Establishing World Class Careers Education and Guidance in Connexions Kent & Medway: Phase 2 - Scoping exercise

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Foreword

This report is part of a larger project comprising various components that extend over the period March, 2007 to March 2008. The Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick is working with Connexions Kent & Medway on the design and implementation of an innovative approach to careers education and guidance (CEG) across the region. This project is designed to help the service prepare for the impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) that will be required to support curriculum changes such as the new Specialised Diplomas and comply with the imminent national standards for IAG. It comprises four discrete, but inter-related work-packages:

- A thorough review of its CEG provision in secondary schools, using a qualitative, in-depth case study approach;
- Designing, testing and recommending an approach for sustainable e-portfolio development for career education and guidance across the region;
- A feasibility study into the development of local labour market information for the region, available on-line; and
- A model of sustainable training support for the use of effective labour market information in the IAG process.

This report is part of the first component listed above – an in-depth review of CEG provision in 15 secondary schools across the region.

Disclaimer

It should be noted that views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Connexions Kent & Medway, or indeed any of the schools in the Kent and Medway region.

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Contents

Appendices

Tables

Executive summary

This qualitative research into the provision of careers education and guidance (CEG) in the Kent and Medway region, involved **37 participants**[1] across **15 schools** and has provided **rich and deep insights** both to the **strengths,** and to the **weaknesses,** of current service provision.

Whilst all research participants **share a common purpose** regarding their involvement with, and/or contribution to, the delivery of high quality CEG in the region, they occupied a **wide variety of designations**, offering very **different types of experience and expertise.**

Connexions Lead Personal Advisers(PAs)/Team Leaders and Guidance **PAs** were more likely to have had **prior experience** of CEG, compared with school representatives. **All had CEG related qualifications.**

Of the 18 **school representatives** responsible for CEG, **the majority** (n=17, 94%) did **not hold** any accredited CEG related **qualifications**.

Of the 18 school representatives responsible for CEG within their schools, 11 (61%) had either applied, **volunteered** or agreed to take on the responsibility of careers provision. The remaining seven (39%) were **allocated** the responsibility.

Of the 15 participating schools, **ten had posts with some level of responsibility for CEG** that were teaching posts; four schools had non-teaching CEG posts; and one was in transition, with the future arrangement uncertain.

Seven (39%) of the 18 school representatives had **no time** formally **allocated to CEG**; one had what was described as a reduced teaching load; one had about a 10 per cent time allocation and nine (50%) either had a formal allocation of time, or felt they were able to manage their time sufficiently well to discharge this responsibility.

The importance of clear, unambiguous terminology around CEG was emphasised by 62 per cent of participants (n=23). However, whilst there was a degree of **consensus**

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[1] One participant was interviewed twice because of their involvement in two of the schools.

regarding **broad concepts** used to describe CEG, there was **less uniformity** in the **language used** to describe its precise nature.

Four distinct models of CEG provision in schools emerged from analysis of the data. These were: integrated; stand alone; peripheral; and transitional.

Evidence-based practice is demanded by government of many publicly funded services. However, participants at **eight** of the **schools** (53%) had either very **little awareness,** or **no idea** at all, of the models underpinning existing their CEG provision.

Eight schools reported a **lack of any formal systematic evaluation procedures** for their CEG programmes. Six schools reported evaluation procedures that were part of other processes, rather than undertaken as part of a systematic process of continuous quality improvement of their CEG provision. Only one school out of the 15 reported how they undertook regular, systematic evaluations of their CEG. PAs seemed to be more likely than school staff routinely to evaluate their work.

Whilst only **three** of the 15 **schools** surveyed had already **achieved** the **Investor in Careers** Award (IIC), six were intending to submit an application or were already in the process of submitting their application for this award. Six schools did not hold the award, nor did they have any plans to do so.

A **breadth of delivery formats** for CEG is evident, with each school developing its own approach. However, some recurring trends are discernible. The practice of '**enrichment days**', compared with more traditional modes of delivery involving **short inputs** of CEG (e.g. within PSHE) more consistently throughout the academic year is perhaps the most notable.

Fully integrated CEG, seamlessly presented throughout the curriculum, with all staff sharing a sense of ownership for its inclusion is undoubtedly hard to achieve, but for some remains the **ultimate aim of delivery**.

Thirteen of the schools regarded their relationship with Connexions as **excellent, good, improving or having the potential to improve.** For the remaining **two** schools surveyed, the current relationship between the service and the schools was reported as poor, with participants expressing a degree of **pessimism** that this was likely to change in the near future.

Twelve schools indicated that they had both **Partnership Agreements and Delivery Plans** – and that these were generally found to be **useful.** Three schools were either ambivalent about, or critical of, Partnership Agreements. In these cases, negative views of the Partnership Agreements related to their being regarded as tokenism.

In **ten** of the15 schools surveyed, either the **Head Teacher and/or the Deputy Head** involved themselves in the **Partnership Agreements** for their school. In three of the schools, Senior Managers from the school were involved, whilst in just two schools, no representative of school management were represented in the Partnership Agreement.

A **crucial success factor** in the delivery of high quality CEG services that has emerged recurrently in this research is the **approach taken** by the Connexions Kent & Medway **PAs** to working in the schools to which they are allocated.

The **number of PAs** allocated to each school **varied** from between one and five. The particular package of services provided differed, as could be expected, across the schools surveyed. How individual PAs worked within their schools was dependent on a number of factors including: time allocation; case load; and the particular focus of the PA's work (for example whether guidance, pre-vocational, intensive or health).

Whilst some problems with PAs were certainly reported, **feedback** on the quality of relationships between PAs and schools was **overwhelmingly positive**.

In order that a high quality service that is relevant to individual student need can be delivered, PAs will require **easy access to student data**. In 14 of the 15 schools, participants indicated that access to student data was not a problem. In one of the schools, however, gaining access to student data was identified as problematic.

The extent to which students make optimum use of services on offer will depend, at least in part, on the awareness of students that these services exist and an understanding of how they might access them. In **only one** of the 14 schools surveyed was **promotion of services** thought to be **sufficient and effective**.

Labour market information (LMI) is an integral part of guidance practice. Twenty participants (57%) indicated how **LMI i**s both **limited** and **not readily available**.

Thirteen participants (35%) undertook their own research for LMI. Nine participants commented on the past availability of LMI and its value. One school representative was not sure what LMI was available in the school. One other was not clear what was meant by 'labour market information'.

In the majority of schools, the **careers library provision** was well supported by both the school and Connexions Kent & Medway; with 13 using funding from Connexions Kent & Medway to extend and update careers library provision. In two of these schools, the careers library provision budget was supplemented by school funding. This provision is **well regarded** and is located in 12 schools in the main library, thereby **maximising students access**.

1.   Introduction

1.1   Project aim

The aim of this research is to provide an accurate indication of current careers education and guidance (CEG) provision in Kent and Medway. It was commissioned by Connexions Kent & Medway service, which is committed to establishing a careers education and guidance system that is world class across the region. Specifically, its objectives are to:

- Provide an in-depth account of CEG provision in up to 15 schools, overall, throughout the region, from the perspectives of key stakeholders involved in its delivery; and

- Establish which critical success factors and strategies contribute to the delivery of coherent CEG services in the region.

1.2   Background to the project

Various recent publications, for example, the '14-19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005), the White Paper 'Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work' (Department for Education and Sills, 2005) and 'Youth Matters' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005), have all identified CEG, or information, advice and guidance (IAG), as important in supporting young people in making successful transitions from education into the labour market. However, although CEG is part of the statutory curriculum, it stands outside the national curriculum. Consequently, schools and colleges are free to design their careers education programme and determine the amount of teaching time allocated. As a consequence, the nature [and quality] of schools' provision is very variable. Because of this, Connexions services are required to 'identify local gaps or weaknesses in provision and appoint a Personal Adviser (PA) to work specifically with schools on developing the careers curriculum'[2].

This research has been designed to provide Connexions Kent & Medway service with information on the strengths and weaknesses of current CEG provision, so that it can ensure that services offered to schools complement and enhance those that already exist.

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[2] House of Commons Committee of Pubic Accounts, 2004, p.5

The research comprised two phases:

- Firstly, 15 schools were contacted and telephone interviews were undertaken with between 2-4 key stakeholders involved in the delivery of CEG in each school;
- Secondly, in-depth case studies were carried out in five schools.

This report is based on interviews with 36 stakeholders[3] across 15 secondary schools in the Kent and Medway region carried out for the first phase of the research. Evidence from the in-depth case studies will be presented in a separate report.

1.3   Methodology

This section reports on the methodology adopted for the survey of 15 schools in the Kent and Medway region.

Research sample

The overall aim was to secure the participation of 15 schools for this survey that represented different types of school (e.g. grammar, technology) and different regional locations (e.g. urban, city). It was also important to ensure inclusion of a school from Medway, as well as Kent. To secure this representation and number, 22 schools were approached by senior management in Connexions Kent & Medway (that is, members of the project management team for the research), to invite participation. Seven declined to participate. After the initial approach, a researcher continued the detailed negotiations with schools that had agreed to participate, taking advice from the initial contact regarding key personnel in the delivery of CEG. As a result, for two of the schools, four participants were interviewed; for three schools, three participants were interviewed; and for the remaining ten schools, two participants were interviewed.

For each participating school, the intention was to ensure the inclusion in the sample of at least one of the PAs allocated to the school, together with at least one member of school staff with key responsibility for the delivery of CEG provision. The proportions of school-based staff compared with Connexions PAs for each school varied across the sample. In 13 schools, one member of staff employed by the school was interviewed; in one school, three members of school staff were

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[3] One PA was interviewed twice, because of their attachment to two participating schools.

interviewed; and in one school, two members of school staff participated in the study. Overall, 18 school-based staff were interviewed across the 15 schools. Nineteen Connexions PA interviews were completed, with only 18 PAs actually participating in the study[4]. For 12 of the schools, one PA was interviewed; for two schools, two PAs were interviewed; and for the remaining school, three Connexions PAs were interviewed. Thirty-four telephone interviews took place during July, 2007, with three taking place in September, 2007. With the permission of the participants, all interviews were digitally recorded, to ensure accuracy of accounts and to permit transcriptions to be produced, to aid data analysis. Interviews lasted between 26 minutes, and one hour and 32 minutes.

Data collection

To ensure comparability of data, the telephone interviews were guided by an interview protocol that was developed by the team of researchers, in consultation with the project management team at Connexions Kent & Medway. The protocol was evidence-based, since it was derived from the findings of a literature review on CEG provision in England, completed immediately before the field research was undertaken by the research team. It comprised six broad areas of investigation (see section 1.4, below). Details of all domains investigated can be found in the full interview protocol (see appendix 1). In addition to the questions related to these six areas, all participants were invited to add any comments, or observations, they regarded as relevant at the end of the interview.

All interviews took place on a date and at a time selected by the participants. Agreement from all participants to participate was explicitly negotiated and their agreement recorded (see appendix 2). Where requested, the person providing the information checked their interview transcript for accuracy.

Data analysis

Two different, but complementary, approaches to data analysis were adopted. First, summaries of transcriptions and/or digital recordings were produced[5]. These then provided the basis for the analysis of key findings from the survey. For this phase of

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[4] For the purposes of analysis, this has been counted as two participants, as their interviews related to two different schools.

[5] For a limited number of interviews, transcriptions had not been completed by the time work on the summaries began, so summaries were produced from the digital recordings.

the analysis, two researchers worked closely together to ensure the accuracy of interpretation.   Second, a researcher worked directly from the interview transcriptions, to develop emergent themes.   These were validated by a second researcher, who had also worked with the transcription summaries to identify key findings.

The conclusions and recommendations are based on both the key findings and emerging themes from the research findings.

1.4   Report structure

This report comprises ten sections – with this being the first containing the introduction, the aim of the project, the methodology adopted, as well as the structure of the report.   Sections two, three, four, five, six and seven present the main findings of the investigation, together with themes emerging.   These sections are organised around the following headings, reflecting those used in the protocol (see appendix 1).   Specifically, these are:

- Background to participants;
- Careers education and guidance;
- Organisation and management;
- Personal Advisers;
- Support for PAs; and
- Labour market information.

The eighth section contains findings from 'any further comments' that participants in the study wished to make.   Section nine presents the overall conclusions from the study.   The final section, section ten, presents recommendations that have arisen from the findings of this research.

2.   Background of participants

Fifteen schools throughout Kent and Medway agreed to take part in this survey. Across these schools, 36 participants[6] involved in the delivery of CEG were interviewed about current provision. These can be categorised into three groups, specifically:

- 18 School representatives with direct responsibility for CEG provision in their school (including Heads of Sixth Form, Deputy Heads, Heads of Key Stage 4, Enterprise officers, Heads of Work-related Learning, Careers and Work Experience, as well as Heads of Careers, and Careers Co-ordinators);
- 7 Connexions Lead PAs and Team Leaders; and
- 11 PAs (including guidance, intensive support and pre-vocational advisers).

This section provides an overview of findings from data collected from those 36 participants, who provided 37 interviews, for this phase of the research. It presents background information on the participants and their current role in CEG, qualification and experience of CEG. Please note that throughout this report, analyses of 37 sets of responses are represented, with the PA interviewed for their involvement in two schools counted twice.

2.1   Participants

Of the 37 participants, 11 are male (30%) and 26 are female (70%) (see Table 1, below). Participants had been in post from less than one year (n=7, 19%) up to 17 years (n=1, 3%). The majority (n=24, 69%) had been in post between 1-5 years. Most had previous experience of CEG prior to their current role (n=23, 62%). Of the 15 schools, ten had posts with some level of responsibility for CEG that were teaching posts; four schools had non-teaching posts associated with CEG; and one was in transition with the future arrangement uncertain. Connexions Lead PAs/Team Leaders and Guidance PAs were more likely to have had prior experience of CEG, compared with school representatives.

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[6] One PA was interviewed twice, because of their involvement in two of the schools.

Table 1: Participant characteristics and previous CEG experience

Participant groups	Gender		Time in current role (years)				Previous experience of CEG	
	Male	Female	>1	1-5	6-10	<10	Yes	No
School representatives responsible for CEG (including those whose role is not explicitly careers) (n=18)	8	10	4	11	2	1	9	9
Connexions Lead PAs/Team leaders (n=7*)		7	3	3		1	6	1
Guidance PAs (including Pre-vocational PAs, Guidance and Intensive Support) (n=12)	3	9		10	2		8	4
Total (n=37)	**11**	**26**	**7**	**24**	**4**	**2**	**23**	**14**

Note:
* One Connexions Lead PA/Team Leader is counted twice as they were interviewed representing two schools.

2.2 Participant qualifications and training related to CEG

Of the 18 school representatives responsible for CEG, the majority (n=17, 94%) did not hold any accredited CEG related qualifications (see Table 2, below). Six (35%) had participated in some CEG related CPD activities and/or Connexions related courses. Of the 18 school representatives responsible for CEG within their schools, 11 (61%) had either applied, volunteered or agreed to take on the responsibility of careers provision. The remaining seven (39%) were allocated the responsibility. When asked about the time allocated to their CEG role: seven (39%) reported no time was formally allocated; one had a reduced teaching load; one reported that they had about a 10 per cent time allocation; and finally nine (50%) either had a formal allocation of time, or felt they were able to manage their time sufficiently well to discharge this responsibility.

All of the Connexions Lead PAs/Team Leaders (n=7, 100%) and the majority of the Guidance PAs (n=9, 75%) held CEG related qualifications, including the Diploma in Careers, the Qualification in Careers Guidance and/or the NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance (see Table 2, below). The four Connexions Lead PAs/Team Leaders with

a Diploma or Qualification in Careers Guidance had also attained an NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance. Two Guidance PAs had attained other relevant qualifications including an NVQ Level 4 in Learning Development and Support Systems for Young People (plus one PA was working towards this qualification) and a Personal Adviser Diploma.

Table 2: Interviewee CEG related qualifications and training

CEG related qualification	School representatives responsible for CEG (n=18)	Connexions Lead PAs/ Team leaders (n=7#)	Guidance PAs (n=12)
Dip CG, QCG, NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance		**7**	**9**
Plus: NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance		4	1
Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers			1
NVQ Level 4 in Learning Development and Support Systems for Young People			1
Teaching qualification			1
CPD and/or Connexions courses and/or related qualifications		3	5*
Morrisby profiling			1
Other related qualifications (including NVQ Level 4 in Learning Development and Support Systems for Young People and PA Diploma)			**3****
Plus: CPD and/or Connexions courses			1
Additional related qualifications			1
Certificate in Careers Education and Guidance	**1**		
No CEG related qualifications	**17**		
Plus: CPD and/or Connexions courses	6		

Notes:
One Connexions Lead PA/Team Leader is counted twice, as allocated to two schools.
* One PA is currently working towards a Diploma in Careers Guidance.
** One PA is currently working towards this qualification.

2.3   Emerging themes

Findings reported above (see section 2) indicate how it is difficult to generalise about the operational status and duties of those responsible for CEG within any one school. The nomenclature used for CEG staff is important, since the individuals talking about their diverse occupational roles, all broadly within the area of CEG, identified different issues arising from their particular backgrounds and associated professional contexts. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this research to explore all these issues in detail, some key themes are highlighted below. Specifically: whether CEG responsibilities were voluntary or mandatory; whether roles were teaching or non-teaching; and status within the school.

