

The Delivery of Careers Education and Guidance in Schools

Marian Morris, Mark Rickinson and Deborah Davies
National Foundation for Educational Research

**Research Report
No 296**

The Delivery of Careers Education and Guidance in Schools

***Marian Morris, Mark Rickinson and Deborah Davies
National Foundation for Educational Research***

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education and Skills.

© Queen's Printer 2001. Published with the permission of DfES on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to The Crown Copyright Unit, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ.

ISBN 1 84185 571 5
September 2001

CONTENTS

	page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The Research Context	2
1.2 Conduct of the Research	4
1.3 Structure of the Report	5
2. CAREERS EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE PROVISION IN SCHOOLS	7
2.1 The Careers Service Perspective	7
2.2 Provision in Schools	8
2.3 Reasons for Variability in Provision	11
3. THE CAPACITY OF SCHOOLS TO DELIVER CAREERS EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE	15
3.1 Building Capacity: The Careers Service Role	15
3.2 Building Capacity: The Situation in Schools	17
3.3 Schools' Awareness and Understanding of Careers Education and Guidance	18
3.4 Supporting Structures	24
4. SCHOOL AND CAREERS SERVICE LINKS	27
4.1 The Focusing Agenda: Careers Service Staffing Structures	28
4.2 The Focusing Agenda: The Impact on Young People	29
4.3 The Focusing Agenda: The Impact on Relationships with Schools	31
4.4 The Focusing Agenda: The Impact on Working Practices	34
5. OUTCOMES OF THE FOCUSING AGENDA?	41
5.1 Differences in Careers Education and Guidance Provision and Outcomes	41
5.2 Differences in Practice Between Schools	43
5.3 Differences in Practice Between Regions	47
6. TOWARDS CONNEXIONS?	49
6.1 Clarifying Issues of Need	49
6.2 Enhancing Capacity in Schools	51
6.3 Addressing Training and Information Needs	52
6.4 The Way Forward?	52
6.5 In Conclusion	54
APPENDIX I	i
APPENDIX 2	ix

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research could not have been undertaken without the kind cooperation of staff in schools and in the careers services and local Connexions services, who all generously gave of their time to complete questionnaires, take part in interviews and organise case study visits to their institutions. Particular thanks must go to the Careers Service National Association for their help in the early stages of this project; to the many careers service chief executives and other senior officers who contributed to the wealth of information garnered from the email survey; to the operations managers, careers advisers and Personal Advisers who took part in the face-to-face visits and telephone interviews; to the careers coordinators who completed a detailed questionnaire survey within a very tight timescale; and to the headteachers, senior managers, careers coordinators and students who took part in the case study work.

The work could not have been completed without a concerted team effort and grateful thanks are due to Pat Ashby, Peter Dickson, Julie Nelson, Monica Taylor and Penelope Weston for their sterling work in conducting many of the fieldwork visits; to Lisa O'Donnell for her help in setting up the visits and contributing to the analysis of data; to Samantha Higgs and Jo Morrison for their invaluable statistical input; and to Vivien Cannon and Julia Rose for their excellent administrative and secretarial support.

Finally, the NFER team are very grateful for the continuing support of Tim Shiles, the Project manager at DfES, and for the help and insights of Stephen Witt and Paul Rasch, both of DfES, who formed the steering group for this research.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, there have been significant shifts in the statutory, structural and curriculum importance accorded to the provision of careers education and guidance. At a national level, considerable efforts have been made to enhance careers education and guidance provision, in terms of both funding mechanisms and developments in legislation. More recently, the introduction of the so-called ‘focusing agenda’ in 1998,¹ along with the launch of the Connexions Strategy in 2000² have increased expectations of the provision that schools, in particular, should be making for young people. To what extent is there any indication that the various strategies have had an impact on the quality of provision being made by schools or careers services? Is there evidence that schools now have the capacity to support, in an effective manner, the implementation of the new Connexions Service?

This report presents the findings from a research project carried out by the NFER between December 2000 and March 2001. The study was commissioned by the DfEE in order to:

- ♦ provide information on the extent, type and quality of careers education and guidance being delivered in schools and careers services;
- ♦ suggest how schools and careers services should best seek to deliver careers education and guidance in the context of the new Connexions Service.

More specifically, the research sought to look at the changes that had been brought about as a result of the 1997 Education Act,³ the 1998 focusing agenda; and, in pilot areas, the new Connexions Service. In addition, the research aimed to examine what practitioners thought had been the relative impact of regulations allowing the disapplication of key stage 4 National Curriculum subjects;⁴ the introduction of citizenship education and policy initiatives such as Excellence in Cities.

¹ DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (1998). *The Requirements and Guidance for Careers Services 1998*. Sheffield: DfEE.

² DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (2000). *Connexions: the Best Start in Life for Every Young Person*. London: DfEE.

³ GREAT BRITAIN. STATUTES (1997). *Education Act 1997. Chapter 44*. London: The Stationery Office.

⁴ GREAT BRITAIN. STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS (1998). *Education, England and Wales. The Education (National Curriculum) (Exceptions at Key Stage 4) Regulations 1998 (SI 1998/2021)*. London: The Stationery Office. These, initially, allowed for the disapplication of the curriculum at key stage 4 in order to make provision for programmes of extended work-related learning and have now been extended to include consolidation of learning or specific curricular emphases for selected students.

1.1 The Research Context

Following the major changes to contractual arrangements for careers services that took place in the early- to mid-1990s,⁵ and the introduction of a statutory obligation to provide careers guidance services to all young people from age 13,⁶ the 1997 Education Act made it a requirement that all schools should provide a minimum programme of careers education and ensure that all young people, from age 13, had access to impartial careers information.⁷ In that same year, the Government, in its *Excellence in Schools* White Paper, also identified aspects of careers education and guidance as an element of its strategy to promote higher educational standards and more effective schools.⁸ Other activities, such as target setting, action planning and promoting student personal development,⁹ which are central to that strategy for raising standards, could also have been expected to enhance the position of careers education and guidance in schools.

More recently, two particular developments have had a direct role to play in emphasising the role that schools need to play in making appropriate provision for students:

- ◆ Firstly, the progressive introduction from 1998 onward of a policy focus for the work of careers services, such that they have been expected to focus their work on young people deemed to be ‘*most in need*’.¹⁰ Under the terms of the new Planning Guidance, target groups of young people were prioritised for careers service support. These included those not in learning or work post-16¹¹ and young people in both compulsory and post-16 education who were ‘at risk’ of not remaining in learning. Schools were primarily responsible for supporting students outside the target group. This change, in essence, highlighted a more specific role for schools to play in ensuring that all young people had access to appropriate careers education and guidance.

⁵ GREAT BRITAIN. STATUTES (1993). *Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993. Chapter 19*. London: HMSO. Note that, under that Act, there was no upper age limit for those with special needs.

⁶ The Competitiveness White Paper redefined and extended the role of the careers service and gave an *entitlement* to careers education and guidance for young people aged 11 to 18. GREAT BRITAIN. PARLIAMENT. HOUSE OF COMMONS (1994). *Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win* (Cm. 2563). London: HMSO.

⁷ GREAT BRITAIN. STATUTES (1997). *Education Act 1997. Chapter 44*. London: The Stationery Office. Earlier, in 1994, additional DfEE funds had been made available, through the Careers Library Initiative, to improve and augment the delivery of careers information and computer-assisted guidance in schools.

⁸ GREAT BRITAIN. PARLIAMENT. HOUSE OF COMMONS (1997). *Excellence in Schools* (Cm. 3681). London: The Stationery Office.

⁹ This would include initiatives such as Progress File, which seeks to underpin student personal development.

¹⁰ This was presaged in the DfEE’s annual Planning Guidance for careers services in 1998–99 and the 1998 revision of the *Requirements and Guidance for Careers Services* (DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (1998). *The Requirements and Guidance for Careers Services 1998*. Sheffield: DfEE) and was more fully articulated in the Planning Guidance for 1999–2000 (this was published in January 1999).

¹¹ Following the guidance issued in spring 1999, this subsequently incorporated Learning Gateway.

- ♦ Secondly, the stipulations made for schools choosing to disapply key stage 4 National Curriculum subjects in order to implement extended work-related learning.¹² Under the 1998 regulations, there is a clear requirement for schools to ensure specific careers-related support for students *prior* to taking part in such programmes. This provision has been extended to the two new purposes for which disapplication is allowed: consolidation of learning and emphasis of a curriculum area.

However, the extent to which careers education and guidance provision has been enhanced is open to question. Research immediately prior to the implementation of focusing suggested that '*curriculum pressures and timetable constraints appear to have militated against any real increase in status for careers education and guidance...*'.¹³ In that same year, a survey carried out by the National Association of Careers Guidance Teachers found that less than 50% of schools believed that they were meeting the requirements of the 1997 Education Act.¹⁴ For many schools, it appeared that individual performance review and target setting have been focused primarily on promoting attainment in National Curriculum subjects rather than on promoting the development of self-directed learners with good career planning or management skills. Research by Morris *et al.* (2000) suggests that few schools appear to have made a clear or overt link between academic, personal and career guidance, even though there is some indication that careers education and guidance can make a significant contribution to school improvement.¹⁵

In addition, more recent research suggests that, while most schools provided for careers interviews for students taking part in extended work-related learning, these were not always specific to students' programmes, nor did they necessarily take place before such programmes began.¹⁶ Moreover, while careers advisers have clearly played some role in the programmes, their involvement in this has varied, as has the extent to which schools kept them informed about the programmes. This suggests that there are still some issues to be addressed in establishing active partnerships between some schools and their careers services.

¹² GREAT BRITAIN. STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS (1998). *Education, England and Wales. The Education (National Curriculum) (Exceptions at Key Stage 4) Regulations 1998* (SI 1998/2021). London: The Stationery Office.

¹³ MORRIS, M., LINES, A. and GOLDEN, S. (1999). *The Impact of Careers Education and Guidance on Young People in Years 9 and 10: a Follow Up Study* (RD 20). Sheffield: DfEE.

¹⁴ NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CAREERS GUIDANCE TEACHERS (1999). *Survey of Careers Education and Guidance in British Schools*. Avon: NACGT. Two years after the introduction of the legislation, 49.6% of schools said they were still not meeting the requirements of the Act.

¹⁵ MORRIS, M., RUDD, P., NELSON, J. and DAVIES, D. (2000). *The Contribution of Careers Education and Guidance to School Effectiveness in 'Partnership' Schools* (DfEE Research Report 198). Sheffield: DfEE.

¹⁶ NELSON, J., MORRIS, M., RICKINSON, M., BLENKINSOP, S. and SPEILHOFER, T. (forthcoming). *Disapplying National Curriculum Subjects to Facilitate Extended Work-Related Learning at Key Stage 4: an Evaluation*. Sheffield: DfEE.

This is a particular issue in the light of the Government's Connexions strategy (and specifically in relation to the new Connexions Service) outlined in February 2000.¹⁷ At a fundamental level, this new service has major implications for existing careers services and schools. This is not only in terms of the balance and focus of work, but also in terms of the interactions and working practices that will take place within and between schools, careers services and other agencies. The creation of a single contact point for young people (their named Personal Adviser), through which their individual needs can be met '*in an integrated and coherent manner*', poses a number of issues, not least of which is identifying precisely what that role encompasses.¹⁸

For schools, supporting the implementation of the Connexions strategy and the Connexions Service poses a significant challenge. To what extent do they (and are they) able to reconcile their perceived role in pursuing academic excellence for their students with the need to provide much wider support and longer-term careers guidance for their young people – a role that some, perhaps, have seen as incidental to, or even conflicting with, their role in raising academic standards? And to what extent have their experiences under the focusing agenda enabled them to gear up to meet that challenge? These questions were central to the research upon which this report is based.

1.2 Conduct of the Research

In order to obtain the widest cross-section of views, along with some in-depth understanding of the issues, the project adopted a mixed methodology, which took into account the need to provide both retrospective and current views of the state of careers education and guidance provision in schools and careers services. The project was conducted over the period of one academic term (spring 2001) and, in brief, included:¹⁹

- ♦ A postal survey to schools about their careers education and guidance practices. This survey, which took place over a six-week period in January and February 2001, was administered to a nationally representative sample of some 986 schools, with **528 schools** responding by the end of February (a 54% response rate).²⁰
- ♦ An email survey of **all careers service chief executives**. Detailed responses were received from 37 of the 51 companies then contracted to DfEE (a 73% response rate). These companies represented more than two-thirds of all the careers service areas in the country (45 of the 66) and

¹⁷ DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (2000). *Connexions: the Best Start in Life for Every Young Person*. London: DfEE.

¹⁸ In a recent conference report, Hughes and Morgan (2000) highlighted, for instance, the apparent '*confusion [that exists] in relation to the respective roles of Learning Mentors and Personal Advisers*'. HUGHES, D. and MORGAN, S. (2000). *Research to Inform the Development of the New Connexions Service* (Occasional Paper). Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies.

¹⁹ More detailed methodological notes can be found in Appendix 1.

²⁰ A comparative breakdown of the respondents against the survey sample and the national population can be found in Appendix 1. Respondents were fully representative, across all of the identified criteria, of both the drawn sample and of the national population of schools.

included responses from services in each of the nine Government Office regions.²¹

- ♦ In-depth case-studies of **28 schools**, with at least three schools in each of the nine Government Office regions. These schools were selected to reflect a broad range of different criteria, including geographical location; school size, type and age range; socio-economic indicators and academic performance. The case studies involved interviews with 25 senior managers,²² 22 careers coordinators and one work experience coordinator and 27 careers advisers linked to the 28 schools;²³ analysis of documentary evidence, including Partnership Agreements and curriculum documents; and group discussions with **164 Year 11 students**.²⁴
- ♦ The case studies were augmented with in-depth interviews with **operations managers** from the schools' local careers services. In all, 20 careers services were visited during the study: in eight cases, the careers service covered two of the selected schools.

Data from all interviewees and respondents have been aggregated and anonymised: any school or student names used in the report are pseudonyms.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The following chapters provide a synthesis of the various data collected during the course of the research. Chapter 2 provides an overview of current practice in school. Chapter 3 critically examines the current capacity of schools to provide careers education and guidance and explores the extent to which such provision is supported structurally, drawing on survey data and illuminative information from teachers and students in case-study schools and from careers service personnel. Chapter 4 looks at developing issues and emerging concerns over links between careers services and schools, from the perspective of school and careers service managers. The characteristics of schools providing different levels of guidance and support are outlined in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 looks at some of the issues surrounding the preconditions that may be necessary for the successful implementation of the Connexions Service. The final chapter of the report critically examines the extent to which the focusing policy has been effective.

²¹ It should be noted that careers services covering more than one geographical area often completed more than one response (details may be found in Appendix 1). The data presented here collates all of the responses, but avoids double counting where a corporate response or strategy was indicated.

²² Five senior managers were also careers coordinators.

²³ The careers adviser in one school was on leave during the school visit. Subsequent attempts to conduct the interview within the fieldwork period were unsuccessful.

²⁴ The numerical data, based on short proformas completed by each of these young people prior to the discussion, is based on 158 students: proformas were not completed by students in one case-study school. The discussions built upon the data generated in research previously conducted with 126 Year 11 students and reported in STONEY, S., ASHBY, P., GOLDEN, S. and LINES, A. (1998). *Talking about 'Careers': Young People's Views of Careers Education and Guidance at School. Executive Summary – November 1998* (RD 18A). Sheffield: DfEE.

2. CAREERS EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE PROVISION IN SCHOOLS

The advent of the new local Connexions Services, with their stress on active partnerships between schools and other agencies, places a particular emphasis on the ability of schools to identify and support young people's differentiated guidance needs. A key question, therefore, is whether the various statutory and structural changes have developed or enhanced the capacity of schools to undertake this role. Is there any evidence that the position of careers education and guidance in schools has become more firmly established than in the past? Have the ambivalent attitudes of senior managers that were noted in earlier research become more positive?²⁵

2.1 The Careers Service Perspective

At an operational level, the picture would appear to be mixed. To begin with, some 44% of surveyed schools thought that the 1997 Education Act²⁶ had a positive influence on their careers education and guidance provision. However, the impact of the legislative change was seen as comparatively insignificant by careers service staff. While nine chief executives noted a marginal effect, mainly in terms of the leverage the Act enabled careers services to exert on those seen as the '*weakest schools*', the predominant view was that the legislation had played no significant role for the many mainstream schools with some basic programme already in place. Operations managers indicated that, even though it may have prompted schools to ensure that there was at least minimum provision, it had made no difference to schools' '*understanding*' of careers education and guidance.

By and large, the majority of chief executives, whose views were echoed by their operations managers, felt that the Act's '*light touch approach*', lack of accompanying statutory guidelines and '*tenuous link*' to the Ofsted inspection framework were inadequate to initiate any increased management thrust towards improved careers education and guidance in schools. In the words of one respondent: '*Legislation does not change attitudes...For many [heads] it is still only the league tables that matter*'.

²⁵ See, for example, MORRIS, M., LINES, A. and GOLDEN, S. (1999). *The Impact of Careers Education and Guidance on Young People in Years 9 and 10: a Follow Up Study* (RD 20). Sheffield: DfEE.

²⁶ GREAT BRITAIN. STATUTES (1997). *Education Act 1997. Chapter 44*. London: The Stationery Office.

