



RESEARCH PAPER

Local Variations

**A Follow-Up Study of New Arrangements for
Connexions/Careers/IAG Services for Young People in England**

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Selected comments from LAs on draft report

“A very interesting piece of work that should cause policy makers to sit up and think through the implications of where we are going.”

“A very interesting and helpful report.”

“I would like to take the opportunity to say how informative I have found the report. The LA are currently looking at the possible options open to them ahead of the current contract ending in 2010 and your report is particularly informative in guiding our thinking in this area.”

“A good summary of what’s going on!”

“I just hope someone takes a good look at the confusion of planning resourcing etc... I fear the economic situation will see further erosion of budget levels in the forthcoming financial year.”

“Overall a very good report.”

“It makes very interesting reading.”

“I found the report interesting, informative and worrying! I don’t whether having been out of the fold and returned (again!) has increased my sensitivities but if you wanted to develop a support service for young people you wouldn’t start from here, would you! Thanks for all the effort in pulling this together – it really is helpful.”

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Executive Summary

The aim of the survey reported here is to describe and analyse the arrangements for the provision of Connexions/careers/IAG services that have been put in place by the 150 local authorities in England since full budgetary and management responsibility for these services passed to them on 1 April 2008. The survey updates the position reported in the earlier report on *New Arrangements for Connexions/Careers Services for Young People in England* (Watts & McGowan, 2007). It has been undertaken against the background of a programme of radical reform of secondary education that has stimulated renewed interest in the importance of careers-related information, advice and guidance. The report examines the arrangements for Connexions/IAG services in all 150 authorities; the analysis includes a particular focus on the impact on career guidance services for young people.

The survey has been conducted through an electronic questionnaire sent to respondents within the local authorities. Replies were received from 141 (94%); in the case of the non-respondents, basic factual information has been collected from secondary sources. In addition, telephone interviews have been conducted with both local-authority respondents and (where applicable) contracted providers, in 30 areas, in order to obtain additional information and clarification.

In broad terms, the arrangements for provision fall into three groups (although in some areas the arrangements encompass a mix of approaches):

- In 44 (30%) of the 150 areas, the local authorities have taken provision 'in-house'.
- In 53 (35%) of the areas, provision is contracted to the preceding Connexions Partnership organisation for the area.
- In 53 (35%) of the areas, provision is contracted to another provider (usually a 'careers company').

The position regarding tendering is as follows:

- Where provision has been remunicipalised, the survey found no evidence of the application of formal contestability or best-value exercises preceding the decision to bring the services in-house.
- In the 53 cases where provision is contracted to the preceding Connexions organisation, seven have undertaken competitive tendering exercises; the remainder represent the 'rolling forward', for a defined period, of the arrangements in place prior to 1 April 2008, or procurement that obviates the need to undergo competitive tendering.
- Where provision is delivered by another provider, competitive tendering has been widespread, although there has also been some degree of 'rolling forward' of contracts.

In nearly three-fifths of the 37 local authorities where competition has occurred, tendering has led to a change of provider. In addition, 70 local authorities indicated that their future plans included further changes, either through re-organisations or through tendering processes.

The budgets transferred to local authorities for the delivery of Connexions/careers/IAG services have not been 'ring-fenced', though provision must comply with the *Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance*. The level of resources allocated to provision has been unchanged in 63% of authorities responding to the survey; among the remainder, 17% reported an increase, and 20% a decrease, in the allocation. Views about future resourcing levels were influenced by respondents' differing judgements about the relative impact of increased importance being attached to IAG as a consequence of the 14-19 reform programme, contrasted with the downward pressures upon local-authority finances and the competing demands within Children's and Young People's Services. Significantly,

the integration of provision within the broader context of youth support is likely to mean that it will become increasingly difficult to identify or disaggregate spending upon Connexions/careers/IAG services and, therefore, to make comparisons with the position prior to 1 April 2008.

The general nature of front-line Connexions/careers/IAG provision has been unchanged in nearly 80% of local authorities. Where change has occurred, it has in roughly equal measure manifested itself as a greater concentration upon work with 'targeted' groups or as an increase in levels of support for universal provision. Respondents noted that there was a degree of tension related to the perceived value of IAG – as an element of support for all young people making transitions or as focusing essentially upon addressing the needs of those disengaging from learning.

The survey indicated that the support for careers education and guidance (CEG) in schools, colleges and work-based learning providers, through curriculum consultancy and INSET, has largely been maintained. In 82% of local authorities, such support is provided by the same organisation that is delivering IAG services to young people. Contracts with Connexions partnerships and other providers generally, but not invariably, include CEG support. In five local authorities, however, CEG support is currently not provided at all.

Local authorities are charged with creating integrated youth support services (IYSS), and the creation of such provision is inevitably affecting the management of Connexions/careers/IAG services. IYSS thinking has developed in different ways in respect to the nature, level and scope of the service. But development is at an early stage, and most authorities see themselves as being at the beginning of a complex process that will need time to implement fully. Only a small number of local authorities believe that the integration of Connexions/careers/IAG services within their IYSS arrangements will lead to a decrease in IAG provision.

The survey revealed considerable uncertainty about the appropriateness and currency of

qualifications in the fields of career guidance and youth support. It is clear that the work now under way, led by Lifelong Learning UK, to address the issues of professional standards in this field is urgently needed, albeit complicated by the absence of a strong all-age approach to career guidance in England.

The flexibility given to local authorities to widen the scope of the Connexions brand has been taken up in a number of cases and is likely to be extended further as IYSS arrangements evolve. There are a small number of cases where the scope of the brand has been reduced, though in contrasting ways: sometimes to focus the brand more closely upon vulnerable groups; sometimes to distance it from the targeted youth support offer.

The key management level for IAG in most local authorities is the 14-19 Partnership. Local authorities express widely divergent views about the continuing importance of sub-regional arrangements for supporting IAG.

The establishment of new arrangements for local-authority management of Connexions/careers/IAG services is far from complete, and the process has, in reality, no natural 'end point'. The transfer of responsibility to the local authorities represents the third major change in the structural framework in fifteen years. Whilst the emphasis has always been upon minimising disruption to front-line provision, the nature and degree of volatility in the sector has affected staff at managerial, delivery and support levels, and will have implications for attracting staff of the calibre needed to deliver IAG for both young people and adults in the future.

It is likely to become increasingly difficult to identify IAG provision within local-authority delivery structures. This has implications both for consistency and coherence between areas, and for establishing straightforward transitions for those moving from provision for young people to that designed for adults in the new adult advancement and careers service. It also has implications for accountability. The loss of identity and accountability is, in our view, a matter of grave public concern.

Related to this is the conceptual confusion which this survey has both reflected and revealed. The different terms that are used in different combinations within different local authorities – IAG, career IAG, careers-related IAG, careers education and guidance, Connexions, integrated youth support – all have somewhat different definitions and resonances; their respective boundaries and the relationships between them are loose and unclear. This is combined with a growing ambiguity about the extent to which access to impartial and professional career guidance from an external base is still an entitlement for young people.

A stronger and more coherent national policy framework is essential if there is not to be continued erosion of career IAG services for young people in England. **This needs to be based on clarification of at least three matters: the nature and relationship of the key concepts; whether the distinctive expertise of the professional Careers Adviser is recognised or not; and the extent of young people's entitlement to professional career guidance from an external base. Until these issues are resolved, policy initiatives in this field will be built on sand.**

1. Introduction

“ *In the light of a renewed understanding of the impact of careers/IAG work upon public policy – evidenced by the decision to establish an ‘adult careers and advancement service’ and by the announcement of the Government’s intention to produce an ‘IAG strategy’ for young people in spring 2009 – it is important that a clear national picture is available of the models of provision that are emerging to support young people.* ”

The importance of the provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG) services has been an increasingly significant element within the development of policies impacting upon young people in England over the last three years. The 14-19 reforms, combined with the raising of the participation in learning age following the implementation of the Education and Skills Act 2008, represent one of the most radical set of changes in secondary education since the 1944 Education Act. These changes have re-affirmed the need for IAG to facilitate individuals’ progression through the education and training system and into the labour market, as well as to contribute to key public policy goals in respect of social inclusion.

Issues currently presenting challenges and opportunities for those charged with ensuring the provision of effective support for young people include:

- the introduction of Diplomas for 14-19-year-olds;
- the publication of the *Quality Standards for Information, Advice and Guidance for Young People*;
- the proposed expansion of the number of apprenticeships;
- the extension of the September Guarantee to 17-year-olds;
- the increasing emphasis upon personalised learning;
- the plans for raising the participation in learning age to 18.

The *Youth Matters* Green Paper (HM Government, 2005) outlined new arrangements for Connexions/careers/IAG services in England. These arrangements were substantially confirmed in the Government’s subsequent policy statement *Youth Matters: Next Steps* (DfES, 2006). Under them, responsibility for universal and generic ‘information, advice and guidance’ (IAG)

services was allocated to local authorities in collaboration with children’s trusts. These new arrangements were to be in place by 1 April 2008.

In 2006/07, CfBT Education Trust commissioned the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) to conduct a preliminary telephone survey of the planned new arrangements. The project report was published in May 2007 (Watts & McGowan, 2007). It indicated that the new arrangements were likely to result in very different patterns in different areas.

