

# A guide to evaluating your careers programme

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## Purpose and value of evaluation

Evaluation enables you to make judgements about the worth or value of different aspects of your careers provision so that you and others can decide what you want to do differently or better. Evaluation involves the systematic choice of methods, collection of evidence, analysis and interpretation of results and presentation of findings and recommendations.

Evaluation is the response to two requirements: the need for accountability and the need for improvement. Some evaluation efforts are focused more on one need than the other; but an effective school evaluation strategy will keep both needs in balance.

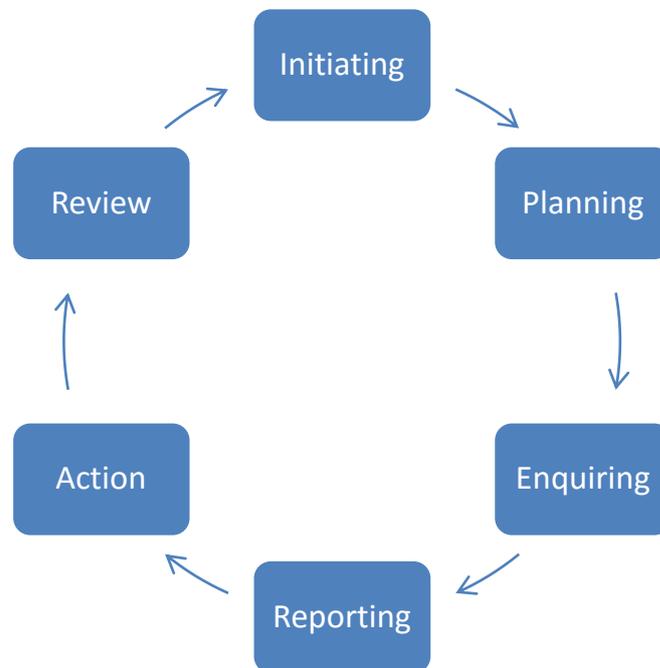
| Accountability ←-----→ Development  |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Schools are accountable for the quality of their careers programmes to their main stakeholders, both internal and external. Stakeholders (e.g. local governing boards) may want to ask value for money questions such as whether or not the resources committed to careers have been well-used or not. They may be interested in ‘hard’ outcomes such as qualification levels, qualification success rates, progression and sustainable destination data. Stakeholders may also want to know how well the school has performed against benchmarks and standards (e.g. NEET reduction figures, numbers of students progressing to elite HEIs, apprenticeships).</p> | <p>Schools constantly ask themselves ‘What can we do to further improve learning and the quality of the learning experience for our students?’ They are interested in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. This involves asking questions about ‘soft’ outcomes relating to personal growth such as ‘distance travelled’ (i.e. how far they’ve progressed from the point they started at) and the qualities, values and attitudes they possess that contribute to career well-being and success. Staff leading on careers, for example, may want to evaluate what the school is doing to enable personal agency, raise aspirations, challenge stereotypes, strengthen adaptability and resilience, improve employability, encourage environmental responsibility and promote career happiness.</p> |

## Developing an evaluation strategy

School evaluation of the careers programme needs to be manageable on an everyday basis. If the strategy is over-ambitious or too resource intensive, it may fail. From time to time, the school may be invited to take part in an external survey or research project. This can provide the school with useful information about itself but the benefits and drawbacks of participation need to be assessed at the time!

A practical approach to the evaluation of the careers programme is to use an action research methodology. The appeal of action research is that it involves participants as researchers into their own situation and follow-up action is necessary to complete the evaluation process.

**A model evaluation framework (based on Clemett and Pearce, 1986)**



| Notes on the stages in the evaluation framework |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Initiating</b>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the focus and purpose of your evaluation?</li> <li>• What issues have you identified in relation to the focus of the evaluation that need to be investigated?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Planning</b>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who should undertake the evaluation?</li> <li>• How should the evaluation be conducted? (i.e. taking care to observe ethical codes of practice)</li> <li>• What method(s)/technique(s) are you going to use?</li> <li>• What is your timetable going to be?</li> </ul> |
| <b>Enquiring</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your arrangements for collecting the data?</li> <li>• What are your arrangements for analysing and interpreting the data?</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Reporting</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your arrangements for reporting and disseminating the findings?</li> <li>• How will your school decide what actions to take by way of follow-up?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Action</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your arrangements for taking action?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Review</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you achieve what you set out to achieve?</li> <li>• What are the implications for your next evaluation cycle?</li> </ul>   |

**Initiating**

The object of this stage of the process is to generate ideas about what aspects of the careers provision are going to be evaluated and from the initial suggestions to prioritise what will be the

focus of the school's evaluation efforts for the coming year (or longer, if appropriate). You can reach agreement about what is to be evaluated in a number of ways:

- Ask stakeholders (e.g. senior leadership team, governors, parents/carers, employers) and beneficiaries (e.g. students) what their concerns are
- Issue a questionnaire or hold a workshop for staff asking them what works well in careers, what works less well and what they are not sure about
- Arrange for a small group of relevant participants (e.g. members of the careers lead team) to refine the suggestions and prioritise what is to be looked at in detail. You can use a diamond-nine ranking activity or nominal group technique to facilitate this

### Trigger questions

What aspect(s) of your careers provision would you like to evaluate? The main triggers for evaluation are:

- an 'unclear' situation, e.g. How useful is our Year 9 choices booklet?
- a 'difficulty', e.g. Y10 are very negative about their careers lessons
- an 'interest', e.g. I'd like to improve the way we provide careers information using social media.

You can also consider important issues such as:

- aims into practice - e.g. Are we achieving what we set out to achieve?
- learning outcomes - e.g. Are we making a difference to what students know and can do in relation to managing their own careers?
- specific learning activities - e.g. Was a particular activity such as holding a careers fair worth doing?
- organisational systems - e.g. How effective are the structures and processes in place for meeting the career development needs of students?
- Professional learning and development - e.g. How effective are in-service activities for staff to equip them for their roles in careers education and guidance?