The guidance that heralded the focusing agenda²⁷ was felt, by contrast, to have had a more marked impact. Careers service managers said that it had prompted a reassessment of the ways in which they worked with schools, leading in some instances to better and clearer identification of young people's guidance needs. Few careers service personnel, however, felt that refocusing had led to a significant '*shouldering of responsibility*' in schools. The willingness of some schools to tailor their provision to meet young people's differentiated needs was not universal. Many careers service respondents indicated that '*schools which were already good have got far better; those which were bad have got worse...when they see a lowering of our input, they make a parallel reduction in theirs!*'. According to one chief executive, this was particularly noticeable in '*high-achieving schools [where refocusing] has in some cases resulted in reduced [careers service] influence and...careers programmes...have weakened. There is therefore no evidence that refocusing has inspired better programmes – exactly the reverse*'. At school level, there was some tacit support for this view: more than half of the surveyed schools (57%) felt that the introduction of priority target groups for guidance had a negative impact on the overall provision their school made for careers education and guidance, despite the fact that some 67% said they had modified their programmes in order to cope with changed priorities in the careers service.

So what is the current picture in schools? Has the focusing agenda enhanced programmes or, conversely, led to a deterioration in schools' careers education and guidance provision? What lies behind any such identified changes?

2.2 Provision in Schools

Survey and case-study evidence suggests that, at its best, careers education and guidance was clearly integrated into the curriculum (through work-related learning, for example) and was linked to students' performance reviews and target setting. Elsewhere, insufficient time allocations, untrained coordinators and low levels of senior management commitment meant that young people came unprepared to interviews and demonstrated little readiness for guidance. How widespread were these different patterns?

At the most basic level, it was evident that more than 95% of schools made some careers education and guidance provision for students in Years 9 to 11. This was primarily through Personal and Social Education (PSE), while just under 90% of those with sixth forms made such provision, mainly through the tutorial programme, for those in Years 12 and 13.²⁸ Overall time allocations were higher than had been noted in 1998, particularly for students in Years 10 and 11. Previous research had suggested that the mean length of programmes had been in the order of 11 hours: those for Year 10 were now, on average, nearer to 14 and a half hours, while those for Year 11 were 13 and a half

²⁷ The 1998/1999 Planning Guidance was incorporated into the revised *Requirements and Guidance for Careers Services*.

²⁸ See Table 1 in Appendix II.

hours.²⁹ Physical resources, in terms of accommodation, materials and dedicated ICT facilities, were said to be at least ‘*satisfactory*’,³⁰ and financial support was available for careers-related information, staff responsibility points and (in nearly two-thirds of cases) some administrative assistance.³¹

These figures, however, simplify what is essentially a far more complex picture. To begin with, it was evident that some schools made the bare minimum of provision: some, indeed, (around one per cent) built in just one session a year for each year group. Others clearly exceeded this, with at least four per cent of schools allocating one or two sessions a week, throughout the academic year, for students in Years 10 and 11. The length of such sessions also varied, ranging from 10 minutes (short tutorial or assembly inputs) to three whole days ‘off timetable’. Clearly, the type of programmes that may be delivered in such circumstances, and the quality of learning that might take place in them, would vary markedly. The following contrasting case studies, drawn from two highly academic schools, illustrate striking differences in approach.

The careers education and guidance programme in [School A], an 11–18 Foundation girls’ school, is seen as a central element of both academic and personal development planning. The school is selective, drawing on the top 29% of the ability range in the local area and, as such, has few students who would be regarded as part of the careers service priority group for guidance. Prior to the changes made in 1998, the school had elected to increase their two days careers adviser allocation by buying in two additional days. Following the focusing agenda, which saw a significant reduction in careers adviser time to two and a half hours a week, the school elected to continue dedicating staffing funds to buying in additional time.

The careers education and guidance programme is planned and coordinated by the headteacher (who has achieved a Dip CG) and the careers adviser, along with heads of year. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a timetabled programme, taught within PSHE, which spans some 14 hours a year; that for Years 12 and 13 is 13 hours a year. Careers education and guidance for younger students, those in Years 7, 8 and 9, is coordinated by heads of year and delivered by tutors and subject staff, all of whom have received some careers education training: ‘[Careers education] *is just another aspect of what we do to prepare children [for adult life].*’

²⁹ See Table 2 in Appendix II. It should be noted that these figures are noticeably lower than those reported for the NACGT survey in 1999. That survey included *all* work-related activities: the NFER survey included individual days off timetable (for example, industry days and careers conventions) but excluded periods of work experience.

³⁰ See Table 3 in Appendix II.

³¹ See Table 4 in Appendix II.

The pre-16 programme, which emphasises post-16 choices, is comprehensive and includes information about, and visits to, a wide variety of post-16 providers, covering employers and training providers as well as sixth-form colleges and other school sixth forms. The school was against the notion of recruiting young people to the sixth form in order to keep up numbers, and the induction course for the '*strongly academic sixth form*' was said to '*put off some – rightly, we'd not have served their interests*'. Learning outcomes, while not yet officially accredited, are identified overtly within the careers education and guidance programme, and curriculum links are clearly specified. Young people, thought by the senior manager to value careers education and guidance as '*part of the entitlement of growing up*', were generally positive about the process, although some felt that there was almost too much discussion about alternatives to the A-level route: '*they keep going on and on and on about GNVQs, and we don't want to do GNVQs. They make them sound so good that some people have even forgotten about A-levels...*'

Staff at [School A] suggested that to expect young people to make choices without access to impartial and comprehensive information was to do them a significant disservice. The lack of post-16 'drop-out', the limited amount of post-16 'switching' and the very low rate of drop-out amongst the more than 90% of students who go on to higher education would suggest that they achieve some measure of success. By contrast, [School B], a selective 11–18 boys' school, was somewhat different. Here careers education and guidance was seen as largely irrelevant to a predominantly academically focused school:

Careers education and guidance provision in [CG] was limited to four hours for students in Year 9 (focusing on subject choice for GCSE) and one hour in Year 11 (focusing primarily on subject choice for A/AS-level: students are encouraged to stay in the school's sixth form). The programme for students in Years 12 and 13, which focuses on university entrance, is in the region of three hours long. There is no provision for students in Year 10 and, while work experience is offered as an entitlement, it is not considered important.

There is a well-stocked careers library, but no access to careers-related ICT facilities, which are deemed to be an inappropriate use of resources. In all, careers education and guidance is afforded little status in this school, with some staff said to regard it as a waste of their students' time.

Secondly, while school staff said that careers libraries and display areas were generally accessible across all year groups, young people in the case-study schools highlighted a number of shortcomings. Many careers rooms, they reported, were '*not well publicised*' or were rarely available because they were in use for other lessons or, in some cases, were simply locked.³² Teachers' levels of satisfaction with ICT provision, particularly stand-alone PCs, were generally lower than those for careers library and paper resources. Schools

³² In a recent review of careers services and schools the DfES, (2001) reported that '*informal access for students [to school careers libraries] continues to be difficult in a significant number of schools*'. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2001). *A Review of Careers Service Focusing in Schools* (QPID Study Report No. 94). Sheffield: DfES.

also acknowledged that access to ICT equipment was far more likely to be restricted to specific lessons than to be freely available either during or outside the normal school day.³³ Broadening access, which some young people would have welcomed,³⁴ was said to be problematic. This was both for security reasons (some case-study schools reported that they had experienced vandalism, even in sixth-form areas, when they had tried to allow free access) and because careers coordinators generally believed that ICT information needed informed mediation³⁵ – a view with which many young people concurred: *'You don't take it particularly seriously because it's just a computer.'*

Finally, while dedicated time and budgetary support for administration were said to be available in nearly three-quarters of all schools, the adequacy of such support was frequently questioned. More than half of the schools (59%) said that it was in need of significant enhancement. Ofsted (1998) had previously expressed concern about the inefficient use of professional time, with careers coordinators said to be focused on organisational and administrative matters rather than on monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision.³⁶ This issue is still evident: operations managers in careers services, for example, frequently criticised schools' lack of internal monitoring of their programmes – and the lack of pressure that careers services could exert to promote such monitoring (*'it's a toothless system'*, as one interviewee commented). However, it is not clear whether this criticism has been levied primarily as a result of the lack of active careers service involvement in monitoring. Ninety six per cent of schools, for example, said that they undertook reviews of their careers education and guidance curriculum, but only 35% said they had involved the careers service in this aspect of their work.³⁷ Moreover, 21% of all schools believed that careers curriculum reviews had improved since 1998 (only three per cent thought they had got worse). Fewer, 10%, thought that careers service contributions to those reviews had been enhanced.

2.3 Reasons for Variability in Provision

The reasons behind the variation in the range and extent of careers education and guidance are many, with external changes triggering internal change and, in some instances, exposing internal limitations. To begin with, there is the question of perceived priorities: senior careers service staff tended to report

³³ See Tables 5a to 5c in Appendix II.

³⁴ Two-thirds of the young people in the case-study schools had made use of ICT facilities for career matching, with just over half of these (35% of all the Year 11 interviewees) saying that the exercise had been helpful.

³⁵ Only four per cent of survey respondents felt that young people could get all of the help they needed from computerised guidance materials.

³⁶ OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION (1998). *National Survey of Careers Education and Guidance*. London: OFSTED.

³⁷ The proportion of case-study schools involving their careers adviser was even lower. Only one-fifth (six schools) said that this was their regular practice.

that the internal pressures resulting from Ofsted inspections,³⁸ or from the introduction of new curriculum initiatives such as citizenship, had played a part in reducing the status of careers education and guidance in schools. These views were not widely shared by the survey respondents from schools, nor by case-study interviewees. Only eight per cent of schools in the postal survey thought that citizenship, and 10% that Ofsted inspections, had a negative impact on provision.³⁹ Instead, schools tended to report that changes in the careers service, particularly the introduction of priority target groups (57%) and changes to Partnership Agreements (38%) as a result of the focusing agenda, had led to the most noticeable reductions in schools' provision. Indeed, the pre-eminence of behavioural and performance criteria as the 'trigger' for targeted careers guidance⁴⁰ had led to some wider school and student perceptions of careers education and guidance as important only for the 'thickies and drop-outs', as one case-study interviewee concluded. This perception was not endorsed by careers coordinators, 98% of whom felt it was important for all students.

This negative impact was clearly recognised in the careers companies, with managers especially aware of the impact that the 'withdrawal of services' had had on 'schools where we had been recently fighting for access'.⁴¹ Operations managers felt that it had contributed to a hardening of attitudes amongst school staff, referring to a growing 'cynicism' amongst heads and an increasing resistance to 'change which seems to happen every year'.

However, there appears to be a more fundamental reason behind variations in the quality of careers education and guidance. In some careers service areas, for example, staff had recorded a net decline in careers education provision in schools: 'The refocusing of the careers service and the withdrawal of some resources has exposed some of [the] deficiencies ... in careers education and guidance programmes in schools and colleges.' These deficiencies, thought to relate only partly to inadequate facilities or insufficient internal resources, were thought to be primarily the result of a lack of capacity – and particularly the 'capacity to pick up the work that had been relinquished by the careers service'. This perception was more clearly articulated by careers service staff than by schools. None the less, many schools acknowledged this want of ability, with nearly half (46%) of all survey respondents requesting more in-school support for their careers education and guidance programmes. Some

³⁸ One operations manager cited the case of one school, judged once to have a good careers education and guidance programme, that had received a poor Ofsted report on the state of its ICT provision. The senior manager's response had been to reduce careers education and guidance provision in Years 9 to 11 to one day a year, in order to spend the transferred time enhancing young people's ICT skills.

³⁹ In interviews, staff in four case-study schools believed that the introduction of citizenship would create an additional burden and 'squeeze' careers provision. Other schools saw the two as complementary: 'Citizenship to me is about adult life.'

⁴⁰ See Table 6 in Appendix II.

⁴¹ A recent DfES review (2001) reported that careers service respondents felt there was a minimum level of careers service presence needed in order to maintain awareness amongst staff and students. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2001). *A Review of Careers Service Focusing in Schools* (QPID Study Report No. 94). Sheffield: DfES.

16% of the surveyed schools, indeed, expressed dissatisfaction with their programmes, while only 18% said they were ‘very satisfied’ with the provision that they made. Chapter 3 examines this question of capacity in more detail.

3. THE CAPACITY OF SCHOOLS TO DELIVER CAREERS EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE

As careers services have recognised, the capacity of schools to deliver careers education and guidance is not just a function of the provision of adequate resources and sufficient time on the timetable. Seventeen chief executives mentioned concerns about the quality of careers education and guidance in local schools, stating that some needed help to meet the needs of the 1997 legislation, while others needed training to improve 'weak' careers education and guidance programmes. A further 10 indicated that they felt there was a specific need to shift the emphasis in schools towards 'self-help' (for students and for schools), thus freeing up careers adviser time to work with students most in need. This notion of enhancing conceptual awareness and understanding and promoting the development of supportive school structures was evident in the strategies that more than half of the companies had adopted towards the work they set in place for the focusing agenda.

3.1 Building Capacity: The Careers Service Role

In responding to the focusing agenda, careers services had adopted models of practice that were largely premised on the need to balance provision for the target group with that for all young people. In some 13 cases, this was a highly structured, tiered approach, with different levels of input available, both at school and individual level, dependent upon agreed criteria and often following the use of diagnostic instruments. In the remainder, the level of input was triggered by an assessment of individual need, generally obtained through self-completion or diagnostic instruments administered by the school or careers service.⁴² However, alongside this direct provision, it would appear that one of the major foci of school-based careers service activity has been capacity building.

Amongst the strategies that they had set in place, careers services had given a greater emphasis to curriculum development than was evident in the past. Many had established specialist curriculum teams and increased their INSET provision (22 services); enhanced their support for curriculum development

⁴² A recent DfES review (2001) suggested that there were some weaknesses in this arrangement, since they did not provide any indication of how well informed young people's idea or decisions were. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2001). *A Review of Careers Service Focusing in Schools* (QPID Study Report No. 94). Sheffield: DfES.

(20 services);⁴³ and developed consultancy (15 services) and ICT work (14 services). Services felt that they had met with varying degrees of success in developing the necessary careers education skills amongst teaching staff. At least one company could say '*there is...already an increase in the number of teachers enrolling for the Diploma in Careers Education*', while others referred to a '*healthy interest in INSET provision*', to successful consultancy work in schools and to a growing number of schools applying for quality awards.

However, this careers service emphasis was only partially acknowledged by schools. To begin with, while levels of satisfaction with careers service contributions were relatively high, particularly for their work with individuals (89% of schools said they were satisfied with this aspect of careers service work),⁴⁴ schools were particularly critical of the training they had received in identifying young people in need of specialist advice (44% reported that it had not been done and 26% that they were not satisfied with what had been provided). Given the emphasis on self-help, and that over three-quarters of the careers coordinators reported that they played a role in identifying young people as a priority for guidance, this would seem to be a crucial area for careers service support. It is worth noting, however, that operations managers reported teachers' resistance to the concept of identification, prioritisation and selective assistance⁴⁵ and commented that teaching staff were often reluctant to take up training that effectively endorsed an approach to which they were opposed.

Secondly, schools were more reticent about reporting improvements in careers service provision than they were in acknowledging that such provision took place. Most schools, for example, reported a range of joint activities, with the overall level of careers service involvement being greater than that found in similar research in 1996.⁴⁶ The extent to which schools believed there had been improvements in aspects of provision was lower than that reported in previous years, though this may simply have reflected their relative satisfaction with previous provision. Schools made some acknowledgement of careers service contributions to information provision (54% of schools reported improvements in at least one aspect of this) and careers guidance (50% said that at least one element had improved), but fewer reported similar levels of improvement in careers service input to careers education provision

⁴³ This was often augmented by an emphasis on the development of, or promotion of, new curriculum initiatives and/or careers education and guidance resources (14 services), with the Real Game most widely mentioned.

⁴⁴ Across the 528 schools, 51% said they were 'very satisfied', 38% that they were 'satisfied'. Some 10% expressed dissatisfaction and one per cent claimed that they had no careers service input.

⁴⁵ Operations managers in three areas, for example, reported that a number of schools had refused to complete or sign their Partnership Agreement, saying they were unwilling to enter into an agreement that they felt discriminated against the majority in favour of the minority.

⁴⁶ MORRIS, M. and STONEY, S. (1996). *An Evaluation of the Performance of Pathfinder Careers Services* (RD12). Sheffield: DfEE. The 124 schools involved in that study were also included in the sample for this study. The main area in which careers service provision was markedly lower than in 1996 was in self-development/self-awareness activities. In all, 98% of schools in the current study indicated that careers services were jointly involved in careers information activities, 91% in those related to the provision of careers education, 93% in careers guidance activities and 85% in curriculum and training support.

(40%) or in curriculum and other support (35%).⁴⁷ Specific improvements in careers service provision were identified in the way in which they presented their services to young people (24%); helped in the development of career exploration skills (24%); and undertook interviews with young people who would now be seen as within the target group (35%).

3.2 Building Capacity: The Situation in Schools

Some enhancements to capacity had clearly taken place since 1998.⁴⁸ Schools reported specific improvements in their provision of careers library (30%) and computer-based information (44%) and in their preparation of young people for work placements (33%). They also noted enhancements in the work they were doing with young people to promote self-development (26%) and careers exploration skills (26%) and in their development of guidance policies (27%) and careers education materials (23%).

