LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF YOUNG PEOPLE: THEIR CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND DECISION-MAKING

a report commissioned by

AYRSHIRE CAREERS PARTNERSHIP LTD

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The research

This research was commissioned by the Ayrshire Careers Partnership to chart a group of Ayrshire young people's developing and/or changing career ideas and aspirations over a period of three years as they prepared to leave school and enter post-school education, training or work. A key aim was to identify and understand the factors (individuals or events) which influenced the formation of the young people's career ideas and their career-related decisions and actions. A second aim was to use these young people's experiences of the careers education and guidance services provided by staff of the Careers Service and by schools to assess the effectiveness of provision and to identify how it might be developed for the benefit of the full client group. At each stage the research team sought to identify the influences on career-related decisions and actions. The relative effect of formal networks of guidance compared with informal networks of guidance was considered.

The research was specifically commissioned to identify aspects that required to be changed or developed and the report reflects this emphasis. The researchers have also been conscious that since the research was commissioned the Duffner Review of the Careers Service has reported and its recommendations on the whole accepted by the Scottish Executive. The Review recognised the importance of extended transitions and concluded that "…transitions are made by individuals at varying stages in their lives and often later than was traditionally the case. More people are going into further and higher education and are not making choices until the completion of their post-secondary education. The pre-Careers Scotland level of focus of careers services on school leavers and initial transitions is increasingly inappropriate, or at least not sufficient, to support individuals in making informed choices at the various transition points with which they will be faced" (Duffner Committee Review, pp.11-12, para 3.7). The imminent introduction of all age careers guidance through the launch of Careers Scotland in April 2002 will focus attention on how school, post-school and adult career transitions are to be supported, and the researchers believe that the report will contribute to this discussion.

The research team has acknowledged their help on the first page of this report, but it is also appropriate to record our thanks to young people in this introduction. Young people (and those who supported them) gave their time freely and were willing to discuss their experiences, ideas and feelings. They made considerable efforts to present their experiences to us in a balanced way that took account of the positive and negative aspects. In the chapters where we report the evidence from the data we make little comment on whether we agree with their statements, instead we report what they said to us, using their own words and from their own perspectives. In the final chapter we reflect on their experiences, taking into account a range of other relevant research, to draw conclusions and make recommendations. These, of course, are our responsibility alone. We make three types of recommendations:

- those which are aimed at professionals in careers guidance, no matter in which context or location they are working;

- those which might be relevant to careers services and schools in Scotland and which are also directed to Careers Scotland, to Scottish local authorities and the Scottish Executive;

- a small number which have a very specific relevance to the situation in Ayrshire and which are directed to practitioners and managers working in careers education and guidance in schools and careers centres in the locality.

Aspects of this research are probably unique: the small number of similar studies that have been conducted have been carried out by researchers typically from a sociology, psychology, education or training background. In this instance, each member of the research team is both trained and experienced in the professional discipline of careers education and guidance. As a result the research was able to identify careers guidance needs and issues from a professional perspective in addition to the more general ones connected with transition experiences.

Young people's transitions and decision-making

To provide the context within which to examine the experiences of the young people involved in this study, we give a brief overview of the research evidence concerning young people's transitions, decision making processes and sources of guidance.

Career decision-making

There are different views arising from research on transitions to work about how young people make career decisions. A substantial body of the research argues that young people's transitions are determined by social class, gender and ethnicity so that young people in fact do not make choices or only very limited ones. Certainly, various research studies including the ESRC 16-19 Initiative and national surveys of young people in England and Wales (Youth Cohort Survey) and in Scotland (SSLS) confirm the effect of prior attainment (itself strongly influenced by social class), family background and social class, gender and ethnicity as the main factors in determining young people's career routes. However, other studies argue that the greater individualisation of young people's lives means that while their prospects still depend on family background, gender, ethnicity and location, these now inter-relate in different configurations and makes generalisation more difficult (Roberts, 1997; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Moreover, the picture of young people's decision-making and transition can look different when it is considered at an individual level rather than at an aggregate level.

Other research, usually qualitative, which has considered how individual young people actually make decisions, suggests that the decision-making is a complex, interactive process in which individual young people can exert considerable choice (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Taylor, 1992; Spencer, 1991). Certainly many guidance practitioners would agree that young people do have meaningful alternatives from which to choose although their decisions are strongly influenced by their social context and culture. Young people themselves, when asked about influences on their career decisions, commonly claim themselves as the main originator of their plans (Foskett and Helmsley-Brown, 1997).

Government policy on post-16 education and training and on careers education and guidance is based on yet another assumption about young people's decision-making which has been termed "technical rationality" (Hodkinson, 1996). This assumes that young people reach

decisions in a systematic way, moving logically through a process of matching self and occupation and planning how to achieve the identified aim. The "technical rationalist" model of decision-making is linked to the prevailing official view of individuals taking responsibility for their education, training and career development. This view of decision-making has been criticised on the basis that much research evidence indicates that young people do not make decisions in a linear, logical manner but that their decisions result from:

- a mixture of personal interests and preferences which themselves have been influenced by their family, for example, research shows that early experiences within the family influence the development of interest in particular occupations and whether young people participate in further and higher education;

- their school experiences and social context;

- the information available to them and knowledge of the opportunities that might be available

- their perceptions of which opportunities might be appropriate for them.

- the influence of peers, parents, other significant adults, teachers and Careers Advisors;

Also young people cannot make decisions in isolation from the decisions of others – a young person's decision-making is part of the interaction with other stakeholders (Taylor, 1992; Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Maclagan, 1997). In general, many young people lack confidence and inexperience of negotiating, and are relatively powerless compared with providers of education and training. In addition they may not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of education, training and job opportunities and indeed of guidance (well documented in various studies eg Taylor 1992; Spencer, 1991; Howieson and Semple, 1996).

A number of studies have shown that young people's attitudes to different career areas develop at an early stage in the primary school (Munro and Elsom, 2000). It is also evident that young people's view of careers is a restricted one, limited to a small number of occupations: the jobs done by family and friends, other 'visible' jobs they see around them eg teacher, doctor, police, or others they are aware of from the media (Kelly 1989, Furlong and Cartmel 1999).

Sources of information and advice and influence

Young people draw on a range of sources of information and advice – parents and other relatives, friends and peer groups, careers teachers, subject teachers and Careers Advisors. They also get information and advice through work experience and part-time jobs and are influenced by careers information, by the media through job advertisements and more generally, the media can broaden understanding of jobs that young people would rarely come into contact with directly (Hawthorn, 1998).

The research evidence indicate that young people use "informal" sources of guidance more than 'formal' sources of guidance (Semple and Howieson, 1993; Spencer, 1993; Howieson *et al*, 1993; Lynn and Courtney, 1997). Formal networks can be defined as including individuals who have been charged with a responsibility for guidance by organisations such as schools, the Careers Service, further and higher education establishments and training providers. Formal influences also include the Education for Work (including careers education) programme and to a limited extent the social and personal education provision of these organisations. Informal sources of guidance include parents, family members, neighbours and

friends. The media and part-time and voluntary work can also be included within the informal heading.

Young people are most likely to consult their parents, for example, in 1991, almost 90% of fourth and fifth year in Scotland reported that they had talked to their parents about leaving school and what they should do afterwards (Howieson *et al*, 1993). When asked to identify the most helpful sources of advice, parents also tend to be seen as the most helpful, followed by Careers Advisors and careers teachers (Lynn and Courtney, 1997). Several studies, however, suggest that perhaps parents are less relied on as sources of advice in periods of rapid labour market change when their knowledge may be seen as outdated (Furlong, 1993).

Young people tend to use the various sources of advice for different purposes and they exert influence in different ways. Parents are a source of knowledge about particular jobs and of work in general and research shows that family advice and support is more influential on the decision to stay in education post-16 than advice from careers specialists (Kidd and Watts, 1996). Mothers in particular seem to play an important role, including in relation to information seeking (Howieson *et al*, 1993; Taylor, 1992). Parental influence can also impact on their children's experience of formal guidance provision. Recent research on the Careers Service in Scotland found that pupils who had discussed their career plans with their parents were more likely to think that their interview with a Careers Adviser had been at the right time, and to judge it as useful (Howieson and Semple, 2001). Friends are an important influence, including on the decision to leave school (Spencer, 1991), in providing new ideas, and friends already in jobs or FE or HE can provide relevant information and first hand opinion.

Careers Advisors tend to be used for information about possible options and for more specialist information eg about entry to particular educational and training opportunities. There are issues about the balance between the Careers Service role as an information provider and as a guidance provider helping young people to explore their aims and aspirations and develop realistic plans for the future. There can also sometimes be conflict between, on the one hand, the expectations of young people who focus on the information-giving role and, on the other hand, the wider role of the Careers Service.

A number of studies indicate that several, partially overlapping groups of young people are relatively worse off than others in the extent of their sources of advice: the unqualified, the unemployed and those who have unemployed parents. These young people tend to be more reliant on the Careers Advisors (Howieson *et al*, 1993; Kidd and Watts, 1996).

Guidance teachers are most likely to have an influential role via teaching careers education; it might be noted that having careers education lessons positively affects young people's view of the importance of gaining academic and vocational qualifications (Howieson and Croxford, 1996).

For high attaining pupils aiming for higher education in particular, subject teachers (without a formal guidance role) are a source of information and advice. An issue, therefore, is the need for information distribution and in-service training to include subject as well as guidance teachers.

Other sources of information and influence include contacts with employers via careers education in school as well as work experience placements. Work experience can have a

major influence on career decisions either reinforcing earlier choices or leading to their rejection or by raising new possibilities. A majority of post-16 students in full-time education have part-time jobs and studies indicate that for many part-time work was particularly useful as a source of information and perceptions about the world of work, in clarifying post-16 choices and was sometimes seen as more useful than school-based careers activities. A number of authors have suggested that students' part-time work has generally been under-valued by schools (Howieson, 1990; Taylor, 1992; Rikowski, 1992; Semple *et al*, 2001).

The local and national context of the research

From the beginning of the research until 31 March 2002, the Ayrshire Careers Partnership will have provided careers guidance and related services to young people in three local authorities. These are East, North and South Ayrshire Councils. It has therefore faced the challenge of working with three potentially different sets of policy and practice, with differing impacts on priorities for schools and for provision of Education for Work (including careers education). One school in each of the three authorities was therefore selected for this study so that the research could take account of the differing local authority practice and to gather data from young people and schools in each local authority.

From 1 April 2002, the Careers Company will become part of Careers Scotland, matching at a local level the integration of the organisations previously known as Careers Service Companies, Education Business Partnerships, Adult Guidance Networks and Local Learning Partnerships. In producing our recommendations, the research team has looked ahead to the new context for careers education and guidance and has taken account of these imminent changes, in so far as they can be anticipated.

The structure of the report

Chapter 2 explains the design of the research and the issues involved in interpreting and using the rich evidence from an ethnographic longitudinal study such as this. The chapter also provides some detail on how the young people were selected and came to participate in the study and how the contacts with them and with those significant to them were managed. An overview of their status and destinations is provided but not at a level that might identify the individuals involved.

Chapter 3 is the first of three chapters to report in detail the evidence from young people and those whom they identified as significant to them. It considers what young people and those who are most significant to their career thinking say about the school's provision of careers education and guidance. This chapter also takes account of documentation and interview data from school and Careers Service Company staff.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Careers Service Company's role in providing careers education and guidance. In a similar way to Chapter 3, it draws on the experiences of young people and those most significant to their career thinking. It, too, uses documentation and interview data from school and Careers Service Company staff.

Chapter 5 reviews the extent to which the informal network supports career development and career-related decision-making and actions. Points at which the informal network played

a significant role are identified, and the extent to which formal and informal networks communicate with, complement or contradict each other is discussed.

Chapter 6 discusses the central issue of the identification of young people's career guidance needs, models of career decision-making and considers the implications for professional practice.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter and draws together the key issues from each of the earlier chapters to make recommendations to schools, Careers Scotland and other relevant bodies.

Confidentiality issues

It has been of the first importance to safeguard the confidentiality of those who participated in the research, a particularly critical issue given the local context of the research: the report is likely to be read by those who have a knowledge of the participants in the study. This concern to preserve confidentiality has determined the presentation of the report and in reading it the following decisions on presentation should be borne in mind:

- We have altered aspects of young people's situation where this could potentially have identified them. Care, however, has been taken to retain the greatest possible faithfulness to their experiences so that the key points in what they are saying are conveyed.

- We initially gave the young people pseudonyms so that we could refer to them by a name. We felt, however, that this might still allow some of the young people to be identified so we have not used names at any point in the report.

- Careers Service Company staff are referred to as male throughout, and quotes have been altered to reflect this.

- School and college staff have been referred to as female throughout, and quotes similarly changed.

CHAPTER 2
THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR CONTEXT AND THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The situation of the young people by the end of the research

Some simple tracking data about the young people was gathered, necessary to an understanding of their situation. Their details, as at December 2001, are as follows:

- All young people have now left school. Over a third have had more than a year in a post-school opportunity. A number of those have had more than two years of post-school experiences, including completing a Skillseekers programme and two year FE provision.

- Around two-fifths are now in a post-school opportunity that is different from that recorded in the CSC destination statistics or from that which was the subject of CSC guidance.

- Over a third were still having difficulty in sorting out a career direction some months or years after leaving school. None of those experiencing difficulty were in contact with formal guidance services, and few were in contact with placing agencies.

- Just under a third entered Higher Education, just under a third entered Further Education and over a third entered the labour market.

- All but one had had part-time work prior to, or close to, leaving school.

The situation of the research group illustrates several key issues that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters but it is worth noting them here. It is clear that young people experience complex and extended periods of transition after leaving school. This is evident from the young people in this study and from much other research (Lynn and Courtney, 1997; NCSR, 2000; Howieson *et al*, 2000).

This indicates the inadequacy of basing policy imperatives and priorities for the provision of careers education and guidance on the results of a first destination analysis, as they are not founded in the full reality of young people's transition experiences.

Some of those who were still unclear about their career direction (a third of our total group) could be classified as having major difficulties in finding a satisfactory post-school opportunity even though only one was technically unemployed. This group included those who were 'under-employed' (ie were not working at, or close to, their potential skill level); those undertaking a series of unconnected temporary jobs or who had had a number of changes of job or college courses without any clear pattern or progress; and several who were working with a relative 'until I get myself sorted'. This scenario should provide no surprises to those familiar with career development theory and research: career choice is an extended process. However, none of those who were having difficulty in career direction were in contact with any of the formal agencies for guidance purposes, and few were in contact with the Careers Service or the Job Centre for placing help.

The research design

It was agreed with Ayrshire Careers Partnership that a qualitative approach to the research would be the most appropriate method to use in the light of the aims of the study. The intention was to identify the perceptions of young people and those who influence them, to

understand their experiences and the processes they were going through in order to identify ways in which the provision of careers education and guidance might be developed. These aims clearly indicated the use of a qualitative approach since quantitative methods would not provide an understanding of perceptions and of the dynamic processes of young people's transitions. A quantitative approach is well suited to answering questions such as "how many people do this" or "how many people think that" but is not an appropriate method to use if the aim is to gain insights into individuals' perceptions, experiences and processes (Hillage, 1994).

The main research tool was open-ended interviewing, with some structure provided by specific tools, which are discussed below. In addition, documentation was gathered from schools and the Careers Service Company, and the young people's Careers Service records were accessed in confidence to provide a comparison between the official records and the perceptions of young people and their "significant others".

Stages of the research

Stage one: identification of the research schools

In discussion with Careers Service Company (CSC) managers, three schools were identified as being typical of each authority in relation to: the destinations of school leavers, attainment levels and socio-economic factors. Also considered were the nature of the CSC/school relationship and the perceived quality of the career education programme: each was thought to be typical of schools in the authority. Once permission was given by the local authority, schools were approached directly and each of the three schools proved keen to be involved.

Stage two: design of research instruments

The initial period of the research was spent identifying or designing research instruments for use with young people and their "significant others". These included:

- questionnaires to review the content of Education for Work provision;
- questionnaires to examine career skills and perceptions of the opportunity structure;
- card exercise on work values;
- visual pattern of network of influences on career choice;
- lifeline exercise to review career development;
- self-characterisation.

Interview schedules were devised for the interviews with the careers advisers and with the school careers contact. The two questionnaires covering the content of Education for Work provision and pupils' career skills and perceptions of the opportunity were slightly adapted for use with the careers advisers and school staff. (We might note that our experience of using a number of these research instruments suggests they have the potential to be used as guidance tools.)

