GUIDANCE FOR LIFE

An Integrated Framework for Lifelong Guidance in Ireland

Quality in Guidance

GUIDANCE FOR LIFE

An Integrated Framework for Lifelong Guidance in Ireland

2007 National Guidance Forum Report

Foreword

The presentation of this report to Minister Mary Hanafin and Minister Micheál Martin from the National Guidance Forum marks an important milestone in the development of guidance in Ireland. The National Guidance Forum was established by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 2004 in recognition of the need to support individuals' self-management of their lives, their learning and their career paths for their own fulfilment and to ensure continued national prosperity. The Forum brought together key stakeholders from across the education and labour market spectrum. The result is that for the first time an agreed cohesive strategy for a national lifelong guidance service has been developed.

Guidance is recognised at national and European policy levels as fundamental to lifelong learning that supports the development of human potential, social inclusion, employability and economic prosperity. Recent reports on aspects of guidance provision in Ireland by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs[1] and the Department of Education and Science[2] reveal many strengths, but also significant gaps. The voice of the general public in Ireland, captured for the first time through the Forum's consultative process, endorses lifelong guidance provision as a priority area for development.

The National Guidance Forum's report provides an opportunity for the two Departments to move forward in the provision of a guidance service that underpins national priorities in lifelong learning.

The Forum's agreed *national lifelong guidance framework* outlines the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals at different times of their lives. The implementation of this framework is supported by *quality standards for service delivery* and *appropriately qualified practitioners*. The proposed *framework of organisational structures* will deliver a coordinated and comprehensive lifelong guidance service.

The timing of this report is opportune following as it does the announcement at the Finnish EU Presidency guidance conference in November 2006 that the European Commission is to support the establishment of a European Guidance Network. The Network will be representative of national guidance fora and will liaise with the European Commission, Cedefop, the European Training Foundation, the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy and international agencies, such as the OECD, in developing guidance policy and practice in member states. The implementation of the recommendations of the National Guidance Forum report will enable Ireland to participate in the European Guidance Network, thus providing access to the support of international good practice and strengthening Ireland's input into European guidance policy.

It has been a great privilege for me to Chair the National Guidance Forum and to witness first-hand the members' dedication to supporting the personal, social, educational and career development of all those living in our country at all stages of their lives. This Report is the result of a wealth of expertise in guidance and I am confident that it will enable the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to continue to build on their successful initiative in setting up the National Guidance Forum.

Professor Joyce O'Connor,
Chair of National Guidance Forum

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[1] Phillips, S., Clarke, A., Classon, J. (2006) *Careers and Labour Market Information in Ireland: A Study for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs,* Dublin: Forfas
[2] Department of Education and Science (2006) *Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools*, Dublin: Government Publications

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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00 The National Guidance Forum

BACKGROUND TO THE NATIONAL GUIDANCE FORUM

The National Guidance Forum was a joint initiative of the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which was launched at an international guidance conference during the Irish Presidency of the European Union in April 2004. In a subsequent letter setting out the mandate of the Forum, the ministers cited the EU Commission's definition of the Forum as 'an assembly of all the relevant actors concerned with the development of policy, systems and practices for lifelong guidance' (EU Commission 2004, cited in letter from ministers, June 2004). The term of office of the Forum ended in October 2006, with the submission of a final report to the two ministers.

Remit and Objectives of the National Guidance Forum

The remit of the National Guidance Forum was to explore how individuals, at any point throughout their lives, can access quality guidance appropriate to their needs; identify collaborative action across the guidance continuum and agree recommendations in collaboration with other stakeholders (Letter from the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, April 2004).

The agreed objectives of the Forum were to:

» Ensure that guidance becomes central to the public policy and planning process in education, the labour market and social strategies;

» Develop, communicate and implement meaningful models of guidance that underpin a vision of personal fulfilment, a fair society and sustainable employability;

» Urgently harness and proactively manage the wealth of existing guidance resources and agree mechanisms for measuring relevant and realistic outcomes;

» Move from a fragmented provision of guidance to a cohesive multi-faceted professional, accessible service, responsive to the needs of the individual and society.

In its final report to the ministers, the Forum presents its proposals for a new national lifelong guidance strategy, the implementation of which will achieve all of the above objectives.