### Evaluation 'flaws'

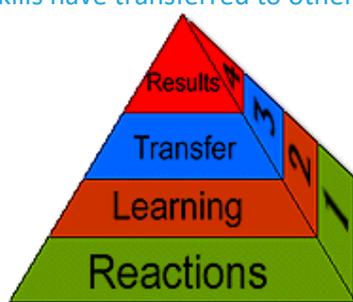
Try and avoid carrying out an evaluation that is flawed. Carl Parsons has identified three types of flaws:

- Type 1: unjustifiable claims for the success of a programme are made
- Type 2: failure to show the existence of a genuine programme effect
- Type 3: an intervention is judged to be ineffective when it is actually the management and implementation of the intervention which is defective.

## Evaluation levels

When planning an evaluation, you will also need to decide the level(s) at which you want to evaluate your chosen topic. D. L. Kirkpatrick (1959) has identified four evaluation levels:

1. Reactions – Are students satisfied? (e.g. You could use a smiley/happy hour sheet or conduct a focus group to find out if students enjoy using the careers library)
2. Learning - What learning has taken place? (e.g. You could use an assessment activity to find out if students can explain to you how information is classified in the careers library)
3. Transfer - Has performance improved? (You could observe students accessing careers information or interview them in the careers library)
4. Results - Has the organisation benefited? (You could use a questionnaire to find out if students' careers information handling skills have transferred to other subjects).



The levels are in a logical hierarchy, i.e. you are unlikely to learn anything (level 2) unless you found the topic relevant, useful or enjoyable (level 1).

The aim at the 'initiating' stage is to produce a draft evaluation schedule before moving on to the detailed planning stage. Here is an example:

| Evaluation schedule   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Purpose   | Issues to be investigated  | Time of the year   |
| Are we making the best use of the resources we have allocated for careers work?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The effectiveness of different guidance interventions, e.g. one-to-one interviews, small group work, drop-in sessions</li> </ul>          | October-February (before budgets are fixed for the next school year) |
| Are we optimising students' learning from the careers programme?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learning outcomes achieved at the end of KS4 (using the CDI Framework for careers, employability and enterprise education)</li> </ul> | April (before students go on study leave)                            |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The benefits of Y12 work experience</li> </ul>  | June-July  |
| How well are students succeeding in taking the next steps in their education, training or employment that are 'right for them'? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The effectiveness of the Y9 options process</li> </ul>  | February-March with a follow-up in the autumn                        |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The destinations achieved at the end of KS4 and KS5</li> </ul>  | End March (two terms after students left)                            |

## Planning

### Observing evaluation codes of practice

The pre-conditions of a successful evaluation are:

- openness and good communication – Discuss the focus and purpose with the main audience for the evaluation (i.e. those who are going to use the results of the evaluation) and those whose co-operation is required
- a climate of trust and sound relationships – An evaluation could appear threatening to some staff so evaluators need to be aware of ethical standards they need to uphold.
- A relevant focus for evaluation with the prospect of a good return on investment (RoI). Evaluations needs to be realistic and focused on issues or areas of practice which can be changed. The report needs to arrive in time to be considered in the decision-making process.
- Well-chosen methods. Evaluation methods should be perceived as fair, valid and reliable. They must be perceived to be suitable for the intended purpose. It is helpful to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods and to be aware of the strengths and limitations of both approaches.
- Participants (especially students) have the skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy, social, emotional) to engage in the evaluation.

### Using an evaluation planner

You can use an evaluation planner for each issue to be investigated. The suggested headings to include are:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Evaluation focus   |  |
| Purpose of the evaluation  |  |
| Your hypotheses or main ideas in relation to the focus of the evaluation   |  |
| Staff who will be involved and in what capacity  |  |
| Methods and schedule for collecting information (including piloting the evaluation instruments, roles and timetable) |  |
| Methods and schedule for analysing and interpreting information  |  |
| Format(s) for presentation of findings to primary and secondary audiences and dissemination                          |  |

## Using performance indicators

Performance measures meet the need for SMART management information, for example, that can be used by senior leadership teams and governors to monitor and review the success of the careers programme. Performance indicators are useful for answering questions about:

- Effectiveness – i.e. ‘doing the right thing’
- Efficacy – i.e. the capacity to get results
- Efficiency – i.e. ‘doing the thing right’
- Economy – i.e. value for money
- Equity – i.e. fair and equal treatment of individuals with ‘protected characteristics’ (2010 Equality Act)
- Ethicality – i.e. observing codes of practice on issues such as impartiality

In the absence of national performance indicators for careers provision, schools can set their own performance indicators based on a standard inputs, processes and outcomes model of programme evaluation. It is important to:

- focus on key indicators and not to have trivial indicators or so many that they become overwhelming
- remember that performance indicators are less useful for evaluating the more subtle aspects of the impact of the careers programme on young people
- check the indicators out with relevant stakeholders
- set targets that are stretching but not setting the school up to fail.

Key indicators for careers could be developed in areas such as:

|                            | <b>Inputs</b>  | <b>Processes</b>  | <b>Outcomes</b>   |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Resourcing</b>          | Budget allocated to careers                                    | How careers is costed   | Effective deployment of resources                                     |
| <b>Careers education</b>   | Hours of careers education per year                            | Emphasis placed on learning from experience                   | Assessment data<br>Acquisition of career management skills            |
| <b>Careers information</b> | Provision of careers information in the library and on the VLE | How students access careers information                       | Acquisition of careers information handling skills                    |
| <b>Careers guidance</b>    | % of year group receiving one-to-one guidance                  | Effective targeting of students who can benefit from guidance | Next steps taken by students<br>Destinations data                     |
| <b>Careers influencers</b> | Resources put into promoting engagement                        | Opportunities for engagement                                  | Levels of engagement of parents, employers, other education providers |
| <b>Staffing</b>            | Hours per week for main specialist to do their careers work    | Professional development opportunities for staff              | Increase in staff confidence  |

## Enquiring

A key requirement is to choose methods that are fit for purpose. For this, you need to consider whether the primary purpose of your evaluation is ‘quantitative’ or ‘qualitative’.

| Quantitative evaluation  | Qualitative evaluation  |
|--|---|
| Quantitative evaluation is suited to surveying large samples and where the processing of numerical data is sufficient. | Qualitative evaluation is suited to in-depth interviewing where illuminating or interpreting students’ thoughts, feelings and behaviour is important. |

## Empowering students as active researchers

Students can undertake evaluation research with training and support. One way of getting started is to advertise a lunchtime ‘Research Club’ and to train interested students in evaluation methods over several weeks. Students then work in groups with staff support on evaluating an aspect of the school’s careers provision that is of particular interest to them. One of the advantages of using students as evaluators is that they can access the views of their peer group in ways that adults cannot easily do.

