

Occasional Paper from the National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults

# The Demand for Adult Guidance

In September 2000, the consultants Segal Quince Wicksteed delivered this report, *The Demand for Adult Guidance*, to the Scottish Executive. Conducted in Scotland, the report echoes and complements the earlier work commissioned in England by the Guidance Council from Heather Jackson and Judy Wilson. Their report, *What are adults' expectations and requirements of guidance? A millennium agenda?* is available from the Guidance Council.

The Guidance Council Briefing on the English report was distributed to NAEGA members last year. Taken together, the English and Scottish reports establish beyond question, the need to find a better explanation of guidance for our clients and potential clients. NAEGA sees this publication as a significant contribution to that search and also to the literature of guidance.

NAEGA is most grateful to the Scottish Executive for permission to make the Scottish report more widely available through this publication.

**Jonathan Brown**  
**Past President NAEGA**  
**March 2001**

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In May 2000, the Scottish Executive commissioned SQW to detail the demand for adult guidance. This report contains the findings from the study and their implications for policy. The approach adopted was a highly qualitative one. This report is based on a series of sixteen focus groups conducted between 20 June and 13 July 2000.

# Executive Summary

## Research findings

- 1 It was apparent that awareness of adult guidance provision is very low. The generally fragmented model that operates in many areas exacerbates this. Even people who had accessed some guidance, for example through a local initiative, were not aware of it. They saw it as part of a wider job/training initiative. Allied to this low awareness was a generally poor understanding of what guidance involved. Many of the workshop participants responded better to descriptions of careers/job advice.
- 2 People had tended to access guidance to:
  - help find employment
  - identify a suitable career change
  - gather information about training courses (having often decided what they want to do).
- 3 Based on the focus groups undertaken it would appear that people want a range of services:
  - information about training courses and funding, although most thought that they would make their decision about which course prior to making contact
  - advice and guidance about jobs/careers which would suit the skills individuals have
  - assistance to apply for jobs
  - details of job vacancies.
- 4 A key issue across these topics was the need for any guidance service to be differentiated from and add value to the current Jobcentre network, for example by appealing directly to those in employment.
- 5 There were some very clear messages from the focus groups about service delivery:
  - guidance services should be available face to face
  - a telephone helpline would be useful, but mainly for simple enquiries
  - centres should be easily accessible by public transport – probably in town centres
  - rural areas may require a roving service, perhaps with designated surgery hours
  - opening hours had to reflect when those in employment could access the service – mainly evenings and weekends

- services must be confidential, both for those in receipt of benefits and of employers
  - those in employment were often willing to pay, although they would like to have more confidence about the services that they would received.
- 6 There was a general view that provision should be independent, focussing on the best interests of the individual. This should be a long-term perspective, not simply moving people in to any job or training course that was available.
  - 7 Advisers were wanted who would be able to respond to requests for specialist help. This would include understanding in depth the characteristics and requirements of different occupations. People would value a one-to-one relationship with the adviser:
    - allowing understanding to build up
    - encouraging consistency over time.

## Policy implications

- 8 Many of those consulted could see value in having access to a guidance service. Given the low awareness, this indicates an unmet demand. Further, given government policy to encourage learning it is important to consider how people can be helped to make more informed choices about learning than was apparent in the focus groups.
- 9 Marketing programmes should be explicit in targeting people in employment. Many current services appear more focussed on young people or the unemployed.
- 10 The service should be delivered at a local level, to enable people to go in and use the facility as they require. Some flexibility of opening hours will be required, with regularly designated late night/weekend opening.
- 11 It should be possible to charge for services, where people are in employment. However, prices should not be set too high as this will deter use, especially as people were unclear about what 'adult guidance' would entail. They often related it to 'careers'. This conceptualisation could be used in developing and marketing the service (it has more positive connotations than 'job') and would also appeal to those in employment.

# I Introduction

In May 2000, the Scottish Executive commissioned SQW to detail the demand for adult guidance. This report details the findings from the study and their implications for policy.

The brief stressed that “the focus of the research be placed clearly on the perspective of the customer”. The research was to test:

- the demand for different types of guidance
- interest in different means of delivery
- awareness of different guidance sources, and their credibility
- the value placed on guidance.

The approach adopted was a highly qualitative one. This report contains the findings of the study, which are based on a series of sixteen focus groups conducted between 20 June and 13 July.

## Context

The UK and Scottish Governments have stressed the importance of lifelong learning, both for economic development and social inclusion purposes. This has led to a wide range of policy initiatives such as the Scottish University for Industry (SUfi) and the Scottish Learning Network. These seek to make learning more accessible to a wider range of people by:

- improving access to information about courses
- promoting new means of learning, especially through the use of information and communications technologies.

A key element of this strategy is to stimulate demand from outside traditional groups of learners, such as the excluded and those with low or no qualifications. It is important that as this demand is developed a mechanism exists to steer it in the correct direction: if people choose to take up a course and find it a poor experience then any thought of them continuing to learn will be lost.

This scenario will be amplified with the introduction of individual learning accounts (ILAs). These anticipate that individuals will invest some of their own finances in their learning. Even where the financial investment is modest, individuals invest in learning in other ways, including the commitment of time and emotional resources. However, many will lack a proper frame of reference to judge:

- what their needs are
- the appropriateness of different provision
- the demands expected of them by different types of provision
- the type of return that they could expect on their investment, i.e. what advantage they will gain.

There is therefore a strong rationale for the provision of high quality guidance, tailored to the circumstances of individuals.

The brief recognised this in its desire to better understand the guidance needs of potential customers and the extent to which current practice is meeting these needs.

## How does the system operate currently and what can be learned from this?

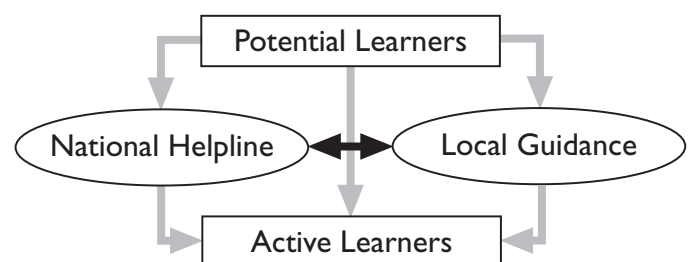
At present adult guidance is provided in different ways and by a wide range of organisations across areas. In many cases it sits within education and training providers. This has advantages (such as closeness to the system) but can also raise questions about the independence of the support provided (especially as organisations are funded on student numbers and outputs achieved), and the extent to which it actively reaches out to widen participation.

The complexity and variety of arrangements at a local level is also a hindrance to any national campaign and may impact on the consistency of the service provided. This is particularly apparent when contrasted with the Careers Service Partnership approach for young people, with each area subject to audit by Scottish Executive Careers Inspectors against the Scottish Quality Management System (SQMS).