Voluntary or mandatory responsibilities

Some school participants had acquired or inherited, rather than chosen, their CEG responsibilities. It did not, however, necessarily follow that these were viewed negatively:

> *It's something that came under my remit…within my remit comes the sixth form recruitment and the September guarantee…It fits in with all the other things that I'm trying to do.*
>
> (Interview 34)

Equally, where an individual had volunteered for a role, it did not necessarily follow that they had clarity about what it would entail

> *I did volunteer, but it wasn't quite what I was expecting.*
>
> (Interview 32)

In one instance, there had actually been some competition for the role of Careers Co-ordinator, with the interviewee remarking that this was an unusual – if encouraging – development.

> *When the Careers Co-ordinator post was advertised they had 4 or 5 people that wanted to do it within the school…in other schools, people are just told that they're going to be doing the careers role and that's where half the problem lies…But this job was properly advertised and there were 4 or 5 people interested…so that was good.*
>
> (Interview 12)

More important than the voluntary or mandatory nature of the responsibilities was the individual commitment with which those responsibilities were carried out.

Teaching versus non-teaching role

Even where school staff with CEG lead responsibilities were not subject teachers, their CEG role was sometimes combined with additional responsibilities. Having a non-teacher, as opposed to a teacher, in the role of 'Careers Co-ordinator' (however named) brought both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages included increased extra time to dedicate to the role and, sometimes, a greater sense of focus. In one instance where the school had just achieved specialist status as a vocational school, new money had been used to fund a full-time appointment without teaching responsibilities. There were also some potential disadvantages to operating effectively for non-teachers. These included lack of integration within the school, and, depending on the seniority of the appointment, lack of authority to get things done as observed by one participant:

> *I think there is still a little problem sometimes with being integrated with the whole school…it is difficult sometimes not being a teacher…it's quite a new thing, isn't it, having non-teaching staff take on these roles, it is something that schools have really got to learn to get used to doing.*

> (Interview 35)

One other non teacher expressed some frustration at not being able to deliver directly to students[7]:

> *I think if you're going to deliver careers it needs to be in the classroom and I don't work in the classroom.*

> (Interview 29)

Some of these issues were also identified by a Connexions PA who commented on the challenges faced by a non-teacher as Careers Co-ordinator compared with the teacher/Careers Co-ordinators she worked with in other schools, although these seemed to be also linked to lack of seniority within the school:

> *…she was actually part of the admin staff initially, which also makes it difficult to get things done really because she doesn't have all that much authority within the school…because I work in other schools I see what it is like with Careers Co-ordinators that are teachers, how much easier it is to get things done.*

> (Interview 36)

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[7] The term 'student' and 'pupil' are used interchangeably within the report, but both define those young people undertaking compulsory education.

However dedicated to their CEG roles, tensions sometimes arose regarding how much time was available. Time constraints inevitably limited what might be achieved and was a cause of frustration for some, for instance:

> *I've got a new role…and in a way, that's put…careers even more on a backburner for me. I've got even more responsibility. I know some schools are now taking on full-time careers staff… so maybe that's the way to go. I think if I was running a school, I just think it's so important. I'd have someone full-time but a part-time teacher as well...I don't think that schools understand the link between students knowing where they're going, knowing their worth, knowing what's out there.*
>
> (Interview 11)

Status in the school

The ability to 'get things done' was also influenced by the status of the nominated CEG person within the school. For example:

> *…the member of staff who managed careers before was not SLT (Senior Leadership Team) like I am and therefore I think it's probably more difficult to get people to budge and do what you want them to do when you haven't got quite as much clout within the institution I suppose.*
>
> (Interview 34)

Another observed:

> *…we just feel that obviously the role of…Connexions is so important there has to be somebody on the leadership group who is supporting them…It is the status, and also its very easy when [the Connexions PAs] come and I can just sort it in a way, rather than going to somebody who has to go to somebody else – it's a direct line of communication.*
>
> (Interview 13)

However, one PA was operating in a school where, temporarily, there was no-one in place assuming responsibility for CEG. This had been turned to a positive advantage, enabling her to be proactive:

> *Nobody's taking an overview of what they want, so therefore I can say, "Right, this is what we're going to do" and I can go to the Head of Year 8 and he will be really enthusiastic. And then I'll go and talk to the Head of Year 10 and they'll be very enthusiastic...it gets you talking to a lot of good people and gets them understanding your role an awful lot…in some ways*

> *it's got real positives, because if you'd got a careers Co-ordinator, you'd just end up talking to that person…whereas in this school you can talk to absolutely everybody and nobody gets miffed or nose put out of joint, they just think: "Oh thank God she's not harassing me."*

(Interview 29)

From the school perspective, therefore, it is clear that even the job title and organisational context of the CEG post holder can have a significant impact on the profile and delivery of provision.

Connexions Personal Advisers

Questions about the language of CEG elicited some strongly held views amongst Connexions PAs. One of the most loudly voiced related to the use of the generic job title of 'Personal Adviser'. In particular, it was felt that it led to confusion about what particular services might be delivered. One PA commented:

> *The terminology that we use, a lot goes over the heads of the students that we work with so that you have to explain it a lot to them… they don't even know the meaning of my job title.*

(Interview 15)

Another referred to confusion amongst school staff when Connexions was introduced:

> *In one of my schools a teacher…said, "Why are you changing your title? When you said you are a Personal Adviser from Connexions I thought you were from a dating agency." And another said to me, "When you go to a bank…the workers there are Personal Advisers, so where do you fit in?"*

(Interview 8)

Some of this confusion was attributed to the lack of marketing at the time of the Connexions launch. Yet, despite the length of time that has elapsed since the new job title was adopted, the Guidance Connexions PA is still sometimes referred to as 'careers':

> *In school speak, they think of careers as me, and Connexions as the Intensive Support, and Health PA…that gives away condoms and things… so it still tends to be described that way, that I'm careers – Connexions careers.*

(Interview 33)

PAs tried to overcome this confusion by providing additional clarification as well as their job title. When asked to explain how they might introduce themselves in school:

I say to them, "I'm a Connexions Personal Adviser. But my qualification is in careers guidance and for the purpose of what we're going to be doing; I'll be there for careers…though I can help them in other areas as well." And I'll go through the whole Connexions range. Although I don't feel entirely comfortable with that because they then hear somebody else is a Connexions PA and they think, "OK, they can do something about my career." And they can't, necessarily.

(Interview 15)

A further theme was the sense communicated by some PAs that their professional expertise had been slighted. Two commented as follows:

A careers adviser and I think it's wrong to pretend anything else…if we're expected to provide all of it, we're actually moving outside our boundaries. I'd be quite furious if a non-guidance trained adviser was giving careers advice out. So I feel I'm exactly the same.

(Interview 27)

I'm supposed to introduce myself as a Guidance PA and I don't think that informs anybody of what I do, so I generally say, "I'm a Connexions careers adviser."

(Interview 33)

Additionally, it would appear that the use of the term 'PA' has resulted in lack of clarity even amongst some Connexions staff:

We have lots of Intensive PAs and some of them - I don't know what they do…the job description seems to be very woolly…you wouldn't automatically make a referral, because you're not sure what they do.

(Interview 15)

Finally, there was a sense that the generic job title had eroded the status of traditional careers guidance work:

…what I try to do is maintain the notion of careers guidance because when we became Connexions…careers guidance became shadowed by the very valuable work…of supporting young people on much wider issues…For a while I feel we've been flying the flag quietly. I do say, yes, I'm a Connexions Personal Adviser, but my specialism is in careers guidance.

(Interview 14)

One PA reflected the views of many:

> *I think, we should be called careers advisers… the role is so broad, I mean 'Personal Adviser' what does that actually mean?...there are still a load of issues around the job title and the understanding of what the role actually means...my role is careers, I've a careers background and we can talk about career planning. Sometimes I say the words 'careers adviser' and then I recoil in horror and realise I shouldn't have said that.*

(Interview 10)

Unsurprisingly, the quality of CEG provision within any one school is likely to be affected by a range of factors, particularly the status bestowed to CEG by the school using mechanisms such as time allocations and teacher status. The nomenclature of school staff with responsibility for CEG provides one powerful illustration of the diversity of organisational priorities within schools. A related but separate issue is the level of dissatisfaction evident, both in schools and Connexions, regarding the job title of the 'Personal Adviser'.

3. Careers education and guidance (CEG)

The previous section presented an analysis of findings relating to the background of participants in the research study who were all involved in some way with CEG provision in schools. This section focuses on the CEG provision itself examining: the language used around CEG provision; current provision; underpinning models; measures of effectiveness; and CEG quality awards.

3.1 The language used around CEG provision

In England, the use of language describing the activities of guidance and/or education and guidance is somewhat problematic. There exists a degree of imprecision which undoubtedly interferes with shared meanings and common understandings. This imprecision has stubbornly prevailed within the community of guidance practice for well over a decade and has been exacerbated, if not at least partially caused, by various recent policy developments. Speculation about the causes of the existing linguistic confusion is, perhaps, less important than its impact on the quality of service delivered to students in schools. Indeed, the need for a common language around careers education and guidance (CEG) and/or Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in schools emerged from recent research as a critical issue[8]. Clarification of the terminology used by those involved in delivering services is, therefore, likely to be important in achieving an accurate understanding both of current provision and potential need. Consequently, one of the questions in the survey of 15 schools explored the use of language in this area.

The importance of clear, unambiguous terminology was emphasised by 62 per cent of participants (n=23). The broad range of (often transient) stakeholders operating in or around this area encompassing not only students, but also subject teachers, school managers, parents, employers, Connexions staff and school-based CEG staff, make the use of language critical. One view that was expressed in this research referred to the central importance of language in persuading 'multiple audiences' of

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[8] McGowan, B. (2006) *Developing careers work in schools: issues and considerations.*
Retrieved June 5, 2007 from:
http://www.crac.org.uk/nicec/publications/pdfs/new_briefings/dev_careers_work_schools_issues_considerations.pdf

the value of CEG. An even higher proportion of participants (n=29, 78%) stressed how their own understanding of CEG encompassed a broad range of activities, that typically focused on a holistic understanding of the individual student at the centre of these activities. The activities identified included: the development of skills for life; competencies to support engagement with lifelong learning; the refinement of decision-making skills; increased self-awareness; the raising of aspirations and broadening horizons; inculcation of the ability to self-manage; and an understanding of opportunities available in education, training and the labour market. Taken together, these broad definitions indicate a clear shift in the collective understanding away from an emphasis on a narrow focus on the initial transition from compulsory education into employment to an all-encompassing educational process that should equip individual students with skills and understanding for life that will support their progression through adolescence into adulthood and beyond.

Whilst there was a degree of consensus regarding broad concepts used to describe CEG, there was less uniformity in the language used to describe its precise nature. The importance of the 'impartiality' was emphasised, unprompted, by six participants. Four suggested that the language of CEG was either unimportant, or of less importance, to the consumers of CEG compared with the quality of service provision available. Only two participants made a particular point of emphasising the importance of clear and unambiguous language for the students who were the recipients of this provision.

3.2 Current CEG provision in schools

Although CEG is part of the statutory curriculum, it stands outside the national curriculum. Consequently, schools and colleges are free to design their careers education programme and determine the amount of teaching time allocated. Whilst there are no set time allocations for CEG, the following guidelines have been provided by the (then) Department for Education and Skills (2004c, p.12): Year 7 – 6 hrs; Year 8 – 12 hrs; Year 9 – 15 hrs; Year 10 – 24 hrs (excluding work experience); Year 11 – 24 hrs (excluding work experience); Year 12 – 20 hrs (excluding work experience); and Year 13 – 20 hrs (excluding work experience). One question in the survey focused on the nature of CEG provision in schools. Participants were asked to describe this provision. A key finding relates to how participants in different occupational roles attached to the same school, who were interviewed independently, demonstrated a high level of agreement in their perceptions of

available services. There was no case where the perception of the Connexions PA, for example, disagreed in fundamental detail from the school-based participant(s). There were, however, five examples of where the Connexions PAs were unsure of some of the details of CEG provision in the school to which they were attached. These were all examples of where CEG was integrated across the curriculum, and/or the PAs were in specialist roles. As a consequence, becoming familiar with the precise detail of what was happening across the curriculum in discrete subject lessons had proved somewhat problematic.

One of the recommendations from the recent end-to-end review of CEG was that: 'Schools should be encouraged to adopt a "whole school" approach, incorporating CEG, student support and progression issues, starting in Year 7' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005g, p.19). However, four distinct models of CEG provision emerged from analysis of the survey data which are discussed below. These are: integrated; stand alone; peripheral; and transitional.

Integrated CEG provision

The majority of schools surveyed (n=10) described a model of provision that integrated elements of CEG across the curriculum. This is close to the 'whole school' approach recommended by the end-to-end review. In these schools, there were no discrete, identifiable 'CEG' lessons – rather, it was 'embedded' in different elements of the curriculum. Some of these schools started to introduce elements of CEG to Years 7 and 8 students, but more commonly, it was students in Years 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 who were the key recipients of provision. The type of inputs described typically reflected the developmental needs of the students. So one example indicated general introductory sessions for Years 7 and 8, with a more focused session provided for Year 9, 'moving on' sessions provided for Year 10 and work experience combined with individual interviews for Year 11. Typically, this type of provision was integrated within PHSE lessons, or within particular subjects, where relevant (e.g. one school introduced students to various careers software programs during ICT lessons). Often, the time allocated to different year groups depended on the school's perception of what comprised particular student need.

In most of the schools with integrated provision, CEG was described as being 'taken seriously' and/or was 'recognised, acknowledged and understood'. However, this was not always the case. A small number of participants felt that even though CEG was 'integrated', it was often viewed very negatively. For example, it was: 'regarded

in a derisory way' by many teachers and even by some school managers. One school representative described CEG as being regarded by other teachers as a 'dud job'. In one particular school, concern was expressed that CEG was being increasingly marginalised, because of the way the curriculum was being 'squeezed', with the introduction of additional elements like citizenship. Across all schools with this particular model of provision, the views of other teaching staff regarding CEG were regarded as very mixed – with some extremely supportive and convinced of its value for students, but with some demonstrating at best ambivalence, if not outward hostility, to CEG.

The majority of the schools with an integrated model of CEG had someone occupying a designated Career Co-ordinator post, with teacher status (with some carrying additional responsibilities). One had a designated teacher responsible for CEG, but who was not called a career Co-ordinator, and two other schools had career Co-ordinator posts who were not teachers.

Interestingly, participants from two of the schools with integrated models of CEG reported how their schools were moving towards a 'stand alone' model (see below) and one school which had not previously had a designated career Co-ordinator role was about to have one established.

Stand alone CEG provision

This describes a model where teachers who were subject specialists had no responsibility for delivering CEG across the curriculum. Rather, designated CEG activities were delivered in specified lessons (e.g. PSHE). Only one school out of the 15 that were surveyed identified this particular model of provision, although two others were intending to move away from integrated provision (see above section) to versions of a 'stand alone' model. In the school with stand alone provision, CEG was timetabled for Years 7 to 11 and regarded as being 'taken seriously'. However, the career Co-ordinator was a member of non-teaching staff, which rendered certain aspects of their responsibilities somewhat challenging.

Peripheral CEG provision

Two schools surveyed had peripheral models of CEG. In these schools, the perceptions of research participants were that CEG was marginalised and given low priority compared with other competing demands. Minimal provision comprised, for example, interviews for Year 11 students with the Connexions PA, together with

limited activities for students in Years 12 and 13. In neither of these schools was there a designated post for CEG. No indication was given that this was likely to change in the near future.

Transitional CEG provision

Finally, two schools could be described as being in transition. Whilst CEG was regarded as important, current provision was reported to be 'inadequate' and 'not sufficient'. This situation was, however, destined to change for the better. Improvements were expected, imminently. Both schools were expected to move towards integrated models of CEG provision in the next academic year.

3.3 Models underpinning CEG provision

Evidence-based practice is demanded by government of many publicly funded services since this provides an indication that practice is based on a scientific process open to scrutiny, rather than just on 'common sense'. The broad community of guidance practice is no exception. Frameworks informing practice in the areas of CEG have, in fact, been in development for over a century and have benefited from numerous iterations of development, implementation, review, refinement and development. In common with many other subject areas, competing perspectives have emerged – some currently having acquired more rigorous evidence-bases than others. Each of these frameworks, or models, provides a clear rationale for their use, specifies desirable outcomes, together with indications of possible processes and content for the delivery of CEG programmes. At the heart of these models are assumptions about learning and/or decision-making processes. As with any educational process, it is not unreasonable to expect those delivering CEG services to have at least an awareness, if not a detailed understanding, of principles informing their practice. A question was, therefore, included in this survey investigating the model(s) underpinning CEG provision in the 15 schools under investigation.

In two of the schools, participants indicated how findings from research into teaching and learning were the main drivers of CEG provision. For example, a framework related to the psychology of individual differences was implicated as the major influence in one school, whilst in another, social contextual factors were highlighted as important determinants in service delivery.

In three schools, implicit frameworks appeared to be informing provision. In all of these cases, a developmental framework was indicated by reference to the sequential learning needs of different year groups of students, together with the need for CEG to prepare students for life after school, into adulthood.

Participants at two schools which were in the process of fundamental change (e.g. with appointments of new career Co-ordinators pending), felt there was a lack of clarity regarding frameworks underpinning provision because of these particular circumstances.

However, participants at eight of the schools (53%) had either very little awareness, or no idea at all, of the models underpinning existing CEG provision. In these cases, the CEG model in operation seemed to have emerged from the confluence of historic and pragmatic circumstances (for example, experienced and qualified staff leaving their posts in schools coinciding with timetable changes being introduced, resources being withdrawn, etc.).

