

Moving through the system – information, advice and guidance

This report focuses on the importance of providing high quality information, advice and guidance to enable young people, as well as their parents and carers, to make thoughtful and well-informed choices about their next steps in education, training or employment, particularly at age 16 and beyond.

Age group: All

Published: March 2010

Reference no: 080273

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Executive summary

This report focuses on the importance of providing high quality information, advice and guidance to enable young people, as well as their parents and carers, to make thoughtful and well-informed choices about their next steps in education, training or employment, particularly at age 16 and beyond. The report also evaluates the transfer of responsibility for information, advice and guidance services to local authorities from April 2008 and the changes to the nextstep provision for adults from August 2008.

Between July 2008 and March 2009, inspectors inspected a wide range of provision in 10 local authorities. The notes at the end of the report provide full details. In eight of the 10 authorities, inspectors evaluated the new arrangements for information, advice and guidance services and visited individual projects that supported young people who were not in education, employment or training. The visits were made before the strategy and related statutory guidance for impartial careers education were published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in October 2009.¹

There was considerable variation in the quality of advice and guidance and, in particular, a failure to meet the needs of some of the most potentially vulnerable young people. In the local authorities visited, young people who had learning difficulties and/or disabilities were disproportionately represented among those not in education, employment or training and this was true even in the authorities where the picture generally was better than the national average.

Most of the young people from the pupil referral units and the special schools visited for the survey progressed into some kind of further education, employment or training, and the local authorities which had a virtual headteacher or an officer with specific responsibility for looked after children generally provided more effective support than those which did not. These findings suggest strongly that combining good support for all young people in their individual institutions, matched closely to their needs and with an active and strategic focus at local authority level on provision for particular groups, can make a positive difference to outcomes. However, the findings also point to the need to do more.

In the areas visited, the new arrangements for commissioning information, advice and guidance introduced in April 2008 had improved communication between

¹ *Quality, choice and aspiration: a strategy for young people's information, advice and guidance* (DCSF-00977-2009), DCSF, 2009; publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00977-2009; *Statutory guidance: impartial careers education* (00978-2009DOM-EN), DCSF, 2009; publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00978-2009&.

managers of children's services and key providers of information, advice and guidance services. There was little evidence, however, that the new arrangements had made more resources, such as personal advisers, available for these services. The advisers were also facing the additional pressures of keeping up to date with a wide range of new developments and information.

Despite some successes in the transfer of such responsibilities, weaknesses persisted. The findings highlight the importance of providing information, advice and guidance that are matched well to the specific needs of individuals; the need to monitor the progress of individuals and groups; and the need to collect and analyse data on the destinations of young people. Too many of the local authorities did not use the data they held well enough to track the progress of young people and they were therefore not able to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the strategies that they had put in place. Five of the local authorities visited knew little about the progress and destinations of care leavers after the age of 16, and only a small number of the secondary schools visited knew how well their students who had left at the end of Year 11 were doing.

Individual institutions and carers did not recognise sufficiently how important it was for adults to provide detailed knowledge and expertise about opportunities for further education and training, either by providing it themselves or by knowing who could. The Connexions service provided good support in the institutions visited. Nevertheless, in all the authorities visited, inspectors found examples of carers, residential staff, teachers and tutors who were providing advice and guidance to young people but who had too little knowledge and understanding of the full range of options to do this effectively.

In seven of the 13 children's homes visited, staff had no knowledge of the options available to 16-year-olds and did not know who might be able to offer the necessary advice and support. In the secondary schools visited, careers education was sometimes taught by those who did not have sufficient and up to date knowledge and, in some cases, the provision was perfunctory. The information, advice and guidance given were not always sufficiently impartial about the options available to young people at the age of 16, for example where secondary schools had their own sixth forms.

Key findings

- The transfer of responsibility for commissioning information, advice and guidance services for young people had been well planned and managed in the eight local authorities visited for this aspect of the survey.
- The introduction of national standards for this work had helped to raise its profile but, at the time of the visits, the survey found no evidence of consequent improvement in the quality and consistency of the provision of these services.
- Links with the local Connexions service were productive in all the institutions visited and all the 18 secondary schools had written agreements. All the students

attended an interview with a Connexions personal adviser but in over half the secondary schools visited they had to miss lessons to do so.

- In the secondary schools visited, support for students with special educational needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and looked after children was particularly good. Every school visited arranged additional interviews and support for them.
- Most of the students in the secondary schools visited were given good opportunities for enterprise activities and other work-related experiences. However, work experience was not always timed or managed well; its evaluation was a major weakness and seven of the secondary schools did not have systems to evaluate the impact of work experience on students' learning and development.
- When careers education was provided by the schools themselves, its quality varied considerably and the provision was perfunctory in some of the schools visited. Not all the staff teaching it had enough knowledge or experience to do this effectively. The provision of information, advice and guidance about the options available to students at the age of 16 was not always sufficiently impartial.
- Good individual support in the pupil referral units and the special schools visited meant that most of the young people progressed into some kind of further education, employment or training.
- The support and guidance provided for looked after children was more effective in the local authorities that had a virtual headteacher or an officer with specific responsibility for this group.²
- Nearly half of the personal education plans and pathway plans for looked after children that inspectors saw during the survey were incomplete, and, in one of the authorities visited not all the carers had seen the personal education plans of the children for whom they were responsible.
- Even in the local authorities visited where young people's participation generally was better than the national average, those who had learning difficulties and/or disabilities were disproportionately represented among those not in education, employment or training.
- Only a small number of the secondary schools visited knew how well students who had left at the age of 16 were doing. Five of the local authorities knew little about the progress and destinations of care leavers after the age of 16.