## Involving young people in evaluation

Much of the literature on involving young people in research is written from a health and social care perspective; but the insights can be applied to involving young people in the evaluation of careers programmes. Useful resources include:

- *Guidelines for Research with children and Young People* (NCB, 2011)  
[http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/434791/guidelines\\_for\\_research\\_with\\_cyp.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/434791/guidelines_for_research_with_cyp.pdf)
- *A Guide to Actively Involving Young People in Research* by Perpetua Kirby  
<http://www.invo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/InvolvingYoungPeople2004.pdf>
- National Youth Agency (2001) *The active involvement of young people in the Connexions Service: A Practitioners Guide*. Nottingham: DfES/CSNU  
[http://www.cegnet.co.uk/uploads/resources/The\\_Active\\_Involvement\\_of\\_YP\\_in\\_the\\_Connexions\\_Service\\_-\\_A\\_Practitionersguide.pdf](http://www.cegnet.co.uk/uploads/resources/The_Active_Involvement_of_YP_in_the_Connexions_Service_-_A_Practitionersguide.pdf)

## Choosing appropriate enquiry methods

Evaluations can be single- or multi-method. The main options are:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Observation</b>                         | Observers usually develop an observation schedule to help them to record the behaviours and actions that they wish to evaluate. Although time consuming, 'pupil pursuit' and 'fly on the wall' type activities provide observers with first-hand knowledge of what they are investigating.  |
| <b>Interviews</b>                          | <p>The three broad types of interviews are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• structured: follows a fixed or predetermined set of questions</li><li>• semi-structured: a set of questions has been prepared in advance, but the interviewer can add supplementary questions to follow up or to further explore an interviewee's responses</li><li>• unstructured: the scope of the interview is not pre-determined in advance.</li></ul> <p>Interviews may have advantages over other methods if the interviewer wants to check that the interviewee has understood the questions asked and, in the case of a semi-structured or unstructured interview, wants to request additional information. However, they can be time-consuming to conduct, record and interpret.</p> |
| <b>Questionnaires</b>                      | <p>Formats include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• tick-box</li><li>• stem statements (unfinished sentences)</li><li>• rating scales</li><li>• ranking scales</li><li>• free comment</li></ul> <p>They are useful for processing large numbers of responses relatively quickly; and can also be used to identify a sample for more detailed follow-up. 'Customer satisfaction' questionnaires (and 'happy hour' sheets) are relatively commonplace but when students rate their enjoyment or the value of an activity, they may not be aware of what they might have had.</p>  |
| <b>Analysis of data/<br/>documentation</b> | <p>Documentation may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• pre-existing information which has not been specially created for the purposes of the evaluation, e.g. digital analytics, minutes of meetings</li><li>• specially created artefacts for the purpose of the evaluation</li><li>• products which have come into being naturally during the course of the evaluation</li></ul>  |

## **Piloting**

Remember to build in ethical safeguards and to pilot your 'instruments' to iron out any ambiguities or shortcomings.

## **Analysing and interpreting data**

One of the tests of an evaluation is that two researchers analysing a set of data would reach identical conclusions. (This is known as 'reliability, i.e. the extent to which the results would be the same, regardless of who conducts the research). Quantitative data such as yes-no answers on a questionnaire can be condensed and distilled into a simple form relatively easily whereas qualitative data such as transcripts of in-depth interviews are more challenging to analyse. However, quantitative data can become very complex as well requiring the use of computer processing and advanced statistical techniques. Similarly, qualitative data analysis may just be time-consuming rather than difficult!

### ***Quantitative data***

When analysing a questionnaire, it is relatively simple to use a blank questionnaire and to keep a tally of each response in the appropriate box.

When dealing with large numbers of respondents, it is appropriate to express the results as percentages, but with small numbers this can be misleading (e.g. 5% represents a single person in a survey of 20).

Not all respondents will answer all the questions in a questionnaire so it is often important to indicate this, e.g. Q1 (n=110), Q2 (n=97)

A maths textbook will help you to carry out operations such as calculating mean and standard deviation, levels of statistical significance, frequencies, correlation

Cross-tabulating helps you to 'drill down' into the data, e.g. imagine that you have been made aware that the usefulness of the careers pages on the school's VLE is an issue. You can ask respondents to rate the careers pages on a four-point scale (e.g. very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied) and then add up the global scores; but if you have also asked contextual questions (e.g. gender, age group) you can cross-tabulate the answers to reveal more differences in levels of satisfaction (which can then be addressed).

### ***Qualitative data***

It is important to base your analysis on the constructs and language that your research participants use so that it can be useful to them. This does not preclude you from using concepts and frameworks that are different from theirs but it reigns you in from becoming too abstract and removed from the social world they inhabit.

Much analysis of qualitative data involves 'structuring through categories'. Coding data into categories helps you to condense and distil it. You can also analyse the frequency of responses to each category. Categories are usually created beforehand by the researcher based where possible on concepts and categories known to the research participants but the process is an iterative one whereby the researcher is sensitive to the unanticipated categories that can emerge from coding the data. A judgement sometimes has to be made about how closely one respondent's reply fits or coincides with another respondent when different language is used; and sometimes not all comments can be fitted into your neat framework of categories.

It is important to be systematic, e.g. creating a table or using index cards to organise data

Unstructured data collection such as unstructured observations and interviews may not lend themselves to the creation of categories in which case they will need to be presented as cameos or case studies.

## **Reporting**

It is important at the outset to have a clear idea of the primary and secondary audiences for your evaluation. The primary audience will be the decision-makers – those who will use the results of your evaluation to make changes, e.g. members of the senior leadership team, the governing and the careers lead team.

