



Career guidance: Making a difference



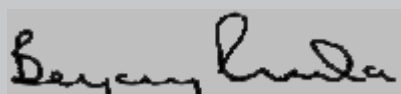
Career Guidance: Making a difference

Each of the governments of the countries that make up the UK have a shared agenda – to make the most of their people through developing their skills, and through those skills improve the economic and social health of the nation. The need to include people who are on the margins of society, or at risk of dropping out, and the need to promote the lifelong learning agenda, are twin pillars of the skills agenda. Career guidance for people of all ages is fundamental to achievement of such government objectives, and this is recognised in a number of ways; by the creation of the new all-age services Careers Wales and Careers Scotland, the development of the IAG for adults partnerships in England, and the specialist role of career guidance practitioners within the Connexions Service. Northern Ireland is taking careful note of these developments whilst it decides on the best way forward for the Province. Outside publicly funded structures, the profession is growing exponentially as industry recognises the importance of career development and career management as part of the human resources function. Never has it been so important to inculcate in people at the earliest opportunity the skills to make career decisions.

I hope that this booklet will help those who work alongside career guidance practitioners, and those who advise on the development of government policy in this area, to have an enhanced understanding of the career guidance practitioner's role, and an appreciation of the very special expertise that career guidance practitioners possess. All of the case studies show the high degree of professional skill and knowledge that is required to ensure that people of any age are able to make career decisions that are right for them.

Career guidance professionals work under a number of different titles - within Connexions as 'personal advisers' for example - and may well have roles that go beyond career guidance. But this booklet concentrates on the aspects of their work which uses their special career guidance skills and experience - and hence we have generally referred to them in the case studies which follow as 'careers advisers'. This booklet has been written for the lay person, and as well as the case studies it contains a clear explanation of the nature of career guidance and its history as a profession, and the ways in which it makes a difference to peoples' lives. There are also sections which explain the different professional roles within the sector, the body of knowledge which underpins the work of practitioners and the ethical principles on which they base their practice

I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has made this booklet possible, especially the people who have given permission for their case studies to appear in the booklet. I do hope that it 'makes a difference' to your understanding of career guidance, wherever it is practised.



Bryony Pawinska
Chief Executive ICG

What is career guidance?

Career guidance is about helping people realise their full potential.

Its focus is on putting those who consult career guidance practitioners in the best position to make their own decisions about available learning and work options. Relying primarily on a combination of personal interviews and group meetings, career guidance practitioners aim to broaden horizons by discussing and advising on personal development, researching available options, career planning, and use of decision making and other techniques.

In this way career guidance helps steer people of all ages into working lives that fit their interests, aptitudes and outlook, and which are suitably demanding and fulfilling. Careers libraries, publications and, increasingly, Internet resources compiled by career guidance practitioners provide additional information.

Key to the career guidance process are the personal relationships that are developed between career guidance practitioners and those who consult them. Calling on training and experience, career guidance practitioners aim to help people increase awareness of the opportunities open to them and recognise their own strengths, abilities, preferences, limitations and areas for development, so as to be able to set themselves realistic and achievable goals.

Once these have been established, career guidance practitioners assist further by advising on the most practical means of working towards career goals, perhaps by identifying skills and knowledge gaps that need to be addressed, by coaching in job search and related skills, and in such tasks as completing applications and drawing up persuasive CVs.

Career guidance practitioners will also support those who consult them in other ways, for example by helping them state their case to educational institutions, employers and support agencies, and also by identifying and helping to address social, family and financial constraints that must be overcome if career aspirations are to be explored and achieved.



Sporting chances

Luke, now aged 26, is a highly successful graphic artist who has worked for some of the most famous advertising agencies in the business. His journey to the top has been a testament to his talent and his courage in taking decisions that were seen by his family and peers as somewhat risky at the time.

Luke says he might not have taken those decisions without the support of his careers adviser.

When she first met Luke in Year 11, his careers adviser saw a kindly and popular lad who was generally seen as 'cool'. A talented sportsman, musician and artist, he was nevertheless expecting only mainly Cs at GCSE.

His family wanted him to go on to college and although Luke was resigned to this, he had some serious reservations.

Luke's careers adviser encouraged him to talk about his thoughts – something he had never had the chance to do before – and he admitted that he was desperate to get out into the world of work. So, although he was ambitious for success, he and his careers adviser agreed that he would feel more comfortable if he could learn in a more practical environment than the classroom.

The danger was that otherwise, should opportunity beckon, Luke might be tempted to abandon his college course before completion. And Luke's careers adviser thought it was crucial that he chose the path in which he would be most likely to stay the distance.

Luke wanted to start by finding out whether or not he had what it took to pursue a career in sport and his careers adviser helped him plan the steps he would have to take to realise such an ambition. Next she helped Luke explore alternative ideas – and he quickly discounted music in favour of art and related careers.

Luke was aware of his strengths but did not understand how important it was for him to research career options in detail and the benefits of tackling the job thoroughly.

His careers adviser pointed him in the right direction and suggested further steps he could take to narrow down his ideas to those that seemed to suit him best. After much discussion, favoured options proved to be linked to sports and leisure, film and television, lighting and sound recording or in graphic design.

Designs on a practical approach

As Luke and his careers adviser worked together, the idea of a Youth Training Scheme was raised as an alternative to college. Initially Luke did not like this idea – at that time YT Schemes were in many cases a hit and miss option and did not command the same respect among employers as college qualifications.

However, Luke's careers adviser had been working on a project that encouraged employers to provide training places and knew that Luke could create his own opportunity by matching his need for practical learning with training that was widely respected. She had also been examining where students from college courses went after completing their studies, and noticed that at that time, many didn't pursue a vocational career in line with their studies but took any local job they could find.

The careers adviser provided Luke with broad information about these and taught him how to search out more precise information for himself.