3.4 Measuring the effectiveness of provision

Any approach to evaluation is likely to be limited where there is lack of clarity regarding the overall purpose of the activity being evaluated. Given the number of schools with little, or no, awareness of models underpinning practice, it is perhaps not surprising that eight schools in the survey reported a lack of any formal systematic evaluation procedures for their CEG programmes. Of these eight schools, a few indicated that limited, informal evaluation of CEG programmes was undertaken, but where this occurred, it was typically limited in scope and somewhat *ad hoc* (for example, in one school, statistical data that was routinely collected on what the students intended to do after they left school was identified as the only indication of the effectiveness of CEG provision).

Six schools reported evaluation procedures that were part of other processes, rather than undertaken as part of a systematic process of continuous quality improvement of their CEG provision. For example: as a requirement for the Investor in Careers award (IiC); as part of the process of achieving vocational status; as part of an OFSTED inspection; or as part of a more general school audit. Where these types of evaluation processes had been carried out, they had tended to focus on simple measures of effectiveness, through student satisfaction questionnaires, rather than

any attempt to evaluate the nature and/or extent of the learning outcomes of students who had engaged in CEG provision.

One school out of the 15 reported how they undertook systematic evaluations of their CEG, with the purpose of improving provision for students. This comprised formal reviews of the schemes of work for each year group, involving in each case the Head of Year and at least one year tutor, together with the Connexions PA and a school governor representative, wherever this was possible. Whilst arguably this represented a noteworthy model of good practice, it should, however, be noted that the practice of rigorous evaluation in this particular school seemed somewhat fragile, since evaluations had not actually taken place during the year prior to the survey taking place. There also seemed to be an absence of any 'student voice'.

3.5   Quality Awards for CEG

The role of local quality awards for CEG in raising standards of delivery was recently acknowledged by the end-to-end review of CEG, with a recommendation that schools be encouraged to pursue them (DfES, 2005[9]). Whilst only three of the 15 schools surveyed had already achieved the Investor in Careers Award (IIC), six were intending to submit an application or were already in the process of submitting their application for this award. Six schools did not hold the award, nor did they have any plans to do so. Reasons given for resistance to, or hesitancy about, this award included: lack of time; the amount of paperwork involved; lack of management support for the process; and/or general scepticism about its general value.

3.6   Emerging themes

The nature of Careers Education and Guidance within the school in terms of the language used to describe it; how it was designed, delivered, regarded and evaluated is central to this research report. The results presented above (sections 3.1 – 3.5) convey some of the emerging complexity. Whilst findings from a limited number of schools can only ever be seen as illustrative of practice, and certainly not

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[9] Department for Education and Skills (2005). Report of the end to end review of careers education and guidance. Retrieved June 5, 2007, from:
http://www.cegnet.co.uk/content/default.asp?PageId=1169andsm=2233,1169

representative of the same, they nevertheless point to critical issues which are explored below.

Language

Results already presented (section 3.1) convey both the importance of a shared, unambiguous terminology for CEG and its absence. However, some particular issues have emerged from the research findings that are worthy of note. Specifically: the lack of consensus regarding a definition of CEG; the range and variation in terminology used to describe it; its lack of any distinct identity; and variation in the extent to which the issue of shared language and understandings are perceived as problematic.

Participants came up with a range of descriptions when probed about their understanding of CEG, often indicating that definition was challenging. For example, two comments follow:

> *It's difficult to explain…the actual statutory things that we have to deliver. We've also got work related learning. We've also got enterprise and there's a heck of a lot of overlap between these different initiatives…the child at the centre, and all these different things feeding in…careers is part of that - advice and guidance doesn't just have to be about careers. It can be about setting targets for themselves…how they view themselves as learners, where are their strengths…weaknesses. If you just use it as a narrow frame of careers I think you'd lose a hell of a lot.*

> (Interview 16)

> *Careers tends to get lumped in with lots of other things as well, like PSHE…so it just kind of gets viewed as part and parcel of a whole range of things, rather than something in its own right.*

> (Interview 21)

Responses given are testament to the degree of thought participants give to CEG as a concept, although the lack of consensus regarding its meaning is striking. Views about whether this lack of consensus is important differed:

> *It certainly makes a difference if you keep changing it…you go to one meeting and they're talking about IAG and then they're talking about CEG and then you go in the specialist school trusts and they're talking about CEIG. Whatever it is, let's make up our minds because I put CEIG onto a staff email the other day and probably half the school came back and said*

> *What is that'? And I say "Careers Education, Information and Guidance"*
> *and they said, "Oh right, like CEG'". And I said, No, not exactly.*

<div align="right">(Interview 7)</div>

Some participants separated out the 'education' and 'guidance' aspects of CEG in terms of who was responsible for its delivery:

> *In my mind, the careers guidance is what Connexions comes in and delivers*
> *for us as a requirement by the government because they're funded by them.*
> *But careers education is something that I think the school should be*
> *planning for…Yes, I do see them as separate.*

<div align="right">(Interview 26)</div>

Others seemed to make a distinction based on whether it was generic work with groups or focused on the individual:

> *I think careers education would be about providing students with a sort of*
> *broad base of information and the options that are out there, whereas*
> *guidance would be much more focussed on the individual, their particular*
> *strengths and weaknesses, the qualifications they're likely to get and then*
> *tailoring something bespoke.*

<div align="right">(Interview 34)</div>

Whilst the ambiguity around the language of CEG may reflect the rapidity of change in the context of CEG delivery, it also exposes a potential weakness, since it might well reflect a lack of understanding of what successful CEG provision comprises.

Delivery of CEG provision

Findings (see section 3.2) suggest a breadth in the delivery formats for CEG, with each school developing its own approach. However, some recurring trends are discernible. The practice of 'enrichment days', compared with more traditional modes of delivery involving short inputs of CEG (e.g. within PSHE) more consistently throughout the academic year is one.

'Enrichment days' describes the practice of setting whole days aside from normal timetabling for activities such as: school trips; enterprise days; world of work or employer days; work experience preparation; Aimhigher days; science days; or careers related activities, such as the Real Game, KUDOS and similar. Although seemingly an attractive model for being high profile, high impact, one PA was critical:

> *…you think about your career twice a year on focus days rather than being*
> *an ongoing process. I think it's a bit gimmicky. We forget about it the rest of*

the year…we need to embed it in people's minds and think about it more regularly (otherwise)…they come along for a careers interview…and they've never done any planning.

This concern was echoed by a participant who felt that because reflection and follow up was not built in, the longer term impact was minimised:

We did a road show which was absolutely fantastic. The kids were hopping afterwards, really keen, but it's not been followed up, which is sad. I think it's all due to timetable.

One other participant in a school about to adopt this approach expressed apprehension:

In September, they're going to get a team of people to deliver PSE discreetly through the timetable, which will be excellent, because these teams…they are going to be good, but they're doing it on focus days. I think it could be a backwards step actually, regarding PSHE and careers, but time will tell.

In at least one school, all staff had to 'bid' if they wanted to secure an enrichment day for a particular year group. Allocated time is not, therefore, guaranteed and has to compete with other school priorities. However, careers had, to date, always secured the days requested.

If the day is a one-off compression of a years' input, then it raises questions about what happens to any students who might be absent on one particular day. It does give CEG a high profile for that one day and has the potential to raise both its status in the school and the awareness of CEG amongst students. Additionally, there may be a greater investment in the quality of provision for a whole day of planned activity and this model may allow new student groups to benefit. For example, one PA wanted to initiate some CEG input for a Year 7 group:

They didn't have anything for year 7. I know that half the reason that schools don't deliver stuff is that they don't have the time to work out what to deliver. So I put together a set of lessons and then thought that other schools were doing focus days so I just tweaked them a bit so that they would run together in a day. I got colleagues of mine to come in and deliver it. So basically all the teachers got the day off. We had two PAs per form

group. It was really good fun because you built up a really good rapport with the students, because you did all the different exercises with them. So that worked quite well.

However, this approach proved too resource intensive, so was not sustainable. Further, the comment regarding school staff viewing it as a 'day off' points to problems where ownership of such activities is delegated to outside agencies, potentially working against the ethos of a fully integrated approach.

Some schools appeared to rely on external agencies for this type of work. For example, East Kent Education Business Partnership was identified as having delivered employer days, although one participant felt representation across different occupational areas was disappointing. Given how labour intensive these days are to organise, it is unsurprising schools will enlist the expertise of external agencies to deliver them. However, where this strategy is used it remains important that the content of days is scrutinised to ensure there are appropriate aims and objectives for the event, and that time for reflection and follow up is also timetabled. There is also a need to consider how such events might fit in with plans for the overall scheme of work for CEG delivery within any one school. One participant explicitly commented on the importance of preparing students for external visitors as part of CEG:

One of the things that is very important…if we're going to get the most out of the careers education is that there is a run into that before the lesson. So when someone comes into to talk to geography students about a career in travel in tourism, that they've actually researched the process before.

More consistent input throughout the school year has definite advantages. Yet, this pattern too has vulnerabilities. Increasing pressures on the curriculum has led to the erosion of some CEG provision:

I think lack of time in the school timetable is the only reason careers has been squeezed and squeezed, because it's a school that used to have a very good careers education programme. It used to have a 40 minute slot on their programme every week for careers, then that went to careers/PSHE and then PSHE got taken out completely and as far as I can see doesn't even appear anywhere now, because they do Citizenship.

Where CEG was embedded within subject areas, this suggested an ethos valuing provision. However, exposure sometimes depended on students' subject choices:

> *I mean it is a little bit haphazard as well…sometimes in English they will do letters and applications for their work experience, but that doesn't seem to happen every year. In business some years they seem to do CVs.*
>
> (Interview 29)

In another school context the person with responsibility for CEG deliberately avoided labelling some activities as CEG to stop them from being isolated from a programme that had more holistic aims:

> *They're not flagged up as careers events because that confuses them. I really wanted them to see it this as part of their work experience.*
>
> (Interview 7)

Overall, it would seem that whilst well run enrichment days produced a positive impact, they could not be regarded as adequate replacement for well developed CEG programmes. Fully integrated CEG, seamlessly presented throughout the curriculum, with all staff sharing a sense of ownership for its inclusion is undoubtedly hard to achieve, but for some remains the ultimate aim of delivery. As one school based participant remarked:

> *My hope is that students, whether they realise it or not will actually be receiving information and guidance through (all) the lessons that they take…I think it will only happen when a student in the department says to the subject teacher…"That poster about that on the wall how do you get to be one of those?"… when we've got staff that will be able to answer.*
>
> (Interview 7)

Perceptions of CEG in schools

Perceptions of attitudes to CEG are an interesting indicator of the status of CEG within a school culture. The following comments highlight some relevant issues. For example, how it is difficult to generalise about teachers' perceptions of CEG:

> *I think it varies really from teacher to teacher Some seem to think it is quite important that time should be dedicated to careers education and then some of them seem to think it's a hassle having to do it, and its not that important, I think it varies throughout the school.*
>
> (Interview 36)

In one school, a participant suggested there was quite a negative view of CEG. Similarly, in another, teachers did not view CEG as their responsibility, but this was not regarded negatively since, as a consequence, students continued to get access to professional expertise for this area:

> *I think its just seen as something that other people do…that's not a bad thing to be honest, because I would rather have qualified staff helping students make the right choices than teaching staff who are made to do it as part of a PSHE rota.*

(Interview 16)

Even where teachers were negative about CEG, benefits to students of tutors working with them were identified since they knew their students well so were often best placed to get involved in CEG where it crossed over into pastoral roles:

> *…because they know the individuals so much better, it's going to be a better way to deliver it than with perhaps somebody who doesn't know the kids as well…*

(Interview 34)

Sometimes negative attitudes about CEG had developed in teachers because they were being required to deliver it without being adequately prepared:

> *I don't think staff feel comfortable delivering careers as a stand-alone separate entity. You're getting a culture of staff, who are very much subject-based teachers because the emphasis now is on subject-based teaching and results...I think there's a bit of a dilemma there with your role in school. The staff need to feel comfortable with what they're delivering before they deliver it really well.*

(Interview 9)

Perhaps understandably, there was a marked reluctance amongst participants to speculate on what young people themselves felt about their CEG provision as commented by one participant:

> *Its quite difficult to guess – you see some students who are really interested and planning for their future and thinking about careers education and then you have others that you know are at the end of Year 11 still haven't thought about what they want to do and couldn't really be bothered.*

(Interview 36)

However, students' attitudes about CEG were picked up by staff in schools, more broadly, where Connexions staff were highly regarded by students:

The way the students see it influences the staff. The Year 11s all have a Connexions career interview, mostly on a one-to one basis. We really put the hours in to give them that. Some of them are in 2s or 3s. When I take along appointment slips to tutor groups the students are really excited and they come back very enthusiastic. Very rarely have I heard negative things. And staff pick up on that.

(Interview 26)

Models underpinning CEG

The inability of research participants to identify, or describe, the rationale that had informed the design of CEG provision is interesting. Participants were very honest about the drivers informing provision and could usually explain how current delivery had come about. CEG programmes were variously described as: inherited; content-driven; reactive to policy; informed by a particular philosophy or psychology of learning; handed over by others; or triggered by external inspection regimes

In one school it was noted that if there had ever been an underpinning rationale, it was now lost, with a focus on content rather than models for practice:

I think that previously there probably was that conscious rationale, I think now its more unconscious – it's looking at what works, what the students have requested and my own training as well, looking at the sorts of thing like your self-awareness, how you make decisions, how you write applications…there is reasons for it – without it being just haphazard and this is what the students want – but I wouldn't say it is as conscious as it maybe used to be.

(Interview 30)

The focus on content, rather than any recognisable model was acknowledged by other participants:

I think its more content led than model led…by this stage, at this year they really ought to be able to find out about this and know where to go to find out about that and understand a bit more about what's out there – not any model really.

(Interview 25)

Other CEG programmes were directly informed by government guidelines about what ought to be included:

We pulled off that massive document that was published by the DfES…and along with that, we tapped into some of the resources at CEGNET and there's the IAG workforce. We've used those as reference points to get some idea of where we should be going.

<div align="right">(Interview 24)</div>

One responded with a more general philosophy informing practice:

We don't use any conscious career model at all. What I use is my own ideas of where I think 21st century education should be in terms Lifelong learning…embedding an holistical approach for the learner, and the learner at the centre, and not necessarily always using teaching staff to deliver what you want to deliver, by putting the correct support structures in place, using other staff that are qualified to help you support that student through…The strength. It's adaptable and more personalised around the student which is what David Hargreaves talks about, personalised learning and we try very, very hard to do that.

<div align="right">(Interview 16)</div>

In at least one instance, the school had asked their Connexions PA, who they rated highly, to write a suggested programme which could be implemented in the coming year. In designing a possible programme, the linked PA did make reference to a model informing the scheme of work, whilst acknowledging it had some limitations:

I think the model I'm basing it most closely on is the DOTS model…because it's a simple one to explain, for people to understand who are new to education and guidance and its easy to make into colloquial terms. So self-awareness, opportunity-awareness, decision making skills and transition. For example in Year 7, we look at transition because transition has just happened. It can become too simplistic…too standardised.

<div align="right">(Interview 27)</div>

There was one notable exception where one school had consciously examined good practice elsewhere, including internationally:

We have recently at a strategic level, looked at lots of structures that other schools, other countries used. We've been driven on by a realisation that what we are offering in England is pretty poor compared to the rest of the world the future jobs market and the skills we are likely to have compared to China and India and places like that the kind of driving factor – the need to do better. So that's the kind of thinking behind what we are trying to do.

<div align="right">(Interview 25)</div>

Even in this case, no model could be identified as providing an underpinning rationale. One participant suggested that schools needed more help in developing CEG provision:

> *I think the schools ideally need greater support in developing their careers education programme...there's not enough awareness of what their statutory duty is to provide and although some Ofsted inspectors find it, others just tend to ignore it...there almost needs to be a raising awareness activity.*
>
> (Interview 29)

Whilst acknowledging the multitude of pressures faced by schools in relation to delivering a broad curriculum, the prevalence of inherited or reactive approaches to delivery of CEG must raise some questions about whether modes of delivery in relation to CEG provision are always as well founded and effective as they might be.

Evaluation

In general, a culture of evaluation for CEG provision does not exist within the school environment (see section 3.4, above). PAs seemed to be more likely than school staff routinely to evaluate their work. One school contact noted that initially he was surprised at the lack of evaluation activities:

> *Its something that's surprised me…I did a lot of research before I came…I was desperately looking for the answer to the question 'how would you judge whether we are doing a good job or not?' and the answer is, there is no answer to that. Obviously the specialist schools' trust has an audit system. Connexions has an audit system. And I'm using them both… but I don't want to do it to the level that's acceptable. I want to do it better than that.*
>
> (Interview 7)

In one school, a PA had worked with the Careers Co-ordinator in their school to conduct an evaluation as part of working towards Investor in Careers. Together they had gone to considerable lengths to evaluate CEG, though this seemed not to focus on learning outcomes, but rather students' views of provision:

> *We set up a careers evaluation…the support and guidance forum… myself and the Careers Co-ordinator, we had a school governor…at least one delivery tutor, and from each year group, and then the Head of Year, and then a student from each form group – so that's about 6 students, and we got each year group together to evaluate the programme. It was an open forum…it has been really interesting…the feedback we've got from the*

> *students has really informed the programme that we're writing for next year.*
> *The students were extremely enthusiastic.*

<div align="right">(Interview 30)</div>

The impetus gained from working towards Investor in Careers came up several times as the catalyst for evaluation activities:

> *I started the Investor in Careers programme and one of the things we had to*
> *do for that, is we had to get a grand committee of stakeholders and get their*
> *views.*

<div align="right">(Interview 3)</div>

However, not all attempts by PAs to canvas students' views about CEG had been welcome. In one instance a PA had, with the co-operation of the school Careers Co-ordinator, had evaluated students' perceptions of CEG provision across the school with a view to using the findings of this to inform future provision[10]. The resultant report was not welcome and the PA actually moved away from the school. The same PA had, however, experienced very positive reactions to introducing similar evaluation activities in other schools. This highlights a key consideration in embarking on evaluation exercises. Where feedback suggests there is considerable room for improvement, such evaluation exercises may not lead to positive outcomes without the flexibility, resources or readiness to implement change.