² The Government's Green Paper, *Care matters*, proposed that there should be a 'virtual headteacher' in every local area to oversee the education of looked after children and those placed outside the authority, to take responsibility as if she or he were the headteacher of a single school; *Care matters: transforming the lives of children and young people in care* (Cm 6932), DCSF, 2006; publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=CM%25206932&index.shtml.

Recommendations

Local authorities should:

- improve the monitoring and evaluation of information, advice and guidance across provision in their areas and monitor actively that schools are acting on the statutory guidance for impartial careers education published in 2009
- improve the quality of information, advice and guidance for looked after children to enable them to move successfully through the education and training system
- ensure that personal education plans and pathway plans for looked after children are completed fully and that these are made available promptly at points of transition
- monitor more effectively the destinations of care leavers after the age of 16 and support them to take up sustainable and appropriate education, employment or training
- improve multi-agency work to identify young people at risk of not entering education, employment or training in order to give them early and effective information, advice and guidance.³

Secondary schools should:

- improve the planning and quality of careers education and work-related activities, especially in secondary schools with sixth forms, by:
 - ensuring that all Year 11 students receive impartial advice about the full range of options available to them at the age of 16
 - ensuring that staff who provide careers education have sufficient and relevant knowledge and experience to carry out the role effectively
- improve the placement of young people so that the work experience they undertake is a better reflection of their interests and aspirations, and time it to take place at a point in the school year when there are opportunities for students and others to review and learn from it
- monitor the quality and impact of work experience, drawing on the views of the young people who have been involved in it
- monitor more effectively the destinations of students who leave school at the end of Year 11 in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the information, advice and guidance they receive.

³ Multi-agency work is one of five focus areas of the DCSF's transition support programme, Aiming High for Disabled Children. It includes all local authorities and partner agencies. For further information, see: www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/transition/transition/.

Fostering services and providers of care homes should:

- ensure that foster carers and staff in care homes receive sufficient training to raise the educational achievement and aspirations of looked after children, and to work effectively with other services providing looked after young people with information, advice and guidance.

Local authorities' strategic role in information, advice and guidance

Transfer of responsibility for young people's information, advice and guidance

1. In April 2008, responsibility for the information, advice and guidance services for young people, formerly managed by the national Connexions service, was transferred to local authorities. Under these arrangements, children's trusts, schools and colleges are expected to work in partnership to commission services for information, advice and guidance and to plan and implement arrangements in a way that supports delivery of the 14 to 19 entitlement. In the eight local authorities visited the transfer had been smooth, had been welcomed by the key partners and had caused little disruption to the services provided. There was a clear understanding of how information, advice and guidance services contributed to key strategies such as:
 - improving results at Key Stage 4
 - ensuring greater flexibility in provision for young people aged 14 to 19
 - responding more effectively to the needs of young people who were not in education, employment or training.
2. The approach to commissioning information, advice and guidance services varied between the eight authorities visited for this aspect of the survey. The model adopted tended to depend on:
 - the quality of an authority's previous relationships with the Connexions service
 - the extent to which the authority felt that it had received an equitable share of support from the Connexions service in the past
 - the responsiveness of existing services to the needs of schools.
3. The three smaller authorities visited had established their own in-house information, advice and guidance services. The other five continued to contract services from the Connexions providers in the sub-region. The in-house model had enabled the three local authority areas to specify their requirements more tightly with good examples of very responsive, centrally provided curriculum support from Connexions. Building on existing arrangements the five larger

authorities had benefited from specialist resources and economies of scale provided by the sub-regional Connexions arrangements.

4. Whichever approach was taken, the new commissioning arrangements in the areas visited had improved communication between managers of children's services and other key stakeholders of information, advice and guidance services and helped to bring clarity to roles. The local authorities had generally used commissioning well as a lever for change. Contracts had been managed in a flexible manner, allowing all parties to respond to the needs of transition arrangements as they arose. In two of the local authorities visited, secondments of staff across the local authority and Connexions helped to ensure coherence and continuity during the transition period.
5. In general, the new commissioning arrangements meant that the schools were receiving a service from Connexions that was matched better to their needs. The authorities visited had played a lead role in developing and implementing an effective strategy for information, advice and guidance and, in most cases, the colleges, schools and other providers adhered to this.
6. The survey found that, occasionally, the concern of a few providers to maintain their autonomy reduced the extent to which information, advice and guidance could be planned across a single area.
7. There was little evidence, at the time of the survey visits, that the new commissioning arrangements had released more front-line resources, such as personal advisers. In fact, the increasing range of options for 14–19-year-olds had extended the caseload of the personal advisers in the Connexions service. They were also facing the pressures of keeping up to date with a wide range of developments so that they could provide well-informed and impartial advice. In some instances, these pressures were made worse by a lack of access to the Connexions database when advisers were in schools or insufficient administrative and professional support from the local authority.