You should tailor what you include in your report to your audience(s), e.g.:

- only include necessary information
- be transparent
- provide an executive summary
- only use important results - be discriminating

Be prepared to report your research in different ways to different audiences; and be sensitive to the timing and presentation of your report in order to maximise its impact.

## **Action**

Evaluation is worthwhile when it informs decision making and leads to action. Discuss the findings and recommendations from your evaluation and negotiate changes that the school is going to make. These actions need to be carefully monitored and appropriate records kept.

## **Review**

At the appropriate time, review the actions taken by asking 'What went well?' and 'What do we need to do differently or better next time?'

## Case Studies

### 1. Year 11 evaluation questionnaire

The following example is of a school questionnaire to evaluate the Year 11 careers programme.

The careers programme in Year 11 is designed to:

- encourage you to take responsibility for your own plans
- make you better informed about post-16 choices, and
- help you make post-16 decisions and carry them through.

Please help us improve the quality of the careers programme by completing this questionnaire.

It will take you about 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you!

| Please rate the following activities on a scale of 1 - 4 (1 = High-4 = Low). Please circle your answers. Do not rate those activities which you have not participated in yourself | How enjoyable was it? |       | How useful was it? |       |
|---|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
|   | High                  | Low   | High.....          | Low   |
| Personal discussion(s) about your career and learning plans with your tutor   | 1                     | 2 3 4 | 1                  | 2 3 4 |
| Personal discussion(s) about your career and learning plans with a member of the senior leadership team   | 1                     | 2 3 4 | 1                  | 2 3 4 |
| Personal discussion(s) about your career and learning plans with any of your subject teachers   | 1                     | 2 3 4 | 1                  | 2 3 4 |
| Personal discussion(s) about your career and learning plans with the school's careers adviser   | 1                     | 2 3 4 | 1                  | 2 3 4 |
| Requesting information or advice at a lunchtime drop-in session(s) in the careers library   | 1                     | 2 3 4 | 1                  | 2 3 4 |

| Please rate the following activities on a scale of 1 - 4 (1 = High-4 = Low). Please circle your answers. Do not rate those activities which you have not participated in yourself | How enjoyable was it? |       | How useful was it? |       |
|---|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
|   | High                  | Low   | High.....          | Low   |
| Finding information in the careers library  | 1                     | 2 3 4 | 1                  | 2 3 4 |
| Finding careers information on the careers pages of the VLE   | 1                     | 2 3 4 | 1                  | 2 3 4 |
| Reading the school's sixth-form information booklet   | 1                     | 2 3 4 | 1                  | 2 3 4 |
| Attending the school's sixth-form information evening   | 1                     | 2 3 4 | 1                  | 2 3 4 |

| Please rate the following activities on a scale of 1 - 4 (1 = High-4 = Low). Please circle your answers. Do not rate those activities which you have not participated in yourself | How enjoyable was it?     | How useful was it? |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------|
|   | High                  Low | High.....Low       |
| Practising your interview technique ('mock interviews')   | 1 2 3 4                   | 1 2 3 4            |
| Drafting your CV  | 1 2 3 4                   | 1 2 3 4            |
| Learning about personal money management (in PSHCE)   | 1 2 3 4                   | 1 2 3 4            |
| Learning about employability skills (in PSHCE)  | 1 2 3 4                   | 1 2 3 4            |
| Learning about the labour market (in PSHCE)   | 1 2 3 4                   | 1 2 3 4            |
| Using Kudos to assess your interests and strengths  | 1 2 3 4                   | 1 2 3 4            |

Please mention up to three other activities not included above which you enjoyed or found useful.

| Please rate the following activities on a scale of 1 - 4 (1 = High-4 = Low). Please circle your answers. Do not rate those activities which you have not participated in yourself | How enjoyable was it?     | How useful was it? |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------|
|   | High                  Low | High.....Low       |
|   | 1 2 3 4                   | 1 2 3 4            |
|   | 1 2 3 4                   | 1 2 3 4            |
|   | 1 2 3 4                   | 1 2 3 4            |

How could the careers programme be improved? (Mention any gaps and any activities you would have liked more or less of.)

How would you advise next year's Year 11 students to get the most out of the careers programme?

## 2. Choosing options

*Subjects of Choice: The Process and Management of Pupil and Student Choice* by Andrew Stables was published by Cassell in 1996. Its conclusions still make rewarding reading today. He investigated the factors influencing students' subject choices at 14, 16 and 18 from the perspective of the young person as 'chooser' and the implications for curriculum planning, management and guidance in schools and in the wider education system. He approached the challenge from a multi-disciplinary perspective drawing on sociology, philosophy and psychology to seek answers to questions such as:

- Is it *good* to give pupils and students choice?
- If so, how much, in what areas and at what age or stage of development?
- Is one of the purposes of the secondary/tertiary curriculum to offer choice, and if so, how might this best be done?
- Do curriculum choices have an *educational* or merely a selective function? (Are they really 'choices'?)
- How can pupils and students be best prepared or helped to make the choices which are best for themselves and for society?

Stables offers cautious answers to these questions. He acknowledges that 'choice is always risky. Against this, however, is the fact that choice brings with it responsibility, and if a school can produce responsible citizens it has done well.' (p.228) He favours a 'gentle stepping from a prescribed to a voluntary curriculum' (p.230):

'As pupils get older, they should not only be given more choices to make about their own learning, but those choices should begin to be of greater significance.

Such choices must be *real*, but their potential for evil consequences should at first be limited. Pupils and students base their choices largely on past experience of two things: the subjects themselves, and society as a whole. Their views of society as a whole at 14 are almost bound to be clichéd and stereotypical. They need a great deal of information to help them realize the variety of opportunities that is really open to them, and to see that the subjects they take do not lead in a straightforward way to desired careers. They need to be helped to keep some of their options open.' (p.230).

Stables provides literature reviews of previous studies in English and discusses conflicting conclusions arising from them and his own research. He also presents his findings in different ways. As well as detailed analysis and interpretation of the responses to survey questions, he provides chapters on key themes (e.g. gender issues in subject choice) and offers succinct summaries (useful for senior leadership teams and governors!). The limitations of his research are also carefully explained.

