

# Personal Guidance What Works?

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- Career Development Institute (CDI)
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
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## About this paper

This research was commissioned by The Careers & Enterprise Company in summer 2018 to establish what works in the provision of personal guidance in schools and colleges and to identify the impacts on young people. The research consisted of three inter-related phases:

1. a rapid evidence review of the academic and grey literature which informs what is currently happening within this area;
2. case studies with schools and colleges across England which highlight good practice and the challenges of implementation; and
3. expert interviews with key thought leaders relevant to the area - this builds on the findings from the literature review.

## In brief

The UK and international evidence base, together with primary data collected from schools and colleges, exploring how personal guidance is delivered suggests that personal guidance has an impact on outcomes for students in terms of their personal effectiveness, career readiness and educational outcomes. The research presented in this report shows that personal guidance is 'effective' (a 3 on the Early Intervention Foundation's scale).<sup>1</sup>

Personal guidance is more effective when it is integrated into a whole school careers guidance programme which is supported by senior leadership and involves all staff in the school or college. In line with Gatsby, it needs to be delivered by a qualified professional on a one-to-one basis. Students need to be prepared prior to sessions and followed up afterwards.

Professional careers advisers need to concentrate on creating a strong relationship (working alliance) with their client and utilising a range of core skills which customise the interview to the young person's needs. Personal guidance should be available on request and when needed, as well as at the key decision points highlighted by Gatsby.

The evidence base could be further supported by research which examines the use of online tools and approaches, group guidance, short interviews, and early interventions. There would also be value in further studies looking at the cost and efficiency of personal guidance. In addition to these thematic areas, there is value in seeking to strengthen the evidence base on personal guidance by using more robust methodologies.

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1. Early Intervention Foundation (2017). *Early Intervention Foundation Guidebook: What do EIF ratings mean?* Available from: <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/eif-evidence-standards> [Accessed 14th September 2018].



**Every student should have opportunities for a guidance interview with a Careers Adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made.**

# Executive Summary

**The research base for this report included UK and International literature together with primary data collected from schools, colleges and experts in the field.**

## **What is personal guidance?**

Personal guidance describes the one-to-one interactions which take place between a careers adviser and a young person. Within Benchmark 8 of the Gatsby report there is a requirement for schools and colleges to provide young people with access to personal guidance. This should be with a careers adviser who should be trained to a minimum of level 6.

## **What impact does personal guidance have?**

There is good evidence which demonstrates the impact of personal guidance. This evidence is able to draw on a number of randomised control trials, longitudinal studies and meta-analyses. It is associated with a range of short and long-term impacts on an individual's:

- personal effectiveness e.g. self-awareness and self-esteem;
- career readiness e.g. career planning and decision making; and
- educational outcomes e.g. improved attendance and attainment.

We assess the strength of the evidence from the literature as 'effective' which is a 3 on the Early Intervention Foundation scale.

## Lessons for practice

From the research, we identified several actions that schools and colleges can take to optimise the impact of personal guidance. These are related to:

1. **Integration.** Personal guidance does not work in isolation. It needs to be integrated into a broader career guidance programme. This programme should be based on Gatsby, be supported by senior leadership and involve all staff.
2. **Space and time.** Guidance professionals need appropriate spaces to work in and sufficient time with clients to achieve outcomes.
3. **Preparation and feedback.** Young people need to be prepared for personal guidance sessions and supported to implement the decisions and plans that they have made in these sessions.
4. **Effective interviews.** The personal guidance interviews themselves need to be well run and make use of evidence-based approaches.
5. **Professionalism.** Personal guidance is a professional activity which needs to be undertaken by an expert practitioner informed by professional and ethical standards.

The evidence base could be further supported by research which examines the use of online tools and approaches, group guidance, short interviews, and early interventions. There would also be value in further studies looking at the cost and efficiency of personal guidance. In addition to these thematic areas, there is value in seeking to strengthen the evidence base on personal guidance by using more robust methodologies.





# 1 | Introduction

The report *Good Career Guidance*<sup>2</sup> by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation presents an approach to careers provision in England that responds to the transfer of responsibility for career guidance to schools and colleges following the Education Act 2011.<sup>3</sup> This paper builds on Gatsby's conclusions (as described in the eight Benchmarks) and believes that they provide a strong basis on which to establish 'what works' in specific areas such as personal guidance.

In December 2017 the Government released the new *Careers Strategy: Making the Most of Everyone's Skills and Talents*.<sup>4</sup> This document sets out the direction of travel for career guidance, positioning it as a driver of equality of opportunity. The aim is for 'all young people in secondary school and college to get a programme of advice and guidance that is stable, structured, and delivered by individuals with the right skills and experience' (p.18). Importantly the Careers Strategy places the Gatsby Benchmarks at the heart of the approach to careers provision that is advocated for schools and colleges.

The term 'career guidance' is used by both Gatsby and recent government strategy to describe the full range of career-related interventions which support young people to make choices and to develop their career thinking. 'Career guidance' therefore describes all eight of Gatsby's Benchmarks. The eighth of these Benchmarks are concerned with 'personal guidance' which is defined by Gatsby as follows;

The Gatsby Charitable Foundation describes personal guidance as usually taking the form of a 'one-to-one interview with a careers adviser who may or may not be a member of staff' (p.30). The Gatsby Benchmarks also recommend that every student should have one personal guidance interview by the age of 16 and the opportunity for a further interview by age 18.

Since the transfer of responsibility for personal guidance to schools, a range of approaches have been utilised. These include employing careers professionals in schools, contracting external providers and working across clusters of schools for commissioning purposes. Despite this, the State of the Nation 2017 report highlights that less than half of schools and colleges are meeting Benchmark 8.<sup>5</sup> The aim of this research is to explore the effectiveness of the current approach to personal guidance and to present evidence-based ways forward.

The case studies and expert interviews used in this research covered both schools and colleges. The literature review also makes use of studies from schools and colleges, as well as drawing on wider literature which examines personal guidance in other settings, such as higher education.

