



# Careers Wales: A Review in an International Perspective

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## Research

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# Careers Wales: A Review in an International Perspective

**Audience** Careers Wales Association, Careers Companies in Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, careers advisors, careers teachers and other stakeholders involved in providing information, advice and guidance on careers related issues.

**Overview** This report was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government as part of a wider review it is conducting of careers services in Wales. The aim of the report is to review the work of Careers Wales, including its links to other career guidance providers, in an international context.

**Action required** No action required.

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**Related documents** Welsh Assembly Government, (2008). Skills That Work For Wales



## Executive Summary

1. This report was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government as part of a wider review it is conducting of careers services in Wales. The aim of the report is to review the work of Careers Wales, including its links to other career guidance providers, in an international context. Use has been made of the benchmarks provided by the OECD Career Guidance Policy Review. Particular comparisons are drawn with the other main all-age services, in New Zealand, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

2. The report is based on an examination of over 200 documents and on six days of meetings and visits carried out in November 2008. These included meetings with relevant staff of the Welsh Assembly Government, with the chief executives of the Careers Wales companies, with a number of the Careers Wales companies' staff, and with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders.

3. On the basis of this review, the **strengths** of Careers Wales include:

- Its **boundedness**. It has a clear and coherent mission: 'developing people in Wales through lifelong career planning'. In general, the range of its activities is coherent and synergistic, with each adding value to the others.
- The **all-age** nature of its services. This enables young people to be familiarised at school with services which they can use subsequently, avoids rigid cut-off points in supporting the transition from youth to adulthood, and offers potential synergies and cost-savings by providing for both young people and adults within the same service framework.
- Its **professionalism**. Its services are, in general, highly regarded. Its volumes of service delivery are impressive. This is particularly the case in relation to young people, who receive more continuity of professional career guidance support than in most other countries. Close attention has been paid to quality assurance, including professional standards, inspection systems, and impact measurement. On all these criteria, it can justly claim to be world-class.
- The extent to which it is **embedded in Assembly policies**. It provides a strong citizen-facing and citizen-centred infrastructure through which the Assembly's policies can be advanced. This is evident in the way that Careers Wales On-Line has been adopted both as the key guidance tool and as the key administrative tool for Learning Pathways 14-19. In addition, Careers Wales performs important gate-keeping roles for a number of Assembly programmes. Beyond this, it has potential to be used more extensively than at present to provide feedback to policy-makers on the impact on individuals of policies relating to education, training and employment, plus advocacy on individuals' unmet needs.
- The extent to which it is **embedded in local communities**. This is evident in its close involvement in local partnerships and co-ordinating roles, and in the range of its local contacts and networks. It is particularly important in enabling

it to attend to the differences between urban and rural areas, and between predominantly bilingual and predominantly English-speaking areas, and also to the distinctive community-development issues in relation to North Wales.

These strengths are closely inter-related. It is important that they be built upon rather than eroded.

4. At the same time, it is clear that Careers Wales faces a number of major **challenges**. These include:

- The need to pay more attention to the needs of **adults**. Although Careers Wales is all-age in the range of its services, only about 15% of its resources are currently allocated to support for adult clients. This low allocation is now being questioned from three perspectives: the broad skills agenda; the impact of welfare reform; and the likely massive growth of redundancies. Each of the three has potentially huge implications for demands on Careers Wales resources; together, their impact is likely to be irresistible.
- The need to determine whether Careers Wales is an **all-ability** as well as an all-age service. Up to the age of 16, it certainly is: it serves all young people. Thereafter, however, there is some tendency for it to be drawn towards lower skill levels. This is evident in the practice in some schools (though only some) of guidance for sixth-formers being managed by teachers rather than by Careers Wales advisers, in the fact that those entering higher education have access to a separate range of higher education careers services, in the practice in some Careers Wales companies of sub-contracting services to graduates to these higher education careers services, and in the tendency for Careers Wales workforce development work to be targeted to low-skill workers. On the other hand, the Careers Wales vision in principle applies to all, and the explicit goal of Careers Wales On-Line is to enable everyone in Wales to develop their career and learning skills through their e-portfolio and supporting site content. Moreover, anyone can ring the helpline, and interviews can be provided to anyone who requests one and is prepared to wait: over two-thirds of adults interviewed have qualifications at Level 3 or above. The logic of this is that Careers Wales seeks to serve all citizens, but in differentiated ways.

5. If Careers Wales is substantially to extend its services to adults within its current service delivery model, this would require a massive increase in its resources. The case for some budgetary increase is strong. But the budgetary pressures within the Assembly make it unlikely that any such increase will be sufficient without some significant **re-modelling** of services, making it possible to move to adults some of the resources currently devoted to young people.

6. The need for such re-modelling has already been recognised by Careers Wales in relation to services for young people, considered in their own terms. The demands of Learning Pathways 14-19 for help at each of four decision points cannot be met within

the current model, and it has accordingly been acknowledged that there will be a need to move towards more differentiated service delivery. There is a strong case for such principles to be applied more widely, and more radically, across the full range of Careers Wales services and across the full range of its existing and potential clients.

7. This will be a major challenge for Careers Wales. In contrast to the high standards of its work on the quality of its services, it has so far given much less attention than comparable organisations in England, Scotland and New Zealand to closer integration of service channels, to differentiated service delivery, to systematic approaches to customer segmentation, and to proactive marketing of its services. These are closely inter-linked. All need to be addressed more systematically and more strategically than they have to date.

8. This re-modelling needs also to attend to the relationships with other career guidance providers, and to exploring the extent to which Careers Wales can devote more of its resources to **building the capacity of others** to deliver services. This will require a major review of the contractual arrangements with the Assembly, which currently focus mainly on target volumes related to direct service delivery. Alongside this, there is a case for exploring the scope, in higher education but also possibly elsewhere, for **extending the Careers Wales brand** to a wider range of provision, so enabling continuity of access to be maintained.

9. There will be fears that addressing these issues will risk compromising on quality. More constructively, it will require reframing of how quality is defined. But the current model is not sustainable if access is to be significantly extended.

10. If these changes are to be achieved, **strong leadership** will be required, alongside a strong interface with the Assembly. In both of these respects, the current structure of six independent Careers Wales companies, plus a seventh jointly-owned company which is a servant of the six, is problematic. Both leadership and the relationship with the Assembly are too diffused.

11. There is accordingly a strong case for **restructuring** the organisational framework of Careers Wales. Options range from a direct contract with the Careers Wales Association (CWA) alongside the existing company contracts, through the CWA being the prime contractor and sub-contracting to the careers companies, to a unitary organisation (a single company, or an Assembly-Sponsored Public Body, or being merged into the Assembly). The centrality of the issue of leadership (reinforced by the example of New Zealand) tends to lean against the first of these options, and to favour the stronger options.

12. Alongside this, there is a parallel need for the Assembly to strengthen or reframe its Careers Policy Branch as its **policy interface** with Careers Wales.

13. Finally, there is a strong case for a **Welsh career guidance forum**, possibly linked to the Welsh Employment and Skills Board, to provide strategic leadership in the

wider career guidance field. This should be **linked to a UK forum**, to enable UK-wide issues (e.g. in relation to branding and marketing, to professional standards, and to skills and welfare policy) to be addressed, and to provide a base for the UK to play a strong role in wider European and global networks.

14. Careers Wales is a strong and highly professional organisation, of which the Assembly should be proud. If these changes are made, and handled well, Careers Wales has the capability to become a fully world-class service and to make an even greater contribution to the development of Welsh citizens and hence to the economic and social prosperity of Wales.

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## Preface

This report was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government as part of a wider review it is conducting of careers services in Wales. The aim of the report is to review the work of Careers Wales, including its links to other career guidance providers, in an international context. Use has been made of the benchmarks provided by the OECD Career Guidance Policy Review<sup>1</sup>. Particular comparisons are drawn with the other main all-age services, in New Zealand, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The framework for the report is that adopted in previous reviews carried out of the all-age services in New Zealand<sup>2</sup> and Scotland<sup>3</sup>. Comparisons are also drawn with England, which is distinctive in the UK in having separate career guidance policies and structures for young people and for adults respectively. In addition, attention is paid to some UK-wide issues.

The report is based on an examination of over 200 documents and on six days of meetings and visits carried out in November 2008. These included meetings with relevant staff of the Welsh Assembly Government, with the chief executives of the Careers Wales companies, with a number of the Careers Wales companies' staff, and with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders (for the programme, see Annex). Most of these were held in Cardiff, but there were also visits to Caerphilly (where the Careers Wales Association is based) and to Bangor (where meetings were held with a wide range of people from North-West and North-East Wales).

I am most grateful to all those who provided information for my review, who organised and supported my itinerary, and who took part in the various meetings. I hope that the report will contribute constructively to the review of which it is part.

Tony Watts  
Cambridge  
December 2008

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<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: OECD. The review covered 14 countries, and has subsequently been extended through the World Bank, the European Commission and the European Training Foundation to cover a total of 55 countries.

<sup>2</sup> Watts, A.G. (2007). *Careers Services: a Review in an International Perspective*. Wellington, New Zealand: Career Services.

<sup>3</sup> Watts, A.G. (2005). *Progress and Potential*. Glasgow: Careers Scotland.



# 1. Setting the Direction

## Origins

1.1 Careers Wales is a brand, not an organisation. It currently covers the work of six independent not-for-profit careers companies, plus a seventh – the Careers Wales Association (CWA) – which is jointly owned by the six. The Welsh Assembly Government contracts with the six companies to deliver a wide range of careers services across Wales. The contracts are based on a common template, and the companies work closely together in a wide variety of ways, using CWA for some of these purposes.

1.2 The establishment of Careers Wales stemmed from the work of the Education and Training Action Group for Wales (ETAG), and its aim to establish Wales as a ‘learning country’ with the capacity to up-skill its workforce in order to compete internationally. In 1999, ETAG published an action plan, which included the statement that ‘the National Assembly for Wales should establish a national all-age information, advice and guidance service – Careers Wales – by April 2001’. Related recommendations included: the operation of existing companies under the new Careers Wales brand; providing a network of access points; making career guidance available free of charge to the unemployed, the economically inactive, the low-paid and those subject to redundancy; and working with Education-Business Partnerships to establish a seamless approach. Further important recommendations were made on careers education and guidance more generally, including commissioning Careers Wales to develop an all-Wales quality award for learning providers meeting agreed standards in careers education<sup>4</sup>. Action has subsequently been taken on all these points.

1.3 Careers Wales was launched in April 2001 by Jane Davidson, the then Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. She identified its critical success factors as:

- Creating a national service working to national quality standards, but working with and responding to the needs of the local community.
- Pursuing a wider remit than the careers companies’ traditional constituency of young people in education – for example, working with employers to promote education-business links, and with community groups to help those looking to move back into learning.
- Making a reality of an ‘all age’ service.
- Innovation and continuous improvement<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Others included: commissioning the identification of learning outcomes for careers education for use across schools in Wales; amending regulations to make careers education in schools and colleges mandatory for 16-19 year-old students; and inviting the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to develop benchmark standards for careers services in higher education, and for careers education as an integral part of higher education course provision. Education and Training Action Group for Wales (1999). *An Education and Training Action Plan for Wales*, ch.7. Cardiff: Welsh Office.

<sup>5</sup> National Assembly for Wales (2001). *Annual Report on the Careers Service in Wales, 2000-2001*, p.7. Cardiff: WAG.

The vision underlying the establishment of Careers Wales was subsequently expressed by the Welsh Assembly Government as providing ‘an opportunity for a step-change in the support provided to underpin in Wales a culture of learning throughout life’<sup>6</sup>.

1.4 The ETAG report also recommended that the Assembly should, in future, consider the benefits that might be derived from a reduction in company numbers. Two of the companies (Dyfed and West Glamorgan) subsequently merged to create Careers Wales West; and in 2005 Mid-Glamorgan and Powys also merged. So the number of careers companies that comprise Careers Wales has been reduced from eight to six.

1.5 Because Careers Wales was based on existing company structures, the longer-term history of these structures is pertinent in explaining some aspects of the current arrangements. Prior to the early 1990s, the Careers Service in England, Scotland and Wales was a responsibility of the Local Education Authorities (LEAs), focusing mainly on young people. In Wales, an all-Wales ethos was established, including a common logo to strengthen the Careers Service brand image (adding a dragon to the basic four-arrow design). In 1995, the Careers Service was marketised, with contracts to offer the service being awarded by government on a local basis through competitive tendering. In Wales, all eight existing local services won the contracts, in the form of partnerships between LEAs and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). Five years later, bids to renew the contracts were restricted to the existing contract-holders. It was subsequently agreed that contracts would be negotiated annually with the existing Careers Service companies, on condition that they continued to meet defined service standards and demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement. This gradually reinstated the culture of co-operation that had been somewhat fractured by the process of marketisation. Some of the careers companies also covered education-business links and adult guidance; in other areas, these were managed separately by the TECs. It was these diverse structures that, following devolution, were brought together into the contracts that formed Careers Wales<sup>7</sup>. Some elements of the different preceding structures are still evident.

1.6 Subsequently, in 2004, the Assembly commissioned a strategic review of Careers Wales from independent consultants. The report by Moulson & Prail<sup>8</sup> explored a wide variety of issues relating to the ways in which Careers Wales had developed to that point, and explored a number of alternative organisational structures for its future development. It made a large number of recommendations, most but not all of which have been implemented. It provides a valuable baseline for the current review.

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<sup>6</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2004). *Corporate and Business Planning 2004-2005: Guidance to Careers Wales Companies*, p.3. Cardiff: WAG.

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed account, see Clark, M. & Talbot, J. (2006). Career guidance in Wales: retrospect and prospect. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34(1), 55-71. Also Peck, D. (2004). *Careers Services: History, Policy and Practice in the United Kingdom*. London: Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

## Policy context

1.7 In a recent strategy statement<sup>9</sup>, the Careers Wales companies define their mission as ‘developing people in Wales through lifelong career planning’. Their **strategic aims** are defined as five-fold:

- To enable/help individuals to plan, manage and progress their career development and enhance their employability.
- To contribute to the economic prosperity of Wales by encouraging and supporting individuals to raise their skill levels.
- To contribute to the social prosperity of Wales by helping to equip individuals with the confidence and capacity to achieve their potential and to access opportunities.
- To influence national and local policies in Wales relating to lifelong learning, social inclusion and economic development, drawing on daily contact with clients to maximise the impact of services.
- To ensure Careers Wales maintains its reputation as customer-focused, partnership-orientated, innovative, professional and forward-looking in an ever-changing context.

1.8 The range of policy areas to which Careers Wales’ work is relevant is very broad. At least three major areas are currently pertinent.

1.9 The first is the **Learning Pathways 14-19** policy, designed to transform learning provision for young people in Wales. This is linked closely to the development of the Welsh Baccalaureate as the qualification of choice for young people in Wales. The pathways policy comprises six key elements, designed to ensure that all learners receive the appropriate balance of learning experiences that best meets their needs. These are: individual Learning Pathways; wider choice and greater flexibility of programmes and ways of learning; a ‘learning core’ which runs from 14 to 19 wherever young people are learning; Learning Coach support; access to personal support; and access to impartial careers advice and guidance<sup>10</sup>. Careers Wales is particularly specified in relation to the last of these, but in practice also plays a broader role, not least since work-focused experience is part of the ‘learning core’ and is heavily dependent on the brokerage and support services which Careers Wales provides (see para.4.10). Career Wales On-Line, too, is being used not only as a guidance tool but also as a key administrative tool to support the implementation of the 14-19 pathways policy (see para.2.25).

1.10 The second is the policy relating to young people who are not in employment, education or training (**NEET**). A major policy goal is to reduce the number of young

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<sup>9</sup> Careers Wales (2007). *Context and Vision 2007-2010*. Caerphilly: Careers Wales Association.

<sup>10</sup> Department for Training and Education (2004). *Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance*. Circular 37/2004. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

people in this group. Measures addressing this goal include steps to ensure that a sufficient range of learning options are in place to serve the needs of such young people. But they also include effective tracking processes, and the provision of a range of support including learning support, personal support, and careers advice and guidance. Careers Wales is seen as central in these respects. A recent consultation document recommended that 'given the proliferation of services and agencies working with young people NEET... there is a need for one organisation to take responsibility for co-ordinating and leading this work'. It continued: 'Taking into account their existing remit to identify and to register young people NEET, to support post-16 transition, the increasing amount of preventative work they are engaged in and their established links with Jobcentre Plus, we think that Careers Wales companies – within the context of Young People's Partnerships – should take on that role'<sup>11</sup>.

1.11 The third is the broader area of the **skills agenda**. This includes the policies relating to young people, but extends them to cover the wider challenge of raising the skills level of the existing workforce. The interface with UK-wide policy is significant in this area. The Leitch Report<sup>12</sup> was prepared in close collaboration with the devolved administrations, and its core analysis – which attached considerable significance to the role of careers services in motivating and supporting individuals in building their skills – was UK-wide. Important elements of subsequent UK government policy in relation to skills have addressed its interface with welfare reform, which is not devolved: this could have significant implications for the work of Careers Wales (see paras.4.38-4.39). Meanwhile, the Webb Report on further education noted in relation to Careers Wales that 'the 14-19 client group commands a disproportionately high share of current resources'. It affirmed that 'the adult population also needs career planning support: for unemployed and disengaged people; for returnees to learning; for those made redundant and in the area of workforce development'. It reported that 'evidence received suggested that present resourcing falls well short of meeting the needs of the adult population'. It accordingly recommended that the Assembly should 'identify the resources necessary to provide an all-age service across Wales'<sup>13</sup>. Subsequently, the Assembly's strategy document on skills and employment policy referred to Careers Wales as an all-age service and stated that it was time 'to re-examine how best to deliver these services'<sup>14</sup>. It is this that has provided the main impetus for the current review.

1.12 In addition to these three, there are other areas of Assembly policy that impact significantly on the work of Careers Wales. Two are particularly worthy of mention here.

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<sup>11</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Delivering Skills that Work for Wales: Reducing the Proportion of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training in Wales*, p.16. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>12</sup> Leitch Review of Skills (2006). *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy – World Class Skills*. London: The Stationery Office.

<sup>13</sup> Webb, A., Drury, S. & Griffiths, G. (2007). *Promise and Performance: the Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the Context of the Learning Country: Vision into Action*, pp.89-90. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>14</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Skills that Work for Wales: a Skills and Employment Strategy*, p.27. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

One is its policy relating to the **delivery of public services**, outlined in its report *Making the Connections*. The four key principles are: partnership working, workforce development, efficiency gains ('better value for the Welsh pound'), and 'putting citizens first'. All have implications for Careers Wales. In relation to the last of these – putting the citizen centre-stage – Careers Wales is cited in the report as an example of front-line access and support<sup>15</sup>.

1.13 The other is the Assembly policy relating to the **Welsh language and bilingualism**. One of the recommendations of the Webb Review was to 'ensure that Careers Wales informs young people of the range of opportunities available which require the Welsh language'<sup>16</sup>. All the Careers Wales companies employ Welsh-speaking staff to deliver advice and guidance to young people in Welsh-medium schools and for all clients on demand. In addition, a range of bilingual careers and LMI materials is provided in hard copy and through Careers Wales Online<sup>17</sup>.

1.14 The work of Careers Wales thus impacts upon a wide range of the work of the Welsh Assembly Government in general, and of the Department for Education, Children, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) in particular. The main relationship with the Careers Wales companies is the responsibility of a **Careers Policy Branch**, which currently comprises seven full-time staff. This was formerly based in a division concerned mainly with youth, but has recently been moved to a division focused on lifelong learning post-16: this despite the fact that around four-fifths of Careers Wales' work is pre-16.

1.15 One of the challenges to an all-age careers service is how to achieve an effective **policy interface**: how to relate effectively to separate branches of policy-making, many of which are age- and sector-specific. There is a risk that it will be subject to competing expectations, which will not be adequately reconciled (some branches of the Assembly seem at times to perceive Careers Wales as sitting on a resource, and to expect it to meet their demands within the existing core contract). There is also a risk that it will not have strong enough direct links with some branches to which its work could be relevant.

1.16 Both of these risks are evident in the current arrangements. Certainly the Careers Wales companies have a wide variety of contacts with Ministers, with Assembly members and with civil servants, and are represented on various committees and working groups. There have also been occasional secondments into DCELLS of Careers Wales staff to work on particular policy areas. But although the Careers Policy Branch has clearly played a role in developing Careers Wales services, and has done its best to manage the demands from other policy areas, it is perceived by the

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<sup>15</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2004). *Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales*, p.13. Cardiff: WAG.

<sup>16</sup> Webb, A., Drury, S. & Griffiths, G. (2007). *Promise and Performance: the Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the Context of the Learning Country: Vision into Action*, p.25. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>17</sup> A review of these and other practices related to the use of the Welsh language was carried out by Mabis on behalf of the Welsh Language Board in 2007 in all Careers Wales companies. An interim report was issued, but received a trenchant detailed refutation from one of the Careers Wales companies, and no final report has been published.

companies as being concerned mainly with contract management. It is accordingly seen as lacking sufficient influence and leverage to mediate the plethora of competing policy priorities to which they are expected to respond, or to ensure that the Careers Wales voice is heard in all the policy areas to which its work is pertinent. The Careers Wales Association response in 2008 to the consultation on *Skills that Work for Wales* noted that ‘Careers Wales delivers a wide range of services that support many of the Assembly Government’s policy areas’, and that ‘independently gathered performance indicators show that the quality of our services is high across Wales and is valued by our clients’; in the light of this, ‘it is disappointing that our work and services are neither understood nor recognised across the Assembly Government’<sup>18</sup>.

1.17 Conversely, however, it seems clear that the current structure of Careers Wales does not help in this respect. The issue of ‘who speaks for Careers Wales?’ is not an easy question to answer. Different chief executives act as ‘champions’ in particular policy areas, but these roles are not always visible externally: contacts often have to go to the Careers Wales Association or to the chair of the chief executives group to be signposted to the relevant ‘champion’. Moreover, decision-making has to be based on consensus-building across the companies, which is a time-consuming process.

1.18 These issues are particularly important in the light of the inclusion as one of the ‘key actions’ in the recent Careers Wales strategy statement that of enhancing ‘our strategic influence through increased research and policy development activities’. The rationale for a wider **policy-influencing role** was set out in a report in 2007 by York Consulting. This noted that, because of the breadth of its work, Careers Wales is ‘in a unique position to inform policy makers of the ongoing impact and outcomes of specific policies’. In particular, ‘it is in an excellent position to understand the way in which policy, and its resulting activities, can impact upon individuals over the long-term and can provide concrete examples of why change is necessary, how policy is being interpreted on the ground and the impacts that can result from this work’. The report accordingly recommended that ‘Careers Wales’ position as a key interface between employers, learners and institutions should be built upon over the coming years and its expertise fully utilised at a strategic as well as operational level’<sup>19</sup>. Much the same point was made in the earlier report by Moulson & Prail<sup>20</sup>. Certainly there is evidence of the Careers Wales companies performing such feedback and advocacy roles in policy circles, but much less systematically and less influentially than they could. If the opportunity for a stronger policy-informing role is to be grasped, this has significant implications not only for the research capacity within the structure of Careers Wales (see paras.3.24-3.26), but also for the structure itself.

