



GUIDANCE MATTERS

Summer 2021 / Issue 6



INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE:

- National Forum on Guidance 2021 - Summary Report
- Whole School Guidance - A comprehensive Guidance Counsellor perspective
- Reflecting Students Vocational & Pastoral Needs
- Challenges and Opportunities in the delivery of FET Guidance
- Guidance to an Independent Adult Life
- The 'NCGE Podcast'
- New Ways of Engagement in Higher Education



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

And lots more inside

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Where an article author has not been directly referenced, content has been developed and / or compiled by a member of the NCGE team.



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INTRODUCTION AND NEWS



Welcome...

to the Summer 2021 edition of
Guidance Matters.

As I write this introduction, I am mindful that our Guidance Matters publication is providing an historical note for our guidance-history books. In our Summer 2020 edition, we were adjusting and learning to adapt and cope with the sudden impact of severe restrictions on our education, training, work and personal lives and worrying about the health and safety of those closest to us. By the time of our Winter 2020 edition, some of us had enjoyed “staycations” and the schools were open.

We have gone through the difficult time of a post-Christmas spike in pandemic infections, further restrictions, school and business closures. We are entering into summer 2021 with increased vaccinations nationally and across the EU. We remain however conscious of the still devastating effects of this pandemic globally.

These 14 months will have an untold and long-term impact on our healthcare, front line workers and essential retail staff. Personal, social, education and career guidance services will be needed more than ever to support students, clients, adult learners, those unemployed due to the pandemic and wider communities to take stock, rethink, reconsider and begin to plan again.

But if there is one area that guidance services excel, it is in planning for and / or supporting transitions and we are now entering a period of global and national transition. Showcasing how guidance services are adapting, changing and developing services to meet these challenges head on is crucial. Guidance professionals and practitioners have developed ICT skills we never knew we needed! However, data gathering, and formal academic research remain essential to informing guidance policy and practice developments. Good practice would still suggest that where management and guidance practitioners reflect and co-operate on service provision, new and innovative ideas are developed, and blended approaches considered where both online provision and face-to-face activities continue.

While sadly many of us, our students, our clients and colleagues will have faced illness or the loss of a loved one due to this global pandemic, the dedicated commitment of guidance professionals and practitioners to supporting others must not be underestimated at this time.

Wishing you all well for a safe and healthy few months ahead,

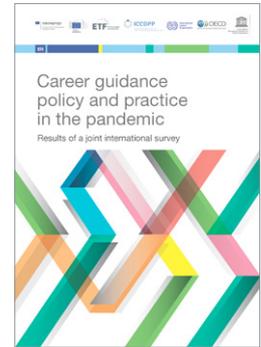
Ni neart go chur le cheile

Is mise le meas,
Jennifer McKenzie
Director, NCGE



Career Guidance policy and practice in the pandemic

Following on from their joint statement in 2019 on Investing in Career Guidance, the EU Commission, Cedefop, ILO, UNESCO, ETF, ICCDPP and the OECD collaborated to develop and roll out a global survey to ascertain the impact of the pandemic on guidance services, whether in education or labour market sectors.



The survey collected 963 valid responses from 93 countries globally, including Ireland. The majority of respondents were career guidance professionals and practitioners from across 53 countries which provided an on-the-ground picture of how guidance services were impacted and challenged due to the global pandemic. 73 countries provided responses from government policy officials and guidance service management representatives with the overall majority of respondents indicating that they worked in publicly funded organisations. 77% indicated that they worked in the education and training sector, 49% in the labour market / employment sector.

The REPORT provides an understanding of the impact of the pandemic and of official measures, actions or decisions taken at national or regional level on the continued provision of career guidance services globally. Referencing responses from various countries, the report noted the provision of Department of Education guidelines for guidance provision in post-primary schools during school closures, the increased use of ICT for the delivery of guidance services online and the provision of online interactive “open days” for education institutions in Ireland.

Findings of the survey indicate that, for the most part, career guidance services adapted to provision online and guidance practitioners’ “positive attitude to the use of technology... was observed!” However, respondents to the survey reported that, along with the need to provide updated labour market information, there was a notable increase in psycho-social supports required to support individuals in uncertain situations.

The conclusions of the report outline the vital importance of co-operation between stakeholders and employers in “repositioning guidance “into national Covid -19 recovery strategies and to consider guidance provision from a systemic perspective. Furthermore, it is expected that the results of the survey could be used to inform policies and initiatives of international organisations into the future

As member of the Cedefop CareersNet expert group, NCGE Director, Jennifer McKenzie worked with this international team on this global survey.



NEWS

Irish EU Reference Group of Agencies of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

The 8th Meeting of the Irish EU Reference Group of Agencies was hosted online on 19 January 2021. It was attended by approximately 50 delegates from the further and higher education sectors. Hosted by QQI, the meeting provided updates about European policies and initiatives which promote and support mobility.



Presentations to delegates included

- The new Erasmus+ programme, under the EU 2021-27 programme cycle with priorities of inclusion/diversity; digital transformation; participation in democratic life and environmental sustainability
- Developments in Euroguidance and CEDEFOP in support of guidance practice and policy across EU
- Latest updates on NARIC work providing advice on foreign and Irish qualifications.
- The development of the new Asia-Pacific Network of centres website providing free and authoritative information on the recognition of qualifications in the region to support physical or virtual mobility of students and academics.
- Updates on the developments at EU level of the EUROPASS.eu portfolio
- Information on Micro – and Digital – Credentials
- Report on the recent referencing of the Irish NQF to the EQF process

Crucially, this meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on how the global pandemic was impacting on all initiatives but had highlighted the benefits of international communication and co-operation and provided opportunities for innovation and creative thinking!

Click [HERE](#) for the full report of this meeting.

Euroguidance Network 'Highlights' 2020

Highlights is a publication series that presents the yearly achievements of the Euroguidance Network. The work of the national Euroguidance Centres is illustrated in selected examples of concrete activities carried out by the 34 participating countries.



Click [HERE](#) to view / download the 2020 publication.

Open public consultations

In the delivery of guidance services across the lifelong learning spectrum, guidance professionals and practitioners will advocate for their students and clients across all sectors. Through direct engagement with clients, guidance services can identify gaps in provision in education, training and labour market sectors. In this context guidance services are well placed to advocate at national and international level through the provision of submissions to public consultation processes. In spring / summer 2021, such public consultation processes in Ireland and at EU level include the below.

Title:	Issued by:	Submission deadline:
National Access Plan 2022 – 2026	HEA and DFHERIS (Ireland)	18/06/2021
National Strategy on ESD to 2030	D.E. and DFHERIS (Ireland)	30/06/2021
Validating non-formal and informal learning	EU Commission	30/06/2021
Micro-Credentials	EU Commission	13/07/2021
Individual Learning Accounts	EU Commission	16/07/2021



FEATURE ARTICLE

SUMMARY REPORT - NATIONAL FORUM ON GUIDANCE 2021

Promoting Sustainable Development and Change - What is the contribution of Lifelong Guidance?



NATIONAL FORUM
ON GUIDANCE
FÓRAM NÁISIÚNTA
UM THREOIR



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Lárionad Náisiúnta um Threoir san Oideachas
National Centre for Guidance in Education

Now in its 10th year, the NCGE National Forum on Guidance provides an informal communication and cooperation facility for those involved in the provision of guidance and the development and support of guidance practitioners and services. NCGE, through hosting the Forum, strives to continually empower guidance stakeholders in the performance of their role. In doing this we seek to bring topics to stakeholders' attention of genuine relevance and interest. Participants include organisations and individuals providing and supporting guidance delivery in both the education and the public employment sector. Each Forum is intended to inspire participants in their practice, in their work developing guidance related policies or simply in returning to their organisation with a greater comprehension of the overarching societal function guidance performs.

 The [National Forum on Guidance October 2020](#) provided an opportunity for NCGE to introduce the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the dialogue and discourse of guidance practice and provision in Ireland, with the intention to continue the discussion into Spring 2021. The [April 2021 Forum](#) therefore provided the opportunity for participants to consider input into the Irish Department of Education [national consultation process](#) on the next [Education for Sustainable Development \(ESD\) Strategy](#). It is crucial that the voice of the guidance community is included in this consultation. Participants at the Forum were encouraged to consider the information provided, and furnish their thoughts, comments and suggestions on why and how guidance can play a role in the development of this Strategy.

Over 120 stakeholders were in attendance, representing a broad spectrum of guidance provision in Ireland; including Further Education and Training; Post- Primary; Higher Education; the Department of Education; the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science; State and independent agencies; various representative organisations and private practice. We were again additionally pleased to have participation from international stakeholders including [Euroguidance Network](#) members and individuals who have and continue to be influential in the development of guidance policy and practice worldwide.



The speakers were:



Leona De Khors

Leona is Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP), Irish Department of Education (Dept. Ed) with responsibility for the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and is the Dept. Ed representative on the Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan Working Group



Jennifer McKenzie

Jennifer is Director of the Irish National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) since 2010 and is currently studying part-time for her Education Doctorate in Queen's University Belfast, focusing on Multicultural Competences in Guidance Counselling. Jennifer is a member of the EU Commission CEDEFOP CareersNet expert group.



Dr. Peter Plant

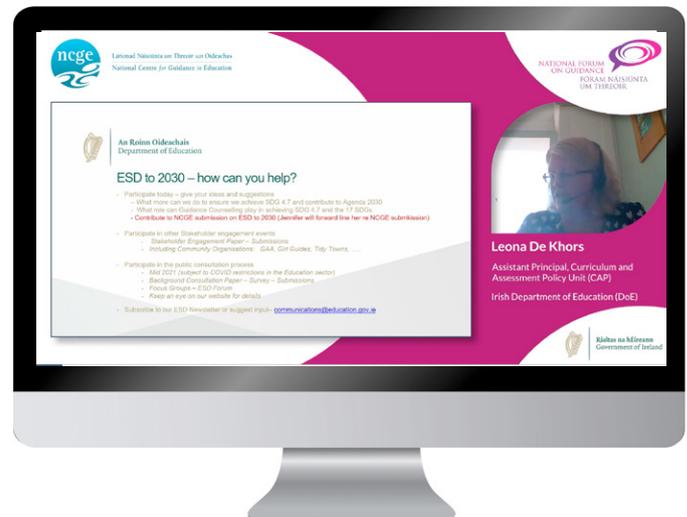
Professor, Dr. Peter Plant has worked in the field of career education and counselling since 1974 in schools, in the employment service, and in universities. He has worked as a researcher in many European projects on guidance, as a consultant to the EU-Commission, and to the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN). He is a Professor in the University of South East Norway, active in rural policies, the chairman of the local village council and the chairman of a regional EU rural fund in his home country, Denmark.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030 – Ireland

Leona De Khors

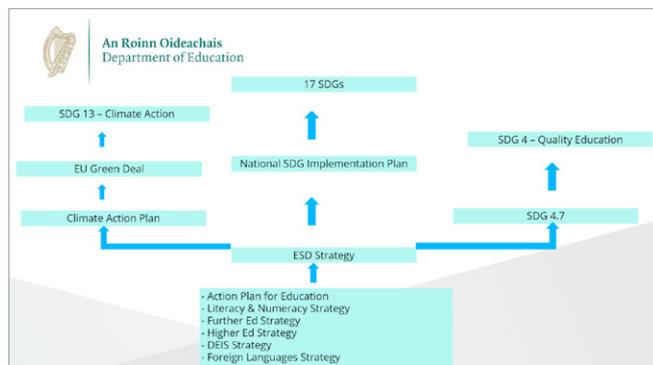
After a brief initial introduction from Jennifer McKenzie, the opening presentation was delivered by Leona. Leona outlined the existing ESD strategy (2014-2020), highlighting its overarching aim **“to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge, key dispositions and skills and the values that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become active informed citizens who take action for a sustainable future”**. This aim was facilitated under policy areas including ‘Environmental’, ‘Socio-Economic’ and ‘Political’ with deliverables occurring under 8 x priority actions areas. Examples of implementation included the integration of ESD across school curricula, subjects and examinations (including a directory of ESD resources available to schools), integration within teacher training / CPD and school inspection processes, the coordination with external organisations providing ESD related resources, an increased focus on ESD within Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education. Additional empirical examples of activities currently underway (under ESD) within schools was provided.

Leona then went on to highlight the 17 United Nations ‘Sustainable Development Goals’ (SDGs). Reference was made to SDG 4, for which the Department of Education



has lead responsibility nationally - to **“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”** and in particular **target 4.7** - **“by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”**. This is already aligned in part within the existing strategy (as the strategy predates the publication of the SDGs). It is intended that alignment to the SDGs be integrated yet further into the developing one.

Leona explained that, building on the existing strategy and under the current Irish Programme for Government and correlating plans (and strategies) the development of the next strategy is underway. This will be a joint strategy between the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (D FHERIS). It will reflect both the UN SDGs and the UNESCO Framework on ESD to 2030 and be built on the proposed associated pillars / priority action areas listed therein. With regard the relevancy of the SDGs to guidance, Leona reminded participants of previous feedback provided as part of the last Forum; where in addition to SDG 4, Guidance was seen as being of relevance and impact to the achievement of SDG 5 – ‘Gender Equality’ and SDG 8 – ‘Good Jobs and Economic Growth’.



In developing this strategy, Leona emphasised the importance of stakeholder voice and that this is being facilitated through information sessions (such as the Forum), focus groups and through requested input into the formal public consultation. Leona stated definitively that guidance related input into its progression is valued and sought and informed participants that NCGE had agreed to coordinate a submission to the public consultation with regard ‘Guidance and ESD’ and that individual submissions will also be accepted.

- **For greater detail access a copy of Leona’s presentation [HERE](#)**
- **View a video of the presentation [HERE](#)** (start point ‘05:45’)
- **Provide input into NCGE’s submission to the Public Consultation on a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030 [HERE](#)**
- **Provide your DIRECT input into the Public Consultation [HERE](#)** (Consultation paper available [HERE](#))
- **Subscribe / contribute to the ESD Newsletter [HERE](#)**



Guidance contribution to Education for Sustainable Development?

Jennifer Mc Kenzie

“Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.” – National Guidance Forum 2007

Following Leona’s presentation, Jennifer contextualized the potential role and input of Guidance.

A brief recap of discussions arising from the previous Forum was made with reference, again, to the 17 UN SDGs; their inherently integrated nature; how they have real world implications effecting people and how, therefore, Guidance has a key role to play in their attainment.

In addition to the overarching **SDG 4**, and target **4.7** (highlighted in Leona’s presentation), Jennifer outlined targets **4.4** - “By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”, and **4.5** - “By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations”. **Guidance was clarified as having a core societal function in supporting the individual to consider everything for and within their own circumstance.**

Further targets outlined as being Guidance related were; **8.3** - “promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation...”, **8.5** - “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value”, **8.6** - “...substantially reduce the

proportion of youth not in employment, education or training”, **5.1** - “End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere” and **5.5** - “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”. The national **Regional Skills Fora** were mentioned as being a key facilitator and support to progress with regard the attainment of these targets; within which Guidance has a natural input. It was stated that **Guidance has a role in the promotion of sustainability. It was stated that Guidance empowers the individual, encourages worker and learner retention, assists in facilitating the otherwise marginalised, promotes social inclusion and can aid with the reduction of discrimination and provision of opportunities.**

Jennifer additionally spotlighted:

the recently published **European Pillar of Social Rights**, making particular reference to associated inclusionary targets such as access to employment and training and the reduction of poverty. The obvious relevance of lifelong Guidance to these targets was highlighted and the fact that particular mention to the role of Guidance is contained within the associated **Action Plan**

the **EU Green Deal** and how Guidance delivery has perhaps pivoted recently (as a result of force majeure) to being more ‘Eco Friendly’ through its provision remotely. A second example provided (linked to the Green Deal) was the role of Guidance in providing access to accurate and impartial information within the ever developing ‘Green Economy’.

The focus of Guidance on and about the **individual** was stressed with its role in maintaining an individual’s personal development and wellbeing, alongside and inclusive of careers and education planning. The prospect and further development of remote Guidance and remote learning was referenced as being an example of meeting individual needs going forward in a sustainable manner.

Jennifer referenced Leona’s outlining of the varied and cross sectoral strategies and required alignments. From an NCGE perspective (reflective of the previous Forum), the need for ‘joined up’ thinking is advocated. It was stated that guidance (as a whole) should be truly reflective and integrated into existing relevant national and international strategies and form part of the leadership for the promotion of global shared responsibility in the achievement of sustainable development. A local example provided was the need for a National Guidance Strategy that could incorporate ESD and other relevant ongoing initiatives to which guidance has a contribution.

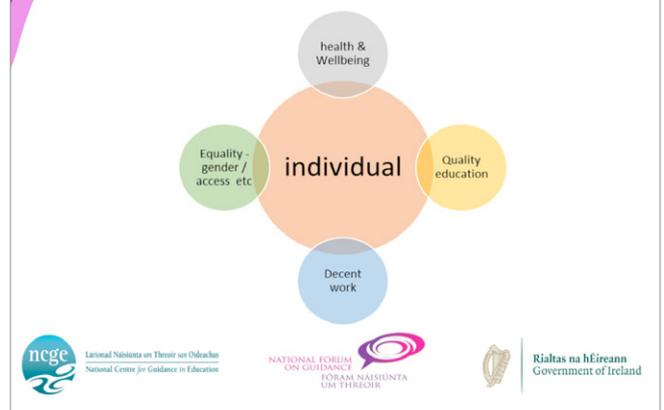
PARTICIPANT COMMENTARY

How do we bring these SDGs to our schools and how do we start implementing a Green guidance plan?

