The Challenge of Change: developing educational guidance for adults

Feedback from paired sessions at the four launch seminars held in January

NAEGA published an edited version of *The Challenge of Change* [##] at the end of last year and this was distributed to members with the Winter 2003 issue of **News and Views.** In January members were invited to attend seminars in one of four locations (Edinburgh, Leeds, London and Bristol).

In all, some 120 delegates attended the four seminars which were quite lively. At each session delegates worked in pairs to develop answers to two questions:

🕐 **How far is *The Challenge of Change* still relevant to your current practice?**

🕐 **What significant current issues are missing from *The Challenge of Change?***

The responses were given verbally in a plenary session at the seminars but written responses were also 'expected' and collected. These written responses produced a richness and diversity of comment which reflected an audience which was drawn from all parts of the guidance community. A report on each of the separate seminars appears below.

These written comments taken together provide significant feedback on how members of the adult guidance community perceive their roles in 2004 and on what they see to be the contemporary problems.

The results of this feedback has been grouped in a overall report which appears in the Spring 2004 issue of *News and Views*

In the following report, written responses are clustered around the two questions that delegates were asked to address. However there were a series of comments that were about tensions in the guidance role and practice that deserved a separate heading of **Tensions in guidance practice**. Phrases in italics are direct quotation from the written responses.

[##] To order copies of *The Challenge of Change* click here to email: admin@naega.org.uk or write to the NAEGA Administrator at: NAEGA, PO Box 459, BELFAST BT2 8YA.

Prices include p+p to UK addresses: single copies   £5-00 each; 5 or more copies £4-00 each; 10 or more copies £3-00 each.

Edinburgh - 8 January 2004

🕐 How far is the **The Challenge of Change** still relevant to your current practice?

1. In the main the report is still relevant. The terms used varied:

🕐 *Extremely relevant*

🕐 *Perfect*

🕐 *More than ever before*

🕐 The report is *easy to understand. Principles and recommendations* are still relevant and *underlying principles are clear.* There is *a welcome focus on the individual. Individual autonomy is very important.*

🕐 The report is *particularly relevant to community guidance.* The report helps *to emphasise the broad-based nature of guidance* in relation to the *complexity of the life of adults.*

2. Specific issues relating to Careers Scotland were raised:

🕐 *There is a link between the seven activities and the differentiated service* model. The report is still relevant *despite the emphasis by Careers Scotland on the 'Careers Planning Continuum' (from Nottingham Trent University).*

3. *The seven activities are still relevant. Agree that it should be 'counselling skills' not 'counselling'* (Endnote 11). But it was noted that *is still some confusion over 'guidance' and 'counselling'.* The activities give a useful reminder that *information is not guidance.*

4 The report *stresses skills and professionalism of* the provision of guidance.

🕐 What significant current issues are missing from **The Challenge of Change**?

1. The importance of IT, the Internet, CAG and Learndirect were the subject of multiple comments. The use of differing media and its impact on guidance practice was seen to be missing. *How do we deliver in a multi media environment? The strengths and weaknesses of IT* need to be identified.

2. The impact on guidance practice of work with *hard-to-reach groups* of clients was a missing element. This is an area where we need to have:

🕐 *A more pro-active approach*

🕐 *More ongoing support*

🕐 *Support for the autonomy of clients*

🕐 *More emphasis on PSD, skills development and confidence building.*

3. Specific practice issues of:

🕐 Continuity of practitioner concern for individual clients

- ✷ The role of group guidance
- ✷ Network creation, development and maintenance
- ✷ Exits from learning / training / work
- ✷ Practitioner isolation (especially in educational institutions)

4.   There is a need for more careful definitions of 'educational guidance' and 'adult'. There is an issue over the *'Adult' definition in relation to the development of Careers Scotland and whether guidance should be <u>needs based </u>or <u>age based.</u>* At what stage do young people become adults? (See also Tensions in guidance practice below)

5.   The link between learning and jobs / works. This is *now much stronger with ESF and New Deal funding.*

✷   Tensions in guidance practice

1.   The structural arrangements do not balance the needs of the individual client on the one hand with employer needs and government policy on the other hand. This issue was put in a variety of ways including the balance between *individual guidance and economic needs.* There is a need for a model of good practice *to counter funding constraints.* In addition there are tensions between practitioners and managers over a range of issues including:
- ✷ *Working constraints within organisations*
- ✷ *A belief from management in website delivery and that this is cost effective*
- ✷ *A pushing of websites* as a complete answer
- ✷ Management do not acknowledge others involved in the guidance (especially in the wider guidance network).

