

Performance Indicators and Benchmarks in Career Guidance in the United Kingdom

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Jennifer Wannan, Project Manager for Guidance at Cedefop, for her support in making the publication of this Occasional Paper possible. We are also grateful to the many individuals who assisted in compiling the information contained within it. A full list of these individuals, and the organisations they represent, is given as an appendix.

The Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS) is owned by 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.

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ISBN 0901437190

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Foreword

At European level the use of indicators and benchmarks is an essential part of monitoring performance and progress towards the objective the EU has set itself of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. To date there are no European level indicators or benchmarks on guidance and improving quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation is an issue currently under examination by the European Commission Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance.

Cedefop plays an active role in the Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance, undertaking research and analysis, commissioning studies and disseminating the results of the Group's work via publications and electronic resources such as the Cedefop guidance web-pages¹. Recent research commissioned by Cedefop has shown that the use of indicators and benchmarks for guidance provision in many Member States is very patchy. There is a general lack of a systematic approach and wide variations exist, not only between but also within Member States, as regards what is monitored, the means used, the purposes for which data is collected and the use made of the results.

The research showed that the four countries which make up the United Kingdom are at the forefront of the development and use of indicators for guidance provision. Pioneering work is being carried out especially as regards:

- performance indicators and related quantified target setting;
- ways of measuring the impact of guidance;
- the development of new instruments to measure progress prior to integration into employment or learning.

There is European added-value to be gained by sharing more widely the interesting examples of policy and practice from the UK. Cedefop therefore decided to sponsor the publication of this Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS) Occasional Paper in the belief that it will make a valuable contribution to the Europe-wide debate on the development and use of indicators for guidance provision. Cedefop would welcome comments on this publication and contributions on guidance indicators more generally and invites you to make your views known through the discussion section of our lifelong guidance virtual community². Alternatively, you may wish to email Jennifer Wannan, Project Manager for Guidance, at jwa@cedfop.eu.int

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¹ http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/Guidance/

² http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/lifelong_guidance

1 Introduction and background

1.1 This overview of performance indicators (PIs) and benchmarking in career guidance in the UK has arisen from a European-wide study commissioned by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). The UK part of the most recent phase of this study was undertaken by the Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS), who carried out a detailed assessment of the availability and use of career guidance-related PIs and benchmarking in each of the four constituent countries of the UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

1.2 The main body of this Occasional Paper summarises the central themes and conclusions of the four UK country reports submitted by CeGS to Cedefop, together with key examples of the availability and use of management information, including PIs. Further background information to the European-wide research is also given. Appendix 1 summarises the key providers³ of career guidance-related services on which the UK part of the study was based; Appendix 2 details the individuals and organisations that helped provide the underlying information; tables 1 to 4 summarise the main features of the availability and use of management information detailed in each of the four UK country reports submitted to Cedefop.

The Cedefop European-wide research

1.3 Career guidance policy reviews initiated by the OECD and extended by Cedefop, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the World Bank, were carried out in 37 countries between 2001 and 2004. One of the conclusions of these reviews was that policy development for career guidance needs to be supported by data on the financial and human resources allocated to career guidance, on citizen need and demand for services, on user satisfaction, and on the outcomes and cost-effectiveness of career guidance. Within this context, the European Union Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance, set up by the Commission in 2002, has a mandate that includes making recommendations on priorities for performance indicators and benchmarks in the delivery of career guidance services.

1.4 As part of the work programme of this Expert Group, Cedefop commissioned a European-wide study into the availability and use of performance indicators and benchmarking. A report detailing the findings of what was to be the initial phase of this study was published in January 2005⁴. The authors concluded that the limited nature of the data collected through the initial phase, and the lack of comparability between countries, precluded the possibility of introducing indicators or benchmarking at the European level in the short term. In light of this, the authors recommended for the mid-term that further work should be done to clarify which services could be characterised as guidance to ensure comparisons of like with like, and to collect wider and more detailed information on the use and availability of PIs and benchmarking for the relevant services in all 25 states of the European Union. They also recommended for the mid-term that this further work should contribute to the development of PIs covering the extent to which target client groups participate in guidance, and covering the financial means spent on the delivery of guidance services.

1.5 In the initial phase of the European-wide study, den Boer et al developed a framework that identified a number of relevant key issues in lifelong guidance, and a number of areas for the possible development of PIs that were based upon an “input, process, outcome” model. The main areas for the possible development of PIs, based upon the model, are summarised below and include examples at the level of individual users, the provider organisations, and at the national policy level. The framework developed by den Boer et al provided the basis of a questionnaire that was used to collect data from a number of EU member states and helped inform the conclusions and recommendations contained in their report. The framework, and the questionnaire, were also used in the subsequent study to collect data from a wider range of EU countries, the UK part of which has resulted in the publication of this paper.

Main areas for the possible development of PIs: based on den Boer *et al* (2005) *op. cit.**Inputs*

- Number and characteristics of service users, and the number of sessions per user.
- Number, type and qualifications of staff available to deliver the service.
- Financial means, including financial resources allocated to guidance by ministries, and time and other resources reserved by providers for guidance activities.

Process

- Content of services provided, including the focus and type of activities used (e.g. information, advice, in-depth assessment), and the means used (e.g. telephone, face-to-face, on-line).
- Quality assurance of the management and delivery of the service.
- Overall co-ordination and coherence of national policy across provider organisations and provider sectors.

Outputs

- Level of user satisfaction with the service provided.
- Extent of user personal development, including the learning of decision-making and career management skills.
- Percentage of users progressing into employment, education or training.