PARTICIPANT COMMENTARY

We need to offer Equal and effective opportunity to 'ALL!'

Where does Guidance fit in? Focus on Individual at centre of SDGs



Again, with reference the previous Forum, the scope for the consideration of how sustainability could be integrated into policy and practice was highlighted. Examples included; simply reflecting on SDGs within practice (day to day); the continued use of online guidance provision; the introduction of the SDGs into guidance related learning / career management skills and career development, supervisory support to practitioners across all guidance sectors and the need for a ‘systems approach’, inclusive of SDG considerations, in guidance planning.

Jennifer concluded her presentation by prompting participants to initially consider where and how does guidance have a role in supporting the attainment of SDGs 4, 5 and 8 and how could these concepts or ideas input into the development of the next (national) ESD Strategy.

- **For greater detail access a copy of Jennifer’s presentation [HERE](#)**
- **View a video of the presentation [HERE](#)** (start point ‘26:00’)
- **Provide input into NCGE’s submission to the Public Consultation on a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030 [HERE](#)**

General input to discussions

Dr Peter Plant

Whilst participants considered the prompts provided at the end of Jennifer's presentation and the specific 'Slido' questions presented (see below), Dr Plant outlined his initial thoughts, in the context of the Forum topic, in order to elicit further and meaningful feedback in the second part of proceedings. Firstly, from a policy perspective as stressed in the earlier presentations, he highlighted the many varied and vital policy level documents and research published to date. Secondly, from a practice perspective, Peter stated it was a 'green opportunity' to make guidance and career education in particular more relevant. In his opinion there will soon be a revival of the focus on sustainability within careers education. "Taking an activist approach" to the exploration of Green Careers will make careers education highly relevant and allow those who do so be ahead of the curve in meeting the future needs of individuals.

The empowerment of learners to perform career research under a Green theme was suggested as a complimentary activity; with many future careers not yet actually defined in detail and that would no doubt ultimately have aspects of sustainability at their heart. Examples of existing careers and industries, such as hairdressing, fashion and law beginning their transition from the bottom up to being more sustainable and 'green friendly' were mentioned.

The question of what is actually meant by 'Sustainability' was addressed by Dr Plant. Discussions in Denmark have focused on the question of whether these might just be related to environmental goals or if there is a more multi-dimensional aspect to the concept. It was determined that it had a broader remit and scope including (but not limited to) the 'built environment', socio-economic considerations and behaviors and culture. On review of initial feedback received; Dr Plant additionally highlighted the ongoing linking of sustainability issues to social justice.

Finally, Peter congratulated Irish decision makers in the promotion and integration of ESD to date.

View a video of Peter's input [HERE](#) (start point '57:35')



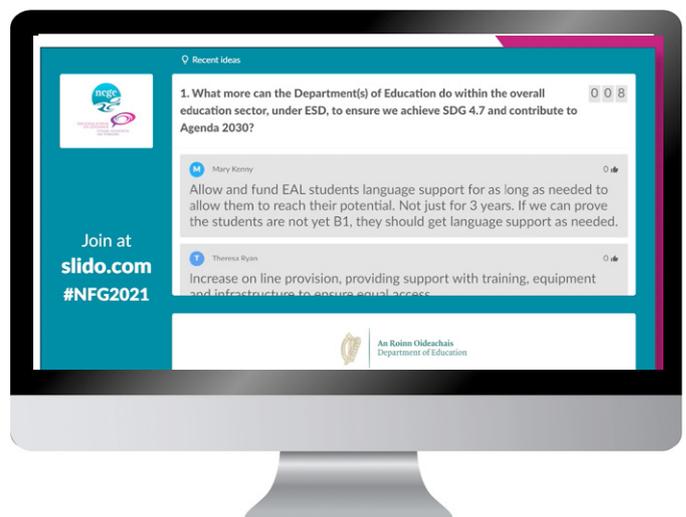
Feedback and discussions

A key component of every Forum is the opportunity for participants to provide feedback on the topics raised. As this Forum took again place remotely, this opportunity was facilitated online. Participant feedback focused on 4 x questions. These questions were provided individually through the interactive 'Sli.do' platform on the day for participant completion.

1. What more can the Department(s) of Education do within the overall education sector, under ESD, to ensure we achieve SDG 4.7 and contribute to Agenda 2030?
2. What Guidance related activities could be included in the ESD Strategy to achieve SDG 4.7
3. From these, what actions can Guidance services take to support ESD?
4. What could the Department(s) of Education do to support Guidance Practice in accordance with ESD?

View a video of the receipt and discussion of feedback [HERE](#) (start point '1:05:45')

All (live) participant feedback received to these questions can be accessed [HERE](#)





Conclusion

As already outlined, the purpose and scope of this Forum was to provide the opportunity for participants to consider input into the Irish Department of Education national consultation process on the next Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Strategy. Through this Forum facilitation we aim to have enabled an informed voice, on behalf of the guidance community, into the consultation.

All contributions made will inform the formal NCGE submission to the Dept of Education ESD consultation.

We would like to further remind you that all members of the guidance Community can provide further input into NCGE's submission to the Public Consultation [HERE](#) (deadline 30/05/2021)

OR you can do so directly [HERE](#) (deadline 30/06/2021)

PARTICIPANT COMMENTARY

So many areas where I need to reflect myself and in my practice. Excellent for broadening scope of my role!



On behalf of NCGE, thank you to all participants for bringing their expertise and experience and engaging in constructive and open exchanges through the technology provided. Thank you to Leona De Khors and Dr. Peter Plant for the giving of their time to inform and engage with participants. NCGE would also like to express appreciation to Streamtech Ltd, the online service provider, for their professionalism and support. We look forward to continued engagement with both the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science in the progression and development of lifelong guidance policy and practice on behalf of all stakeholders.

For more information, including the programme, presentations, participant feedback (Sli.do) and the full video recording of the Forum go the NCGE National Forum on Guidance home page.

<https://www.ncge.ie/national-forum-guidance>



Broadening the conversation on Guidance with the NCGE Podcast



In January 2021, NCGE continued our exploration of new ways to communicate with the Guidance Community through the launch of the NCGE Podcast. The aim of the podcast is to discuss topics relevant to Post Primary (secondary schooling), Further Education and Training (VET) and European considerations for guidance. We like to imagine you listening at home, on the move, on your morning commute or in your office in between classes / 1-1s and client meetings. We are delighted with the feedback and support the series has received to date.

5 x episodes are now available...

Episode #1

The challenges and possibilities for collaboration with Independent Community Education in FET (VET) with **Tara Farrell**, chair of AONTAS and CEO of Longford Women's Link.

Episode #2

Aisling Fleming of DCU spoke about considerations for lifelong guidance for everyone.

Episode #3

Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE outlined her key principles for working in guidance and discussed a number of exciting developments in guidance provision.

Episode #4

President of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), **Dr Gert van Brussel**. Gert outlines his own background and path to the IAEVG, the importance and benefits of guidance associations,

organisations and individual practitioners being IAEVG members, as well as the key messages for developing guidance services, particularly in a post-Covid world.

Episode #5

Rory Gallagher, CTC Youth Advocate in Longford Westmeath ETB discusses his career path from social care and working in a family research centre, to his role as a Youth Advocate, how he employs the MAGIC model (Mentoring, Advice, Guidance, Information and Counselling) with early school leavers, and the parallels and differences in the work of Advocates in Irish Community Training Centres and that of a Guidance Counsellor.

These and all future episodes of the NCGE podcast can be accessed on the SOUNDCLOUD platform by clicking below.

.....
 Listen / Follow us on Soundcloud [HERE](#) and get new episodes as they become available.



PSI Register of Psychometric Test Use - Guidance Counsellors



Guidance Counsellors in Ireland – why should you make sure you are registered with *PSI Register of Psychometric Test Use - Guidance Counsellors*?

 This Register was established following agreement between PSI and the [Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling](#) on the training of guidance counsellors in the use, administration and feedback of psychometric assessments. In 2016, this agreement was revised and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the now [Adult Guidance Association](#) also became signatories to this agreement, signifying the commitment of the professional bodies to appropriate use of and qualifications for Psychometric assessments. In addition, the [Department Programme Recognition Framework](#) on the criteria for the training of guidance counsellors to work in education sector, required that graduates would be eligible to sign up to this register, ensuring standardised training.

This PSI Register supports the implementation of good practice in the use of psychometric testing in the education sector. It endorses the professional competence of the Guidance Counsellor in the administration of psychometric tests in Ireland and serves the public interest as an Irish Register. Recent Departmental Circulars pertaining to guidance practice in schools indicate the requirement for guidance counsellors in schools to remain aware of the ongoing developments in areas relevant to guidance such as psychometric tests¹ and notes that guidance counsellors are “strongly encouraged to join this Register to keep up to date with developments and continuous professional development in this area”²

Since 2020, NCGE has continued to engage with PSI, IGC and AGA to encourage sign-up to this Register and to ensure that guidance counsellors in schools and FET can access appropriate psychometric tests for use with students. In 2021, following further collaboration and negotiations between NCGE, PSI and psychometric test publishers in the UK, Pearson-Clinical have agreed to recognise the qualifications of Guidance Counsellors to access their tests categorised as [CL2R tests](#), once the guidance counsellor is registered with PSI thus providing a quality assurance mechanism for all concerned.

Furthermore, in accordance with Department Circulars and the NCGE remit to provide appropriate CPD to support quality practice in guidance, NCGE and PSI are collaborating to deliver CPD in psychometric testing in next academic year 2021-2022. This CPD will be provided to those guidance counsellors in schools and FET who have registered with the PSI Register of Psychometric Test Use - Guidance Counsellors. More information will be issued in due course, but now is a good time to sign up to the Register if you have not already done so!

For more see - www.ncge.ie/psi



¹ Advice on the use of assessment instruments/tests for Guidance or for additional and special educational needs (SEN) in post-primary schools

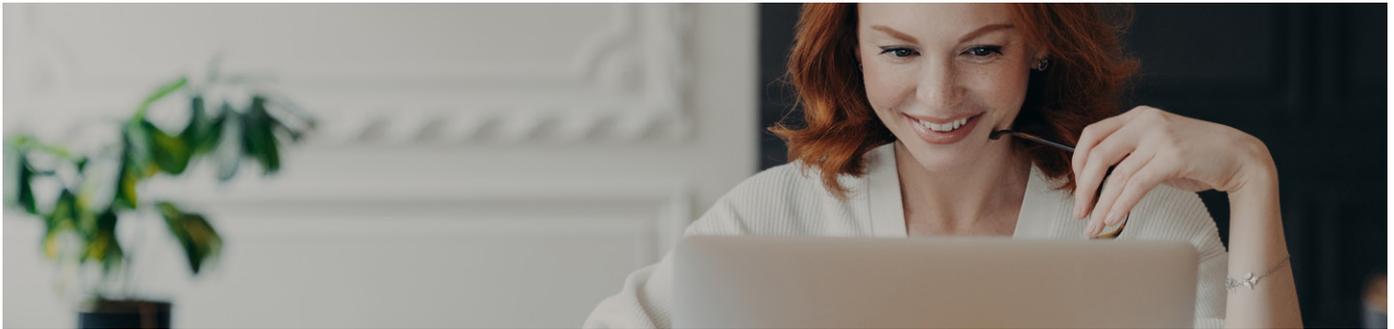
² Staffing Arrangements in Voluntary Secondary Schools for the 2021/22 school year





NCGE CPD

(Webinars and remote resources for Post Primary Guidance Delivery)



International and European guidelines promote the development of practitioner skills and the importance of continuous professional development for guidance counsellors. One key role for NCGE is the delivery of CPD for guidance counsellors in schools and FET sector. As with many other services globally, NCGE moved CPD provision online due to the pandemic. This article indicates the commitment of guidance counsellors to attending such national CPD, online, and may inform planning of crucial CPD into the future.

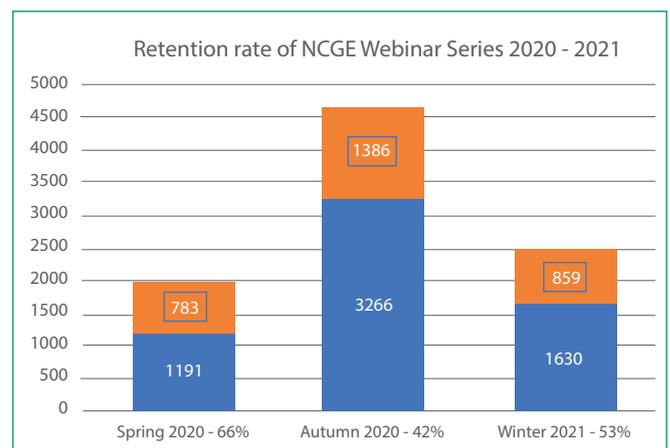
The initial closure of schools in March 2020 because of Covid-19 prompted NCGE to react quickly to respond to the needs of Guidance Counsellors, particularly with regards to CPD provision. While NCGE had been able to host an **initial session of CPD** in Dublin on 10/03/20 with La Touche Training on the theme of 'Legal Responsibilities & Confidentiality for Guidance Counsellors', further planned sessions of this CPD were postponed, along with planned 'Guidance Counsellor Resource Days', scheduled for delivery across the country, to provide and develop resources for Post-Primary Guidance Counsellors.

In lieu of these traditional forms of CPD delivery, NCGE developed several Webinar Series, which focused on a 'two prong' approach: the provision of remote Guidance as an unexpected occurrence and the continuation of all aspects of Guidance provision (policy and practice) in line with established policy, and to meet the needs of stakeholders in each local school. A large suite of **resources** were also developed to support schools and Guidance Counsellors with all aspects of Guidance provision with regard to both policy and practice.

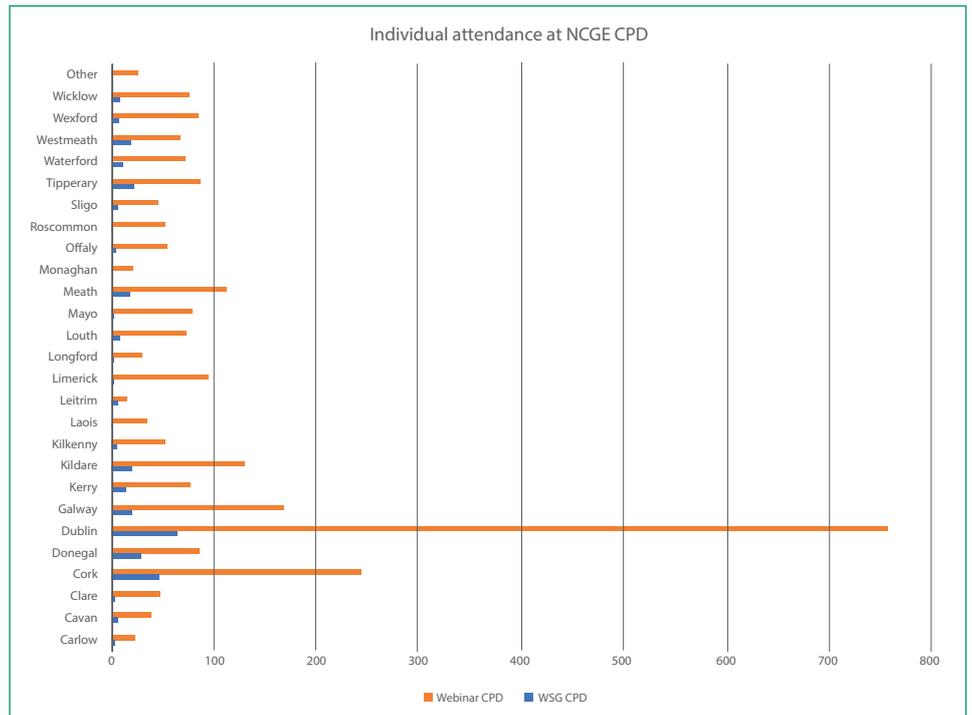
While school closures have continued to present considerable challenges to all school staff, the development of online CPD provision has provided NCGE

with the opportunity to deliver to a wider audience. This can be seen in statistical analysis of live participants during NCGE's 2020 and 2021 Webinar Series'.