Henry McLeish’s announcement in October 1999 on the review of the careers service (See end references for reports on the outcome of this review), with a requirement to consider under its terms of reference ‘all age guidance’, underlines its importance in the lifelong learning agenda. New opportunities are presented by the continuing development of distance and on-line learning facilities as well as the development of SUfi, with its focus on providing information.

These developments all sit within a context of lifelong learning. They also raise questions about the fit of national and local provision. For example, on what basis will the national helpline for SUfi refer people to a local service, or how will be the relationship between the two impact on marketing or flows of information about courses or opportunities. Of course, in other cases people will choose to go direct to the supplier (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1 Fit of national and local provision**



## What are the characteristics of existing and potential customers?

Guidance services must respond to the needs of individuals in terms of their training, education and work. The characteristics of learners and potential learners seeking guidance vary in relation to several factors. The locality of the learner is one important dimension, particularly if the locality is relatively remote, or it is associated with those who are socially excluded as less active in learning. The qualification background of the learner is another factor (we know that

people with higher qualifications are more likely to participate in further learning), as is their age (more mature workers not engaged in learning consider that they are “too old to learn”), occupation (lower skilled occupations train less than higher skilled ones), and sector.

Different types of learner will require different types of guidance and support especially vis a vis their relative demand for and links between educational, vocational and careers guidance. The evaluation of Learning Direct found that three-quarters of callers made some positive use of the information that they received, with almost half starting a course to improve job prospects. This indicates that in many cases the request for information is driven by a direct need or want related to career development.

## Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- chapter two – details the methodology adopted, including details of how focus groups were selected and the types of people included in them
- chapter three – explains the motivations of people for seeking guidance
- chapter four – details the type of services that people wish to access
- chapter five – how people would like to access guidance, and examines how far they would be willing to pay
- chapter six – discusses who people want guidance delivered by, and the extent to which this should be seen to be independent
- chapter seven – sets out our conclusions from the research and the implications of these for policy development.

## 2 Study Method

This chapter details the approach used in the research to identify and organise focus groups. It also discusses the types of groups that were held and the geographical spread achieved.

### Organising the focus groups

The research was overseen by a steering group drawn from the Scottish Executive and guidance providers. The initial steering group meeting identified six areas (based around three groups of two) of Scotland in which the focus groups would be concentrated. These were chosen to reflect a range of different situations, such as tight and slack labour markets and a mix of urban and rural areas, as shown in the table below.

The table also describes the different nature of adult guidance provision in each area.

The Adult Guidance Network co-ordinators in each of the six areas were the starting point for organising the focus

groups in their areas. Four were able to attend a meeting at which we discussed the need to generate a mix of different types of group:

- employed/unemployed
- received guidance before/no experience of guidance
- in learning/not in learning

**Table 2.1 Details of the focus group areas**

#### **Edinburgh** *Tight urban labour market.*

Throughout Edinburgh and the Lothians the “Learning Line” provides a single point of contact for people to access adult guidance services across the area. This is a collaborative partnership between the member organisations of Lothian Adult Guidance Network. It is funded by the Scottish Executive through the Adult Guidance Network Challenge Fund (from which it was established in 1997) to offer information, advice and guidance on careers, education, training and employment matters. This service is available 9.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday with an out of hours answering service. “Learning Line” is located within the Adult Guidance Service of Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians. For some services adults in employment are asked to pay.

There is also access to a large network of 140 members of the Lothian Adult Guidance Network and a further 300 members of the nine local networks who work collaboratively to provide advice, information and guidance on education, training and employment.

#### **Glasgow** *Urban labour market, with significant unemployment in several areas.*

Glasgow Adult Guidance Network is not a direct deliverer of guidance. Its strategic role has been to improve access to the guidance offered by our member agencies. All members have been issued with ‘window stickers’ of the network logo, allowing us to give the message “Call in where you see this sign.” Our Members Directory is now also on the Web and available to the public to research what services are offered by whom. In addition, we encourage members of the public to contact the ‘Hub’ directly if they need help in accessing the agency most appropriate to their needs. There are plans for further development to increase ease of access.

#### **Fife** *Mixed semi-urban labour market. Focus groups concentrated in the west of the area where unemployment is higher.*

In Fife the principal provider of adult guidance is Fife Council’s Adult Guidance Service. This is an independent specialist agency whose services are available to anyone over the age of 18 who lives or works in Fife.

**Guidance to adults in the area is also provided by a range of network member organisations in the context of the learning and training programmes that they provide.**

***Lanarkshire Mixed semi-urban labour market, with significant levels of unemployment.***

**In Lanarkshire, a wide range of organisations are involved in delivering guidance to adults. These organisations will deliver some or all of the key guidance services.**

**Members of the LAGN operate within agreed quality standards including a Code of Practice and Entitlement Statement and appropriate inter-agency client referral procedures.**

**Members of the public can call into any network member organisation for appropriate referral or access the LAGN website for further information on accessing services.**

***Highlands Rural area, with significant seasonal and lifestyle employment.***

**The Highland Adult Guidance Network has as its aim “to improve and strengthen the provision of vocational and educational guidance to adults throughout the Highlands”. There are presently around 45 member organisations within the Network. A large part of the adult guidance provision in the Highlands is undertaken by local training providers and community/voluntary sector organisations that offer guidance as part of their wider services. In addition, most LECs in Highland fund adult guidance advisers who provide specialist, impartial input and to whom local organisations can make referrals.**

***Tayside Areas chosen excluded Dundee and so had rural characteristics and so provided a comparison to the groups held in the Highlands.***

**The Network for Adult Guidance Tayside is a network of 55 organisations actively involved in adult guidance throughout the area. Although not directly involved in giving guidance to adults the Network supports and provides information and training for its members. The production of a Directory of Guidance Services and the CD-ROM knowledge base are two examples of this and a website will shortly be on line. These publications detail the services available to adults and can be used by both members of the public and practitioners alike. The Network phone number is also widely available on much of the publicity materials and members of the public will be directed to the appropriate provider.**

All six of the AGN co-ordinators identified agencies and employers in their area which they thought would provide interesting cases and which would help to achieve the desired range of activities. They then contacted these agencies and secured their agreement to co-operate. SQW were then able to contact the agency to agree the exact timing and nature of the focus group. In some cases the AGN co-ordinator took it upon them self to organise a group. We are grateful to all of them for their considerable efforts.

The adult guidance co-ordinators who attended the meeting highlighted a number of important issues:

- routes into guidance need to be wide and varied
- choice and range more important than actual location, one mechanism will not suit all
- it would be helpful for image and uptake if there was a high profile and discrete service, or common brand
- recognise that people have specialist needs and skills – one adviser cannot do everything
- need for consistent quality across providers (a core entitlement, probably underpinned by a quality assurance)
- client tracking would help to identify the benefits of the system.

We have taken these points into account in drawing out the policy implications in chapter seven.

## Details of the focus groups held

The spread of the focus groups across the six areas and the types of groups we met are detailed in Table 2.2 below.

