



“Vulnerable and at risk individuals should be identified as soon as possible and appropriate early interventions made.”

(Voluntary Organisation)

“Support needs to be integrated into education and training provisions”

(Homeless project)

“Better work and training advice at school is needed.”

(Young person in Focus Group Study)



6 Improving Transition

Guidance and Support

The Issue

6.1 One of the main themes from our consultation exercises was the importance of guidance and support in helping young people to make the transition from school to post-school learning or employment. For some young people and their parents/carers the problem is not a lack of interest or purpose but a lack of adequate information and support. Once young people have been discouraged because the choice they have made was not right for them, or they have "fallen down the gap", there is a risk that a sense of failure will discourage them from trying again. Other young people approach transition to post-school learning from a background of disillusionment and failure. They may need intensive guidance to help them understand that there are opportunities open to them. They also need support to help them take advantage of these opportunities. In an Inclusiveness approach arrangements for guidance and support should recognise and meet the diverse needs of young people. We believe that there are 2 issues:

- young people and their parents/carers require access to high quality guidance and support to enable them to make the transition from school to post school education and training;
- young people also require readily accessible ongoing guidance and support to assist them with subsequent transitions.

The Committee's View

6.2 Young people may experience a variety of transitions on leaving school. Young people who are particularly vulnerable and their parents/carers are likely to need support to navigate their way through the range of post-school provision. Agencies with whom young people are in contact have a responsibility to provide guidance and support which meets the needs of the individual. Accurate information, impartial guidance and positive support should be available to:

- assist young people plan for transitions;
- support young people through the transitions; and
- help the young person sustain further education, training or employment.

6.3 Young people may look to a range of professionals for information and advice about their options (careers advisers, guidance teachers, subject teachers, social workers and community education workers) and more informal sources, most notably parents/carers but also other family members and peers. There is a body of research evidence which highlights the importance of parental influence on young people's career choices (Bratcher 1982, Kelly 1989, Semple and Howieson 1991).

6.4 Young people with different types of support need, whether these arise from a disability, difficult personal circumstances or as a result of low educational attainment and poor motivation, will require appropriate guidance and support which includes :

- assessment of education and training needs;
- assessment of personal development and support needs;
- access to information and advice;
- initial guidance and support;
- ongoing guidance and support;
- access to impartial careers guidance and careers and labour market information.

6.5 The Committee has reviewed aspects of the preparation for transition from school; the transition process itself; and guidance and support in the post school setting. These are discussed in the following sections.

Preparation for Transition

Transition from School

6.6 Raising awareness about post school learning opportunities and the world of work usually starts in the early years of secondary school through subject choice in second year (S2), careers education and other education for work activities. There is focused preparation for leaving school in S3/4 of secondary school delivered through careers education. Young people also have an opportunity to participate in university and college visits, work experience and other education for work activities. Access to individual careers guidance from careers service companies is generally from S4 onwards although young people, e.g. a young person with a Record of Needs, may have a careers interview at an earlier stage.

6.7 Careers education is delivered in a variety of ways in Scottish schools and there is not a consistent approach nationally. We welcome the fact that the Government has asked career service companies to adopt a consultancy role in working with schools to develop careers education and to bring greater coherence to the delivery of careers education and careers guidance. We also welcome the plans to develop national guidelines for careers education in Scotland. A consultation on the proposed guidelines for careers education will take place later this year.

6.8 Evidence from young people in our focus group study suggested that young people think that careers guidance and preparation for the world of work sometimes comes too late. They suggested that the emphasis should be on experiencing and understanding the nature and availability of different kinds of work and different routes to employment, rather than being focused on preparation for a particular career route. The introduction of the Progress File into secondary schools next year may assist pupils to think more about their future development including career choice and preparation for job interviews. The Committee believes that preparation for transition should start as early as possible, particularly where young people are likely to require a high level of support to enter post-school education or training or if they are in danger of "dropping out" of the education and training system.