The provision of career guidance services in the United Kingdom

1.6 In the UK, the specific term “guidance” is normally reserved to describe the more intensive support element of a broader range of services collectively referred to as “information, advice and guidance” (IAG). These services are highly developed across the whole of the UK and are widely available to those in education, in the labour market and in a variety of community settings. However, there are many differences and similarities in the arrangements for the delivery of IAG services across the four constituent countries of the UK. These arrangements partly reflect the geography, culture, complexity and relative population sizes of the regions and, increasingly, they are also linked to differences in the legal and constitutional responsibilities that apply.

1.7 In 1999/2000 certain powers, including those covering education and training, were devolved to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales who now have their own administrations, namely: the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Executive and the National Assembly for Wales. This means that within an overall policy framework emanating from the national parliament in London, the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are able to enact their own distinctive legislation. For example, the Department for Education and Skills has published a Skills Strategy White Paper⁵ that sets out targets and strategies for ensuring that individuals have the skills to be employable and to enjoy fulfilled lives and, although the strategy is primarily for England, the devolved administrations have each developed their own, equivalent strategy for skills and lifelong learning and lifelong guidance.

1.8 These differences and similarities in approach to IAG services across the UK are not only reflected in the respective legislation of the four countries but are also reflected in their organisational and delivery arrangements “on the ground”. For example, the delivery of publicly funded career guidance, typically by specialised “careers companies”, is the responsibility of the respective administrations and differs somewhat in each of the four countries in terms of its management and delivery arrangements. Crucially, in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, the careers companies deliver an all-age service, whereas in England separate institutional arrangements apply for young people and for adults. On the other hand, publicly funded

⁵ Department for Education and Skills (2005). Skills: Getting On In Business, Getting On At Work. London:DfES.

employment information and advice services in England, Scotland and Wales are the responsibility of the UK Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and are managed across the three countries by Jobcentre Plus according to common arrangements, whilst in Northern Ireland separate, though equivalent, arrangements apply. Appendix 1 contains a glossary of the key providers of IAG services that formed the basis of the UK part of the Cedefop research. This glossary serves to highlight some of the differences and similarities in the organisational and delivery arrangements across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

2 The availability and use of management information in the provision of IAG in the UK

2.1 Irrespective of any differences in the legislative, organisational and delivery arrangements of IAG services in the four countries, consistent features and underpinning principles apply, partly reflecting the emphasis upon social inclusion and lifelong learning that runs through all current UK policy on learning and training, and partly reflecting past shared practice. Similarly, although there are differences in the priorities and systems for collecting and using management information across the four countries, and across IAG provider sectors, there are also many common features. The key features of the availability and use of management information, including PIs, that are broadly consistent across all four parts of the UK, and some of the differences, are summarised under the headings below. Tables 1 to 4 give further details of these features drawn from information contained in the four UK country reports submitted to Cedefop. This overview concludes with a number of overall observations about the availability and use of performance indicators in the delivery of IAG services in the UK, and about possible future developments.

Identifying need and demand for guidance services

2.2 Some research studies have been carried out to assess the need and demand for IAG services in the UK. In England preliminary⁶ and follow-up⁷ research was carried out by MORI/Guidance Council to assess the level of demand for IAG amongst the general public. In addition, some providers have carried out small-scale surveys, including the use of focus groups, to assess local demand and any unmet demand. For example, CeGS has carried out an unpublished local study on behalf of the Lincolnshire and Rutland nextstep partnership focussing upon “hard to reach” groups in their area.

2.3 Many providers have established systems for identifying, on an ongoing basis, the likely referrals to their services. For example, careers services across the UK, and Connexions partnerships in England, identify need and demand in response to individual self-referrals, agency referrals, and through their links with schools, colleges and employers. More specifically, in Northern Ireland, the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) identifies those who might need the service, but may well not demand it, by networking with a wide range of “signposter” individuals and organisations.

2.4 At the funding body level, the principal means of establishing the level of community need and demand for IAG services in the UK is largely historical, based upon past service usage and/or the statistical representation of defined target or priority groups within the national or local populations. This assessment of need is typically linked to the annual funding cycle for publicly funded services whereby funds are set against provider performance targets based upon past performance and take up of service, and any additional policy priorities for defined target groups. For example, the level of funding allocated by central government to Connexions partnerships in England is determined by a funding formula containing two elements, each element providing half of the funding allocated. The first element provides funding to Connexions Partnerships based on the number of 13-19-year-olds in their area. The second element provides additional funding to all Connexions Partnerships based on the needs of young people in the area as defined by levels of: educational non-achievement, unemployment, non-participation in education or training, and dependency on state financial support. Providers of publicly funded IAG services generally receive their funding on an annual basis through a formal “funding agreement”. These agreements require that the recipients of funds monitor and report on progress against set targets, usually on a monthly or quarterly basis, and this management information is used to inform the funding and planning process for the following year.

Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) in Northern Ireland

EGSA identifies those who might need the service, but who may not demand it, by networking with a wide range of “signposter” individuals and organisations. With funding support from the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), EGSA extended its provision in 2000 and established a network of 12 guidance workers (8 working in offices located in host organisations such as Community Support organisations, Colleges and Libraries throughout the province). Demand is generated through proactive links with key other partners such as the local British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) who use EGSA's telephone number to support their adult learning initiatives. EGSA monitors individual client demand and use of service through in-house “Client Contact” and “Client Record” database systems. They use this to obtain figures on take-up of services by area, client profile (age, gender, employment status, existing qualifications), and how the client heard about the service.