Yet it was clear that there was no uniform picture of progress. For example, the introduction of extended work-related learning at key stage 4 was thought to have had a positive impact on careers education and guidance in some 58% of schools. However, only 20% of schools said that their work-related curriculum activities had actually improved, and others reported that the status of work-related learning had declined, both in terms of school (14%) and careers service contributions (12%). Similarly, despite some feeling that the organisation of external visits was improving in some areas, these links were thought to be primarily the remit of schools alone (57% reported they undertook this work without the help of careers service). In some 10% of schools, indeed, connections were said to have become more tenuous. This suggests that some of the links that had begun to be forged, both across the curriculum and with external providers, were in danger of being weakened, just at the time when the Connexions Service might have looked for the strengthening of such bonds.

Finally, while provision for young people in the target group was thought to have improved (particularly in the careers service, but also in terms of school provision – 11% of schools thought they were now more skilled at this), guidance activities for young people outside the target group were thought to have got worse. Nine per cent of schools said that their own provision had deteriorated, and 36% felt that careers service provision had been reduced.⁴⁹ The Year 11 students in the case-study schools were often very alert to uncertainties around guidance provision, criticising apparent confusion about

⁴⁷ Detailed information on each of these aspects can be found in Appendix II. In the 1996 study, which included a sub-set of the schools in the present study, 87% of schools felt that information provision had improved in the years since the introduction of new contractual arrangements. Sixty per cent reported improvements in careers education, 79% in careers guidance and 68% in support systems. *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Seventy per cent of schools reported improvements in their provision of careers information and careers education. Just over half (53%) felt that curriculum development and training activities had improved and fewer, 40%, noted similar improvements in their guidance provision.

⁴⁹ This echoes the finding in the DfES review (2001), which suggested that there had been a reduction of some 32% in the numbers of group sessions and individual interviews provided for young people in education. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2001). *A Review of Careers Service Focusing in Schools* (QPID Study Report No. 94). Sheffield: DfES.

who did or did not receive a guidance interview:⁵⁰ *‘None of the teachers seem to know what they’re doing ... at first we were all going to get [an interview], then it was they gave priority to the ones who are going to be leaving, then it was that we’d have small group ones ... and now it seems that you have to book them.’*

In real terms, the work that is expected of careers services and schools has changed markedly, both since the original changes to contractual arrangements in 1994 and in relation to DfEE guidance from 1998 onwards. The question is whether the capacity of schools to deliver careers education and guidance has kept pace with the various demands being made. A detailed evaluation of the case-study schools, for example, based on indicators associated with effective provision identified in previous research,⁵¹ suggests that less than one-third (8) of the 28 schools taking part in this study were judged as having the capacity to deliver such effective programmes. To what extent, therefore, are schools more generally in a position to develop the integrated support systems necessary to support the Connexions Service and to maintain a specific careers education presence? The following sections explore some of the factors that appear to be associated with that capacity, most particularly those linked to awareness and conceptual understanding of careers education and guidance and to the supporting structures in place in schools.

3.3 Schools’ Awareness and Understanding of Careers Education and Guidance

Across the survey schools, 40% reported that there had been some positive changes in teachers’ attitudes to careers education and guidance over the last three years; and more than one-third (35%) said that the adoption of a quality award had enhanced their provision. Moreover, there was clear evidence that a growing number of careers coordinators had achieved nationally recognised guidance qualifications (just under half of the coordinators in the survey – 45% – had achieved or were working towards such qualifications).⁵² The careers service role in supporting this training was warmly welcomed by those staff who had benefited from it – as one coordinator commented: *‘You couldn’t put a price on what I’ve learned – it’s been great’*. The wider value of training was also specifically recognised in one case-study school where the

⁵⁰ Of the 158 interviewees who completed the proforma, 84% said they had taken part in at least one guidance interview, although it was not clear whether this had always been with a careers adviser, or whether it had purely been for screening purposes. None the less, three-quarters of these felt it had been helpful, a higher proportion than had found small group guidance sessions useful: just over half of the 49% of students thought this had been a useful process.

⁵¹ These include, for example, MORRIS, M., RUDD, P., NELSON, J. and DAVIES, D. (2000). *The Contribution of Careers Education and Guidance to School Effectiveness in ‘Partnership’ Schools* (DfEE Research Report 198). Sheffield: DfEE.

⁵² See Table 7a in Appendix II.⁵² An earlier Ofsted report noted that, by 1998, one-third of careers coordinators had gained a recognised qualification relating to careers education and guidance. OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION (1998). *National Survey of Careers Education and Guidance*. London: Ofsted. This in itself was an improvement over 1995, when *‘it was rare to find careers coordinators undergoing a course of accredited training linked to CEG’*. OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION (1995). *A Survey of Careers Education and Guidance in Schools*. London: Ofsted.

senior manager asserted that it had led to *'people taking responsibility... and increased understanding will lead to improved careers education and guidance programmes'*.⁵³

Despite these positive developments, few careers coordinators felt confident that schools were best placed to deliver careers education and guidance to young people in Year 11. Less than one-fifth (17%) said that they were in a position to provide individual guidance to those students (on average, some 67%) outside the target group. More (81%) of survey respondents felt secure in their ability to supply careers education in Years 9 and 10, although nearly one-fifth of these said they felt they would do this best in tandem with a careers adviser. The situation in Year 11 was less sanguine. Less than half of the careers coordinators believed that the school was best placed to deliver careers education to these students. Instead, staff identified the careers adviser alone (29%), or teachers working alongside the adviser (17%), as the best way forward, a view they also held for provision for young people in Years 12 and 13.

The reasons behind this lack of confidence are many. Interviews with school staff and careers services suggest that three main factors contributed to this issue. These included perceptions of the role and purpose of careers education and guidance, amongst school senior managers and careers coordinators;⁵⁴ the level of knowledge and understanding and extent of training across the wider school staff; and uncertainty over the implications of the post-16 curriculum, particularly in relation to concerns about young people's career decision-making.

3.3.1 The role and purpose of careers education and guidance

Across the 28 case-study schools, none appeared to view careers education and guidance as an 'agent of change', either in terms of promoting raised attainment or as a means of restructuring the curriculum. However, and particularly in those schools that were based in disadvantaged areas, careers education and guidance was more widely seen as a 'motivating force' (encouraging young people to raise their aspirations and become more self-reliant and responsible)⁵⁵ or as a means of creating curriculum relevance (facilitating the differentiation of curriculum provision in order to meet the needs of a larger number of students).⁵⁶ One senior manager, from a school where 56% of the students were entitled to free school meals, emphasised that, in an area with *'second and third generation unemployment'*, careers education and guidance was essential to help young people become aware that there were *'areas of their [lives] that they can make decisions about'*. In

⁵³ Careers coordinators in 12 of the case-study schools had such nationally recognised qualifications, with at least one other member of staff in three of those schools similarly qualified. However, while best practice was rarely found in schools where staff had no training, the existence of qualified staff was not necessarily a guarantee of good provision.

⁵⁴ In the words of one service interviewee, the quality of careers coordinators was said to vary from the *'excellent'* to the *'enthusiastic but inexperienced'* and the *'mediocre'*.

⁵⁵ This was particularly evident in six schools.

⁵⁶ This was seen in three schools.

addition to good timetabled provision,⁵⁷ all key stage 4 students, whatever their level of ability, undertook a vocational course,⁵⁸ which, it was hoped, would give students '*currency in the big wide world*'.

The role of careers education in promoting lifelong learning was more evident in some of the more academic schools, though there was a fine line to be trodden between programmes that stressed a range of possibilities at 16 (clearly evident in only two of those schools) and programmes that were geared towards maintaining the school's sixth form (the case in at least four of the eight such schools). Students were quick to see through such biased positions or personal preferences.⁵⁹ In one school, for example, students felt that teachers were actively withholding information about local college courses. As one stated: '*They're a bit biased [...] you don't really get any information about going to other colleges because they want you to stay here*', while another reported: '*Whatever teacher I've spoken to, they've all said "You should stay here; colleges always have drugs problem"*.' Similarly, the academic emphasis of teachers in other schools were regarded with suspicion: '*My teacher said that I should do A-levels and not GNVQs but didn't tell me why he thought that. They try and limit your choices.*'

The lack of any particular accepted role for careers education and guidance meant that it was often more subject to external pressure than other areas of the curriculum. The focusing agenda was said to have prompted many schools to review the delivery of careers education and guidance and to have led to greater commitment. However, this was not universal.⁶⁰ As one chief executive commented: '*Where careers advisers have reduced their time in schools with more academic pupils, there has been no corresponding replacement of provision by schools, particularly in the provision of **impartial information and advice***'. This view was echoed in other services, with respondents indicating that schools had sometimes '*not replaced the sessions*' previously undertaken by the careers adviser, or regarded the withdrawal of careers service activities as an indication that careers education and guidance had no real status: '*It can't be that important ... if even the careers service is withdrawing.*' In one high-attaining case-study school, for example, the reduction of careers service input (said to be decreased by more than half) was not matched by any commensurate increase in school provision. Indeed, no young people outside the priority target group (which last year only included two students) were said to receive any one-to-one guidance and the few group

⁵⁷ 30 hours for Year 9 students, rising to 55 hours for those in Year 11

⁵⁸ This is currently the Diploma of Vocational Education, but will be different next year as a result of changes instigated by QCA.

⁵⁹ It is worth noting that, by the early spring of 2001, 84% of the Year 11 students said that they had heard a visitor in their school talking about work or training and that over half (59%) had visited a careers convention. A smaller proportion (34%) had been on day visits to employers. However, it is clearly not so much the lack of external provision as the context in which it is delivered that seems to give young people the impression of withheld or biased information.

⁶⁰ DfES (2001) reported that there was '*very little evidence that schools have made substantial reviews of their own services in order to adjust to reduced allocations by careers services*'. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2001). *A Review of Careers Service Focusing in Schools* (QPID Study Report No. 94). Sheffield: DfES.

discussions that were run by school staff were said to be inadequate to prepare young people for their post-16 transitions.

3.3.2 The wider understanding of careers education and guidance

It needs to be recognised that, despite the enhancements that have taken place in careers coordinator training, much of the careers education and guidance delivery in schools is undertaken by PSE and tutorial staff, few of whom are similarly qualified.⁶¹ As some Year 11 students commented: *'You get form tutors doing careers lessons for their class, and they've never even heard of careers'*.

Some 12% of survey schools reported that at least two members of staff (one of whom was the careers coordinator) had gained (or were working towards) a careers education and guidance qualification. However, a broader spread (the equivalent of between five and nine members of staff with such qualifications) occurred in only one per cent of the schools. As a result, even where school staff supported the concept of careers education and guidance,⁶² they often lacked the knowledge or understanding to deliver it effectively. This limitation of expertise in school provision was frequently criticised by young people in case-study schools who were quick to identify teachers' lack of detailed knowledge: *'When you listen to teachers talk about careers,'* said one, *'they talk about it so generally that it doesn't help at all. They just say "If you want to be a lawyer, then do history" or whatever. It's sort of like, basic.'*⁶³

The lack of general expertise meant that programmes sometimes lacked coherence (students commented that *'it all just comes whenever they can fit it in'*) and were not connected with the wider curriculum in the school (*'it just seems like they've done it to fill the time in'*). These were criticisms that had been voiced by young people in the past,⁶⁴ and were still of concern to students now. In particular, Year 11 interviewees were concerned about inappropriate timing, whether as a result of carousel programmes (*'When we came back from work experience, I thought we might spend some time looking over what our opinions were, but at that stage we had Religious Studies'*) or poor curriculum planning, with too much information in *'Year 9, which is too soon or in Year 11, which is too rushed'*.

Secondly, many staff lacked more specific expertise in some areas. Few case-study schools (only two), for example, formally accredited any aspects of careers education and guidance, and there was little significant emphasis on

⁶¹ See Table 7b in Appendix II.

⁶² Only 18% of careers coordinators indicated that there was a lack of support for careers education and guidance amongst subject staff in their school)

⁶³ Few young people relied solely on their teachers for careers information (35%) or guidance (6%), most claiming that they talked to a range of people (81%) and sought out careers information for themselves (56%).

⁶⁴ STONEY, S., ASHBY, P., GOLDEN, S. and LINES, A. (1998). *Talking about 'Careers': Young People's Views of Careers Education and Guidance at School. Executive Summary – November 1998 (RD 18A)*. Sheffield: DfEE.

learning outcomes.⁶⁵ Although seven schools made reference to a curriculum framework based on this approach, drawing mainly on the QCA document,⁶⁶ the extent to which they were linked to wider work-related learning was limited. In only two cases were learning outcomes formalised, clearly identified, included in all documentation and made a specific element of liaison with careers service staff.

Expertise was also limited in relation to the use of ICT. Few schools agreed that unmediated ICT was an appropriate strategy for careers education for young people: only seven per cent of survey schools thought that such an approach was sufficient for young people in Years 9 and 10,⁶⁷ and only two per cent thought it appropriate in Year 11. In this, their views were supported by those of the many young people who expressed concern about using computer programmes instead of talking to people, since '*a computer doesn't know you*' and '*can only give programmed answers*'.

While the use of some software packages was relatively common across all schools (nearly two-thirds of survey schools made use of ICT for action planning, Progress File, Records of Achievement and/or post-16 education and training databases for young people in Year 11, for example), more imaginative or interactive use was far less widespread. To date, few schools appeared to have encouraged young people to use email as part of their career development planning, despite the relatively high numbers who claimed to have internet access for careers education and guidance in Year 9 (94%), Year 10 (88%) and Year 11 (85%). As students noted: '*We have to ask permission to get on to the internet and then [it is] most probably after school*'. This more interactive use of computer technology is one area that a number of careers companies have decided to augment as a response to the focusing agenda. However, given the emphasis on ICT as a potential way forward for many young people under the new Connexions Service, there is clearly some work to be done in schools to promote the effective use of such services.⁶⁸

Finally, and at a more fundamental level, only half the careers coordinators in the survey felt confident that all staff knew how to identify and refer young people who needed specialist careers advice. As a result, it is perhaps not surprising that more than three-quarters of all schools (76%) believed that some young people were missing out on the careers education and guidance

⁶⁵ As in the past, the DOTS model – an emphasis on Decision-making, Opportunity awareness, Transition skills and Self-awareness, based on the model originally identified by Watts *et al.* in 1976 – appeared pre-eminent in the 28 case-study schools.

⁶⁶ QUALIFICATIONS AND CURRICULUM AUTHORITY (1999). *Learning Outcomes from Careers Education and Guidance*. London: QCA.

⁶⁷ Seven per cent of careers coordinators felt that the use of ICT was sufficient for careers education for young people in Years 12 and 13. However, only one per cent felt that it was a suitable means of providing guidance for young people in the target group and only three per cent that it would be appropriate for other students.

⁶⁸ The recent DfES review (2001) concluded that the '*development of ICT in school does not currently represent a consistently reliable base on which to develop differentiated careers services*'. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2001). *A Review of Careers Service Focusing in Schools* (QPID Study Report No. 94). Sheffield: DfES.

they needed. Staff in case study schools reiterated this concern, with 11 reporting that many young people, often the most able, had not been able to access independent careers guidance. While at least half of the careers services acknowledged that there had been a significant deterioration in services to clients in education, there are some signs of tension here. As indicated in section 3.1, careers service staff felt that there had been some resistance in schools to engaging with the process of identification and prioritisation.⁶⁹ Young people's comments also raise some concerns about the ways in which prioritisation has been presented to students: *'They seem to prioritise us. They say to us "the most important people get an interview, but if you think you know what you need, then you probably won't".'*

3.3.3 Wider curriculum developments

A specific challenge for schools, but one that the majority of careers services felt was not yet widely understood or fully appreciated in schools, was that related to the new post-16 curriculum. As some 17 chief executives commented, these changes were introduced precisely at the time when pre-16 individual guidance, or guidance to those *'students who have already achieved level 2 qualifications'* was reduced. One respondent summarised the issue thus:

The new post-16 curriculum is yet to be understood by young people and their parents or by employers. Even some colleges are having problems (and we have had to provide them with training). The simultaneous move to refocusing was ill timed as many able young people who would have benefited from our support in choosing appropriate courses did not get it and have made wrong choices. For this reason, those on A/S-level courses are now priority clients.⁷⁰

Students in over one-third of the case-study schools endorsed this view, saying that they needed *'more advice about A-levels and ... when you have to fill all the application forms in – like AS- and A-levels, a load of people don't understand them'*. Some were highly critical of the limited guidance they had received, which meant that *'people are filling in application forms for sixth form and they don't even know what they're going to do'*. This lack of clarity had also been noticed by careers service staff, with nine chief executives making particular mention of an increased demand for advice and support from young people during Year 12 – a demand that few felt they were meeting adequately. Careers service staff questioned the capacity of sixth-form and other tutors in schools to meet the need for impartial and comprehensive advice and information at a time when funding streams continued to emphasise *'post-16 competition rather than cooperation'*. This concern also voiced by young people in some 11–18 case-study schools, who felt that *'careers lessons were much better when we had the careers adviser rather*

⁶⁹ This issue is explored more fully in Chapter 4.