The quality standards for information, advice and guidance

8. In transferring responsibility for information, advice and guidance to local authorities, the DCSF published a set of quality standards in 2007.⁴ The standards provide a benchmark to support directors of children's services in securing first class services as well as to help providers and others to assess the quality of provision locally and identify how services might be improved. The

⁴ In October 2007, the DCSF launched new quality standards for the provision of information, advice and guidance for young people. These set out the DCSF's expectations of the information, advice and guidance services that local authorities assumed responsibility for commissioning from April 2008. For further information about the quality standards, see: www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00253/.

standards set out expectations of the services that should be made available to young people.

9. Six of the authorities visited had established strategic groups which represented a broad range of partners, including the Connexions service, schools, the voluntary and community sector, and providers of further education and work-based learning. These groups had a good, collective overview of the needs of young people and had identified gaps in provision. Their contributions ensured that key planning documents, such as the 14 to 19 strategy and the integrated youth support proposals, referred clearly to the standards and gave prominence to information, advice and guidance. Where the standards were being used well, they had been linked to Gateway Diploma bids for 14 to 19 provision and were promoted as a collective measure of quality across all local providers. These authorities were also clear about how the standards applied to young people who were not in education, employment or training. However, the documents did not give sufficient attention to factors such as mental health, well-being and housing that have a fundamental effect on young people's life chances.
10. Senior managers in the authorities visited generally had a good awareness of the standards. In contrast, front-line staff were less aware of the relevance of the standards to their day-to-day work. A lack of clarity about the status of the standards in relation to other similar initiatives hindered their implementation. Over the years, Connexions partnerships, colleges and schools had aligned themselves to a variety of quality marks for different reasons and all the authorities visited reported a particular challenge in determining how the national standards related to other quality indicators.
11. Although the introduction of the national standards had helped to raise the profile of information, advice and guidance within the local authorities visited, the survey found no evidence at the time of the visits that they had led to an improvement in the quality and consistency of provision.
12. At provider level, the impact of the national standards was very variable. Some of the larger institutions, such as colleges, were using the standards to assess the quality of their information, advice and guidance services. However, smaller organisations, such as those in the voluntary and community sector, were either unaware of the standards or found the process of auditing their own provision onerous. The local authorities were of the view that the self-assessment documents were time-consuming and not user-friendly.
13. Most of the self-assessments seen by inspectors during the survey were insufficiently analytical, did not focus on impact and outcomes and were not rigorous enough in identifying areas for improvement. In some cases, they were no more than compliance checks. Nevertheless, there were pockets of better practice. In one school, for example, application of the standards had revealed weaknesses in careers education and guidance which were then

remedied. The more enterprising Connexions contractors had taken a lead role in mapping the standards across relevant aspects of the curriculum, including citizenship, careers education and guidance, and personal, social and health education.

14. In two of the local authorities visited, experienced personal advisers from the Connexions service offered mentoring to staff, particularly those from schools, to help them to audit their provision. However, those who took advantage of this opportunity tended to be from institutions that were already strongly committed to self-evaluation.

The quality of information, advice and guidance

15. In all the institutions visited, links with the Connexions service were productive and the quality of support provided was good. However, in all the authorities, there were examples of carers, residential staff, teachers and tutors who were providing advice and guidance to young people but who had too little knowledge and understanding of the full range of options to do so effectively.

Secondary schools

16. The extent to which students in schools received impartial information, advice and guidance varied considerably within and between the authorities visited. Young people were not always aware of:
 - the full range of options available to them
 - the expectations and demands of different education, training and employment routes
 - what their next steps entailed.
17. All the secondary schools visited for this survey provided careers education, but in around half of them inspectors were concerned about the completeness and impartiality of the advice offered.
18. Provision for careers education ranged from a good, comprehensive programme, cross-referenced to the new quality standards for young people's information, advice and guidance, to an unsatisfactory and informal series of lessons and presentations from visiting speakers. In four of the schools visited, such presentations coincided with other activities and it was left to the students to decide whether or not to attend.
19. The Year 11 students interviewed did not always have a full picture of the range of options available to 16-year-olds. In four of the seven secondary schools visited which had a sixth form, more guidance was available for students about transferring into the sixth form than for the wider opportunities outside the school. Students in schools with a sixth form were too often unaware of the range of courses offered in further education colleges or of the

opportunities for work-based learning. Three of the seven schools with sixth forms provided structured programmes of careers education for those going on to higher education but nothing comparable for other students. Advice was more impartial where schools did not have a sixth form and all pupils were transferring elsewhere.

20. Ofsted's second report on the implementation of 14 to 19 reforms, published in 2009, found that the overall quality of information, advice and guidance for young people was good in around two thirds of the 23 consortia visited for that survey; however, in more than half the areas, the 14 to 19 web-based prospectuses were not being used effectively as part of a coherent approach to advice and guidance for young people.⁵
21. In six of the 18 schools visited for this survey, the staff who taught careers education did not always have sufficient current knowledge of career paths or the world of work outside education to support students effectively or to challenge stereotypical career choices; they could provide only limited advice, guidance and support. Some of the staff had been asked to teach careers education simply because time was available on their timetables or because careers education was provided in tutorial time. The perception among a number of students in these schools was that careers education was relevant only for those who were not capable of going to university.
22. The following examples illustrate successful careers education.