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<sup>18</sup> Careers Wales Association (2008). Response to *Skills that Work for Wales: a Skills and Employment Strategy*, p.10. Caerphilly: CWA.

<sup>19</sup> York Consulting (2007). *An Initial Study to Redefine the Careers Wales Contribution to ‘Learning Pathways 14-19’ and ‘Extending Entitlement’*, pp.36, 42. Leeds: York Consulting.

<sup>20</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, p.59. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.



## Structure

1.19 As noted in para.1.1, Careers Wales is a brand covering a number of separate companies. Their prime accountability is to their Boards, which tend largely to represent regional rather than national interests. Each of the Careers Wales companies contracts with the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver the range of services specified in annual Planning Guidance, which provides a common template for the contracts (this template now tends to be negotiated collectively by the companies with the Assembly). The contracts are based on separate company business plans. Reporting is required on a number of outputs (numbers of interviews, transition reviews, etc.) plus a variety of performance indicators. The contracts include a penalty clause permitting up to 10% of monthly payments to be withheld if there is a shortfall of at least 10% on any target; this has never been invoked. In addition, the companies may contract with other bodies in both the public and private sectors, and may bid for challenge-type funds, including the European Social Fund.

1.20 The benefits and potential benefits of the **existing model** were summarised by Moulson & Prail as being:

- That it moves risk (e.g. of funding fluctuations) outside the public sector.
- That it provides access to additional funding (company borrowing) without affecting the Public Spending Borrowing Requirement.
- That it spreads overheads across non-Assembly business.
- That there is potential enhancement of existing service delivery through non-core contracts.
- That it leads to greater innovation.
- That it encourages speed of action.

Moulson & Prail suggested that there was evidence for some of these benefits, but less so for others. On the final two, they suggested that these were largely governed by the quality of management<sup>21</sup>.

1.21 Although the current model is based on a company structure, this is not seriously subject to **competition**. The general case against competition in public services within the Welsh context was made by the Welsh Assembly Government in *Making the Connections*. It argued that models based on competition 'exclude the empowerment of the public service user in the design of the delivery system'. It stated that 'there is a perfectly respectable case to be argued for this model, but not for Wales'. Instead, it preferred a model which 'seeks to maximise efficiency gains through the scale economies of more effective co-operation and co-ordination between agencies across the whole of the public sector, not excluding the independent, voluntary and private

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp.45-46.

sectors<sup>22</sup>. This contrasts markedly with the approach adopted in England, where a substantial quasi-market in career information, advice and guidance has developed<sup>23</sup>.

1.22 The main arguments for **retaining the current multi-company model** are two-fold. The first is that it provides a regional structure which enhances regional and local partnership working and accountability, and ensures that service delivery is grounded in the distinctive needs of different parts of the country. There is clearly a strong case for this model in a country like Wales, with significant differences not only between urban and rural areas, but also between predominantly bilingual and predominantly English-speaking areas. In addition, there are distinctive issues in relation to North Wales, where the Careers Wales companies' work tends to include stronger community-development elements. These three distinctions overlap, but are not coterminous.

1.23 The second argument is that diversity both supports innovation and enables cross-company benchmarking as a contract management tool. There is clearly some tension between these two claims: innovation benefits from diversity; benchmarking tends to encourage conformity. In practice, Careers Wales has been repeatedly criticised for lack of consistency, not least by the independent inspectorate Estyn<sup>24</sup>. There is concern in the Careers Wales companies that the pressure on this issue stifles innovation. They also feel that they receive mixed messages from the Assembly. On 14-19 matters, for example, the Assembly indicates that there is a national policy, locally delivered. Careers Wales is asked to work closely with local partnerships in securing this local delivery. It is then criticised for doing things differently in different areas.

1.24 In practice, there seems to be considerable **cross-company consistency** on most issues, because the work is based on the same contract and on common standards. Such consistency is significantly supported by a wide variety of cross-company working groups<sup>25</sup> – the emphasis of which tends to be more on consistency and quality than on innovation and change – and also by national Careers Wales standards which have been developed on a variety of professional and administrative issues (see paras.2.4-2.6). The main cross-company differences relate to the 5-10% of work which is targeted to the NEET group of young people, where European Social Fund support has been confined to certain geographical areas, and where the work is significantly managed by local partnerships. There are also differences relating to education-business links (para.4.9), to higher education careers

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<sup>22</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2004). *Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales*, preface. Cardiff: WAG. David Reynolds has described this position as representing a 'new producerism'. Reynolds, D. (in press). New Labour, education and Wales: the devolution decade. *Oxford Review of Education*.

<sup>23</sup> Watts, A.G., Hughes, D. & Wood, M. (2005). *A Market in Career? Evidence and Issues*. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Also Watts, A.G. & McGowan, A. (2007). *New Arrangements for Connexions/Careers Services for Young People in England*, appendix 3. Reading: CfBT Education Trust.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Estyn (2004). *Measuring Progress in Careers Wales Companies*, p.5. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>25</sup> New guidelines for all-Wales working groups produced in 2007 distinguished between 17 standing groups and four 'task and finish' groups. Some are 'corporate' (e.g. finance; HR); some are concerned with 'delivery' (e.g. curriculum; adult services); and some are 'cross-cutting' (e.g. quality; equality and diversity).

services (para.4.30) and to adult guidance networks (para.4.42). Most of these, it should be noted, derive from the remnants of previous TEC structures (see para.1.5) rather than from diverse innovative practice.

1.25 The **geographical boundaries** represented by the current careers companies are somewhat anomalous. The two mergers that have taken place have resulted in two companies (West; Mid-Glamorgan & Powys) which are much larger than the others, in both budgetary and geographical terms. Moulson & Prail recommended that the number of companies should be reduced to three or four,<sup>26</sup> and this could have been achieved by bringing together the North East and North West into one company, and Gwent and Cardiff & Vale into another. Even then, however, they would not be totally aligned with the regional boundaries now adopted in relation to education, training and employment policies; the issue is complicated further by the fact that the structures adopted by national bodies to segment the map of Wales are themselves are not always consistent. In two cases, moreover, Careers Wales company boundaries cross-cut Local Authority boundaries. Several changes would be likely to be required to achieve an optimal alignment.

1.26 Alongside their merger recommendations, Moulson & Prail indicated that enhanced powers for the **Careers Wales Association**, enabling it to 'act as an effective central co-ordinator', were essential if the current multi-company structure was to be retained<sup>27</sup>. Little action has been taken on this. The CWA continues to be conceived as a common resource, rather than a planning organisation; as a servant of the companies, rather than their co-ordinator. There is no direct contract between the CWA and the Assembly: instead, the companies effectively sub-contract to CWA some specified functions from their own contracts. In the case of Careers Wales On-Line, this was for a while ring-fenced within the contracts; but it was still sub-contracted. Somewhat ironically, CWA does provide central contract co-ordination in relation to substantial contracts with third parties, notably those with the European Social Fund, largely because of the complex technicalities of such contracts. It also does some co-ordination of marketing and promotion activities, and co-ordinates consultation responses. But in all these respects it remains clearly subordinate to the careers companies, whose Board Chairs and Chief Executives comprise its Board. It is evident that the careers companies have been willing to provide some resources for CWA, but have not wanted to cede too much power to it.

1.27 This structure has a number of **negative effects**. One is a lack of clear leadership. As already noted (para.1.17), decisions have to be based on cross-company consensus-building, which takes time and inhibits radical change. There is no consistent focal point with which outsiders can negotiate, with powers to act. When particular chief executives take part in public meetings, it is not always clear when they are speaking on behalf of Careers Wales as a whole or only on behalf of their own company. This

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<sup>26</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, pp.50-52. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. The case for this is supported by the 'value for money' cross-company benchmarking data cited later in the present report (para.3.23).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

leadership vacuum is linked to what Estyn referred to as 'a culture of contract compliance in many aspects of the work'<sup>28</sup>. Arguably, too, there is excessive duplication of resources for activities like marketing/promotion, information-technology support and human resource development, and inadequate attention to activities like research which would benefit from a strong critical mass.

1.28 A minor but telling illustration of the weaknesses of the current arrangements is that there is no regular reporting in the public domain of what Careers Wales does as a whole. Prior to its creation, the Assembly published detailed annual reports on the Careers Service in Wales<sup>29</sup>. The Careers Wales companies took these over from 2002/03. Their recent annual reviews demonstrate a move from a company-by-company structure to a thematic structure, but seem to be increasingly viewed as a public relations product, with illustrative case-studies but little systematic data. As a result, it is now difficult for an interested outsider to gain a documented overview of the range and extent of the Careers Wales companies' work.

1.29 It could be contended that the fact that the Careers Wales companies have not responded in any fundamental way to the clear message from the Moulson & Prail report about the need to strengthen the role of CWA is itself a clear example of the difficulties presented by the current structure in achieving change. The failure to implement the prescription reinforces the validity of the diagnosis. It seems clear, therefore, that if structural change is to be achieved, the initiative needs to be taken by the Assembly.

1.30 One possibility would be for the Assembly to **contract directly with the Careers Wales Association** to carry out a range of specified functions, alongside the existing contracts with the careers companies. These might include some of the functions noted in para.1.27 above.

1.31 A stronger option would be for **CWA to be the prime contractor** with the Assembly, and then to sub-contract to the careers companies. This could enable it to focus more strongly on planning and quality-setting, with a research capacity to underpin extended representation in all-Wales fora. It would place CWA in a clearer leadership role.

1.32 The recent Webb Report went further still, recommending that Careers Wales should be restructured to create a **unitary organisation**. It argued that this would achieve 'some additional efficiency gains – and greater standardisation'<sup>30</sup>. Similarly, the Assembly report *Skills that Work for Wales* posed the question of 'whether new delivery models, such as a single national careers company or a merger between

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<sup>28</sup> Estyn (2004). *Measuring Progress in Careers Wales Companies*, p.17. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>29</sup> The final one was: National Assembly for Wales (2002). *Annual Report on the Careers Service in Wales, 2001-2002*. Cardiff: NAW.

<sup>30</sup> Webb, A., Drury, S. & Griffiths, G. (2007). *Promise and Performance: the Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the Context of the Learning Country: Vision into Action*, p.90. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

Careers Wales and the Assembly Government, could deliver a better customer experience<sup>31</sup>.

1.33 The proposed unitary organisation could take one of three main forms:

- A single company.
- An Assembly-Sponsored Public Body (ASPB).
- Merger into the Assembly Government.

None is problem-free. On the first, Moulson & Prail questioned whether it would be politically acceptable to have such a large non-competitive contract with a single provider. On the second, they noted that the ASPB option would mean that risk currently outside the public sector would be brought within it; that access to additional funding outside the PSBR would be lost; that non-core contractors (notably European sources) might take a less favourable view of contracting with a public body; and that there might be some loss in terms of innovation and flexibility (e.g. ability to apply company reserves to development projects)<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, linked to the *Making the Connections* policy, a number of agencies, including the Welsh Development Agency, the Wales Tourist Board, and Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) (previously the largest ASPB), have in recent years been brought into the Assembly Government. In view of this 'bonfire of the quangos', creating a new ASPB would seem unlikely. But the merger of these organisations into the Assembly has not been widely viewed as successful, and doing the same in the case of Careers Wales – the third option – could involve considerable complexities and costs in harmonising the grading and terms of conditions of the staff of the respective companies with those of the Assembly Government. All three options would involve costs in terms of Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).

1.34 The Careers Wales Association in its consultation response to *Skills that Work for Wales* stated that there were advantages and disadvantages to each of these options, and that 'each could be made to work with the right factors in place, including clear expectations, agreed priorities, strategic planning, agreed measures of success, appropriate resourcing and the right leadership'. It indicated that it was 'keen to engage in dialogue with the Assembly Government to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each option and the human, financial and physical change processes that would need to be undertaken to unpack the current arrangements'<sup>33</sup>.

1.35 The case for moving towards one of the options outlined in paras.1.30-1.33 would seem very strong: the status quo is not viable if Careers Wales is to confront the challenges which now face it. But the choice between these options is not easy. All

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<sup>31</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Skills that Work for Wales: a Skills and Employment Strategy*, p.27. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>32</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, pp.49-50. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>33</sup> Careers Wales Association (2008). Response to *Skills that Work for Wales: a Skills and Employment Strategy*, p.10. Caerphilly: CWA.

involve costs, and the projected benefits need to outweigh these costs. Some further comments on the options will be offered in paras.1.46-1.48, drawing from exemplars elsewhere, and in para.5.20. Whichever of the structures is adopted, it will be important to retain the strong regional and local links that the Careers Wales companies have developed.

### **Level of resourcing**

1.36 Following a period of significant increases in funding (from £28.9m in 2001/02 to £37.4m in 2004/05), the Assembly funding for Careers Wales has been constrained, in line with the general tightening of other public-sector expenditure. It increased from £37.4m in 2004/05 to £39.9 in 2007/08, an increase of 6.5% over the four-year period – substantially less than inflation. The indicative budget line for the next two years shows no increase. The result has been an effective cut in budget, estimated by the companies as amounting to 12% over the past three years. This despite the increasing demands for their services from various parts of the Assembly. The Webb Report suggested that new funds or savings elsewhere were needed to expand Careers Wales provision for adults<sup>34</sup>. It is worth noting in this connection that the UK Government is planning to invest an additional £50m per year from 2010/11 in the new adult advancement and careers service in England<sup>35</sup>.

1.37 The criticisms of Assembly under-funding are not confined to Careers Wales. It has for example recently been argued, somewhat controversially, that since 2002/03 6.4% less has been spent on education in Wales compared to the rest of the UK, and that this contrasts with relative increases in funding for ‘nation-building’ (culture, media and sports)<sup>36</sup>. The current funding for Careers Wales represents 2.6% of the Assembly’s education and training budget.

1.38 The present funding formula for Careers Wales companies is based largely on a capitation formula that reflects the three statutory client groups: secondary school pupils aged 11-15; 16/17-year-olds in education and training; and an estimate of NEETs. Each is given a weighting to reflect the relative costs of service provision. In addition, an allowance is made to recognise the additional costs of delivering the service in rural areas. The adult service is not an explicit part of this formula: work with companies and the Assembly Statistical Directorate showed that inclusion of working-age population statistics did not materially alter the funding-formula shares<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Webb, A., Drury, S. & Griffiths, G. (2007). *Promise and Performance: the Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the Context of the Learning Country: Vision into Action*, p.89. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>35</sup> Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2008). *Shaping the Future – a New Adult Advancement and Careers Service for England*, p.12. London: DIUS.

<sup>36</sup> Reynolds, D. (2008). Funded to fail: how the Welsh Assembly Government cheats our children. See: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6005200>

<sup>37</sup> Though in the context of the current economic climate, the issue has been raised of whether the inclusion of numbers of welfare claimants would affect these shares, and whether this should accordingly be incorporated into the funding formula.

1.39 The current contracting arrangements are very prescriptive and detailed, and tie the Careers Wales companies into a heavy emphasis on service delivery. They do not encourage flexibility: any movement of resources has to be justified to the Assembly.

1.40 The Assembly contract currently comprises around 90% of the total income of the careers companies. The single largest source of additional funding has been the European Social Fund (mainly to support Youth Gateway), which in 2007/08 provided £1.3m, comprising around one-third of the remaining 10%. The next-largest category was Local Authority funding for tracking NEET young people (Keeping in Touch) (£0.3m). Another sizeable contract is with the Assembly's Department for the Economy and Transport to manage Project Dynamo, designed to introduce enterprise activities into the school curriculum. Almost all of the income, apart from deposit interest, is from public-sector bodies.

1.41 The Careers Wales Association has currently prepared a number of substantial bids for further ESF funding under its new 2007-15 programmes: these cover a broader range of work, including the 11-13 age-group and adults as well as Youth Gateway. If all were successful, they could add significantly to the core Assembly budget (the original bids would have added 40%, but they have since been reduced in size). The bidding process at the Welsh European Funding Office has however been protracted. One of the difficulties posed by such programmes is that they are liable to be terminated when the funding ends or in intervals between programmes, involving losses in capacity and in service delivery. They also, as noted earlier (para.1.24), tend to be targeted at specific geographical areas, leading to unevenness in service delivery across Wales.

### **International context**

1.42 The ensuing sections of this report will examine the work of Careers Wales in more detail in relation to the benchmarks provided by the OECD Career Guidance Policy Review carried out in 2001/02. This included Wales as part of the UK review. The OECD synthesis report did not attempt to reach any definitive conclusions on the relative merits of age-specific and all-age models. It did however point out that all-age services have a number of organisational and resource-use advantages. In particular, they allow a diverse range of services to be provided throughout the lifespan within the one organisational framework. Potentially this allows them to be more cost-effective, avoiding unnecessary duplication of resources. The report cited Careers Wales as illustrating many of these advantages<sup>38</sup>.

1.43 Subsequent reviews have been undertaken – also using the OECD benchmarks – of the two other leading global exemplars of all-age services: in New Zealand<sup>39</sup> and Scotland<sup>40</sup>. Another more recently established example of an all-age service is the Careers Service in Northern Ireland. Some comparative features of the four services are summarised in Table 1.

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<sup>38</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, p.144. Paris: OECD.

<sup>39</sup> Watts, A.G. (2007). *Careers Services: a Review in an International Perspective*. Wellington, New Zealand: Career Services.

<sup>40</sup> Watts, A.G. (2005). *Progress and Potential*. Glasgow: Careers Scotland.

**Table 1: All-age career guidance services: some comparative features**

	<b>Careers Wales</b>	<b>Careers Scotland</b>	<b>Careers Service in Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Career Services, New Zealand</b>
<b>Population</b>	3.0m	5.1m	1.8m	4.1m
<b>Origins</b>	Established 2001 as common brand for eight previously separate non-profit careers companies	Established 2002 by integrating over 80 previously separate organisations	Previously part of Employment Service; established as separate service in 2004	Established 1990
<b>Structure</b>	Six non-profit careers companies, with separate but co-ordinated contracts with Welsh Assembly Government; sub-contracting some central functions to Careers Wales Association (a separate jointly-owned company)	Until 2008, part of two Enterprise Networks (Scottish Enterprise; Highlands and Islands Enterprise), under a common brand; now, part of Skills Development Scotland	Part of Department for Employment and Learning (staff are civil servants)	Crown entity (one of six government education agencies)
<b>Annual income from Government</b>	£40.2m	£50.2m	£5.4m , of which £1.3 is sub-contracted to Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) for aspects of adult guidance	£6.5m (NZ\$18.2m)
<b>Annual income from other sources</b>	£4.7m	Nil	Nil	£0.5m (NZ\$1.4m)



<b>No. of staff (FTEs)</b>	1,004	1,065	153	168
<b>No. of professional career guidance staff (FTEs)</b>	444	455	96 (target: 112)	84
<b>Percentage of school-leavers interviewed</b>	Goal: 90%	Goal: all (though under review)	74%	Low (interviews largely provided by school-employed careers advisers)
<b>No. of young people interviewed</b>	227,787 <sup>41</sup>	154,000	32,127	1,750
<b>No. of adults interviewed</b>	44,905	26,500	2,571 (plus 3,006 EGSA – see above)	5,250
<b>No. of careers centres</b>	48 <sup>42</sup>	92	27 (four stand-alone; rest co-located with Jobcentres/ Jobs and Benefits Offices)	17
<b>Distance guidance services</b>	Previously, four callcentres; now one, managed by one of the six careers companies on behalf of the rest; web-based services seen as major part of service	Previously, website only, with separate Learndirect Scotland helpline; now likely to be integrated	Website only (helpline service offered through England)	Integrated web-based, telephone and face-to-face services

1.44 Caution needs to be exercised in interpreting some of the figures in this table. The range of activities covered by the different services varies. Again, the figures for the number of young people interviewed are not fully comparable, and are useful mainly to give a broad indication of scale, and also of balance between interviews offered to

<sup>41</sup> This figure refers to number of interviews, not of clients.

<sup>42</sup> Includes Careers Wales centres open full-time (40) and part-time (8), but excludes services on other organisations' premises.

young people and to adults. It is noteworthy that the numbers of adults interviewed is substantially higher in the case of Careers Wales than elsewhere, particularly when compared with size of population; but that the proportion of total interviewees who are adults is much higher in the case of New Zealand (where service volumes in general are significantly lower).

1.45 A number of the features outlined in the table relate to some of the issues discussed earlier in this section. In terms of structure, for example, Careers Scotland has been the closest to Careers Wales, in the sense that it too is a brand rather than an organisation. In the case of **Scotland**, however, the brand has been applied to only two organisational entities, both of which have been part of another organisation: the Enterprise Networks. Under this arrangement, Careers Scotland agreed with each of the Networks a set of performance targets for its own work. The rationale for the split between the two Networks has some resonances with the regional differences within Wales: in the Highlands & Islands, as in North Wales (see para.1.22 above), Careers Scotland's work has stronger community-development elements. Its two parts are now being merged, with other organisations, into a new organisational structure – Skills Development Scotland – and it is not yet clear whether the Careers Scotland brand will be retained within this new structure and what form the service-delivery structure will take.

1.46 In relation to the reorganisation options discussed in paras.1.30-1.33 above, the Careers Service in **Northern Ireland** shows the possibility of running such a service within the government structure: its staff are civil servants. Since however no formal OECD-style review has yet been conducted there, it is difficult to form an informed view of the pros and cons of such a structure. Certainly the service is less well-resourced on a per capita basis than Scotland and Wales, is less fully integrated (a significant amount of the work with adults is contracted out), and the pace of development since it was established as an all-age service has been slow. The latter may however be due largely to the political and constitutional difficulties that have been experienced in Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

1.47 More pertinent in relation to the options under consideration in Wales is the example of Career Services in **New Zealand**. This is effectively a quango: it is one of six government education agencies, which sit outside government but assist in the achievement of government goals. Its main funding is in the form of an 'annual purchase agreement' with the Minister of Education<sup>43</sup>. It is a single organisation, which in recent years has benefited from strong leadership. It is widely regarded as being agile, competent, well-managed, collaborative, pragmatic and responsive, and its voice is widely respected in government circles<sup>44</sup>. Its model of working is very different

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<sup>43</sup> The policy context is set out in a Letter of Expectations from the Minister of Education, which sets out the policy themes to which the organisation is expected to attend in its planning. This is then reflected in a Statement of Intent, and in an annual Output Agreement, the latter specifying the outputs that the Minister is purchasing from Career Services, plus the purchase conditions and the amounts to be paid. Watts, A.G. (2007). *Careers Services: a Review in an International Perspective*, p.11. Wellington, New Zealand: Career Services.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

to that in Wales: it is much less involved in service delivery in schools, where it plays a much more limited support role. It is accordingly a much smaller organisation, with a much smaller budget. Moreover, regional differences are perhaps less strong in New Zealand than they are in Wales. But the New Zealand example does indicate the benefits of strong leadership and a single interface with government.

