

An Adult Guidance Service: a NAEGA Position Statement

NAEGA welcomes the launch of the Government's new Next Step adult careers service. For us it represents the culmination of thirty years of campaigning, experimenting and development work by our Association and its members. We are on the brink of having, for the first time ever, a world class guidance service on learning and work for adults.

The achievement is the greater because the service has been launched at a time of extreme constraint on public resources. We believe that this is right: good guidance helps ensure the efficient use of public and private money: without it, lives and money are wasted through inappropriate choices about learning and work.

The Next Step service is aimed at "adults". NAEGA has always campaigned for a service for adults to match that for young people, who have a statutory entitlement to career guidance, and whose service has always been larger, and more generously funded. Nevertheless, we support the principle of good guidance for young people, and regret that services for young people are currently in a state of uncertainty. However, this makes the current discussions about an "all age service" particularly sensitive. There is a risk that a move to pool resources to create such a service might undermine what has been achieved for adults.

We recognise our common ground with providers of guidance for young people: we share ethical principles, ways of working, and resource needs. However, for adults, the test of any future organisational structure will be how well it secures five key features of Next Step:

Universality	A service open to all adults, of all ages, whether or not they are in or seeking employment. This enables people to make informed career decisions, to manage life crises, to undertake mid career review, and to plan for extended working life and lengthening retirement.
Independence	For guidance to be effective, clients must be confident that it is impartial, confidential and focused on their individual needs and aspirations. The best results for all parties will be served, if clients are confident that the guidance is not driven, or limited, by the needs of particular employers, education providers, or Government.
A focus on learning as well as work Prioritising	Decisions about learning and work are inevitably intertwined and complex. Encouraging people to learn, for whatever reason, and in whatever way, increases their ability to continue to learn, and their productivity in work. Guidance matters to all, but is especially critical for those who are most at risk of social and economic exclusion. Services must pay special attention to ensuring that such clients get appropriate (which is sometimes expensive) support.
Multi-mode delivery	The combination, in a single service, of face to face, telephone and online modes, is efficient and allows clients to use the mode which suits them best. The face to face service, which is inevitably the most expensive, is vital for many clients, including, but not only, those who are most vulnerable and with the most complex problems.

In considering future arrangements, we would advocate two improvements:

- institutional arrangements should make it easier for people to move between youth careers services and the adult service, if they need and wish to do so.
- Networking arrangements between the adult service and other agencies at local level need strengthening, to make it easy to call on specialist expertise, to refer clients and to reach out to excluded groups

September 2010

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

The Old George Brewery · Rolleston Street · Salisbury · SP1 1DX · **T** +44 (0)1722 339811 · **F** +44 (0)1722 331313
E admin@naega.org.uk · www.naega.org.uk