Our interviews with young people and their significant others in career development were designed to ensure open questioning using non-directive probes to help individuals to review and evaluate their own career development experiences. We made no assumptions about the

responses we might expect and this approach proved helpful in enabling us to acquire a clear view of the particular perspective of each individual.

Stage three: identification of the young people to be involved

Each of the three schools were asked to suggest 12 young people to become involved in the research on the basis of criteria set by the research team. We gave the schools concerned the following criteria:

- there should be six from S4 and six from S5;

- there should be a spread of likely attainment and post-school destination;

- there should be equal numbers of girls and boys in each year group.

The young people identified met these criteria in two of the schools. In the third school the research group was somewhat skewed towards the lower end of the attainment range and towards those intending to enter the labour market after school. Although not what was planned, this proved useful in allowing experiences in the post-school labour market to be given equal consideration to those within post-school education. Our group of 36 young people offers a view of the considerable richness and diversity of young people's school and post-school experiences.

Each of the three members of the research team was allocated a school with which to work. The researcher met with young people as a group, explained the commitment that would be involved and asked for consent to contact a parent for permission. Young people proved very willing to be involved and their parents also gave full consent to involvement over the three year period. Inevitably in longitudinal research there is a degree of attrition, that is, loss of individuals who drop out of contact with the researchers. Remarkably, of the 36 young people who started the study, 34 remained at the end, a very good response.

Stage four: gathering contextual information for the interviews

For each pupil group, the researcher conducted an interview with the school careers adviser, with the member of guidance staff responsible for the careers programme and for links with the CSC and with either an Assistant Head responsible for guidance and careers or a Principal Teacher of Guidance. CSC documentation on policy and practice in work with schools was examined, as were details of the school's careers education and guidance programme: both these aspects formed part of the discussions with school and careers staff. School and CSC staff interviewed were also asked to rate the career skills of the pupil group.

Stage five: the first contact with young people

The first interview with young people took place in school in May of their 4th or 5th year. A number of factors were covered in these interviews. These included:

- actual and expected attainment and experiences in education;

- the extent and nature of Education for Work (including career education) in the school and young people's opinion of it;

- the role and impact of guidance staff on career thinking;

- the role and impact of other school staff and the total school provision on career thinking;

- the role and impact of the careers adviser on career thinking and the transition process into the labour market or post-school education;

- the impact of part-time and voluntary work and other experiences;

- the influence of the family (including intentional and unintentional contributions to career thinking);

- the influence of friends, neighbours etc on career thinking;

- career development since childhood;

- perceptions of the opportunity structure;

- self perceptions, with particular focus on the extent to which young people felt in charge of their lives;

- the extent to which young people felt they had developed career related skills, and the extent to which these were in evidence in young people's actions;

- decision-making strategies;

- what individual young people and their 'significant others' thought were important in work (ie their work values);

- perceptions of models of career choice processes;

- career guidance needs;

- monitoring of the use of formal advice sources over the period, what prompts this use and its impact;

- reviewing whether the young person's choice of 'significant other' changes over the period and the reasons for this.

The factors listed above give some indication of the complex nature of career decision-making and development: they also indicate some of the challenges faced by Careers Services and schools in delivering effective careers education and guidance provision.

Each interview was tape recorded with the permission of the young person and then transcribed. Interviews were typically up to an hour long.

Stage six: first contact with the "significant other"

Young people were asked to describe their support network, by which we mean the range of individuals that they had talked to about their future or experiences that were influential on their career development. They were then asked to identify the most significant influence on their thinking or the person they talked to most about their future in the knowledge that the researcher would conduct an interview with this person(s).

In the case of 35 of the 36 young people, the 'significant other' identified at the first contact point was a parent, or parents. One young person chose one of her subject teachers who was also an AHT for the upper school. In some cases, both parents were present, and in one case both parents and a step-parent. These interviews were organised in a place of their choosing, most usually in their home, and interviews lasted from one to two hours. These interviews were also taped with permission and transcribed.

Interviews with the "significant other" covered the same aspects as those with young people, with the addition that they were asked to review their own career development and the role

that their parents and teachers had had in their own career-related decision-making and actions.

Stage seven: subsequent contacts

Due to the extended illness of two of the researchers at the time of the second contact, and a period of absence due to personal circumstances by one of the researchers at the third contact point, the pattern of contact was slightly different for each school group. In summary: all of the young people were interviewed on a face-to-face basis three times. In addition, one of the school groups had a fourth interview during the period while the other two groups had a telephone contact. At the beginning and end of the research the young person's "significant other" was interviewed. By the time of the final contact, several young people had changed the person they defined as "significant other". For most of this group, the change was from one parent to the other, but in one case a grandparent was chosen, in another it was the employer, and in a third it was a guidance/PSE tutor at FE college. For another young person, the 'significant other' had died during the period of the research, and another family member was interviewed instead.

Stage eight: reference to CSC records

CSC client records were accessed to note CSC perspectives on interventions with clients and the guidance needs identified and recorded. This allowed a comparison between the picture that young people and their "significant other" had of careers service interventions and the official records of guidance given to provide a check of clients' interpretation of service provision.

Analysis

The data is very rich and could illuminate a range of transition issues. An ethnographic study such as this consumes a high level of the allocated resource in fieldwork. Inevitably, hard decisions have had to be made about priority areas for analysis, and the following topics have been selected as most relevant to the aims of the research:

- stages of career development and guidance needs identified;
- school careers education and guidance provision;
- CSC careers education and provision;
- the role of informal networks of support.

CHAPTER 3
THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

An overview of career education provision

It proved difficult to get a clear picture of what was really happening in career education provision in the three schools. The school careers co-ordinator's description of career education provision (in interview and in the questionnaire) differed in significant ways from that of pupils and this was again different from the careers adviser's view in all three schools. The careers co-ordinator and the school careers adviser differed in their views of the career skills of pupils in the school: the careers adviser tended to assess pupils' skills as being at a lower level.

It was noticeable that careers advisers were likely to have a higher number of 'not sure' responses when asked to comment on the career education provision of the school. This finding is supported by number of other studies in Scotland and the rest of the UK which suggest that it is common for careers advisers to have gaps in their knowledge of the actual provision of career education in their schools. It is, however, important that careers advisers know the career education programme in detail if they are to help young people integrate the lessons of career education into their personal decision-making. There seems to be a need for better audit techniques to monitor what is actually happening, and for careers advisers to put a higher priority on supporting the design and review of career education provision so that they can make use of career education outcomes in individual guidance. It would also seem important that school careers coordinators take the differing perspectives of pupils into account when monitoring delivery and content of career education.

All of the schools made considerable efforts to provide information on employment and especially on educational opportunities. Nevertheless, in the research interviews both school co-ordinators and careers advisers judged young people's understanding of the labour market as limited, particularly with respect to local job and training opportunities. Their understanding of the kind of jobs likely to be available in the future and future skill requirements was also thought to be limited.

This was borne out in the research interviews with young people and their parents which confirmed that in many cases they did not have a good knowledge and understanding of the labour market. It was evident that most of the young people had a generally low level of awareness of the opportunity structure but this was frequently not perceived as a problem, either by young people or by those most significant to them in career development.

The three schools varied in their overall focus in terms of how much they emphasised information/knowledge or skills development in their career education provision. One was very information-based, the second gave some attention to skill development, which had the greatest focus in the third school. Skill development was generally most concerned with practical skills such as opportunity search skills (how to write a letter of application, complete a UCAS form, what to do at interview etc) rather than more process-based skills such as decision-making and coping with change. In one school a member of staff described how the career education programme promoted the recording of skills in Progress File in order to encourage an understanding of the need for lifelong education that would be

necessary to cope with the shifting post-school scene. However, this message did not appear to have been absorbed by the young people we spoke to from the school.

Before discussing the young people's experience of career education, it is worth noting that both they and their parents agreed that career education was an important role for a school:

> *'Schools should let the pupils see what's available, because if that had been available when I was younger, I'd've went down a different road.* [Parent]

Young people's experience of career education

Work experience

When asked about their career education, our young people were most likely to mention work experience and also to rate it as one of the most useful activities in which they had participated. Mock interviews, careers exhibitions, visits to colleges and universities and visiting speakers were the other elements of career education provision that were frequently referred to as having been helpful.

The most valuable aspect of work experience in the view of the young people (and their parents) was the opportunity it could give to try out their career ideas:

> *"If you can get the work experience in the line of work you are considering doing, it's worthwhile to see. I know some people who've had, "This is what I want to do" in their heads, went out and done work experience, thought, "No, that's not for me." So it is a good thing."* [Young Person]

For a number, their work experience had been useful in confirming whether or not their career idea was the right one for them. One young woman, for example, found that her view of care work was at odds with her placement experience and this changed her plans:

> *"I didn't like my work experience. I wanted to work in an old people's home but, nah, I hated it. I really didn't like it. It's put me off that."* [Young Person]

In this instance, she had been able to observe and to participate, at least to a limited extent, in the level of work that would actually be involved in the job she had in mind. But another example illustrates the limitations of work experience as a test of career ideas. One young man who was interested in being a lawyer had a work experience placement in a solicitor's office. He concluded that the work was routine and boring but he had, in fact, mainly observed the work of clerical and technician level staff. The lack of a full de-briefing of his experience on placement combined with his ignorance of levels of work and responsibility within occupational areas led him to this misplaced conclusion.

The timing of work experience was an issue for several of the young people, most particularly for two fourth year leavers who effectively got their work experience after they had left school ie in May. One of these young people delayed applying for training opportunities since she had been told that her application would have a better chance of success if she could show that she had some direct practical knowledge via her work experience. These young people understood how the work experience system was organised (that pupils go out in batches at certain times throughout the school year) but felt that priority for an early work experience place should be given to those who planned to leave school at the end of that session.

For a minority of those young people who had been on work experience, it had not been an enjoyable time:

> *"I hated it, no one explained anything, they worked you so hard and no-one even said thank you."*   [Young Person]

This example, and comments from a number of other young people, raises questions about the selection and briefing of placement providers and about monitoring of pupils out on placement.

Although the testing out of their ideas was the predominant benefit for young people, a number also identified other benefits of their work experience such as increased confidence in their abilities after coping successfully in a new situation:

> *"I was really worried about going there, 'Cuz I though they [young children] were going to just run about the place like dafties but they were fine, if you just stayed calm with them, you got [on] alright with them."*   [Young Person]

There was a demand from young people and also from some parents for more than one opportunity for work experience as their career ideas developed. One girl who had had work experience in S4 relevant to the careers idea she had at that point felt that work experience later related to her new idea might have prevented what turned out to be the wrong post school decision. By the time of her third interview she had dropped out of her college course after her first course placement in an old folk's home and commented that:

> *"They [schools] should organise work experience in sixth year as well as earlier, if I'd gone to a home then it might have stopped me applying to college."*   [Young Person]

It might be noted that several young people had more than one placement but these young people all had family contacts who were able to organise this for them outwith the formal school provision. Young people with family connections were also more likely to be able to get a placement relevant to their career ideas since they could access opportunities in addition to the school's provision; in several cases these placements were ones that the school would not have been able to offer:

> *"He [accountant] doesn't take work experience people. He only took [names son] in because obviously, he knew us and he knew that anything [name] saw or did would be confidential, which obviously, in a business like that you wouldn't just open your doors to anyone."*
>   [Parent]

There are issues here about equity of access to work experience. Some of our group of young people had no access to work experience at all, and were unclear why this was:

> *"No, I wasn't offered it, I think it was….I don't know how I didn't get it but some people in my class did get it and they said that I would get the choice of work experience in fifth, but I didn't get it."*   [Young Person]

Mock interviews

When asked their ideas for improving career education, the opportunity to have a mock interview was one of the most frequently mentioned ideas. Only a few young people had had a mock interview. All judged it as a useful, if nerve-wracking experience:

> *"I quite, not enjoyed it - I was nervous as hell! – but, yeah, it was really good, it was definite teaching experience. That was a good eye-opener that was. Basically the type of questions they asked, 'coz they didn't ask much about your personal background, which I thought*

would be the priority, but more about experience. And there wasn't much about qualifications either, because the work could be taught there and then. It was more about how you are as a person, 'can you learn quickly?', 'are you good at certain things?' So I thought that interviews were like, 'what are you like?', but it was more like, 'how well suited are you to doing this sort of thing?" [Young Person]

Some others had gone through the first part of the mock interview process by filling out an application but had not been selected for an interview. While this does mirror reality, the others also wanted the opportunity of interview practice. There was general agreement among the young people that everyone should have the chance of a mock interview.

Changing information needs and "hot" information

Young people's reaction to provision such as visits by external speakers, careers exhibitions and fairs and open days at colleges and universities revealed two common themes: the desire for more specific information and a wish to meet and talk with people who had current or recent direct experience of the career or course in question. We noted that, as young people became more focused in their career thinking (that is, as they developed their career ideas or at least moved nearer to a decision point) they wanted more specific information. This development was reflected in the way young people changed their earlier opinions about the usefulness of visits from external speakers and, to a lesser extent, visits to career exhibitions and open days. External speakers were more likely to be rated as useful on the first occasion we interviewed the young people than at later stages. Topics such as what college and student life is like were initially perceived as useful but later young people wanted more detailed information such as about the specific courses they were interested in:

'When they come they just talk about social activities and things like that. They don't really talk about individual courses.' [Young Person]

This is not to say that such visits were not useful, simply that there is an issue of timing. Other points raised by young people about external speakers included: the desirability of having small group sessions where there could be more opportunity for questions and discussion; and better time-tabling of visits to avoid clashes between several events of interest.

While visiting speakers might be useful, those planning on entry to further and higher education thought that there was no substitute for a visit to the institution:

'We got lots of visits from universities and colleges but to get the big picture, you've really got to go on the visits' [Young Person]

It would seem that those thinking about higher education were better served in terms of visits than those focusing on further education. Open days at HE institutions appeared much more likely to be incorporated in a structured way into school career education provision than did open days and visits to FE colleges.

The possibility of seeing the department(s) of interest and of talking to those concerned with specific courses were among the benefits of a college or university visit or open day:

"When I saw round the Chemical Engineering Department and saw what it was going to entail, I just didn't fancy it." [Young Person]

Some visits were judged to be better than others:

> *"I had a chat with the students. Got their point of view. They were able to say what kind of place it was... what their courses were like. The other open day at [names university] wasn't really as well organised, I didn't think. There wasn't really any students about. You couldn't get into the different departments to see what the facilities were like."* [Young Person]

Involving those who had had recent relevant experience or were currently doing the job or course was the most common suggestion about how schools could improve career education and how colleges and universities could make open days more meaningful for prospective students. One of the young people summed up the programme of external speakers at his school:

> *"It was people in grey suits, they just came in, droned on and went away again. They all seemed older. If you had somebody coming in who had been in that situation recently, somebody who knows what they're talking about."* [Young Person]

Other research has shown that young people value what has been termed 'hot information' (that is, from those who can be seen to have recent, 'real' experience) and this was also true of the young people in this study. A clear development point for schools is the need to incorporate the experiences of other young people (recent 'transition makers') into a structured career education programme as a way of delivering a more relevant input that pupils will be much more likely to pay attention to:

> *"I'd have probably paid more attention to them [former pupils] …if someone came back in who'd done something that I was interested in, I'd listen to everything that they say."*
> [Young Person]

Another benefit of the approach of using recent 'transition makers' is that it offers a way for schools to link with the informal network (older brothers and sisters and friends) and make structured use of the experience there. Young people often ask for the type of subjective opinion which formal networks cannot give, for example, when one young man was asked what kind of useful information friends and family could give from their own experiences of careers/colleges, he said:

> [they can tell you] *"If folk give you hassle, whether it's a good laugh, if there's places to go when you're there."* [Young Person]

More generally, pupils and their parents wanted more access to those with a direct involvement in a job or course rather than those in a more senior position or a general advisory capacity. They wanted schools to enable young people to get information "from the horse's mouth":

> *"They should have a chef in, a fireman in. Give them the good points, the job satisfaction points and the low points."* [Young Person]

It is worth noting that the careers conventions usually held at the Magnum Centre were mentioned positively by most of the young people; they appreciated the access it enabled to a wide range of opportunity providers and the chance to collect a lot of information:

> *"I got information about job opportunities and salaries from the careers thing at the Magnum, not from careers education classes."* [Young Person]

Computer interest guides

Computer interest guides (such as Centigrade and Scotquest) had been completed by a number of pupils in their fourth, fifth or sixth years: opinion was varied as to whether they had contributed to the development of career ideas. Among the factors influencing the impact of interest guides were the pupils' perceptions of their purpose, the extent and quality of feedback about the results and whether the results were incorporated in to the guidance process. Personal feedback appeared to be limited as was the use of the results of the interest guide in careers guidance. Pupils generally viewed the role of interest guides in very specific ways, seeing their purpose as either to confirm their ideas or to tell them what they should do:

> *"I didn't think it was very good. It didn't really come back as what I wanted to do and a lot of folk felt the same."* [Young Person]

and

> *"It told me I'd be good at things I didn't like."* [Young Person]

Whichever particular one is used, interest guides raise the same issues for schools and the Careers Service. These are: the need to ensure that pupils are clear about their purpose as an aid to their career thinking; the importance of supporting and encouraging young people to take on board guidance which challenges rather than confirms career ideas; the extent of individual and group briefing and debriefing of such systems; and the way in which they are supported and used in PSE teaching and in individual guidance.