1.48 Some of the other differences outlined in Table 1 will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of this report. These include the pros and cons of seeking to see all or the majority of school-leavers (paras.2.30-2.35), the relationship between different channels of service delivery (paras.2.7-2.29) and the balance between service delivery and capacity building (Section 4).

1.49 Some comparisons will also be drawn with **England**, which has adopted the rather different approach of having separate policies and separate service structures relating to career information, advice and guidance for young people and for adults respectively. Instead of seeking 'vertical' integration, as in the rest of the UK, it has sought to achieve 'horizontal' integration with a wider range of other services, linked to a generic concept of 'information, advice and guidance' (IAG) (with no qualifying adjective). In the case of services for young people, this is widely perceived to have weakened the extent and quality of careers services<sup>45</sup>. In particular, the proportion of school-leavers in England who have been interviewed by a careers adviser is much lower than elsewhere in the UK: only 40% of young people in England have now received an individual (i.e. one-to-one) interview with a Connexions personal adviser (who might or might not be a professional careers adviser)<sup>46</sup>. The recent devolution of responsibility for IAG services for young people, with no ring-fenced funding, is at risk of leading to further erosion<sup>47</sup>. While the government in England has now declared that it is interested in developing an all-age strategy, it has reconfirmed its commitment to separate service structures for young people and adults<sup>48</sup>. The Conservative Party, however, has indicated its intention to set up an all-age service in England if it comes to power<sup>49</sup>.

1.50 In addition to such comparisons, later parts of the report will also address some UK-wide issues raised by the analyses in the forthcoming sections: these are summarised in para.4.55.

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<sup>45</sup> Watts, A.G. (2001). Career guidance and social exclusion: a cautionary tale. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 29(2), 157-176.

<sup>46</sup> Watts, A.G. (2008). The partnership model for careers education and guidance: rise, decline – and fall? *Career Research and Development*, 20, 4-8.

<sup>47</sup> Watts, A.G. & McGowan, A. (2007). *New Arrangements for Connexions/Careers Services for Young People in England*. Reading: CfBT Education Trust. Also McGowan, A., Andrews, D. & Watts, A.G. (in press). *Local Variations: a Follow-Up Study of New Arrangements for Connexions/Careers/IAG Services for Young People in England*. Reading: CfBT Education Trust.

<sup>48</sup> Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2008). *Shaping the Future – a New Adult Advancement and Careers Service for England*, p.14. London: DIUS.

<sup>49</sup> Conservative Party (2008). *Building Skills, Transforming Lives: a Training and Apprenticeships Revolution*. Opportunity Agenda Policy Green Paper No.7. London: Conservative Party.

1.51 In relation to the use of the OECD benchmarks, it should be noted that these were developed to apply to lifelong career guidance systems, not to particular services. In the case of the reviews in New Zealand and Scotland, they were adapted to be applied to all-age services, but to include attention to the interface between such services and other career guidance providers. The same approach will be adopted here (see Section 4).

## **Conclusion**

1.52 Despite being a brand rather than an organisation, Careers Wales plays a key role in relation to a number of important Assembly policies. As an all-age service, however, there is a need for a stronger interface from the Assembly Government than the current Careers Policy Branch is able to provide. Conversely, the diffuse structure of seven independent companies inhibits both the influence of Careers Wales within the Assembly, and its capacity to achieve effective change in response to the challenges it faces. A number of alternative structures can be conceived, some of which can be illuminated by exemplars from other countries. In particular, the example of New Zealand demonstrates the benefits of strong leadership and a single interface with government.

## 2. Shaping the Service

### Access

2.1 Several of the features of 'lifelong guidance systems' identified in the OECD review<sup>50</sup> are concerned with access to services:

- Transparency and ease of access over the lifespan, including a capacity to meet the needs of a diverse range of clients.
- Particular attention to key transition points over the lifespan.
- Flexibility and innovation in service delivery to reflect the differing needs and circumstances of diverse client groups.
- Processes to stimulate regular review and planning.
- Access to individual guidance by appropriately qualified practitioners for those who need such help, at times when they need it.
- Assured access to service delivery that is independent of the interests of particular institutions or enterprises.
- Access to comprehensive and integrated educational, occupational and labour market information.

Access issues are also addressed by two of the challenges to policy-makers identified in the OECD review<sup>51</sup>:

- Ensuring that resource allocation decisions give the first priority to systems that develop career self-management skills and career information, and that delivery systems match levels of personal help, from brief to extensive, to personal needs and circumstances, rather than assuming that everybody needs intensive personal career guidance.
- Ensuring greater diversity in the types of services that are available and in the ways that they are delivered, including wider use of self-help techniques, and a more integrated approach to the use of ICT.

2.2 Regarding the sixth of the features listed in para.2.1 – 'assured access to service delivery that is independent of the interests of particular institutions or enterprises' – the all-age stand-alone structure of Careers Wales assures that all inhabitants of Wales in principle have access to independent and impartial career guidance services. This is one of the distinctive strengths of such a structure, in contrast to many other countries where most career guidance provision is embedded within educational and other organisations, and subject to pressures from the institutional interests of those organisations.

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<sup>50</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, p.138. Paris: OECD.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148.

2.3 On some of the other criteria, the models of service delivery being developed by Careers Wales are comparable to good practice identified in the OECD review, and in New Zealand and the rest of the UK. There are however issues relating to others. Six features of access will be discussed in this section: coherence; channelling; differentiation; penetration; targeting; and marketing.

## Coherence

2.4 Over the past few years, steps have been taken by the Careers Wales companies to improve the level of coherence and consistency in their service design and delivery. As noted in para.1.24, national Careers Wales standards have been developed on a variety of professional and administrative issues. These include: the Welsh language, Youth Gateway, post-education group endorsement procedures, the Careers Wales Quality Award, staff training, health and safety, work-experience diaries, Learndirect and special needs.

2.5 In particular, a set of Guidance Standards has recently been developed, designed to provide ‘a recognised Careers Wales model of “careers guidance”, as opposed to generic advice and guidance’<sup>52</sup>. The current Guidance Standards mainly relate to individual one-to-one work, and have been rolled out through a series of two-day workshops covering all Careers Advisers and all Youth Gateway Advisers across Careers Wales.

2.6 Responses from practitioners to the Guidance Standards have been very positive, as reaffirming and strengthening what the Careers Advisers perceive as being the core of their professional role. There has however been some tension between the standards and the Estyn inspection framework (see para.3.13). This tends to give significant attention to ‘realism’, leading to some pressure on advisers to use labour market information even where the adviser does not consider it appropriate for the client at that stage in the process. Estyn feels committed to adhere to this framework until the current round of inspections has been completed in 2009. There could then be an opportunity to review them and to explore whether they and the Guidance Standards might be aligned more closely. The more general issue of quality assurance will be discussed in more detail in Section 3 (paras.3.12-3.29).

## Channelling

2.7 Careers Wales career guidance services are offered face-to-face, on the telephone, and in web-based form. Each will be discussed in turn.

2.8 Much emphasis is placed on **face-to-face** provision. Many Careers Wales Careers Advisers have bases in schools or colleges; in the case of smaller institutions, they may service more than one institution. Others are based in careers centres, of

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<sup>52</sup> The generic ‘information, advice and guidance’ model adopted in relation to young people in England would seem to be the main point of (negative) reference here. See e.g. Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007). *The Children’s Plan: Building Brighter Futures*. Cm 7280. London: Stationery Office.

which there are 48 across the country: Forty of these are open full-time, and eight part-time. In addition, many guidance sessions take place in a variety of other locations: an analysis prepared by one company, Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale, showed over 50 venues being used for such purposes, including employers, training providers, enterprise centres, jobcentres, a careers bus/stand, mental health centres, and other community centres.

2.9 The case for the network of walk-in careers centres is based in part on the need to provide an accessible location for 'NEET' young people, including those who are claiming hardship allowances. But they also provide an accessible resource for others, including adults. Care is taken where possible to segregate group youth activities, so that adult clients do not feel uncomfortable in what they might otherwise see as a youth-dominated environment. Estimates suggest that between a third and a half of visitors to the centres are adults.

2.10 The **telephone** service has hitherto been separately branded as Learndirect, linked to the UK-wide service co-ordinated until recently by Ufl. This has been based on a four-countries agreement, with a common brand, a single telephone number, and minimum common standards of service. The services for Scotland and Wales have however been managed separately<sup>53</sup>.

2.11 In Wales, the helpline has been managed by Careers Wales since 2001, when it was transferred from the TECs (where it had been managed since its inception in 1998). For a while the service was operated separately by four of the companies. Moulson & Prail noted that the vast majority of the calls were taken in two of the centres, in Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale and Careers Wales West. They also pointed out that England was covered by two callcentres and that 'there appear to be no good arguments as to why Wales needs four'. They contended that 'the arguments in favour of local knowledge appear to be insufficiently powerful to overcome the arguments for greater efficiency and flexibility of operations that a single centre would carry'. They accordingly recommended that the number of callcentres should be reduced from four to one, arguing that this would lead to cost reductions, greater flexibility in terms of use of trained casual staff, and stronger bilingual capacity<sup>54</sup>.

2.12 Thus in 2006 the service changed to one centre based at the Cardiff office of Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale. The service is available from Monday to Friday from 9am to 9pm, and on Saturdays from 9am to 12 noon; calls outside these hours are passed to a voice-mail facility. Callers who leave messages are called back up to a maximum of three times (this service is not offered in England, where callers are asked to ring back themselves)<sup>55</sup>. A performance report by Cardiff & Vale in 2007/08 reported

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<sup>53</sup> Watts, A.G. & Dent, G. (2008). The evolution of a national distance guidance service: trends and challenges. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 36(4), 455-465. In Scotland, a separate telephone number has been adopted, but calls are still also routed from the standard UK number.

<sup>54</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, p.48. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>55</sup> Gilson, P. (2008). *Learndirect (Learning Advice Line) Helpline Report 2007-2008*. Cardiff: Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale.

that the service was operating more cost-effectively than the previous four-centre model<sup>56</sup>. Independent evaluations indicate that callers from Wales are consistently more likely than those from England to agree that the overall quality of the service has been good<sup>57</sup>.

2.13 Calls are taken by information staff qualified at NVQ Level 3. Those requiring guidance are then transferred to an adviser qualified at NVQ Level 4. A rota system had been in place for several years between Cardiff & Vale and two of the other companies, under which an adult guidance adviser was present at the Cardiff base and delivered guidance over the phone (for one day a week, on a rota basis). Since early 2007, this system has been modified: instead of the adviser coming into the callcentre, calls are transferred to a suitable venue within the 'duty' careers company. This procedure has now been extended to include the other Careers Wales companies, leaving only one not covered. The helpline performance report for 2007/08 indicated that during the year 2,020 such referrals had been made (6% of total calls), and that 'the rota is seen as a demonstrable means for the other companies to have involvement with the centre'<sup>58</sup>.

2.14 Prior to 2001/02 the helpline service was available exclusively to adults, but it has since been extended to become in principle an all-age service. This is not the case in England, where young people are encouraged to use a separate Connexions Direct service. In general, however, the helpline service is not widely marketed to young people in Wales. Only 2% of its users are aged 17 or under, while a further 11% are aged 18-24<sup>59</sup>.

2.15 The call volumes of the helpline have been enhanced by its use as part of the application procedure for opening Individual Learning Accounts: an example of the way in which it can be used to support other Assembly policies and programmes. In view of this, and the all-age nature of the service, it is somewhat surprising that the call volumes seem to be somewhat lower on a per capita basis than in England and Northern Ireland. The total number of contacts in 2007/08 was 33,827, which was a 7.3% increase on the previous year. This figure included 1,365 e-mails<sup>60</sup>. One possible explanation is that calls by mobile phone are not automatically transferred to the Welsh callcentre. Another is that the greater availability of face-to-face careers services in Wales may mean that there is less recourse to the telephone for such purposes.

2.16 Linked to its work on the telephone advice service, Careers Wales is also responsible for delivering the Welsh part of the UK-wide National Learning Directory.

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<sup>56</sup> Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale (2008). *3<sup>rd</sup> Performance Report: 1<sup>st</sup> December 2007 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008*, p.6. Cardiff: CWC&V.

<sup>57</sup> BMG Research (2008). *Learndirect Helpline Evaluation Survey Debrief (Qtr 1, 2008) – Key Scores for Wales*. Birmingham: BMG Research.

<sup>58</sup> Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale (2008). *3<sup>rd</sup> Performance Report: 1<sup>st</sup> December 2007 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008*, p.6. Cardiff: CWC&V.

<sup>59</sup> Data from Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale.

<sup>60</sup> Data from Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale. If the e-mails are excluded, the remaining figure of 32,462 represents a proportion of 1.1% in relation to a total population of 3.0m. The comparable proportion for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2006 was 1.6%.



This work is carried out by Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale and Careers Wales West. An independent evaluation reported very good levels of accuracy<sup>61</sup>.

2.17 The Learndirect service has now been rebranded as the Careers Advice Service, in line with developments in England where responsibility for it has been transferred from Ufl to the Learning and Skills Council in preparation for its integration into England's new adult advancement and careers service from 2010. This may result in a further rebranding, which raises some important marketing issues from a Welsh perspective (see paras.2.62-2.63).

2.18 The fact that the telephone service is subject to a UK-wide agreement, and ring-fenced within the Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale contract with the Assembly, has restricted the extent to which it has been fully integrated into the Careers Wales service structures. Some Careers Wales companies still market their own freephone service. Of course, Careers Advisers have long used the telephone to maintain contacts with some clients, particularly in rural areas. Such practice is not necessarily incompatible with having a national callcentre. And the referral system for guidance calls (para.2.13) has helped to achieve more integration than previously. But there is still room for substantial further progress in this respect – an issue to which we shall return shortly (para.2.29).

2.19 The Careers Wales **web-based** service, Careers Wales On-Line (CWOL), is clearly regarded as one of its most successful achievements. Assembly interest in it is linked to its wider policies on ICT and e-Government in Wales, stemming from its *Making the Connections* report.<sup>62</sup> CWOL is described in the *Planning Guidance 2008-2009* as 'the most significant additional Careers Wales service enhancement since 2004-05'<sup>63</sup>. It has won a number of awards, including a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) award in 2005 for technical and social innovation, and was the only Welsh finalist to make the shortlist in 2007/08 for the e-Government Awards.

2.20 Much of the development of CWOL has been managed by a Project Management Board, which has comprised Careers Wales Association board members and a representative from the Assembly. Most of the funding has come from the careers companies; some has been ring-fenced within their contracts with the Assembly (though this is no longer the case). Recently, it has been agreed that the Chief Executives Group should replace the Project Management Board, in the light of the impact of CWOL on the core business activities of each of the companies.

2.21 In planning and developing the site, there has been extensive consultation with client groups and with partners. This has included focus groups, user testing, and questionnaires to different client groups. Users are routinely invited to feed back their

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<sup>61</sup> Globe Economic Development Consultants (2008). *Testing the Accuracy of Data in the National Learning Directory*. Lincoln: Globe Regeneration Limited.

<sup>62</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2004). *Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales*. Cardiff: WAG.

<sup>63</sup> Careers Wales & Welsh Assembly Government (2008). *Careers Wales: Planning Guidance 2008-2009*, p.4. Cardiff: WAG.

views through a SurveyMonkey feedback mechanism. There is also a CWOL Advisory Group containing representatives of significant reference groups.

2.22 The site includes a variety of databases and career planning tools. The databases cover educational, occupational and labour market information. At the heart of the site is an e-portfolio, designed to enable users to record, review and reflect on their career and learning journey. The vision is ‘to enable everyone in Wales to develop their career and learning skills through their own e-portfolio and supporting site content’<sup>64</sup>. The hope was expressed at an early stage that ‘the ground-breaking new “e-portfolio” will become a lifelong tool, helping people to develop the skills to manage their own career development and learning by recording their achievements over the years and charting their progress against set targets’<sup>65</sup>.

2.23 The number of CWOL site registrations increased from 29,537 in 2004/05 to 96,826 in 2005/06, 213,349 in 2006/07 and 243,990 in 2007/08<sup>66</sup>. There is particularly extensive usage of the site by young people (though extent and speed of access to ICT is still an issue in some schools). A survey in 2008 of young people who had had a guidance interview (as almost all young people have) found that just under two-thirds (62%) of the young people interviewed said they had used it<sup>67</sup>. The comparable figure in the case of adults who had had a guidance interview (a much smaller number) was just over two-fifths (43%)<sup>68</sup>. In general, it seems that the CWOL is less used by, and seen as somewhat less useful to, adults. A survey of an adult population sample in 2006 found that 24% had heard of the Careers Wales website; of these, just over a third had visited it<sup>69</sup>. While the responses to CWOL from all age-groups have been very positive, they have been a little less so from employed adults, some of whom have felt that the site content was aimed at younger people<sup>70</sup>.

2.24 The CWOL website has recently been significantly enhanced. There are now dedicated sections for different target-groups: those up to age 16 (split for years 9-11), those aged 16-19 (split into sixth form or college, in employment, in training, and unemployed), adults, employers, parents, and careers professionals. It is hoped that this will prevent any of these groups feeling it is not for them. A database of work-experience opportunities is to be piloted shortly, which will record places offered by employers and enable young people to book their placement. Enhancements have also been provided for users with learning difficulties.

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<sup>64</sup> Careers Wales On-Line brochure.

<sup>65</sup> Careers Wales (2004). *Annual Review 2003/4*, p.8. Caerphilly: Careers Wales Association.

<sup>66</sup> Data from Careers Wales Association.

<sup>67</sup> Beaufort Research (2008). *Careers Wales: Performance Indicator Survey: Young People Report March 2008*, p.3. Cardiff: Beaufort Research.

<sup>68</sup> Beaufort Research (2008). *Careers Wales: Performance Indicator Survey: Adult Clients Report March 2008*, p.18. Cardiff: Beaufort Research.

<sup>69</sup> Beaufort Research (2006). *Careers Wales: Brand Awareness and Impact Research: an Overview of Key Findings*. Cardiff: Beaufort Research.

<sup>70</sup> Data from Careers Wales On-Line performance indicators.

2.25 Of particular significance is the fact that the new version offers enhanced support for Learning Pathways 14-19. This includes: a pan-Wales prospectus of Learning Pathways opportunities for each of the twenty-two 14-19 Networks (one in each Local Authority), containing details of Key Stage 4 and post-16 courses; messaging facilities that allow learners to submit their plans and option choices to tutors, Careers Advisers, Learning Coaches and curriculum co-ordinators; and administrative facilities for schools and networks which support the production of management information reports on the Learning Pathways choices made by learners. Schools are able to download pupil choice data into their school management information system, where they can then use the data to support their timetabling. The Assembly is effectively adopting CWOL not only as the key guidance tool in relation to the pathways, but also as the key administrative tool. Schools, colleges and other learning providers will not be obliged to use it, but training in its use (including how to customise the content to incorporate their own provision<sup>71</sup>) is to be offered to all of them by September 2010, and it seems likely that most if not all will do so.

2.26 This potentially places CWOL in particular and Careers Wales in general in a pivotal position. The vast majority of young people are likely in future to be using CWOL continuously between the ages of 14 and 19. Because it has been designed initially as a guidance tool rather than an administrative tool, it is learner-centred and user-friendly. Since their e-portfolio is housed there, potentially as the basis for sustaining their curriculum vitae, and including the individual's personal bank of relevant information resources, there is a chance that they will continue to use it. In which case, it could genuinely become the basis for their lifelong career development, with their e-portfolio surrounded by other resources – including signposts to other Careers Wales services – that they can access for support. The key will be whether they regard their e-portfolio as something they own, and therefore want to maintain; or as something they associate with school and with obligation, and accordingly want to leave behind. In principle, however, it provides a strong base on which to build, especially if further 'hooks' can be developed to encourage them to use it post-19. The interoperability with e-portfolios in higher education, currently being explored by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)<sup>72</sup>, is an issue of some importance in this respect, as is the wider interface between Careers Wales and Welsh higher education careers services (see paras.4.23-4.33).

2.27 The level of interactivity with advisers provided within CWOL is currently limited. Users are able to email their queries via the CWOL 'Contact Us' messaging facility, which directs their request to the Cardiff & Vale callcentre in the case of learning-related enquiries and to their local careers company in the case of other enquiries. No use is yet made of on-line chat facilities. If CWOL is to continue to play a major strategic role in the development of Careers Wales, such possibilities need to be explored further, along with the social-networking opportunities offered by Web 2.0 technologies.

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<sup>71</sup> Such customisation can take place at institution, consortium or partnership level: decisions on this are to be taken locally.

<sup>72</sup> See [http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/pub\\_eportfolio\\_overview/pub\\_eportfolio\\_overview\\_full.aspx](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/pub_eportfolio_overview/pub_eportfolio_overview_full.aspx)

2.28 In addition to CWOL, Careers Wales has since 2004 managed CLIC, the National Information and Advice Service for young people aged 11-25. The information is classified into ten topics, and includes health, law, rights and citizenship, and family and relationships. It was agreed at an early stage that this should have a management structure, and a brand identity and image, which would be distinct from CWOL. This represents a further example of the refusal in Wales to go down the route adopted in England of subsuming careers services within a generic concept of 'information, advice and guidance' (cf. para.1.49). The contract has now been retendered, and awarded to another provider.

2.29 The extent of **integration** of the various channels within Careers Wales is still somewhat restricted. No work has yet been done to develop an integrated customer management system, as it has in New Zealand, recording all interactions with the same client regardless of which channel is being used<sup>73</sup>. The basic models of guidance used by Careers Wales have not been significantly re-engineered to take account of these different channels. The resources are now however in place for significant advances to be made in these respects, moving towards a structure in which the channels are viewed not as alternatives but as alternate portals into an integrated range of services<sup>74</sup>.

## Differentiation

2.30 In contrast to New Zealand and Scotland, relatively limited work seems also to have been done in Careers Wales on differentiated service delivery.

2.31 As noted in para.2.13 above, a triage system is operated within the telephone helpline, under which calls are received by information staff, and those requiring guidance (6%) are then transferred to a Careers Adviser. Similarly, in the walk-in careers centres, visitors are initially seen by a receptionist and/or by information staff, and those requiring guidance are then referred to a Careers Adviser.

2.32 Within schools, the policy has been to seek to interview at least 90% of pupils in Key Stage 4, and to see them at other times where feasible. In the Planning Guidance for 2008/09 this 'aspirational target' has been removed, though the plans 'should set out how a consistent, readily accessible and comprehensive support service for KS4 students requiring IAG support for their transition planning will be maintained'<sup>75</sup>. The usual model is an interview of 50 minutes or so, leading to a careers action plan. The Careers Wales contract for 2007/08 specified that pupils should be helped to reach an informed decision at each of the Key Decision Points (Years 7, 9, 11, 13), and that 'decisions at the second, third and fourth Key Decision Points which are reached with the significant individual assistance of a Guidance Practitioner [qualified at

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<sup>73</sup> Watts, A.G. (2007). *Careers Services: a Review in an International Perspective*, p.21. Wellington, New Zealand: Career Services.