In one school visited, students enjoyed the very structured careers education programme linked to the Every Child Matters curriculum. In Year 8, students looked at the world of work and their own interests. In Year 9, lessons included examining stereotypes in career planning and using an internet-based programme to give personalised careers information and advice. In Year 10, students were involved in work experience and, in Year 11, in thinking about the future and applying for options or opportunities outside school. The Year 12 programme included UCAS applications and contributions from the Connexions service for students considering further education and training or employment. Year 13 students continued with UCAS applications and interviews. The Connexions personal adviser supported the programme.

Another school had recently started sending Year 9 students on Aim Higher visits to universities and other higher education institutions to raise aspirations. It also linked with the specific initiative for students who had

⁵ *Implementation of 14–19 reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas (080267)*, Ofsted, 2009; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080267.

special educational needs where university students acted as ambassadors to promote further and higher education among this group.

23. Every secondary school in the survey had good links and written agreements with the Connexions service. All the students attended an interview with a Connexions personal adviser but in over half the schools visited the students had to miss lessons to do so. Further planned contact varied between schools, depending on students' career options and the availability of advisers.
24. Support for students with special educational needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and looked after children was particularly good. Every school visited arranged additional interviews and support for these students, as in this example.

In a secondary school, in addition to the normal advice and support for transition for students with special educational needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there were supported visits to colleges, work-based learning providers, employers and specialist provision. Links with a special school with specialist expertise in communication offered additional opportunities. The students attended one day a week to access the qualifications offered such as drama and food studies at entry level. Students were also involved in the Aimhigher initiative.⁶ The school prepared detailed reports to send to the colleges to assist with examination concessions. This meant that these students started their college career with the right level of support to ease the period of transition.

25. In over half the schools visited, specialist Connexions personal advisers worked closely with the school, students, parents and carers.
26. All the secondary schools visited kept records of how many students continued into the sixth form. They also used data from the Connexions service to identify how many did not progress to education, employment or training.⁷ However, over half of them had no data on any other destinations and only a small number knew how well their former students were doing.
27. In 2007/08, the proportions of 16-year-old students in the schools visited who had not progressed to education, employment or training ranged from none to

⁶ Aimhigher is a national programme jointly funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. It aims to widen participation in higher education by raising the aspirations and attainment of young people from under-represented groups, including looked after children and pupils with special educational needs.

⁷ Guidance on the September Guarantee, published in January 2009 by the DCSF, set out the joint responsibilities of schools and the Connexions services for establishing the 'intended destinations' of Year 11 students. For further information, see: www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=42&pid=347&ctype=TEXT&ptype=Single.

6%. The figure tended to be lower where the schools had clear procedures to identify and support students who were in danger of falling into this category. They used a range of strategies to ensure their students' continuing engagement.

One of the schools visited arranged for 17 Key Stage 4 students to attend a work placement for one day a week. It had also introduced a level 2 certificate covering fire and rescue in the community, awareness of hazards in the workplace and the young lifesaver award scheme. The programme was very popular with students and, in 2008, it had led to a reducing number of students who did not move on to education, employment or training.

Ofsted's report on effective strategies in local authority areas to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training provides further examples.⁸

Special schools

28. Five of the special schools visited did not have staff with the experience or qualifications to provide relevant careers advice and support to students. However, the close links they had established with the Connexions service and other agencies compensated for this.⁹
29. In most of the special schools visited, the Connexions personal advisers made an important contribution by supporting students at key transition points, attending annual reviews and liaising with other specialist services. The majority of students in the schools visited progressed to some form of education, employment or training. In two of the local authorities, the Connexions advisers had produced excellent booklets and liaised closely with students and their families to ensure that they were fully aware of opportunities and the support available to help them to prepare for the transfer from school.
30. The nine special schools that had a sixth form ensured that this provision was given a separate identity, for example by being organised as a further education centre on a different site or in a separate part of the building. Students attached great importance to this. One said, 'It makes me feel normal. Normal students go to college. Now I do.'

The curriculum in one further education centre was designed to extend students' interests by providing them with a wide range of options in

⁸ *Reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training: what works and why* (090236), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090236.

⁹ The Connexions service has a responsibility to support young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities up to the age of 25.

addition to the core subjects. The options included mini-enterprise schemes, sports studies, creative and performing arts, and catering. Students in Years 12 and 13 also attended courses at local colleges. Links with the local Education Business Partnership provided opportunities for students to develop their personal and social skills further by providing training for them to become mentors for younger pupils.

31. All the special schools visited placed a strong emphasis on securing better futures for their students by helping them to cope with the demands of adult life and to progress to further training and employment. They kept data on students' destinations and many tracked their progress beyond school.

Pupil referral units

32. Of the seven pupil referral units visited, five of them had been judged to be good at their previous inspections and one was outstanding. In all the units visited, including the one which had been judged to be satisfactory, young people were developing a good understanding of career options and job entry requirements. Two pupil referral units for students at Key Stage 4 and above offered awards in career planning and employment skills.
33. All the pupil referral units encouraged visits to a range of organisations, such as businesses, colleges, and universities, in order to raise their students' aspirations.

