



**How do young people (in the region)  
form their views on future learning  
and career options?**

**NE 14 – 19 Commission**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) has been commissioned by the North East 14 – 19 Commission to carry out research in the region to inform its activities of the Regional Employment and Skills Partnership, and more specifically to “inform the future development of labour market intelligence (LMI) to support the provision of employment related information advice and guidance (IAG) to support young people” (ONE, 2008). The aim of this report is two-fold; firstly to provide the 14 – 19 Commission with a Literature Review which:

- highlights the core principles of young people’s decision-making processes;
- takes into consideration research which discusses the cognitive changes that young people undergo between the ages of 14 -19;
- focuses on structural issues, which affect young peoples views on future work and learning options;
- Investigates the significance of place and locale in the formation of young people’s views and decision making in a manner that is mindful of the identity of the North East region.

This literature review then informs the second aim of this report which is to review evidence from the North East that interprets some of the key messages from the literature review to the regional context. This is done through analysis of:

- evidence from consultations with Service Managers recommended by One North East (ONE), and;
- a review of documents, web sites and other evidence provided by consultees.

### 1.2 Rationale for the research

The North East 14-19 Commission brings together stakeholders from across the region to work together to deliver current educational reforms and ensure that all young people in the region are able to fulfil their potential.

*“The 14-19 Commission is a forum through which partners can work at a regional level to add value to local delivery of the 14-19 agenda and ensure that it contributes effectively to the economic and social priorities for the region. Helping young people aged 14-19 develop the skills and specialisms to participate in a thriving regional economy in North East England [and] ensuring that every young person aged 14-19 is helped to find the learning/work that is right for them, including those who have become disengaged or are at risk of disengaging.” (Mission Statement, 14-19 Commission Strategic Framework Priorities, 2004).*

With a range of new qualifications to offer, local partnerships are developing practice and synergies which aim to meet the needs and aspirations of every young person. This means putting in place qualifications and support infrastructures which enable them to continue learning and achieve their goals, either in employment or at school, college or with a training provider until they are 19.

With the plethora of choices available to young people; GCSEs, A-levels, Apprenticeships, Diplomas and the Foundation Learning Tier, comes the need to a) inform them about what is offered and where, b) support them to acquire the decision making skills which are necessary to make the most of the opportunities which are available to them in the North East and c) ensure that the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) that they access embodies the characteristics of good practice within the Quality Standards for young people's Information, Advice and Guidance (DCSF, 2007).

The specific drivers and concerns of the 14 – 19 Commission that informed the design of this literature review are:

- How young people form their views on future learning and career options?
- The importance of place in informing their views and subsequent decisions – and more specifically the importance of the North East?
- How can CEIAG services influence young people's views in ways that encourage young people to raise their learning and career aspirations?

### **1.3 Approach**

The multi-disciplinary literature on how young people form their views is extensive. Much of it is also quite accessible including research published under the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (and formerly DfES, and DfEE) research report series, JRF funded work and other work accessible via the internet. The constraints on time and budget, meant that it was important to adopt a pragmatic approach to the study. Rather than conduct a systematic literature review, a process which involves exhaustive searches, strict adherence to selection criteria and a very thorough appraisal process, we adopted a highly pragmatic but nonetheless thorough search procedure.

The pragmatic search for relevant research is possible when the parameters of the search are clear and the literature is familiar. As the research team were able to draw on the extensive experience of the Ask\_iCeGS service these conditions were satisfied.

The search process is outlined in more detail in Appendix Three, however it involved two key strands of activity. The first strand was a search of selected research terms using a number of databases and search engines to generate lists of potential documents, reports and monographs. The second set of

activity was to activate our networks to identify internationally important pieces of research (via email requests to our international colleagues), and regionally based research (via email requests and interviews with stakeholders nominated by One NorthEast).

These approaches generated a long list of sources which were mapped against pre-determined search criteria to ensure that all factors and issues that we would expect to be covered were indeed covered by the list. We then selected a number of sources for reading, review, summary and assimilation.

In presenting the findings from the research we have sought to ensure that the main factors affecting how young people form their views are presented and discussed. We will not however have presented these factors as they are explored in the full range of literature – this is to ensure that the discussion issues are not obscured by the weight of references.

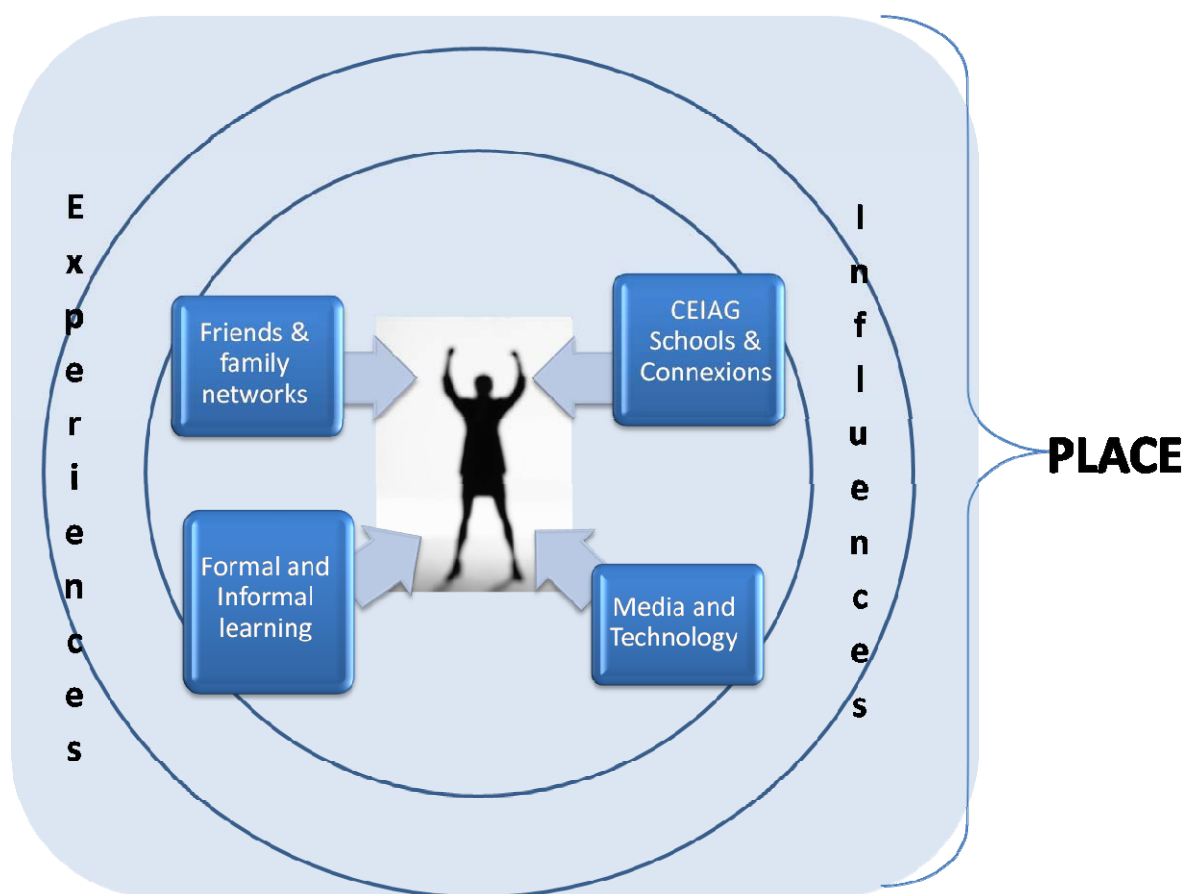
The regional perspective is presented in three ways; firstly research that has been conducted in the North East is presented in the first part of the report. Secondly, thematic analysis of interviews with stakeholders is presented in the second part of the report following the themes identified in the first, and finally examples of practice that have been documented and published are collated and presented.

#### **1.4 An overview of the evidence**

In the UK, an evidence base does exist which helps to make sense of the influences on young people as they make their learning and career decisions in 14-19 education and training, though it should be noted that this is not strong (Wright, 2005), and it tends to regard young people as a rather homogenous group.

The Figure.1 summarises the factors that we know influence young peoples views. Firstly we recognise that each young person is different, they have different learning styles, characters, abilities and self-knowledge. Young people's views are formed from the interplay of influences (from people and networks that have access and direct influence) and their own experiences and feelings (through formal and informal learning for example).

**Figure 1: Factors shaping young people's views**



### **Intrinsic factors – the individual natures of young people**

Research has explored factors that are intrinsic and personal to the young person themselves, for example, young people who not only enjoy particular subjects, but who perform well in them are more likely to use this to set their parameters for the kinds of careers to which they could reasonably aspire (Alloway, 2004). Similarly this research has also noted that young people bring different mindsets to the decision-making process, their decisions can often fluctuate over time, even amongst students who initially might appear very decided about their choices. From a psychological perspective it has long been established, that vocational reasoning is related to cognitive development (Nelson, 1978). Young people's views and reasoning about occupations reflect their changing modes of understanding the world. Therefore, it is critical to take a developmental perspective when addressing young person's patterns of aspirations in terms of chronology, identity and the influences placed upon them such as sex stereotypes in a changing society (Gottfredson, 2002).

### **Experiences and Influences**

Furthermore, we know that young people's views are influenced by a range of factors associated, not just with individual differences, but with shared



experience. Other research has explored both the influences and experiences of young people. Among the factors, studies identify economic conditions (for example Mongon and Chapman, 2008). They track cultural factors (for example Hodkinson et al., 1996). And all can be readily related to how young people respond to invitations to consider their career prospects (for example Law, 2006). For example, a literature review into pupil choices at key stage 3 identifies six factors that influence the process of decision-making. These are: the intrinsic value attached to certain subjects (i.e. enjoyment of the subject); the extrinsic value (i.e. their usefulness to future careers); pupil self-perception of their ability at any particular subject; careers education and guidance; home background (though the literature is divided on just how much influence parents may exercise); and teachers (McCrone et al., 2005).

In addition there is research that considers effective ways to support young people. Research undertaken in Wales (Webb, 2006), which examined how Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) could be developed to support young people's access to a wide range of academic and vocational courses and training, found that four categories of 'success factors' played a key role in combating barriers to choices young people made about progression. These were: information (the need for higher quality, comprehensive labour market information); support (that is, from significant adults in the lives of young people, like parents and tutors); development of decision-making skills (as preparation for post-16 choices); and transition pathways (institutional collaboration increased the range of options for study available to young people).

## **Place**

Young people's attachment to place and location are impacted upon by issues such as age, gender, social networks, class and aspirations; both those they personally hold and those which may be communicated through their significant and influential others such as parents, teachers and peers. The social spaces that young people develop and grow up in are intimately connected to their sense of self and constantly developing identity. In their recent work Green and White (2007) explore the connectedness of locale and opportunities. Their work suggests that for some, though not all, their immediate surroundings present them with a host of locally based social networks which provide them with advantages in the labour market. Because access to positive opportunities and networks are not available to all young people in equal measure, there exists the challenge to widen horizons amongst those who face often numerous, barriers to participation.

Central to the links between place and identity is concept of social capital. Kintrea et al. (2008) discuss this in their recent work on territoriality, drawing attention to the work of Putnam, 2000 and his differentiation between 'bonding' and 'bridging'. The former is inward looking, exclusive, often found in deprived communities and is characterised by knowledge and networks which help people to 'get by'. Bridging is characterised by more outward looking and diverse social interactions, it is more usually present in middle

class relationships and promotes social mobility or 'getting on'. The study will consider whether within the North East there are places where young people's surroundings promote their ability to create bridges to 'get on', and others where the place they live merely supports 'getting by'.

### **1.5 Acknowledgements**

The authors are grateful for the time and reflections offered by stakeholders that inform the findings presented in Section 4 of this report and to the helpful guidance provided by Jeff McCloud and Shelly Smith from One North East. In addition we would like to record thanks to the research team who contributed to the search and summary of literature; John Marriott, Margaret Christopoulos, Sarah Dyke and Gill Holt.

## PART ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2. Key Concepts

#### 2.1 Theories of Career Decision Making: Rationality and Structuralism

The literature that is reviewed in this paper often reflects an implicit or explicit recognition of the ways in which young people learn, and the ways in which they make decisions about their futures. These have been rationalised and theorised by several authors. This Review does not aim to critique or apply these models or theories, however it is helpful to summarise the different approaches not least because if ultimately this work is to inform the provision of support services, it is imperative to understand what might reasonably be expected of those services.

Theories of career development see the individual either as the key agent (the Master) who shapes their destination (known as instrumental rationality or differentialism), or they see the individual as a pawn whose choices and actions largely shaped by external factors (the structuralist approach). If these two theoretical approaches are seen as existing at either end of a continuum, there are a range of theories that exist at various points along that continuum.

**Instrumental rationality** is a description of a decision making model that sees decision making as a rational process of gathering information about ones-self (expressed as human capital) and ones possibilities, weighing up the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action and then planning a course of actions to match ones-self to an appropriate career (see for example, Becker, 1975).

**The Structuralist approach** sees decisions made mainly as a consequence of external forces beyond the control of the individual. Wright (2005) summarised the approach by describing those forces that can be elements of an individuals' background (such as class, ethnicity, gender), the influence of other individuals over the decision-making process (e.g. parents and teachers), the nature of education and training provision (as influenced by government educational policies and the nature of learning providers), and economic conditions (e.g. labour market opportunities). They also tend to down play the element of rationality in decision making, emphasising instead emotional and psychological factors and preconceptions and assumptions arising out of the external factors listed above.

**Hybrid models** have been developed that seek to develop a compromise between the two approaches outlined above. Several authors have developed a number of different ways to understand how people make decisions that shape their life course.

Hodkinson et al. (1996, p.139) developed the concept of pragmatic rationality that has three interlocking dimensions:

- firstly that decision making processes are part of a wider choice of lifestyle which is strongly influenced by the social context and culture of the person making the decision;
- secondly, that decision making is part of the ongoing life course, and;
- thirdly the decision making is part of the interaction with other stakeholders, which means that a pragmatic decision can only be understood as part of the actions of others, as well as those of the person supposedly making the choice.

They stress that “social structure and culture permeate all parts of the model”.

Other interpretations include those of Law (1996, 1999) who is the principal proponent of community interaction theory and career learning theory. He suggests that the primary impacts on individual’s career development are the interactions they have with significant individuals in their lives. These will usually be their family, neighbours, peers, teachers and other acquaintances. As such, ‘community intervention’ occurs within the social group within which the individual is a member. The individual receives messages from this group which provide reinforcement of their aspirations; observations of others work habits and models also influence choice. Other researchers place emphases variously on social class (Ball et al., 2000), change in the external environment, termed happenstance (Hambly 2007), and the phased processes of decision making (Helmsley-Brown, 1999).

Most recently, longitudinal research by Bimrose and Barnes (2007) has used in-depth qualitative data from 28 people reflecting on their career development and the role of guidance within it to develop a typology of decision makers that reflects those aspects of the instrumental / structural typology outlined above. They find that people adopt one of four decision making styles:

- Evaluative – an approach whereby individuals reflect on themselves, their needs, values and abilities and on the long term consequences of decisions, characterised by critical self-reflection and evaluation
- Strategic – a more focussed and rational decision making style that is based on analysis, synthesis, consideration of advantages and disadvantages and then a period of goal setting. This approach maintains a “steadfast focus on a career goal” and a tendency to “marginalise emotions”;
- Aspirational – whereby decisions are taken that are inextricably intertwined with personal circumstances and priorities, but that are based on a focused but distant career goal, one which is often highly competitive or challenging to achieve;
- Opportunistic – an approach that is different to the other three in that an opportunist will exploit available opportunities rather than making active choices about work – their career plans can seem vague, undecided and uncertain. A characteristic of this style is to go with intuition, to be flexible, and have an ability to cope with high levels of uncertainty.

Their research therefore finds that different people, at different stages in their lives adopt approaches to opinion forming and decision making that span much of the rational / structural continuum.

While most of the theories outlined above have been founded on research with people throughout their working lives (and not just among young people) they emphasise the importance of the individual as an agent of their own destiny, and the way that their community and their context help to shape their views and their decisions. They also emphasise the idea that career is a journey through life and that learning is a key part of that journey.

## **2.2 What do we mean by career, and career education and guidance?**

This study examines how young people form their views of their futures. It focuses on how they form their views of their working futures and consequently it is concerned with career. The term career is generally applied to mean “the unfolding sequence of a person’s work experiences over time (Arthur et al., 1989)”, but in order to understand that sequence career guidance researchers and practitioners have, over the past two decades, undergone a serious transition in the way that career is perceived. Career now encompasses Arthur’s notion of the boundaryless career which sees career in the context of work, social networks, family, community, age and place. Career is about work life balance and self-actualisation.

Careers education and careers guidance practice is therefore much less about professionals with “expertise” assisting people to find a good fit of their skills with current or future opportunities – the idea that careers teachers or careers advisers can assess an individual, predict the labour market and guide them on a successful pathway is just not viable, not least because of the pace of economic and technological change. Their role now is much more focussed on supporting individuals to build the skills of self awareness, investigation, assessment, decision making, and evaluation in the context of learning and working opportunities.

So what is career education and guidance for young people? The DfES National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance (2003) offers the following definition: “Careers Education helps young people develop the knowledge and skills they need to make successful choices, manage transitions in learning and move into work. Careers Guidance enables young people to use the knowledge and skills they develop to make decisions about learning and work that are right for them” (2003, p.6). In the context of adult guidance services further definitions have been developed (for example by the Guidance Council) that distinguish information, advice, and guidance. The use of appropriate terminology within any work related to careers education and guidance is important because (i) they refer to different activities and processes; and (ii) an assessment of the efficacy of one or the other should be based on an understanding of those differences.

That terminology, and indeed the role and focus of careers work in schools and colleges is changing following a range of policy developments that have

been shaped by the 14-19 skills education programme. Within this are requirements for teachers to have 'sufficient understanding of the careers routes and pathways available for 14-19 year olds and to be able to offer information, advice and guidance to learners.' The policy context for this research is framed by the following developments:

- the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2005 *Education and Skills White Paper* that emphasised the need '*to help young people assess themselves and improve their decision making*';
- *the Ofsted (2005) 14-19 Implementation Plan* which highlights the expectation that '*young people will receive better advice and support, so that they are well informed to make choices*';
- guidance to schools from the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL, 2006) which gives a recommended minimum time allowance in order for students to achieve the learning outcomes in the National Framework; and;
- QCA (2008) Framework to support Economic wellbeing 11 – 19.

In turn these changes are influencing a number of environmental factors that help shape the support infrastructures for young people. These include:

- the reforms of the (Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum so that "career" is included within the Curriculum. There are now two strands; Personal Wellbeing, which addresses the Every Child Matters (ECM) imperatives of 'be healthy' and 'stay safe' and Economic Wellbeing and Financial Capability (EWFC) which focuses on, 'make a positive contribution', and achieve economic wellbeing;
- workforce remodelling within schools that have changed the nature and remit of the schools career co-ordinator and / or their careers teacher;
- the introduction of Diplomas and the extension of the school leaving age has raised further concerns about the need for effective impartial careers education and advice, and;
- the transition of Connexions services to local Children's Trusts and new commissioning arrangements.

Finally, it is important to note that these reforms are still ongoing, work is currently underway to review and develop a framework for qualifications for careers co-ordinators (due to report to DCSF in early summer 2009), and a strategy for IAG for young people is currently being developed by DCSF.



### **3. Factors affecting young people's views**

#### **3.1 Introduction: How young people differ**

This literature review seeks to outline the range of factors that comprise how young people form their views of their future learning and career options. It is important to commence this discussion by making the point that young people are a heterogeneous group. They develop their awareness of themselves and the world around them in different ways and at different points in their development. This introductory section presents the findings of research from a psychological perspective that outlines:

- the different types of thinking skills that are needed before young people can begin to formulate considered and realistic views of their worlds; and;
- the ages at which thinking skills develop.

Thinking skills are important in the new 11 – 19 framework of personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS). They are defined as creative thinking, independent enquiry and reflexivity, the sorts of skills that are demanded by employers in labour market (Quality Improvement Agency, 2008). These are also the sorts of skills that young people need in order to formulate views of their futures.

Blenkinsop et al. (2005) noted in their survey of young people that they make decisions in different ways and that it seemed to vary according to context (including the curriculum offer and support), the ways in which information and advice was available to them, and their own individual approach to and skills of decision-making. Young people brought different mindsets to the decision-making process, and made decisions differently across and within schools. They were able to observe that decisions had also often fluctuated over time, even amongst students who had at first appeared very decided about their choices.

Future planning and career management necessitate that different options and outcomes must be critically considered. As part of a literature review of early years thinking skills, Taggart et al. (2005) draw attention to counterfactual thinking, the ability to consider alternative outcomes to the present situation thus requiring the ability to suspend ones conviction that the way things are, is the only way that they could or should be. By over riding 'one's real world' young people are not only able to empathise with what/who is different to them, they are also able to consider that things could be different for them also. This level of abstraction is more difficult for younger children.

The work of Taggart et al. (2005) also notes the significance of language and vocabulary development in terms of young people's ability to articulate and understand their own thinking, noting that its development is strongly dependant on social experience. The implications of this are that

vocabulary development, especially during the early years, will be dependent on the language skills of primary carers which in turn will be affected by parental occupations and socio-economic background.