Sometimes evaluation was seen purely as a paper-based activity – restricting the monitoring of provision to quantitative criteria rather than attempting an assessment quality. The Connexions' 'Moving On' and 'Next Steps' questionnaires were also identified in the context of evaluation. These are forms distributed by Connexions for students in certain year groups to help identify what support students may need as part of a process of prioritising students for interviews with Connexions (e.g. Interview 14). Although this might be an indicator of an individual student's state of career decision-making readiness, it is questionable whether this can be legitimately regarded as an evaluation activity.

There seems little clarity of purpose about what evaluation means, nor how to go about conducting a meaningful evaluation of CEG provision. Students and students did not have their views canvassed and parents were also noticeable by their absence in evaluation processes. This lack of evaluation culture does not

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[10] This took place in a school that was not part of this research survey.

necessarily mean that there is a lack of good practice. However, it does make it harder to point to, celebrate and share good practice, or to identify and address areas for improvement.

Investor in Careers

Whilst there was a general awareness of the Investor in Careers (IiC) scheme (see section 3.5 above), it was often seen as a resource intensive activity. Typically, schools where Careers Co-ordinators had multiple responsibilities were reluctant to take on the extra work involved. Additionally, some schools with exemplary provision felt there was nothing to be gained from the process. In one instance, for example, the provision at the school was regarded as so innovative it was felt it would not match the apparently restrictive vision and criteria of the IiC process. There seemed to be something of an anomaly associated with these awards as successful applicants sometimes seemed to be those most willing to commit time to the process, rather than those which necessarily had the best provision. One PA observed:

> *They're obviously one of the best schools…in terms of what they do careers-wise and I get annoyed when other schools get this award when I know they're not as good.*
>
> (Interview 12)

Those welcoming the IiC process valued the opportunity to review current provision and start afresh:

> *Its come at the right time because I think it fits in beautifully with someone new going into the position because a lot of it is monitoring what's going on in the school and identifying any gaps and filling those gaps so I feel it fits in perfectly with the time at the moment.*
>
> (Interview 6)

> *For me, its fantastic. It's very labour intensive…It is very much a working document, that's what I'm going to use it for. Its been handy for me to assess what's going on at the moment but everything that I put into it, has a review date – this is what's going to happen going forwards.*
>
> (Interview 7)

One participant pointed out that the time required for the process might be better spent on developing their CEG programme:

> *If I judge on what Connexions say about this school… we are doing an awful lot more than many schools in the area and we'd walk it. So I thought, well,*

> *is it worth me spending hours and hours and hours getting this qualification*
> *when really I could be spending it planning new things for next year.*

<div align="right">(Interview 11)</div>

One possible consequence of achieving IiC was that this might be viewed as an end in itself, ironically blocking rather than stimulating further innovation and development. One participant commented:

> *I think it personally, in a way it will help the school to wake up to the*
> *importance of careers education and careers guidance. My hope is that it*
> *wouldn't just be used as a brownie point...I'm hoping the enthusiasm with*
> *which they put the process together will carry on – I'm hoping that once*
> *they've achieved Investors they wont just think phew we've got there now*
> *we can relax.*

<div align="right">(Interview 8)</div>

Investor in Careers seems to have most value as a way of bringing new appointees up to speed with what might usefully be included as part of good practice in establishing CEG in schools. It is ironic that those schools operating with the perception that they had the most established programme felt that they had least to gain from the award. A degree of cynicism about the quality standard was evident and although PAs linked to schools were often enlisted to assist with this process, they were not always centrally involved.

In summary, the research has revealed a varied and expansive terrain of CEG provision, albeit patchy in places. However, the overarching issue seems to be the lack of clarity about the purpose of CEG. There is a lack of shared language for CEG, little evidence of any underpinning models for careers education and guidance coupled with a rather haphazard approach to evaluation mechanisms. In addition, the quality award that might be thought as an attempt to raise the base line for CEG provision is not enthusiastically embraced by all the schools in this survey. This is not to imply that there is not much good practice and innovation in evidence, only that such provision is not easily identified, celebrated or shared.

4. Organisation and management

Having reviewed the detail of CEG provision in schools in section 3, this section will examine its organisation and management.

4.1 Current relationship between Connexions and schools

The quality of the relationship between individual schools and the Connexions service is likely to be a crucial factor in the ability of the Connexions service to delivery a consistently high level of service. Participants were asked, therefore, about the nature of the relationship between the school to which they were attached, or by which they were employed, and the Connexions service. This included whether the school ethos was correctly understood by Connexions, whether the particular needs of each school were understood and whether Connexions offered a realistic service that was delivered reliably. Participants from nine of the 15 schools surveyed reported that their relationship with the Connexions service was either 'excellent' or 'good'. In only one of these nine cases was the perception of the Connexions PA somewhat at odds with the perception of the member of staff employed by the school. In a number of these cases, the school representative(s) highlighted the quality of the Connexions PA as critical to the overall quality of relationship with the school.

Participants at four of the schools surveyed reported how the relationship between the school and the Connexions service was either 'improving' or had the potential to improve – with the clear implication that the relationship had been, or was, wanting in a number of respects. The amount of resource available from the Connexions service to the school was highlighted as one important issue in how schools regarded their relationship with Connexions. One other issue identified as important in establishing and maintaining a high quality relationship was the continuity of the relationship between particular PAs and schools. Where this had been disrupted, sometimes for unavoidable reasons (e.g. maternity leave, sickness), schools reported a negative impact on the quality of provision. Finally, the quality of the service provided by the Connexions PA was identified as crucial – to the extent that where the relationship was reported to be improving, this was often because the PA had changed.

Overall, 13 of the schools regarded their relationship with Connexions as excellent, good, improving or having the potential to improve. For the remaining two schools surveyed, the current relationship between the service and the schools was reported as poor, with participants expressing a degree of pessimism that this was likely to change in the near future.

4.2   Protocols

Clear communication and mutual understanding of the offer of service provision from the Connexions service to schools lays the foundation for effective relationships. Different types of protocols were identified.   The 'Partnership Agreement' was described as representing the formal offer between the school and Connexions. Indeed, one participant regarded this as primarily a 'public relations exercise', because it typically involved managers rather than operational staff. The 'Delivery Plan', in contrast, is generally regarded as 'dealing with the nitty gritty'. One school also operated with a 'pre-partnership' agreement, which appeared to represent a lower degree of formality in the agreement between the Connexions PA and the career Co-ordinator. Yet another school identified a 'subsidiary delivery plan', also relating to a particular aspect of service provision, which encompassed a lesser degree of formality.

Twelve schools indicated that they had both Partnership Agreements and Delivery Plans – and that these were generally found to be useful. Different practices used to arrive at these agreements were evident across the 15 schools. In some, three meetings (or more) were held each year to negotiate, and then to review, arrangements and how they were operating. In others, two meetings were held (e.g. typically one for discussing arrangements and one to review progress). In yet others, one meeting only per year was reported. Two schools indicated how they found the Partnership Agreements useful, since they specified the service to be delivered, but that they found delivery plans of limited value.

Three schools were either ambivalent about, or critical of, Partnership Agreements. In these cases, negative views of the Partnership Agreements related to their being regarded as tokenism: 'just a paper exercise' or 'merely a formality'.   Particular difficulties seem to have arisen where either the school, or the Connexions service, informed the other party of changes, rather than consulting or negotiating. One other

source of dissatisfaction was where Connexions had been unable to deliver, or respond, to specific requests from schools.

4.3 Involvement of senior management

In ten of the 15 schools surveyed, either the Head Teacher and/or the Deputy Head involved themselves in the Partnership Agreements for their school. In three of the schools, Senior Managers from the school were involved, whilst in just two schools, no representative of school management were represented in the Partnership Agreement. Interestingly, in these two particular schools, one of the school's representatives interpreted the non-participation of senior management as a lack of interest in CEG, whilst in the other, it was regarded as an indication that the career Co-ordinator was trusted to 'get on with it'.

4.4 Careers library provision

Participants were asked about the careers library provision in their schools, how often it was updated, its location and accessibility for students, together with who had responsibility for organising the materials.

In the majority of schools, the careers library provision was well supported by both the school and Connexions Kent & Medway; with 13 using funding from Connexions Kent & Medway to extend and update careers library provision. In two of these schools, the careers library provision budget was supplemented by school funding. In one school it was reported that the Connexions funding had been 'lost' in the school budget, but that the matter was being addressed to ensure that future careers library provision would be improved. It was noted that in one school the budget for the careers library provision was under-spent, but this was due to restructuring in the school.

Careers library provision within all schools had dedicated individuals organising the materials, variously including: the PA; school librarian; school representative responsible for CEG; and the local Connexions Co-ordinator. Within three schools it was believed that the materials were under-utilised by students, whereas two were aware that the materials were in constant use.

Eight schools had their careers materials reviewed annually; three had materials continually reviewed on an informal basis. Resources available through the careers libraries included: materials from local Connexions Co-ordinators; reference texts on CV and application writing; and networked careers programmes (such as Kudos, Streetwise, Odyssey and Future Deal). In two schools, they were working towards IiC criteria for the careers library provision.

Careers library provision is located within the main library in 12 schools, so materials are easily accessible by students. Limited access to the careers library materials was reported in three schools, two of which were addressing the problem and in the process of relocating materials to a more student accessible location. In two schools, where materials had gone missing, they were now monitored by staff, so access was restricted.

One PA recommended that school's careers library provision should be audited twice a year. In four schools, trialling the use of library was underway of monitors to supervise the use of the materials and identify dated materials requiring renewing. Early indications were that this method was proving to be effective in maintaining and monitoring careers library provision.

4.5 Emerging themes

The nature of the relationship between Connexions and schools was clearly influenced by a number of factors. These include: the perceived extent of the investment in schools made by Connexions Kent & Medway; the regard in which the linked PA was held by the school; the perceptions of current relationships; and attitudes towards the Partnership Agreements.

Investment in the schools

The different types of investment by Connexions Kent & Medway in the region were generally acknowledged by schools, specifically: provision of PAs INSET training; library grants; and delivery of events such as the annual Resources or Further Education fairs. Regarding PAs, one participant commented:

> *I think the investment has been absolutely amazing really, we've got so many different PAs in this school, and (they) do so many different roles and jobs. They are just superb…We've got the generic PA. We've got the Vocational PA, we've got the Intensive PA and we've also got one that*

> *works with our Princes Trust group…and that's a direct investment really…they all do a sterling job.*

<div align="right">(Interview 16)</div>

Another school made special reference to the INSET training opportunities available:

> *The training they offer. It is brilliant…There's so much coming through that I can pass on to different people in school, the Family Liaison Officer or other key stage managers...I saw one recently on loss and bereavement. We don't pay anything. I also saw a Connexions conference recently for teaching staff and support staff. Things like keeping up to date on student finance.*

<div align="right">(Interview 26)</div>

Such training was seen as particularly helpful to those new to post:

> *When I first took over and I knew absolutely nothing really, Connexions were really good in arranging different types of training. If I'd said, "look can you do a training course on this?" they would have done. They're always free and really well arranged and they're always really supportive afterwards as well.*

<div align="right">(Interview 35)</div>

However, although the quality of training was well regarded, lack of resources for teaching cover limited take up. Even when Connexions offered to pay for cover, it still was not always possible for school staff to take up training opportunities.

Similarly, the library grant was highly valued universally, though some attributed the source of this money to central government, with Connexions Kent & Medway merely acting as a filter:

> *We're given the annual library allocation, which I believe will come from the government but is issued to us from the local Connexions service, which is very very useful. If it was up to the school to finance the careers library it would be very difficult as resources can only be kept so long...you are talking about a turnover…every year, every two years…It would be very difficult for a school to keep up with that, so it's very, very, very good having the careers library allocation.*

<div align="right">(Interview 32)</div>

The role of the Personal Adviser

One recurrent theme relates to the way the PA personifies the Connexions service, from the school perspective. Some participants had difficulty in differentiating the

investment from Connexions Kent & Medway as an organisation, from the service they received from their link PA. Where there was a lack of confidence in the designated PA, this became a major cause of frustration:

> *There was one year when one particular PA just didn't fit in the school and the communication and service completely broke down.*
>
> <div align="right">(Interview 27)</div>

Even when relationships between the schools and the PAs worked well, some participants hinted at a lack of contact with Connexions Kent & Medway more broadly. Whilst the schools generally had confidence in their individual PA(s), they were less positive about Connexions as an organisation more broadly, with some participants indicating that they felt Connexions did not always appreciate the schools' priorities:

> *I just don't think they understand the way the school works...I think sometimes they need to be a little bit more… flexible...The kind of thing I mean is that Connexions say that "You have to do this in school". But the schools might not necessarily want it.*
>
> <div align="right">(Interview 15)</div>

Nor the pressures under which schools operated:

> *Sometimes I don't think they appreciate the amount of time pressure we have on us as teachers. We do get a very short time span sometimes…it just doesn't work like that, especially if you are relying on someone else as well.*
>
> <div align="right">(Interview 32)</div>

Perceptions of the current relationships

Lack of negotiation about some CEG provision certainly emerged as an issue for some schools. Even though some problems were historic; the sense of frustration was still expressed by one participant:

> *Well actually that's the problem, how do you negotiate with Connexions? How do you negotiate with them, because all you see is your PA and your PA basically has no power over what the organisation does.*
>
> <div align="right">(Interview 3)</div>

When Connexions was first launched, at least one school did not want the additional services being proposed; stating that they wanted the professional expertise of careers guidance for all students. The more 'pastoral' aspects were seen as a

school responsibility. One Head teacher refused to sign the new Partnership Agreement because of a feeling that there had been a lack of communication, and that change was being imposed without negotiation. Another participant, was unsure of the non-careers related services of Connexions and was unclear if it was possible to opt out of the service:

> *Connexions do a lot of work outside careers and I don't understand, really, they're government-funded. Are we supposed to use them? I've never really fathomed that. As careers goes, I think most of the school knows that Connexions is some sort of careers-based thing.*
>
> (Interview 11)

One school contact was particularly forthright in their criticism:

> *You have people who are PAs in school and they don't even know about the national framework, but they've gone through all this training to be fabulous PAs, [but] there's no impetus, there's no imagination, there's no drive to do stuff. You just think, "We're wasting our money here". From a higher level generally we get lip service in terms of actual practical help. It's been very hard to get a lot out of them.*
>
> (Interview 3)

Other schools recognised the ebbs and flows in the relationship between the school and the Connexions service:

> *I think for a while they misjudged the fact that they were not giving the support they could have done and a lot of (the) good relationship that had been there was lost. I think Kent and Medway have now realised that the school could have done with some more support.*
>
> (Interview 27)

> *We've had a...very chequered recent relationship. The previous Head had one or two 'bust ups'…with the Connexions service in [their] time here. But when I had the provision meeting a month ago, the Connexions service seemed very positive.*
>
> (Interview 1)

Partnership Agreements

Once again, varied views were expressed (see section 4.2 above). Some participants were pleasantly surprised by how valuable the Partnership Agreement meeting proved to be:

I was expecting it to be a paper-based activity to be honest, but I did actually feel as though it was quite a meaningful dialogue...as a result of it we were able to access some more services, not just in the information and advice and guidance area, but also in supporting kids who had disengaged...so I thought that was actually pretty good.

<div align="right">(Interview 34)</div>

Others viewed the process as very much a paper based activity with a sense of 'going through the motions':

It is repetitive, it's a recycling of what we used to do under Careers Management but tweaked a bit to reflect Connexions criteria. It's very, very brief. Every year it's the same document, albeit if there are any changes in the names of people the names change...the last one took about 20 minutes.

<div align="right">(Interview 8)</div>

It needs to happen, it's a paperwork exercise which I don't like, but it does mean that other things happen as a result, but it has to be there and therefore it is useful.

<div align="right">(Interview 25)</div>

Although there was an element of 'box ticking', it did not follow that the Partnership meeting was unimportant since it helped maintain relationships and allowed for formal acknowledgement at a senior level of work that had taken place:

It was a positive meeting actually. They were complimentary which was lovely as you don't get many compliments. It was a chance for me to say thank you as well, because they do work hard .and I'm aware of all the constraints they have from the Connexions point of view it was a case of ticking boxes and highlighting all the key development targets for the coming year, and an opportunity for the Head to get to know (regional manager) and meet me. He said "hello" before, but hadn't really engaged in discussion.

<div align="right">(Interview 10)</div>

Less positively, one school seemed particularly frustrated at how little could actually be negotiated:

Well it's a partnership isn't it...in theory we ought to be the customer and we ought to...say what we want and you come and deliver it and if you don't, we don't pay you. But that doesn't happen, because we have the one size fits all stuff really from Connexions...You see [the] organisation once a

year...other than they think giving you (so many) PA days, let's say, is going to solve the problem. It isn't. You need to think more carefully about what needs individual schools have. I'd rather not have the PAs. I'd rather have experts in particular areas...if I could have, let's say, someone who comes along from Connexions who could bring 3 employers from [industry] with them and talk to about 12 students about [occupation] that would be useful.

(Interview 3)

One comment illustrated how a PA did not see the Partnership Agreement as especially relevant to their work on a daily basis, whilst acknowledging that it was necessary to ensure that appropriate facilities were made available:

…mainly it involved my line manager...really an agreement between the whole of Connexions and the school, it doesn't have too much bearing on the work I'm doing to be honest. I think it's also an exercise to ensure that we have the facilities that we need to allow us to do the job really.

