

Guidance for Life

An Integrated Framework
for Lifelong Guidance in Ireland



2007

National Guidance Forum Report

Foreword

The presentation of this report to Minister Mary Hanafin and Minister Micheál Martin from the National Guidance Forum marks an important milestone in the development of guidance in Ireland. The National Guidance Forum was established by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 2004 in recognition of the need to support individuals' self-management of their lives, their learning and their career paths for their own fulfilment and to ensure continued national prosperity. The Forum brought together key stakeholders from across the education and labour market spectrum. The result is that for the first time an agreed cohesive strategy for a national lifelong guidance service has been developed.

Guidance is recognised at national and European policy levels as fundamental to lifelong learning that supports the development of human potential, social inclusion, employability and economic prosperity. Recent reports on aspects of guidance provision in Ireland by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs¹ and the Department of Education and Science² reveal many strengths, but also significant gaps. The voice of the general public in Ireland, captured for the first time through the Forum's consultative process, endorses lifelong guidance provision as a priority area for development.

The National Guidance Forum's report provides an opportunity for the two Departments to move forward in the provision of a guidance service that underpins national priorities in lifelong learning.

The Forum's agreed *national lifelong guidance framework* outlines the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals at different times of their lives. The implementation of this framework is supported by *quality standards for service delivery* and *appropriately qualified practitioners*. The proposed *framework of organisational structures* will deliver a coordinated and comprehensive lifelong guidance service.

The timing of this report is opportune following as it does the announcement at the Finnish EU Presidency guidance conference in November 2006 that the European Commission is to support the establishment of a European Guidance Network. The Network will be representative of national guidance fora and will liaise with the European Commission, Cedefop, the European Training Foundation, the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy and international agencies, such as the OECD, in developing guidance policy and practice in member states. The implementation of the recommendations of the National Guidance Forum report will enable Ireland to participate in the European Guidance Network, thus providing access to the support of international good practice and strengthening Ireland's input into European guidance policy.

It has been a great privilege for me to Chair the National Guidance Forum and to witness first-hand the members' dedication to supporting the personal, social, educational and career development of all those living in our country at all stages of their lives. This Report is the result of a wealth of expertise in guidance and I am confident that it will enable the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to continue to build on their successful initiative in setting up the National Guidance Forum.

**Professor Joyce O'Connor,
Chair of National Guidance Forum**

¹ Phillips, S., Clarke, A., Classon, J. (2006) *Careers and Labour Market Information in Ireland: A Study for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs*, Dublin: Forfas

² Department of Education and Science (2006) *Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools*, Dublin: Government Publications

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Guidance Forum would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of individuals, professional associations and agencies to the completion of this report. In particular the Forum would like to thank writer and editor Cynthia Deane, researchers Dr. Claire Hayes and Maeve Murray and the members of the general public who participated in the consultative process.

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The National Guidance Forum

BACKGROUND TO THE NATIONAL GUIDANCE FORUM

The National Guidance Forum was a joint initiative of the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which was launched at an international guidance conference during the Irish Presidency of the European Union in April 2004. In a subsequent letter setting out the mandate of the Forum, the ministers cited the EU Commission's definition of the Forum as 'an assembly of all the relevant actors concerned with the development of policy, systems and practices for lifelong guidance' (EU Commission 2004, cited in letter from ministers, June 2004). The Forum had its last meeting in October 2006 and the final report was submitted to the two ministers in January 2007.

Remit and Objectives of the National Guidance Forum

The remit of the National Guidance Forum was to explore how individuals, at any point throughout their lives, can access quality guidance appropriate to their needs; identify collaborative action across the guidance continuum and agree recommendations in collaboration with other stakeholders (Letter from Minister for Education and Science and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, April 2004).

The agreed objectives of the Forum were to:

- » Ensure that guidance becomes central to the public policy and planning process in education, the labour market and social strategies;
- » Develop, communicate and implement meaningful models of guidance that underpin a vision of personal fulfilment, a fair society and sustainable employability;
- » Urgently harness and proactively manage the wealth of existing guidance resources and agree mechanisms for measuring relevant and realistic outcomes;
- » Move from a fragmented provision of guidance to a cohesive multi-faceted professional, accessible service, responsive to the needs of the individual and society.

In its final report to the ministers, the Forum presents its proposals for a new national lifelong guidance strategy, the implementation of which will achieve all of the above objectives.

Membership of the National Guidance Forum

The National Guidance Forum had an independent Chair and 33 members who represented the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; professional bodies; trainers of guidance practitioners; state agencies with a remit for guidance; employer bodies; trade unions; parents; education management and practitioners from primary, post-primary, further and higher education levels, including universities and institutes of technology; consumers, and private guidance practitioners (see list of Forum members on page ii). All of the groups represented made submissions that informed the proposals made by the Forum in its final report.

Outline of the work undertaken by the Forum, June 2004–October 2006

The Forum met eleven times in the period from June 2004 to October 2006. During its term of office, the Forum agreed a common vision and definition of guidance across the education, labour market and community sectors. The Forum's vision for the future of guidance is outlined in this report. The Forum's definition of guidance is as follows:

Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.

In the past two years, the Forum has also:

- » Collaborated with the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs to draw up the terms of reference for a national audit of careers information and dissemination: the outcomes of this study are incorporated into the Forum's recommendations;
- » Prepared a proposal for the establishment of a National Learning Line;
- » Participated in the EU Joint Actions funded project *Developing National Guidance Fora in Six Member States* (MEDSUI) 2004–2006;
- » Liaised with the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy on developments in guidance at EU level and their implications for guidance in Ireland;
- » Made a submission about funding for guidance under the National Development Plan 2007–2013. The Forum proposed measures to address the gaps in current guidance services by enabling the provision of a seamless, quality service that maximises resources, with the collaboration of guidance stakeholders.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) provided the Forum secretariat. A Steering Group managed the work and strategic direction of the Forum, coordinated the work of sub-committees, represented the Forum in networks with other groups and disseminated the outcomes of the Forum's work.

The Steering Group also made links with the two ministers to keep them informed of progress. There were four sub-committees of the Forum, each of which was charged with a specific task that contributed to the achievement of the Forum's objectives. The following reports produced by the sub-committees are summarised in this final report as a background to the Forum's proposals and they are also published in full on the accompanying CD Rom.

Guidance in Ireland: Background Scoping Report

The sub-committee produced a background scoping paper on *Guidance in Ireland* to outline current provision and identify gaps. This scoping paper has informed the recommendations of the Forum on policy development and coordination of guidance.

Perceptions of the General Public on Guidance and Guidance Services: Consultative Process Report

The sub-committee undertook a consultative process on behalf of the Forum, to research public perception and experience of guidance. The outcomes of the research have informed the Forum's recommendations for strengthening provision to achieve a seamless guidance service across the lifespan.

FIGURE 1 REPRESENTATION ON THE NATIONAL GUIDANCE FORUM



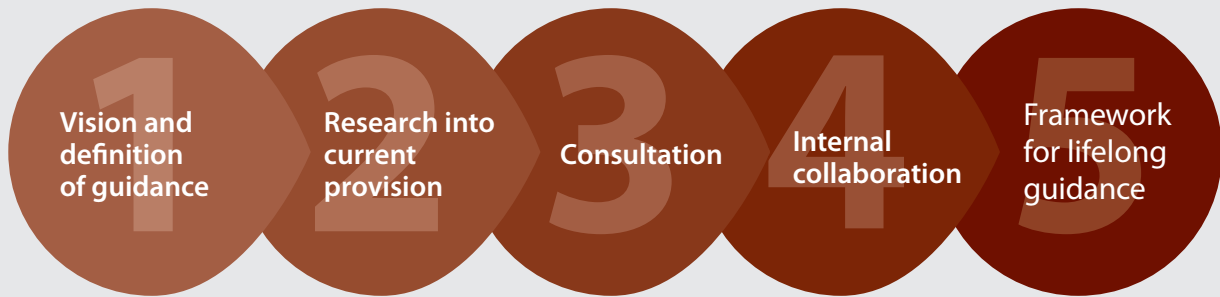
Quality in Guidance

The sub-committee produced a quality assurance framework for guidance that will enable policy makers and providers to ensure that they provide high-quality services to clients throughout the life cycle. It also proposes structures for evaluating services and quality improvement measures.

A Competency Framework for Guidance Practitioners

The sub-committee developed a framework of competencies for guidance practitioners, which will influence the future professional education and training of practitioners who will provide guidance across the life cycle and in a range of different contexts.

FIGURE 2 ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL GUIDANCE FORUM



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is the National Guidance Forum?

The National Guidance Forum is a group of experts including policy makers, providers of guidance services, practitioners and citizens who have worked together for two years to prepare a plan for an integrated lifelong guidance service in Ireland.

What has the National Guidance Forum achieved?

Since 2004, the Forum has:

- » Brought together policymakers, practitioners, providers and citizens to agree a common vision and definition of guidance across the education, labour market and community sectors;
- » Researched the current provision of guidance in all of these sectors;
- » Consulted with the general public about their perceptions of guidance services;
- » Collaborated with partners at international level to ensure that the guidance service in Ireland meets the highest standards of practice;
- » Developed a national framework for lifelong guidance, which includes frameworks for practitioner competencies, quality assurance and organisational structures.

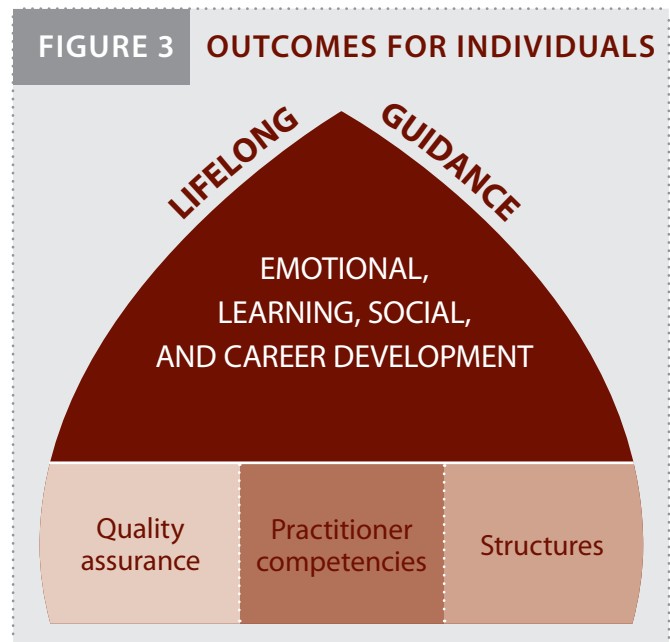
What are the recommendations of the National Guidance Forum?

The Forum has adopted the following definition of guidance:

Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.