By now Luke realised there might be more to life than col-



lege, and he set to work with a will. Having quickly eliminated his interest in sport, he returned to his careers adviser for help in making applications to join local youth training schemes covering film and television lighting and graphic design. Both schemes were popular locally and the competition for places was strong, so his careers adviser helped Luke strengthen his application by showing him how to summarise his skills and related experience so as to make his personal statement more compelling.

At the time careers advisers were also asked to give their professional recommendations on applications to help colleges ensure places were given to those most likely to succeed and the careers adviser was pleased to pass on her support for his applications.

Luke also asked for her help in explaining his decision to his family – who were by now more than a little disconcerted about the direction events were taking. The careers adviser saw his parents and explained how certain industries valued people who could not only display talent and achievement, but also demonstrate their ability to deliver practical solutions in working environments. Luke's intention was to enter just such an industry and the careers adviser explained that he would be more likely to make progress if he could demonstrate a range of personal skills and workplace experience in addition to his academic ability. Their fears were placated and they began to understand that Luke was more likely to fulfil his potential if he made decisions that were right for him rather than his family.

Each of the YT Schemes invited Luke to an interview. After attending that offering a graphic design option, he was absolutely convinced that he had found the right place for himself. He was so certain that he was reluctant to go to the other interview, especially as it clashed with an important personal engagement. His careers adviser suggested he follow his instincts and release the place for somebody else to take.

Luke loved his time on his YT scheme and felt very relieved his careers adviser had given him the confidence to follow his heart. He loved working for a real company, a small design agency. After two years he gained his National Vocational Qualification with flying colours and was commended as one of the best students on the course. He quickly gained a job as a junior artworker with one of the largest corporate design agencies and within two years had moved on to a large design company specialising in different areas of design – such as web-based interactive systems. Within three years he had beaten off stiff competition to become a design artworker with one of the most prestigious design companies in London, and was more recently headhunted by a competitor with a global network of offices.

Building self belief

Since leaving school a few months earlier, Phillip had done no work or training. He had left with no qualifications and had hoped to go to college, but this had not worked out.

Even so, he seemed to his careers adviser, who worked as a personal adviser within the Connexions Service, to be a cheery and optimistic sort of lad, very engaging if a bit vague about his future.

At first the adviser found it hard to know how to help Phillip - he was not easy to 'reach' and simply deflected questions with a smile. She knew she had to win his confidence, and instinct told her to tread carefully.

She started by 'selling' the role of the personal adviser to him, explaining how helpful it would be to have someone to point him to the road ahead, step by step, and give him whatever help he needed.

Over the course of several meetings Phillip, who was 17, began to reveal the pattern of the life he was leading.

His mother had died when he was small and his father was a controlling man with a drink problem.

Phillip had gone along to family mediation with his father and two brothers but that had not changed anything and his elder brother was increasingly turning to crime. To protect his family, Phillip covered up what was happening to him and as a result lived with high levels of tension that wore him out emotionally. In the process he had lost sight of his own ambitions altogether.

He had been interested in retail work, but his father wanted him to take a course in business studies - and his father was used to getting his own way. Fearful of challenging his father, Phillip had lost confidence, was frightened to move away from his abusive home, and had become aimless and depressed. He had difficulty finding the motivation to get up in the morning, and at times he felt despair.

Phillip's adviser helped him to see his many positive qualities and achievements to date and to begin building upon them. She encouraged him to tell her about difficult situations that he had dealt with and pointed out the strength he had shown at these times. She reminded him of what he had told her about the ways he had supported his family members so as to illustrate the drive, tenacity and other qualities she saw that he possessed.

Phillip thought he was lazy, but his adviser showed him that he was merely overwhelmed by his experiences.

Eventually the adviser judged it the right time to suggest Phillip try some counselling. Phillip agreed.

Gradually, with gentle and professional support and guidance, he began to find his hopes for a different future rekindled. And together Phillip and his adviser drew up an individual development plan for him to follow.

Now Phillip began to build a new picture of himself as a person with a right to make his own decisions, one who could be responsible for himself. He could see that his father was domineering but did not yet know how to reconcile the difficulty of pleasing both his father and himself.

Patiently his adviser helped him move forward by helping him reach his own decisions and build his self esteem and confidence.

In line with the Connexions approach, the adviser began contacting others who could help Phillip overcome his various obstacles.

With his poor academic record, she judged Phillip would thrive in a practical learning environment and put him forward for a work based training scheme for retail work. And at her suggestion that he would benefit by improving his literacy and numeracy, he began a level 2 NVQ.



Finding a home

Meanwhile Phillip's father had thrown him out of the house leaving him homeless. The quest for a bed had led him to a friend's sofa. But this was out of his own area and he could not afford to bus fare to see his adviser.

Not knowing where he was, his adviser left repeated messages on his mobile (that his brother had appropriated) until, to her relief, he turned up in her office one day. On finding out what had happened she was able to arrange a small but significant amount of financial support to cover his bus fares to the careers centre and to interviews. The adviser also talked to the benefit office to make sure Phillip received what he was due. And she began the lengthy and often tortuous process of finding Phillip somewhere to stay.

Acting as his advocate she contacted a local housing association on his behalf, explaining that without a base he risked losing his training place.

Responding to the shock Phillip experienced at being homeless, and his need for moral support to keep going, the adviser redoubled her efforts to find him a place to live.

Phillip had further problems. He was admitted to hospital for an emergency appendix operation.

The adviser realised Phillip was in danger of losing direction again. Her answer was to work with him on a statement of his 'wants'. With patience she helped him see that all of these things could be achieved.

Her meticulous note taking meant colleagues could also step in to help Phillip with practical support when his adviser was not available.

Before too long things began to look brighter. Phillip could see for himself how well his training was going, with even the possibility of promotion on the horizon. He had stepped away from the controlling influence of his father, had found a place to live, and he had lost the idea that he was worthless and lazy.