Monitoring access to, and use of, guidance services

2.5 All key IAG providers in the UK regularly and systematically record and report on volumes of service delivery against “activity” targets, and “priority client group” targets where applicable. The precise nature and detail of the required reports varies and usually reflects the performance targets set for each particular category of provider by the appropriate government department, funding body or provider organisation management group. For example, for nextstep partnerships in England, there is a requirement to report the number of users *and* the number of sessions, both by defined user groups and the category of service provided. In other cases, for example Connexions partnerships in England, the number of individual service users is not reported though the number of service interventions is a reporting requirement.

2.6 In most cases, wherever possible, data is recorded of the user’s gender, age, ethnicity, disability (where appropriate), employment status and qualification level. However, although such data is usually recorded and used for internal purposes within the organisation, typically for equal opportunities monitoring, it is not always required to be reported regularly to the appropriate government department or funding body. One exception to this is the Northern Ireland Careers Service which uses a system to extrapolate data pertinent to equality of opportunity legislation; the data is then used to provide feedback to the relevant government departments. The level of ease of access to this data, and the degree of its centralisation, will vary depending upon the scale of the provision and the size and scope of the provider. For example, Jobcentre Plus, extending across England, Scotland and Wales, records this data in an electronic database, the so-called Labour Market System, that is available to key managers and policy advisers via the organisation’s intranet.

Connexions

Connexions partnerships are required to submit regular management information to the DfES involving a wide range of aspects of Connexions delivery. A full specification of the management information reporting requirements for 2004/2005 can be downloaded from the publications section of the Connexions website at: <http://www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships/>

The required intervention information is submitted monthly in terms of:

- the type of intervention, e.g. one-to-one personal contact, telephone, email/text message/letter;
- the delivery staff involved, e.g. Personal Adviser, other agency on behalf of Connexions;
- activity context, e.g. in education, in employment;
- age of those subject to the interventions; and
- level of support, e.g. intensive support, minimum intervention.

Although the number and types of intervention have to be reported, the number of individual users and individual user characteristics do not. However, as the DfES specification makes clear, most partnerships and their provider organisations will collect more detailed user profiles for their own performance management purposes and as part of the monitoring of their equal opportunities policy.

Satisfaction with guidance services

2.7 All key IAG providers in the UK regularly record and report feedback from service users, including consumer reactions and levels of satisfaction with the service. Some providers carry out these surveys themselves using their own staff, for example, Careers Wales; some use external consultants working on behalf of the provider, for example, learndirect and Jobcentre Plus; and others combine both of these methods, for example, Careers Scotland and Connexions Partnerships in England. The main method used is the telephone interview, with postal questionnaires and focus groups occasionally used. Generally, the user feedback data is used as part of the providers' continuous self-improvement procedures, with the more favourable feedback used for publicity purposes. In the case of several providers, the feedback data is used to measure performance against user satisfaction targets set by the appropriate government department or funding body, for example, learndirect and nextstep partnerships.

learndirect Advice

Feedback from users on their level of satisfaction with the services they have received is systematically sought in three ways, as summarised below.

- Every month 500 users of the telephone helpline are interviewed, by telephone, to assess their satisfaction with the service received. The interviews are carried out by an independent research company, BMG Research, and are reported to learndirect Advice every three months.
- BMG Research also carry out focus groups on behalf of learndirect Advice, to explore further specific issues arising from the telephone surveys.
- Every six months a larger and more in depth telephone survey is carried out by BMG Research that assesses the extent to which users of the learning advice service have progressed to learning, or are likely to progress to learning in the near future, as well as assessing their level of satisfaction with the service received.

The profiles of the users interviewed in these surveys is broken-down by: age; gender; employment status; qualification level; ethnicity; and disability (where appropriate). BMG Research record and interrogate the data electronically using specialist software (SPSS). Text-based statistical reports are made available to the learndirect Advice management team via a portal at the BMG Research website.

A Ufi/learndirect Customer Feedback Committee reviews the user feedback results with a view to continue to improve the quality of service. Included in the performance targets set by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is a target of 90% of users to be satisfied with learndirect. The satisfaction survey results are included in the reporting of target achievement to the LSC and are used to determine the payment of any financial bonuses to learndirect Advice staff.

Monitoring the quality of guidance services

2.8 All key IAG providers in the UK operate in line with formalised systems of quality assurance that are invariably based upon the processes of self-assessment and continuous self-improvement. In addition, the clear majority of providers are accredited against an externally regulated standard such as matrix or Charter Mark⁸, and are usually subject to periodic inspection by an independent inspection service⁹, though one exception to this in both respects is learndirect scotland's information and advice service. Data on the quality of the management and delivery of services, including user feedback, is made available to the external inspectors and is usually summarised in the published inspection reports. Data made available for the purposes of internal quality assurance systems will vary depending upon the provider organisation and the precise nature of the quality assurance framework in place.

⁸ Matrix is the UK standard that has been specifically designed for organisations that deliver information, advice and guidance on learning and work opportunities, whilst Charter Mark is a quality standard that has been specifically developed for UK publicly funded services.

⁹ The inspection service in England is provided by the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI); in Northern Ireland, by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI); in Scotland, by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE); and in Wales, by Estyn.

Careers Scotland

The service is accredited against Charter Mark, and is working towards the EFQM Excellence Model. In addition, the service has adopted, and has made significant progress in addressing, the following four key areas identified by the OECD to assist in monitoring the quality of guidance services.

- Ensuring greater diversity in the types of services that are available and in the ways that they are delivered, including greater diversity in staffing structures.
- Working more closely with career guidance practitioners to shape the nature of initial and further education and training qualifications in support of the development of career self-management skills, better career information, and more diverse service delivery.
- Developing better quality assurance mechanisms and linking these to the funding of services.
- Improving the information base for public policy making, including gathering improved data on the financial and human resources devoted to career guidance, on client need and demand, on the characteristics of clients, on client satisfaction, and on the outcomes and cost-effectiveness of career guidance.