Based on this definition, the Forum proposes a strategy for lifelong guidance in Ireland that includes four main elements. The elements of the strategy are:

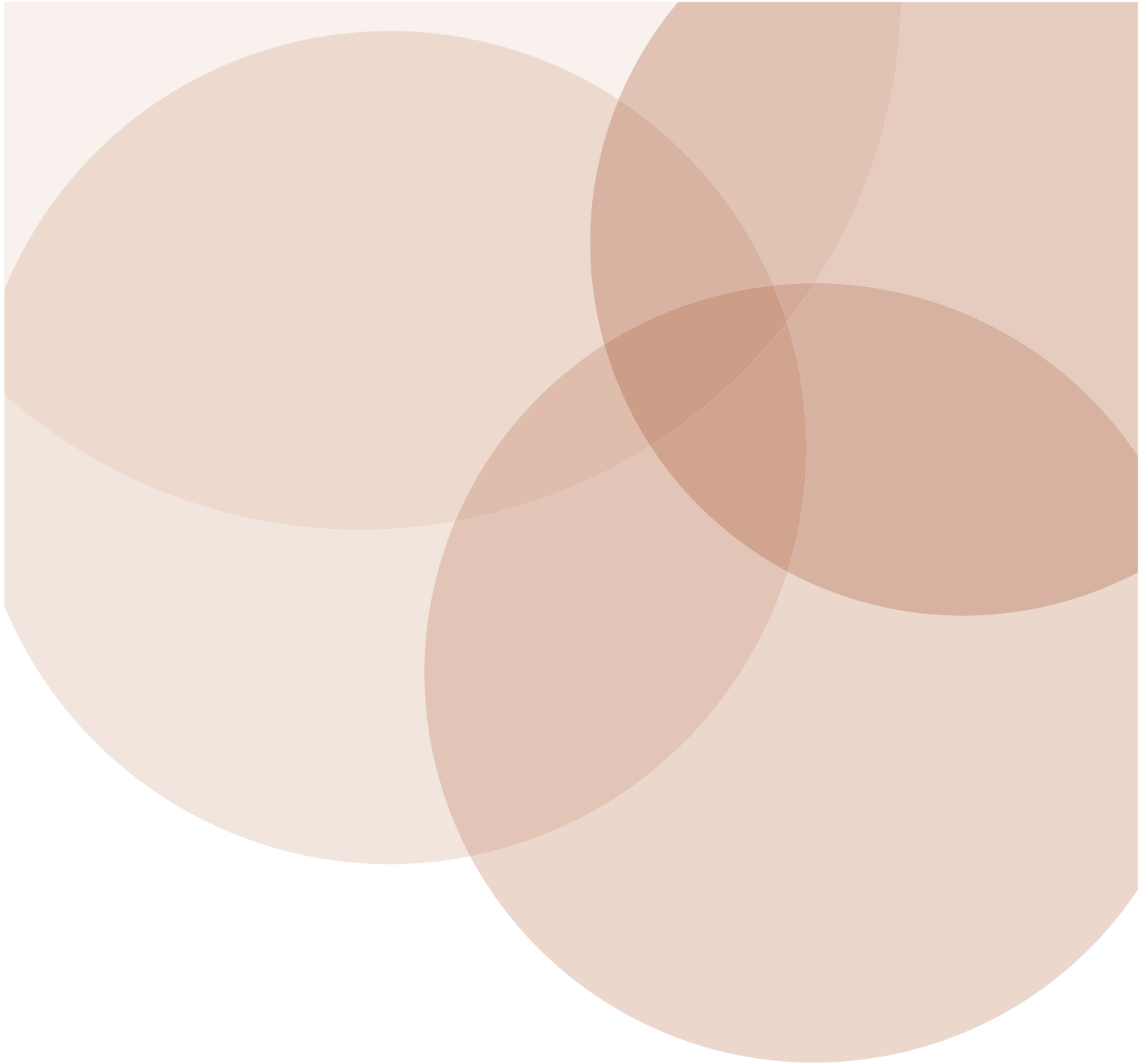
FIGURE 3 OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS



1. A **national lifelong guidance framework**, outlining the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals at different times of their lives;
2. A **competency framework** for guidance practitioners;
3. A **quality framework** for guidance services;
4. A **coherent framework of organisational structures** to deliver a coordinated and comprehensive lifelong guidance service.

The Forum has undertaken some initial development work on each of these elements, and this report outlines how the Forum envisages each element of the integrated strategy being implemented. The Forum recommends that the lifelong guidance strategy should be implemented in full as soon as possible. The strategy, when implemented, will:

- » Meet the guidance needs of people at all stages in the life cycle;
- » Set high quality standards for service delivery by appropriately qualified practitioners;
- » Coordinate the guidance services offered in education, training, employment, community and private settings.



01

Introduction

This is the final report of the National Guidance Forum, presented to the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in January 2007.

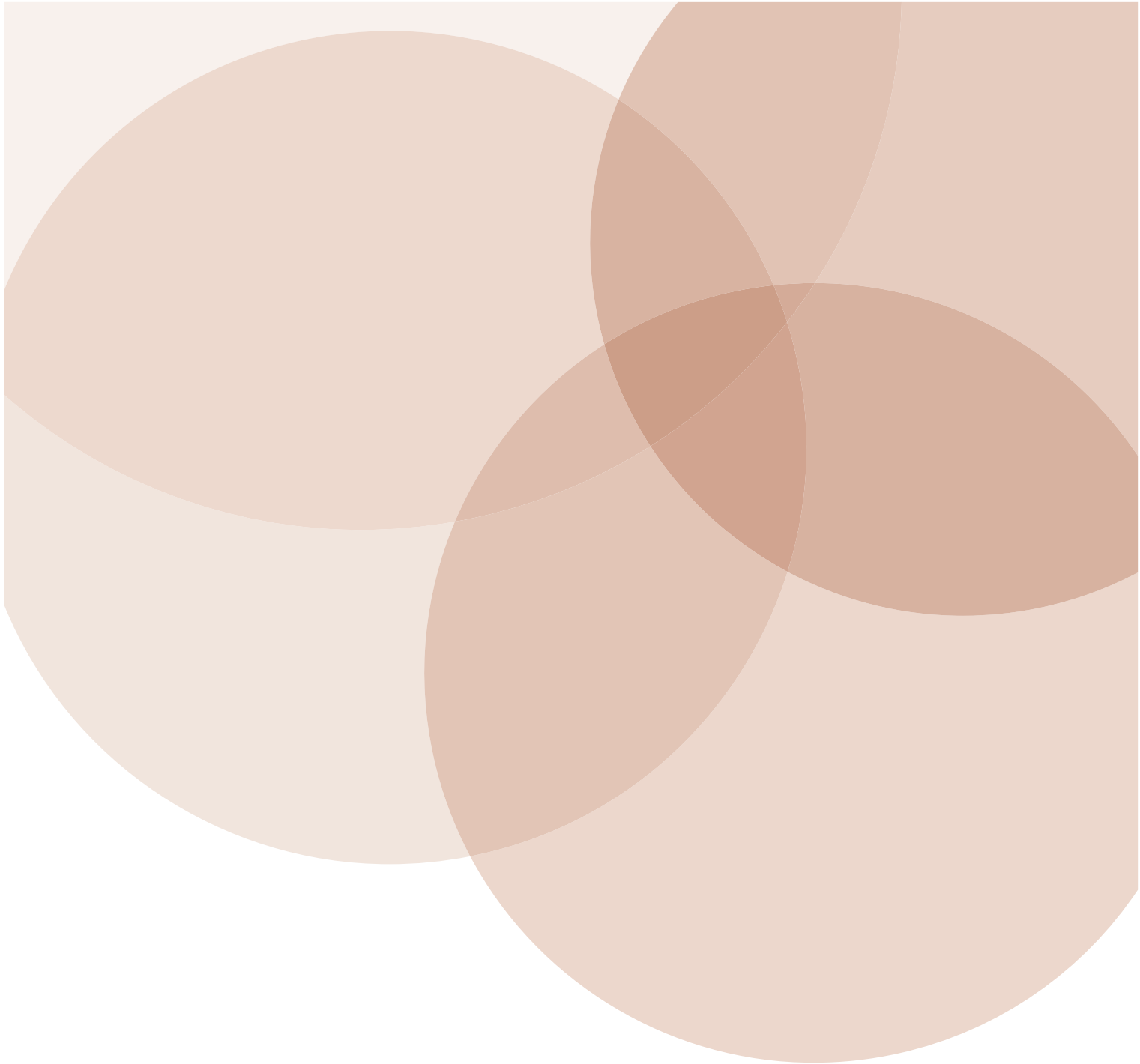
In this report, the Forum proposes a strategy for lifelong guidance in Ireland that will address the gaps that the Forum has identified in existing guidance services. The strategy will also place Ireland in a favourable position when compared to best international practice in lifelong guidance.

This report is in two parts:

Part 1 sets out the four integrated elements of the Forum's proposed strategy for lifelong guidance in Ireland:

- » A national lifelong guidance framework, outlining the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals at different times of their lives;
- » A competency framework for guidance practitioners
- » A quality framework for guidance services;
- » A coherent framework of organisational structures to deliver a coordinated and comprehensive lifelong guidance service.

Part 2 summarises the main elements of national and European policy and practice that are critical to the development of guidance services in Ireland and that provide a context for the Forum's proposals. It concludes by identifying the gaps that need to be addressed by developing an integrated strategy for lifelong guidance.



02

Part 1: A Vision for Guidance in the Future

Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.

This part of the report sets out the National Guidance Forum's proposal for an integrated strategy that will help to achieve the vision of lifelong guidance in Ireland in the future. The strategy, when implemented, will:

- » Meet the guidance needs of people at all stages in the life cycle;
- » Set high quality standards for service delivery by appropriately qualified practitioners;
- » Coordinate the guidance services offered in education, training, employment, community and private settings

An integrated strategy for lifelong guidance in Ireland

Having comprehensively examined current guidance policy and practice both in Ireland and internationally, the National Guidance Forum has identified the need for a new and imaginative approach to planning and providing guidance for people at all stages of the lifespan, from pre-school to post-retirement (for a summary of the Forum's analysis of Irish and European policy and practice, see Part 2 of this report). The Forum proposes a strategy for lifelong guidance in Ireland that includes four main elements:

- 1.** A national lifelong guidance framework, outlining the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals at different times of their lives;
- 2.** A competency framework for guidance practitioners;
- 3.** A quality framework for guidance services;
- 4.** A coherent framework of organisational structures to deliver a coordinated and comprehensive lifelong guidance service.

The Forum has undertaken some initial development work on each of these elements, and this report outlines how the Forum envisages each element of the integrated strategy being implemented. However, the Forum recognises that the full development of the four elements will be a priority task to be undertaken in the immediate future within the proposed new structures at national and local levels.

A NATIONAL LIFELONG GUIDANCE FRAMEWORK

The central feature of the Forum's proposed strategy is a national framework for lifelong guidance, which outlines the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals at different stages of their lives.

Traditionally in Ireland, guidance has been largely based in the post-primary sector, providing educational and career guidance to students and applying a personal counselling approach to support young people who encounter barriers or challenges in their personal lives.

The National Guidance Forum proposes a framework for guidance at five distinct stages in the life cycle, while recognising that guidance also plays a particularly important role in helping people to manage the major transitions in their lives: from home to school; from primary school to post-primary school; from post-primary school to further or higher education, to training or to employment; from education and training to a career. In addition, guidance helps people to manage their choices when they change careers, become unemployed or retire from paid employment.

In developing its proposal for a lifelong guidance framework, the Forum has taken account of current international practice, while at the same time being aware that it is necessary to define the outcomes (knowledge, skills and competencies) that are specific to the needs of people in the Irish education system and labour market. Two specific international models, the *Canadian Blueprint*³ and the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*⁴ were considered to be particularly relevant to the Irish context because they cover the whole lifespan. The lifelong guidance framework proposed by the Forum takes account of lifelong learning, career transitions, establishing a life-work balance and it recognises that the phases should be needs-based rather than age-based.