In one of the units visited, careers education took place in Year 9 to help students to choose their options; this continued in Year 10. However, the main focus was on Year 11. A visit to the local university, designed to raise aspirations, gave pupils an insight into the courses available and student life. At the following careers event, in collaboration with the Connexions service, five speakers from different vocational areas talked to pupils in small groups. This was a very practical day, including handling the animals brought in by one of the speakers who worked in animal care. The staff commented on how the students had developed their self-confidence and were able to communicate well with people they had not met before.

34. All but one of the units visited had established excellent links with the Connexions service which provided regular sessions and interviews for students. One of the personal advisers maintained a comprehensive careers library and arranged visits by speakers from different vocational areas and from colleges and work-based learning providers. The headteacher of one of the units visited was a member of the local authority's 14 to 19 strategy team, thus helping to develop continuity of provision for students.
35. In the pupil referral units visited, the numbers of students not progressing to education, employment or training were low. This was in no small part because of well-planned individual support from staff at the units and the Connexions

personal advisers, both before and after the students left. The students said that staff were interested in them and wanted them to succeed; they did not want to let those people down. Three of the units visited had a high percentage of looked after children. Individual support and attention meant that they usually progressed very well and achieved higher grades than had been predicted for them at their mainstream school.

36. There was some reintegration into mainstream provision at Key Stage 3 but, at Key Stage 4, progression was more likely to be to further education colleges, work-based learning or employment. The most rapid reintegration into mainstream school provision occurred in Key Stages 1 and 2: the younger the pupils, the more successfully they were reintegrated.
37. All the pupil referral units visited kept detailed records and prepared reports for the pupils when they left, either to return to a school or to take up other provision.

Looked after children

38. The quality of advice available in the children's homes and fostering services varied considerably. In the local authorities visited where the support services worked well together, children who were looked after were more successful at school and a larger number progressed into education, employment or training. This was particularly true of looked after children who attended special schools or pupil referral units.

In a children's home, five young people over the age of 16 lived in self-contained bedsits. The young people had spent most of their lives in homes and had additional needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties. Staff had helped them to produce a curriculum vitae, complete application forms and prepare for interviews by practising questions and providing them with suitable clothing. They received further support from a range of agencies, including a specialist post-16 team from the local authority. They were all in education, employment or training as a result of the support they had received. Where necessary, they were also able to attend a therapeutic counselling course before starting work or training.

39. In four of the local authorities surveyed, the corporate parenting group took a very active role and promoted good outcomes for young people in the areas of leaving care, employment, health and education. One young person, for example, had been provided with work experience and a part-time job with the council until he went to university. After three years, he returned to work full-time for the council. Three of the authorities did not have specific plans or agreements to offer work experience or employment to young people in their care, although one of the authorities was beginning to plan for this.

40. In seven of the 13 children's homes visited, staff had no knowledge of the options available to 16-year-olds and did not know who might be able to offer the necessary advice and support for those for whom they were caring.
41. Support for the progress of looked after children was most effective where a local authority officer with specific responsibility for looked after children or a virtual headteacher acted as a link between children's homes, foster carers and the schools. This ensured a coherent approach to raising attainment, reducing absence, tackling exclusions and meeting individuals' needs. In one authority, the virtual headteacher also provided support and training to foster carers and staff in the children's homes. Staff and carers were given the name of the designated teacher for looked after children in each school and were supported in keeping in contact with the school. However, even in the authorities that had a virtual headteacher, not all the staff in the children's homes and foster care settings were fully aware of what this role entailed and how they might capitalise on it.
42. Inspectors found that documentation relating to looked after children was often incomplete and did not include essential information such as dates of birth, addresses and support requirements. Nearly half of the personal education plans and pathway plans seen during the survey were incomplete. In one of the children's homes visited and in three of the fostering services, school reports and personal education plans were not promptly passed on when young people moved to a different placement. In one of the authorities visited, not all the carers had seen the personal education plans of the children for whom they were responsible.
43. The quality of training for staff in children's homes and foster carers differed considerably between the local authorities visited. In three of the local authorities visited, training and support were good; they were satisfactory in four and inadequate in one.

A carer in one of the primary schools visited had attended a programme of 10 sessions, run by the local authority, on raising awareness of the importance of education and ways to support foster children in school. She said that it had been a revelation to her about how to support children in their education and had been useful not only for her foster child but also for her own children.

44. In six of the children's homes and five of the fostering services visited there was insufficient training for staff to enable them to encourage educational achievement and raise aspirations. One of the local authorities did provide awareness training about the education system, but this did not include certain key areas such as raising educational achievement and the carers' role in this. Knowledge about careers education, information, advice and guidance and the range of options at 16 was very mixed. As a result, young people were not

encouraged to make use of the information, advice and guidance services available.

45. Five of the local authorities visited knew little about the progress and destinations of care leavers after the age of 16. Records and information were inconsistent. As a result, the authorities were unable to track how well the young people were doing and measure the success of any provision that had been made for them. As the next section of the report describes, the proportion of looked after children who were not in education, employment or training was too high.