Gati and Saka (2001) note that significant developmental processes take place during adolescence which result in improved cognitive abilities that are connected to enhanced decision making skills. Referring to the work of Piaget and Inhelder (1969) they note that as young people get older they are better able to make the shift from concrete to abstract cognitive processes, are more confident in exploration and coping with complex environments and are better able to relate to facts rather than anecdotal evidence. Lewis, (1981) also cited in Gati and Saka, notes the positive correlation between adolescents' ages and their decision making skills; as young people age their cognitive capacity to gain and assimilate knowledge and develop cultural capital increases which in turn means that the choices they make are more widely informed and better connected to objective realities such as labour market information.

There is therefore evidence to show that thinking skills and cognitive abilities differ from individual to individual and correspond to age and experience. However, individuals' responses to a given problem are not predictable, and even when the same individual is given the same problem to solve their response can differ even when the same task is presented with little time lapse. Although this makes it hard to make accurate or useful generalisations about young peoples cognitive and decision making skills, it does suggest that flexibility and mental agility are necessary for higher level critical thought processes such as counterfactual thinking (Siegler, 1996).

Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that work can be done to complement this developmental process. McGuinness (1999, second page) in her evaluation of thinking skills and related areas asserts that '*developing better thinking and reasoning skills may have as much to do with creating dispositions for good thinking as it has to do with acquiring specific skills and strategies*' and as such advocates that teaching and learning environments should actively encourage habits of mind such as questioning, critical thinking, predicting, contradicting and doubting.

***In summary,***

Young people need to develop a range of thinking skills, including the ability to think creatively, to construct alternative future realities in their minds, to articulate choices and alternatives and to approach issues with mental agility, and critical thought. These are all high order skills and develop as young people grow older, and learn through formal education and wider world experience. Furthermore, even though young people have these cognitive abilities their responses to particular issues or dilemmas will not necessarily be consistent over time – young people have a propensity to change their minds as all people do.



## **3.2 Gender, Ethnicity Family and Faith**

The previous section has focused on the development of young people's ability to develop reasoning and thinking skills from a psychological perspective. In addition to this it is clear that females develop views of the world that are different in key respects to males, that faith and ethnicity also have an influence and that these influences are often set within the context of family. In this section we review a range of research that focuses on some of the aspects of these and how they help young people shape their views of themselves and their future. In this section we consider research findings that relate to four factors that contribute significantly to the development of young people: gender, ethnicity, family and faith.

### *3.2.1 Gender*

Research indicates that gender has a significant effect on the views that young people develop for their future learning and career options. The literature describes several key areas which are critical to the influence of gender on career choices, these are:

- social constructs related to masculinity and femininity influence young people's views and career choices;
- gender-related subject choices are made at school, which in turn influence career choices;
- some young people consider that there are gender-specific skill sets which relate closely to occupations;
- many young people hold gender-stereotypical views on which occupations are suitable for males and females, and these can become entrenched over time;
- in general boys and young men are more conservative about choices of occupation related to gender stereotypes;
- some groups have stronger stereotypical views than others, entwined with factors relating to ethnicity and families, as well as wider socio-economic issues.

In a 2002 ESRC funded study, Francis analysed the career aspirations of 100 boys and girls of average or above average abilities in Maths and English, drawn from a range of ethnic background from different parts of London. She found that choices tended to be gendered, and that young people's views of what constituted 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits and characteristics could be mapped across to subject choices which then generated the boundaries for career choice. She suggested a binary dichotomy (Francis, 2002, p.83) in relation to constructs related to masculinity and femininity, the related traits of which underpin subject choices:

<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Rationality	Emotion
Objectivity	Subjectivity
Science	Nature
'Hard'	'Soft'
'The sciences'	'The arts'

An extensive study by Careers Scotland (2004), agrees broadly with Francis' findings (2002). It investigated views of S2 and S3 pupils, aged 14-15. The young people were asked to indicate whether they considered jobs as suitable for 'men', 'women' or 'both'. In the case of their own career choices the pupils' perceptions of their own suitability for particular occupations was influenced by a broad range of factors – including ethnic background, year in school, levels of achievement, choice of science subjects, and attitudes to job characteristics perceived to be important by pupils. However overall, socio-economic measures did not appear to influence job aspirations to any great extent. Rather, career choice is underpinned by the belief that the boys and girls have different skills sets making some jobs more suitable for people of one gender. In general women were thought to have better communication skills, be more caring, understanding and good at helping people. Men are perceived to be stronger, fitter, more technical and practical.

Consequently the Careers Scotland (2004) survey of young people aged 14-15 showed that occupations such as lorry driver and plumber/electrician were considered by many as typically male jobs and 'female' jobs as nurse and care assistant. In addition the pupil's own job preferences generally remained along traditional lines. The study also showed that some jobs were less stereotyped, for instance teacher, shop worker and police officer. Girls were significantly less likely to stereotype occupations than boys and pupils working at lower levels of achievement in Maths and English were more likely to stereotype than those working at higher levels.

Francis' findings in 2002 indicate for girls, a dramatic widening from the gender stereotypical job choices of the 1980s (for example nurse, hairdresser) to a wider range, including doctor, solicitor. The shift of boys' career choices was much less marked in Francis' study, supporting other studies that boys are more conservative than girls in terms of gender and career choice (Francis, 1996; Lightbody & Durndell, 1996; Whitehead, 1996; and Miller & Budd; 1999). This may be significant in terms of the readiness of boys to move into non traditional areas of work as demanded by the labour market (Pickering, 1997; Francis 1998).

This same style of gendered thinking also influences subject choices. Clark (1993) found that few children choose jobs traditionally performed by the opposite sex. She suggests that children's choices reflect a gendered dichotomy in which boys tend to choose scientific, technical and business skills and girls tend to choose occupations with creative and caring

elements, a finding more recently endorsed by Francis (2002). O'Connell (2007) notes that these choices extend to A-level study finding that more boys choose Physics and Maths and Business Studies, than girls who chose most often Psychology, Social Studies, Biological Studies and Art and Design.

Other studies have considered the generic skills developed in the classroom which are related to employability skills. Research undertaken over three years observing East Anglian year 11 school pupils indicated different attitudes between girls and boys towards their study for GCSE examinations (Warrington et al., 2000). The research explored peer pressure, image and social group. It was found that it was more acceptable for girls to work hard and still be part of the 'in crowd' whilst boys were under greater pressure to conform to a 'cool' male image and boys were more likely to be ridiculed for working hard. Teachers confirmed that girls were better organised, spent more time on their homework and had more sophisticated communication skills. There was a perception among some girls that boys worked less hard at some subjects because they were naturally good at them – particularly Physics and Chemistry. The researchers accept that some girls and boys do not conform to gender generalisations but they concur with a deputy head teacher (Warrington, p404),

*'Girls are far better at learning independently, taking decisions about what they are doing themselves. Where there are behaviour problems with boys, it is responding to others, wanting to perform, wanting to be valued in that little counter-culture group, showing off, preening feathers'.*

Young people's choices therefore reflect their views of what it means to be male and female and these views are translated into what are acceptable behaviours and actions for boys and for girls. Other researchers have however suggested that young people's actions are informed by their understanding of work and prevailing economic conditions. For instance, Stafford et al. (1999) found little evidence that boys were disadvantaged when entering the labour market, they were slightly more likely to be unemployed than girls, but girls were far more likely to be in part-time jobs than boys. Other authors have suggested that a lack of traditional industrial jobs in some part of England and Wales (Arnot et al., 1999) lead working class boys to assume that there is little point in working hard at school. Pickering (1997) argues that boys maintain a complacent attitude at school, presuming jobs will automatically be available, failing to realise that the labour market has changed.

There are some researchers who indicate that there are gender-related issues that may be of particular interest in the North East. O'Donnell (2007) suggests a culture of low aspiration in the North East. Young people feel uncertain around future employment opportunities, which can potentially limit their long term career ambitions. They find a concern that women often opt for low skilled jobs that meet immediate needs, rather than make long-term career choices.

The effects of gender and ethnicity can work in combination. A study of an apprenticeship programme (Beck et al., 2006) shows that young people are not engaged in any formal opportunities to discuss gender and ethnic stereotyping as related to the labour market. The researchers carried out both qualitative and quantitative research involving over 1200 young people from a range of schools aged 14 and 15. This particularly affects females who tend to populate apprenticeships in sectors with lower completion rates and levels of pay, which in turn provide less progression opportunities. Females dominate in areas like hairdressing and early years, boys in construction and engineering. The study finds that young people from non-White backgrounds are more reliant on official sources of information, rather than families and friends for labour market information and they tend to be well represented statistically in IT, Electronics and Business Administration.

Beck et al.'s 2006 research reinforces the Careers Scotland work, finding a high level of occupational segregation in apprenticeships, but they note that the European Union trend has been for a decline in gender segregation across age cohorts for female graduates, but the level has remained high for those with lower attainment levels (Dolado et al., 2002). There is evidence of a striving for higher level of achievement among girls than boys, which is emphasised by trends in some ethnic minority groups. Beck et al.'s research shows that girls are more positive about choosing to remain in full-time education at 16 than boys, with particularly high rates for this choice from the Asian and Chinese group in their study in which 92% of female respondents planned to stay in full-time education, compared with 79% of the males.

In terms of ethnicity, Francis (2002) found that the Anglo boys were more likely to choose jobs requiring a degree than their Afro Caribbean counterparts, however Afro Caribbean girls are more likely than the boys to choose professional and non gender traditional jobs, and this was endorsed by Mirza's study (1992).

***In summary:***

Research indicates that gender has a significant effect on the views that young people develop for their future learning and career options:

- boys and girls view traits and attributes that differentiate between being masculine and feminine;
- some subjects are correlated with masculine traits, and others are viewed as feminine;
- similarly occupations are perceived as being for men or for women, some occupations are viewed as gender neutral and girls see fewer stereotypes than boys;
- it is more acceptable for girls to work hard and study, while boys experience peer pressure to be “cool”;
- young people’s attitudes to work may belie the reality; some researchers suggest that boys are more complacent at school because they think they will find work anyway;
- the actual choices that girls and boys make for learning or work-based learning reflect gendered stereotypes, although there are some exceptions.

### *3.2.2 Ethnicity*

A recent study funded by Joseph Rowntree explored the transition of young people from minority ethnic and white backgrounds to adulthood (Cassidy et al., 2006). As part of this research young people, while still at secondary school were asked about their plans for their futures. The majority of participants wished to attend university after completing school, and only 10 per cent declared they were planning to apply for a college course. There were marked preferences for particular subjects of study between ethnic groups; while whites chose a greater variety of university courses, courses related to medical sciences were cited by 44% of Pakistani participants and almost half of the Indian participants. The researchers conclude that this preference reflects family aspirations and community role models, which emphasise the need to study at high levels, to focus on professional careers and to pursue betterment. The study also found, one year on, that not all the young people who had wanted to, had in fact found a University place but of those who were in college, many thought of it as a stepping stone to University.

This ambition to continue learning and studying after compulsory schooling is re-enforced by Bhattacharya et al. (2003). Their analysis of the youth cohort study found that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds were more likely to be in full-time education after the age of 16 than their white counterparts. Interestingly this is even true of black young people despite their lower trends in the levels of attainment. This apparent



contradiction has been explored by Bradley and Taylor, 2004. Reflecting on the disparities of exam performance between different ethnic groups, their analysis of youth cohort and census data found that the primary reasons for the relatively poor performance of Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani youths '*lie in the family's relative poverty, which may in turn stem from discrimination in the labour market*' (Bradley and Taylor, 2004, p.343). They conclude that, if discrimination is eliminated then disparities in exam performance would similarly be eliminated. Against this background whites are least likely to proceed to Further Education, 73% whites in 1998 compared with 90% of Indians. Some of the differences in educational attainment can be related to family composition and described in the section 3.2.3.

Bhattacharyya et al.'s findings emphasise the importance of not considering pupils of ethnic minority backgrounds as being one homogenous group in relation to achievement at school and post 16 education and training. For instance Chinese and Indian pupils are more likely to achieve compared with other ethnic groups at all key stages. Many children from ethnic minority groups are from lower socio-economic groups and claim free school meals. Black Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils are recorded as having greater special education needs proportionately and Black Caribbean pupils are three times more likely than whites to be permanently excluded from school.

Interestingly, Schroeder et al. (2008) note that people from minority ethnic groups place a higher value of gaining qualifications as a means of gaining entry to professional and managerial jobs but white, middle-class men appear to have other strategies supporting them to be upwardly mobile. Consequently, young people from non-White backgrounds might recognise this implicitly and pursue the acquisition of such credentials to counter-act their relative lack of social capital. So, there is a propensity for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in particular to aspire to higher education.

Bradley and Taylor (2004) state that educational attainment has a positive effect on the decision to stay on in education and that the most able pupils are much more likely to stay on and enrol on academic rather than vocational courses (Andrews and Bradley, 1997). People from ethnic minority backgrounds and particularly Asians, are more likely to stay on in education to avoid unemployment (Leslie and Drinkwater, 1999) thus supporting the view that ethnic minority youths aspire to occupations requiring more education. They find the effect of ethnicity is stronger for boys than for girls.

However the influence of gender alongside ethnicity is significant in shaping how young people think of their futures. A study of women from ethnic minority backgrounds in Newcastle (Stiell and Tang, 2006) used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies including literature and census data analysis and workshops and focus groups. Their findings suggest that the female family role models for school girls from an ethnic

minority community are very different from their contemporaries from non ethnic minority backgrounds.

Significant issues from their study include the fact that women in many ethnic minority communities in Newcastle are young: women under the age of 24 make up almost two thirds of the local Bangladeshi population and only 7% of Pakistani women are over the state pension age – compared with 35% of all women in England. Women in some areas are far more likely to be unwaged, in Elswick only 4% Bangladeshi women were employed full-time, compared with 38% of other local women. Many of the ethnic minority women are clustered in a small number of wards, and in these wards there is a high proportion of households with dependent children. For instance 58% Bangladeshi households had dependent children, compared with 17% of all Newcastle households. The employed women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in Newcastle, tend to work in sales and customer service occupations and are less likely to be managers and professionals than others in these occupations.

Beck et al.'s (2006) study described in 3.2.1. notes that it is significant that there have been suggestions of considerable failings in multiculturalism, with some suggesting a return to assimilation (Abbas, 2005). The effect of this may be to reinforce social expectations and restrictions.

***In summary:***

This section focuses on the research literature which shows that:

- attitudes to career development differ between and within ethnic minority groups;
- overall, young people from ethnic minority groups stay in full-time education longer than their contemporaries are more likely to aspire to higher education as a means to gain entry to professional and managerial careers more than their non minority counterparts, and;
- there are gender differences within some groups.

Because minority ethnic groups live within tightly defined geographical boundaries the impact of ethnicity on young people's views has an observable spatial dimension.

### *3.2.3 Family*

The Family is critical in shaping the views young people develop in relation to their future learning and careers. A digest of research on family influences on career development on young people, primarily from USA research sources, by Lankard (1995) identified the following categories of importance: influence of family background, influence of family processes, parents from ethnic minority backgrounds and career development and negative effects of parental influence. This section highlight's the pertinent points found in the literature, namely:

- the range of socio economic and cultural issues related to the family;
- parental education;
- parental involvement and aspirations;
- class;
- the role of fathers;
- family structure;
- parents' perceptions, and;
- family occupational role models.

*The range of socio-economic and cultures issues*

*'Family background factors found to be associated with career development include parents' socioeconomic status, their educational level, the biogenetic factors such as physical size, gender, ability and temperament' (Penick and Jepson, 1992 p. 208 cited in Lankard,1995).*



This is endorsed for the UK by Deforges' review of literature (2003, p. 4), which found that:

*'The extent and form of parental involvement is strongly influenced by family social class, maternal level of education, material deprivation, maternal psycho-social health and single parent status and, to a lesser degree, by family ethnicity.'*

DeRidder (1990) makes clear the influence of families on young people's lives noting the daily influence that parents have on cultural standards, attitudes and expectations. Information received in this way is 'normalised' by virtue of its frequency and sets the standard against which additional information will be evaluated by young people.

Young people's informal support networks, which are developed mainly through their parents and family members, are crucial and have a greater important on their career development than formal career guidance. A study of young people in Scotland found that the informal support networks impacted on young people's career support through planned interventions, implicit assumptions and unplanned influences. (Howieson et al, 2002).

#### *Parental education*

As a predictor of post-school destinations, that of parental education is the strongest. The children of parents who have been to university are most likely to chose to attend University, those who have lower qualifications will have children who are more likely to leave school earlier, and with lower levels of attainment. (Mortimer, 1992, and DeRidder, 1990, both cited in Lankard). Additionally, De Ridder notes that *'being born to parents with limited education and income reduces the likelihood of going to college or achieving a professional occupational goal and essentially predetermines the child's likely vocational choice.'*

#### *Parental involvement and aspirations*

Parental involvement in their children's career development in general has been categorised as: positive involvement, non involvement and negative involvement (Middleton and Loughhead, 1993, cited in Lankard, 1995). The recent report of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC 2009), using both qualitative and quantitative data relating to young people and adults, suggests there are four parenting types: protectors, planners, enablers and observers and each of these types can influence their children in different ways.

A German study over the decade 1985-1995 used archival data of 641 young people in age groups 12 and 15 years, to examine the interplay between parenting, adolescent academic capability beliefs and school grades (Juang et al., 2002). It found that parents who demonstrate more

interest in their adolescent's schooling and had higher levels of aspirations for their young people had children with higher levels of self-efficacy and academic belief. Subsequently Deforges (2003) also noted the correlation between parental involvement and a child's attainment.

However, Jones et al. (2004) point out that it is difficult to determine the line between too much involvement and not enough. Both deficiency and excess are usually only defined as such when young people are unable to make the transitions they are expected to with relative smoothness. In terms of decision making and pathway planning, adolescents who are from 'enmeshed families' have difficulty separating the desires of their parents from their own aspirations while those who receive too little support and guidance have,

*"limited self-knowledge and task orientation which interferes with mastery of career development tasks".* (Penick, 1992, p220, cited in Lankard, 1995).

In 2008, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) published research which revealed that although 92% of parents felt fairly involved in the lives of their children two thirds would like to be more involved with their children's school life. Lone-parents, non-resident parents and parents who left education shortly after the age of sixteen were the groups who felt most distanced from the experiences of their young people. For those who did wish to be more involved, working patterns and commitments were cited as significant barriers to engagement.

Again, young people will not necessarily all follow the patterns predicted by research or expected by parents. In a recent Northumberland study of gendered choices O'Donnell (2008) explored the views and experiences of women of all ages to accessing training in non traditional areas, specifically in construction, engineering and manufacturing. The research included both year 11 girls and young women aged 16 to 19 in both gender- traditional (Business Administration) and gender-non traditional (Mechanical Engineering) vocational training. For the year 11 girls, the influence of parents on young women's career aspirations was important, most participants feeling that they were being pushed by their parents towards or away from a particular course of study. However, a notable minority stating that they wished to strive *against* their parents wishes.

### *Class*

Class is a complex issue. Feinstein (2004, p.15) usefully defines class as a,

*'complex notion .... not equal to education or income or socio economic status but comprising them alongside cultural capital. It is a 'relational and positional measure'.*

Issues of class may be felt directly by young people or indirectly through the lived or told experiences of their parents. Deforges (2003) for example notes that often working class parents can feel 'put off' by feeling 'put down' by schools and teachers. Feinstein (2004) found that inter-generational transmission of educational success is a key driver of the persistence of social class differences and a barrier to equality of opportunity. Working class parents may feel their own sense of 'place' and legitimacy challenged within the context of what has historically been a profession occupied by members of the middle class. Therefore, it is important to note that this sense of devaluation may be perceived, rather than real, but it may nevertheless influence how young people think.

### *The role of fathers*

The role that fathers play in child-rearing has increased in significance in recent years with shifts in employment patterns for both genders meaning that for co-habiting parents, fathers are increasingly 'present' in the day-to-day activities of raising children. The DCSF report (2008) notes that it is the quality and not the quantity of fathers' involvements within the home and involvement in the wider activities of the school, that generates the most impact for young people.

### *Family structure*

Bradley and Taylor (2004) note that family structure and parental occupation affect examination performance – which in turns affects how young people perceive their choices. They find that good exam performance is positively correlated with:

- having fewer siblings (to ration time with parents) – more important for girls than for boys, and;
- having parents in higher skilled occupations.

They find no such correlation with single parent families. Their study also makes the observation that a number of family aspects vary considerably between different ethnic groups, namely: family size, accommodation in rented accommodation, single parent household and the employment status of parents.

### *Parents' perceptions*

Parental perceptions are important in that they directly influence attitudes and aspirations. Feinstein (2004 p.52) notes that several studies have shown that parental perceptions of their adolescents' abilities are significant predictors of the young people's own estimates of their abilities in Maths, English and sports, which condition the young person's performance. Additionally parents directly influence their children's choices by providing (or failing to provide) specific toys and experiences, something which may be both subtle and overt (D'Amico et al., 1983).

### *Family occupational role models*

Family and friends are a strong influence on careers preferences of school pupils, (Careers Scotland, 2004). Most pupils consulted knew someone who worked in their preferred careers, these included other family members and family friends although only relatively small numbers mentioned their parents.

In Bright's (2005) study of 651 Australian university students, it was found that students perceived family and teachers to be significant influences on their career decisions. The students' current course choice and career intentions were significantly likely to be in interest categories congruent with their father's job. Influences such as the media and web-based information were also significant.