2.   There are specific tensions about networks. *Who should support guidance networks - one organisation alone or in a partnership? How should networks operate?* Resource pressures can make *collaboration a problem.*

3.   There are some tensions about terminology. *The terminology* (of the report) *is not the terminology we use.* There are tensions in Scotland about using <u>adult </u>in an <u>all-age </u>setting. There are ongoing tensions about vocational, educational and careers as applied to guidance. Others did not agree and pointed to the fact that the report in talking about educational guidance did include work within its definition (See also Missing Section point 4).

Leeds - 13 January 2004

⌚   How far is the **The Challenge of Change** still relevant to your current practice?

1.   In the main the report is still relevant. The terms used varied:
  ⌚ *Basic points can be used in any guidance environment*
  ⌚ *Highly relevant, but setting now more mobile with pro-active involvement of policy makers and politicians*
  ⌚ *Relevant to many more guidance workers.*
  ⌚ *Still relevant is* [the concept] *of being an independent and impartial organisation: being recently MATRIX-assessed brought this out.*

2.   There were comments on specific items / ideas in the report which were seen as being key ones. These included:
  ⌚ **Evaluate** clients' own personal position (Report p.4) before seeking opportunities
  ⌚ **Feeding back** (Report p. 5) *still relevant and needed*
  ⌚ ***Impartiality*** *is challenging*
  ⌚ Would **enabling** be better understood if changed to **empowering?**

⌚   What significant current issues are missing from **The Challenge of Change**?

1.   The importance of IT, the Internet, CAG and Learndirect were the subject of multiple comments. How to cope with email, telephones and helpline traffic. It is about ICT <u>AND </u>role of internet <u>AND </u>CAG. *Information is changing.*

2.   The impact on guidance practice of work with *hard-to-reach groups* of clients was a missing element. There is *more emphasis now on work with clients with various barriers to learning.* These clients may face significant challenges in terms of alcohol; drugs; domestic violence; mental health. *Motivating people to learn is needed prior to guidance.* This often means that:
  ⌚ *There is an overlap with personal guidance so that there are decisions* [to be made] *prior to educational and vocational ones. It takes longer to evaluate* with such clients
  ⌚ There is also a need in many cases for group guidance before individual sessions
  ⌚ A need to spell out issues of equal opportunity and access for those with special needs

3.   Specific practice issues of:
  ⌚ Continuity of practitioner concern for individual clients
  ⌚ *Educational guidance is a continuous process rather than an individual* [one-off] *event*
  ⌚ The role of group guidance
  ⌚ Network - *The Challenge of Change did not predict the involvement of such a number of agencies* involved in networks

- ☉ Exits from learning / training / work.
- ☉ Formal routes for feeding back are needed by all practitioners
- ☉ <u>Outcomes</u> from the guidance process
- ☉ *Is guidance <u>life-coaching?</u>*
- ☉ *Support for staff so that they can integrate guidance into the learning process and the curriculum*
- ☉ The links between guidance and mentoring (particularly peer mentoring
- ☉ Developing a research culture in guidance so that practice can become evidence based (NB link to National Guidance Research Forum - see Winter 2003 *News and Views pp 12-13*)

4.   The report is rather static and guidance is now a dynamic and serial process. *Adults evolve during participation in learning so that guidance needs to develop individual progression.* Progression that is over a total lifetime.

5.   Missing are the links to the workplace and this includes:
- ☉ Workforce development
- ☉ Impact of the world of work
- ☉ *Learning representatives as members of a common peer group*
- ☉ The need to *challenge employers and the labour market about the benefits of education and training*
- ☉ Developments in the NHS (including NHSU)

6.   Missing are issues of current funding and resourcing of guidance. Also the impact of 'initiative-itis'. This tends to skew service delivery as does target setting. Also missing is the impact of IAG. This includes consideration of the *democratic deficit in the development of IAG (*and in other organisations).

☉   Tensions in guidance practice

1. The structural arrangements do not balance the needs of the individual client on the one hand with employer needs and government policy on the other hand. This issue was put in a variety of ways including:
- ☉ *Policy is skills-driven - not all adult learning should be work-driven*
- ☉ *Contract working with targets may not assist clients after first contact*
- ☉ *Targets and target driven agencies / culture conflict with practice and principle*
- ☉ *Confidentiality and equal opportunities (with data bases and forms) are often at risk*
- ☉ *Funding driven organisations conflict with principled practice*
- ☉ *Tracking can be intrusive*

2.   Linked to concern about the balance between client interests and those of government policy is a raft of concern about the stance of government. *Funders and government bodies don't appear to understand the principles of guidance.* Moreover there are *problems over differing practice between government departments (DfES; New Deal; ESF; MW&P).* On the ground there are unresolved issues between *Connexions and all-age service.* The problem is often *the pro-active involvement of policy makers.*

London - 27 January 2004

🕐   How far is the ***The Challenge of Change*** still relevant to your current practice?