The groups provided a good mix of different client groups. In particular we were able to pick up people who were in very different types and at different levels of employment, and also a range of people who were out of work. This range of participants also represented a wide variety of educational backgrounds, from graduates (and some with post graduate qualifications) to several with no formal qualifications.

One particular issue was the inclusion of focus groups with people who had not accessed guidance and had no plans to do so. Much of these discussions was based on hypothetical questions. This meant that interviews with this group tended to be less fulsome than with others, although they did highlight some important issues, especially in terms of how they perceive guidance and existing service providers.

Despite the variety achieved it is worth noting that there are a couple of areas where the coverage was less than ideal. These are:

- people in full and part time formal education, such as college courses
- participants in community education programmes (although one group in the Highlands did attract some of these).

These shortcomings reflect the timing of the study. We had a number of discussions with AGN co-ordinators about such groups. However, the four weeks within which the groups were undertaken fell after term time teaching had stopped

and it was thought unlikely these groups would attend on a voluntary basis (as opposed to meeting them during lesson time). We also explored the option of interviewing people taking part in summer school activities, but these generally started too late to fit with the study timescale.

**Table 2.2 Details of the focus groups**

#### **Edinburgh**

- **Group of 5 people who had previously enquired about accessing the adult guidance service, but had not subsequently done so. Most of this group were graduates and had been in employment for some time.**
- **Group of 4 people who were using the graduate careers provision at Edinburgh University. Two of this group had been out of higher education for several years.**

#### **Fife**

- **Group of 8 males who were about to be made redundant. Most had worked for the company for over 10 years. They had previously not accessed guidance but had recently received a presentation about services available to help them find alternative work.**
- **Group of 3 people who have accessed the Opportunities Centre in Kirkcaldy. One was employed.**

#### **Glasgow**

- **Group of 4 childcare workers, employed through the Glasgow Works project (an intermediate labour market project for the long term unemployed. They were receiving training through the project but had not received formal guidance.**
- **Group of 8 young people on the New Deal Full Time Education option. Their dealing with their gateway adviser was their only link to guidance.**
- **Mixed age and gender group of people returning to the labour market in a disadvantaged estate. They were currently on a personal and social development programme run by one of the local economic development companies. They had had a small amount of guidance before starting the programme.**

#### **Highlands**

- **Group of 6 young people, recent school leavers undergoing the New Deal Gateway. They were currently attending a two week training course to develop their job seeking skills with an element of work placement. Had experience of New Deal personal advisers, but little contact with the Careers Services.**

- **Group of 10 (2 males and 8 females) local residents in a small village, all volunteers at a visitor attraction. Mix of semi-retired and part-time workers. More interested in details of courses for themselves. Only a couple were aware of adult guidance.**
- **Group of 6 females and one male of mixed age. All were local residents and currently undertaking a computer course through Community Education. They had some experience of advice and guidance from their community education worker.**

#### **Lanarkshire**

- **Group of 6 females and one male, most of whom were volunteers through the local volunteering centre. Some were also in part or full time education. They had a range of experience of guidance, mainly through Employment Service and training providers.**
- **Group of 6 males aged 20 – 25 who had been through the New Deal programme. Two were currently on the Environmental Task Force, two were doing college courses and two were not currently in work or training. Their experience of guidance was via the Personal Advisor.**
- **Group of 3 males and 3 females working at a SME in the IT sector in semi-skilled occupations. The company has a learning centre. None had experienced adult guidance.**

#### **Tayside**

- **Group of 6 males and one female, all currently undertaking a range of open learning courses at a centre in a small town. Two were registered disabled. Many of the participants travel (up to 1.5 hours) to access the centre. All had experience of guidance at the centre and through the referral process to access its facilities.**
- **Group of 6 males and 2 females. All were looking for work and were currently either volunteering, on New Deal placements, or unemployed. All had accessed guidance through specialist centres (Next Steps or Six Circle).**
- **Group of 3 professionals in employment at an internationally renown hotel and leisure facility. All were engaged in providing advice and guidance or training to staff.**

# 3 Why Do People Access Guidance?

This chapter reports people's motivation for accessing guidance. It draws on the experiences of those in the focus groups who had previously used guidance. This was augmented by a series of hypothetical questions asking people if they would:

- have liked guidance in the past when they had made certain decisions
- want guidance in the future.

## Understanding of guidance

The Scottish Guidance Group has agreed a wide definition of guidance as follows:

'Guidance is a process by which individuals are helped to clarify options about their futures in terms of training, education and work. Through this helping process people learn to be autonomous, taking control of their own decisions and making them wisely. Guidance covers a range of interventions which are best described by the seven activities of guidance developed by the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (*The Challenge of Change*, UDACE, 1986):

- Informing providing unbiased information
- Advising helping clients to interpret information and choose the most appropriate action
- Counselling skills helping clients to discover, clarify, assess and understand their needs and the various opportunities ways of meeting them
- Assessing helping clients to make realistic judgements about the appropriateness of certain opportunities
- Enabling supporting the client in dealing with educational or training establishments and employers
- Advocating negotiating with an organisation on behalf of a client
- Feeding back gathering and collating information on unmet needs and encouraging providers to respond to these.' (Scottish Guidance Group, 2000)

As we noted above those who had simply sought advice did not view this as guidance. This reflects the language used. Indeed, in many cases the term guidance was not well understood. This in part reflected the low level of awareness of guidance services which existed in most of the focus groups undertaken. The exceptions to this were the people (mainly professionals) who had sought assistance in Edinburgh and the group in Fife who had used the Opportunities Centre. In these cases their explicit contact with a guidance service had improved their understanding of what was available.

Those who had experienced long/repeated spells of unemployment also had some difficulties with the principles underlying the definition. Due to the nature of their previous relationship with the Employment Service, they anticipated that any approach to ask for help would be met by a strongly directive response. For example, one New Deal client asked if they would find an adult guidance service useful group respondent by saying it depends on what they told us to do.

Not all viewed this type of approach as a negative. Many had become used to it and had come to rely on it. As some participants commented

***I am looking to see how I can get into different fields. To see what I want. I want somebody who is going to say to me okay this is what you should do.***

***Sometimes I need to be led by the hand.***

## Reasons for accessing guidance

A number of those we met had, as outlined in the previous chapter, sought guidance support previously. These tended to fall in to two broad categories, differentiated by employment status.

There were a number of people who attended the sessions who were in employment, but who were seeking alternative employment due to unhappiness with their current position. These were mainly, although not exclusively, more highly skilled/qualified people who were seeking a career change. However, they were not sure what else they could do given the skills that they had. They were seeking professional assistance to:

- help clarify their options
- identify how they could use their skills
- understand what job opportunities existed
- explain how to access relevant jobs, e.g. how to present a CV, or any training that might be needed.

The quotes below give some examples of comments made in the focus groups.

