



University and College Union

‘Further, higher, better’

**Submission to the government’s
second Comprehensive Spending
Review**

Section 32

32 Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for learners and students

Further and adult education

Currently the Connexions Service supplies information, advice and guidance to young people from the age of 13 to 19. Adult IAG is delivered through local partnerships. There is also Learndirect, which is a national information service giving details of adult learning programmes and links to local providers.

The Green Paper 'Youth Matters' proposed changes in the Connexions Service to bring it back under local authority control and to make it service for all young people (currently Connexions prioritises those young people at most risk of not participating in education and training up to and after 16).

Comment

There can be no substantial progress in participation in learning and achievement and attainment among learners without a step change in the information, advice and guidance given to both young people and adults on their learning prospects.

The jungle of qualifications and routes to qualifications that confront young people and adults makes such on-going information, advice and guidance to continuing participation in education and training vital. Such IAG must also be linked to labour market information so that learners and potential learners can see where their learning may take them, and what the ultimate rewards for this may be in terms of future study and/or employment.

Without such IAG learners will continue to end up on learning programmes that do not match their requirements, aspirations and talents. Many studies have shown that poor or even wrong advice resulting in the learner being enrolled on the wrong course is one of the main reasons for student/learner drop-out in further education colleges and adult learning.

We call for a single IAG service covering both young people and adults. This would mean there would be one service and one location in any area where those wanting to embark on learning journeys could receive all the information, advice and guidance they required at various points in their lives: when leaving school and embarking on further learning and/or employment; when wishing to progress at work; and at the point of leaving work. Such a single service requires sufficient resources to enable it to offer a comprehensive service to all young people and adults who may wish to use it. Such resources would enable there to be suitable premises in every locality, which should be supported by national and regional promotional campaigns and the continuation of national information services such as Learndirect.

Since 1997 there has been a remarkable development of IAG in the workplace being supplied by union learning representatives, who receive

statutory time off to undertake their duties. However many have difficulties actually gaining this time. Additionally there is no statutory right for workers to have time to seek advice from the learning representative. We look to this being remedied and for continuing support in terms of access to continuing training and support. Funds for this could be directed through the recently established TUC 'unionlearn' service.

Higher education

Higher education institutions provide their own careers services, which offer advice, support and assistance to students and graduate employers. Careers services provide on-line vacancy bulletins, as well as facilities for employers to give presentations on campus to potential employees, and to interview students as part of the 'milkround'. In addition, graduate employer forums, run by some careers services, let employers forge closer links with HE institutions and their students.

Comment

The Dearing Report noted that good careers advice was essential to students, and saw a two-fold role for careers services: providing advice to students, and contributing to the development of academic programmes.¹⁶⁹ We support Dearing's recommendation that careers services should be more fully integrated into academic programmes. We also think that integrating careers guidance at a higher education level with guidance in further education would be valuable, particularly where the two sectors meet.