Differentiation in career education

The young people's overall reaction to the career education aspect of their PSE classes can perhaps be best described as lukewarm. Inputs related to opportunity search skills such as mock interviews and how to complete applications were most likely to be mentioned positively. But the general reaction was less positive. One explanation may relate to the common difficulty of delivering career education provision suited to the varied needs of different young people:

> *"The course work isn't all that great, you just switch off. I think they try to suit everybody, but it's all, before in your register class it's all mixed ability. I mean, you've got people wanting to get out of school as quick as they can, go and try and get a job. And you've got in-between folk who don't know what to do. To suit them it's not very detailed for people that want to go to university. It's kind of a wee bit about that and a wee bit about that. There's not really any great focus on the different bits."* [Young Person]

The question of differentiated provision is a considerable challenge for schools and Careers Services. As we have already noted, it is necessary for pupils to cover general opportunity awareness in the lower school and there may be less need for a differentiated approach at this stage. In the upper school there may be more of an argument for delivering career education in a more differentiated way. Certainly delivery is easier if pupils can be dealt with according to their particular needs. But organising such a system is not a straightforward matter since there are a number of factors by which pupils could be/should be differentiated including their attainment, their intended route and also their level of vocational maturity and stage of decision-making. If there is a differentiated system then this raises issues of who is in control – who decides which pupils join a particular group? There is no easy answer but some

general points apply. The first point is the value of taking into account the differences within the pupil group and not just to view these differences in terms of attainment levels. Secondly, it is important to build in as much flexibility as possible to career education programmes, for example, by having a core and options structure and having teaching and learning materials at different levels.

Part-time work

We discuss the role of part-time work for the young people in this study further in Chapter 5. The point we wish to make here is that part-time work is of value to young people in a number of ways and these benefits are different from those gained through work experience (Semple *et al*, 2001). It is a waste of a valuable learning experience if career education does not take account of pupils' part-time work- this appeared to be the case for our young people. If the learning gains of part-time work are to be realised then pupils need the opportunity to review and reflect about their job and this should be done within career education.

The role of teachers

The young people were in constant contact with their subject teachers so it is unsurprising that those teachers had had a considerable impact on their career thinking. This was especially the case where the young person enjoyed the subject or where it was related to possible career ideas. Nevertheless, there is also a question about the quality of the careers information available from subject teachers. This was something commented on by one careers adviser who suggested that this sort of situation had to be handled carefully so as not to be seen to contradict what the teacher had said. An issue for both schools and the Careers Service is how can subject staff be supported in their role as first-level providers of careers information and advice?

There were various examples of young people who had discarded or adopted a career idea linked to a subject because of the quality of their relationship with the individual teacher. An interested teacher who encouraged and could explain things well could be a positive influence on young people's motivation, their general commitment to school (thus affecting their attainment across a range of subjects) and their ideas about post-school study:

> *"Like my physics teacher, she can tell us things about the further education in that subject and that's the same for maths and the other subjects. You can ask them questions about anything to do with the course and they can answer them, that helps a lot."* [Young Person]

and

> *"Mrs. X is my chemistry teacher buts she's more than just her subject, she's very helpful."*
> [Young Person]

and

> *"She was excellent at her secretarial studies, I mean, the teacher couldnae praise her up enough at that. So I knew, and she knew, that if [her other career idea] didn't work out she always had that to fall back on. Whereas, the other teachers, they were more pointin out her downfalls, that she should be workin more on this an that, an like it was for these school figures and we want tae up our pupils, this kind o thing,. Ah'd like tae see more people like her [secretarial studies teacher] involved in the school careers side o it."* [Parent]

The young people in the study varied as to whether their guidance teacher was a particular influence. Guidance teachers were generally seen as a source of careers information *"I got sheets from her"* and as the person to see to arrange an interview with the careers adviser. Young people's views were more varied on whether they saw their guidance teacher as someone with whom to discuss their ideas. Most of the young people, of course, had more regular contact with a subject teacher than with their guidance teacher. Where a subject teacher (especially of a favourite subject) was also a guidance teacher or had another relevant responsibility, then this could be a powerful combination since it combined regular contact with the pupil with a higher level of knowledge and expertise.

Guidance teachers seemed to play more of a role in encouraging and supporting young people than having a direct impact on career ideas:

> *"I must say she* (the guidance teacher) *has been very good with [names daughter]. There was a time in school when [names daughter] sort of strayed a bit, you know, everything was sort of going down. Just one of these things where four of them got together and they just didn't do well together at all. As individuals, they were all right, but together they were.... I was very grateful, she wasn't listening to her dad and I at the time, so* [names guidance teacher] *was great and taking her aside and giving her advice and she just totally turned around. So I've got a lot to be grateful to her for."* [Parent]

There were examples of guidance teachers intervening when there were potential difficulties with pupils' career intentions. One young woman, who in sixth year was still planning on a social science degree but had failed her three Highers, is an example where the guidance teacher had obviously identified a problem and was encouraging her to think about alternatives and come to a realistic assessment of her chances of university:

> *"I did have an interview with my guidance [teacher] and she was asking me questions like about things to fall back on...There was a couple of folk from different unis and...like for career talk things and my guidance [teacher] made me go to that so I sat through them."* [Young Person]

Assistance with the UCAS process was an area where guidance staff and senior management, typically an Assistant Head Teacher, were mentioned as having specific inputs:

> *"Well, I done a first draft* (of the personal statement) *and handed it in to my guidance teacher who had a look at it. It was really just sitting down one night and rattling all these ideas out and what he felt was it was a touch repetitive. There was a lot of 'I this, I that, I this' and so. I worked on it from that and then had the rest of the form done and Mrs x* (AHT) *was wanting to see ... well she gave us all a photocopy of the form ... a photocopy form to fill in before doing the real thing. And she wanted to see them and she felt it was okay, so..."* [Young Person]

While parents and other family members helped with application forms for jobs, Skillseekers training places and college courses, they were much less involved with UCAS applications. In a few cases where an older brother or sister had recently applied to HE, they were mentioned as giving advice but it seemed that UCAS applications was an area where schools had a strong input.

CHAPTER 4
CAREERS SERVICE PROVISION

Introduction

In this chapter we recount the young people's perceptions and experiences of the Careers Service. We also describe the perceptions and experiences of their "significant others", primarily parents. We noted in Chapter 2 that we had accessed Careers Service records to check clients' perceptions of careers service work. We found the statements of young people and their parents to be very largely in accordance with the Careers Service's own documentation (where it existed) of careers service interventions with these young people. We were also able to check that young people and their parents were not confusing a member of school staff with a careers adviser.

It is also important to note that we report the perceptions of young people and their parents without much comment in this chapter. However, we do make a judgement on the extent of the impact of particular Careers Service interventions on young people, and while we will return to this in the final chapter, it requires some discussion at this stage. We did ask young people and their parents their opinion of the usefulness of the Careers Service interventions they had experienced but when we explored their responses further with them, it was evident that asking this sort of general question did not give much indication of the impact of the careers input. This is in line with other research which shows the limitations of asking general questions about satisfaction with provision (Howieson and Semple, 2001). We have found, for example, that while young people responded positively when asked the general question whether their careers interview was "useful", a more negative (but more informative) picture emerged when they were asked more detailed follow-up questions about the interview process, questions such as whether the careers adviser in interview "encouraged you to talk about yourself", "gave you honest advice and information", or "let you make up your own mind". More detailed questions about careers service interventions are necessary to arrive at a more accurate assessment of the impact of provision.

Secondly, we applied a professional judgement of effectiveness, based on our work on the effectiveness of careers services across Scotland (Howieson and Semple, 2001). We used two particular descriptors and their elements for this measure of impact. These are:

B1 Effective delivery of careers guidance to individual clients:

- extent to which guidance inputs are "owned" by clients;
- extent to which individual client's assumptions and expectations about career choice are identified, met and challenged (if appropriate);
- extent to which a client's career thinking is moved on by contacts with the Careers Service.

B2 Successful outcomes for clients:

- extent to which individual clients make appropriate decisions;
- whether young people enter an appropriate post-school opportunity;
- level and type of "drop-out" or inappropriate opportunity-changing;
- level and duration of unemployment.

All three members of the research team are experienced professionals in careers guidance, and we drew on this expertise, in conjunction with our research skills, to apply these professional measures to the young people in this research and to make a judgement of impact.

Young people's contact with the Careers Service

The CSC, in common with others in Scotland provides a range of services to its young clients. These might include introductory group sessions, inputs at subject choice, introduction to the careers library, talks on Skillseekers or UCAS, individual interviews (pre-scheduled or drop-in), special events such as careers conventions, notification of local vacancies and submission for vacancies. However, our research interviews found that our young people's contact with the Careers Service was predominately through having an interview with a careers adviser. Typically, they would have had an introductory talk on a class or year group basis, at which they completed a screening questionnaire, which would be followed by their interview with the careers adviser. Generally, most young people had had an interview in their fourth year. In fifth year and especially sixth year, the choice was usually left to them. They might also have contact with the careers adviser by attending a drop-in clinic but this was not available in all three schools.

Both the young people and their parents thought that it was a good idea that fourth year pupils should routinely have an interview with the careers adviser:

> *"It's better to arrange interviews for everyone first and then you can decide after that."*
> [Young Person]

Parents, in particular, thought that if the initiative was left with the pupil then most would be unlikely to "get round" to requesting one even if they wanted one. But several comments illustrated a disadvantage of routinely interviewing the majority of fourth years for pupils in S5 or S6:

> *"The last interview was quite a help but it's difficult to get an interview with him because of all the fourth years he needs to see."*
> [Parent]

Perceptions of the Careers Service role

Perceptions of its role in the provision of information

The clearest image held by young people and parents of what the careers service did was its provision of information. Their expectations of the careers interview focused on the opportunity it provided to get information from the careers adviser whom they regarded as more knowledgeable than family, friends and teachers:

> *"My family and friends don't really know everything but the careers officer, it's her or his job to know everything about the subjects. So they would be more informed, be able to tell you anything you need to know."*
> [Young Person]

> *"I think the careers adviser has more information and can tell us more about jobs an' that rather than the guidance teacher."*
> [Young Person]

Perceptions of its role in the provision of guidance

In general, the guidance role of the careers service was less apparent to both young people and their parents than its information and placing services. A few of the young people did see a role for the careers adviser in giving them new ideas and broadening their horizons. One girl who had not considered engineering because she thought it was "dead dirty" commented that suggesting new or different ideas was a good role for the careers adviser:

> *"it gives you more things to think about, it could completely change your mind and you had never thought of it."*   [Young Person]

Perceptions of its role in motivating and supporting

Parents often saw themselves in a supportive and motivating role with their child and frequently expected the careers adviser to provide similar support and motivation, an expectation of the careers adviser which was not always met:

> *"…they'll just, 'Oh, with the grades you're getting you couldn't do that kind of thing' but no' suggesting other things."*   [Parent]

> *"No, I don't think he was helpful at all. It was like, "Oh, you can't do that!" He could have said, "Look, this is what [grades] you really, really need and if you think you can get that in the next 2 or 3 years, stick in and we'll revise, we'll have another go at this. Come and see me or I'll come and see you and we'll have a look and see what we can do."*   [Parent]

Young people too wanted the careers adviser to be encouraging:

> *"It would be better if he made you feel if you could actually get the grades."*
>   [Young Person]

Other research studies support this finding, that it seems that careers advisers are more likely to see themselves in a motivating role with post school clients, especially with unemployed clients and are less likely to adopt this approach with clients in the school. This may be related to the far greater focus on the vocational guidance interview in school and an emphasis on a non-directive approach. There is an interesting contrast with the role of the careers service in England where their effectiveness is at least partly measured by the extent to which their clients in school meet learning targets.

Perceptions of its role in placement/job-finding

Young people and their parents were sometimes vague about the school leaver placing service and registration procedures although others were aware that the Careers Office held vacancies for 16 and 17 year olds. Nevertheless, there were examples where young people had used the Careers Service's job-finding service but their parents had not realised that this was where the vacancy had come from. This means that the Careers Service Company does not always receive recognition for this aspect of its work. One young man, for example, had been placed by the Careers Service into a training opportunity in construction (not an apprenticeship) but he was subsequently able to move on to an apprenticeship with another company from this basis. His father said*:*

> *"I'm not sure how he got on to it. He came back with these forms and I helped him fill them in and he got a start.."*   [Parent]

Even where the careers office was known to have provided an application form for the opportunity which the young person had entered, the credit for success in getting the job or

Skillseekers place was still likely to be given to the young person or to those helping him rather than the careers office.

Perceptions of the careers service's post-school role

At each stage of contact we asked young people and their significant others to look ahead to their possible need for guidance and support, and to suggest how those needs might be met. Awareness of the continuing guidance function was much more limited than of the service's placement role. Few young people or their parents perceived that the careers service could be a source of guidance if they changed their plans, were unhappy in their current position or simply wanted to discuss their future careers direction. As one young woman said, "*It's not somewhere I'd think of going*".

But there was clearly a need for professional help. A number of parents expressed their anxiety about the current situation of their child and the limits of their ability to help. One mother, for example, while recognising that she was the person her daughter talked to most, felt she didn't know much about requirements for college:

> "*She discussed what she needed to get for the college but I haven't got much of a clue of what she'll have to do.*"   [Parent]

There was very little recognition indeed of the availability of adult careers guidance in the area. It was interesting to note that although a number of parents had made, or were considering, a major career change for themselves, none had used any formal guidance provision. Instead they saw family, friends and colleagues as their sources of career information and advice.

Information provision

Information provision has been a high priority for the service locally. It is clearly also a function that is expected of the careers service by clients and one that may be especially necessary in certain situations where, for example, in the case where the school's careers library is, in practical terms, not functioning. Some young people and parents commented that the information from the careers service had been helpful:

> "*The interview with the careers adviser in fourth year helped, it really broadened the information that I already had*"   [Young Person]

Several young people identified the need for careers advisers to extend and update their knowledge base, in particular by getting information directly from students on courses or those employed in an occupational area:

> "*It would help if they found people who've been on these courses and ask them questions. It might help them tell other people if it's the best thing for them*"   [Young Person]

A common theme was that the information received was not sufficiently customised to the young person, for example, it seemed to the young person to be the same as that given out following a previous interview or the same as friends had received. In a number of cases it appeared not to be sufficiently geared to the person's career development concerns or reflect the discussion accurately. Other issues included inappropriate information such as information packs with little information on Skillseekers but a lot on FE when FE was

definitely not an option or where vacancy information was sent although the client did not have the appropriate qualifications:

> *"The careers adviser sent information after the interview but it wasn't what I wanted ..I wanted things about the job I told him I wanted to do …the universities and colleges that done the courses and how to apply and things like that."*   [Young Person]

> *"They did send him through a few things and it was on building and one of them it was to let him know that the applications were coming out. He didn't even have the qualifications to apply for this position, so I wasn't too impressed."*   [Parent]

It was not uncommon for young people to remark that the careers adviser "*just told me things that I already knew*". It may be that the careers adviser felt there was a need to reinforce certain information but there does also seems to be an element of the careers adviser not checking what the client already knew and building from this base. There may be a need for careers advisers to check clients' information base in a more systematic way.