At the time of that survey, a number of areas had still not decided what form the new arrangements were to take. In a substantial number of other areas, it was clear that the arrangements initially adopted were regarded as interim measures. In some of those cases, formal consultations were under way to determine a longer-term policy.

Whilst illustrating that the new arrangements had yet to be finalised in all areas, the earlier survey also captured some of the hopes and concerns prevalent among the chief executives of the Connexions Partnerships who were at that stage responsible for most of the IAG provision. In broad terms, respondents were split almost equally in their assessment of whether the new arrangements would lead to an increase or decrease in the quality and quantity of IAG/careers services.

Those believing that there would be an increase pointed to the significance of the 14-19 reforms in refocusing attention beyond those young people deemed to be disaffected, to the majority suffering the consequences of not having their career thinking sufficiently challenged before undertaking key transitions. The provision for schools to make their own arrangements for provision, if they were dissatisfied with the arrangements made by local authorities, was seen as exerting a positive pressure upon local authorities, as were the continuing prominence of the NEET

targets and the well-recognised contribution of IAG to meeting those targets. Finally, respondents identified the links between IAG/careers work and the economic development agenda of local authorities, and the possibility of extending the NEET focus on targeted engagement to the wider focus on aspiration, progression and attainment embodied in the approach of the Leitch Review of Skills (2006).

On the negative side, there was concern that after 2008 the funding for Connexions/IAG services would no longer be ring-fenced, and that provision would have to compete for resources within cash-strapped local authorities with a wide range of other services and needs, some of which would be likely to be given much higher priority. In this regard, a dual risk was identified: that the Connexions agenda as a whole would be given limited attention; and that within it, more attention would be given to targeted support than to universal IAG. The delivery of provision within the context of 'integrated youth support services' was seen as potentially problematic in a number of ways. The possibilities for realising savings in management and administrative costs within local authorities had to be weighed against the loss of economies of scale derived from the sub-regional structure of Connexions. Doubts were expressed about the levels of expertise within local authorities to understand and effectively manage IAG services. The absence of any general or shared understanding of the concept of 'integrated youth support', coupled with a lack of national policy leadership, was seen as posing a potential threat to sustaining professional expertise within integrated provision and, in particular, raised the danger of significant erosion of professional career guidance expertise.

The present report is intended to provide an updated picture of the new arrangements for Connexions/careers/IAG services. The focus is upon the arrangements established at 1 April 2008 when the local authorities assumed full budgetary and delivery responsibility. It is clear, however, that the introduction of new arrangements is an ongoing process and that further changes are likely: those already envisaged are also reported.

In addition, it is clear that the new arrangements are themselves influenced by previous 'reforms' effected to the structures for delivering careers/IAG services. Until the passage of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993, the statutory duty to provide a careers service lay with the local authorities. The transfer of that responsibility to the Secretary of State led to the formation of 'careers companies' – an umbrella term embracing a range of charities, not-for-profit and for-profit companies – that held contracts for the delivery of contracts in one or more areas (not always coterminous with local-authority boundaries). The subsequent merger of the Careers Service into the new Connexions Service as part of the implementation of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 led to some of the careers companies 'transmuting' into Connexions Partnerships, whilst others remained as sub-contractors to the Connexions Partnerships (for more detailed accounts of these changes, see Peck, 2004; Watts, 1995; 2001).

It is possible to perceive the transfer of responsibility for Connexions/IAG services to the local authorities from April 2008 as a return to the situation pre-1993. That would, however, be to ignore the continuing impact of the intervening structural arrangements, each of which has left a substantial 'residue'; the local authorities have addressed and accommodated this 'residue' in different ways in framing the new arrangements. One important difference between the current arrangements and those that existed before 1993 is that, when the Government published its policy document in 2006, it intended that local authorities should be commissioners of IAG services, and not necessarily providers (though our survey reveals that a substantial minority of local authorities have chosen the provider route – see Section 3.1).

The survey reported here is designed to provide a picture of the main models of delivery for Connexions/careers/IAG services for young people in England, and their prevalence; to report the extent to which tendering procedures have been used in establishing the new arrangements (and may be used in the future); to identify

changes to the nature, shape and scope of the services provided and to the level of resources applied in 2008; and to examine the implications for Connexions/careers/IAG services of incorporation into integrated youth support services. The report also focuses on arrangements to support the development of careers education and guidance provision within schools; on the significance attached to professional career guidance qualifications within new service structures; and on the forms in which the Connexions brand is being retained.

In the light of a renewed understanding of

the impact of careers/IAG work upon public policy – evidenced by the decision to establish an ‘adult careers and advancement service’ (DIUS, 2008a), and by the announcement¹ of the Government’s intention to produce an ‘IAG strategy’ for young people in spring 2009 – it is important that a clear national picture is available of the models of provision that are emerging to support young people. The survey reported here is designed to provide a reliable evidence base to inform the continuing debates at both national and local levels. It is based on the position as reported to us at the end of October 2008, including future plans as envisaged at that point in time.

¹ By Baroness Morgan of Drefelin in the House of Lords, 11 November 2008.

2. Methodology

“ *Considerable effort was invested in maximising the responses to the survey... This resulted... in responses from 141 local authorities (94%)... In the case of the remainder, basic factual information was collected from secondary sources.* ”

The main evidence base for this report has been an electronic survey emailed to respondents within the 150 local authorities identified as holding the ‘lead responsibility’ for the provision of Connexions/careers/ IAG services. On the basis of the responses received, 30 local-authority areas were followed up with telephone interviews, using a semi-structured interview schedule.

The initial challenge was to identify, within each local authority, the appropriate recipient of the survey. This information was not available from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, or from the regional Government Offices. It was frequently the case – particularly where the provision was ‘contracted out’ – that there was uncertainty within local authorities about where responsibility lay and who, therefore, was best placed to respond.

The survey was piloted with seven local authorities before being sent to the remaining 143 at the end of August 2008. Considerable effort was invested in maximising the responses to the survey, with a number of reminder emails being followed by a telephone follow-up of all non-respondents. Further follow-up exercises involved emails and telephone calls: in total, in addition to generic emails, nearly 150 individual follow-ups were undertaken with the 104 local authorities which did not respond to the initial request to complete the survey. This resulted, by the beginning of December 2008, in responses from 141 local authorities (94%). The nine remaining non-respondents were: Bath and North-East Somerset, City of London, North Somerset, Northumberland, North Yorkshire, Richmond, Rutland, Surrey and Trafford. Of these, one (North Yorkshire) did not complete the on-line survey but agreed to a telephone interview. In the case of the remainder, basic factual information was collected from secondary sources. Such information is, therefore, available on 100% of local-authority areas (see Appendix 1).

An analysis of the questionnaire responses demonstrated that provision was broadly organised in one of three ways: through in-house delivery; by the preceding Connexions Partnership; or through contractual arrangements with another provider. Ten examples of each delivery mode were selected for interview contact. The local authorities selected were chosen with a view to maintaining a geographical balance in the sample, combined in some cases with a desire to clarify or elaborate points made by respondents in the on-line questionnaire. In those cases where delivery was not undertaken in-house, interviews were conducted with both the local-authority respondent and with a representative of the service provider. A total of 50 interviews, each of around 30 minutes’ duration, were undertaken in November and December 2008.

A draft of this report was sent to all e-survey respondents and interviewees. Comments and amendments were received from a number of these, and in some cases led to further email exchanges and telephone conversations. Various amendments were made in the light of these interactions.

The remaining sections of this report present the results of the e-survey, supplemented by the information gathered from the interviews. A table showing the changes in the nature of provision from the position prior to March 2007 through to the position post-April 2008, and the application of tendering processes, is presented in Appendix 1. The e-survey questionnaire and interview schedule are included as Appendices 2 and 3.

3. Arrangements for Provision

“... in terms of predominant careers-related provision: 44 (30%) are making such provision ‘in-house’ (i.e. within the local authority); 53 (35%) have contracted this provision to the preceding Connexions Partnership; and 53 (35%) have contracted this provision to another provider.”

The survey identified the arrangements in the local authorities for managing the provision of career guidance services, the extent to which competitive tendering had been undertaken, and whether there were plans for further reorganisation and/or tendering procedures.

3.1 Current Arrangements

The baseline position for the survey is illustrated in the table in Appendix 1. Prior to 1 April 2008, provision remained largely the responsibility of the 47 Connexions Partnerships (although the ‘break-up’ of those arrangements had already been anticipated in a number of areas – for example, Greater Manchester, Tees Valley, West London).

Respondents were asked how the career guidance element of their Connexions/IAG services was organised. In broad terms, the responses indicated that local authorities could be divided into three groups, with some important caveats where provision was split across those groups. The categorisation of local authorities in the table is based on the most significant elements of career IAG provision.

The position from 1 April 2008 (or shortly thereafter, as tendering timescales in some areas led to changes in the summer or autumn months of 2008 that are also captured in this report) is that, in terms of predominant careers-related provision: 44 (30%) are making such provision ‘in-house’ (i.e. within the local authority); 53 (35%) have contracted this provision to the preceding Connexions Partnership; and 53 (35%) have contracted this provision to another provider.

