



Summary

A review of careers professionals' involvement with schools



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 is highly challenging.

This literature review forms the second of four produced as part of the [From Education to Employment](#) theme. Collectively, they identify strategies for assisting young people at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) to make effective post-16 transitions into learning or employment. The reviews build upon recent NFER research on the reasons for young people's NEET status, and the identification of three discrete sub-categories of NEET young people:

- 'Open to learning' NEETs – most likely to re-engage in education.
- 'Sustained' NEETs – characterised by a negative experience of school, high levels of truancy and exclusion, and low academic attainment.
- 'Undecided' NEETs – similar to 'open to learning' NEETs, but dissatisfied with available opportunities.

This review explores successful approaches to careers education (CE), and information, advice and guidance (IAG). It examines general support for all young people, as well as targeted support for those young people at risk of becoming NEET. It considers evidence of the impact of CE/IAG on outcomes for young people, and also looks for gaps in the evidence base at both general and targeted levels.

[In these four reviews, the NFER offers a unique perspective on the research and evidence-based practice of the last five years in this area and identifies the gaps for future research.](#)

Approaches used

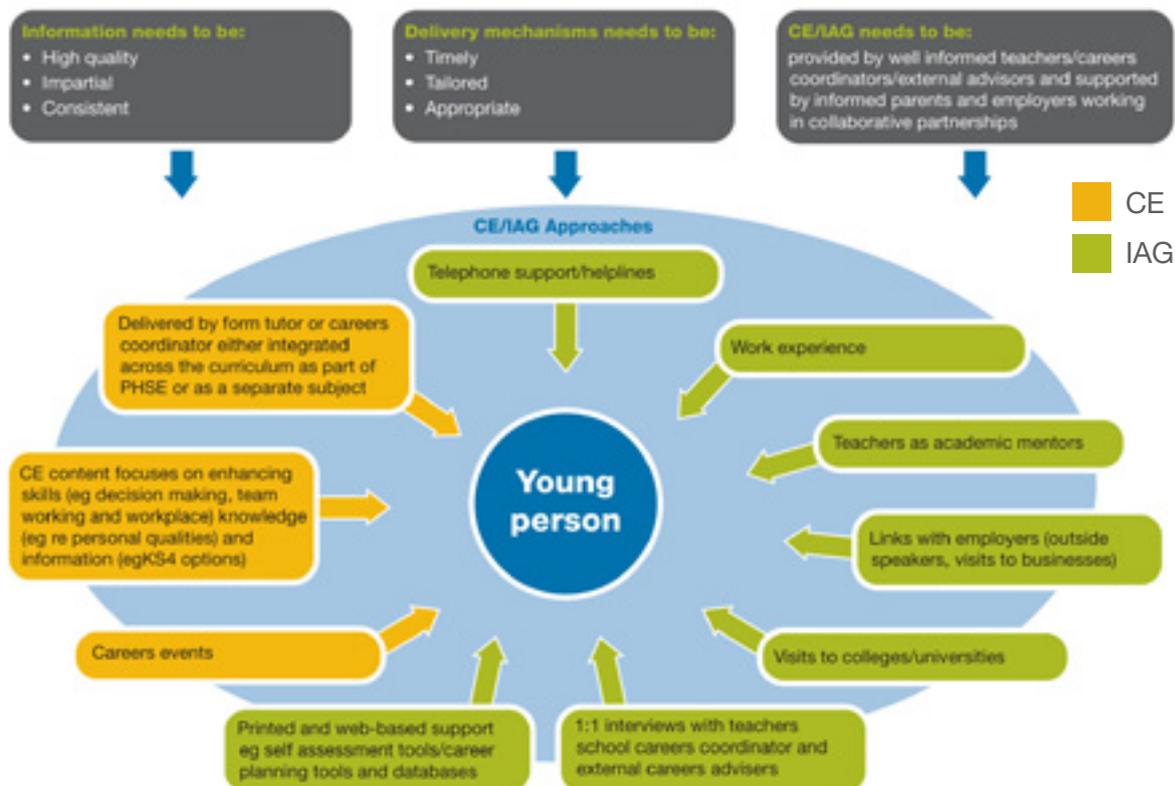
CE/IAG programmes for all young people, including those at risk of becoming NEET, share similar characteristics across secondary schools.

- Schools' careers coordinators or form tutors deliver careers education (CE) as part of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, as a separate subject, or as a subject integrated across the curriculum. The programmes focus on developing personal and practical skills, as well as providing factual information on key stage 4 subject options and future careers. They generally incorporate careers events, visits from outside speakers and work experience.
- External advisers or schools' careers coordinators and teachers deliver careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) in one-to-one interviews with young people. Young people also have access to telephone helplines and online support.
- CE/IAG programmes vary in content and quality between different schools and geographical locations. In particular, schools without sixth forms are more likely to provide high quality, impartial advice on all career pathways open to young people.
- Schools provide additional CE/IAG support targeted at specific groups of young people who might be at risk of becoming NEET, but there is little detailed research evidence of specific approaches for different types of young people.

Features of successful approaches

Collaborative working between informed stakeholders, timely, personalised support; and well-structured, impartial programmes are the key features of successful approaches to CE/IAG.

- Good collaborative working between informed stakeholders within schools and with outside agencies is fundamental to providing effective careers guidance for all young people but is particularly effective with ‘at risk’ young people because it enables schools to draw on different kinds of support to tackle specific needs.
- Impartial, personalised support is essential for understanding and addressing the complex issues of different groups and individuals.
- Successful CE/IAG programmes are well structured, and most effective, when they are appropriately timed, providing support early on and at key transition points.
- A combination of all these approaches, together with high quality, impartial and relevant programmes, works best when supporting young people’s decision-making.



Perceived determinants of successful CE/IAG

Impact of CE/IAG programmes

- Good CE/IAG can have a positive effect on soft outcomes for young people, such as improved attitudes, self-confidence, aspirations and decision-making skills.
- There is little research evidence on the impact of CE/IAG on hard outcomes for all young people, that is, the transition to education, employment and training. These outcomes are difficult to measure because young people are influenced by many interacting factors, such as their own circumstances and the views of their families.

Summary

Effective CE/IAG can have a positive effect on soft outcomes for young people, such as improved attitudes, self-confidence, aspirations, and decision-making skills. However, there is little research evidence on the impact of CE/IAG on hard outcomes for all young people, that is the transition to education, employment and training. Additionally, young people are influenced by other interacting factors, such as their own circumstances and the views of their families, which make such outcomes difficult to measure.

Furthermore, although there is data that discuss CE/IAG approaches for NEETs, these appear to be in terms of ‘sustained’ NEETs. There is little evidence that links successful CE/IAG approaches to ‘open to learning’ or ‘undecided’ NEETs, that is those young people who are likely to benefit significantly from well-informed and appropriately timed and delivered CE/IAG.

Identifying research gaps for next stage research

As outlined in the summary there is currently a gap in research around effective CE/IAG strategies that enable young people who are susceptible to becoming 'open to learning', or 'undecided' NEET to continue to progress in education, employment and training. This area will be the focus of the [From Education to Employment](#) theme within The NFER Research Programme. Key features will be:

- the development and implementation of indicators to assist in the identification of young people who are 'open to learning' or 'undecided' NEET
- the trialling and evaluation of specific support strategies
- the validation and dissemination of good practice.

Through this programme of research, we hope to go some way towards reducing the gap in what is known about effective NEET prevention strategies, and to make a difference to the lives of learners.

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



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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