It was evident that young people had different preferences in terms of how they were given information, for example, verbally, in hard copy or on-line:

> *"He just gave me information in a booklet, I wanted him to tell me, not to read it myself. I just put the booklet aside."*   [Young Person]

This comment, and other similar ones, may relate to the different learning style or decision-making style of individual young people. The need for a more personal, individualised approach that takes account of the particular circumstances of a client is identified by Boreham and Arthur in their comprehensive review "The Information Requirements of Occupational Decision Making". They conclude that although occupational decision-makers need information about specific occupations, it is not sufficient to offer clients the information that from an external viewpoint they need in order to make a decision. If they are going to use it, the occupational information must be presented in a way that fits in with an individual's personal view of the world. This evidence also confirms the need to use guidance strategies to identify the person's view of the world.

Information giving and guidance

The relationship and balance between information and guidance emerged as a key issue from the study. For most of the young people in the study, the balance in their interview(s) with the careers adviser was described as heavily in favour of information-giving rather than guidance. Careers advisers have been trained not to be directive in their approach and information giving can be a way of trying to deal in a non directive way with a client's desire to be told what to do or told the best course or job. In a number of instances information-giving appeared to be divorced from guidance:

> *"It's a big decision to make and all you're really getting's information about that one [job] and that one. I know they're trying, they don't want to influence you too much. Just giving me more and more information. I've got loads of stuff at home, I've read it all but I'm still none the wiser about what I want to do. And I know they're trying to take a back seat and they've given me loads of information, but that's not what I'm wanting."*   [Young Person]

The experiences of our young people suggest that the aspects of guidance that relate to the use of information and the decision-making process tended to be overlooked. Young people and their parents suggested there was a need for careers advisers to go beyond simply

providing information and to consider how to help young people to assess the information in relation to themselves and their ideas and to support them in their decision making while leaving the decision to them.

It is evident that many of the young people in this study were not able to easily identify and articulate their guidance needs and were more likely to express them in terms of an information need, for example, "I need information on which course of electronic engineering would suit me". This is actually a guidance rather than an information question, needing a guidance response as well as specific information. Careers advisers appeared frequently to take this at face value and respond by giving or sending out information. This raises issues about the professional identification of need and not simply responding to the stated demands of clients. Client need is not always the same as client demand.

The vocational guidance interview

A few of the young people felt they had been moved on in their thinking about their career ideas or that it had made them think seriously for the first time about their future plans:

> *"She obviously listened to what he [the CA] was saying because she came home and discussed with her Dad the various things she could do that she hadn't really thought about before."* [Parent]

> *"It [the interview] made me look and definitely think about what I'm supposed to be doing because up to then I just thought 'I might want to go to uni but I don't know, I'll check another time, I didn't think it was a priority ….after coming out of there, I was thinking 'Right, I've got to get that done cos' if I don't it's going to blow up horribly in my face"* [Young Person]

For the majority of the young people in the study, however, their careers interview(s) appeared to have had a limited impact (see the note at the beginning of this chapter on how we defined "impact".). They were most likely to comment on the fact that they had got some information (although as noted above this was not always satisfactory) but few identified a wider value of their interview(s). The conduct of an effective careers interview requires a high level of skill from careers advisers. Among other demands, they need to help the young person explore their ideas and think widely without being perceived as intrusive or as trying to "put them off" their particular idea or as advocating a particular course of action. This becomes a more difficult task where young people and their parents have little awareness or understanding of the careers adviser's guidance role.

A variety of experiences reported to us suggest that careers advisers sometimes lacked the necessary skills:

> *"I was asking him about the sports development course and he goes ' eh, you train to develop people's sports skills' and that was that!"* [Young Person]

and

> *"But when I said 'No', he kept on asking why I didn't want to do it and I didn't have a reason, I just didn't want to do it but he kept saying' Why?"* [Young Person]

The second quote illustrates a common difficulty in interview: how might careers advisers "challenge" young people's thinking in an effective way? It also shows the need for attention

to language and style of questioning, including open questions that are constructive and focused rather than simply asking "why?"

Some young people had had interviews from several careers advisers and were able to make revealing comparisons. Such experiences highlight the need for the regular monitoring of careers advisers' professional practice and continuous staff development.

> *"Mr. A sits and explains it, Mr B disnae. He just goes on the computer and clicks about and then prints all this stuff out. He disnae listen. But he (Mr A) sits down and explains like where it is and what would be happening and what you would do and all that."* [Young Person]

Several young people and their parents commented that the careers adviser had broadened thinking :

> *"When he looked at my subjects and said that just looking at law, I could look at others. I hadn't really had the chance to look at other options."* [Young Person]

But there was also some indication from both young people and parents that careers advisers tended to focus in on expressed interests rather than being more exploratory and wide-ranging :

> *"They should give you sheets saying here's what you could do if you had these qualifications- here's 20 or 30 jobs- instead of 'what do you want to do? Building then? And then just giving three ways of doing it."* [Parent]

and

> *"I don't think they're very helpful, I don't think they did advise him. As I say, he'd always thought of engineering, so they just went along with that. He never ever came home and said 'they've mentioned woodwork or electrician."* [Parent]

Several parents pointed out that, as far as they were aware, the careers adviser had not discussed or followed up on an out-of-school interest of their child or identified common careers paths in the wider family network although both might well have been relevant to their child's careers plans. For example, the parent of a girl who played sport at an international level noted that this had not been identified and that careers in professional sport or in the leisure/sports sector had not been discussed.

We also observed an apparent reluctance on the part of careers advisers to identify and record the details of young people's informal networks. This is not untypical of many careers advisers in Scotland. Such reluctance stems from a feeling that these issues are too personal and are potentially sensitive. It also comes from a lack of understanding of the fact that issues in the situation of young people can be key to understanding their career related actions and decisions. A good example of this was one of our young people who limited his post-school choices because he took his care responsibilities for two disabled members of his family seriously. There was no evidence that either the school guidance system or the careers service were aware of or had discussed this issue which was critical to his career-related decisions and actions. We might add that it was clear from our interviews with the young man that he had no reluctance to disclose this information.

Our comparison of the careers service client records with our interview data for these young people identified a number of cases where relevant information or interests did not seem to have been picked up. Of course, we do not know whether the careers adviser had covered this but certainly there was no note of this in the client record. It is impossible to assess how

much of this is due to the level of guidance skills of the careers adviser, to the interview time available, to the young person's perception of the careers adviser role or to the quality of record keeping. Our interviews with the young people typically lasted an hour, a time which is longer than the standard careers guidance interview. Certainly some parents thought that if careers advisers spent more time with young people then they would be more likely to give effective guidance:

Parent: *"It may be that if they actually talked to the individual for maybe an hour or so about what they want to do, you know, and advise them in that way."*

Researcher: *"What would be better?"*

Parent: *"If they got to know the young persons, which they cannae do in that short space of time, they only go if they want information... they should do that if they don't know what they want to do or if they do know what they want to do they could give them advice as to how to go about it."*

and

   "She got lots of paperwork and binders but it wasn't personal and not a lot of time spent with her."   [Parent]

The time available for interviews is an issue but as we have noted, an undue amount of time in a careers interviews frequently appeared to be taken up in information giving rather than guidance. We have also noted that careers service provision was largely devoted to interviews with some introductory talks to classes or year groups. There seemed to be very little group work such as small group work on particular occupational areas. However, such group work with young people, based around a common interest, can be a time effective way of passing on information and freeing up interview time to focus on identifying and meeting guidance needs.

It may also be helpful to use different approaches in the interview to encourage a more exploratory approach and elicit a wider range of information from the young person. In the interviews that we conducted, we used several tools to aid our discussion, for example, a lifeline exercise to review careers development and asking the young person to make a visual representation of their network of influences on their career ideas. Doing this did not add much to the time needed but helped us to gather more information, in particular about the topics about which it can sometimes be more difficult to ask direct questions such as out-of-school activities and family matters. Another strategy would be to ask the young person to complete these tools in advance of the interview. Nevertheless, it is difficult to envisage a 30 minute interview being sufficient and that a longer interview of around 40-45 minutes is necessary to enable a more guidance oriented interview.

A substantial proportion of the young people had been given computer interest guides, usually Centigrade and/or Scotquest but few thought that they had been particularly helpful to them. Their comments suggest that there was limited discussion of the results with them and little use made of them as a guidance tool, for example, where the results were very different from that expected by the young person, exploring why this might be the case.

The post-school experience

Guidance post school

We noted earlier in this chapter that young people and their parents had limited awareness of the guidance function of the careers service. Nevertheless, some young people had continuing guidance needs but there was little evidence that these needs had been identified and responded to. One young man's contact with the careers service, for example, was confined to placing activity although he had left school prematurely which meant he needed to review his career plans.

Another example is where a mother identified a potential guidance need for her son when he suddenly changed his mind from a building to a paramedical career. She described sending him to the careers office since she felt there was a need to discuss this sudden change of plan and check that it was well-founded:

> *"It just came out of the blue, so I told him to go along to the careers adviser. He just gave him the phone number to ring for an application form. I could've done that myself, I could have told him about it and so could his sister and his aunts and his uncle (all in a similar paramedical field). I thought he would have got him to talk it over."* [Young Person]

The placing service

It seemed that if young people used the placing service, they were most likely to do so immediately on leaving school than at a later stage when they had already been in employment or had been in FE. It appears that once the direct link with the careers service (in the sense of a direct follow-on from their contact in school) had been broken they were less likely to think of using it. Whether or not they were inclined to use the careers service subsequently was influenced by their own experience of the careers adviser at school and also by the experience of elder brothers and sisters and friends. Similarly, parents were more likely to encourage their child to go into the careers office where they knew of someone who had had a positive outcome:

> *"I know a lot of kids through my friends. One daughter, she didn't know what to do and her mother gave her till August and took her down to the centre [Careers Centre] down the street, took her upstairs, asked for an interview and said, "We'll sit here till we get one. She needs a job." And they got her a job down at x and she works in an office now. She gets £40 from Skillseekers and she gets £70 from them. I mean, these things do happen. Maybe she's lucky, but it happens. Her birthday was two weeks ago and they gave her £100 in an envelope. I mean, that's encouraging."* [Parent]

A negative experience had the opposite effect, another parent did not think it worthwhile to encourage her daughter to use the careers service after the experience of her older son. He had not been given access to vacancies because he was judged by staff in the careers centre to be over-qualified for the available opportunities. He had then himself written round factories and got a job that did not require his level of qualifications but was what he wanted at that point.

This example raises a basic issue about the placement service, that is, who is in control of access to vacancies? We have found from national research on the Scottish Careers Services that systems vary across careers services (and sometimes within careers services) with three broad possible approaches: an open display system where the decision to apply is left up to

the client: careers service staff select candidates on the basis of the careers advisers' recommendations: a mixture of open access and pre-selection (Howieson and Semple, 2001).

If a placing system matches clients to vacancies according to the recorded recommendation of the appropriate areas of work, then it is critical that the recommendations are accurate and kept up to date. Our review of client records revealed some differences between the type of work several young people thought they were registered for and that which was noted in their client record.

Several young people's post school contact with the careers service was experienced as impersonal and lacking in continuity of contact as one young man's experience illustrates:

Young man: *"When I go into the Careers Office sometimes, I don't really, like, speak to them, I just really have a look at the, there's a coupla bulletin boards with a list of stuff, so I just look at that really."*

Researcher: *"So you don't have a particular person looking after you when you go in?"*

Young man: *"No, it's a coupla different folk I've had. I've only spoke to three folk and it's been different folk I've had. I got confused there."*

We might add that not all of his visits were (or could be) recorded in his client file, only those that resulted in placing action appear to have been noted or that involved direct contact with staff.

These young people also reported being called into the careers office to go over information that could have been checked on the telephone - a real issue when the journey cost them money that they could ill afford to pay out on bus fares.

Continuing contact?

Where the young person had been successfully placed in an opportunity, the youngster and their parents were generally satisfied with the careers service's role in this. Young people submitted on to mainstream Skillseeker places had no expectations of continuing contact from the careers service and this indeed is general careers service policy. (Practice across Scotland in terms of the support given to young people with Special Training Needs has varied considerably. With the introduction of the new STN support model from April 2002, support for STN young people should become more consistent and developed.)

The evidence from this study suggests that there might be considerable value in some level of contact and support with young people in mainstream provision, especially in their first opportunity. To take one example, STN endorsement had been considered for a member of our group, but he was initially submitted to a mainstream opportunity prior to STN submission. He was successfully placed, but although he did complete the appropriate SVQ, the mainstream provider was not able to provide the necessary support and outstanding issues to do with confidence, personal development and basic skills were not addressed. He remains unemployed following the end of the Skillseekers programme. His father commented that:

"He was just sort of placed there [by Skillseekers provider] and any support he got just came from the people he worked with."   [Young Person]

The issue of the need for continuing contact and support post-school is one that has emerged strongly from this study. Not only were young people in the labour market in need of support, we also found examples of young people dropping out of FE and HE provision, with limited or ineffective involvement from the formal guidance services of the institution. (We should also note that there were examples where the system in FE was successful in supporting the young person.) As we described in chapter two, by the end of the research over a third of our group were still having difficulty sorting out their career direction. Where we were able to view the destination statistics, two fifths were in a post school opportunity that was different from that recorded in the CSC first destinations statistics or from that which was the subject of CSC guidance.

The complexity and change in young people's career pathways has now been well documented in a variety of research. All of this suggests a strong need for more attention to post school contact. It would be helpful, for example, to extend the current system of collecting first destination statistics to track young people beyond their initial destination, for perhaps up to two years after leaving school. In the past careers services operated "a review of progress" but the practice was discontinued. However, this sort of activity is needed more than ever given the pattern of post-school transitions.

Young people could be offered a transition review, perhaps one year after leaving school. In theory, this sort of review is available to young people in that they can call into the careers office at any time after leaving school but as we have noted, there was very little awareness of the careers service's post school guidance function. A transition review would need to be offered proactively to young people and more attention given to effective publicity for the post school role of the careers service.

We found that several young people in our study who were not technically unemployed still wanted to be notified of vacancies for example, two were working with family members as a fall-back option but were unhappy with this:

> *"I'm not really too keen on it, we don't see eye to eye, it's no really my thing, but. I suppose it's not bad money."*   [Young Person]

It appeared that since these young people were not unemployed, the careers office no longer contacted them with vacancy information. We might add that in one case, the young woman concerned still thought she was on some sort of vacancy register with the careers office.

Researcher: *"So are you still registered with them, even though you're working with (family member)? Do they know that you're still looking for something – the careers office?"*
Young woman: *"Aye, I'm still down."*

Our review of this client's record showed her to have been removed from the register for failing to sign on.

It has been many years since an effective "betterment service" operated in most careers services, but there appears to be a need for such a service to be available, and to be offered proactively to young people.

CHAPTER 5
INFORMAL NETWORKS OF CAREER SUPPORT

Introduction and background

One of the most striking features of this research was the powerful impact that families, and especially parents, had on career development. The informal network of careers advice and information (including family, friends, neighbours and school staff without a formal responsibility for guidance) has been described as providing "the background music" against which the information and advice of careers advisers and guidance teachers (the formal network) is heard. For the great majority of the young people who took part in this study, the "background music" was very loud and highly significant.

Research on the role of parents

We start this chapter with a discussion of the role of parents since for the first interview with the "significant other" in career development, 35 out of 36 young people identified one or more parents in that role. Research over the years from the UK and North America (and to a certain extent from the rest of Europe, also) identifies a range of influences from parents. The evidence shows that parents are influential:

- in decisions and actions about post-school choices;
- in decisions and actions about staying on at or leaving school;
- in whether young people enter higher education or not;
- about values in working life;
- about aspiration levels;
- about motivation levels;
- in being able to intervene to link their children to local jobs and other opportunities including educational provision.

This research found evidence of each of these types of influence in the experiences of the young people in this study. We also found that to a large extent, young people's views of the opportunity structure (by which we mean the way in which the labour market and educational and training provision operate) were formed by parents and other influences from the informal network. In contrast, the impact of formal networks on young people's understanding of the opportunity structure was minimal.

The research literature also suggests that links between parents and the formal networks of careers guidance are very limited, and that the influence of parents and others in the informal networks are rarely incorporated effectively in the design and delivery of careers education and guidance provision. We discuss this later in the chapter but would comment at this point that this research leads us to concur with these earlier findings.

We now go on to describe and discuss informal networks of career support as seen in the experiences and accounts of our young people and their "significant others".