Membership of the National Guidance Forum

The National Guidance Forum had an independent Chair and 33 members, who represented the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; professional bodies; trainers of guidance practitioners; state agencies with a remit for guidance; employer bodies; trade unions; parents; education management and practitioners from primary, post-primary, further and higher education levels, including universities and institutes of technology; consumers, and private guidance practitioners (see the list of Forum members on page ii). All of the groups represented made submissions that informed the proposals made by the Forum in its final report.

Outline of the work undertaken by the Forum, June 2004-October 2006

The Forum met eleven times in the period from June 2004 to October 2006. During its term of office, the Forum agreed a common vision and definition of guidance across the education, labour market and community sectors. The Forum's vision for the future of guidance is outlined in its reports. The Forum's definition of guidance is as follows:

Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.

In the past two years, the Forum has also:

» Collaborated with the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs to draw up the terms of reference for a national audit of careers information and dissemination: the outcomes of this study are incorporated into the Forum's recommendations;

» Prepared a proposal for the establishment of a National Learning Line;

» Participated in the EU Joint Actions funded project *Developing National Guidance Fora in Six Member States* (MEDSUI) 2004-2006;

» Liaised with the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy on developments in guidance at EU level and their implications for guidance in Ireland;

» Made a submission about funding for guidance under the National Development Plan 2007-2013. The Forum proposed measures to address the gaps in current guidance services by enabling the provision of a seamless, quality service that maximises resources, with the collaboration of guidance stakeholders.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) provided the Forum secretariat. A Steering Group managed the work and strategic direction of the Forum, coordinated the work of sub-committees, represented the Forum in networks with other groups and disseminated the outcomes of the Forum's work. The Steering Group also made links with the two ministers to keep them informed of progress. There were four sub-committees of the Forum, each of which was charged with a specific task that contributed to the achievement of the Forum's objectives. The following reports produced by the sub-committees are summarised in the Forum's report *Guidance for Life: An Integrated Framework for Lifelong Guidance in Ireland* as a background to the Forum's proposals and published in full on the accompanying CDRom.

Guidance in Ireland: Background Scoping Report

The sub-committee produced a background scoping paper on *Guidance in Ireland* to outline current provision and identify gaps. This scoping paper has informed the recommendations of the Forum on policy development and coordination of guidance.

Perceptions of the General Public on Guidance and Guidance Services: Consultative Process Report

The sub-committee undertook a consultative process on behalf of the Forum, to research public perception and experience of guidance. The outcomes of the research have informed the Forum's recommendations for strengthening provision to achieve a seamless guidance service across the lifespan.

Quality in Guidance

The sub-committee produced a quality assurance framework for guidance that will enable policy makers and providers to ensure that they provide high-quality services to clients throughout the life cycle. It also proposes structures for evaluating services and quality improvement measures.

A Competency Framework for Guidance Practitioners

The sub-committee developed a framework of competencies for guidance practitioners, which will influence the future professional education and training of practitioners who will provide guidance across the life cycle and in a range of different contexts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2004, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, following from a recommendation contained in the OECD Country Note on Guidance in Ireland[1], collaborated in the establishment of a National Guidance Forum.

This newly formed National Guidance Forum (NGF) adopted a number of objectives, one of which was:

To develop, communicate and implement meaningful models of guidance that underpin a vision of personal fulfilment, a fair society and sustainable employability.

When addressing this objective, the NGF formed a sub-committee to examine this area and develop Quality Guidelines which would assist individuals, organisations and agencies, involved in provision of guidance related services, to improve the quality of service delivery to clients. The Guidelines were developed and took account of relevant national and international policy development and publications. In particular, consideration was given to the model developed by Glasgow Caledonian University and Partners.[2]