<sup>74</sup> As recommended in a paper prepared for the OECD review. Watts, A.G. (2002). The role of information and communication technologies in integrated career information and guidance systems: a policy perspective. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 2(3), 139-155.

<sup>75</sup> Careers Wales & Welsh Assembly Government (2008). *Careers Wales: Planning Guidance 2008-2009*, p.4. Cardiff: WAG.

NVQ Level 4] must be recorded in a Written Outcome and a copy retained by the Provider'. Even though many pupils receive more than one interview (see para.3.37), it is clear that the Careers Wales companies do not have the resources to provide careers interviews to all students at each of these decision points.

2.33 It seems evident, therefore, that the Careers Wales companies will need to move towards a differentiated service delivery model in schools and colleges as well as elsewhere. This is recognised in a paper prepared by the companies for the current review. It states that 'it is now time to provide a more differentiated service to its clients, responding to their demands and needs as and when they arise'. It notes that 'this will involve a shift in resources away from a blanket approach (whereby everyone in a year group meets their Careers Adviser) to one which targets support on those who need it when they need it'. It comments that 'this is not being met with enthusiasm from schools who want Careers Wales to continue providing its current level of service to Key Stage 4 students whilst also increasing its work in Key Stage 3', but indicates that 'this is not possible from within current resources'. In particular, it proposes that 'to enable additional time to be allocated to those in Year 9, Careers Wales will need to take a more demand-led and needs-led approach to its support for young people at Key Stage 4, and those in post-16 provision'. It adds that 'this targeted support will be informed by diagnostic assessment tools and referrals, both from young people and from staff working with them'<sup>76</sup>.

2.34 In addressing these issues, the Careers Wales companies may find it fruitful to examine the structure adopted in Scotland<sup>77</sup>, where services were substantially remodelled on the basis of a model of differentiated service delivery developed at Florida State University in the USA<sup>78</sup>. This distinguished between those able to operate largely on a 'self-help' basis, those requiring brief 'assisted' services, and those requiring 'in-depth' support. A version of this model is also currently being implemented in Northern Ireland. It provides a systematic approach to service redesign<sup>79</sup>.

2.35 In implementing this model, careful consideration is needed to its application within schools. Scotland, for example, has for a while reverted to seeking to interview all pupils, though this is currently again under review. There is a strong argument for all young people to be seen at least once by a professional Careers Adviser, not least as a career-decision-making quality-control measure. Young people can find it convenient to claim a career direction, which may be very weakly grounded. Moreover, if access to an independent adviser is one of the assurances of impartiality, as enshrined in the Education Act 1997, then such access would seem a minimum entitlement. On the other hand, blanket interviewing can become routinised, and viewed by pupils as a bureaucratic process. There is a strong case for diversifying its timing, and embedding it

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<sup>76</sup> Careers Wales (2008). *Careers Wales Paper 2: a Summary of Services Provided by Careers Wales*, p.7. Paper prepared for the Review of Careers Services in Wales.

<sup>77</sup> Watts, A.G. (2005). *Progress and Potential*, pp.11-12. Glasgow: Careers Scotland.

<sup>78</sup> For a recent handbook presenting the FSU model in detail, see Sampson, J.P. (2008). *Designing and Implementing Career Programs: a Handbook for Effective Practice*. Broken Arrow, OK: National Career Development Association.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. the penultimate bullet-point in para.2.1.

within a developmental approach which incorporates the principles of differentiated service delivery.

## Penetration

2.36 In principle, in addition to their statutory responsibilities for young people<sup>80</sup>, Careers Wales is expected to provide career services to all adults. The nature of the entitlement involved here is somewhat ambiguous. At a formal level, the possibility of access to Careers Wales On-Line provides a convenient escape clause. Efforts are clearly made to provide more than this for those who seek it. But the Careers Wales Association response to the *Skills that Work for Wales* consultation stated that 'there should be an entitlement to careers guidance for all – adults as well as young people'<sup>81</sup> – implying that this was not currently the case. There would seem, for example, to be a strong case for access to career guidance to be provided to all adults engaged in formal publicly-funded learning, to help them to make optimal use of the learning in relation to their career progression. But while the recent Assembly consultation document on adult community learning discusses the importance of progression, it makes no reference to guidance to support such progression<sup>82</sup>.

2.37 In relation to young people, the penetration rates are clearly very substantial. During 2007/08, Careers Wales companies conducted 137,000 interviews with young people in schools and colleges. With an average age-cohort of around 40,000, this works out at nearly 3.5 interviews per student between the ages of 14 and 19. In practice, most receive between one and three interviews, with a small number – those with additional learning needs and those at risk of becoming NEET – receiving more intensive help. If to this are added group sessions and access to CWOL, it amounts to a substantial continuum of support. It is noteworthy, however, that whereas the proportion of the Year 11 cohort that were interviewed in 2006/07 was 91%, the proportion of school and tertiary college sixth-formers was only 45%<sup>83</sup>. This could be due to the practice adopted in some schools of restricting access of Careers Advisers to sixth-formers intending to enter higher education, with guidance for such students being provided by tutors and sixth-form heads.

2.38 On adults, the activity levels are very much lower than for young people. During 2007/08, 44,905 adults received individual interviews with Careers Wales staff; of these,

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<sup>80</sup> These are enshrined in the Employment and Training Act 1973, as amended by the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993. In addition, the Direction and Guidance on Youth Support Services (Wales) 2002, made under section 123 of the Learning & Skills Act 2000, sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's expectation that every young person in Wales should have access to independent, specialist careers advice and guidance, as one of ten entitlements, in order to enable them to participate in education, training and employment and in the lives of their communities.

<sup>81</sup> Careers Wales Association (2008). Response to *Skills that Work for Wales: a Skills and Employment Strategy*, p.2. Caerphilly: CWA.

<sup>82</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Delivering Skills that Work for Wales: a New Approach to Adult Community Learning*, p.24. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>83</sup> Data provided by DCELLS Careers Policy Branch.

a minority received more than one<sup>84</sup>. Of the interviewees, 43% had qualifications at Level 3 or above<sup>85</sup>. In terms of the level of intervention, over two-thirds of the interviews were guidance interviews provided by staff qualified at NVQ Level 4; the remainder were information and advice sessions provided by staff qualified at NVQ Level 3<sup>86</sup>. These numbers are in addition to those using the telephone service (see para.2.15) and those accessing Careers Wales On-Line (see para.2.23). It is clear that only a small minority of adults in Wales currently uses Careers Wales services at any point in their adult lives.

2.39 The tension between universal access and targeting services to those in most need is cleverly reconciled through a policy formula under which the Careers Wales companies are required to state their commitment to ensure that at least 75% of guidance interviews with adults will be with members of specified priority groups. This means that proactive steps have to be taken to promote services to the targeted groups, while enabling the services not to turn away those outside these groups who request help.

2.40 In practice, the formula is maintained partly by restricted marketing (see paras. 2.56-2.65 below) and partly through waiting lists. Such waiting lists are of course common in public-sector services, though strong efforts have recently been made in some sectors, notably health, to reduce them. The length of time adults have to wait for career guidance interviews varies with the economic climate, but at the time of writing is estimated by careers companies as ranging from under a week to as long as four weeks, depending on the geographical area; between five and 15 days is the most common. Some priority-group clients – notably those recently made redundant – may be fast-tracked (cf. paras.2.51-2.53 below): with the current massive growth in redundancies, this could add significantly to waiting times for other clients. The longer the waiting list, the more likely people are to withdraw, or not to show up.

2.41 To date, no substantial work seems to have been done in Wales comparable to the customer segmentation model developed by Careers Scotland. This defined the number of potential customers in each of a number of categories. The first level had three categories: future workforce; in work; and out of work. Each of these was then sub-divided further: 'future workforce' into school, FE and HE; 'in work' into categories by size of employer and whether they were receiving training or not; and 'out of work' into 'want a job' and 'don't want a job'. In some cases, a further level of analysis was added: for example, school-leavers were broken down by destination; and those who 'don't want a job' into 'long-term sick', 'caring', and 'retired/other'. Each of these categories was examined in terms of their priority level, and allocated to high-, medium-and low-priority groups. This prioritisation was used to determine appropriate sought penetration rates for each of the categories<sup>87</sup>. A similar approach, extended to

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<sup>84</sup> Data provided by DCELLS Careers Policy Branch.

<sup>85</sup> Information provided by Careers Wales companies.

<sup>86</sup> Data provided by DCELLS Careers Policy Branch.

<sup>87</sup> Watts, A.G. (2005). *Progress and Potential*, pp.13-14. Glasgow: Careers Scotland.

cover the concept of 'key transition points over the lifespan'<sup>88</sup>, might fruitfully be adopted by Careers Wales as a strategic planning tool.

## Targeting

2.42 The use of such a tool might be particularly helpful to Careers Wales in the light of the fact that, alongside its universal services, it is required to pay particular attention to the needs of a number of specific target-groups. This applies both to young people and to adults.

2.43 So far as young people are concerned, particular attention is paid to the needs of young people who are not in education, employment or training (**NEET**) or who are at risk of falling into this group. Reducing the size of the NEET group is a key policy goal (see para.1.10). The main programme addressed to such young people is Youth Gateway. Originally designed to facilitate the transfer of students from age 16 into work or further education and training opportunities, it has developed to address the wider problems resulting from disengagement from formal education<sup>89</sup>. It now comprises two programmes: Youth Gateway, designed for the post-16 age-group; and Education Gateway, targeted at those in Key Stage 4 who have dropped out or been excluded from school, or are in danger of doing so. Both programmes consist of a mix of intensive one-to-one mentoring, small-group work, and group activities (e.g. outdoor activities). These include group work designed to improve self-esteem, motivation and self-confidence, plus help with seeking jobs, with completing application forms and with compiling a CV. Most of the work is undertaken by specialist Youth Gateway Advisers. In some areas, the programmes have been supported by ESF funding (see paras.1.40-1.41). Of young people who entered the post-16 Youth Gateway between 1 July and 31 October 2007, 83% progressed into a positive outcome within four months of starting the programme<sup>90</sup>.

2.44 Of those achieving such a positive outcome, a substantial number enter Skillbuild work-based learning provision. Young people entering Skillbuild have to be endorsed by Careers Wales staff before entering this provision. Careers Wales staff also hold review meetings with the young person and their training provider to ensure that the terms of their endorsement, and therefore the needs of the young person, are being met.

2.45 In addition to Youth Gateway, Careers Wales also plays an important role in many local Young People's Partnerships (YPPs) in contributing to and in some cases leading co-ordination of tracking arrangements (Keeping in Touch) to identify and offer support to young people aged 11-25 who are NEET. The Assembly in its report on *Delivering Skills that Work for Wales* acknowledged that Careers Wales had worked hard to improve the quantity and quality of tracking data, but indicated that 'there is still

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. second bullet-point in para.2.1.

<sup>89</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, p.10. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>90</sup> Information provided by Careers Wales companies.



work to do<sup>91</sup>. In its response, Careers Wales stated that 'it makes sense for destination tracking to fall within our remit', but added that 'if this is to be significantly enhanced, there will be resourcing implications'<sup>92</sup>.

2.46 As noted earlier (para.1.10), the Assembly consultation document also recommended that there was a need for one organisation to take responsibility for co-ordinating and leading the work with NEET young people, and that the Careers Wales companies – within the context of Young People's Partnerships – should take on this role. In its response, Careers Wales indicated that it was willing to do so, but added: 'It is crucial that our partners are clear that they share responsibility for identifying and supporting these young people and do not assume that Careers Wales has sole responsibility for reducing NEETs'<sup>93</sup>. This extended role, too, has implications for resourcing.

2.47 The services offered by Careers Wales to 16/17-year-olds also include referral and placement services. In Scotland, the issue of whether such vacancy handling should be retained within Careers Scotland's remit, confined as the service was to this particular age-group, was an issue of some contention at the time of the 2005 review<sup>94</sup>, and it has subsequently been removed from the remit. In Wales, there does not seem to have been any serious questioning of the rationale for Careers Wales offering these services, even though they were criticised by Estyn in 2004 as being 'the weakest strand of the services that careers companies provide'<sup>95</sup>. It is accepted that because at this age young people are not entitled to unemployment benefits, they do not get picked up by Jobcentre Plus, and that it accordingly makes sense for Careers Wales to offer placement services to them as part of their broader support for the NEET group. In 2007/08, the Careers Wales companies placed more than 10,000 young people into employment and/or training<sup>96</sup>. If there is a significant number of applicants, and if the employer requests it, they will compile a shortlist for the company to interview.

2.48 Linked to the concern to reduce the size of the NEET group, priority is also given within schools to young people who are leaving full-time education at the end of Year 11. The Planning Guidance states that 'a key expectation is that any young person identified as likely to leave their educational institution at the end of Year 11 has the support and advice needed to make a successful transition at 16 to further/continuing education, training or employment'<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Delivering Skills that Work for Wales: Reducing the Proportion of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training*, p.16. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>92</sup> Careers Wales Association (2008). *Consultation Response Form: Delivering Skills that Work for Wales*, p.9. Caerphilly: CWA.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.2, 7.

<sup>94</sup> Watts, A.G. (2005). *Progress and Potential*, p.26. Glasgow: Careers Scotland.

<sup>95</sup> Estyn (2004). *Measuring Progress in Careers Wales Companies*, p.8. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>96</sup> Careers Wales (2008). *Careers Wales Paper 2: a Summary of Services Provided by Careers Wales*, p.11.

Paper prepared for the Review of Careers Services in Wales.

<sup>97</sup> Careers Wales & Welsh Assembly Government (2008). *Careers Wales: Planning Guidance 2008-2009*, p.8. Cardiff: WAG.

2.49 Distinctive attention is further paid to the needs of **young people with special educational needs** (SEN) relating to learning difficulties or disability. Careers Wales companies have significant involvement in the SEN transition process from the age of 14. This includes a lead role in the preparation of applications for funding specialist residential FE placements, and in the preparation of Learning and Skills Plans during such pupils' last year at school with a view to gaining further learning support. As part of this process, Careers Wales advisers are required to attend all transition planning reviews that take place in Years 9 and 11. They also perform important tracking, advocacy and brokerage roles. Such work requires a substantial range of distinctive skills and knowledge, and is usually best carried out by special-needs specialists, of whom there are currently 35 across Wales: there is some concern about whether this is sufficient. Of Years 11-14 leavers in 2007/08 with SEN statements who had taken part in the programmes in which Careers Wales is involved, 97% achieved a positive destination<sup>98</sup>.

2.50 The work which Careers Wales currently undertakes in this area is likely to be significantly extended by current policy developments within the Assembly. These enlarge the concept of special educational needs to embrace the much broader concept of additional learning needs, which overlaps significantly with the NEET agenda. They include a Supported Employment Strategy for 16-18-year-olds with such needs, to extend the level of support available to those who have left school: Careers Wales is likely to play a lead role in the implementation of this strategy.

2.51 On **adults**, the priority groups<sup>99</sup> outlined in the Planning Guidance<sup>99</sup> are:

- The unemployed outside New Deal.
- Those looking to return to work.
- Those under notice of redundancy.
- Employed people with low levels of accredited academic qualifications.
- Part-time vocational students and those in community education.
- Those in prison or on probation or returning from prison to their home area.

Companies may also add their own priority groups: for example, one company (Cardiff & Vale) includes ethnic-minority and asylum-seeker groups.

2.52 **Redundancy** is a major issue, and in the current economic climate is likely to become much more so. Careers Wales companies' strong community relationships have built an expectation that they will be able to respond in such situations: their capacity to do so could become a major issue now. When in 2001 two steelworks were closed, the Assembly provided extra resource, and permitted the plan for the year to be interpreted flexibly. The proportion of Careers Wales adult guidance interviews that

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<sup>98</sup> Information provided by Careers Wales companies.

<sup>99</sup> Careers Wales & Welsh Assembly Government (2008). *Careers Wales: Planning Guidance 2008-2009*, p.16. Cardiff: WAG.

were with adults who were under threat of redundancy fluctuated between 14% and 23% between 2003/04 and 2007/08<sup>100</sup>: it seems likely to be much higher in the next year or two.

2.53 The Assembly's main programme instrument for responding to redundancies is the ReACT programme, which includes an Employer Recruitment Subsidy, an Employer Training Subsidy, and Discretionary Training Awards. The programme is supported by ESF funding. All applicants need to have been seen by, and their application form signed by, a Careers Wales adviser. Careers Wales staff often work on-site within the company concerned, offering group sessions as well as one-to-one sessions. The work usually includes career planning, skills profiling, training needs analysis, and support in writing CVs. An evaluation of the ReACT programme in 2005 concluded that it helped over 80% of beneficiaries to gain new employment fairly soon after being made redundant, with most of them showing good job sustainability<sup>101</sup>. Such success is likely however to be influenced by the general state of the economy.

2.54 Another important priority group is **offenders**. The issue of career guidance support for them in terms both of skill development while they are in prison and of rehabilitation on release has recently been highlighted by a NOMS paper on 'developing skills to reduce re-offending'<sup>102</sup>. Careers Wales is particularly significant in relation to young offenders, because of its capacity to provide continuity of support: Estyn has recently reported a good and productive relationship between Careers Wales and youth offender teams<sup>103</sup>. Two significant issues in relation to offenders in general are the restrictions on internet access in prisons (which, for instance, is a barrier in terms of setting up Careers Wales On-Line e-portfolios), and the fact that many Welsh prisoners are incarcerated in England (there is, for example, no prison provision in Wales for women). On the former, disc/paper alternatives to the internet are being sought; on the latter, steps have been taken to create links with, and on-line records for, offenders serving sentences in England. Careers Wales Mid-Glamorgan & Powys has two full-time-equivalent staff working with adults in Parc prison and another one doing pilot work with juveniles (15-18-year-olds).

2.55 It is worth noting that a number of other target-groups are conspicuous by their absence in current priority lists: for example, students who have dropped out of higher education; career changers; and older workers. On the latter, the link between career guidance and active ageing is an issue meriting much stronger policy attention. Not the least of the merits of the customer segmentation model outlined in para.2.41 above is that it can identify such additional target-groups, and focus attention on developing ways of attending to their needs.

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<sup>100</sup> Information provided by DCELLS Careers Policy Branch.

<sup>101</sup> CRG Research (2005). *Evaluation of the ReACT Programme – Phase II*. Caerphilly: National Council for Education and Training (ELKa).

<sup>102</sup> National Offender Management Service (2007). *Learning to Change: Developing Skills to Reduce Re-offending in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>103</sup> Estyn (2008). *Meeting the Learning Needs of Children and Young People Who Offend*. Cardiff: Estyn.

## Marketing

2.56 The level of public recognition of the Careers Wales brand is moderately high. A telephone survey in 2006 found that 63% had heard of Careers Wales, as opposed to 93% for Job Centre and 81% for Learndirect. When asked where they would go to first for 'help or advice on careers, gaining qualifications, training opportunities or funding', 27% said Job Centre, 17% 'school or college or university', 12% Internet and 7% Careers Wales (the figure for Learndirect was 2%). 24% had heard of the Careers Wales website, and of these, just over a third had visited it. 39% said that they had seen advertising/marketing for Careers Wales in the last year or so: the top mentions were TV (34%) and adverts in local newspapers (25%)<sup>104</sup>.

2.57 A parallel piece of work by Effective Communication in 2006 on perceptions held by various people in the media, business, education, the Assembly, local government, unions and other partners found that perception/knowledge/opinion of Careers Wales was high among those who dealt with it directly, and low among those who did not. Careers Wales communication was not well regarded, and some frustration was expressed on its fragmented structure<sup>105</sup>. A later report by York Consulting recommended that 'a clear set of messages needs to be developed to summarise and articulate the USP (unique selling point) of Careers Wales to a range of audiences including clients, employers and partner organisations'<sup>106</sup>.

2.58 The figure of 63% in the Beaufort Research survey compares favourably with New Zealand, where the comparable figure was 31%<sup>107</sup>. But it is lower than for Careers Scotland (72%)<sup>108</sup> and for Learndirect in England (82%)<sup>109</sup>.

2.59 The level of expenditure on marketing is much lower than in the cases of New Zealand and of Learndirect. In Careers Wales, the total spend in 2007/08 was around £400,000, which represented under 1% of the total turnover of £44.9m. By contrast, the figure for New Zealand was 7%, and for Learndirect Advice 33%<sup>110</sup>.

2.60 Of the total marketing budget of around £400,000, only £50,000 was handled centrally by the Careers Wales Association. The rest was managed at regional level by the different careers companies.

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<sup>104</sup> Beaufort Research (2006). *Careers Wales Brand Awareness and Impact Research: an Overview of Key Findings*. Cardiff: Beaufort Research.

<sup>105</sup> Effective Communication (2006). *Careers Wales: External Perceptions Survey*. Cardiff: Effective Communication.

<sup>106</sup> York Consulting (2007). *An Initial Study to Redefine the Careers Wales Contribution to 'Learning Pathways 14-19' and 'Extending Entitlement'*, p.42. Leeds: York Consulting.

<sup>107</sup> Watts, A.G. (2007). *Careers Services: a Review in an International Perspective*, p.30. Wellington, New Zealand: Career Services.

<sup>108</sup> Segal Quince Wicksteed (2003). *Evaluation of the All Age Guidance Pilots*, p.50. Edinburgh: SSQW.

<sup>109</sup> Leitch Review of Skills (2006). *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy – World Class Skills*, p.107. London: Stationery Office.

<sup>110</sup> Watts, A.G. (2007). *Careers Services: a Review in an International Perspective*, pp.30-31. Wellington, New Zealand: Career Services.

2.61 These various figures suggest that Careers Wales gets good value from its limited investment in marketing. Regional and local marketing seems to be very effective, contrasting favourably with Careers Scotland in this respect<sup>111</sup>. There is some reluctance to market too heavily for fear of stimulating demand (especially outside the priority groups) which Careers Wales will not be able to meet.

2.62 It is also recognised within Careers Wales that its helpline has benefited considerably from the multi-million-pound Learndirect advertising campaigns and promotion activities funded by Ufl in England<sup>112</sup>. Since a lot of the most influential media are UK-wide, and since a common telephone number has been used across the UK, the national promotion of the helpline has in effect been provided to Wales free of charge. But now the helpline service in England has been transferred from Learndirect to the Learning and Skills Council, where it is being rebranded, along with the linked web-based services, as the Careers Advice Service; and from 2010 it will be transferred again to the new Skills Funding Agency, where it will become part of the new adult advancement and careers service under an as-yet-undetermined brand (brand research to determine the new identity for the service is to be commissioned in December 2008, with the new identity being phased in during 2009/10)<sup>113</sup>.

2.63 So far, the devolved administrations have been informed about these decisions rather than being actively consulted in their making. The move from Learndirect to Careers Advice Service has brought the helpline brand closer to that of Careers Wales, but the two remain distinct. The two logos are used alongside one another in relevant promotion materials, and telephone enquiries are answered 'Learning and Careers Advice' rather than 'Careers Wales'.