⁷⁰ Careers service staff in all areas reported that they were now working with many young people in Year 12 who had missed out on careers guidance in Year 11, had made poor choices and were now dropping out or thinking of dropping out.

than teachers because the careers advisers aren't actually part of the school ... the teachers are more pressuring you to stay on at the school...'

A longer-term consequence of the changes to the post-16 curriculum, combined with reduced careers service input to the *'average and more able pupils who are still seen to need high-quality guidance'*, was felt to be an increase in drop-out post-16. In addition to the general feeling that it had become increasingly difficult to meet the guidance needs of young people not in the target group, more than one-third of chief executives identified the growing need for what one company termed *'remedial guidance'* for the *'increasing numbers of young people dropping out of sixth forms or colleges of FE'*.

3.4 Supporting Structures

Strategies that should contribute to the type of internal networking that would be necessary for the successful implementation of Connexions were evident in many schools, with careers coordinators (or their line managers) having access to curriculum review meetings (71%), pastoral meetings (69%) and vocational meetings (40%). In addition, 47% of schools indicated that there was now a forum for regular meetings between careers advisers and the wider teaching staff, a development that had been mentioned with enthusiasm by a number of careers service interviewees.

However, in up to half of the schools, such structural support was not evident, while in others it was only partial: few schools made provision for linkages that spanned curriculum, pastoral and vocational areas.⁷¹ This lack of integration was a cause of concern for at least 13 of the careers services, with schools said to be making insufficient links between careers education and guidance and work-related learning, citizenship, key skills and other elements of PSHE. This, in turn, was thought to be a major hindrance, both to developing integrated support systems in schools and to maintaining a specific careers education presence – a concern for the future development of Connexions. As one respondent commented, *'just adding a [Personal Adviser] to the pastoral and learning support system is unlikely to do the trick'*.

There were indications that some schools were moving towards a more integrated support system, although there was more alignment with pastoral systems than with academic and pastoral support structures.⁷² In one inner city case-study school, for example, the careers coordinator explained how the last two years had seen careers education and guidance move from its location within the Business and Technology Faculty to become a more central part of the pastoral system in the school. This had facilitated closer links between the careers adviser and the educational social worker, the education welfare

⁷¹ See Table 8 in Appendix II.

⁷² Chief executives frequently expressed the concern that schools' pastoral systems were unable to identify or to support young people's differentiated needs, a concern that led to some wider unease about the ability of schools to be active partners in forthcoming Connexions Services.

officer and the head of key stage 4, and was said to have enabled the school to adopt more effective strategies for working with students deemed to be ‘*at risk of social exclusion*’. However, it also highlights the inherent complexity of schools and the ways in which the integration of careers education and guidance in one area (in this case, the pastoral area) may be accompanied by a greater sense of separation from another (such as the curricular area). In the school described above, the work of the careers adviser had become ‘*more visible*’ to the deputy head responsible for pastoral welfare. At the same time, the careers coordinator felt that in curriculum terms ‘*careers has become less of a formal subject*’ and so ‘*staff find it difficult to see where it fits in and to make sense of it*’.

Appropriate feedback mechanisms existed in just under one-third of the schools, but systems to facilitate the sharing of information about the outcomes of guidance interviews were still lacking in the majority of schools.⁷³ Given the points made by careers service chief executives and operations managers (and indeed, by staff in case-study schools) about schools’ worries over correctly identifying, targeting and referring young people, this is a significant lack. Without adequate feedback, a valuable source of evaluative comment on wider careers education and guidance input is missed. Of more concern, however, is the missed opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the identification and referral process.

Further issues, which particularly exercised both school and careers service staff, were the timetabling and planning constraints that existed in schools. Changes consequent upon the focusing agenda were often said to be difficult to implement, since schools were rarely able to accommodate significant alterations to provision part-way through an academic year. As interviewees noted, timetables and budgets for the coming academic year were often fixed in the spring term of the previous year. This lack of flexibility has put an additional strain on school and careers service interaction, with some schools describing their current relationships as more that of ‘clients’ than the ‘partnerships’ they felt they had enjoyed before. As one senior manager noted: ‘*in the end, we have to accept what [the careers service] offer*’. Careers services were not oblivious to this, pointing out that lead-in times for change in schools often needed to be as long as two years.

Furthermore, staffing structures in schools were said to focus on individual areas of responsibility, rather than on teams working across areas. This meant that changes initiated externally did not necessarily have an impact across the whole curriculum. As one chief executive noted: ‘*There is a tendency [in schools] to respond to new initiatives by appointing separate coordinators (e.g. work-related education, careers education and guidance, PSHE,*

⁷³ The situation with regard to feedback is little different from that found in the early and mid-1990s, even though the existence of such mechanisms has been identified as one of the key components of effective school and careers service interaction. Prior to the focusing agenda, many careers service companies had been emphasising this approach as a means of promoting guidance communities in schools. MORRIS, M., SIMKIN, C. and STONEY, S. (1995). *The Role of the Careers Service in Careers Education and Guidance in Schools: – Final Report (RD7)*. Sheffield: ED, Careers Service Branch, Quality Assurance & Development Unit.

citizenship, work experience) but difficulty in bringing their roles together into an integrated and coherent whole'. This lack of cross-school integration was seen as a particular challenge for the future implementation of Connexions. Chief executives were largely uncertain about the extent to which schools could or would be flexible in approach: 'Connexions will face its biggest challenges in schools, because of the rigidity of their organisation and [the] perceived threats to established structures.'

The relationship between schools and careers services, the changes that have occurred as a result of the focusing agenda and the implications these have for the future success of Connexions, are explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

4. SCHOOL AND CAREERS SERVICE LINKS

As indicated in Chapter 3, the introduction of the focusing agenda in 1998 often necessitated some significant changes in the ways in which careers services and schools worked together to provide careers education and guidance to young people in schools. Particular challenges were faced in balancing provision for young people in the target group with that for all young people. While chief executives in two services were overtly positive about the impact of focusing on their work with schools (primarily because of the removal of action planning targets), the remaining services were fairly equally divided between those who regarded it as a '*mixed blessing*' and those who saw it as a negative move.

Just under half of the chief executives reported that refocusing encouraged greater flexibility than had been possible when services needed to meet contractual targets for action plans. Two operations managers, indeed, said that by being forced to reassess the ways in which they worked with schools, they had developed far more innovative ways of working. Others noted greater levels of success with young people who would previously have been lost to the system. One company, for example, highlighted a steep rise in the reintegration of teenage mothers into the school system, with an initial rate of 25% reintegration rising to 58% over a 12-month period.

However, even when they reported enhanced flexibility, chief executives also argued that the changes had led to strained relationships with schools who continued to want '*blanket interviewing*' – or at least a universal entitlement to such interviews. The remaining services felt that refocusing had led to a significant deterioration in services to clients in education, particularly to those who might be seen as '*of average ability or the most able*'. Operations managers and school staff were often more forthright, with the former commenting that the focusing agenda had '*narrowed and impoverished*' careers adviser work in schools. There was further frustration, moreover, with the way in which the agenda had been introduced, with many services resenting their '*messenger*' role. The perceived lack of DfEE communication with schools about focusing was heavily criticised, with one manager referring to the amount of work needed to persuade schools that the focusing agenda was not simply a local whim, but a national directive. Other managers reported that their schools had initially thought that the careers service was simply trying to reduce its workload at the expense of the schools.

So what is the current nature of the relationship between schools and careers services? To what extent have they been able to develop (or continue) good working practices that facilitate appropriate careers education and guidance

for all young people, whether or not they are in the target group? The following sections summarise the approaches that careers services had adopted to their work with clients in education, examine the impact of this on young people and on relationships with schools and parents and explore some of the issues that this has raised, at school level, that may have significant implications for the implementation of Connexions.

4.1 The Focusing Agenda: Careers Service Staffing Structures

As outlined in Chapter 3, the majority of careers companies (34 of the 36 responding) adopted a targeted approach to the services they provided in order to meet their contractual requirements and to deliver the expected level of support for students and schools. In doing so, most needed to establish new working systems and companies had developed a number of different approaches towards deploying staff: indeed, only one service reported that changes in staffing had not been necessary. For some, structural changes had been relatively small, involving, for example, the recruitment of additional administrative, technical or information staff (4 services), or had been more related to the development of new operational systems, such as the those linked to caseload and time allocations (6 services). Elsewhere, more radical changes had been made. Four main models of deployment emerged:

- ◆ The development of **specialised sector-focused teams** (11 services). This strategy tended to involve the creation of education (or school-based) teams and labour-market (or lifelong-learning) teams, although services variously referred to specific remits for Learning Gateways, outreach and community work and post-16 full-time education teams. In some services, the development of such teams was said to have '*increased participation...reduced unemployment [amongst the target group]*' and led to fewer '*lost cases*'. In others, however, some additional issues had arisen:
 - According to chief executives, the decrease in generalist provision meant that some new careers service recruits, attached to non-school teams, tended not to develop a sufficiently detailed understanding of schools. This, in turn, had implications for the effectiveness of their work with 'disaffected' young people who they were trying to re-engage in learning;
 - Respondents reported a general decrease, amongst their staff, in education-specific skills, such as working with the more able students or taking part in curriculum development or planning.
- ◆ While those companies that had adopted a specialist team approach felt that it had been necessary to reflect the reallocation of resources and changing priorities within services, the split was not always felt to be entirely equitable: chief executives severally referred to a '*quantifiable reduction in support for young people in schools*', a '*withdrawal of services from those not at risk*' and '*gaps in service delivery*'.

- ♦ **Generic area-based teams** (5 services). This approach appeared to have been adopted either to facilitate working with a range of different local agencies or to emphasise *‘holistic work with clients rather than sectors’*. While it was felt to foster better joint working (a strategy that was believed would be helpful with Connexions), some services reported communications difficulties and noted the complexity and challenges of multi-agency working. Moreover, many of the generic area-based teams had moved towards the development of a Personal Adviser role – a role in which some ‘traditional’ careers advisers were said to feel uncomfortable.
- ♦ **Specialist teams** to which area-based or sector-based teams had access (9 services). These teams had remits covering a range of areas, including education and curriculum services, communications and ICT, social inclusion and special educational needs. The creation of such teams, while providing much-needed support, had also highlighted the need for wider training, both amongst careers services staff and in schools.
- ♦ **Mixed models** (6 services), in which services maintained their previous generic or specialist teams, but established Personal Adviser roles for some staff, working either across all sectors, or within, for example, Learning Gateways.

Many companies felt that the strategies they had set in place had met their contractual requirements and delivered the *‘expected level of support’*, albeit *‘within existing constraints’*. However, both they and schools raised many issues about the overall impact upon students, upon working relationships between careers services and schools and with parents, and upon working practices.

4.2 The Focusing Agenda: The Impact on Young People

Around one-third of chief executives (10 services) reported positive outcomes for students in the target group, with fewer students *‘lost to the system’* (3 services), more of the *‘at risk’* students moving on to further education or training (6 services) and greater levels of contact for the *‘disengaged’* after leaving school (1 service). However, other services (4) felt that an inordinate amount of time had been spent tracking down the *‘hard to reach’* and that the level of success was not generally commensurate with the effort involved. For some such young people, their relative lack of maturity (among other factors) was said to negate the work that was put into preparing them for their post-16 decision-making: as one adviser commented, *‘there seem to be about 20 a year not prepared for transition whatever I do – they’re not ready for it’*.

Moreover, there was a feeling that success with the target group was often at the expense of other young people – a view shared by at least 15 of the case study schools. Some careers service respondents reported that further education colleges and training organisations had noted *‘[a] reduced standard of applications from those who have not had individual attention, whether from [the careers service] or elsewhere’*. In at least one area, refocusing resources towards the *‘harder to help’* group was also said to have contributed

to an *'increase in the incidence of unemployment amongst last year's [non-target group] Year 11 leavers'*.

Schools reported that, on average, one-third of their students were included in the careers service target group. These were selected primarily on the basis of:

- ◆ individual educational or social needs (71%);
- ◆ underachievers or low achievers (61%);
- ◆ disaffection or disengagement (38% – often demonstrated by poor attendance or punctuality, or disruptive behaviour); or
- ◆ lack of direction (31%).

However, while many of these could be classified as the 'hard to help' and therefore in need of extra support, there were many other young people whom both school and careers services staff felt had suffered as a result of refocusing.⁷⁴ Interviewees were concerned about the long-term cost of not meeting the *'career learning needs of all young people'*, with fears that failing to recognise that *'academically able young people also need access to guidance and support to make successful transitions'* would lead, in future, to increased levels of drop-out from both further and higher education.

At a more practical level, it was clear that many schools (and their careers advisers) had sought to maximise the professional guidance available for young people. Across the 528 survey schools, the median value for the proportion of young people seen, at least once, by the careers adviser, was between 75% and 90% of the cohort. In some 40% of schools, Year 11 students automatically received a screening interview (generally of some 10 to 15 minutes in length), with schools also reserving the right to refer students – and for students to refer themselves.⁷⁵ Indeed many careers companies identified a significantly increased use of 'drop-in' facilities and careers service premises after school and during holidays.

This raises a wider question of the capacity of careers services to cope with such high levels of self-referral: at least seven services specifically asserted that it had led to a higher demand for one-to-one guidance than they could meet. Commenting on their use of additional funds made available through Government Offices in the academic year 2000/01, nearly half of the responding companies said that a major concern had been finding effective and sustainable ways of addressing the needs of young people who were not targeted for one-to-one guidance and had either self-referred or, more worryingly, appeared to have *'little basic knowledge of options'* and no idea how to *'obtain or use the information available'*.

⁷⁴ School and careers service interviewees in the QPID study for DfES (2001) shared this view. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2001). *A Review of Careers Service Focusing in Schools* (QPID Study Report No. 94). Sheffield: DfES.

⁷⁵ Provision of automatic screening interviews for young people in Years 9 and 10 was more limited: 5% of schools reported this for students in Year 9, and 13% for students in Year 10.

Year 11 students expressed some clear opinions about the provision that had been made available to them during the last two years. While the accessibility of the careers adviser, and the quality of advice provided, were commended by students in four of the 28 case-study schools, the story elsewhere was more mixed. For young people in eight schools there was confusion about whether they were entitled to have an interview (*'everyone was supposed to have an interview, but not everyone has had one'*) or how to set about accessing one (*'I wanted [an interview], but I didn't realise you had to book them. They don't give enough information on that – there's a lack of communication'*). Others were concerned about the lack of available time in school, with careers advisers only *'being there part of the time'* so that *'there's always a big queue'* and *'there isn't enough time to see [them]'*. In all, students in nine schools raised issues related to staffing, with calls for more careers advisers and careers teachers: *'The whole careers thing is a bit understaffed and they either need to cut down what we do [in careers lessons] or they need to bring in more staff to do what they do.'* It should be noted that these issues of staff availability and time were not raised by young people during a similar study conducted amongst Year 11 students in 1998.⁷⁶

The lack of available time also meant that, for those students who had access to a careers adviser, there was an issue about the extent to which their potential could be understood by someone they saw, at most, on two or three occasions. Students in one school, for example, felt strongly about *'people you've never met before ... deciding your future'*, with young people saying that *'they don't know you as well as teachers; they don't know who you are or how capable you are'*. This highlights a very particular dilemma for schools and careers services, since, on the one hand, students want to obtain advice from people who know them well, yet on the other hand want that advice to be impartial and highly informed. The assertion by one student of the need for both the *'personal view and then the careers view'* through contact with both *'the tutor and the adviser'* might anticipate the Personal Adviser role. However, it predicates a degree of school integration and a degree of careers expertise that may not be that easy to ensure.

4.3 The Focusing Agenda: The Impact on Relationships with Schools

Six careers services reported that they had been able to maintain and build on good school relationships, mainly, they felt, by adopting an incremental and inclusive approach to the development of their system of guidance provision. However, many careers services acknowledged that, in refocusing their resources on the 'hard to help' – and specifically in refocusing staff support towards young people in the Learning Gateway – some schools had *'missed out'*. One service quantified this by suggesting that some 70% of its resources had been directed away from schools. The result of such realignment was

⁷⁶ STONEY, S., ASHBY, P., GOLDEN, S. and LINES, A. (1998). *Talking about 'Careers': Young People's Views of Careers Education and Guidance at School. Executive Summary – November 1998 (RD 18A)*. Sheffield: DfEE.

manifested in different ways. Some schools had clearly benefited, with an increase in adviser input, whilst others had seen significant decreases, with the consequent reduction of time spent with *'low priority students'* and the abandonment of activities such as lunchtime clinics. This had led to some major concerns about equality of provision: *'We are being penalised for being a good school.'*

Amid criticism of the decline of the universal entitlement to individual careers guidance, some schools also felt that the focusing agenda was sending out a negative message to students (and to staff) that *'only the thick ones get to see the careers adviser'*.⁷⁷ In this climate, it was not entirely surprising that there were reports of *'strained relationships'*, between services and schools, particularly in schools where there were few students in the target group. Fourteen services identified areas of concern, ranging from school discontent over the removal of a universal interview entitlement, to negative (or even hostile) parental attitudes, poor relationships with students as a result of decreased contact time and difficulties in following up students post-16.