1.   In the main the report is still relevant. The terms used varied:
   - 🕐 *A very good read - a resource for trainees in all types of guidance*
   - 🕐 *A good practice tool*
   - 🕐 *Language feels solid and honest*
   - 🕐 *Key principles and points still stand*
   - 🕐 *Relevant as a key definition of guidance*
   - 🕐 *Helps to retain values and principles*
   - 🕐 *Guidance is clearly an umbrella terms for our work*
   - 🕐 *A useful tool for on-going assessment of practice*
   - 🕐 *Next most relevant document is the Kennedy Report 'Learning Works'*
   - 🕐 *It has stood the test of time*

2.   There were comments on specific items / ideas in the report which were seen as being key ones. These included:
   - 🕐 *The seven activities essential in training front line staff*
   - 🕐 *The seven activities are a useful checklist for evaluation*
   - 🕐 *Advocating used in most APEX interactions*
   - 🕐 *Guidance is about empowering individuals*
   - 🕐 *Learner-centredness still relevant*
   - 🕐 *Feeding back should be a stronger feature of modern practice* [this links to curriculum development]

3   The relevance was often seen as being helpful in dialogue about resourcing and the practice environment. This was seen in terms of discourse with both management and policy makers. For example, the report *provides an understanding for practitioners and helps* [them] *in promoting guidance with policy makers and funders.* Put simply, the report is *helpful in policy making and financial arguments.* Moreover, the report gives *basic concepts which can easily get lost in current quality / funding concerns and in current policy initiatives.* The report is *a tool for informing management* about the purpose and practice of guidance.

4.   Although relevant, there is concern about the terminology: *educational guidance should be seen widely to include training and work as well as education.*

5.   There was one dissenting voice: *it never was relevant to my practice - sorry.*

6.   The report is *very relevant and stands alone but perhaps as well we now need a wraparound document about current practice.*

🕐   What significant current issues are missing from ***The Challenge of Change***?

1.   The importance of IT, the Internet, CAG and Learndirect were the subject of multiple comments. How to cope with use of technology; management of information; on-line guidance; email, telephones, and helpline traffic. *We need to think more carefully about ICT.* Also there is *an increasing challenge from IT and the range of media* involved. On the information side to move into **informing** there is a *need to interpret information especially that obtained from the Internet which is very complex.*

2.   The impact on guidance practice of work with *hard-to-reach groups* of clients was a missing element. Missing from the report is consideration of social exclusion and targeting (especially the below NVQ Level 2 targets). This issue was raised in a variety of contexts:
- There needs to be *outreach in the context of community delivery*
- *Outreach targets and partnership working*
- *Group work is missing*
- *Is capacity building in communities (LSC) a form of group enabling?*
- *Unemployment; retention in FE / HE; health related issues (particularly mental health)* are all relevant targets for guidance
- *There are barriers to access that cannot easily be overcome (e.g. transport)*
- *The need to deliver guidance in all EU languages*

3.   Specific practice issues of:
- Continuity of practitioner concern for individual clients: there is *a cyclical nature to adults needs which are not on a linear scale*
- Networking: the network is important in giving coherence between organisations in supporting guidance as a continuing process
- The role of group guidance
- Job searching and employability skills together with workforce development and job matching need to become part of our practice
- Mentoring, networking and coaching are needed in addition to the seven activities
- Equal opportunities is missing and the client-centred approach needs more development. EO needs to be a specific principle. EO and diversity should include consideration of psychological and cultural accessibility.