(Interview 36)

As such, the Partnership Agreement offered something to fall back on in the event things went wrong. Certainly at least one PA was grateful for the leverage provided by the Partnership Agreement:

It's been extremely useful. When I first arrived here I had no confidential space to interview in...I had no access to a phone or stats on young people. The Partnership Agreement was one of the main tools to be able to refer to...It's a service level agreement that you've agreed to. So it's a very useful negotiating tool. I think it also gives us professional status that we do clearly belong to a corporate body. It's also been a chance to review annually, the successes, so it's become a very positive thing.

(Interview 27)

Of the two types of Partnership Agreements, the Delivery Plan was seen as most value. As one PA observed:

The delivery plan meeting is more important for us to stipulate what kind of work we are going to be doing, who is going to be doing it, and when it is going to be done...the delivery plan is really important so you know each term what needs to be done and it does stipulate who'll be involved.

(Interview 36)

41

However, in one instance where it seemed the Delivery Plan was being presented by Connexions prior to any negotiation having taken place, a school contact was less positive:

> *[PA] has produced a delivery plan but I mean really, well it needs to be negotiated, because I don't want the delivery plan to be the same as it was last year and the year before and so on, because I think we want to be trying to do things in a slightly different way – to try to be a bit more effective.*
>
> (Interview 34)

Senior management involvement in Partnership Agreements

There was considerable variation in who was involved in CEG provision across the schools. In some, responsibility was delegated from the Head to the designated person responsible for the Connexions relationship (see section 4.3 above). The involvement of members of the senior management teams gave status to the relationship between Connexions and the school concerned. However, if they then did not attend the Partnership meetings, this could be dispiriting:

> *Heads are always invited, but they never come and that's quite depressing if you're the Careers Co-ordinator. It makes you feel like my Head or Head teacher isn't really interested in what I'm doing because they won't even come to the meetings to discuss.*
>
> (Interview 12)

Attendance of Head teachers at Partnership meetings was not always positive:

> *In my view it was a paper exercise. Because the Head was..."yeah, yeah, you need to talk to so and so about that", rather than saying, "Well would you like me to get involved?".*
>
> (Interview 29)

> *I actually came away from that Partnership Agreement meeting feeling slightly undervalued actually...the words that were coming out of the Head were 'fast, dynamic, moving' and things like that. And I almost was thinking do you know what I have been doing in the school for the past 5 years?*
>
> (Interview 6)

However, the opposite view was also expressed, with one PA appreciating senior staff involvement:

> *I think it's useful just really for the local manager to know what's happening in the school and it does seem to be the time when more senior staff in the*

school start to listen and get involved. In some schools you seem to get the Head teacher actually involved in them so it's a good opportunity for them to find out what's going on, discuss any issues that might be happening.

(Interview 2)

Many positive examples emerged regarding how Connexions Kent & Medway is perceived by the schools in this survey. However, there are undoubtedly some outstanding issues with a continuum of experiences of the quality of the relationship existing between Connexions and individual schools.

5.   Personal Advisers

A crucial success factor in the delivery of high quality CEG services that has emerged recurrently in this research is the approach taken by the Connexions Kent & Medway PAs to working in the schools to which they are allocated. Participants were probed specifically on how many PAs were allocated to individual schools, what services were provided and whether effort was invested by PAs in establishing (and maintaining) constructive working relationships (by, for example, demonstrating a flexible approach and commitment to the school). Results are discussed below.

5.1   Relationships between PAs and schools

The number of PAs allocated to each school varied from between one and five. This variation reflected the diverse needs of students, as well as the availability of PAs offering different specialisms, with Pre-Vocational PAs, Guidance PAs, Intensive PAs and Health PAs all providing schools with very varied services. The presence of PA specialisms in schools reflected a combination of the numbers of students enrolled and their particular needs.

The particular package of services provided differed, as could be expected, across the schools surveyed. Service provision typically included combinations of activities, such as: one-to-one interviews organised on a referral basis for various year groups of students; one-to-one interviews provided as part of lunch-time drop-in sessions; group work of different types addressing topics reflecting the needs of the year groups of students (for example, work experience preparation for Year 10 students and University Admissions for Year 12); attendance at parents' evenings; and various types of presentations at school assemblies.

Patterns of relationships between PAs and schools inevitably varied (see section 4.1 above), with some schools reporting how this was 'in flux' because of illness; maternity leave; staff turnover; and 'normal working practices' (e.g. transfer of a PA from one school to another to provide the PA with experiences of different types of schools). Whilst some problems with PAs were certainly reported, feedback on the quality of relationships between PAs and schools was overwhelmingly positive. At one end of the continuum, relationships were described as 'excellent', 'very, very good' or 'superb' – typically this was where the PA was regarded as an integral part

of school life. One member of school staff described the PA allocated to their school as: 'a very strong helper who has initiated lots of different ideas'. One other member of teaching staff described the relationship of their PA with students as 'outstanding'. In another school, where there was more than one PA, the response was somewhat qualified, because of difficulties experienced with one of the PAs: 'on the whole, it's [the relationship of the PA to the school] brilliant'. In one case, the relationship between the PA and the school had clearly broken down. A quotation from one member of school-based staff reflects an understanding that the allocation of PAs could be regarded as something of a lottery: 'I think I'm very lucky – I've got two very good PAs that come here'. Where critical comments were made about the relationship of the PA with the school, this often related to the level of resource available – so schools were critical where they required more PA time than was actually available. In at least one instance, a school had been offered an Intensive PA, which was not required. More resource from the Guidance PA was requested, but had not been forthcoming, so was the source of some discontent.

5.2   Emerging themes

The PA represents the bridge between schools and the Connexions service. S/he is the main (sometimes only) representative for the service, taking on almost an ambassadorial function. The relationship established with schools is, therefore, absolutely crucial. How individual PAs worked within their schools was dependent on a number of factors including time allocation; case load and the particular focus of the PA's work (for example whether a Guidance, Pre-vocational, Intensive or Health PA). One particular theme emerging from the data is the scope PAs have for personal innovation, with the extent to which individual PAs felt they were either encouraged or enabled to share good practice, varying significantly. This section highlights some of these issues.

School perceptions of PAs

Both within the schools and within the Connexions service, the time and resources available to initiate and deliver in new ways will inevitably vary over time. Whatever frustrations had been experienced at organisational level, most schools were generally very positive about the commitment of the PAs who worked in their schools:

> *Absolutely superb...one to one, group work the lot.*
>
> (Interview 3)

> *Superb, superb, they really are...Our pupils see them as part of school life and when they need help, they'll come and say...Connexions… we have just been so pleased with the relationship we've had…It is about give and take and it has worked brilliantly.*
>
> (Interview 5)

> *Fantastic...very popular with the students and does a great job.*
>
> (Interview 7)

> *They are just prepared to go that extra mile, they have the conversations before and after the interview so they can let us know what is happening. They try and find out a little bit about the students. They are just really, really positive.*
>
> (Interview 25)

Such testimonials point to the extremely positive relationships that PAs have, on the whole, been able to build within their schools. Whilst there were notable exceptions, most did regard PAs favourably. One PA comment emphasised the critical issue of size of caseload:

> *I think we build relationships really well. The Intensive PA because (of) a smaller case load – obviously builds up a better relationship I think, and then I get to build up quite a good relationship with the people I see because I have a slightly smaller case load than the Guidance PA.*
>
> (Interview 28)

PA Guidance – elements of provision

Across schools, the types of activities in which Guidance PAs were involved tended to be similar (see section 5.1, above). PAs were also enthusiastic contributors to, as well as participants in, target setting days, option choosing days and AimHigher. Additionally, PAs supported the use of various software packages in schools (e.g. Kudos, Pathfinder, Fast Tomato and Streetwise) as well as other elements of services available (e.g. psychometric testing or the 'Real Game').

PA Guidance – examples of innovation

A number of examples of PA innovation were identified. For instance a PA who had voluntarily initiated a whole day of group based activities for a Year 7 group has already been described (see 3.6 above). These resources were shared with other PAs and across school contacts demonstrating a willingness and enthusiasm for sharing good practice.

In another school a PA had worked with a school interpreter to deliver the Real Game in Czech to a mixed year group of students with English as an Additional language (EAL). The changing cultural mix of the school represented a challenge and the PA appeared to have taken this on with enthusiasm:

> *…for the "Real Game", I wanted to see what it that would be like doing it with foreign students and so we did it with (the)...whole group…Years 11, 12 and 13 really...about…12 to 15.*
>
> (Interview 14)

The same PA had been on visits to higher education with members of the EAL group, and had found this professionally enlightening:

> *We did take the...girls to...university...they found a Czech speaking student ambassador so those students...could spend the day talking to someone from their homeland...one...said 'Look Miss, look, there are gypsies like us here.' It was such an awakening for them…That was quite an eye opener for me as much as for them about how limited foreign students perceptions are as what they can do.*
>
> (Interview 14)

There were plenty of other examples of innovation, not only in relation to direct delivery. For example, another PA had picked up on the interest of some Year 7 students and enlisted their help in maintaining the Careers library. However, less positively, efforts to initiative new activities had not always received unqualified support from either the host schools or Connexions:

> *I arranged a Years 9 and 10 careers day...all these fabulous activities for an hour...the school was going to provide a member of staff to teach each activity...I did all the materials, turned up in school, No that's not happening, you're having all the year groups for 90 minutes in the hall and they'll go round and do it in small groups. It was a nightmare.*
>
> (Interview 29)

One comment illustrates the perception that initiatives could be blocked by default, as workloads did not allow time for personal or professional innovation:

> *We do things like this and get really excited, but its not part of your job and you're not allowed...not given the time to do it. You have to try and fit it in.*
>
> (Interview 12)

However, PAs' experiences were not uniform in this respect:

Under Connexions, we can be very flexible as to what we offer...one of the teachers for Year 8 is doing an assembly on careers and I wrote the information for her...If somebody asks me for something, if I feel I can do it, I'll do it. I've arranged team building days for Year 10 through the Army. Something a bit different, different ways of working and outside speakers to come in.

(Interview 15)

PA (Pre-vocational)

PAs with a pre-vocational remit had slightly reduced case loads compared with the Guidance PAs. The role was variously described as 'new' and 'pioneering' suggesting potential greater flexibility for these PAs in terms of how they worked within this relatively new remit. This role allowed for longer and more frequent interviews with students considering, or already participating in, vocational pathways, for example:

Essentially I am still guidance...Pre vocational…we were recruited initially to work with more the pre-14s so Years 7, 8 and 9 up to the point where they were going to make their options choices...with the vocational options coming in It was seen that more guidance is needed earlier...as well (as) to support them along the way...because they are doing such a vocational course early on...careers questions might pop up a bit earlier. It just means that we have the opportunity to see the students a bit more often. I get a whole hour with that student.

(Interview 18)

The introduction of the vocational pathways had stimulated innovation with increasing focus on take-up for taster days and attempts to challenge gender stereotyping within particular occupational areas:

I think its also trying to get them onto...taster days to advertise the course – also trying to break down stereotypes about jobs so trying to get more girls into construction and engineering stuff like that.

(Interview 36)

In at least one instance, the PA (pre-vocational) had been able to spend time alongside students on their vocational courses which had been very positively received by the young people themselves.

PA (Intensive)

PAs with a remit for intensive work do potentially have greater flexibility and autonomy in how they operate, because of their reduced case loads. Examples of innovation captured do, however, demonstrate what can be achieved given adequate time, impetus, resources, and support, to innovate. Only one PA (Intensive) was interviewed for this research, so caution must be exercised in any interpretations made. However, illustrative examples of innovative practice are relevant in this context. The PA in question had found that the range of issues raised by their particular client group required a high degree of flexibility in working practices:

> *I get such a massive range of people really...one young person came to me and talked about things he was doing which were serious child protection issues really, and obviously I had to discuss those, and talk to the child protection co-ordinator...and then I get other people that...are not going to get their grades for GCSEs...I use a whole variety of methodologies to work with them.*

> (Interview 19)

The individual needs of the clients had led this Intensive PA to develop, or adapt, new tools (or games) for practice. This included adapting the APIR (Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review) model into a more relevant tool. Using pictures on magnets stuck to a board, it became a focus for interactive discussion with a young person. Previously it had seemed rather too rigid to be of value in the guidance process.

The feeling expressed was that, whilst a number of resources exist, most need to be adapted to work with young people in any particular context. However, the fundamental 'tools' for good practice remained traditional counselling skills:

> *Some of the resources have to be adapted because it never fits your need with the young person exactly...That's why a one size fits all approach in this sort of stuff isn't very good. You have to have the skills if you like to match it to the young person…...I use a lot of...counselling skills as well...trying to draw out information from young people...rather than resources, I use techniques as well.*

> (Interview 19)

In one instance the Intensive PA had built up a relationship over time with a small group of students participating in the Prince's Trust programme. This had allowed access to additional funding that could be used for residential trips. The strength of

this relationship was such that the PA had supported the young people to apply successfully for additional funding, which they used to go abroad for a week to research poverty. This innovation was obviously high profile, but somewhat untypical, even 'a bit of a fluke', for instance:

> *…we were doing a theme about poverty, and I said to them flippantly, if you raise the money I'll take you to South Africa...and then they said, 'yeah that would be really good'. And I got them the application form for the Youth Opportunities Fund and they filled it out...never believed it would happen and we got £5K from them and we had to raise another £5k to make that happen...lots of different people in the community got involved, parents, people we know, other staff – it was a massive opportunity.*

> (Interview 19)

Clearly, some of these innovations were only possible because this Intensive PA had access to funding, contacts and networks, because of his particular circumstances. Thus, whilst impressive and worthy of mention here, such innovation is perhaps unrealistic for PAs with different specialisms operating in other contexts.

All of these examples of good and innovative practice suggest that having different types of PAs working with different remits allows for a degree of tailored provision. However, a potential consequence is the variation in services that individual young people will experience:

> *Connexions can offer different people different things and that's part of the problem in terms of its image...one young person will...go to South Africa and another young person will have half an hour with a careers adviser and never see anybody ever again – which I'm not saying is worse – but it will be a very different experience of what Connexions is offering.*

> (Interview 19)

Such different experiences could represent a challenge to Connexions in terms of managing expectations amongst stakeholders in the service. One other challenge relates to the sense of invisibility of the innovative work of PAs, which could have three potential consequences. First, it makes it hard to disseminate and share good practice; second PAs may not get the recognition they deserve; and third where things are not going well, there seems to be little recourse:

> *Probably a more close monitoring of those Personal Advisers and seeing what they're actually doing and Connexions being able therefore to intervene if things aren't going as well as they should be...would be quite an*

important step forward, because...once the contract's signed and everything's agreed...nothing really happens until the year after and perhaps there should be some on-going review of what's going on and how effective it is, and how effective the Personal Adviser is at actually delivering, because they may need to up-date their skills.

<div align="right">(Interview 34)</div>

Parallel or partnership provision?

One other consideration relates to the degree of synergy that develops between school provision and PA work. This may represent a missed opportunity in terms of mutual reinforcement of activities, especially when Connexions PAs are left to 'get on with it':

We haven't got any careers related activities. There hasn't been enough time to take it on at all and it's just been left really to the Connexions people within the school to run the careers guidance.

<div align="right">(Interview 28)</div>

A further consequence of this approach to delivery was a greater necessity for the PA to be proactive, to ensure even minimum levels of input took place:

If I didn't arrange all the interviews, if I didn't go and talk to the Head of Year and arrange assemblies...or say, you know, "Do you want me to come to the options evening?", it would not happen...because nobody else would arrange it...we've had health and intensive support go in there and we've had to withdraw them, because nobody will take responsibility for them and be appointed as a line manager for them.

<div align="right">(Interview 29)</div>

Such a lack of synergy or integration between the two strands of service provision risks losing the maximum benefit from available resources for students. In a contrasting example, there was a move towards integration of School and Connexions services under the umbrella of e.g. Student Support Services:

We invite the Connexions PA to our parent consultation afternoons...We also had an open evening for Year 5 students...we invited all the student support services, including Connexions. Just by doing that, we're already saying to Year 5 parents that Connexions is very important and…we see the role of our Connexions adviser as a key role in student support services.…we're going to invite all the members of the student support services to come together. That means our Connexions adviser will meet

people like behaviour services, learning support...with the family liaison officer and the support officer...What we want to see is all those links in place...that's how we wanted students to see the student support service.[11]

(Interview 9)

Differentiating PA responsibilities

Given the range of specialist PA services on offer within any one school, there remains potential for confusion. This issue will be discussed further below (section 6.5). However, in at least one school the various PAs were regarded as offering complementary provision, allowing referrals and individually tailored support:

It depends on the student really...you've got maybe a...student who's going on to grammar school when they leave us at 16...They will be looking at...how they are going to get into A-levels going on to University...another are...not necessarily turned on to a traditional academic route, and they will be going through a lot of vocational qualifications like the BTEC...they will be having interviews with a vocational PA on an individual basis...every 2 – 3 terms...vocational PA helps them tie that qualification into future aspirations where they want to go. We've also got apprenticeships coming on board next year...We've also got students who...go away one day a week to do qualifications elsewhere. they get a lot of advice and guidance...We've also got students who are under-achieving, who work with our Aim Higher co-ordinator, a lot of one-to-one. Then finally we've got the intensive Connexions PA who works with the boys who are .at real risk of just dropping out of education altogether. They will be having two to three meetings a week with them.