#### ***In summary:***

The family provides the core of young people's everyday existence. The family is where traits of socio-economic status, norms of behaviours, values, faith, health and employment patterns are experienced by young people. Family provides a direct influence on how young people view their future learning and career options:

- most young people make decisions in consultation with a parent or parents;
- parents who are involved in their children's schooling tend to have children who have higher levels of self-efficacy and academic belief;
- larger families mean parents have less time per child and this has an impact on attainment at school;
- most young people chose careers done by someone they know in their family network.

Family also provides the context or background which helps shape young people's choices. For example:

- the strongest determinant of whether or not a young person attends higher education is the educational attainment of their parents;
- views of class also set the context with class-consciousness being passed through generations;
- parents' perceptions of their adolescents' abilities are significant predictors of the young persons own estimates of their ability.

### **3.2.4 Faith**

The role of faith and religion in young people's lives will vary between religions and between the individuals who follow them. For those who consider their faith a significant aspect of their daily and weekly practices, the activities they are privy to and the information, advice and guidance they receive as part of it can be complemented through wider social networks such as education and the family. This extended network of information and guidance can function to counterbalance partiality and give young people access to differing perspectives relating to learning and employment.

Career and Religion / Spirituality are important foci in the lives of many people. For some, their career and their religion are part of their understanding of themselves and are referents of identity which reinforce and direct action, therefore, 'religion is one type of diversity that professionals are obliged to respect' (Richards & Bergin, 2004).

Faith can shape young people's views indirectly, through transmission of a value system for instance. For example, Fox (2003) notes that the church advocates that women value the unpaid work they do in the home. But faith or the influence of church organisation can be more direct through more overt activities such as volunteering, mentoring and work shadowing. Fox (2003) discusses the roles of the church and the Career Guidance sector by placing both as disseminators of information, advice and guidance. Through a literature review which scoped documents from the 1960's through to the early 2000's, it became apparent that although the church developed and organised career development programmes, they were designed and delivered at a 'grassroots' level, which meant that there was local variation in quality and the dissemination of effective practice did not usually occur. There were also issues associated with access to opportunities as many of the programmes were only marketed through church newsletters or bulletins.

The church, in its guidance activities, is noted by Fox (2003) as taking a holistic approach to life and career which also incorporates meaningful leisure activities. The impact of this on young people's decision making may mean that spare time is a directed activity, giving them access to opportunities which are beneficial to their general sense of efficacy. Indeed, in America a report carried out by Frase (cited in Fox, 2003, p174) for the National Centre for Education Statistics found that 50% of high school seniors who had taken part in volunteering activities had done so through church-related organisations.

***In summary:***

Research into the role of the church has demonstrated how it can influence young people's views of the world through the transfer of a set of values and beliefs which they can then apply to future choices. The infrastructure supporting faiths can offer more direct sets of influences either through developing mentoring or volunteering schemes, or as direct providers of advice and guidance.

### **3.3 Formal and Informal learning**

#### *3.3.1 Formal learning*

Experiences of school and formal learning play a significant role in shaping the aspirations of young people and consequently their attitudes towards further education and choice of career. Young people's decision-making is not static but is a 'dynamic process' which changes over time as a result of different influences (Foskett, Dyke and Maringe, 2004). A significant body of research on this issue was carried out in the UK in the early nineties and some more recent studies draw heavily on this work. There is also a substantial amount of recent work emanating from Australia which, in many cases, echoes UK findings. Enjoyment of school is a key issue and is determined by a number of factors including level of attainment, relevance of the curriculum and relationships with teachers. Students' attitudes to learning are also affected by their social class, gender and ethnicity. Finally, organisational factors such as the existence of a sixth form, levels of resources and the information/advice they receive in school also appear to influence young people's decision-making.

#### *Attainment*

The EdComs report (2007) based on desk research to inform DfES policy-making with respect to increasing participation in education among 17 year-olds concluded that the level of young people's attainment in school is the most reliable indicator of post-16 participation, although gender, ethnicity and socio-economic group were also influential. Low achievement in tests and exams results in reduced confidence among students and eventually leads to disaffection. Thompson (2002) found that attainment was a key factor in the choice of course for Australian students for their Year 12 certificate (17-18 year-olds) and this, in turn, had a major influence on post-school pathways. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, high achievers chose advanced mathematics-physical sciences courses (dominated by males) and the social-sciences and humanities courses (dominated by females). Over half of students on these courses went on to university. Lower achievers tended to choose vocational courses some



of which (service-vocational areas) led most often to the poorest outcomes such as unemployment, part-time work or not in the labour force.

### *Relevance of the curriculum*

According to the EdComs (2007) report, numerous studies show that many lower ability students felt that the education system did not suit them, not only with respect to exams and qualifications, but also in terms of teaching methods and curricula.

*'They do not enjoy school. They see the curriculum and thus lessons as irrelevant and/or boring. They may have adopted an anti-learning culture as a way of coping with the low self-esteem created by repeated low achievement'. (p.5)*

This view is supported by Payne (2002). In her review of the literature for the DfES 14-19 Advisory Panel she claims that there is a significant minority of pupils who dislike school, causing problems for themselves and teachers. This would appear to impact directly on students' views of future learning and career. Hollands' (1990) evidence cited by Payne (2002) links dissatisfaction with school-leaving; trainees participating in the research most often recalled three types of experience:

- (a) the desire to leave school and move into work;
- (b) a resentment of the inapplicability of the education curriculum and criticism of schooling relations and exams; and;
- (c) making the best of a bad situation, "muckin' about" and having a good time as they reached the end of their compulsory time in education.

Conversely students who enjoy subjects at school are more likely to stay on in education. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1997) claim that interest in a subject is one of the 'intrinsic' reasons given by young people for staying in education. Such reasons are often linked to social class and are prevalent among middle class children who are often high achievers. Green and Smith (2006) found that Australian students involved in the school-based New Apprenticeship (SBNA) programme were less likely to cite a school subject as being 'the greatest influence on the major activity being undertaken six months after leaving school' (9.1%) compared to non-SBNAs (14.3%).

### *Relationships with teachers*

In addition to an irrelevant curriculum, many studies refer to students' poor relationships with teachers who 'pick on them', don't treat them like adults, have little respect for them or seem to have more time for 'academic' students. This often leads students of low or moderate ability to either transfer to a further education college post-16 or to move directly into work. Canning and Mannion (2000) suggest that Further Education (FE)

students perceive colleges to be more attractive because they offer the opportunity to study specific and fewer subjects in a more relaxed and mature environment while work-based trainees were drawn by the benefits of more relevant work-based qualifications and regular wages. According to Foskett, Dyke and Maringe (2004), boys were more likely to opt for work-based routes than girls.

### *Organisational/resource factors*

McVicar (1999) indicates that it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions from the research carried out in the US and UK on the effect of school resources (including pupil/teacher ratio) on staying-on rates but claims that there is a 'possibility of a real-world relationship' between the two. Similarly, although there is a general consensus that peer group effects in schools do have an influence, it is difficult to isolate these effects from those produced by resources or school culture/ethos. His own research in Northern Ireland does confirm that all three factors have an influence but states that it is impossible to rank them. However, he finds that the consistently most important school-related characteristic is the presence or lack of a sixth form. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the higher staying-on rates in schools with sixth forms is due to academic ethos, peer group or role model effects.

The presence of a sixth form is also an important influence on young people's decisions to continue in post-compulsory education for Foskett, Dyke and Maringe (2004). Knowledge about post-16 provision was greater in these schools than in others. However, while all schools promoted academic routes at the expense of work-based routes, this tendency was more marked in schools with sixth forms. The promotion of work-based routes was low in all schools. The importance of the school as a source of advice differed according to socio-economic group – for less well-off students in schools without a sixth form, the school's advice was very important, but for those students who chose academic pathways, the influence of parents and home-based sources was paramount.

There are two studies that have been conducted and recently published exploring the attitudes towards formal education in the North East (Dobbs, et al., 2003; Craddock, et al., 2007). Craddock, et al. indicate that, '*a majority of young people in the North East have a positive attitude towards their current and future education*' (2007, p1). Dobbs et al. note that teachers have an important role to play in motivating young people: making lessons enjoyable and interesting, and providing encouragement for young people to learn, usually results in young people working hard. However, there are other influences highlighted in the reports.

The physical environment of the school is also an important motivating factor. '*Run down*' buildings can undermine positive work carried out by *enthusiastic staff and advisors*' (Craddock et al., 2007, 22). These researchers also note the influence of the local labour market: '*in all schools, the availability of local employment opportunities was influential in*



*shaping young people's attitudes to education'*. Taken together, these two findings are an indication that raising the achievements and aspirations of young people is a holistic exercise that needs to assess all areas of young people's education and should take account also of the wider, economic contexts in which young people are immersed.

***In summary:***

The compulsory school experience is a part of the environment in which young people develop their sense of selves and their roles in their communities. In addition to this there are specific facets of schooling that shape young people's views in a number of ways:

- those young people who are higher attainers are more likely to pursue further and higher education post-16;
- if young people think they are good at a subject, they will be more positively disposed towards that subject as an option choice, and consequently as a potential career route;
- lower achievers are less likely to value learning and to want to continue in learning, they can develop an "anti-learning culture";
- some young people have poor relationships with teachers and consequently resent school. College or work-based learning routes offer alternative modes of learning for this group;
- there is a positive relationship between staying-on rates and being in a school with a sixth form, but whether this is due to an academic ethos, or culture or peer group effects is not known.

### *3.3.2 Informal learning*

#### *Impact of part-time work and other work experiences*

Informal learning for young people often occurs in the workplace. Schools organise a short period of work experience for their students in Year 10 but many students also undertake part-time employment. According to Davies (1999), part-time work extends across students from a wide range of backgrounds and is common amongst 14-15 year-olds, and almost universal for those aged 16-19. Students' main motivation for working is to earn money to finance 'a preferred lifestyle' and not a result of financial hardship.

Most studies conclude that paid part-time work, which is usually in sectors such as retail and hospitality, can have positive benefits for young people and may even have a positive influence on academic performance. Hodgson and Spours (2000) argue that there are benefits to students in terms of skills development, including organisational skills and time management but, according to Davies (1999), most students did not feel that part-time work helped them develop specific vocational skills relevant

to a given career – probably due to the unskilled nature of the work they undertook and the limited training that was provided.

In addition to the life-skills developed by students, Robinson (1999), in an Australian study, also emphasises the importance of knowledge about the labour market gained by students who work part-time and argues that this gives them an advantage in the workplace on leaving school. There is general agreement that experience of part-time work can smooth the transition of young people into the labour market. Unfortunately however, in their local study of part-time work in Gloucestershire, Hodgson and Spours (2000) found that the students who might be expected to gain most from such work - disaffected 14-16 year-old students - tended to be excluded from the part-time youth labour market.

When too many hours are worked, part-time work can have a negative impact on students' academic performance and, consequently, it may affect their future learning or career options. Most studies agree that over 10 hours paid work a week is the tipping point. Davies (1999) states that young people are positive about combining their study with part-time work and, although many of them recognised that work had some negative impact on their academic performance, they did feel able to cope. In spite of the resulting tiredness and stress, part-time work rarely resulted in students missing classes or caused them to drop out. However, Robinson (1999) noticed that students who worked too many hours were slightly less likely to complete Year 12 of their schooling than non-workers.

Smith and Green (2005) examined how a variety of workplace experiences affected the career pathways of young Australians. These experiences included work experience, part-time work and participation in the Australian school-based New Apprenticeship (SBNA) programme (involving paid part-time work placements, sometimes leading to a vocational qualification). 72% of respondents said that their workplace experiences had not changed their intentions about further study, although the rate for SBNA was lower at 66% probably due to the fact that these students were less uncertain about their future study plans and more likely to be affected by their experiences in the workplace.

Qualitative information revealed that, for some students, their work experience convinced them of the pathway they wanted to follow, for others it helped them decide what they did not want to do. Other students indicated more general benefits such as improving their understanding of business and the workplace, developing their skills and learning independence. Benefits already mentioned above, such as smoothing the transition to work were also confirmed by this study. In a follow-up article to the report, Green and Smith (2006) draw attention to the diversity of young people's pathways and the complexity of their different situations which meant that the data was not easy to analyse. They concluded that the most policy makers can do with such data is to attempt to provide young people with a range of services and experiences that enhance opportunities.

***In summary:***

There is mixed evidence about the impact of workplace experiences, either as part-time work or as work placements, on how it affects young people's views of their futures:

- such work can help the development of transferable skills such as organisational skills and time management;
- it can smooth the transition to work as young people learn how the labour market and the workplace works; and
- it can convince young people of the validity of decisions already made about the career path they want, or do not want, to take.

However:

- it does not assist with the development of specific vocational skills;
- excludes disaffected 14 – 16 year olds who might benefit most, and;
- if more than 10 hours a week are worked it can have a detrimental effect on academic achievement.

### **3.4 Careers education, information, advice and guidance**

Research that explores how influential and effective formal careers, education, information, advice and guidance services have been tend to take one of two perspectives. The first, and by far most substantial evidence base, is from the service provider perspective and there are several studies that explore how much of an impact an existing service has on developing the learning and career decision-making skills of young people – either in schools, in colleges or through the Connexions service. The second perspective that research takes is from young people to explore where they go, and who they ask to find out about jobs and careers. This section will review each of these in turn.

Young people typically may receive support in school from a careers teacher, or careers coordinator who is a teacher or staff member of the school who facilitates careers education and guidance (CEG) within the school. Many young people also have contact with personal advisers, who will usually work for a connexions organisation, local authority or similar organisation either for a one-to-one careers interview at the end of Key Stage 4, or as part of a more intense support experience if they are disengaged or in danger of joining the NEET group (Not in Education or Employment or Training). There are several research studies which seek to find out the extent to which young people receive effective careers education, and the impact of information, advice and guidance services.

The current government focus on careers learning within schools follows a period of review and investigation which mapped the provision of careers education and guidance within schools and colleges and assessed its potential and actual impact. The Transitions Review Group for example reported that schools were particularly effective at “*offering advice about subject choices for A level, providing guidance about possible university courses, and offering realistic advice based on perceptions of academic potential and competence*” (2003 p9). However, the Group’s report then identified a number of shortcomings including the timing of advice and guidance; not fully utilising Personal, Social and Health Education; limited range of ideas around post-16 choices; and limited knowledge from those offering advice.

Subsequently the End-to-End Review of Careers Education and Guidance (DfES, 2005) found that the level of CEG being delivered varied from school to school. This was attributed to the lack of any statutory programme of careers education, which resulted in schools having flexibility ‘*to determine what is delivered, and how much curriculum time and other resources should be devoted to it*’ (DfES, 2005, p.17). This finding was supported by Higham & Yeomans (2006, p.37) who report that “*practice was highly varied across the schools*” who participated in the evaluation of 14-19 pathfinders.

The End-to-End review also levelled criticism at several other elements of CEG delivery in school, including the lack of impartiality in the guidance they offer to 14-16 year olds, especially in schools with their own sixth form, and lack of consistency in the qualifications of the school workforce delivering CEG (DfES, 2005). Staff delivering CEG in secondary schools, either as a discrete part of the curriculum or sessions integrated into other national curriculum subjects, are not required to have a careers-related qualification. These individuals will require appropriate professional development; however the Review reported that obstacles were being experienced by some teachers whose schools were reluctant to release them to participate in training events.

With no statutory requirement for post-16 learning providers, including school sixth forms, to provide careers education, the delivery of CEG in colleges can vary depending on the nature of the establishment. Despite this, a report published by the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) indicated that colleges were delivering “*on-programme IAG to learners in FE*” (2006, p.2) via a range of approaches. These included a review process to confirm the learner is on the right course, one-to-one advice or guidance interview and a progress review and/or individual learning plan (NIACE, 2006, p.2).

Because FE courses tend to be more vocationally specific most guidance is offered to young people as they are choosing a course prior to enrolment and in the earlier stages of a learning programme, with very little offered prior to or post exit. Those learners on courses where IAG is

not embedded in the programme receive considerably less: the NIACE report stated that '*the onus is on the learner to seek it out for themselves*' (p1). Despite this, the NIACE study reports that the landscape of guidance within further education is improving; this is largely due to the drive provided by services working toward the matrix quality standard (<http://iaq.isc.gov.uk/matrix-quality-standard/>)

Consequently the extent to which young people are able to access effective and embedded careers education to help them to formulate their views of their futures will depend upon the culture and practice exercised by those working in the school or the college which they happen to attend.

Evidence on the impact of career education and guidance on young people is partial, however there is a body of research that supports the claim that there is a clear positive link between career guidance and a variety of immediate outcomes, including attitudinal and motivational changes, enhancement of career decision-making and career planning skills (e.g. Whiston et al., 2003, Brown and Ryan Krane, 2000). Bowes et al. (2005) conclude on the basis of a systematic review of research into the impact of CEG during KS3 and KS4 on young people's transitions, that good quality interventions can have an impact on the success of subsequent transitions. However, the strength of this impact is mediated by a number of factors that include the nature and type of CEG intervention, the timing of interventions, and the extent to which interventions are tailored to meet the needs of the individual. This impact can also be seen at an organisational level. A substantial piece of research, commissioned by the then Department of Education and Skills (DfES), explored how young people make educational choices (Blenkinsop et al., 2006). This study was based two waves of in-depth interviews held with 165 young people aged 14 and 16, across 14 schools in 2005 and 2006. Some of the key findings of the work included:

- schools can make a difference to how young people make decisions. The research shows a link between effective schools – in relation to curriculum management, student support, staff expectations and school leadership - and the young people who were making the most rational, decisions, and who remained happy with their choices six months later;
- when students felt supported in decision-making by the school they were more influenced by school factors (such as the careers education and guidance provision) and less reliant on external factors;
- young people valued having sufficient time to make choices, the opportunity to have individual conversations with teachers to discuss their options, and detailed, clear and impartial information on courses and pathways so that they could make informed choices;
- few young people, particularly at age 14, made the link between careers education and guidance activities and the actual personal decisions they were making – in other words young people will not



necessarily recognise that the skills and personal insights they are learning often in PSHE are related to careers education, but nevertheless it provides essential foundation for their career decision making skills.

A less positive picture was generated by a more recent study. DCSF (2009) commissioned-research aimed to provide an overall picture of how young people (13 -14yrs and 16-17yrs - Yr 9 and 12) and their parents currently feel about information, advice and guidance (IAG), specifically in the area of deciding their future career. Albeit based on small samples, it found that pupils faced a mixed IAG experience which seemed to depend upon school, location, personality of people in charge of careers advice and their post GCSE decisions. Specifically the study found that most young people in Year 9 were currently not aware of the IAG offer. Furthermore at the ages of 13/14, “careers” still do not feel relevant to young people (unless they were being fast tracked into making their options earlier). Only a minority of young people in year 9 sampled were aware of a Careers Advice service primarily through having older siblings who have experienced some input from their school’s service. Most Year 12s knew about careers advice through their schools (from Year 10/11 onwards).

On the whole though, evidence suggests that if schools do it well, careers education can support young people’s decision-making. However, Wright’s review of literature (2005) found strong evidence that many schools provide slanted and partial evidence on post-16 options. Maychell et al.’s research findings (1998 cited in Wright 2005) suggest that young people recognise this because students in their study perceived visiting professional careers advisers as the most useful source of career advice and guidance (partly because they were not based in the school and seen as more ‘independent’ than school-based careers or subject teachers). On this theme, the Sutton Trust report (2008) recorded that advice and guidance regarding higher education is too often poor and ill-timed – at least half is judged by young people to be inadequate, not objective or unrealistic.

Researchers suggest that effective and impartial careers education and guidance appears is particularly important for students from working-class backgrounds. It is argued that students from middle-class, professional backgrounds can rely on family resources (information, contacts, support, money) when making decisions about what to do at the end of compulsory schooling (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000 cited in Wright, 2005), resources that those from more working class backgrounds cannot access.

In addition, there is also evidence of some satisfaction with advice and guidance in colleges. A National Learner Satisfaction Survey undertaken in 2003 by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) provides further insight into where and how young people attending college obtain advice and guidance. It reports that approximately two-thirds of the 43,316 learners

interviewed stated that teachers/tutors at their college were a source of advice; however, only a small minority (10 per cent) reported this about a Connexions Personal Advisor (PA). Learners responding to the survey largely found the advice and guidance they received useful, with 64 per cent of learners rating teachers/tutors in colleges as very useful. There is little other evidence of the impact of college based IAG, as providers are not required to offer IAG, are not funded for it and tend therefore not to monitor the level of services provided, to whom and with what effect. Consequently when NIACE (2006) sought to determine the impact of IAG on learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression, they found the paucity of available and consistent data to be a major obstacle.

So it appears that where schools and colleges offer careers education, information, advice and guidance it is well received by those learners who access it, and can make a positive contribution to their development and career learning skills.

On the question of what young people want, they appear to value some forms of careers education or advice and guidance more than others. Wright (2005) summarised a number of studies including those of Foskett and Helmsley Brown (2000), and Foskett et al. (2004) who found that students they surveyed placed a greater premium on “experiential information” (visits to institutions, work experience, face-to-face contact with outside visitors) rather than paper-based forms of information. Maychell et al. (1998) found that “external” advice was valued; students perceived visiting professional careers advisers as the most useful source of career advice and guidance (partly because they were seen as more independent than subject or careers teachers).