However, the five stages of the framework are linked to the following approximate age groups:

0–6 years: includes the development of knowledge, skills and competencies in the family setting and in early childhood education;

6–12 years: includes the development of knowledge, skills and competencies in primary school programmes and through family supports;

12–16 years: includes the development of knowledge, skills and competencies through the range of programmes and curricula available in lower secondary education;

16–18/19 years: includes the development of knowledge, skills and competencies in upper secondary education, further education, and in the vocational education/training sectors;

18/19 years + (adulthood): includes the development of knowledge, skills and competencies needed for employment, life-work balance and lifelong learning in a range of learning contexts including the workplace, higher education and the community.

The lifelong guidance framework is designed to reflect person-centred values and to promote personal, social and economic development. In proposing this framework, the Forum recognises that there is a need for balance between individual and group approaches to guidance and counselling at all stages of the life cycle. Full implementation of the framework will require that adequate resources are available so that a combination of learning and guidance approaches is used to help learners achieve the outcomes at each stage. The range of guidance approaches includes:

- » Provision of information services;
- » Small group and large group work;
- » Self-directed learning;
- » Mentoring by guidance practitioners and others;
- » One-to-one encounters with guidance practitioners;
- » Experiential learning.

³ Canadian Blueprint <http://www.blueprint4life.ca>

⁴ http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/career_development/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/australian_blueprint_for_career_dev/

These approaches will be applied by providers and practitioners as appropriate to the age of the learners and the context in which they are learning. In the Irish national lifelong guidance framework, it is proposed that there will be four groups of outcomes (in the areas of knowledge, skills and competencies):

Emotional Development

Social Development

Learning Development

Career Development

An outline of the framework is shown in Table 1. This indicates some of the main outcomes in each group. Specific education and training programmes are not mentioned because the Forum considers it more appropriate to indicate broad approaches to learning and guidance at each stage of the framework. The Forum recommends that the full elaboration of the lifelong guidance framework should be undertaken as an immediate priority by a national agency with responsibility for guidance. The Forum’s proposal for the establishment of this national agency is outlined on page 25.

TABLE 1 NATIONAL LIFELONG GUIDANCE FRAMEWORK

Outcomes for 0–6 years				
Emotional Development	Establish secure attachment	Develop the capacity for emotional self regulation	Develop self esteem based on positive interaction with others	Develop emotional intelligence
	Develop emotional literacy	Develop a positive self concept	Discover change and growth are part of life	
Social Development	Develop self knowledge and awareness of self in relation to others	Develop the ability to see another’s perspective	Develop social interaction skills	Develop interpersonal competence
	Develop teamwork and cooperative interaction skills	Acquire the ability to work collaboratively with others	Develop empathy	Develop the capacity to change and grow
Learning Development	Develop curiosity, creativity, play, optimism, positive thinking	Develop enjoyment and the ability to play and learn.	Develop language and communication skills	Develop basic concepts of number, space, time, symbolic representation
	Acquire meta cognition skills, problem solving and critical thinking skills	Develop informed decision making skills	Develop learning readiness skills	Develop a love of learning
	Develop skills and attributes in line with multiple intelligences theory	Develop a sense of self as a successful learner	Prepare for the transition to school	Develop appropriate personal management and independence skills
Career Development	Explore own skills, talents and preferences	Develop problem solving skills	Explore work, life, play and leisure concepts	Explore work and life roles

Learning and Guidance Approaches

- » Parent coaching and skills programmes
- » Quality early child care and child-centred education provision
- » Play, role play and experiential learning
- » Interaction with peers and educators and through play

Outcomes for 6–12 years				
Emotional Development	Develop self esteem based on external and internal reinforcement	Increase capacity for emotional self regulation	Develop coping skills	Improve self awareness
	Develop a positive self concept and understand impact on life and work	Develop an awareness of own emotions	Develop understanding of own and other's behaviour	Develop trust in self and others
Social Development	Improve group work skills	Learn to work as part of a team	Develop thinking on justice, morality, fairness, equality and responsibility	Develop interpersonal competence
	Develop understanding of role in relation to family, peers, society	Develop positive relationships	Develop cooperative play	Learn how to share
Learning Development	Improve information processing and retention strategies	Acquire a knowledge of post primary schools and preparedness for transition	Develop effective learner skills	Identify own learning strengths and challenges
	Develop self reflection skills	Develop meta cognition skills	Establish the link between learning & work	
Career Development	Understand how work contributes to the community	Develop awareness of own skills, talents and preferences	Use imagination to role play adult situations, jobs and tasks	Understand roles in work, home and society
	Increase awareness of gender and social roles and stereotypes	Discover the value of work and work/life balance	Develop a healthy lifestyle	Develop skills to manage change, conflict and stress

Learning and Guidance Approaches

- » Broad primary school curriculum
- » Experience of the range of careers
- » Individual and small group learning methods
- » Transition and induction programmes

Outcomes for 12–16 years				
Emotional Development	Improve self awareness	Enhance the capacity for emotional regulation	Learn to cope with stress and develop conflict resolution skills	Develop awareness of personal effectiveness
	Develop ability to maintain a positive self concept	Develop self esteem	Learn how to respond to change and growth	
Social Development	Improve social, personal and interpersonal development	Develop networking and team work skills	Understand the concept of voluntary and community work	Develop an awareness of the needs of others
	Develop more sophisticated thinking on justice, morality, fairness, equality and responsibility	Develop assertiveness skills		
Learning Development	Understand the different types of learning	Awareness of learning preference	Develop time/stress management, study and examination skills	Develop appreciation of the benefits of independent learning
	Relate lifelong learning to one's career building process	Understand the relationship between school subjects and work/life	Learn about the skills and competencies that different subjects foster	Develop problem solving skills
Career Development	Increase awareness of own skills, talents and preferences	Improve the ability to develop, plan and prioritise work	Develop leisure time and pursuits	Understand the value of a healthy lifestyle
	Recognise the importance of subject choice	Engage in life/work decision making	Explore non traditional life/work roles	Learn about available supports in the community

Learning and Guidance Approaches

- » Lower secondary curriculum
- » The whole school guidance programme
- » Out of school programmes
- » Transition and induction programmes

Outcomes for 16–18/19 years				
Emotional Development	Improve strategies to maintain positive self esteem and self concept	Develop awareness of own potential	Develop goals and sense of self actualisation	Identify personal and life values and establish a philosophy of life
	Extend coping skills to respond to a variety of challenges in own life	Learn to manage emotions		
Social Development	Increase independence and autonomy	Learn how to scaffold and support the learning of others	Develop assertiveness skills	Prepare for the transition from school/centre of education
	Establish oneself as an adult member of the family and community	Demonstrate awareness of discrimination and appreciation of diversity	Build positive relationships	Increase ability to respond to change and growth
Learning Development	Develop research skills	Develop analytical and critical thinking	Develop problem solving skills	Improve self management and independent learning skills
	Develop awareness of external factors that hinder learning	Develop an appreciation for lifelong learning	Interpret and evaluate life/work information	Engage in life/work decision making
	Learn about the impact of stereotyping			
Career Development	Develop and practice life/work decision making skills	Evaluate own aptitudes and achievements	Develop presentation, interview and career management skills	Interpret and evaluate life/work information
	Develop the capacity to seek, obtain and maintain employment	Develop the capacity to seek and obtain educational opportunities	Develop the capacity to seek and obtain training opportunities	Understand the impact of societal and economic factors on work

Learning and Guidance Approaches

- » Upper secondary & FE curriculum
- » Work preparation, experience & placement
- » The whole school/centre guidance programme
- » Transition programmes

Outcomes for 18/19 + years				
Emotional Development	Increase autonomy, independence and responsibility in life/work decision making	Develop self management skills	Develop coping skills and resilience	Develop self awareness and awareness of own strengths and limitations
Social Development	Develop social awareness	Improve capacity to scaffold and support the learning of others	Develop assertiveness skills	Develop self actualisation and clarification of expectations
Learning Development	Improve critical thinking and analysis skills	Develop reflective thinking	Improve capacity to learn and how to learn	Appreciate the benefits of lifelong learning and personal development
	Learn how to work within a team	Develop an appreciation for lifelong learning		
Career Development	Develop the capacity to seek, obtain and maintain employment	Develop the capacity to seek and obtain educational opportunities	Develop the capacity to seek and obtain training and development opportunities	Develop awareness of transferable skills
	Demonstrate capacity to take risks	Develop innovative responses to career progress needs	Develop career management skills	Increase the capacity to balance life/work roles and demands
	Increase awareness and understanding of stereotypes in life/work	Engage in life/work decision making		

Learning and Guidance Approaches

- » HE learning, teaching, and guidance programmes
- » FE learning, teaching and guidance programmes
- » Employee Assistance Programmes, training & development, induction, employment
- » Adult guidance across all sectors

TABLE 2 A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR GUIDANCE PRACTITIONERS**1. Theory and practice of vocational, educational and personal/social guidance across the lifespan**

This includes the competencies to:

- » Facilitate vocational career/life choices throughout the lifespan;
- » Facilitate educational choices throughout the lifespan;
- » Facilitate personal/social choices throughout the lifespan.

Specialisation – Assessment

2. Labour market education and training

This includes the competencies to:

- » Provide up-to-date information on educational and training opportunities, using information technology and other resources as appropriate to assist an individual in their career development;
- » Help individuals to interpret and apply labour market information to achieve their career objectives;
- » Assist individuals to create their own career opportunities;
- » Assist individuals in self-management, self-promotion and networking effectively;
- » Establish linkages with other specialist services and refer individuals to these services where appropriate.

3. Counselling

This includes the competencies to:

- » Engage in personal counselling with clients either individually or in groups;
- » Clarify the professional and ethical issues in group counselling and group guidance;

- » Help individuals to develop a personal life plan. Engage in appropriate supervision to develop counselling skills and to progress work with individuals;

- » Recognise when it is necessary to seek the support of other professionals in the counselling role.

4. Information and resource management

This includes the competencies to:

- » Develop, maintain and review information management strategies to provide up-to-date personal and social, educational and vocational/career information;
- » Use information technology to support practice;
- » Follow efficient and effective case and project management procedures;
- » Establish and maintain client records, adhering to relevant confidentiality guidelines.

5. Professional practice

This includes the competencies to:

- » Engage in consultation, collaborative work, continuing professional development, supervision and research to improve and develop professional practice;
- » Evaluate the service provided to individuals;
- » Practise in accordance with ethical guidelines;
- » Organise and manage a service and supervise personnel as appropriate;
- » Develop and implement strategic and operational plans for lifelong guidance services as appropriate.

A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR GUIDANCE PRACTITIONERS

To ensure that the lifelong guidance framework proposed can be effectively implemented, the Forum proposes that a competency framework be developed for guidance practitioners. This competency framework will ensure that professional education and training for guidance practitioners keeps pace with the needs of users in a rapidly changing social, economic and labour market environment. By being part of the National Framework of Qualifications, which facilitates the recognition of prior learning, the competency framework will also provide for mutual recognition of guidance qualifications between the education and labour market sectors, and enable practitioners to progress from one level of qualification to another when they achieve the relevant competencies.

The Forum has formulated an outline competency framework for guidance practitioners, which draws on best international practice and is designed to fit within the Irish National Framework of Qualifications. The competency framework is an overview of the competencies that practitioners will require to work within the broad context of the lifelong guidance service. The core competencies are grouped into five broad categories, and when the framework is fully developed as part of a wider consultation process there will be a number of areas of specialisation that will enable practitioners to undertake specialised tasks or to work with specific client groups. It is intended that the competency framework will inform the development of a comprehensive and flexible set of professional education and training programmes for guidance practitioners in the future.