(Interview 16)

One final issue that seemed to trigger a degree of frustration was the need for clear communication amongst Connexions Kent & Medway when working in particular schools. For example, when someone from Connexions Kent & Medway had come into a school without firstly informing existing PAs, one PA commented:

I went into their reception one day to sign in, and noticed that someone else had signed in from Connexions Kent & Medway below me. So I asked the

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[11] This type of approach might be viewed as potentially compromising impartiality, but such a debate is beyond the scope of this research report.

receptionist do you know where this lady is? So I took it upon myself to introduce myself and find out what her role is within the school.

<div align="right">(Interview 8)</div>

A certain lack of communication between Connexions Kent & Medway management and PAs involved in frontline delivery was noted. Overall, there is ample evidence of innovation and commitment on the part of the PAs in the schools, both of which are critical factors in establishing constructive working relationships. There are also, however, examples of where careful planning and clear communication could help maximise the impact of available resources for the benefit of young people.

6.   Support for Personal Advisers

Given the central importance of the relationship that Connexions PAs establish with the schools in which they work, it is relevant to scrutinize the level of support received from schools to facilitate their effective operation. This section considers the level of easy access to student data; the way in which the services they offer are promoted successfully; how students are referred for individual support; and whether any tensions exist between their remit for universal as well as targeted provision.

6.1   Effective operation

In order that a high quality service that is relevant to individual student need can be delivered, PAs will require easy access to student data. One question in the survey, therefore, probed the level of access provided by schools to the PAs to this information. As for other questions, there was a high level of agreement amongst PAs and school staff. In 14 of the 15 schools, participants indicated that access to student data was not a problem. In one of the schools, however, gaining access to student data was identified as problematic.

In many of the 14 schools where data access was not regarded as a problem, access to email had been transformative in providing easy, quick access to required data. There were some qualifying comments, however. In five schools, lack of a dedicated room available for the PA to use when working in the school was identified as a major impediment to gaining data access, since this prevented easy access to a computer and/or telephone. In one school, most data required by the PA was automatically provided, but some that was not had to be specially requested. In another school, data access had been somewhat problematic over the previous academic year since because of the physical location of some parts of the school. For another school certain technical problems were reported arising from the incompatibility of the IT systems used by a particular school and the Connexions service. A final comment attributed the easy access of data directly to the good relationship that had been developed between the PA and the school. Without this excellent working relationship, there seemed to be a level of uncertainty about whether is would occur.

With one notable exception, schools were clearly providing PAs with the type of access required to support their role, and where this had been experienced as problematic in the past, solutions to this problem were expected to be implemented during the forthcoming school year.

6.2   Promotional activities

The extent to which students make optimum use of services on offer will depend, at least in part, on the awareness of students that these services exist and an understanding of how they might access them. An area scrutinized in the survey was the effectiveness of promotion of services offered by Connexions. In particular, how services were promoted and whether there was a strong service branding that conveyed an accurate message to the target audience. In only one of the 14 schools surveyed was promotion thought to be sufficient and effective. Methods identified achieving this positive result included extensive use of postage and signage in all classrooms, regular announcements in assemblies and promotional material distributed systematically at parents' evenings.

Whilst promotional activities were thought to be adequate at the other 14 schools, participants indicated that there was certainly room for improvement. It was the multiplicity of services offered by Connexions that was generally felt to represent the major challenge in communicating, clearly and accurately, the service offer to students. The ambiguity of the title of the 'Connexions' service was regarded as an important contributory factor in preventing a clear message from being conveyed (compared with the title of 'Careers Service', which it was thought presented a clear message about mission and purpose). Trying to get the message across that a range of services were available had served to confuse, in many cases. For example, one participant reported how one student did not think they needed to see a PA because they had given up drugs. As one participant expressed it: '…in terms of knowing what Connexions offer, I think that that message isn't necessarily out there'. This view was echoed by other participants who felts that students struggled to understand the complete range of services and that there was a need to be much more explicit. Some felt that the complex nature of services on offer made it virtually impossible for all students to understand, fully, details of the offer. One school representative felt that the PAs in their school should promote themselves more effectively - even aggressively. In contrast, one other indicated that there was little point in any aggressive promotion of services, since there would be insufficient

resources to meet the level of demand that might be created. Yet another expressed the pertinent view that branding Connexions as a service that was separate from the school could very well prove to be counter productive where the overall aim was to integrate the operation of the PAs within the school system.

6.3 Referral mechanisms

The volume of positive referrals can provide an indication of how well known, and indeed how well regarded PAs are in schools. The effectiveness of the mechanisms used in any one school for referral will be pivotal in ensuring that individuals who need, or wish, to see a Connexions PA are able to gain access. When participants were asked about how, and on what basis, students were referred to the PAs, 14 of the 15 schools indicated that systems of self-referral by students and/or staff referrals were common practice. In most schools, students regarded 'at risk' in some way would be automatically referred by staff to PAs. One school indicated that they operated a complete open door policy: 'anyone can refer at any time'. In only one school surveyed were parents able to refer their children.

6.4 Targeted and universal provision

A potential source of tension regarding the provision of Connexions services is the perception of whether provision is targeted on particular student groups, or universally equal to all. One question probed this particular issue and responses revealed the highest level of disagreement amongst participants of the survey. In seven schools, there was a difference in the opinion expressed by PAs and school staff about whether Connexions offered a targeted or a universal service. In four schools, there was a consensus that both universal and targeted services were provided. In two schools, it was thought that only targeted services were available and in the remaining two schools, it was thought that only universal services were on offer.

6.5 Emerging themes

Findings suggest there are very few difficulties amongst PAs with regard to accessing relevant information from their schools (see section 6.1, above). However, some issues regarding how information is shared by the Connexions service have emerged from the research. Related to this is the finding that only one of the 15

schools felt that the promotion, or branding, of the Connexions service within schools was sufficient and adequate (see section 6.2 above). This section explores the inter-related themes of information sharing; perceptions of Connexions and client referral.

Mutual information sharing

Two distinct themes emerged regarding information sharing. First, the view was expressed that communication ought to operate more easily and clearly in both directions (i.e. from Connexions to the school as much as from the school to Connexions), with some schools not feeling that this was always the case. Second, there was a perception that Connexions, as an organisation, did not always appreciate the difficulties schools had in trying to provide data within tight timescales.

Regarding the two-way flow of information, one school expressed exasperation because of their lack of access to student action plans. The PA withheld these documents on the grounds of client confidentiality, even though the school wanted to follow up as necessary[12]. Similarly, one instance of a school deliberately withholding data was identified:

> *Connexions...sometimes, they'll come in and say, can they have information about drugs, teenage pregnancies, social problems or statemented kids. The school have their own ways of dealing with those and we're not going to give Connexions that information because we don't really think that's their role to play.*

> (Interview 11)

From the Connexions perspective, one PA suggested that whilst there were no deliberate barriers, there was a sense that school staff were so overwhelmed that they did not always remember to keep PA in the loop of information:

> *I think they forget that we're only there one day a week and we're not on the staff e-mail and we're not perhaps in staff briefings every day so, you know we miss things.*

> (Interview 29)

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[12] Other schools did have access to action plans when this had been negotiated with young people at the conclusion of a guidance interview. This particular instance of withholding access to action plans was, perhaps, untypical.

Another school regretted the length of time they had to wait for destination data about their students and felt this was unacceptable. It may be that Connexions is unable to supply the data any earlier, but if so, the rationale behind the date for passing on this information had clearly not been explained:

> *If there's one criticism that I've got of Connexions, its that finding out that information on a yearly basis is really hard...and they make it difficult for me to respond to the previous years. For example...I got my NEETs from various things 2 weeks ago, and that is totally unhelpful. I should have had that in October November, not in June...it is a frustration...because how can you address something that is extremely important by having this data at a very late date – it's totally unacceptable.*

> (Interview 16)

One PA comment supports those from a number of school representatives, suggesting Connexions is not always sensitive to the pressures under which schools operate:

> *Sometimes [information] is delayed because of pressures there...sheer volume of work...personal issues…sometimes I do have to wait for it, which I'm prepared to do...I have to pay due respect and regard to the school situation and to the individuals I'm working, and sometimes there is pressure on me to get the information when they want it.*

> (Interview 10)

Frustrations identified in relation to information sharing, both by schools and Connexions, appear fairly modest. Such issues could be easily addressed with clearer communication about why information is being requested, by whom and the rationale for time scales given. It may also be helpful for unusual requests to come centrally from Connexions, rather than left to an individual PA to negotiate.

Perceptions of Connexions

Something of a contradiction emerges from the findings relating to the way Connexions is perceived. On the one hand, it seems to be closely associated with the holistic targeted provision for disaffected or 'at risk' young people:

> *They see us as being there for the NEET group, of helping them with benefits, housing, and drugs. It's very difficult for them to see us in any other light than that. You will be amazed at how many of them have friends...who are being supported by Intensive Personal Advisers, who have health or home issues so are referred to Intensive Support Personal*

Advisers so that overshadows everything else we do - especially the careers aspect.

<div align="right">(Interview 8)</div>

On the other, it is seen as 'careers', without much recognition of other services provided. It seems, therefore, that the Connexions' branding is somewhat ambiguous:

It tends to be careers, because the kids get confused...a few schools moaned about the Connexions thing...so they just say, "This is a careers adviser from the Connexions service" and they introduce you like that because it makes more sense to the students.

<div align="right">(Interview 21)</div>

These contradictory responses suggest that clarity about the services available is perhaps lacking. Various common strategies for promoting services were adopted (section 6.2). There were also examples specific to some schools. Four are highlighted below.

First, PAs promoted Connexions within the guidance interview. One PA explained how they used a laminated diagrammatic representation of the services available from Connexions to talk through possible sorts of assistance and then focus in on the particular area of expertise that they were offering within the careers based interview. This comprised a simple picture of a person in the middle, with various symbols surrounding them – a pound sign, a heart and so on. This seemed to be a simple and effective technique to explain the Connexions offer to young people:

I'd say that I'm a careers guidance specialist, but Connexions itself can help with all these other areas and you can talk through relationships, money, health etc. And the diagrams just make it a bit more real for them...a colleague developed (it)...Rather than just verbalise things, they'll see it there. And quite often they'll say "Ooh money, does that...mean about how to make money or .managing money?" and we say it could be either. It's just a talking point as well. It's quite a useful tool.

<div align="right">(Interview 18)</div>

Second, some participants referred to a 'Young Worker' coming into school to talk about Connexions. It seems this initiative was driven centrally from Connexions, with a requirement that the Young Worker should have access to appropriate assemblies in order to introduce the service to Year 8 groups. One school found it puzzling that

Connexions was introduced by someone other than their link PA and felt the individual delivering the assembly in question was not as powerful an ambassador for the service as their usual PA.

Third, some schools promoted Connexions from their school websites. In at least one, it appeared within a section branded 'careers':

> *It's on the website...that I'm with the careers department and that there's a referral form if anyone or their son or daughter wants career advice. I've been named in several newsletters and classed as part of the careers team. I think being in a school long term does have huge benefits, pupils, staff and students know me.*
>
> (Interview 10)

Fourth, in an attempt to market the service more directly to parents and/or carers of students, they had sent copies of action plans to the young person's home address and suggested they share it with their parents or carers:

> *I don't think there is enough literature for work with parents...parents don't know how to access you or what even to ask, because they don't have an understanding of who you are or what you do…the parents in most cases wouldn't even know their son or daughter is having a careers interview.*
>
> (Interview 30)

The need for enhanced services to parents was identified by one school representative:

> *Connexions is going to become more and more crucial, because quite bewildering for many parents and they're going to need Connexions to be able to offer them advice and support as well when they're helping their son or daughter to make the right choices.*
>
> (Interview 34)

Referrals

In most cases, appointments for PAs were based on referrals according to need. Once priority students had been seen, others would be offered support perhaps in small groups, or through library drop-in sessions. Connexions 'Moving On' and 'Next Steps' questionnaires, annually distributed to the Year 9 and 11 student cohorts, were also scrutinised for clues that might suggest which students would need support. However, such a process was not without limitations:

We do a questionnaire called 'What Next', which asks them what they've achieved and what they want to go on to do…used to pick out participants in Year 11, but of course since filling in that form, they've had 2 weeks work experience, a long summer holiday, they've come back to a different year group – it proved to be a not very reliable tool.

(Interview 26)

Certainly, there is evidence that variations on systems of self-referral also operate. For example, students using library drop-ins to ask for appointments, or requesting help via the Careers Co-ordinator (or equivalent) who would then be scheduled. Teachers sometimes suggest to students that they might ask for a careers appointment with the Connexions adviser (a guided self-referral). In one school this process was being incorporated into ICT systems which might allow students, and their parents, to request appointments on line. This approach neatly addressed the twin challenges of how to market Connexions and ensure effective referral systems were in place:

If you want a Connexions appointment...it will be available online and that will also be available to parents because they can get into the learning gateway as well...We're doing as much as we can to raise the profile. We will have…screens in school, across school, where we can promote CEG.

(Interview 9)

Heavy reliance on young people to identify themselves for careers guidance has limitations. Nevertheless, some prioritisation is essential, because of resource constraints. For example one school participant felt it was hard to fit in any additional appointments requested by students because PAs were so infrequently in school.

Those PAs working with very specific groups e.g. students on pre-vocational courses, tended to see all their caseload on a regular basis, so the issue of 'referral' did not arise in quite the same way. PAs delivering services such as intensive support typically had a more formal referral system. This particular highly structured approach to referral, contrasted sharply with the system of self-referral to see Guidance specialist PAs:

To make a referral for (the) Intensive PA they have to fill in a three - four page questionnaire about why they are doing it – the teacher making the referral. Self-referral would be quite different, direct without any documentation at all.

(Interview 26)

It is important to emphasise the importance of informed consent by the young person being referred:

> *We wouldn't expect anyone to be referred if they didn't take part in that decision. It just doesn't work if they're not...those who get referred are generally pleased about it. If they're not pleased, the referral generally doesn't go ahead. There's no point.*

(Interview 27)

Overall, it would seem that stricter adherence to basic principles of good practice in referral (e.g. seeking the consent of the young person involved and ensuring advocacy and follow up where appropriate) may enhance the quality of services to young people.

In reviewing the support for PAs no serious concerns were identified, though some issues merit further consideration. For example, the extent to which the communication of information was a two-way process and the difficulty of conveying a consistent message about services offered. One key component for an effective referral is likely to be the free exchange of relevant information between all parties, given the informed consent of the young person concerned.

7.   Labour market information

When someone receives good labour market information that leads to a good decision, it benefits the individual, the employer and the economy.

(LSC/DfES, 2004, LMI Matters! Sheffield: DfES, p.2)

The use of labour market information (LMI) is an integral feature of the major evidence-based frameworks that inform guidance practice[13]. The particular way(s) in which practitioners use LMI with their clients will depend on which of these framework(s) have been selected to inform their practice. For example, specific LMI may be given directly to clients by practitioners during a guidance interview with the intention of changing behaviour (e.g. information about application deadlines for courses or jobs given to motivate clients to adhere to these deadlines). Or practitioners may inform clients about sources of LMI required and methods of accessing these sources (as a method of both assessing interest in an occupational goal and developing the necessary research skills for clients to undertake their own future investigations).

The ways in which practitioners use LMI with their clients will, at least in part, determine the type of LMI they indicate that they need for effective guidance practice. Perhaps because of this, there is little agreement within the broad advice and guidance community about the type of LMI that is essential for effective practice.

The research probed this area of practice to establish the level of awareness about the importance of this element of CEG provision; the availability of LMI in schools; how it is regarded and used by practitioners, together with the quality of information available through careers libraries.

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[13] Walsh, W.B. (1990) A summary and integration of career counseling approaches, in W.B.Walsh & S.H.Osipow (eds) 'Career Counseling: Contemporary Topics in Vocational Psychology', Hillsdale, New Jersey: Hove & London.

7.1 Availability of up-to-date reference materials in the school

Local labour markets

Participants were asked about the local labour markets in which they are operating. All were knowledgeable about the location of their school, the employment opportunities available to young people and the current industries operating in their local labour markets. Several were even able to report on the destinations of the young people, including apprenticeships, further education and higher education.

Nine of the 15 schools operated in what were described as local labour markets with limited employment opportunities in particular sectors, including retail, construction, social care, education and hospitality. Two operated within areas which suffered from a lack of public transport. Participants in several schools expressed concerns about the limited apprenticeship opportunities and the reluctance of some young people to travel any distance to find employment. Two participants reported how the preferred (and more successful) method of young people finding employment was the systematic exploitation of personal networks.

The local labour markets of two schools were described as currently showing some improvement with an increasing number of local employment opportunities for young people. However, these opportunities were limited to just one industry, specifically construction. Four schools operated in buoyant local labour markets with good and varied employment opportunities for young people.

Availability of LMI

Twenty participants (57%) indicated how labour market information (LMI) is both limited and not readily available. The LMI that is available predominately relates to: local and regional employment vacancies; national and regional LMI; apprenticeships; local business plans and occupational opportunities; local regeneration projects and associated employment opportunities. Three participants reported that they regularly received an LMI newsletter, but the style of this was considered to be rather dated.

Nine participants (24%) commented on the role of the Employer Liaison Officer in increasing their access to LMI. Their role is to:
- Inform PAs, regularly, about local employment opportunities, vacancies and other issues;

- Disseminate information from employer and higher education visits;
- Supply specific LMI on request; and
- Contact employers directly when a student has a query.

Their contributions were considered vital in starting the process of increasing awareness of the value of LMI.

Thirteen participants (35%) undertook their own research for LMI. They did this by: proactively contacting local employers; locating vacancy information from local newspapers; researching LMI on the internet; sharing information with colleagues; and undertaking employer visits. Several believed this research was an important part of their professional role.