He chose a mainly qualitative and interpretative approach using survey methods (both questionnaires and interviews) focusing on choosers' own perceptions of the choice process. The scope of his research extends beyond what is feasible for a practitioner to undertake but any of the survey instruments he used could provide inspiration for a piece of evaluative action research into the effectiveness of the school's option choice processes providing they are not copied wholesale (see example of the Year 9 interview schedule that follows). Evaluators need to develop their own instruments with complete clarity over the purpose and suitability of the questions to be asked.

Year 9 interview schedule (Stables, 1996)

Students had completed a questionnaire previously. They were interviewed individually during May and June 1984. (Students were interviewed again in Year 10 to find out how their perceptions of the choices they had made had changed.)

1. How have you gone about choosing which subjects to take next year?
2. On the questionnaire, you wrote that ... were your favourite subjects.
  - (a) Are they still your favourite subjects, or have you changed your mind?
  - (b) (If so) Why?
  - (c) (If not) What are your (three) favourite subjects now?
  - (d) Why?
3. On the questionnaire, you wrote that ... were the subjects you liked least
  - (a) Are they still your least favourite subjects, or have you changed your mind?
  - (b)-(d) As above, but for 'least favourite'.
4. (a) Which subjects have you chosen (for next year)?
  - (b) Why?
5. On the questionnaire, you wrote that ... were the subjects that you found most important?
  - (a) Do you think the same now, or have you changed your mind?
  - (b)-(d) As for 2 above, but for 'subjects you think are most important'.
6. On the questionnaire, you wrote that ... were the subjects you found least important.
  - (b)-(d) As above, but for 'subjects you find least important'.
7. (a) To whom have you spoken about your option choices?
  - (b) How many times?
  - (c) For how long?
  - (d) What did they say?
  - (e) Who has had the most say in your decisions, you or ...?
  - (f) What did your parents think were the most important things to take into account? (When you were choosing)
  - (g) What did your teachers think were the most important things to take into account? (When you were choosing)
  - (h) Did you have enough advice?
  - (i) (If not) From whom would you have liked to have had more advice?
8. (a) What do you want to do when you finish the Fifth Year?
  - (b) --when you leave education completely?
  - (c) --eventually? (in ten or twenty years' time?)
9. (a) Do you know anything about your friends' option choices?
  - (b) Does it matter to you what they've chosen?
  - (c) Who decided their choices, do you think?
10. Does it matter to you which teachers are taking which subjects next year? Try to explain your answers as fully as you can.
11. (a) Do you have any hobbies outside school?
  - (b) Do you enjoy reading fiction/stories?
  - (c) Do you have a home computer?
  - (d) (If so) Can you program it?
  - (e) Do you enjoy playing sport?
  - (f) Do you play a musical instrument?
  - (g) Do you make things at home? (Anything from cooking to sewing to making kits to building walls.)
12. Is there anything else about option choices you'd like to say? Anything that's struck you about the way the options work?

### 3. Evaluation of guidance interviews

The DfES funded the Warwick Institute for Employment Research to evaluate the effectiveness of career guidance interviews based on longitudinal case studies.<sup>1</sup> The research team interviewed 57 adults who had received guidance but seven case studies could not be used for various reasons. (Researchers expect some attrition of data and therefore try and anticipate it in their research design). In the first phase, they aimed to identify good practice together with the strategies and skills used by the guidance practitioners, so that issues could be raised relevant to the improvement of guidance practice.

At the end of the first phase, the research team were confident that their qualitative research methodology had succeeded in illuminating the complex issues involved in understanding effective guidance. As well as administering questionnaires to the clients and their advisers (participants), they also obtained feedback from expert witnesses (observers who listened to recordings of the interviews with a transcript). Multi-method data collection makes triangulation possible (i.e. by studying guidance interviews from more than one viewpoint the researchers can feel more confident about the validity of the data they are analysing). They found that clients, practitioners and expert witnesses all had similar understandings of what 'useful' guidance is (i.e. it supports positive outcomes for the client; provides access to expert knowledge, information and networks; promotes constructive change in the client; and, overall, provides the client with a positive experience). There was also a high level of agreement particularly about: the welcome and introduction by the practitioner; whether the client felt comfortable discussing personal information; agreeing a future action plan; and issues of respect. The highest levels of disagreement related to: whether the client had understood what was going to happen in the interview; whether the client's thinking had been changed in any way; and whether a client had understood the importance of something which they had not before the guidance intervention. Of the fifty clients who participated in this research all but one stated that they had found the guidance they had received useful. Good practice was identified as: allowing for reflection; discussion; and affecting some measure of transformation in the client. The need for guidance was emphasised and made explicit. The full report details the characteristics of useful guidance.

The semi-structured questionnaire below is the one that was given to clients. Bear in mind that the research viewed guidance as a process rather than a one-off event. In designing an evaluation of the effectiveness of guidance for young people, you may want to ask different questions. You must not assume that the conclusions from a study of effective guidance for adults automatically apply to young people. Even the researchers noted that variations in context meant that they were unlikely to be comparing like with like. (The issue of the generalizability of findings is an important one in the field of evaluation).

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<sup>1</sup> Bimrose, J., Barnes, S-A., Hughes, D. & Orton, M. (2004) *What is effective guidance? Evidence from longitudinal case Studies in England* DfES/Warwick Institute for Employment Research  
[\[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/ngrf/euskills/module1/careers\\_information\\_energy\\_utilities\\_introduction/longitudinal\\_study\\_on\\_effective\\_guidance2004.pdf\]](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/ngrf/euskills/module1/careers_information_energy_utilities_introduction/longitudinal_study_on_effective_guidance2004.pdf)



4. Did the interviewer help you to explain what you wanted to get out of the interview?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', how did she/he do this?

If 'no', what would have helped you to do this?

5. Did you feel the interviewer listened to you carefully?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', please give an example:

If 'no', please give an example of something you said that was ignored:

6. Did the interviewer show she/he understood how you felt about things that mattered to you?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', how did she/he do this?

If 'no', what could she/he have done?