The National Guidance Forum envisages that in future the initial education and training of guidance practitioners will be modular, allowing practitioners to become qualified to work in a range of roles across the whole spectrum of lifelong guidance services. It is further envisaged that the framework will enable practitioners at any stage in their careers to study and qualify in additional modules, so that they will be competent to take on new guidance roles within the

national lifelong guidance service. The competency framework is summarised in Table 2 on page 20. It is presented in more detail in the report from the competencies sub-committee that is included on the accompanying CDROM.

A QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR GUIDANCE SERVICES

To support the effective implementation of the lifelong guidance framework, the Forum proposes a quality framework for guidance services, which is designed to assist individuals, organisations and agencies that are involved in guidance-related activities ('providers') to ensure that they provide a high-quality service to clients. The framework includes a code of principles that should be adhered to by providers (Table 3, page 22), together with examples of guidance services (Table 4, page 23). Guidelines for evaluation of guidance services are also included.

In keeping with best international practice, the Forum recommends that an organisation engaged in developing its guidance service should ensure that its processes are consultative and negotiated, fostering ownership among stakeholders and engaging in discussion to overcome obstacles and reach agreement. The guidance process should be client-centred, appropriate and relevant to the needs of the client, balanced, unprejudiced and fair.

The approach to providing guidance services should be integrated and incremental, to ensure that good practice is reinforced. It should also be developmental, so that improvements that are needed in the service are identified and addressed. Continuous quality improvement of the service should be pursued through qualitative and quantitative methods.

The proposed quality framework for guidance services is summarised here. It is presented in more detail in the report from the quality sub-committee that is included on the accompanying CDROM.

TABLE 3 CODE OF PRINCIPLES FOR GUIDANCE SERVICES**1. Accessibility**

Guidance services should be publicised and accessible to any eligible user. The target clientele, availability and other relevant arrangements need to be stated clearly in appropriate languages, formats and publications.

2. Appropriateness

The guidance offered to individuals should be relevant and appropriate to the needs of individuals at different life stages.

3. Confidentiality within the law

The guidance process should be confidential subject to ethical and legal limitations and this should be made clear to the client.

4. Equality of opportunity

Equality of opportunity and inclusivity should underpin all aspects of provision, including the processes of the provider and the opportunities to which the guidance process leads.

5. Impartiality

Guidance should be impartial. Providers should be able to demonstrate that they offer an impartial service or declare any factors which might limit the impartiality of the guidance offered to individuals.

6. Individual ownership and responsibility

The guidance process should be client-centred and focused on the needs of the individual. It is the responsibility of individuals to make their own choices, with appropriate support.

7. Integration

Assessment and evaluation of the quality of guidance should be balanced and include the personal/social, educational and vocational aspects of the service. Assessment should be both qualitative and quantitative.

8. Quality standards of service

The service provider should operate to agreed standards of delivery which include:

- » Providing information to individuals detailing service delivery;
- » Providing individuals with accurate and current information about careers and education or training opportunities;
- » Employing staff with appropriate skills, knowledge and training;
- » Having appropriate facilities and resources to meet the needs of the client groups and the level of service being provided.

9. Team approach

It is important that all practitioners in the service organisation collaborate with each other in the interests of the clients.

10. Transparency

The guidance process itself should be open and transparent. Guidance practitioners should explain to individuals in clear and appropriate language how they propose to work with them in the guidance process.

11. Complaints handling

Providers should have a complaints procedure for clients and systems for obtaining client feedback.

TABLE 4 **EXAMPLES OF GUIDANCE SERVICES****1. Information**

Providing general or specific information on education, training, career opportunities and the labour market.

2. Advice

Helping people to interpret information and to choose the most appropriate option.

3. Counselling

Working with people to help them to discover, clarify, assess and understand their needs: counselling may be vocational, educational and/or personal.

4. Assessment

Helping people to understand their vocational, educational and/or personal development, enabling them to make appropriate judgements.

5. Teaching and learning

Providing learning experiences that enable people to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies related to making vocational, educational or personal decisions and transitions.

6. Enabling

Supporting people in dealing with agencies that provide or influence learning or employment opportunities.

7. Advocating

Negotiating with institutions or agencies on behalf of individuals.

8. Networking

Establishing links with a range of people and agencies to support and enhance guidance work with clients.

9. Providing feedback

Gathering and collating information on how well the service meets the needs of clients.

10. Managing

Coordinating and developing the human and physical resources to provide a coherent and effective programme of guidance activities.

11. Mentoring

Using appropriate mentors, both within and outside the service, to provide support to clients and to other practitioners.

12. Innovation and system change

Developing curricula and promoting changes in practice to maintain and improve quality of service.

Code of principles for guidance services

The Forum proposes a code of client-centred principles that should underpin the guidance service and provide the basis on which the quality of the service is assessed. These principles are based on international practice emerging from a recent EU project (the Leonardo da Vinci funded project *Quality Guidelines for Adult Guidance*⁵). The Forum also recommends that a customer charter be developed by all providers based on these principles, to make individuals aware of the type, level and quality of service they can expect to receive, and how the continuous improvement of the service is assured.

Assessment and evaluation of the guidance service

To ensure the provision of a quality guidance service, there should be procedures for both internal and external assessment and evaluation. Internal assessment can include documenting the elements of service provision to evaluate if key elements are being provided to the relevant quality standards; review of feedback received from clients; identifying weaknesses and putting in place short-term and long-term improvement measures. External assessment should be independent, credible, and appropriate and should be conducted by experienced assessors. It should take place within an appropriate timeframe and should support the continuous improvement of the service.

⁵Glasgow Caledonian University (Centre for Education & Training Development) & Partners (2000). *ISSEE Quality Guidelines*. Leonardo da Vinci.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL STRUCTURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Having put forward its proposal for a lifelong guidance framework underpinned by quality and competence frameworks, the Forum considers that effective implementation structures need to be put in place at national, local and provider unit levels (provider units include educational and training institutions and

centres, firms and community or voluntary bodies). Structures at each level should meet certain criteria for efficiency and effectiveness, as shown in Table 5 below, to ensure 'joined-up' delivery of the lifelong guidance framework. In addition, the proposed structures will make it easier to identify and fill gaps in provision and delivery, and will enable Ireland to continue the collaboration with EU partners on the achievement of common goals for lifelong guidance.

TABLE 5 CRITERIA FOR NEW STRUCTURES

National	Local	Provider unit
<p>Effective structures at national level will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Have a clear legal basis and mandate; » Report to a lead Department; » Have appropriate executive capacity, including staff and budget; » Have a broadly-based advisory mechanism to inform the executive; » Promote joined-up policy making and delivery of lifelong guidance service. 	<p>Effective structures at local level will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Have a clear legal basis; » Have appropriate executive capacity, including staff and budget; » Integrate service provision and delivery for people of all ages in education, training and labour market; » Link national and local guidance provision, delivery and policy-making; » Have buy-in from relevant government departments and their agencies; » Give local providers, practitioners, users and other stakeholders a voice through a local advisory body. 	<p>Effective structures at provider unit level will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Use existing management structures; » Ensure lifelong guidance is reflected in unit and organisational planning; » Provide appropriate staff and funding to meet the standards prescribed in the national guidance, quality and competency frameworks; » Provide a voice for users, practitioners and other stakeholders on guidance provision, delivery and policy.
<p>All levels</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Optimise the use of existing structures at national level; » Use existing providers to deliver the enhanced service; » Ensure the structures are lean and focus only on their precise objectives. 		

Proposed new structures at national and local levels

Based on its analysis of the guidance service in Ireland and of international policy and practice, the Forum proposes new structures at national and local levels that will enable lifelong guidance to become a reality.

National level structures

To promote the effective implementation of the lifelong guidance framework, the Forum proposes that two interlinked structures be set up at national level: a National Guidance Agency and a National Guidance Forum. The functions of the two structures are shown in Table 6 below.

TABLE 6 FUNCTIONS OF NATIONAL LEVEL STRUCTURES

National Guidance Agency	National Guidance Forum
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make guidance policy proposals to the government having regard to the advice of the National Guidance Forum. 2. Oversee the delivery of lifelong guidance in a way that is efficient, effective and seamless; evaluate services. 3. Oversee the implementation of the Report of the First National Guidance Forum submitted in January 2007 (this report). 4. Liaise with and receive reports from the local coordination structure. 5. Liaise with national guidance forums in the EU, OECD and other countries as appropriate. 6. Commission research into the guidance service as appropriate.. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advise the National Guidance Agency on national guidance policy. 2. Consider reports from the local coordination structure in advising the National Guidance Agency. 3. Advise Agency on the implementation of national guidance policy. 4. Identify and recommend areas for collaboration by providers, practitioners and other stakeholders. 5. Consider the work of other national guidance forums and collaborate with them as appropriate. 6. Consider research into guidance. 7. Report to the National Guidance Agency under each of the headings above and in a format prescribed by the Agency.

Composition of the National Guidance Agency

The National Guidance Agency will have a chairperson appointed by the government and board of eight to ten people which may include representatives of the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Higher Education Authority, FÁS, education management bodies, professional bodies, practitioners and users. The Chairperson of the National Guidance Forum will be an ex-officio member of the board. The Agency will report to a lead department decided by government and will be established by means of a Statutory Instrument. (It should be established on an interim basis pending the issuing of the Statutory Instrument).

The National Guidance Agency will, in addition to its new mandate, carry out the tasks currently undertaken by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) and the guidance remit of the Employment Services Unit (ESU) in FÁS.

The staff will include a CEO, a labour market guidance specialist, an education guidance specialist and an administrative officer in addition to the staff of NCGE and the staff of the ESU. A detailed study should be carried out to establish the optimum staffing levels for the Agency in the light of the Forum’s proposals.

The board of the National Guidance Agency will meet eight times per annum and have a three-year term of office. The budget will be allocated by the lead department designated by the government. The board will report to the designated lead department, the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Composition of the National Guidance Forum

The membership of the National Guidance Forum will include representatives of government, education and training providers, social partners, and users. The Forum will have an independent chairperson nominated by government. The board of the National Guidance Agency will be represented on the Forum to facilitate integration and coordination within the national lifelong guidance service.

The Forum will be established by the Statutory Instrument establishing the National Guidance Agency. It will have two meetings each year as provided for in

the Statutory Instrument. Its term of office will be three years. However, the terms of office of the National Guidance Agency board and the National Guidance Forum should be planned so that both do not change at the same time, to ensure continuity. Staffing and budget for the Forum will be provided as for the National Guidance Agency.

Local level structures

To promote the effective implementation of the lifelong guidance strategy, the Forum proposes that two interlinked structures also be set up at local level: a **Lifelong Guidance Coordination Board** and a **Local Guidance Forum**. The functions of the two structures are shown in Table 7 below.

TABLE 7 FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL STRUCTURES

Lifelong Guidance Coordination Board	Local Guidance Forum
<p>Ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The delivery of lifelong guidance by labour market and education providers is coordinated. 2. National lifelong guidance policy is delivered effectively at county/county borough level. 3. A local guidance forum is established. 4. Reports on the delivery of the lifelong guidance service and on guidance policy are forwarded twice yearly to the National Guidance Agency and the National Guidance Forum. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide an opportunity for local providers, practitioners and users to inform guidance policy and evaluate the guidance service in the local area. 2. Identify gaps in service provision. 3. Make recommendations to the Lifelong Guidance Coordination Board on lifelong guidance matters.