Of the ‘other providers’, the three organisations with the largest number of contracts are Prospects (13), CfBT (11) and VT (11). Smaller providers include Better Choices (4), igen (3) and Nord Anglia (3). Seven

other providers hold one or (in the case of Calderdale & Kirklees Careers) two contracts. There are thus in total 13 different providers for the 53 contracts.²

There are significant regional disparities, as shown in Table 1. Thus in-house provision within the local authority is particularly prevalent in the North East and in the East; contracting to the preceding Connexions Partnership is a common pattern in the North West, the East Midlands, the West Midlands and the South West; and contracting to other providers is especially evident in Yorkshire & the Humber and in London. At the other extreme, there is no example of contracting to Connexions Partnerships in the North East, and no examples of contracting to other providers in the East Midlands or West Midlands.

Within this pattern, a number of ‘mixed models’ are evident. One is where there was dual delivery under the Connexions delivery arrangements, with some delivery undertaken by directly employed Connexions Partnership staff alongside sub-contracted delivery, and this model has been preserved within the new arrangements (as, for example, in Enfield and Hertfordshire). Others include new approaches to the delivery of provision: for example in North Yorkshire, where career guidance provision for young people in schools and colleges is contracted out, whilst provision for those in the labour market is delivered by staff employed by the local authority. The Black Country provides a unique example of four local authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton) each contracting with the Black Country Connexions Partnership, which in turn sub-contracts much of the provision to another provider. A further variation on the ‘mixed model’ approach is evident where, whilst the delivery of front-line provision has been taken in-house, some of the supporting

² This analysis is confined to the career guidance element of Connexions/IAG services, and therefore excludes other contracts.

Table 1: Regional Variations

	Local authority Connexions Partnership	Contracted to other provider	Contracted to	Total
North East	11	-	1	12
Yorkshire & the Humber	1	4	10	15
North West	7	10	5	22
East Midlands	2	7	-	9
West Midlands	4	10	-	14
East	9	1	-	10
South East	4	7	8	19
South West	2	13	1	16
London	4	1	28	33
Total	44	53	53	150

Note: Connexions Berkshire is recorded as a Connexions Partnership in the six local authorities that previously comprised the Berkshire Connexions area. Connexions Berkshire also formed a new legal entity, Connexions Thames Valley, which bid successfully for the contracts in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, where it operates as Connexions Buckinghamshire and Connexions Oxfordshire respectively: in these two local authorities, it is recorded as an 'other provider'.

services are contracted out (e.g. Lancashire, Waltham Forest).

In general, more authorities contract out the career guidance element of Connexions/ IAG services than contract out other wider elements of such services. Among the 141 respondents to the e-survey, 66 (47%) made provision for the wider elements in-house, 58 (41%) by contracting them to the pre-existing Connexions Partnership, and only 17 (12%) by contracting them to another provider.

In determining their approach to securing careers-related provision, local authorities have clearly been influenced to varying extents by the evolution of their integrated youth support strategies (see Section 6), the demands of the 14-19 reform agenda, existing capabilities (particularly in respect of 'back office' and professional-support functions) and the drive for efficiencies and economies. It follows that the commissioning of provision has led

to substantial and significant variation in the approaches adopted by local authorities. This has in some cases included disaggregation of such issues as: Personal Adviser provision, information provision, CEG support (see Section 5.2), IT, data handling, premises, workforce development, and opportunities handling. Some authorities have clearly looked at such items separately in considering whether to commission for them or make in-house arrangements (or even, in a few cases, scrap them altogether).

The survey found no evidence of schools or colleges opting out of their local authority's arrangements and choosing instead to commission their own IAG service. The financial and other implications of such a step accordingly remain untested.

3.2 Tendering and Contestability

The issue of contestability in the provision of children's services has been somewhat controversial. A report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2004) noted that:

'The Government has no plans to force increased contracting out of children's services, but it does wish to promote greater contestability, where appropriate, as a way of stimulating high quality and choice, as well as acting as a means of securing well-focused services in the most cost-effective way.'

It suggested that:

'Some of the potential benefits of greater contestability can be summarised as follows:

- Helping to ensure that prices charged, where a service is contracted out, are at competitive levels.
- Ensuring that costs and performance measures, where a service is provided in-house, are kept under rigorous review.
- Stimulating service development and the potential for innovation.
- Ensuring a choice of provider for both the commissioner (such as the local authority, Children's Trust or extended school) and the end user, where this is appropriate, so that an alternative provider is available should the quality of the existing service be unacceptable.'

The report noted that 'Consideration of contestability in relation to children's services... needs to take account of the barriers to entry and exit that prevent potential choice and diversity of provider' (p.9).

The main premise of the theory of contestable markets (Baumol, Panzar & Willig, 1982) is that even with a single provider, the threat of other providers entering the market will force the provider to contain costs and maintain

quality. This will only work, however, if there are no significant barriers to entry and exit. The PWC report identified potential barriers in four main categories – legal, political and cultural, contractual and commissioning, and economic.

The Government's endorsement of the contestability principle was confirmed in the guide to commissioning services for children and young people (HM Government, 2006) which stated that:

'As far as is practical (taking account of the nature and value of the contract) there should be competitive tendering between providers. Increasingly this will mean internally provided services will have to compete against external providers to ensure a range of provision, and the most efficient and effective delivery of outcomes' (p.21).

The DfES Procurement Guide for Connexions Partnerships³ was unequivocal:

'It is a fundamental principle that Connexions contracts should be let as a result of some form of competition.'

Where provision has been taken **in-house**, the survey did not identify any instances of the decision to remunicipalise being preceded by formal contestability or best-value processes. Whilst there were examples of consideration being given to other possible options (i.e. contracting), a more common response was that the decision was 'straightforward'. For a number of local authorities, the demands of creating an integrated approach to delivering youth support services suggested that bringing provision in-house, alongside other elements of youth support, was almost axiomatic. In others, however, the decision did not seem to have been driven by any modelling of youth support services. One local authority in the North East observed: 'The issue has not been "were we right to take the service in-house?" but "where is the right

³ <http://www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships/publications/uploads/cp/procurementGuide.doc>

place to put it?’. A local authority in the North West observed that: ‘The political old school remembered when they ran the Careers Service and wanted it back!’

External factors have also played a part in some cases where the decision of one or more local authorities to remunicipalise provision has influenced the thinking of other local authorities within a Connexions Partnership area. In the previous South Central Connexions Partnership area, for example, the decision of the largest local authority (Hampshire) to remunicipalise undermined the continued viability of the Connexions Partnership and was a significant consideration for the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton in also taking provision in-house.

The position is considerably more complex, however, where local authorities are **contracting delivery to the previous Connexions Partnership**. Of the 53 local authorities that have adopted this model, competitive tendering exercises have only been undertaken by seven (13%). A joint tendering exercise was undertaken by the six local authorities that comprised the Connexions Berkshire area (Bracknell Forest, Reading, Slough, West Berkshire, Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham), resulting in the award of a contract to Connexions Berkshire. In addition, London East Connexions secured a delivery contract with Newham after a competitive tender.

The remaining local authorities securing delivery through the preceding Connexions Partnership fall into three categories. The first is those who are still deliberating over the shape of the new arrangements or the approach to be adopted (e.g. Bristol). The second is those who have ‘rolled forward’ the previous arrangement with effect from

April 2008 for an initial (usually one year) period to afford themselves greater time to make a decision about remunicipalisation (e.g. East Riding of Yorkshire) or to undertake a tendering exercise (e.g. the Greater Merseyside local authorities). The third category is those who have determined that delivery by the Connexions Partnership is their established approach (e.g. Cheshire, Derby).

Local authorities have preserved delivery through Connexions Partnerships where there is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of provision, a reluctance to disturb the stability of the current provision (including that of staff employment), or a political aversion to undertaking competitive tendering. Some such local authorities have been exercised by the legal constraints upon their procurement practices, but most have agreed contracts without going through a tendering process.

In some cases, this has been as a consequence of invoking the Teckal case (Box 1). In Nottinghamshire and in Devon & Cornwall, for example, where the Connexions company is owned by two (Nottinghamshire) and five (Devon & Cornwall) local authorities respectively, there is clear structural control and – since both companies overwhelmingly confine their activities to the owning local authorities – economic dependency. These accordingly claim to have met the ‘Teckal tests’.

Connexions Berkshire provides a contrasting example. Having secured delivery contracts with the six Berkshire local authorities through open competition, the company subsequently won delivery contracts in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. It was free to do so because it was not restricted by the Teckal emphasis upon the need to carry out the essential part of its activity with a controlling local authority.

Box 1: The Teckal Case

The Teckal case (named from the Italian company that was its subject) established in European law that a local authority (or local authorities) could avoid an EU public procurement tender if they awarded a contract to a provider meeting two tests:

- That the provider is controlled by the awarding authority/authorities in a manner 'similar to that which it exercises over its own departments'.
- That the provider carries out the essential part of its activities with the controlling authority/authorities.

The tests relate, therefore, to *structural control* and to *economic dependency*.