The Guidelines recognise that guidance services can be accessed at any stage of an individual's life and recommend that to ensure individuals are receiving a quality guidance service, it is imperative that such services are evaluated with overall responsibility assigned to the service provider. The Guidelines advise that the benefits of having Quality Guidelines in place not only impact on the client but extend to others involved in the process such as staff, service providers and society in general. The different types of services which can be expected of a guidance service are also set out and can range from the giving of information, advice and counselling to networking and mentoring.
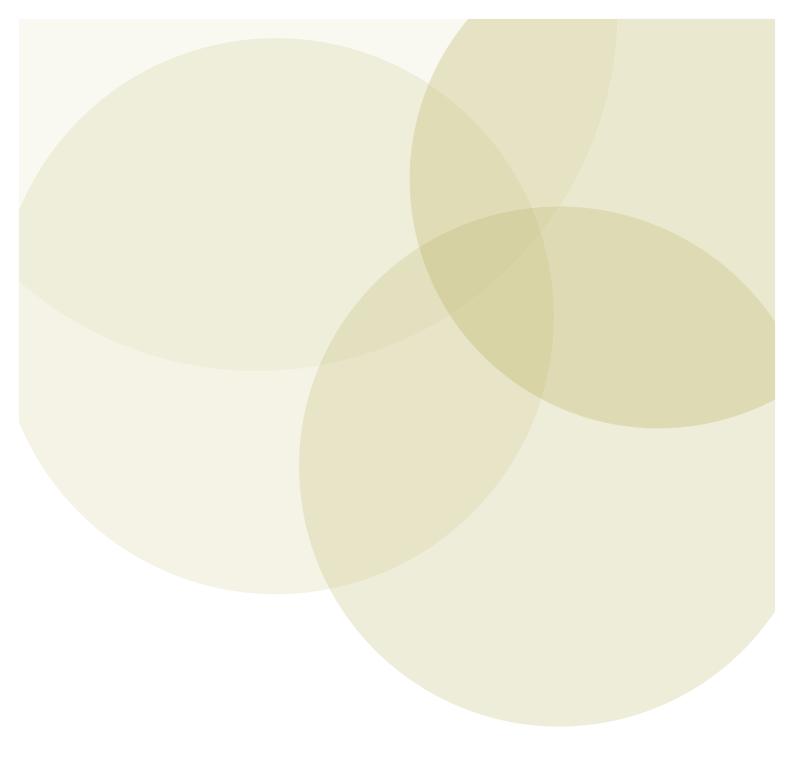
The Guidelines present a framework for the development of guidance related services and, in this regard, set out a Code of Principles. These highlight the importance of all parties involved in the guidance process being in agreement with the Codes of Principles. There are eleven areas identified and described under the Code of Principles: Accessibility, Appropriateness, Confidentiality within the Law, Equality of Opportunity, Impartiality, Individual Ownership and Responsibility, Integrated, Quality Standards of Service, Team Approach, Transparency and Complaints Handling. Each of the Principles mentioned above are interdependent and therefore must be fully embedded.

The Guidelines also examine the issue of assessment of a guidance service, which should be both quantitative and qualitative, and recommend that assessment should take place via two forms, internal assessment and external assessment. They further advise that the service provider give consideration to obtaining external publicly recognised accreditation.

The Guidelines are intended to be 'general' in their approach, as opposed to being specific to each provider, and present a practical incremental methodology to developing quality in guidance service organisation, and are intended to build on best practice and existing guidelines.

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[1] Review of Career Guidance Policies, Country note on Ireland, OECD, April 2002.
[2] ISSEE Quality Guidelines, Glasgow Caledonian University (Centre for Education & Training Development) & Partners. Leonardo da Vinci, October 2000.

01 Introduction to Quality and Guidance

The National Guidance Forum has adopted as its working definition the following view of guidance:

Guidance refers to the process of facilitating individuals or groups at any point throughout their lives to develop their capacity for the self-management of their personal, social, educational, training, occupational and life choices in order to grow towards their potential and thereby to contribute to the development of a better society.

It has now been recognised that 'guidance' is critical at all stages in life, if people are to cope successfully with the many challenges they have to face. Whether it be in the education/lifelong learning area, the employment/training area or the personal/social decisions people have to make, organisations, agencies and individuals who provide 'guidance related services', have a key role.

The 'Quality Standards Movement' in line with strategic management initiatives being implemented across the Public and Civil Service has been about improving quality to the public at large in a variety of different ways and is a response to the demands and expectations of people in today's world. 'Quality Guidelines' are similarly a way in which the needs, demands and expectations of individuals can be met.

The quality of the guidance service offered to clients must be evaluated, and the providers of the service have to be accountable for the service they provide. This evaluation should be done in a balanced way and should include the personal/social, educational and vocational development of clients. Ultimately, it must be said that it is primarily a management function to ensure that a quality guidance service is being provided for clients. Management *(of the service providers)* in consultation with guidance practitioners, has the responsibility to plan, carry out, support, monitor and evaluate the provision of the guidance service.