To support quality assurance within the organisation, a set of Careers Scotland Quality Standards has been developed. It comprises 15 standards, in four groups: ‘engagement standards’, ‘contact standards’, ‘action/progress standards’ and ‘follow up and review standards’. Impact measures are attached to each of the standards, based on the Kirkpatrick Model, in which such measures are divided into four levels: reaction; learning outcomes; transfer of learning to changed behaviour/attitude; and longer-term social/economic impact. Management information, in line with Career Scotland’s quality assurance framework, is regularly collected and used principally in performance management evaluations.

Assessing the benefits and outcomes of guidance services

2.9 All key IAG providers in the UK record data linked in some way to the outcomes of the service provided, usually in terms of the numbers of service users progressing into work and/or learning/training. However, the relationship between the service provided and the outcome data recorded is not always clear, and the strength and directness of the relationship between the two can vary. For example, Connexions partnerships in England are set a NEET¹⁰ reduction target against which they are required to report data, though it is a matter of conjecture as to how directly Connexions interventions are linked to the outcomes recorded by the data. Similarly, the quality of advice and guidance provided by student services units in colleges of further education is just one of many factors that may possibly be linked to reported student retention rates.

2.10 There are differences as to how data linked to service outcomes is used and reported. For several providers, including nextstep partnerships and learndirect in England, and Jobcentre Plus in England, Scotland and Wales, there is a requirement to report this data against published performance targets associated with progression into work and/or learning. Similarly, EGSA in Northern Ireland is required to report performance against set targets mutually agreed with the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL). For other providers, including Careers Wales and learndirect Scotland, although the relevant data is collected, corresponding performance targets are *not* currently in use, and there is no formal reporting requirement to the relevant funding body.

2.11 There are also differences in the way data linked to service outcomes is gathered by providers. A variety of sources is used including: tracking users directly via follow-up telephone interviews; interrogation of employment service databases; interrogation of school/college leavers and destination databases; and use of “signposters”, i.e. individuals and organisations, to provide information. Some providers gather this data themselves, for example, Careers Wales¹¹ and many colleges of further education; some providers, funding bodies and government departments, employ the services of external consultants to carry out special impact studies, either on an ongoing annual basis, for example the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), or in the form of “one-off” studies, for example the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The LSC and DfES commissioned studies are summarised in sections 2.12-2.14.

¹⁰ Not in Education, Employment or Training.

¹¹ Summarised in an Occasional Paper published by CeGS: Reed, K., Mahony, K. & Gration, G. (2005). *Career Guidance for Adults in Wales - Making a Difference*. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

Careers Wales

A team of individuals drawn from all of the Careers Wales companies and initially supported by CeGS, designed, developed and successfully implemented a pilot survey involving the tracking of 1,000 adults three and six months following their guidance interviews. A summary of the pilot survey and its findings were published by the Centre for Guidance Studies as an Occasional Paper in 2005. In tandem with the impact evaluation survey, Careers Wales are working with the Welsh Assembly Government on the development of key PIs and possible benchmarks for IAG services in Wales.

The findings of the impact survey provided valuable evidence of the positive impact experienced by users of the Careers Wales adult guidance service. The majority of respondents said that as a result of the guidance interview they were clearer about their career plans, had carried out actions to achieve their plans, and had experienced significant career-related life-changes where the guidance had been a main or contributing factor. The vast majority of respondents said that they found the guidance interview to be useful, with many making very positive and detailed comments about the help and support they received. Respondents also reported 'softer' outcomes from the guidance interview, reflecting the added value of guidance in terms of confidence, encouragement, sense of purpose, and greater focus.

The research was also considered to have been effective in demonstrating that Careers Wales managers and practitioners can successfully design and implement their own in-house research as a means of providing useful and cost-effective data to feed into established quality assurance processes, and as a means of making a valuable contribution to evidence-based practice.

Recent impact studies in the UK

2.12 The DfES published a report in early 2005 on a longitudinal telephone survey of over 4,000 recipients of IAG services in England¹². The survey was commissioned by the DfES and its aim was to test whether the provision of IAG makes a difference to the work and learning outcomes of individuals by tracking them over time. The individuals who were tracked consisted of two groups: namely the "A/G group" who had received advice and guidance, and a matched control group, namely the "I group" who had received information only. By using two groups whose personal characteristics were broadly similar, the study sought to attribute any differences in the outcomes of the two groups to the impact of the advice and guidance intervention.

2.13 The LSC published a report in 2004 on the impact of information and advice services delivered by nextstep Partnerships in England¹³. This national impact survey, and a number of equivalent regional nextstep surveys, involved telephone contact with 2,181 adults of working age some 3 to 6 months after the information and advice had been provided. Unlike the DfES study, the LSC survey methodology did not include a matched control group. However, the methodologies of the two studies were similar in other respects: both used broadly the same work and learning variables to measure impact, and both asked individuals to say how important they felt the IAG service had been in contributing to any career-related life changes.

2.14 Also, the DfES commissioned a five-year longitudinal qualitative study, led by the Institute for Employment Research (IER), Warwick University, in association with CeGS, that was designed to examine what is meant by 'effective guidance' from users', practitioners' and expert witnesses' perspectives. The tracking of fifty adults over a five-year period should yield new insights to contemporary policies and practices. This particular study, and the contrasting examples described above, highlight the crucial importance of developing both qualitative as well as quantitative approaches to assess and measure the impact of career guidance interventions.