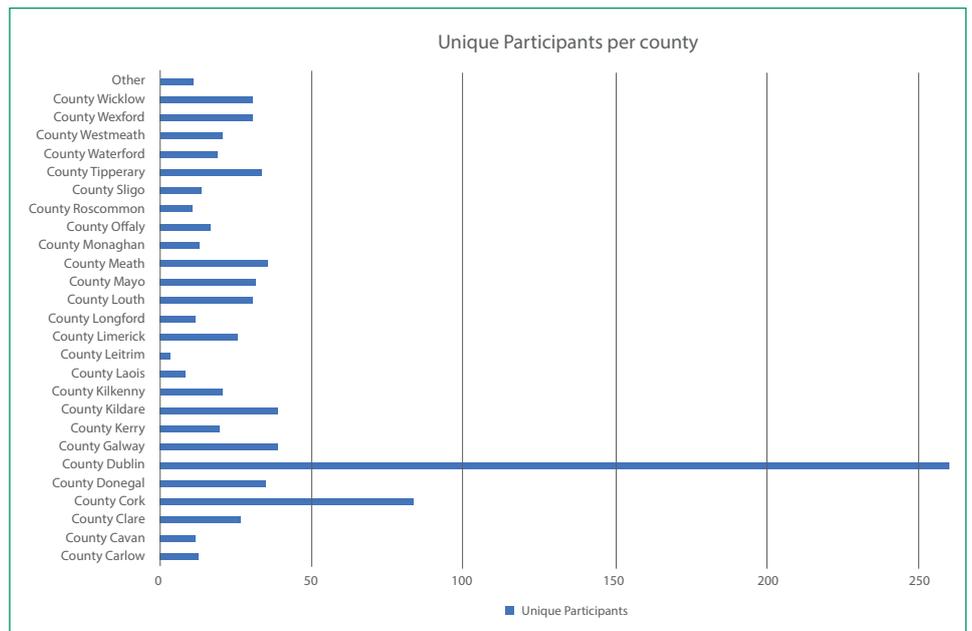
The four webinars offered in the four sessions of the Spring 2020 series featured live participation from 783 individuals, a retention rate of 66% from the total 1191 original registrants. Retention rates remained steady as NCGE increased our Webinar output and participants adapted to online delivery methods through 2020 and into 2021. The total retention rate of live participants from initial registrants in each Webinar series can be seen in Table 1 below.



Online delivery enabled NCGE to deliver to participants from all counties at a higher rate than in-person sessions. Table 2 across compares total live attendance at the Spring, Autumn and Winter Webinar series 2020/2021 per county to total attendance per county of individual participants (as opposed to schools) at Whole School Guidance CPD, NCGE’s main CPD delivery in 2019/2020.



During the 21 Post Primary Webinars delivered at time of writing, we have had 902 unique participants, that is, individual registrants who have participated in one or more sessions live. Of these, 63% have participated in two or more sessions. The breakdown by county of unique live participants can be seen in Table 3 across.



The benefits of face-to-face CPD – Guidance Counselors networking and sharing practice with colleagues, the space to go in depth on issues, the time to fully explore key concepts – cannot easily be replicated in online provision. Nevertheless, the capacity to deliver information in greater numbers and on a more frequent basis has demonstrable advantages. While NCGE eagerly anticipates the time when we can meet with our colleagues in person again, the statistics show the potential for an increasingly blended approach in CPD provision going forward.

You can access all NCGE webinar recordings and accompanying resources [HERE](#)



Whole School Guidance and School Improvement Review

- A Guidance Counsellor Perspective



Conor Hayes, school guidance counsellor, provides a clear and comprehensive outline of linking whole school guidance and school self-evaluation and improvement processes. *NCGE invited Conor to present on his schools' experience and good practice in a recent NCGE webinar.*

In an era of unprecedented change, the onus of commitment and responsibility has never been so great on school management personnel, especially when it comes to implementing legislative policies that have been established by The Department of Education. Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998 requires schools to ensure “that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices” (Irish Statue Book, 1998). The provision of guidance is a statutory requirement for schools under this Act. It is disconcerting to see how government policy has been so detrimental to the service in recent times regarding cuts in guidance provision. The Institute of Guidance Counsellors has been steadfast in their lobbying of government over the years in the restoration of these posts, which were axed in 2012. Over the past year, as all of society grapple with becoming accustomed to the “new normal”, the emergence of major issues among our students in post-primary settings have presented, some no doubt being exasperated by the current pandemic. “Student wellbeing was identified as a key concern, with several school leaders suggesting that an increased allocation of guidance counsellors would be helpful, especially in the case of continued remote or blended learning” (ESRI, 2020, p.77). The additional temporary increase in guidance hours (reinstatement of remaining 120 ex-quota posts) because of the Covid pandemic is welcome. However, as it is only an interim

measure, it is hoped that in time the ex-quota model will be restored and, better still, increased hours beyond levels which they were a decade ago, when a plethora of the issues emerging from society presently did not even exist.

Whole School Guidance

Guidance refers to “a range of learning experiences, provided in a developmental sequence, that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives” (DES 2005). Guidance is viewed as a continuum, an on-going process which begins before the student enters the school and continues when the student leaves. While the professionally trained school Guidance Counsellor delivers guidance counselling, it is also acknowledged that guidance is envisaged within a whole-school approach. Management, teaching staff, year heads, SEN coordinator(s), parents and students are all important stakeholders whose input is welcomed in the delivery of the guidance service. Presently, it is more important than ever to have an updated and functioning whole school guidance plan, given the rapid speed at which changes are occurring in every aspect of school. I feel it is important to note that a whole school guidance document is a roadmap that is a work in progress and is adaptable as the school requires. It operates in tandem with a plethora of other school planning documents.

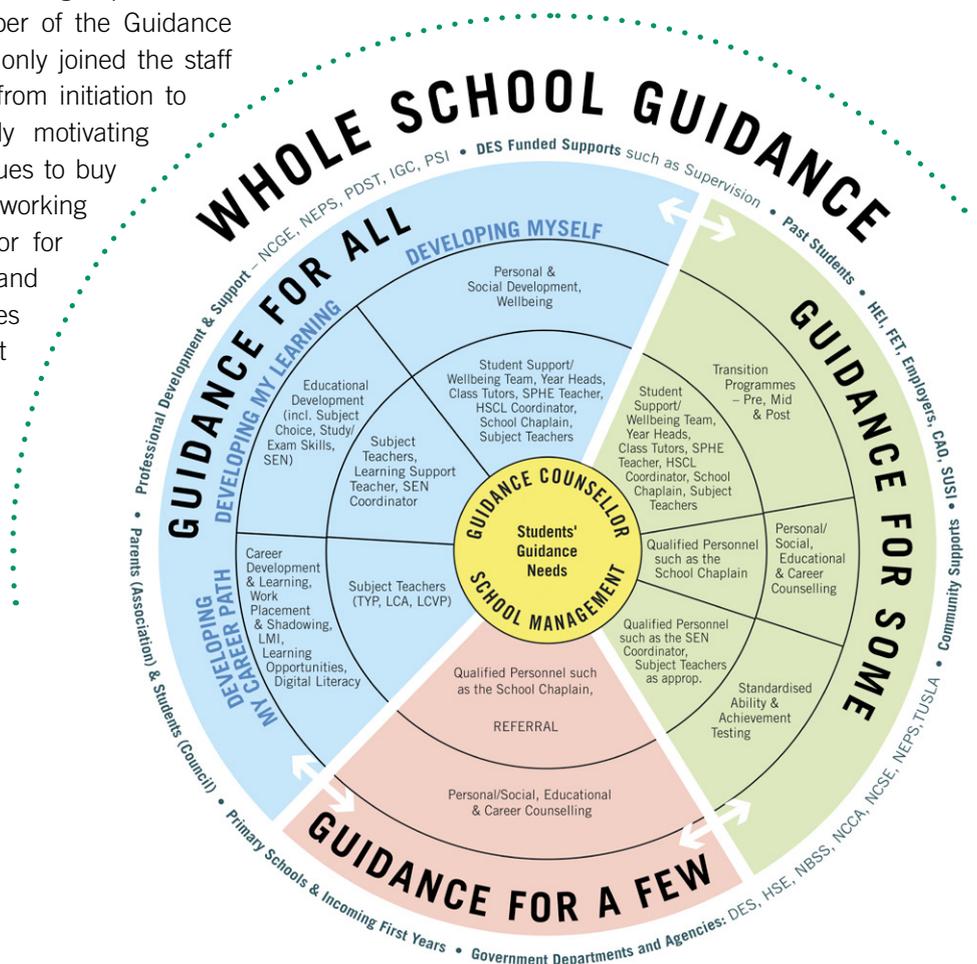
Leading the Whole School Guidance Journey

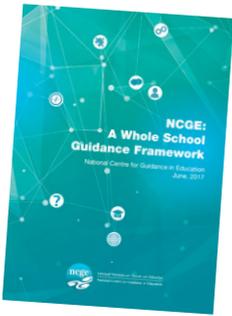
I am working in my current role of Guidance Counsellor in a voluntary secondary school in Tipperary since 2016. I began the journey of implementing a whole school guidance plan in my first year at the school. Many other Guidance Counsellors have already engaged in such a process, and for those that have not done so, it is not anything to be feared. Partnership is key to the process. Partnership can be defined as “a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and willingness to negotiate” (DES, 2006). I anchored the development of a totally new revised Guidance Plan viewing guidance holistically as a whole school approach. The planning stage involved liaising with and collaborating with many different teams (Year Heads, Student Support and Wellbeing Teams, Senior Management Team), subject departments, student council and leadership team and the parents' advisory committee. The revised Guidance Plan involved not only documenting the core curriculum for Guidance classes but more significantly outlining the vision of The Abbey School and implementation of guidance as a whole school integrated service to offer support to staff and students in the three main areas of our practice: Personal, Vocational and Educational Counselling. A critical area I identified for inclusion in the plan was the development of standard operating procedures for use by all Guidance and Student Support personnel as an integral part of our daily practice. As the newest member of the Guidance and Student Support teams, having only joined the staff a year previous, I steered the plan from initiation to implementation while simultaneously motivating my more experienced senior colleagues to buy into it and adopt it as a practical working framework document. As Coordinator for our weekly Whole School Guidance and Student Support meetings, our activities ensure that as a team, we reflect and regularly revise in our practice. The revised plan was subject to inspection in our recent WSE - MLL inspection, and the inspectorate report complimented the Guidance plan.

“In addition to the very good support and guidance provided by all staff to all students, a student support team is proving valuable in meeting the needs of students identified as requiring specific supports and interventions” (DES, MLL Report, 2018, p.3).

A student support team, and a related weekly meeting, is proving valuable in ensuring adequate provision of support for students. The approach to the provision of guidance is well balanced and supports students' educational, vocational, and personal needs. Provision of timetabled educational and vocational preparation and guidance in senior cycle, and the provision of inputs in junior cycle as deemed important and necessary, are noted as hugely beneficial (DES MLL Report, 2018, p5).

For any school at the initiation stage of the whole school guidance process, it is quite timely given the number of changes that have occurred in the past year. One should not worry or be apprehensive if they are only beginning this journey as it is a process that takes place in stages over a period. The key is that the school establishes a whole school guidance plan that encompasses all relevant stakeholders. “A Whole School approach ensures that a school maximises its resources for guidance through the identification of roles and responsibilities for school management and staff in the provision of appropriate guidance to students” (JMB, 2012, p4).





NCGE: A Whole School Guidance Framework

This framework was published in June 2017. Its title, “A Whole School Guidance Framework”, is the foundation from which I worked when revising the whole school plan. The framework contains a continuum of

support for schools in relation to the guidance curriculum. Three areas of learning are promoted. These are personal/social development, educational development, and career development.

The NCGE have been instrumental and fast paced in their response to the needs of Guidance Counsellors engaged on the front line in educational settings across the country through their delivery of various online CPD events in recent months. This reply was no doubt aided by a robust and dynamic resource sharing and online platform, which they already operated from prior to March 2020. A recent webinar which took place on March 2nd, coordinated by Dr Carol Guilda (Post-Primary Guidance Coordinator) on the area of “Whole School Guidance and Looking at Our Schools” in addition to “The Inclusion of Parents in Whole School Guidance” on January 19th stood out to me as being very practical and useful daily in my role as Guidance Counsellor.

Whole School Guidance and School Self Evaluation

“School self-evaluation empowers a school community to identify and affirm good practice, and to identify and take action on areas that merit improvement. School self-evaluation is primarily about schools taking ownership of their own development and improvement” (SSE Guidelines 2016-2020). It is a process that has become embedded in school culture since 2012. I have worked in three schools in this timeframe. Initially, I remember a sense of resistance from staff to engage in the process mostly due to the unknown and seeing it as a bureaucratic endeavour which would take away from their ability and time to prepare for classroom-based activities. This perception could not have been further from the reality of what the cornerstones of SSE are. School self-evaluation involves reflective enquiry leading to action planning for improvement that is informed by evidence gathered within each school’s unique context, (SSE Guidelines, 2016-2020)

In my current school, we engage in the process as an opportunity to collect data from stakeholders, set appropriate targets for the year ahead, implement change, culminating in evaluating progress at the

end of a cycle. Strands include literacy, numeracy, assessment, questioning, critical thinking, reflection, and communication. The process enables us as a school to use the data from feedback and evidence to identify meaningful and specific targets and actions for the improvement of the whole school that focus on the enhancement of teaching and learning actions and outcomes.

Just as Whole School Guidance is an undertaking that includes all stakeholders, the same is true of the SSE process. While I am not directly involved in the coordination of SSE in my school setting, I work in tandem with the coordinator of SSE on several areas. Whole School Guidance and School Self-Evaluation are inextricably linked, and the processes are mutually beneficial. Many guidance and student support activities can be linked to SSE improvements carried out within the school. One such example is documented below.

A Working Example of Whole School Guidance Improvement Linked to SSE – “Check and Connect”

In our school, we constantly strive to improve every aspect of school life. In the 2019-2020 school year, the Whole School Guidance Team, in conjunction with the Student Support Team, implemented a mentoring programme for 6th Year students which is referred to as “Check and Connect” mentoring. The programme was established due to concern that a minority of students graduating from the school may not necessarily have a major focus for progression. They sometimes lacked motivation and focus and perhaps were studying a subject at the wrong level. When some of the above issues were identified, it was late in the year, so much so that implementing an improvement strategy at that stage would have minimal impact. Research through questionnaires and focus groups was carried out when the previous group of 6th Years were exiting the school. This was analysed by the Whole School Guidance and Student Support Teams. The results of this research heralded the launch of a student mentoring programme in our school.

Check and Connect in Action

All 6th Year students are connected with one good adult from the school staff. This greatly aids my role as a Guidance Counsellor through collaboration with the mentor teachers. The mentoring programme adds an extra layer to an already effective support structure. It also assists me in managing the ever-growing challenges with the role of Guidance Counsellor in a more efficient and structured manner. It proved very advantageous to the whole school community during the periods of remote learning recently.

Mentors and mentees are paired by looking at mentee future career goals, personal interests, and personalities in conjunction with the subject area and interests of the mentors involved in the programme. For example, a student wishing to undertake studies in Agriculture would be paired with the teacher of Agricultural Science. A student aspiring to study PE teaching or Sports Science may be linked with a teacher trainer of the Senior Football or Hurling Team. Some of our senior cycle subjects have small numbers of students studying them. As a result, the teachers and students connected to these have a strong working relationship. For this reason and where possible, we match mentors and mentees of these subject groupings, which has proven to have worked very well.

Mentors and mentees meet formally and informally throughout the year. They are encouraged to meet formally three times over the year and informally as time permits. Informal meetings may be a quick chat after class or training. Formal meetings are structured with clear goals and areas for development identified. Mentors can keep an eye on mentee results, performance and overall progress whilst maintaining communication with the 6th Year Team and myself for additional supports and interventions where necessary. Feedback on how the process is working out is sought from all parties at regular intervals.

Six Step SSE Process

Six Step Process		School Application
1.	Identify Focus	School focus – monitor students in 6th Year more closely by establishing a check and connect system
2.	Gather Evidence	Evidence gathered from LC class in the previous year, exit questionnaire and focus group. Also informed by the progression of recent groups of LC graduates.
3.	Analyse and Make Judgments	Working group of staff from Student Support and Guidance teams assessed results from the previous 2 years of LC, progression to further education tracked, and feedback gathered from students on graduating. It was established that students might benefit from more one-to-one support, in addition to the support they receive from Guidance Counsellor, Tutor and Year Head.
4.	Write and Share Report and Improvement Plan	6th Year “Check and Connect” system proposed. Teachers who would act as mentors on a voluntary basis were identified. These staff members were matched to students through career and extra-curricular interests relevant to both as far as was possible.
5.	Put Improvement Plan into Action	Mentors and Mentees linked up. Formal and informal meetings take place over the year. Mentors briefed on what role involves. Suggested areas to cover in meetings are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAO, Further Educations Interests • Developing an Action Plan based on Short-Term Goals • Methods for Coping with Stress • Reflect on positive/negative aspects of school and personal life currently • Realistic Goal Setting Revisited • General Wellbeing Check-in and Reassurance
6.	Monitor Actions and Evaluate Impact	Coordinator checks in with a different mentor and group of mentees each week. Coordinator frequently communicates with mentors formally and informally. Feedback at regular intervals. Formal through questionnaires with mentors and mentees. Impact and success of system discussed with Guidance and Student Support Teams and Senior Management to establish a roadmap for the following year.