The National Guidance Forum 'Quality Guidelines' are designed to assist individuals, organisations and agencies that are involved in guidance related activities, to improve the quality of service that they provide for clients.

The assessment of a guidance service should be both qualitative and quantitative, and should, ideally, include both self-assessment and external assessment. Consideration should be given to achieving publicly recognised externally accredited Quality Certification such as ISO and the Q-Mark *(Excellence Ireland Quality Association)*. By acting in a supporting as well as a monitoring role, external assessors should strive to empower guidance practitioners in the work they are doing.

When devising these Guidelines consideration was given to the model developed by Glasgow Caledonian University and Partners under a Leonardo da Vinci funded Project (October, 2000) and also existing policy development and publications listed in Appendix 1.

02 | The Benefits of Having
Quality Guidelines

For any guidelines or any system around guidelines to be accepted and operated effectively, there must firstly be agreement about how and with whom they are going to be used. The first step in the process is to decide who will use these guidelines and then get their agreement to implement the guidelines.

It will be essential to make absolutely clear to those involved that there will be benefits to:

» The client;
» Staff;
» Service Providers;
» Overall guidance-related provision within Ireland;
» Society in general.

The benefits that can be expected include the following:

» A clear statement about what quality in guidance is;
» More clarity about what is on offer;
» Better services, value for money and accountability.

Quality development and quality guidelines are important to:

» Ensure that the needs of those seeking guidance are being met;
» Ensure that different providers are clear about what they are delivering and to make their provision fit the needs of clients;
» Provide consistency of service across the country's organisations;
» Meet the needs for a better informed public;
» Meet the needs of clients so that they have support (guidance, information, advice, counselling and referral) to enable them to make reasoned informed choices for the self management of their personal, social, educational, training, occupational and life choices.

So, the client needs to know:;

» What guidance is, i.e., be aware of the difference between guidance, information and advice, counselling and referral;
» Where to go, to whom to go, when to go and how to access a guidance, information, advice, counselling and referral service as appropriate.

This can all be provided by a clear statement of service from the provider *(see p19 – Clarity of Service Provision)*.

03 | Examples of Guidance Services

Many different types of guidance and related services are sought by individual clients. These cover a wide range of information, advice and guidance activities *(see also Appendix 2)*.

The following are important in a quality guidance service:

1. Informing

Providing information of a general or specific nature on career opportunities available together with job-related labour-market information. Information provided could relate to educational, training and labour-market opportunities. The information given should be easily understood and readily available, with possible support from staff who can facilitate access and clarify queries.

2. Advising

Helping individuals to interpret information and to choose the most appropriate option. To benefit from advice individuals must already have a fairly clear idea of what their needs are, as responsibility for decisions should rest with them. Advice on learning opportunities together with financial and entitlement advice in relation to funding for same should be covered.

3. Counselling

Working with individuals to help them to discover, clarify, assess and understand their needs and various ways of meeting them. Counselling may be of a vocational, educational or personal nature, or a combination of all three.

4. Assessing

Helping individuals, by formal or informal means, to obtain a structured understanding of their personal, educational and vocational development, in order to enable them to make sound judgements about the appropriateness of particular opportunities. Formal assessment instruments would range from computer-aided guidance packages to specific skills/ aptitude tests and other psychometric tests.

5. Teaching and Learning

Providing learning experiences to enable individuals to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies related to making personal educational/vocational decisions and transitions, e.g. CV/job search support, courses on study skills or interview techniques, or a programme on Social, Personal and Health Education. Identifying transferable skills that would assist individuals in marketing themselves across different sectors would be important.

6. Enabling

Supporting individuals in dealing with agencies providing or influencing learning/employment opportunities. This must include helping individuals make applications. Specialist educational/vocational advice from 'experts', especially those with knowledge of particular sectors or institutions, would be advantageous. This should be done in a way which encourages individuals to take the action themselves next time.

7. Advocating

Negotiating directly with institutions or agencies on behalf of individuals or groups, e.g. negotiating exceptional entry arrangements.