When his adviser last saw him Phillip said he would like to help youngsters like himself by acting as a mentor. His adviser supported him, recognising that the best way to encourage his self esteem was to give him responsibilities.

Why it makes a difference

It is widely recognised that effective career guidance brings both social and economic benefits.

On a personal and family level it empowers people to control better the course of their working lives, so as to make the most of their opportunities, avoid false starts and wasted effort, reduce uncertainty and stress, and optimise the balance between pursuit of financial reward and personal fulfilment.

Given that career guidance is likely to include suggestions for personal development, including further education or training, it contributes towards national aspirations for a 'learning society', and for a well-trained, skilled and well-adjusted workforce. It also provides an important prop needed to support a society that must deal with the prospect of each person having a succession of careers within a longer working life, spent in a workplace driven by an increasing rate of technological change.

On a more general level, effective career guidance promotes efficiency in both education and business by helping to reduce the drop-out rates within higher and further education, making the recruitment process work more smoothly (by reducing the number of unrealistic applications, and better highlighting the qualities of suitable candidates), and improving productivity (by contributing to job satisfaction, thereby reducing employee turnover).



Who are the professionals?

Career guidance is available to both young people and adults from a number of different sources within the UK. Some career guidance practitioners are in private practice, charging fees for their services, some work within recruitment and commercial companies, others work within further education colleges and universities. By far the largest number of professionals in the UK work within publicly-funded agencies including Careers Wales, Careers Scotland, the Northern Ireland Careers Service, and, in England, within Connexions Services and IAG partnerships offering adult guidance. They provide their services through careers centres, Connexions outlets, community settings and schools.

Career guidance is not a restricted occupation although it has long been recognised by governments, who provide the major part of the funding for career guidance work, that it is an important personal service that should be delivered by suitably qualified professionals.

There are a number of relevant professional associations. Largest is the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG), which is the awarding body for the principal career guidance qualification (see below). Full membership is open only to suitably qualified individuals who, by joining, accept a commitment to the Institute's ethical standards and to maintaining the currency of their knowledge by undertaking continuing professional development.

Other professional bodies for people involved in career guidance are: the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, the Association of Careers Advisers in Colleges offering Higher Education, the International Association of Career Management Professionals, the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, the National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers, the National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults, and the National Association for Managers of Student Services. These bodies, together with the ICG, combine to form the Federation of Professional Associations in Guidance.





Legal ambitions

When Helen met her careers adviser at a sixth form recruitment evening, she told her she hoped to become a barrister. The careers adviser asked some questions about her background and interests, and together they looked at the information to hand.

The careers adviser discovered that Helen had already demonstrated a positive and mature approach by 'networking' her way into a range of part time and holiday jobs where she had picked up valuable work experience. This included some time spent in her father's hair and beauty salon.

Helen had previously attended some group career guidance sessions which had taught her some general career planning skills and she had begun to put an action plan together. At that early stage her interests had been in computing and beauty therapy, a direction that flowed naturally from her involvement in her father's business. Now, she had started to reassess her personal hopes and dreams and she realised that there were much broader opportunities open to her.

When they met again, Helen told her careers adviser that one of the reasons she wanted to become a barrister was that she had enjoyed her law course at school. She wanted to find out about the qualifications she needed and was hoping for confirmation that this would be a good career choice.

It was soon clear to the careers adviser that Helen's understanding of her chosen profession was a little hazy, and that she had not yet learned to challenge her own ideas to make sure they would work for her in practice.

They began to review Helen's interests and abilities and the careers adviser showed her how to relate these to the requirements of particular job roles. They explored her feelings about work in general and noticed her enjoyment of office work, her ambition to work closely with other people, and also her desire to join a 'profession'.

Helen, who had mostly D grades at GCSE, was sur-

prised and disappointed at the high level of qualifications required to become a barrister and realised that her own academic record might make it difficult for her to compete with other more highly qualified students.

Helen's careers adviser urged Helen to broaden her thinking and to find alternative ways to reach her goal. One was to hunt out other law-related careers and to think of alternative options that might give her a back-up plan if things did not turn out the way she hoped.

Helen's plan

Working on a plan helped structure Helen's thoughts so that by the time she next met her careers adviser she had set her sights on becoming a legal executive as a route into a career in law. She had already shown how determined she was to find out whether this was the right career area for her by securing part time work with a local solicitor.

The careers adviser helped Helen think about the steps she could take to lead her into work as a legal executive. As a result she decided to stay at school after taking her AS level examinations so as to obtain further relevant qualifications before finding a job with a law firm and moving on to train as a legal executive.

Helen's careers adviser explained she could get some help in preparing for employment a little nearer the time and agreed to update her action plan and send it along with some information about legal executives. Meanwhile Helen could help herself by looking at selected websites giving more information about the training and work of legal executives.

'It helped a great deal talking to somebody outside college and home who could understand my position and was able to steer me in the right direction', said Helen.

She is now planning to stay an extra year at school so she can gain an A2 level in business and a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in office skills to improve her chances of gaining employment with a law firm.



Creating chemistry

Kate wanted to be a doctor and needed good A level passes to get into medical school. But in her first year in sixth form she did badly in chemistry, an essential subject for her.

A bright but shy girl, Kate's response was to keep her worries to herself. She became withdrawn, and her performance suffered even more. Her lack of confidence left her disoriented and, fearing failure, she did not even put in a university application.

Eventually, desperate for help, she went to see her careers adviser – who immediately saw that although she came from a close knit family, Kate needed professional support to give her the practical tools needed to find a new way forward. In particular she needed to accept the possibility that medicine might be out of her reach.

Kate had assumed she would be able to re-take exams in which she needed better results, delaying her medical course as necessary. She was deeply shocked to discover this was not necessarily the case.