Whole School Guidance and Looking At Our Schools

The Department of Education document Looking At Our Schools 2016, is intended as a tool to guide and inform school improvement from teaching and learning and leadership and management perspectives. Like aspects of Whole School Guidance improvement can be linked to the six step School Self-Evaluation process, they can be benchmarked for standards of improvement through the LAOS 2016 framework. “It is designed for teachers and for school leaders to use in implementing the most effective and engaging teaching and learning approaches and in enhancing the quality of leadership in their schools” (LAOS, Framework, 2016). With this concept in mind, we set about benchmarking any initiative we engage with from whole school guidance, wellbeing, and student support against this quality improvement document. The framework assists us as a school to identify strengths and areas for development. This, in turn, enables the school to steer and take ownership of improvement and development plans. A key benefit of this process is it promotes embedding school self-evaluation and reflective practice taking place at a whole school level leading to overall school improvement.

Student Mentoring Programme – “Check and Connect”

Structure and Application of LAOS Quality Framework in Practice

Identify Area for Action:

The Guidance Counsellor has high expectations for students and leads staff in striving for improved outcomes. They support reflective practice and promote a culture of improvement.

Dimension:

Teaching and Learning

Domain:

Learner Experiences

Standard:

Grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive

Statement of Effective Practice:

Interactions among students and between students and teachers are respectful and positive, and conducive to wellbeing.

Statement of Highly Effective Practice:

Interactions among students and between students and teachers are very respectful and positive, and conducive to wellbeing.

Review of Programme After Year 1:

- Working very effectively, review after year 1, 87% satisfaction rate with students and 82% with teachers
- Some areas to refine
- Worked particularly well through remote learning during lockdown 1 (March –June 2020)
- Most importantly, students in need of support often flagged earlier and could be referred to the most appropriate member of staff for further advice
- Currently in Year 2 of programme –2020-2021
- Advantageous is Lockdown 3 and Return to School on March 1st
- Plans to roll it out with 5th Year students also in 2021-2022

Benefits and Challenges of Whole School Guidance Planning

The design and the implementation of the school guidance plan becomes a team and collaborative effort which includes many stakeholders, i.e., management students, teachers, parents, SEN department, student support team. This, in turn, provides a more open and integral service for the student body. In the NCGE’s most recent guidance framework publication, it suggests the guidance counsellor has a key role in to play in coordinating the planning and delivery of the whole school guidance programme and in the provision of guidance to students but that “a whole school approach is employed in delivering the learning and teaching programmes activities of the school guidance programme” (NCGE, 2017, p12). A major challenge in positively implementing this policy is changing the mindset and culture of staff regarding the remit of the guidance counsellor. While, in theory, there is an abundance of support in schools for new initiatives and policy developments, the reality is teachers have less time to commit to them. Culture can be defined as “the glue that holds everyone together and can be seen as a positive development force”. (Stoll, 1998, p.9.) Embracing change when traditions exist can be a challenging task Hislop, (2015, p.4) asserts that “a challenge for the school leaders is the task of building a collaborative culture among teachers”.

Conclusion

I have documented how one school can establish a whole school guidance plan. I have supported this with an example of one practice within whole school guidance and student support provision in post-primary education which can be linked to SSE and School Improvement Practices through LAOS 2016. When I audited all practices executed within our departments, there are many others I could have documented also. From engaging with many guidance practitioners across Ireland, I know there are exemplary examples and practices going on in every setting. Developing a whole school guidance plan is the first stage of the process, which many have already established. When the plan is entrenched, it is important to remember that it is a working document which is updated frequently in line with the needs of the school and the students. From there, the Guidance team can collaborate with SSE and School Improvement teams with regard to improving practice. I recommend focusing on no more than one or two aspects of whole school guidance to improve per year. Utilise the content of the relevant documents to support improvement. The standards and statement of practice in LAOS 2016 will provide a mapping device for establishing where you are and where you need to go.

Conor was a panel member during the recent NCGE 'Whole School Guidance Provision - Examples of Good Practice' webinar. You can access the recording and accompanying presentation [HERE](#).



About the Author:

Conor Hayes is a Guidance Counsellor at The Abbey School in Tipperary Town. This is an all-boys Edmund Rice School serving students from the West Tipperary and East Limerick areas. Conor has previous experience in the role of Guidance Counsellor in two Dublin city schools, DEIS and non-DEIS. His undergraduate degree is a Bachelor of Business Studies specialising in Finance from DCU. Conor worked in private practice in Accounting and Audit before returning to complete a Graduate Diploma in Education at DCU in 2010. He returned to DCU, completing a MSc. in Guidance Counselling in 2014, carrying out his research dissertation on School Improvement and Guidance. He subsequently graduated from Maynooth University in 2018 with a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management (PGDELM) He is currently pursuing a Masters in School Leadership at the University of Limerick. He is passionate about lifelong learning, developing student voice and leading school improvement.

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POST-PRIMARY

Reimagining a Guidance Counselling Service that Reflects Students Vocational & Pastoral Needs in Castlecomer Community School



In the provision of Guidance services in post primary schools, the context and ethos of the school will inform the development and delivery of the whole school guidance plan. Furthermore, the influence of school management, in particular the School Principal, has a key role in supporting the guidance counsellor in his / her work. Here, one such guidance counsellor in Castlecomer Co Kilkenny, pays tribute to his school Principal who has created a legacy of supports in their school and details the value of including student voice in guidance planning

As I write this article our working Principal had just passed away to his eternal rest, so if permitted, I would like to dedicate this article to Seamus O'Connor who was Principal of Castlecomer Community School for sixteen years who was my employer, colleague and very close friend who will be sadly missed in our school community.

Seamus O Connor had a great influence on my teaching career in recent times and in the late autumn of 2015 when he arrived at my classroom door and asked me if I was still interested in becoming a Guidance Counsellor. I said, "I was" and his reply was "take it on and apply for the PDSGC in Maynooth". I applied and was successful and started my career change from teaching to Guidance Counselling in Castlecomer Community School, where I had started my teaching career seventeen years previously teaching History, CSPE, SPHE and resource.



Over the past five years I worked closely with Seamus in developing a Whole School Guidance Counselling service in "Castlecomer High" as referred to in the school. His belief and my belief were to reimagine a Guidance Counselling service that reflects the needs of our students in our school.

As a Principal, he prioritised the personal and holistic welfare of students in whom he had great confidence. This pastoral care outlook is certainly reflected in the success of our school community today, set in a rural setting twelve miles north of Kilkenny city.

The three core beliefs around learning in Castlecomer Community School are as follows:

1. The process of learning is different for each person.
2. Deep learning requires revision, reflection and making sense of information.
3. Effort to learn is more important than ability to learn.

Our commitment is to empower students to recognise their talents and abilities, enable them to make informed choices and take responsibility for their own futures.

When I became Guidance Counsellor in my school in 2016, I wanted to reimagine a Guidance Counselling service that reflected those core beliefs and the needs of all students.

I also wanted to provide a Guidance service that would embrace pastoral and vocational attributes which would be holistic, student centred in the changing face of a school community.

In 2016 I conducted a survey with all staff and sixth years students to get an understanding of what their understanding of Guidance Counselling was in our school community. The feedback was important as it gave knowledge of what was working well and areas that we should develop in the Guidance Counselling and pastoral care area.

From those surveys I started working on an inclusive Whole School Guidance framework which is evolving on a yearly basis with yearly feedback from students and what their needs are particularly from Transition, fifth and sixth year students. The evolving aspect of this is to bring Junior Cycle students into the Whole School Guidance framework by working with the Whole School Guidance pastoral care team. This, we hope will also be achieved by talking to our Junior Cycle students and getting feedback from them on what issues are of concern to them as teenagers.

Currently some of the ways we encourage our students to make informed choices and take responsibility for their own futures is achieved through:

- Careers Information Management and Employment Opportunities.
- Developing Self Awareness through Personality tests and career suitability tests.
- Timetabled Career classes.
- Post Leaving Cert choices.
- Attendance at Career events.

- Personal, Vocational Guidance Interviews.
- Career talks through guest speakers.
- Third level Colleges Liaison Officers as guest speakers.
- Liaising with Community business.
- Apprenticeship talks and links with local businesses and companies.
- Arranged one to one practice interviews with sixth year students linked possible career choice.
- Use of IT sources in school for Career Investigation.
- Past pupils as guest speakers.
- Open days.

The administration of Guidance in Castlecomer CS is delivered through the formal Guidance Curriculum which is delivered using two forms of intervention employing several methodologies. These forms of Guidance are successfully delivered with the support of the whole school staff, including school management, Year Heads, teachers and class tutors.

Individual meetings in both Careers/Vocational Guidance with the Guidance Counsellor and meetings of a personal counselling nature are provided in close collaboration between the Guidance Counsellor and School Chaplin. Classroom Guidance is delivered in regular weekly classes. The informal Guidance programme consists of liaising with other teaching staff and Management to promote cross curricular links to enhance the development of a Whole School policy in relation to the delivery of Guidance. Meetings with parents/guardians and outside agencies form an integral part of informal guidance.

To ensure the safe and effective delivery of the Guidance programme, an appointments system for Personal Counselling, careers and vocational Guidance interviews operates. Appointments are made in consultation with each student. Appointments are also made with the recommendation from the school Year Heads and at the request of a parent. The Whole School Guidance Counselling programme is delivered by working with other staff members including class teacher, Principal, Vice Principal, class tutor, Year Head, TY Coordinator, LCVP Coordinator, SPHE/RSE teachers, Well Being Coordinator, Parents Council, Students Council and Board of Management.

These structures that are present in Castlecomer Community School are reflected in the success and wellbeing of our students who progress on to third level education, securing apprenticeships in well established

companies and Post Leaving Cert courses. Each year in school we contact our students after they leave school as a follow up to see how and where they have progressed onto the next stage of their career.

In 2016 an initiative agreed between management and the Guidance Counselling department was to timetable Career classes for Transition Year students and to change our students' abilities test to CAT 4 which are now completed in Transition Year, whereas previously students completed them in fifth year. The reasoning behind this initiative was to use these abilities tests with other methodologies to allow students to make a better and more informed decision when choosing their senior cycle subjects. The initiative also included one to one follow up career meetings with each transition year student and working with their parents.

A second initiative I was keen to introduce was to have timetabled career classes in fifth year which we now deliver as part of the Whole School Guidance framework to support students. This is delivered with a double class period weekly and in the last term of the academic year career appointments are arranged with each fifth-year student to start a discussion on a career pathway.

In my Guidance Counselling role over the past five years of working with students on a one to one basis I believe that the pastoral care needs in school have become an even more essential aspect of school life. A changing society means changing or evolving pastoral care needs for all. The changing society in Ireland influenced by the standards and values at global level and the ever changing family structure have reflected in an increasing

number of educational and pastoral issues which also has been exasperated by Covid 19 which face all of those involved in educating and guiding our young people. The new social issues such as anxiety, school refusal, cyber bullying, mental health and alcohol abuse are issues that pose educational and pastoral challenges for Guidance Counsellors and schools. As an essential part of the Whole School Guidance framework from my experience, the delivery of a successful pastoral care system will entail a reactive, proactive, and developmental pastoral care plan. This is an essential part of Guidance Counselling in Castlecomer Community School which I advocate in a very positive way in delivering our guidance programme. Reactive pastoral care refers to the response that teachers show in the context of guidance counselling, where children's needs are supported with an issue of a personal, social, or emotional kind. As a Guidance Counsellor and teacher, I would regard this as the heartland of pastoral care. But I think to be just reactive in pastoral care is not enough as it reduces the pastoral as emotional first aid. Prevention is better than a cure. The proactive pastoral care system which is strong in Castlecomer CS tries to anticipate critical incidents among our students and this in turn provides students with coping skills which allow them to handle them before they reach crisis point. From my experience I believe the development of pastoral care in schools should extend beyond coping strategies. I firmly believe from my work with students if we engage students in activities which will contribute to students personal and social development this in turn will enhance the potential quality of their lives inside and outside school.



So as a Guidance Counsellor how do I know what we are providing is reflecting the needs of the students in our school and what is happening in their lives. Every year I ask students to complete a survey on the Guidance Counselling service in school and to comment on what is working well and areas that they would like to see develop as part of the Guidance Counselling programme. So below is a quote from one of our sixth-year students:

"I found the Guidance Counselling service in school is extremely helpful in both a personal and academic point of view. I found myself confused as to whether I wanted to go to college or to do an apprenticeship during fifth year. The Guidance Counselling service helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses and what would suit me best when I leave school. I am now hoping to do an apprenticeship. I found the counselling service extremely helpful as I struggle with mental health. I felt my Guidance Counsellor was always someone I could talk to whenever I was in doubt or if I need a chat to boost my self-esteem. Overall, I believe I would be lost without the Guidance Counselling service in my school. It's helped me decide my Career Choice and has also helped me realise it's good to talk to people about your problems and not to hide them all in as holding them in creates bigger problems for you down the road".

What is reflected with great honesty in the above quote is I think is Guidance for all, Guidance for some, Guidance for a few. As students' needs change reflecting society change, I think it is important to be aware of what I do as a Guidance Counsellor in reflecting the needs of students in our school with an evolving Whole School Guidance plan in operation. I was given a present at Christmas time from a staff member with the following advice on it:

"I Am Your Guidance Counsellor, I Do not have a magic wand, a crystal ball or all the answers.

But I Do have A Heart to Care, Ears To Listen, Time To Give, Ideas to Share & An Open Mind.

I Am your Guidance Counsellor.

I may not be able to fix all your problems, but I promise that you will not have to face them alone.

I Am Here for You".

This to me reflects in many ways what Guidance is in schools.



About the Author:

Pat Tynan is a Guidance Counsellor in Castlecomer Community School, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny.

In 1998 he returned to Education studying a BA in Local & Communities with NUI Maynooth Outreach centre in Kilkenny. Before returning to education, he was self-employed. After completing his Degree, he studied for the H Dip with NUI Maynooth and his teacher training was in Castlecomer Community School. In 2004 after qualifying as a teacher he commenced work in Castlecomer Community School as a resource teacher. His subjects are History, CSPE & SPHE and in 2006 he moved into mainstream teaching with History as his main subject. In 2015-16 he returned to NUI Maynooth to do PDSGC in School Guidance and qualified in June 2016. He became Guidance Counsellor in Castlecomer Community School in September 2016. In 2019 he completed a Diploma in Leadership in Education with Hibernia College. In 2019 he also completed a Certificate in Excellence in Career Coaching Service 7 Delivery with Psychometrix. In 2020 he completed the Story Exchange Facilitating online course with Narrative 4. In October 2020 he additionally became the TY Coordinator in Castlecomer Community School.

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POST-PRIMARY

Open P-TECH: Supporting students with the skills required to navigate tomorrow's digital world



NCGE has collaborated with IBM and Exit Entry to support increased access to work experiences. Through this collaboration, NCGE has supported IBM to map content and courses to the competences developed through the whole school guidance framework and key skills in Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. In this article Yvonne Conaty, the P-TECH Programme Manager for IBM in Ireland, outlines the careers and education opportunities for students through this programme.

As a Guidance Counsellor you understand that students love getting kudos for the work they do. More often you struggle to find better ways to provide your students with that extra edge and the chance to gain career and industry insights. As an experienced educator you also know that your students like to display their achievements, show them off to their peers and in time include on their LinkedIn profiles – especially if they are industry recognised achievements.

Open P-TECH is a free online digital learning platform with content created by IBM experts in partnership with education specialists and is designed to prepare students in Ireland for the future of work. This new and freely available educational platform presents students with both digital and professional skills to help them succeed in today's workplace whatever learning or career path they decide to explore.

Open P-TECH was specially created and curated for teachers and students (aged 14-20 years), who are striving for that industry support and insight, and is now available for free for schools and colleges to use 24 x 7.

Students can take many courses on the platform and when they complete their course they gain industry recognised

'Badges' in both technical and business professional skills. The technology areas on the platform include all the 'in demand' digital skills areas of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, as well as collaborative critical thinking, mindfulness, design thinking and more.

The online courses are not all technology focused – and there are many other areas of learning to explore for personal development and classroom work including Sustainability, Diversity & Inclusion, Multimedia Creation and an area that certainly would generate classroom discussion - Unconscious Bias.

While the platform allows for students to study courses on their own –most importantly for Guidance Counsellors in schools, there are a set of Teacher Resources and Lesson Plans on the platform to help you manage and guide your students' developments.

In Ireland all the Open P-TECH content and courses have been mapped by IBM in partnership with the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), to Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Skills and the Whole School Guidance Framework.



Ciara Dowling, P-TECH Coordinator* at St Joseph's CBS, Fairview, Dublin, who has been using Open P-TECH, commented: *"Open P-TECH is an innovative digital resource that compliments and enhances our current curriculum. It allows students to engage with highly relevant content to boost their academic, technical, and professional workplace skills in an interactive and exciting way. Students get a great sense of accomplishment by earning badges that will feature on their CV after school and will support them in the competitive jobs market of tomorrow. As a teacher, the implementation of Open P-TECH has made learning more meaningful for students."*

What are the skills for tomorrow's digital world?

A recent IBM study, 'The Enterprise Guide to Closing the Skills Gap' predicts that more than 120 million people will need up-skilling or re-skilling in the next three years. By providing free access to Open P-TECH, IBM is sharing the tools to boost early career prospects for students and provide a route to work that is more inclusive than ever before.