Nine participants commented on the past availability of LMI and its value. Several participants remember receiving regular updates containing local, regional and national LMI, but noted how the value of this update was limited because it was not accessible, nor easy to digest. A few highlighted the value of employer visits for gathering information on local labour market opportunities, recognising that this function was now performed by local Employer Liaison Officers.

One school representative was not sure what LMI was available in the school and was unable to comment on its availability or usefulness. One other was not clear about what was meant by 'labour market information'.

Useful LMI

Twenty one participants (57%) reported that LMI is useful, valued and that access to more information would be beneficial. Whilst it was recognised that the availability of LMI has reduced, it was assumed that, with current changes, more would become available. Only two participants (not PAs) indicated that they did not use LMI with students and/or as part of Careers, Education and Guidance (CEG). LMI considered useful, but not necessary available, included:
- Local, regional and national data;
- Factors affecting young people;
- Local employment and education opportunities;
- Higher education information;
- Information from local employers (plus required skills); and

- Vacancy data.

In particular, LMI was considered useful when it is simple, concise and well presented. It is also valued as it: helps young people make informed decisions; enables the identification of actual opportunities; and increases aspirations. Several participants (n=16, 43%) stressed the importance of local labour market information and knowledge in CEG. In terms of the local labour market, LMI can be used to match young people with local requirements and create links with local employers. It also has the potential to guide strategies and curriculum provision within school (though this is regarded by some as contentious).

Using LMI

Generally, it is felt that the use of LMI should be part of a PAs role and integral to their professional development. Fourteen (38%) (9 PAs, Lead PAs and a Team leader; as well as 5 school representatives) would appreciate more opportunity to research LMI. One reported that they were confident in locating relevant information, whilst others were confident that colleagues could help.

Twenty one participants (57%) were confident about using LMI and felt their local knowledge and own research contributed to this confidence. Seven believed that they had limited knowledge of LMI, so consequently were not confident in using LMI to provide effective CEG. One interviewee, a school representative with responsibility for careers, felt that using LMI effectively with young people was complex as it was difficult to convey the changing nature of LMI. Others (n=3, all school representatives) noted that LMI is generally not tailored to young people, being too complex. One school representative felt that 'snapshots of LMI' (such as tables) would be of value for use with young people. Additional training on LMI and how to help students access and apply LMI was requested by one Lead PA.

One school representative was unable to comment on useful LMI as was unclear what available and used in the school.

7.2   Emerging themes

LMI is undoubtedly recognised as an important aspect of careers education and guidance in the schools surveyed. Three emerging themes are explored below: the variety of approaches to engage with LMI and employers; the barriers participants

identify in working effectively with LMI; together with variable importance attributed to LMI over time.

Approaches used to engage with employers/LMI

A range of activities to extend students' understanding of the labour market were identified. In addition to hard copies and ICT based materials, there were also examples of direct links with local and national employers. Much of this work was useful, but fairly familiar and routine. For example, contact with employers through standard visits, with particular reference being made to talks from the Army or Navy representatives. Such speakers seemed to be given prominence because they were very easy to organise:

> *We have people like the Army coming in; the Navy, but we don't have a labour market or employment careers fair or anything like that in our school. What we would like to do is broaden the students' horizons...it's accessing those people that is an issue.*
>
> (Interview 9)

Of perhaps more interest were the sometimes experimental initiatives which point to potentially new ways of bringing LMI into schools. For example, another school tried to encourage students to extend their ideas about the labour market by using computer based research activities with a Year 7 group:

> *They had a little look at four different types of careers beginning with the letter A, and so on...and they had a word search as well…involved lots of careers which they probably hadn't heard of before, so it was trying to get them to think outside the box instead of just the usual mechanic, hairdresser.*
>
> (Interview 21)

There were attempts to widen the pool of employers that came in to talk to students; one well established method being that of using parents to represent different occupational areas:

> *One of the questions when we send things out to parents is: "What job do you do? Would you be willing to come and talk to students in school about it" We do try and use those resources as well.*
>
> (Interview 9)

Parents were also used as a source of work shadowing placements by at least one school:

67

I do hand out leaflets at parents evenings saying, if you're able to come and talk to our students, or if you can provide work shadowing, please drop me a line. I have a little database of doctors and dentists...They're very keen to come in.

<div align="right">(Interview 11)</div>

One PA took a very direct approach, and where possible would phone up local employers to try and get an immediate sense of the opportunities in that area. This enhanced their credibility with young people, since their knowledge was up-to-date.

From a school perspective, there were some differences in how important LMI was regarded for CEG. For example, where it was felt that most of students went into the sixth form and subsequently on to Higher Education, the lack of LMI (seen as related to employment) was not necessarily seen as an issue:

Most of our pupils will stay on into the sixth form towards university and the majority of them will go to higher education...we would promote ours to continuing education, simply because they're the top 20%/30% when they arrive at our school on our doorstep and one would hope that they've managed to stay within those parameters.

<div align="right">(Interview 20)</div>

However, one other participant acknowledged that there was a need to cater for students more suited to other destinations:

Unless they know what further education opportunities there are, what university courses there are, what careers there are, they can't make a choice...sometimes...I think we concentrate too much on the high flying academics and not enough on those going into hairdressing or whatever… what we call work. I've met a few ex-students who are very grumpy in terms of careers, because we concentrate far too much on UCAS and university placements.

<div align="right">(Interview 11)</div>

Another school, that had recently acquired status as a vocational school, had money put aside to appoint someone with a remit to build external links. That individual spoke very positively of the rewards of engaging with local employers and had found all sorts of new ways of linking with employers across the curriculum:

A big local employer has just emailed me the IT questionnaire that they've just used with all 250 of their employees… to discover how good people were. Now, I've just sent that to our Head of ICT to say this is what is a

local employer is looking for...If we can use an industry standard ICT audit on our pupils, brilliant...every HR manager that I ever meet. I ask them if they can supply me with their recruitment documents...to be able to stand up and say this is one that's actually used by one of the large employers locally, it clicks that one day you might want to work for them and this is the process you'll go through.

(Interview 7)

Links between employers and the school were clearly being exploited across the curriculum. In a further example two young female scientists from a large local employer had come to talk to Year 11 students about what it was like to be a scientist – so raising issues around gender in the science field. In geography the Head of the Olympic bid committee had come in and talked to students about the role of his team and their geography background in choosing London as the centre of the Olympics.

Another enlightened initiative at a different school involved a 'Business Buddy' event. Organised in association with East Kent Education Business Partnership, it had all sorts of unexpected mutual spin-offs. This had also attracted some welcome media attention:

We matched 80...so every member of teaching staff and some support staff had a business buddy and the idea...was trying to get the local employers engaged with what our students are doing – students now being able to go into companies and talk to employers directly. In terms of students producing advertising, promotional material for local companies...businesses coming and delivering seminars to students… schemes of work written...with real companies in mind, real projects rather than fake scenarios...What surprised me most is...to what extent employers would be naturally interested in just helping out.

(Interview 24)

One school participant explained how sometimes employers wrote directly to their schools asking if there were any young people interested in taking up apprenticeships or vacancies:.

We do have a lot of industrialists, solicitors...who will write into the school saying…if we've got sixth formers who would like to take up this option, become an accountant, then "we will be having a vacancy come up.

(Interview 20)

However, the same school was unclear about whether such letters were limited to grammar schools across the region. This raises an important point in relation to the promotion of equality of opportunity. In the absence of a proactive approach to LMI on the part of schools, and the Connexions service, it may be that employers will operate targeted approaches to advertising opportunities which favour students from particular educational backgrounds:

> *They've made contact with our school...one doesn't know whether...they just send letters out to any school. But one would assume for the category of jobs I'm talking about it is clearly just ear-marked for grammar school students.*
>
> (Interview 20)

Evidence of direct engagement with employers is real and heartening. Where a proactive approach is adopted with opportunity providers, this has proved very effective in terms of building links with the labour market to the benefit of schools and their students. It is therefore very positive that there is an appetite amongst some PAs to do more direct work with employers:

> *I would like to have a research project on specific areas, especially within Kent, to know what is available and what is going on out there.*
>
> (Interview 15)

> *Before, what we've done is gone out in small teams and taken a vocational area and gone out and done some research on that… and then put a report of that together and then circulated those different reports around our colleagues which helped to give a local picture about what's going on. I personally…I found that extremely useful...I think that makes it much more real to the young person, when you're talking about raising their awareness...if you can also get an inside picture.*
>
> (Interview 6)

Barriers to working effectively with LMI

Barriers to working effectively with LMI include: time available; training in the use of LMI; and the lack of LMI in formats appropriate for direct work with students. Regarding time, one school participant commented:

> *It is the time restraints. Its one side of my job I feel I'm neglecting but I don't know how to do anything about it at the moment.*
>
> (Interview 26)

A PA similarly expressed a lack of time for employer work:

We no longer have allocated time to do that. As careers advisers you had allocated time to do employer visits and you were expected to do it. You were also given the time and expenses to do it. Now you're actively discouraged and you're given too heavy a case load. It simply isn't valued.

(Interview 27)

Even when there was access to LMI, not all participants appeared completely confident in this aspect of their work. One participant highlighted a potential need for training support in navigating and interpreting LMI because of the conflicting messages it often contains:

We don't always find that the studies that are done are in direct agreement, so there are some conflicts in the results of the various reports that are published, not in significant ways, but there is always that element.

(Interview 25)

The rapidity of change in the labour market sometimes results in a lack of confidence in its use. Although training was available through Connexions on using LMI, it was identified by one participant as not addressing crucial aspects (e.g. overview of the current local labour market; skills of interpretation):

I think we do have like a training course but I think its just more on how to deliver information to young people and how they can find out about the local labour market rather than actually going in with statistics around the local employment market....I don't think it's an area we get a lot of input on to be honest.

(Interview 37)

In terms of encouraging use of LMI directly with students, a suggestion for materials that were classroom ready to make it easier to engage with young people was made:

I think one of the things that we as a school need to do is raise the awareness of our students that there's a world particularly outside of East Kent...it would be good if we could receive it in things like the form of tables...that the students could use to actually identify what kind of things they could do and where they could do them...snapshots of what's on in particular areas...so they can get a flavour of what goes on outside their area...things that the students can use to investigate what's going on themselves, because in the end you can tell students stuff, but there's a

71

difference between telling someone something and someone seeing it...so they can realise the impact of it.

<div align="right">(Interview 34)</div>

LMI as a priority for CEG

One theme emerging from the research is the extent to which LMI appeared to have moved in and out of favour. The process of being asked about LMI caused a number of participants to recall that they used to have information bulletins automatically sent to them in the past. Some felt this no longer happened, others seemed to imply that the tide was turning, and LMI was again becoming more available. Two comments illustrate that LMI seemed to have dropped away initially unnoticed:

> *I used to get…now I think about it…a little booklet/ leaflet on labour market and trends. I don't think I've had that recently...personally I found it interesting because I could actually say to kids… we're lucky we live in the Ashford area because we're not that badly off for jobs.*

<div align="right">(Interview 5)</div>

> *You actually just reminded me really, we used to get something through, but I haven't seen anything like that for quite a long time...That was quite useful, yes, I used to get that once a month and I used to post that around the school, put it on the website so that pupils and students could pick that up.*

<div align="right">(Interview 35)</div>

Others recalled the bulletins, but were less generous about their usefulness:

> *We did used to have a brochure called Local Labour Market Information...but to be honest I didn't find it particularly appealing. It certainly was not appealing to the students, it was a very bland, very heavy worded brochure.*

<div align="right">(Interview 32)</div>

Some participants seem to suggest that LMI is once again being recognised as of central importance:

> *This is…coming up to the front a bit more now, because it did die off completely...it seems to be picking up pace again and seems to be back on the ball which I'm really pleased about because I think the whole employer work side of things has taken a bit of a tumble and I think that's a real shame.*

<div align="right">(Interview 6)</div>

These comments seem to illustrate how easy it is for the profile of LMI to diminish, unless a consistent and conscious effort is made to keep it high profile. It is noticeable that where LMI was provided, it was valued. Yet when it stopped coming through, this was not particularly noted. The marginalisation of LMI in CEG seems to be linked to the changing priorities associated with the arrival of the new Connexions service. The broad and consistent message is that LMI is crucial:

> *I need it is because I need to make sure...that in the schools we start developing the employment skills that students need when they go to the workplace. It's not just about occupational competency, it's also about generic skills...retail customer handling...ICT, office administration...looking beyond that – what I would like to do...is start a skills academy where...local employers...send their people...for training, so we need to know what's going on.*

(Interview 3)

The extent of the challenge in trying to provide support in relation to LMI is significant, but given the strength of feeling expressed about the centrality of LMI to much CEG, the rewards are potentially high in terms of enhanced services to young people.

A wide range of LMI related activities is evident, but good practice is not being shared across all schools. There are real barriers to working with LMI notably lack of time, confidence and the perceptions that work with LMI has been actively discouraged since the introduction of Connexions. A key issue therefore relates to the fragile status of LMI in CEG.

8.   Further comments

Participants were asked if they had any further comments. Some themes discussed variously across the stakeholder groups included:

- The role of CEG provision in schools;
- The role of PAs;
- CEG provision and ideas for improving provision;
- Relationships between Connexions, the schools and PAs; and
- Future changes in the education system and CEG provision (both locally and nationally).

School representatives

The school representatives responsible for CEG provision in their schools commented on the relationship with Connexions; five school representatives (28%) reported a positive and supportive relationship between the school and Connexions Kent & Medway in which Connexions were helpful in developing CEG provision. These strong relationships were believed to be the result of a high level of commitment and enthusiasm in the school. One school representative reported that they were keen to develop the relationship further. Another believed that the school staff had a poor awareness of Connexions and that schools often did not value the work of PAs. It was stated by one that the quality of PAs is key to CEG provision.

One school representative believed that students and parents/carers should become more actively involved in evaluating CEG provision within the school.

The role of CEG provision was commented on by seven school representatives (47%). Three reported that CEG is an important element of the curriculum and is essential to help students make informed choices. Two reported that an integrated or more holistic approach to CEG provision within schools is important. A further two reported that changes to their school status (i.e. academy, enterprise etc.) would positively affect the centrality of CEG provision within the school.

Future changes in the educational system and CEG provision were commented on by five school representatives (29%). Whilst one felt these changes would be challenging, two were more cautious and two were more optimistic about these changes on CEG provision.

Connexions Lead PAs/Team Leaders

Connexions Lead PAs/Team leaders identified ideas for improving CEG provision within schools, specifically to:

- Expand work with students whose second language is English;
- Improve work with parents (for example more information on options, invitation to attend careers interview and scheduled time to see PA during parents evening);
- Include Connexions information on school newsletter;
- Encourage innovative CEG work; and
- Re-introduce Connexions Card for young people.

Additionally, limited possibilities for progression were noted, together with the lack of quality LMI. It was also noted that whilst some schools valued the money donated for CEG resourcing, they required more support from Connexions Kent & Medway to develop its CEG programme.

Four PAs were positive and optimistic about the future provision of CEG and the proposed changes in the educational system. One believed that the quality and status of CEG in schools had fallen as less time was allocated in the curriculum and to careers teachers. Another commented that there was a lack of resourcing for CEG in the school and was disappointed that careers programmes were not available on the school network. Five commented on the poor communication existing within Connexions Kent & Medway and some did not feel valued. One PA felt over-burdened by increasing administration and tracking duties. Finally, very different experiences of working in schools were highlighted by three PAs. Whilst two had good relationships with their schools, the other reported a tension created by the lack of space and resources available to them.

9. Conclusions

- It is impossible to generalise about the operational status and duties of those responsible for CEG within any one school across the region. The nomenclature used for CEG staff is important, since individuals talking about their diverse occupational roles, all broadly within the area of CEG, identified different issues arising from their particular backgrounds and associated professional contexts.

- Unsurprisingly, the quality of CEG provision within any one school is likely to be affected by a range of factors, particularly the status bestowed to CEG by the school using mechanisms such as time allocations and teacher status. The nomenclature of school staff with responsibility for CEG provides one powerful illustration of the diversity of organisational priorities within schools. A related but separate issue is the level of dissatisfaction evident, both in schools and Connexions, regarding the job title of the 'Personal Adviser'.

- The research has revealed a lively, varied and expansive terrain of CEG provision, albeit patchy in places. However, the overarching issue seems to be the lack of clarity about the purpose of CEG. There is a lack of shared language for CEG, little evidence of any underpinning models for careers education and guidance coupled with a rather haphazard approach to evaluation mechanisms. In addition, the quality award that might be thought as an attempt to raise the base line for CEG provision is not enthusiastically embraced by all the schools in this survey. This is not to imply that there is not much good practice and innovation in evidence, only that such provision is not easily identified, celebrated or shared.

- Many positive examples emerged regarding how Connexions Kent & Medway is perceived by the schools in this survey. Particularly valued was the financial support for library provision and INSET. However, there are undoubtedly some outstanding issues with a continuum of experiences of the quality of the relationship existing between Connexions and individual schools.

- There is much to celebrate regarding the work of PAs in schools. Overall, there is ample evidence of innovation and commitment, both of which are critical factors in establishing constructive working relationships. There are also, however, examples of where careful planning and clear communication could help maximise the impact of available resources for the benefit of young people.

- In reviewing the support for PAs no serious concerns were identified, though some issues merit further consideration. For example, the extent to which the communication of information was a two-way process and the difficulty of conveying a consistent message about services offered. One key component for an effective referral is likely to be the free exchange of relevant information between all parties, given the informed consent of the young person concerned.