A different approach, also avoiding a competitive tender exercise, was adopted in Coventry where the City Council has entered into a contract with Connexions Coventry & Warwickshire. The service was commissioned by means of a Single Negotiated Tender, and jointly negotiated with Warwickshire County Council. The Council was advised that this approach was appropriate where 'the provider is already high performing and it is unlikely that there is a known market to provide any meaningful competition to the current provider'. Account was also taken of the transaction costs and potential service disruption if Coventry took a different approach from Warwickshire, and of the possibility that the uncertainty which a competitive approach would create might affect the stability of the service. A three-year contract was selected on the basis that, by the end of that period, there would be likely to be a number of potential competitors, making it possible to pursue a competitive tendering approach. Meanwhile, Coventry Council was also advised to 'seek continued evidence of the Value for Money offered by the current provider'. Our survey suggested that this was fairly widespread practice where local authorities contracted with Connexions Partnerships without recourse to competitive tender, with best-value exercises sometimes involving third parties (e.g. in Derby).

In two local-authority areas, the provision of Connexions and Youth Services has been merged outside the local-authority structures. In Cheshire, the local authority

has transferred its Youth Service to the Connexions Partnership – with staff being 'TUPE transferred' – after concluding that the realisation of savings from the merged provision was more likely to be achieved effectively outside the Council. The Council was advised that a combination of the Teckal considerations and the absence of a mature market of providers of Connexions/ Youth Services obviated any need to go to competitive tender in instituting the arrangement. In Gloucestershire, on the other hand, an external provider was contracted to provide both the delivery of its Connexions service and the management of Integrated Youth Support.

Where provision is **contracted to another provider**, this is either as a consequence of 'rolling forward' or novating the contract agreed by a Connexions Partnership that previously contracted delivery (e.g. Southwark, Wakefield), or as a result of a competitive tendering exercise (e.g. Brighton & Hove, Lewisham, North Yorkshire).

An exception is the arrangement in Medway, where the local authority's priority has been to create a robustly 'Medway focused' provision independent of the Council in governance terms. The Medway Youth Trust has been established by Medway Council to deliver Connexions/careers/IAG services under contract. The charitable trust is managed by a Board of Trustees and can obtain additional funding from other contracts. There was no competitive tendering exercise for the contract

awarded from April 2008, because research demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that there was no current market of Medway-focused providers (a conclusion similar to that reached by Coventry, as noted above).

Where local authorities have put services out to tender, they have mostly acted individually. But the Directors of Children's Services in the six boroughs that constituted the former South London Connexions partnership decided that they would work together as a sub-regional unit and put the Connexions/IAG service out to contract to a single provider. The reasons given included economies of scale and coherence across the sub-region. A sub-regional head office manages the contract on behalf of the consortium of local authorities, working through one borough as the lead local authority. Similarly, the six unitary authorities in the former Connexions Berkshire partnership worked together on a single tender.

Competitive tendering exercises have led to a change of provider in 20 of the 35 (57%)

local authority areas that have adopted this approach (the proportion is slightly greater – 22 of 37 (59.5%) – if earlier tendering exercises are included). Explicit statements of dissatisfaction with previous provision were rare, however, as the reason for going to tender. Instead, local authorities cited legal advice and their own procurement requirements or policies, together in some cases with their lack of capacity for in-house delivery. Oxfordshire expressed its belief that its information, advice and guidance responsibilities, especially as they related to impartiality, were best met by contracted-out provision.

Two interesting case studies of good practice in the involvement of young people in the tendering process are outlined in Box 2. The involvement of young people in the design and delivery of services has been one of the distinctive features of the 'Connexions era'. A challenge to local authorities is to see how far they can sustain and build upon this under the new arrangements.

Box 2: Involvement of Young People in Contracting Out Provision

In Harrow, young people were involved in the contract-awarding process, from the outset through to the final decision-making. They were given a half-day's training and formed a panel to which each of the bidders had to make a 20-minute presentation. Each bidding organisation was also asked to provide a 2–4 page summary of their bid, for the young people's panel. The young people asked questions and devised their own scoring system. One representative from the young people's panel then joined the 'adults' panel for the final presentation.

The young people decided on a clear winner, while the adult panel took longer to reach a decision. The young people's views were a significant factor in the final decision.

The young people went on to organise a welcome event for the new provider and have been invited to talk about their experience to the Greater London Authority, as an example of good practice.

A broadly similar approach was adopted in the case of the six local authorities which had previously formed Connexions Berkshire. Two or three young people were recruited from each of the authorities to take part in the final selection panel. They included young carers and young people in public care.

3.3 Future Plans

No local authorities that have remunicipalised provision have any plans to change their arrangements. Only one could envisage circumstances where a different approach might be taken at some point in the future.

Competitive tender exercises are either under way or anticipated within the next year in at least 18 local-authority areas (all currently delivered under contract by other providers). In addition, at least a further eight local authorities where the Connexions Partnership is the current provider are reviewing the options available to them. Taken together with those other areas where the current provision is a roll-forward of previous practice, there is clearly a significant amount of work still to be undertaken in establishing the pattern of post-April 2008 arrangements. In total, 70 local authorities stated that there were plans for further reorganisation and/or tendering processes (although, in some cases, the timescales were unclear). One local authority made the point that the costs of any future tendering exercise would need to be met from the Connexions budget. In a number of cases (e.g. Greater Merseyside), tendering will be undertaken because of the legal advice received by the local authorities. In others,

there is an expressed desire to change the current arrangements in order to realise cost efficiencies, either as a consequence of tendering or by moving to in-house provision.

In those instances where contracts for delivery are in place – either with Connexions Partnerships or with other providers – contract lengths vary from two to five years (with some making provision for contract extensions). There is some evidence that the more recent contract awards are for longer periods than the earlier ones, possibly reflecting a realisation amongst local authorities that two or three years is an unduly short period within which to demonstrate the effective delivery of Connexions/careers/IAG services.

In addition to the possibility of contract expiry dates leading to a new round of review of delivery arrangements, there are continuing changes in the structure of local government that may impact upon management and delivery of Connexions/careers/IAG provision. In particular, local government re-organisations are due in Bedfordshire and Cheshire in 2009, which will involve changes to the existing local-authority structures.

Key Points

- Of the 150 local authorities, 44 have taken careers-related provision in-house; 53 have contracted delivery to the preceding Connexions Partnership; and a further 53 have contracted delivery to another provider.
- Within this overall pattern, there are a number of 'mixed models'.
- There is no evidence of the application of contestability processes where provision has been taken in-house.
- Competitive tendering exercises have been undertaken in 13% of areas contracting with the previous Connexions Partnership.
- Competitive tendering exercises have led to a change of provider in nearly 60% of areas undertaking such exercises.
- 70 local authorities have plans for further reorganisation and/or tendering processes.

4. Resourcing Provision

“... local authorities and their contractors are less sanguine about the resourcing levels for Connexions/careers/IAG services in future years.”

Connexions budgets have been transferred to local authorities without any hypothecation or ring-fencing of the funding. Local authorities have targets to meet in respect of the numbers of young people not in education, training or employment (NEET) but, as with the preceding Connexions regime, there are no nationally prescribed performance indicators relating to career guidance for the generality of young people. Provision does, however, need to conform to the *Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance*.

In responding to a parliamentary question (10 June 2008), the Minister of State, Beverley Hughes, indicated that the annual amount spent on Connexions had been virtually static since 2003/04, rising from £439 million in that year to £469 million in 2008/09. These figures approximately doubled the spend in the final year of the Careers Service (£233 million in 2000/01). The Minister noted that an independent survey in 2006 had concluded that, on average, around 42% of a Connexions Partnership's expenditure was on information, advice and guidance. On this basis, it can be calculated that the spend on career guidance has been reduced from £233 million in 2000/01 to £197 million in 2008/09, a reduction of 15.5% (excluding the effects of inflation). Any subsequent changes in the allocation of resources need to be seen against the background of this reduction.

For 2008/09, 63% of local authorities responding to our survey indicated that there had been no change to the level of resources allocated to Connexions/careers/IAG services; 17% indicated that there had been an increase in the level of resources; and 20% indicated a decrease. This picture may, however, be distorted somewhat by a lack of consistency in accounting for the impact of inflation.

Where it was reported that there had been no change, there were some caveats. In some areas, changes in the shape of delivery meant that it was difficult to compare like with like. In North Yorkshire, IAG is provided both by

another provider and directly by the local authority, in a deployment that does not mirror the provision contracted by the preceding Connexions Partnership. In Cheshire, the merger of the Connexions Partnership with the Youth Service with a budget derived from two previously separate sources makes direct comparison problematic. In other areas (such as East Sussex and Sutton) there has been no change to the Connexions grant received by the local authority but, following changes to the requirement for contracted services, the value of the contract for the provider has been reduced.

Where resources have increased, this has sometimes been in areas where the previous Connexions partnership sub-contracted delivery and savings have been realised as a result of winding up the Connexions Partnership (as in Central London and West Yorkshire). In other cases, the 'increase' in resources has been identified as a consequence of securing better value through undertaking a competitive tender (e.g. Havering, Milton Keynes, Waltham Forest), or taking services in-house (Blackpool), or through the 'alignment' of provision with other services (Lambeth). There were also, however, more direct examples of increases: in Bradford, for example, the IAG contracts (including the Connexions contract) were enhanced by 2%, and Kensington & Chelsea also made a significant increase to their budget. In addition, Enfield reported a 'significant increase in careers/IAG service to schools', and both Greenwich and Redbridge noted an 'increased number of Personal Advisers'.