***There could be hundreds of jobs out there that I simply don't know about. Need someone to show me what opportunities exist in the job market.***

***I don't really know what job I want to go into. Every job I have ever done I have just fallen into by accident. I know what my skills are. There might be the ideal job out there but I don't know it even exists.***

***At the stage before I know what I need to do. I need someone to tell me what options are open to me.***

***To get another job. I don't like what I am doing.***

***What you really mean is someone who has the ability having spoken to you to put the square peg in a square hole.***

***I wanted to sit down with someone to discuss what I wanted to do with the skills that I have.***

***I needed to take a few steps back rather than take a further step forward.***

***That's the reason why I came here because I didn't know what I wanted to do. I wanted to sit down with someone and speak to them about what would suit me and my skills and what I wanted out of the job.***

***I wanted to get an overview, a considered view of the job market and see the potential within myself that perhaps I couldn't see for myself.***

The second category of clients had accessed guidance because they wanted to find a job. This group were commonly unemployed. They shared with those described above a desire to understand what jobs their skills could be applied to. However, they tended to be less selective, there was a much greater focus simply on getting any job.

Both of the categories set out above have focussed on recruitment. A number of those we met had also sought advice, especially about education and training provision. For many this interest was stimulated by a desire to get a new job, although for a minority their involvement in learning was driven by self-development. The latter was common in more rural areas and among older age groups.

Most of these enquiries had been made direct to providers, asking them if they ran a particular course. The providers used tended to be colleges and so were easy for the individuals to identify.

In some instances they had sought advice from a local initiative or jobcentre as to which provider might be suitable. This was particularly likely where the individual was already in contact with the agency, for example in looking for vacancy information.

However, the focus group participants tended not to see this as seeking guidance, but simply as someone within the system answering a request for information. In many cases, particularly in small towns and more remote rural areas, there is only one college and therefore only one source of information which people feel will be of any use to them.

Those consulted had usually decided what course they wanted to do before making contact with the provider. In the main this choice was based on their own experience and judgement, they had not accessed guidance. A number had asked the provider to identify a suitable course, but this was usually based around a fairly narrow specification. It was also apparent that providers had guided people on to courses that they could offer.

## Reasons for not accessing guidance

This perception of what guidance involves clearly has implications for any future marketing of provision. Indeed, it was apparent across many of the groups that the profile of adult guidance provision was very low:

- a number of those who had explicitly sought guidance had used the Yellow Pages
- others had phoned the Careers Service and been directed from there as appropriate
- one group thought/guessed that adult guidance was only linked to adult education

- another thought that it related to people with special educational needs
- some had made contact with Edinburgh University because they remembered the graduate service from their time at university, even although they had attended different institutions.

These views tended to come from those in employment. Amongst the others there had been little real thought of seeking out someone to provide career guidance. This generally reflected their low awareness that any such services existed, and a thought that where it did it would replicate the service that they had received previously from the Employment Service. Several groups experience led them to believe that Employment Service was only concerned with getting people into jobs rather than getting to know the individual and their specific needs.

This of course partly reflects the ethos of the Employment Service over the last few years. This has begun to change more recently, for example with the introduction of personal advisers for the New Deal programme, although established attitudes will take some time to change.

More generally, was the thought that the Employment Service and private recruitment agencies would be primarily interested in finding individuals jobs from their registers. This would help them to meet targets. Neither was seen as offering independent advice, which would put the needs of the client first.

Those who had used local provision, such as a development company or opportunities centre tended to be more positive. They viewed the advisers based there as more independent and less coercive. This in turn meant that they were more likely to ask for advice about what options were open and to act on the advice given. There was also a view that these initiatives would be able to spend more time with clients, unless people had been allocated a New Deal personal adviser, about whom there were several positive comments.

Local initiatives along with the Employment Service tended to have the highest profile. They were viewed as much more relevant to the unemployed, and as focussing on getting people jobs rather than providing guidance. Guidance had a low profile across the six areas, regardless of the means of delivery. This was true even in Kirkcaldy where all bar one of the group facing redundancy had been unaware of the Opportunities Centre despite its high profile location at the bus station and the fact that there has been a well established guidance service in the area.

The following comments highlight these issues.

***An attitude (by Employment Service) of get them in, get them out.***

***I might feel that in a employment agency that they would speak to you with a view to the vacancies that they had because that's what they get their money from.***

***Jobcentre will be trying to push you into jobs.***

***The Jobcentre, there is no real back up. It's like looking at the newspaper, you do it all yourself, but here you have back up with them.***

**Because the Jobcentre always try and push horrible jobs. Somebody that is independent that only deals with being an adviser**

**Unless they work for New Deal, anybody else in the Job Centre doesn't help you at all that way... because they just want you to take the first thing you can get so that you are not unemployed.**

Despite the general low awareness of guidance amongst the 'unemployed group' there was, amongst a number, an interest from them for some form of support. In particular, when they finished the programme that they were currently on they expected to access assistance to help them find work. It was noticeable that the three groups in Glasgow all expected to receive this from within the same agency that they were currently with. This had the advantage of meaning that they would be dealing with people that they knew, and who knew them, which would lead to a more personalised service that they would trust.

## 4 What Services Do People Want?

The previous chapter set out why people would seek to access guidance services. This chapter concentrates on the type of services that they would want to access and discusses these under a number of headings:

- identifying education and training courses
- identifying appropriate occupations
- assistance in applying for jobs
- information about job vacancies.

### Identifying education and training

Most of those we interviewed had undertaken some form of education or training since leaving school, either for personal fulfilment or to enhance their employability. This included full and part time college courses and activities supported through Skillseekers. The strong impression given was that most people had decided what they wanted to do by themselves and then made contact with public agencies (such as a Jobcentre or The Careers Service) to identify a suitable course, or else had gone direct to a local training provider. A number of those we spoke to had found a course by phoning around a number of colleges.

**It's not so much writing away for information to a college that I need. I can do that myself. I can get them on the phone.**

**Just found out what I wanted to do and just took it from there and just contacted the colleges direct.**

We tested with the focus groups whether or not they would like a guidance service which could provide information on courses and many supported this. In particular they liked the idea of a central resource that they could go to. This would save them having to contact a range of agencies or providers. The development of the Scottish University for Industry with its freephone number to allow people to find out about courses should further enable people to take this approach, which is based around seeking information rather than guidance.

A number of groups mentioned that one way of adding value would be to provide information about tuition costs and student support alongside course details. These are important considerations for people considering further learning and early access to this information would help people to decide what might be suitable for them

### Identifying appropriate occupations

There were a number of people who had sought guidance about which jobs might be suitable for them. These people tended to be better qualified, often to graduate level. This group were very clear that a guidance service should have the facility to work with people to help identify appropriate career choices. They recognised that this would be resource intensive and require considerable skill, but saw it as a service that would be of true value. It would require staff with:

- the ability to 'unpack' the skills people have
- knowledge of how these skills fitted with occupational requirements (there are of course computer programmes which can help with this).

Few in the other groups saw a need for this type of assistance, they generally thought they could identify jobs which would interest them by themselves. That said they did see value in having someone they could ask about how what vacancies were likely to occur and at what frequency.