2. The Gatsby Charitable Foundation. (2014). *Good Career Guidance*. London: Gatsby Charitable Trust.

3. Great Britain (2011). *Education Act 2011*, Chapter 21. London: TSO.

4. Department for Education (2017). *Careers Strategy: Making the Most of Everyone's Skills and Talents*. London: Department for Education.

5. The Careers & Enterprise Company. (2017). *State of the Nation 2017: Careers and Enterprise Provision in England's Schools*. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

# 2 | What is personal guidance?

In the past the terminology used to describe the different elements of careers activities has often been confusing. Terms such as CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance) and IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) have been used to describe careers related activities provided for young people.

*Good Career Guidance* has helped to clarify this by providing a clear set of terms which we have adopted in this paper.<sup>2</sup>

**Career guidance** describes all activities intended to assist young people in making decisions about their future education, training and jobs. This should be based around a planned careers programme which provides young people with access to a range of learning opportunities, including employer engagement, work experience, careers fairs and local labour market information. These are summarised as the eight Gatsby Benchmarks. Historically the term career guidance has been used to illustrate a one-to-one interaction between a careers practitioner and a young person, but this activity is increasingly being described as personal guidance in line with the Gatsby terminology.<sup>6</sup>

**Personal guidance** is the eighth of the Gatsby Benchmarks. This term describes a focused one-to-one interview provided by a trained and qualified career professional. Andrews and Hooley define personal guidance as;

*A structured career conversation between a careers professional and a young person. This usually takes place face-to-face and one-to-one.*

A professional is defined as a practitioner who has been trained and should hold a relevant career guidance/development qualification at a minimum of level 6 (equivalent of undergraduate degree level).<sup>7 8</sup> Careers advisers usually have sole responsibility for the delivery of personal guidance. However, it is important to recognise that they are also typically involved in the delivery of many of the other Benchmarks. This paper focuses on Benchmark 8 rather than the wider contribution of careers advisers.

Personal guidance provides individual support for a young person which enables them to connect and apply their learning from the full range of career guidance activities to themselves. It needs to be customised to meet the individual needs of the young person and provides an opportunity for them to discuss their career ideas, plans, identify the support they may need and what they need to do to progress.

6. Andrews, D. and Hooley, T. (2018). *The Career Leaders Handbook*. Bath: Trotmans.

7. Career Development Institute (CDI). (2018). *Equipping the young people of today for the career choices of the future: Personal Guidance*. Available from [http://www.thecdi.net/write/Documents/CDI\\_Personal\\_Career\\_Guidance\\_May\\_2018\\_Final\\_\(2\).pdf](http://www.thecdi.net/write/Documents/CDI_Personal_Career_Guidance_May_2018_Final_(2).pdf) [accessed 2nd October 2018].

8. Careers Profession Task Force (2010). *Towards a Strong Career Profession*. Runcorn: Department for Education.

# 3 | What impact does personal guidance have?

Over the last 30 years, a series of studies have examined the effectiveness of personal guidance and have identified a range of impacts associated with this intervention.<sup>9 10 11 12</sup> Such literature is of a high quality and includes a number of randomised control trials, longitudinal studies and meta-analyses.<sup>13 14 15</sup> Brown summarises the findings of this literature noting that career interventions are modestly more effective than doing nothing in promoting outcomes associated with both choice-making and job finding. He goes on to discuss what features comprise effective practice (see the next section).

Reid notes that outcomes can be immediate, such as increased motivation, confidence or a revised job search strategy, or they can be revealed over the long term.<sup>16</sup> However, it is inevitably more challenging to capture and demonstrate long-term outcomes in research studies. Musset and Mytna Kurekova<sup>17</sup> emphasise that there is empirical evidence which suggests that guidance can have a formative impact on educational, social and economic outcomes for young people. These improvements are generally modest but are 'driven by increased student motivation linked to

a deeper understanding of the relationship between education and employment' (p.10).

Personal guidance can support young people to develop their personal effectiveness, career readiness and better educational outcomes.

## Personal effectiveness

Personal effectiveness addresses individuals' self-image, self-efficacy, motivation and resilience. There is evidence from the literature that personal guidance can support individuals to improve their personal effectiveness.<sup>15</sup> Such evidence highlights the role that personal guidance can have in increasing self-reflection and enhancing self-awareness and self-efficacy, clarifying values and helping individuals to build a stronger sense of self and a positive outlook.<sup>18 19 20 21 22 23</sup> For example, Maree reported the impact on self-reflection (evidence of looking back on past thoughts and actions), reflexivity (desire and capacity to plan), enhanced sense of self (improved self-awareness emancipation (insight and resilience) and transformation (commitment to change).<sup>24</sup>

9. Oliver, L.W. and Spokane, A.R. (1988). Career-intervention outcome: What contributes to client gain? *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 35(4), 447-462.

10. Whiston, S.C. and Sexton, T.L. (1998). A review of school counseling outcome research: Implications for practice. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 76, 412-426.

11. Brown, S.D. and Ryan Krane, N.E. (2000). Four (or five) sessions and a cloud of dust: Old assumptions and new observations about career counseling. In S.D. Brown & R.W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of Counseling Psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 740-766). New York: Wiley.

12. Hooley, T. (2014). *The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance*. Jyväskylä, Finland: The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN).

13. Whiston, S.C., Sexton, T.L. and Lasoff, D.I. (1998). Career-intervention outcome: A replication and Extension of Oliver and Spokane (1988). *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 45(2), 150-165.

14. Brown, S.D. (2016). Meta-analysis and evidence-based career practice: Current Status and Future Directions. In Sampson, J. P., Bullock-Yowell, E., Dozier, V. C., Osborn, D. S. and Lenz, J. G. (Eds.), *Integrating Theory, Research, and Practice in Vocational Psychology: Current Status and Future Directions*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University.