Of the 28 cases where local authorities reported a decrease in resources, 23 (82%) emphasised that there had been no direct adverse impact upon the delivery of front-line services. Savings had been found in administrative, managerial, premises and other support costs (though there is some evidence of support for curriculum development and INSET being regarded as a 'back office')

function that can be reduced without impact upon service delivery). Wiltshire reported the 'deletion of a number of management and development roles'; Southampton stated that 'practitioner levels have been maintained'; and Torbay, acknowledging efficiency savings in back-office costs, pointed to 'no change to front-line service delivery'. These comments, of course, do not necessarily take into account the impact of reductions in management, development and other support services on the longer-term sustainability of well-prepared and well-supported front-line services.

Five local authorities reported that a budget decrease, attributed to a reduction in their Connexions grant or to an increase in provision in other areas of youth support, had led to service reductions.

The generally 'upbeat' tenor of these responses appears to be at variance with other reports relating to the impact of the transfer of responsibility to the local authorities. *Children and Young People Now* (April 2008) reported the results of a survey which found that 20% of Connexions services intended to cut jobs as part of the move, and other press reports have provided specific examples of job and/or budget reductions. The focus of local authorities upon the preservation of front-line delivery means that the two perspectives are, in principle at least, reconcilable.

On the other hand, local authorities and their contractors are less sanguine about the resourcing levels for Connexions/careers/ IAG services in future years. When asked about future changes in resource levels, 44%

replied 'don't know'. Of the remaining 79 local authorities, 37 (47%) envisaged 'no change – status quo', 17 (21%) envisaged an increase and 25 (32%) a decrease.

Those anticipating an increase in resources pointed in particular to the importance of IAG within the Diploma programme and to the delivery of the 14-19 reforms agenda. There was also mention of a re-assertion of the importance attached to 'careers-related IAG', especially by schools and colleges. In addition, the introduction of the *Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance* was seen as arguing for an increase in resources for IAG.

The views of local authorities who replied 'don't know' are broadly represented by the response from Lancashire: 'The Young People's service budget will be subject, like any other within the County Council, to revenue setting procedures and the impact of any potential growth or reductions are not as yet clear.'

Where local authorities thought a decrease was likely, their reasoning included reference to general downward pressure on local government spending and to specific reductions in the Connexions grant. Others also pointed to the 'competing priorities' within local authorities, and the greater vulnerability of funding as local-authority officers became aware of their freedom to 'draw upon Connexions funding' for other agendas. There was a fairly widespread view that any further decrease in funding would be likely to have to have an impact on front-line provision.

Key Points

- 63% of local authorities report no change to the level of resources allocated for careers-related provision; 17% an increase; 20% a decrease.
- There is considerable uncertainty about future resource levels.
- Increases in resources might be driven by the 14-19 reform agenda, the views of schools and colleges, and the application of the *Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance*.
- Decreases could follow from the downward pressure on local government expenditure, and competing priorities within Children and Young People's Services.

5. The Nature of Provision

“ *The different priorities of local authorities may well reflect a divergence of understanding about the essential function of Connexions/ careers/IAG work: as supporting the progression of all young people through transitions in learning and work; or as focusing upon the engagement of young people who are, or are at risk of, disengaging from education and training.* ”

The survey asked if there had been any significant changes to the nature of the services provided (e.g. in the balance between school-based and externally-based guidance services, and/or in the balance between careers-related IAG and non-careers-related IAG). Respondents were also asked if there had been any significant changes to the arrangements for external support (through curriculum advice and staff development etc.) to careers education provision within schools and colleges.

5.1 ‘Universal’ v. ‘Targeted’ Provision

The survey revealed some striking differences in the directions in which local authorities are driving their Connexions/careers/IAG provision.

Of the 30 (21%) of local authorities which indicated that there had been significant changes, seven explicitly described a shift of balance in favour of targeted and non-careers-related IAG. Buckinghamshire, East Sussex and Kent were amongst those favouring the targeted agenda; Oxfordshire described the change as a focus on the wider issues presenting barriers to progression. Reading registered an increase in targeted support, ‘but not at the expense of the universal service’.

Six other local authorities, by contrast, emphasised a relative strengthening of the universal provision of careers-related IAG. Bournemouth, Enfield, Greenwich, Havering and Nottinghamshire were in this category, along with North Yorkshire which asserted that ‘schools want to see more careers in Connexions – there was a danger of “dumbing down” careers within Connexions’. The demand from schools for more ‘careers work’ was echoed by others (e.g. Bradford, Harrow, Islington), whilst Derby and Leicestershire also highlighted a desire to increase careers-related IAG (Leicestershire is specifically looking to reduce the non-careers IAG work of its provider).

These variations in approach are being played out against a changing policy context. The

recent DIUS consultation paper on *Higher Education at Work* (DIUS, 2008b) reported concerns from employers that ‘information, advice and guidance (IAG) available for young people making choices at 14, for potential university students and for undergraduates is not good enough. As a result, employers believe that young people sometimes damage their own careers because they lack information and advice about the economic consequences of their course choices.’ It further indicated that ‘some students report that they would have liked to have had more career specific advice during their time at school, and this may have impacted on their choice of course or university’. In response, the paper stated:

‘We are improving information, advice and guidance (IAG) for young people including through the development of new curriculum guidance, the provision of high quality teaching materials for use in the classroom, new arrangements for the continuing professional development of the careers workforce and new quality standards.... We are responding to young people’s need for IAG earlier in their lives. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and DIUS will work together to ensure the Children’s Plan proposals on earlier IAG (through Key Stage 2 Pathfinders); experiential learning; and the development of classroom materials for careers education, will all include a higher education element encouraging more young people to aspire to enter university....’ (p.17).

These statements seem to indicate a significant strengthening of the policy focus on universal careers-related IAG. The different priorities of local authorities may well reflect a divergence of understanding about the essential function of Connexions/careers/IAG work: as supporting the progression of all young people through transitions in learning and work; or as focusing upon the

engagement of young people who are, or are at risk of, disengaging from education and training. This sense of uncertainty was captured in a number of comments:

‘Connexions is straddling two horses – the provision of IAG within 14-19 developments, and the provision of IAG as part of the integrated youth support service’ (East Sussex).

‘There is tension within the local authority as to whether the 14-19 agenda is part of integrated youth support provision, or vice versa, and where the NEET agenda fits in’ (Bournemouth).

‘The re-assertion of the importance of careers is making the IYSS model already look a bit old fashioned’ (a contracted provider).

5.2 Support for Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) in Learning Providers

In addition to providing careers advice and guidance to individuals, Connexions services – and before that, careers services – provided support for CEG in schools, colleges and work-based training providers through curriculum consultancy and in-service training (INSET) for careers co-ordinators and other staff involved in CEG. The survey indicates that although such support has largely been continued in the new arrangements for Connexions/careers/IAG services, there is a small number of local authorities where it is no longer provided.

In 123 (82%) of the 150 local authorities, curriculum support and INSET for CEG is provided by the same organisation that provides the IAG service to young people – namely, the local authority, the Connexions partnership or the other provider. On the other hand, in 22 (15%) of the local authorities, CEG support is provided, but by a different organisation to that which provides the IAG service. The most common form that this alternative arrangement takes is where the IAG service has been taken in-house by the local authority, but some of the central services –

including CEG support – remain provided by a small organisation formed from the former Connexions partnership. For example, in the former Connexions Lancashire area, CXL provides CEG support to Blackpool and to Lancashire. Again, in the former Connexions Tyne & Wear area, ‘the Hub’ provides CEG support to Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland. In addition, two other local authorities that have taken the IAG service in-house have chosen to commission CEG support from another provider (Waltham Forest, York).

In almost all the local authorities that have continued to contract with the pre-existing Connexions partnership for IAG services, the contract includes CEG support. One exception is Worcestershire, which has recently appointed an IAG adviser within its school improvement service.

Similarly, where local authorities are commissioning IAG services from a Connexions partnership or another provider, the contract usually includes CEG support. There are just three exceptions: Brighton & Hove and Oxfordshire, where the CEG support is provided from within the local authority and integrated into the 14-19 curriculum-support services; and Hounslow, where the CEG support is provided through a contract with a different provider from the one which provides Personal Advisers.

There are five local authorities that are known not to provide curriculum support and INSET for CEG: Herefordshire, Isle of Wight, Redcar & Cleveland, Southampton and Stockport (of these, Herefordshire contracts with the pre-existing Connexions partnership; the other four have decided to manage the IAG service within the local authority). Two of these local authorities reported that they had not made a conscious decision not to offer CEG support; it was simply overlooked when the service was taken in-house. In one of these areas, schools were now beginning to ask what has happened to the support that had been available previously through the Connexions partnership; in the other, schools did not appear to be making such demands, as yet at least.

Key Points

- 30 local authorities have made significant changes to the nature of provision: some have increased the emphasis upon targeted provision; others have strengthened their universal provision.
- There is a level of uncertainty about the positioning of information, advice and guidance within local-authority agendas for integrated youth support and 14-19 agendas.
- Support for the careers education and guidance curriculum has largely (but not universally) been maintained.