Objective assessments of the quality and impartiality of careers education, information, advice and guidance is less well researched. There are many branded Quality standards that schools can chose to pursue if they wish, but these review the infrastructure within which education and advice is delivered, not the education or advice itself. This prompted the Equal Opportunities Commission report (2005) to commission several separate research studies which included conclusions about some negative aspects of CEIAG:

*‘Many young people we consulted expressed general dissatisfaction with the quality, timing and quantity of careers advice they received. Quality was considered poor for three main reasons: the unsuitability of career recommendations – sometimes these were based on software programmes that were viewed as ineffective and often reinforcing gender stereotypes; advisers’ lack of specific knowledge – especially of occupations in science, engineering and technology – since they were more likely to have arts backgrounds; a bias towards traditional occupations – only two out of 100 people responding to our call for evidence said careers advisers recommended non-traditional occupations’.* (p.19)

*'This is in sharp contrast to the way that raising achievement is on the agenda for all schools. Careers advice reinforces traditional choices and young people have no information on the pay advantages of non-traditional routes. Pay in childcare, the only female-dominated sector, is generally half, or less, of that in construction, engineering, plumbing or ICT'. (p.7)*

*'Many of those working within careers advice and guidance advocate the 'freedom of choice' model of equality practice. This model emphasises equality of opportunity, but does not advocate positive action to provide information and guidance about a wider range of career options'. (p.18)*

However, when studies ask young people who they would go to for information about jobs and careers, a low proportion respond that they would seek advice from those best placed to provide it. For example, when asked where or who they turn to for advice or guidance about work Glynn and Nairn's (undated, p38) survey of 1681 Year 10 students in Sussex schools, found that the majority of young people (84%) would turn to members of their family. Whereas, over a third (39%) sought advice from a teacher or a careers adviser and 16% would search the internet and 12% would use a library.

In the absence of a structured school-based source of CEG, there is evidence of the impact of unmediated information. Students are free to use their imaginations and hearsay to supplement their knowledge and understanding of choices and career pathways (Morgan et al., 2007).



***In summary.***

There is concern about the implementation of careers education and guidance within schools. This concern has a number of angles including the:

- degree of impartiality with which advice is given (particularly in those schools with a sixth form);
- extent of time and resource devoted to careers education;
- lack of knowledge, training and support given to those delivering careers education and guidance.

There is evidence that shows that when schools have well designed and structured careers education and guidance it makes a positive contribution to young people's ability to make decisions with which they remain confident. However, provision of such CEG is inconsistent.

As CEG is not a statutory requirement beyond Year 11, provision in sixth forms and schools is similarly patchy although there are positive signs of provision and improvement in colleges.

Objective assessments of the quality of education or guidance provided are few, however the Equal Opportunities Commission review of services concluded that they served to reinforce rather than challenge stereotypes and as such were not promoting equality of opportunity.

Where it has been well provided, young people value the support they have received, However, for significant proportions of young people their experience of the careers education, information, advice and guidance services has been inadequate.

### **3.5 Media and Technology**

The role of the Media in young people's lives can be argued as being one of the most significant in terms of the transmission of information. Kellner goes as far as to say that the media has now become our "*common culture, offering us tools in the construction and production of our modern identities*" (1995, cited in Massoni, 2004, p49). Discussions regarding the role of the media in young people's decision-making are not straight forward as each medium (newspapers, magazines, the internet or television) differs in terms of news values and they are also received in differing contexts, all of which impact on the way that the information is assimilated.

One of the key issues associated with young people and the media is the proliferation of negative portrayals of youth, how the '*minority are represented by the minority*' (Clark et al., 2008, p 8). Within the media

sensationalised images of teenage pregnancy, gangs and 'hoodies' are represented as signifiers of a morally bereft and degenerative British Youth without due attention being paid to the constructive, socially aware acts of citizenship performed by others. This negative depiction is not uniformly applied and as Clark et al. (2008) note, the national press are more likely than local media agencies to show young people in a negative light, as are tabloid publications.

### 3.5.1 The Internet

The internet could arguably be seen as a democratising medium, giving people relatively easy access to information that they would otherwise not be in a position see. The internet can be both a source of information, and a method of communication [which in turn can be synchronous (in real time) or asynchronous]. It has immense potential to influence young people's views of the world both as a source of information and as a means of offering one-to-one guidance.

The internet can provide information about courses (as with area-wide prospectuses) or other labour market information. Labour market information (LMI) can be defined as "*any information about the structure and working of a labour market and any factors likely to influence the structure and working of that market, including jobs available, people available to do those jobs, the mechanisms that match the two, changes in the external and internal business environments*" (Offer, 2003). While great progress has been made with prospectus' since their report, the concern raised by ASW (2004) that information needs to be improved to improve its "digestibility" will still hold true, particularly of LMI for use by young people.

There are however, concerns about the digital divide. As Hans Uwe Otto (2005) notes, our "*off line life' effects our online use*", particularly our educational background and social environment: simply having access to the internet as a resource will not "*initiate an extension of use competencies*" (p5). For instance; those with a higher level of formal education are more likely to change their internet use over time, being more comfortable with using sites with which they are unfamiliar. They are also more likely to persevere with new sites if they can't locate the information they need immediately (Hans Uwe Otto, 2005, p. 7)

*'If individuals are unsophisticated in their use of information , or lack the ability to use information in their decision making, then simply providing additional information – an " information dump" - will be inadequate to improving their decision making, about careers or any other goal. If this is a serious problems for many individuals – particularly young people in secondary school, starting to make decisions that will affect their futures – then they will end up with misaligned ambitions inconsistent with their educational plans'.*(Grubb, 2002 quoted in Evangelista, 2005, p61 – 62)

In other words, the internet offers potential for giving young people the information they need to inform their views and their decisions, but its mere existence will not automatically generate more use, or more considered use.

While some young people may use the internet for easily accessible entertainment purposes such as social networking on sites like bebo, myspace and facebook, it does not necessarily transfer that they will feel competent using sites which offer little or no immediate feedback or gratification.

Research carried out by iCeGS in December 2005 examined users' perceptions of the process and outputs of Kudos in order to assess the impact of the programme on self-awareness and career decision-making. The results indicate that the vast majority of pupils have confidence using careers guidance software but that they were reluctant to discuss the result with a personal adviser, a finding which was considered to compromise users' understanding of the purpose of Kudos and the ways in which it is designed to help them. This lack of awareness casts doubt on whether the user group is adequately informed and equipped to interpret the results and, most importantly, assess the implications for their decisions about learning and work unaided.

The Connexions Direct website, which provides information and advice for young people aged 13 – 19 through telephone, webchat, email and text messaging services is responsive to the need that many young people have for timely responses to important questions. Through incorporating such a diverse array of mediums, all of which are confidential, young people can gain knowledge about important issues away from a classroom setting. Although perceptions may be that young people would favour this medium over and above face to face information advice and guidance, a piece of qualitative research commissioned by the DfES in 2003 which focussed on young peoples perceptions of the service that they had received through Connexions, found that very few of their 135 strong sample had actually accessed the service, even though they thought it was a 'good idea'.

As with 'blended learning', information, advice and guidance, and its place within young peoples lives, can benefit from what the internet and information technology has to offer, but the support that practitioners can bring to young people in developing their online practices should continue to be acknowledged. Programmes such as KUDOS are a positive means of engaging young people in the skills evaluation process, but follow up discussions with practitioners may enable further critical consideration and open discussions about barriers to aspirations.

### 3.5.2 Magazines

The potential influence of magazines on young people's thinking about their futures is not well researched. One study, by Massoni (2004) interrogated the role of teen magazines and their contribution to the career aspirations and decision making habits of young women. A gendered portrayal of certain occupations in *Seventeen* was evidenced through the fact that of the forty jobs represented, only 6 were portrayed as gender neutral. Men were represented as 'job holders' twice as often as women, holding 70% of jobs and when considering higher status white collar, or managerial positions, men were said to occupy this role 76% of the time. Using data gathered through the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES), she noted that there is a *'considerable discrepancy between teens' occupational aspirations and the real life labour market'*.

Massoni argued that the subtlety of such messages neutralises and normalises them, making them easily absorbed into young women's views of the world which they then perceive to be the options available to them. Indeed the key messages that they were getting from *Seventeen* magazine, could be summarised as *'entertainment careers are viable and prestigious options, men are the norm as workers, men hold the power and fashion modelling is the pinnacle of 'women's work'* (p47). The lessons that young women could learn from these magazines is that they gain success through approximating themselves, via adherence to a model of feminine beauty, to the successful men who hold the jobs they don't consider a viable option for themselves.

### 3.5.3 Games

The extent to which gaming technology influences the views and actions of young people is a subject for debate popular in the media. In a recent literature review of computer and video game learning Mitchell and Savill-Smith (2004) note that since the year 2000, there has been a large increase in the number of publications which have focussed on the use of computer games (p1). Their comprehensive review focuses on a number of issues related to teaching and learning which incorporates technologies such as mobile phone games, personal computers, palmtop and handheld devices such as Nintendo Game Boy and specialist consoles such as the XBOX. One of the issues which Mitchell and Savill-Smith's work covers is that of the gender bias in computer science, both academically and professionally. They note how informal engagement with technology during childhood and adolescence can lead to a more formal interest professionally.

*'The gender imbalance in computer literacy is seen as directly linked to the gender imbalance in computer gaming culture: missing out on computer games means that girls miss out on what can be a lead in to programming skills and*

*associated career opportunities with high earning potential*'.(Natale, 20002 cited in Mitchell, A. and Savill – Smith, K, 2003, p14).

Mitchell et al (2006) note that although there is little research on how these new technologies influence young people's views of themselves and their futures, a European funded mobile Game-based learning (mGBL) project included in their review capitalises on the pedagogic role of 'fun in learning' and the notion that mobile phones are one piece of technology that most people have with them on a daily basis (Accepting that mobile phones are symbols of social networks, tools bound to social life, mGBL has been developed to capture the potential experiential learning that games could offer. In Mitchell's project players learn experientially about career related principles through gaming activities designed to encourage the uptake of various subject positions, or perspectives, which encourage the critical thinking and reflexive skills necessary to make decisions about career pathways and also as part of a career once a pathway has been followed. Taking learning activities from the classroom and contextualising them in the spaces and places of everyday life certainly has advantages for young people as familiarity will increase the probability of assimilation.

*"For many game players the ultimate motivation is mastery – the promise that with enough energy and concentration you might 'master the machine' or at least the software" (Becta 2001; cited in Mitchell, A. and Savill – Smith, K, 2003 p 18).*

This desire to master and to persist until one has met the challenge is a truly positive attribute for a young person to possess, making this tenacity transferable to other aspects of learning and 'off line' behaviour, has large scope for development as does the engendering of critical thinking skills through riddle based computer games (Doolittle, 1995 cited in Mitchell, A. and Savill – Smith, K, 2003).

It is argued by Kelly and O'Kelly (1994) that teacher involvement in the design of games used for learning and development enhances their potential for learning as they have skills and experience that game designers do not: familiarity with young people, knowledge of the curricula and 'the desire to expand and develop their professional skills.' (p 4)

***In summary:***

The range of communications media that are available to young people will affect the way they view the world and their future place in it; however there is surprisingly little evidence that explores the nature, impact, extent or benefit of that effect.

Media portrayals tend to view young people as a degenerative generation in a way that belies the reality for many young people. Meanwhile popular magazines portray images of work that at best are inaccurate and at worst positively reinforce stereotypical views of appropriate vocations for particular groups.

The internet is a source of information and a method of communication. It provides a variety of resources to support young people's decision making and encourage the development of positive views of their futures. The extent to which these are effective is as yet, unexplored.

### **3.6 Place**

Young people's views are formed as a consequence of complex, sometimes conflicting, often confusing factors and experiences. These have been summarised in the previous sections. However, while we have discussed culture and economy and social factors so far, we have not considered the spatial aspect of these factors or the influence that living in a particular place has on young people's views.

The influence of geography on young people's lives and their futures has been recognised in a number of ways for some time; the spatial targeting of regeneration initiatives reflect the observation that there are relatively high concentrations of young people experiencing sets of disadvantage in particular defined geographical areas. In this sense geography is important because of its spatial element; for example the distance towards the nearest college or University, the proximity of alternative urban environments, and the road, rail, air and sea connections that exist with other places. These are structural factors that can influence young people's views of their future.

But geography also includes the aspect of place, which is a social construct. Jack (2008, p. 17) notes that people's sense of place, and belonging to it, is a very powerful social concept, a key referent in their sense of identity,

*'People have lasting and sustained bonds with [their] country of origin; the region, city, town, estate or village in which they grew up; the house(s) in which they lived; the schools they attended, the shops they visited and the 'special places' they played with their friends'.*



This attachment to place is connected to their overall sense of identity. Consequently young people who share the same sense of place, can build a collective identity that helps to define their views of their futures.

Finally, the third dimension associated with both spaces and places is time. The history associated with a place and how that can build its character and identity is important - as Massey (1995) notes, a place's 'past' can sometimes be considered to represent its real character

### *3.6.1 The influence of geographical space*

The structural dimension of place is keenly felt by young people whose ability to move around is constrained by public transport and shared private transport. In a study of rural youth transitions Midgley and Bradshaw (2006) found for example that "the impact of subsidised transport must not be underestimated with respect to the success or failing of broad post-16 participation, now and in the future". They found prices for a day's travel ranged from £2 to £15 and quoted the study by Storey and Brannen (2000) that "40 per cent of 15 – 16 year olds from rural areas said that the availability of transport played a part in their decision over whether or not to enter post-16 education".

Rurality had other effects on young people's views of their futures. It affected the choice of courses available within reasonable travelling distance for instance. It also affected employment patterns with the availability of much work being seasonal rather than part-time, associated either with agriculture or processing or tourism. The fact that this seasonal employment calendar was out of synch with training providers' and colleges' calendars meant that young people had to choose between working or learning but could not do both.

### *3.6.1 The influence of geographical place*

The social and cultural dimensions of place are explored within a variety of disciplines. A core concept that has developed is Putnam's (1993) description of social capital in relation to children and young people's well-being and health. His conceptualisation of social capital consists of the following features: trust, reciprocal support, civic engagement, community identity and social networks; and the premise is that levels of social capital in a community have an important effect on people's well-being. Social networks include both informal (friends, family and acquaintances in the neighbourhood), voluntary networks (from involvement in groups and activities) and formal community networks linked to local government. While the precise nature and operation of social capital is contested, exploration and discussion of the term has opened up an exploration of the effect that personal networks linked a place influence attitude, aspiration and actions.

Morrow (2004, p 71) for example stresses the importance of children's friendships in their development of their sense of self and notes that these are highly circumscribed by where they live. She concludes that friendships, conventionally depicted as voluntary, informal and personal, *'are in fact highly constrained and context specific'*. So where young people live sets the context for the friendships that they make.

Putnam (2000) further refined the concepts of social capital as being either:

- Bonding Social Capital: strong and durable ties are formed through interactions with immediate social networks such as friends at school, or the family. It is inward looking and exclusive and possibly inhibiting interactions with others;
- Bridging Capital: characterised by weaker, if more extensive ties than bonding capital, bridging capital refers to an individual's connectedness to extended networks and diverse social relationships across community divides.

As young people get older these friendships, alongside their other social networks can become a source of strength and serve to reinforce a sense of self and belonging, but those same networks can also be very limiting, serving to reinforce the social, economic and community ties that lock them into poor places. Kearns and Parkinson (2001) quoted by MacDonald et al. (2005) sum this up as "the neighbourhood for poorer people has more often served as an arena for "bonding" social capital that enables people to *'get by'* rather than as a platform for "bridging" social capital that enables people to *'get on'*."

The concepts of bonding and bridging, of getting by and getting on are explored further in a study of Teesside youth by MacDonald et al. (2005). From the basis of in-depth qualitative work with young people in deprived wards spanning a decade, they found that young people living in highly deprived neighbourhoods moved within those neighbourhoods, but not out. They had strong social ties to the place that included knowledge of family, friends and criminal networks that allowed them to "understand" the place and how it worked. They were so familiar with their locality that they could not compare it with other places, nor could they compare their circumstances with other more 'successful or *'affluent biographies'* because by their mid-20s those people around them were just like them, the few that could had already got out. They were able to use informal networks to get work, but that tended to be contract work, low skill, low paid and uncertain.

MacDonald et al. (2005, p.885) conclude that *'paradoxically, while connection to local networks could help in coping with the problems of growing up in poor neighbourhoods and generate a sense of inclusion the sort of social capital embedded in them served simultaneously to limit the possibilities of escaping the conditions of social exclusion'*.

These findings are further reinforced by a recent report on social capital in the North East (Schmuecker, 2008, p7) which found that, in comparison with other regions, the North East has “*strong communities*” and is ‘*a sociable place*’. The report notes that the region is ‘*exceptional [...] with regard to social contact with family and neighbours*’ (p48) indicating that communities are ‘*strongly bonded*’. However, as the report points out, this may have negative as well as positive implications for the region: ‘*strong communities offer networks of social support for people, but can be exclusive and inward looking*’. People living in strong communities of the type described in the report, Schmuecker suggests, may have, ‘*a lower level of geographic mobility*’ than those living elsewhere. A policy ‘conundrum’ therefore results from these findings: a mobile community can access new employment and learning opportunities outside the locality or region - but mobility is encouraged at the possible expense of social cohesion.

### *3.6.2 The influence of geographical time*

The influence of place on people over time has formed a theme of debate and research particularly with respect to the phenomenon of third or fourth generation unemployment. Page (2000) found that children in workless households with no links to the ‘normal’ working world were less likely to aspire to gain employment. Meanwhile, school and formal education appears to have little effect in addressing this with a high correlation between low attainment and indices of deprivation (Gordon, 1996). In a review of research that explored worklessness at a community level Ritchie et al. (2005, p450) noted that there have been a variety of theories about the existence of an intergenerational under-class, but that there is not enough evidence to support theories of transmitted deprivation (i.e. that poor places will always be poor places). They note that while some young people from disadvantaged backgrounds will move ahead of their parents in terms of occupational class and earnings, they might also move out of an area thus increasing the spatial concentration of multigenerational low income families.

### *3.6.3 Environmental determinism?*

With a view to exploring the effect of community over and above the combined influence of school, families, friends and socio-economic status the Cabinet Office (2008) published a study that explored young people aspirations and the effect of where they live. Original analysis of the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) data was undertaken to explore whether the places where young people lived, were influencing their aspirations. In this analysis, no direct ‘neighbourhood effect’ on aspirations were identified. However, the study did suggest that the effect of community level factors may be indirect, occurring via their association with children’s pre-school environment, parents’ and children’s values and beliefs, as well as the characteristics of children’s schools.

This was slightly at odds with Lupton and Kintrea's (2008) conclusion that "overall, quantitative evidence tends to suggest that there is a neighbourhood effect on attainment, over and above the effect of individual and household characteristics but that this is relatively small".

The Cabinet Office study did however find that the strongest factors predicting children's aspirations were; the value they attach to school, their ability, beliefs and prior attainment; mothers' aspirations for their child to go to university; and a family's socio-economic status. Nevertheless, while the place in which young people live is an important explanatory factor that helps us to understand why they have their particular views of their future, a place, as a factor in its own right, does not determine what those futures will be.

### ***In summary***

Where young people live affects how they view their futures in a number of ways:

- their locality will have physical attributes that affect their views including for example the distance to learning and employment opportunities;
- the places they grow up affects their friendships, norms of acceptable behaviour, access to community life, and access to family and other social networks.

These together, and with the perspective of time and the changing (or unchanging) nature of places and network, give each place a meaning for young people. For some young people the sum of experiences and relationships that make up the place they live gives them "bridging capital" – a means to get on in life. For others it serves to provide "bonding capital" – a means to get by.

While the place in which young people live is an important explanatory factor that helps us to understand why they have their particular views of their future, a place, as a factor in its own right, does not determine what those futures will be.

## **PART TWO: REGIONAL PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES**

### **4. Introduction**

The literature review has highlighted a range of influences and experiences that shape how young people form their views on future learning and career options. These factors will be the same for young people in the North East as for young people elsewhere in the UK, and beyond. They combine in different ways and degrees in different places. So, for example, all regions have issues associated with gender stereotyping, with the need to enhance attainment and to promote inclusion and in this sense the North East is no different to any other region. The key differences lie within regions as much as between them, and within the North East young people experience these common factors in a range of ways.

In this section of the report, we explore the following issues:

- What is the nature of the North East economy and social geography?
- what are practitioners views of the factors affecting young peoples views in the North East? and
- what is currently being done, in terms of documented practice, to support young people in forming well informed, advised and positive views of their futures?

This is achieved by reporting the views of ten senior managers drawn from across the region (see Appendix 4). Their views are clearly well-informed and based in practice and as such provide a valuable perspective, however, further research could usefully explore the same issues with other stakeholders such as staff in schools and colleges, and most usefully with young people.





## 5. The economic and social geography of the North East

### 5.1 Introduction

This section outlines the geographic, economic, and social contexts of the North East. It outlines the issues that led to One NorthEast commissioning this study. Topics raised in this section are explored further later in the report during the discussion of our consultations with Service Managers and our review of literature.

### 5.2 North East Economic Geography

Turning again to the geography of the North East, the region is divided into four sub regions: Northumberland to the north, Tyne and Wear in a central/eastern location, County Durham to the South, and Tees Valley in the south east. The sub-regions and their main towns and cities are shown on the following map:

Figure 1: Map of the region



Source 1: [http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/map\\_of\\_region.cfm](http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/map_of_region.cfm)

As can be seen above, the North East region's larger urban centres such as Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, Darlington and Middlesbrough are located predominantly to the East and South with more rural areas to the West and North. In respect of issues that might influence young people's decision making within these locations (employment and learning opportunities, anti social behaviour, area and individual disadvantage,

affluence, etc.) our consultation shows that there are similar issues across the region, whether in urban or rural locations; for instance, in relation to the problems prevalent in a more rural area, one rural Service Manager observed: *'people have described it as a rural county with urban problems'*.