15. Whelan, N., McGilloway, S., Murphy, M. P. and McGuinness, C. (2018). EEPIC-Enhancing Employability through Positive Interventions for improving Career potential: the impact of a high support career guidance intervention on the wellbeing, hopefulness, self-efficacy and employability of the long-term unemployed-a study protocol for a randomised controlled trial. *Trials*, 19(1), 141-159.

16. Reid, E.R. (2018). *Length Matters! Exploratory Research into the Impact the Shortening of Guidance Appointments is Having on Practice*. Warwick: University of Warwick.

17. Musset, P. and L. Mytna Kurekova (2018). Working it out: Career Guidance and Employer. *OECD Education Working Papers*, 175. Paris: OECD Publishing.

18. Fried, R.R. and Irwin, J.D. (2016). Calmly coping: A Motivational Interviewing Via Co-Active Life Coaching (MI-VIA-CALC) pilot intervention for university students with perceived levels of high stress. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring* 14 (1) 16-33.

19. Lancer, N. and Eatough, V. (2018). One-to-one coaching as a catalyst for personal development: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of coaching undergraduates at a UK university. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 13, 72-88.

20. Bimrose, J., Brown, A., Barnes, S. A., and Hughes, D. (2011). *The Role of Career Adaptability in Skills Supply*. Wath-upon-Deane: UKCES.

21. Neary, S., Hooley, T., Morris, M. and Mackay, S. (2016). *The Impact of Career Guidance on Progression in Learning and Work: A Literature Review*. Derby: University of Derby.

22. Edokpolor, J. E. and Omiun, S. E. (2017). Role of career development services in developing students lifelong learning self-efficacy: Vocational and adult education lecturers' perceptions. *Baltic Journal of Career Education and Management*, 5(1), 30-45.

23. Archer, S. and Yates, J. (2017). Understanding potential career changers' experience of career confidence following a positive psychology based coaching programme. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 10(2), 157-175.

24. Maree J.G. (2015). Career construction counselling: A thematic analysis of outcomes for four clients. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 86, 1-9.

## Career readiness

Career readiness capabilities include the understanding of occupations, decision-making, planning, self-preparation and transition preparedness. Research studies find that personal guidance has a positive impact on career planning and supports young people to develop their vocational identity and aspirations.<sup>9</sup> In a longitudinal study, Perdrix and colleagues found that personal guidance reduced clients' career decision making difficulties and helped them to implement their career plans.<sup>25</sup> A study from Kenya found that personal guidance to secondary school students had an impact on their capacity to make career decisions.<sup>26</sup> Personal guidance can also serve as a critical moment when young people can be encouraged to engage with labour market information and to consider what it really means for their individual career aspirations. The use of labour market information in personal guidance is a key component that can contribute to its efficacy.<sup>14</sup> This can help students to better understand the opportunity structure and increase their likelihood of pursuing career relevant routes such as choosing STEM subjects.<sup>27</sup>

The participants in the case studies also emphasised the role that personal guidance could play in enhancing young people's career readiness.

*I would say it is finding out interests and passions and then informing about opportunity awareness... for me it is always opportunity awareness and making them think about the reasons for why they have done something and why they want to do something.*

### Careers Co-ordinator

They reported observing this impact on career readiness on a regular basis.

*I would say from a personal guidance point of view, the students come away from a careers appointment feeling more comfortable with decision making than they did before and more empowered. For example, it might be a student who [is] broadly interested in educational psychology but is panicking that they are not doing the right subject, and they are able to come away with the knowledge and understanding that there is a variety of different paths they can take.*

### Careers Co-ordinator

25 Perdrix, S., Stauffer, S., Masdonati, J., Massoudi, K. and Rossier, J. (2012). Effectiveness of career counseling: A one-year follow-up. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80, (2) 565-578.

26 Ibrahim, F. R., Aloka, P. J., Wambiya, P., & Raburu, P. (2014). Perceptions on the role of guidance and counselling programme on Kenyan Secondary School students' career decision making. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 4(6), 313

27 Falco, L. D. (2017). The school counselor and STEM career development. *Journal of Career Development*, 44(4), 359-374.

## Educational outcomes

There is evidence that personal guidance can contribute to an improvement in educational outcomes. This includes increased attendance, reduced drop out, enhanced attainment and progression to personally valued educational destinations. Research suggested that personal guidance for undergraduate students helped them to gain more control over their academic work, avoid anxiety and improve their attainment.<sup>16</sup> Another study found that personal guidance contributed to an increase in students' academic, personal and social competence.<sup>26</sup> Tomaszewski and colleagues' longitudinal study with Australian students found that career guidance contributed to the decision to attend university.<sup>28</sup>

Studies from the USA also highlight the positive impact that personal guidance can have on students' likelihood of engaging with a post-secondary education and of achieving a good outcome from participating in such education.<sup>29</sup> McCulloch reports a similar finding in the UK based on a study of all university entrants in 2005/06 which found that both the amount of advice on higher education that an individual had received (from all sources) and their satisfaction with the career guidance that they had received were correlated with reduced likelihood of dropping out from higher education.<sup>30</sup>



28. Tomaszewski, W., Perales, F. and Xiang, N. (2017). Career guidance, school experiences and the university participation of young people from low socio-economic backgrounds. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 85, 11-23.

29. Poynton, T. A. and Lapan, R. T. (2017). Aspirations, achievement, and school counselors' impact on the college transition. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 95(4), 369-377.

30. McCulloch, A. (2014). *Learning from Futuretrack: Dropout from Higher Education*. London: BIS.

# 4 | What are the lessons for practice?

The literature review, expert interviews and the case studies suggest that personal guidance is more effective when the following conditions are in place.



- 1. Integration.** Personal guidance does not work in isolation. It needs to be integrated into a broader career guidance programme. This programme should be based on Gatsby, be supported by senior leadership and involve all staff.
- 2. Space and time.** Guidance professionals need appropriate spaces to work in and sufficient time with clients to achieve outcomes.
- 3. Preparation and feedback.** Young people need to be prepared for personal guidance sessions and supported to implement the decisions and plans that they have made in these sessions.
- 4. Effective interviews.** The personal guidance interviews themselves need to be well run and make use of evidence-based approaches.
- 5. Professionalism.** Personal guidance is a professional activity which needs to be undertaken by an expert practitioner informed by professional and ethical standards.