Flexibility of Curriculum

6.9 Our consultation responses included a significant number of representations about the need to adapt the school curriculum to recognise and meet the different learning needs, and perhaps, just as importantly, the different learning styles among young people. There is another important and related issue: many young people who have low attainment, poor motivation or social, emotional or behavioural problems become disillusioned with learning at an early age.

6.10 We welcome the increased flexibility for the S3/S4 curriculum set out in The Scottish Office Circular 6/99 to local authorities on Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages. This will offer schools greater flexibility to meet the wide range of pupil needs. Schools will be able to use Higher Still and other units from the National Qualifications portfolio. The units at Access level will be particularly useful for pupils for whom a wide range of Standard grades would be too demanding. There will also be greater flexibility for the S3-S6 curriculum and schools will be able to design their own short course programmes using National Qualifications core skill units. We would encourage local authorities and schools to consider carefully how curriculum design can be adjusted to take account of the needs of individual students.

Flexibility of Provision

6.11 There are recent developments designed to address the range of problems experienced by a number of young people. The New Community School pilots across Scotland will develop and promote a multi-disciplinary approach to identifying and addressing the many factors which can create barriers to pupils' learning. The Excellence Fund for schools is also supporting a range of

measures designed to re-engage young people in learning. Through the Alternative to Exclusion scheme a number of innovative alternatives for young people at risk of exclusion are being piloted. Projects include in-school support units and vocational schemes involving work placements and outreach services into schools. There are also similar projects which have attracted Scottish Lottery Board funding. Some specialist training providers run education programmes in conjunction with other partners for school refusers and those young people aged 14-16 who are excluded from school. The young people are usually referred to the programme by the education authority. The programmes provide support for a wide range of young people including vocational education and training, work experience and preparation for employment.

6.12 The Committee wishes to record its support for the further development of alternative types of provision for young people in their latter years of statutory schooling. The problems of engaging young people in learning whilst at school can extend to post-school. However, if young people have a positive experience in their latter years at school, this can encourage them to continue in some form of learning when they leave school.

Education for Work Agenda

6.13 The Education for Work (including enterprise education) agenda seeks to make more effective links between education and the world of work. Education for Work and enterprise education activities can start at an early age and the Committee welcomes the current developments in primary schools. Learning about work and enterprise education is now an integral part of school education and can be a powerful motivator for young people who have low motivation, poor academic qualifications and who may be at risk of disaffection from education and training. We also welcome the proposed research projects on the impact of Education for Work and Enterprise on the learning of young people.

6.14 Work experience is an important aspect in preparing young people for the world of work and can benefit young people of all abilities and aspirations. We welcome the publication of a new work experience guide to be published by The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (Autumn 1999). The guide encourages organisers of work experience to develop approaches best suited to the needs of individual students.

6.15 Education authorities, schools, career service companies, The National Centre: Education for Work and Enterprise, Education Business Partnerships and of course industry itself all have a role to play in developing the links between education and work and improving the employability of young people. We would encourage the newly established Advisory Group to the National Centre for Education for Work and Enterprise to give serious consideration to examining means of improving the employment prospects of disaffected and disadvantaged young people.

Activities which Support Preparation for Transition

6.16 The Committee has looked at various examples of activities which are designed to

improve transition for a wide range of young people. "Transition Teams" are a good example of an approach to transition which actively involves young people. The distinctive feature of Transition Teams is that they are self-managed by pupils rather than teachers. Pupils investigate their own choices of post school education, training and employment. The programme has been designed by the Counselling and Career Development unit (CCDU) at Leeds University. In Scotland, Transition Teams have been piloted by Glasgow Education and Business Partnership in conjunction with CCDU and supported by The Scottish Office. Evaluation of the pilots has concluded that Transition Teams provide a relevant and motivating learning focus for young people with a range of needs. We support approaches which, like Transition Teams, encourage young people to actively engage in the transition process and to develop the skills and knowledge that will help them manage their own transition.