Work-related learning and work experience

46. In the majority of the schools visited, students had the opportunity to visit local colleges to see the range of courses and activities they offered and to take part in vocational programmes. Links with work-based learning providers offered additional opportunities for work-related activities.

Year 10 students in one of the schools visited developed their work-related skills on an Industry Interview Day. They applied for a job and attended an interview. In 2008, 21 interviewers took part from industries where students were likely to apply for jobs and students received detailed feedback. Year 12, level 3 students, took part in industry conference days to develop their work-based and work-related skills and support them in their Universities and College Admissions Service (UCAS) applications. Students who had attended a university interview said that they had discussed this at the interview and that there was a great deal of interest in the skills they had developed.

47. Schools were increasingly offering a range of additional programmes such as the Young Apprenticeship programme, for motivated students of average and above average ability in Key Stage 4 to study for nationally recognised vocational qualifications.
48. Work experience was good or better in 13 of the 18 secondary schools visited. Through this and other contact with employers and the world outside school, students began to learn about the specific skills and attributes they needed to succeed in the workplace. Good work experience placements clearly matched the career options of the students. However, in the less effective schools, the problem of finding suitable placements meant that sometimes students were placed in a vocational area that they were not interested in. This did not mean that the work experience was not a valuable insight into the world of work, but there were missed opportunities for students to try out their chosen career option. As one student said, 'I enjoyed my work experience but it was not what I wanted to do. I wanted to do hairdressing but ended up in an office photocopying.'

49. The timing of the work experience was critical. Where it was at the end of the summer term, there was insufficient time to review it and learn from shared experiences. In one of the schools visited, students were able to draw on their work experience for their GCSE coursework in English and French.
50. In the best instances, work placements closely matched students' career aspirations and interests, and collaboration between schools and local authorities was effective. Links with the Education Business Partnerships enhanced the quality and relevance of both careers education and work experience. For example, the partnership in one local authority had produced a useful booklet to prepare students for work experience, including advice on how to find information about a company; how to plan the journey to work; what to wear; how to gather and record information during the placement, and how to review the placement. An Education Business Partnership in one of the authorities employed a 'stretch team' that worked in local schools to raise the aspirations of Year 11 students.
51. A major weakness of work experience was evaluation. Seven of the 18 secondary schools visited did not have measurable outcomes for this aspect or systems to monitor students' progress; when work experience happened at the end of the summer term, there was insufficient time to review and learn from it. The following illustrates how a local authority evaluated work experience effectively.

A local authority trained learning mentors to organise work experience across 168 different organisations. At the end of the placements, the students completed evaluation forms which the schools and the authority used to assess and improve the quality of provision for the following year.

52. Work experience was an important part of the curriculum in all the special schools visited. In the best instances it was planned carefully, with considerable support and guidance for the students and the organisations offering the placements.

One of the residential schools visited arranged work experience locally for students in Year 12 and a placement close to home for those in Year 13. The school's personal adviser for the Connexions service liaised with other Connexions services to identify suitable placements. The school worked closely with parents to help them adapt to having their children living at home again and starting on adult life.

53. It was not always possible, however, for students in special schools to be given external work experience placements. In these cases, the schools had a range of alternative activities. One of the schools used its partner schools to offer placements in the school office, in the school grounds and other suitable

activities.¹⁰ One of the schools advertised these jobs on a 'Situations vacant' board and invited the students to apply for jobs such as supporting other pupils and helping to supervise clubs.

54. All five of the pupil referral units visited which had pupils in Key Stage 4 included work experience as part of their curriculum. This required a great deal of preparatory work with the employers as well as the students. There were sometimes difficulties in placing students and arrangements had to be made to try to provide alternative realistic work situations within the centre. One example involved running a hair salon within the unit.

Young people not in education, employment or training

55. The local authorities visited generally had clear strategies and plans to identify and support young people who were not in education, employment or training. Five of the authorities had established coherent links between their Children and Young People's Plans, 14 to 19 strategies, integrated youth support policies, and developments in providing information, advice and guidance. Clear accountability for reducing the number of young people who were not in education, employment or training rested with operational or working groups that reported directly to strategic managers. However, the impact of such approaches was limited. In four of the authorities, the number of young people not in education, employment or training had not been reduced. In three of the authorities, the number of young people aged 16 to 18 not in education, employment or training had declined but still remained high, ranging between 9% and 12%.¹¹
56. In all the local authorities visited, specific groups of young people were commonly found to be at greater risk of not involving themselves in education, training or employment. They included teenage parents, young offenders, looked after children, some young people from minority ethnic groups and young people who had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Young people who had learning difficulties and/or disabilities were disproportionately represented. This was true even in those authorities where participation generally was better than the national average. In one authority, half of the young people not in education, employment or training had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, inspectors found effective, well-devised projects, as in this example.

A project based at a local college of further education focused very specifically on re-engaging young people with learning difficulties and/or

¹⁰ Further examples can be found in *Twelve outstanding special schools: excelling through inclusion* (080240), Ofsted, 2009; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080240.