The careers adviser worked hard to build a rapport with Kate and to gain her confidence – in the process learning that Kate knew very little about the rigours of getting into medicine. She encouraged Kate to start finding out more by asking different medical schools about their attitudes to 're-sit' candidates.

Meanwhile Kate's careers adviser obtained information from the British Medical Association about the possibility of starting with a 'pre-med' course. Kate and her careers adviser discussed this and agreed it was not a suitable option although the approach had helped Kate see that perhaps other less direct routes could take her to her goal.

Remedy found

By helping Kate find out about different routes to becoming a doctor, her careers adviser was able to give her a much more realistic understanding of her situation. As a result Kate's feelings of panic began to subside.

Together they explored the idea of using a science degree as a means of getting into medical school. At the same time, the careers adviser tried hard to help Kate appreciate the benefits of a back-up plan in case the worst should come to the worst.

Kate was very resistant to this but began to feel happier after she found a medical school that said it might accept her after re-taking her A levels.

But just as things seemed brighter, Kate was involved in a car crash and had to take time out from school to recover, interrupting her studies severely.

When Kate met her careers adviser a few months later, she admitted her prospects looked bleak, with grades C and D likely in her physics and chemistry re-sits. She was feeling low.

The careers adviser reminded her how much better she would feel if she tackled the problem head on, and helped her research different institutions. She encouraged Kate to speak to each directly, coaching her on the questions she could ask and teaching her how to put her case clearly.

Kate was delighted to discover that her preferred university said it would consider her circumstances exceptional and had been encouraging about her likelihood of being accepted. Buoyed up by this, Kate enrolled at a local college offering 'fast-track' courses. And at the suggestion of her careers adviser, she attended an 'open day' at a local hospital to find practical work experience and work shadowing opportunities that would strengthen her university applications.

By keeping in regular contact with Kate and her family, her careers adviser knows Kate is making great progress. She is confident that Kate's newly acquired sense of purpose will help her to do well in her exams.

The careers adviser had helped Kate summon up the courage to understand and accept her situation and then to find ways of overcoming what at first seemed to be huge barriers to success. Kate was able to appreciate that ambition alone was not enough and that what she needed were the practical strategies to manage the hurdles and challenges along the way.

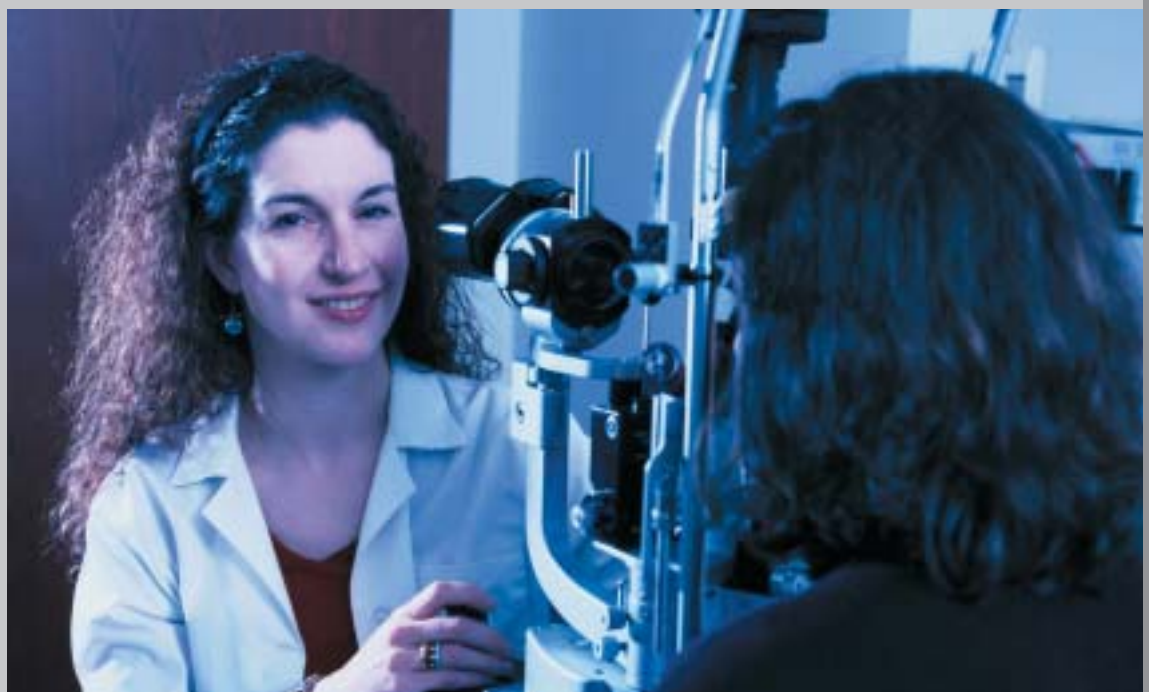
A body of knowledge

Career guidance is not a new profession but arose from work in the early part of the last century which coincided with the development of the social sciences.

Frank Parsons, author of the 1909 work *Choosing a vocation* and who helped establish a 'vocational bureau' in Boston, USA, was one of those leading the way. Since then a substantial body of work has accumulated, much emanating from the USA, a nation that is renowned for endorsing only those approaches which are effective and economically worthwhile.

In the United Kingdom there are currently 14 universities offering the courses leading to the ICG-awarded Qualification in Career Guidance (QCG), developed by the Department for Education and Skills between 1999 and 2002. Many universities also offer master's degrees in career guidance or related subjects, and a few now offer doctorates. In addition, there are a number of other universities with research or other interests in career guidance or related subjects.

The University of Derby, for example, has a Centre for Guidance Studies which includes the ICG's library as part of the National Career Guidance Resource Centre, and the Economic and Social Research Council's Research Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance is based jointly at Oxford University and the University of Warwick. Professor Ken Roberts of the sociology department at Liverpool University has researched and written on youth transitions, while Professor Phil Hodgkinson is director of the Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Leeds. Tony Watts, now a visiting Professor of Career Development at the University of Derby and at Canterbury Christ Church University and also administrator of a Career Guidance Policy Review by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, was in 1964 co-founder, with Bill Law, of the Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC). This sponsors the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, a network organisation dedicated to applied research into career guidance issues.