The North East of England is an area characterised by large areas of open countryside and more urban areas built round heavy industry and sea ports. English Heritage (2005) notes the following:

*'The region is widely known for the quality of its rural landscapes, coastline and castles, and now recent rejuvenation of the Tyne Gorge in Newcastle–Gateshead. Distinctive themes of the historic environment range widely: the prehistoric landscapes of upland Northumberland; remains of traditional industries such as railways, coal, shipbuilding, iron, steel and lead; and major ports, coastal settlements, market towns and villages. The historic environment is one of the North East's most important assets: it is one of the principal reasons why visitors come and it underpins a high quality of life'*. (English Heritage, 2005, p.3)

Tourism to the North East is marketed under the banner, Passionate People Passionate Places, (ONE Tourism Team, 2009) a strapline that effectively links the geography of place to the cultural and social identity of its people. That link is reinforced by the tourism website's rhetorical question, asked over a series of images of North East attractions: When does a place become part of you? This view of a strong link of place and people is a characteristic of the North East identified by consultees, for example: *'there is a real sense of 'I belong here'* (city area Service Manager).

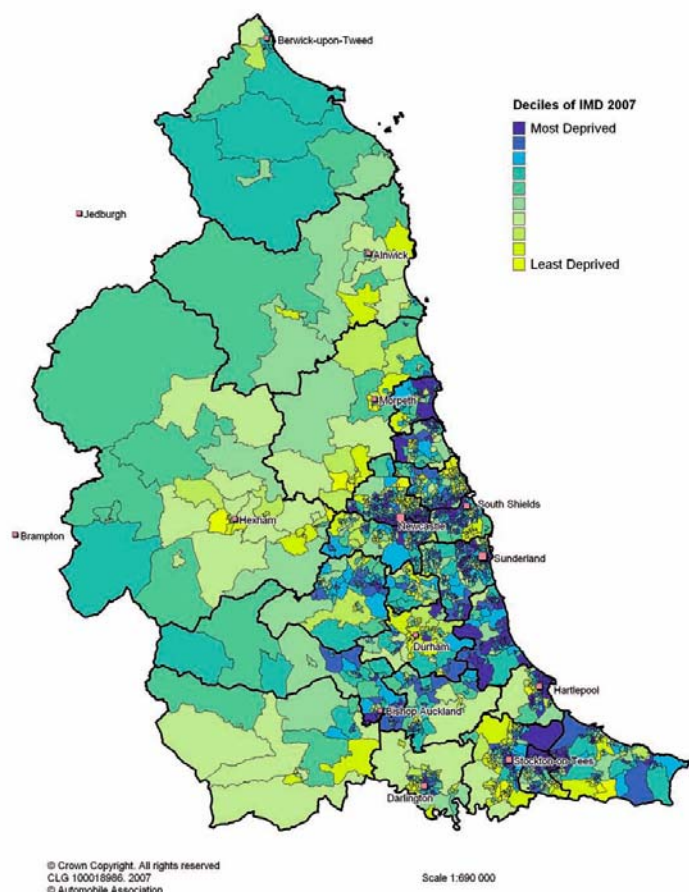
It is clear that the economy of the North East has changed over the recent past. The 1980s and early 1990s saw the relative decline of heavy industries such as mining, shipbuilding and chemicals. Although some employment remains in these industries in the North East, particularly in high technology/high skilled occupations, there has been a tendency towards service industry employment, exemplified by a growth in call centre and retail jobs, and some developments in new technological industries. There are large national and international businesses in the region, including those that have been based in the region for a number of years such as Barbour, as well as more recent investments such as NISSAN. However, employers in the region are mostly small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) and public sector organisations such as the NHS, local authorities, and the civil service.

### *Affluent and Deprived Neighbourhoods*

The English Indices of Deprivation 2007 (Communities and Local Government, 2008) shows that there are high levels of deprivation in areas where heavy industry has been in decline, areas such as Middlesbrough, Easington, Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland, and also that there are

concentrations of deprivation in Newcastle, South Tyneside, Sunderland and Gateshead:

Figure 2: North East Government Office Region Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007

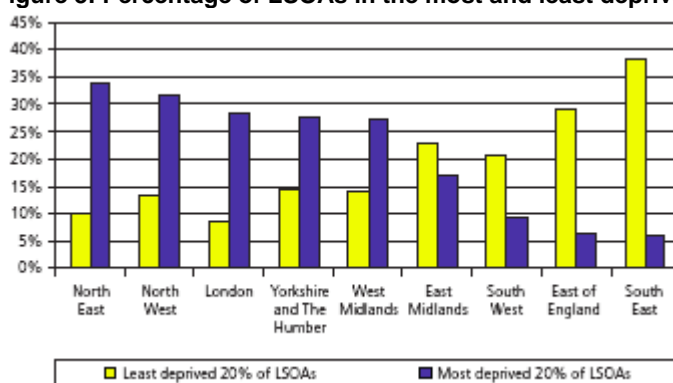


Source 2: Communities and Local Government, 2008, p.49

The region is characterised by areas of severe deprivation coexisting with areas of high affluence. The North East has more areas that fall within the most deprived 20% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) than any other Government Office Region and fewer areas that fall within the least deprived 20% of LSOAs than any region except London:

(Note that LSOAs are areas of between 1,000 and 3,000 households. Averaging at 1,500 households per LSOA, they are generally smaller than wards and can therefore more accurately map area characteristics):

Figure 3: Percentage of LSOAs in the most and least deprived 20% of LSOAs by region



Source 3: Communities and Local Government, 2008 p.61

Our consultations suggest that young people of the region are generally willing to seek opportunities outside their immediate locality but often, except for some 'high-flyers', this means accessing opportunities available within the region rather than beyond. Often this involves commuting to and from employment and learning with little or no negative effect on social cohesion. It may mean, however, that some young people do move from their locality, resulting in a reduction of social cohesion as described above. As one rural Service Manager said: for some rural areas, *'the folks who need most support are those that are left behind'*.

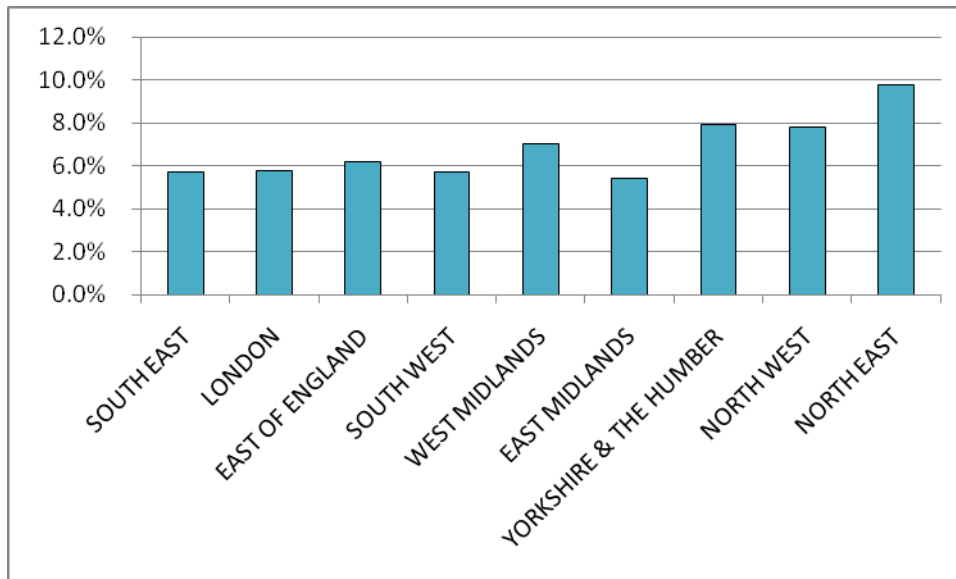
### 5.3 Social geography: NEETS in the North East.

In relation to young people not in employment, (education or training NEET) the Invitation to Tender notes that there is a disparity between the North East and other regions:

*'despite improvements in regional educational performance and a narrowing of the gap between regional and national averages, the region continues to have a relatively high level of young people classed as not in education, employment, or training'* (ONE, 2008).

As the following graph shows, the North East in fact has the highest level of NEET 16-18 year olds of any English region, almost two percentage points higher than Yorkshire and Humber and over four percentage points higher than the best placed region, the South East:

**Figure 4: Regional 16-18 year olds NEET. November 2008 – January 2009 average: Client Caseload Information System (CCIS)**



Source 4: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=42&pid=343&lid=337&ctype=Text&ptype=Single> accessed May 2009

Within the North East, the estimated percentage of 16 – 18 year olds who are NEET varies from 13.2% in Sunderland to 6.3%% in Northumberland. As the following table illustrates, all areas except Northumberland currently show estimated NEET figures that are higher than the English national average of 6.7%.

**Table 1: Proportion of 16 – 18 Year olds NEET 2008/2009: Connexions data (CCIS) in reverse rank order**

Area	16 - 18 population known to Connexions	Estimated number NEET	Estimated percentage NEET	Percentage of 16 – 18 population whose activities are unknown
Sunderland	9,883	1,300	13.2%	3.3%
Redcar & Cleveland	4,923	590	12.0%	3.5%
County Durham	16,325	1,760	10.8%	4.2%
Stockton on Tees	6,173	650	10.5%	4.5%
Middlesbrough	6,436	670	10.5%	3.8%
South Tyneside	4,600	470	10.2%	7.2%
Gateshead	6,320	640	10.2%	3.9%
North Tyneside	6,079	550	9.0%	3.4%
Newcastle	12,707	1,080	8.5%	7.3%
Hartlepool	3,807	300	7.9%	5.9%
Darlington	5,049	350	6.9%	2.9%
Northumberland	9,888	630	6.3%	3.1%
<b>NORTH EAST</b>	<b>92,190</b>	<b>9,010</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>

Source 5: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=42&pid=343&lid=337&ctype=Text&ptype=Single> accessed May 2009

But comparisons with 2006 and 2007 do show that there has been continuous regional improvement and, when compared to regional and national statistics for those years, the figures show a decrease that, at 1.5 percentage points, is slightly greater than the national average decrease of 1 percentage point.

**Table 2: Proportion of 16 – 18 Year olds NEET 2006, 2007 and 2008: Calculated from Connexions data (CCIS)**

North East 2006	North East 2007	North East 2008	England 2006	England 2007	England 2008
11.3%	10.0%	9.8%	7.7%	6.7%	6.7%

Source 6: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=42&pid=343&lid=337&ctype=Text&ptype=Single> accessed May 2009

#### 5.4 Young Peoples attitudes to Education in the North East

Research undertaken in 2002 and 2003 commissioned by the North East Assembly (Northumbria University, 2003), among over 4200 young people from the Region provides an effective overview of key issues for the North



East for partners seeking to encourage and support a culture of education and lifelong learning across the North East. The following sections reiterate the conclusions from that study.

*“The majority of young people in the North East are engaging positively with education and learning, and many of them are strongly motivated by a personal desire to do well. They are also supported within the school environment and encouraged to do well by parents and carers and by teachers, pupils and friends. Most young people plan to undertake post-16 education or training and they are also being encouraged to attend college or university by the parents and carers. They also have high aspirations in relation to their future employment[...]They are also very positive about living in the North East and about the facilities that are available to them.*

*The research also showed that the school environment, levels of personal confidence and levels of aspiration, including an understanding or educational and employment pathways, are central to the extent to which young people engage in education and learning. In this respect, a considerable minority do not enjoy their school experience, and there is evidence to suggest that some young people feel overburdened by homework and by the worry and stress associated with exams and tests. There is also a strong sense that some young people do not feel valued during their time at school and they lack confidence in relation to their school performance, and that they do not feel that there is any immediate or long-term reward for effort. These negative indicators appear to increase between years 6 and 9, just at the time when young people are making crucial decisions about their future opportunities. It is also clear that young people in all of the year groups do not understand the necessary steps involved in negotiating educational and employment pathways and that they are not making the links between qualifications and future lifestyles”.*

***In summary:***

- the North East region comprises four sub-regions with more urban areas to the East and South and rural areas to the North and West;
- its heritage has informed the development and persistence of a strong regional character which forms the heart of its marketing identity: *Passionate People Passionate Places*;
- the economy has transformed in recent decades from a reliance on heavy industries such as mining, shipbuilding and chemicals;
- the region is characterised by very many areas of severe deprivation co-existing with areas of affluence;
- relatively high proportions of the region's young people are not engaged in education or employment with training. While there are sub-regional variations with some areas such as Northumberland and Darlington having the lower proportion while Sunderland and Redcar and Cleveland have the highest proportion of NEETs, all areas except Northumberland are currently above the national average;
- despite high proportions of NEETs, most young people in the region are positively engaged in learning, enjoy good family and social time and are positive about their futures;
- however, a significant proportion of young people in the region grow disenchanted by school between the years 6 and 9 and too many fail to understand the link between attainment and good employment.

## 6. Service Providers' Perspectives

In this section we present the findings from discussions with key stakeholders. These discussions focused on how many of the factors identified in the literature review influenced how young people in the region form their views on learning and career options. The information is presented following the structure of the literature review, however the ways that different pressures and stimuli operate are varied and complex and consequently some of the discussions with providers did not fit neatly within these sections.

In this section we also re-present a selection of the regional research highlighted in the main literature review with a view to either comment on, or corroborate findings on the basis of our stakeholder discussions.

### 6.1 Gender, ethnicity, family and faith

Traditional gender influences – that young men should go into manual work, young women into care and clerical work – appear strong in the region (see below) and may be perpetuated by social network and peer influence:

*'the sorts of jobs young women go into are often low pay, little prospect of advancement, of course that's a gross generalisation, and I just feel that they are limiting themselves, but again, we are a very traditional community and you've got to be fairly brave and be well supported to go into something that's seen as non-traditional'* (Service Manager).

With reference to non-traditional career choices, O'Donnell, states that *'out of all our participants, strong personal interest was most obviously a factor guiding the career choices of trainees on non-traditional courses and for the younger unemployed women we spoke to'* (ibid, pp478-479). Those rebellious and self-interested factors are often overlooked during studies of the influences on people's decision-making and O'Donnell is a useful reminder not to do so. O'Donnell found that some young people did not feel that schools supported them when making 'non-traditional' choices: *'they do still think that women should be doing the cooking and staying at home and leave the heavy jobs to the lads'* (ibid). Once enrolled on courses the young women generally found staff and student colleagues supportive.

A number of consultees observed that as young people get older, i.e. aged around 17 to 19, they sometimes feel that it is not socially acceptable to ask agencies, and Connexions in particular, for help. Connexions may be seen as being for younger people. One Service Manager observed that *"Connexions always had problem with overlap at 18/19"* and that although Job Centre Plus may help them, that service has perhaps historically not been able to offer the personalised support that connexions could. This

may have the consequence that rather than seeking help from service providers, young people tend to turn to their social networks and peers for help, including parents, carers and families.

Parents, carers and families were generally thought by consultees to be the most significant influences on young people's opinions. Like social network and peer influence, the effect can be positive or negative, one Manager observed that: *'depending upon the parental viewpoint, I think it's very important because the parents can assist aspirations as well as hinder aspirations'*. In one area the consultee detected that parental influence was having a negative effect on a small number of young people at a critical time in their learning:

*'At KS2 they are as competitive as other areas but between KS2 and KS3 you see a real decline there. And that is just purely down to the fact that parents aren't valuing, aren't enforcing attending education. And maybe peer influence is coming into play there'*.

Craddock, et al., (2007) observe that *'parental influence shaped their children's attitudes to education over a long period of time'* (p11) but this view was contested by one teacher who thought that only the most able, 'high flyers' were influenced by parents. Nonetheless, a minority of parents are seen as having a negative impact on young people's education:

*"the parochial attitude of some parents/families meant that it is 'hard to get even the brightest students to think beyond going to local colleges ... doing something beyond what their parents did'"* (ibid, pp.19-20).

Consultees for this study also discussed the parochial nature of some people and areas, for instance: *'a lot of young people want to stay [in the city]; they don't particularly want to travel. You know, we are very parochial in lots of ways'* (city-based Service Manager).

On the whole however, there was general agreement that the vast majority of parents and carers desire positive outcomes for their children; as one consultee said: *'there isn't other than very, very few parents who want less than the best for their kids. There can be all sorts of issues and barriers but I really don't believe parents want anything other than the best for their children for the most part'*. A problem is that parents may be unsure of how current labour and learning markets operate, either because they have no experience of them or because their knowledge is not up to date:

*"I think families can go one way or other, there are some families who are just confused by what opportunities there are and would and would put them in the direction of the careers coordinator in school, or hopefully the PA. There are others who feel as though well, they know what it's like because they left school 20 years ago and they've always been in a job, so they will offer their advice and that's obviously some concern to us because the labour market information that they're relaying to young*

*people is not necessarily a true and accurate picture of what the young person would need.” (Service Manager)*

One Service Manger explained that it was positive that: *‘it is all about informing and up-skilling parents and carers to support their young people because we know, every survey I’ve ever read with regard to parents and influence puts them at the top of the tree of who is most important’* This manager’s team takes *‘every opportunity to meet parents and explain the service and the important issues to be considered and how parents can help’*.

The cost of education can be a factor in shaping parent’s opinions with regard to their children continuing in education, particularly in relation to them going into Higher Education. Many consultees also thought that Education maintenance Allowance (EMA) is divisive *‘due to it being means tested’*. They were concerned that it could act as a disincentive to some young people staying in learning. One consultee argued:

*‘I think EMA is a wonderful thing, I think it is a great thing but what it does in some cases is, if all the young person is going to get is EMA, there is a feeling [amongst recipients] where ‘I may as well just go to college rather than actually going out and work to earn that money’. There is this perception that, going to college is not working, it’s the value placed on learning that’s missing’*

Another observed that they felt that:

*‘When the training allowance was converted into EMA it significantly reduced the number of people because there wasn’t the financial draw, if you like, that there had been ... I think there are some young people who still consider, you know, they might be on a training programme but they consider it work. And feel as if they should be compensated more for that than some people who choose to remain within academic or vocational education.’*

EMA was also a theme taken up by young people at a recent engagement event (Sweeney, 2008) who argued that all young people in the eligible age range should be eligible for EMA if they remain in learning rather than it being means-tested as is currently the case.

Friends and peers are shown in Craddock, et al.’s, study to be a major influence but the nature of that influence is not as fully explored as other influences. The consultees for this current research study rate friends and peers as being very influential, either positively, in that peer influence can support people into making considered career and educational decisions, or negatively, in that people may decide on the basis of their friends’ decisions *‘irrespective of whether it’s appropriate or not’* (urban-based service provider). It is not surprising that friends and peers are influential for young people if, as young people themselves suggest (Sweeney, 2008) they sometimes felt “disconnected from society. They also felt that adults –

such as those from the local community, shopkeepers, the police and bus drivers – *‘often had very negative views about them’* (ibid, p.4).

Social networks and peer groups were considered by consultees to be amongst the most important influences on young people. One issue raised, was the perceived decrease in the importance of social networks on one’s ability to gain employment. One consultee observed: *“if you knew somebody that knew somebody you could get in [get a job]. That still happens but very much less than it did in the past”*. In this view, parents, families, friends, and friends of friends cannot help as much as they did. This is due partly to the positive effects of equal opportunities legislation and partly to changing education and labour markets and network members’ lack of knowledge of those areas. Others disagreed, arguing instead that in some areas, for example those with a profusion of smaller businesses, social networks remain an effective channel for recruitment. One consultee was adamant that in their part of the region the situation is not changing and in fact, may be getting worse.

Whilst there was a general consensus of opinion amongst consultees that most young people are reasonably mobile and willing to travel or move to access opportunities, some thought that a small number would prefer to limit their choices rather than leave immediate social networks:

*‘Some people (very few) would rather not get on if it meant they had to get out. They would rather have a low level life but stay around the immediate family with all the aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters close at hand. They’d rather give up an employment opportunity somewhere else if it meant having to move away from the family support structure ... it does exist’*

One Service Manager observed: *‘teenagers don’t like to be different by and large ... they like to go with the flow. Don’t want to stand out from the crowd’*. But consultees observed also that peer influence can be either positive or negative: *‘if you are within a group of bright, high-achieving young people, then you will probably aspire in the same way, on the other hand if your pals are not as ‘aspiring’ shall we say, then you may be influenced from that way’*.

## **6.2 Careers education, information advice and guidance**

Discussions about the provision of careers education in schools and the influence of information, advice and guidance provided by the range of services, most notably Connexions services, often tended to highlight the recent changes that have occurred.