6.17 There are also good examples of careers service companies working with partners such as schools, education authorities and colleges to help more vulnerable young people prepare for leaving school. Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians, with support from the Scottish Office worked in partnership with West Lothian Council, Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd, schools, West Lothian College and employers and training providers to develop "West Work". The pilot was an innovative way of providing the transition skills necessary to enhance access to training and employment for December leavers at West Lothian schools. Concentrated careers education complemented visits to colleges, extended work experience and mentoring for a group of young people who often do less well in Standard Grades, have little motivation and poor attendance at school, especially during their last term of compulsory education. The partners have been impressed by the success of the programme and intend to continue with it.

Transition for Young People with Special Educational Needs

6.18 Children with a physical, sensory or learning disability, or an emotional or behavioural difficulty, who have a Record of Needs will undergo assessment within the 2 years before their statutory school leaving date. This assessment should identify their needs, make arrangements for any post school education and training, and assess the young person's need for any social work services or support to assist their transition to adulthood. These assessments, known as Future Needs Assessments (FNA), are generally co-ordinated by school staff, with input from other agencies including psychological services, careers service companies, further education colleges, social work and health.

6.19 The Committee believes that the FNA process offers a good model for post-school planning. In particular, it encompasses the early identification of needs, early specialist input and cross-agency planning. However, the practice is not always as effective as it should be. We have received evidence from parents and voluntary organisations highlighting their concerns about the quality of information about services, and about effective communication between agencies. Professionals can often dominate FNA meetings and young people and their parents/carers can find difficulty in making their voices heard. Another concern raised by some young people themselves was that sometimes professionals make assumptions about what route the young

person will follow. In the words of one young man, *"I said that I wanted to do a HND in computing but they all said, you can't do that, you'll fail."* This young man went on to do a HND, followed by a degree course and is now working as an IT analyst.

6.20 The Committee welcomes the publication by SOEID (1999) of the new Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs and in particular, the guidance on the role of the local authority, school and support services in Future Needs Assessment. Amongst the recommendations are that:

- The careers adviser is a member of the FNA team and offers specialist vocational assessment where required;
- The child/young person and his/her parents are offered up-to-date information about the range of post-school provision in the area and elsewhere, where appropriate, which is available to them;
- Voluntary agencies, colleges and other providers of post-school services are involved, as appropriate;
- There is joint training for professionals from different support agencies.

6.21 We would endorse the good practice highlighted in the manual and encourage local authorities, schools and support services to work together to improve the experience of the FNA for young people and their parents/carers.

Transition

The Role of Careers Service Companies

6.22 There are 17 careers service companies in Scotland which offer careers information, guidance and placement services, to a wide range of clients. Recent Government aims for career service companies have been:

- to work more closely with employers to find out more about opportunities in the labour market;
- to work as consultants to schools on the design of careers education;
- to work more closely in strategic partnership with other organisations; and
- to give increasing priority to work with disaffected and disadvantaged young people.

6.23 Careers service companies play a crucial role in the transition of young people and are in the unique position of having potential contact with young people whilst at school, and on

leaving school. They also have contact with employers and post school education and training providers. Careers service companies work with young people who have additional support needs in a variety of ways:

- involvement in the Future Needs Assessment process;
- conducting careers guidance interviews;
- referral to training providers and other agencies;
- providing a placing service to those leaving school, college or training;
- providing careers and labour market information to clients and to other agencies;
- tracking and follow-up.

6.24 Many (but not all) career service companies have specialist careers advisers who can support the in-service training of mainstream staff. There is also involvement in the development of specific careers education and information for young people with additional support needs including employer visits and work experience. Specialist careers advisers work with young people in special schools and those in mainstream schools who have a Record of Needs.

6.25 Some careers service companies do outreach work with young people requiring intensive support. Tayside Careers Service has appointed a community-based careers adviser who works with other agencies involved with young people. There are other examples of careers service companies working with other agencies to support vulnerable young people. Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians works with the Edinburgh Homeless Project and Glasgow Careers Service run a Care Leavers project. A careers adviser has been seconded to the Aberdeen Foyer to provide careers guidance and information on employment and training to young people. The Foyer provides affordable accommodation, employment/training, guidance, and skill development and personal action planning support for young people aged 16-25 who are homeless or in need of housing.