8. Networking

Establishing specific links with a range of people and agencies to support and enhance guidance work with individuals. These links should involve regular contact, internally and externally, and foster a team approach to guidance. Employer links, including the opportunity to job trial or undertake work experience, are especially beneficial.

9. Providing Feedback

Gathering and collating information on unmet or inappropriately met needs of individuals and encouraging providers to respond by adapting or developing their provision. Feedback can also provide positive information which can be useful in making decisions about future provision and delivery. Where the needs of individuals cannot be met by a particular provider, the individual should be referred to other agencies or professionals.

10. Managing

Guidance activities should form a coherent programme, which is sustainable within its institutional or organisational setting, coordinating and developing its human and physical resources, enabling its effectiveness and promoting its services and interests. Guidance should be integrated as part of the organisations' activities and structures.

11. Mentoring

The provision of advice and support by a practitioner, who has in-depth knowledge and experience, to other practitioners who are less experienced and would benefit from such support.

12. Innovating Systems Change

Curriculum development, changes in institutional practice, and changes in guidance practice are necessary in order to maintain and improve quality of both educational and guidance provision.

The provider of the guidance service should make clear the range of services offered. It should also make clear the scope of the service, e.g., outreach for rural areas, disabled access, provision for speakers of languages other than the 'native language', provision for different years/levels within an educational institution, provision for crisis interventions, etc.
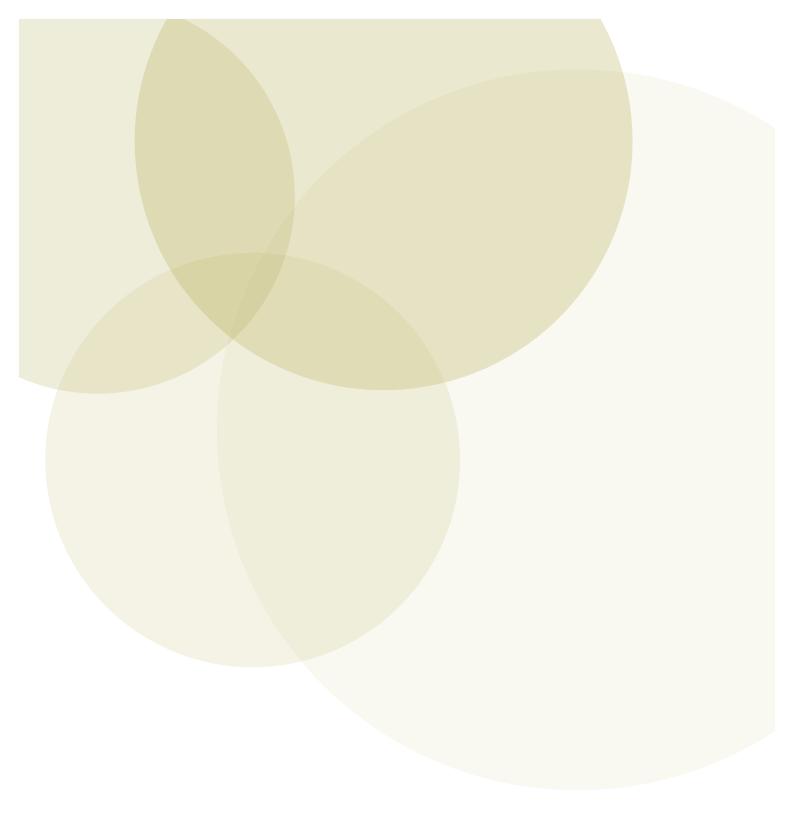
The plans need to be integrated into the overall strategic plan of the host organisation.

The Basic Guidance Interview Model (next page) provides a guide to structure the guidance interview and manage the guidance process. Individuals' needs and circumstances, along with the time available for the guidance interview, dictate the pace of each interview. The amount of time spent on the different stages of the process will vary depending on the needs of the individual.

This is only an example of a guidance model and there are many others which can be adapted in the context of delivery of guidance and related services.

FIGURE 1. BASIC GUIDANCE INTERVIEW MODEL

GUIDANCE

Introduction

Verbal Contract

Information Gathering

Hearing the Story

Initial Assessment

Exploring Options

Action Planning

Ending the Interview Process

04 | The National Guidance Forum Quality Guidelines

The NGF quality guidelines provide the following:

(a) Framework for developing quality guidance related activities.