The Lifelong Guidance Coordination Board will have about 8–11 members including education and labour market management representatives, a practitioner, a user and a member of the City or County Development Board. To ensure effective linkages of service delivery to adults, the coordinator of the Adult Educational Guidance Service and a FÁS Employment Service manager should be ex-officio members of the Board.

The status of the Lifelong Guidance Coordination Board will be determined by the Ministers for Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment following a recommendation by the National Guidance Agency. The Board will not require additional staffing and its budget will be quite small. The budget for local boards will be provided to the National Guidance Agency by the lead department as determined by government.

The Board will organise the Local Guidance Forum on an annual basis and will invite users, practitioners and providers to attend.

FIGURE 4 FRAMEWORK OF ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE TO DELIVER LIFELONG GUIDANCE

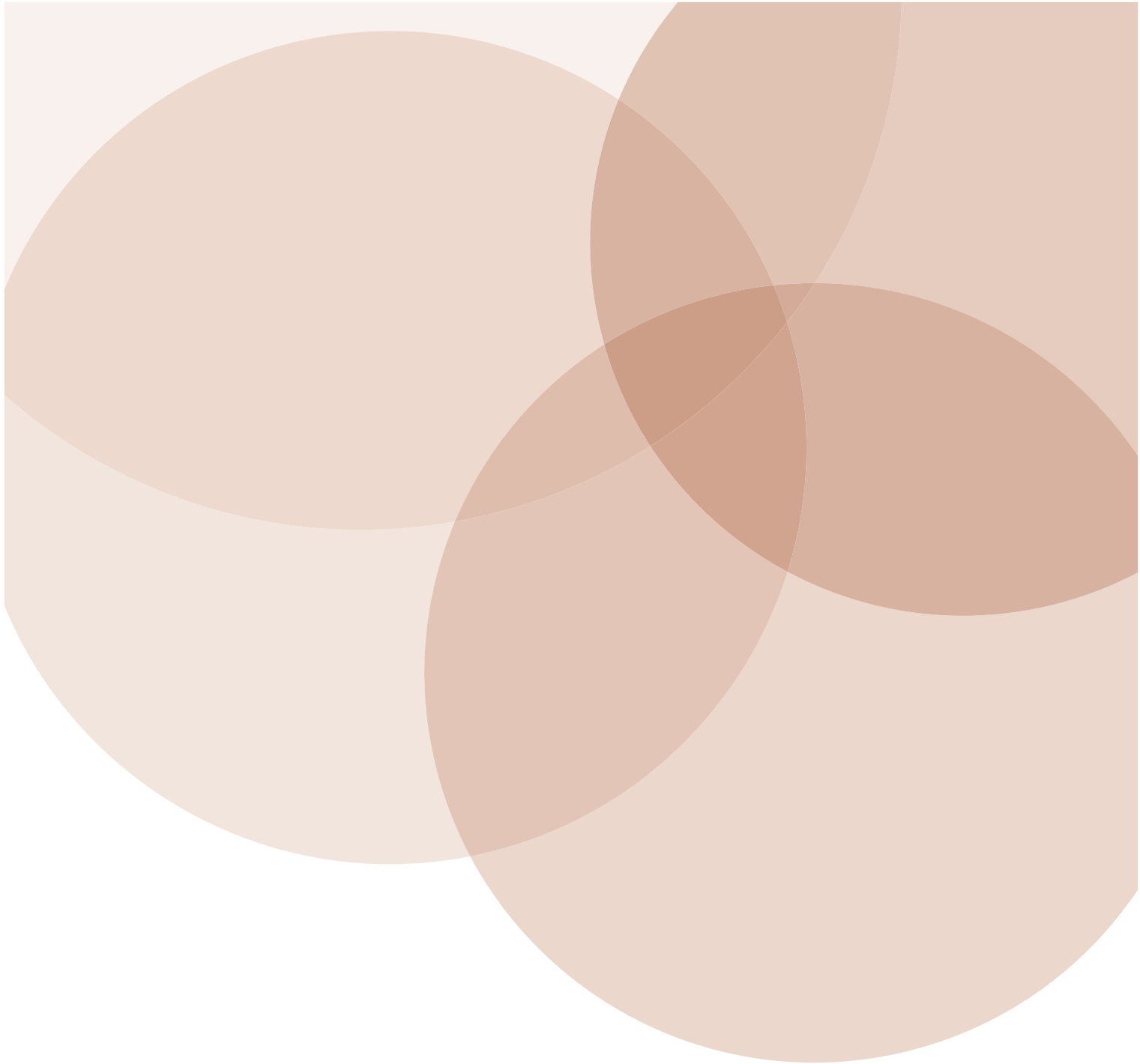


A **solid line** represents a direct reporting relationship on overall operation, e.g. the NGA is funded by the Lead Dept and will report annually to the Lead Dept on policy implementation.

A **broken arrow** represents a narrow functional relationship, e.g. the Lead Dept nominates the Chair and two members of the NGF.

The **dotted arrow** indicates that the NGA services the NGF and the LGCB services the LGF.

* No staff directly employed for this purpose. The Lead Department will decide how the LGCB and LGF will be serviced.



03

Part 2: Why Ireland needs a new integrated strategy for lifelong guidance

The Forum is making its proposals for an integrated lifelong guidance strategy against a background of considerable change in guidance policy and practice at both European and national levels, and within the broader context of economic and social change. This part of the report summarises the main elements of national and European policy and practice that are critical to the development of guidance services in Ireland and that provide a context for the Forum's proposals.

IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING GAPS IN GUIDANCE POLICY AND PRACTICE IN IRELAND

In the past decade, there have been considerable developments that have influenced the provision of guidance services in both the education and labour market sectors in Ireland. National policy has incorporated a number of important initiatives that have directed resources towards guidance and shaped the way services are delivered to various groups. The range of provision has expanded but, as will be seen in this section of the report, it remains somewhat fragmented and disjointed, highlighting the need for greater integration in the future.

Some of the main national policy themes and instruments that have had an impact on the current provision of guidance services include:

- » Legislating for provision of educational support services, including appropriate guidance. *Education Act (1998)*;
- » Facilitating access, transfer and progression through different levels in the National Qualifications Framework, which is a major national initiative that links the education and training sectors. *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999)*;

- » Tackling educational disadvantage by enabling young people at risk to remain within the formal education system, with guidance support. *A New Deal*, Department of Education and Science (1999); *DEIS Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*, Department of Education and Science (2005);
- » Facilitating entry or re-entry to the active labour market, in particular for marginalised people. *FÁS Statement of Strategy (2002–2005): Building on Our Vision*;
- » Importance of the role of a public employment service in the reintegration of the unemployed into the labour market. *White Paper: Human Resource Development*, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (1997));
- » Achieving national social and economic development through education and training (including guidance) and social inclusion. *National Development Plan 2000–2006; National Development Plan 2007–2013*;
- » Mainstreaming vocational guidance and job placement services for people with disabilities. *A Strategy for Equality - Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities (1996)*;
- » Establishing principles and priorities for the development of lifelong learning including an Adult Educational Guidance Service. *Learning for Life, White Paper on Adult Education (2000)*;
- » Developing a pro-active approach to school attendance, to support children who are at risk of early school leaving. *Education Welfare Act (2000)*;
- » Providing comprehensive and coherent guidance and information as part of a strategic framework for lifelong learning. *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002)*;
- » Developing skills for change, adaptability and mobility in the workforce. *National Employment Action Plan (2003)*;
- » Building a fair and inclusive society and contributing to economic and social wellbeing. *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000–2002); Towards 2016 (2006)*.

The Forum's research and consultation show that the provision of guidance in Ireland is currently quite fragmented, with many different providers delivering services to various target groups in a wide range of educational and labour market settings. For an outline of current provision, see the appendix, which summarises the background scoping paper prepared by the Forum. The full text of the paper, *Guidance in Ireland*, is included on the accompanying CDROM.

As well as the research carried out by the Forum itself a number of recent studies, particularly those undertaken by the OECD, the Department of Education and Science, and the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs have examined guidance provision in Ireland and have identified the gaps and challenges that need to be addressed both in policy and practice. The main findings of these recent studies are summarised below, to provide the background to the Forum's proposal for an integrated lifelong guidance strategy for the future. In considering the findings of the various reviews the Forum, in keeping with its integrated definition of guidance, has focussed not only on the economic imperative for improved guidance services, but also on the important role that guidance plays in promoting effective personal development and social inclusion, which the Forum regards as vital pre-requisites of sustainable economic development.

OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies (2002)

The OECD carried out a review of career guidance policies in 14 countries, including Ireland, in 2001–2002. The *Country Note* on Ireland gives the following brief overview of career information and guidance services:

Career information, guidance and counselling services in Ireland are diverse, with long-standing services sitting alongside interesting recent initiatives and experimentation. The public sector plays the dominant role, but in practice service delivery is shared between many different government

agencies, with the private sector and organisations that represent guidance practitioners also playing a role. There is a strong core of committed guidance professionals in Ireland, and they are supported by an extensive institutional framework for service delivery, by a national infrastructure for training, and by the National Centre for Guidance in Education, an agency of the Department of Education and Science within the education portfolio. Individuals seem to appreciate the quality of the services that are provided, as do school principals. Guidance has a clear legislative basis in both the education and labour portfolios and its importance has been reflected in a number of recent national policy initiatives, for example those dealing with adult education and services for the disadvantaged. While services are diverse, they are generally not specialised. Few, and certainly neither of the major services, focus exclusively upon career information, guidance and counselling. (OECD, 2002)

The *OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies* concluded that:

In moving closer to a lifelong approach to the provision of career information, guidance and counselling services, Ireland has many strengths. The legislative basis is solid, there is a climate that favours initiative and experimentation, the profession is a committed one, and the services that it provides appear on the whole to be well received. (OECD, 2002)

Having identified a number of important gaps in current provision and practice, the OECD review made recommendations and suggestions for action in five main areas as shown in Table 8 on page 32, and these have been further explored both by the Forum and by other subsequent studies that are mentioned later in this section.

Perceptions of the General Public on Guidance and Guidance Services: Consultative Process Report (Hayes and Murray, 2006)

The National Guidance Forum carried out research and consultation among members of the general public to determine their experiences, opinions and recommendations about guidance services in Ireland. It is the first research of its kind and it is one of the main pieces of work completed by the Forum. The methodology for the consultative process included:

- » An extensive review of Irish and international literature on guidance to provide a context for the consultative process and a platform from which to interpret the findings of the research;
- » A questionnaire which was issued through Forum members to members of the public and to a range of organisations and voluntary bodies (635 responses received);
- » Seven focus groups, which allowed for more in-depth exploration of the issues with specifically targeted groups including older people, parents of pre-school and primary school children, people of different nationalities, people with physical and/or learning disabilities as well as people who were unemployed or living on a low income (72 participants).

The findings of the research are outlined briefly here. The full report of the consultative process is included on the accompanying CDROM.

Table 9 on page 33 summarises the findings of the consultative process in a number of key areas.

TABLE 8 OECD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**1. A better balance of services in schools**

Achieve a better balance between services in upper and lower secondary schooling, and between *career oriented services* and *personal and social guidance and counselling*.