4.3.1 The identification of a priority group

According to operations managers, one of the biggest concerns raised by schools was related to prioritising students for interview. Schools in 11 out of 20 case-study services were said to have been reluctant or unwilling to identify students for the target group, either because they were suspicious of the careers service motive (*'they think we are just out for our own commercial gain'*) or because they were unhappy about *'bridging the gap'* for those young people who would not constitute the target group. While schools were said to support the principle of increasing support for the hard to help, they were unwilling to enter into an agreement that, as they saw it, discriminated against the majority in favour of the minority. This view was frequently expressed by young people: *'I think everybody should be treated equally...my friend really found [the interview] helpful.'*

This highlights a very real concern for both schools and careers service staff: that of identifying who should really constitute the priority group. Is it those students who present the greatest overt resistance to guidance – or those able students who, ill-prepared and lacking the careers related skills to make the most appropriate choice, drift quietly into the wrong post-16 destinations and subsequently drop out and fail to reach their potential? Many interviewees expressed the view that defining guidance needs in social rather than vocational terms was a fundamental error. In many areas, some of the students who were identified as being at *'high risk'* of social exclusion were said to have clearer ideas of their future career paths than more socially advantaged young people.

⁷⁷ This fear was previously raised by the DfES (2001) who indicated that both teachers and careers advisers reported that access to careers guidance and to careers advisers was *'becoming stigmatised by an association with a poorly achieving or poorly behaving minority.'* DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2001). *A Review of Careers Service Focusing in Schools* (QPID Study Report No. 94). Sheffield: DfES.

4.3.2 The negotiation of partnership agreements

As indicated in Chapter 3, at least three companies reported that schools had refused to sign a Partnership Agreement with the service, in protest against refocusing. The negotiation of this Agreement was clearly a major aspect of the interaction between schools and services, and some careers companies had sought to use it as a means of building greater capacity in schools.

A limited number of companies (5), for example, said that they had specifically sought to influence the quality of school provision through the realignment of Partnership Agreements. One, for example, operating in a Connexions pilot area, had tried to transform the agreement from '*a document of good intentions*', in which processes were specified (the allocation of ring-fenced money and time for the careers coordinator to meet with the careers adviser), to one which specified learning outcomes. This, they thought, was a more rigorous approach, in that it challenged careers coordinators to discuss and evaluate the aims of their programmes.⁷⁸ A second company had specifically inserted wording related to raising levels of achievement. They hoped that this would alert senior managers to the wider potential role of careers education and guidance, a strategy that they said had met with some success in that it had led to the involvement of more school staff in negotiating the agreement. Others reported that the changes they had made were primarily to reflect the focusing agenda. In this they had established procedures in the documentation to make transparent the strategies used to prioritise students for individual guidance and to encourage schools to identify their curriculum and training needs.

However, as nine of the 20 services noted, the changes they had introduced had met with only partial success. To begin with, while the negotiation process was often said to be effective, in that it raised awareness of emerging issues, the documentation was said to be often '*out of date as soon as it was agreed*' and was not particularly effective in ensuring that what '*was agreed actually takes place*'. Many case-study schools (11) clearly regarded the process in a positive light, either because '*it makes us sit down and plan*' or because it was seen as a formal means of reviewing provision, establishing priorities and promoting change, whether in terms of school or careers service provision. In these schools, the element of partnership with the careers companies, and the willingness of both sides to be flexible in their discussions, were often emphasised. Yet careers service staff often argued that such discussions tended to be about physical provision rather than the evaluation of that provision. As a response, at least two companies had introduced more regular review meetings in order to systematise and formalise the evaluative process.

Across all companies, operations managers expressed concerns about the impact that the focusing agenda had had on the negotiation process. One

⁷⁸ The careers coordinator of the one case-study school in this pilot area said that the Partnership agreement process produced '*an acceptable result*' and had done so since 1998, but did not seem aware of any significant changes to the strategy.

reported that they had to work very hard to overcome the perception that they were a private company out to ‘*maximise profits by cutting down on services*’. Others said that it had been a ‘*strain*’ negotiating the Partnership Agreement in the context of focusing, when schools’ perceptions were that focusing simply meant they were getting less input from the careers service and being expected to do more of the work themselves. A number of senior managers and careers coordinators concurred with this view, with teaching staff saying that they were ‘*forced into the Partnership Agreement ... it’s not really negotiation ... [they] tell us what they can deliver in terms of the number of days*’. Others commented that they were being asked to ‘*do more and more with less and less careers service support*’. For these schools (11 of the case-study schools) it would seem that the Agreement had become less of a tool for negotiation and more a means of communicating information about the level of provision that could be made.

4.3.3 Post-16 tracking of students

Of concern to both schools and careers services was the collection and collation of data on young people's destinations at 16. While many companies readily acknowledged that the proportion of ‘unknowns’ had decreased, a number of tensions had emerged. To begin with, staff in the careers service expressed an element of discomfort in approaching young people, with whom they had previously had no prior contact, in order to ascertain their current occupation:

The fact that we no longer have extensive contact with the majority of young people in schools makes the destinations and follow-up exercise seem more of a bureaucratic exercise. The fact that, in many cases, no strong relationships exist with careers service staff means young people are sometimes less inclined to share their progress.

Secondly, this lack of contact, according to many, reduced their ‘*unique selling point ... the contact with further and higher education and training*’. They argued that, without clear ‘*follow-up*’, the destinations data they provided would be suspect. Some were also concerned that some of the increases they had already noted in the proportion of young people staying in learning might not be the result of appropriate careers service or other guidance input. They queried whether the increases had been a reflection of such guidance, the introduction of Education Maintenance Allowances or, as some feared, because some students ‘*did not ... know about other options, such as work-based learning*’. These fears were exacerbated by the apparent increases in early post-16 drop-out that some had already identified.

4.4 The Focusing Agenda: The Impact on Working Practices

Changes in working practices were evident both in the move towards (or away from) specialist or generic teams and in the ways in which careers advisers worked with the various client and customer groups. However, no chief executive claimed that they had yet found a model of practice that addressed

every need, even though some believed they were ‘*effective within the resources available*’. For example, while some companies saw benefits accruing from a specialist team approach (in-depth expertise, shared knowledge, etc.), many saw a differential rate of progress. Staff working in labour-market or out-of-school teams were said to be adopting more flexible working practices than those in school teams, where the constraints imposed by school timetables and staffing structures appeared to hamper progress:

[The] *difficulty of accommodating change in school routines means [that] school-based careers advisers [have been] frustrated by barriers to introducing [the] new agenda. For that reason, staff working with young people in the labour market have surged ahead in personal and service development terms – our schools teams are beginning to look very ‘old hat’. The innovative staff show a tendency not to work in schools these days.*

4.4.1 The work of the careers adviser and personal adviser

Those companies that had adopted an area-based approach, broadening the generic skills of their staff, also made reference to varying rates of progress and development. On the one hand, respondents felt that the structure they had established had facilitated joint working with other agencies (though that in itself was said to lead to tension and uncertainty over points of contact and reporting lines). On the other hand, this wider brief for careers advisers (in terms of external liaison, for instance) was said to have highlighted a need for more in-depth training amongst their own staff, particularly for working with young people who were multiply disadvantaged. A number of chief executives expressed concern about the ability of some careers advisers to work flexibly with a range of agencies. One chief executive, commenting on the willingness of ‘*what we used to call support staff – our non-Dip CG staff*’ to seize ‘*opportunities for innovative and developmental working*’ that was ‘*light years ahead of what we did before*’ mused: ‘*We wonder whether the Dip CG made people too “precious”!*’

Alongside this view, however, there was a distinct awareness that there was still a widespread need for greater expertise in careers education in schools. Highlighting the need to demonstrate ‘*that careers education and guidance remains at the heart of Connexions*’, companies have none the less found that ‘*a more specialist level of knowledge and expertise was needed to initiate change and development than that held by many careers advisers*’. To this end, and as indicated in Chapter 3, many had initiated specialist education teams and provided additional training for their staff.

A wider issue, and one that exercised many services (and schools) approaching the implementation of Connexions, was the future deployment and management of Personal Advisers. To begin with, careers service staff pointed out that not all careers advisers wanted to take on the Personal Adviser role. While many were said to see the new role as ‘*a great opportunity*’, operations managers said that these were often staff who had previously expressed an interest in working with the ‘hard to help’ and were more likely

to elect to work in the Learning Gateway than in schools. Staff attracted to the ‘traditional’ careers adviser role were said to be concerned about their ability to establish effective multi-disciplinary working with a range of agencies. This indeed was thought likely to *‘make new and extremely challenging demands on staff across the various agencies’*, particularly where Connexions Services were being established across multiple LEAs and careers services.

Secondly, many companies reported that they had encountered difficulties in recruiting new staff, with potential recruits *‘put off’* because they did not want to become *‘quasi-social workers’* (as some thought of Personal Advisers). Others said there was a particular problem of recruitment and retention in areas that were already involved in Excellence in Cities, where learning mentors appointed by schools and Partnerships were said to be *‘well paid... [and recruited] from our skill pool’*. Staff questioned how Personal Advisers would (or should) make linkages with such initiatives focused on disadvantaged students or the ‘hard to help’, and specifically, what the relationship should be between Personal Advisers and Excellence in Cities Learning Mentors. This raised a further concern about the wider credibility of Personal Advisers. Both careers service and school staff commented that Connexions was in danger of being undermined by the level of *‘suspicion’* that existed in some schools about the *‘reliability of staff from other agencies (e.g. Social Services, Youth Service)’*, based on what were said to be *‘previous negative experiences’*.

Finally, many careers service and school staff reported that there was still a lack of clarity about the role of, or training for, Personal Advisers. What, some asked,⁷⁹ was the distinction between careers advisers, Personal Advisers and Learning Mentors? Chief executives also commented that, even where there was some understanding of the particular role of the individual, the link between that and the broader Connexions Strategy was not widely understood. Were Personal Advisers, for example, to have input *‘at individual pupil level [or at] curriculum development level’*?

This question of liaison and support highlighted some additional concerns about the management of Personal Advisers at school level. A number of careers service chief executives (11) discussed the challenge (a challenge that, for some, had already arisen) of maintaining the independence and impartiality of Personal Advisers, especially where they were (partly or wholly) managed by the school: *‘For advice to be genuinely impartial, it has to be independent of the provider(s) of learning so that the interests of the individual are paramount and do not conflict with those of the institution employing the Adviser.’*

Students were generally in favour of the concept of a Personal Adviser, although most saw their role primarily in relation to careers education. Young people variously commented that schools should *‘employ a full-time careers teacher so there is always someone there to talk to’* and that *‘I think there*

⁷⁹ Nine chief executives expressed continuing confusion over this role, while there was a lack of clarity about the role of the Personal Adviser in all 28 case-study schools.

should be an adviser that just deals with the negative parts of careers. For example, if you apply for a job and don't get it, what do you do next? What if you've got a job and have been sacked? People who haven't done GNVQ might not know the rules'. However, they were also alert to the scale of the post, suggesting that caseloads would need to be limited ('if [the Personal Advisers] have too many [students] then you couldn't be able to see her that often') and that time was a necessary element in building trust ('you need to build a relationship with them first'). Others were quite clear that the post should not be internal to the school: '[not a teacher's] second job [but] someone from outside, someone experienced, someone who is really dedicated and cared about what you wanted and got to know you.'

4.4.2 Redressing the balance

Some of the issues outlined above provided the rationale for the use that careers services made of the additional funds available through Government Offices in the academic year 2000/01. As one respondent indicated, school perceptions were key: *'The model [the company has adopted] is successful in identifying [the] need for guidance but some schools perceive that the flexible responsive process is constrained by finite careers adviser resources.'* For many companies, the challenge was to redress the apparent imbalance that schools had criticised and so counteract the notion (apparently growing amongst some schools and some groups of young people) that careers education and guidance was intrinsically only for those 'at risk': *'Headteachers...were increasingly unhappy about the targeting of resources at those who were very time consuming and often not seen as the school priority.'* For some, there was concern to find effective and sustainable ways of addressing the needs of young people who were not targeted for one-to-one guidance. For others, the priority was to set in place strategies that would improve careers education and guidance programmes in schools and so make more effective use of careers adviser time.

Careers services were clearly alert to this issue. In nearly two-thirds of the responding services (24), the priority for the use of recent additional funds had been to set in place strategies that would improve careers education and guidance programmes in schools and so make more effective use of careers adviser time. Despite some comments that *'frankly, with the amount of money involved, it's not really worth making a fuss about!'* ...*'it only equates to 1.4% of our annual contract fee'*, companies had variously sought to:

- ◆ **Enhance interactive ICT services** in order to provide greater sustainable support for young people outside the target group (15 services). Strategies ranged from developing a complete online service (using the funds to place appropriate telephone and modem equipment in schools), to enhancing websites, promoting access to online Career Clubs and careers conventions, providing email helplines and vacancy alerting, messaging and information facilities for students. One company was piloting a Café Connect service based in an Excellence in Cities City Learning Centre. While there was an air of excitement about many of these developments, some respondents sounded a word of caution. ICT facilities, particularly

for careers education and guidance, were said to be still poor in many schools, while a number of chief executives reported that their previous experience had been that providing ICT services had only increased the eventual demand for one-to-one guidance.

- ♦ **Strengthen the ‘skills base’ of teaching staff** in schools – and of careers advisers (14 services). Careers services had adopted a limited number of approaches for this work, primarily related to targeted training and consultancy support in schools and colleges and the development of distance learning or ‘self-help’ tutor packs. However, while some of this training was innovative (such as diagnostic profile training, for instance) and a necessary adjunct to careers service support, some respondents suggested that it was in lieu of meeting the ‘*real need*’, which, they felt, was for ‘*more individual support for young people*’.
- ♦ Strengthen careers education provision through **new and/or innovative curriculum packages** (9 services). The Real Game was the most widely mentioned innovation, with some companies buying it in for use across all or most of their schools.⁸⁰ Other companies had adopted more individually focused materials, such as Personal Learning Planning or Cognitive Information Processing, in order to enhance the diagnostic and developmental element of careers education and guidance programmes. Although the use of theatre groups was mentioned in one area, this did not appear to be a strategy that companies had widely sought to fund.
- ♦ **Increase the visible presence of the careers service** in non-target schools, which was felt necessary to restore school confidence in the work of the service (7 services). Strategies included setting up teams of careers advisers to spend days in schools, running clinics, carrying out group work and promoting web-based services, for example. In other areas, alterations to staffing structures were noted, with additional information staff appointed to help with school careers libraries, specialist careers education posts being instituted and new trainees being recruited.
- ♦ Develop **additional work with** young people designated as **gifted and/or talented** (5 services). Many companies were concerned about what they saw as a withdrawal of services from the more able students and some had used the additional money to reinstate elements of the work they had previously done with such young people. The long-term continuation of this work, they felt, was still insecure, because of the ‘*short-term nature of the funds*’. However, some had carried out development work specifically with students designated as gifted and talented (these were not, interestingly enough, in Excellence in Cities areas) in the hope of reducing or preventing future drop-out from Year 12 or from higher education.

On the whole, respondents felt that it was rather too early to measure the success of these strategies: in some instances, new posts had not yet been filled, while in others, web-based activities were still being developed. A few felt that the additional funds had merely enabled them to ‘*plug the [identified] gaps on a short-term basis*’ and that they had not yet found a long-term

⁸⁰ As one correspondent noted, however, the Real Game ‘*hardly restores individual careers guidance to between 3,000 and 4,000 pupils*’.

solution. As one respondent noted, *‘the overwhelming constraint is one of resourcing ... shifting this resource from one sector [education] to another [Learning Gateway] is not a long-term answer’*.

It was clear from the research that the biggest impact on careers services’ working relationship with schools was made by the changes to the Planning Guidance, which heralded the focusing of the service towards those identified as ‘most in need’. In summary, the introduction of this agenda had led to the emergence of tensions over the definition of need, an exposure of deficiencies in school careers education and guidance programmes, and a growing awareness of the need for different types of training and support for both school and careers service staff. Each of these has major implications for the successful implementation of the Connexions Service, not the least of which is the challenge to balance specialist expertise with wider generic and multi-agency working. Chapter 5 now looks more fully at some of variations in practice and outcomes between schools and across regions that have emerged as a result of the refocusing agenda.

5. OUTCOMES OF THE FOCUSING AGENDA?

The discussion so far has focused on the capacity of schools and careers services to respond to the focusing agenda and has examined strategies established by careers services to raise capacity in schools. This chapter identifies some of the wider outcomes of the focusing agenda, for schools and careers services. Is there any indication that their response has led to better overall provision for young people in disadvantaged areas?

5.1 Differences in Careers Education and Guidance Provision and Outcomes

Data from the postal survey of schools was used to construct a detailed statistical model that reflected the nature, quality and extent of guidance provision.⁸¹ This analysis suggests that there may be some positive outcomes – as well as some emerging concerns – as a result of the changes to the Planning Guidance in 1998. To begin with, two principal components of provision were identified by a process of primary and secondary factor analysis.

- ◆ The first (**structural support**) was related to the extent of student access to resources (both information and communications technology – ICT – and other careers-related resources) and the extent of senior management support, expressed in terms of budgetary and administrative support and mechanisms for curriculum integration. This explained over one-quarter of the variance between schools (27%).
- ◆ The second (**level of specialist provision**) was linked to the extent of student access to guidance; specialist delivery by trained teachers and careers service staff; and the overall amount of time dedicated to careers education and guidance across Years 9 to 11. This explained a further 19% of the variance.