(b) Code of Principles that should be adhered to in the provision of guidance related activities.

Some additional material is provided for organisations that wish to develop quality standards related to aspects beyond direct delivery. Some providers have additional material related to their specific quality systems.

The NGF quality guidelines represent a realistic and incremental approach to developing quality in guidance services organisations, without imposing excessive demands on organisations, staff time or resources. They are intended to build on best practice and existing guidelines.

The NGF quality guidelines are designed as a development tool and it is recommended that internal and external assessment are the most appropriate forms of evaluation to be used in organisations.

The NGF Quality Guidelines have been developed to be 'general' guidelines related to baseline delivery, rather than specific to each provider. The development of too specific guidelines for all organisations/agencies and sectoral organisations might create problems and difficulties for some organisations and agencies.

It was felt that it was important that the guidelines:

» Build on existing quality guidelines and best practice;

» Recognise the different starting points of organisations relating to quality development;

» Should represent 'threshold' or 'baseline' provision.

(A) FRAMEWORK

An organisation when developing its process should be:

Consultative	Advice, opinions, views, etc (sought from relevant parties), ownership (relevant parties taking ownership).
Negotiated	Discussion(s) take place, obstacles overcome and agreement reached.
Appropriate	Suited to the subject.
Relevant	Linked to the issue.
Client Centred	Focuses on the individual/client.
Balanced	Unprejudiced and fair.
Integrated	Incorporates all other relevant elements, etc.
Incremental	Reinforces what is current and allows for expansion.
Developmental	Identifies development(s) needed for improvement of guidance provision.
Qualitative and Quantative	Facilitates continuous improvement in the quality and measurement of service.

(B) CODE OF PRINCIPLES

(from the client's perspective)

Any Code of Principles should be agreed by representatives of all parties involved in the guidance process within a sector, organisation or location. The Principles in the Code are interdependent and are designed to be applied in their entirety.

The National Guidance Forum recommends that the following code of principles should underpin the Guidance Service and form the basis on which quality is assessed.

1. Accessibility

Guidance services should publicise, signpost and make the delivery of guidance accessible to any eligible user. This includes stating clearly, in appropriate languages, locations and publications, the target clientele, availability and other relevant arrangements.

2. Appropriateness

The guidance offered to clients should follow an incremental process and be relevant to the needs of clients at whatever stage of development they are at.

3. Confidentiality within the Law

The guidance process should be confidential and this should be made clear to the individual. Personal information should not be passed on without the individual's prior permission. Any limitations on this should be made absolutely clear at the earliest possible stage, e.g., within the education sector circumstances may arise when it is not always possible to offer complete confidentiality.

4. Equality of Opportunity

Equality of opportunity and inclusivity should underpin all aspects of provision, including the activities and behaviour of the provider and the opportunities to which the guidance process leads. Providers should be able to demonstrate how they provide equality of opportunity.

5. Impartiality

Guidance should be impartial. Providers should be able to demonstrate that they offer an impartial service or declare any factors which might limit the impartiality of the guidance offered to the individual. This includes provision reflecting the vested interests of the provider and/or the provision of incomplete information on opportunities for learning and work.

6. Individual Ownership and Responsibility

The guidance process should be client centred and focused on the needs of the individual, whose interests are paramount. Promoting the responsibility of the individual, with appropriate support, to make choices consistent with their individual needs.

7. Integrated

Assessments of the quality of guidance should be 'balanced' and include the personal/social, educational and vocational aspects of the service. Assessments should be both qualitative and quantitative.

8. Quality Standards of Service

The service provider should operate to agreed standards of delivery which should include:

» Provision of information to individuals detailing service delivery;
» A complaint procedure for clients and system for obtaining client feedback;
» Accurate and current information;
» Staff with appropriate skills, knowledge and training;
» Appropriate facilities and resources related to their target group and level of service.

9. Team Approach

In organisations where various professionals are involved in the provision of the guidance service it is important that they network and collaborate with each other in the interests of the client/user. This should not take from or undermine the specialist role of a qualified guidance practitioner.

10. Transparency

The guidance process itself should be open and transparent. Guidance providers should explain in clear language, appropriate to the individual, how they propose to work in their part of the process.