The qualification and the register

The Qualification in Career Guidance (QCG) is the principal career guidance qualification. It has only recently taken over from its forerunner, the Diploma in Careers Guidance (DipCG).

Usually, but not necessarily, taken as a post-graduate qualification, the QCG involves one year full time or a longer period of part time study. Topics covered include the theoretical basis for guidance practice, guidance interventions, careers education, ethics and equal opportunities, and use of careers and labour market information. Students are also tutored on reflective personal development, and the workings of organisations and networks, and they undertake workplace training. Typically QCG graduates go on to join publicly-funded services, where they undertake a further year of development before being deemed to be fully qualified. There is an alternative work-based and competence-assessed training route leading to the National Vocational Qualification or Scottish Vocational Qualification at level 4 in Advice and Guidance. NVQ/SVQ units of competence may cover such subjects as managing relationships, referral procedures, advocacy and use of group meetings for learning.

Holders of the DipCG, QCG or NVQ/SVQ level 4 in Advice and Guidance are eligible to become full members of the Institute of Career Guidance and to work in the statutory sector.

Those full members who are currently practising, who can confirm their commitment to the ICG's *Code of Ethical Practice* and who can demonstrate they have kept their skills up to date, may also apply to join the Register of Career Guidance Practitioners. This is a public register that, among other things, provides anybody who is dissatisfied with the level of service provided by a career guidance practitioner with a means of seeking redress.

In England there is a further qualification for people who work within the Connexions Service as personal advisers – the Diploma for Personal Advisers. This is divided into five modules covering such issues as managing referrals; personal advisers are required to refer young people to colleagues with appropriate professional qualifications where specialist help is needed. The diploma is open to people who already hold a professional qualification relevant to Connexions (such as in career guidance).



Overcoming difficulties

Paul's dyslexia was not the only thing that caused him difficulties. Another was that he did not get on with his mother's new husband. But he did not tell his careers adviser this when they met.

Even so, his careers adviser suspected there was more to tell and to encourage Paul to open up a little more he suggested they have brief but regular lunchtime meetings. The careers adviser was also able to fill in important gaps by speaking to Paul's teachers.

Paul, who received extra help at school for his special educational needs, had impressed all his teachers with his hard work. He was most enthusiastic about creative and artistic career ideas and his mind was teeming with possibilities – mostly picked up from the television; everything from interior design to hairdressing or working as part of a cabin crew.

The challenge for Paul's careers adviser was to support this enthusiasm while – helping him accommodate his limitations – especially his difficulty with written work – within his career choices. His career ideas had to be challenged and tested, carefully, to make sure they were right for him.

Together they talked through the range of career options that appealed to Paul, looking in some detail at catering. Paul's family was in the business and he enjoyed cooking, not least because it allowed him to demonstrate his talents in this area and receive the praise that so rarely came from his academic work.

With his careers adviser's encouragement Paul found himself a part time job in a bakery where he enjoyed dealing with customers. But Paul also wanted to know how he could use his artistic skills and wanted to know what employment options were opened up by his GCSE in art and graphic communication.

Paul's careers adviser helped him find out what exactly was involved in becoming an interior or graphic designer and similar roles, and how to work out whether or not the skills needed by each dovetailed with his own abilities.

Although college would be challenging to Paul, his careers adviser knew it was important that he make his own

decision about whether or not to go. So he told Paul about the additional help available to college students with learning difficulties, made sure he got hold of all the relevant information about the courses that interested him, and helped him judge how well he would be able to cope with courses by looking at the ways they were taught and assessed. The careers adviser also told Paul about modern apprenticeships and job opportunities, especially in catering.

Leaving home

By this time Paul's relationship with his mother and stepfather had deteriorated so much that Social Services had become involved. Paul was moved to a foster home.

By the spring term of Year 11 Paul had been with various foster parents and he had become convinced he needed to make a break with his family. This extended to a change of name by deed poll and a change of heart about his career – for Paul, catering was too closely linked to his family's involvement.

His careers adviser recognised that Paul's decision to make a fresh start was a pragmatic and healthy response to his situation and together they began looking again at career options – which became broader once Paul's careers adviser was able to gain confirmation from Social Services that he would be financially supported through college.

Despite the challenges put in his way, Paul remained determined to succeed, and had not lost his capacity for hard work or his interest in the creative and practical. Through his earlier work with his careers adviser he had already learned much about how to find his way through the complex network of choices open to him.

Now Paul had been able to research careers ideas objectively he opted for hairdressing. This would allow him to learn in a practical environment, exploiting his creativity and building on the satisfaction he had experienced working directly with customers when at the bakery. With his careers adviser's support he won a place at his local college and was soon saying he was sure he had made the right choice.

Making a difference

Kelly had not got much out of her time at school and had fallen into a number of unskilled jobs, and then into single parenthood. Now, having completed a beginner's computer class with a women's outreach project, she wanted advice about what to do next.

When she met a careers adviser at the 'Learning Shop' Kelly talked, after some coaxing, about her circumstances, explaining that she had been bullied at school and had left without achieving much. She had previously worked in factory jobs before becoming pregnant and then had spent most of her time looking after her son, although as well as her IT classes she had completed a personal development course with a lone parent group. She hoped to return to work in about a year's time.

It soon became clear to the careers adviser that Kelly had ambitions for herself and had an interest in improving local play facilities. Now, having missed the opportunity in earlier years to test out her capabilities, she needed the chance to explore some career ideas and something at which to aim.