We know that the world of work is rapidly transforming and evolving, according to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report the best way we can prepare our young people to navigate this rapidly changing world is to empower them with adaptable skills, the ability to think critically, be creative and problem solve.

The 10 key professional skills that were identified by the World Economic Forum are mapped to the Professional Skills Badge that IBM offers on Open P-TECH. These skills are about problem-solving, working with others, technology, and personal development.

Are your students prepared to work collaboratively with other professionals? Can they dream up design ideas that help people? Can they use modern project methods to bring those ideas to life? Professional skills, design thinking, and agile work methods are some of the cornerstones of professional success. Open P-TECH offers high quality activities and courses on these skills.

Keith Gibbons, a teacher at Kildare Town Community School, has been putting Open P-TECH into practice with his Transition Year students, he said, *"Open P-TECH has been particularly useful while my students have been learning remotely, what I like about it is that it makes teaching and learning fun. Students are learning and discovering topics and skills that are relevant in today's innovation space. Open P-TECH is relevant, it's creative and it's worthwhile for my students."*

Access to Digital Credentials and Badges

A badge is an industry-recognised credential earned by completing certain courses. This can really pump up your student's CV since these courses support and develop skills many professionals learn in the workplace.

Open P-TECH offers a variety of IBM's badge courses & digital credentials, these are recognised and valued around the world, not just at IBM but by other employers too. When you earn a badge on Open P-TECH you will be able to easily and quickly share a verified record of your achievement wherever and whenever you decide.

All IBM credentials are represented by a fully portable and digital object that when clicked will surface vital information such as what was required to earn the credential, when it was earned, and what outcomes were achieved.

Students can earn a badge for lots of different topics from many different organisations. What makes the badges issued to students from Open P-TECH unique is that they represent achievements valued by employers. Badges can be displayed in a digital portfolio or a CV, this will help your students tell their professional story in a way that is complete and validated.



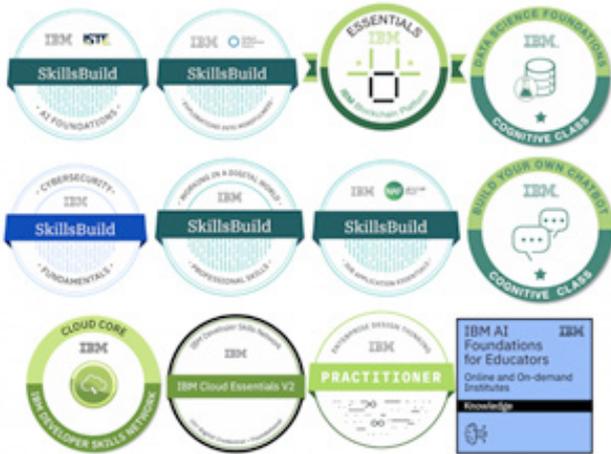
Top 10 skills of 2025

-  Analytical thinking and innovation
-  Active learning and learning strategies
-  Complex problem-solving
-  Critical thinking and analysis
-  Creativity, originality and initiative
-  Leadership and social influence
-  Technology use, monitoring and control
-  Technology design and programming
-  Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
-  Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation

Type of skill

-  Problem-solving
-  Self-management
-  Working with people
-  Technology use and development

Source: Future of Jobs Report 2020, World Economic Forum.



 Click [here](#) to check out Open P-TECH's available badge learning experiences.

What is special about Open P-TECH?

The Open P-TECH platform has been built and designed with your students in mind. Its content is designed for young people in a way that they can engage and understand technical content without needing any prior technical knowledge. Open P-TECH provides a space for students to explore careers and topics, the platform focuses on giving young people a glimpse into the technologies like data science, cybersecurity and blockchain that are shaping our world while also giving students an understanding of what professional skills are about and what it means to “show up” in a professional environment.

“We want to help young people actually understand the breadth of what’s in front of them. We want to facilitate early exposure to emerging fields and help them build the skills that are required in these fields.” Joel Mangan, Executive Director, IBM’s P-TECH and one of the leaders behind Open P-TECH.

Interested in bringing Open P-TECH to your school?

 You can access Open P-TECH as an individual or use it in your school as a Guidance Counsellor or Teacher. [Educator Toolkits](#) are also provided which include lesson plans, worksheets and additional resources to bring to life the online content in the classroom. Your students are digital natives who spend much of their time on their phones and playing video games, Open P-TECH can help them level up their skills and get workplace ready using the technology they love through any Open P-TECH course.

IBM and Exit Entry entered a collaborative agreement in late 2020, making Open P-TECH accessible through the Exit Entry App. This allows students to access accredited professional and technical skills learning, insight into careers compatible with their interests and to

discover new skills and careers that they may not have considered previously. IBM and Exit Entry have launched a nationwide Open P-TECH Badge Challenge for the final term of this academic year, (April 19th – June 10th, 2021). Every badge* a student earns through the Exit Entry app or through their school on the Open P-TECH platform <https://www.ptech.org/open-p-tech/> during this final term will automatically be entered into a draw for 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize. Guidance Counsellors and Teachers are also in with a chance of winning prizes.

Contact yvonne.conaty@ibm.com for further information on setting your school up as an organisation to participate in this challenge or click [here](#) to find out how to enter through the Exit Entry app.

**P-TECH (www.ptech.org) is an education model for bricks and mortar schools across the world, the programme is currently being piloted with 3 DEIS post-primary schools in Dublin’s North East Inner City.*

*** Students can choose to complete 1 or more of the 4 badges available on the Exit Entry App or 1 or more of the 12 available badges on the Open P-TECH platform.*



Launching April 19th 2021, post primary students in Ireland are invited to participate in the **IBM and Exit Entry Open P-TECH Challenge**. Utilise the free Exit Entry app to complete Open P-TECH badges accredited by IBM. On the move, at the touch of a button, study and gain an insight into the world of work by accessing the Open P-TECH badges within the Exit Entry app. Students can choose to complete all four badges namely **Professional Skills, Cybersecurity Fundamentals, Explorations into Mindfulness and Principles of Visual Design**. For students that have already completed badges you will automatically be entered into this competition!

The more badges completed by students, the higher up on the leaderboard your school will appear in our nationwide challenge. Be in with **a chance of winning PRIZES** for you and your Guidance Counsellor upon the completion of the Open P-TECH badges. These badges will provide students with an invaluable insight into the world of work, they can add their badge accreditation to their student portfolios or CV and they'll also be in with an opportunity to win a prize for their hard work. Exit Entry believes in creating opportunities for everyone and is delighted to partner with IBM on this initiative.



About the Author:

Yvonne Conaty is the P-TECH Programme Manager for IBM in Ireland. An experienced teacher of 11 years, prior to joining IBM, Yvonne taught in Coláiste De Lacy, Ashbourne actively promoting the use of ICT and digital technologies across the curriculum.

FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Innovation and collaboration – managing challenges and creating opportunities in delivery of Further Education and Training Guidance



 **Two years have passed since the launch of the Department of Education commissioned independent (Indecon) [Review of Career Guidance Report](#). At that time, the [NCGE Management of Guidance Committee](#) welcomed the attention given by the Report to the need for effective and inclusive career guidance policy and strategy at a national level, including a specific focus on high quality career tools and information. NCGE’s response noted the Report’s analysis of the current policy framework and organisational structures, and that the report identified the challenges emanating from the disparate nature of policy, practice, and funding provision in guidance.** 

With the subsequent establishment of the then Department of Education and Skills Internal Implementation Task Force to consider the implementation of the report, there was an expectation in early 2020 that the recommendations would be actioned – in particular, the establishment of a ‘National Policy Group to develop a coherent, long-term strategy for lifelong career guidance’ and to ‘Integrate a consistent Learner Guidance and Support Service across FET’

At the time of final editing of this article, NCGE is aware that the Dept of Education and the newly established Dept of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science, are working together to finalise the agreed processes on the implementation of these recommendations.

Certainly, nobody expected that we would be consumed with managing the challenges of a global pandemic that have come about during the last year. Nonetheless, other strategies have been launched during the last tumultuous year. July 2020 saw the launch of the SOLAS FET Strategy ‘[Future FET: Transforming Learning](#)’ which is - as stated by

DFHERIS Minister Harris “an ambitious new strategy based around the three core pillars of building skills, fostering inclusion, and facilitating pathways.” While impartial, professional and integrated Guidance Counselling facilitates all three ‘core pillars’ of the SOLAS Strategy, notable is SOLAS’ statement on page 54 of the Strategy:

*‘7.4 Facilitating Lifelong Pathways: Critical to facilitating lifelong learning pathways is the pivotal role of ETBs in providing guidance on education, training, employment and careers to all within their regions. The approach to guidance is inconsistent across FET settings and provision, and this must be rectified with an **integrated approach to guidance across ETBs**. This should ensure that impartial guidance is available to all who seek it within the ETB region, and that the ETB positions itself to ensure that it works effectively for all FET provision and all FET learners. Despite many different information resources, FET also lacks a good centralised single ‘go to’ IT portal which can offer more accessible information and advice without the need for face-to-face contact, and FET must support the*



development of such a resource as recommended by the recent Government Review of Career Guidance. This must include accessible labour market intelligence that can inform potential learners of the likely available future job and career opportunities from particular course choices.'

The SOLAS FET Strategy echoes NCGE's understanding of the urgency in developing an integrated, collaborative, accessible and appropriate FET and lifelong guidance service. The global pandemic notwithstanding, there are ongoing significant national and global expectations and commitments that we all share a responsibility to engage, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular the Irish Dept of Education focus on [Goal 4 Quality Education](#): 'To Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', including Goal 4.3 'By 2030, to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university'

See the earlier Feature Article (NFG Forum Report) for details on 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030'.

Here are some of the other strategies and plans launched recently that support and point to the need for access to impartial, professional and integrated guidance and information:

- 18th January 2021, DFHERIS launched ['The Right Course'](#) site which included links to the Adult Educational Guidance Services of the ETBs ([Career Guidance and Information](#))
- 26th February 2021, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth publication of [White Paper](#) establishing new 'International Protection Support Service'. Access to appropriate, informed, professional and Impartial lifelong Guidance must underpin the development of this support Service.
- 29th March 2021 the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) Published a Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - ['Our Rural Future'](#) - a five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland; developed in partnership with community stakeholders. A central objective ... **to bring communities together, empower them to identify their own needs and priorities, and involve them in designing responses to those needs and priorities.** It also noted '*considerable developments in Further and Higher Education training to improve capacity in digital inclusion and blended learning to make education and training as accessible as possible to everyone, including those in rural communities.*'

- 7th April 2021 IASIO Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023 ['Sustainable Change – Building on Success'](#)
- 19th April 2021 Minister DFHERIS Simon Harris launched the ['Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025'](#)

In the context of just a few of the strategies, Forums, and stakeholder consultations that are emerging from a range of actors, it is of value to reflect on the potential of existing FET Guidance Service provision as evidenced by the data captured on the NCGE Adult Guidance Management System which documents and records the guidance service delivery in the Adult Educational Guidance Services (AEGS) of the 16 ETBs nationally. That data was the basis for the NCGE commissioned [Research Report on the data gathered by the \(ETB\) Adult Education Guidance Services 2004 – 2018](#)

In this issue of NCGE's publication Guidance Matters, we offer an illustration from three areas of FET Guidance Support services. Two pertain to the ETB Adult Education Guidance Services.

The first is an account of the recent work of John Doherty, a Longford Westmeath ETB Adult Education Guidance Service Information Officer, in maintaining the delivery of quality FET Guidance information through the development of an 'Online newsletter'. This mirrors ETB AEGS work nationally to meet new challenges, to be dynamic and to serve the public as effectively as possible.

The **second** article is from the Youthreach – CTC Advocates Network Chair, Rory Gallagher. Rory offers an outline of the framework of support known as 'M.A.G.I.C' and how this person-centred formula "*allows us to focus on our personal relationship with trainees and generate a productive dialogue based on overcoming their present adversity and maintaining a constructive eye on their future*"

The final article, in the later [Euroguidance](#) section, is by Adult Guidance Counsellor Sinead McNerney, Sinead has worked as an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor with the CDETB Adult Education Guidance Service for almost 15 years and has worked as an Adult Guidance Counsellor with SOILSE, a HSE Rehabilitation and recovery programme in Dublin City. The work that Sinead has engaged in the ETB AEGS service in Dublin's Inner City has included working with a vast range of clients – including persons who have come to live in Ireland, as migrants or seeking asylum here. This article offers a description of a collaboration between NCGE Euroguidance and NCGE FET Guidance and offers insight to how an Adult Guidance 'session' works, and what the work of an Adult Guidance Counsellor involves.

Adapting to challenging times



'We are where we are'.

Within the Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB) Further Education and Training (FET) Guidance Service we had started to look at our social media footprint in the third quarter of 2019. We envisioned that this was to be another way for people to engage with the service. The service, across the three offices of Athlone, Longford and Mullingar, already had a very good footfall of people with many referrals from the different agencies. In early 2020, as we all know, the pandemic arrived with all its lockdowns and suddenly my role changed completely. I was no longer meeting people and the drop-in service I provided no longer existed. We had to work from home and figure out what to do next. How do we reach people who are at home in a lockdown?

As a service we looked at one of my main roles which was our weekly information email and I decided to transform it into a weekly newsletter. The email had begun as an internal method of keeping people informed in the FET side of LWETB as to what was going on. Initially it was a very basic email constructed within Microsoft Outlook to highlight the various courses and activities that were happening across LWETB. I quickly realised that I could use the weekly email to keep in contact with colleagues and looked to see could we include our clients and reach possible learners. Bearing in mind GDPR concerns, I researched what was the best tool to reach our students and how to best keep in contact with them virtually. I looked at different options and I decided to go with Mailchimp and as the saying goes "we never looked back". The catchment increased internally among staff and we included our clients to the mailing list.

We included a facility to subscribe to our newsletter and this facilitated an increased growth in our mailing list, with numbers increasing from a couple of hundred

people initially to nearly six hundred one year later. The newsletter now informs readers on courses (both local and nationally), national and international activities, well-being tips/webinars and jobs. The reach has grown, and we include surveys from time to time to gauge its effectiveness and are appreciative of suggestions. In this pandemic, we strive to inform people that we are still operating and are thinking of them in this time of isolation. It is the new era for all, where for a considerable amount of foreseeable future learning will be online, with the prospect of hopefully a return to blended and the classroom environment.



About the Author:

John Doherty has been employed with LWETB (formerly Longford VEC) as the Guidance Information Officer since 2002. John is also a former VTOS Student.

Advocacy during COVID 19



The National Advocacy Service provides mentoring and guidance to Early School Leavers engaged in training in Youthreach or Community Training Centres.

On March 12th 2020 a bolt from the blue hit all advocates who work with Early School Leavers around the country; we were going into lockdown to try and suppress Covid-19 rates, to say it was sharp and sudden would be an understatement, with most centres only having a matter of a few hours to contact parents and learners to let them know what was happening and to put in place structures to move to online provision.

Initial Response

It quickly became apparent that the initial two-week lockdown was going to be extended and we needed to figure out how to encourage the participation of our cohort to support them in maintaining their motivation in relation to education/training and their future employment opportunities. Our greatest concern revolved around the possible dis-engagement of our learners; how their experience of disadvantage, lack of IT access, space and motivation might make the move to entirely online provision too onerous to achieve. The Mental Health of our learners and their levels of motivation in terms of overcoming these challenges, were our key areas of concern. Our greatest assets in relation to addressing them was our sense of empathy for their situation, our pivotal role as their 'one good adult' and the personal/supportive relationship which is the basis of the Advocate role.

M.A.G.I.C

As advocates we utilise a framework of support known as M.A.G.I.C; we are Mentor; Advisor; Guidance Counsellor; Information officer and Coach, this person-centered

formula allows us to focus on our personal relationship with trainees and generate a productive dialogue based on overcoming their present adversity and maintaining a constructive eye on their future. Mentoring & Guidance Counselling came to the fore over the past year as we attempted to keep these young people's focus on the prize of a productive future; letting learners know that while the world had been turned upside down, the supports they got from Youthreach and CTCs were still available to them and they were not forgotten. The key element of this process was reassurance; reassurance that negative feelings about the experience were valid but also reassurance that they had the capacity to overcome the negatives and plan constructively for their future. During this process Advocates became the focal point for communication between centres and trainees, liaising between tutors and learners in relation to their participation with online classes. Always coming back to the supportive basis of the relationship, the fundamental element of the role during the pandemic was keeping lines of communication open, while also engendering civic participation by explaining the vital importance of adhering to lockdown guidelines.

Developing Response to Learners needs during Lockdown

The immediate, indeed rushed move to online provision created enormous challenges during the early days of lockdown, specifically around IT access for a particular cohort of trainees; for example, young people accessing online provision via smartphones or poor Wi-Fi necessitating the posting of work to rural-dwelling learners in particular, but these challenges also generated opportunities in terms of providing various methods of maintaining contact and keeping the all-important lines of communication between centres and trainees open. Advocates used weekly phone calls, texts, emails, Zoom, MS Teams and postal contact to keep learners engaged. This regular contact was so important as trainees felt encouraged and supported and understood that they would not be allowed to fall through cracks in their personal support network. Advocates often acted as mediators between the centre and trainee; advocating for flexibility and leniency on coursework deadlines based on our knowledge of a learner's particular situation and the unique challenges they might be addressing. This occasional mediation also allowed for the all-important development of Self-Advocacy as there was regularly an element of reciprocity to these interventions - 'I can help with this situation, but you have to develop the strength to do this yourself', after all, the constructive basis of the supportive advocacy relationship with a trainee is focused on the individual reaching a point of personal development where the support is no longer necessary.