11. Complaints Handling Procedures

Individuals should be made aware of these, as they reflect the guidance-related practice which is available to them. These codes or statements should not be theoretical, but should outline the type, level and quality of service which individuals can expect and should receive, and should also outline how individuals can proceed if they are dissatisfied with the service.

CLARITY OF SERVICE PROVISION: INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL

Clarifying who offers what, and where, when and how it is offered, is critical in enabling people to use any guidance related service. This is why it is important for organisations to 'classify' or 'categorise' different **levels** of guidance related activities as outlined in pages 13–14.

An attempt should be made to identify which organisations, sectors, and individuals in organisations are involved in the following:

» Core delivery, i.e., guidance as the main function of the organisation or unit within the organisation;

» Other aspects of delivery as part of learning, education or training, e.g, information or advice;

» Referral to other appropriate services.

This will be important in any national 'system' development or where some individuals have a role in supporting quality development in each organisation.

A key aspect of any quality service is making it clear to those who might use the service what they can expect to receive. Indeed, if an organisation states that it offers guidance, individuals are entitled to ask about certain key features of that guidance provision **before** he or she decides whether or not to use it. The organisation might wish to set this out clearly – in the form of a leaflet, or provide information on a website, or in other marketing material.

Some services are aimed at particular target client groups and may therefore be especially helpful to them, but less useful to others. The services should be accessible to all of their target client groups (both physically and in terms of language, and be open at times convenient for these groups).

Individuals should be made aware of any costs which may or will be incurred from receiving a service.

LEVEL OF SERVICE

The **level** of service provided should be clear. In addition, the professional standpoint of the provider is important, especially as it may limit the impartiality of the guidance related service on offer. If impartiality cannot be guaranteed, individuals should be informed as to where it is possible to get additional information, which would assist and provide independent advice.

Individuals using the service should be made aware of specific skills, qualifications or experience of staff as these apply to the services offered.
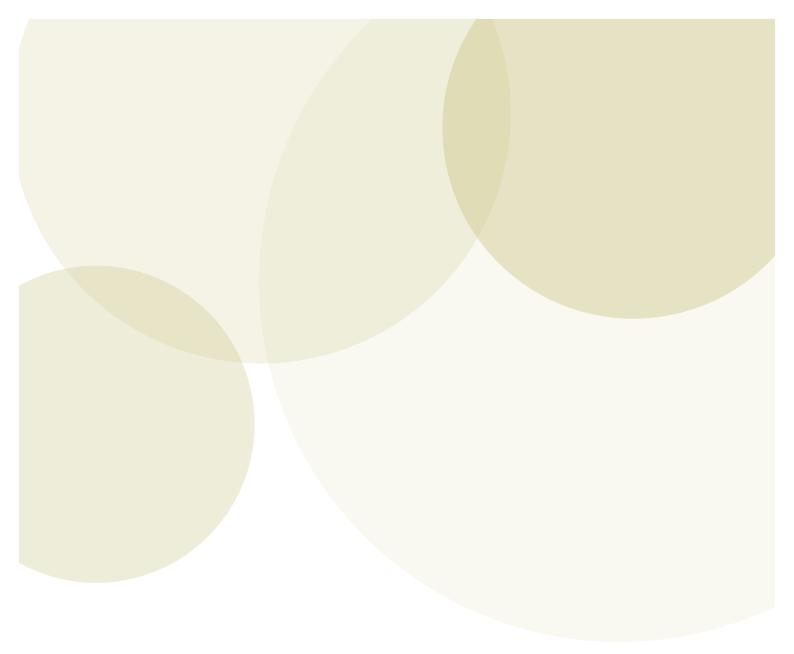
Staff qualifications and competencies required to deliver a quality guidance service should be stated; these should be reviewed and staff training and development identified, planned and delivered according to activities undertaken by the organisation, which require new knowledge or skills.

The range of facilities which organisations have to support their guidance related activities will vary across organisations. Even within countries the range of different contexts within which information, advice and guidance related activities will take place is wide, and different types of resources and facilities will also be a feature.

For these reasons it may be inappropriate to specify in a very detailed form, the type, range, format, etc of facilities which are required. If appropriate, individual organisations could use a checklist format in this area, as in the delivery of guidance services section.