The careers adviser suggested adult learning opportunities, and in particular that brushing up on her English, maths and IT, would give Kelly a fresh start and help her feel more confident, whatever direction she chose. The careers adviser proposed they work together over the next year on a programme of career development activities linked to classes and voluntary work to help build up Kelly's skills and work experience.

The careers adviser judged it important to give Kelly something tangible to get her teeth into so as not to lose momentum. Appointments were arranged on the spot for classes that fitted around school hours and Kelly and her careers adviser agreed to meet again to run through the *Adult Directions*, a computer program designed to help generate career ideas.

At the next meeting Kelly was more relaxed and by focusing on the *Adult Directions* computer generated questions the careers adviser avoided the face to face questioning that she knew from experience Kelly would find daunting. The top job ideas that emerged were 'chef', 'home care organiser' and 'administration assistant'.

Kelly did not seem too pleased about what had come out

of the exercise – what she really wanted was the answer to the big question – what she should do with her life? But the careers adviser knew that Kelly had to find this answer for herself if she was to commit to making a success of her choice. She highlighted common requirements of the jobs – the need for practical skills, being organised, paperwork and being committed to service to the public – and she suggested Kelly would find it helpful to bear these themes in mind while she worked to broaden her experience and basic skills.

Over the next year, Kelly took more basic skills and IT classes and was also referred by the careers adviser to a local youth worker who wanted volunteers for a youth involvement project. Through this she became involved in organising trips for mothers and children and putting together a newsletter, and within a few months her confidence in her own abilities was noticeably greater.

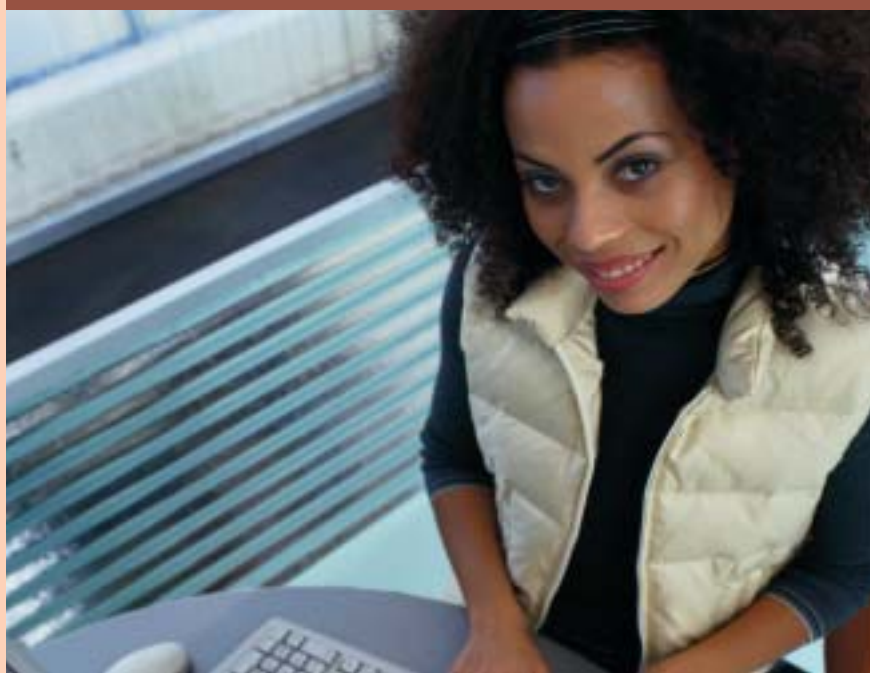
When a course came up in community development and health, run by a local health promotion project, the careers adviser made a home visit to encourage Kelly to apply. When she found her depressed because of personal difficulties, she contacted the course organiser and persuaded her to visit Kelly to encourage her to join the course.

This Kelly did, along the way producing a project stating the case for developing an adventure playground on some derelict land.

When an opportunity for a trainee post with the local health authority came up, Kelly was ready to apply. Helped by her careers adviser, who tutored her in interview techniques, she was successful.

Kelly's careers adviser referred her to a Lone Parent Adviser to help sort out her transition from Income Support to paid employment.

A year and a half after the first appointment Kelly was settled in work that she enjoyed and was continuing to develop and make a difference to her community. She made great progress through her own efforts but behind her success was a range of specially funded projects and opportunities which all played their parts in the story. The careers adviser's role had been to diagnose the support that Kelly needed, steer her through the twists and turns of the road ahead, build her confidence, refer her to others where appropriate and be there when needed.



Ethics and standards

Career guidance practitioners have a duty to provide those who consult them with effective and impartial career guidance about openings available to them in education, training and work. This is the reminder at the very start of the *Code of Ethical Practice* that members of the Institute of Career Guidance agree to follow. Other members of the Federation of Professional Associations in Guidance also have their own codes of ethics which incorporate minimum core requirements agreed by all. These cover such issues as competency and adherence to codes of practice that require advisers to provide guidance that is impartial and puts the interests of those seeking advice first. They are also expected to maintain confidentiality, except where legally advised to disclose information, and to commit to equality of opportunity, 'irrespective of race, gender, religion, social class, age, disability or sexual orientation'.

The ICG code sets out principles to be followed and illustrates practice that 'demonstrates the standards of competence, integrity and rigour demanded of members'. The influence of career guidance practitioners extends beyond those people who go to them for career guidance, and encompasses, as appropriate, parents and guardians, providers of learning opportunities, employers, other career guidance professionals and colleagues in related disciplines.

Principles to be followed include placing focus on the needs of individuals, recognising their rights and responsibilities, and respecting their privacy - except in exceptional circumstances, confidential information is only disclosed with the prior consent of the person to which it relates.

Career guidance practitioners also commit themselves to promote equality of opportunity for all, 'regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, age, social background or sexual orientation'. And they agree to work towards removal of barriers to personal achievement resulting from prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination.

As professionals they are expected to put objectivity over institutional pressures and personal interests, and to declare anything which might limit the impartiality of the career guidance they are offering.