For several people in the rural groups the concept of having 'a career' was inappropriate, while some might have several jobs (many of them seasonal) career progression is not part of the structure. Rather, many of those we met were involved in jobs which fitted their lifestyle. They acknowledged that this meant they were probably not maximising their earning, but accepted this as a trade-off for their desire to live in a rural area. As one person commented: I worked long and hard to be able to come here and get away from all that!

There was, however, a recognition across all groups that any guidance should be firmly rooted in a sound knowledge of the labour market. People were aware that new types of job were available and that the nature of many jobs was changing. However, they lacked sufficient detail about this to apply it to

their own situation. Similarly, several people mentioned that advice about training opportunities should be related to the likelihood of them getting a job using those skills once they completed the course.

The advantage of professional advice in this context is that it can highlight opportunities which:

- would suit individuals' skills
- are sufficiently plentiful in the local area to be worth pursuing.

Some examples of this view are quoted below:

***The labour market is changing so quickly now that careers guidance is so important.***

***Just to keep an eye on the market would be useful, to know roughly how things are moving to be contemporary, so that they know well there are going to be vacancies coming up in this area or this is sort of the way things are going if you are trying to get a job.***

***Different people have different aspirations but they don't always do anything about them, because they come from a dead end, they know what they think they might be interested in, but no motivation to go in and do it.***

***He really impressed me in the fact that he really has a wide knowledge in what's out there and what you need to do the job.***

***I went to libraries – yet I don't know what I am looking for.***

## Assistance in applying for jobs

There was strong support across almost all the groups for a guidance service to offer assistance in applying for jobs.

Comment included:

***I guess I wanted to leave having spoken to someone and felt that I had been given a lot of different options that I could go away and think about career wise and what sort of job I should be looking into but also the means to finding one.***

***I came forward with an application form... and he can sit and tell you why you would be relevant for the job. But to do it for myself, it was a block and he sat down next to me and it was almost like your crosswords, it was clues and I just had to provide the answers.***

***You feel that they are there to hold your hand a bit more and its reassuring to know that and even if you do have a problem, you know who you can go and talk to***

***I think it would be helpful to a point, I mean I think because actually applying for jobs is quite difficult in itself, just applications and things like that.***

***That would be good for techniques for interviews, and you know, how to dress, how to fit, even just you know if you are having to do presentations at interviews, how to get it together, you know the overheads, make sure everything flows, for me it would be a good idea.***

This type of service would therefore include:

- advice about CVs and applications, including how these should be tailored for different types of job/employer
- interview skills support.

Several people mentioned that along with advice about CVs it would be helpful to have access to computers to keep CVs up to date, and to tailor them to different situations. A number had accessed such services through local agencies and generally found them useful. In some cases people had agreed to pay a fee (usually £10-£20) to a private agency for preparation of a CV. This reflected both a lack of IT skills and limited access to a computer. Several people acknowledged that they would need assistance with the IT: either advice about using a computer, or someone doing the work for them.

## Information about job vacancies

Almost all of the focus groups thought that an adult guidance service should provide information about job vacancies. This desire for job vacancies reflects the strong relationship between the perceived need for adult guidance and employment described in the previous chapter. In several cases the desire to see vacancies appeared to reflect a wider feeling that the more vacancies they knew of the more likely they were to get a job.

The one group who were actively seeking employment but did not believe vacancies should be on offer was comprised of graduates. They believed that if a service could point them towards the correct sort of vacancies then they would most likely access these through other means, such as newspapers or agencies.

***Now I know what to do and look on the New Scientist Website.***

***In terms of the possible vacancies, I would imagine it would be pretty difficult for them to have tabs on everything, I mean they have got the sources for you to look through, whether its papers, whether its to go on the internet here or whatever and if they are pointing in the right direction that's as much as I would expect.***

A number of participants had indeed found employment through their contact with local adult guidance provision, The Careers Service and the Employment Service. The issue is whether an adult guidance service should replicate the vacancies available through these services or should seek to add value to them. A key point for several of the groups was that it should offer more than a Jobcentre, for example it could:

- pull together vacancies from a range of different sources
- offer higher quality vacancies
- appeal more to those in employment.

We return to this latter issue in the next chapter which describes how people would like to access the service.

# 5 Where Should Services Be Based?

The previous chapter examined the types of services which people might find useful. This chapter sets out what people thought would be the best way to organise such services to enable them to gain benefit from them. It looks at the:

- means of delivering adult guidance
- location of the service
- timing the delivery of the service
- payment

## Means of delivering guidance

In all the focus groups the participants stressed the desirability of having a service which could be offered face to face. This was an almost unanimous view. It was especially the case where there was a need for a longer, more in-depth discussion. This was generally due to the need for people to develop a relationship with an advisor, so that they could understand each individual's needs and offer appropriate advice. This could not be developed effectively over the phone.

***It meant a lot to me to see the face and the eye contact.***

***For actual job search I would come in. I wouldn't deal with anything like that over the phone.***

***You could lose vital bits of information over the phone.***

***I think it depends on the amount of questions you have got. If it's like, I think what I want is a course on this or, can you advise me on what to look for this sort of thing, it's fine on an email. But if it's like, I have this idea that I might suit this sort of area, what do you think? It's not suitable for an email.***

Some people were more comfortable with using the telephone for either advice or information than others, although many recognised instances when they thought it might be useful.

***If you could have a phone call to see where to be directed. Say they only have one in say Motherwell but you are out a long way... that would be useful.***

***A phone advice line would be useful if somebody just wants the information about something.***

***Helpdesk – I could imagine that sort of service would be useful if you were in the process of applying for jobs and you did an application form for it and they had looked at your CV and just had someone look over it. If you had limited time it would be useful.***

Several participants recognised the internet as a key source of information and many would be willing to use it. Access however was an issue for many people.

## Location

It was clear that a physical location for a service would be necessary. This relates to the demand for face to face contact. There was a general agreement that the location for such a service should be central to the local town or city. Many people, particularly those on low incomes mentioned the desirability for it to be somewhere which was accessible by bus, which by default will be a town centre in many cases.

***A central location is good, as long as it is a local central location, somewhere that is close by where you can reach them, but somewhere all the information is.***

This was also recognised by the groups in Glasgow, although they believed that local delivery would make access easier and so increase the likelihood that they would use it. The point was occasionally made however, that if the service was a good quality service, which offered information and advice which people found really useful, then they would travel to it.

***Somewhere where you could go, and see for yourself. Nothing beats that.***

***For example, I don't have a car so I could not go somewhere like an out of town centre unless there happened to be a bus stop nearby. So in terms of equality of access I think that's not only location but access by public transport.***

***If you can't make the effort to go to it then that's your problem.***

Two types of groups offered a slightly different perspective. Groups of people in employment thought that if the advice were pertinent to the development of a career within the company then it would be reasonable to expect the advisor to visit the company: If it was to do with within the company, that way it would be fine.