Investment and financial monitoring

2.15 All key IAG providers in the UK are allocated funds within the context of performance targets that they are required to report progress against according to a regular schedule often set out in a formal funding agreement. The requirement to report performance regularly against targets means that the *overall* financial investment in these services is closely monitored and accounted for. In addition, each provider will have access to more detailed financial information about all aspects of its delivery arrangements as part of its normal business planning and financial reporting and accounting processes.

2.16 Although the *overall* financial investment in IAG services in the UK is monitored and accounted for, the use of unit cost calculations in relation to the delivery of IAG services is less evident across provider sectors in the UK. For example, throughout the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL), in Northern Ireland, there is recognition of the need to develop accurate unit costs for each type of IAG intervention and it is understood that some progress has been made in moving towards this goal. The Northern Ireland Careers Service is currently undertaking work on 'unit costs' for one-to-one interviews, group work sessions and classroom activities. The decision to relocate the Belfast-based learndirect helpline to Manchester was based on a unit cost calculation i.e. service delivery cost per call in Belfast was £33 compared to a £6 cost for delivery from the Manchester office. In England, Jobcentre Plus managers *do* share information about the unit cost of delivering advice sessions, but it is unclear as to whether this approach applies widely elsewhere.

2.17 There is even less evidence of data that links financial investment and costs directly to IAG *outcomes*, as opposed to levels of *service delivery*. Although only indirectly linked to IAG provision, by contrast it is interesting to note that the DfES plans to develop and publish performance indicators for colleges of further education in England that link financial input to defined output measures.

Minimum performance and value for money in further education colleges in England

Floor targets setting minimum performance levels for post-16 education and training providers have been in place since September 2003. All colleges and 90% of work based learning providers are expected to meet or exceed floor targets by 2005/06.

More recently, the DfES has been working with HM Treasury and the LSC to develop a value for money measure. In 2005/06 the Department will use the proposed efficiency savings that relate to colleges to demonstrate improved value for money at the national level.

The Department is also working to establish new performance measures covering critical success factors for the sector. Considering costs against these measures will give a productivity/value for money measure at provider level. Provisional indicators will be tested during 2005/06 and phased in from 2006/07

Performance targets and benchmarks

2.18 All key IAG providers in the UK are set measurable and specific annual performance targets that include some or all of the following: enquiry/advice levels; work and learning/training progression outcomes; and user satisfaction levels. For example, the performance targets for learndirect Scotland for 2005/06 include all three of these aspects, and also include targets for the quality and effectiveness of their Learning Opportunities Database and for innovative pilots to overcome barriers to learning. In Wales, the six careers companies are currently working with the Welsh Assembly Government with a view to pilot a number of common all-Wales performance targets likely to be based upon advice and guidance outcomes.

2.19 Although performance indicators and performance targets are well established for the provision of IAG in all parts of the UK, the use of *benchmarks*¹⁴ as comparative standards or “norms” is less evident. The UK central government has been active in promoting the dissemination and use of performance data for comparative purposes in the delivery of public services as part of the duty given to local authorities for “best value” under the Local Government Act 1999. For example, the Local Government Performance website enables comparisons to be made between the performance of the delivery of local services across all of the English local authorities. Unfortunately, these, and similar comparisons elsewhere in the UK in relation to the delivery of local services, do not *directly* relate to IAG services. However, it may be that benchmarking is one possible outcome from the all-Wales pilot mentioned above, with agreed performance data being actively and jointly used as comparative standards, or “norms”, across all six of the Careers Wales companies.

Careers Wales

Quantifiable benchmarks have not yet been set in Wales concerning information, advice and guidance services. However, in tandem with the impact evaluation survey mentioned in section 2.5 above, Careers Wales is working with the Welsh Assembly Government on the development of key PIs and possible benchmarks for IAG services. The work is still at an early stage, but it is planned to pilot a small number of PIs with Careers Wales in 2006/07. Possibilities currently being considered are listed below.

- Percentage of clients sustaining a positive outcome.
- Percentage of careers education and guidance (CEG) clients indicating that their Key Stage 4 guidance interview(s) helped to inform their decisions about career and learning choices.
- Percentage of young people identified as having special educational needs, and involved in transition planning, achieving an initial positive outcome.
- Percentage of adult clients making career and learning related decisions in their lives as a result of Careers Wales services.
- Percentage of Careers Wales Online users identifying it as helping to support their career and learning-related decisions.

It is recognised that client behaviour will be based on a number of factors, some of which are outside Careers Wales' control or influence. However, it is intended that piloting some performance indicators will provide both a benchmark and highlight areas for improvement by Careers Wales and other partners. Discussions about definitions, resource implications and other implementation arrangements are still ongoing and final decisions on PIs have yet to be made.

3 Conclusions

3.1 In terms of the *availability* of management information, including PIs, the following conclusions can be made in relation to the key IAG providers in the UK.

- Providers collect a wealth of information covering all of the main aspects of the services they provide. This information is particularly rich in capturing aspects of delivery, including volumes of service interventions and penetration of services in targeted population groups. Data on service outcomes is also collected, usually in terms of work and education/training outcomes and/or user satisfaction ratings.
- One area where there is little evidence of available management information is that concerning the unit costs of IAG delivery; there is even less evidence of any reporting of the relationship between the costs of delivery and the outcomes of delivery.
- The management information that is reported is invariably capable of being analysed electronically and can usually be broken down by a number of variables that are broadly consistent across equivalent providers in all parts of the UK. These variables include: number and type of intervention, client characteristics and equal opportunity monitoring data, and service outcome measures.