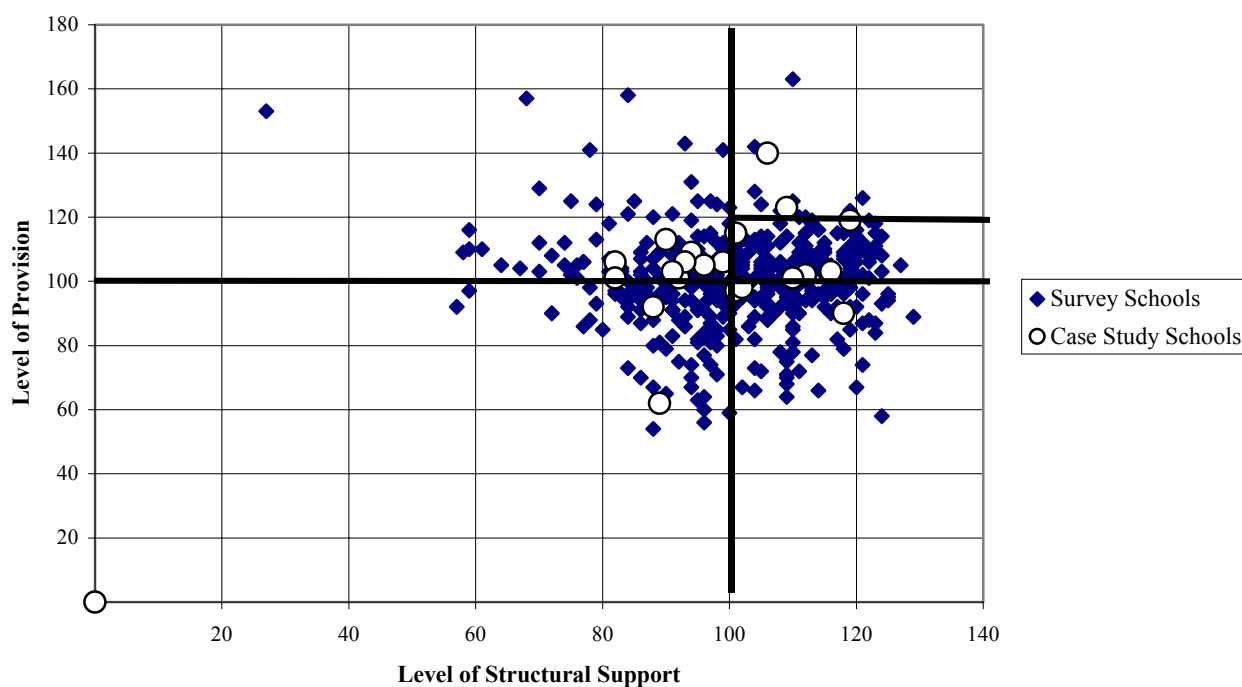
These two components were used to map provision across the survey schools (Figure 5.1, overleaf, provides a picture of the wide variation observed), and schools were then categorised according to the extent of their structural support and the level of their specialist provision.⁸² Four major groups were identified. These groups confirmed that over two-thirds of the schools for

⁸¹ A brief description of the statistical analysis undertaken for this study is included in Appendix 1. In order to construct a composite indicator of overall provision, this data needed to be fully comprehensive: in all, sufficient data was obtained from 470 of the 528 surveyed schools (89%).

⁸² The survey items used in this analysis are summarised in Appendix 1.

whom sufficient data was available (69%)⁸³ displayed some major deficits, whether in terms of support or provision or both. Overall, in just under one-third of the schools (31%),⁸⁴ provision of careers education and guidance could be said to be to reflect good practice, with some 13 schools (3%) forming a further sub-set of schools with high levels of both support and provision.

Figure 5.1 Distribution of schools: by levels of provision and structural support



The 13 best practice schools all had:

- ◆ one or more staff with a nationally recognised careers education and guidance qualification;
- ◆ a timetabled allocation of at least 50 minutes a week for the careers education and guidance programme for each of Years 9, 10 and 11;
- ◆ good facilities for, and easy access to, ICT and other careers-related resources;
- ◆ a high level of senior management support expressed in terms of budgetary, time and resource allocation and in terms of access to decision-making bodies;
- ◆ clear strategies for the integration of careers education and guidance into the wider school curriculum and into the various academic, pastoral and vocational systems in the school;

⁸³ Insufficient data was available for some 11% of the schools (58 cases) to make a judgement about their status. Were all schools to be included in the analysis, this figure would represent 62% of all those in the survey.

⁸⁴ This reflects just over one-quarter of all schools.

- ♦ strategies to ensure access to specialist guidance provision for the target group and for other students outside the target group.

The distribution of schools across the four major groups is indicated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Patterns of provision: distribution of schools.

Category	SCALE OF PROVISION	%	%
A1	Very high levels of support and provision	3	3
A2	High levels of support and provision	24	28
B	Low levels of support but good provision	21	24
C	High levels of support but poor provision	21	23
D	Low levels of support and poor provision	20	22
U	Insufficient data	11	-
N =		528	470

*Outcome of Principal Components Analysis
470 schools provided sufficient data to be included in the model
Source: NFER survey of schools*

These differences are evident both in relation to school characteristics and to regional variations, with statistically significant differences at a number of different levels.

5.2 Differences in Practice Between Schools

The ‘best’ schools (those in Categories A1 and A2 above) tended to differ significantly from others in terms of:

- ♦ the proportion of staff with careers education and guidance qualifications (schools with good support but poor quality provision tended to lack staff with guidance-related qualifications);
- ♦ the amount of improvement that they had noted in:
 - careers service contributions of careers-related information;
 - school and careers service provision of careers education;⁸⁵
 - careers service input to guidance.⁸⁶

Moreover there were clear differences in the type of careers-related developments, at school and at careers service level, that schools in the different categories sought, and these are summarised in Table 5.2 overleaf.⁸⁷ These differences suggest that schools were clearly aware of the gaps or deficiencies in their programmes, with schools in the ‘best’ category tending

⁸⁵ It should be noted that schools with poor support structures, though good provision, were also marginally more likely to identify such improvements.

⁸⁶ This was also noted in schools with poor provision but good support.

⁸⁷ These were significant at $p < 0.05$.

to focus on additional administrative support and displaying most concern about young people outside the current target group. By contrast, schools where provision was relatively poor were more likely to seek a comprehensive overhaul of their programme and to look for significant additional support from the careers service.⁸⁸

Table 5.2 Careers-related developments: by category of provision

Category	Issues for development in school	Issues for development in the careers service
A1	Additional administrative support; better provision for the non-target group (or no development needed).	Enhanced guidance for non-target group (or no development needed).
A2	Changes to the careers education and guidance curriculum.	More provision of supporting services (e.g. curriculum support).
B	Improvements needed in resources, ICT provision and status.	Enhanced guidance for non-target group and more information about Connexions.
C	Improvements needed in timetable allocations; better liaison with the careers service, better provision for the non-target group; changes to the careers education and guidance programme and enhanced status.	Improvements needed in the provision of careers information; support for careers education; enhanced guidance for the non-target group; more provision of supporting services (e.g. curriculum support); and more information about Connexions.
D	Improvements needed in timetable allocations; better liaison with the careers service, better provision for the non-target group; and enhanced status.	Improvements needed in the provision of support for careers education; enhanced guidance for the non-target group; more provision of supporting services (e.g. curriculum support).

All careers services (and therefore schools) were involved in the focusing agenda, and schools were subject to the 1997 legislation and had been supported by the earlier enhancement of careers education and guidance for

⁸⁸ In many ways, the respective differences between schools in the needs they identified is relatively encouraging, suggesting a realistic appraisal of current provision. However, it also raises some specific issues, not least of which is how these needs might be met. Few careers services could support the comprehensive one-to-one guidance system that had prevailed prior to the introduction of the focusing agenda, for instance, even though many schools were said to support such a system. Yet many chief executives and operations managers indicated that the enhanced ICT strategies and ‘multimedia alternatives’ that they had introduced as part of the ‘self-help’ approach to guidance for young people outside the target groups ‘often only increased the demand for guidance rather than meeting the need’. Secondly, while careers coordinators in schools with poorer provision indicated a desire for more curriculum support, many careers services suggested that they also needed to enhance their own skills in this area. A number reported, for example, that a ‘more specialist level of knowledge and expertise was needed to initiate [curriculum] change and development than that held by many careers advisers’. However, even where education specialists and curriculum teams were included as part of the careers service strategy, some schools, as indicated in Chapter 3, were said to make little use of the proffered help.

young people in Years 9 and 10. There remains a question, therefore, as to why there were such significant differences between schools. Were there any distinguishing characteristics shared by the ‘best’ schools, or by those where provision and support were poor?

Much previous research indicates that young people's openness to guidance was, and had been, significantly higher amongst students in schools without sixth forms than amongst those in schools with young people in Years 12 and 13.⁸⁹ There was some indication that this might still be the case, although it is difficult to make a clear assessment of this based on the limited numbers of Year 11 students involved in essentially open-ended group discussions (164). A high proportion of the students involved in the study (60%) indicated that they hoped to study for A-levels. Those from schools with sixth forms, particularly the more academic schools, tended to be a little more adamant than others that they did not want to receive information about alternative pathways at 16. As one such student commented, *‘I just didn’t like the talks we had about what you could do post-16, because I definitely want to do my A-levels’*. Others were not convinced about the value of different qualifications: *‘There was a talker [sic] that came in one day about GNVQs at the sixth form and I really wasn’t interested in GNVQs – I had my sights set on A-levels. So that was pointless, really...’* At the same time, young people in these schools were quick to raise issues about withheld information (*‘you don’t really get any information about going to colleges because they want you to stay here’*) or biased presentation (*‘All the talk about A-levels puts you off. They talk about it so much, you just think “Can I be bothered?”’*).

However, at a school level, the current survey suggests that there were no significant differences between the reported quality of, and support for, careers education and guidance provision in schools with or without sixth forms. Instead the biggest differences were evident in relation to socio-economic circumstances and levels of student ability and attainment. In summary, the reported quality of careers education and guidance provision, in terms of access to facilities, resources and guidance (whether or not there was good internal or structural support – Categories A and B) was significantly higher in:⁹⁰

- ♦ areas of higher socio-economic deprivation (as measured by entitlement to free school meals). However, it should be noted that there is no indication that this corresponds entirely with inner-city areas: there is no significant difference, for example, between schools in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas;
- ♦ schools with lower key stage 3 results;
- ♦ schools with lower levels of attainment at GCSE.

Since schools’ reported level of careers service input to guidance was one element of the overall measures outlined above, it might appear that an emphasis on provision for young people in the areas of greatest need (in terms,

⁸⁹ See for example, MORRIS, M., LINES, A. and GOLDEN, S. (1999). *The Impact of Careers Education and Guidance on Young People in Years 9 and 10: a Follow Up Study* (RD 20). Sheffield: DfEE.

⁹⁰ These differences were significant at $p < 0.05$.

at least, of economic deprivation and attainment) may have had some positive impact. However, this is not a straightforward association and may indeed reflect past developments rather than any recent enhancement. While the research sought teachers' perceptions of change over time, there is no comprehensive baseline of past provision and support for all of the schools in the study. A number of the schools had been involved in an earlier research project exploring the impact of enhanced guidance on young people in Years 9 and 10.⁹¹ In these schools, previous findings suggest that many of the schools in disadvantaged areas had already developed strong careers education and guidance provision and good careers service links. The positive impact summarised above is not sufficient evidence to suggest that focusing careers service support on particular groups of students has led to better careers education and guidance provision in all schools in those areas.

- ◆ To begin with, the quality of much of school provision appeared to rely heavily on access to careers advisers. Were careers services to withdraw or to reduce their input in these schools, it is possible that many of the programmes would have been significantly poorer.

Careers education and guidance provision in one Category B case-study school was said, by both the careers adviser and the careers coordinators, to have a low status, with little senior manager or year head support, and to lack opportunities for strong work-related curriculum input. The programme in school is taught by non-specialists and, while there is a clear work scheme, there is no monitoring of delivery. Inadequate time provision, some inappropriate timing of activities on a PSE carousel and the vulnerability of the careers programme to other curriculum pressures suggest that, were the careers service to withdraw, provision would not be maintained at the current level.

- ◆ Secondly, the proportion of schools in which there was good access to guidance and support, but which lacked appropriate supportive structures, was high (21%). Such schools are vulnerable to staffing changes and to external (or internal) pressures on the curriculum and, in some cases, it would take little for significant and detrimental changes to provision to take place.

In a further Category B school, the high quality of the careers education programme was felt, by both the senior management and the careers adviser, to be primarily the work of the trained and enthusiastic careers coordinators. However, while the current provision was recognised as strong, no other member of staff had developed similar expertise or was in a position to take over the area were the coordinators to move on. Secondly, although senior managers were said to be generally supportive of careers education and guidance, it was evident that there were other – and stronger – pressures on the school, most particularly in terms of raising attainment in a school with a relatively low ability intake.

- ◆ Finally, it was evident that, as many interviewees had indicated, the quality of careers education and guidance programmes was significantly poorer in many of the more academic or socially advantaged schools. Given the

⁹¹ MORRIS, M., LINES, A. and GOLDEN, S. (1999). *The Impact of Enhanced Guidance Provision on Young People in Years 9 and 10* (DfEE Research Brief RD 20). Sheffield: DfEE.

concerns about reduced numbers of applications (and increasingly late applications) to post-16 education and training providers (other than school sixth forms), this may be a cause of some unease.

The situation in one of the category D case-study schools reflects this picture. In this very high achieving (and oversubscribed) comprehensive school, with few young people in the careers service priority group, the careers education and guidance programme is currently minimal. There was no specific school allocation of time for careers-related provision, which was delivered solely through the occasional suspension of the timetable for one-off activities, such as bringing in outside speakers to make presentations to Year 11. Young people tend to stay on in the school for their post-16 courses and were said, by the careers adviser, to have little clear understanding of the careers implications of their choices.

Overall, and based on the self-reporting of practice, the current patterns of provision raise some doubts about the capacity of some 60% to 70% of schools to continue to offer good-quality careers education and guidance. Schools continue to have concerns about the provision they make for students in the non-target groups. The existence of targeting was identified as a significant positive contributory factor in the development of careers education and guidance programmes *only* where both the quality of provision and the extent of structural support were high.⁹²

5.3 Differences in Practice Between Regions

Variations in the quality of guidance practice and support in schools were also evident between regions. Schools in the North West and West Midlands, for example, were significantly more likely than others to report both good internal support and good guidance provision, and when the proportions of schools in each category are examined, a higher proportion of those schools (along with those in the North East) are in the category of ‘best practice’ (Category A). By comparison, schools in Greater London were significantly less likely than others to report good practice, and a higher proportion were in Category 4 – that of poor internal support and provision.⁹³ Information from the careers services provided some limited insight into why these differences, or perceptions of differences, may be so evident.

Since 1998/1999, careers services in the South and South East have received proportionally lower increases in their DfEE funding levels than those in the North. This has led to a reduction of services to clients in school on two specific fronts. Firstly, in order to meet the additional requirements for the Learning Gateway (work with post-16 clients not in education, training or

⁹² Furthermore, the achievement of a quality award, something that many careers services were promoting as part of their aim to improve capacity, was said to have a positive impact only in those schools that reported both good internal support and where a high quality of provision could be discerned.

⁹³ Schools in the South East and Yorkshire and the Humber were marginally more likely to be in this lower performing group.

employment), chief executives argued that the lower level of funding increases meant that they had to withdraw proportionally more of their funds away from the provision of services to schools.

Secondly, in reallocating their remaining funds across schools according to prioritised need, they reported considerable difficulties, with some services reporting higher levels of students eligible for their target groups than could be included. As one London service, commenting on the reduction of resources to schools following pressure to focus efforts on post-16 and Learning Gateway, concluded:

Refocusing in an area such as ours... has resulted in the perverse outcome whereby schools with relatively large numbers of disadvantaged pupils and low levels of achievement in our inner-city area had disproportionately higher levels of reduction in service compared with schools with higher levels of achievement elsewhere in the country.

However, services in each of the Government Office regions indicated that *'the good schools have got better; the bad have got worse* [in terms of careers education and guidance provision]'. There was, moreover, a clear difference between the 'best' schools and others in terms of the extent to which they worked in partnership with the careers service. Those schools making good provision and with good structural support were significantly more likely than others to work in partnership with the careers companies to provide students with careers information, careers education and careers guidance. They were also significantly more likely to involve them in the design and review of careers programmes and other elements of the work-related curriculum.⁹⁴

So what can be learned from this? Chapter 6 goes on to explore some of the specific challenges faced by careers services and schools in moving towards Connexions.

⁹⁴ It should be noted that on average, careers coordinators tended to report a reduction in careers adviser time somewhere in the order of 20–25%. This was not universal, but Tables 9a, 9b and 9c in Appendix II confirm the perception of an overall reduction of careers service provision (at least in terms of time) to the education sector since 1998.