The second perspective was offered by people who lived in more rural areas, where the possibility of having a mobile advisor who held 'surgeries' in an appropriate local place was discussed. A mobile service, which would visit people in their homes, was also highlighted by one woman whose childcare responsibilities made it difficult for her to travel far, and for some participants with disabilities.

A number of options were discussed for the location of the service. Although this was by no means universal Job Centres were generally thought to be inappropriate venues despite being based on or close to high streets. For those who were or had been unemployed their experiences had coloured their view of the Employment Service. They tended to equate 'adult guidance' with the role of their personal advisor and consequently the issue of relationship between guidance and benefits was also raised as a concern.

For people in employment, the stigma associated with Jobcentres and their association with unemployment made them less attractive than other options.

***It's alright the way it is. It's not the coming (to the Jobcentre), it's the \*\*\* they give you when you walk through the door. They treat you as if you are wee baby. Did you do this son, did you wipe your bum, did you do***

**that? Have you done this yet? If you want I can put you on that.**

**I find that once you are in work, they (the Job Centre) don't want to know you.**

**Only once, it was for leaflets and I thought, what an awfully sad place this is. I wouldn't really like to spend much time in there.**

People were much less specific when it came to discussing other venues. Some of them thought that the local library or council offices would be appropriate. Others, who were in contact with a range of projects thought that those projects offered a suitable site for adult guidance. This tended to reflect familiarity, local delivery and a positive experience in dealing with the staff. These locations included:

- local initiatives as in Glasgow
- specially designed centres, as in Fife
- training providers.

It is important to recognise that these positive views may reflect the ways the groups were recruited and where they were held. Several took place through local centres and initiatives, which invited people who had used their services. Those who came along might therefore be expected to present a more positive view than those who chose not to attend.

It is also likely that the positive view is a combination of both service location and credibility/quality. Many of these services are voluntary and therefore people had first chosen to go there, which indicates some credibility. Also, they tend to be based in town centres, or housing estates and so reasonably easy to visit.

The Careers Services were mentioned. There was a perception that these tend to be “geared towards young people and school leavers”. There was a divergence of view among and across groups as to how far the needs of adults were comparable to young people. Some were concerned that adult's needs were different, for example in terms of benefits advice, or that young people would make too much noise and not take the service seriously.

That said, a service built around careers would have a number of advantages:

- when asked about adult guidance, many of those who did not understand the term linked it back to their experience of the Careers Service at school
- several had found the adult guidance service by first phoning the Careers Service
- the term ‘careers’ has a wider and more positive connotation than ‘job’
- it may allow economies of scale, so allowing individual staff to develop more in-depth knowledge of particular sectors/occupations
- it may facilitate the further development of extensive resources and information sources.

A small number of people thought that all the advice and guidance you needed could already be found, but the problem was more its lack of co-ordination and the fact that services

were offered with geographical boundaries which did not reflect the patterns of people daily lives. What was needed, according to this view was a service which acted as a one stop shop to direct people towards the appropriate provider.

**Where do you find those careers guidance, I mean it's not obvious. There is not a file on this is whom you go and contact.**

**I had been seeking guidance for about 3 years from different places. Finding guidance is often difficult. There are different agencies who will all offer some advice, somewhere along the line. It never seems to be integrated in any way.**

## Timing

For those who were seeking employment, the timing of the advice in terms of time of day which they would access it was less of an issue, than the stage at which they could access advice. Several people commented that it would have been useful to have known of the existence of a service when they first became unemployed, rather than in one case be referred on to it once their six months with the personal advisor were up.

For those in employment, gaining access to a service was an issue. People in several different groups commented that Job Centres tend to shut mid afternoon, which makes it inappropriate for people in work. So, a service that is accessible after normal working hours, or on a Saturday would be needed by those in employment.

An appointment system was preferred by some (as long as it was efficiently administered). However, the need for a drop in centre was more often mentioned.

**On office opening hours – Utterly useless for people who are at work. I mean if someone like you was employed and at a push I could have got here for 5:00 p.m. if I left pretty sharp from Midlothian, but I mean if the target is in people who are unemployed and who are free all day that's fine.**

**I would probably like to book an appointment.**

**The times should be very flexible as well because if you are looking at people that are in employment or doing courses they need open pretty much so that everybody has access to it.**

**One evening and one morning, early in the morning before 9:00 or lunch time or something like that every week so that you could catch the people who work shifts and for the people who are on 9:00 to 5:00 p.m. make it in the evening.**

**The sort of things I want to do when I get here, it's more difficult if you come straight from work and you have still got your current job in your head and have not got a chance to take two steps back which is at the weekend you would be in more of a position to be prepared.**

**If you are in a position like we are in at the moment, we have no access to it, because we are here through the day.**

**And in the end, when they turn around and ask you to come down for 2:00 p.m. You go down and sit there until 3:00 p.m. then it's a different matter when they ask you to come down at 2:00 p.m. and you walk in at 2:30 p.m. 'Oh, I can't see you, you need to come back in a fortnight'. It's alright for them but it is not alright for you.**

## Payment

Those who were seeking work were emphatic that they could not pay for advice and that any charge would stop them using the service. However, some did say that they would consider putting something back into service if they achieved a successful outcome as a consequence.

**What with the bit of money you get after a giro. I get £82.40 or something. It's done in under 3 days.**

**I would pay for it if I was getting enough to pay for it.**

**But then again that's them going into your details or what have you. It's not something you would go for, I don't think nowadays anyway. People want a free access.**

**Depend on how much you had in the bank sort of thing.**

**It would depend on how much wages you would obviously be getting at the end as well.**

**Could pay back in stages... or once in employment – something similar to student loans.**

Those who were in work were more amenable to charging for a service, although their use of it would be partly governed by the scale of charges. Provided these were 'reasonable' then most of those in employment would be willing to pay. Several of those out of work also thought that if they were in employment then they should pay.

The participants were reluctant to commit to a figure about how much they would pay but suggestions tended to be around £10-£20 for an interview.

Several of those participants who said that payment would be a possibility wanted greater clarity regarding what they would get for their money. This reflects the low awareness of current services and so a lack of trust in what will be delivered.