One Service Manager in the North East remarked of changes that it was a bit like: *‘back to the future! I started out in [the] County Council, got contracted out to the careers service, Connexions, and then we are back in the local authority again’*. The effects of the changes are described thus:



*'from our career service days, Connexions [Careers Education and IAG] got a bit, what we'd say... we came a bit more de-skilled. It got lost a bit more in the mire of the Connexions agenda. Since we've come back into the Local Authority, it's certainly become higher on the agenda. We certainly had more influence when we were a careers service. I think it went a bit more vague when it was Connexions but we've put more resource in and we are seeing more young people again than we used to as a Connexions service. So I think it will come out that we will be a bit more helpful, supportive of young people on the careers or IAG side of things.'*

One area of work that has become disrupted during the changes for some but by no means all consultees is in engaging with employers. One Service Manager noted:

*'we are very poor at the moment in our employer engagement work. It's been literally just ticking over but we have had very little contact ... it's because we've just come over from a separate company and we were assimilated back into the LA in April 07, and at that point we lost our employer liaison section which was quite a thriving team that works with employers but then when we split ... suddenly split down into smaller companies, and the amount of resource that went into the employer side was so small.'*

However, that situation is changing and the service is now able *'to go and knock on employers' doors'*. Many teams have been able to maintain effective employer engagement throughout the changes.

Sunderland Education Business Partnership (EBP) was accredited with the National EBP Network Quality Award in 2007. It is a Connexions service that offers Business Ambassador Activities e.g. mock interview preparation and mock interviews, culminating in a BEC 500 Certificate for successful students, and an enterprise challenge day. Sunderland EBP also supports teachers and others in Professional Development Placements.

A number of consultees hold a 'personal development' budget for activities such as providing residential activities for young people and, as a method of engaging young people in the delivery of services, training in activities such as 'mystery shopping'. One Service Manager noted that, unusually in their opinion, they have set aside a part of the budget as an 'access fund' to help young people who are NEET and facing small but significant barriers. These might include obtaining an item of uniform, buying a travel pass, or, for example, something as simple as getting a copy of a lost birth certificate in order open a bank account so that the young person is able to get Education Maintenance Allowance. What is critical, according to one Service Manager is *'really understanding what their barriers are and addressing those barriers in practical ways'*. One innovative way that this

has been carried out in one area of the region is by adopting an 'Outcomes Accountability' approach, an approach developed by Friedman (2005). Outcome Accountability rejects the idea that, for instance, 'you must do 7 interventions a day because that's a good thing' but asks, 'is anybody that you are working with better off. Are you making a difference?'

Newcastle Connexions aimed to reduce NEETs, promote improved services, ensure staff worked effectively, and enhance partnership working. They adopted an Outcomes Accountability approach that provided the framework for a number of changes. These included a change of culture within Connexions and partner agencies e.g. by ensuring that staff worked with the 'whole person' to overcome barriers rather than following pre-determined processes. Services for young people and partnership working are said to have improved in Newcastle following the adoption of this approach, and the level of NEETS in the city has reduced from 15% in 2003 to 9.3% in 2007.

The following are included in the 'learning points' following its implementation:

- outcome-based Accountability is simple to understand and implement, and is very practical;
- it enables partners to identify how they can work together;
- it is not a quick-fix model, managers and staff need to be prepared for the long haul;
- the process can be kept fresh by ensuring there are new and different approaches to developing services being considered all the time;
- people should be held to account;
- more of the same will not necessarily continue to achieve improvements. New ways of working need to be considered to improve outcomes.

(Source: Department for Children and Families, 2008)

All consultees thought that Connexions services could offer valuable and independent advice and guidance, which, if allied to good careers education in schools would enable young people to make valid, informed choices. Where CEIAG works well in schools there will be:

*'a clear careers policy, endorsed by the governing body, and the senior staff, and there would be modules or programmes of active involvement for young people in looking at themselves, looking at the range of options that are available, and good relationship with the PA.'* (Service Manager)

In response to supplementary question about what good CEIAG is, another Service Manager stated:

*'I think at the heart of it is helping [young people] to understand the process of making decisions. And the process of searching for answers, solutions, and being able to sort the wheat from chaff. So there's the difference between, good impartial information provision and that that's provided by someone that has perhaps a vested interest. So, you know, able to sort their way through the process. I think that that's probably more important to me, in my view, than providing them with information within lessons say, you know, it's the ability to find out for yourself that's important .... That's been one of the frustrations about working in the careers world for so long, that everybody has a view but those views are not always well informed.'*

Some schools will have a strong commitment to delivering careers education within the curriculum from Key Stage 3 onwards drawing in connexions services to support their offer; others will focus on supporting young people at the time that they are making choices and utilising their connexions partner primarily to support this activity. For the practitioners we consulted, the critical variable was the degree of engagement of the schools with whom they worked with careers education, information, advice and guidance

However, there was a general consensus that CEIAG is not uniformly provided across all schools in the region. For instance, one Service Manager explained that its influence *'depends on where you are, what school you are in and what commitment there is in school from the top down.'* There is clearly variation in school's engagement with services, for instance, according to one rural Service Manager: *'in some schools the impact is appropriately significant and in others you don't even see it'*.

Another argued:

*'Where its working well in schools and colleges, I think it has quite a strong influence on young people's decisions. If its independent IAG within the schools and schools allow connexions to have substantial access to those young people, I do feel that they make much more informed decisions. For example we've got some schools where we put quite a lot of hours into their CEG programme as well as have drop-ins, and one-to-one interviews with students and spend more time with those who we class as vulnerable in making that transition decision. And where we have that buy-in from schools and we're linked in to their CEG programme the numbers of young people leaving in Yr 11 without a positive destination are quite low.'*

Another Service Manager, however, argued that:

*'it's incredibly problematic what influence Careers Education has, what influence IAG actually has. My personal view is that neither of them have THE most significant influence on the majority of young people. I think Careers Education [...] has a reasonably high influence on a reasonably high number of people (using vague words there) and IAG, particularly the guidance end, has a significant influence on a relatively small number of*

*young people in terms of their, what I think some people have called 'orientation'. In terms of implementation of whatever their decisions are, then it probably has a stronger influence. But I think IAG has a sort of, general impact but not a significant impact for the majority of people'.*

This Service Manager argued further that, *'it's only when you actually get a chance to work intensively with someone that you have a significant impact on them'.*

One Service Manager compared the effects of 'good schools' to those that were not so good at providing CEIAG:

*'In some schools it's possible to see young people in Yr 10 and 11 that have done very little, if any, research into options post-16. And they are reliant upon a PA [to give them sort of careers information if you like. Whereas in some of the better schools you'll see young people with that information very early on. They've been able to have group activities, discussions about matching themselves to, you know, these kinds of opportunities as individuals and then take advantage of the PA to talk about the guidance elements as opposed to the two dimensional approach of just issuing careers information or signposting them to websites and stuff like that. The better schools prepare young people better for those decisions.'*

Another said that:

*'there are some schools where all we do is the very basics, so we just go in and do that year 11 careers interview. But we're not integrated into their CEG programme. Not integrated. For example we hold a big careers event once a year and we pay for the transport for all the schools to come to that, some schools don't buy into that. And the schools that don't have that significant buy-in to the IAG that we offer and their own CEG, tend, it's not universal, but tend to have higher numbers of those that don't have a positive transition post 16.'*

Where independent services could not be delivered in schools, most consultees thought that it was because of the attitude of the head and senior staff:

*'The nature of the school and the role of the head and the senior staff in the school really hold sway over the whole ethos of what it is they think they are doing. And whether or not they are an outward looking school and see their contribution to a young person's transition to adulthood as that, or they see it as an end in itself, in which case they don't look beyond the school gates, be that at 16, or 17, or at 18. And that has a big bearing on how open they are to fully comprehensive CEIAG.'*

Another Service Manager concurred with that assessment:

*'The schools where we really struggle to get in and deliver what I would class as an adequate service, those schools where we have problems; it is purely the head teacher's influence, who is saying 'I don't want my kids out of English, maths, and science. Connexions are not taking them out of any lessons at all'. And it's a directive from the top.'*

When asked, as a supplementary question, if there was any correlation between different school types, for example faith schools or the independent sector, and engagement with Connexions services, consultees had found no such connection. For instance, one faith school with 'a successful 6th Form' and 'a strong IAG element' was said to actively 'encourage' other IAG providers into school. Another consultee said:

*"We also have a large number of independent schools and we do work in the independent schools as well even though we know that we know that the majority of those young people do go on, usually into higher education. But it doesn't say that they don't need IAG in making the right choice for them. We don't exclude, it's a very inclusive service".*

The importance of information as part of the decision making process was one that was implicit in the discussions with stakeholders. There were some comments that emphasised the importance of having young people who were career literate in that they understood notions of transferable skills, of their own skills and ambitions, and were able to interpret information that outlined the routes and opportunities available to them. Information on its own was mainly discussed in relation to the availability of destination data, for instance were young people aware of the numbers of young people who went into plumbing jobs after finishing a specific plumbing course for example? However, while such information would be of some worth, its real value comes from an ability to turn information to intelligence which requires a knowledge of the specific environment, of longer term trends, of other comparable data and data collection issues. Careers advice and guidance brings that intelligence to young people's decision making processes in ways that go beyond the expectations of careers education and information.

A recent Ofsted report (2008) stated that although the support young people had from Connexions Advisors was 'particularly valued' (Ofsted, 2008, p.5) there was a concern that 'evidence suggested that a small minority of young people, usually in 11–18 schools, had not received completely impartial advice about the full range of post-16 options'. This was due to either school staff's lack of knowledge of the range of options available or, in a small proportion of 11-18 schools, because staff had encouraged young people to stay on in the school despite the course being inappropriate. When pressed on this topic, consultees did believe that, in a small number of schools, there is a problem of inappropriate IAG being delivered and young people who are being encouraged by school staff to remain in school but for whom that route might not be appropriate; one consultee observed: 'I think it's about wanting big 6th forms.'



All consultees recognise that schools are under a great deal of pressure to manage their resources and need to prioritise carefully, sometimes at the expense of CEIAG. Typical of this view is the following:

*“So there are a lot of pressures on schools about what they need to put in place and, as time goes along, what they see as priority. And it’s not usually CEIAG”*

A number of consultees identified a growing need for staff training in the delivery of Careers Education, one observed: *‘the staff delivering can be not very well trained, or informed, a sort of sideline as it were’*. Another explained that:

*‘There’s a trend now. We see some of the older careers coordinators .... taking retirement. Now those roles are being split up and taken on by people like learning mentors – so there is a much more variable group of school contacts that we deal with... We feel as though there’s a significant training and development need’.*

Another argued that CEIAG does have a huge role to play in influencing young people but that *‘there is a role that we are just really beginning to rise to the challenge of, that is raising aspirations of young people who either through peer influence, continuing several generations of parental influence, have very, very low aspirations. It is a problem’*

Head Start in Gateshead engaged 18 primary schools – 650 young people – in activities designed to raise aspirations. The project, funded by Connexions Gateshead and Aim Higher, has four strands:

- visit by pupils, tutors, and some parents, to Newcastle University;
- curriculum consultant support for teachers;
- activity-based workshops by employers for young people;
- all parties attend a session within two weeks that includes positive images of the young people taking part;

Employer partners include Northumbria Police, Proctor and Gamble, and BT.

Swalwell primary school’s involvement in Head Start featured on Teachers TV and Connexions Gateshead won an ICG National Career Award for the Head Start programme.

A number of consultees observed that it is useful to engage young people early in their school careers. For instance, one Service Manager held the opinion that:



*'The further down you get people in the school thinking about Careers Education and young people, the better the young person is going to benefit out of the programme. You know, from the Years 7, 8, where they are getting the ideas about the research skills, etc. And particularly important now is Year 9 with the new diplomas coming on board.'*

### *Diplomas*

The Government Office for the North East (2009) report that all 14-19 Partnerships in the region will deliver at least three Diplomas in 2009 and that North Tyneside and Newcastle will deliver five from September 2008. Sunderland is particularly advanced in terms of delivering Diplomas; the Partnership expects to deliver ten from September 2009.

It is clear that there is an element of support for the new Diplomas amongst consultees but it is too early in their implementation to come to any firm conclusions about their influence on young people's decision making. Nonetheless, some consultees have concerns about their introduction. One Service Manager explained for instance that, because of the way they are delivered by consortia, there was a particular issue to be addressed in rural areas:

*'it's a challenge in a rural county; delivering Diplomas ... you know getting the youngsters at the right place at the right time for the right opportunity. So that's been one of the hard things that we've had to address ... we do have some schools that are close to partner schools, and then we have others that are, you know, miles away'*

Consultees also noted that, at this stage in their development, young people and others may consider opting to take Diplomas something of a gamble, one arguing that *'people are very reluctant to be the first ones to be experimented on'*. Another consultee concurred saying that parents asked questions such as *'what can my daughter do if she does this?'*

This urban-based service manager explained further:

*'there is no track record, a bit of a step in the dark. Some people think it's like an apprenticeship whereas we know it's work related learning not an occupational qualification. So there does need to a bit of work done to get the right image across to parents who may encourage their children to take them up thinking that they are more than they actually are'*

One further area of concern noted was that Diplomas may not necessarily be the best route for some young people but their schools may advise them to take them up because they appear suited: *"we have concerns about schools identifying pupils that they think would be good diploma students as opposed to the students opting themselves for the diplomas."*

Another important development that will affect young people's decision making is the forthcoming raising of the participation age to 18 (see

Department for Children Schools and Families, 2006) Consultees generally supported the initiative but raised important caveats:

*'If it's rolled out correctly, I think it has got to have a difference [for the better]. I think the more time that people are forced to invest in their own future; I think that's got to make a difference to aspiration'* However, the same service manager also observed:

*"I think its fraught [raising the age of participation] I think the chances of failure are huge. And it makes me wonder what will happen if they are coming off at 17 with their NVQs and this future, a glowing future, promised them doesn't materialise, I think that it could lead to more disenchantment, disengagement than previous - but I think it's worth a start, yes"*

As is outlined later in the discussion of 'place,' some consultees noted that there is a 'culture of work' in parts of the North East. That is to say that young people, and their parents/carers, tend to undervalue education and learning and aim to move into employment as soon as possible, regardless of whether there is a training element to it. In relation to this culture of work and raising the age of participation, one Service Manager observed that the culture may be difficult to challenge but that it was positive that the region was able to offer 'second chance' opportunities:

*'I don't know how it's going to play out because there are already youngsters who have had enough at 16. They may come back to it [learning] - and that's another thing, we expect youngsters to determine things at 16 when it might take them a bit longer and I'm very pleased that we have got a lot of second chance opportunities in the region.'*

### **6.3 Media and technology**

Consultees noted a number of areas of concern about the media including some aspects of labour market misinformation and also the negative image that is often presented of young people. One consultee argued:

*'of course [young people] are hugely influenced by the press, in terms of 'well there are no opportunities are there?' Well yes, the opportunities are probably reducing or have reduced of late, but there are still opportunities. And the young people do get bad press but the majority of young people are fine!'*

Another consultee noted that information from the media could be either positive or negative giving the example of *'reports of plumbers in the media earning £120,000 and things like that certainly led to surge in plumbing which was always one of the less popular of the construction trades'*. This consultee did observe, however, that such information tends to be out of date by the time it is broadcast.

The influence of fictional dramas such as Cracker (see <http://www.itv.com/ClassicTVshows/crime/Cracker.html>) and the various CSIs (<http://www.cbs.com/primetime/csi/>) was discussed by a number of consultees as having the effect of opening up new employment roles for young people and were generally viewed as positive, although aspirations might not always be realistic. Soap operas were also discussed by consultees and were generally felt to promote typecast employment roles but with some occasional positive elements. A number of consultees observed that reality programmes had a negative effect on young people, one consultee exclaiming that: *'they are personal irritation to me!*' Another observed that they give the impression, *'that you can be famous for doing nothing'*. However, another consultee said that there are some positive role models on television, offering the example of Ant and Dec (see <http://www.officialantanddec.com/>) as positive media role models for young people in the North East.

A small number of consultees discussed the possible effects and contribution that new technologies can have. In terms of jobs, one consultee observed that new employment roles may emerge that we cannot conceive of at the moment, just as they have emerged over the recent past. Another noted that the internet is great source of information for young people and can support them in their decision making, for instance employment information is now readily available if young people have the skills to identify what is appropriate for them.

LAG is available on line in the North East and elsewhere in England. Councils in the North East have taken different approaches to presentation. Some, such as county Durham with its writing pad page motif and Gateshead's 'Eel of fortune' possibly take a more playful approach; others such as Middlesbrough and Newcastle offer a more serious-looking home page. All offer links to a range of information on subjects, providers, etc. as is shown in the screen grabs below:

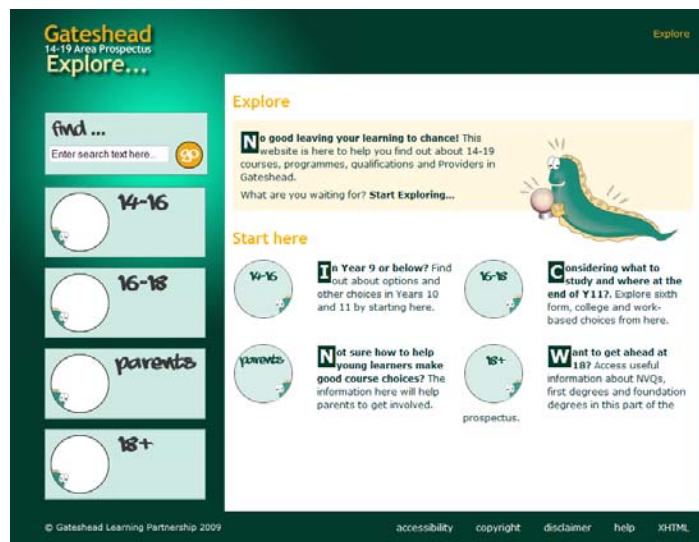
Figure 5: County Durham's online area prospectus



Source 7:

<http://www.help4teens.co.uk/content/1142873518.289/1111579011.667/1193936836.022/>

Figure 6: Gateshead's online area prospectus



Source 8: <http://www.logicat16.co.uk/>

Figure 7: Newcastle's online area prospectus



Source 10: <https://www.newcastleroutes.co.uk/>

Figure 8: Middlesbrough's online area prospectus



Source 9: [http://www.next4me.co.uk/\(X\(ab991802-c6a7-4ad1-a6d6-fc2dbe19cdb1\)\)/middlesbrough/Home.aspx](http://www.next4me.co.uk/(X(ab991802-c6a7-4ad1-a6d6-fc2dbe19cdb1))/middlesbrough/Home.aspx)

## 6.4 How views change over time

When asked if and if so how young people's views had changed over time a small number of consultees thought that they have remained practically the same, for instance in relation to gendered views on the labour market, the value of learning etc. A small number observed that people are generally aware of the changes that have been made on the job market by new technologies and that, in the current climate, they are *'more aware that there's no longer a job for life'*. Young people are also *'very aware of the fact that they need transferable skills'*.

However, the most common change that consultees noted was that *'the vast majority don't see employment at 16 as an option'* and growing



numbers are staying on in education. As one service manager explained, staying on in education *'is a conscious decision. We have training out there. We have employment out there. And the number of young people going into training and employment is declining year on year but actually the number of young people who are staying in education is increasing and I think that reflects a change in views'*. Another observed, *'overall the change has come mostly in young people going to college. That has changed in the past 10 or 15 years quite significantly'*.

## 6.5 Place

One theme that kept recurring during discussions with most consultees was that the North East tends to be parochial: *'A lot of young people want to stay in [the city]; they don't particularly want to travel, you know, are very parochial in lots ways'*. Others also noted that travel was an issue for some young people, for instance an urban-based Service Manager observed: *'for a small city, in terms of population but in terms of actual geography, there are elements of resistance to travel across the city'*.

Another Service Manager observed:

*"there are some people will not go, what we call 'over the border' of their small community or neighbourhood and we have to spend considerable time with some young people to try and say, 'look, if you want to be a whatever, the biggest chance you have is broadening your travel-to-work area, because if you don't you are going to have a very, very restricted number of opportunities.' But some of them are, I wouldn't say they are fearful of surviving, come off the estate or whatever, but it's not common for some young people or groups of young people to do that and therefore they are reluctant to alter that aspect of their life which is firmly established. You have to challenge that'*

However, Midgley and Bradshaw (2006) found that, "large numbers of young people in rural areas feel that they have to 'get out' to 'get on'" (Midgley and Bradshaw, 2006, p6). They argue that this may be, *"a natural response to the often limited education opportunities and poorly paid, low-skilled and insecure employment options available"*. Whilst Midgley and Bradshaw found that, *'young people are leaving rural areas in order to obtain improved education and employment'* our study indicates that young people in rural communities are possibly more used to travelling than their urban peers and are actually likely to commute greater distances to and from opportunities.

One of the major influences on young women's career choices outlined in O'Donnell's (2008) report some young women's *'desire to leave Northumberland'* (ibid, p479): *'after university, very few were keen to return to live or work in Northumberland'* (ibid). This, iCeGS, research concurs, indicating that many people who leave the region to attend university do not to return to the North East. On the whole, however, we found that in order to 'get on', it is not necessary to 'get out' of the region,



i.e. that going to university in order to study for higher level qualifications and access jobs does not necessarily mean leaving the region. Consultees pointed out that regional universities draw students from within the region as well as beyond, and whilst acknowledging that students who go to universities outside the region may not return, because to do so would limit the number of opportunities available to them, they did not generally support the view that there is a 'brain drain' from the North East.