The nature of the informal network of career support

The informal network of career support proved to be very broad, encompassing the extended family (including the "step" variety). It included aunts, uncles, cousins, godparents and grandparents in addition to immediate family members such as older and younger siblings and, of course, parents. Also potentially influential was the friendship group, and in particular the "best pal" or close friends. Those loosely attached to the family, such as family friends or neighbours, or colleagues of family members were also part of the informal network. As young people came into contact with other experiences, some aspects of the informal network changed. Sports coaches, subject teachers (usually of a favourite subject), work supervisors and colleagues, fellow FE and HE students moved in and out of the network. Lastly, TV and the media had an impact on many young people's career thinking, particularly at a younger age.

An analysis of various data from this study suggests there might be three ways in which the influence of the informal network could be categorised.

The first category is that of **planned, explicit interventions** where those concerned actually intended to provide help and advice in career development. Most planned, explicit interventions were driven by parents. The second category of impact is that of **implicit assumptions** (usually from the family) whereby values, expectations and assumptions were shared without being clearly articulated. The third category of impact is that of **unplanned influence** where young people came into unplanned contact with other experiences or situations which nevertheless had results on career thinking. We now provide some examples of ways in which the informal network operated under each category.

Planned, explicit interventions

Interventions with schools

Some interventions which had important repercussions for career were with respect to school provision, which was only realistically negotiable by the parent/carer. These included:

- parents insisting that the young person was moved from Foundation to General Maths in Standard Grade, a course of action which proved critical when applying for nursing;

- parents seeking to negotiate (unsuccessfully) a continuation of learning support from primary into secondary;

- parents asking the school to give early warning of problems with subjects which were key for the chosen career direction of their child.

These parents were proactive (though not always successful) in speaking on behalf of their children. However, the lack of such interventions could also be critical and we found instances of this. For one young man, his decision to leave school was only taken because he had been allocated to Intermediate 2 rather than Higher level study in his favourite subject which was essential for his career, (he had achieved a "2" at Standard Grade). Although very unhappy at the way he had been treated, his parents felt that their son was being pushed to leave school and that he should not stay where he was not welcome. As a result they did not intervene, nor did the young man himself challenge his school. But it became clear over the period of the research that this was a highly significant episode: it had forced him to make a last minute application for the FE course that he had been planning to enter after S5. This was

unsuccessful and he lost confidence in his intended career direction and in himself. By the end of the research, 2 years after leaving, he was still working temporarily for a family member and described his career direction as "*I have no idea what I want to do*"

Encouragement and motivation

Some parents had an impact by insisting that their children worked hard at school or stayed on at school because qualifications were important, or studied in their HE course:

> "*I think there's a big thing to get out and earn, especially if a friend's left and doing that and what they don't realise is there's not the opportunities there to earn. You know, it's meaningless jobs, I think, at that age (ie 16). You really need the qualifications, that's what we kept saying to her all the time.*"   [Parent]

> "*We were anxious that he was slow at first in his (professional paramedical) course, he just got passes at first and we had to encourage and push him – we were nag, nag, nagging at him, but then he got a B1, so that was fine.*"   [Parent]

Sometimes parents' efforts at motivation were directed at encouraging the young person to develop work discipline, get experience of earning a living and take responsibility for contributing to the family income:

> "*I say to her repeatedly, if she's, 'Oh, no, I don't want to go to school today!' 'Well, away and scrub the floor, then, cos that's the job you're going to get when you leave!' She says, 'No, I'm going on holiday, I'll be on holiday for eight weeks' (during the school summer holidays) and I've thought, 'I'm sure you're no, you'll be going to look for a job.*"   [Parent]

Parents were particularly important in making young people proactive in seeking jobs (part-time or full-time) and courses:

> "*Jobs'll no come to you, you'll have to go and get them. Away down to the supermarket and see if they're looking for someone.*"   [Parent]

Raising Aspirations

A very common approach was to say "*don't do what I did*". A number of parents regretted that they had not taken the advantage of certain opportunities when they had been of a similar age and wanted their child to do better:

> "*He's to go out and do what he has to, 'cos I didn't take the opportunities and you want more for your family than what you've had.*" [Father of young man now in last half of training as a motor vehicle technician]

Another example is the mother who had clear views about what she wanted for her daughter and was therefore encouraging her as much as possible:

> "*I don't want her to be dependent on any man!*"   [Parent]

The following quotes from a young person and her mother show that the mother's views had been forcibly expressed and clearly understood by the young person:

> "*She says she'll back me up, told me to finish my qualifications and then get more qualifications…. She works in a factory and says 'You work in a factory and I'll never speak to you again'.*"   [Young Person]

> "*I feel as though I'm the bad example, I'm the example of what not to do, I don't think there's anything wrong with working in a factory but I would rather she didn't. I tell her, if she doesn't go to school, she'll end up scrubbing floors, or that type of job.*"   [Parent]

However, this young woman's situation is also an example of how parental aspiration, if not securely founded on an understanding of levels of entry, can potentially confuse the situation. She was thought by her school to have some potential for higher education and sat three Highers, all of which she failed. Her early aspirations were for social science degrees (*"the Navy, if nothing else works"*) followed by social sciences or graphic design while in S5. The final contact showed her to be unemployed, helping out at home, and registered at the Job Centre for bar, shop or factory work.

> *"She's settled for factory work or shop work or something like that. (Her brother's) settled for a brickie. Everything we didnae want them to do! I'd like tae see her doing something better than being unemployed and I'd rather she had a decent job, no in a factory, but they were well warned....I always told them to be a doctor or a lawyer, but, no, they didnae listen.."* [Parent]

The young woman did not disagree with her mother's view but said:

> *"It's just no for us, but it would have been good to be something like that.."* [Young Person]

While several parents had had high, and unrealistic, aspirations for their children other parents had different concerns. The mother of a young man who had left school with three Highers and has recently started an HN course in computing, having completed the NC in the previous year at a local college, was concerned about too much pressure on young people:

> *"A lot of them set their sights very high and then if they don't get the grades, they're very disappointed.... Sometimes I think you're better not to set your sights too high because a lot of them, they get into depressions. They should be happy, you know, you hear a young' un's maybe taken their own lives, I wouldn't like to think I'm pushing my family... you can't give any more than what you've got to give."* [Young Person]

Practical assistance

Parents were playing a key role in helping with travel expenses, supporting the costs of FE and HE courses and helping with budgeting in the early stages of jobs and courses. Parents who wished their children to stay on beyond S4 were aware that there could be a motivation to leave school early for a wage, and they were often joined by grandparents, aunts and uncles in providing increased pocket money over this period;

> *"I think there's a big thing to get out and earn, specially if a friend's left and doing that, one of the things we had to do was to make sure (daughter's name) had enough money so that if her friends (ie that had left school and were working) wanted to go on holiday or something like that, she would be able to do that too. Otherwise money gets to be too big an influence. That's what happened to me."* [Parent]

Members of the informal network of career support explicitly intervened to give a range of practical help with respect to opportunity search. This included:

- parents and other family members completed, or helped to complete, application forms for jobs, Skillseekers training places and college courses;

- parents and other family members phoned or called in to get prospectuses and application details, to get information packs on education and training opportunities and to negotiate application time-scales;

- parents, family members, neighbours and family friends fixed up part-time jobs or work experience for young people.

In some cases, parents "checked out" the possible opportunity for their children, and followed up the application through indirect means:

"The job? It was advertised in the local paper. I noticed it for her and I says to her would she be interested? So we applied for an application form and since I had made enquiries from people that I know that worked in [name of company] and I knew it was very high demand that had applied for it. So I sort of said to her, 'Don't worry too much if you don't get started, it is your first interview' sort of thing. Seemingly from what I have heard she sailed right through it and she was the top of the list to get started to be asked. So I was quite chuffed for her." [Parent]

Use of contacts within the informal network

Where families had contacts in areas of work that the young person was considering as a career choice, these were drawn in to advise on what specific occupations were like. For example, one young man's parents had acquaintances working in accountancy and in optometry. In fact, he dated his interest in optometry from when his mother first began to work as a dispensing optician:

"The initial push towards optometry hadn't crossed my mind until she started work there." [Young Person]

His interest in accountancy was stimulated by contact with a family friend (in whose firm he was subsequently able to do work experience, a company which did not normally offer this to school pupils). His parents facilitated the contacts for him:

"I asked him about the job (accountancy), what's it like and is it worth going down that (route) because there's a lot of folk do it." [Young Person]

He also spoke to two opticians at his Mum's work.

"I was lucky cos I knew lots of people." [Young Person]

This raises a broader issue about what happens to young people whose families do not have these contacts. A second issue is that of the limiting effect of the informal network. On the one hand, it is capable of providing detailed information on specific careers that are within its compass. On the other hand, as can be seen in the experience of the young man outlined above (who in practice only gave serious consideration to these two occupational areas) it cannot provide the breadth of choice, and it may present a partial and personally-skewed view of the satisfactions and difficulties of different career areas. We return to these issues later in the chapter.

It was evident that where parents or other family members were "in the same business", they were able to provide increased support at the time of transition into a job or course to their children. This included: talking over upsetting incidents at work in the realisation of a shared ethical approach to confidentially; explaining what could reasonably be expected at different stages of training; and putting into perspective any relationship difficulties. One good example of this was the mother who, along with a number of members of the family, was employed in a similar professional paramedical role as the young man in our study:

"One of his placements, he came back and said, 'I'm no learning anything here, I'm just getting treated like a skivvy, I'm supposed to be getting trained.' We just said to him that that was what it was like sometimes, and just to stick it out for the 4 weeks and if it wasn't better in the next one, then he could make a fuss about it. Actually, I knew the people he was dealing with, and I knew fine there would be problems (in that placement) so it was best just to make

him stick it out. I suppose another parent might say 'You shouldn't be getting treated like that, just chuck it! Or go and complain' but I knew it was only a temporary thing."

<div align="right">[Parent]</div>

This is not the kind of help that most parents can give, and it illustrates the importance of young people having support over the period of learning and training from somewhere in their support network, whether the formal or informal one.

Involvement in the guidance process

We also saw examples of parents seeking to be involved in the guidance process, for example one young person's mother went with her to a guidance interview at FE college just after she had dropped out of a NC course. Another father handed in his daughter's application forms for Skillseekers at the careers office and took the opportunity to check out what was happening (something his daughter had specifically not wished either of her parents to do).

Members of the informal network reacted to ideas suggested by young people and by others:

"My Mum told me she didn't think I'd like that type of work." [Young Person]

"We tried to put her off catering, she hadn't really thought about the hours." [Parent]

The mother of another young woman had discouraged the armed services.

"I talked her out of it, I told her, You'll no last in that, you'll no want tae dae that." [Parent]

'The informal network regularly suggested possible career ideas, often based around a particular interest or strength in a school subject. One young man's mother, for example, had brought forward ideas connected with an early ability in maths (accounting or banking) and different aspects of art-related work (going to college or screen-printing). She also suggested occupations in which other members of the extended family were employed for consideration. Her exasperation and helplessness by the stage of the final contact were clear:

"I'll say – "what about the police?" – "no" – "motor mechanic?" – "no" – "the airport?" – "no" – he doesn't give any ideas!" [Parent]

Her son was equally troubled and puzzled by his inability to sort out a sense of direction.

In addition to suggesting occupational ideas, members of the informal network suggested college courses by, for example, looking through prospectuses together and discussing possible courses.

Implicit assumptions

Implicit assumptions were, inevitably, more difficult to identify as they were by definition rarely expressed.

Shared perceptions of the opportunity structure

We did identify instances where perceptions of the opportunity structure were shared, for example, where both parent and young person responded in a similar way to a challenge:

Researcher*:* *"So you've decided on FE college? Had you ever thought about the different ways of training, such as Skillseekers?"*

Young person: *"Oh no, I've never wanted to do that, never thought about it, it wouldn't be for me."*

A similar question to her mother received the response:

> *"Well, we've never talked about it, she's never mentioned it, she probably knows that there's no way we'd let her go on one of these things."*   [Young Person]

Another example is a very able school leaver who was currently in the first year of a business-related degree.

> *"I don't know, I've just never thought of doing anything but go to university."*
>   [Young Person]

> *"Ever since she's been wee, the whole family has kind of expected she would go to university, and there's never been anything to make us think otherwise."*   [Parents]

It was only by using questions which challenged the statements which young people and their parents made were the researchers able to identify the implicit assumptions that were driving and sometimes limiting choice. This highlights the importance of challenge as part of the careers guidance process but which is a much under-used skill as confirmed by a range of research evidence.

Shared work values

Another way in which assumptions were passed on implicitly was through shared values about work. We asked both young people and their significant other to rate in order of importance a set of work values. The sharing of work values was sometimes deliberately done, but more commonly appeared to be unintentional and casual. Many families were heavily involved in support of their children's career development but would commonly state that they were leaving the choice to the young person. There is no contradiction in this, but it was clear that some of the parameters on young people's choices had resulted from family influence. Comparison of interviews between parent and child showed many cases in which key work values were shared, and others where clear links could be seen. In a number of cases both parent and child used virtually the same words to illustrate or define a key work or education value.

The evidence on work values from this research is very complex, but a working hypothesis might be that where values are already shared, parents of older teenagers have less need to explicitly motivate and encourage aspiration: these values have been assimilated by the child at a younger age:

> *"We'd no need to persuade them because what they've been thinking about doing has fell in line with what we'd like them to do anyway."*   [Parent]

There was a high degree of concordance in key stated values between this parent and her son so that there was therefore no need for the parents to intervene further, other than to support his investigations of his two possible career options.

In response to a challenge by the interviewer about how she would react if her son decided on a different path, his mother's response shows how strong these assumptions are:

> *"We've always stressed to them that we would like them to go on to take the best of the opportunities that are there. If he said, 'I don't want to go on now (ie leave school)', I don't know how I'd cope with that, I really don't."*   [Parent]

The implicit assumptions that often drive career decision making and that may limit career choice often come from the informal network of career support; they are factors that clearly need investigated as part of an effective careers guidance process.

Unplanned influence

The media

Much of the informal network's influence on career development came without conscious intent, through proximity to experiences of a variety of kinds. At early stages of career thinking, the media, especially TV, stimulated ideas about jobs. Examples included psychology (eg Cracker), forensics, the fire service and hospital services. Other parts of the media such as newspapers had impacted on career thinking, but in a different way. While TV encouraged what might be called glamour ideas, newspapers helped to build a picture of the opportunity structure through articles on local companies and developments, and more importantly through the vacancy columns which gave young people and their parents an impression of what would be available.

The experiences of families and friends

Young people absorbed values from the experiences of their parents and families. This could include a parent's experience of redundancy or of re-training or a parent's stories of the workplace from the perspective of a shop steward. Some young people had helped out at a parent's place of work, and this had encouraged initial career ideas (for example, helping with outings of elderly people in care first started to form one young person's picture of himself in a caring role).

Young people had absorbed aspects of others' conversation and applied it to their experience, often without examination – *"He says it's a good job"*. One young person had become interested in the navy because of a cousin's comments:

> *"I was into the navy because it's like one of the emergency services so if nothing else works, fall back on the navy cos you can get into it."*   [Young Person]

She also recounted a tale of another cousin with a different experience when discussing whether she had considered different routes post-school:

> *"My uncle was telling me that my big cousin that was at uni, it was awfy hard to keep him there cos of a the pressures he's been under fae course work and then fae the job he was still in."*   [Young Person]

Another young person who subsequently dropped out of HE after two months had previously referred to a cousin's experience:

> *"He was doing accounting at college, and he made me start thinking about it. But he's dropped out, didn't like it, too long a course."*   [Young Person]

The most striking aspect of statements like these is that, when the researcher tried to open these out for discussion it became clear that they had been absorbed without examination into the young person's thinking, almost by what might be called a process of mental osmosis. And yet some of these statements were key drivers of young people's career-related decision making and actions.

Boyfriends and girlfriends had considerable influence, as did close friendship groups. The most notable effect related to whether aspirations were shared or not. Where a boyfriend or girlfriend was not motivated to school study or to post-school education or training, it was difficult for a young person not to be drawn along in the first flush of a developing personal relationship.