6. TOWARDS CONNEXIONS?

It is clear from the preceding chapters that there is a difference in practice between schools and between careers services. In moving towards Connexions, it is likely that no single model of practice would prove to be practicable, or suitable, in all areas. Indeed, one of the criticisms levelled at the focusing agenda by rural practitioners was that it was a *'policy predicated on the assumption that the problems of [an inner-city area] exist everywhere, and if they don't then there is no problem'*. However, it is imperative that some of the lessons that have been learned in recent years, both those that have resulted from the focusing agenda and those that have emerged as a result of other initiatives and activities, are more widely disseminated and acted upon, in order to move towards a situation in which Connexions can be implemented successfully. These include clarifying issues of need, enhancing capacity and addressing information and training needs.

6.1 Clarifying Issues of Need

On the whole, it was felt that many of the young people in the target group were now receiving more effective input than in the past, although few operations managers felt that their system was perfect. However, both schools and careers services expressed some real concerns about the kinds of students that should constitute the target group. A key concern was that, while careers service efforts were focused on the 'hard to help', many other young people, who would not be targeted under the current criteria, were clearly in need of more support than they were currently receiving. Chief executives suggested that the focusing agenda had led to a significant deterioration in services to clients in education, particularly to those who might be seen as *'of average ability and the most able'*, a perception shared by staff in many schools.

This, in turn, was felt to have led to the creation of a new group of priority students post-16 – those who were dropping out of academic courses that many were said to have chosen without sufficient preparation or access to comprehensive, impartial information. It was widely felt that the implications of the new post-16 curriculum were not fully understood. As one service interviewee commented: *'We have not yet plumbed the depth of ignorance about the new curriculum'*. It was thought that many problems had been created because changes had been introduced at a time when the young people who would be following such AS- and A-level courses were largely outside the target group for individual interviews. Moreover, the curriculum changes had also introduced what chief executives saw as an additional guidance point at 17 – the point at which, most respondents noted, careers service efforts were focused on those outside school, in, for example, the Learning Gateway.

Both teaching and careers service staff felt that there was a need to revisit the criteria for targeting. Were socio-economic disadvantage and disaffection the most appropriate triggers for guidance? In operating the current system, a number of additional issues emerged, each of which have implications for the future development of Connexions

6.1.1 Obtaining accurate, comparative data on students

In order to identify students that should be included in the target group, careers services relied on obtaining accurate, comparative data on individual students from schools and local authorities. However, the schools and local authorities were said to collect and collate data on young people in a variety of different ways, not all of which were easily accessible and not all of which answered the needs of the services – or, indeed, of the schools. Some services said that local systems were so poor that it had made it difficult to establish a priority group.⁹⁵ In addition, operations managers commented that some schools had identified numbers of students far in excess of either DfEE or careers service estimates, leading to long negotiations in order to refine the final list. In a few cases, schools were beginning to realise the value of accurate data collection and record keeping, but progress was said to be slow. Overall, the data collection systems that are in place in schools, local authorities and other agencies at the moment do not appear to be sufficient to support a comprehensive service for young people aged 13 to 19.

6.1.2 Getting access to the ‘hard to help’

Difficulties were encountered at a number of different levels. To begin with, target group students in rural areas were said to provide a far greater challenge to services than those living in city areas. The combination of poor rural transport systems and the scattered nature of young people’s homes meant that obtaining access to this group was often reported as costly and time consuming. Many operations managers thought that the current model of identification and targeting was not appropriate to areas suffering rural deprivation, which was felt to be hard to measure.

Secondly, careers service staff reported that some schools tended to resist advisers making contact with young people who were on the priority target list. This was said to be particularly evident in schools with sixth forms (who were thought to be more concerned about maintaining their student numbers) and in more academic schools that, prior to focusing, had allowed freer access to students, but now accorded a lower status to careers education and guidance. Finally, careers advisers felt that they encountered a higher degree of ‘*no show*’ amongst priority group students than amongst the wider student

⁹⁵ The introduction of the Common Basic Data Set may overcome some of these problems. However, it is unlikely that this will be in place much before April 2002. Moreover, and as NFER have identified during the evaluation of Excellence in Cities, the physical capacity to apply the CBDS (in terms of hardware and software) is not yet widespread. Many schools have not yet allocated Unique Pupil Numbers, and levels of expertise in the use of interactive datasets are not uniform. In addition, data protection issues are still being explored.

group, leading to much wasted time – time that some said could have been spent more profitably on other clients in education.

6.1.3 Providing meaningful guidance for ‘hard-to-help’ young people

In at least two areas, operations managers commented that, even though they were getting access to the high risk groups, there was some scepticism about what this would achieve in the long run. As one concluded, there were few opportunities for such young people locally: there was a large unemployment register for this age group and employers were simply not interested in recruiting young people with qualifications below Level 2. While some would be moved on to Learning Gateway, it was felt that, locally, there was little suitable alternative provision. In the words of a second manager, *‘there’s nothing for the kids once you get them motivated!’*.

6.2 Enhancing Capacity in Schools

Since the introduction of the focusing agenda, it would seem that there has been a significant polarisation of provision. Some schools have worked hard to provide comprehensive, high-quality programmes and others have retreated to a form of provision that was more common before the enhancement of careers education and guidance for Years 9 and 10. Many chief executives reported that they their staff had worked hard to secure school involvement, although there were still *‘pockets of resistance’*. The greater concern was that careers programmes in schools were often insufficient to meet the guidance needs of all. One operations manager commented that, even with senior staff taking responsibility for careers education and guidance, many schools simply did not have the capacity to pick up the work relinquished by the careers service.

Yet there was also a recognition amongst careers companies that *‘you can’t expect schools always to have the capacity to do everything...they have many demands [on their time] and the careers coordinators probably has multiple roles’*. This lack of capacity was recognised by many companies in the use they had made of additional funds, but some felt that it was *‘too little, too late’*.

At a developmental level, chief executives were less concerned about the operational impact of curriculum changes (such as changes to PSHE or the statutory introduction of citizenship education) than about their longer-term strategic impact. Companies sometimes mentioned difficulties in resourcing the extra input needed to help schools introduce extended work-related learning at key stage 4, for example (a role that some felt had *‘not always been properly acknowledged in Planning Guidance’*). However, they were more worried about pressures on school timetables that they perceived as reducing the future status of, and provision for, careers education and guidance: *‘Schools think that citizenship is more important than careers education and guidance.’*

6.3 Addressing Training and Information Needs

Issues about training and information needs were evident at both school and careers service level. Firstly, chief executives argued that ‘*overcoming lack of tutor motivation and skill*’ and ‘*providing high-level training and support*’ were two critical elements for the effective introduction of Connexions. These were felt to be important not only to ensure the quality of careers education and guidance programmes, but also to counteract the notion (apparently growing amongst some schools and some groups of young people) that careers education and guidance was intrinsically only for those ‘at risk’.

At the same time it was recognised that there were some significant needs amongst careers service staff, particularly in terms of enabling them to work with the multiply disadvantaged, with the ‘hard to help’ and with a range of agencies. Some worries were expressed about the potential deskilling of service staff, whose work broadly took them away from clients in education, and, conversely, about the narrow approach of some of those staff who resisted the more innovative approaches adopted by staff who had taken on a Personal Adviser role: ‘*The innovative staff show a tendency not to work in schools these days.*’

6.4 The Way Forward?

So, what can be done to facilitate the implementation of Connexions? Four factors seem to be key:

6.4.1 Clarifying Connexions

There was relatively widespread support for the multi-agency approach to be adopted by Connexions as part of the wider ‘inclusion’ agenda. However, the level of understanding of both the Connexions Service and the wider Connexions strategy was relatively limited. High levels of confusion were evident about the future role of the careers service and the implications of this for guidance in schools. There were concerns about the remit of Personal Advisers (their role and the ways in which they would be managed, for example) and the longer-term future for careers advisers. Furthermore, teachers and careers service staff were worried about the extent to which Connexions would have an impact on existing partnerships and networks. The original Connexions document was not widely known in schools, and few recalled seeing the DfEE Circular sent to headteachers. This high level of uncertainty was not limited to schools. Many careers service personnel were unsure what the service would look like ‘*on the ground*’.

It would seem, therefore, that in order for Connexions to have any hope of longer-term success, more needs to be done to clarify the strategy (that it is about more than guidance interviews and social inclusion, for example) and to draw on the experience of the pilot areas to give careers service and school staff a better picture of how the Connexions Service operates at a local level.

6.4.2 Recruiting and training Personal Advisers

As indicated in Chapter 4, schools expressed some real concern about the credibility of the new role of Personal Advisers: *'You can't have twenty-somethings coming straight off the street [and talking to young people on sensitive issues without adequate training]; our kids are so open [and therefore vulnerable].'* This highlights some specific issues that do not yet appear to have been fully addressed. Who are these Personal Advisers? From where will they be recruited? What levels of expertise will they have? While many services have identified scales of Personal Advisers, to address the emerging issue of strategic versus operational roles, recruitment into a Personal Adviser post is currently available only to staff previously trained in another tradition (whether guidance, counselling or other form of youth support). While there is clearly a need for a range of skills amongst staff appointed to this role, there is no specific career path for a Personal Adviser. Would such staff have the relevant careers-related expertise still needed by schools? As one careers coordinator noted: *'I understand the rationale, but I think that to have people trained with impartial experience of careers guidance is essential, more necessary than ever.'*

6.4.3 Reducing fragmentation in schools

While the introduction of the focusing agenda was said to have led to better identification of guidance needs amongst young people, careers services frequently expressed their concern that schools' pastoral systems were unable to identify or to support the range of young people's differentiated needs. This led to wider unease about the ability of schools to be active partners in forthcoming Connexions Services: *'Connexions will face its biggest challenges in schools, because of the rigidity of their organisation and [the] perceived threats to established structures.'* The detailed statistical analysis of school data, and the information gleaned from case-study interviews suggest that the need to improve liaison and networking in schools and between schools and other agencies is paramount.

6.4.4 Coordinating policies

The wider-scale integration of Connexions with other policies and initiatives has proved to be a significant challenge for careers service and school staff and led a number of chief executives to plead for greater clarity and overlap between policy developments. The parallel piloting of Excellence in Cities and the new Connexions Service was, they argued, a case in point. Both aimed to promote inclusion and ensure that young people had access to new and appropriate opportunities. Yet, as one chief executive argued: *'There was no direct link or connection made by DfEE between Excellence in Cities and Connexions. This has not helped partnership on the ground or the formation of Connexions arrangements locally.'* Respondents identified problems both with philosophy (such as the potential *'multiplicity of advisers from various initiatives...exactly what Connexions is supposed to avoid!'*) and development strategy. The different strategies adopted by local partnerships in bidding for Excellence in Cities funds had clearly led to some difficulties, with chief

executives concerned about the lack of national and local coherence: *‘Neither the LEA nor [the careers service] were consulted by headteachers re their proposals to DfEE.’*

This had led to considerable local confusion, particularly in relation to *‘clarifying [the] roles and responsibilities of different staff providing individual support to pupils’*. As one correspondent noted: *‘In the early days, some [Excellence in Cities] learning mentors were tempted to give careers advice and information which proved to be erroneous’*. More than half of the operations managers reported that they faced a specific challenge in facilitating the effective interaction of Personal Advisers and learning mentors. One manager (within a pilot Connexions Service) went so far as to say that, as far as he could see, Connexions was *‘on a separate railway line’* from other initiatives. An interviewee in a second pilot area, while very enthusiastic about the benefits that had accrued from Connexions, expressed concern that Excellence in Cities, with its emphasis on performance and teaching and learning, would take precedence in the minds of headteachers and, in effect, *‘push Connexions down the agenda’*. It was this disjuncture that led a number of chief executives to plead for greater clarity and overlap between policy developments.

6.5 In Conclusion

In the light of reports from careers services and schools, there must still be some doubt about the current capacity of schools to support the full implementation of the Connexions Service. Above and beyond the state (and status) of careers education and guidance programmes in schools, internal support strategies to meet young people's individual guidance and other needs are highly variable. Many schools remain in need of additional external support to develop their ability to become full partners in a Connexions service. The following points provide some suggestions of ways in which DfEE might move forward in assisting schools and careers services.

- ♦ **Provide information.** Many of the difficulties encountered by careers services in introducing focusing, and in launching Connexions, have been a result of the lack of school awareness of these as national rather than local initiatives. At present, many schools (and some careers service staff) still lack awareness and understanding of the role of Personal Advisers, the scope of Connexions and the implications this has for student support.
- ♦ **Provide clarification.** The ambiguities over the definition of the target group, while theoretically facilitating a diversity of local practice, led, in fact to an almost universal use of social inclusion issues (whether these were related to ability or to disaffection/disengagement) as the criteria for guidance provision. Few companies and schools focused instead on detailed assessments of students' vocational and guidance needs, regardless of ability or risk of social exclusion.
- ♦ **Build in longer lead-in times.** The speed with which the focusing agenda was introduced meant that many schools were unable to accommodate the necessary staffing and timetable changes. Many, therefore, put pressure

on careers services to continue previous levels of school-based provision. Where these expectations could not be met, they led to strained relationships and, in some cases, the marginalisation of careers education and guidance in schools.

- ♦ **Ensure coherence.** The lack of clear central coordination of initiatives such as Excellence in Cities and Connexions has led to confusion at a local level and may lead to a significant waste of resources in the future.
- ♦ **Revisit policy.** The focusing agenda has, in some cases, led to better provision for students who would previously have been lost to the system. However, the emphasis on the so-called 'hard to help' has led, in other instances, to the stigmatisation of careers guidance, the polarisation of school-level provision and the emergence of new 'priority' groups of students needing guidance, both pre-and post-16.

APPENDIX I

1. The Survey of Careers Services

An email survey of all Careers Service Chief Executives was sent out on the 26th of January 2001. The email addresses were obtained from the Careers Service National Association, and the survey was sent out with a request that chief executives, or senior staff designated by them, complete the questionnaire. Detailed responses were received from 37 of the 51 companies contracted to DfEE (a 73% response), with companies covering more than one geographical or socio-economic region adopting a number of different completion strategies:

- ♦ Those covering multiple, neighbouring (mainly metropolitan) LEAs tended to send in one response, generally completed by the chief executive.
- ♦ Those covering multiple LEAs, but within a relatively contained geographic area, tended to send in a series of corporate coordinated responses, with a central body of corporate text amended or adapted to reflect local circumstances.
- ♦ Those covering multiple LEAs, but covering diverse geographic or socio-economic areas, tended to send in independent responses, generally completed by local operations directors or managers. In some cases, these were augmented by an overview response from the company headquarters, completed by the chief executive.

The analysis that is included in the report collates all of the responses, but aims to avoid double counting where a clear corporate strategy or response was indicated.

2. The Postal Survey

The national survey of schools took place between the 8th of January and the 28th of February 2001. A total of 998 schools were drawn in an initial sample, reflecting the geographical, structural and socio-economic characteristics of the national population of all schools with young people in Years 10 and 11.⁹⁶ Subsequently, 12 more schools (1%) were withdrawn from the survey by their local authority, either because they were taking part in Ofsted or other inspections at the time of the survey, or because the school was under special measures, or undergoing reorganisation or closure (4 schools) or other substantial pressures, including staff shortages and illness (5 schools).

⁹⁶ The intention had been to draw 1,000 schools, but, once the criteria were specified and, subsequently, schools that had already taken part in more than one survey this academic year were removed, only 998 schools remained eligible.

In total, 986 schools were sent a questionnaire, with **528** (54% response) returning these by 28-02-01. A comparative breakdown of the respondents against the survey sample and national population is given in Table A.⁹⁷ This indicates that the characteristics of respondents and non-respondents are the same across all of the identified criteria, and that the respondents to the survey may therefore be regarded as fully representative of both the drawn sample and of the national population.

It is worth noting that only 2% of the invited schools (17) refused to take part in the survey, citing staff issues or too many requests for help as their reason. In relation to this latter point, the research team were also alerted to a number of careers service surveys and audit trails that coincided with (or pre-dated) the NFER survey. Many of these, which were mainly linked to mapping need and provision prior to the introduction of new Connexions Services, were augmented by careers service visits to schools. A number of schools said they did not want to take part in the national survey because of intensive involvement in such local work. Some forwarded copies of these audits, though none were directly comparable with the data being collected for this research project.

The survey sought information on the organisation of careers education and guidance, in terms of curriculum location and integration; budgetary and structural support; and quality of, and access to, resources; as well as the extent to which careers coordinator and other staff had achieved (or were working towards) nationally recognised careers education and guidance-related qualifications. It explored the range and quality of links with the careers service, and staff perceptions of change over time in those relationships and sought information on the level and quality of young people's access to guidance. Finally, it examined teachers' views on the ways in which careers education and guidance was (and should be) provided and sought their perceptions of the factors that had made a significant impact on schools' provision of careers education and guidance and their levels of satisfaction with current delivery.

Data from the survey was used to construct a series of composite variables, derived through a process of scoring and factor analyses, which represented a range of different facets of provision, delivery and support. These included the extent and quality of specialist provision; the amount of curricular time allocated; access to, and quality of, ITC and other resources; access to and quality of guidance provision; senior management and structural support; and dominant influencing factors, whether internal or external. These composite variables were subsequently normalised and entered into a second order factor analysis in order to derive further composites: two, explaining 46% of the variance emerged. In 58 cases, there was insufficient data from schools to derive the second order factor score (data for one or more of the original composite variables was incomplete) and these schools were removed from the final stage of analysis.