6. Integration into Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS)

“ ... in many authorities there has been a reassertion of the recognition of the value of discrete areas of professional expertise. This reassertion raises the issue of where the distinctive expertise of the Careers Adviser sits within this model. ”

The concept of an ‘integrated youth support service’ was initially articulated in *Youth Matters* (HM Government, 2005):

‘Having a single body responsible and accountable for youth policy and the *Every Child Matters* outcomes.... Our vision for success is to create an integrated system which supports teenagers to achieve the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes.’

There is, however, no universally agreed definition of the concept. The survey accordingly focused on understanding how IYSS arrangements are impacting upon the provision of Connexions/careers/IAG services rather than on an in-depth study of the IYSS arrangements themselves. It was, nevertheless, instructive to see the wide range of interpretations of the IYSS concept manifest in the responses to the survey.

The absence of a shared understanding was reflected in responses that echoed that of City of Westminster: ‘it really depends what you mean by “integrated”’. It is possible to explore the development of integrated youth support service provision by reference to the nature, level and scope of ‘integration’ within local authorities.

6.1 The Nature of Integration

A typology of levels of linkage between organisations and within networks used in a number of earlier studies (most recently, Watts, Hughes & Haslam, 1999) proposes

a five-stage model that commences with communication and culminates in integration.

The stage of **communication** is where no working patterns are changed but efforts are made to help services to understand what other services offer in order, for example, to cross-refer clients effectively. This constitutes the initial prerequisite for service integration and, particularly where local authorities and their providers are at an early stage in developing IYSS thinking (e.g. Milton Keynes), represents the current position in a number of areas.

Co-operation describes the stage where two or more services co-operate on some joint task; and **co-ordination** where two or more services alter their working patterns to bring them more closely into line with another, while remaining within their professional boundaries. The survey showed that the majority of local authorities are at this point. For many, this stage – with the emphasis upon the retention of professional (and sometimes service) identities – represents what they believe to be the most effective manifestation of ‘integration’.

The further stage of **cross-fertilisation** refers to an approach where efforts are made to encourage services to share and exchange skills, and in effect to work across professional boundaries in ways that are likely to redraw the boundaries themselves. This approach is being pursued by Lancashire and is informing the current thinking in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

The final stage, **integration**, is characterised as the development of cross-fertilisation to a point which means that the boundaries between the different services disappear altogether. Within the field of youth support, this might be equated with the notion, promoted in the earlier years of Connexions, of developing a ‘generic’ youth support

professional. At present there is little indication that local authorities regard this as the 'end game' for their integrated youth support provision. On the contrary, in many authorities there has been a reassertion of the recognition of the value of discrete areas of professional expertise.

This reassertion raises the issue of where the distinctive expertise of the Careers Adviser sits within this model. Does it remain subsumed, as it was officially encouraged to do under Connexions, in the generic role of Personal Adviser? Or is it to be revived as a distinctive role in its own right, recognising that it has survived in some areas under such aliases as 'Universal PA', 'IAG PA' or 'PA (Education)' (see Watts & McGowan, 2007, pp.14-15). At least two local authorities (North Yorkshire and York) have re-introduced the job title 'Careers Adviser' ('Connexions Career Adviser' in York) for those delivering career guidance in schools and colleges. We will return to this issue in Section 7.1.

6.2 The Level of Integration

Integration can also be described in terms of the management and delivery of provision, using a four-tier typology that is related to, but also distinct from, that outlined above.

In terms of this four-tier typology, almost all local authorities defined IYSS provision in terms of integration at the **strategic management** level. This definition includes: joint senior management arrangements for Connexions and at least one other element of youth provision (Bolton, Devon, Shropshire); joint planning and commissioning of provision (Merton, Norfolk); common 'support services' such as training and quality assurance (Leeds); and 'partnership working' (Bournemouth, Wirral).

A significant number of authorities also referred to integration at the level of **operational management**, including integration within locality teams (Derbyshire, Reading, Thurrock), and 'one-stop shop' arrangements (Barking & Dagenham, Poole).

Over a third of local authorities referred to

integration at the level of **service delivery**, with responses referring to the provision of support to young people through 'multi-disciplinary teams' (Blackpool, Hampshire, Lincolnshire); to co-location with other aspects of youth support provision (Cambridgeshire, Hull, Newham); and to the development of the 'lead professional' model (Hammersmith & Fulham, Somerset).

Significantly, no local authorities indicated an intention to realise integration at the level of **professional identity**. In this respect the thinking within most authorities was captured by one in the north-east:

'Future developments will see all workers competent to deliver a greater range of baseline help, in line with Children's Workforce developments, but with professional identity/specialisms still intact.'

6.3 The Scope of Integration

Different approaches to the establishment of integrated youth support service provision are also evident in the range of services that local authorities are bringing within the scope of their IYSS. Notably, Cambridgeshire has chosen to dispense with word 'service', choosing instead to describe its arrangements simply as 'integrated youth support'.

The most common structural manifestation of integration involves Connexions and the local-authority Youth Service coming closer together, as for example in Hartlepool, the Isle of Wight and Suffolk. Integration of these services is not confined to areas where the Connexions provision has been taken in-house, with Cheshire, Derbyshire and Gloucestershire providing examples of similar integration of provision by a contracted provider. Indeed, in Gloucestershire the local authority has contracted with another provider for the delivery of Connexions and for the management of the IYSS (though youth service staff remain employed by the local authority).

Arrangements are, however, bringing together combinations of services that vary between

authorities. Camden, Cumbria and Wiltshire are among those whose IYSS additionally embraces the Youth Offending Team (YOT). In other areas, the net is wider still. In Harrow, the IYSS includes Connexions, the Youth Service, the Youth Offending Team, the Teenage Pregnancy Service, and the Leaving Care and Asylum teams. In Birmingham, Connexions, the Youth Service, the Youth Offending Team and the Education Welfare Service have been brought together. In Oxfordshire, the IYSS includes Connexions, the Youth Service, the Youth Offending Team, Youth Mentoring and Youth Counselling.

In a few local authorities, it appears that the term 'integrated youth support' is applied solely to the targeted youth support provision. In other instances, however, Connexions is reported as being 'disaggregated' between the IYSS and the targeted youth service (TYS).

It is important to recognise that the development of Integrated Youth Support Service provision is at an early stage. Over half of the local authorities responding stressed that they saw themselves at the beginning of a process that was complex and would need time to implement. Many are still at the stage of developing their thinking. One authority in the North East simply referred to its IYSS as 'a bloody mess'.

Of the 122 local authorities which responded to being asked whether integration within IYSS provision would impact upon the provision of information, advice and guidance, only 2 (2%) thought it would lead to a decrease, 32 (26%) believed it would lead to an increase, and 88 (72%) considered that there would be no change.

Key Points

- There is no universally agreed definition of the concept of an integrated youth support service.
- There are significant and substantial differences in the nature, level and scope of integration within youth support arrangements.
- No local authorities indicated an intention to realise integration at the level of professional identity.
- The integration of provision within IYSS arrangements is not seen by most local authorities as detrimental to the provision of IAG services.

7. Other Issues

“ *The sense of confusion is explicable given the lack of clarity that currently surrounds the notion of a ‘professionally qualified’ career guidance practitioner. The absence of a clear definition is manifest at both professional and policy levels.* ”

7.1 Professional Qualifications

The survey asked whether professional career guidance qualifications (Diploma/Qualification in Careers Guidance/NVQ Level 4 in Guidance) are mandatory for any roles within the new service structures.

The responses revealed significant variations in the definitions and descriptions of roles, plus considerable uncertainty about the appropriateness and currency of qualifications in the fields of career guidance and youth support. There is a broad consensus that the qualifications of professional practitioners should be at Level 4. Seven in ten of respondents indicated that professional-level qualifications were required. But for many, the suite of acceptable qualifications was wider than those focused upon career guidance, and a significant number made reference to the NVQ in Learning Development and Support Services. Staff responsible for providing career guidance in schools and colleges (whatever their job title) were most likely to be required to hold a Level 4 career guidance qualification; a number of local authorities specifically do not make that requirement of staff providing targeted support for disengaged or vulnerable young people. The majority, however, responded that all ‘Personal Advisers’ were expected to have a professional career guidance qualification, although there was a divergence of views about which qualifications fall into that category.

The sense of confusion is explicable given the lack of clarity that currently surrounds the notion of a ‘professionally qualified’ career guidance practitioner. The absence of a clear definition is manifest at both professional and policy levels.

At the professional level, the Institute of Career Guidance does not currently have an agreed definition of what constitutes a professionally qualified career guidance practitioner – nor has it ever done so. Historically, the Institute of Careers Officers comprised local and

national government officers whose job title was ‘Careers Officer’ (see Peck, 2004). Until the mid-1970s, a minority of these Careers Officers (previously Youth Employment Officers) had undertaken a formal national qualification. The shift to an Institute defined by the professional discipline of its membership, rather than by their job title, was not accompanied by a focus upon the nature or level of qualification. Membership of the Institute of Career Guidance is currently open to all who are willing to pay the membership subscription and recognise the Institute’s Code of Ethics – there is no qualification bar to entry. However, the Board of the Institute has recently (November 2008) asked its Professional Development and Ethics & Standards Committees to advise on the definition of a ‘qualified Careers Adviser’.