2.64 There would seem to be a strong case for discussions to take place between the UK government and the devolved administrations about the feasibility of sustained collaboration on a joint UK-wide marketing strategy, linked to co-ordinated branding. If, for example, the new Adult Careers and Advancement Service in England were to be branded as Careers England (effectively 'buying' the title from the current organisation with that name), and if the Careers Service in Northern Ireland were to be branded as Careers Northern Ireland, this would enable the UK-wide services to be branded collectively as Careers UK, with consistent and clearly associated brands for each of the home countries. We will return to these issues in paras.4.57ff.

2.65 For the present, it is worth noting that while the current marketing strategy works adequately within the present structure of Careers Wales, a more ambitious and more strongly co-ordinated approach is arguably needed if Wales is to respond to the challenge expressed in the 2004 Resolution of the European Union's Council of

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<sup>111</sup> The review of Careers Scotland noted that local offices sometimes felt discouraged from undertaking their own marketing activities at local level, despite the considerable potential of such marketing. Watts, A.G. (2005). *Progress and Potential*, p.15. Glasgow: Careers Scotland.

<sup>112</sup> Gilson, P. (2008). *Learndirect (Learning Advice Line) Helpline Report 2007-2008*. Cardiff: Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale.

<sup>113</sup> Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2008). *Shaping the Future – a New Adult Advancement and Careers Service for England*, pp.9, 12, 17. London: DIUS.

Education Ministers on guidance. This stated that: 'Services need to be available at times and in forms which will encourage all citizens to continue to develop their skills and competences throughout their lives, linked to changing needs in the labour market.' It added: 'Such services need to be viewed as an active tool, and individuals should be positively encouraged to use them'<sup>114</sup>. This of course raises major issues about how such demand, once elicited, is to be met.

## **Conclusion**

2.66 Steps have been taken to develop more coherence and consistency in service design and delivery, and in making services available in multi-channel forms. Work still needs to be done, however, on the integration of these channels, so that each provides an alternative portal into an integrated range of services. Strategic attention also needs to be paid to enabling the careers e-portfolio within Careers Wales On-Line to be used by more adults as well as young people, as a tool for lifelong career development. Alongside this, more systematic work needs to be done on differentiated service delivery and on more systematic customer segmentation, as a basis for strategic planning and service redesign. This will then make it possible to develop strategies for more active marketing of services.

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<sup>114</sup> Council of the European Union (2004). *Resolution 9286/04 EDUC 109 SOC 234*. Brussels: European Commission.

## 3. Improving Performance

### Quality

3.1 The OECD review noted a number of challenges to policy-makers which, in most OECD countries, had received minimal attention<sup>115</sup>. Several of these were concerned with quality issues:

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

Careers Wales has taken substantial steps to address each of these challenges, though work remains to be done on some of them.

### Staffing

3.2 The total company staffing for those involved in the delivery of the Careers Service in Wales in March 2001 amounted to 400 full-time-equivalents (FTEs)<sup>116</sup>. With the establishment of Careers Wales, and the merging into the careers companies of various TEC activities, this increased to 1,102 FTEs in 2004/05. Since then, overall staff numbers have declined to 1,004 in 2007/08, due partly to the ending of ESF funding for Youth Gateway. But the number of Careers Advisers qualified to at least Level 4 increased from 352 to 366 FTE over the same period; savings have been achieved by reducing management and corporate staff by 30 FTEs, thereby increasing the proportion of delivery staff as a percentage of total staff from 68.7% to 69.3%<sup>117</sup>.

3.3 Staff working in careers centres and on the helpline are usually trained to handle initial contacts on an all-age basis. Careers Advisers tend to working predominantly

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<sup>115</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, p.148. Paris: OECD.

<sup>116</sup> National Assembly for Wales (2001). *Annual Report on the Careers Service in Wales, 2000-2001*, p.5. Cardiff: WAG.

<sup>117</sup> Data provided by DCELLS Careers Policy Branch.

either with young people or with adults, especially in the case of those based in schools. Those working with young people with special educational needs or in the Youth Gateway tend to specialise in this work, though they are all also trained in career guidance: in other words, their roles are viewed as specialisms within the field of career guidance. In the case of those working with the NEET group, this contrasts markedly with the policy adopted in England, where under Connexions all Careers Advisers working with young people were integrated into what was termed 'a new profession' of Personal Advisers, many of whom had no specific career guidance qualifications<sup>118</sup>.

3.4 Staff doing education-business link work, however, are not necessarily trained in career guidance. It is recognised that their work as Employer Liaison Officers requires a distinctive set of negotiation, consultancy and organisational skills. A report from York Consulting in 2007 noted that this was an area where further staff development provision was needed<sup>119</sup>.

3.5 There are some cross-overs between these various roles. Special-needs advisers, for example, may help adult guidance advisers who are working with adults with mental health problems. There are also opportunities for career progression which enable staff to move between different age-groups and different target-groups. The malleability of the workforce in these respects is important if changing service priorities are to be addressed.

3.6 The Assembly's contract stipulates that all career guidance services should be delivered by staff possessing, or working towards, NVQ Level 4 in guidance. Support staff, including telephone helpline advisers, are required to hold or be working towards NVQ Level 3 in guidance.

3.7 The main professional qualification in the career guidance field remains the Qualification in Career Guidance (QCG). This provides a stronger grounding in theory than the NVQ, but has left some deficits which the Careers Wales companies have had to fill with their own training provision. The integration of the Careers Service into Connexions in England, for example, resulted in a weakening of the attention to labour market issues within many such courses. The courses are also perceived as attending mainly to the needs of young people. Special-needs issues, too, have sometimes been inadequately addressed.

3.8 There is currently only one QCG course in Wales: at the University of Glamorgan. The links between those running the course and Careers Wales have however been somewhat weak. A paper by two of the course staff commented on the need for its trainers to 'be more familiar with the delivery of services, not only better to prepare new entrants, but to augment guidance knowledge for advisers trained in-house

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<sup>118</sup> Watts, A.G. (2001). Career guidance and social exclusion: a cautionary tale. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 29(2), 157-176 (see p.166).

<sup>119</sup> York Consulting (2007). *An Initial Study to Redefine the Careers Wales Contribution to 'Learning Pathways 14-19' and 'Extending Entitlement'*, p.41. Leeds: York Consulting.



and to support continuous professional development'<sup>120</sup>. There has been only belated interaction, for example, in relation to the Careers Wales Guidance Standards (see paras.2.5-2.6). It is also relevant that the course does not meet the needs of the North Wales careers companies, both because of geographical distance and because there is no teaching in the Welsh language. There have recently been some initial discussions within the Careers Wales companies about the need to explore with local higher education institutions the possibility of developing joint training programmes which better meets the companies' needs. Attention might fruitfully be paid in such discussions to the parallel developments which have taken place in Scotland, where new training programmes linked to master's-level qualifications have been developed by three universities in conjunction with Careers Scotland<sup>121</sup>.

3.9 More broadly, steps are under way to address the issue of professional standards on a UK-wide basis, to facilitate mobility of qualified staff within the UK Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the Sector Skills Council for the lifelong learning sector, has been considering the inclusion of career guidance specialist employers within its footprint. The chief difficulty has been that while the all-age careers services in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the adult services in England clearly fall within the Lifelong Learning UK footprint, the youth services in England (which comprise the largest part of the system) have been viewed as falling within the footprint of the Children's Workforce Development Council. It has now been agreed that work will be led by Lifelong Learning UK to review the qualifications framework and continuous professional development arrangements for careers advisers, to be completed by July 2009<sup>122</sup>.

3.10 Meanwhile, in Wales even those possessing the QCG are required by the Assembly Government to go through the NVQ Level 4 (a requirement which does not apply in other parts of the UK). The Careers Wales companies accordingly have to devote a significant level of resource to training provision. This includes not only reduced workloads for the trainees, but also the time that senior staff have to spend on assessment (equal to about a day per month per trainee)<sup>123</sup>. An Estyn report in 2004 made a number of critical comments on the extent and quality of such support, including not enough time being spent 'in developing trainee advisers' underpinning knowledge of key principles and important guidance concepts'<sup>124</sup>. The subsequent development of the Careers Wales Guidance Standards (see paras.2.5-2.6) has produced some improvements in this respect.

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<sup>120</sup> Clark, M. & Talbot, J. (2006). Career guidance in Wales: retrospect and prospect. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34(1), 55-71 (see p.69).

<sup>121</sup> The Careers Wales companies were, with Careers Scotland, part of the original project to develop these new programmes. The companies withdrew when the qualifications became awards by higher education providers with no direct employer engagement; also, the costs of the programmes were viewed as excessive.

<sup>122</sup> Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2008). *Shaping the Future – a New Adult Advancement and Careers Service for England*, p.12. London: DIUS. The report notes that the review 'will make recommendations which draw out the differences between the needs of the youth sector in England and the combined careers offer in other parts of the UK' (ibid., p.14).

<sup>123</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, p.41. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>124</sup> Estyn (2004). *Survey of Continuous Professional Development in Careers Wales*, p.2. Cardiff: Estyn.

3.11 The issue of management and leadership training is also important. Estyn in 2004 commented upon the inconsistent quality of leadership and management in the careers companies across Wales<sup>125</sup>, and also on some inadequacies in the staff development support in these areas<sup>126</sup>. This is an area that merits further attention, particularly in the light of some of the recommendations made elsewhere in this report. It is worth noting in this respect that the collective role of the senior management team of Career Services in New Zealand has been reoriented to focus more on organisational strategic leadership<sup>127</sup>, with considerable attention being given to enhancing their management and leadership competences.

### Quality assurance and performance management

3.12 The Planning Guidance for 2008/09 stipulates that Careers Wales must indicate its approach to ensuring that 'the services to be delivered to the client groups in the business plan meet agreed quality standards and are subject to continuous improvement processes'. This should include achieving Investors in People status (all companies have done this); CharterMark is optional but recommended. It should also include further developing, refining and ensuring consistency of services in line with recommendations made by Estyn through the Common Inspection Framework and through thematic surveys, and with the findings from the work on quality benchmarking, performance indicators and impact assessment<sup>128</sup>.

3.13 The quality of performance, and impact on learner achievement, are judged through an independent **inspectorate** (Estyn). Its guidance on the inspection of careers companies<sup>129</sup> is based on its Common Inspection Framework<sup>130</sup>. Its inspections are carried out by a team of inspectors, and each inspection includes observation of around a hundred one-to-one guidance interviews and of 20-25 group sessions.

3.14 Estyn reports on Careers Wales companies have been predominantly very positive. Some have been excellent; the rest have been satisfactory; none has been unsatisfactory. The reports include ratings of seven criteria on a 1-5 scale: 1 is 'good with outstanding features'; 2 is 'good features and no important shortcomings'; 3 is 'good features outweigh shortcomings'; 4 is 'some good features, but shortcomings in important areas'; 5 is 'many important shortcomings'. A 2007 report on Careers Wales North West awarded six grade 1s and one grade 2<sup>131</sup>. At the other end of the scale, a 2006 report on Careers Wales Gwent gave it one grade 2, five grade 3s, and one

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<sup>125</sup> Estyn (2004). *Measuring Progress in Careers Wales Companies*, p.3. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>126</sup> Estyn (2004). *Survey of Continuous Professional Development in Careers Wales*, pp.10-11. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>127</sup> Watts, A.G. (2007). *Careers Services: a Review in an International Perspective*, p.32. Wellington, New Zealand: Career Services.

<sup>128</sup> Careers Wales & Welsh Assembly Government (2008). *Careers Wales: Planning Guidance 2008-2009*, p.6. Cardiff: WAG.

<sup>129</sup> Estyn (2007). *Guidance on the Inspection of Careers Companies*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>130</sup> Estyn (n.d.). *The Common Inspection Framework for Education and Training in Wales*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>131</sup> Estyn (2007). *A Report on the Quality of Careers Services in Careers Wales North West*. Cardiff: Estyn.

grade 4<sup>132</sup>, while a 2005 report on Careers Wales North East gave it seven grade 3s<sup>133</sup>. But very few grade 4s have been recorded, and no grade 5s.

3.15 Estyn has also produced a number of thematic reports. An early example (2001) covered work in Years 8-10<sup>134</sup>; others covered supporting transitions to employment (2003)<sup>135</sup>, education-business links (2003)<sup>136</sup>, and quality management systems (2005)<sup>137</sup>. A more recent report, on gender stereotyping (2007), reported examples of good practice, but indicated that the careers companies did not work together enough to share and build on this good practice or to develop a pan-Wales strategic approach to challenging gender stereotyping<sup>138</sup>. A further recent report, on Careers Wales On-Line (2006), was generally very positive<sup>139</sup>.

3.16 In terms of **outputs**, the Careers Wales companies reported 314,651 face-to-face interactions in 2004/05 and 327,535 in 2007/08, an increase of 4.1%. If Careers Wales On-Line usage hours are included, the figures change from 316,101 guidance unit hours in 2004/05 to 356,556 in 2007/08, an increase of 12.8%<sup>140</sup>. Both of these sets of figures exceed the *Making the Connections* target of a 1% year-on-year increase (see para.1.12).

3.17 Over the past few years, a number of reports<sup>141</sup> have emphasised the need for the Careers Wales companies to pay more attention to measuring **outcomes**. The result has been a series of follow-up studies.

3.18 The first major impact evaluation study carried out for Careers Wales was conducted in conjunction with the Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby in 2005, following up 1,000 adult clients three and six months after their guidance interviews. The majority indicated that as a result of the guidance interview they were clearer about their career plans, had carried out actions to achieve their plans, and had experienced significant career-related life changes to which the guidance had been a

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<sup>132</sup> Estyn (2006). *A Report on the Careers Services in Wales in Careers Wales Gwent*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>133</sup> Estyn (2005). *A Report on the Careers Services in Wales in Careers Wales North East*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>134</sup> Estyn (2001). *A Survey of the Work of the Careers Companies in Years 8, 9 and 10 in Wales*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>135</sup> Estyn (2003). *The Effectiveness of the Careers Wales Companies in Supporting Young People in Making a Successful Transition from Education to Employment*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>136</sup> Estyn (2003). *Inspection Report: Impact of Careers Wales in the Promotion of Education Business Links*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>137</sup> Estyn (2005). *Quality Management Systems in Careers Wales Companies*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>138</sup> Estyn (2007). *Good Practice in How Careers Wales Companies Challenge Gender Stereotyping*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>139</sup> Estyn (2006). *A Report on the Progress and Effectiveness of Careers Wales Online*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>140</sup> Data provided by DCELLS Careers Policy Branch.

<sup>141</sup> Including: Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, pp.33-34, 40, 57-58. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. Estyn (2005). *Quality Management Systems in Careers Wales Companies*, p.3. Cardiff: Estyn. York Consulting (2007). *An Initial Study to Redefine the Careers Wales Contribution to 'Learning Pathways 14-19' and 'Extending Entitlement'*, p.40. Leeds: York Consulting. Webb, A., Drury, S. & Griffiths, G. (2007). *Promise and Performance: the Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the Context of the Learning Country: Vision into Action*, p.90. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. .

major or contributing factor. They also reported 'softer' outcomes from the interview, in terms of providing confidence, encouragement, sense of purpose, and greater focus<sup>142</sup>.

3.19 More recently, Beaufort Research was commissioned to carry out a Performance Indicator Survey on adult clients in 2007 and again in 2008. The first of these, conducted in February 2007, followed up 600 adult clients (100 from each of the six companies) who had received a guidance interview between April and November 2006. The proportion who felt that their guidance interview had helped to inform their decisions about career and learning options was 88%, comprising 36% who said it had helped 'a great deal', 36% 'a fair amount' and 16% 'a little'. The proportion of those who were unemployed had almost halved (from 47% to 27%), and most had taken some positive action following the interview – including 36% who had started a new job, 34% who had made a job application, and 26% who had had a job interview (only 9% had done nothing)<sup>143</sup>. Broadly similar results, with some improvements, were achieved in the 2008 survey: the proportion who said that the interview had helped 'a great deal', for example, increased from 36% to 44%; and the figures on this measure were more consistent across companies<sup>144</sup>.

3.20 A broadly similar approach was used by Beaufort Research in relation to young people. In January-February 2007 they interviewed by telephone 3,000 young people who had received a guidance interview between September 2006 and May 2007 – 500 in each Careers Wales company area. 87% had achieved a positive outcome, and 95% indicated that their interview had helped inform their decisions about career and learning choices: 35% 'a great deal', 43% 'a fair amount' and 16% 'a little'<sup>145</sup>.

3.21 The need for **performance indicators** was voiced by Moulson & Prail, linked to a demand for more **cross-company benchmarking**<sup>146</sup>. Following a study by York Consulting in 2005<sup>147</sup>, six indicators have been adopted in the last couple of years:

- Percentage of year 11 clients who sustain a positive transition to education, employment or training.
- Percentage of year 11 clients indicating that their Key Stage 4 guidance interview(s) with Careers Wales Advisers helped to inform their transition to post-16 education, employment or training.

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<sup>142</sup> Reed, K., Mahony, K. & Gration, G. (2005). *Career Guidance for Adults in Wales – Making a Difference*. Derby Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

<sup>143</sup> Beaufort Research (2007). *Careers Wales: Performance Indicator Survey Adult Clients Report March 2007*. Cardiff: Beaufort Research.

<sup>144</sup> Beaufort Research (2008). *Careers Wales: Performance Indicator Survey Adult Clients Report March 2008*. Cardiff: Beaufort Research.

<sup>145</sup> Beaufort Research (2008). *Careers Wales: Performance Indicator Survey Young People Report March 2008*. Cardiff: Beaufort Research.

<sup>146</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, pp.18, 28-30. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. See also Estyn (2004). *Measuring Progress in Careers Wales Companies*, pp.33, 37-38. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>147</sup> York Consulting (2005). *Careers Wales: Performance Indicators – Final Report*. Leeds: York Consulting.

- Percentage of young people in years 11/12/13/14 identified as having a Statement of SEN (or as '3 star' where this exists, or as 'School Action Plus'), and involved in an educational transitional planning programme and annual reviews, achieving a positive destination.
- Percentage of post-16 Youth Gateway clients achieving an initial positive outcome within four months of starting the programme.
- Percentage of Careers Wales Online registered users indicating that it helped them make career and learning-related decisions.
- Percentage of adults making career and learning-related decisions as a result of guidance received from Careers Wales.

A review of the results for 2007 and 2008 showed high performance levels on all these indicators<sup>148</sup>. Moreover, it showed a fairly consistent level of performance across companies.

3.22 These studies represent an impressive level of investment in outcome measurement – comparable with best practice internationally – and impressive levels of performance. It could be argued that more demanding performance measures might be linked to following up clients over a longer period of time. This would demonstrate the effects and sustainability of their decisions – as measured, for example, by levels of drop-out from further and higher education courses. It would, of course, involve additional costs, but these might be reduced by, for example, mounting such extended follow-ups triennially rather than annually.

3.23 The demand by Moulson & Prail for more cross-company benchmarking was extended to cover 'staff value for money': on this, progress appears to have been more limited. An analysis of companies according to their budget share and their delivery share showed that the largest company (Careers Wales West) along with Careers Wales Mid-Glamorgan (before it merged with Powys) delivered a significantly greater proportion of all-Wales activity in 2004/05 than their proportion of all-Wales funding, while the other four companies under-performed in this respect. By 2007/08, the differences had narrowed, and while Careers Wales Mid-Glamorgan & Powys (now merged) still over-performed on this criterion, this had ceased to be the case with Careers Wales West<sup>149</sup>.

3.24 Part of the rationale for developing a stronger **evidence base**, expressed explicitly in the Planning Guidance for 2006/07, is to 'lay the foundation for making a case for future investment levels'. The document added: 'Developing robust conclusions from the benchmarking and evaluations initiatives, plus making constructive links with organisations and bodies involved in researching the outcomes and impact of careers information, advice and guidance, are central to creating a credible evidence base'<sup>150</sup>.

<sup>148</sup> Careers Wales Association (2008). Response to *Skills that Work for Wales: a Skills and Employment Strategy*, pp.15-16. Caerphilly: CWA.

<sup>149</sup> Data provided by DCELLS Careers Policy Branch.

<sup>150</sup> Careers Wales & Welsh Assembly Government (2006). *Planning Guidance 2006-2007*, p.9. Cardiff: WAG.

3.25 The need for a stronger research base in broader terms was articulated by Moulson & Prail, who noted ‘the absence of an effective research capability to inform the Assembly’s policy making in the careers field’. They added that ‘the very fact that internationally Wales is at, or close to, the leading edge in terms of the development of all-age and added value services places pressure to form a solid policy position to support what is happening’. They accordingly recommended that Careers Wales ‘should be encouraged to make proposals for how it could provide a research capability to the Assembly ... from an independent viewpoint, using a knowledge base of careers practices across the world and in a way that would effectively exploit CW’s information bases’<sup>151</sup>. York Consulting, too, recommended that ‘Careers Wales’ research activities should be brought together, and built upon, to enable it to more fully evidence the impact of its work’, and that ‘this would be aided by the creation of a centralised research role within Careers Wales whose work could feed into policy, planning and awareness raising activities’<sup>152</sup>.

3.26 Two of the careers companies have research officers, but there has been no investment in a collective research capacity. This seems a missed opportunity: Careers Wales is an information-rich organisation, but the information is not being harnessed. There is some anxiety that developing a role of this kind might change the nature of the relationship with the Assembly (which might seek to gag critical voices), particularly if it was linked to advocacy/feedback roles (see para.1.18 above). But if managed professionally, it would seem likely to enhance significantly the authority of Careers Wales in policy circles and in the wider community.

3.27 A final aspect of quality is **involving customers in service design**. The Welsh Assembly Government has made a commitment to involving children and young people aged 0-25 in all aspects of decision-making on issues that affect their lives. It has accordingly indicated that it would ‘expect children and young people to be involved actively in letting those parts of any future service delivery contract which relate to provision of advice to 0-25 year olds, and for it to be a condition of contract that children and young people are involved actively in planning, evaluating and reviewing service provision throughout the lifetime of the contract in accordance with the national Standards as part of a mainstream part of future activity’<sup>153</sup>.

3.28 A Funky Dragon survey stimulated by this commitment indicated that 48% of a sample of young people said that they had received ‘quite a lot’ or ‘loads’ of advice and information about their future career options, while 34% said that they had received ‘not much’ or ‘none’. While these data do not distinguish between services provided by Careers Wales or by the school or college, the latter figure is surprising in view of the extent of Careers Wales careers interviews provided within schools and colleges

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<sup>151</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, pp.5, 59. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>152</sup> York Consulting (2007). *An Initial Study to Redefine the Careers Wales Contribution to ‘Learning Pathways 14-19’ and ‘Extending Entitlement’*, p.43. Leeds: York Consulting.

<sup>153</sup> Paper prepared by DCELLS for the current review of careers services in Wales, on ‘Issues Relating to the WAG Children and Young People’s Rights and Entitlements Agenda’.