⁹⁷ Note that the table only includes information on **527** respondents. The other respondent had removed the contact ID from the returned questionnaire.

Table A. Comparison of respondents with national population of secondary schools and with the survey sample (selected for maintained schools with young people in Years 10 and 11)

Category	National Population		Survey sample		Respondents	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Region						
North East	161	5	60	6	30	6
Yorkshire and the Humber	312	10	96	10	48	9
North West	421	14	150	15	90	17
East Midlands	267	9	96	10	41	8
West Midlands	377	12	116	12	60	11
Eastern	339	11	102	10	54	10
Greater London	398	13	120	12	54	10
South East	477	16	143	14	73	14
South West	301	10	115	12	77	15
Management Type						
Community school	1991	65	661	66	362	69
Foundation school	488	16	151	15	79	15
Voluntary aided	474	16	149	15	66	13
Voluntary controlled	100	3	37	4	20	4
Free school meals						
Bottom quintile	247	8	75	8	40	8
4 th quintile	828	27	280	28	152	29
Middle quintile	832	27	276	28	156	30
2 nd quintile	721	24	233	23	124	24
Highest quintile	415	14	132	13	55	10
Missing data	12		2			
Size						
Small (up to 652)	613	20	207	21	100	19
Small-medium 653-830)	603	20	201	20	108	20
Medium (831-997)	617	20	207	21	109	21
Medium-large (998-1212)	613	20	192	19	103	20
Large (more than 1212)	607	20	191	19	107	20
School type						
Secondary modern	170	6	58	6	26	5
Comprehensive to 16	1196	39	391	39	207	39
Comprehensive to 18	1512	50	493	49	263	50
Grammar	165	5	54	5	31	6
Other	10	<1	2	<1	0	0
GCSE attainment (% 5 A* to C)						
Bottom quintile	658	22	213	22	98	19
4 th quintile	743	24	252	25	149	28
Middle quintile	727	24	256	26	129	24
2 nd quintile	672	22	201	20	105	20
Highest quintile	232	8	71	7	46	9
Missing data	21	1	5	<1	0	0
Total	3053	101	998	101	527	100

The second order factors were used to provide the axes for a scatterplot within which the normalised composite scores from each individual school were then recorded. Five clusters of schools, distributed around the mean normalised scores, were subsequently identified. These clusters were entered into the next stage of analyses (using, for example, analysis of variance or Chi-square, as appropriate) in order to identify the characteristics of the schools within which each set of practices were observed. It should be noted that one of these five clusters (in which high levels of structural and managerial support and very good quality careers education and guidance programmes were noted) was very small, with only 15 schools. Since a number of the statistical tests that were applied were case dependent, this cluster was generally grouped with the next level of schools in order to test for significance and to make any definitive statements about differences. However, the tests were also applied across the five clusters in order to identify any *potential* differences between the groups. Data from this set of tests was used primarily for purposes of illumination rather than to make definitive statistical statements.

3. The Case Studies

The case studies included three distinct elements:

- ♦ interviews with teachers and link careers advisers in schools;
- ♦ group discussions with Year 11 students in those schools; and
- ♦ interviews with the Operations Managers (or similar) of the local careers service.

3.1 The Case-Study Schools

The criteria used to select the case-study schools, all of which were also included in the postal survey, included:

- ♦ geographical location;
- ♦ management and structural type;
- ♦ age range (with or without sixth form);
- ♦ size;
- ♦ levels of social deprivation, as measured by entitlement to free school meals (FSM);
- ♦ aggregated student performance data (at key stage 4).

The final sample was broadly representative of the national population of relevant schools, but was not an exact match. The short timescale for the project (December 2000 to March 2001), and the limited number of weeks available for fieldwork (8), meant that an element of opportunity sampling had to be accepted. Thirty schools agreed to take part in the research, but time constraints in one school and staff pressures in a second meant that two schools subsequently withdrew just before the end of the short fieldwork

period, despite initial positive discussions and agreed visit dates. At that stage it was too late to negotiate, obtain agreement and carry out fieldwork in any additional schools.

The 28 schools eventually visited by the research team were located throughout England (three to four schools were visited in each Government Office region) and included those situated in largely rural as well as in urban areas. Nineteen were community schools, with four foundation and five voluntary aided schools, reflecting the national sample. Just over half (16) of the schools visited by the research team had sixth forms (57% compared with 54% in the national sample). The proportion of medium to large schools (that is, those with more than 998 pupils) was similar to such schools nationally (12, or 43% were visited, compared with a national figure of 40%), while 25% of the case-study schools (7) had fewer than 653 pupils (this compares with 20% nationally).

Entitlement to free school meals was divided into quintiles. Among the case study schools, the majority fell into the middle three bands, with only four schools in the highest and two in the lowest eligibility bands. This means that, proportionally, the case-study sample had similar proportions of schools with low levels of economic disadvantage and slightly more with higher levels of disadvantage than would be found across England as a whole. Levels of attainment, as measured by the numbers of students achieving at least five GCSE's at grades A*–C, show that the schools' intake represented the full range of ability.

Among the 28 case study schools featured in this paper, the largest group (16) were located in towns or inner-cities, nine described their catchments as a mix of urban and rural and three were based in rural locations.

In each of the case-study schools, interviews were conducted, where possible, with a senior manager, the careers coordinator and the school's link careers adviser. This report is based on an initial analysis of the interviews with:

- ◆ 29 careers advisers
- ◆ 25 senior managers (four of whom were also careers coordinators)
- ◆ 24 careers coordinators (one of whom was also the careers adviser)
- ◆ one work experience coordinator

The semi-structured interview schedules used in the study aimed to explore a range of aspects of the schools careers education and guidance programmes, with a particular focus on the **nature and support** for CEG provision, the impact of the **1998 focusing agenda** and on schools and careers service perceptions of **Connexions**. Data from the interviews was triangulated and reviewed in relation to documentary evidence, to group discussions with young people and to quantitative data from the postal survey data completed by the schools. It is worth noting that only 21 of the 28 case-study schools

provided sufficient information in the survey to be included in the final stages of the questionnaire analysis.

Across the 28 case-study schools, the driving forces behind school perspectives of careers education and guidance were clearly dominated by:

- ♦ concerns about levels of student attainment (these ranged from a high of 98% five A*–C grades at GCSE to a low of 13% five A*–C grades);
- ♦ changes in student rolls (four schools claimed to be over-subscribed, while others were contending with problems of high numbers of refugees or asylum seekers or declining populations);
- ♦ socio-economic problems (including high levels of local unemployment, rural poverty and, in some areas, issues of racism)
- ♦ different levels of parental expectations and support.

3.2 Group Discussions with Students

During case-study visits, group discussions were undertaken with students in each of the 28 case-study schools (164 students). Each group discussion involved a researcher stimulating a structured discussion with around six Year 11 students about the careers education and guidance provision at their school. In addition, students completed a short proforma to collect summary data on the careers education and guidance activities in which young people had taken part and the extent to which they had found these helpful. 158 students, from 27 of the case-study schools completed these proformas: a further six students in the final school took part in the discussions but did not complete the proforma.

In order to reduce the potential difficulties imposed by timetable constraints, the students were selected by school staff, but researchers requested a mixture of genders (if appropriate), ability levels and potential post-16 pathways. As can be seen from **Table B**, 89% of the students intended to stay in learning, whether as part of an academic programme in school or college (60%) or with a more vocational focus through GNVQ (8%) or a Government-sponsored or other training programme (21%). At this stage in the spring term, however, there were still a sizeable minority who did not know what their plans would be (8%).

Table B. Potential post-16 pathways

Potential post-16 pathways...	%
Study for A-levels	60
Study for GNVQs	8
Train for an NVQ	4
Get a place on a Foundation or Advanced Modern Apprenticeship	11
Get a place on some other training programme	6
Get a job without training	1
Be self-employed	0
Something else	3
I don't really know	8
No response	0
N =	158

A single-response item

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not sum to 100

158 respondents answered this question

The group discussions were tape recorded, transcribed and then analysed in terms of recurring themes and variations both within, and between, the case-study schools. In particular the interviews explored how the students perceived and evaluated:

- ◆ their careers education and guidance programmes;
- ◆ their main sources of help and advice in relation to careers;
- ◆ how their careers education and guidance might be improved.

In analysing the data, comparison was made, wherever possible, with student perspectives reported in a similar study commissioned by DfEE and undertaken by NFER in 1998 (Stoney *et al.*, 1998).⁹⁸ In addition, the analysis explored connections and/or discontinuities between the students' comments and those of their teachers or careers advisors and encompassed quantitative data from the student proforma responses.

3.3 Interviews with Operations Managers

Interviews were undertaken with all of the Operations Managers (or equivalent) in the 21 careers services to which the 28 case-study schools were linked. The areas covered in these interviews broadly reflected those explored in the survey of chief executives, but focused particularly on the operational

⁹⁸ STONEY, S., ASHBY, P., GOLDEN, S. and LINES, A. (1998). *Talking about 'Careers': Young People's Views of Careers Education and Guidance at School* (RD 18). Sheffield: DfEE.

aspects of work with schools – staffing, partnership agreements and strategies for prioritising young people for interviews, for example.

The data was analysed in relation both to the chief executives' survey and in relation to the information from the linked schools.

APPENDIX 2

Table 1. Careers education and guidance on the timetable: pre-1997/98 and 2000/01

Careers education and guidance as:	Year 9		Year 10		Year 11		Years 12 and 13	
	Pre-1997/98	Now	Pre-1997/98	Now	Pre-1997/98	Now	Pre-1997/98	Now
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Separate subject	7	4	11	7	12	8	5	4
Timetabled element in PSHE/PSE	32	35	31	30	31	32	16	17
Part of PSHE/PSE carousel	15	18	24	23	23	21	13	11
Part of tutorial programme	17	18	10	11	10	11	29	30
An element of all subjects	1	<1	1	0	1	0	<1	<1
Within PSHE and an element of all subjects	3	4	3	5	3	5	4	5
Within PSE, tutorial and all subjects	2	3	1	2	1	2	2	3
Other pattern	10	13	13	18	12	18	16	19
Does not apply for this year group	4	1	1	1	1	<1	2	1
No response	2	4	1	2	1	2	13	10
N =	528		528		528		311	

A series of single response items

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 527 respondents answered at least one item in this question.

Table 2. Time spent on careers education and guidance per academic year

Year group	Average length of provision (hours and minutes)	N
Year 9	9 hours 55 minutes	478
Year 10	14 hours 33 minutes	492
Year 11	13 hours 36 minutes	493
Year 12	10 hours 17 minutes	229
Year 13	8 hours 55 minutes	225
N =		528

Numerical data

Information calculated from more than one item

A total of 510 respondents gave information for this question.

Table 3. Quality of resources for careers education and guidance in school

Quality of resources...	Very good	Satisfactory	Could be much better	Would like to have this	No response
	%	%	%	%	%
Careers library	51	37	10	1	1
Dedicated room for guidance interviews	53	29	11	6	1
Up-to-date materials and information	57	36	6	<1	1
Display area for careers information	44	39	15	1	1
Extra resources for staff time	8	25	42	23	2
Extra administrative assistance	17	23	30	29	1
Networked computers	38	31	15	16	1
Stand-alone PCs	25	36	22	10	8
CD ROMs	30	44	19	5	2
Internet access	40	31	15	14	<1
Computer-based careers education and guidance materials	42	42	12	4	<1
N = 528					

A series of single-response items

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 527 respondents answered at least one item in this question.

Table 4. Support for careers education and guidance in school

Support available for careers education and guidance...	Available	Not available	Don't know	No response
	%	%	%	%
A designated budget for:				
♦ careers education and guidance materials	97	2	<1	1
♦ administrative assistance	65	28	1	7
♦ responsibility points for the coordinator	90	7	1	2
Time allocation for:				
♦ curriculum development	59	32	1	8
♦ meetings with the careers adviser	70	26	<1	4
♦ administration	65	28	1	5
Dedicated ICT facilities	81	16	<1	3
INSET provision for all staff	60	30	4	6
N = 528				

A series of single-response items

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 527 respondents answered at least one item in this question.

Table 5a. Level of Year 9 students' access to careers resources

Access to careers resources...	Any time	Any time & specific lessons	Year 9 Specific lessons only	No access	No response
	%	%	%	%	%
Careers library	67	5	24	2	2
Materials and information	69	3	25	1	4
Display area	79	2	11	4	5
Networked computers	45	2	39	11	4
Stand alone PCs	40	2	31	17	11
CD ROMs	49	2	34	9	6
Internet access	47	12	35	3	4
N = 528					

A series of single-response items

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 528 respondents answered at least one item in this question.

Table 5b. Level of Year 10 students' access to careers resources

Access to careers resources...	Any time	Any time & specific lessons	Year 10 Specific lessons only	No access	No response
	%	%	%	%	%
Careers library	74	4	19	1	2
Materials and information	72	2	22	<1	4
Display area	81	2	10	3	5
Networked computers	47	2	38	10	3
Stand alone PCs	41	1	30	16	11
CD ROMs	51	2	34	7	7
Internet access	48	4	36	10	2
N = 528					

A series of single-response items

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 528 respondents answered at least one item in this question.

Table 5c. Level of Year 11 students' access to careers resources

Access to careers resources...	Any time	Any time & specific lessons	Year 11 Specific lessons only	No access	No response
	%	%	%	%	%
Careers library	75	4	17	1	3
Materials and information	72	3	20	<1	4
Display area	80	3	9	3	5
Networked computers	48	2	37	9	4
Stand alone PCs	42	11	29	16	2
CD ROMs	52	2	32	7	7
Internet access	49	3	33	11	4
N = 528					

A series of single-response items

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 528 respondents answered at least one item in this question.

Table 6. Identification of students in careers service target

Identification of students...	%
Individual needs	71
Performance-related	61
Behaviour-related	38
Direction-related	31
Student request	5
Careers service criteria (unspecified)	6
Socio-economic decisions	4
Parent request	2
All in target group	2
Don't know	5
Other	4
No/uncodeable response to this question	14
N =	528

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100

A total of 475 respondents gave at least one response to this question.

Table 7a. Nationally recognised guidance qualifications held by careers coordinator in school

Nationally recognised guidance qualifications of careers coordinator...	%
Further Professional Certificate in Careers Education and Guidance	14
Advanced Professional Certificate in Careers Education and Guidance	8
Diploma in Careers Guidance	12
Diploma in 16-19 Guidance	1
NVQ Level III in Guidance	1
NVQ Level IV in Guidance	1
MA/MEd in guidance	2
Other	17
None/No response	55
N =	528

*More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 236 respondents gave at least one response to this question.*

Table 7b. Nationally recognised guidance qualifications held by other staff in school

Nationally recognised guidance qualifications of other staff:	Other staff				
	Some	At least one	None	Don't know	No response
	%	%	%	%	%
Further Professional Certificate in Careers Education and Guidance	1	4	39	8	47
Advanced Professional Certificate in Careers Education and Guidance	<1	2	36	8	53
Diploma in Careers Guidance	1	3	36	8	53
Diploma in 16–19 Guidance	0	1	35	9	56
NVQ Level III in Guidance	0	2	37	10	55
NVQ Level IV in Guidance	0	<1	34	9	56
MA/MEd in guidance	0	<1	34	9	57
Other	1	3	20	6	70
N = 528					

*A series of single-response items
Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 331 respondents answered at least one item in this question.*

Table 8. Integration of careers education and guidance into wider school curriculum

Mechanisms for integration...	This happens %	This does not happen %	Don't know %	Not applicable %	No response %
The careers coordinator (or their line manager) attends:					
> curriculum review meetings	71	22	1	1	4
> pastoral review meetings	69	23	1	2	5
> vocational review meetings	40	34	5	10	11
Forum for regular meetings between careers adviser and teaching staff	47	48	<1	1	4
Outcomes of guidance interviews fed back to curriculum areas	29	62	2	2	6
Employers and the community involved in wider school curriculum	84	12	2	<1	2
N = 528					

A series of single-response items

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 526 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Table 9a. Careers adviser input in school per academic year: pre September 1998 and 2000/2001

Careers adviser input...	Pre-September 1998 %	Now %
Full data given	63	71
None	1	1
Don't know	35	20
No response	1	8
N =	528	528

Two single-response items

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not sum to 100

521 respondents answered at least one item of this question

Note: Data on careers service provision (particularly pre-September 1998) proved difficult to collect in around one-third of the schools, not because the schools were unaware of the level of input, but because input in some careers service areas had been calculated (and, in some areas, still was calculated) on the basis of careers adviser caseload, which was not directly translated into a specific number of hours.

Table 9b. Careers adviser input in school per academic year: pre September 1998 and 2000/2001

Careers adviser input	Pre-September 1998	Now
Average number of careers adviser hours	410	314
N =	304	375

Numerical data: calculated from more than one item

Table 9c. Careers adviser input in school per academic year: range of provision

	Value of quintile: number of hours	
	Pre 1998	Now
Lower quintile	< 160	<101
4 th quintile	160 to 240	105 to 200
Middle quintile	241 to 400	201 to 309
2 nd quintile	401 to 600	310 to 480
Top quintile	> 600	> 480
N =	304	375

Numerical data: calculated from more than one item