Friends might make comments on choices such as *"Officey things? You could do better than that"*. For other young people there was considerable discussion of options:

> *"We always talk to each other and listen to each other's ideas, we share stuff, like information."* [Young Person]

The school or careers service was more significant in forming a picture of routes and opportunities for only a small number of young people in our group. As the research progressed, it became clear that young people were gaining their view of the opportunity structure primarily from the informal network:

> *"My friend's big sister did Skillseekers and she didn't have any qualifications and she thought it was good."* [Young Person]

> *"Someone that works beside my mum, she had done a degree in art and couldn't get a job."* [Young Person]

> *"There's all these people who have been to uni and are working in McDonalds."* [Young Person]

> *"Down this way I would imagine that the biggest majority (of school leavers) are all going to leave school in the summer and they are no going to get a job and I think it is really sad for young ones and if they leave school with no job they have got nothing to look forward to. And the longer you are without employment the harder it is to get in on that one."* [Parent]

We could produce many examples of this type of statement. As we noted in chapter three, young people value "hot information" from those who can be seen to have recent, "real" experience. We would repeat the point made in chapter three that there is a need for the formal providers of careers education and guidance to make use of these sources of "hot" information.

The impact of part-time work

A very powerful experience in forming a picture of work and of what a young person could cope with and enjoy came in part-time work. Almost all of the young people in our group had had some part-time work before or shortly after leaving school. For some it had a generally educative effect in moving the young person into an adult environment and broadening the range of people that he/she had come into contact with. This could lead to greater maturity which in turn helped with a more realistic career decision, as described by this mother:

> *"He sees a lot of different sides and is becoming more aware that life outwith our circle can be entirely different."* [Young Person]

Another young person noted a similar experience in his initial period in a care situation prior to entering HE;

> *"It really hits you hard, because it is people that are from like deprived areas not too far from here, and I actually met someone that I knew as well."* [Young Person]

This had the effect of confirming his career intention.

Others had developed confidence, discovered skills, found they could handle responsibility, came into contact with a different range of jobs, heard about courses, made contacts that led to work and developed budgeting skills from part-time work.

What the informal network of career support can and cannot do

We have noted the extensive range of interventions and influences from the informal network of career support, but how helpful and appropriate were these interventions for our young people? For the majority, it could be said that the young people would not be in their current positive situation without the support of their informal network.

However, we could identify a number of young people whose informal network, in our view, was unhelpful or ineffective in their support for young people. One example is where a mother's attempt to set her children high goals had been completely unrealistic and unattainable (law and medicine) and may have contributed to her daughter's inability to develop more realistic alternative ideas. Another example is the young man who had struggled at school but was proud of the skills he had achieved in a vocational area. He had ambitions which were realisable, but was being encouraged by his father to aspire to work for which a degree would be required. By the end of the research, his father was still trying to persuade his son to college and continued to blame the school for his academic failure.

We could also look at the situation of some young people from another perspective. For two young men, their families had given what at one level might be seen as powerful support. In the first case, the young man had been greatly supported in his entry to, and progress in, a professional paramedical career. The second young man had received much practical help: his parents had arranged for him to speak to family friends and contacts about the two career areas he was considering but neither he nor his parents saw any need to look beyond the two presenting career ideas. In both examples, the young men had not been encouraged to explore beyond the informal network for a possible career direction. The informal network of career support can often be limiting in the range of opportunities it can present, and it is often unaware of the need to broaden perspectives. In the case of the second young man referred to, his situation also highlights another issue. His father, in discussing possible bias in the advice given to young people by guidance teachers, said:

> *"I'd rather see **independent** people sitting with them advising them on their career. That's why when [names son] was thinking about optometry, we got one of our friends to have a chat."*   [Parent]

He does not consider that a family friend's advice and experience may be at best partial and at worst biased. In fact, there was generally a lack of recognition of the importance of impartiality in careers advice. Advice from the informal network was valued precisely because it could be directive and could give some direction to a young person struggling with career planning. Members of the informal network often had no compunction about directive guidance such as *"that would never suit you"* or *"it's a really good job, you would like it!"*, and this was accepted because of the relationship with the young person or the family. The formal network, on the other hand, often will refuse to give an opinion, an approach that can be seen as unhelpful by a confused client. Where this refusal to be directive is accompanied only by more career information, and not by the use of guidance strategies to help decision-making, the client can feel let down.

As noted above, over a third of our young people were still having difficulty in sorting out a career direction some months or years after leaving school. Some of these young people had assessed themselves as uncertain at the beginning of the research and remained undecided across the period. But it was just as common for young people to have thought they were clear about their career direction only for this to become less focused as they hit difficulties in their post-school transitions. We found that those identified as significant others (for 35 out of 36 at the beginning this was one or more parent) tended to make a similar assessment of stage of career development as did the young person.

As the research progressed, we were able to observe some aspects of the changing relationship between parents and their children with respect to career development. Prior to them leaving school and during the time immediately afterwards, parents passed on as much of their understanding and experience as possible. After this, the parents of those young people who appeared to have made a successful transition were mostly content to withdraw in the either in the hope that their children would ask them for help or because they were confident of the support and supervision in the workplace, college or university. The situation was different, however, for those parents whose sons and daughters had problems in their career transition. By this point, these parents felt they had reached the limits of what they could do. Several young people felt they had let their parents down or were puzzled themselves about what had happened. The comment by the mother of one young person articulates the difficulties faced by some parents whose children were confused in career direction:

> *"If he'd just come and say, 'I think ah want tae be a such and such' I'd rush away and find out about it for him. But he's just no idea, no idea at all! An I don't know what I can do to help him."* [Parent]

Informal networks of career support are relatively helpless in the face of career uncertainty such as this. It is at this point that professional help is needed, but neither this young man nor his mother had any picture of where this might be found. We have already noted that our young people and their significant others had little perception of a post-school role for the careers service or of any adult guidance service. It is clear that parents (and others in the informal network) need a clear explanation of the transition support available in careers guidance.

Variation in the resources of young people's informal network of career support

It was clear that some of our young people's informal networks of support appeared to be better equipped to help than were others. Some parents and families understood education, training and occupational systems better than others; some were more confident about intervening than others; and some families had their own internal difficulties such that they were limited in what they could do for their teenagers. Obvious examples of a lack of resources can be seen where a young person is the first person in the informal network to seek to enter a particular route (eg to university) and where families are not confident about seeking and using formal advice sources and so are likely to be less effective in their support.

What is the role of the formal agencies in this situation? We noted in Chapter 1 that there is good research evidence that the Careers Service can be particularly helpful in certain

situations where the young person lacks effective help from the informal careers support network We also know from work done with young people in the context of criminal justice issues that a key indicator of whether young people facing difficulties in their lives will offend or not is the strength of their support network. If two young people face similar difficulties, then the one who has at least one strong support relationship (no matter from where) will be much less likely to offend than the one whose support network is weak or non-existent. From the evidence of the young people in this study (none of whom were involved in offending behaviour), a strong informal network was no guarantee that young people might not encounter difficulties in making a smooth transition. However, we did observe that, where the network was weak, this appeared to have negative consequences. One of our young people was unable to identify any individual who was supportive to him in any way, including career support. It was clear that his confidence and motivation to study had deteriorated, and we would assess him as in some danger of dropping out.

We would suggest that the careers service needs to assess the strengths and limitations in an individual's network. This would allow negotiation of the role which the careers adviser and the service generally might play in order to support each client's career-related decision-making and actions, taking into account the other resources that they have at their disposal. As recommended in the National Review of Assessment (Semple et al forthcoming), the identification and monitoring of the career support network might well identify individuals at risk of not making an effective transition. These young people could then be provided with increased and early support as part of the inclusiveness strategy. In fact, some of our parents suggested that a personal support role might be necessary from the careers adviser for young people experiencing transition difficulties.

Taking account of the informal networks of career support

The impact that parents and other members of the informal network have on young people is immense: they influence aspirations and motivation; affect knowledge of educational and occupational opportunities; influence values about post-school choices; and provide practical, moral and financial support that allows their children to implement action plans. This puts the influence of the informal network of career support at the heart of careers guidance processes. Members of the informal network are in a powerful position to reinforce, complement or negate the work of careers guidance professionals. It is therefore essential that formal networks work alongside informal networks to support young people's transitions.

Not only must the system of delivery of careers guidance be seen as a partnership between formal and informal networks, it is also essential that individual careers guidance seeks to identify the influence of the informal network on each client. It is common for careers advisers to view adult careers guidance as more complicated and demanding because it is obvious that adults bring work and life experience to their careers guidance interviews. In contrast, it is sometimes suggested, careers guidance with young people, especially school pupils, may be considered less complicated because of what is perceived to be limited life experience. But young people bring the accumulated life and work experience of their parents and families to careers guidance, and it is essential that these experiences are examined and incorporated in a structured way as part of careers guidance processes.

CHAPTER 6
IDENTIFICATION OF NEED AND MODELS OF CAREERS DECISION-MAKING

Introduction

In this chapter we consider the identification of young people's career guidance needs, a professional task which is fundamental to the provision of effective careers education and guidance. The identification of careers guidance needs encompasses: an assessment of young people's stage of career development; the identification of their approach to career decision making and of the range of influences driving their thinking; an assessment of their career skills, knowledge and understanding; and identification and negotiation of appropriate strategies and activities to help move them forward in their career thinking.

The extent to which careers guidance needs were identified by school and Careers Service staff

We referred to Careers Service records to try to assess the extent to which stages of career development and careers guidance needs were identified as part of the guidance processes of the school and the Careers Service. Client records in all three offices commonly held a school report (completed in S4); one or more screening forms (depending on how long the young person had stayed at school); and a Career Plan of Action if the young person had had a careers guidance interview, and most had. The Careers Service screening forms, completed as young people entered S4, S5 and S6, were one of the main approaches to identifying need. The S4 form was different from the S5/6 one in some respects (and one office had experimented with its own S5 form), but generally they covered:

- school subjects;
- school leaving intentions;
- health;
- career ideas;
- possible routes;
- whether family discussions had taken place (and what advice was given); and
- whether the young person wished an interview now or in the future or required information now (and if so about what).

School reports generally covered the following factors:

- young people's academic potential (or more precisely the level at which they might be able to enter post-school education or training, as assessed from their school performance);
- a particularly strong interest (such as music, art, sport – though usually without any great detail);
- personal and social factors, such as interpersonal skills, level of confidence;
- timekeeping and attendance;
- if a young person had been on work experience, where this had been;

- health (though this did not necessarily record issues that young people identified on screening forms as relevant to career choice);

- stated career idea.

In two of the three offices, notes of careers guidance interviews were completed and staff thought these would be an accurate record of the discussion and of careers guidance given. In the third office, interview notes were not completed as staff thought that the Career Plan of Action on its own accurately reflected the guidance content of the interview. We also accessed the computer system which complements and takes over from the manual records (and is particularly relevant for post-school contacts).

From the records held by the Careers Service we concluded that there was only limited evidence that issues identified by the school report had been considered as part of the careers guidance process. The main exception was that careers advisers made considerable use of the school's predictions of academic level and of possible level of entry into post-school education or training.

The research team identified careers guidance needs for each young person at each point in the study. We used a variety of strategies to help us discuss and identify each young person's stage of career development and their resulting career guidance needs (details of the strategies are given in Chapter 2).

We did not directly ask our young people and their significant others to identify "careers guidance needs": instead we asked questions such as " so what help do you think you (or your child) needs with your (or their) career at the moment/ in the future?" We then used our professional judgement (as trained careers advisers) to analyse the data in order to identify and assess the careers guidance needs of each young person at each stage. Our analysis of the careers guidance needs of young people showed a considerable range – different young people at different times needed to:

- examine their attitudes, expectations and perceptions about continuing education in FE and HE compared with the school experience;

- deepen their understanding of a specific career area;

- consider how accurate a picture work experience gives of particular occupations;

- broaden their career ideas beyond those visible within the family;

- extend their career ideas beyond those linked to a particular school subject;

- recognise that their current approaches to career-related decisions and actions were reactive and recognise the need to change to more proactive ones;

- recognise their underpinning thinking with regard to how career choices are made;

- understand the role of information in career decision-making;

- develop skills in the use and assessment of information from their informal networks;

- disentangle their personal expectations and values from that of their family;

- receive extra explanation and encouragement as the first member of the family to plan a university application;

- understand the sequence, timing and selection mechanisms of college applications;

- understand the work-based training route, especially Modern Apprenticeships.

We found that few of these individual needs were noted in the careers service records that we reviewed. We recognise that we had a greater amount of time with young people, the time allowed for vocational guidance interviews is an issue that we have already commented on in chapter 4 and we return to it in the next chapter. We used a broader range of strategies to identify young people's needs than is commonly used in the careers service. Nevertheless, there is no reason why a similar range of strategies could not be available for use as part of careers guidance interviews.

It is clear that the identification of these needs on an individual basis has implications for the content of each client's careers guidance interview and for the strategies agreed in a Career Plan of Action. Individual young people may well be encouraged to tackle career development through more effective use of subsequent career education or of their own personal support network. However, many of these needs identified in our work with young people clearly require to be addressed both by career education programmes in school in addition to more personally focused careers guidance strategies. A working definition of the relationship between the two is that career education provides the general context while careers guidance helps the individual apply the general context to personal decision-making. Our brief list above (only a selection from those identified) shows the potential of a careers guidance interview to identify more general needs that a career education programme can address. It also shows the need for effective career education as the basis for individuals to make the best use of careers guidance.

Effective careers provision can only be delivered when it is securely founded on accurate and systematic identification of client need. In making this statement we are drawing on three years of research on the effectiveness of the careers service in Scotland conducted for the Scottish Executive as well as the evidence from this study. If accurate and systematic identification of careers guidance needs requires a change in the way resources are allocated, or different strategies to be adopted, then it is important that this is recognised and taken forward.

Models of careers decision-making

Lack of awareness of models of decision-making

We found that young people and their parents had little understanding of philosophies or approaches that might underpin career decision making and support career development. Some expected to find their career direction by serendipity *"I'll maybe see something on the TV, something that'll catch my eye – not college…"*, others saw themselves asking around friends and family. Many tried to match their school interests and subjects to the range of jobs with which they came into contact, while others took as their basis a strong personal interest. Others again recognised the limitations of their own environment *"there's not many jobs for school leavers around here"* but this was a partial view in several respects because they lacked sufficient understanding of the opportunity structure. Examples of the limitations of their view included: lack of understanding of post FE and post HE entry points to the labour market; an inaccurate picture of the Travel To Work area; and a lack of understanding of national labour market opportunities and trends.

Those who lacked a sense of career direction were often a puzzle to themselves and their significant other; their indecision could sometimes be a source of exasperation and anxiety to themselves and to those who tried to help them.

The research team was fairly eclectic in its use in this research of theoretical models for career decision-making. Aspects were taken from each of the following: the developmental model; community interaction models; social learning models and (to a certain extent) the opportunity structure model (Super, 1957, Super *et al*, 1996; Krumboltz, 1994; Gottfredson, 1981; Law, 1981; 1996; Roberts, 1977; 1997). We also drew on strategies and evidence from personal construct psychology and from a family systems perspective (Kelly, 1955; Edmonds, 1979; Whiston, 1989). All of these are part of the body of professional knowledge and understanding required in careers guidance. In using such a range of strategies, we were able to connect with each of our young people at some level, no matter what their individual approach to career development.

Our assessment of the theoretical and professional underpinning to the Careers Service's work in this study suggests that the talent matching model is predominant. For the talent-matching model to be effective in its own terms, it must be based on the detailed gathering of evidence (traditionally based on the Seven Point Plan (Rodgers, 1972)), and our observation of the records of guidance is that this is not being systematically done.

While the talent matching approach has many strengths, it is generally recognised that it is a snapshot which is suitable for short term planning but not for longer term planning. It also often fails to take account of motivational factors and of underlying values (which we found to be a powerful influence on our group of young people and their families). Computer interest guides are primarily based on a matching model and these appeared to be used as soon as career uncertainty was diagnosed by a careers adviser. For maximum effectiveness and to help individuals take a longer term view, a computer interest guide needs to be fed back at a personal level and interpreted within the frame of reference of each young person. This does not have to happen on a one-to one basis but does need to be personal.

The need for an explicit use of models of career decision making

Although many practitioners and most clients would say that they do not operate according to any theoretical model of careers decision making and choice, it is nonetheless the case that each person applies a particular structure to make sense of their situation (Kidd *et al*, 1993). In our work with young people, we could identify different approaches that were driving or disabling their career decision making and development, but these were rarely apparent to young people or their parents.

We would make two points about models of decision making. First is the need for careers advisers to identify and take young people's models of decision making into account. From the evidence available to us, this did not appear to have happened with our young people. In the absence of this basic understanding of the young person's way of thinking, careers advisers cannot help young people to explore whether their approach to career decision making is appropriate and effective.