(see para.2.37). The report recommended that young people in schools should be offered 'better quality and greater levels of careers advice', and also 'more relevant and useful work experience placements', including being 'involved in designing and locating suitable work experience placements'<sup>154</sup>.

3.29 An example of strong involvement of young people in the design of services has been Careers Wales On-Line (see para.2.21). There have also been examples in relation to Youth Gateway. In general, it seems that the Careers Wales companies have made progress in this respect, but less so than, for instance, some voluntary-sector organisations<sup>155</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

3.30 The attention to quality-related issues within Careers Wales is impressive, and comparable with the best international practice. Close attention has been paid to ensuring that its services meet high professional standards. The work on impact measurement is particularly strong, and should be published and disseminated more widely. This might be aligned to developing a stronger research capability within Careers Wales itself.

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<sup>154</sup> Funky Dragon (2007). *Our Rights Our Story*, p.35. Cardiff: Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales.

<sup>155</sup> For a useful analysis of some of the possibilities, see Plant, H. (2006). *Involving the Users of Guidance Services in Policy Development*. Leicester: The Guidance Council.





## 4. Working with Other Career Guidance Providers

### Principles

4.1 In Sections 1-3, the benchmarks drawn from the OECD review have been applied only to Careers Wales. On the remaining benchmarks, however, Careers Wales is significantly dependent on other career guidance providers for their delivery. These include three of the features of 'lifelong guidance systems' identified by OECD<sup>156</sup>:

- Programmes to develop career-management skills.
- Opportunities to investigate and experience learning and work options before choosing them.
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders.

These can only be delivered through effective partnerships with career guidance provision within education and training institutions and within workplaces. This also applies to one of the challenges to policy-makers identified by OECD<sup>157</sup>:

- Developing stronger structures for strategic leadership.

4.2 In the earlier review of Careers Scotland, it was noted that it had given significant priority to establishing partnership agreements with the main other career guidance providers in Scotland<sup>158</sup>. Each took one or more of four forms:

- *Boundary drawing*: indicating to which provider particular clients with particular needs should be referred.
- *Joint working*: collaborating on tasks.
- *Servicing*: providing services to enhance delivery.
- *Capacity building*: improving the provider's own capability to provide services.

In the case of New Zealand, Career Services had not at the time of its review had a systematic policy to establish partnership agreements of these kinds. Its relationships with other career guidance providers were strong and clear in some sectors, but weak and/or unclear in others<sup>159</sup>.

4.3 As the OECD review indicated, having a separate organisational structure to provide career guidance on a lifelong basis has many advantages. Its main possible disadvantage, though, is that it cannot provide all of the career guidance that is needed,

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<sup>156</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, p.138. Paris: OECD. .

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p.148.

<sup>158</sup> Watts, A.G. (2005). *Progress and Potential*, Section 4. Glasgow: Careers Scotland.

<sup>159</sup> Watts, A.G. (2007). *Careers Services: a Review in an International Perspective*, p.39. Wellington, New Zealand: Career Services.

and that its dominance may weaken provision elsewhere<sup>160</sup>. The challenge to Careers Wales is to ensure that, far from weakening such provision, its existence strengthens it. Establishing partnership agreements with the main other providers, where possible through appropriate representative structures, could represent a strategic approach to addressing this issue.

4.4 As a basis for developing such a strategy, the existing provision in other sectors will now be briefly reviewed, alongside the provision of Careers Wales in these sectors, and the relationships between the two forms of provision. Attention will be paid in turn to schools and colleges, to higher education, to Jobcentre Plus, to the voluntary and community sector, and to employers and trade unions (including a brief reference to private-sector career development services). Some of these sectors have career guidance services provided by careers professionals; in others, there are careers programmes run mainly or wholly by teachers, managers, community workers and the like. This will be followed by a discussion of Careers Wales companies' wider involvement in partnership working at local level. Finally, issues relating to strategic leadership across the career guidance field as a whole, both within Wales and across the UK, will be explored.

### Schools and colleges

4.5 As noted in para.2.8, many Careers Advisers have bases in schools and colleges: they are also provided with office space in Careers Wales companies' office accommodation on a 'hot-desking' basis. This enabled the companies to manage their growth in the early part of the decade without a proportionate increase in their property base<sup>161</sup>. It is also welcomed by the schools and colleges, who usually view their Careers Adviser as an honorary member of staff. There appears to be no evidence that this has in any way compromised the Careers Advisers' impartiality.

4.6 In addition to the considerable amount of specialist career guidance service delivery provided by these Careers Advisers (alongside their Youth Gateway, special-needs and employer-liaison colleagues), they also provide **training and consultancy support** to schools and colleges in the delivery of their careers programmes. These programmes are subject to statutory requirements outlined in the Assembly's 'Careers and the World of Work' framework, which has brought together what were previously separate frameworks for careers education and guidance and for work-related education<sup>162</sup>. The framework covers 11-19-year-olds: it is part of the basic curriculum for 11-16-year-olds, and also part of the requirements of the 'learning core' of Learning Pathways 14-19. The Welsh Assembly was the first regulation-making body in the UK to introduce a requirement that schools and colleges should provide

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<sup>160</sup> This was, for example, a criticism of the former vocational guidance system in Germany, where for many years the Federal Employment Service held a formal monopoly. See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2002). *OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies: Germany Country Note*. Paris: OECD.

<sup>161</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, p.28. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>162</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Careers and the World of Work: a Framework for 11 to 19-Year-Olds in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

programmes of careers education for all students aged 16-19 – under the Education (Extension of Careers Education) (Wales) Regulations 2001; a similar extension is now being considered in England by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

4.7 The Careers Wales support for such programmes includes a variety of training and support activities. These are co-ordinated within each of the Careers Wales companies by a specialist curriculum support team. They include both formal short courses and informal coaching and support.

4.8 Such activities are not confined to careers education but also incorporate the much wider area of **work-related education**. This includes five main elements: work-experience programmes; enterprise/business awareness; employer-supported mentoring; employer-supported curriculum development and delivery; and teacher placements. During 2007/08:

- More than 177,500 students participated in an education-business links activity facilitated by Careers Wales.
- Almost 41,500 students spent at least one week on a work-experience placement.
- Careers Wales conducted health-and-safety assessments at over 10,800 work-experience placements;
- More than 94,500 students participated in an employer-supported curriculum-linked activity;
- Almost 12,000 students worked with an employer mentor who helped them with their individual goal-setting<sup>163</sup>.

4.9 The Careers Wales companies' function in relation to work-related education is both strategic and operational, and there has been some tension between these two roles, linked to the ways in which much of this work was passed over to them from the TECs (see para.1.5)<sup>164</sup>. A report by CRG Research Ltd in 2005 pointed out that Careers Wales was acting both as contractor and as contract manager, and that this 'could be seen as unfair and lacks transparency'. It noted that 'on the whole consultees' views favoured Careers Wales' role to be that of facilitator – a role it could play well to develop more synergy through more strategic oversight' – but that this 'runs counter to the ethos of Careers Wales, which is primarily a delivery organisation in respect of its other main activity, careers education and guidance'. It concluded that in practice it would always be necessary for Careers Wales to have an element of both roles. It was accordingly important to operate a consistent and transparent approach to securing relevant work-related education provision, recognising Careers Wales companies as

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<sup>163</sup> Careers Wales (2008). *Careers Wales Paper 2: a Summary of Services Provided by Careers Wales*, pp.8-9. Paper prepared for the Review of Careers Services in Wales.

<sup>164</sup> This has been complicated by the fact that different TECs structured their education-business links work in very different ways. These differences have not yet been fully smoothed out. In Mid-Glamorgan, for example, the Education-Business Partnership retains a quasi-independent status.

lead but not sole providers<sup>165</sup>. In the light of this, a ring-fenced element for contracts with other providers is now included in the Careers Wales core contract. In addition, a Strategic Forum has recently been established to act as a procurement board, inviting tenders and placing contracts for work-related education provision utilising an annual fund of £350,000+, administered by Careers Wales.

4.10 The importance of the education-business-links area of the Careers Wales companies' work is growing in relation to Learning Pathways 14-19. These include a minimum of three weeks' work experience 14-19, of which at least one week should be in Key Stage 4<sup>166</sup>. Careers Wales companies play a crucial brokerage role in developing these placements, in monitoring them in terms both of health-and-safety and learning requirements, and in supporting student learning from the experience (through work-experience diaries and the like). They also play an important role in the development and implementation of vocational pathways, including advising on their labour-market viability, and brokering the employer support required to deliver them<sup>167</sup>. With the development of vocational pathways, there is a growing requirement for work-focused experience to be embedded in such courses, to help students to relate theory to practice. Since there is increasing pressure on work placements, particularly at a time of economic recession, care will need to be taken to ensure that curriculum-related work experience for some students does not crowd out exploratory work experience for all<sup>168</sup>.

4.11 There is still some lack of clarity about whether the Careers Wales companies have an overall co-ordinating role in relation to education-business links at school/college level, or not: for example, some schools, colleges and 14-19 consortia go direct to employers, who as a result may have the problem of reconciling demands from different sources. A 14-19 Employer Engagement Task Force set up by the Assembly recommended in 2007 that 'as a clear indication of a new approach, employer engagement activity should be separately branded as Wales Education Business Partnerships (formal title to be agreed), managed within a strategic national approach while remaining a strand of Careers Wales'. The foundation of its work would be the Employer Gateway being developed as part of Careers Wales On-Line<sup>169</sup>. The Assembly accepted this recommendation in principle, but indicated that any change of branding would incur costs, and that the recommendation should be looked at as part of the current Careers Wales review. It would be helpful if the nature of the Careers Wales remit in this area could be clarified as part of this process.

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<sup>165</sup> CRG Research Ltd (2005). *Developing a New Education Business Strategy*. Cardiff: CRG Research Ltd.

<sup>166</sup> Department for Education and Education (2004). *Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance*, section 1.4. Circular 37/2004. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. The three-week requirement is now being loosened somewhat post-16.

<sup>167</sup> Under the proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2008, consortia of institutions will be required to offer a minimum of 30 course options, at least five of which must be vocational in nature.

<sup>168</sup> As it did in Australia, for example. See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2002). *OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies: Australia Country Note*, p.7. Paris: OECD.

<sup>169</sup> 14-19 Employer Engagement Task Force (2007). *Report*, pp.3-4. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

4.12 The current extent of the Careers Wales companies' education-business links work certainly creates a certain 'lumpiness' in the profile of its activities. It is worth noting in this respect that when Careers Scotland was formed, the heterogeneous nature of the education-business links inherited from the partnerships that preceded it was reduced by insisting that the links supported by Careers Scotland must have some relationship to career planning<sup>170</sup>. Consideration might fruitfully be given to this in Wales too.

4.13 The Careers Wales companies' work in relation to work-related learning embraces not only secondary but also **primary schools**. Although the 'Careers and the World of Work' framework covers 11-19-year-olds, it notes that 'understanding of the world of work can begin at any age' and that the KS2 learning outcomes for personal and social education (PSE) include a requirement for students 'to consider the range of jobs carried out by people in their community'<sup>171</sup>. There is also a strong argument that efforts to address gender stereotyping need to start in primary schools. In addition, it is often easier to gain access to teachers' and pupils' time in primary schools, and such work can be very rewarding. But while the current contract permits primary-school work, it does not necessarily encourage it. A significant increase in the education-business links budget would be required to address primary schools in a strategic way, not least because of the large number of such schools. The balance of work-placements targets for primary-school teachers and for secondary-school teachers has recently been changed, to give relatively less attention to primary schools. Much of the work in primary schools could, in principle, be reframed as career-related learning.

4.14 The Careers Wales companies' work with **colleges of further education** tends largely to mirror their work with secondary schools. All full-time students are likely to have at least one interview with a Careers Adviser; in the case of part-time students, access is more likely to be on a voluntary basis. One or two colleges have appointed their own Careers Advisers, who are not subject to Careers Wales standards.

4.15 The nature and extent of Careers Wales support for Learning Pathways 14-19 has been significantly affected by the promotion of the concept of the **Learning Coach**. This role was defined as being 'to work with individual learners on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, to establish goals and to develop a Learning Pathway for each learner that will include formal, non-formal and informal opportunities phased over time'. It was noted that Learning Coach support 'will need to provide impartial and practical advice and guidance on pathways which best meet both the individual learner's needs and reflect the learning styles which suit them best'. It was pointed out that 'Learning Coach support is not necessarily a single person but may be delivered through a team approach enabling learners to access support at different times in different ways and in different places'. The range of professionals who 'may have the skills and knowledge set to provide Learning Coach support' was defined as including 'teachers, careers

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<sup>170</sup> Watts, A.G. (2005). *Progress and Potential*, p.7. Glasgow: Careers Scotland.

<sup>171</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Careers and the World of Work: a Framework for 11 to 19-Year-Olds in Wales*, p.10. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

service staff, youth workers, those with social work training, counsellors, teaching assistants, classroom support workers and work based trainers<sup>172</sup>.

4.16 There has been some concern about the lack of clarity concerning the role of the Learning Coach. A recent Assembly paper has suggested that it may be a person, or a function carried out by a team; and that 'a Learning Coach will usually work with groups of learners rather than individuals'<sup>173</sup>. It seems that the concept is being interpreted in very different ways in different institutions. The issue of impartiality has been raised, not least by Sir Adrian Webb, chair of the further education review group (see para.1.11), who reported that the group was 'quite distressed by some of the stories that were brought to us about the pressures put on [students] to follow particular kinds of courses or to stay in particular kinds of institutions'<sup>174</sup>. A recent research-based review suggested that one way of addressing this issue might be for Learning Coaches to be managed by Careers Wales, as an organisation committed to impartiality as one of its defining features<sup>175</sup>.

4.17 There has also been concern about the relationship of the Learning Coach concept to the role of the Careers Adviser<sup>176</sup>. A paper produced recently by Careers Wales defined the distinction between the two roles as being that the Learning Coach 'helps maximise the young person's current learning and future decisions around their learning pathway', whereas the Careers Adviser 'discusses learning in relation to its implications on career planning/progression'. It also noted that Special Needs Careers Advisers and Youth Gateway Advisers fulfilled a number of Learning Coach functions, though more resources were needed to do so fully; and that Careers Wales was well placed to contribute to or fulfil the Learning Coach role for young people in work-based learning<sup>177</sup>. There is a risk within schools and colleges that the distinction between the roles of the Learning Coach and the Careers Adviser will bifurcate the relationship between learning choices and career choices (as already occurs sometimes in sixth forms – see para.2.37). Since learning choices are also in effect career choices, care will need to be taken to ensure that this does not happen. A recent Estyn report recommended that Careers Wales companies should improve partners' understanding of the boundaries between the two roles, and that the Assembly Government 'should establish clear guidelines to clarify the role of learning coaches'<sup>178</sup>.

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<sup>172</sup> Department for Training and Education (2004). *Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance*, sections 1.2, 2.1. Circular 37/2004. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>173</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2007). *Learning Pathways 14-19: Learning Coach Support*, p.5. Cardiff: WAG.

<sup>174</sup> This included one particularly vivid report of 'a young man who wanted to go to an FE college, who was locked up in a room for over an hour and told that he would not be let out until he changed his mind and stayed in the sixth form'. Evidence to the Welsh Assembly Government Proposed Learning and Skills Measure (Wales) Committee, 4 November 2008.

<sup>175</sup> Saunders, D. (2008). *The Learning Coaches of Wales: Summary Document*, p.39. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>176</sup> See e.g. Estyn (2008). *Supporting Learning Pathways*. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>177</sup> Careers Wales (2008). *Careers Wales Contribution to Learning Coaching*. Caerphilly: Careers Wales Association.

<sup>178</sup> Estyn (2008). *Supporting Learning Pathways*, p.5. Cardiff: Estyn.

4.18 The arrangements with schools and colleges are formalised through a **partnership agreement** negotiated between the institution and the relevant Careers Wales company. This specifies the level of services to be supplied, the times at which they are to be provided, and the inputs required from the school/college and from the Careers Wales company in order to achieve the agreement. They do not detail the full careers programme to be provided by the school or college. In this sense, they represent a service-level agreement rather than a full partnership agreement.

4.19 The wider support provided by Careers Wales to the school or college's own programme is however strongly reflected in the **Careers Wales Quality Award (CQWA)** for Careers Education & Guidance and for Work-Related Education. This was recommended in the 1999 ETAG report (see para.1.2), drawing together four previous quality marks. Its mission statement focuses on 'quality provision within the curriculum that supports personal development, effective understanding of the world of work and lifelong career planning'. There are five principles for each award: student achievement of learning objectives; overall management; people management; partnerships, processes and resources; and evaluation and continuous review. Careers Wales provides consultancy to help schools through the process, which has to be renewed every two or three years.

4.20 An independent review of the CQWA by ASW Consulting found that the main reason for non-participation was concern about the amount of staff time needed to work towards the award. The support from Careers Wales was viewed as professional and appreciated, but the process was seen as being time-consuming and overly complex. The award was perceived as being a gold standard – difficult to obtain but highly prized by those who attained it<sup>179</sup>. It could be viewed as a case of the best being the enemy of the good.

4.21 The latest figures (November 2008) indicate that 77 schools and 15 colleges have now gained the CQWA<sup>180</sup>, representing a penetration rate of around one in three. The award is being adapted to meet the new 'Careers and the World of Work' framework (para.4.6), but is also being reframed to make it more accessible. It is being replaced by a Careers Wales Mark for Continuing Improvement, to be launched in September 2009. Rather than recognising excellent provision, this will focus on having plans and processes in place to improve provision, so fostering incremental change.

4.22 While the Careers Wales companies' support for the CQWA represents a clear capacity-building role, and other aspects of their work in schools and colleges fall into this category too, the extent of their service delivery work means that the latter tends to dominate the way in which their role in such institutions is constructed and perceived. The strong target-based structure to which they are subject also tends to drive in this direction, as does the fact that Estyn inspections of the careers companies are separate

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<sup>179</sup> ASW Consulting (2006). *Evaluation of the Content, Process and Management of the Careers Wales Quality Award*. Matlock: ASW Consulting.

<sup>180</sup> Careers Wales (2008). *Careers Wales Paper 2: a Summary of Services Provided by Careers Wales*, p.11. Paper prepared for the Review of Careers Services in Wales.

from school and college inspections, in which careers education and guidance tends to be given only limited attention. There is anecdotal evidence that the number of schools with careers co-ordinators is diminishing; instead, it is becoming more common for careers education and guidance within schools to be co-ordinated by a senior manager with a wider set of responsibilities, and/or to use a non-teacher to carry out various administrative tasks. While this can be effective, it can also make it more difficult to develop a clear base for a partnership model which places more emphasis on Careers Wales staff's capacity-building role in relation to the institution's own provision.

## Higher education

4.23 In higher education, on the other hand, the relationship has been largely one of boundary drawing. All higher education institutions have their own careers services, and while these vary considerably in scale and in function, they usually provide career guidance as well as other services (though the extent of access to careers interviews is very limited in some institutions)<sup>181</sup>.

4.24 The ETAG report which led to the establishment of Careers Wales (see para.1.2) recommended that the Assembly should invite the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) 'to develop benchmark standards for the HE institutions' careers services provision and for the integration of careers education in course provision, and take steps to ensure that all HE students have access to a clearly defined and consistent level of service across Wales'. It also recommended that the Assembly should 'commission Careers Wales to agree arrangements with the Wales Higher Education Careers Service Association for joint local planning and best use of resources in provision of careers services to graduates and diplomates'<sup>182</sup>. Such strong attention to services in higher education is unusual in national guidance policies.

4.25 Following the ETAG report, HEFCW established a Review Working Group, including Careers Wales staff. This made recommendations focusing on a collaborative, pan-Wales approach to provide guidance services to prescribed standards for all higher education students in and returning to Wales, to supply employers in Wales with motivated candidates to meet higher skill needs, and to maintain a strategic approach to the graduate employability agenda. It suggested that there was a need to clarify the mutual responsibilities of the two sets of services. It accordingly recommended that a clearer set of respective responsibilities be agreed between them, and that the resource implications for future working practices should be assessed. The universities, however, wished to retain control of their own careers services, and no action was taken to progress these recommendations<sup>183</sup>. Careers Wales is identified as a key partner in HEFCW's Corporate Plan, but although there have been a number of attempts to build

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<sup>181</sup> The nature of these services was analysed in detail in *A Survey of Careers Service Provision in Welsh Institutions in Higher Education*, prepared by ASW Consulting and Minds at Work for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and for ELWa in 2002. The report has not, however, been placed in the public domain.

<sup>182</sup> Education and Training Action Group for Wales (1999). *An Education and Training Action Plan for Wales*, p.44. Cardiff: Welsh Office.

<sup>183</sup> Clark, M. & Talbot, J. (2006). Career guidance in Wales: retrospect and prospect. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34(1), 55-71 (see pp.64-65).



a concordat between HEFCW and the Careers Wales Association, this has not yet been achieved.

4.26 A study of working relationships between Careers Service Organisations and higher education careers services, conducted in England and Wales when the Careers Service still existed as an entity in England, distinguished between:

- *Perceived complementarity* – where there is due recognition of potential benefits from establishing links between activities that are contiguous to, but separate from, one another.
- *Uncontested territory* – where the area of work is acknowledged as the responsibility of one side, and any involvement of the other side is recognised as supporting this work.
- *Perceived incursion* – where one side perceives the other as intruding upon its specialist area of work.
- *Contested territory* – where it is recognised that both sides have potential claims on a particular area of work.
- *Open territory* – where it is recognised that there are needs for services which neither side is yet able to meet.

These distinctions were used to examine working relationships in relation to higher education students pre-entry, on-course and post-exit, and also in relation to the broader field of adult guidance<sup>184</sup>. In general, it is recognised in Wales that students pre-entry are primarily the responsibility of the careers company, and students on course and immediately post-exit primarily the responsibility of the higher education careers service; but longer-term post-exit work and the general field of adult guidance tend to be open or contested territory. Higher education services themselves vary considerably in the extent to which they provide services to their own students post-graduation and to students from other universities in the immediate post-graduation period<sup>185</sup>.

4.27 One of the case-studies in this study was of collaboration between University of Wales Bangor and of the local careers company in relation to access provision. This collaboration has continued, and close links have been maintained with what is now Bangor University: its current registrar sits on the Board of Careers Wales North West, and its previous registrar chairs this board.

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<sup>184</sup> Watts, A.G., Hughes, D. & Haslam, D. (1999). *Closer Working?* Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Also Watts, A.G., Hughes, D. & Haslam, D. (2001). Working relationships between careers services within and outside higher education. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 51-70.

<sup>185</sup> A survey across the UK a few years ago found that 90% of the universities responding made provision available for their own graduates for at least two years post-graduation, while 78% said that they also made them available under a 'mutual aid' scheme to graduates from other institutions – though several qualified the latter as being confined to a limited service (usually excluding guidance interviews). Maguire, M. (2005). *Delivering Quality*, p.38. London: Department for Education and Skills.