- The precise nature of the data collected, and the variables by which it can be analysed, typically reflect the particular performance targets and the requirements of quality assurance frameworks that apply for each provider.
- 3.2** In terms of the *use* of management information, including PIs, the following conclusions can be made in relation to the key IAG providers in the UK.
- At the operational level: IAG performance data is used mainly to support continuous self-improvement by informing the development of systems and procedures, management arrangements, and staff development programmes.
 - At the provider funding level: where providers of services are subject to renewable contracts, performance against targets is considered within the contract tendering and renewal process. Where renewable contracts do not apply, performance against targets is considered within the funding agreement process and may affect the level, and targeting, of funding agreed for the forthcoming year.
 - At the policy maker level: performance against targets is one of a number of factors influencing future policy, delivery arrangements, and the overall level of funding via the Public Service Agreements that cover IAG services.
 - Although IAG performance data is used at both national and local levels as indicated above, there is little evidence of its use for benchmarking purposes - that is, as published standards or “norms” to enable active comparisons to be made between equivalent IAG providers.

3.3 Generally, it is recognised that career guidance is well developed in the UK compared to most other developed countries. It is provided in a diverse range of ways, is widely available across many sectors, and has many highly developed institutional support arrangements including a strong legislative base, quality assurance standards, training and qualification frameworks, and research and evaluation support¹⁵. Similarly, it can be concluded that arrangements for collecting and using management information, including PIs, are also well developed in relation to the delivery of career guidance services in the UK compared to most other developed countries.

3.4 The findings from this UK overview of PIs and benchmarks in career guidance were presented at a Cedefop meeting in Nuremberg in October 2005. The meeting brought together 7 participants from 6 different EU Member States (i.e. Germany, the UK, Denmark, Finland, France and Ireland) in order to report on the developments in the identification of indicators and benchmarks for guidance in their respective national contexts. These 6 countries were chosen because, given their response to the Cedefop follow-up study on indicators and benchmarks, it was clear that they had made some concrete progress in the establishment and use of indicators for guidance provision. A summary report¹⁶ from the meeting contained a number of recommendations to the EU Lifelong Guidance Expert Group. In their recommendations, the Nuremberg participants stressed the importance of adopting an incremental approach to data collection, with data collection becoming more sophisticated over time but avoiding excessive or unnecessary data collection. They also stressed the importance of giving practitioners a voice in the articulation and development of indicators, as well as in the analysis of the data generated, and the importance of developing evaluation frameworks that recognise the multi-faceted nature of guidance including the development of career management skills.

Appendix 1: Glossary of the key information, advice and guidance providers in the UK

Careers Scotland: Careers Scotland provides free careers information, advice and guidance to the people of Scotland - whatever their age, background or circumstances. The service is part of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise set up by Scottish legislation in 1990. The two enterprise organisations operate in terms of two separate systems and procedures and each is managed by its own Chief Executive. However, both organisations have a common national brand, operate according to common strategic objectives contributing to the economic well-being of Scotland.

Careers Wales: Careers Wales is the national brand for the all age careers information, advice and guidance services funded by the National Assembly for Wales. Established on April 1st 2001, it combines the strengths and best practices of the six Careers Companies working in Wales. Careers Wales works with young people from the age of 11 (and some primary school work in Education Business Activities) upwards, and with adults, to provide them with the information, advice and guidance to help achieve their career development goals.

Connexions: Connexions is the UK government's support service for all young people aged 13 to 19 in England. It aims to provide integrated advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for this group and to help them make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. Connexions is being delivered through local partnerships covering the same geographical areas as the Learning and Skills Councils (LSC).

EGSA (Educational Guidance Service for Adults): EGSA is a major player in delivering adult educational guidance services throughout Northern Ireland. It is a 'company limited by guarantee', recognised by the Inland Revenue as having charitable status. In 2004, the majority of its income was provided by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), Belfast.

Employment Service of Northern Ireland: The Employment Service of Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive's Department of Employment and Learning (DEL). The service is delivered within the context of the Jobs and Benefits initiative designed to co-locate local employment and benefits services within single sites across Northern Ireland by March 2006. Although a separately administered initiative with its own policy objectives and performance targets, Jobs and Benefits is the Northern Ireland equivalent of Jobcentre Plus in England, Scotland and Wales.

Further Education Student Support Services: the provision of student support services, including career guidance, is well-established in UK further education institutions offering mainly sub-degree courses to students post-16. Typically, the support is managed through specialised student services "units" whose staff will often include qualified careers advisers and/or student counsellors. Reflecting its status and importance in further education, the service has its own professional association - the National Association of Managers of Student Services (NAMSS).

Higher Education Careers Advisory Services: the provision of career guidance for students in higher education is well-established in universities and degree-awarding colleges in the UK with, typically, specialised careers advisory "units" staffed by qualified professional careers advisers. Reflecting its status and importance in higher education, the service has its own professional association - the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS). The service is also supported by the Higher Education Careers Service Unit (HECSU) which was established in 1972 to provide news and information about research and development in career-related learning and career guidance in Higher Education.

Jobcentre Plus: Jobcentre Plus was launched in April 2002, across England, Scotland and Wales, to bring together the Employment Service and parts of the Benefits Agency that delivered services to working age people. Jobcentre Plus aims to help more people into work and employers to fill their vacancies, and to provide people of working age with the help and support to which they are entitled.

learnirect: learnirect operates a network of more than 2,000 online learning centres in England, Wales and Northern Ireland providing access to a range of e-learning opportunities. It also provides a national telephone helpline and website for adults wishing to access integrated information, advice and guidance on opportunities for learning and employment. Some differences apply across the three countries in terms of funding arrangements, performance targets, and quality assurance. Equivalent, but separate, arrangements apply in Scotland.

learnirect scotland: learnirect services are delivered by the Scottish University for Industry (SUfi). SUfi was established by the Scottish Executive as a private limited company in 2000. It became a non-departmental public body, responsible to Scottish Ministers, in April 2005, and retains its private limited company status. It provides a telephone helpline and website in Scotland for adults wishing to access integrated information, advice and guidance on opportunities for learning and employment.

nextstep: nextstep is the brand name for local face-to-face information and advice (IA) services funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There is a nextstep service in each of the 47 local LSC areas in England and for each, a single, main contractor is responsible for managing the delivery of IA services and targets through the co-ordination of a network of sub-contractors. These networks typically include: colleges of further education, voluntary and community organisations, trades union representation, and some employers.