In general, most consultees observed that although there are some elements of anti-social behaviour in the region – *'you've got this estate culture where some people from the outlying estates won't come into the city centre for fear of violence and stuff like that'* – on the whole the North East does not have the same problems with violence and drugs that are prevalent in some other parts of the country. One urban-based consultee observed that their area had:

*"One of lowest crime areas in country. The fear of crime is high ... we do have our problems with drugs but not generally; there is very little, almost negligible knife crime in the county. It is mainly anti social behaviour, you know youngsters choosing to hang around on streets which other people don't like."*

With reference to the relative lack of drug misuse, one consultee observed that there was: *'not much in the way of gang culture, knife crime and gun crime and I do wonder whether that isn't partly because we don't have the hard drug issues'*. However, most consultees thought that the region had a problem with alcohol misuse, an issue that the media tended to propagate. Nonetheless, one service manager detected that young people in the North East were 'proud' of the region: *'I think there is a real sense of 'I belong here'. I haven't got any research that proves that but you do feel that there is that sense of pride in the region, I mean there are massive problems but there is that sense of pride.'*

With regard to the 'massive problems' one consultee noted that deprived areas and more affluent areas coexist in the region saying that the spectrum, deprivation to affluence, was *'probably as broad as it is anywhere nationally. You've got young people living in 3rd and 4th generation workless households and you've got young people living with parents who are university lecturers, doctors, whatever'*.

A number of consultees explained that there are 'cultural' influences in the North East that needed to be challenged if people in the area are to make the most of the opportunities that are available. For instance, one explained that *'we have got to get a cultural move away from the idea that in the North East we do heavy industry jobs – they are not there anymore'*. This view was echoed by another consultee who noted that,

*'There used to be a buoyant manufacturing sector. We still do have opportunities but they are significantly lower in numbers.'* Instead, the new employment areas offered by 'Science City' in Newcastle for instance or

opportunities in art and design, digital imaging, call centres, hospitality, etc, need to be promoted and accepted as legitimate opportunities: *'get people to accept that, 'yes, these are valid opportunities. They are perfectly OK'.*

Another cultural issue raised was the imbalance between males and females taking apprenticeships. One consultee explained that about 65% of apprentices are male and that this was thought to be because apprenticeships are traditionally a male way to acquire job skills. A number of consultees observed that people's views about employment in the North East tended to be based on 'traditional' employment roles and was often out of date. As one Service Manager remarked:

*'Most of [this sub-region] ... is of old industrial areas. The attitudes and the awareness for the general population, by which you can include parents, families, to a much lesser extent teachers, but including some teachers, is shaped by things that might be 20, 30, 40 or more years out of date. So people's understanding of what's available now and how those things are organised, how you get into them, is very rarely up to date. So youngsters aspirations are formed by all those sorts of people and those sorts of influences just in casual conversation over the year and obviously things like gender expectations, you know, 'I'm a boy, if I choose that are people gonna think I'm a big girl?' You don't do this consciously but, 'I'm a girl, is this gonna effect how people think of me if I end up wearing dungarees and hard hat?' All those sorts of things have an impact on people.'*

With regard to the region's recent history and the decline of manufacturing and other industries, a number of consultees thought that their experiences had affected their views about what employment and education can give to them, for instance, one Service Manager observed:

*'areas have come through some really very hard times, and so there are generations-worth now of people who are very sceptical about what a job can offer, or what learning can offer for that matter. Because, 'where does it lead you?' and 'it doesn't really and it's a load of nonsense' ... those kinds of influences are always going to be stronger to young people who are living in it than either the school or anybody else for that matter.'*

Another Service Manager observed:

*'I detect, and I don't know if this is just my impression or not, but somewhere along the way, we've lost a bit of the 'mining community missionary zeal', to describe it, where young people's parents would say, you know, 'I want my child to have better than I had and the way to get out of it is education'. I'm not sure if that is prevalent. It certainly used to be'.*

Another manager observed that, *'there is real statistical evidence that you are getting generational under-achieving within areas'.* When asked if it was the case that there was a 'culture of worklessness' in their area, one consultee explained:

*'To some extent there probably is but I think there's much more of a culture of work ... an expectation that young people will get jobs at 16 ... certainly by 18 and probably by 17. Which means that we do have very high staying-on rates at 16 now but our staying-on rates at 17 and 18, are below the regional averages, whereas I think we are sort of top or top but one in terms of staying on at 16. So local people have got clues that they are not going to get very much at 16 but they really want employment. Any education is a means of getting employment for the majority of people. So work, in a traditional sense, is very, very important'.*

The result is that work with training is not valued highly for its own sake:

*'they know its high status if it's got training involved, but the first thing is they want work. They want it if it can be to be meaningful and to lead somewhere but the meaningful and leading somewhere comes second to actually having work'.*

Nonetheless, consultees observed that *'significant inroads have been made [for instance] young people are staying on longer'*. The area is characterised by a *'huge amount of friendly development'* and *'a lot of people want to stay here [in the North East] there are opportunities here'*. One consultee observed that there are good opportunities still in sectors such as engineering and that companies like NISSAN, although currently having difficulties, have brought significant opportunities to the area. With regard to training provision in the area, consultees thought that colleges and other training providers *"pretty fairly match the employment opportunities available."*

Although some consultees noted that a small number of young people in urban areas did not like to travel outside of their immediate neighbourhood, many observed that those living in rural areas may be more open to travel: *'you know they are used to getting up at the crack of dawn and getting on the bus, that sort of thing, they are actually less timid about it than a lot of other youngsters. The bottom line is that they have to travel'*. So, although one consultee said for instance that, *'it's quite parochial in that people tend to stick to their own neighbourhoods'* they also observed that *'the majority of young people might travel to other parts of the North East but do tend to stay in the region'*. It is recognised that learning and employment opportunities might be more scarce in some, particularly rural, areas than in others but, as another Service Manager observed, their area *'has a travel out agenda, trying to make transport links easier, trying to encourage people to look beyond the boundaries ... for their employment but not to move out of being residents, because you would only be left then with the unemployed and the elderly'*.

The following quote from a Service Manager discussing a project aimed at raising of the aspirations of young people exemplifies the complex nature of influences and pressures on young people. It encompasses the influences of programmes, schools, parents, and place:

*'We had a programme, AimHigher and before that we had projects trying to get [young people] to look a college or university education. We used to have an event where we would take them to the University of Northumbria. They do a project where they would sit with students and it was to raise aspirations. It was in a good school but originally parent's aspirations were very low: 'university wasn't for our kids'. So, good supportive parents but, not so much [a problem with] the schools, that ethos of the area, they had never really aimed for university although with the results, and where the school is, there should really be more going down that road.'*

**In summary:**

On the nature of the region:

- the region has relatively high levels of deprivation when compared with other English regions, and comparatively low numbers of areas of least deprivation;
- the North East also has relatively high rates of young people not in education, employment or training but there are signs that progress is being made in this area and the rates have reduced over a three-year period;
- however, it is clear that the majority of young people have a positive transition from education into work or continued learning/training;
- the region is characterised as being traditional, with an emphasis on the traditional routes into employment, e.g. that young men should go into manual work, and young women into care and clerical work for example;
- for some, traditional attitudes are equated with a more restrictive parochial attitude, in that young people from some localities do not feel encouraged to move beyond or challenge the norm, whether that be with choice of employment, or choice of location of employment;
- 'parochial' attitudes may not necessarily be negative, for instance it may mean that employers keep skilled workers and that neighbourhoods exhibit good social cohesion. The other side of the coin is that people might not achieve their potential and neighbourhoods may be inward-looking and exclusive;
- some consultees noted that there is a 'culture of work' in parts of the North East. That is to say that young people, and their parents/carers, tend to undervalue education and learning and aim to move into employment as soon as possible, regardless of whether there is a training element to it - nonetheless the most noted change of attitude among young people that consultees noted was that fewer young people now expect to leave school at 16 and enter employment.

#### On the influence of social networks:

- parental influence is recognised as the most important influence on young people's views; and it is noted that this can be positive (to promote aspirations), or negative (to devalue education).
- friends and peers can be influential in forming young people's views. Some stakeholders observed that traditional social networks as a means of securing employment are no longer reliable, whilst others concluded that they are still effective.

#### On CEIAG in schools:

- Connexions services have been subject to change but the core services of support to NEET young people and supporting careers education and guidance in schools remain;
- adoption of the Outcomes Accountability approach has supported a focus on activities that appear to have been able to make a difference in one area of the North East;
- providers confirmed the findings from the literature review that some schools have effective CEIAG programmes that support young people to make informed decisions;
- other schools do not engage well with support services and may not provide young people with careers education or information early enough - a number of consultees observed that it is useful to engage young people early in their school careers;
- where independent advice and guidance services could not be delivered in schools, a number of consultees thought that it was because of the attitude of the head and senior staff. However, they also observed that staff have competing pressures and have to juggle limited resources;
- consultees observed that in a small number of schools, there may be a problem of inappropriate IAG being delivered to young people who are being encouraged by school staff to remain in school but for whom that route might not be the most appropriate;
- a number of consultees identified a growing need for staff training in the delivery of Careers Education;
- One of the key conclusions of the research is that there is an element of serendipity in the ways that young people are influenced in their decision making. As one consultee observed: *"I feel as though the way that young people are influenced about what they are going to do post 16 particularly, is influenced by all these ad hoc things that we have just been discussing, you know, if your parents are interested great, if they are not... and if you are in a good school, with a good careers education programme then you know lucky you!"*



On media and information technology:

- consultees noted a number of areas of concern about the media including the validity of some aspects of labour market information such as media reports of the high wages reportedly enjoyed by plumbers;
- the influence of fictional drama on the TV was generally thought to be positive in that it portrayed a range of occupations that young people might not otherwise know about, although there was caution about unrealistic expectations;
- consultees noted the importance of Information Technology as a means of disseminating information and noted that it could be very helpful as long as young people have the skills and access to use it.

On the importance of place and regional identity:

- many of the problems affecting the area are probably very similar to those affecting young people in the age range in many areas of England and the UK. There has been a decline in many traditional industries such as manufacturing, mining, steel, chemicals, etc across the UK over the past decades;
- while some young people will always want to leave the region, consultees felt that on the whole it was not necessary to “get out to get on”, and that there was not a significant brain drain from the region;
- young people from rural areas did not always appear to let travelling distance or time prevent them from accessing learning, in fact it was noted that rural young people were often more open to travel than those from urban areas.
- anti-social behaviour in the region was not considered to be as severe as in comparable areas in other parts of the country. For example whilst alcohol abuse rather than hard drugs was an issue, knife crime or gang culture was not thought to be widespread;
- in some cases cultural attitudes need to be challenged, such as the stubbornly persistent belief that the North East should be associated with heavy industry, a belief that runs contrary to labour market evidence over the past twenty years;
- similarly, some young people in the area are possibly resistant to the message that learning can open up meaningful employment opportunities;
- work remains important to the identity of many young people in the region. Regional identity appears very strong;
- many aspects of the Educational Maintenance Allowance scheme appear iniquitous to some young people;
- Overall, the complex nature of influences and pressures on young people were well understood by consultees.



## **7. Summary and Conclusions**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This report has summarised a cross section from a wealth of literature to inform discussions about how young people form their views, and explored the regional perspective from the inclusion of quality research conducted within the region and from interviews with regional stakeholders. In this final section a summary of key findings from both literature review and the stakeholder interviews are presented, conclusions are then drawn based on the three fundamental research questions:-

- How do young people form their views on future learning and career options?
- How important is place in informing their views and subsequent decisions – and more specifically the importance of the North East?
- How can CEIAG services influence young people’s views in ways that encourage young people to raise their learning and career aspirations?

### **7.2 Summary of research literature**

Young people need to develop a range of **cognitive abilities** or thinking skills, including the ability to think creatively, to construct alternative future realities in their minds, to articulate choices and alternatives and to approach issues with mental agility, and critical thought. These are all high order skills and develop as young people grow older, and learn through formal education and wider world experience. As young people develop they think differently about their futures and have aspirations that are more realistic than idealistic – this happens around the ages of 11 – 14. Furthermore, even though young people have these cognitive abilities their responses to particular issues or dilemmas will not necessarily be consistent over time – young people have a propensity to change their minds as all people do.

Young people are all different, but there are significant observable differences between boys and girls. **Gender** has a significant effect on the views that young people develop for their future learning and career options.

- Boys and girls views traits and attributes that differentiate between being masculine (e.g. practical) and feminine (e.g. caring)
- Some subjects are correlated with masculine traits, and others are viewed as feminine
- Similarly, occupations are perceived as being for men or for women, other occupations are viewed as gender neutral, and girls are less likely to stereotype occupations than boys
- It is more acceptable for girls to work hard and study, while boys experience peer pressure to be “cool”.

- Young people's attitudes to work may belie the reality, some researchers suggest that boys are more complacent at school because they think they will find work anyway.

These profound and well established attitudes shape the actual choices that girls and boys make for learning or work-based learning which reflect gendered stereotypes, although there are some exceptions.

The **family** provides the core of young people's everyday existence. The family is where traits of socio-economic status, norms of behaviours, values, faith, health and employment patterns are experienced by young people. Family provides a direct influence on how young people view their future learning and career options –

- most young people make decisions in consultation with a parent or parents.
- parents who are involved in their children's schooling tend to have children who have higher levels of self efficacy and academic belief
- larger families mean parents have less time per child and this has an impact on attainment at school
- most young people chose careers done by someone they know in their family network.

Family also provides the context or background which helps shape young people's choices. For example

- the strongest determinant of whether or not a young person attends higher education is the educational attainment of their parents.
- views of class also set the context with class consciousness being passed through generations
- parents' perceptions of their adolescents' abilities are significant predictors of the young persons own estimates of their ability.

It is clear from the literature that the family tends not to overtly direct young people's choices – although there are cases of groups of young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds being encouraged to leave learning. It is a more subtle process of social assimilation and collective aspiration, but it operates in a way that perpetuates patterns of learning and employment.

There are differences between how young people from different **minority ethnic groups** see their future learning and employment careers. It can be observed that young people from ethnic minority groups stay in full - time education longer than their contemporaries, aspire to higher education and to gain entry to professional and managerial careers more than their non minority counterparts. There are also differences within minority ethnic groups with clear gender differences within some groups.

Because minority ethnic groups live within tightly defined geographical boundaries the impact of ethnicity on young people's views has an observable spatial dimension.

Often linked to ethnicity (though not exclusively so) **faith** can influence young people's views of the world through the transfer of a set of values and beliefs which they can then apply to future choices. The infrastructure supporting faiths can offer more direct sets of influences either through developing mentoring or volunteering schemes, or as direct providers of advice and guidance.

Moving to more structural factors, the compulsory **school** experience is a part of the environment in which young people develop their sense of selves and their role in their community. In addition to this there are specific facets of schooling that shape young people's views in a number of ways:-

- Those young people who are higher attainers are more likely to pursue further and higher education post-16;
- If young people think they are good at a subject, they will be more positively disposed towards that subject as an option choice, and consequently as a potential career route;
- Lower achievers are less likely to value learning and to want to continue in learning, they can develop an "anti-learning culture";
- Some young people have poor relationships with teachers and consequently resent school, college or work based learning routes offer alternative modes of learning for this group;
- There is a positive relationship between staying on rates and being in a school with a sixth form, but whether this is due to an academic ethos, or culture or peer group effects is not known.

There is mixed evidence about the impact of **workplace experiences**, either as part-time work or as work placements, on how it affects young people's views of their futures;

- Such work can help the development of transferable skills such as organisational skills and time management;
- It can smooth the transition to work as young people learn how the labour market and the workplace works; and
- It can convince young people of the validity of decisions already made about the career path they want, or do not want, to take;

However,

- It does not assist with the development of specific vocational skills,
- Excludes disaffected 14 – 16 year olds who might benefit most, and
- If more than 10 hours a week are worked it can have a detrimental effect on academic achievement.

**Careers education, information, advice and guidance** is a statutory requirement of schools up to Year 11, although it is not a core part of the Ofsted inspection regime, and operates within a Guidance rather than a Regulation framework. Young people's views of the careers support they have received are based on their experience of careers education in schools alongside Connexions services. Research highlights concern about the implementation of careers education and guidance within schools. This concern has a number of angles including the

- Degree of impartiality with which advice is given (particularly in those schools with a sixth form);
- Extent of time and resource devoted to careers education;
- Lack of knowledge, training and support given to those delivering careers education and guidance.

There is evidence that shows that when schools have well designed and structured careers education and guidance it makes a positive contribution to young people's ability to make decisions with which they remain confident. However, provision of such CEG is inconsistent.

As CEG is not a statutory requirement beyond Year 11, provision in sixth forms and schools is similarly patchy although there are positive signs of provision and improvement in colleges.

Objective assessments of the quality of education or guidance provided are few, however the Equal Opportunities Commission review of services concluded that they served to reinforce rather than challenge stereotypes and as such were not promoting equality of opportunity.

Where it has been well provided, young people value the support they have received, However, for significant proportions of young people their experience of the careers education, information, advice and guidance services has been inadequate. Young people are anxious about their choices and options and value the chance to talk about this.

In the absence of structured and well informed information about learning and career options young people are left to resort to family and friends for information, and the influence of un-mediated messages from **communications media**. The range of communications media that are available to young people will affect the way they view the world and their future place in it; however there is surprisingly little evidence that explores the nature, impact, extent or beneficence of that effect. Media portrayals tend to view young people as a degenerative generation in a way that belies the reality for many young people. Meanwhile popular magazines portray images of work that at best are inaccurate and at worst positively reinforce stereotypical views of appropriate vocations for particular groups.

The internet is a source of information and a method of communication. It provides a variety of resources, including labour market information, to support young people's decision making and encourage the development of positive views of their futures. The extent to which these are effective is as yet, unexplored.

The factors affecting young people's views outlined above have universal relevance. However, the **place** in which these factors combine to shape each young person's views are highly specific. Where young people live affects how they view their futures in a number of ways:-

- Their locality will have physical attributes that affect their views including for example the distance to learning and employment opportunities;

- The places they grow up affects their friendships, norms of acceptable behaviour, access to community life, and access to family and other social networks.

These together, and with the perspective of time and the changing (or unchanging) nature of places and networks, give each place a meaning for young people. For some young people the sum of experiences and relationships that make up the place they live gives them “bridging capital” – a means to get on in life. For others it serves to provide “bonding capital” – a means to get by.

There is a debate concerning **environmental determinism** – that there is a sense of inevitability about the futures of young people living in particular places. Recent research concludes that while the place in which young people live is an important explanatory factor that helps us to understand why they have their particular views of their future, a place, as a factor in its own right, does not determine what those futures will be.

### **7.3 Summary of stakeholder perspectives**

On the nature of the region:

- The region is characterised as being traditional, with an emphasis on the traditional routes, that young men should go into manual work, and young women into care and clerical work for example.
- For some, traditional attitudes are equated with a more restrictive parochial attitude, in that young people from some localities do not feel encouraged to move beyond or challenge the norm, whether that be with choice of employment, or choice of location of employment.
- Some consultees noted that there is a ‘culture of work’ in parts of the North East. That is to say that young people, and their parents/carers, tend to undervalue education and learning and aim to move into employment as soon as possible, regardless of whether there is a training element to it- saying this however the most noted change of attitude among young people that consultees noted was that few young people now expect to leave school at 16 and enter employment.

On the influence of social networks:

- Parental influence is recognised as the most important influence on young people’s views; and it is noted that this can be positive (to promote aspirations), or negative (to devalue education).
- Friends and peers are influential in forming young people’s views. This can serve to reinforce traditional patterns, but some stakeholders warned that traditional social networks (the phenomenon of getting work through who you know) as a means of securing employment are no longer reliable.

On CEIAG in schools:

- Connexions services have been subject to change and whilst some aspects of services have changed, and the service has experienced



turbulence, the core services of support to NEET young people and supporting careers education and guidance in schools remain.

- In some areas the adoption of the outcomes accountability approach supports a focus on activities that make a difference.
- Providers confirmed the assertions from the literature that some schools have effective CEIAG programmes that support young people to make informed decisions.
- Other schools do not engage well with support services and do not provide young people with careers education or information early enough. A number of consultees observed that it is useful to engage young people early in their school careers.
- Where independent advice and guidance services could not be delivered in schools, most consultees thought that it was because of the attitude of the head and senior staff.
- Consultees thought that in a small number of schools, there is a problem of inappropriate IAG being delivered and young people who are being encouraged by school staff to remain in school but for whom that route might not be the most appropriate
- A number of consultees identified a growing need for staff training in the delivery of Careers education.

On media and information technology:-

- Consultees noted a number of areas of concern about the media including some aspects of labour market misinformation such as media reports of the high wages supposedly enjoyed by plumbers;
- The influence of fictional drama on the TV was generally thought to be positive in that it portrayed a range of occupations that young people might not otherwise know about, although there was caution about these generating unrealistic expectations.
- Consultees noted the importance of Information Technology as a means of disseminating information and noted that they could be very helpful as long as young people have the skills and access to use it.

On the importance of place and regional identity:

- While some young people will always want to leave the region, consultees felt that on the whole it was not necessary to “get out to get on”, and that there was not a net brain drain from the region.
- Young people from rural areas did not let travelling distance or time prevent them from accessing learning, in fact it was noted that rural young people were more open to travel than those from urban areas.
- The nature of deprivation and anti-social behaviour in the poorest parts of the region were described as being less severe than in comparable areas in other parts of the country, for example that alcohol abuse rather than hard drugs was an issue, but that knife crime or gang culture was not prevalent.
- Cultural attitudes needed to be challenged, such as the stubbornly persistent belief that the north east should be associated with heavy



industry, a belief that runs contrary to all labour market evidence over the past twenty years.