## Integration

Personal guidance is not a stand-alone activity. Rather, it should be integrated into a wider programme of career guidance activities as described by Gatsby. This finding is backed up by wider research which also emphasises holistic and integrated provision in guidance services.<sup>12</sup>

Such a programme requires strong career leadership and the support of the school or college's wider staff and leadership.<sup>31,32</sup> The careers leader plays a particularly critical role in bringing the careers programme together and ensuring effective integration between the different components, including the role of personal guidance.<sup>33</sup> As well as good leadership, careers programmes are also dependent on the effective use of other school and college staff, most notably teachers and lecturing staff.<sup>34</sup> It is also important that parents are involved.<sup>35</sup>

It is particularly critical that personal guidance is well integrated with teaching staff as many teachers serve as a first point of contact for students' career concerns.<sup>36</sup> This is likely to require the development of strong referral processes as well as a clear record keeping. A systematic literature review from New Zealand highlights that to achieve an integrated approach, teachers need to have an improved understanding of the content and importance of careers education and advisers need to interact with colleagues.<sup>37</sup> A Dutch longitudinal study emphasised

that whilst a school's vision for career guidance might be clear to teachers, if it felt imposed and was not shared internally it would not be effective.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, there is a need to involve teachers in the creation of the vision and to build understanding between teachers and careers professionals.<sup>34</sup>

Many of the case study institutions had an organised team working closely together on the delivery of career guidance with a careers professional responsible for the delivery of personal guidance. All the case study institutions identified the importance of the relationship between the delivery of the one-to-one sessions and the wider career guidance programme.

Some schools commissioned external guidance professionals and built really strong working relationships with providers and careers advisers who were well integrated, but they recognised the potential pitfalls of this. Whilst other schools and all colleges employed their own careers adviser. Gatsby argues that there is no clear evidence which points to one model being better than another. There are potential pitfalls with both approaches, but we observed that schools with an external adviser needed to attend more carefully to the integration of this adviser into the wider programme. Conversely, those that utilised an internal careers adviser needed to ensure that the advisers' professionalism and impartiality were respected.

31. The Careers & Enterprise Company and Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2018). *Understanding The Role Of The Careers Leader: A Guide for Secondary Schools*. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

32. The Careers & Enterprise Company and Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2018). *Understanding The Role Of The Careers Leader: A Guide for Colleges*. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

33. Andrews, D. and Hooley, T. (2017). '...and now it's over to you': recognising and supporting the role of careers leaders in schools in England. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 45(2), 153-164.

34. Hooley, T., Watts, A.G. and Andrews, D. (2015). *Teachers and Careers: The Role Of School Teachers in Delivering Career and Employability Learning*. Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

35. Oomen, A. (2016). Parental involvement in career education and guidance in secondary education. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 37(1), 39-46.

36. Hearne, L., King, P., Kenny, N. and Geary, T. (2016). *A Case Study Analysis of a Whole School Approach to Guidance Counselling in a Voluntary School in the Irish Post Primary Sector*. Limerick: University of Limerick.

37. Yates, A. and Bruce, M. (2017). The future of career education in New Zealand secondary schools: A review of the literature. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 26(2), 62-70.

38. Draaisma, A., Meijers, F. and Kuijpers, M. (2017). Towards a strong career learning environment: results from a Dutch longitudinal study. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 45(2), 165-177.

On balance, some case study schools had a preference for an internal model as being able to offer stronger integration between personal guidance and the wider careers programme.

*I work here five days a week and the relationships I have within the school are strong enough so that I have already put myself in a position to be an influential voice in terms of how the school moves forward.*

#### **Careers Co-ordinator**

Having someone directly employed by the institution was perceived as being more effective as the students were familiar with the member of staff and the careers person knew the students better, their home situation and the type of support which may be most helpful. These individuals were perceived to be able to develop an influential role in the school.

*The regular contact I have with students means it is easier to present them with more opportunities and easier for them to open up in meetings. Students are more likely to come back to me and see me because there is more awareness of who I am.*

#### **Careers Co-ordinator**

## Space and time

The evidence shows that it is important that careers professionals have appropriate spaces to work in and to have appropriate amounts of time to achieve the outcomes that they need to achieve. Expert interviews highlighted that this has not always been the case with personal guidance often delivered in sub-optimal places in very limited amounts of time. Westergaard also highlights the problems associated with trying to deliver personal guidance in cramped environments that do not offer clients any confidentiality.<sup>39</sup>

### Appropriate spaces

The space where career guidance is delivered is important for both practical (it needs to be private, comfortable and of sufficient size) and symbolic reasons (it signals the importance of the activity and defines the relationship between the client and the professional). Westergaard highlights the importance of providing students with safe, secure and private environments, noting that for some clients this may be the only opportunity in their lives where they can feel safe and feel free to talk openly.<sup>36</sup> Ofsted also notes that personal guidance interviews need to take place in a confidential space and highlights the importance of internet access and access to other information resources.<sup>40</sup>

39. Westergaard, J., (2012). Career guidance and therapeutic counselling: sharing 'what works' in practice with young people. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* 40, 327–339.

40. Ofsted (2013). *Going in the Right Direction? Careers Guidance in Schools from September 2012*. Manchester: Ofsted.



Thomsen sounds a note of caution in codifying the places in which personal guidance can take place too much.<sup>41</sup> She argues that while there is value in conducting personal guidance in closed spaces, there can also be value in offering drop in and outreach opportunities to speak to a careers professional e.g. after school. Such opportunities for informal personal guidance can supplement and extend the opportunities that are provided by more formal encounters such as those advocated by the Gatsby Benchmarks.

The careers leaders in the case study institutions generally had their own office and made this space available to the careers adviser to undertake their work. This contributed to a greater level of status and visibility for personal guidance which made it more familiar to young people.