7. When the interview moved to a new topic, did you know why?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', please give an example:

If 'no', what would have helped you see why you were discussing a new topic?

8. Did the interviewer help you get a better understanding of yourself and your situation?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', how did she/he do this?

If 'no', please comment:

9. Did the interviewer show that she/he understood what information you needed?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', please give an example:

If 'no', please comment:

10. Did the interviewer change your thinking in any way?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', please give an example:

If 'no', please comment:

11. Did the interviewer help you set out a clear plan of action to carry out after the interview?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', how would you expect this to help?

If 'no', would an action plan have been useful?

12. Looking back, did you feel respected by the interviewer?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', what did the interviewer do to make you feel respected?

If 'no', how would you have liked the interviewer to behave differently?

13. Sometimes an interview can help you understand the importance of something you hadn't understood before Did this happen in this interview?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', please give an example(s):

If 'no', please comment:

14. Was the interview useful to you?

**Yes**

**No**

If 'yes', in what way(s) has it been useful?

If 'no', how could it have been made useful?

15. When you think back on the interview, what stood out for you?

16. If there is anything further that you wish to add, please do so below:

Thank you for your help

## 4. Using focus groups to investigate young people's views of careers education and guidance at school

*Talking about 'Careers': Young people's views of careers education and guidance in schools* was produced by NFER for The Careers Service (DfEE, 1998). The report sought to:

- Explore young people's views experiences and expectations of the careers education and guidance they have received;
- Explore what young people would like to have had;
- Explore how they think new and existing aspects of careers education and guidance could have been delivered more innovatively.

Although some aspects of the report are dated, it still makes interesting and worthwhile reading especially for its overall conclusion that 'there is much unfilled potential in current careers education and guidance provision and delivery mechanisms' (p.48) which remains as relevant as ever.

NFER described this as a small qualitative study involving 126 students in Year 11 and 100 post-16 students in schools, FE colleges and training providers in three contrasting areas of England. They took part in discussion groups as well as completing an individual proforma about their CEG experiences and career intentions. The views of careers co-ordinators, careers advisers, careers service managers and training providers were also gathered by face-to-face interview.

The focus groups 'proceeded using a schedule of questions and probes as a guide (see Appendix 1 of the report). All the group discussions were recorded and the transcriptions subjected to a content analysis, using a framework of key themes as a basis' (p.8). NFER acknowledged the limitations of their research. One of the major problems was that 'very few young people really understood what careers education and guidance or a careers programme was' (p8).

The discussion schedule for the Year 11 focus groups is reproduced below:

### National Foundation for Educational Research

#### Delivering CEG Innovatively - Young People's Views

#### Discussion Schedule for Year 11 Focus Groups

##### Introduction

Introduce self.

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this research project, which is about new ideas in careers education.

It has two aims: to find out what **young people themselves** think about the help they've had in making decisions about what to do when they leave school, and secondly - and this is very important - to find out what kind of help they would **like** to have had. We're especially interested in any ideas

you may have on how to make careers advice **better** - so your comments could make an important contribution to improving careers provision for young people in the future.

This discussion will last for about three-quarters of an hour. It isn't any kind of test; we just want to know what you - each and all of you - really think, especially if you have any suggestions to make about new ways of doing things. As I am sure you are aware, you can prepare for your career choices in many different ways [*list a few examples based on information supplied by the school, e.g. careers lessons, Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons, tutorials, interviews, group sessions with visiting careers advisers, careers conventions, industry days, work experience.*] I am interested in your views on every kind of careers activity - what you actually did and what you would like to have done.

No one is going to be told what you, as individuals, say, but if you don't mind I would like to record our discussion to make sure that I don't miss any of your comments when I write up my notes afterwards.

#### **A. Students' Views on CEG Received**

**1. The forms you have just/already filled in for us will tell me in detail what help you've received at school in making your careers choices, and what you plan to do after the end of year 11. What I would like to do now is to discuss in more general terms the different kinds of help that you have had in making decisions about what to do next year, and/or when you leave school.**

(a) Did you have a programme of careers activities, or a series of one-off events?

*Probe:* Were there links between different activities?

Could you see how they might help you?

(b) Were any activities optional?

*Probe:* Was/would this have been a good thing? Why (not)?

(c) How easy is it to see a careers teacher or careers adviser if you need individual advice or information?

*Probe (briefly):* How do you go about it? Any problems.

#### **What might have helped?**

(d) Was there anything that made any of you want to go off and find out more information **for yourself**?

If so, did you know how to go about this? Did anyone give you guidelines?

*Probe:* which do you think is better, being given information, or finding it out for yourself?

Why? (explore any areas of disagreement here)

(e) Have you done any work on practical skills (*CVs, interview technique*)?

*Probe:* (if no) Would you have liked to?

(if yes) Was it useful? Would you have liked more?

(f) What about activities that focus on **you as a person** rather than on different careers?

Are they helpful? Would you have liked more (or less?) of this kind of thing?

*Probe* any comments. Do others agree?

## 2. What kind of approach suits you best in careers sessions?

(a) Would you prefer careers activities to be included in individual subjects (*such as geography or English*) or to be provided separately?

(b) Who do you like to lead them? (*the careers teacher/subject teachers/careers officer/visiting experts/employers ...*)

*Probe:* of the people mentioned, what is good about the style or content of their delivery?

(and less good about others?)

What sort of mix of people is best?

(c) **How do you like to work?** (*on your own/in groups/as a whole class...*)

What are the advantages/disadvantages of each approach?

(d) What **resources** do you find most helpful? (*books/leaflets/IT packages/interactive IT...*)

Explore both general approach and specific packages. Are these resources freely available or in short supply?

(e) What about **visits?** and **work experience?**

(f) Overall, what kinds of activities **do you enjoy** most in careers sessions?

Are these the **most useful?**

(g) Was there anything that, for you' was just a **waste of time?**

3. **Looking back, was there any one event or activity or any one person, that stands out in your mind as really important or helpful for you as an individual - something that made everything fall into place for you - that helped you to make a decision (or perhaps to change your mind)?**

If any examples,

*Probe:* Why do you think this was?

Was the same event also useful to other group members?