Advocates as a Connection Point

As noted above, there was initial concern about the levels of engagement from our disadvantaged cohort with the supports and services available to them. Motivation could be regarded as the key challenge in relation to our learners, compounded by issues around Mental Health, lack of routine, sleep patterns, IT access, fears about their future progression options and a whole gamut of negative experiences compounded and extended by lockdown. The independent and impartial role of the Advocate created a supportive space where these fears and anxieties could be shared and addressed, the regular contact gave a venting

space to trainees and allowed Advocates to relay informal information back to tutors about stresses learners were experiencing. Our personal experience of the stresses of lockdown was instrumental here also, honestly sharing the anxiety we all feel during this experience and reassuring young people that they had the personal strength and potential to overcome and succeed.

In my own experience I had always cut the 'shop talk' with trainees and have a chat about what they were up to day to day, external to their online training experience - what were they doing to keep busy and what were they doing for fun, focusing on holistic support based on our human connection.

Benefits of work done with learners during lockdown on return to Centres

The fundamental element of the Advocate role during lockdown was to focus on learner engagement, keeping lines of communication open between the learner and their educational provider, mediating on occasional points of contention between staff and trainees, always cognisant of our supportive/mentoring role in relation to these Early School Leavers. The individual and continual support offered during lockdown strengthened the personal relationship between Advocates and learners and indeed energised learners on return to in-house training as they had successfully overcome an unprecedented interruption to their education. When further lockdowns were instituted, they had the skill set, personal drive and appropriate hardware to move relatively smoothly into another period of online provision.

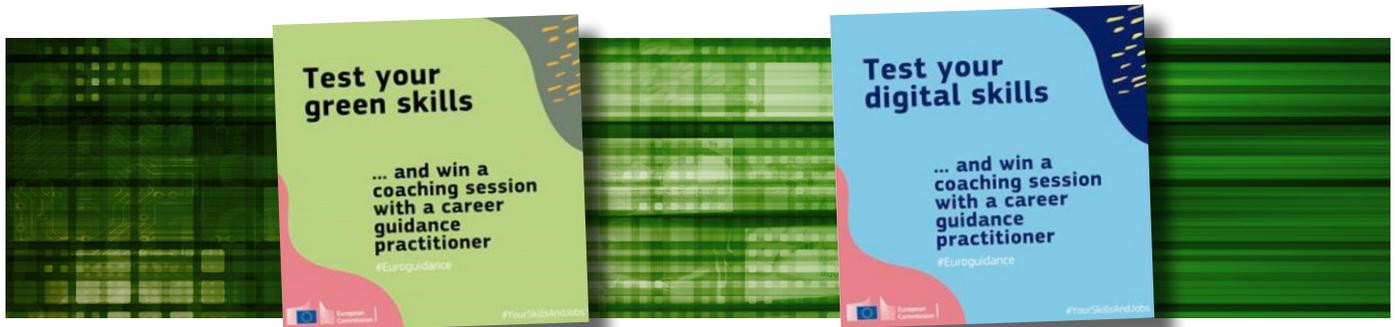
The linkage provided by the efforts of Advocates maintained the relationship between centre and trainee, the supportive and constructive inputs offered allowed trainees to take ownership of their education and overcome the acute impediments presented by the lockdown. The empathic relationship and nurturing of trainee's personal drive and strength allowed learners in the sector to address and overcome adversity which is the constructive element in developing resilience. This experience should overall stand this cohort of learners in good stead in terms of overcoming future stresses and challenges.



About the Author:

Rory Gallagher is the Chair of the Northern Region of the National Advocates Network, he has an M.A. in Community Development, an M.A. in Family Support and has previously worked in Social Care, Community Development and Mental Health Services. He has been working as Youth Advocate with Longford Westmeath ETB for the past five years.

'Your Skills and Jobs' Online Week - Guidance Competition



Organised by the Commission between the 30th of November and 4th December 2020, this event provided students, young people looking for a first job, experienced workers or entrepreneurs the opportunity to find out what the EU is doing to help them to find jobs and manage their career. They were given a chance to share their experiences and receive advice from experts on drafting CVs, job and apprenticeships opportunities, on skills, and much more. As part of activities, a unique opportunity was provided to win a 1-hour personal counselling session with a career guidance practitioner. Four quiz participants were selected as winners and these were then matched to a European guidance counsellor based on the preferred language. A winner from Kosovo selected to undertake the session in English and this was facilitated by Irish Adult Education Guidance Counsellor, Sinead McNerney.

In November 2020, the request for Guidance Practitioners willing to contribute to a one-hour guidance session, as a prize, in connection to a contest for young persons (20-30 years old), at the European Commission Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) Open Week “Your Skills and Jobs” hit my inbox. My first impression was “What would I know about delivering guidance to a young person outside of Ireland”. On second thoughts, I realised this could be an opportunity for me to meet a young person from another European country, learn a little about the structure of their country’s education system, their guidance service, and possibly a little about their country and culture. In my practice as an ETB Adult Education Guidance Counsellor, I have also worked with clients from all over the world, so this was in a way an extension of that experience.

Without thinking too much more on it, I agreed to put myself forward for this opportunity. No sooner had I done so, when I thought “What have I done”. I am known sometimes to be spontaneous, and this was one of those “sometimes”. I became quite anxious, feeling a bit unsure of my knowledge base, just a little about Euroguidance but – crucially for Guidance Counselling I didn’t feel ‘expert’ on the education and guidance services or the training and education opportunities and options available outside of Ireland. In fact, even regarding education and training options, I would only

feel truly confident in the area where I work in inner city Dublin, where I’ve been working as an Adult Guidance Counsellor for the past 12 years or so. In that work, I have been part of the (ETB) Adult Education Guidance Service in Inner City Dublin, while also working as an Adult Guidance Counsellor with SOILSE (*HSE Addiction recovery rehabilitation program*).

In both contexts my Adult Guidance practice is informed by the definition of guidance as referring to ‘a range of activities designed to assist people to make choices about their lives and to make transitions consequent upon those choices.’ As an Adult Guidance Counsellor my work is underpinned by the Principles of the ETB Adult Education Guidance Services, providing ‘free and confidential Guidance and Information Services to adults, including impartial adult educational information, one-to-one guidance and group guidance, helping people to make informed educational, career and life choices.’

I got in touch with NCGE and was reassured in talking through the proposed Guidance session as a ‘normal’ Adult Guidance Counselling session. The challenge in Guidance is not always knowing all the answers to questions presented but recognising if more information

or investigation is needed and supporting that where possible. Adult Guidance Counselling centres around facilitating the client to make their own decisions, wherever they are – geographically or on their learning journey – and it is the Guidance Counsellor's role to make the client feel comfortable in discussing options, to build trust and communication and to offer a reflective space that lets the client recognise what choices exist while offering support to the client in managing the choices available.

In early December 2020 the winner of the guidance session was selected, the confirmation and timing of the session was to be arranged. The session was to be conducted online using the platform 'Streamyard'. In order to maximise the impact of the session, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in the EU Commission, forwarded questions to the candidate and myself, in advance of the session. I also had the opportunity to give feedback on the proposed questions and to add in any other questions, I felt might be relevant or useful. Everything was "ready to go" from my side, and I just awaited confirmation of time and date of session from the winner.

21st December 2020 10am, still feeling anxious, not knowing what to expect I wondered how this session might go, what the expectations of the client might be, what questions could arise. The Information and Communications Officer with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Elena Pascual Jimenez, was on hand in case of any technical issues and to support our "live online meeting" if required.

So, I met Arjeta, a very pleasant 25-year-old student from Kosovo, who had completed her degree in Chemical Engineering and was currently doing a Masters in Analytical Chemistry. It was clear that Arjeta knew exactly what her education path was. She wanted to continue her studies to Doctoral level. Arjeta had been exploring her options for a period of time, prior to our session and she had amassed a substantial amount of information herself as to her options. However, she wanted to consider, and to reflect on the options and to look at internships in Europe. Arjeta was particularly interested in opportunities in

Germany and Switzerland, as she had family in both these countries and felt that she would like to explore options that might be open to her. International Scholarships was another area she had explored somewhat, so that was another part of our discussion.

As it happened and as can be so useful in Adult Guidance work, advocacy and networking came in to play at this stage; I had a contact, who lives and works in Germany and who was a great support and help to me. With extensive experience with the IDA (the Irish Development Authority) my contact offered solid advice and a list of connections to pharma/chemical companies who took on interns as part of their employment/education programmes. Following our session, and with Arjeta's permission, I researched agencies in both Germany and Switzerland who recruited interns for companies. I then shared that information with Arjeta along with the information that I had researched regarding International Scholarship Opportunities.

While I remained a bit unsure that this Guidance Session had been that effective - a challenge that all Guidance Counsellors are facing in delivery of 'online' Guidance Counselling now – on reflection, I felt again the value of Guidance Counselling in providing an impartial, professional, 'reflective space' to support an adult in considering their career, education and training decisions. It was reassuring and good to hear from Arjeta, who gave positive feedback and was so thankful for the help I had given her.

Arjeta's future plans include working elsewhere in Europe. Kosovo, being the third poorest country in Europe and a small country, means not many career opportunities are available to high achieving students. Providing Guidance counselling to Arjeta seemed initially to be a daunting prospect, however, as a professional Guidance Counsellor, with experience working with clients from all around the world meant that this was really a case of 'guidance is guidance'. As a client, Arjeta was well informed, and had done a lot of research herself, but as a guidance counsellor, I could support her, offer perspectives and expertise to encourage Arjeta to continue with her studies, reach her potential and follow her dream.



About the Author:

Sinead McNerney, was born in Co. Longford. She took the scenic route in Education, culminating with an M.Sc. in Educational Guidance and Counselling from Trinity College 2006.

Work history:

2006-2007 - City of Dublin VEC - Soilse Drug Rehab and Education Programme.

2007-2009 - Co. Laois VEC - Clonaslee Vocational School - Guidance Counsellor.

2009-2010 - Co. Longford VEC - Ballymahon Vocational School - Guidance Counsellor.

Currently working part-time as an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor with City of Dublin ETB and has been in this position since 2011.

Competition for Student Linguists

Last autumn, Languages Connect and Euroguidance Ireland launched a competition aimed at senior cycle students. Students were asked to create a Europass profile, CV and cover letter, in a foreign language, and “apply” for a position as conference interpreter for the EU. The thinking behind it was to show students who are interested in languages and current affairs one of the career options that is open to them. The EU, its institutions and how they impact on European citizens is quite a topic to cover, but 80 students showed us how passionate they were about both languages and European current affairs.

Euroguidance Ireland / Languages Connect Careers with Languages Competition 2020

JOB VACANCY
CONFERENCE INTERPRETER FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

Do you speak a European language (other than English)?
 For example, do you speak Spanish? Italian? French? German? Irish?
 Or any other European Language?
If so, then the EU are looking for you!

Job title:
 Conference Interpreter for the European Union

Job Description:
 The EU institutions' interpreting service is the largest in the world – as an interpreter you will ensure that the discussions held at meetings are correctly interpreted into an official language of the EU.

Essential skills:
 EU interpreters work in a stimulating, multi-cultural environment. The successful applicant must be capable of the following:

- possess an EU language mother tongue and two additional EU languages, e.g. English mother tongue, Irish and French
- to listen carefully
- communicating effectively
- adapting to change
- working under pressure
- working independently but also as part of a team

Essential Qualifications:
 The successful applicant will -

- Have studied English or Irish and one other European language at Junior Cycle (e.g. French)
- Be a current TY, 5th year, 6th year, LCA student
- Enjoy languages
- Have an interest in other cultures

Desirable (but not essential):

- The ability to communicate through Irish
- An interest in travel abroad
- Some knowledge of the EU

Salary:
 58K per annum (Starting salary for an EU interpreter)

#EuroguidanceComp

Logos: nsc, Languages Connect, europass, Teangacha Iar-bhunscóile Éireann Post-Primary Languages Ireland, and the European Union flag.



Covid has taken centre stage for the last year, and Brexit has probably not had as much coverage as it might have had otherwise, but the students who entered [the competition](#) showed us that they were aware of the advantages of being a European citizen, and therefore the disadvantages that their counterparts in the UK will experience. Some of them had already spent a term living in another European country, attending school and experiencing how different life can be from one country to the next. Some had even done work experience in another European country, which was both impressive and showed initiative. Quite a few had a good grasp of the various European institutions, the European Commission and the European Parliament, and some had even visited them. Lots of them were very enthusiastic about wanting to work abroad when they were older, not necessarily to emigrate but to spend a few years working abroad.

Multilingualism is a core value of the EU. As an EU national, you have the right to use any of the 24 official languages to contact the EU institutions, and they are obliged to reply in the same language. A quick look in any country's history book will tell you that this has not always been the case. Irish is an official EU language, recognised as one of the 24 official languages. Although only approximately 1.7% of us speak it every day, it is still a core part of our identity. Irish was an official language when Ireland joined the EC in 1973, but at the beginning when it had treaty status, it was not a working language. That changed in 2007 when it became a working language with a limited status, as requested by the Irish government, due to a lack of qualified translators and interpreters it will not have full status until 2022. It is not enough for translators and interpreters to speak English and Irish; they need to have



their mother tongue plus two languages in order to work for the EU. For students who love both foreign languages and Irish and have an interest in current affairs, there are fabulous opportunities out there for interpreters, with approximately €58,000 per annum as a starting salary, which is fantastic. Add in travel, variety and a unique insight into current affairs and it becomes a very attractive career path. For other interesting career paths involving languages, see 'Languages Connect'.

Languages Connect promotes the personal, social, professional and economic benefits of foreign language skills to principals, teachers, guidance counsellors, parents, students and stakeholders in the third-level sector. The campaign is funded by the Department of Education and facilitated by Post-Primary Languages Ireland, as a key objective of the Languages Connect – Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 – 2026. For all the latest updates, follow Languages Connect social media on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Youtube](#).



Winner Jennifer Holly, Royal and Prior Comprehensive School, with new iPad



Runner up Dáire Meehan, Rice College Ennis.



Runner up Lorcan Gay, Clifden Community School



About the Author:

Nellie Tattersall joined PPLI in October 2017. She is currently project managing the funding for School Exchanges, Language Summer Camps, the #ThinkLanguages TY event and various other projects. She also acts as PPLI's Environmental Officer. She has a degree in German and Czech, and taught German at second level in the UK before coming to work for the Austrian Embassy in Dublin. Prior to PPLI she worked at Léargas as the Languages Coordinator and was responsible for the European Language Label, the European Day of Languages and the European Centre for Modern Languages. She likes the cultural side of languages and enjoys trying out different languages.



New Ways of Engagement: DCU Careers Service



From March 2020, the adjustment to providing eLearning and eTraining has focused the attention of educators, policy makers, practitioners, teachers, students, and parents alike. With the delivery of education online, all other support services provided throughout the education sector were required to “go online”. In this article, Yvonne McLoughlin, Head, Careers Service, DCU outlines the steps taken as part of a strategic decision to engage more with their stakeholders online, to think online first and develop a digital careers service.

The Careers Service at DCU is the university’s central hub for career development and employability. We are a team of 8, made up of career advisors, employer engagement and operations staff, offering a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, supports, and developmental opportunities to 18,000 students, as well as to graduates up to two years post-graduation.

During 2019, the Careers Service took the strategic decision to engage more with our stakeholders online, to think online first and develop a digital careers service. This important decision laid a strong foundation for our team to move seamlessly online when the Pandemic started. We had already begun to develop more online content. We became content creators with the development of our Career Conversation Podcasts, we were implementing a new careers education platform called MyCareer and had begun to offer career appointments virtually or via telephone, for example, over the summer when most students are not on-campus.

“...our Careers Service is a better service because we embraced digitisation and online delivery which enhanced an already student-centred, responsive, and professional service.....”

One of the biggest changes was the move to virtual career guidance and coaching appointments with students. While we had some experience of virtual and telephone appointments pre-pandemic, we embraced the opportunity to move our appointments fully online.

So, what has been our experience of supporting students at a distance? Firstly, technology has not replaced the human element in our service delivery. There are similarities between face-to-face appointments and virtual appointments. For both methods, we are still contracting with students to realistically establish what can be explored in the allocated time; we still use career theories to help increase student understanding; we continue to use our skills such as active listening, questioning techniques, paraphrasing, summarising, to develop an action plan with the student at the end of the session.

What have we learned: (1) it is useful to build a little more time into the session to facilitate rapport building; (2) Ensure your appointment setting is professional; (3) We only see visual cues from the shoulder up, therefore, the importance of listening to non-verbal cues through voice is important, for example, being alert to the client's changes to the tone of voice, speech rate or if the client is pausing.

Overall, virtual appointments are a worthwhile addition to our service provision for one-to-one appointments. They will continue to be offered into the future as additional method of one-to-one engagement.