4.   Among the missing features was consideration of the training, CPD and qualifications of guidance workers and all other staff involved in guidance. This starts with a *need for skilled, qualified, expert, professional guidance workers.* But such workers require *CPD which is essential for practitioners.* All training should be based on *good practice. Training is a key issue for all levels of staff.* There are clear links here to quality processes: *how does matrix inform guidance and vice versa.* What is the impact of *OFSTED and the adult inspectorate?* And there is the issue of the impact of Connexions on adult guidance: *what influence does the development of Connexions have on the boundaries of adult practice?*

5.   The client's views and position do not seem to be raised in the report. *The client perspective is not explicit in The Challenge of Change. Is the client empowered by guidance? How effective is adult guidance? (We need feedback on those whose needs have been met.)* There is also the issue of the expectations of the client: *how do we handle enhanced expectations?*

6.   Missing are the links to the workplace and this includes:
- ⏱ Workforce development
- ⏱ Impact of the world of work
- ⏱ *Learning representatives as members of a common peer group*

7.   Missing are issues of current funding and resourcing of guidance. *Funding creates a postcode lottery about who gets free guidance. Financing of decisions made about education and   training have become much more acute.*

8.   There are terminological problems about most of the key words used in the report including in particular <u>guidance</u> itself *(the terminology is not clear). The use of counselling is contested and problematic* and *counselling skills need definition when used in relation to adult guidance.* <u>Career</u> when applied to guidance divides delegates between those who view <u>career</u> as being about life and those who see it as only being work related. But so does the use of <u>educational</u> when pre-fixed to guidance. *The processes of guidance become very relevant if one views <u>learning</u> as <u>self-knowledge acquisition.</u>*

⏱   Tensions in guidance practice

1.   The structural arrangements do not balance the needs of the individual client on the one hand with employer needs and government policy on the other hand. This issue was put in a variety of ways including:

- ⏱ *Emphasis on targets / achievements and accreditation sit uneasily in a client-centred service*
- ⏱ *Multiple funding is a worry*
- ⏱ *The ludicrous dividing by government between I and A and G into mutually exclusive activities (IAG consultants do not seem to understand the distinctions drawn between I and A and G)*
- ⏱ *IAG activities and enhanced guidance*
- ⏱ *The emphasis on work and on learning related to work is divisive*
- ⏱ *The interface, or lack of it, with Connexions. How will <u>The Challenge of Change</u> be filtered through to those working as PAs in Connexions?*
- ⏱ *Some of these dilemmas are well expressed in one delegate's comment I believe I can more closely follow the principles of <u>The Challenge of Change</u> in my freelance work than when I work for organisations who are chasing funding targets*

2.   Linked to concern about the balance between client interests and those of government policy is a raft of concern about the stance of government. *Values and principles with a person-centred approach are in danger if government is pulling in the opposite direction.* Concern also arises with what is seen to be *compulsory guidance* in Colleges and other work institutions.

3.   (See also above under 'What issues are missing?') There are also practitioner tensions about CPD and research. There is a problem in trying to find the necessary

time so that *I am juggling work and study. Research time is needed but where can it be found?*

Bristol - 30 January 2004

🕐 **How far is the *The Challenge of Change* still relevant to your current practice?**

In the main the report is still relevant. Comments included:
- 🕐 *Very much so. It provides an essential core of practice and principles to see us through major changes.*
- 🕐 *It is concise - an advantage as people have limited time to read!*
- 🕐 *Terminology might have changed, but still relevant*
- 🕐 *Like recognition of 'psychologically assessable'*

Discussion also highlighted that:
- 🕐 Keeping the title was good
- 🕐 It is what we still want to aim for
- 🕐 The activities remain

There was a general feeling that:
- 🕐 *Government requirements are now so prescriptive (what can be delivered, who can receiver the service at particular levels and targets).*
- 🕐 *The paperwork is unbelievably time consuming.*
- 🕐 It offers *continuity in a 'sea of change'.*

🕐 **What significant current issues are missing from *The Challenge of Change*?**

The role of IT was indicated from a number of responses. This included:
- 🕐 *E-learning*
- 🕐 *Impact of the Internet*
- 🕐 *How to manage and analyse information available through technology*
- 🕐 *There is a need for advice the use of self-help tools*
- 🕐 The need for more training in working with groups was raised.
- 🕐 Interagency work needs to be established (*this is especially needed where there are referral targets*).
- 🕐 Disability and other legislation (e.g. age related) is now a major issue.
- 🕐 *The role of PDPs (personal development plans) needs to be considered [these have 'official' recognition].*

🕐 **Tensions in guidance practice**

Partnership working is very valuable, but time consuming, especially monitoring quality.
The greater and growing need for support for some clients (e.g. incapacity benefit clients).
The area of skills required by an adviser included:

- *Managing information (analysis, jettison, storing, retrieving, update)*
- *Diagnosing client need 'Sampson Model'*
- *Link with LMI - most clients want to move into work (The need to work with non-public sector organizations to help clients to turn desires into actions, especially ref to labour market information.)*
- *Devolution - different political agenda. Constraints are more evident.*