Members of the ICG are also expected to maintain the currency of their professional knowledge and skills by participating in suitable training, study and reflection on their practice and other development activities. Those who apply to be listed in the Register of Career Guidance Practitioners must provide evidence of their continuing professional development.

How we got to here

Career guidance has, since its early beginnings, been strongly associated with fulfilment of government education, youth and employment policies through provision of advice and guidance about opportunities.

A Juvenile Employment Service was established as long ago as 1910, and the Institute of Career Guidance itself was founded in 1922 as the Association of Juvenile Employment and Welfare Officers. In 1948 the Youth Employment Service was formed, and in 1974 the Careers Service was created.

At first this was a government service, although in the mid 1990s it became a 'contracted out' service placed in the hands of private companies. This changed the way the service was paid for, with careers companies competing for various contracts, but did not bring major changes to the nature or objectives of career guidance itself.

Meanwhile private and corporate provision of career guidance has continued to grow, and over 100 organisations have already committed to the relatively recent Matrix Quality Standard for information, advice and guidance provided in the workplace. Devolution within the UK has brought further changes to mainstream career guidance, with the establishment of Careers Wales, Careers Scotland and, in England, of the Connexions Service. Careers companies in England have either 'transmuted' themselves into local Connexions Service Partnerships or continue as contractors to Connexions. In Northern Ireland career guidance remains part of the civil service. Common features of the services in England, Scotland and Wales include simplification of funding, unification of branding in each country, and use of central resources such as the increasingly important websites.

Careers Wales and Careers Scotland provide all-age guidance services. Connexions, however, is for 13 to 19 year olds, with adult career guidance now the province of the IAG Partnerships which operate under the auspices of the Learning and Skills Councils. As far as younger people are concerned there is a heavy focus in Careers Wales, Careers Scotland and Connexions on providing particular help to the so-called 'NEET' group – those not in employment, education or training.

Within Connexions career guidance professionals operate as personal advisers, sometimes fulfilling a wider function than previously, but always having a special expertise to offer within the area of career guidance.





Caring approach

Sean, who was 28 and had no qualifications, needed a job. He had quit his last one, his seventh since leaving school, to join the army but then changed his mind because he did not want to leave his girlfriend.

Together they visited the Community Learning Shop to speak to a careers adviser.

When asked about the wide range of experience he had built up, Sean dismissed this as irrelevant. It had not helped him make up his mind about what he really wanted to do, he told the careers adviser.

Sean had gone to a local comprehensive school that had had low expectations of its pupils and poor discipline. He had left to join a Youth Training Scheme in catering with a placement in an Age Concern café but moved on before gaining formal qualifications that would have helped him get a trainee job in a restaurant. Since then he had moved from job to job with no particular plan. He had worked as a machine operator in engineering, in a food production factory, in a nursing home, as a construction site labourer and, lastly, as a shelf filler in a supermarket.

From Sean's story his careers adviser could see he had got on well with people and always come away with good references from his employers. She realised he had a useful combination of 'people' and 'practical' skills and plenty of potential.

Sean and his careers adviser looked together at information about working in a range of sectors, including hotel and catering, engineering, production, construction, retail, and care work. During this, the careers adviser probed Sean's feelings about work and what his expectations were for his future career. It turned out that Sean was most positive about his time at a nursing home, where he felt he had been most able to make a difference. But Sean realised he had no qualifications for care work and thought that unskilled care work was badly paid and not a practical option for him.

It was clear to Sean's careers adviser that he wanted to commit to something and to work for some qualifications. And she encouraged him to think ahead and, rather than simply 'finding a job', to treat his next move as the next step on a planned career path.

Sean agreed but was despondent about his chances because he thought he had left it too late.

The careers adviser assured him she had seen many others who had similar worries and that, although it could be difficult to get into adult training, Access courses at the local

college could be a route to a range of professional careers, including nursing. Sean caught on to this idea and with his careers adviser's help, set about finding out how to get into nursing. He discovered that Access courses took from one to three years depending on how much time could be put in, and that nursing training was another three years on top of that. It was clearly a long haul – but on the plus side he found out that bursaries and grants were available for student nurses.

The careers adviser helped Sean gain a better understanding of the realities of a career in nursing, talking to him about different specialisms and working environments.

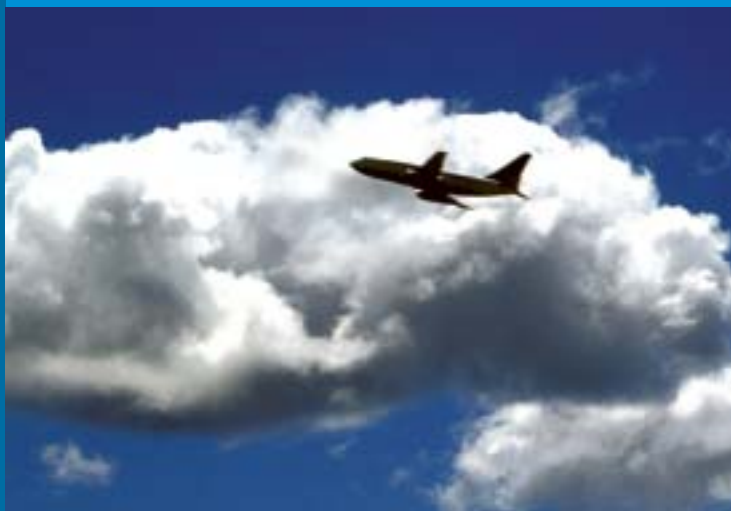
Sean was drawn to the idea of mental health nursing and was particularly attracted to the idea of working in the community.