6.26 The Committee believes that it is vital to identify young people who are disadvantaged in any way or who are at risk of "disappearing" from the system as early as possible. We welcome the increased focus on work with disadvantaged clients, and would **recommend that the Scottish Executive ensure that careers service companies have adequate resources to do such work. Careers service companies should continue to develop their work in partnership with schools and other agencies, (e.g. social work, community education, voluntary sector) to identify those young people who will find it most difficult to make the transition from school to post-school provision, or who are risk of dropping out of the education and training system.**

6.27 We also recommend that careers advisers should also identify young people at

school who might benefit from the support of a key worker and/or mentor in collaboration with schools and guidance staff.

6.28 Conventional methods of delivery of careers information and guidance may not be appropriate for many young people who require a lot of support to enter further education, training and employment. Careers service companies are already examining different methods of working with young people who are at risk of becoming "disaffected". The Committee believes that careers service companies should be encouraged to continually re-examine the ways in which they can reach young people and work in partnership with other agencies to do this. Other agencies would include social work and community education who are in contact with a range of young people. **We therefore recommend that careers service company managers should work with other key agencies to seek alternative ways of assisting young people with additional support needs and develop effective multi-agency approaches to support young people.**

6.29 Innovative ways of reaching young people will demand new approaches and enhanced professional skills. Staff training and development will be crucial to allow careers service company staff to develop more innovative methods of working with young people in their local area. The proposed area networks will have a role to play in arranging joint training where appropriate.

6.30 Careers service companies are currently required to supply the Scottish Executive with information on the first destination of school leavers. However, many young people "disappear" from the system after they have left school or when their first destination does not work out. The problems of early leavers are discussed later in this chapter. Continued tracking of young people once they have left school could help identify those who are most at risk. Many young people return to their local careers service company at some stage either to discuss their career options, find a job/training place or to register for benefits (Bridging Allowance, Job Seekers Allowance). The introduction of a key worker service could help provide the continuity and support which young people will require if they leave further education, training or employment prematurely.

6.31 The Committee believes that careers service companies, as the bridge between education, training and employment, should track those young people most at risk of dropping out of the system beyond their first destination. Careers service companies will not be able to do this in isolation and should work in conjunction with other agencies and the key worker service. We also recognise that the tracking of young people is time and resource intensive. **We therefore recommend that careers service companies identify those young people for whom further tracking would help, for example, young people who leave school and do not enter any further education, training or employment or young people who leave care. We also recommend that careers service companies be given sufficient resources to track such young people beyond their first destination.**

Guidance and Support in the Post School Setting

Pre-entry Guidance

6.32 We have discussed the importance of preparation for transition from school, and the role of careers service companies and other agencies in assisting young people through the transition process and providing ongoing guidance and support. Colleges and training providers also have a crucial role to play in offering pre-entry guidance and ongoing support to young people. Improved assessment of a young person's learning and support needs should identify the nature of provision required to ensure that the young person achieves his/her potential.

6.33 Colleges offer pre-entry guidance in a variety of ways, for example, attendance at FNA meetings, liaison with schools, link courses with schools in their area. One example of a collaborative approach to preparing young people for moving on to college is "On to College" which is a programme developed by Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians, with financial support from The Scottish Office Challenge Fund for innovative work with careers service companies. "On to College" is a careers education resource designed to ease the transition of young people with learning disabilities from school to college.

6.34 The Support Plus Project at Stevenson College is a 2 year project funded by the Scottish Executive and is examining ways of providing extra support to young people who are underachievers or who find the transition to college particularly difficult. An interim report on the project has confirmed the importance of the pre-entry guidance to enable vulnerable young people to make smoother transitions. The Support Plus report and evidence from the Committee's consultations highlights the need for communication between schools and colleges to be improved. Pre-entry guidance for colleges should be a joint responsibility between school and college in partnership with careers service companies and other relevant agencies.