### Intensity of interviews

Gatsby recommends that young people should receive a minimum of two personal guidance interviews before they have left school (one before 16 and one between 16 and 18). The State of the Nation 2017 report shows that many schools are failing to deliver this both pre 16 and post 16.<sup>5</sup> However, it is important that this is interpreted as a minimum rather than a maximum. Gatsby highlight that it should be linked with key decision points (e.g. before A level/post-16 choices and before post-18 choices), but also with the development of young people themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Increasing the number of personal guidance sessions is associated with their impact. Some research argues that it is better to view personal guidance as a series of meetings than as a one off encounter.<sup>11</sup> Such a finding emphasises the importance of good record keeping in personal guidance (see Benchmark 3) to ensure that careers professionals can build on previous personal guidance interviews (and wider career education) that the student may have taken part in.

Other studies reinforce Gatsby's point about linking personal guidance to key decision points in students' lives and note that personal guidance is ineffective if it is offered too late.<sup>42</sup> Personal guidance needs to be offered sufficiently in advance of a decision point to allow the student to act on what they learn within the interview.<sup>16</sup>

The case study schools provided a personal guidance interview for all Year 10 or Year 11 students; the identification of the year depended on whether they were an institution for 11 to 16-year-olds, or 11 to 18-year-olds. Interviews took place in Year 10 for students who did not have a sixth form, to ensure they had a plan after their final year.

41. Thomsen, R. (2013). Career guidance on the move: Developing guidance in new places. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 31 9-15.

42. Moote, J. and Archer, L. (2018). Failing to deliver? Exploring the current status of career education provision in England. *Research Papers in Education*, 33, 187-215.



**Timing is important. Personal guidance should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made, though it should also be available on an occasional basis, given that pupils' conceptions about themselves and their careers are developing all the time, and do not always coincide neatly with the timing of curriculum choices.**

In addition, schools and colleges were also offering personal guidance to students between the ages of 16 and 18.

Every student in the relevant year groups was given an interview, with schools usually prioritising students who had been identified as at risk of NEET (not in employment, education or training), SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) or students with few career ideas or plans. One institution discussed how they used data from the information management system and discussions with heads of year to identify those in need (e.g. levels of engagement, SEND, pupil premium).

Several of the case study institutions made personal guidance interviews available from Year 7. Such interviews could be triggered by a referral from a member of staff (e.g. key stage tutor), parent or in some cases by a request from the student. However, many also expressed concern about managing the demand for such services so that they did not exceed the supply. One institution provided a short 15-minute interview for every student from Year 7 onwards. Examples were also provided by short group interviews with younger students, which contributed to initial career thinking and helped to surface students who might benefit from further support.

Increasing the number of interviews has potential resourcing implications for schools and colleges. While it is possible for some of these costs to be externalised (e.g. by making use of the National Careers Service telephone helpline)<sup>43</sup> the evidence suggests that there are, at best, limited overall savings to the public purse from shifting face-to-face guidance into telephone and distance modes of delivery. In a review of adult services, Page and colleagues concluded that the cost per personal guidance session was approximately the same for telephone guidance (learndirect) as it was for face-to-face guidance (nextstep advice).<sup>44</sup>

Some of the case study institutions were using short drop-in interviews, group guidance approaches, online chats with guidance professionals and some automated tools, usually to supplement one-to-one sessions and increase the level of access across all school years. These approaches are valuable, but are best thought of as additional to the basic Gatsby entitlement, not least because Oliver and Spokane's meta analysis concludes that although one-to-one sessions are costly, they are more effective than technology-based approaches or group treatments.<sup>9</sup> However, all of these approaches may be worthy of further innovation and research as will be discussed in the final section of this report.

43. See <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/contact-us/home> for further information.

44. Page, R., Newton, B., Hawthorn, R., Hunt, W., & Hillage, J. (2007). *An Evaluation of the Ufi/learndirect Telephone Guidance Trial*. London: Department of Education and Skills.

## Sufficient length

The amount of time allocated to the personal guidance interview contributes to the impact that it has. In their meta-analyses, Oliver and Spokane concluded that increasing the number of hours and/or number of sessions increases the probability of a positive outcome.<sup>9</sup> Reid reported that both students and guidance practitioners emphasised that additional time in appointments would add value.<sup>16</sup> She argues that additional time helps students' to gain greater clarity about the agreed next steps and increases the impact of the interaction. Other research also reports that longer sessions are associated with increased satisfaction in the session and that there are dangers in trying to rush people through personal guidance encounters.<sup>45</sup>

One of the participants in our case studies argued that the opportunity for a student to take some time to talk in a personal guidance interview was at the heart of its value.

*Everything is time-bound in a school. Just having someone whose remit is to listen to them in a space which is uninterrupted for a decent length of time with a follow-up possibility. They can come back to talk about things if they change their mind for example. It is on their terms.*

**Careers and Employability Manager**

The amount of time allocated to student interviews in the case study institutions was varied and ranged from 30 minutes to an hour. In the case study institutions, the interview time was predominantly defined by timetabling and there were some discussions of the difficulties in fitting in the interviews around the timetabled lessons or students being released. Some of this was due to a lack of appreciation of the content of personal guidance from other staff, hence the importance of engaging all staff and increasing their understanding of personal guidance.

*There is a lack of understanding [about] what a guidance interview is; around the learning community meetings. People don't realise why it should take so long, but it is a different way of working to teaching.*

**Personal Development Co-ordinator**

The experts argue that a thirty-minute interview should be seen as a minimum length of time and felt that an hour would provide a greater opportunity for the interview to be impactful. This is in line with the literature which highlighted that longer sessions were more effective.

## Preparation and feedback

Personal guidance is a learning intervention which needs to build on and connect to the wider career education that students are undergoing. Because of this, it is important that students are prepared for personal guidance and that their experience of personal guidance is followed up and acted upon subsequently.