The careers adviser was sure Sean could succeed in such a demanding environment and thought that he underestimated his own capabilities. He had done well in his army tests but probably needed to improve his basic skills in English and maths. She explained how classes to improve his skills in this area could be arranged to fit in with a job and suggested that by joining some Sean could feel he was making a start on getting qualifications. The classes would be beneficial in other ways too, as they would get him used to studying and help him work out if taking an Access course would be a realistic proposition.

The careers adviser then turned her attention to Sean's present circumstances. He was unemployed and living at his mother's house. He definitely did not want another retail job nor any job involving shift work – which would upset his new plans for part time college. The careers adviser knew of a job going at a local plaster moulding factory and suggested that it might be worth applying. It needed reliable, hard working people who could fit in with a team and who had good practical skills – this all sounded much like Sean. There was scope for promotion and specialised work with the company for those who did well.

Sean agreed it sounded interesting and said he would apply. He went away with a long term plan that might lead to nursing as a career, an appointment to enrol on English and maths classes, and a job to go for.

Four weeks later, he telephoned to tell the careers adviser he had got the job, the classes were going well, and that he had applied to the Access course. When six weeks later he was accepted on the Access course, he telephoned again to thank the careers adviser for the help that had set him on a new direction for the future.



Travelling in hope

Tracy, 17, wanted to continue her studies and get good qualifications but she could not face the long and difficult journey to and from her present school.

She badgered her careers adviser to help her fill in applications for sixth form options nearer her home. But although outwardly adventurous, when it came to deciding on a suitable course Tracy was nervous she might make a wrong choice.

She began to call in regularly during 'drop in' sessions to see her careers adviser and to talk over possible directions.

The careers adviser provided Tracy with information about courses and the range of occupations each would open up, helping her find her way around the dizzying array of competing offers and to home in on preferred options. After brief enthusiasms for childcare and hairdressing, she eventually plumped for 'travel and tourism' – an industry with many possible career options.

Using her knowledge of local and more general opportunities and of different working cultures, the careers adviser helped Tracy narrow her aims further by helping her to find out more about the particular roles that seemed most appealing.

By drawing out her interests and experience, and by allowing her to express her personality, the careers adviser was able to explore Tracy's likely aptitude for work in various aspects of travel and tourism – so helping her to feel confident about her choice before committing herself to a vocational course.

And then....

Tracy had set her sights on working as a travel rep and believed her experience of working in fast food chains and shops had shown that she was able to work with people in demanding and sometimes stressful situations. Her careers adviser agreed her aims were realistic – but suggested that her aptitude and temperament could be tested more thoroughly by commitment to a course that included opportunities to taste practical working environments.

Just such a sixth form course was found, with Tracy adding studies leading to a GCSE in Spanish – which had not been available to her at her old school.

At first Tracy told her careers adviser she was happy with her choice and was settling in and enjoying life at the new school.

Highly motivated, Tracy worked hard, even joining a class of younger pupils to study Spanish from scratch. She planned to follow this with a more advanced course at a local college of further education.

Meanwhile she was learning more about the world of work she had committed to and, discouraged by the amount of academic study required, started to think she might after all have made a wrong choice. Alternative ideas such as catering, retail and sports and leisure began to appeal to her more.

Tracy's careers adviser helped her look at the possibilities in these areas to think about her next step. Her recent experiences made it clear that Tracy would be more comfortable in a practical rather than mainly academic learning environment – perhaps on a Modern Apprenticeship, although these were difficult to come by in her area.

Now convinced that travel and tourism was not for her, Tracy's confidence was faltering and she might have dropped out. But encouraged by her careers adviser she saw that her best immediate plan was to stay the distance and to complete her course.

Stylish future

Tracy's careers adviser continued to help her search out possible options. Together they talked through college and work-based learning opportunities.

Tracy was encouraged to contact people she knew to try to get some experience of different workplaces.

After spending some time in a salon, Tracy returned to the idea of hairdressing. This, she felt, would give her a set of professional skills that one day she could use to travel, by working abroad or perhaps on cruise ships.

She decided to look for a Modern Apprenticeship with a local salon and to attend a hairdressing academy for day release training. Again her careers adviser helped her, this time by drawing up a strong CV which Tracy took doggedly from place to place in her search for the right opportunity.

The last time her careers adviser saw her, Tracy was smartly dressed and *en route* to her new job at a hair and beauty salon. She was very happy with her choice.

'It seemed sometimes that it would be almost impossible to find something that suited me and wouldn't be a dead-end job', said Tracy. 'I really want to see the world and this way I can work my way to different countries, and still have something to come back to'.



Useful contacts

Association of Graduate Recruiters	www.agr.org.uk
Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services	www.agcas.org.uk
Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC)	www.crac.org.uk
Careers Scotland	www.careers-scotland.org.uk
Careers Service Unit	www.prospects.csu.co.uk
Careers Wales	www.careerswales.com
Connexions	www.connexions.gov.uk
Department for Education and Skills	www.dfes.gov.uk
Federation of Professional Associations in Guidance	www.fedpig.com
IAG Partnerships	www.lifelonglearning.co.uk
Institute of Career Guidance	www.icg-uk.org
International Association of Career Management Professionals	www.iacmp.org
International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance	www.iaevg.org
Learning and Skills Council	www.lsc.gov.uk
Learning and Skills Development Agency	www.llda.org.uk
National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers	www.nacgt.org.uk
National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults	www.naega.org
National Association for Managers of Student Services	www.namss.org.uk
National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling	www.crac.org.uk
Third Age Network	www.taen.org.uk

Acknowledgements

ICG would like to acknowledge the work of Maddie McGowan in supporting career guidance practitioners to 'tell the story' from a professional perspective. We also thank VT Careers Management, Sheffield Futures and the individuals who have contributed considerable time and effort in producing studies that illustrate the dynamic and challenging nature of the process of professional career guidance, and the subjects of the case studies for giving their permission for their stories to be used in this publication.

Career guidance: Making a difference was produced for the ICG by Write Now and printed by Holbrooks Printers Limited.



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