¹¹ See also *Reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training: what works and why* (090236), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090236.

disabilities. Through interviews, discussions and information events, the young people and their families received detailed advice and guidance on the various opportunities available. Personalised job coaching was provided for the young people, their employers, parents, carers and, where necessary, other employees, to support transition into paid employment. Of the 51 placed successfully since the start of the project, 24 of them had not previously been in education, employment or training. A high proportion (82%) stayed in employment for over 26 weeks.

In the authorities visited, the proportion of looked after children who were not in education, employment or training was too high compared to that of other groups.

57. All the local authorities in the survey acknowledged the need for stronger multi-agency work to identify young people at risk of not entering education, employment or training in order to give them effective information, advice and guidance at an early stage. While these strategies had generally been slow to develop, there were examples of good practice.

An out-of-hours project focused specifically on young people who were in danger of not progressing to education, employment or training. It was run by a partnership of employers, schools, Connexions and those working with specific groups, such as young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young mothers, and young offenders.

The project was based in the local football stadium which provided excellent facilities, including rooms for group work and a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment. There was a strong focus on developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and on careers advice. A professional footballer provided mentoring and the young people participated in work experience within the club, in such areas as grounds work, retail and administration. The project manager visited all local schools to help identify young people who might benefit from this provision and to ease their transition into it.

58. The collation, analysis and use of data to monitor the whereabouts of vulnerable young people at risk of becoming 'lost' to support agencies were good in five of the eight local authorities visited for this aspect of the survey. In the better performing authorities, the comprehensive and robust collection and analysis of data helped to identify geographical areas, or specific groups, with high numbers of young people who were not engaged in education, employment or training. This information helped to develop appropriate intervention strategies within the Connexions service and across partner agencies. However, three of the local authorities visited did not use the information they had sufficiently. For example, they did not share data on young people's destinations or use it to improve their planning.

59. The quality of information, advice and guidance for young people who were not in education, employment or training, or who were at risk of not being so, was generally good. Effective inter-agency collaboration resulted in a wide range of community-based projects and programmes. The most effective of these provided personalised support and challenge to young people, helping them to improve their self-esteem and motivating them to involve themselves in learning or employment again. Community-based teams of Connexions personal advisers provided specialist support and good practical advice on housing, benefits, health and welfare.
60. In three of the local authorities, good links with local employers gave young people opportunities to develop skills allied to the needs of industry.

Year 11 students, who had been excluded or had absented themselves from school attended alternative education at a local factory where they focused on key skills and worked towards a range of National Vocational Qualifications. The majority moved on to the local college or to an apprenticeship programme. Of the 19 young people who left in 2008, 15 had successfully enrolled in further training or employment.

61. The following example shows how young people who were among the hardest to help had an opportunity to take part in an intensive programme that had been developed in consultation with them.

The two-week programme ran each month, with places for eight young people aged from 16 to 18 who referred themselves, or were referred from organisations such as Connexions, the youth offending service and the leaving care team. The first week comprised a three-day challenge, including mountain biking, kayaking and archery. Work experience was also offered. The second week involved visits and taster sessions with local training providers. All the young people received information, advice and guidance, as well as individual support on personal and welfare issues and could be referred promptly to specialist services if needed, for example, for housing benefit and screening for sexually-transmitted infections. In the first 10 months of the project, 77% completed the course. Of these, 73% progressed into education, training and employment. The programme was being developed to offer opportunities for young people under the age of 16 who were at risk of not involving themselves in education, training or employment when they left school.

Information, advice and guidance services for adults

62. From 1 August 2008, the provision for face-to-face information, advice and guidance services for adults, under the nextstep brand, changed from 47 locally run contracts, linked to local Learning and Skills Council areas, to 10 regional prime contracts.¹² Under these arrangements, all contractors must have the matrix quality standard for information, advice and guidance.¹³ The new contracts are initially for two years, until July 2010. A new adult advancement and careers service is planned to come into operation in August 2010.
63. All four of the nextstep contractors visited had successfully implemented well-planned and well-managed arrangements for the transition to the new regional contracts. Managing a short-term, two-year contract had inhibited medium- and long-term planning. Continuing changes to nextstep contract arrangements had created real challenges for the contractors and front-line staff in particular. Examples included the additional responsibility to deal with clients required to attend following a referral by Jobcentre Plus and the completion of a full action plan, to be updated at each follow-up meeting.
64. Changes to include adults with qualifications at level 3 and above had improved the service to meet the already known needs of this wider group. All the nextstep contractors visited viewed this change very positively, as they were already providing the service to these clients but, previously, had not received funding.
65. Arrangements to procure an appropriate range of subcontracted services for information, advice and guidance for adults, across the wide geographical regions, had generally been well thought out in relation to identified needs and funding restraints. A challenge for the nextstep contractors within the much reduced subcontracting arrangements was to maintain their previous success in widening participation to a broad audience. Three of the four regional nextstep contractors visited had substantially reduced the number of subcontractors across its entire region. In one region, 24 organisations were contracted to provide information, advice and guidance services for adults, compared to 74 under the previous arrangements. In one sub-regional area, the number of subcontractors had been reduced from 22 to six. While the reduced numbers simplified arrangements to monitor the quality of subcontractors' activities, they placed additional pressure on individual providers to ensure that they delivered a sufficiently broad range of settings to meet the needs of a diverse client group.