(a) Develop more systematic tools for assessing student need to obtain a better balance of services between the junior and senior cycles of secondary school, between different schools, and between schools and Post Leaving Certificate institutions.

(b) Adopt a stronger developmental or curriculum based approach to career assistance in schools by:

- » Including career education as a compulsory element in the curriculum of the Transition Year;
- » Incorporating the LCVP career-related modules in a wider range of Leaving Certificate programmes;
- » Making the LCVP more attractive by relaxing its guidelines to give students greater flexibility in subject choice.

(c) Issue a clear statement by government that 'appropriate guidance', as specified in the 1998 Education Act, includes access by all students to assistance with their career decision-making.

(d) In considering the resource implications of such a statement, adopt a broader approach rather than a simple focus on student-to-guidance counsellor ratios.

2. A more integrated and coordinated approach to career information

(a) Develop a new and more comprehensive electronic product.

(b) Develop a unified post-secondary admissions system.

(c) Set standards for all forms of career information.

(d) Adopt a stronger developmental approach to career information in schools, integrating networks and experience into career information strategies.

3. A more integrated approach to the skills, qualifications and careers of practitioners

Develop a common standards framework for the skills, knowledge and competencies required by all career guidance workers at all levels and in all sectors.

4. A more coordinated approach to targets and resourcing

(a) Address the present gap in access to services by employed adults, and more particularly by adults not in the labour force, by:

- » Modifying the guidelines of the adult educational guidance pilots or;
- » Making greater use of provisions of the 1987 Labour Services Act that allow service delivery to be contracted out to community groups; or both of these.

(b) Address the potential distorted incentives that could arise from charging adults for access to one type of service but not others.

(c) Ensure, through a public statement by government, that guidance resources allocated to schools are used for guidance purposes.

5. Improved steering, governance and coordination

Improve data and monitoring of service use, and promote better coordination among all key players at national level.

(a) Locate discussions with training providers on the organisation of curriculum content more centrally within government.

(b) Develop a client recording instrument for use by guidance counsellors in schools and Post-Leaving Certificate institutions.

(c) Create an Irish career guidance forum on a permanent basis, and strengthen joint and co-operative work between the Department of Education and Science and FÁS on a number of specific issues.

TABLE 9 FINDINGS OF THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS**People's views on guidance**

While some respondents were critical of the type of guidance received, many were very clear about the benefits and role of guidance in helping them access lifelong learning. Guidance was seen as having a broader role than helping people with career choice.

Guidance for children and young people

There was a wide range of opinions of the guidance services in schools; however there was general agreement regarding the importance of guidance. The respondents made a number of recommendations regarding how guidance services for children and young people could be improved in the future.

Guidance for adults

There was widespread agreement that the focus of guidance for adults needs to be widened, to include adults who are employed as well as unemployed, adults with financial difficulties and those who are earning a good income, students who are engaged in higher education and adults who have retired. The research suggests that guidance is held in very high regard by many people.

Training and quality control

Participants in the consultative process expressed the view that some guidance counsellors working in schools in the past were not adequately trained and they were concerned that this deficit should be addressed in the future, with proper monitoring of practitioners and high professional standards maintained.

Access to guidance services

Many respondents referred to difficulties in accessing guidance services, for children and young people and for adults. This can be linked to lack of information, lack of eligibility to avail of services, lack of confidence and lack of funding.

Implementing policy

While participants in the consultative process were not necessarily familiar with Irish and European policy documents, there was a marked similarity in how the general public and policy makers viewed the importance of lifelong guidance. It is clear that the general public as well as policy makers believe that guidance services in Ireland need further investment to support the implementation of lifelong guidance policies.

Individual responsibility

The challenge for guidance policy makers, service providers, trainers and practitioners is to ensure that guidance services are accessible, well-resourced, well-run and available to everyone who needs and wants them. At the same time the right of the individual not to engage with services must be respected.

Identifying gaps in current guidance provision and practice

The consultative process has also identified a number of gaps in current guidance provision and practice. Of 578 respondents who stated that they received the majority of their schooling in Ireland, 333 answered the question 'How helpful was guidance in school?' More than a quarter of these respondents said that it was 'unhelpful' or 'very unhelpful', and more than two-thirds said that they did not know where to access guidance services. Almost three-quarters rated information as the most important aspect of guidance, and 58 per cent of students indicated that the only significant guidance they had received was information. There are specific client groups that are

particularly badly served by guidance provision, including adults, early school leavers and young people at risk, for example those attending Youthreach or Senior Traveller Training Centres. Many parents felt that the career guidance provision for their children was inadequate. A major finding of the research is that there is a need to focus on empowering and actively engaging service users in the guidance process and to involve them in quality assurance of guidance services.

The report of the consultative process puts forward a number of suggestions for improvement in guidance services, as shown in Table 10.

Review of Guidance in Post-Primary Schools: Department of Education and Science (2006)

The Department of Education and Science completed an extensive review of guidance in post-primary schools in 2006. The four strands of research were:

TABLE 10 **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN GUIDANCE SERVICES**

- » Widen guidance provision so that it is available from pre-school to post-retirement;
- » Ensure that people working in guidance are well-trained and supported, with proper quality assurance procedures in place;
- » Ensure that guidance services are available in appropriate and convenient locations and that they are well resourced;
- » Provide guidance that is individual and suitable to the needs of individuals in terms of the way it is provided, who provides it and the methods used;
- » Recognise and support the role of parents, teachers, employers and others in guidance;
- » Guide people to avail of guidance services by:
 - » Informing them of services through advertising widely in a way which will clearly reach the target groups;
 - » Helping them to access guidance by providing sufficient supports;
 - » Providing follow-up services if required;
 - » Strengthening links with referral agencies.

1. A quantitative and qualitative survey of the use of the ex-quota resources provided by the DES for guidance, carried out by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) in all second level schools (738);
2. A questionnaire survey in 260 of the 738 schools, carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI);
3. In-depth case studies involving principals, deputy principals, guidance counsellors and students in 15 schools selected from those surveyed in Strand 2, conducted by the ESRI;
4. Focus group interviews with a range of stakeholders including parents and students, conducted by a researcher from the Education Department, University of Dublin, Trinity College and coordinated by NCGE.

(The full report of the review is available on the website of the Department of Education and Science http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/review_guidance_second_level_schools.doc?language=EN).

The review identified some of the main issues and challenges facing school-based guidance provision, which are relevant to the proposals being put forward by the Forum.

Resources for guidance

The model of guidance in operation in post-primary schools puts a strong emphasis on one-to-one guidance, mainly in the senior cycle. This model is resource intensive, and the review states that schools are stretched to the limits of their resources to meet the demand for guidance. There is insufficient support available when students need personal counselling over a long period, resulting in an imbalance between the various roles of the guidance counsellor in providing individual personal, careers and educational guidance, careers information, educational development programmes and consultation with parents. Students commented that there was limited access to Information and Communications Technology for guidance purposes. There is also an imbalance between guidance provision at junior and senior cycle in most schools. However, the review found that schools participating in the Guidance Enhancement Initiative were enabled to provide both group and individual guidance at junior cycle, which encouraged students to progress to senior cycle and on to higher education.

Profile and role of the guidance counsellor

The personal qualities of guidance counsellors are considered one of the main strengths of the guidance services in post-primary schools. They are characterised as approachable, flexible, committed and hard-working. Two-thirds of them are female, and one-third of those currently practising have been qualified for 20 years or more. Almost one in five guidance practitioners in schools (18 per cent) have no guidance qualifications. Guidance counsellors reported difficulty in 'juggling' their various teaching, information provision, guidance and counselling roles. There is also a level of confusion about guidance counsellors' remit and training among students and parents.

Professional development for guidance counsellors

The review identified a need for systematic continuing professional development for guidance counsellors throughout their careers. The Forum recognises that this is especially necessary in the context of changes that affect the guidance counsellor's working environment, including for example:

- » Student entitlement to appropriate guidance;
- » National policies on lifelong learning and social/ educational inclusion;
- » Requirement for guidance programme planning
- » Improved access to education for students with special needs;
- » Developments in psychometric testing;
- » Introduction of national qualifications framework;
- » Greater availability of information and communications technology, including web-based guidance resources.

Careers and Labour Market Information in Ireland: Report of Expert Group on Future Skill Needs (2006)

The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs published a report on *Careers and Labour Market Information in Ireland*, which examined the collection and dissemination of career guidance information across the education and training systems. The report concluded that there are plenty of good sources of careers information which are becoming more available to non-professional users. However, there are difficulties with levels of awareness about quality careers information sources and with the accessibility of some of the information. In particular, the report states that the guidance needs of adults are more diverse than those of other groups, especially in cases where adults are vulnerable, returning to the workforce or hoping to increase their skills level after redundancy. The Expert Group makes a number of recommendations and suggests that the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment should collaborate to implement the recommendations in consultation with appropriate agencies and professional associations.

The main recommendation of the report concerns the development of a national careers portal based on international good practice, which would use clear language and be easy to use, visually attractive and interactive, covering all aspects of careers-related information for all users. This coordinated gateway site would contain careers, course and labour market information, organisational/company profiles, a range of assessment tools and testimonials, a guidance helpline and appropriate links to related sites. The report identifies a number of web sites and other sources within the Irish education and labour market sectors that could be incorporated into the new portal. It suggests that it might be possible to develop one of the existing careers databases into a portal, to avoid duplication or unnecessary expenditure. In addition, the report recommends that existing career sites should be more actively promoted and advertised among potential users, and that useful labour market information should be made more easily available on careers databases. Finally, the report recommends that existing career guidance and information resources be improved through the addition of new tools, better information about work experience and courses, and better accessibility to meet the needs of people who are not currently attached to the education or training system. Such groups include people who are unemployed or under-employed, facing possible redundancy or absent from the workforce for long periods because of family responsibilities.

The Forum has endorsed the recommendation of the expert group to establish a national careers portal as a delivery mechanism which will help to achieve the improvements in information services which were envisaged in *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (2000)*. As part of its work over the past two years, the Forum has submitted a proposal for the establishment of a National Learning Line to the Departments of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Phases I to IV of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative 2000–2006: Overview and Recommendations. Report by NCGE to Department of Education and Science

The National Centre for Guidance in Education has recently completed a report to the Department of Education and Science on Phases I to IV of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI), a pilot programme that was established by the Department of Education and Science in 2000, following recommendations in *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (2000)*. The AEGI programme has been funded under the National Development Plan 2000–2006. During this time a total of 36 AEGI services have been initiated in four phases with a further three to begin in 2007. Most of these services are managed by Vocational Education Committees. The AEGI originally set out to target learner participants on Vocational Training Opportunity Schemes (VTOS), adult literacy and adult and community education programmes. In 2006, the remit of the service was expanded to include clients of the Education Finance Board and their adult offspring.

The AEGI services provide a range of guidance supports including information on education courses, one-to-one guidance, group guidance and outreach provision for learners within the identified target groups. The AEGI services provide educational guidance as an integrated support and resource for learning in each VEC. Evaluations of the services carried out over the six years have found that innovative approaches to the delivery of guidance and client-specific models have been effective in integrating educational guidance into local learning provision. The AEGI services work closely with local education providers to identify needs and plan provision for guidance support for learners. Since the inception of the programme, over 30,000 individuals have accessed AEGI services, including significant numbers of adults from outside the designated target groups, for example some people with learning difficulties, physical disabilities and/or mental health problems, unemployed people and foreign nationals.