6.35 Most young people entering training are referred by careers service companies and receive pre-entry guidance. The Evaluation of Skillseekers (PACEC 1998) has identified the problem of "early leavers" from Skillseekers. The evaluation surveyed 1081 current trainees and 600 young people who had left Skillseekers without gaining a qualification. The proportion of young people with additional support needs was much greater among early leavers than amongst Skillseeker trainees. Some key findings amongst early leavers were that:

- Young people in Special Training Needs (STN) programmes are less likely than other trainees to have stayed at school for fifth year;
- Early leavers are less likely to be employed under Skillseekers and be earning a wage. The average weekly pay of early leavers is £50.93;
- Early leavers were unsure of the job or training they wanted to do before joining Skillseekers.

6.36 Most of the young people left Skillseekers early because they were unhappy with the running of the programme or to go to a job with better pay. Only a quarter of the young people who left were still working towards a qualification and it was rarely related to their Skillseekers training. One of the recommendations in the Evaluation was that the quality of guidance for young people with additional support needs or those who were at risk of leaving training early should be strengthened. Scottish Enterprise has produced an Action Plan to take forward the recommendations from the Evaluation. One of the proposed measures is that LECs and careers service companies work with each other to identify potential early leavers. We are aware of a number of good examples of LECs and careers service companies working together to improve guidance and assessment for young people with additional support needs, for example, Renfrewshire Careers Pathways, the Assessment Service in Careers Central, and the assessment process being used by Fife Careers.

6.37 We believe that pre-entry guidance for young people with additional support needs should be given a higher priority and **recommend that careers service companies should work with schools, colleges, LECs and training providers to improve pre-entry guidance for young people who will require additional support in further education or training. Where possible, careers service companies should identify young people who may experience difficulties in sustaining a college or training place and, in partnership with the education and training provider, identify a specific support mechanism. This may involve a referral to a key worker or mentor.**

Ongoing Guidance and Support

6.38 Inclusiveness requires that colleges and training providers provide ongoing guidance and support appropriate to the needs of the learner. We recognise that college and training providers already have systems in place for offering ongoing support to the learner. Many colleges have course lecturers who have a responsibility for guidance. Some colleges employ their own careers advisers to provide careers information and guidance to their students. Some training providers have staff who act as "counsellors" to learners and the young person can choose who he/she wishes to take on this role.

6.39 Ongoing guidance and support is essential if young people are going to sustain an education or training place and fulfil their potential to learn. For some young people, the need for guidance or support is difficult to acknowledge. The interim report of the Support Plus Project at Stevenson College suggests that this is particularly true of young male technical and engineering students. A study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Lloyd 1999) looking at young men's (aged 18-20) attitudes to gender and work also suggests that some young men are reluctant to ask for help or accept advice about their options, particularly whilst at school. Many young people with additional support needs will be relatively immature when entering further education or training and may find it difficult to acknowledge the need for support. This reluctance to acknowledge the need for help can pose a challenge for staff working with such young people. The experience of Support Plus, to date, suggests that further education staff are not necessarily equipped to

respond to the needs of immature or vulnerable young people. Part of the maturing process for young people may be the acknowledgement that they need support, and the increased confidence to seek help.

6.40 In 1998, HMI carried out a small-scale study into the levels of retention and achievement among college based Skillseekers in the Fife Fast-Trac project for non-advanced further education. Part of the study was a comparison (although limited in scope) with students in other colleges in Scotland. One of the most significant findings was about the characteristics of 16-18 year olds in non-advanced further education. In many cases they had lower previous educational attainment, low levels of motivation and, in general, had greater difficulty in adapting to the college environment.

6.41 The particular issues which were identified as crucial to improving retention and achievement among this cohort were:

- improved pre-entry and ongoing guidance and support;
- staff development and training in dealing with "disaffected" young people;
- early diagnosis of problems e.g. literacy, numeracy etc: early diagnosis led to more tutor guidance and in some cases, specialist learning support.