### Preparation

Suitable preparation should take place prior to the personal guidance interview. Central to such preparation, as discussed above, is the fact that a student should have been involved in a wider programme of career learning if they are going to make the most of the opportunity. As one of the experts we interviewed argued “if we give career guidance to young people who are not ready to engage it is a waste of that resource... The main thing is that students have been doing a programme of career-related learning and that personal guidance is integrated at an appropriate point.”

More specifically, Reid recommends that students should be informed in advance about the nature of personal guidance and asked to prepare some information that will be relevant to the interview (e.g. creating a CV or list of interests).<sup>16</sup> One way to achieve this would be to create a preparatory worksheet or workbook. This kind of preparation will enable students to reflect prior to their appointment and allow key issues to be surfaced more quickly in the personal guidance session. Ofsted also highlight the importance of “thorough pre-interview preparation to gain an

understanding of the students', previous work on careers guidance, their performance in school and any relevant personal circumstances” (p.16).<sup>40</sup>

One of the case study institutions highlighted the importance of preparation and explained the approaches that they use to prepare students for personal guidance.

*In terms of preparation, we go through what a careers adviser is and what guidance appointments are in assembly. I speak to all the students when I give them their stickers for their careers appointment. We have a page in the student planner so every student and parent can see it and it will tell them what they can expect [from] the careers adviser.*

#### **Careers Leader**

Further examples of strategies used by case study institutions involved in the research to prepare students for personal guidance included: providing students with a pre-interview pro form or questionnaire which explains what the interview is for, what might be covered and encourages the exploration of future career ideas and interests; the provision of information about personal guidance interviews through the school or college website; presentations in assemblies; and teachers making a personal introduction to a careers adviser.

## Follow up

Follow up focuses on the activities which should happen after the personal guidance interview; this may be with the careers adviser or with other staff or parents/carers.

Ofsted discussed how the students in their research valued records of discussions that had taken place which they could refer to when undertaking further activities or engaging with other people about their plans.<sup>40</sup> Hooley and colleagues added that a follow up after a guidance interaction could have a positive effect on client satisfaction.<sup>45</sup>

The case studies demonstrated a range of approaches used to record what has been learned in the personal guidance session and to support follow up activities. These include:

- teachers having informal conversations with students after personal guidance interviews e.g. asking, 'how did you get on?';
- scheduled check-ins with teachers where students have the opportunity to say if the interview was useful and to discuss whether the next steps were clear;
- post-interview feedback forms or reflections designed to allow students to summarise what they have got out of the personal guidance interview; and
- regular review of action plans created during the personal guidance interview to ensure that it is being acted on.

Such processes highlight the way in which the personal guidance interview can be viewed as a focus point to a much wider set of career learning which is being undertaken by the young person. This in turn highlights the fact that there needs to be good record keeping (as described by Gatsby Benchmark 3) to allow effective communication between the careers adviser, careers leader, teachers and other staff. In two institutions, the data gathered through the personal guidance interview was attached to the student profile on the information management system (with agreement from the student) so that it could be shared with other key career informants who were working with the student (e.g. teachers, heads of year and parents). One careers professional used an online portfolio to capture evidence around the Gatsby Benchmarks during the personal guidance interview to allow both the student and other school staff to have access to this information.

## Interview content

The core of personal guidance is the interview itself. Given this, it is critical that the adviser has the appropriate interview skills to conduct an effective interview. These include the ability to build an effective working relationship with their client, listening and questioning skills, the ability to engage with a students' narrative and help them to shape it, as well as an understanding of referral processes and the ability to be reflective about their interview practice. Alongside this, it is also important that careers professionals have a strong knowledge base about the education system and the labour market and that they are attentive to evidence and the impact of their practice.

The literature review highlighted that interpersonal skills and relationship building during the guidance process were important in many studies.<sup>21</sup> The relationship that the adviser can establish with the student is the essential resource that can be used to promote the student's development, reflexivity and career planning.<sup>46 47 48 49</sup> This relationship between the professional and the student is often referred to as the 'working alliance' and is understood to focus on three main components: (1) agreement about the goals the interview will address; (2) the tasks needed to achieve the goal; and (3) the relationship developed between the adviser and the client. Masdonati and colleagues highlight how an effective working alliance can help to ensure that the information transmitted in a personal guidance interview is received by the student and that a clear agreement is reached about

next steps.<sup>47</sup> Elad-Strenger and Littman-Ovadia found a direct relationship between the clients' rating of the working alliance in the first session and their readiness after the interview.<sup>48</sup>

There were consistent views from careers leads, practitioners and experts involved in the focus groups and interviews as to the professional skills that were important to achieving positive outcomes from a personal guidance interview. All agreed that the working alliance was the most important element of the intervention and stressed the importance of the relationship between the client and the adviser and ensures that there is a mutual bond, with a shared commitment to goals and task. It was recognised that such a relationship can be more difficult to establish if the careers adviser is not well integrated into the institution.

Skills that were identified as important by the case study institutions involved in the interviews and focus groups included listening, questioning, effective contracting, and challenging assumptions. Brown and colleagues argue that the five best evidenced components of personal guidance are (1) establish written goals; (2) provide information about the world of work; (3) the guidance professional should model good career behaviour and discuss how they had resolved their own career choices; (4) the guidance professional should encourage young people to make use of other sources of career support; and (5) that the advice that young people receive is clearly individualised and tailored to their situation.<sup>14 50</sup>

46. Whiston, S.C., Rossier, J. and Barón, P.M.H. (2016). The working alliance in career counseling: A systematic overview. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 24, 591–604.

47. Masdonati, Perdrix, S., Massoudi, K. and Rossier, J. (2014). Working alliance as a moderator and a mediator of career counseling and effectiveness. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 22(1), 1–15.

48. Elad-Strenger, J. and Littman-Ovadia, H. (2012). The contribution of the counselor-client working alliance to career exploration. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 20(2), 140–153.

49. Bordin, E. (1979). The generalizability of the psychoanalytic concept of the working alliance. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 16, 252–260.

50. Brown, S. D., Ryan Krane, N. E., Brecheisen, J., Castolino, P., Budisin, I., Miller, M. and Edens, L. (2003). Critical ingredients of career choice interventions: More analyses and new hypotheses. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62(3), 411–428.