TABLE 11

NCGE RECOMMENDATIONS ON ADULT EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE INITIATIVE**To the Department of Education and Science**

1. Develop a vision and strategy for the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative within the context of a national guidance framework.
2. Improve access for adults to AEGI services.
3. Review funding of AEGI services.

To Vocational Education**Committees/Managing Agencies**

1. Improve the strategic integration of the AEGI services into the VEC/managing agencies.
2. Improve access for adults to AEGI services.
3. Maximise resource allocation.

To AEGI services

1. Use evidence-based strategic planning.
2. Improve access for adults to AEGI services.

The AEGI has developed a range of models of guidance delivery to suit a variety of needs. Innovative practice has been a feature of the pilot programme and guidance practitioners have developed expertise in meeting the specific needs of learners. The services have been monitored and evaluated regularly, and training has been provided for staff to develop and refine their skills. One particularly novel aspect of the pilot programme has been the provision of outreach services to client groups that are hard to reach, and techniques have been developed to provide good follow-up for these individuals. Another is that AEGI services have identified gaps in educational provision for adult learners. The evaluations of the services point to the fact that contact with guidance services has had a positive impact on learners, by promoting changes in their attitudes to learning and prompting them to consider possible progression opportunities in education and training.

However, the provision of AEGI services nationally is currently somewhat uneven. An increase in public awareness of educational opportunities has given rise to an increased demand for Adult Educational Guidance services nationally. In addition, the current level of staffing in many AEGI services is reported to be causing concerns regarding on-going planning and development of guidance support provision.

In its report to the Department of Education and Science, the National Centre for Guidance in Education summarises the experiences of the AEGI services since 2000 and identifies a number of gaps that need to be considered:

Geographical gaps in provision: Adults in some parts of the country do not currently have access to an AEGI service;

Need for mainstreaming: Further work needs to be done to ensure that services are sustained in the long-term and integrated as part of the range of adult education services provided by VECs and other providers;

Barriers to access: Many adults within the target groups cannot avail of educational opportunities because they face obstacles such as lack of childcare, inadequate financial support, transport difficulties and physical access to premises. The adult literacy groups in particular are poorly represented in AEGI participation;

Definition of the target groups: There is a need to achieve a balance between the inclusion of a larger group and the maintenance of quality services;

Availability of resources: Uncertainty about funding after 2006 has made long-term planning of the AEGI very difficult and posed challenges to the development of adult guidance support services. There is also a need to review funding and staffing arrangements in the light of locally-identified learner needs and local differences in costs such as rent of premises;

NCGE offers recommendations to three main stakeholders: Department of Education and Science, Vocational Education Committees/Managing agencies and the AEGI services (Table 11).

Evaluation of the Advocacy Service: Report to FÁS (Martin, T and Associates, 2006)

The Advocacy Service is intended to provide a tailor-made approach to career path planning in order to meet the specific guidance, training and work experience needs of disadvantaged early school leavers as they move from Youthreach centres to mainstream training, education or employment. The Advocacy Service was set up on a pilot basis in December 1996 following a review of support services to early school leavers and it was mainstreamed in 2000. FÁS commissioned an evaluation of the Advocacy Service and the consultants' report was submitted early in 2006. The evaluation methodology included a review of the literature, interviews with key informants, focus groups, a questionnaire-based survey and two case studies.

FÁS Community Services manages the Advocacy Service and there are currently 27 advocates distributed throughout the country, providing career guidance and other related supports to over 1600 early school leavers. The advocates provide services to trainees in Youthreach centres, Community Training Centres, FÁS/Department of Justice Workshops and Senior Traveller Training Centres, and also to early school leavers who are not currently attending any education or training provision.

The evaluation found that the Advocacy Service is generally effective, with advocates showing dedication and professionalism in delivering a caring, informal and flexible service to meet the needs of individuals. Some of the main strengths identified in the service include the advocates' expertise in national career guidance developments, for example the national framework of qualifications; the maintenance of up-to-date databases of local progression options; their creativity and sensitivity in matching individuals' career aspirations with their abilities; longitudinal support of individuals through key transitions, and linkages with external stakeholders in the local area for the benefit of individuals.

The report made a number of recommendations about the future development of the Advocacy Service, and the summary below reflects those which are of particular relevance to the work of the Forum.

Advocacy service model

The Advocacy Service should be mainstreamed nationally.

Role of advocacy

- » The main emphasis of the service should be on providing career guidance and counselling, including individual career path planning to enable individuals to progress to mainstream education, training or employment. The service should focus on providing support to the most disadvantaged trainees within the centres;
- » There is a need to develop new approaches to tracking progress of trainees;
- » Advocates should take a lead role in the preparation of personalised Career Path Plans. They should also contribute to the formulation of the Individual Learning Plan by the Key Worker, and they should be involved in the induction process for trainees in centres.

Skills and training

- » Centres should use a standard job specification in recruiting advocates, which should indicate the desirability of having an accredited qualification in career guidance counselling. Alternatively, applications should be invited from people with a track record in providing services to early school leavers, and appropriate training should be provided for those appointed as advocates;
- » Centres should organise induction training for advocates and put in place structures to ensure ongoing skills and knowledge development;
- » FÁS should support centres to facilitate training and should monitor the ongoing skills and training requirements for the advocacy service;
- » Advocates should have access on a regional basis to peer-to-peer and professional counselling, and should also be provided with training in stress management and coping skills.

Local supervision and national support structures

The appointment of a national advocacy coordinator is recommended, to provide support and assistance to employers of advocates and to local management committees. The coordinator would define and clarify the advocates' roles, organise induction and ongoing training for advocates, provide guidance in relation to reporting procedures and disseminate best practice. The task of the coordinator would also include promotion of the advocacy service among all Youthreach centres and with national and local management authorities, including FÁS and the VECs.

DRAWING ON EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE OF GUIDANCE POLICY AND PRACTICE

The main themes from recent European policy developments that have influenced the provision of guidance services in the labour market and education sectors in Ireland are shown in Table 12 on page 40.

Reviews of policies for guidance in European countries jointly undertaken by the European Commission and the OECD show that, in many countries, policies, systems and practices for guidance do not match the demands of knowledge-based economies and societies (EU Council Resolution, 2004). In 2002, the EU commission established an Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance, which has developed a set of common European reference tools: common aims and principles for lifelong guidance provision; common reference points for quality assurance systems for guidance; key features of a systems model of lifelong guidance (CEDEFOP, 2005).

Arising from the 2004 EU Council Resolution, the European Commission granted funding to set up two pilot European Networks of National Forums for Lifelong Guidance in 12 countries, including Ireland. The project in which Ireland has participated has identified critical success factors for a National Guidance Forum: government support; a broad range of stakeholder involvement; real expertise in guidance; user involvement in policy-making; leadership and management; communication mechanisms and continuing support from the EU (Bled Conference Report 2005).

The International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP) was established in 2005 as a resource for policy developers and researchers, in association with partners and guidance practitioners, to improve career development systems that support lifelong learning and workforce development goals (ICCDPP, 2005).

In recent years both the National Centre for Guidance in Education and FÁS have been active in developments at European level. NCGE and FÁS are members of Euroguidance - a network of national resource centres throughout Europe whose aim is to assist transnational mobility of students and adults for education and training and to form links between the guidance systems of EU Member States. This network is funded by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme. For example, each year up to 60 guidance counsellors, policy-makers and trainers of guidance counsellors visit Ireland on European-funded study visits to examine the Irish guidance system. NCGE is part of the Academia Programme (funded by the EU as part of the Lifelong Learning Programme) which sends Irish guidance counsellors on study visits to other participating countries and hosts study visits to Ireland for guidance counsellors from other countries. The study visits include an overview of the education and labour market systems (including the guidance system) in the receiving country and include visits to guidance services and organisations. Study visits for guidance practitioners are also arranged by CEDEFOP (the European Centre for Vocational Education and Training), in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science International Section. These practitioners receive a presentation from NCGE on the education system and guidance in Ireland and they also have the opportunity to visit organisations providing guidance services, including, for example, schools, higher education institutions and FÁS training centres. Finally, NCGE receives a number of guidance practitioners from EU countries through Euroguidance centres for one-week study visits. These practitioners receive a presentation on the guidance system from NCGE and visit a number of guidance services for two to three days of the visit.

TABLE 12 RECENT EUROPEAN POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN GUIDANCE

- » **Implementing the Education and Training 2010 work programme** (which supports the Lisbon strategy to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world); including access to guidance services, quality assurance of services, enhancing the role of guidance in human resource development, and facilitating mobility for learning and employment in Europe. *Lisbon Strategy (2000); Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems (2001);*
- » **Promoting access to lifelong guidance and learning** to help create economic prosperity, employment and social inclusion. *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality (2001); Employment Guidelines (2003); Resolution on Guidance (EU Council of Ministers 2004);*
- » **Enhancing occupational and geographical mobility and workforce upskilling** by providing better access for workers and employers to information, guidance and counselling. *Action Plan for Skills and Mobility (Commission Communication 2002);*
- » **Strengthening policies and practices that support information,** guidance and counselling in member states. *Copenhagen Declaration (2002);*
- » **Improving retention in the education and training sectors.** *Investing Efficiently in Education (Commission Communication 2003);*
- » **Implementing a framework for transparency of qualifications,** *Europass,* which includes guidance as a key element (European Parliament and Council Decision on a single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competencies, December 2004).

Ireland has also enhanced its profile in the field of guidance at European level by drafting the Guidance Resolution which was approved by the Council of the European Union during Ireland's EU presidency in 2004. One of the agreed articles in the Resolution states that:

...all European citizens should have access to guidance services at all life stages, with particular attention being paid to individuals and groups at risk.'

In addition, Ireland was one of the first countries to establish a National Guidance Forum and is one of 12 European countries participating in networks of such forums.

The FÁS Euroguidance centre operates under the aegis of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and acts as an Information Centre for Member States to access information and advice on vocational training and labour market opportunities within the EU.

The FÁS Euroguidance Centre participates at various Careers Exhibitions both in Ireland and overseas (*e.g. FÁS Opportunities, overseas recruitment fairs*). FÁS Euroguidance staff continuously network and maintain links with national and international guidance services and share common and new areas of mutual interest. The FÁS Euroguidance Centre also hosts regular study visits from visiting practitioners.

The FÁS Euroguidance Centre has developed products including *Career Directions*, an integrated and interactive tool containing information on over 720 careers, to assist in the delivery of career guidance. *Career Directions* is available on the web and also in CDROM. It incorporates an interest inventory to help users identify work preferences, presenting a range of suitable careers to match these preferences. It is updated yearly and the CDROM is distributed to all career guidance practitioners in schools and colleges.

From the point of view of Ireland's involvement in guidance developments at international level, it is notable that the Department of Education and Science has played a significant role in the establishment of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy, which has received support from a range of countries worldwide, including Canada and Australia, and is working to strengthen and coordinate guidance systems at a global level.

This strong international dimension provides a sound platform for the further development of lifelong guidance in Ireland and the Forum has been able to draw on the experience of its international partners and networks in formulating its strategy for the future.