Career readiness programmes feature throughout student's time in DCU. While initial concerns may have been around less engagement from students, this has not been the case. There has been an increase in attendance and good engagement from students at our sessions. This is welcome and a reflection that online delivery can also facilitate quality engagement and discussion with students. We also recorded our sessions enabling students to watch them in their own time – a mix of synchronous and asynchronous delivery.

Our award-winning Mentorship Programme became a global mentorship programme as the mentors could now volunteer to mentor from their locations around the world including UK, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Nigeria and America. Our mentors are graduates of DCU who work with second year undergraduate students for six months from November to April. We moved the face-to-face meetings to an online space which removed geographic barriers between mentors and mentees. Mentoring meetings take place virtually, which means that students can continue to access a network of graduates to help them with their personal, professional and career development. Helping students to build a network and be comfortable networking ensures students can continue to develop their social mobility and career growth potential.

One of our biggest challenges was getting used to new technology platforms very quickly. For example, we moved our annual Recruitment Careers Fair to a virtual Fair. Traditionally, the on-campus Fair saw employers come to the Helix to meet with students to promote their graduate programmes and recruitment opportunities. We moved the Fair to an online environment utilising a Careers Fair App. The move to a virtual careers fair resulted in new considerations in how to prepare employers and students for the Fair.

As part of the preparation, we delivered dedicated sessions to employers on how to use the virtual Fair platform including uploading their company profiles to setting appointment times for students. For students, we delivered dedicated sessions on how to engage with employers online, how to book a one-to-one with employers and some tips about online etiquette and employer research.

Feedback from the virtual fair was positive with students commenting that they liked having a dedicated one-to-one appointment with their employers of choice. While other students commented that they preferred the on-campus Fair. The main learning is that we can continue to connect students with employers whether we offer a virtual or on-campus Fair or a blended approach.

Engaging online has helped students to gain more competence and confidence with their digital skills and the skills they require for the workplace now and the workplace of the future.

COVID-19 has acted as a catalyst to increase our online service provision and career programmes to students. It has accelerated the pace of change and challenged our team to be even more adaptable, flexible, and resilient - all the things we encourage our students to be as they enter the world of work! Yes, there were challenges along the way, but our Careers Service is a better service because we embraced digitisation and online delivery which enhanced an already student-centred, responsive, and professional service. Our next phase of development is to design a hybrid service delivery that encompasses the best of face-to-face and online delivery.



The Author

Yvonne McLoughlin is Head, Careers Service, DCU and a member of the Dublin Regional Skills Forum.

Nurturing Bright Futures



Lifelong guidance supports individuals at any age and stage to plan for and cope with transitions in their lives, and to develop the necessary competences to negotiate through their education and career journey. Here, Carol Veiga from UCC outlines how an online programme is preparing school students for the transition to Higher Education, based on their own interests and career dreams...

UCC has developed a unique new programme designed to help pre-entry students make the transition to third level life and learning.

Developed by the Graduate Attributes Programme, **Nurturing Bright Futures** (NBF) is an innovative online programme designed for secondary level students from Transition Year to Leaving Certificate, to help them become future-ready as they navigate the next step in their education journey.

The six-module programme guides students on how to choose a course that is right for them, degree choices and future careers, decision-making styles, transitioning to higher level education, and the realities of university life. The self-directed programme is designed to be taken over the course of several weeks, in bite-sized format. The multi-media content – including videos, podcasts, articles, worksheet exercises and quizzes – has been created to help students acquire the skills and tools they will need as they make the transition to third level.

NBF is relevant for all Senior Cycle students, from Transition Year to Leaving Certificate, and is designed with all pre-entry student cohorts in mind – both domestic and international. The programme also contains bespoke content for students accessing third level as Mature Students, International Students, and through the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme.



While the programme is designed to empower and enable Senior Cycle students to make informed choices and decisions for their next step, NBF also serves as a resource for Guidance Counsellors, educators, and parents and guardians, and bespoke guides are available for those in supportive roles both in school and at home.



In developing the programme, the Graduate Attributes team collaborated closely with both internal and external stakeholder groups including academic and professional services teams at UCC, the UCC Students' Union and, crucially, Senior Cycle students and Guidance Counsellors.

Carol Veiga, Interim Manager of the Graduate Attributes Programme, says: “**Nurturing Bright Futures** will empower students to make informed choices on what subjects, degree courses and careers would work best for them. It will give them the confidence and the courage to own their decisions, and will enable them to follow their passions, pursue their dreams and, ultimately, begin, belong and become the people they want to be.”

Interim President, Professor John O'Halloran, has welcomed the launch:

*“**Nurturing Bright Futures** sets out a programme for skill development and prioritises opening up diverse and progressive pathways for everyone, enabling personal growth, developing our learners' talent, promoting lifelong learning and empowering learners to become active members of society, engaging in employment, contributing to prosperity and driving vibrant and diverse communities.*

*“We hope and believe the **Nurturing Bright Futures** programme will be a really useful and relevant resource for students, Guidance Counsellors, teachers, parents and guardians.”*

Beatrice Dooley, President of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, welcomed the launch of the programme, saying that:

*“The IGC publication (2017) **Guidance Counselling Core Competencies & Professional Practice** echoes the **Nurturing Bright Futures** programme where it states: “it is clear that vocational development is linked to identity formation. The picture we have of ourselves, or the self-concept, plays a major role in career choice and changes with time and experience, making choice and adjustment a continuous process”.*

Claire McGee, Head of Education and Innovation Policy at Ibec, added:

*“The **Nurturing Bright Futures** programme is a fantastic support to help students to hit the ground running as they make the first big transition of their lives, from school to the world of college, university or further study; to really set themselves up to consider careers that suit their interests and their skills. I really like that this programme prepares students to become reflective learners; to build an experience and see that learning does not just happen in a classroom or a lecture hall, but all throughout college. It helps set people up to see the value in learning and developing a personal learning journey.”*

For more information about **Nurturing Bright Futures**, please follow [this link](#).



The Author

Carol Veiga joined UCC in 2016 and is currently the Interim Manager of the Graduate Attributes Programme which is concerned with helping students to transition in to, through and out of university and to develop distinctive graduate attributes and values. Prior to working in UCC, Carol worked in second level education and in HR and Recruitment roles. A graduate of an MA in Hispanic Studies and a fluent Spanish speaker, she has a passion for world languages and cultures. She also has a keen interest in charitable work and advocacy, lifelong and life-wide learning and in empowering students to begin, belong and become the people they want to be.



Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
Trinity College Dublin
Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

Ionad na Tríonóide do Dhaoine le Míchumair Intleachta, Scoil Oideachais
Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities, School of Education

Guidance to an Independent Adult Life



In this article, Des Aston of the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities (TCPID), provides an insightful reflection on Post-School Transitions for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the Republic of Ireland. Students with Special Educational Needs and in particular those with Intellectual Disabilities require a spectrum of additional supports to complete post primary school and consider their own future education, career and life options. Recommendations within the report, referenced here, provide an opportunity for school management to consider their lead role and obligations under both the Education Act (1998) and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), where the benefits of a whole school inclusive ethos include co-operation and co-ordination between whole school guidance and special education needs supports.

The narrative around intellectual disability, and disability more generally, has shifted dramatically over the past few decades nationally. What was once considered a medical impairment, which needed strict supervision and intervention from clinicians, is now more commonly viewed as a societal responsibility to ensure our citizens with an intellectual disability can meaningfully participate in all aspects of society. It is no longer tolerable that we design new physical building structures to be inaccessible to over 5% of the Irish population who have mobility difficulties (CSO, 2018). Similarly, we must ensure our learning environments are made accessible for those with intellectual/learning disabilities who make up 1.4% of our population (CSO, 2018).

In Ireland, the right to education is highly valued and underpinned by national policy and law. Furthermore, the right to education for every child is enshrined in the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs

(EPSEN) Act (2004). This inclusive educational policy ensures that every child is entitled to a free education in a suitable environment, up until the age of eighteen, at which point they are expected to enter adult services. Since the enactment in 2004, an ever-increasing number of students with intellectual disabilities have been attending mainstream primary, and post-primary education within their local community and alongside their siblings and peers. Educators working in these schools have responded to the specific needs of these children by creating inclusive learning environments and opportunities for social inclusion. These children are expected to wake up early, put on their uniform and turn up for school - the same as their peers. Through these raised expectations, these young people are gaining essential skills for a more independent adult life; building their self-determination and resilience and, essentially, self-awareness of their own capabilities (Newman et al., 2009).

Although the advancements of including students with intellectual disabilities in the school system is to be celebrated, we need to address the fact that the wider societal expectation for this group of students is lowered once they leave compulsory schooling. Irish research is starting to investigate why so many people with intellectual disabilities are struggling to successfully transition from school to post-school education or training environments. Several Irish studies (Mc Guckin et al., 2013; Scanlon and Doyle, 2018; WALK, 2015) have identified a worrying trend amongst school personnel who assume that students with intellectual disabilities will progress seamlessly into adult day services/vocational training centres coordinated by the Health Service Executive.



Similar findings have been highlighted in a recent research report by the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities (TCPID), and the School of Education at Trinity College Dublin. The report, entitled “Post-school Transitions for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the Republic of Ireland” has been endorsed by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) and hopes to have a positive impact at both the policy and school level by engaging with a variety of stakeholders to address some of the findings. This article intends to provide practical suggestions to aid the development of more coherent, aspirational post-school transition routes for young people with intellectual disabilities across the country.

The research report (Aston et al., 2021) goes into detail about the myriad of complex, and interdependent complications experienced by school personnel who, with every goodwill, are doing their best to appropriately support their students with special educational needs to make important life decisions with very little formal support or resources (mainly time). The systemic fascination with the Leaving Certificate seems to overshadow any other alternative planning, therefore, students that sit

outside the mainstream CAO system will likely have a very different transition experience. The reality is that there have historically been very few appropriate post-school destinations for these students, and so, the safest option for education professionals to recommend to students, and their parents, was a localised disability support organisation. There is a genuine concern from educators and parents alike, that young people with intellectual disabilities would be “safer” in this highly supported environment, rather than being set up to fail in the competitive race for access to higher education, where it is felt they would not receive the same level of structured supports that are apparent at school level.

In a previous Guidance Matters article, we [TCPID] have discussed the increasing popularity of alternative pathways to post-secondary education. The Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice course offered by TCPID, develops a broad range of skills across a comprehensive curriculum, including preparing graduates to work in diverse employment settings. Young people with intellectual disabilities attending mainstream post-primary schools are sharing the same spaces as their peers growing up, and as they reach their formative school years, conversations amongst them and their friends in the schoolyard naturally evolve to discussing their after-school options. Now, more so than ever, there are inclusive programmes specifically designed for learners with intellectual disabilities on offer from Irish higher education providers. These inclusive higher education programmes have been established in an attempt to address the gap in post-school provision for this cohort and tend to offer from level 3-5 on the National Framework of Qualifications – which mirrors empirical evidence that many young people with an intellectual disability are completing school without a full Leaving Certificate (level 5).

The introduction of the L1L2 programmes at Junior Cycle is of importance in this conversation as the research suggests the need for a continued programme for students with intellectual disabilities as they progress through second level into the senior cycle. There is a need for continuity for students who are engaged with the L1L2 programmes. An accredited Level 4 qualification would, for example, ensure they have appropriate access to the curriculum while in school, and have a clear pathway to Level 5 and 6 qualifications when they leave school.

According to international research, transition planning for students with special educational needs should begin as early as 14 years of age (Wagner et al., 2014; Newman et al., 2016). Although the recent Irish research showed that 80% of school principals that were surveyed reported the

use of Individualised Education Plans (IEP), less than 50% of those in the study reported using the IEP for the purpose of transition planning. Best practice for a robust transition plan would include utilising multidisciplinary student support teams that include the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO); the Guidance Counsellor and Support Teachers; and some form of leadership such as a Principal, Deputy or Year-Head. Using this collaborative approach from first year onward, has proved to be beneficial when it came to post-school transition planning, at which point all involved would have a good knowledge of the student by the time they enter senior cycle. The TCPID recognises that there are several people in a young person's life that can be influential in encouraging and facilitating the transition from compulsory schooling to "adult life". There are often many barriers that block students with intellectual disabilities from accessing post-secondary education - such as students moving from a highly supported and structured school environment to a more challenging situation that demands a higher degree of self-reliance. Moreover, parents and educators share a fear of a lack of suitable places for students with intellectual disabilities, and a lack of relevant information about suitable post-school education/training placements. While these barriers are often experienced by students with intellectual disabilities, they are not exclusive to this cohort. There is a clear need to address these issues through increased formal linkages between schools and further and higher education providers. Closer

collaboration allows for the development and awareness of adequate resources and supports to aide students to transfer from one system to the next.

Creating and embedding seamless post-school transition pathways (much like the structured transition from primary to post-primary that is evident throughout the country) requires a multidisciplinary approach. While school leaders have an integral role in creating an inclusive school ethos, guidance professionals are central to this process. Students with intellectual disabilities require a spectrum of additional supports when considering their future education, career and life opportunities. TCPID are prioritising the need for more collaboration between schools and higher education providers and invite you to engage directly with us.

There are many challenges that we all face when ensuring that we develop clear pathways from school to a more independent adult life for our citizens with an intellectual disability. We are but one of the pieces to this puzzle, but by working together we can piece together a viable pathway to a much more vibrant future for these young people.

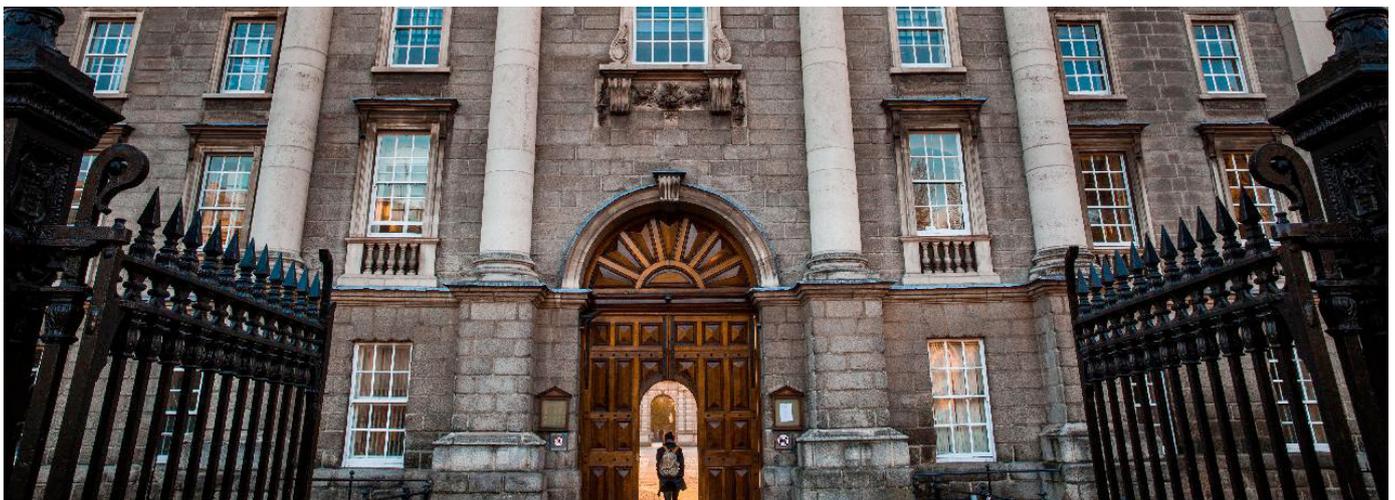
Find out more about the ongoing work of TCPID [HERE](#)



About the Author:

Des Aston is National and Schools Coordinator in School of Education, TCD and is based in the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities. Des is the point of contact within TCPID for schools/guidance counsellors that would like to engage with the centre.

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International teenage career indicators - an update



NCGE regularly works and collaborates with our European and International colleagues on guidance policy and practice. We welcome international research, information and advice on supporting young people and adults on their lifelong learning and career journey. In this article we are delighted that Anthony Mann (has once again) agreed to highlight the ongoing work of OECD in providing vital research and data to support guidance policy and practice developments globally.

One of the hardest things about working in career guidance is knowing what works. After all, if you are working with young people, it will often be years before they start looking for full-time work. Only then will it become possible to know if the guidance counselling, job fairs, work experience and other forms of guidance they received as school students did what it was designed to do and helped them to make good decisions about education and training to end up in work that suits their interests, abilities and constraints.

The only way to know is to follow a decent number of kids from childhood into adulthood and collect plentiful information about their lives along the way. That way, we can know what career guidance they did when in schools and what happened to them after they left education. Such longitudinal studies, like [Growing Up in Ireland](#), are rare, but important, because statisticians can use them to see if young people who have had specific experiences end up doing better in work. They can take account of all the usual things that typically determine how well someone does, their qualifications, their gender, social background and so on and then see if someone who has had a particular teenage experience does better or worse than would be expected later in adulthood.

It is an approach I used a few years ago to look at whether British students aged 14-16 who took part in career talks with people from outside of their school went on to earn more at age 26 than classmates who did something else with their time. The study showed an important link with much higher earnings later, especially if the students were younger, took part in more talks and (at the time) thought they were very useful.