Northern Ireland Careers Service: N. Ireland Careers Service operates within the Department for Employment and Learning's (DEL), Skills and Industry Division. It offers an all-age careers guidance service throughout the province. Its mission is "to assist economic and social development in Northern Ireland by enabling clients to make informed, realistic and sound decisions about their futures. To ensure equality of service to young people and adults within an open and responsive, progressive and innovative culture". Careers Advisers are based in Careers Offices, Job Centres, Jobs and Benefit Offices.

Appendix 2: Key contacts and sources of information

The information summarised in this paper was obtained with the support of the following individuals and the organisations they represent.

Vivienne Brown, Head of Career Planning, Careers Scotland

Anne Dean, Quality Manager, Careers Wales Cardiff and Vale

Gareth Dent, Head of Advice Services, learndirect *Advice*

Michael Downing, Strategic Manager, Jobcentre Plus

Douglas Govan, Careers Scotland

David Hall, learndirect scotland

John Higton, Researcher, learndirect *Advice*

Eileen Kelly, Director, Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA), Belfast, Northern Ireland

Donald King, Target Strategy Manager, Jobcentre Plus

John McKeown, Head of Careers and Guidance Services, Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland

Leonora McLaughlin, Department for Social Development, Northern Ireland

Bronwyn Nelson, Senior Policy Manager, National LSC, Coventry

Jennifer Rush, Deputy Head of Careers and Guidance Services, Department for Employment and Learning, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Eleanor Speers, Assistant Director, Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA), Belfast, Northern Ireland

Steve Spendlove, Skills Strategy Manager, Jobcentre Plus

Kathleen Travers, learndirect scotland

Karen Turner, learndirect *Advice*

Eddie Valente, Careers Scotland

Paul Watts, Policy and Contract Manager, Careers Wales Adult Guidance, Welsh Assembly Government

Tony Watts, Visiting Professor, Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby

Hazel Wright, DfES, Policy Adviser Young Person's Information, Advice and Guidance

Table 1: England: summary from the country report submitted to Cedefop

	Connexions	learndirect	nextstep	Jobcentre Plus
Monitoring access to, and use of, guidance services	Detailed service delivery data is submitted monthly by Connexions Partnerships to DfES	Detailed service delivery data is submitted monthly by learndirect to National LSC	Detailed service delivery data is collected by the main contractor & submitted monthly via an LSC online management information system	Detailed service delivery data is collected on ongoing basis & made available via a Labour Market System on JCP intranet
Satisfaction with guidance services	Service-wide surveys by independent consultants & providers' own surveys	Regular surveys & selected focus groups by independent consultants	Provider own surveys is a matrix standard requirement	Mystery shopper programme; surveys by independent consultants
Monitoring the quality of guidance services	Partnership annual self-assessment (according to published guidelines); Ofsted inspected	Matrix accredited & ALI inspected	Strategy for continuous quality improvement required of main contractor & matrix accreditation is required of providers	JCP is matrix and Charter Mark accredited; JCP funded provision delivered by others is ALI inspected
Assessing the benefits of guidance services	NEET levels closely monitored and reported against published performance targets	Surveys carried out by independent consultants include progression into learning rates	Work and learning outcomes measured via 1 and 6 month follow-up of 20% advice clients and all enhanced service clients	Job progression outcomes measured and reported by points system & employer vacancies outcomes measured and reported
Investment in guidance services	Provider funding agreements & targets; provider own accounting; reporting of delivery costs (premises & staff) to DfES	Funding linked to performance targets; own financial accounting	Main contractor funding agreement & targets; provider own accounting	Funding linked to performance targets; own financial accounting
Performance targets	Reduction of NEET by 10% Nov 2002 to Nov 2004 + local targets e.g. local priority groups	For 05/06: 6 million advice activities; 90% user satisfaction; 50% progression into learning	For 05/06: 2.5 million info. sessions; 0.3 million advice users below LII; 45% advice users progressing into learning; 100% matrix; 90% user satisfaction	Great Britain targets for 04/05 include: 7.295 million job outcomes points; 84% filling of JCP employers' vacancies