In policy terms, the Education Reform Act 1997 legislated for ‘careers advisers’ to have access to students attending educational institutions. Section 11 of paragraph 44 stated that:

- (a) “‘careers adviser’ means a person who is employed by a body providing services in pursuance of arrangements made or directions given under section 10 of the [1973 c.35] Employment and Training Act 1973 and who is acting, in the course of his employment by that body, for the purposes of the provision of any such services; and
- (b) a careers adviser has responsibilities for any persons if his employment by that body includes the provision of any such services for them.’

Paragraph 46 section 4 of the same Act reads:

‘The Secretary of State may by regulations amend the definition of “careers adviser” set out in section 44 (11)(a).’

The clearest 'understanding' of an 'approved' career guidance practitioner probably occurred during the period of the contracting out of the Careers Service when contracts – critically – included a requirement upon contractors to agree a specified number of action plans with young people (failure to meet the contracted number resulted in a reduction in the contracted payments). The contracts made clear that action plans had to be signed off by qualified Careers Advisers. At the time, this was taken to mean staff who held the Diploma in Careers Guidance or the Qualification in Careers Guidance or an NVQ Level 4 in Guidance (although long-serving staff, who were practising before the DCG became widespread, were granted special dispensation).

Since the demise of action plans as a funding-linked performance indicator, there has been no attempt by policy-makers to impose a definition of professionally qualified career guidance practitioner. The 'Connexions era' was indeed marked by a studied vagueness on the subject of qualification. Current guidance states that Personal Advisers should be recruited from a range of professional disciplines and should have 'as a minimum PAs with or actively working toward an NVQ level 4 (or equivalent) in a relevant discipline, plus appropriate assessment framework training' (DCSF, 2008b).

The Diploma in Careers Guidance – abandoned in the late 1990s – was the last qualification to command widespread recognition (albeit not free from criticism). Its academic replacement – the Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG) – has been widely criticised for its lack of an applied (practical) dimension, and its graduates are generally required to undertake NVQ studies when starting employment. Conversely, the NVQ Level 4 in Guidance is widely acknowledged as failing to provide practitioners with an understanding of underpinning theory and so as inhibiting the development of practice.

The NVQ in Learning Development and Support Services (LDSS) – favoured by Connexions in its latter days and now increasingly prevalent within integrated youth support services – has still to convince many within the career guidance field of its rigour in providing a sound base for career guidance practice.

The position is complicated further by the erosion of 'external' career guidance services and by the related diversification of career/ IAG-related roles that are emerging within schools and colleges. An NFER/NICEC study, funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, is currently investigating these roles and the training provided for them.

Steps are now under way to address the issue of professional standards in the field of career guidance on a UK-wide basis, to facilitate the mobility of qualified staff within the UK. Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the Sector Skills Council for the lifelong learning sector, has been considering the inclusion of career guidance specialist employers within its footprint. The chief difficulty has been that while the all-age careers services in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the adult services in England clearly fall within the Lifelong Learning UK footprint, the youth-related services in England (which comprise the largest part of the system) have been viewed as falling within the footprint of the Children's Workforce Development Council. It has now been agreed that work will be led by Lifelong Learning UK to review the qualifications framework and continuing professional development arrangements for careers advisers, to be completed by July 2009. The government announcement to this effect notes that the review 'will make recommendations which draw out the differences between the needs of the youth sector in England and the combined careers offer in other parts of the UK' (DIUS, 2008, p.14). Much depends on how these differences are defined and resolved.

7.2 Connexions Branding

In December 2006 a DfES Action Note reported that Ministers had decided that from April 2007 organisations 'receiving grant funding for Connexions' or 'for a combined offering of information, advice and guidance, and targeted youth support' would be required to use the Connexions brand. In April 2008 it was announced that 'local authorities will have the flexibility to widen the scope of the Connexions brand to cover other youth support services over and above those that are currently delivered under the brand' (*Connexions Multi Bulletin Transition Update*, Issue 210, 4 April 2008).

The survey found that in 79% of local authorities there has been no change to the range of services for which the Connexions brand is being used. Of the rest, 17% indicated that the brand has been extended to a wider range of services, and 4% that it has been reduced to a narrower range of services.

Where the brand has been extended, most have covered the Youth Service and (in some cases) other related services. In a number of cases there has been a 'localisation' of the brand. Examples are Telford & Wrekin, where the integrated youth support service is named 'Connexions 4 Youth'; Hertfordshire, where all Connexions and Youth services operate under a 'Youth Connexions Hertfordshire' brand; and Brighton & Hove, where the brand 'ConnexionsPLUS' has been adopted.

Where the scope of the brand has been reduced, this has sometimes been as a consequence of applying the brand more selectively. This might involve focusing the brand more closely upon vulnerable groups (for example, those in the labour market in North Yorkshire); or, conversely, 'distancing' the brand from the targeted youth support offer (as in Hackney). In other cases, it has resulted from a desire to promote the Council's own brand in preference to the Connexions brand (e.g. Waltham Forest).

The survey indicated that more local authorities are likely to extend the application of the Connexions brand as their policy relating to Integrated Youth Support Services evolves.

7.3 Management Arrangements for Information, Advice and Guidance

Analysis of the DCSF paper *Delivering 14-19 Reform: Next Steps* (DCSF, 2008a) suggests that the management of arrangements for Connexions/careers/IAG services can now be found at up to five levels:

- the institution (school/college/work-based learning provider);
- the consortium;
- the 14-19 Partnership (which is to be 'the link between the consortia delivering on the ground and the local authorities as strategic leaders of 14-19 reform through their local role of commissioning provision' (Summary, p.16) and is also to be responsible for delivering a Common Application Process in its area);
- the Local Authority (Children's Trusts are included at this level);
- sub-regional groupings of Local Authorities. The paper states that 'even the most capable and best supported local authorities will not be able to work alone to commission the most effective provision for young people in their area, especially given the number of young people who will travel to another local area to learn.' The paper affirms that 'by 2009, there will be sub-regional groupings in every part of the country' (Summary, p.18). Detailed proposals about sub-regional arrangements are to be submitted by local authorities by March 2009.

Interviews undertaken in 30 of the local authorities indicated that the key management level in most for careers-related IAG is the 14-19 Partnership, where IAG Strategy Groups have commonly been established to create impetus for the IAG agenda within the 14-19 reform programme. By contrast, in seven of these 30 areas, the local authority was identified as the critical locus for development of IAG policy and activity. It should be noted that in some local authorities there is just one

14-19 partnership, and so only four of the five levels identified above.

There was a very mixed response to the importance of the sub-region, with some local authorities emphasising its importance (e.g. Leicestershire, Sefton), and others seeing it as of much diminished importance or as unimportant (Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire). In one area it was noted that it was difficult to make progress on a sub-regional basis whilst all the local authorities were going through competitive tendering exercises for their provision. It may be that the heritage of the Connexions Service – organised on a sub-regional basis – is in evidence here, as some local authorities seek to preserve the best of what they perceive as a generally positive initiative, whilst others look to

distance themselves from an undertaking for which they had little enthusiasm. In one area where the Connexions Partnership had been dissolved and provision taken in-house, the blunt observation was made: 'We didn't go to all that trouble to dismantle a sub-regional arrangement just to put it back together again!' However, the emerging emphasis on the development of sub-regional approaches to the planning and commissioning of 14-19 Diploma provision may prompt a reconsideration of the significance of sub-regions even among the most sceptical local authorities.

Key Points

- There is confusion around what constitutes a 'professionally qualified' career guidance practitioner.
- 79% of local authorities have made no change to the use of the Connexions brand; 17% have extended the brand; 4% have reduced its scope.
- The key management level for IAG provision is, most commonly, the 14-19 partnership.

8. Implications

“ ... a stronger national policy framework is essential. This needs to be based on clarification of at least three matters: the nature and relationship of the key concepts; whether the distinctive expertise of the professional Careers Adviser is recognised or not; and the extent of young people’s entitlement to professional career guidance from an external base. ”

The move to ‘new arrangements’ for the management and delivery of Connexions/careers/IAG services is far from complete. In over a third of local authorities the current arrangements have been ‘rolled forward’ from the position prior to 1 April 2008. This has commonly been for very good reasons – often a belief that ‘the system isn’t broke, so why fix it?’, combined with a recognition that there are areas of children’s and young people’s provision that represent a greater priority for attention and reform. Nevertheless, there is an intention in all of these authorities to at least ‘review’ the current arrangements. It is clear that there will further competitive tendering exercises and, almost certainly, further remunicipalisation.

Even where new arrangements have been put in place, further reorganisations are anticipated in a significant number of local authorities. In many, that will be a consequence of refining thinking and policy around their Integrated Youth Support Services, with possible re-engineering of both management and delivery structures. In others, there will also be the need, as contracts with Connexions Partnerships or other providers come to the end of their term, to put provision out to tender again or resolve to take it in-house. Further local government re-organisations are another factor impacting upon the management and delivery arrangements for Connexions/careers/IAG services.