**Cost was a bit of an issue and also I have got a mortgage and I realise that I would have a lot of outlay in different directions from the beginning, and so I didn't want to leap in with that.**

**I have also gone out and bought two books for £8.50 called the "The Résumé Kit" which is about 400 pages. The point I am making, the book cost £8.50 for all sorts of advice as opposed to an £80 consultation for something comparable here.**

**If you go to a lawyer, the first consultation is free for that lawyer. Then decide whether you want to go with this person and pay them the money.**

**I would pay. My life is my job; I have to make sure that I am going to be happy with that for the rest of my life and if it means paying £300 – £400 right now to do it, then, yes it is beneficial.**

**...think I would pay, I was very surprised that there was a service here, and I did think at the time well okay, if it is a free service I always felt that, should I offer something in return.**

**Wouldn't mind paying if I knew that I was going to get something worthwhile out of it. That's what universities promise, the university is well established, they do get jobs for students, you know you are going to get something out of the end of it. I have never heard of the Adult Centre.**

**My personal view with that, if there was a free phone number here, I think the quality of service would be over stretched because you would get too many time wasters or idiots that didn't really know what they wanted or they were saying. They would stretch the staff. I don't agree with that. If you have a genuine enquiry, then you don't mind paying.**

**£20 for an hour. You could probably do it, that's reasonable. It's something that wouldn't be nice. £80 no way.**

**And also what was included with that charge, I mean if it's a one off charge for everything and they will take you from there and to give you advice guidance for interviews.**

**I would like to know how much I could be helped before I paid £80 or whatever it was in order to get the help. It's quite a lot of money.**

We asked focus groups if their current or past employers would pay for such a service. There was a mixed response to this, many said no, others that it would depend on how it would benefit the business, and a minority thought that their employer would have no problem with paying for a service. The range of opinions sought through this process would be too narrow to base recommendations on, however this would be an interesting issue to pursue in employer surveys.

## 6 Who Should Provide Guidance?

The way people thought about a service is partly dependent on the quality of the service they have in mind. Quality is a function of the physical experience of accessing guidance, and the nature of the guider. This section reviews the thoughts of those who contributed to focus groups by outlining the desired characteristics of guidance and those offering it. This chapter looks at:

- independence
- specialist advice
- characteristics of advisers.

## Independence

It was recognised that the service must be confidential. The need for advice which is clearly unrelated to benefits is a major issue for those who are unemployed and on New Deal. They also raised concerns about being able to talk to anyone including advisors about the skills which they may have, but which have been developed through trade in the informal economy.

Similarly, some of those in employment thought that it might not be well received by their employer if they knew that the individual was looking for other work. This also has implications for the location of the service as people would not want to be seen going in.

***I think it's important they (guidance and Job centre) are separate, because otherwise they could be seen as not independent.***

***Especially if it's a complex situation and you have divulged a certain amount of impossibly personal information that is needed to make sense of your situation.***

The need for privacy or confidentiality will make some venues more appropriate than others. If the guidance service were to be located in larger premises its internal configuration would need to be carefully considered to balance the needs of accessibility and openness with individual comfort and confidentiality. Indeed, there was some criticism of venues that were totally open plan, and positive comments for those which had meeting rooms to discuss more private issues.

***I think the problem with the library, and the problem with here is the person I think ought to have a degree of privacy if they are maybe looking for information because they want to change their job or relates to a career change, do they necessarily want to do that publicly. So it might sound fine, yeah let's have it in the library but if the library cannot provide that degree of privacy that will turn out to be an inappropriate venue. Even it were open, it isn't likely to be open.***

A different perspective was offered by those in employment, who were seeking advice and guidance on how to develop their role within the same organisations. This group tended to rely on their employer to signpost courses. They were generally happy with this, believing that the employer would identify suitable courses to develop them in a way which would help them to do their job.

## Specialist advice

The extent to which the advice was based on a realistic understanding of both the locality and the economic structure of the area was raised in some of the focus groups. For those living in rural areas or towns, gaining advice from someone who knows the area was thought to be very important. This kind of local knowledge helps to remove psychological barriers to developing a relationship, and contributes to the recipients feeling that they are being advised by someone who understands them and their geographic situation. It would be a tall order for someone coming new to the area

For those in employment, some groups thought there was a difference between offering fairly generic advice about interview techniques and job applications, which are appropriate at all occupational levels, and specialist sector or occupation specific advice. They noted that the requirements in terms of CV presentation or the interview process could vary considerably and that people needed to be guided through this.

***I am confused about CVs because in terms I had read about it and it strikes me that different places are clear about what they want. You waste time. What would be the best way to do this CV for this. I mean I know I have been caught in it, between the Health Service and (my current employer). I mean how can you make that judgement?***

***The attitudes and values in the profession... I would also be interested in finding out what kind of job areas with the kind of value system or whatever with these characteristics. I mean people can also think, well I want to be a doctor or I want to be a such and such, and sometimes its not actually necessarily the job or work environment, but the underlying sort of ethical basis or lack of it or the underlying drive, whether it is sales or competition or whatever. I think that I would hope that perhaps people who are specially skilled would know about this.***

The graduate group were clear that any service should be able to recognise their needs. A couple of the participants wanted this reflected through a separate service, which would in effect replicate the provision that they had accessed. That said, this in part reflected the perceived credibility of the University as a whole, against the low profile of the adult guidance service. Across the group there was less concern with a specialist service than for a quality service which would fully meet their needs and aspirations.

I had no idea that they offered anything for graduates, let alone if you were a graduate from another university, that you could use it. I just thought I would phone and ask. I was surprised.

***I think it would depend on what kind of job you wanted to do, or your background. For me, I would go to the university one because I know that they can find what I would want.***

***I think I want the fact that you have got a degree recognised but it doesn't have to be within a university.***

***Employment services or any kind of career establishment, that I wasn't really getting any kind of career satisfaction at a deeper level and they didn't really know what to do with me as a graduate.***

## Characteristics of advisers

People need to develop a relationship with their adviser, and may need to discuss some personal issues with them so the approachability of an adviser was mentioned in several groups. For some participants the idea of an adviser who acted as a mentor was very attractive.

***They would need to help with keeping your self esteem, confidence or motivation***

***She actually sent me a postcard saying about a particular job she thought I might be interested in.***

***If you are mentored at an early stage, then you can move on much quicker rather than by luck or chance finding a course and finding a mentor who will help you.***

***Our adviser really cares about what she does.***

Continuity of advice was also raised in several cases, the need to be able to go back to the same person and not to have to start again with a different person each time was important.

***I walked in here and have been dealing with (the Job Centre) since I was 18, I am 25 now, nothing has changed. I have been through 3 different (new deal personal) advisers, that was the agreement he made then with another one you need to make another. When they ask you to go down there, you dread it. You never know what they are going to hit you with next...***

***That person will know you, and you wouldn't have to start again.***

***It's like going to the same doctor.***

***If you were getting advice and information and you were going back more than once, you were going back to speak to somebody you would prefer it to be the same person, the same adviser.***

***It does make it a bit more difficult if you sat down and had a half hour discussion with someone and you get the feeling that they do really know what you are looking for and the sort of thing you can do and don't want to do – it is difficult when you go into interview with someone else who doesn't have a clue who you are.***

***You don't have to then repeat yourself then do you. Of they know your case and who you are, you don't have to explain yourself again.***

## 7 Conclusions and Policy Implications

SQW was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to assess the demand for adult guidance. The research comprised a series of 16 focus groups, conducted in various parts of Scotland with different groups of people including those in employment, in training and unemployed; and those with and without prior experience of guidance.

