



# Careers professionals' involvement with schools

**A practical guide for headteachers**



## About the **NFER Research Programme**

Against a backdrop of economic recession, high youth unemployment and a sustained reduction in public funding, the task of supporting young people to make effective post-16 transitions into further education or employment is highly challenging. This document is based on a literature review produced under the **NFER Research Programme**, as part of the **From Education to Employment** theme. Collectively, these reviews identify strategies for assisting young people at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) to make effective post-16 transitions into further learning, or into employment.

## About this document and the literature review on which it is based

This document offers practical guidance for school leaders based on findings from *A review of careers professionals' involvement in schools in the UK*. The report explored what the best available recent research tells us about successful careers education, information, advice and guidance (CE/IAG) for supporting all school pupils (i.e. 'universal support') and those who are at greater risk of becoming NEET ('targeted support'), in their transitions and decision-making. Evidence from this review shows that the key approaches listed here are beneficial in supporting all young people to make positive transitions from education to employment, and in helping to prevent some from being 'NEET'.

The nature of this topic means that almost all of the research evidence, and thus this guidance, pertains to secondary schools. However, there is some relevance for primary schools and their heads, and a final section refers specifically to that context.

### Ofsted Common Inspection Framework

In conversation with school leaders, this guidance has been mapped where possible against the Common Inspection Framework for Schools, effective as of January 2012. This mapping is shown in shaded boxes at the right-hand side of each bullet-point (where relevant), using the following abbreviations:

**AoP:** achievement of pupils at the school

**QoT:** quality of teaching in the school

**B&S:** the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school

**QLM:** the quality of leadership in and management of the school

**OE:** overall effectiveness

The numbering given (for example 41:1, etc.) after the abbreviation indicates the particular paragraph and bullet-point in the Framework that applies to that statement in this guidance, as appropriate.

- Preventing young people from becoming NEET is a long-standing and complex challenge, and thus needs long-term and multi-faceted solutions throughout the education system. Headteachers in all kinds of schools should take a range of strategic approaches and practical steps, both within their schools and alongside their stakeholders and communities. These approaches and steps need to include careers education and information, advice and guidance (CE/IAG) services.

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- Schools' success in helping prevent young people becoming NEET depends in good measure on regular updating, reflecting, planning, implementing and monitoring of various interventions, by senior staff. Careers education and guidance are two aspects for leadership actions. Remember that the impact of doing these can also have indirect consequences on the CE/IAG provision.

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- The phased increase in the participation age to 18 by 2015 will affect the NEETs situation, and CE/IAG provision within schools, in a number of ways that are not yet clear. In particular, this encompasses the work of the new National Careers Service and the implementation of new statutory duties amongst schools for provision of CE/IAG. However, these changes are unlikely to diminish the need for action over the NEETs issue, or the need for high-quality provision of CE/IAG in schools of all types.

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- Research and analysis has segmented young people who are NEET into three distinct sub-categories. There are those who are 'open to learning' NEETs (the ones most likely to re-engage, with a positive attitude towards education and who feel they have enough support to make decisions). Then, there are those who are 'sustained' NEETs (the ones most likely to remain NEET – often facing multiple barriers, with lower attainment, higher levels of truancy and exclusion, and negative experiences of school). Finally, there are the 'undecided' NEETs (who are similar to the 'open to learning' group in some respects, but dissatisfied with the opportunities on offer, less sure about what they want to do in the future and frustrated by being unable to access what they want).

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- The NFER Research programme has a particular interest in those who are either 'open to learning' or 'undecided' NEETs, as there is potential to make a substantial difference to these two groups if they can be effectively identified and supported.

## Overarching messages about approaches to CE/IAG

- Approaches to CE/IAG across all types of secondary schools share many features. There are, however, three main characteristics that seem to determine the success or otherwise of such provision. Firstly, CE/IAG support must be provided by well-informed teachers, careers coordinators and external, independent advisors – itself supported in turn by informed employers and parents, who work in collaborative partnerships with the school.
- Next, CE/IAG programmes must be carefully timed to help with the transition points in pupils' lives, as well as being tailored to their individual needs, and delivered through appropriate systems.
- Finally, CE/IAG must offer a high-quality, impartial and consistent service – in relation to, for example, course content across schools, the socio-economic context in which a school is located, and what will benefit the individual pupil most.

### Collaborative approaches between schools and their partners

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear focus on collaborative working and good communication (especially between schools and outside agencies/organisations, including employers) is vital from heads. These factors, and a resulting CE/IAG provision which is multi-faceted, are key features of success which have been proven to be effective in supporting young people's continuing engagement in education and training.</li> </ul> | QLM 45:5 & 6;<br>OE 46:6 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In particular, providing effective and targeted help for specific groups of 'at risk' young people relies very much on successful partnership working between schools, colleges, local authorities and other stakeholders.</li> </ul>   | QLM 45:5 & 6;<br>OE 46:6 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads should therefore aim for the successful integration of such area-based, multi-agency, varied and responsive approaches (once again, also involving employers) in order to achieve a good CE/IAG programme which is truly fit for all young people's needs.</li> </ul>   | QLM 45:5 & 6;<br>OE 46:6 |

### Integrating Careers Education and IAG internally

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make CE most effective in your school by ensuring its integration with IAG and the wider curriculum, and that it has a high profile and strategic support from senior management (for example, by making the careers coordinator part of your senior management team).</li> </ul> | QLM 45:1 & 3;<br>OE 46:6                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devise and implement a coherent strategy for CE/IAG across the key stages and develop close internal partnership working between your subject departments and those school staff who deliver careers support.</li> </ul>  | QoT 42:8 & 9 and QoT 43;<br>QLM 45:1, 3 & 5;<br>OE 46:6 |