- A wide range of LMI related activities is evident, but good practice is not being shared across all schools. There are real barriers to working with LMI notably lack of time, confidence and the perceptions that work with LMI has been actively discouraged since the introduction of Connexions. A key issue therefore relates to the fragile status of LMI in CEG.

10. Recommendations

In working towards a vision of world class careers education and guidance in Kent and Medway, there needs to be full acknowledgement of the inter-dependence that exists between school-based CEG provision and services provided by Connexions Kent & Medway. Whilst the remit of Connexions Kent & Medway clearly does not extend beyond the boundaries of their provision of services to schools, the following recommendations take account of the critical role that schools will inevitably play in achieving the overall vision of excellence.

Staffing issues

The lack of specialist qualifications amongst staff based in schools with responsibility for CEG is likely to continue to be an important factor because of the inevitable constraints that this will place on an understanding of key professional issues. For example, the models, or frameworks of CEG which could be used to underpin, and inform, practice, together with robust evaluation methods aligned with particular models. Raising awareness of the potential impact of this issue with relevant policy makers within the region is, therefore, one recommendation from this research. A complementary recommendation is to develop INSET on CEG models and evaluation techniques (see the section on INSET, below).

The issue of the status of CEG in schools represents a broader policy issue. The extent to which those responsible for CEG are employed in teaching or non-teaching roles; whether they have a formal and adequate time allocation for this particular responsibility; and their seniority within the staffing hierarchy are all indicators of the esteem in which CEG is held in schools. They are also factors that impinge on the quality of provision. Again, it is unrealistic to recommend that Connexions Kent & Medway go beyond raising the awareness of key policy makers about the potentially negative impact of these factors on their ability to provide a world class service in schools.

In addition to these two broad policy concerns, a number of other recommendations relating to staffing issues are well within the direct remit of Connexions Kent & Medway. Because there appears to be some confusion about differences amongst various PA roles, it may, for example, be helpful for Connexions Kent & Medway to consider:

- Producing user-friendly, focused job descriptions for the varied PA roles (guidance; intensive; pre-vocational and health), for distribution to schools to assist their understanding of the scope of Connexions services.

- Circulating an internal document at regular intervals to update staff of the different specialist roles, providing names, remit and contact details - to assist with effective client referrals.

CEG provision

Confusion in the use of language around the activities of 'career education and guidance' and of 'information, advice and guidance', is an issue extending beyond the Kent and Medway region. However, consistency and clarity in the use of terminology both within Connexions Kent & Medway, and between Connexions Kent & Medway and recipients of its services, would go some way to addressing this persistent and widespread problem. The challenge would be to support a community of CEG practice in which shared meanings and common understandings become embedded in routine professional interactions. Mechanisms that could be used to assist this process include:

- Producing a glossary of terms used in CEG/IAG to assist with the development of a shared language for careers related activities.

- Developing guidelines to help schools consider the use of 'Enrichment Days' as an important part of CEG delivery, which focuses on maximising its impact on student learning (e.g. pre and post event preparation and debriefing). This to be done in partnership with schools.

- Reviewing how 'Investor in Careers' (IiC) operates and is marketed, especially with regard to its ability to recognise alternative, new and flexible modes of CEG delivery. This review would also include an examination of the balance between involvement of school-based PAs and staff employed centrally by Connexions.

- Consulting with schools to explore the potential benefits of achieving IiC status, specifically, if any additional incentives might be provided to improve take up.

Organisation and management

The use of Partnership Agreements and Delivery Plans are the formal mechanisms currently used to specify services available to schools from Connexions Kent & Medway. The extent of the involvement of senior staff in the negotiation of these

agreements, together with the quality of the relationship established with school by the PAs are other important influencing factors in the ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships. To enhance and support processes and mechanisms already in place, Connexions Kent & Medway might consider:

- Developing new mechanisms to encourage feedback from, and dialogue with, schools which are independent of partnership review meetings.

- Reviewing the types of requests made to schools, together with the timeframes within which schools are required to respond, to ascertain whether it is possible to manage such requests with greater sensitivity to the operational constraints of schools.

- Developing a 'consultation protocol', which would ensure that more opportunity for dialogue with schools existed (for example, prior to the introduction of new initiatives, or changes of personnel involved with the schools).

- Providing all schools with introductory information packs on an annual basis that outlines services offered by Connexions Kent & Medway, giving an overview of organisational structures and providing contact details of staff together with a summary of their particular responsibilities. This might also explain the purpose of requests for information requests, partnership meetings, INSET and so on. This type of information could also be provided via a schools section on the Connexions Kent & Medway website intranet.

- Reviewing the format and content of existing Partnership Agreements to ensure they remain relevant across all the different school contexts.

Personal Advisers

The way in which Connexions Kent & Medway PAs operate in schools recurrently emerges as a critically important factor in productive working relationships. To support and develop these key workers, Connexions Kent & Medway might usefully consider the following:

- Establishing specialist roles to encourage interested PAs to innovate in areas of strength such as group work or labour market information.

- Introducing appropriate and supportive quality assurance of PAs' work in schools – alongside explicit management of the expectations of schools.

- Introducing mechanisms to support and celebrate PA innovation, as well as encourage and promote professional initiative (e.g. internal award for 'best practice' perhaps annually).

- Designing staff time to develop, initiate and share new resources across the organisation as part of caseload management.

- Developing protocols for involvement of all Connexions staff in schools (for example, where staff are not normally linked to particular schools, procedures are in place to ensure that staff working within that school are informed, in advance, of the date and purpose of such a visit).

- Developing good practice guidelines for sharing student action plans produced by the Connexions service amongst schools, parents/carers and PAs, within the bounds of confidentiality,

- Developing a briefing document for schools providing information about the rationale for collection of destination data and timescales involved. This document might also usefully outline good practice in terms of sharing destination information between schools and the Connexions service.

- Offering greater support to Connexions PAs, when required to obtain information from schools at very short notice (for example, a letter from senior management to explain the reason and timescale for the request).

- Providing suitable text on the Connexions service for schools to incorporate into their websites or other promotional literature for the school.

- Encouraging schools to link their own websites to the Connexions Kent & Medway website, where appropriate.

- Producing publicity materials for parents and carers to raise awareness of the range of provision from Connexions and their role in the career transitions of their children.

- Developing and communicating guidelines for effective referral and follow up, particularly for those young people who are being referred to external agencies.

- Introducing INSET support on the meanings and implications of confidentiality and impartiality (see section on INSET, below).

Labour Market Information (LMI)

To raise the profile and effectiveness of their LMI work, Connexions Kent & Medway might usefully consider the following recommendations:

- Developing a 'What's In It For You?' guide, to outline the mutual benefits for Schools, Connexions and Employers of working together in relation to LMI provision.

- Developing and disseminating a good practice guide for building links with employers and schools. This might include, for example, widening databases of contacts through developing databases of school alumni and or parents /carers of students who might be willing to give participate in various employment focused activities.

- Exploring the possibility of extending the 'Business Buddy' scheme to other schools.

- Supporting the work of Connexions PAs in establishing partnerships with a range of employment-focused agencies.

- Initiating an annual ideas competition to encourage PAs, or their schools, to share ideas about broadening horizons in occupational areas. Outcomes might be a published booklet of resources with the prize a voucher to be spent at the annual resources fair.

- Setting up a virtual (or real) LMI Forum for PAs to share opportunity provider contacts and labour market intelligence.

- Developing an 'employer pack' for PAs to use in making contact with employers. This should outline good practice in terms of how to approach opportunity providers, together with promotional literature about services the Connexions service can offer to employers, where appropriate.

- Setting up speedy communication channels to ensure vacancies, whether notified to schools or Connexions, can be disseminated widely within the region.

- Providing the necessary support for PAs to engage in work with employers. This could be undertaken in teams, perhaps with a particular regional or occupational focus, with clear outcomes such as the production of short reports to be produced and circulated as an outcome from this work.

- Identifying an individual or project group of individuals, who have a time allocation and responsibility for sourcing LMI and developing it into materials in appropriate formats for direct use in schools across a range of year groups.

- Systematising the dissemination of information about key national LMI resources (e.g. National Guidance Research Forum website and LMI learning module developed by the Institute for Employment Research as immediately available web-based resources in relation to LMI).

- Reviewing, revising and re-launching the LMI Bulletin.

- Investigating the practical possibilities of allowing some flexibility to allow Employment Liaison Officers to maintain informal links with PAs in regional offices and Connexions Access Points.
- Communicating quickly and clearly any shifts in organisational priorities regarding employer work.

INSET training

INSET provision by Connexions Kent & Medway emerged consistently as a facility that was particularly valued by participants in this scoping exercise. The following section focuses on recommendations for additional INSET arising from this research that would strengthen and enrich the current offer. It is suggested that such events would be open to both school and Connexions staff.

Arising from exploration of Staffing issues
- Demystifying the role of the PA - periodic awareness raising half days as part of in-house training (and/or induction) to emphasise distinctions amongst PA caseloads, perhaps using such events to highlight particular innovation or achievements. This type of training event would serve three functions: awareness raising; formal acknowledgement of achievement and improved internal communication.

Arising from exploration of CEG provision
- Sharing Current Practice in CEG - a joint symposium for school and Connexions staff to disseminate ideas around current practice in relation to models of delivery for CEG
- Effective design of CEG programmes - to cover statutory duties, policy context and possible models and approaches to CEG in school (ideally delivered in partnership with school representatives)
- Evaluation Matters – practical ideas for why and how to approach evaluation CEG provision covering processes and procedures (ideally delivered in partnership with school representatives)

Arising from exploration of Organisation and Management
- Effective Partnership Planning – providing training centred around a newly devised 'suggested good practice guide', to help maximise the effectiveness

of Partnership Agreement and Delivery Plan meetings (and avoid these becoming regarded by some schools as a 'paper based' activity).

- Connexions and Schools Working Together Conference – a jointly hosted and organised event to offer debate and dialogue between school and connexions representatives on shared interests, for example: impact of forthcoming curriculum changes or challenging occupational gender stereotyping in vocational courses. If popular, events could be themed around particular interests such as LMI and engaging with employers. This could bring together key staff from across schools and the Connexions service and mark a new ethos of partnership working.

- Effective Marketing – an event that explores how to promote and market Connexions services accurately and effectively in schools to ensure young people access the services to which they are entitled.

Arising from exploration of Personal Adviser role

- Sharing Good Practice – an annual convention as a mechanism for soliciting and sharing resources developed by individual PAs, one outcome of which might be the production of an electronic directory of common resources that could be disseminated, and shared, across the organisation, and between Connexions and school representatives.

- Where Next? Understanding student destinations – an event that explains why destination data is important, how it is collected and used and shares the data from previous year(s), perhaps including information packs in a format that could be used as a resource in schools or with parents and carers.

- Making Effective Referrals – Understanding different PA roles, when and how to refer including recognising professional boundaries, wider support networks and identifying good practice (e.g. supported referrals, importance of follow up, confidentiality)

- 'Can't Say; Won't Say' – exploration of confidentiality and impartiality within CEG. What sorts of information can and should be shared, and the importance of negotiating and communicating with young people appropriate levels of confidentiality and / or disclosure.

Arising from exploration of Labour Market Information

- LMI back centre stage – a high profile re-launch event to signal the renewed focus on labour market information, to include workshops on the themes

below as a one-day event. Alternatively, these workshops could each be run separately as half day INSET

- Linking with Employers Event - to share new and creative ways of working with opportunity providers how and why to approach employers, mutual benefits and perhaps introducing the Connexions Employer Pack – what Connexions Kent & Medway can offer employers and opportunity providers

- Understanding the Local Labour Market - Instituting a programme or day of talks from employers and/or local authority business development contacts about the current local and regional labour market. This event to be open to PAs and their school colleagues, with time made available for participation.

- Making sense of Labour Market Information (LMI) – to cover how to source, navigate and interpret LMI (possibly based around the IER LMI Learning module, an open access web-based resource that aims to help users develop the ability to access, understand and manipulate Labour Market Information (LMI) as part of effective career guidance).

- Making LMI attractive for different client groups - how to make LMI accessible and relevant for different audiences such as young people, their parents and so on. Linking to a separate event below:

- Using LMI in schools - a training event for PAs and school staff to assist them in taking forward ideas in relation to LMI materials developed by the LMI group suggested above as an LMI Forum. A 'bring and share' event where participants pool resources arising from INSET or their work.

Appendix 1: Telephone survey: interview protocol

Introduction	
	We're really interested to find out about CEG provision in [name of particular school] and your involvement in this.

1. Background of participant	
Prompts: • Occupational role (including job title)? • Length of time in this particular role? • Is this designation voluntary or was it assigned? • How much time is allocated to the role? • Experience of CEG elsewhere? • Training and qualifications relevant to CEG (initial and CPD)? • Make a note of gender.	Could I just ask you some background information about you and your current CEG role?

2. CEG	
Prompts: • What do you understand by 'Careers Education & Guidance'? • Do you think the language used to describe provision is important?	The language used around CEG provision
Prompts: • Who is involved? • How much time is allocated? • Is it integrated across the curriculum or stand alone? • Is the Careers Co-ordinator a teacher or a non-teacher? • Would you describe the Careers Co-ordinator as integrated into mainstream activities in the school? • What external links exist? • (e.g. with business – 'insight' days, work experience etc.) • How is CEG regarded by other members of the teaching staff? • How is CEG regarded by students?	Please describe current CEG provision in this school.

Prompts: • Do you know why the CEG programme has been designed in the way it has? • What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of this approach? • Are you aware of any model informing this approach?	Models underpinning CEG provision
Prompts: • Is there any systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of CEG programmes in the school? • If 'yes', are soft (e.g. developing self-confidence, etc.) as well as hard outcomes (e.g. placement into education, training or employment) used?	Measuring the effectiveness of provision
Prompts: Does the school hold a quality award for CEG? If 'yes': • Which awarding body? • When was it awarded? • What support did the school received from Connexions in pursuing this quality award? If 'no': • Has Connexions encouraged the school to consider applying for a quality award? • What are the reasons for the school not considering this as a desirable course of action?	Take up of Quality Awards for CEG
3. Organisation and management of relationships with schools	
Prompts: • To what extent has K & M Connexions made an investment in establishing and maintaining a robust, functional relationship between this school and the Connexions partnership? • Do they understand the ethos of the school? • Do they negotiate what is realistic and achievable? • Do they ensure delivery of services promised?	Explore the current relationship between Connexions and the school

Prompts:	Protocols and service level agreements
• Are you aware of any protocols and/or service level agreements for CEG provision in this school? If 'yes',: • To what extent are these useful? • Are they understood by all those they involve? • Are they regularly reviewed? (by whom?) • Do they clarify the PA role?	
Prompt: • Which senior managers in the school are involved in the partnership arrangements?	Involvement of senior management

4. Personal Adviser(s)

Prompts:	The approach of the PA in schools is likely to be a critical success factor in delivering CEG
• How many PAs work in this school? • Is there any other involvement from K & M Connexions? • How would you describe the relationship that the PA(s) establish with students in the school?	
Prompts: • In what ways do the PA(s) work in this school? • Do they demonstrate commitment? • Do they work flexibility? • Are they willing to adopting an advocacy role (so that provision can be negotiated that many not currently exist)	Research indicates that the extent to which PAs are committed to their schools is critical in establishing constructive working relationships

5. Support for PAs

Prompts:	Enabling them to operate effectively within schools on a day-to-day basis
• Is the Connexions service given access to relevant information, including student data?	

Prompts: • How is the Connexions service promoted? • Is there a strong service branding? • Do you think it conveys an accurate message? • Do young people understand exactly what is on offer?	Effective promotion of the service offered by Connexions
Prompts: • On what basis are students referred to PAs (how and for what?)	Positive referrals are particularly effective
Prompts: • Would you describe the provision from the K & M Connexions PAs are targeted or universal? • What are the strengths & weaknesses of this provision?	Possible tensions need to be managed carefully
6. Labour market information	
Prompts: • How would you describe your local area in terms of local labour market and social structure? • To what extent is LMI available to schools? [local, regional or national] • Do you find this useful? If 'yes', in what ways? If 'no', why not? • To what extent do you feel confident about using LMI in CEG?	Availability of up-to-date reference materials in the school
Prompts: • To what extent is the school supported in the provision of reference materials? • How regularly are these up-dated? • Who has responsibility for organising these materials? • How are they made available to students?	Careers library provision
Any other comments:	

Appendix 2: Consent to participate

STUDY INTO CAREERS EDUCATION & GUIDANCE PROVISION:
PARTICIPANT BRIEFING & CONSENT

You have been invited to participate in a *telephone survey* into careers education and guidance (CEG) provision in Kent and Medway.

In total, *15* schools across the region have been asked to participate, with two to four key staff involved in the delivery of the CEG being contacted by researchers. If you are willing to help, this will involve:

- Answering some questions about CEG provision in the school in which you are involved in the delivery of CEG. This will involve a telephone interview of about 30 minutes with a member of the research team at the University of Warwick.

- Having your interview digitally recorded. This is so that a researcher can ensure your account of CEG provision is accurate. Nothing you say will be directly attributed to you, though you will be asked by the researcher whether you will give your permission for your name to be listed in the credits of the report to be produced from this research as a participant in the research.

- Possibly being contacted again by telephone or email after the interview, to clarify any issues that arise in the transcription of your interview.

All the information you provide will be treated in strictest confidence, in conformity with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, 1998. No information that could identify individuals will be passed to any third party.

Name:…………..……………………………………………………………………………

School:…………………………………………………………………………………………

Telephone numbers:……………………………………………………………………………

Email (if available):……………………………………………………………………………

Confirmation that verbal consent to participant has been given   Yes/No