6.42 If more young people, particularly those with lower qualifications and motivation are going to benefit from further learning opportunities, enhanced guidance and support will be essential. **We therefore recommend that colleges and training providers, in collaboration with careers service companies and other agencies, identify ways in which ongoing guidance and support for learners can be enhanced. Specific consideration should be given to improving early diagnosis of problems; introducing an improved tutor system so that the young person has a named contact; and identifying young people who may benefit from key worker and/or mentor support.**

Other Sources of Support

6.43 There are other voluntary sector organisations which can provide specialist information, guidance and support to students with disabilities and other support needs. Skill, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities in Scotland, provides up to date information and advice on employment and post-16 education opportunities for disabled people through a freephone helpline, website and publications. The national guidance helpline Learning Direct (which is to be absorbed into the Scottish University for Industry) also offers a support service for people with disabilities in partnership with Linking Education and Disability Scotland (LEAD Scotland). We would encourage colleges, training providers and careers service companies to work in partnership with such organisations to offer guidance and support to students.

The Role of Local Authority Psychological Services

6.44 We have given specific consideration to the potential role of local authority psychological services. Currently psychological services can provide support and advice in relation to young people up to their 19th birthday within their existing statutory remit. However, the services are mainly currently deployed in relation to school pupils. The staffing levels within psychological services are not designed to meet the needs of 16-18 year olds.

6.45 The Committee has had representations from those who feel that psychological service support should be available for young people in post school education and training. We believe that there is a need for continued access to psychological service support for young people with additional support needs. A psychological service for 16-24 year olds should:

- complement and augment the assessment and advice provided by college or training provider staff;
- contribute to contextual assessment which is solution focused and is consistent with Inclusiveness;
- support the transition process;
- contribute to strategic developments within the Area Structure arrangements.

6.46 **We therefore recommend that the Scottish Executive, in co-operation with the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists, the British Psychological Society and COSLA, should develop a specification for psychological services for 16-24 year olds based on the outline above. They should also review staffing levels and training requirements for psychological services in Scotland in light of this new emphasis and extension of role.**

Summary of Recommendations

We recommend that:

Careers service companies should continue to develop their work, in partnership with schools and other agencies, to identify those young people who will find it most difficult to make the transition from school to post-school provision, or who are risk of dropping out of the education and training system. (Paragraph 6.26)

The Scottish Executive should ensure that careers service companies have adequate resources to work with these young people. (Paragraph 6.26)

Careers advisers should also identify young people at school who might benefit from the support of a key worker and/or mentor in collaboration with schools and guidance staff. (Paragraph 6.27)

Careers service company managers should work with other key agencies to seek alternative ways of assisting young people with additional support needs and develop effective multi-agency approaches to support young people. (Paragraph 6.28)

Careers service companies should identify those young people for whom further tracking would help, for example, young people who leave school and do not enter any further education, training or employment or young people who leave care. (Paragraph 6.31)

Careers service companies should be given sufficient resources to track such young people beyond their first destination. (Paragraph 6.31)

Careers service companies should work with schools, colleges, LECs and training providers to improve pre-entry guidance for young people who will require additional support in further education or training. Where possible, careers service companies should identify young people who may experience difficulties in sustaining a college or training place and, in partnership with the education and training provider, identify a specific support mechanism. This may involve a referral to a key worker or mentor. (Paragraph 6.37)

Colleges and training providers, in collaboration with careers service companies and other agencies, should identify ways in which ongoing guidance and support for learners can be enhanced. Specific consideration should be given to improving early diagnosis of problems; introducing an improved tutor system so that the young person has a named contact; and identifying young people who may benefit from key worker and/or mentor support. (Paragraph 6.42)

The Scottish Executive, in co-operation with the Association of Principal Educational Psychologists, the British Psychological Society and COSLA,, should develop a specification for psychological services for 16–24 year olds based on the outline above. They should also review staffing levels and training requirements for psychological services in Scotland in light of this new emphasis and extension of role. (Paragraph 6.46)