The second point is that careers advisers need to introduce young people to a range of models of decision making to broaden the strategies available to them. To take the example of the young man noted above: he was waiting for something to catch his eye, something

which he would somehow recognise as the right thing for him. This way of thinking ie his "model" meant he was reactive and powerless in managing his career. A strategy that could help this young man would be to make explicit to him the model he was using and introduce him to alternative approaches that might help him recognise that he could be more proactive. Such a strategy requires careers advisers to be familiar with the range of models that we have outlined.

We did not directly ask the careers advisers involved in this research what model of career decision making they were working with. However, other research has found that most careers advisers would say that they did not use any particular model (Kidd et al, 1993). As we noted above, our observation is that careers service work was primarily based on a talent matching model. As we move from a focus on initial transitions to the need for careers services to respond to continuing transitions into and throughout adult life, the talent-matching model has considerable limitations as an approach to underpin the delivery of support for extended transitions and lifelong career development.

We are not advocating any particular model of careers guidance but would suggest that careers advisers need to be aware of the model that underpins their practice (whether consciously or unconsciously) and need to be familiar with a range of alternative models to use with clients as appropriate.

CHAPTER 7
KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter pulls together the main findings of this research and considers them in the wider context of a range of recent research. It makes brief recommendations on issues that may need to be addressed as a result.

As noted in Chapter 1, we have made recommendations at three levels:

- those which are aimed at professionals in careers guidance, no matter in which context or location they are working;

- those which might be relevant to those working in careers services and schools in Scotland and which are directed to Careers Scotland, to Scottish local authorities and the Scottish Executive;

- a small number which have a very specific relevance to the situation in Ayrshire and which are directed to practitioners and managers working in careers education and guidance in schools and careers centres in the locality.

Before detailing the recommendations, we clarify the basis on which we have made them. Obviously the findings of this study comprise the main basis and, in respect of this, we reiterate the points made earlier: that young people and their parents gave very balanced statements and tried to produce evidence for their opinions of the careers education and guidance provision of schools and careers centres. We also examined the relevant client records in careers centres and found that they very largely echoed the descriptions which young people and their parents gave of interactions with the Careers Service. In addition to the findings of this research, we have drawn on the evidence from a number of other studies, both those carried out by members of the research team as well as a range of other relevant UK research.

Over the period of this study, members of the research team also conducted three national research studies: on the effectiveness of Careers Service Companies in Scotland; on the learning gains from education for work; and on assessment of need (Howieson and Semple, 2001; Semple *et al*, 2001; Semple *et al*, forthcoming). The effectiveness research was wide ranging and included two surveys of young people's experiences and opinion of the careers service (sample size 1400). The learning gains from education for work research examined career education and elements of careers service provision and involved work with school staff, careers advisers and a number of S4, S5 and S6 students (sample size 247). The national review of the assessment of need considered approaches to the identification of learning and support needs by Careers Services and others. It entailed interviews and reviews of documentation on the identification of need across all Scottish Careers Service Companies; interviews or group discussions with young adults who had left school; and interviews with staff from training and voluntary sector organisations and further education colleges. In addition to these research projects. one of the researchers worked with schools across Scotland with respect to CPD and development work relating to the recently published National Framework for Career Education in Scotland. We also reviewed a variety of research studies (see Chapter 1 for an outline of this literature). We have found that the issues identified in this longitudinal study are very similar to the issues that emerged from the other

researchers. This has reinforced our confidence in the findings of the current study, allowed us to be clear where we could make generalised recommendations and enabled us to identify a considerable number of recommendations at a national level.

As we noted in Chapter 4, in assessing the impact of careers service interventions on the young people in this study we have applied a professional judgement of effectiveness based on our work on the effectiveness of careers services across Scotland (Howieson and Semple, 2001). Since this is such a critical issue for this chapter, we repeat our explanation from Chapter 4. We used two particular descriptors and their elements for this measure of impact. These are:

B1 Effective delivery of careers guidance to individual clients

- Extent to which guidance inputs are "owned" by clients;

- Extent to which individual client's assumptions and expectations about career choice are identified, met and challenged (if appropriate);

- Extent to which a client's career thinking is moved on by contacts with the Careers Service.

B2 Successful outcomes for clients

- Extent to which individual clients make appropriate decisions;

- Whether young people enter an appropriate post-school opportunity;

- Level and type of "drop-out" or inappropriate opportunity-changing;

- Level and duration of unemployment.

All three members of the research team are experienced professionals in careers guidance, and we drew on this expertise, in conjunction with our research skills, to apply these professional measures to the young people in this research and to make a judgement of impact.

The rest of this chapter is divided into two main sections:

A. issues relating to school provision of career education and guidance

and

B. issues for careers guidance services.

A. Issues for schools

The issues for schools can be considered under two headings. The first part of this section (and the largest) deals with Education for Work, within which we include the career education provision as such, and also work experience and mock interviews. This section makes recommendations for staff involved in the delivery, design and evaluation of Education for Work. The second part looks at implications for the work of other staff, such as subject staff and librarians.

Education for Work: career education

Content

In Chapter 6 we noted the range of careers guidance needs which we observed in the group of young people in this study. We would identify the following priority career education and guidance needs that might be (at least partially) addressed by effective career education programmes in schools.

Firstly, we noted many gaps in *understanding of the opportunity structure:* including the local labour market, levels of entry, and of the differences of the various post-school routes. Particular gaps were seen in understanding of Modern Apprenticeships and HN level provision. There was also very limited understanding of employment trends amongst the majority of young people and their parents.

The work already being done to strengthen labour market aspects of school careers provision needs to be continued. We noted in Chapter 4 that it was evident that most of the young people had a generally low level of awareness of the opportunity structure but that this was frequently not perceived as a problem, either by young people or by those most significant to their career development.

We noted that, as young people's career focus tightened, and the impact of post-school choices of career were felt, their perceived need for knowledge and understanding narrowed to that required for the specific occupation (or occupational route) chosen. They saw little need for a more general understanding but a broader picture of the opportunity structure is necessary to make sense of specific information, and it is essential to effective long-term planning and career development.

Timing appears to be critical if young people are to gain a more general understanding of the opportunity structure. It seems that this sort of learning needs to be acquired before career focus has tightened too much, and before the post-school destination is entered. This is recognised in the National Framework for Career Education in Scotland (2001) which recommends that this area should be covered for all school students by fourth year.

Recommendation 1

Directed to	*Scottish schools and local authorities; Careers Scotland curriculum support team*
We recommend that	*as per curriculum guidance, understanding of the key features of the local and national opportunity structure needs to be a core part of career education in schools for all pupils prior to the end of S4*

A second need was for young people to be able to *weigh up sources of information and advice*, to identify bias and partiality and to recognise which information sources can give which type of information. Our young people were on the receiving end of (sometimes conflicting) information and advice and needed strategies to assist them to assess what they had been told. This means that, not only does career education need to teach young people how to access information and guidance sources, it also needs to provide opportunities for young people to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the support available to them within their personal support network. This could be done by class or group based exercises, by individual review as part of school guidance support and by incorporating discussion

exercises with members of each young person's informal network at each stage of secondary education.

Recommendation 2

Directed to   *Scottish schools and local authorities; Careers Scotland curriculum support team*

We recommend that   *two strands of career education are developed and delivered to pupils. One strand would cover assessment of the value of different sources of advice and information. The second would cover the identification and use of informal networks of career support.*

A third aspect of career education content requiring development is the ability to *take a longer term view*. It is perhaps no coincidence that both school and careers staff judged that young people were unable to look very far into the future. Nor were young people thought to be able to anticipate the need to access guidance for career development beyond school. School and careers staff were in agreement that pupils did not know very much about "how to seek guidance and information post-school" and "future planning of career". It was difficult for teachers and careers advisers to identify points in the career education programme where such issues were currently raised or addressed. There is a need to develop materials that will assist schools to do this. These might include case studies of individual young people requiring and accessing transition support post-school, and adults managing their career plans in their 20s and 30s.

Recommendation 3

Directed to   *Scottish schools and local authorities; Careers Scotland curriculum support team*

We recommend that   *reviews of the career education programmes of individual schools look carefully at the extent to which they encourage a post-school perspective, and that exercises are amended and designed to provide such a perspective*

This research, and other recent work (Semple *et al*, 2001) has shown that young people's career development can be greatly affected by their experiences of part-time work. Young people learn different things from part-time work than they do from work experience. Those young people who do not have the opportunity of a part-time job are disadvantaged unless they can absorb some aspects of the experience from others who have had part-time employment. We found little evidence that young people's part-time work experiences were incorporated into class or group work in career education. Career education needs to take account of pupils' part-time work, in particular to give pupils the chance to discuss and reflect on what they are learning from their part-time work.

Recommendation 4

Directed to   *Scottish schools and local authorities; Careers Scotland curriculum support team*

We recommend that   *materials are designed and used as part of career education to encourage reflection and sharing of views on part-time work experiences*

Audit and review

There seems to be a need for better audit techniques to be used in monitoring what is actually happening. School staff will be able to use The National Framework for Career Education in Scotland (2001) as a structure for audit. In addition to detailing recommended learning outcomes to be achieved at different stages, it states that:

> *"The overall goal of career education is to develop young people's capacity for managing their own career development effectively, confidently and with due respect and care for their own needs, those of others and of their wider communities."*
>
> [p.6, Learning and Teaching Scotland 2001]

If schools can deliver their career education to match the progression grid in the National Framework for Career Education, this will encompass many of the recommendations in this section since the curricular guidelines aim to increase focus on the opportunity structure; to improve links with parents and informal sources of advice; and to increase awareness of lifelong learning and guidance. It is also important that careers advisers put a higher priority on involvement in supporting the design and review of career education provision so that they can make use of (and reinforce) career education learning outcomes in individual guidance.

Recommendation 5

Directed to	*Scottish schools and local authorities; Careers Scotland staff*
We recommend that	*school staff audit their career education provision against the guidelines in the National Framework for Career Education. We also recommend that careers advisers are involved in this process as this is important in ensuring effective integration between career education and careers guidance.*

Education for Work: work experience and mock interviews

Work experience

We suggest that there needs to be more discussion at a local and national level about the purpose(s) of work experience. There is continuing evidence that work experience is used by many young people as a test of career ideas; this is often how it is also perceived by families. Indeed this view of work experience is implicit in how it is often offered in schools, for example, with placements displayed on boards for young people to apply to as if they were real vacancies. In considering the purpose(s) of work experience, it has to be clearly stated that it is impossible to have a trial of every possible job or career: such experiences as can be provided inevitably remain partial and have a potentially biasing effect. There is currently a national review of Education for Work; this could possibly consider the role of work experience and make recommendations on this issue.

Undoubtedly, there are aspects of the "real experience" of work or of seeing a college or university that can be immensely valuable. Two key aspects need to be in place for such experiences to be incorporated into young people's thinking in a positive way. The first is thorough briefing and debriefing. The second is providing the skills to assess and weigh up the evidence from experiences and from information provided from a range of sources. As we have noted above, these skills need to be incorporated into a career education programme.

There are also some practical difficulties in the delivery of work experience. There needs to be an appropriate range of placements and this is not easy for a school or local authority to

organise, especially for certain occupational areas and levels of employment. A second practical issue is that of timing. We have noted in Chapter 3 that some young people (ie those planning to leave at the end of S4) were not well served by the timing of work experience placements in their school.

Thirdly, there are issues about equity of access to work experience. Schools and Careers Scotland might consider identifying ways in which they could intervene to balance out some young people's lack of family resources to ensure they are able to access a wide range of placement and to have more than one opportunity if this is appropriate.

Recommendation 6

Directed to	*Scottish local authorities; Careers Scotland curriculum support team; national consultation on Education for Work*
We recommend that	*both the national consultation on Education for Work and local policy groups review the principles and practices of work experience*

Mock interviews

There was general agreement among the young people involved in this study that everyone should have a mock interview. It was thought to be particularly useful in developing confidence and in providing relevant skills that were practised in what was close to a "real" situation. Similarly positive views on the value of mock interviews were expressed by young people involved in research on the learning gains from Education for Work (Semple *et al*, 2001).

Recommendation 7

Directed to	*Scottish local authorities; the Scottish Executive; Careers Scotland curriculum support team*
We recommend that	*resources be allocated to increasing the number of young people able to experience a mock interview*

Implications for the work of subject staff and librarians

We have seen that subject staff could be extremely influential in motivating, supporting and encouraging young people as they thought about their future. The impact of this could be seen in improved attainment in particular subject areas, in a more positive orientation towards career areas connected with the subject and in attitudes towards post-school education. Most of these staff had no formal guidance role (except in so far as all teachers have a guidance responsibility), but could be extremely influential on young people's thinking. Other staff who did have a formal managerial or guidance role used their subject contacts to encourage and inform young people. It is important to consider how subject staff can be effectively used as first-level providers of careers information and advice.

There were occasions, however, where the relationship with subject staff was poor, and this, too, had an effect on career planning and attainment. We noted a number of instances where a change of teacher resulted in a change in career direction away from careers related to the subject (for example, art or PE) or encouraged the young person to avoid careers perceived to be related to the subject (for example, maths). If it is important to consider how positive influence can be harnessed, it is also important to find strategies for mitigating negative

effects. We have no solutions to this, but we note this here because our close contact with young people showed us how strong these influences could be.

We are able to make more practical comments, however, on the needs of those delivering career education and Education for Work generally. Our young people had mixed experiences of career education and PSE, and some of this related to the knowledge and expertise of those delivering it. We cannot say precisely why this variation occurred, but suggest that PSE/career education classes are more likely to be effective if taught by volunteers who are supported through training and good quality materials.

Recommendation 8

Directed to   *Scottish schools and local authorities; Careers Scotland curriculum support team; Faculties of Education and other providers of CPD to teachers*

We recommend that   *those teachers delivering career education are provided with appropriate training and materials, and that school managers should ensure that staff take on this role voluntarily*

It is also important to note the potential impact on the structure and provision of pupil support of the omission of "guidance" from the McCrone review of teachers' pay and conditions. Another related factor will be the new CPD framework and the need to integrate career education training within this framework.

One clear variation across the schools was seen in the provision of a careers library. In the school where the careers library had been effectively unavailable to pupils for a considerable period, pupils were unaware of its existence, of standard reference books or of broader information sources. This is an unsatisfactory situation. The careers library is an essential part of a school's provision of career education and guidance. As the National Framework for Career Education states:

> *"Staff responsible for the careers library should:*
> - *Ensure that the school careers library is well managed and adequately resourced*
> - *Support young people as they use career information sources and develop research skills*
> - *Provide up-to-date career information in a range of formats (including ICT, video and paper)."*
>
> [Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001, Page 21]

Where there are problems in providing such a service in the long term, there is a responsibility on school managers and on local authority managers to intervene, otherwise young people in one school will be disadvantaged compared to others.

Recommendation 9

Directed to   *Scottish schools and local authorities; Careers Scotland curriculum support team; education authorities in Ayrshire*

We recommend that   *action be taken to redress the situation when career information provision in a school careers library is unavailable over a period*

B. Issues for the careers guidance services

Introduction

This research suggests that there are three broad issues for careers guidance services to address: firstly a need to emphasise the *guidance* element of their provision; secondly, a need to *extend its focus* beyond dealing with initial transitions; and thirdly, the importance of *making links* to other parts of the formal network of careers education and guidance and to the informal network of career support.

We would note that there have been historical limitations in what Careers Service Companies have been able to do: much of their work has been bounded by contract requirements from the Scottish Executive by the overall central resourcing of services at a national level. While some of our recommendations will have considerable resource implications, nonetheless we are confident that many of these recommendations for careers guidance services can be implemented without major overall resource changes.

Emphasising the careers guidance role

The evidence from this study indicates that careers service provision in Ayrshire is heavily focused on the provision of information. This emphasis on information may well be a consequence of the talent-matching model that appeared to be the main model of career decision making in use by careers advisers as well as being a response to client demand for information. The research suggests that the careers *guidance* needs of the young people involved in this study were not being adequately addressed. To do so is likely to require a number of changes in terms of philosophy, resource allocation, delivery strategies and management approaches.

In order to meet the careers guidance needs of young people it is necessary first to systematically identify what those needs are. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, there was limited evidence that this was currently happening.