## Personalised approaches

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look to personalise as far as possible, by understanding the needs and issues of young people in different groups, targeting and differentiating carefully as a result, as well as providing ongoing advice and support.</li> </ul>	QoT 42:1, 4, 8, 9 & 10; QLM 45:3; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A tailored approach can be particularly successful with those young people who are in 'at risk' groups.</li> </ul>	QoT 42:1, 4, 8, 9 & 10; QLM 45:3; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be fully effective, make sure that not only is your provision relevant, well-targeted, and appropriately personalised/tailored to pupils' needs – but also that it is clearly seen to be so, by them (rather than being perceived as serving the needs of your school, and/or any other organisation).</li> </ul>	QoT 42:8; QLM 45:3; OE 46:5

## High-quality, impartial CE/IAG staff and programmes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quality of in-school CE/IAG varies in large measure because not all staff are best-prepared to deliver it, with insufficient knowledge and understanding of the full range of options, the expectations and demands of different routes for education, training and employment, or what young people's next steps entailed. This factor needs clear and effective leadership from you and your senior management team.</li> </ul>	QoT 42:9; QLM 45:1, 2, 4 & 5; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aim for well-qualified, experienced personal advisers and teachers who can deliver a wide range of high-quality CE activities and IAG, appropriately targeted at both individual and group needs in your school.</li> </ul>	QLM 45:3, 4 & 5; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalised support, particularly for young people at risk of becoming NEET, means that heads need to recognise that teachers may well require more training and support from external organisations to deliver this effectively.</li> </ul>	QLM 45:1 & 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heads should also strive to ensure impartiality in IAG, working in the long-term best interests of the individual pupil, as a key ingredient of success and should be seen to be doing so.</li> </ul>	QLM 45:1, 3 & 5; OE 46: 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting the creation and maintenance of trust between your staff (and others providing CE/IAG) and the pupils they work with is very important, especially for those young people who are at risk of disengaging or those facing multiple barriers.</li> </ul>	QoT 42: 8; QLM 45:1, 2 & 5

- Check that all written careers guidance, whether internally-produced or from external sources (for example, options booklets) is of high quality: these materials need to be clearly expressed and set out, as well as being sufficiently detailed.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes for young people (whether 'hard' ones such as improved achievement and progression to employment and further study, or 'soft' ones such as improved focus and attitudes or raised aspirations and self-confidence) can reach an excellent standard especially if you are able to seek out and secure additional resourcing for your CE/IAG.</li> </ul> | QLM 45:1 & 5; OE 46:6 |
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- Heads should be aware that although informal, unofficial sources and influences regarding careers are powerful, the reassurance that your staff's professional authority and impartiality can offer is very important as well.

### Aiming for significant impacts from CE/IAG provision

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember the softer and wider outcomes of effective CE/IAG for your pupils: these include improved attitudes, self-confidence, aspirations, and decision-making skills.</li> </ul>   | AoP 41: 2 & 6; QoT 42:10 & 43; QLM 45:3; OE 46:6 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads who encourage and support teacher/pupil discussions during years 9 and 10 about future studies can often see positive effects on pupils' attitudes to school and the intention to stay in education, as well as on their chances of knowing what they want to do after year 11.</li> </ul> | QoT 42:8 & 43; 44:1, -3 & 5; QLM 45:5; OE 46:6   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantial high-quality CE/IAG from teachers helps more young people to be significantly more likely to remain in full-time education – but you need, as a head, to help ensure that the scale, substance and quality of CE/IAG is such that a long-term outcome can emerge.</li> </ul>         | QLM 45:1, 3, 4 & 5; OE 46:5 & 6                  |

### Specifically for primary school heads

As with the accompanying NFER guidance for heads on preventing young people from becoming 'NEET', the apparently logical assumption that the research and the advice emerging from it applies solely to the secondary level is not wholly correct. Several points here should be carefully considered by primary heads. There are also other relevant, but more implicit messages which will support the effectiveness of CE/IAG in those secondary schools that your primary school feeds.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although there is very little evidence of CE/IAG as such being delivered in primary schools, some features of their other normal provision will help prepare pupils when they begin to encounter CE/IAG at the next level. For example, primary heads should focus on those points above which deal with pupils who are perceived as 'at risk', since the signs of that may well be clear at primary level.</li> </ul>	QLM 45:1 & 3; OE 46:6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linked to this, effective liaison between your primary school and local secondary schools (and other stakeholders) about individual pupils contributes to helping them to tailor and target their later CE/IAG work more personally and towards improved outcomes for your pupils, later on in life.</li> </ul>	QLM 45:1 & 3; OE 46:6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for, and impact of such early CE/IAG interventions is evidenced by a study where key stage 2 pupils involved in a career-related learning pathfinder pilot programme showed increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of types of employment and the pathways required to achieving employment.</li> </ul>	QoT 42:8 & 9 & 43; QLM 45:1 & 3; OE 46:6

This guide is based on a review from The NFER Research Programme which is available for free at [www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/RCPI01](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/RCPI01)

**This is the second review in the From Education to Employment series. The first review, Approaches to supporting young people not in education, employment or training, is available from: [www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/RSRN01](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/RSRN01)**



## The NFER Research Programme

This Programme was set up in 2011. Funded by NFER, it is developing partnerships with organisations and individuals who share our commitment to solving unanswered challenges young people face in education. The Programme targets key areas of education, highlighting gaps in existing evidence and conducting new research to provide evidence to fill the gaps. Current areas of focus are: *From Education to Employment*, *Developing the Education Workforce* and *Innovation in Education*.

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