The process has no natural ‘end-point’. In some respects, that must be true for all public service provision that is responsive to changing needs. But there has been exceptional volatility, and instability, in this particular field over the past fifteen years. The return of responsibility for this area of youth support to local authorities represents the third major change in the structural framework during that time. In some areas, staff have had up to four different employers in the past twelve years. At every point of transfer, emphasis has been laid upon the need to minimise the disruption to front-line, client/

customer-facing services. With every change, however, there are inevitably ‘casualties’, and loss of experienced managers and professional support expertise (for example, in training and development, curriculum development, quality assurance, information management) will have an impact upon the quality of front-line services and upon the confidence of front-line delivery staff. This is particularly significant at a time when a raft of policy initiatives are emphasising the need for high-quality, effective information, advice and guidance to support young people, and when policy-makers are exercised by the need to recruit high-calibre staff to deliver both that agenda and the new adult advancement and careers service.

The sense of continued uncertainty is exacerbated by the absence of clear underpinning models – both for IAG provision and in respect of integrated youth support service provision – from central government. The announcement of the articulation of an ‘IAG strategy’ may serve in part to redress the situation, but any effective strategy will need to address in a coherent manner the relationship between IAG provision, the IYSS agenda and the management arrangements for 14-19 reform. Some local authorities have been transparent in acknowledging that they are unsure where Connexions/careers/IAG provision ‘sits’ within their own structures. Some have resolved the issue by ‘disaggregating’ the provision but, arguably, creating ‘diseconomies’ of value and effectiveness; others have created ‘dotted line’ or matrix management approaches.

Our survey illustrated the difficulties in determining where the provision is located within local authorities. The survey sought responses from the local authority officer with responsibility for ensuring the provision of the Connexions/careers/IAG services transferred to the local authority on 1 April 2008. Of the 141 respondents, 39 had ‘IAG’ or ‘Connexions’ in their job title; a further 47 had ‘youth’, ‘young people’ or ‘children’

in their job title; 13 were commissioning or contracts officers; and the remaining 42 had a variety of other job titles too wide to classify. There is a real sense that it is 'difficult to find' the provision within many local authorities, and certainly there is no consistency across local authorities. The aspiration to create a nationally consistent and coherent provision, that ostensibly informed both the 'contracting out' of the Careers Service and the creation of the Connexions Service, would appear now to be further away from realisation than ever before in recent times.

At this point the 'shape' of the new adult advancement and careers service (to be launched in 2010) is unclear. The Government has, however, declared its aspiration to create a smooth transition between services for young people and adults – possibly within the umbrella of an 'all-age guidance strategy'. The challenge of establishing effective transition arrangements from 150 local authority services to post-19 services is daunting simply in terms of the transactional load, but will be made much more complicated by the very different nature of the organisational arrangements within and between the local authorities.

A number of respondents drew attention to the problems caused by imprecision in the use of language in this area. That the concept of 'integrated youth support' can be interpreted in a multiplicity of ways is evident from the emerging dispositions. In addition, however, the word 'commissioning', apparently critical to the Government's vision for developing Children's and Young People's Services, clearly means different things to different people (and the Government itself may not always be consistent in its use). For some, commissioning is synonymous with 'tendering'; for others, commissioning describes the process of determining the service specification; for yet others, the term covers both.

But the same reservation exists in respect of 'IAG' itself. As one respondent said: 'The term IAG creates problems and will become increasingly problematic. It means different things to different people.' The term was originally used in relation to services for adults,

where it was widely criticised on the grounds that, without 'career' as a qualifying adjective, it meant little to potential users. At that time, there was an IAG framework for adults, but a careers service for young people. It is richly ironic that this has now been precisely reversed: there is to be a careers service for adults, but only an IAG framework for young people (Watts, 2008a).

The looseness of the term 'IAG' is part of a broader conceptual confusion which this survey has both reflected and revealed. The different terms that are used in different combinations within different local authorities – IAG, career IAG, careers-related IAG, careers education and guidance, Connexions, integrated youth support – all have somewhat different resonances and definitions; their respective boundaries and the relationships between them are loose and unclear. Where services are contracted, the nature of the services that are contracted may vary according to the terminology that is used.

Allied to this is a growing ambiguity about the extent to which access to impartial and professional career guidance from an external base is still an entitlement for young people. The Education Act 1997 (which remains on the Statute Book) mandated schools to provide access to careers advisers on the school's premises, in order to ensure that they had access to impartial career guidance. But the Children's Plan White Paper (DCSF, 2007), in addressing the issue of impartiality, made no reference to this provision. Instead, it saw impartiality being secured through 14-19 partnerships, through the content of careers education programmes, and through information provision in general and area prospectuses in particular (for a detailed analysis, see Watts, 2008b). It is the impartiality of these latter arrangements that the Education and Skills Act 2008 seeks to assure.

The reality is that only 40% of young people now receive an interview with a Connexions Personal Adviser, who might or might not be a professional Careers Adviser (Watts, 2008b). This contrasts sharply with the situation in Wales, where almost all young people

between the age of 14 and 19 receive at least one such interview, and many receive two or more (Watts, in press).

To exacerbate all this, a major implication of the new arrangements for young people is that it will be increasingly difficult henceforth to ascertain whether the resources dedicated to providing career IAG support to young people are increasing or continuing to diminish. The combination of a lack of hypothecated budgets for this area of work and the integration – in a wide variety of forms – of delivery into broader youth support provision will make it more and more difficult to disaggregate spending on IAG for comparative purposes.

The loss of both identity and accountability in an important area of public service provision is, in our view, a matter of grave public concern. If this situation is to be remedied rather than exacerbated, a stronger national policy framework is essential. This needs to be based on clarification of at least three matters: the nature and relationship of the key concepts; whether the distinctive expertise of the professional Careers Adviser is recognised or not; and the extent of young people's entitlement to professional career guidance from an external base. **Until these issues are resolved, policy initiatives in this field will be built on sand.**

Appendix 1: Summary of New Careers-Related Arrangements⁴ ⁵

NORTH EAST					
Former Connexions Partnership	Local Authority	Provider to March 2007	Provider April 2007 to April 2008	Provider from April 2008	Tender exercise undertaken
County Durham	Durham	Connexions County Durham	Connexions County Durham	Local authority	No
Northumberland	Connexions Northumberland	Connexions Northumberland	Connexions Northumberland	igen	Yes
Tees Valley	Darlington	Connexions Tees Valley	Local authority	Local authority	No
	Hartlepool	Connexions Tees Valley	Local authority	Local authority	No
	Middlesbrough	Connexions Tees Valley	Local authority	Local authority	No
	Redcar & Cleveland	Connexions Tees Valley	Local authority	Local authority	No
	Stockton-on-Tees	Connexions Tees Valley	Local authority	Local authority	No
Tyne & Wear	Gateshead	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Local authority (CEG support: the Hub)	No
	Newcastle	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Local authority (CEG support: the Hub)	No
	North Tyneside	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Local authority (CEG support: the Hub)	No
	South Tyneside	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Local authority (CEG support: the Hub)	No
	Sunderland	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Connexions Tyne & Wear	Local authority (CEG support: the Hub)	No

⁴ The table gives details for the careers-related element of each local authority's IAG service (sometimes referred to as the 'universal' service). In many local authorities, the wider/'non-careers' element of the IAG service (sometimes referred to as the 'targeted' or 'intensive' service) is provided by the same organisation; but in several, the wider IAG service is provided by a different organisation. For a fuller discussion, see Section 3.1.

⁵ The table outlines the arrangements at the end of October 2008. The final column refers to completed tendering processes and does not cover current exercises or future plans: the latter are however discussed in Section 3.3.

YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER					
Former Connexions Partnership	Local Authority	Provider to March 2007	Provider April 2007 to April 2008	Provider from April 2008	Tender exercise undertaken
Humber	East Riding of Yorkshire	Connexions Humber	Connexions Humber	Connexions Humber	No
	Hull	Connexions Humber	Connexions Humber	Connexions Humber	No
	North Lincolnshire	Connexions Humber	Connexions Humber	Connexions Humber	No
	North-East Lincolnshire	Connexions Humber	Connexions Humber	Connexions Humber	No
South Yorkshire	Barnsley	Nord Anglia Lifetime Development	Nord Anglia Lifetime Development	Nord Anglia Lifetime Development	No
	Doncaster	Nord Anglia Lifetime Development	Nord Anglia Lifetime Development	Nord Anglia Lifetime Development	No
	Rotherham	Nord Anglia Lifetime Development	Nord Anglia Lifetime Development	Nord Anglia Lifetime Development	No
	Sheffield	Sheffield Futures	Sheffield Futures	Sheffield Futures	No
West Yorkshire	Bradford	Careers Bradford	Careers Bradford	Careers Bradford	No
	Calderdale	Calderdale Kirklees Careers	Calderdale Kirklees Careers	Calderdale Kirklees Careers	No
	Kirklees	Calderdale Kirklees Careers	Calderdale Kirklees Careers	Calderdale Kirklees Careers	No
	Leeds	igen	igen	igen	No
	Wakefield	Guidance Services (VT)	Guidance Services (VT)	Guidance Services (VT)	No
York & North Yorkshire	North Yorkshire	Connexions York & North Yorkshire	Connexions York & North Yorkshire	igen	Yes
	York	Connexions York & North Yorkshire	Connexions York & North Yorkshire	Local authority	No