Recommendation 10

Directed to	*Careers Scotland all-age guidance and training teams; careers guidance staff and managers in Ayrshire; policy makers with responsibility for resourcing Careers Scotland; QCG course centres*
We recommend that	*staff development be provided to increase awareness of models of career decision making and to train staff in the use of a range of strategies to aid the process of identification of careers guidance needs. The development of tools might be a task that could be undertaken centrally by Careers Scotland.*

Another staff development issue is the reinforcement of the guidance skills of practitioners. These include the gathering of relevant information from clients (including personal information), exploring their stage of career development and their approaches to career decision making; challenging limiting ideas in a positive way; helping them to reflect and review ideas; broadening perspectives and helping them to decide on appropriate career development strategies.

Recommendation 11

Directed to	*Careers Scotland all-age guidance and training teams; QCG course centres and other providers of CPD for careers guidance practitioners*
We recommend that	*effective careers guidance is a demanding task and there needs to be a strategy to ensure that staff receive regular training and development to keep their skills up to date*

We identified a number of ways in which the balance of careers service work might be changed in order to meet the careers guidance needs of clients more effectively. Some changes were connected with the balance of the content of the careers guidance interview. Other studies suggest that clients make most progress in their career thinking if the balance of talk in an interview is towards the client (a minimum of 70 % client). One way to help practitioners explore the client's situation rather than give information may be to encourage them to monitor the balance of talk within a careers guidance interview.

Recommendation 12

Directed to	*Careers Scotland all-age guidance, performance management and training teams; QCG course centres*
We recommend that	*the delivery of a careers guidance interview needs to change to emphasise its career guidance function rather than the provision of information. This may be assisted through the encouragement of self-monitoring activities and through monitoring by careers guidance managers at local and company level. It is essential that this includes direct observation of interviewing in addition to review of documentation.*

We have said that careers advisers need the appropriate skills to provide careers guidance in an interview. While we have recommended a move away from information giving in an interview this should not suggest that we do not support the provision of relevant career information as an essential need for young people. We have noted earlier that many of our young people found the information provided to be insufficiently related to their personal situation and perceived needs. In deciding what information to give or to send, careers advisers need to take account of young people's existing information and knowledge, and identify the information that is appropriate to the individual and their particular situation. Standard information packs are not the most useful approach.

It is also important to consider the development of other mechanisms (apart from the interview and the provision of written material) for the delivery of information. We know that young people (and adults too) have different learning styles and preferences, and the provision of information through small group work can be a very effective method of increasing knowledge and understanding on a particular occupational area or broad area of study in FE or HE of interest to a number of clients. Careers Scotland developments in the use of web-based information should provide an additional strategy for accessing information for those young clients whose learning style matches this approach.

Recommendation 13

Directed to	*Careers Scotland web and information team; careers guidance staff and managers in Ayrshire*
We recommend that	*paper information provided subsequent to a careers guidance interview should be more carefully customised to clients' specific context. We also recommend that a range of strategies for providing career information is*

> *developed by the Careers Service to take into consideration different styles of learning and decision-making.*

A greater focus on guidance also requires clients to understand the functions of the careers guidance interview otherwise they will leave the interview frustrated and dissatisfied if they have gone into it expecting information.

Recommendation 14

Directed to   *Careers Scotland all-age guidance and curriculum support teams*

We recommend that   *prior briefing and discussion about the careers interview is an important aspect of careers guidance. While this is an activity that can be undertaken in conjunction with schools as part of career education, it is likely to be necessary for the Careers Service to provide the materials and strategies that can be used by schools to explain careers guidance processes to young people and their parents.*

From our review of careers service records we concluded that the current careers service documentation is limited as a record of the discussion with the client, of the client's guidance needs and of the guidance given. Good record keeping is essential to ensure previous guidance is built on and not repeated in subsequent contacts and to help provide continuity in guidance, something that will be essential if those in need of continuing support in their post-school transitions are to be provided with a careers guidance service. It is also essential if managers are to monitor the quality of work.

Recommendation 15

Directed to   *Careers guidance staff and managers in Ayrshire; Careers Scotland staff*

We recommend that   *the quality of careers service documentation on clients be improved*

We have noted already that careers guidance managers at both local and company level need to give greater attention to the monitoring and evaluation of careers advisers' professional practice including their conduct of interviews and also their completion of client records. Peer review is one approach to monitoring and self-monitoring is another, but ultimately it is a management responsibility to ensure the quality of staff's work.

Recommendation 16

Directed to   *Careers Scotland performance management team*

We recommend that   *Policy and practice needs to be clarified and developed in order to ensure that the quality of careers guidance is monitored*

We have noted that career service work in school was dominated by the individual careers guidance interview. We have suggested alternative approaches to information giving. There is also evidence that different approaches are effective in terms of the delivery of *careers guidance*. We noted considerable use of computerised interest guides as an aid to indecision in career choice, and this is indeed one way of varying approaches. However, the impact of these guides on young people and their parents was limited by the lack of personally focused feedback and by the results of interest guides appearing to clients to stand separately from the rest of the careers guidance process. In addition to the use of interest guides, various combinations of short and long interviews, group sessions and personal action points for using careers information and guidance systems have been found to be more effective than

the careers guidance interview by itself in moving clients forward in their career skills and thinking (Morris *et al*, 1995).

We have also noted that some of the tools that were used by the research team could also be useful within careers guidance processes.

We recognise that careers advisers took different approaches in practice to timetabling interviews, but repeat a point that we made in chapter 4, that 30 minutes is insufficient for the conduct of an effective careers guidance interview: a *minimum* of 40 minutes is necessary. This may well be a statement that goes against the trend in caseload management in the careers service. But it is important to emphasise that our views on this arise directly from our work with these young people, and from our observation of the time required to systematically identify careers guidance needs. If a more varied approach is taken in schools, then this should help to release time for careers guidance interviews to be longer.

Recommendation 17

Directed to	*Careers Scotland all-age guidance, inclusiveness and training teams; policy makers with responsibility for resourcing Careers Scotland*
We recommend that	*consideration is given to a more varied delivery model in schools, and that where computer-generated interest guides are used as part of the delivery strategy they are fed back at a personal level and incorporated into the careers guidance process. We also recommend that due recognition is given to the amount of time needed to adequately identify careers guidance needs in scheduling contacts with young people. Thirdly, we recommend that some of the tools used by the research team become available for use as part of careers guidance processes.*

The evidence on the appropriateness of current interview practice in S4 (almost blanket interviewing) was mixed. On the one hand, the majority of our young people and their parents thought that it *was* appropriate that young people's first main contact with the careers adviser should be scheduled for them. On the other hand, while a minority had a positive view, the majority had negative or at best neutral opinions of the effectiveness of these contacts. We note two aspects of these criticisms here: firstly that those intending to leave at the end of S4 were given insufficient priority for one or more careers interviews; and secondly that there was insufficient time allocated within the interview for the careers adviser to get to know the young person to a level that would allow appropriate careers guidance to be given. Both of these criticisms could be seen as resulting from the CSC's decision to allocate such a major amount of the interviewing resource to S4, such that both the number of contacts, and the length of time available for each contact, was limited. If a range of strategies for the delivery of careers guidance is introduced, it may be possible to consider whether contact via a careers guidance interview is necessary for the large majority of pupils at this stage or whether other types of contact would be sufficient for some pupils.

Recommendation 18

Directed to	*Careers guidance staff and managers in Ayrshire; Careers Scotland all-age guidance team*
We recommend that	*the careers service reviews its interview practice in S4*

Extending the focus beyond initial transitions

In earlier chapters we have noted the fact that the Careers Service was not involved in careers guidance services to those young people in our group who were struggling with post-school transitions. The local CSC is not alone in focusing on initial transitions rather than extended transitions, and this issue will need to be addressed as part of the introduction of Careers Scotland. The evidence of our research is clear: some young people need a transition service which identifies and responds to careers guidance needs in the period after leaving school.

Recommendation 19

Directed to	*Careers Scotland all-age guidance and inclusiveness teams; policy makers with responsibility for resourcing Careers Scotland*
We recommend that	*Careers Scotland publicises and provides a post-school transition and support careers guidance service for at least two years after young people leave school*

Our experience of following young people across a period of almost 3 years has shown the importance of monitoring and tracking transitions. One point we have made already is that first destination statistics are likely to change (this was the case for over a third of our group). Policy decisions made on the basis of the first destination statistics are unlikely, therefore, to be well founded. It is important to identify subsequent destinations.

However, there is a second purpose in monitoring and tracking. While some difficulties in transition could be anticipated, others could not. Monitoring and tracking, therefore, needs to be broader than identifying the status and destinations of young people as their career trajectory proceeds. It needs in addition to use screening devices that will allow careers guidance professionals and young people themselves to identify the need for extended careers guidance support.

Recommendation 20

Directed to	*Careers Scotland; policy makers with responsibility for resourcing Careers Scotland*
We recommend that	*Careers Scotland's design of a tracking system encompasses the identification of continuing careers guidance needs in addition to recording destinations over a period*

Our research has found that both young people and their significant others (mostly parents) had little or no perception of a post-school careers guidance service for young adults. Nor were those parents who were in the process of career change themselves conscious of the availability of any adult guidance services in the locality. Not only were young clients and potential adult clients unaware of the availability of services, most had a limited view of what careers guidance could offer. We have said that although some had a positive view, the majority opinion of careers guidance was either neutral or negative. The lack of impact was at least partly due, we would suggest, to a lack of understanding of the potential of careers guidance. There is a need for more positive marketing of services that encompass not only availability, but the nature of careers guidance.

Recommendation 21

Directed to	*Careers Scotland marketing and all-age guidance team*
We recommend that	*marketing of the new Careers Scotland to all clients needs to emphasise its*

> *guidance role, including its responsibility to challenge limiting ideas, broaden perspectives and provide impartial guidance*

The talent-matching model may have been appropriate for delivery of services at a particular point of need (for example, school leaving stage), but it is much less appropriate for delivery of transition support, for career development and for all age careers guidance, as will be required when Careers Scotland is introduced.

Recommendation 22

Directed to   *Careers guidance practitioners and managers in Ayrshire; Careers Scotland all-age guidance and training teams; QCG course centres*

We recommend that   *the professional rationale for the delivery of careers guidance services is reviewed and changed in anticipation of the changes required in the future*

Making links

This third section of implications for the Careers Service considers the importance of making links with both the formal and informal sources of support. Aspects of links with other parts of the formal network of careers education and guidance have been referred to under our earlier section on school provision, so we will refer only briefly to these. The bulk of this section considers how links may be made with the informal network of career support.

Links with the formal network of careers education and guidance

We have noted under the section on school provision the importance of the careers adviser working closely with schools on the design, evaluation and delivery of career education provision. We would add that it is also important that the careers adviser uses his knowledge of the career education programme as a basis for a careers guidance interview. Discussion of the skills, knowledge and understanding which the young person has acquired through career education is a useful way to help identify their level of understanding and assess needs and also to help them integrate their various careers education and guidance experiences.

Recommendation 23

Directed to   *Careers Scotland curriculum support, training and all-age guidance teams; Scottish schools and local authorities*

We recommend that   *Not only should the careers adviser be involved in the audit, design and delivery (where appropriate) of the career education programme within the context of the National Framework for Career Education but that this understanding should be used as a basis for initial identification of need in a careers interview*

Links with informal networks of career support: the importance of identifying and monitoring the full network of support

Across the period of the research we observed changes in who was listed in a young person's network of support for their career development. As young people moved out of school and into a post-school opportunity, school and careers service staff generally moved out of the network. There were exceptions to that: some young people in the first year after school suggested that, if they needed advice, they might go back to the school to speak to a favourite teacher with whom they had a good relationship. The careers adviser rarely featured in a possible career support network post-school.

Earlier in this report we have listed the ways in which the informal network was influential on career development. We would suggest that the examination of its impact for each client is key to understanding such things as:

- The level and nature of the young person's aspiration to education, training and work;

- How the young person views the opportunity structure and personal choices within it;

- How the young person's career support network is operating, and the most effective way for the careers adviser to work with this network.

We also observed a reluctance on the part of careers advisers to identify and record the details of the informal network. This is not untypical of many careers advisers in Scotland. Such reluctance stems from a feeling that these issues are too personal and therefore sensitive (but contrast this with the view from young people and parents that careers advice *should* be more personal). It also comes from a lack of understanding that issues in the situation of young people can be key to understanding their career related actions and decisions.

Recommendation 24

Directed to	*Careers Scotland all-age guidance, curriculum support and training teams; QCG course centres; Scottish schools and local authorities*
We recommend that	*four changes take place. The first change is that exercises should be included within career education programmes in schools that take account of informal networks of career support. Secondly, pre-interview preparation should include an exercise that takes account of the individual's informal network of career support and its strengths and weaknesses. A third change would be to include a discussion of the role of the informal network in careers guidance interviews. A fourth change would be to record this network in the careers guidance records for future discussion with clients and for the monitoring and identification of career support needs.*

We have noted the importance of identifying the members of the informal network of career support. We suggest that an assessment of the strengths and limitations in an individual's network would allow negotiation of the role which the careers adviser, and the service generally, might play in supporting each client's career-related decision-making and actions.

In virtually all cases, both the young person and parents envisaged the family remaining the key consistent part of the career support network in the foreseeable future. It is therefore important to ensure that the family knows not only the formal guidance provision that is currently available but also what will be available in the future.

Recommendation 25

Directed to	*Careers Scotland marketing and all-age guidance teams*
We recommend that	*communications from Careers Scotland to parents/carers and families includes a clear explanation of the transition support available from careers guidance services, in addition to explaining services immediately available*

Links with informal networks of career support: the informal network's motivational role

We observed that members of the informal network (primarily parents and close family) could have a profound effect on motivation. This operated on a continuum. At one end were those who consciously gave regular encouragement, praise, advice, instruction and criticism across a period. This could be connected with attendance at school, with studying and with

being proactive in seeking jobs and college courses. Further along the continuum were those who intervened at key points, otherwise leaving it up to the young person, while others left it entirely up to the young person unless he or she actively sought advice. At the other end of the continuum, a young person with a dysfunctional family could not only lack such support, but in fact have to battle against negative factors. In such a situation s/he might lean much more heavily on a trusted teacher or a reliable member of the extended family. These individuals become powerful and significant in the young person's informal network.

The key worker posts being introduced across Scotland as part of the implementation of the inclusiveness strategy might be expected to fulfil some of the motivational and support roles for those young people with learning and support needs. This might be by supplementing the support from the informal network or by providing the majority of the input. We would identify three young people in our group who would have greatly benefited from this help.

However, we would suggest that there is something about this support relationship with an adviser that might be useful for a broader group of young people. As we have noted earlier, individuals who young people could and would talk to were often defined as those with a positive approach and with a personal interest in the individual young person. For our young people, a valued adviser from whom they might take advice might be described as *"they build you up"*, *"they give you encouragement"*, *"make you feel good about yourself"*, *"they know what you're like"*. Particular teachers (sometimes guidance teachers but by no means always) could be described in this way. While the careers adviser was sometimes mentioned as part of the general support network, he was rarely described in those terms. This may well explain the limited impact of the careers service as seen in the experiences of these young people.

Nevertheless, we do know that careers advisers can play a key role with particular groups of young people (for example, those who are the children of single or unemployed parents). The careers adviser in this situation is providing specific support that is less likely to be available from the informal network.

Recommendation 26

Directed to	*Careers Scotland all-age guidance and inclusiveness teams; careers guidance professionals; QCG course centres*
We recommend that	*careers guidance practitioners monitor the informal support network as a means of identifying those young people who might need a key worker, or who might need the careers adviser to play a more powerful support role to compensate for weaknesses in the informal network*

We have also noted in Chapter 5 that many parents expected careers advisers to have a motivational role that would encourage their children to achieve more at school and to fulfil their aspirations. Is this a reasonable expectation? The Careers Service in England has been at least partly evaluated on the extent to which its young clients meet learning targets and improve their attainment, so it does seem that some policy makers would share this parental expectation. Careers guidance can have the effect of increasing motivation if it results in a clearer sense of career direction and purpose. But it would seem to us to be important that impartiality is maintained so that, for example, different routes are fairly presented so that remaining at school is not automatically seen as a better choice than the work-based route. This brings us back to issues of identification of need and of personally-focused support.

Careers guidance can be used to motivate and support, but it is only likely to do so when it is based on good knowledge and understanding of young people and their needs.

Recommendation 27

Directed to	*Careers Scotland all-age guidance and inclusiveness teams; careers guidance professionals; QCG course centres; Scottish Executive policy makers responsible for resourcing Careers Scotland*
We recommend that	*professional practice is re-focused to provide a more personal service, based on an appropriate personal knowledge of the client and on systematic identification of careers guidance needs*

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