4.28 Another such example was the joint development by the University of Glamorgan and Careers Wales of a careers curriculum for 16-19-year-old students and foundation-year university students, based on equipping students with robust career planning skills. This is accredited by the University, and has been delivered in all but one of the Careers Wales areas<sup>186</sup>.

4.29 A further example of co-operation is in relation to students with learning difficulties once they are in higher education. The Learning and Skills Act 2001 gives powers to the Welsh Assembly Government to conduct an assessment of any young person under 25 with learning difficulties who is undertaking post-16 education. It exercises this duty through its contract with Careers Wales companies, except in the case of students already on higher education courses, when the relevant HE institution is asked to make the assessment – either through its own careers service or by Careers Wales<sup>187</sup>.

4.30 In relation to adult guidance of graduates, different policies are followed by different Careers Wales companies. Aberystwyth and Swansea universities, and Trinity College Carmarthen, are subcontracted by Careers Wales companies to provide career guidance services to graduates who live in Wales, presumably at least in part on the grounds that they know the graduate labour market better than Careers Wales does. In the case of Swansea, this work supports 0.6 of a Careers Adviser post. In Cardiff, on the other hand, Careers Wales Cardiff & Vale has not done this, because it considers that it has the relevant expertise in-house. These different approaches were inherited from previous TEC practices before adult guidance services were merged into the Careers Wales companies. While they are currently small in numerical terms, they reflect a wider issue of considerable strategic significance for the Careers Wales companies: whether they claim and seek to provide an all-ability as well as all-age service, or whether after 19 – and even possibly after 16 (cf. para.2.37) – their services are designed mainly for those at lower skill levels. We shall return to this issue in Section 5 (para.5.13).

4.31 Other areas where clarification is needed are the provision of services to discontinuing students, and to students in further education on franchised higher education courses. The latter group is in principle expected to access the careers service in the relevant franchising university, but may in practice find it difficult to do so. In one college in North-West Wales, the Careers Wales company provides career guidance services to higher education students at the college under a subcontracting arrangement.

4.32 The boundary between further and higher education is becoming more blurred now: in Merthyr Tydfil, for example, the further education college has been merged into the University of Glamorgan, and other such mergers are under discussion. There are

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<sup>186</sup> Clark, M. & Talbot, J. (2006). Career guidance in Wales: retrospect and prospect. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34(1), 55-71 (see p.59).

<sup>187</sup> Hutt, J. (2007). *The Welsh Assembly Government's Response to the Equality of Opportunity Committee Report on Service Provision for Disabled Young People*, p.8. Cabinet Written Statement. Cardiff: WAG.

also some discussions between higher education institutions about establishing shared careers services: this is the case in Swansea (where Swansea University, Swansea Metropolitan University and Trinity College Carmarthen have secured HEFCW collaboration funding for three years to develop a 'virtual' South West Wales Careers Service) and in South East Wales. Such developments could open up new possibilities for reframing of services.

4.33 If Careers Wales is to maintain links with school-leavers to support them in their career development, through CWOL and its wider range of services, then maintaining some access to students in higher education is strategically important (see para.2.26). The possibility of it taking over delivery of careers services in higher education has been discussed, but is unlikely to be acceptable to universities and their staff. It would also be likely to inhibit the growth of curriculum programmes related to career development learning and employability, which have been a major growth area in recent years<sup>188</sup>. Since however Careers Wales is currently a brand rather than an organisation, there could be merit in exploring whether the brand could be extended to cover careers services in higher education, without affecting the structure of these services. This would require reconsideration of what the brand means, and the standards it represents.

### **Jobcentre Plus**

4.34 All the Careers Wales companies have had close relationships with Jobcentre Plus (JCP). In the past, they have been contracted by JCP – or by voluntary-and private-sector organisations contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – to provide career guidance interviews to some individuals referred through New Deal. There has however been some tension between the tendency of Careers Wales advisers to encourage longer-term career planning which may include education and training, and for Jobcentre Plus and DWP contractors to focus more on short-term job-specific training leading to more immediate entry into employment.

4.35 A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed between the Careers Wales companies and JCP, which covers information sharing and co-operation on marketing and communications. It also indicates that there should be discussions at local level between the careers company and the JCP District Manager, with a list of principles to underpin these discussions. These local arrangements work better in some areas than in others.

4.36 The links with JCP have recently been given much greater significance by UK Government and Welsh Assembly Government policies designed to bring together policies relating to skills, employment and welfare. The Assembly's Skills and Employment Strategy states that: 'The Assembly Government and DWP are committed to ensuring that skills and employment services work together effectively. We want to go

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<sup>188</sup> Watts, A.G. (2006). *Career Development Learning and Employability*. York: Higher Education Academy. Also Watts, A.G. & Butcher, V. (2008). *Break-Out or Break-Up?: Implications of Institutional Employability Strategies for the Role and Structure of University Careers Services*. Manchester: Higher Education Careers Services Unit.

further and make sure that they are seamlessly integrated'<sup>189</sup>. It proposes a 'Careers Ladders Wales' concept with five phases of information, advice, guidance, and support:

- *Contact*: reaching out to the 'hardest to reach', stimulating their ambition to work.
- *Stepping on*: an Employment Coaching Service.
- *Stepping up*: a range of skills and employment programmes.
- *Stepping out*: access to job vacancies.
- *Moving forward*: in-work support.

Careers Wales could have significant contributions to make at several of these stages. In particular, the Employment Coaching Service is designed to offer 'professional advice and guidance to benefit claimants building on the services that Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus already provides'. It 'will offer information, advice, and guidance on learning opportunities and employment vacancies within their local area, with practical help on job searching, CV preparation, interview skills, and practical issues like childcare'. Every client will develop 'an individual learning and career plan describing the services available from key agencies and any entitlements they may have to financial help with tuition fees or access to learning'<sup>190</sup>.

4.37 The Careers Wales Planning Guidance for 2008/09 stated that 'in anticipation of the Skills and Employment Strategy, companies should review their relationships with Jobcentre Plus locally, and work together through the all-Wales Working Group to further enhance consistency of delivery with key partners including Jobcentre Plus and basic skills providers' It added that: 'Further guidance will follow when the results of the consultation on the Skills and Employment Strategy are known'<sup>191</sup>.

4.38 All this is clearly likely to be significantly influenced by DWP's UK-wide policy on referring substantial numbers of people on benefit for Skills Health Checks. Skills policy is devolved, but employment policy is not, and benefits reform is likely to drive some degree of consistency across the UK. This includes the increasing pressures being placed on groups like lone parents and those previously on incapacity benefit to return to the labour market. Significant numbers of these, and also (under Flexible New Deal) of those who have been on Jobseekers Allowance for six months, are likely to be referred for Skills Health Checks. In England these are to be carried out by the new adult advancement and careers service; in Wales, Careers Wales seems much the best-qualified organisation to provide them. The result could be a substantial increase in

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<sup>189</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Skills that Work for Wales: a Skills and Employment Strategy*, p.27. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>190</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Skills that Work for Wales: a Skills and Employment Strategy and Action Plan*, pp.43, 45. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>191</sup> Careers Wales & Welsh Assembly Government (2008). *Careers Wales: Planning Guidance 2008-2009*, p.16. Cardiff: WAG.

demand for Careers Wales services, which is likely to be significantly enhanced by the impact of the current economic recession on unemployment levels.

4.39 This potentially has major resource implications (it is so far uncertain to what extent any additional funding would come from the Treasury or from Assembly budgets). In addition, it seems likely that many of these referrals will be made mandatory for continued receipt of benefit. This could jeopardise the advantages of the detached, impartial role that Careers Wales currently has, so risking lower levels of satisfaction with service provision. It could also have significant implications for risk management, for example, requiring changes in the design of offices. In addition, it will also have substantial staff training implications, relating both to the Skills Health Checks themselves and to the career guidance that presumably will follow it. It is as yet unclear what level of discretion there will be to develop a distinctive Welsh response on these various matters.

### **Voluntary and community sector**

4.40 In England<sup>192</sup> and Scotland<sup>193</sup>, systematic approaches have been adopted to capacity building within voluntary and community agencies, based in part on training of front-line staff and in part on branded resource centres. In Northern Ireland, the main services for adults have been developed within the voluntary sector, in the Educational Guidance Service for Adults.

4.41 The OECD Career Guidance Policy Review noted that ‘the merits of policy strategies that work through community-based organisations include not only their greater knowledge of, and acceptability to, particular client groups, but also the contribution they can make to community capacity building’. It added: ‘Some accordingly hold the view that they should be used as the conduit for most public services, including those in the guidance field. On the other hand, others take the view that this sector is fragmented, idiosyncratic, and sometimes anti-government and anti-bureaucratic, and that it too often consumes public funds without discernible outcomes. It seems likely that the sector has a contribution to make to career guidance strategies for adults, but alongside – rather than as a substitute for – more formal services’<sup>194</sup>.

4.42 In Wales, some but not all Careers Wales companies have maintained Adult Guidance Networks inherited from the TECs. Under these arrangements, voluntary organisations refer clients requiring guidance (at NVQ Level 4) to Careers Wales, whose staff may visit them to provide such interviews. In addition, they themselves may provide information and advice (at NVQ Level 3) on a sub-contractual basis, with staff training and quality assurance carried out by Careers Wales. In some

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<sup>192</sup> Barker, V., Watts, A.G., Sharpe, T. & Edwards, A. (2005). Building career guidance capacity in the voluntary and community sector. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 33(4), 457-473.

<sup>193</sup> Careers Scotland (2004). *Community Guidance: a Partnership Approach – Linking Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance*. Glasgow: Careers Scotland.

<sup>194</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, p.65. Paris: OECD.

larger organisations, staff may be trained at NVQ Level 4 to provide guidance themselves, in which case they will be subject to Estyn inspections. The insistence on such standards has led to some organisations dropping out of the networks, but prevents erosion of quality.

### **Employers and trade unions**

4.43 If Careers Wales is to provide career development support on a lifelong basis, then the support it offers in the workplace, either direct or via employers and/or trade unions, is of critical importance. When in the UK a few years ago a national sample of adults were asked which sources of information, advice and guidance about learning or work opportunities they had used in the previous year, the most commonly-mentioned source (mentioned by nearly two-fifths) was their employer<sup>195</sup>.

4.44 In addition to their extensive work with employers in other aspects of their work – notably gaining employer involvement in work-related learning, gathering labour market information to inform its career guidance work, and providing placement services for early school-leavers – Careers Wales companies carry out workforce development and redundancy counselling on employers' premises.

4.45 The workforce development work was originally developed to address issues relating to low skills and low pay. Each Careers Wales company has a small workforce development team working with employers to enhance their career development programmes for their employees and to identify the training needs in their workforce. This might include, for example, identifying the skills needs of employees, gauging staff opinion, and developing a careers programme – possibly involving a mix of workshops and one-to-one interviews – to help employees achieve their career goals. The service is free to employers: the majority of those that use it are in the public sector, and the current scale of the work is fairly limited. In most cases it is still confined mainly to low-skill workers, but in some it is spread across all skill levels. There could be potential for linking it more strategically to the Assembly's wider policies on supporting skills development in the workplace, including the learning brokerage role undertaken by its Human Resource Development (HRD) Advisers and its support for the Investors in People (IiP) standard<sup>196</sup>.

4.46 The Careers Wales companies' redundancy counselling work has already been discussed in paras.2.52-2.53. In unionised workplaces, it is usually carried out in close collaboration with trade unions. In the current economic climate, there are risks that the scale of the redundancy programmes will reduce the resources available for workforce development work.

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<sup>195</sup> Market and Opinion Research International (2002). *Demand for Information, Advice and Guidance*. Winchester: The Guidance Council.

<sup>196</sup> Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008). *Skills that Work for Wales: a Skills and Employment Strategy and Action Plan*, pp.53-56. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

4.47 The more general links with union learning representatives (ULRs) have been increasing, though on a somewhat ad hoc basis. The growth of such representatives has been a very significant development in relation to career development in the workplace. It was strongly endorsed by the Leitch Report, which noted that there were 15,000 trained ULRs across the UK, with a target of 22,000 by 2010<sup>197</sup>. The per capita density of ULRs is in general higher in Wales than in England. There could be scope for Careers Wales to play a more systematic capacity-building role in this area.

4.48 The possibility of developing charged services to employers has been considered by some of the Careers Wales companies, recognising that there is already a market where consultants charge large fees, which the companies could seek to enter. To date, however, they have done no more than dip their toes into these waters, partly because of lack of reserves to invest, and partly because of the culture in Wales to expect services like those offered by Careers Wales to be free of charge.

4.49 A wider issue which arises here is the relationship of Careers Wales to private-sector provision. In general, the private sector in career guidance delivery is much smaller than in England, where the issue of fee-paying and of the role of private markets was identified by OECD as a significant policy issue<sup>198</sup> – this is not currently the case in Wales. In relation to services to employers, however, a market does operate, and there are a number of consultancy companies that offer services relating to outplacement (sometimes using Careers Wales companies to deliver a ‘free service’ as part of the package) and to human resource development<sup>199</sup>. As private companies, Careers Wales companies can if they wish operate in this market, but if they became an ASPB or were merged into the Assembly (see para.1.33), it might be more difficult for them to do so. Either way, it might be more congruent with their wider public remit to focus more on a quality-assurance role here than on an extensive service-delivery role. The use being made of the Matrix standard in relation to employers and the private (as well as the public) sector in England may be worth exploring in this respect<sup>200</sup>.

### **Partnership working**

4.50 Alongside its relationships with other career guidance providers, the Careers Wales companies are involved in a large number of local networks. Most of them are concerned with young people rather than being all-age in nature. They fall into two main categories.

4.51 One is the Young People’s Partnerships (YPPs) set up in 2002 as a result of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, to deliver the ten entitlements of Extending Entitlement

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<sup>197</sup> Leitch Review of Skills (2006). *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy – World Class Skills*, p.92. London: The Stationery Office.

<sup>198</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2002). *OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies: United Kingdom Country Note*, pp.18-21. Paris: OECD.

<sup>199</sup> In addition, some private-sector training providers with contracts with public bodies – e.g. under New Deal – include guidance elements within their provision (usually at NVQ Level 4).

<sup>200</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, p.133. Paris: OECD.

(of which Education and Employment is one, and Access to Information and Guidance another). The YPPs include representatives from the local authority, other statutory sectors and the voluntary sector. They set the broad agenda for youth support services for 11-25-year-olds in their areas.

4.52 The other is the 14-19 Networks, established in 2004 to secure the implementation of the six key elements of 14-19 Learning Pathways for all 14-19 learners in their area. These Networks include local authorities, schools, the FE sector, some training providers and the voluntary sector (plus, in some areas, Jobcentre Plus). They are charged in particular with ensuring that a specified minimum range of 30 learning options are available to all 14-19 learners (see para.4.10).

4.53 Careers Wales companies are represented on all 22 14-19 Networks and all 22 YPPs – in each case, there is one in each Local Authority. An Estyn review of Careers Wales support for Learning Pathways reported that the Careers Wales companies contributed well to the partnerships, which valued their representation by senior managers with the capacity to make strategic decisions<sup>201</sup>. One of the strengths of the Careers Wales companies in these contexts is that they are able to contribute from the perspective of the young person's progression, taking into account both learning provider and employer perspectives. This enables them to play a valuable catalytic role.

4.54 Linked to this, it is worth noting the extent to which Careers Wales companies are increasingly being invited into co-ordinating roles. This is the case, for example, in relation to NEET young people (para.2.46), to young people with additional learning needs (para.2.50), to work-related education (para.4.9), and even possibly in relation to Learning Coaching (para.4.16).

4.55 All this work is however very resource-consuming, especially for senior management. Moulson & Prail reported management team members as spending something in the region of 20-40% of their time on partnering activities<sup>202</sup>. This raises issues about the appropriate balance between partnership/co-ordinating activities and service delivery, particularly since the former do not lead directly to measurable outputs or outcomes. There can also be tensions between the two roles (see para.4.9). In addition, partnership working can be frustrating. Nonetheless, it represents an important part of embedding the work of Careers Wales within local communities, and engaging at a strategic level in working out local solutions to the issues that confront them.

### **Strategic leadership**

4.56 Strategic leadership is an issue to which the OECD review attached considerable attention. It noted that across such a diffuse field, strategic leadership and co-ordination needed to be carried out by government in co-operation with other stakeholders –

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<sup>201</sup> Estyn (2008). *Supporting Learning Pathways*, p.4. Cardiff: Estyn.

<sup>202</sup> Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). *Careers Wales Review – Final Report*, p.24. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.



including education and training providers, employers, trade unions, community agencies, students, parents, consumers, and career guidance practitioners. It suggested that mechanisms for involving stakeholders could include permanent bodies for consultation and advice on which stakeholders were represented. In addition to broad tasks such as setting strategic directions, identifying gaps in services, and co-ordinating what different stakeholders did, such bodies could be given operational responsibility for tasks for which high levels of co-operation and collective ownership were needed. Examples included: the development of quality standards; and the development of new frameworks for career guidance training and qualifications<sup>203</sup>.

4.57 These issues might fruitfully be addressed in a wider UK perspective. We have already noted the importance of the UK context in relation to branding and marketing (paras.2.62-2.64), professional standards (para.3.9) and skills and welfare policy (paras.4.38-4.39). This suggests that there is a need for a more formal strategic leadership mechanism to bring together key policy-makers and stakeholders on a continuing basis, to share information and to address issues of common concern where policy co-ordination might be mutually beneficial. At present, contact has been based largely on informal contacts between the relevant civil servants in central government and in the devolved administrations; the demise of the Guidance Council has left a vacuum in terms of a wider UK-wide stakeholder consultation body<sup>204</sup>. The International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy held at Aviemore, Scotland, in October 2007, helped to forge closer links: the symposium was hosted jointly by the four home countries, and was planned by a steering group that contained representatives of all of them; this has provided the basis for some of the continuing conversations that have occurred since the event. But the informality of these contacts has allowed some important issues to slip between the net (notably the marketing issue raised in paras.2.62-2.64, which does not appear to have been discussed on a UK-wide basis).

4.58 These issues need also to be addressed within the context of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), which has recently been established by the EU member-states, with funding from the European Commission. The paper outlining the establishment of this Network pointed out that: 'National Guidance Fora or national co-ordination steering groups have been established in a number of Member States. These structures enable a broad range of stakeholders to develop consensus on strategic objectives, to co-operate on strategic tasks, and to monitor and support policy development.' It added that: 'Where national co-ordination bodies or fora exist, these provide a suitable basis for the composition of national delegations'<sup>205</sup>. A manual has been published by Cedefop to help countries to develop forums or other co-ordination mechanisms relevant to their needs, drawing from the experiences of other countries

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<sup>203</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, pp.124-125. Paris: OECD.

<sup>204</sup> Though one of the recognised weaknesses of the Council was lack of clarity about whether it was an English or a UK-wide body. See Alloway, J. (ed.) (2008). *The Story of the Guidance Council*. Leicester: National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education.

<sup>205</sup> European Commission (2007). Establishment of a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network: Conclusions and statement of principles of the meeting in Helsinki, 7-8 May 2007.

which have done so to date<sup>206</sup>. The role of the ELGPN has recently been strongly endorsed in a Resolution of the EU Council of Ministers<sup>207</sup>.

4.59 In the case of the UK, its representation in the ELGPN has so far been somewhat ad hoc, comprising representatives from England (DIUS), Scotland (Careers Scotland) and Northern Ireland (DELNI), but not Wales; communications with other relevant government departments and other stakeholders have been informal and limited. If the national delegation reported to a UK Forum/Network, which in turn linked to broader fora within each of the home countries, this would provide a robust basis for more broadly-based engagement with the European Network, as well as for attending to UK-wide issues.

4.60 Some starts have been made in the development of such a structure. Scotland has established a Scottish Guidance Network. In Northern Ireland, a recent consultation document on developing a careers education, information, advice and guidance strategy recommended the establishment of a Project Board, chaired jointly by DELNI and DENI, to take forward the implementation of the strategy; and also recommended the formation of a forum of delivery partners<sup>208</sup>. In England, one possibility would be to extend the remit of the national stakeholder group which is being established by DIUS to support the new adult advancement and careers service<sup>209</sup>. To ensure full Welsh involvement in these developments, but also to provide strategic leadership within Wales itself, it would be helpful if a Welsh forum of some appropriate kind could be established, linked to Welsh support for a UK forum. A possible convenor of such a body might be the Welsh Employment and Skills Board, which might open up a wider relationship with the UK Commission on Employment and Skills. This could put in place an infrastructure which would be of mutual benefit to the constituent home countries of the UK, and would also enable it to play a strong role in the ELGPN and in future International Symposia on Career Development and Public Policy<sup>210</sup>.

4.61 Not the least of the benefits of such developments would be to make it possible for Wales to showcase its considerable achievements more effectively than it has done to date<sup>211</sup>, and to benefit from sharing its experience with that of other countries. In recent years it has been much less visible internationally than the other home countries: although it co-hosted the International Symposium at Aviemore (see para.4.57 above), the other three home countries were each represented by teams of 3-5 people, whereas

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<sup>206</sup> Cedefop (2008). *Establishing and Developing Lifelong Guidance Policy Forums*. Thessaloniki: Cedefop.

<sup>207</sup> Council of the European Union (2008). *Council Resolution on Better Integrating Lifelong Guidance into Lifelong Learning Strategies*. Brussels: CEC.

<sup>208</sup> Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning (2007). *A Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy for Northern Ireland*, paras.8.8, 7.8.5. Belfast: DENI/DELNI.

<sup>209</sup> Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2008). *Shaping the Future – a New Adult Advancement and Careers Service for England*, p.16. London: DIUS. .

<sup>210</sup> The Aviemore symposium (para.4.57) was the fourth in a series of what have now become biennial events. The next one is to be held in New Zealand in November 2009. The usual policy is for one team from each country, so the team in New Zealand will probably need to be from the UK as a whole.

<sup>211</sup> Though it has been given some European visibility through the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning.

Wales was not represented at all; and, as noted in para.4.59, it has been the only home country not to be represented directly at meetings of the ELGPN. This has represented a wasted opportunity, and should be remedied.

## **Conclusion**

4.62 Most of the current work of the Careers Wales companies is concerned with service delivery. They engage with some elements of capacity building in their work with schools and colleges, with employers, and in the voluntary and community sector, but to a fairly limited extent. If the companies are to respond adequately to the range of potential need within a limited resource, there is a strong case for them to pay more attention to capacity-building strategies in the future. There might also be merit in exploring, in higher education but also possibly elsewhere, the scope for extending the Careers Wales brand to a wider range of provision, so enabling continuity of access to be maintained.

4.63 As an extension of its career guidance work, partnership working is an important part of the Careers Wales companies' role: its resource implications need to be recognised. There is also a strong case for a Welsh career guidance forum, possibly linked to the Welsh Employment and Skills Board, to provide strategic leadership in the wider career guidance field. This should be linked to a UK forum, to enable UK-wide issues to be addressed, and to provide a base for the UK to play a strong role in wider European and global networks.