There was a consensus that it was impossible to separate out these skills and techniques as it was the interrelationship between the skills, theory and tactics deployed by the careers professional that made personal guidance effective. These skills and techniques come together in a meaningful dialogue between the careers professional and the client, which builds up a narrative about the client's story, her desires, her vision of the future, the understanding of her skills and potential; and allow the client to take meaningful and purposeful actions as a result of the dialogue.<sup>51 52 53</sup>

## Evidence based

Although we have presented the evidence in this review in relation to 'personal guidance' in general, much of the literature on efficacy validates a range of different theoretical approaches, techniques and tools.<sup>54 55</sup> There is no clear evidence that any one approach to personal guidance is better and it is certainly unlikely that the same approach will work for all individuals in all circumstances. However, experts were agreed that it is important for professionals to be aware of these different theoretical approaches and to be able to deploy them carefully in line with the evidence.

*Practitioners need to be able to use different theoretical approaches and concepts which are focused on the needs of the individual... As a practitioner there is no point having one theory; you have to constantly refresh it and how it impacts on a new generation of students.*

### Expert

Although all practitioners who participated in our case studies were trained in career theory, few were able to explain how a theoretical approach informed their practice. Most were familiar with the DOTS model<sup>56</sup>, matching approaches<sup>57</sup> and Planned Happenstance<sup>58</sup>, but were unaware of more recent theories or developments in evidence-based practice. This finding echoes recent research from Bimrose and colleagues who observed that '*theoretically informed practice frameworks that foreground context and have been successfully integrated into practice are scarce*' (p.147) and noted that the theories that are in use are often confined to '*narrow matching approaches*'.<sup>59</sup>

51. Hartung, P.J. and Vess, L. (2016). Critical moments in career construction counseling. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 97 31-39.

52. Watzlawik, M. and Kullasepp, K. (2016). Career as affective journey: How constant flux challenges the search for career pathways and counseling. *Integrative Psychological & Behavioral Science*, 50, 492-506.

53. Cardoso, P., Silva, J.R., Gonçalves, M.M. and Duarte, M.E. (2014). Innovative moments and change in Career Construction Counseling. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 84, 11-20.

54. Yates, J. (2013). *The Career Coaching Handbook*. Abingdon: Routledge.

55. Reid, H. (2015). *Introduction to Career Counselling & Coaching*. London: Sage.

56. Law, B. and Watts, A.G. (1977). *Schools, Careers and Community*. London: Church Information Office.

57. Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making Vocational Choices: A Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments* (3rd ed.). Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

58. Mitchell, L. K. and Krumboltz, J. D. (1996). Krumboltz's learning theory of career choice and counseling. In D. Brown and L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (3rd ed., pp. 233-280). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

59. Bimrose, J., Mulvey, R. and Brown, A. (2016). Low qualified and low skilled: the need for context sensitive careers support. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 44, 145-157.



These findings suggest that it is important that attention is given to how careers professionals are trained on theory and evidence, how their knowledge is updated through CPD (continuing professional development) and critically, on unpicking the implications of research to allow them to be employed in practice.

Some practitioners in the case studies made use of theoretical informed models of practice like Egan's three-stage Skilled Helper approach<sup>60</sup> or the GROW (Goal, Current Reality, Options or Obstacles and Will or Way forward) model.<sup>61</sup> Such models of practice can be useful but, raise issues if they are applied uncritically and without respect to context. So, one expert raised concerns that Egan's model was designed for people with 'a problem' which does not necessarily describe the way in which young people are thinking about their careers. They argued that the application of such theories and models needed to attend carefully to the context and career issues of the client of personal guidance (e.g. young people making educational choices in Year 10 or 11).

## Professionalism

Personal guidance is a professional activity. As such, it needs to be undertaken by appropriately trained professionals with the knowledge and skills to do the job. Professionals should also be committed to an ethical framework and able to access continuing professional development to ensure that they keep up to date.

### Qualified professionals

The skills, training and dispositions of career professionals are important in assuring the consistency and efficacy of personal guidance. In England the appropriate level of qualification for careers professionals was defined by the Careers Profession Task Force as a minimum of level 6 (degree level).<sup>8</sup> Where training and professionalism is not in place it hampers career professionals' ability to innovate and respond to complex issues that they encounter.<sup>39</sup> Neary and colleagues report that the expertise of the adviser was an important theme in many studies included in their literature review.<sup>21</sup>

All the careers advisers who delivered personal guidance in the case study institutions were highly experienced and qualified to either level 6 or 7 (with one exception who was in training). The delivery of personal guidance by a qualified professional (typically to at least level 6 or higher) was identified by all the institutions as well as the experts as being important to ensure a professional service.

One practitioner provided an account of the value of level 6 and above training.

<sup>60</sup> Egan, G. and Reese, R.J. (2019). *The Skilled Helper: A Problem-Management and Opportunity Development Approach To Helping*. (11th edition). Boston: Centage.

<sup>61</sup> Whitmore, J. (2002). *Coaching for Performance: Growing People, Performance and Purpose*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

*Having someone who is qualified to do the interviews and people know that this is what that person does. They need a qualification in a careers specialism at level 6 or above. This isn't because people with level 3 can't give advice, but a level 6 gives a greater understanding of psychology, the counselling skills etc. that are important. Also, how you can tailor the approach.*

### **Career practitioner**

In addition to requiring professionalism as part of quality assuring personal guidance, there is also a need for wider forms of quality assurance and evaluation.<sup>62 62</sup> The National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment argue that it is important to view the responsibility for quality in guidance as one that should be shared between the individual practitioner, the organisation and government policy.<sup>63</sup>

## **Ethics and impartiality**

Research has warned that some secondary school students were put off from accessing personal guidance as they did not think that they would get impartial advice and guidance. In particular, concerns were expressed that schools or colleges would be 'biased' and would predominantly just want to channel students into their own routes (e.g. A levels), rather than supporting the student to explore other options.<sup>31</sup> Research from The Careers & Enterprise Company has also found a tendency for schools without sixth forms to provide weaker information and support about alternative and vocational educational routes.<sup>42</sup> Personal guidance delivered by a professional who adheres to an ethical framework and the principle of impartiality should serve as a bulwark against this.