There is an on-going review of careers guidance (See end references for reports on the outcome of this review), which this report will sit alongside. Therefore, although a series of conclusions can be drawn from the research as to how the public would like adult guidance services to be delivered it is not possible to provide detailed recommendations as to how these should be implemented in practice. Such a decision can only be taken with a fuller knowledge of the workings of the current system and the proposed funding regime.

We are also conscious that much learning will have taken place within Adult Guidance Networks and that this should be incorporated in any re-designed system. For example, we are aware that some models of delivery appear to attract much higher numbers than others. For instance, the shop front style facilities in Kirkcaldy and Aberdeen attract a very high throughput of customers, compared to more specialist services such as in Edinburgh. However, the former model is clearly more expensive and the lack of consistent monitoring data makes it difficult to compare accurately (high throughput need not necessarily equate to high levels of guidance).

The remainder of this chapter sets out the conclusions that can be drawn from the research undertaken as part of this assignment and highlights the policy issues which flow from this for considerations as part of the wider review. These are set in the following tables.

### Chapter 3: Why do people access guidance?

#### Conclusions

It was apparent that awareness of adult guidance provision is very low. The generally fragmented model that operates in many areas exacerbates this. Even some who had accessed some guidance, for example through a local initiative, were not aware of it. They saw it as part of a wider job/ training initiative.

Allied to this low awareness was a generally poor understanding of what guidance involved. Many of the workshop participants responded better to descriptions of careers/job advice.

People have tended to access guidance to:

- help find employment
- identify a suitable career change
- gather information about training courses (having often decided what they want to do).

#### Policy implications

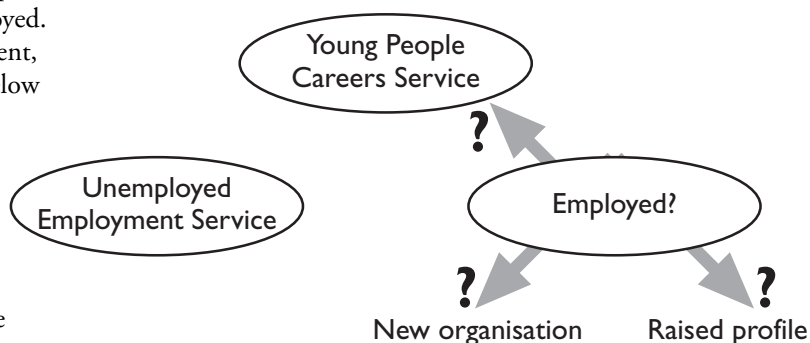
Many of those consulted could see value in having access to a guidance service. Given the low awareness, this indicates an unmet demand.

The low level of awareness is a key issue to address if uptake is to be increased, as might be hoped given other policy initiatives to stimulate demand for learning (e.g. Scottish University for Industry, Individual Learning Accounts).

Further, given these initiatives it is important to consider how people can be helped to make more informed choices about learning than was apparent in the focus groups.

The issues highlighted in the summary table for Chapter 3 are central to the future of adult guidance provision. The present system appears most suited to the young and unemployed. There is also a clear demand from people in employment, which should be recognised. However, as figure 7.1 below indicates, it is not straightforward to identify how this gap should be filled. There are a number of options, including establishing a national service or raising the profile of existing provision. This study was not set up to answer this question. However, we would suggest that it is a key issue to be addressed: in the same way as the single business gateway has been established to help businesses access available support, so the system for individuals wishing to further their careers would benefit from a common, easily understood point of entry.

Figure 7.1: Options for developing the system



**Chapter 4: What services do people want?****Conclusions**

Based on the focus groups undertaken it would appear that people want a range of services:

- information about training courses and funding, although most thought that they would make their decision about which course prior to making contact
- advice and guidance about jobs/careers which would suit the skills individuals have
- assistance to apply for jobs
- details of job vacancies.

A key issue across these topics was the need for any guidance service to be differentiated from and add value to the current Job Centre network, for example by appealing directly to those in employment.

**Policy implications**

Guidance services should be able to provide a wide range of services, which would help people to identify the types of work they might like and then work with them to help identify suitable vacancies and advise on job applications.

To provide an effective service, staff will require good knowledge of the local labour market and skill requirements for different occupations.

Marketing programmes should be explicit in targeting people in employment, for example by focussing on how they might enhance their career.

**Chapter 5: Where should services be based?****Conclusions**

There were some very clear messages from the focus groups:

- guidance services should be available face to face
- a telephone helpline would be useful, but mainly for simple enquiries
- centres should be easily accessible by public transport – probably in town centres
- rural areas may require a roving service, perhaps with designated surgery hours
- opening hours had to reflect when those in employment could access the service – mainly evenings and weekends
- those in employment were often willing to pay, although they would like to have more confidence about the services that they would receive.

The desire for a face to face contact means that specific locations will need to be available. Those interviewed were generally positive about these being in:

- Careers Service offices
- local initiatives as in Glasgow
- specially designed centres, as in Fife
- training providers.

**Policy implications**

The service should be delivered at a local level, to enable people to go in and use the facility as they require.

Some flexibility of opening hours will be required – with regularly designated late night/weekend opening.

It should be possible to charge for services, where people are in employment. However, prices should not be set too high as this will deter use.

People may be put off paying by uncertainty about what is on offer – free introductory sessions may help overcome this.

People were unclear about what ‘adult guidance’ would entail. They often related it to ‘careers’. This conceptualisation could be used in developing and marketing the service (it has more positive connotations than ‘job’).

**Chapter 6: Who should provide guidance?****Conclusions**

There was a general view that provision should be independent, focussing on the best interests of the individual. This should be a long-term perspective, not simply moving people in to any job that was available.

Services must be confidential, both for those in receipt of benefits and of employers. This will enable people to talk more freely.

Advisers should be able to respond to requests for specialist help. This would include understanding in depth the characteristics and requirements of different occupations.

People would value a one to one relationship with the adviser:

- allowing understanding to build up
- encouraging consistency over time.

**Policy implications**

The fragmented model of Adult Guidance Networks raises a number of issues concerning whether or not people are consistently signposted correctly. This will depend on

- the remit and capacity of the organisation that they make contact with
- the independence of the organisation (many organisations appear to signpost to themselves).

The requirement for specialist knowledge may mean individual advisers taking an interest in particular jobs/sectors. This may be best achieved in larger units, which would enable greater specialisation.

**References**

Since The Demand for Guidance Report was written the Committee Reviewing the Careers Service in Scotland has reported. The first two entries refer to the work of the Committee.

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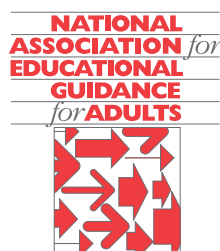
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The National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA) brings together diverse organisations and individuals providing guidance for adults across the UK. A network of seven local branches complements a range of activities at national level managed by an elected Executive. NAEGA provides the opportunity to:

- Influence policy makers and contribute to professional debate and discussion
- Keep up-to-date with public policy developments in guidance
- Update knowledge and understanding of good practice at competitive prices
- Link into local networks through the NAEGA branches

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