CONCLUSION

As this report shows, the National Guidance Forum has carried out an extensive analysis and undertaken comprehensive research on current national guidance provision. Arising from this analysis and research, the Forum has identified the main gaps that need to be addressed in developing an integrated strategy for lifelong guidance in Ireland. The Forum has found that there is inequality of access to guidance services among certain groups such as young children (0–6 years), children in primary schools and people in employment, while at the same time there is overlap and duplication of service provision in other sectors. It has also found that the level of service in different sectors is inconsistent, with a particular deficit in guidance for early school leavers. Issues of quality assurance and competence of practitioners are seen as critical to the delivery of a comprehensive service to people at all stages of the life cycle, and the Forum has observed that the fragmented nature of current

guidance provision in Ireland means that it is not cost-efficient. Another major gap is found in information and communication about guidance, and in the failure to disseminate examples of good practice to improve quality nationwide. In the education sector, it is suggested that there is a need for a *whole school* or *whole institution* approach to guidance. Finally, the Forum recognises the need for better support for individuals, especially vulnerable individuals, moving from one environment to another.

As well as the gaps and challenges identified above, the Forum has also discussed the gaps that exist in early childhood and primary school, in post-primary, further and higher education and training, and in the community and voluntary education sectors. Arising from the summary of current issues in policy, and from the identification of gaps in practice, there is a clear agenda for action in a number of critical areas which will enable Ireland to implement the new integrated strategy for lifelong guidance proposed by the Forum in Part 1 of this report. This proposed strategy will ensure that Ireland fulfils the common aims and principles that have been developed as part of the EU Education and Training 2010 work programme, to provide lifelong guidance:

...that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives (lifelong) to identify their capacities, competencies and interests, to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life path in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competence are learned and/or used (lifewide). (EU Commission, Report of Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance, 2005)



04

Acronyms, References and Appendix

Acronyms used in this report

CEDEFOP: Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

DES: Department of Education and Science

DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

EC: European Commission

EU: European Union

FÁS: Foras Áiseanna Saothair (Training and Employment Authority)

LCVP: Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

VEC: Vocational Education Committee

VTOS: Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

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Appendix 1

National practice: a summary of current provision of guidance services in the labour market, in the community sector and in the education system

GUIDANCE SERVICES LINKED TO THE LABOUR MARKET

State employment and training services

Provider/agency	Service provided	Client Group
FÁS	Vocational guidance and counselling provided by Employment Services Officers: identification of needs, exploration of options, development of action plan, placement into employment, referral to vocational training programmes. Provision of a range of IT based support tools for individuals so that they can 'self-help' and 'self-direct'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » All jobseekers - employed and unemployed. The following is the range of client groups targeted by FÁS for assistance: » Individuals referred under the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP). » Individuals who are Early School Leavers » Individuals who are long-term unemployed. » Individuals with a disability. » Individuals unplaced from FÁS Training and Employment Programmes. » Individuals who are lone parents. » Individuals who are facing redundancy. » Women returning to work. » Individuals who are members of the Traveller Community.
FÁS National Contact Centre	Preliminary vocational guidance and information services to jobseekers on job vacancies and training and employment programmes.	Job-seeking individuals registered with FÁS.
FÁS Euroguidance Centre	Providing information vocational training opportunities within the European Union. Career Information provided via Career Directions which is an integrated and interactive tool containing information on over 720 career profiles and incorporates an interest inventory.	People wishing to work in any country of the European Union.
Local Employment Service (LES)	Vocational guidance and counselling provided by Mediators: identification of needs, exploration of options, development of action plan, placement into employment, referral to vocational training programmes and after placement support.	<p>Individuals most distanced from the labour market, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Individuals who are Long-term Unemployed (12 months or more). » Individuals who are dependent partners of long-term unemployed people. » Individuals who are lone parents. » Individuals who are early school leavers. » People with a disability. » Individuals who are members of the Traveller Community or ethnic minorities. » Individuals referred from FÁS. » Other locally identified client groups.

OTHER GUIDANCE SERVICES LINKED TO THE LABOUR MARKET

Provider/agency	Service provided	Client group
Small Firms Association	Training programmes to help small firms grow necessary skills for future development.	Owner managers of small and medium enterprises.
Skillnets	Training networks that provide flexible and relevant learning at local level or for specific industry sectors	Staff of large, small and medium enterprises.
Enterprise Ireland	Voluntary mentoring service to provide advice and assistance for growth and development (Mentor network).	New start-up businesses.
City and County Enterprise Boards	Mentoring and support programmes.	New businesses.
Individual companies, working with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	Induction and training, continuing professional development, performance management.	Managers and staff.
Refugee Information Service	Information and referral service provided on an outreach clinic basis in Dublin and Galway (service is free, confidential and independent).	Refugees and asylum seekers.
Employee Assistance Programmes	Provides counselling for work-related and personal issues.	Employees of companies.
Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed	Information on welfare rights, enterprise support and training, community development activities. Network of 170 local centres.	People who are unemployed.
EQUAL community initiative	Programme co-financed by EU; identify and address discrimination and inequality in the labour market; develop new and innovative policies and practices.	Development Partnerships.

GUIDANCE SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY SECTOR

Provider/agency	Service provided	Client group
Youth Information Centres	30 centres nationwide providing information on employment, local community services, education and training.	Young people.
Area-based partnerships	Prepare local development plans to tackle disadvantage and promote social inclusion; work with local employment service and education agencies to provide guidance to local community.	Unemployed people and young people experiencing social and educational disadvantage.
Public Libraries	Books and resources on career guidance can be consulted and borrowed.	General public.
Citizens' Advice Information Centres	Information on educational opportunities and on financial and legal rights of students, including adults and learners with special needs.	General public.
Family Resource Centres	Support for families including personal counselling; no formal career guidance for individuals.	Families living in local communities.
Informal sources	Family and friends provide information and guidance	Young people.
Information and communications technology	Web sites such as Career Directions (FÁS); Qualifax (IGC), Gradireland (AGCSI) and many others.	General public.

THIRD AGE GUIDANCE

Provider/agency	Service provided	Client group
Retirement Planning Council	Advice on retirement planning and mid-career change.	Older people, pre-retirement.
General information service	Age Action Ireland, University of the Third Age (no specific guidance services provided: referral to VEC or private providers).	Older people participating in formal and non formal education.

GUIDANCE SERVICES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Primary education

Programme	Content/focus of provision	Target group
Social, Personal and Health Education	Enable pupils to develop personal and social skills, promote self-esteem and self-confidence, develop responsible decision making, provide opportunities for reflection and discretion and promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.	All primary school pupils.
DEIS Schools Support Programme	Improve student attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment; enhanced guidance provision through school completion programme, support teacher scheme and home school community liaison scheme.	Pupils in 600 primary schools serving areas with high levels of social disadvantage.
School Completion Programme	Increase the retention rates of young people in primary and secondary education and encourage the completion of senior cycle or equivalent. In school, after school, out of school and holiday activities including social and personal development, mentoring and learning supports.	Pupils in schools with high levels of social and educational disadvantage; especially those at risk of early school leaving.
Support Teacher Scheme	Supporting children with behavioural difficulties and contributing to the development of school policy on behaviour management.	Pupils in schools with high levels of social and educational disadvantage, who display disruptive, disturbed or withdrawn behaviours.
Home School Community Liaison Scheme	Maximise the participation of children in the learning process and promote active cooperation between home, school and community.	Pupils in designated disadvantaged schools.
School Transfer Programme	Devised and organised in conjunction with the home school community liaison scheme; a whole school approach involving management, staff, parents and guidance counsellors.	Pupils transferring from primary to second level education.

POST-PRIMARY AND FURTHER EDUCATION

Programme	Content/focus of provision	Target group
Whole school planning	Planning process for guidance to involve all stakeholders including staff, students, parents and community.	All post-primary schools.
DEIS Schools Support Programme	Improve student attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment; enhanced guidance provision through school completion programme, support teacher scheme and home school community liaison scheme.	Pupils in 150 post-primary schools serving areas with high levels of social disadvantage.
Curriculum-based measures	Personal, social, educational and career guidance integrated into curriculum through specific programmes: Social, Personal and Health Education; Civic, Social and Political Education; Transition Year Programme; Leaving Certificate Applied and Vocational Programmes.	Students in all post-primary schools.
Guidance Counselling	To assist students with their personal, social, educational and career choices by providing counselling, support, assessment, information, workplace learning experience, referrals and classroom guidance activities.	Students in all post-primary schools and further education centres/colleges.
Guidance Enhancement Initiative	Additional posts allocated to schools for innovative actions to enhance guidance: strengthen formal links with business and local community; increase uptake of science in senior cycle; address educational disadvantage.	103 schools in 2001; further 78 schools in 2004.
Out-of-school education programmes: Youthreach; Traveller centres; community education programmes	Guidance, counselling and psychological services provided by VECs; advocate service provided by FÁS.	Unqualified early school leavers.
Special needs	Assessment services and development of individual education plans.	People with special educational needs including physical and learning disabilities.

ADULT EDUCATION

Programme	Content/focus of provision	Target group
Adult Educational Guidance Initiative	Educational and career guidance at pre-entry, entry, ongoing and pre-exit stages of learning programmes. 36 services nationwide offer guidance on individual and group basis. Guidance projects network locally with employment, welfare, training and health services.	Adult learners in literacy programmes, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, the Back to Education Initiative and other adult and community education programmes.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Programme	Content/focus of provision	Target group
Careers advisory services	Services include: careers information; one-to-one interviews; psychometric testing; e-guidance; courses and workshops on career management skills; mentoring and graduate placement.	Students in higher education institutions.

PRIVATE SECTOR

Provider/agency	Service provided	Client group
Private guidance practitioners, Life Coaches, Psychologists	Educational and career guidance and counselling services.	Private clients.

SUPPORT AND COORDINATION AGENCIES FOR GUIDANCE

Programme/agency	Content/focus of provision	Target/client groups
National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)	Support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education; inform Department of Education and Science policy.	Provide support to the Department of Education and Science; relevant organisations and agencies; guidance practitioners in education.
Euroguidance Centres	Provide information on educational opportunities within the European Union. Promote European mobility and European dimension within education and training. Share best practice in guidance.	Support the guidance community, in cooperation with a network of 65 centres in 31 countries.
Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC)	Liaison and advocacy role with government departments, management and trade union organisations, national parent bodies, higher and further education institutions, employment and training agencies. Services include supervision, continuing professional development for guidance professionals, Qualifax web site, publication of journal <i>Guideline</i> .	Professional body representing 1200 practitioners in second level schools, third-level colleges, adult guidance services, private practice and other settings.
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	Executive agency of Department of Education and Science. Provides psychological services to pupils in primary and post-primary schools	Services are not yet available in all schools: priority to pupils with learning disabilities.
Education Centres	Network of 30 centres nationwide supported by Department of Education and Science.	Provide professional development support for teachers and other partners in local school community.
Association of Graduate Careers Services in Ireland (AGCSI)	Develop the career services provided to students and graduates; resource and information materials; web site.	Members are guidance professionals in publicly funded third-level institutions.
Institute of Technology Careers Advisers' Network (ITCAN)	Support operation of career advisory services; forum for sharing best practice.	Members are career advisers in 14 Institutes of Technology.
Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD)	Undertake research related to disability and higher education; advocate improvement in access and participation of students with disabilities in higher education; inform and change national policy on education and employment of graduates with disabilities.	Advises Higher Education Authority, education institutions and others in education sector.
Irish Association of University and College Counsellors (IAUCC)	Representative body for counselling services in third level education.	Counsellors work with individuals or groups to provide support in personal and academic issues.
Adult Educational Guidance Association (AEGA)	Identifies staff training needs and adult guidance developments in association with NCGE.	Represents staff of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative pilot projects.



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