In the UK the Career Development Institute's Code of Ethics provides a key framework for ethical practice.<sup>64</sup> The code of ethics covers the ethical responsibilities of members of the CDI including issues like being committed to act in the interests of the individual and of society, maintaining competence and fitness to practice, ensuring confidentiality, impartiality, transparency and trustworthiness. It is backed up by a complaints and disciplinary process. Given this, there are clear advantages for organisations to ensure that careers staff are members of the CDI and that they commit to professional development as part of their inclusion on the CDIs professional register.<sup>65</sup>

62. Hooley, T. and Rice, S. (2018). Ensuring quality in career guidance: a critical review. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, online first.

63. National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment. (2012). *Beratungs Qualität in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung*. Berlin: Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

64. Career Development Institute. (2014). *Career Development Institute Code of Ethics*. Available from <http://www.thecdi.net/Code-of-Ethics> [Accessed 9th October 2018].

65. Career Development Institute. (n.d.). *UK Register of Career Development Professionals*. Available at <http://www.thecdi.net/Professional-Register-> [Accessed 9th October 2018].

## Access to CPD

The effectiveness of career guidance has a heavy reliance on the skills, expertise and competence of the practitioner. Neary and Johnson suggest that maintenance and improvement of knowledge is a commitment of the professional career practitioner.<sup>66</sup> In addition to reading and the attendance at courses, many studies emphasise the importance of forms of reflective practice to underpin practitioner competence.<sup>67 68 69</sup> Despite the importance of CPD activities, research highlights the way that such activity can be squeezed by economic pressures which can in turn have an impact on the professionalism of careers practitioners.<sup>70</sup> Consequently it is important to ensure ongoing engagement with CPD.

Within the case study institutions engagement with CPD was mixed; with some institutions demonstrating a limited commitment to CPD. Despite this, two case study institutions provided strong evidence of regular CPD for those involved in the delivery of personal guidance as well as wider staff involved in the careers programme.



66. Neary, S. and Johnson, C. (2016). *CPD for the Career Development Professional: A Handbook for Enhancing Practice*. Bath: Trotman.

67. Hearne, L. (2016). *The Resilient Adult Guidance Practitioner: A study of the Impact of a High-Touch Work in Challenging Times*. Limerick: University of Limerick.

68. Reid, H., Bimrose, J. and Brown, A. (2016). Prompting reflection and learning in career construction counseling. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 97, 51-59.

69. Savickas, M. L. (2016). Reflection and reflexivity during life-design interventions: Comments on Career Construction Counseling. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 97, 84-89.

70. Mulvey, R. (2013) How to be a good professional: existentialist continuing professional development (CPD). *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 41:3, 267-276.

# 5 | Recommendations for developing the evidence base

As this paper shows, there is a developed evidence base which supports the practice of personal guidance. This evidence can provide schools and colleges as well as career guidance professionals with a level of clarity about what constitutes good and effective practice.

However, there are a number of areas which were touched on, either by the literature or by our interviews with practitioners or experts which would benefit from further research. These areas included the following:

**Online tools and approaches.** There is extensive literature that looks at the role of ICT in guidance and which highlights the value that innovative and technological approaches can bring to the field.<sup>71 72</sup> However, relatively little of this material addresses the integration with personal guidance. In this paper, we have highlighted several areas where technology offers potential opportunities for personal guidance. These include using technology to prepare young people for interviews, to support interviews with resources and to track and support young people following interviews.

**Group guidance.** There is some literature which supports the efficacy of group guidance approaches. However, our interviews showed that these approaches were used infrequently and often to supplement one-to-one approaches. There would be

value in further research looking at group guidance and particularly examining when it is best used and how it can be combined with one-to-one approaches.

**Short interviews.** A number of the case studies made use of short interviews and other forms of drop in. While the evidence supports the use of longer interviews, such short interviews and informal guidance encounters may have a value for engagement and extension of personal guidance when combined with longer interviews. There would be value in further research exploring this in greater detail in future.

**Early intervention.** Some of the case studies started forms of personal guidance earlier than is typical e.g. in Year 7. Evidence from other sectors suggests that early intervention can be effective but there would be value in considering when and how such early intervention personal guidance is best deployed.

**Cost and efficiency.** Finally, it is worth noting that there were a number of concerns about the costs of personal guidance to schools and colleges. However, there is very little evidence in the literature which seeks to quantify these costs or to look for efficiencies. This would be another valuable area for further developments of the evidence base.

71. Vigers, K. Everitt, J. and Staunton, T. (2017). *The Evidence Base for Careers Websites. What Works?* London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

72. Bakke, I.B., Haug, E.H. and Hooley, T. (2018). Moving from information provision to co-careering. Integrated guidance as a new approach to e-guidance in Norway. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, forthcoming.

In addition to these thematic areas there is value in seeking to strengthen the evidence base on personal guidance by using more robust methodologies. While some randomised control trials, longitudinal studies and meta-analyses do exist there is considerably more to be done to deepen the use of these kinds of robust studies. For example, Bernes and colleagues call for more efficacy studies, experimental designs and longitudinal research in personal guidance.<sup>73</sup> While Brown argues for greater conceptual clarity on the anticipated outcomes of guidance, the use of more diverse samples and further exploration of the impact on lifetime outcomes of guidance.<sup>14</sup>

The evidence on personal guidance remains a work in progress. However, it is sufficient to offer us a clear hypothesis about 'what works'? It is hoped that the projects funded through The Careers & Enterprise Company's personal guidance fund can contribute to and extend the existing evidence base over the next few years.



73. Bernes, K. B., Bardick, A. D. and Orr, D. T. (2007). Career guidance and counselling efficacy studies: An international research agenda. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 7(2), 81-96.

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