¹² Nextstep is a free service to support those trying to return to work.

¹³ The matrix standard is the national standard for organisations that provide information, advice and/or guidance on learning and work. For further information, see: www.matrixstandard.com/.

66. Strategic partnerships had developed well in all the nextstep contractors visited. The building of positive and effective relationships with subcontractors was a real focus of their communications strategies. Developing effective communications and establishing a consistent working methodology and standard of service across its entire region were major challenges at the early stage of the contract. Communication with subcontractors was frequent and the arrangements were generally well received. Access to workable information technology systems had created problems for both front-line staff and for those staff with responsibility for management information, and continued to do so.
67. Three of the four nextstep contractors visited had developed comprehensive quality assurance systems, building on good practice from the experience of previous nextstep contracts. One contractor had yet to develop its systems to the same level. Systems were in the early stages of being implemented and their impact had yet to be seen.

Notes

Between July 2008 and March 2009, inspectors inspected a range of provision in 10 local authorities. They visited 18 secondary schools, 10 special schools, seven pupil referral units, eight local authority fostering services and 14 children's homes. Three of the children's homes provided care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and two provided respite care. Inspectors also visited two virtual school projects and two projects offering services to looked after children in four further authorities.

In eight of the 10 authorities, inspectors evaluated the new arrangements for information, advice and guidance services and visited individual projects in each area that supported young people who were not in education, employment or training. Inspectors also visited four regional nextstep providers to evaluate the introduction of new contractual arrangements for the provision of adult information, advice and guidance services.

In addition, inspectors drew on evidence from institutional inspection reports, other survey visits that formed part of Ofsted's 2008–09 survey programme, and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) subject inspections of secondary schools conducted between September 2008 and March 2009.

Further information

Ofsted publications

Pupil referral units: establishing successful practice in pupil referral units and local authorities (070019), Ofsted, 2007;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070019.

Support for care leavers (080359), Ofsted, 2009;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080259.

Implementation of 14–19 reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas (080267), Ofsted, 2009; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080267.

Improving progression to sustainable unsupported employment—A review of strategies developed by Workstep providers (080258), Ofsted, 2010;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080258.

Reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training: what works and why (090236), Ofsted, 2010;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090236.

Publications by others

Quality standards for young people's information, advice and guidance, DCSF, 2007; www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/connexions/qualitystandards/qualitystandardsiag/.

Quality, choice and aspiration: a strategy for young people's information, advice and guidance (DCSF-00977-2009), DCSF, 2009;

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00977-2009>.

Statutory guidance: impartial careers education (00978-2009DOM-EN), DCSF, 2009;

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00978-2009&>.

Annex: Schools, local authorities and other providers visited

Secondary schools

Alexandra High School and Sixth Form Centre	Sandwell
Baylis Court School	Slough
Eston Park School	Redcar and Cleveland
Hastingsbury Business and Enterprise College	Bedford
Mark Rutherford Upper School and Community College	Bedford
Medina High School	Isle of Wight
Menzies High School Science College	Sandwell
North Axholme School	North Lincolnshire
Pensby High School for Boys–A Specialist Sports College	Wirral
Priory Community School	North Somerset
Redcar Community College–A Specialist Visual and Performing Arts Centre	Redcar and Cleveland
Richard Challoner School	Kingston upon Thames
Ryde High School	Isle of Wight
St Katherine’s School	North Somerset
The Holy Cross School	Kingston upon Thames
The Royal Liberty School	Havering
The Sanders Draper School and Specialist Science College	Havering
Winterton Comprehensive School with Specialist Status in Engineering	North Lincolnshire

Special schools

Arbour Vale School	Slough
Bedelsford School	Kingston upon Thames
Kirkleatham Hall School	Redcar and Cleveland
Ravensbourne School	Havering

St Catherine's School	Isle of Wight
St Hugh's Communication and Interaction College	North Lincolnshire
St John's School	Bedford
The Meadows Sports College	Sandwell
Westhaven School	North Somerset
West Kirby Residential School	Wirral

Pupil referral units

Birnam Wood Pupil Referral Unit	Havering
Eston Centre (EOTAS)	Redcar and Cleveland
Malden Oaks Pupil Referral Unit	Kingston upon Thames
The Larch Centre	North Somerset
Wasp	Wirral
Whiteheath Education Centre	Sandwell
Young People's Education Centre	North Lincolnshire

Looked after children

Isle of Wight Fostering Services
North Lincolnshire Council Fostering Team
North Somerset Children and Young People's Services
Redcar and Cleveland Family Placement Service
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Adoption and Fostering Team
Sandwell Family Placement Service
Slough Family Placement Service
Wirral Fostering Service

Areas where specific projects were examined

Bath and North East Somerset
Cumbria

London Borough of Ealing
Stockport

Authorities visited in order to examine the strategic role of local authorities in planning information, advice and guidance

Wirral Metropolitan Council
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
North Lincolnshire Council
Isle of Wight Council
The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Sandwell Metropolitan Council
Slough Borough Council
London Borough of Havering

Adult information, advice and guidance services

Careers Yorkshire and the Humber, nextstep Yorkshire and the Humber
Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership, nextstep North West
Suffolk County Council, nextstep East
VT enterprise, nextstep South East