## 5. Summing Up and Looking Forward

### The OECD benchmarks

5.1 This review has sought to examine the work of Careers Wales in relation to the benchmarks provided by the OECD Career Guidance Policy Review. In particular, it has reviewed its work in relation to the ten features of 'lifelong guidance systems' identified in the OECD review<sup>212</sup>.

- a. Transparency and ease of access over the lifespan, including a capacity to meet the needs of a diverse range of clients.
- b. Particular attention to key transition points over the lifespan.
- c. Flexibility and innovation in service delivery to reflect the differing needs and circumstances of diverse client groups.
- d. Processes to stimulate regular review and planning.
- e. Access to individual guidance by appropriately qualified practitioners for those who need such help, at times when they need it.
- f. Programmes to develop career-management skills.
- g. Opportunities to investigate and experience learning and work options before choosing them.
- h. Assured access to service delivery that is independent of the interests of particular institutions or enterprises.
- i. Access to comprehensive and integrated educational, occupational and labour market information.
- j. Involvement of relevant stakeholders.

Of these, (a)-(e) and (h)-(i) have been addressed in Section 2, and the others in Section 4.

5.2 The report has also sought to review the work of Careers Wales in relation to the six challenges to policy-makers which the OECD review indicated had received minimal attention in most OECD countries<sup>213</sup>:

- a. Ensuring that resource allocation decisions give the first priority to systems that develop career self-management skills and career information, and that delivery systems match levels of personal help, from brief to extensive, to personal needs and circumstances, rather than assuming that everybody needs intensive personal career guidance.

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<sup>212</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, pp.26, 138. Paris: OECD.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148.

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

Of these, (a) and part of (b) are addressed in Section 2, (f) in Section 4, and the rest in Section 3.

5.3 On most of these criteria, Careers Wales emerges strongly. There are however a number where work remains to be done. These are included in the lists of challenges and other suggestions later in this section.

## Strengths

5.4 On the basis of this review, it is clear that Careers Wales as currently structured has many strengths. Five stand out in particular.

5.5 The first is its **boundedness**. The OECD review suggested that ‘the priority for policy-makers in most OECD countries should be to create separate, and appropriate, occupational and organisational structures to deliver career guidance’<sup>214</sup>. Careers Wales provides a strong example of this approach. It has a clear and coherent mission: ‘developing people in Wales through lifelong career planning’ (para.1.7). Any pressures to blur this mission by broadening the remit, as has occurred in England (para.1.48), have largely been resisted. The education-business links provide some loosening in this respect (para.4.12). In general, however, the range of Careers Wales activities is coherent and synergistic, with each adding value to the others.

5.6 The second is the **all-age** nature of its services. The OECD review pointed out that such services have a number of organisational and resource-use advantages, including being more cost-effective by avoiding unnecessary duplication of resources (see para.1.42). They also enable young people to be familiarised at school with

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid, p.102.

services which they can use subsequently, avoid rigid cut-off points in supporting the transition from youth to adulthood, and offer potential synergies and added value from providing for both young people and adults within the same service framework<sup>215</sup>.

5.7 The third is its **professionalism**. Its services are, in general, highly regarded. Its volumes of service delivery are impressive. This is particularly the case in relation to young people, who receive more continuity of professional career guidance support than in most other countries. Close attention has been paid to quality assurance, including professional standards, inspection systems, and impact measurement. On all these criteria, it can justly claim to be world-class.

5.8 The fourth is the extent to which it is **embedded in Assembly policies**. From an Assembly perspective, it provides a strong citizen-facing and citizen-centred infrastructure through which the Assembly's policies can be advanced. This has been acknowledged by the Assembly in citing it as an example of 'putting citizens first' (para.1.12). It is evident, too, in the way that Careers Wales On-Line has been adopted both as the key guidance tool and as the key administrative tool for Learning Pathways 14-19 (para.2.25). In addition, Careers Wales performs important gate-keeping roles for a number of Assembly programmes, including Individual Learning Accounts (para.2.15), Skillbuild (para.2.44) and ReACT (para.2.53). Beyond this, it has potential to be used more extensively than at present to provide feedback to policy-makers on the impact on individuals of policies relating to education, training and employment, plus advocacy on individuals' unmet needs (para.1.18).

5.9 The fifth is the extent to which it is **embedded in local communities**. This is evident in its close involvement in local partnerships and co-ordinating roles (paras.4.50-4.55), and in the range of its local contacts and networks. It is particularly important in enabling it to attend to the differences between urban and rural areas, and between predominantly bilingual and predominantly English-speaking areas, and also to the distinctive community-development issues in relation to North Wales (para.1.22).

5.10 These strengths are closely inter-related. In any changes that are made, it is important that their essence should be built upon rather than eroded.

## Challenges

5.11 At the same time, it is clear that Careers Wales faces a number of major challenges.

5.12 The first is the need to pay more attention to the needs of **adults**. Although Careers Wales is all-age in the range of its services, only about 15% of its resources are currently allocated to support for adult clients<sup>216</sup>. This low allocation is now being

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<sup>215</sup> For an elaboration of these points, see Careers England (2007). *An All-Age Strategy for Career Guidance in England*. London: Careers England.

<sup>216</sup> Careers Wales (2008). *Careers Wales Paper 2: a Summary of Services Provided by Careers Wales*, p.5. Paper prepared for the Review of Careers Services in Wales.

questioned from three perspectives: the broad skills agenda (para.1.11); the impact of welfare reform (paras.4.38-4.39); and the likely massive growth of redundancies (para.2.52). Each of the three has potentially huge implications for demands on Careers Wales resources; together, their impact is likely to be irresistible.

5.13 The second is the need to determine whether Careers Wales is an **all-ability** as well as an all-age service. Up to the age of 16, it certainly is: it serves all young people. Thereafter, however, there is some tendency for it to be drawn towards lower skill levels. This is evident in the practice in some schools (though only some) of guidance for sixth-formers being managed by teachers rather than by Careers Wales advisers (para.2.37), in the fact that those entering higher education have access to a separate range of higher education careers services (paras.4.23ff), in the practice in some Careers Wales companies of sub-contracting services for graduates to these higher education careers services (para.4.30), and in the tendency for Careers Wales workforce development work to be targeted to low-skill workers (para.4.45). On the other hand, the Careers Wales vision of ‘developing people in Wales through lifelong career planning’ in principle applies to all, and the explicit goal of Careers Wales On-Line is to ‘enable everyone in Wales to develop their career and learning skills through their own e-portfolio and supporting site content’ (para.2.22). Moreover, anyone can ring the helpline (paras.2.10ff), and interviews can be provided to anyone who requests one and is prepared to wait (para.2.40): over two-thirds of adults interviewed have qualifications at Level 3 or above (para.2.38). The logic of this is that Careers Wales seeks to serve all citizens, but in differentiated ways.

5.14 If Careers Wales is substantially to extend its services to adults within its current service delivery model, this would require a massive increase in its resources. The case for some budgetary increase is strong. But the budgetary pressures within the Assembly (para.1.37) make it unlikely that any such increase will be sufficient without some significant **re-modelling** of services, making it possible to move to adults some of the resources currently devoted to young people<sup>217</sup>. This will need to include attention to the balance and interaction between individual interviews, group activities, and telephone and web-based services (para.2.29)<sup>218</sup>.

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<sup>217</sup> The Webb Report noted that ‘gradually, as the youth cohort reduces, some shift in investment will become possible’. But it added that this ‘will not be sufficient to support post-19 learners; new funds or savings in other aspects of the work of the Department will be needed to develop the service’. Webb, A., Drury, S. & Griffiths, G. (2007). *Promise and Performance: the Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the Context of the Learning Country: Vision into Action*, p.89. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. It should also be noted that although the size of the youth cohort is now declining, it is due to increase again from around 2015.

<sup>218</sup> A succinct summary of the research on relative impact, drawn from meta-analyses in the USA, is that if the aim is to provide the greatest gain in the shortest amount of time for the client, the individual interview is far the most effective intervention. But if the criterion is the greatest gain for the greatest number of clients per unit of adviser resource, then other interventions provide higher levels of productivity. See Watts, A.G. & Dent, G. (2006). The ‘P’ word: productivity in the delivery of career guidance services. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34(2), 177-189.



5.15 The need for such re-modelling has already been recognised by Careers Wales in relation to services for young people considered in their own terms. The demands of Learning Pathways 14-19 for help at each of four decision points cannot be met within the current model, and it has accordingly been acknowledged that there will be a need to move towards more differentiated service delivery (para.2.33). There is a strong case for such principles to be applied more widely, and more radically, across the full range of Careers Wales services and across the full range of its existing and potential clients.

5.16 This will be a major challenge for Careers Wales. In contrast to the high standards of its work on the quality of its services (para.5.7), it has so far given much less attention than comparable organisations in England, Scotland and New Zealand to closer integration of service channels, to differentiated service delivery, to systematic approaches to customer segmentation, and to proactive marketing of its services (Section 2). These issues are closely inter-linked. All need to be addressed more systematically and more strategically than they have to date.

5.17 This re-modelling needs also to attend to the relationships with other career guidance providers, and to exploring the extent to which Careers Wales can devote more of its resources to **building the capacity of others** to deliver services. This will require a major review of the contractual arrangements with the Assembly, which currently focus mainly on target volumes related to direct service delivery (para.1.39). Alongside this, there is a case for exploring the scope, in higher education but also possibly elsewhere, for **extending the Careers Wales brand** to a wider range of provision, so enabling continuity of access to be maintained (paras.4.33, 4.49).

5.18 There will be fears that addressing these issues will risk compromising on quality. More constructively, it will require reframing of how quality is defined. But the current model is not sustainable if access is to be significantly extended.

5.19 If these changes are to be achieved, **strong leadership** will be required, alongside a strong interface with the Assembly. In both of these respects, the current structure of six independent Careers Wales companies, with a seventh jointly-owned company which is a servant of the six, is problematic. As outlined in Section 1, both leadership and the relationship with the Assembly are too diffused.

5.20 There is accordingly a strong case for **restructuring** the organisational framework of Careers Wales. Options range from a direct contract with the Careers Wales Association alongside the existing company contracts, through the CWA being the prime contractor and sub-contracting to the careers companies, to a unitary organisation (a single company, or an ASPB, or being merged into the Assembly) (paras.1.30-1.35). The centrality of the issue of leadership (reinforced by the example of New Zealand – see para.1.47) tends to lean against the first of these options, and to favour the stronger options.

5.21 Alongside this, there is a parallel need for the Assembly to strengthen or reframe its Careers Policy Branch as its interface with Careers Wales.

5.22 Finally, there is a strong case for a **Welsh career guidance forum**, possibly linked to the Welsh Employment and Skills Board, to provide strategic leadership in the wider career guidance field. This should be **linked to a UK forum**, to enable UK-wide issues (e.g. in relation to branding and marketing, to professional standards, and to skills and welfare policy) to be addressed, and to provide a base for the UK to play a strong role in wider European and global networks.

### **Other suggestions**

5.23 Other suggestions made in the course of the report have included:

- a. When the current round of Estyn inspections ends in 2009, the opportunity should be taken to review whether its inspection framework and the Careers Wales Guidance standards might be aligned more closely (para.2.6).
- b. In developing Careers Wales On-Line, 'hooks' need to be developed to encourage users to continue to use the e-portfolio post-19; this should include exploring the possibilities for interoperability with e-portfolios in higher education (para.2.26).
- c. In developing Careers Wales On-Line, attention should also be given to exploring possibilities for greater interactivity with advisers and others, linked to the social-networking opportunities offered by Web 2.0 technologies (para.2.27).
- d. Work should be done to explore the possibility of setting up an integrated customer management system, recording all interactions with the same client regardless of which channel is being used (para.2.29).
- e. More attention should be given to management and leadership training (para.3.11).
- f. Consideration should be given to commissioning longer-term impact measurement studies, possibly on a triennial basis (para.3.22).

### **Conclusion**

5.24 Careers Wales is a strong and highly professional organisation, of which the Assembly should be proud. In its professionalism and quality-assurance processes, it is world-class. But at present it is not adequately carrying out its all-age remit. It is now under increasing pressures to do so. If it is to meet these and other challenges, it needs to make radical changes in its models of service delivery, without eroding quality. This will demand strong leadership, which in turn requires a more integrated structure and a strengthened interface with the Assembly. If these changes are made, and handled well, Careers Wales has the capability to become a fully world-class service and to make an even greater contribution to the development of Welsh citizens and hence to the economic and social prosperity of Wales.

## Annex: Visit Programme

Monday 17	Tuesday 18	Wednesday 19	Thursday 20	Friday 21
<p><b>Venue:</b> Welsh Assembly Government Cathays Park Cardiff</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 9.00am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Careers policy</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Mike Moss (Head of Careers Policy Team) Mike Barry (Careers Policy Team) Neil Thomas (Careers Wales Review)</p>	<p><b>Venue:</b> Cardiff &amp; Vale Youth Gateway Office 33 Charles Street Cardiff</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 8.00-9.30am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Strategic discussion on role, responsibility and priorities of Careers Wales within the non-advanced education sector</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Brian Lightman (Head Teacher and Immediate Past President of Of ASCL) Malcolm Charnley (Principal &amp; Fforwm Director)</p>	<p><b>Venue:</b> CWA Caerphilly (all day)</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 9.00am-12noon</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Consider role and Responsibility of CWA – strategic &amp; operational focusing particularly on CWO ESF marketing and information Governance</p>	<p><b>Venue:</b> North West Head Office 5 Chestnut Court Parc Menai Bangor</p> <p><b>Time:</b> (all day)</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 9.15- 9.45am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Strategic and operational links between the higher education sector and Careers Wales</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Dr David Roberts (Registrar – Bangor University)</p>	<p><b>Venue:</b> Park Plaza Hotel Cardiff</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 9.30am-12.45pm</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Chief Executives</p> <p><b>Venue:</b> Welsh Assemlly Government Cathays Park Cardiff</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 1.15pm</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Meeting with Wales Employment &amp; Skills Board Task and Finish Group Members of the appointed to provide an external reference to the Careers Wales</p>
<p><b>Time:</b> 10.00am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Extending Entitlement</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Suzanne Chisholm (Head of Rights and Entitlement Branch)</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 9.40pm-10.45am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b></p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 9.00am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> CWOL strategic and operational overview including future development</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 9.45am-10.30am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Overview of Careers Wales Guidance Standards</p>	

Monday 17	Tuesday 18	Wednesday 19	Thursday 20	Friday 21
<p>John Pugsley (Senior Policy &amp; Implementation Manager 14-19)</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 11.00am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Additional learning needs</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Bethan Cowan (Senior Additional Learning Needs Policy Development).</p>	<p>All-Wales helpline: Relationship with WAG/ partners/England</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Pam Gilson (CWC&amp;V)</p> <p>Sian Powell (DCCELLS Head of External Communication &amp; Marketing)</p> <p>Mark Freeman (Chief Executive - CWCV)</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 10.30am-12.45pm</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> NEETs: strategic/operational discussions on role &amp; responsibility of CW including Learning Coach personal support placing &amp; referral examples of local delivery</p>	<p><b>Meet:</b> Paul Messer and Mark Freeman</p> <p><b>9.30am Schools Meet:</b> Cedric Burden (Deputy Head - Dyffryn School)</p> <p>Glan Rees (Assistant Head Teacher - Glyn Derw)</p> <p><b>10.30am</b> ESF: strategic and operational overview</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Kath Bermingham Andrew Watson Trina Neilson</p> <p><b>11.00am</b> Marketing and information: strategic and operational overview</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Isobel Brown Andrew Watson</p>	<p>and their Implementation</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Sarah Finnegan Dehn (CWNW)</p> <p>Joyce M'Caw (CWNE)</p> <p>Delyth Ellis-Jones (CWNW)</p> <p>Norma Jones</p> <p>Suzanne Metcalf (CWNE)</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 10.40-10.50am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Collaboration with Probation Service</p> <p><b>Tel. call:</b> Judith Williams (Senior Probation Officer North Wales Probation Service)</p>	<p><b>Review:</b> Marcella Maxwell (Chair of Group)</p> <p>Danny Saunders (Group Member)</p> <p><b>Venue:</b> Jobcentre Plus Offices, Companies House Cardiff</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 3.00pm</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Links with Jobcentre Plus</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Bon Westcott (IES &amp; Welsh Assembly Government Relations)</p> <p>Sam Huckle (Head of Employability Branch (WAG))</p>
<p>Employer engagement skills &amp; employment policy</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Bob Waller (Head of Skills Policy, Employability &amp; Knowledge Transfer)</p>				

Monday 17	Tuesday 18	Wednesday 19	Thursday 20	Friday 21
<p><b>Time:</b> 1.00pm Lunch</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 1.30pm</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Higher Education Careers Services</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Ruth Hayton (Senior HE Policy Manager) Jackie Cresswell-Griffith (Higher Education Funding Council for Wales) Emma Harrison (Chair - Welsh Higher Education Careers Services)</p> <p><b>Venue:</b> Estyn HQ, Anchor House Cardiff</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 3.00pm</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 11am-12.30pm</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Shirley Rogers (CWC&amp;V) Simon Morris (Cardiff CYPP) John Fabes (Cardiff 14-19 Network) plus training providers - Andrew Cooksley (ACT) Sportrain Jim Holohan (Sportrain) and voluntary sector – Sam Austin (Llamau Housing)</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 12.30-1.00pm</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Shirley Rogers (CWC&amp;V) Graham Bowd (CWW) Rhys Cornwall (CWMGP)</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 11.45am</p> <p>CWA: strategic and operational overview</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Andrew Watson</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 12.30pm Lunch</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 1.00pm</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Additional learning needs: strategic/operational</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 1.00-1.45pm</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Alison Jones (CWW) Anne Woodhouse (CWC&amp;V) Steve Hole (CWMGP) Jayne Tilley (CWMGP)</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 10.50-11.00am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Employer links</p> <p><b>Tel. Call:</b> Caroline Langford (Maelor Hospital)</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 11.00-11.45am</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> All-age careers Guidance (partner organisations)</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Angharad ap Iwerth (Genesis Manager - Gwynedd) Mike Jackson (Consultant Clinical Psychologist – North West Wales NHS Trust) Mary Caldwell (North Wales Women's Centre) Cadi Evanson (Communities Next)</p>	

Monday 17	Tuesday 18	Wednesday 19	Thursday 20	Friday 21
<p><b>Activity:</b> Estyn</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Bernard O'Reilly Alun Connick</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 1.00pm Lunch</p> <hr/> <p><b>Time:</b> 1.30pm-2.15pm</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> General discussion about employer engagement to cover:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>employers supporting CW activities e.g. ed-bus awareness enterprise activities curriculum enrichment etc</li> <li>CW support to employers e.g. vacancies strategic engagement including: SSCs FSW EEW = EE report and WAG policy</li> <li></li> </ol>	<p><b>Time:</b> 1.45-2.30pm</p> <p>Additional learning needs Stakeholders (tel. calls)</p> <p><b>1.45pm</b> Andy Henderson (Head - Special Needs School)</p> <p><b>2pm</b> Paul Brown Coleg Gwent Independent Living</p> <p><b>2.15pm</b> Nicola Crews RNIB</p> <hr/> <p><b>Time:</b> 2.40-3.00pm</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Parc Prison and offender work</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Cathy Murphy (CWMGP) Michael Keoharne (CWMGP)</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 11.45am-12.00noon</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> ReACT</p> <p><b>Tel. call:</b> Eleri Lewis (ReAct)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Time:</b> 12.00 noon-12.30pm</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Provision of youth guidance services in a bilingual and rural context</p> <p><b>Meet:</b> Dr Brian Jones (Headteacher -Ysgol David Hughes) Gwyn Parri (Head of Education Service, Anglesey Council)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Time:</b> 12.30-1.00pm Lunch</p>	

Monday 17	Tuesday 18	Wednesday 19	Thursday 20	Friday 21
	<p><b>Meet:</b> Trina Neilson (CWG) Jeff Evans (CWC&amp;V) Beth Titley (CWMGP) Andrew Kirby (CWW)</p>	<p>Sacha Davies (CWC&amp;V)</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 3.00-3.30pm <b>Activity:</b> All-Wales Pls <b>Meet:</b> Ray Collier</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 1.00-1.45pm <b>Activity:</b> All-age careers guidance - operational focus of guidance services in education <b>Meet:</b> Alwyn Williams (Deputy Head – Ysgol y Bont) Rhian Jones (Careers y Moelwyn) J. Phillips (Manager – Deeside College) Heather Roberts (local employer contributing to work in education) <b>Tel. call:</b> Linda Coolidge (Careers Co-ordinator – Ysgol Bryn Hyfryd)</p>	
	<p><b>Time:</b> 2.20pm Dave Rosser CBI <b>(Tel. Call)</b></p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 3.30pm <b>Activity:</b> Wrap up <b>Meet:</b> Ann Evans</p>		
	<p><b>Time:</b> 2.40pm Young Enterprise - Anne Colwil <b>(Tel. Call)</b></p>			
	<p><b>Time:</b> 3.00pm WFD and redundancy: Tom Whyatt (Continental Teves, Blaenau Gwent) <b>(Tel. Call)</b></p>			

Monday 17	Tuesday 18	Wednesday 19	Thursday 20	Friday 21
	<p><b>Time:</b> 3.30pm Deri Bevan, Union Learning Fund TUC (Tel. Call)</p>		<p><b>Time:</b> 1.45-2.30pm <b>Activity:</b> Careers Wales work with the FE sector <b>Meet:</b> Dr Haydn Edwards (Principal, Coleg Menai), Annie Williams (Principal Coleg Harlech I – WEA)</p>	
	<p><b>Time:</b> 4.00pm <b>Meet:</b> Trina Neilson Beth Titley, Andrew Kirby</p>		<p><b>Time:</b> 2.30-3.15pm <b>Activity:</b> Careers Wales contribution to 14-19 Learning Pathways <b>Meet:</b> Elfyn Jones (Gwynedd) Janice Wingett (Wrexham) Ellen Vaughan Williams (Learning Coach)</p>	
	<p><b>Time:</b> 4.35pm <b>Meet:</b> Trina Neilson Mark Freeman</p>			
	<p><b>EVENING:</b> (Phone call to June Jensen President, Association for Careers Education &amp; Guidance)</p>	<p><b>EVENING:</b> (Phone call to Gwyn Thomas, Chair of Board, CWNW)</p>		



Monday 17	Tuesday 18	Wednesday 19	Thursday 20	Friday 21
			Kerry Uguart (Learning Coach) Ffiona Williams (CWNW)	
			<b>Time:</b> 3.15-4.15pm <b>Activity:</b> Overview <b>Meet:</b> Sarah Finnegan-Dehn, Joyce M'Caw	

Other telephone conversations:

26/11/08 - Mike Hopkins, Head of Lifelong Learning and Providers Division, DCELLS, Welsh Assembly Government  
 27/11/08 - Iwan Trefor Jones, member of Wales Employment & Skills Board Task and Finish Group

In addition, separate pre-meetings were held on 10/11/08 with members of DCELLS and with the Chief Executives of the Careers Wales companies.