4. **Do you feel you were given enough information about the full range of careers open to you? And about all the possible routes into those careers?**

*Probe:* any important omissions. What else would you have liked?

5. **Have any of you/of the rest of you actually changed your plans during the course of the past year?**

- (a) Why was this?
- (b) Did anybody help you to make the decision, and how?
- (c) Is there any other kind of help you would **like to have received**?

6. **If during the next few years you begin to wonder whether you've made the right decisions, and decide you might need to change your plans - for example by changing your course or moving to a different career entirely - would you know what to do? And would you feel able to do it?**

*Probe transferability* of any skills they think they have gained, and any ideas they may have for alternative strategies which might help to prepare them better for future career changes.

7. **To sum up**

- (a) If you or any of your friends have a clear idea what you want to do, how can the school careers programme best help you?
- (b) If you have no idea at all, what help do you need?

*Probe:* how these (possibly differing) needs can be reconciled.

Are there any essential features common to both approaches?

8. **Has anyone ever asked you before about your views on the help you would like in making plans for the future?**

If so, has this led to any **changes**?

*Probe:* Is there anything else that you can think of that you personally would **like to have done** that could have been really useful in helping you to

- get to know your own abilities?
- gather information?

- make decisions?
- apply for courses and jobs?

*Probe:* How do other group members feel about any suggestions made?

Would the same thing suit everybody?

If not, how do they think **different needs and interests** should be reconciled?

## **B, Young People's Views on CEG they Would have Liked**

### **9. If you were asked to design a careers programme for young people like you,**

- Is there any advice you would give on **how young people like yourselves should be treated**?
- what would the **most important features** be?
- is there anything you do at the moment that you would **leave out**?
- are there any activities that you've **heard about** (but haven't done yourselves) that you would like to include?
- who** would run the programme? When would it start?

*Probe:* are different kinds of input needed at different times?

- should it be about helping people to make decisions, or about opening them up and broadening their horizons?

## **C. Young People's Views on More Innovative CEG**

### **10. Finally I want to tell you about some new kinds of CEG that are already being tried out in different parts of the country, and ask how useful you think they might be to you (or would have been at an earlier stage):**

First of all, different kinds of **information**:

- careers information on CD ROM?
- careers information on the Internet?
- leaflets giving brief information on jobs trends in the local labour market?

Now **activities**:

- work experience which is clearly linked to developing your skills?
- a programme of events to develop teamwork and problem-solving skills?
- activities in which students themselves research information on different jobs and then present their findings (*Transition Teams*)?

What about **advice and support**:

- The new National Record of Achievement (*Progress File 'Widening Horizons'*), which places more emphasis on reviewing progress with tutors and supervisors?
- help with setting and reviewing personal targets for careers work?
- mentoring - that's individual advice and support provided on a regular basis by careers advisers or employers?

And finally, what do you think about schemes like GNVQ or ASDAN which include separate elements on careers work for which you can get **credits or awards**?

**11. Are there any other comments you would like to make on the help you have received (or would like to have received)? Remember, we're particularly interested in new ideas and suggestions.**

Notes

1. NFER has published an online guide to *Using focus groups* in their school research toolkit [[https://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/PRE\\_PDF\\_Files/09\\_42\\_02.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/PRE_PDF_Files/09_42_02.pdf)].
2. For a more detailed guide, read *Using Focus Groups in Research* by Lia Litoselliti (Continuum, 2003).

## 5. The impact of work experience for students

Routine evaluation of work experience is generally low level focusing on student satisfaction and administrative arrangements rather than looking at impact measures.

Between 2006-2008, the National Support Group for Work Experience with expert advice from Andrew Miller developed a 'Pre-16 Work Experience Impact Tool'.

The group looked initially at a triangular approach involving the student, employer and teachers' perspectives. A parental questionnaire was also considered, but not pursued.

They piloted the three forms in a number of areas and received additional comments from conference delegates to whom they presented their plans. As a result, the group decided to concentrate only on students and to drop the open-ended questions as these were impossible to collate in large numbers. At the request of the then DfES, the student questionnaire was aligned with the CBI employability skills framework from *Time Well Spent* which had just been launched [<http://aces.shu.ac.uk/employability/resources/timewellspentbrief.pdf>].

The group also considered developing a tool which measured distance travelled through 'before' and 'after' tests; but rejected this approach as requiring a more objective attempt to measure 'knowledge' and being harder to control across all the schools involved.

The final aims of the project were:

- to develop a simple, clear and robust tool that can be used to collect evidence of the impact of pre-16 work experience, i.e. to establish in what ways their knowledge and understanding, skills, qualities, experiences, attitudes and attributes have changed using a self-assessment process
- to collate data from a large number of areas and schools to produce a baseline measure against which to judge future quality improvements.

The results from the survey are reproduced below and you can read the full report on the project online

[<http://www.educationandemployers.org/media/4677/iebe%20dcfs%20work%20experience%20impact%20measures%20report%20-%202008.pdf>].

It is worth noting:

- they favoured using a four-point scale for questions 1-16 to prevent students opting for an 'unsure' option
- they did not preclude the idea of areas and schools adding statements and questions but wanted to ensure that the tool was easy to use
- they omitted contextual questions (e.g. about gender, year group, dates and type of placement) as carrying out cross-tabulation involves a lot more work
- Item 10 (Do you understand better the importance of problem-solving at work?') has been omitted from the revised form which now has 15 statements.