Table 2: Northern Ireland: summary from the country report submitted to Cedefop

	Careers Service NI	EGSA	learndirect	Employment service NI
Monitoring access to, and use of, guidance services	Detailed service delivery data submitted from regional offices to Headquarters, on a monthly basis. Combined use of ICT software and Service Level Agreements	Detailed service delivery is collected on an ongoing basis & made available via in-house Client Contact and Client Record database systems	Detailed service delivery data is submitted monthly by learndirect to the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).	Detailed service delivery data is collected on ongoing basis & made available via the Client Management System
Satisfaction with guidance services	Use of questionnaire and focus group surveys. Developing a new tracking mechanism to inform this aspect of work	Use of comments and complaints forms, telephone and postal questionnaires linked to quality assurance and matrix standard requirements	Up to 2004, a sample of Northern Ireland customers was included in the regular surveys undertaken by independent consultants as for England.	Up to 2005 programme of user satisfaction surveys carried out by independent consultants; from 2005 small-scale studies only periodically by Jobcentre staff.
Monitoring the quality of guidance services	Use of the 'Matrix' quality standard to measure quality of IAG provision. Plans for a further roll-out to 15 other IAG guidance organisations. Developing 'qualification standards' for a range of IAG practitioners	Use of the 'Matrix' quality standard linked to specific targets. Staff development includes NVQ 4 in guidance; also achievement on post-graduate modules in guidance	Telephone help line managed from England and is "Matrix" accredited	Some Jobcentres are Charter mark accredited
Assessing the benefits of guidance services	NEET levels closely monitored and reported within DEL. Working with Skill Sector Councils (SSCs) and Analytical Services (DEL) to enhance the use of labour market intelligence (LMI) in IAG practices	Currently refining its tracking systems to build on client questionnaire data. The service has a tradition of using "client case-studies" to identify and promote the benefits of guidance	Up to 2004, a sample of Northern Ireland customers was included in surveys carried out by independent consultants that covered progression into learning rates	Research by independent consultants to measure impact of Jobs and Benefits on client progression; some impact measurement tools currently being evaluated
Investment in guidance services	Funding linked to performance targets; own financial accounting; some progress made in moving towards unit costs of IAG in DEL	Measures to date have tended to be "outputs" such as reaching particular groups rather than cost inputs	A cost analysis review has resulted in the transfer of service delivery from N. Ireland to the Manchester office, England	Funding linked to performance targets; own financial accounting; some progress made in moving towards unit costs of IAG in DEL
Performance targets	Set performance targets to make and sustain fortnightly contact with clients who are disengaged and to engage 30% identified from education, training or employment sectors	Targets include:- numbers of contacts, impact measured by client satisfaction rates and assessment of guidance practice against national assessment standards.	Up to 2004, targets included: 90% user satisfaction; 50% progression into learning	05/06 targets include: to assist 7,800 working age benefit customers into notified job vacancies; to assist 2,600 New Deal participants from welfare to work.

Table 3: Scotland: summary from the country report submitted to Cedefop

	Careers Scotland	learndirect scotland	Jobcentre Plus
Monitoring access to, and use of, guidance services	Detailed service delivery data is collected and reported against targets to the Scottish Enterprise networks	Detailed service delivery data is collected monthly and reported against targets to Scottish Executive at least annually	Detailed service delivery data is collected on ongoing basis & made available via a Labour Market System on JCP intranet
Satisfaction with guidance services	Range of customer satisfaction surveys carried out on an ongoing basis in-house & by use of external consultants; a performance measure of 85% customer satisfaction has been set	Telephone customer satisfaction surveys by independent consultants; branded provision delivered by others subject to mystery shopper programme	Mystery shopper programme; surveys by independent consultants
Monitoring the quality of guidance services	Careers Scotland has adopted the four areas of quality assurance identified by the OECD & uses an internal detailed Quality Standards framework; Charter Mark & matrix accredited; working towards EFQM standard	Rigorous internal quality assurance system; branded provision delivered by others inspected by HMIE	JCP is matrix and Charter Mark accredited; JCP funded provision delivered by others is ALI inspected
Assessing the benefits of guidance services	“Insight” management information system records follow-up data linked to impact factors, e.g. Data on the extent to which NEET clients enter an education, training or employment opportunity	Data recorded of numbers enrolling on learning programmes who received information and advice in the previous six months.	Job progression outcomes measured and reported by points system & employer vacancies outcomes measured and reported
Investment in guidance services	Overall funding linked to performance targets; own financial accounting; some resource data gathered including: average time per user of the service; actual expenditure on guidance material	Funding linked to performance targets; own financial accounting	Funding linked to performance targets; own financial accounting
Performance targets	Indicators for 05/06 include: number of individuals within the working age population engaged with Careers Scotland in career planning will be 175,000; the number of school leavers moving into tertiary education, employment, training and/or voluntary work will be 80% by 1st October 2005	05/06 targets include: enquiries from individuals and SMEs; user satisfaction; participation in learning for both individuals and SMEs; quality rating of Learning Opportunities Database	Great Britain targets for 04/05 include: 7.295 million job outcomes points; 84% filling of JCP employers’ vacancies

Table 4: Wales: summary from the country report submitted to Cedefop

	Careers Wales	learndirect	Jobcentre Plus
Monitoring access to, and use of, guidance services	Detailed service delivery data collected and made available via Training, Skills and Career Policy Division of Assembly	Detailed service delivery data is submitted every 3 months, and annually, to the Assembly via Career Wales	Detailed service delivery data is collected on ongoing basis & made available via a Labour Market System on JCP intranet
Satisfaction with guidance services	All companies have own customer survey systems	Regular surveys & selected focus groups by independent consultants	Mystery shopper programme; surveys by independent consultants
Monitoring the quality of guidance services	All companies Investors in People accredited; possible future matrix accreditation; Etsyn inspected	Matrix accredited; to be Estyn inspected	JCP is matrix and Charter Mark accredited; JCP funded provision delivered by others is ALI inspected
Assessing the benefits of guidance services	Work and learning outcomes measured via 3 & 6 month follow-up of 6% of users - currently being piloted across all companies	Customer survey data does not currently include learner progression rates for Wales	Job progression outcomes measured and reported by points system & employer vacancies outcomes measured and reported
Investment in guidance services	Funding linked to performance targets; company financial accounting	Funding linked to performance targets; own financial accounting	Funding linked to performance targets; own financial accounting
Performance targets	Possible PI pilot including: % work and learning outcomes; % decision making outcomes	For 05/06: 80,000 enquiries; 90% user satisfaction	Great Britain targets for 04/05 include: 7.295 million job outcomes points; 84% filling of JCP employers' vacancies