It is an approach that we are now using at the OECD for an international study designed to identify career-related indicators that a teenager is on track to do well in work later. First, we looked at the research that has already been done and found some clear patterns. The more that teenagers seem to be thinking about their futures in work, the better they tend to do once they have left education. The same applies to how much as teenagers they explored the world of work (including through school-based activities like career guidance) and experience it through volunteering, internships or part-time work. We find more career-focused students typically earn more and are less likely to be jobless than you would expect for someone with their qualifications and background.

What makes the project so important is its ambition. Never has there been a review like this of national longitudinal



surveys. In addition to looking at existing research, we are now analysing survey data ourselves from Australia, Denmark and Switzerland and we have researchers looking at results from Canada, China, Germany, Korea, the UK and US. In May, we will publish a new paper focused on teenage thinking to doing better in work. We already knew that career uncertainty was linked with worse outcomes. We know from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) that since 2000 the percentage of Irish teenagers unable to name a job they expect to do at age 30 has quadrupled to nearly one in five. Other aspects of career thinking that raise flags are lack of career ambition and career misalignment. Young people with ambitious educational and occupational plans, the research shows, tend to do better than you would expect given their qualifications and backgrounds. But highly ambitious students can be misaligned. This means that often they underestimate the education needed to achieve the job they expect to do. This is a sign of confusion or a lack of attention being given to career thinking. In my [last article](#) I shared some of the 2018 PISA data that we have about teenage career certainty, ambition and alignment. Now, we are looking at two more likely indicators of teenage thinking going awry. It seems that teenagers who do not see a connection between their education and their futures in work do worse later in employment than you would expect. And we are finding out some interesting things about the originality of career thinking. In Ireland, 60% of girls and 49% of boys (who have a career plan) say that at age 30 they will be working in one of ten jobs.

What work do Irish teenagers expect to be in at age 30?

OECD PISA 2018.

	Girls	%	Boys	%
1.	Teachers	17.4	Teachers	8.9
2.	Doctors	7.9	Engineers	8.3
3.	Nursing and midwives	7.5	Sportspeople	6.9
4.	Lawyers	6.1	Accountants	5.3
5.	Veterinarians	5.1	Architects	3.7
6.	Beauticians and related workers	4.0	ICT professionals	3.6
7.	Psychologists	3.7	Motor vehicle mechanics	3.5
8.	Accountants	3.3	Physiotherapists	3.2
9.	Physiotherapists	2.8	Carpenters and joiners	3.0
10.	Actors	2.3	Doctors	3.0
	Total	60.1		49.2

In our new research, we find that there is an advantage to expressing a job plan outside of these top 10 jobs. It may be that when a young person says they are planning to work as a teacher, doctor or in sport, they may well be showing that they have not really given much thought to their ambitions and what they need to do to achieve them. The more it is that young people say that they expect to work in a small number of jobs, the less confidence we can have that students are aware of what the jobs market really has to offer.

In our work, we are looking for patterns across different countries at different times. We are working to identify universal indicators of better-than-expected employment outcomes. What we are finding is that how a teenager thinks about the future makes a difference to it. Ambitious, informed young people who can connect today's education to tomorrow's employment can expect to do better later. In our forthcoming publication, we will look at some of the techniques that guidance professionals around the world use to help students think more clearly. Throughout this year, we are working to turn these insights into useful tools that will let us know if the guidance programmes that we put students through can really be expected to help them succeed. In these days of rising youth unemployment, the need for guidance to be informed by the best possible evidence is stronger than ever.

To stay in touch with the Career Readiness in the Pandemic project: visit <https://www.oecd.org/education/career-readiness/>



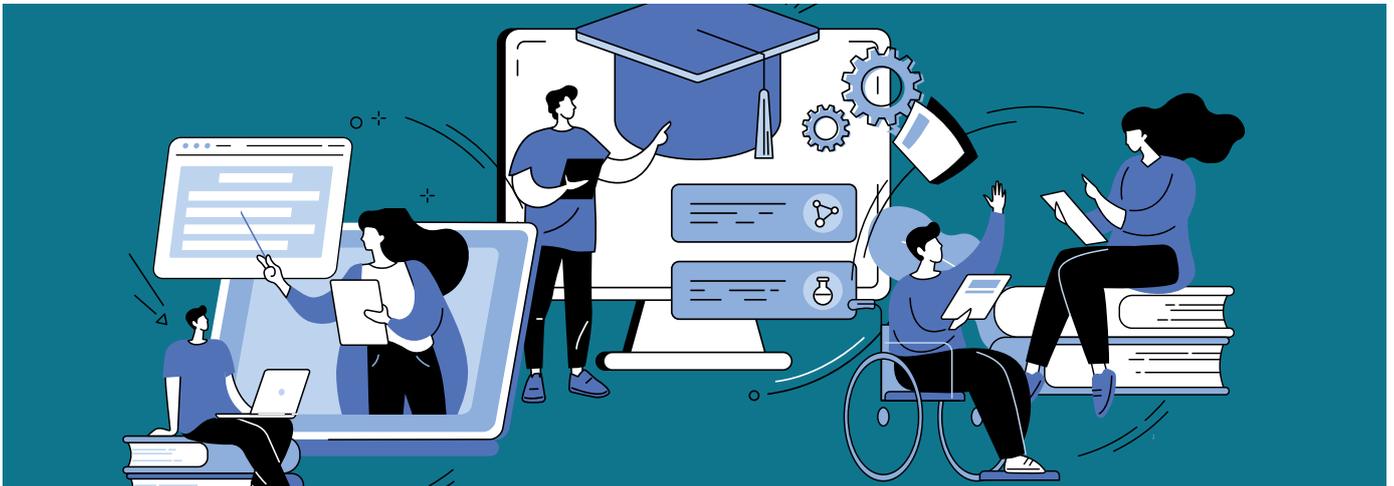
About the Author:

Anthony Mann is Senior Policy Analyst (Education and Skills) at the OECD. You can stay in touch with new publications, identify practice to share globally, sign up to receive the monthly newsletter and help shape future work by emailing Anthony.Mann@oecd.org.
Twitter: [@AnthonyMannOECD](https://twitter.com/AnthonyMannOECD).

RESEARCH

A Big Question

- Is it time to redesign how we design the future for our learners?



This article sets out the background of an invitation to participate in a ‘Delphi Study on Inclusion, Guidance Counselling / Career Guidance and Universal Design for Learning’. Today in our ever-changing uncertain world, making decisions about ‘what to study next’ or ‘what to think about in terms of career and ‘work choice’ is not just a challenge but moreover is changing. How we engage in a guidance relationship is also changing. In fact, everything we know is changing about learning and work. Yet, learners with a disability have always faced change and uncertainty. In this article you are invited to first consider the ‘experience of disability in learning’ over recent years. You are also invited to consider the theories and language that frame our guidance practice as these are what inclusive approaches in a contemporary guidance setting depend upon. Finally, the authors set out the development of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and how we as guidance practitioners may benefit from this. It will be noticeable to readers a great similarity in some of the points and issues raised here to those in a [previous article in this issue](#).

UDL is a ‘design approach’ that has redesigned the experience of inclusion while not negating the need for add-on supports. Can such an approach lend itself to a UDL or inclusive guidance approach? Can we ‘redesign’ what we do for a greater diversity of learners – now that the need is greater than ever before? Finally, we need to remember that while inclusionary practices continue to develop apace, we cannot forget that we each need to continually rethink and redefine ‘inclusion’ and what it means as we engage in our work.

To clarify for the purpose of this article, planning for transition is about planning for life choices ‘after formal education’, it is about planning for engagement in a future world of work; it involves making and creating education

and learning opportunities, making personal and individual choices and decisions. It is important that the learner ‘has a sense of themselves’ and developing this deeper sense of identity can involve a number of advocates and professionals – particularly for the learner with a disability as they seek to make truly informed choices. While many professionals can engage in ‘transition planning’; the role of the guidance counsellor is particular and unique.

Experience of Disability in Learning

Disability, or indeed the need to include ‘difference’ is not going away and needs to be ‘designed for’, across the learning environment. It must be appreciated that the learning environment for learners with a disability

has changed dramatically since the beginning of the century. This cohort of learners were once considered the 'problem' and educated separately in accordance with the medical model of disability. The evolution from medical to social model of disability has had significant impact over the years – not just in learning, but moreover across society. The workplace and many professional areas of work have also changed because of the discourse around 'inclusion'. Consequently, there are opportunities continuing to develop across learning, work and society that were once considered unattainable for people with disabilities. There is now a greater appreciation, that the medical model of disability "results in services and research aimed at the individual level; the emphasis is [being] placed on altering the individual rather than social processes" (Shakespeare & Watson, 1998, p. 14 [parenthesis added]). The social model perspective however advocates that "disabled people would experience better quality of life and more equality of opportunity if society were organized in ways that took the needs of all its citizens into account" (Goodley & Tregaskis, 2006, p. 631).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A further development of the social model of disability, while not exclusive in its engagement in that it seeks to work for a great diversity of learner, is that of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). It was preceded by the model of Universal Design (UD), which set out 7 principles to be considered for accessible design having originated from architectural thinking. The focus was on optimizing accessibility in physical spaces by designing from the beginning to be as inclusive as possible. There are in fact several frameworks of UD adopted for the learning environment – but the CAST (formerly known as the Centre for Applied Special Technology) model of UDL is familiar to most. The CAST guidelines originally inspired by UD, Vygotskian thinking, and neuroscience research, seek to offer a tool for the implementation of UDL around three guiding principles: (i) the 'what' (multiple means of representation), (ii) the 'why' (multiple means of engagement), and (iii) the 'how' (multiple means of action and expression) of learning (CAST, 2018). UDL is about creating learning environments so all potential differences are accounted for in a more integrative and less stigmatizing way. (Rose, & Meyer, 2006).

While the move from the medical to social model of disability and subsequently to UDL has resulted in many positive inclusive practices; 'disability' and 'exclusionary thinking' is still present as a challenge - it is not gone

away. There is an uncomfortable truth in the fact that the 'medical model' has however left a legacy (Donoghue, 2003) and some of the thinking around disability continues to be framed by this medical model approach. Guidance, in this respect, faces a dilemma.

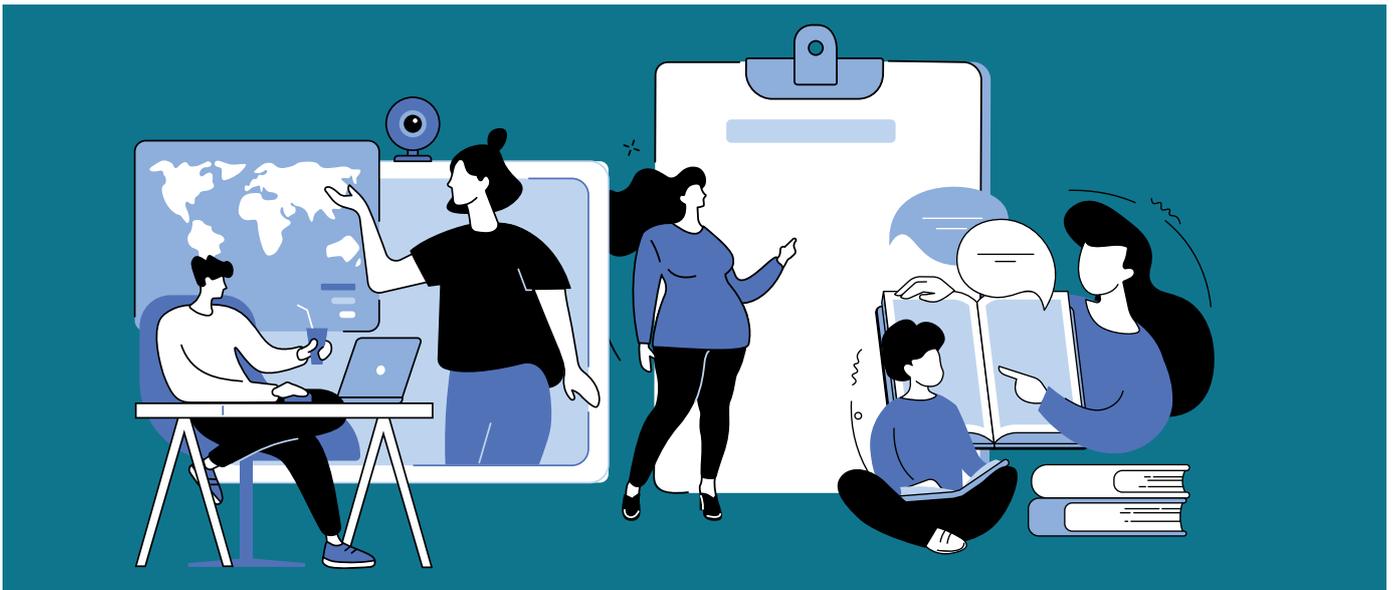
Some Considerations for the Inclusive Guidance Approach

Guidance professionals generally train from a school of psychology or education. As part of their professional course, 'disability', 'the issues that face people with disabilities' and 'inclusionary practices' are often seen as add-on learning rather than actual influencers for their thinking and practice. Career Guidance theories, allied with traditional psychological theories ask that the guidance counsellor identify 'disability' as a medical condition or problem. The dilemma is that while guidance seeks to 'include', the models their practice is based on, while well intentioned, can in fact, exclude.

Moreover, the language of disability and medical interventions, which prevail in the learning environment including terms such as 'special education teacher', 'special educational need' and clinical terminology including 'counselling' can frame the learning experience and identify the learner by their disability. While this may not be perceived as a very negative use of language, such language can impact on not just the overall learning experience, but at a deeper level, planning for future career and work. Language is critical when considering inclusion. If taking a truly inclusionary approach - the language of disability, and its impact on not just education, but career guidance for both the professional and the learner with a disability is a consideration. "Defining impairment or disability or illness or anything else for that matter is not simply a matter of language or science; it is also a matter of politics" (Oliver, 1996, p. 36).

An added dilemma is that careers professionals may be socialised by their training and work environment into believing they know what is 'best' in terms of future options for a learner with a disability. We need to ask if this can have an impact on choices about college courses and work, self-identity, aspirations and hopes, disclosures and how 'the learner wishes to frame themselves'?

There is a great need to continuously re-examine the very theories we align our practice and our work with as we seek to offer an inclusive service. It is critical that all learners can engage with a suitably qualified professional when considering and planning learning and work choices – this is particularly important at times of transition. Career



Guidance in Ireland is defined as “a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives...”. (DES, 2005, p. 4). Additionally, “Guidance is recognised at national and European policy levels as fundamental to lifelong learning that supports the development of human potential, social inclusion, employability and economic prosperity” (National Guidance Forum, 2007). Finally, how we, as professionals, engage with learners as they plan for the future, will directly impact on not just their future but also the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)_ (e.g., SDG4: Quality Education, SDG10: Reduced Inequalities).

Back to the Future – Time to Redesign

It is timely that we consider how we define and action ‘inclusive practice’ in the guidance world and subsequently in the contemporary ‘inclusive learning environment’ for the diversity of learners that we meet in our schools and learning environments. Applying a UDL approach can ensure that diversity of learning and difference is included. UDL asks us to redesign our thinking and our very engagements, by taking a multidisciplinary approach, so that most learners, not just those with a disability, can access what we have to offer. It does not negate the need for add-on supports at an individual or group level. The challenge, however, is for all professionals to reconsider not just their practice but also their thinking so as to optimise “inclusion”. Can such a shift in thinking influence not just the thinking but the practice around career guidance. What would this mean for all learners including the learner with a disability? But moreover – what would it mean for the contemporary ‘inclusive’

career guidance professional. That is ultimately what this Delphi Study is setting out to explore. The Delphi study will be virtual and involve 3 rounds of surveys. The voice of people with disabilities will also be included.

It cannot be underestimated that understanding guidance in the context of disability is complex. Overcoming the challenges faced by people with disabilities when accessing not just education, but meaningful learning and the necessary educational standards for professions and work requires a unique knowledge about disability and the world it faces. The trick is, as argued by Quirke and McCarthy (2020), is to remind ourselves that ‘inclusion is everybody’s business’ and that any move to design for inclusion should be considered and be intentional from the get-go! Thus, it can be argued that guidance and career planning require a unique approach and knowledge of disability if it is to empower people with disabilities to transform their futures.

Study on Inclusion, Universal Design & Career Guidance / Guidance Counselling

It is time to engage in redesigning contemporary guidance and the Delphi study, which is part of a doctoral research study, is inviting you to participate and giving you the opportunity to share this change.

If you are interested in participating, please complete [THIS SHORT FORM](#)



The deadline for expressions of interest is Tuesday 25th May 2021.

Or, alternatively, you can email me at maquirke@tcd.ie





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Mary Quirke is a qualified guidance counsellor, for over 20 years. Mary is also a PhD candidate in Trinity College Dublin with a research interest in Guidance Counselling, Universal Design (UD), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Inclusion and Disability. She has experience with the HSE, REHAB, FETAC, AHEAD and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. Consequently, Mary has a depth of knowledge and this has been further complimented by her active engagement in the inclusion agenda across learning and work environments, both nationally and internationally over the years. [More](#)



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