**Work Experience: Student –Trainee Feedback Form – Collation Based on 15,025 student responses**  
– figures are %

|   |                |                  |                |               |
|---|----------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| How much did you enjoy your work placement? | Very enjoyable | Mostly enjoyable | Some enjoyment | Not enjoyable |
|   | 49             | 31               | 13             | 4             |

|   |                |                 |           |                       |              |
|---|----------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------|--------------|
| How satisfied were you with your work experience? | Very satisfied | Quite satisfied | Satisfied | Slightly dissatisfied | Dissatisfied |
|   | 50             | 30              | 12        | 4                     | 2            |

| AS A RESULT OF MY WORK EXPERIENCE:  | Strongly agree | agree | disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. I better understand the skills employers are looking for (please refer to the chart)   | 34             | 60    | 4        | 1                 |
| 2. I know which personal qualities employers think are important  | 37             | 57    | 6        | 1                 |
| 3. I was able to show my initiative in a workplace  | 45             | 48    | 10       | 1                 |
| 4. I have developed some new skills that employers value(e g customer awareness, and use of IT)                                 | 42             | 45    | 6        | 2                 |
| 5. I developed my spoken communication skills, e.g. talking to adults   | 51             | 42    | 6        | 1                 |
| 6. I know I can work well with a team of adults   | 54             | 41    | 4        | 1                 |
| 7. I was able to show a positive attitude at work   | 60             | 37    | 2        | 1                 |
| 8. I feel more confident in handling new situations   | 45             | 48    | 6        | 1                 |
| 9. I have a better understanding of my own strengths and weaknesses   | 35             | 53    | 10       | 1                 |
| 10) Do you understand better the importance of problem solving at work?   | 29             | 53    | 10       | 1                 |
| 11. I understand better why it is important to do well at school  | 50             | 40    | 7        | 2                 |
| 12. I am more prepared to work hard in lessons and my coursework  | 42             | 47    | 9        | 2                 |
| 13. I understand better how workplaces are organised  | 41             | 51    | 6        | 1                 |
| 14. I have experience of working with people who have different roles   | 47             | 45    | 6        | 1                 |
| 15. I have a better understanding of people’s rights and responsibilities at work, e.g. health and safety & equal opportunities | 40             | 50    | 8        | 1                 |
| 16. I am clearer about what I want to do in my future education and career (post-16)  | 37             | 38    | 18       | 6                 |

## 6. Parental involvement

The role of parents/carers as career influencers continues to be an important focus for evaluation. Key issues include:

- Why is parental engagement important?
- How does the school currently facilitate parents' contribution to the career development of their own and other people's children?
- How can the processes of parental engagement be made more effective?
- What else could the school be doing to facilitate parental engagement?

Data on parental engagement can be obtained by:

- Asking students, e.g. 'How useful did your parents find the Y9 options evening?
- Asking staff, e.g. 'What success have you had in engaging 'hard-to-reach' parents?
- Interrogating yourself, e.g. 'How much notice has been taken of parental views in practice?', 'Are parents actively encouraged to attend guidance interviews?'
- Asking parents.

An example of a questionnaire for parents follows.

### Careers Advice Survey - Parents/Carers Questionnaire

As parents/carers at XXX School, your children are entitled to help with making the career decisions that will have a big impact on their future progress in learning and work:

Careers education is provided mainly in PSHE lessons but is part of the learning in all school subjects. Students can access careers information in the library, online (through the VLE) and at lunch-time drop-in sessions. Students can request a one-to-one interview or participate in a small group careers guidance discussion with a careers adviser.

We are reviewing the careers provision in school and would like to hear your views. It will only take a short time to complete this survey. The survey can be completed anonymously but you can provide your name if you are happy for us to contact you for further information or clarification. Your feedback will help us to develop a careers programme that meets the needs of all students.

Thank you for your help.

YYY, Teacher i/c Careers

Please put your completed survey in the box at reception.

Are you a parent/carer of a child or children in Year: 9 10 11 12 13? (Circle all that apply)

Please answer the following questions by circling one of the five choices. The key to the choices is:

| SA             | A     | N                                   | D        | SD                |
|----------------|-------|-------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Not sure/Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

|    |  |             |
|----|--|-------------|
| 1  | Getting good careers help from school for my child/children is very important to me  | SA A N D SD |
| 2  | I know what the school provides in PSHE to help my child/children prepare for the future   | SA A N D SD |
| 3  | I know where to find careers information in school to help my child/children prepare for the future  | SA A N D SD |
| 4  | I know about the help that my child/children can get from the careers adviser in school  | SA A N D SD |
| 5  | The school gave my child/children the help they needed to making decisions at option time (e.g. Year 9 options, post-16 options, post-17/18 options)       | SA A N D SD |
| 6  | The school has improved my child/children's awareness of the skills that employers are looking for   | SA A N D SD |
| 7  | The school has helped my child/children to value equal opportunities and respect for diversity in the workplace  | SA A N D SD |
| 8  | The school has helped my child/children to develop the self-presentation skills they need for making applications and going to interviews                  | SA A N D SD |
| 9  | The school has helped my child to develop personal financial management skills (e.g. saving, budgeting, forecasting, applying for allowances/grants/loans) | SA A N D SD |
| 10 | The school has helped my child/children to feel confident about planning for the future  | SA A N D SD |

Please comment below on any of your responses or make suggestions about what the school could do to improve its careers provision

## Resources

Centre for Guidance Studies & Connexions Lincolnshire and Rutland (2001) *A Little Book of Evaluation*. Nottingham: DFES  
[http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs\\_a\\_little\\_book\\_of\\_evaluation2001.pdf](http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs_a_little_book_of_evaluation2001.pdf)

Clemett, A.J. & Pearce, J.S. (1986). *The Evaluation of Pastoral Care*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Survey Monkey is a free tool for creating online surveys [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

### Action research

McNiff, J., Lomax, P. & Whitehead, J. (2003). *You and Your Action Research Project*. (Second edition). London: Routledge

McNiff, J. (2003) *Action Research for Professional Development*. This booklet may be downloaded from <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/ar-booklet.asp>, for use in your own context.

### Active involvement of young people

National Youth Agency (2001) *The active involvement of young people in the Connexions Service: A Practitioners Guide*. Nottingham: DfES/CSNU.  
[http://www.cegnet.co.uk/uploads/resources/The Active Involvement of YP in the Connexions Service - A Practitionersguide.pdf](http://www.cegnet.co.uk/uploads/resources/The_Active_Involvement_of_YP_in_the_Connexions_Service_-_A_Practitionersguide.pdf)

Teaching and Learning Research Briefing No.5 (June 2003) *Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning* TLRP/ESRC [http://oer.educ.cam.ac.uk/w/images/6/63/Student\\_voice-1.pdf](http://oer.educ.cam.ac.uk/w/images/6/63/Student_voice-1.pdf)