- Similarly young people from deprived areas are more likely to be resistant to the message that learning can open up meaningful employment opportunities.
- Work remains important to the identity of young people in the region and their regional identity is very strong.
- Attitudes to work place value on employment over learning, and reflect the sense that work with training is not valued highly for its own sake.
- Young people can think it iniquitous that EMA is paid at the same amount for those undertaking work based training as for those at college.

Overall, the complex nature of influences and pressures on young people were well understood by consultees.

#### **7.4 Discussion and Conclusions**

The discussions with stakeholders and the review of regional research to which we have had access have reflected very strongly the issues and findings that come from the wider literature review.

Young people in the region are not a homogenous group, they have different socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, families and faiths. Their experiences are shaped by participation in schools and other forms of learning, working, community and by their exposure to local, regional, national and international media. These in turn are shaped by, and shape the place where they live. It is clear from the research that the North East has a distinct **regional identity**, and that people who come from and live in the North East are very proud of that identity.

Specific aspects of concern about this identity are;

- the region's identity is based on an industrial heritage that does not exist and will not be reinvented in the future, is it therefore too retrospective?
- identity with particular places can bond people to places that offer them few prospects, is this especially true of the limited geographical and employment horizons that young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods express?
- Are young people able to identify positive employment futures in the north east or do they think they have to move out to move on?

This research has generated only partial responses to these types of question but there are other activities currently being developed that will help clarification of these questions.

Our research has confirmed that the North East's industrial heritage has left a legacy of deprivation in many areas of the region. **Deprivation** has a range of effects on places and the people who live there. A key impact is

with the rates of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the region are the highest of any English region, almost two percentage points higher than Yorkshire and Humber and almost double that of the best placed region, the South East.

There is some evidence that people in the North East are considered to be 'parochial' but it is not entirely clear that that is always negative. For instance, it may mean that employers keep skilled workers and that **neighbourhoods** exhibit good social cohesion. The other side of the coin is that people might not achieve their potential and neighbourhoods may be inward-looking and exclusive and this is certainly true of the Teesside neighbourhoods investigated by MacDonald et al. (2005).

There is also some evidence that '**traditional**' views on employment persist in the minds of some young people and their parents or carers. This is particularly the case in terms of opinions on gendered employment roles for instance, the comparative value attached to certain jobs, e.g. manual work compared with hospitality, and a tendency to possibly undervalue learning.

Nonetheless, it is the case that the majority of young people in the North East are able to see **positive futures** for themselves and they do achieve good transitions at Year 11 for instance. Consultees were anxious to note that the majority of young people are able to work towards achieving their full potentials. Many schools have effective careers education and guidance programme. Some schools do not offer Connexions and other service providers full access to young people in their schools but in probably the majority the service is able to give independent IAG and effectively challenge and support young people in their decision making. Learning and training provision appears to be generally accessible and offers the right range of courses for young people to participate effectively in local labour markets. An interesting, and possibly counter-intuitive conclusion of the research is that young people living in rural areas may be more receptive to travelling to learning and employment opportunities than their urban equivalents, possibly because for many of them it is an established way of life whereas young people in urban areas are more used to having services close by.

**Place** is an important factor in shaping young people's views and behaviours, and while the North East has a very strong regional identity. However, there is little in the research to suggest that the issues and problems facing young people living in the North East (and more particularly in specific places in the North East) are somehow peculiar and unique to the North East. It would for instance be possible to come to the same conclusions about parts of the South West, the Midlands or the North West. The contrasts of experiences of young people within the regions are probably greater than between them – indeed it would be interesting to explore the natures of sub-regional identity and their influence on young people's aspirations over and above the influence of the range of structural and socio-economic factors.

The critical question then is how can support agencies under the strategic direction of the 14 – 19 Commission partners develop responses that support young people's skills and abilities to think rationally about their futures, to consider alternative futures, to **challenge stereotypes** and adopt behaviours that take them beyond tradition? Before listing sets of good practice (which we do in the final section of this report), it is important to revisit the theory to consider not only what might be done, but also, what might we expect to achieve as a consequence of these actions?

The factors that shape young people's views can be discussed as a discrete set of factors, but they are more usefully considered as a set of factors that comprise a complex web of networks and relationships. Their amalgamation to generate a set of attitudes, beliefs, values and aspirations are variously described. The concept of **life chances** for example is used to explore how to generate a more equitable society. Social capital is used to explore how one's networks and relationships are used as the foundation for achieving satisfactory employment and family relationships. **Cultural capital** meanwhile adds how wider society influences act upon individuals in addition to those social networks of parents, peers, role models, neighbours, schools and workplaces). These concepts build an understanding of the generation of patterns of behaviour and norms within which individuals respond almost instinctively.

The notion that individuals can change their habits of mind, and consequently their behaviours is captured in Bourdieu's notion of habitus which relates to 'lasting dispositions or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in particular ways, which then guide [individuals] in their creative responses to the [circumstances] of their external [surroundings]'. **Habitus** is a principle of both social continuity and discontinuity: continuity because it imbues the individual with social forces and transports them across time and space (through the practices, customs and dispositions of the individual agent); discontinuity because it can be modified through the acquisition of new dispositions and because it can trigger innovation whenever it encounters, through the agent, a social setting, or field, different from the one in which it arose. (Wacquant, 2006)

Theories of career development map across (at least in part) to these ideas of individuality and agency. The rational approach, that one has to determine ones own abilities and aspirations and match them to the future employment opportunities fits more closely with ideas of social capital in that it assumes a degree of autonomy and self-direction is possible. The structuralist approach reflects ideas of cultural capital and the importance of conforming to patterns of employment and other behaviour.

Hybrid approaches - notably the concept of bounded rationality can apply the concept of habitus to argue that while it is possible to match stories of personal development to both rational and structural decision making modes, there are exceptions. In other words this represents recognition that there are probabilities but not inevitabilities. The concept of bounded

rationality as the normative mode of decision making is most useful for policy makers and practitioners because it recognises the importance of the individual, of the social structures and environmental factors that surround them and the potential to collectively shift the boundaries within which possibilities lie.

So back to the question of how can agencies support young people? Responses that shift the boundaries of how young people view their futures are those that will have most impact, whilst being relevant to the contexts within which young people live. So for example,

- it is clear that parents are the most important influence on young people, responses should challenge the stereotypes of parents alongside their children;
- careers education should be embedded in all schools, it should be age relevant and locality relevant, it should allow young people to learn about themselves and to imagine different futures;
- labour market information should be made available to young people as they move from thinking about dreaming futures to more realistic ones, but it needs to be mediated by a teacher or adviser to encourage critical thought and reflection on key messages and to ensure that the learning is taken home;
- media portrayal of young people should promote positive role models that allow young people to see a range of occupations and possibilities.

This list is not exhaustive but actions across the range of factors that influence young people's views delivered in ways that build social and cultural capital to encourage well informed and considered decisions that extend the boundaries of personal possibility are all to be encouraged.

Finally, a note on where activities should be targeted. Places do not inevitably determine outcomes, but it still makes sense to co-ordinate responses at a local area level because this offers the potential for coherent multi-agency intervention that delivers services efficiently to clusters of young people.

## **8. IAG Services in the North East: Good Practice**

This final section of the report gives the details of a selection of effective practice case studies which iCeGS have located throughout the course of the project.

During part two of the research, Regional Practitioner Perspectives, participants were able to provide details of effective practice case studies that they were aware of through their own work. Other case studies have been identified using the search terms “Young People” “North East” “Case Study” and “Effective Practice” The majority of these accounts were already in concise case study format, therefore they have not been re written, instead a table is provided that details the area of the North East in which the effective practice took place, the aims and objectives of the initiative, the outcomes and a link to a relevant website or document.

Area	Title	Aims and Objectives	Outcome	Link/ Reference
County Durham	The Mineral Valleys Project	To reconnect local people to their landscape through restoration, production of education materials, the provision of employment in sustainable tourism.	By linking smaller projects into larger programmes communities have become more aware of larger issues connected to sustainability. Schools groups have been able to learn about the geology and ecology of the area and local unemployed people are trained in group leadership and teaching traditional skills leading to employment in sustainable tourism.	<a href="http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/communitiessummit/show_case_study.php/00176.html">http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/communitiessummit/show_case_study.php/00176.html</a>
Durham	NEETS Project	A joint Youth and Connexions service project which worked with 30 NEET young people engaging them in planning and organising their own activities.	As a result the project all but one young person moved on to employment or education and one withdrew from drug use.	Raising and Realising Aspirations For children and young people in the North East. What works, models and methods
Durham	Work Related Learning Leading to Employment in an Urban Area	Developing work related learning in conjunction with local employers and colleges to improve and expand routes into local employment.	On completion of courses 20 Year 11 students were offered apprenticeship jobs. Other reported engagement in the process as useful in terms of future career development. Links with local employers were developed through the project and continued through school governance activities	Manual of Good Practice from 14 – 19 pathfinders <a href="http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.PathFinderDetails&amp;sid=9&amp;pid=258&amp;ctype=Text&amp;ptype=Single&amp;pf=45">http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.PathFinderDetails&amp;sid=9&amp;pid=258&amp;ctype=Text&amp;ptype=Single&amp;pf=45</a>
Durham	Developing young Peoples Decision Making Abilities	Developing sector specific Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) materials to improve young people's decision making abilities.	IAG materials were provided to help students progress onto the next stage of learning or employment	Manual of Good Practice from 14 – 19 pathfinders <a href="http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.PathFi">http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.PathFi</a>



	in an Urban Setting	A comprehensive guidance system was developed which recognised the roles of all partners, including schools and the connexions service,		<a href="#">nderDetails&amp;sid=9&amp;pid=258&amp;ctype=Text&amp;ptype=Single&amp;pf=45</a>
Gateshead	The impact of family Learning on Improving the Life chances of families	Parental involvement in the Open College Network to they develop skills and gain accreditation at the same time as their children.	Every Child Matters Outcomes were achieved. The accreditation lead to an increase in parents seeking further educational opportunities, especially those within the childcare sector	Raising and Realising Aspirations For children and young people in the North East. What works, models and methods.
Gateshead	Head Start	18 primary schools were engaged in aspiration raising activities including visits to Newcastle University and activity based workshops for employers and young people.	Headstart was featured as a case study of good practice by the CWDC and won an ICG National Careers Award in the Pre 14 Learning Category.	<a href="http://www.gos.gov.uk/gone/cyp/changeforchildren/aspirations/case_studies/t_headstart/">http://www.gos.gov.uk/gone/cyp/changeforchildren/aspirations/case_studies/t_headstart/</a>
Gateshead	Engagement with young parents in the High Fell Area	To support young parents during the first year of their child's life through peer support groups and teenage parents playgroup	Empowering parents to take an active part in their child's learning and development, giving confidence to young parents and encouraging them to access other services and engage with other activities that will enhance life skills.	Raising and Realising Aspirations For children and young people in the North East. What works, models and methods
Gateshead	Working with Education Business Links to Improve the Vocational Offer in an Urban Area	Improve vocational learning and promote vocational career options to key stage 4 students throughout the region through activities such as Industry days and sector specific events.	The partnership integrated vocational pathways into mainstream and longer term initiatives, establishing links with local colleges, local education authorities and Connexions to facilitate the process.	Manual of Good Practice from 14 – 19 pathfinders <a href="http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?qo=site.PathFinderDetails&amp;sid=9&amp;pid=258&amp;ctype=Text&amp;ptype=Single&amp;pf=45">http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?qo=site.PathFinderDetails&amp;sid=9&amp;pid=258&amp;ctype=Text&amp;ptype=Single&amp;pf=45</a>

Gateshead	Reducing Transport Issues by Adopting Alternative Delivery Mechanisms in an urban area	To reduce the travel to learn barriers that students face and increase post 16 participation and retention rates through overcoming timetabling issues which enabled young people to access provision with a range of providers.	Although costly the pathfinder scheme increased student access to provision, doubling the intake of students in 2005/6 and improving staying on rates across the partnership. The extended access to provision lead to increased student choice and access to a broader curriculum.	Manual of Good Practice from 14 – 19 pathfinders <a href="http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.PathFinderDetails&amp;sid=9&amp;pid=258&amp;ctype=Text&amp;ptype=Single&amp;pf=45">http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.PathFinderDetails&amp;sid=9&amp;pid=258&amp;ctype=Text&amp;ptype=Single&amp;pf=45</a>
Gateshead	Embedding Systems for Sustainability in an Urban Area	A project framework to maximise the potential sustainability of pathfinder funded activities and inform long term quality 14 – 19 provision through marketing, common timetabling and a virtual sixth form	Increased participation rates, a wider choice of progression routes for young people in their own locality, enhanced guidance and counselling through an agreed entitlement delivered to a consistent standard across the partnership.	Manual of Good Practice from 14 – 19 pathfinders <a href="http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.PathFinderDetails&amp;sid=9&amp;pid=258&amp;ctype=Text&amp;ptype=Single&amp;pf=45">http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.PathFinderDetails&amp;sid=9&amp;pid=258&amp;ctype=Text&amp;ptype=Single&amp;pf=45</a>
Hartlepool	Building Futures: Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) / Allowance Based Initiative for Young People (ABIYP)	A Tees Valley initiative administered by Hartlepool Borough Council. Training and support for young people aged 16 – 19 (ABIYP) or 18 – 60 (ILM) whilst undertaking a paid work placement in the construction industry.	During 2005 - 08 ABIYP: 148 Beneficiaries, 50 employed 26+ weeks, 59 employed 52+ weeks. ILM: 41 beneficiaries, 19 employed 26+ weeks, 16 employed 52+ weeks.	<a href="http://www.teesvalleypartnership.co.uk/projects/details.php?id=252">http://www.teesvalleypartnership.co.uk/projects/details.php?id=252</a>
Middlesborough	Engagement Project	Re engaging Y10 students at risk of becoming NEET through accredited work based learning	Cases of improved levels of qualifications and opportunities to engage in full-time apprenticeships.	<a href="http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/NorthEast/North_East_14-19_Commission_Update_Issue_2.pdf">http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/NorthEast/North_East_14-19_Commission_Update_Issue_2.pdf</a>
Newcastle	Newcastle Children and	To reduce the historically high number of NEET young people in	Young people sat on all shortlist and selection panels, all	<a href="http://www.idea.gov.uk">www.idea.gov.uk</a> Improvement and

	Young People's Strategic Partnership and Connexions Tyne and Wear	Newcastle through effective mapping and tracking, operationalising a preventative strategy, focussing on funding on the real barriers that some young people face and taking the Connexions service to young people rather than expecting that they will visit the centre and engaging children, young people and families in local area decision making.	Connexions events were evaluated by parents and young people and this was fed back to area managers as part of a drive toward quality assurance.	Development Agency.
Northumberland	Using Learning to Learn to help students take ownership of their own learning	Cramlington Community High School made Learning to Learn an integral part of its Year 9 humanities course to boost students confidence and independent learning skills by teaching them how they learn and how to become more effective learners	The course raised students awareness of how they learn and improved their ICT skills, improved behaviour in all lessons and started them on a path of lifelong learning based on the application of the 5 R's (Resilience, resourcefulness, responsibility, reflectivity and reasoning)	<a href="http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/casestudies/casestudy.cfm?id=331">http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/casestudies/casestudy.cfm?id=331</a>
South Tyneside	The Boys Achievement group at St Joseph's RC Comprehensive School	An initiative designed to work with young boys in year 7 who were found to be under achieving during the first ten weeks of their secondary school career. The activities included encouraging them to discuss their feelings in a safe environment and working on behaviour skills, particularly anger management.	Of the 25 Year 7 pupils who were identified to take part in the initial group, 13 have returned to the classroom. The participants have noted that the activities have made them reconsider their behaviour and friendship groups.	<a href="http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/casestudies/casestudy.cfm?id=258">http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/casestudies/casestudy.cfm?id=258</a>
South Tyneside	Outstanding Secondary Schools –	Staff at Harton Technology College have worked to the principles of tradition, innovation and excellence	Raised standards though strategies including the refined use of performance data and	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Twelve-outstanding-secondary-">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Twelve-outstanding-secondary-</a>

	Harton Technology College	to inspire their young people	target setting have lead to the school being considered a 'beacon of hope' for many of its disadvantaged young people	schools-Excelling-against-the-odds
Sunderland	Year 11 Recruitment and Information Directory 2008	To present information learning, employment and training opportunities available to young people leaving Year 11 in 2008.	The presentation of this publication is an example of effective practice. Opportunities in learning, training and volunteering in information relating to funding are presented in a simple format which addresses the audience in an adult yet accessible manner.	<a href="http://www.connexons-tw.co.uk">www.connexons-tw.co.uk</a>
Sunderland	Sunderland Education Business Partnership (SEBP)	To support the enhancement of the National Curriculum through the development, promotion and delivery of activities within primary and Secondary education with an emphasis on work related learning and enterprise education	Evidence was submitted and Sunderland successfully achieved the prestigious National EBP Network Quality Award	<a href="http://nebpn.virtualschools.net/folders/nebpn_membership/membership/north_east/">http://nebpn.virtualschools.net/folders/nebpn_membership/membership/north_east/</a>
Sunderland	Your Shout: The views of young people in poor communities in North East England	This one day event sought to uncover young people's views of what it is to live in disadvantaged communities in Britain, focussing on family life, locality, aspirations and whether young people can change things.	The event unveiled young peoples concerns and highlighted issues related to sex and teenage pregnancy, the cost of higher education and transport and the stigma that they faced as a result of living in deprived areas. Conclusions included the need for more residential courses to enhance learning and broaden horizons.	<a href="http://www.ippr.org/members/download.asp?f=%2Fecom%2Ffiles%2FYour%5FShout%5Fevent%5Freport%5F08%2Epdf">http://www.ippr.org/members/download.asp?f=%2Fecom%2Ffiles%2FYour%5FShout%5Fevent%5Freport%5F08%2Epdf</a>
Sunderland	Youthinc	Giving young people a voice within	Improved levels of mutual	<a href="http://www.sncwd.org.uk/doc">http://www.sncwd.org.uk/doc</a>

	Annual Conference 2008	the planning and organisation of the city's services	respect between young people and public sector workers and improvements in transport links	uments/SunYouthInc3.pdf
Sunderland	Sunderland Voluntary Sector Youth Forum Lets Start a conversation about poverty	Engaging young people in discussions about locality and poverty and government policy	Young people were able to articulate what their needs were and how they felt about issues such as child poverty and 'things to do'.	<a href="http://www.svsyf.org/content/Growing%20up%20in%20Sunderland%20Report%20-%20Dec%202008.pdf">http://www.svsyf.org/content/Growing%20up%20in%20Sunderland%20Report%20-%20Dec%202008.pdf</a>

*How do young people (in the region) form their views on future learning and career options?*  
*Literature Review*



## Appendices

### Appendix 1: References: Part One: Literature Review

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## Appendix 2: References: Part Two: Regional Practitioner Perspectives

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*How do young people (in the region) form their views on future learning and career options?  
Literature Review*

### **Appendix 3: Methodology**

After consultation with the client and experts within the iCeGS Associate network the methodology chosen for the literature search was a directed literature search. This method was chosen because it was felt this approach would be most likely to best reflect the views gathered from practitioners and case studies gathered from the North East. And because of the complexity of the issues identified in the initial consultation.

In order to identify material for the project, after discussions with the client and staff and associates within iCeGS an initial list of keywords were identified. Searches were then carried out using the following databases: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), PsycINFO, British Education Index (BEI) Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) and Gale Powersearch (InfoTrac and Expanded Academic ASAP). This was supplemented with more general searches using Google and Google Scholar and the Ask iCeGS library catalogue and British library catalogue. These searches identified further keyword terms and descriptors that were added to the table. A number of international experts were also contacted for their views on the most relevant research within their country and area of expertise and their responses were added to the search results. Bibliographies of the most relevant publications retrieved were also scanned for additional material. The material was then categorised under 13 sub-headings identified from the results and reviewed to ascertain any gaps in research. Summaries of the most useful resources were then created so that they could be included in the research findings and as an aid to any further research.

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#### **Appendix 4: Stakeholder Interviewees**

iCeGS would like to thank the following people for their contribution to this report. They gave up their time to contribute freely and highlight good and effective practice in their localities.

Name	Job Title	Organisation
Andy Hately	IAG Development Manager	Integrated Youth Support Service. Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Chris Wilkinson	Area coordinator	Connexions Sunderland
David Coates	Practice and Performance Manager	Connexions Redcar and Cleveland
Janice Bray	Executive Director	Connexions County Durham
Mark Smith	Connexions Service Manager	Hartlepool Council: Children's Services Department
Peter Robertson	Assistant Head of Service; Connexions Manager	South Tyneside Council
Sally Weir	Head of Service (for Connexions Northumberland Contract)	igen
Sara Morgan-Evans	Head of Integrated Youth Service	Newcastle City Council
Steve Graham	Over 11 Lead, Connexions	Children and Young People's Integrated Youth Support Service, Gateshead Council/Connexions Gateshead.
Tony Bousfield	Acting Connexions Manager/Team Lead for Education Team for Connexions Darlington	Darlington Borough Council

The International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGs) is a research and development unit based at the University of Derby. The Centre aims to bridge the gap between guidance theory and practice. It supports and connects guidance practitioners, policy-makers and researchers through research activities and learning opportunities; and by providing access to resources related to guidance and lifelong learning.

iCeGs aims to:

- conduct and encourage research into guidance policies and practices;
- develop innovative strategies for guidance in support of lifelong learning; and
- provide resources to support guidance practice across all education, community and employment sectors.