Facilities and resources available (see Appendix 3). Examples of different types of facilities and resources include:

» Individual Interviews

» Group Guidance

» Computer-assisted guidance

» Facilities for those with learning or physical difficulties

It is recommended that a Customer Charter be developed and approved in respect of the services provided. The Client/Customer Charter in Appendix 4 may be customised as appropriate in line with specific services being provided.

05 Assessment of the Guidance Service

To ensure the provision of a quality guidance service, the following should take place:

(a) Internal Assessment
(b) External Assessment

(A) INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

To facilitate Internal Assessment the following information should be available:

» The total number of individuals receiving guidance;

» Others who may be visiting the premises of the provider and using facilities informally;

» Number seeking guidance (e.g., from particular target groups which have been identified as a priority).

(See Appendix 5)

One form of evidence which will always be extremely important in measuring the quality of any guidance service is client satisfaction data. Internal assessment by the organisation should draw on this, as it provides an 'objective' measure of service quality, which together with other data collection procedures, can assist in improving quality delivery.

The next step is to make judgements and decisions about whether you are achieving the provision or if further development is needed. The self-assessment process asks you as an organisation/agency/institution/service to make these decisions about your guidance service and to agree and plan what action needs to be taken in areas where further development is required.

Internal assessment of the service could include some of the following:

» Document key elements of service provision and evaluate if key elements are being provided;

» Review feedback received from clients;

» Weaknesses highlighted and improvement measurements (short-term and long-term) put in place;

» Review of improvements measurements.

Staff have an important role to play in the Assessment Process - both internal and external - and should be actively involved at all stages.

(B) EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

To facilitate External Assessments, there should be evidence of market research into potential target groups for guidance services and tailoring of the services to meet the demand.

The organisation should have information about the potential demand for these services, e.g., numbers, locations and characteristics of potential clients. The target client groups for the organisation should be clearly stated.

There should be evidence that the promotion is appropriate to the target groups. The promotion of the service should include reference to the quality features of impartiality, client-centredness, and the confidentiality of the service.

External Assessments should be:

» Independent, credible, appropriate and conducted by experienced assessors;

» Given appropriate timeframes (preparation, conducting assessment etc.);

» Supportive.

06 Acronyms, References and Appendices

Acronyms
used in this report

NGF: National Guidance Forum

ISO: International Standards Organisation

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Appendix **01**

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

The Irish Government, in recognising the strategic importance of guidance and following consultation with the Social Partners have endorsed guidance (and related areas) through legislation and policy developments such as:

Labour Services Act 1987

This Act facilitated the establishment of FÁS. One of the functions assigned to FÁS under this Act was the provision of:

services consisting of the provision of guidance, advice and information in respect of choice of career and employment, and to assist (whether financially or otherwise) in, and coordinate, the provision of such services by others (Section 4.1, E (iii))

White Paper on Human Resources Development 1997

This paper addresses the issue of guidance by stating that:

FÁS should be in a position to provide a guidance, counselling and placement service for job-seekers… (Pg79, 4.27)

Education Act 1998

In Section 9 we find the following:

9(c) A school shall use its available resources to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices, and 9(d) Promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999

Two of the functions outlined under this Act are to:

facilitate lifelong learning through the promotion of access and opportunities for all learners, including learners with special educational and training needs. (Section 4.1, E)

to promote the recognition of knowledge, skill or competence acquired through research, adult and continuing education and training and employment. (Section 4.1, F)

Publications

Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of the Education Act 1998 relating to students' access to appropriate guidance issued by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science and published by the Stationery Office, Dublin.

Planning the School Guidance Programme published by the National Centre for Guidance in Education in association with the Department of Education and Science.

Appendix **02**

GUIDANCE, INFORMATION, ADVICE, COUNSELLING AND REFERRAL

The term guidance encompasses a wide range of activities. The descriptions below define what is meant by guidance, information, advice, counselling and referral; the needs of the client and the response of the guidance provider in relation to each of these. The roles of the client and staff member are identified under each of the many aspects of service.

GUIDANCE	Guidance refers to the process of facilitating individuals or groups at any point throughout their lives to develop their capacity for the self-management of their personal, social, educational, training, occupational and life choices in order to grow towards their potential and thereby contribute to the development of a better society.
The Client	Is unsure about future direction.
The Member of Staff	Uses a wide range of guidance techniques to assist the client in action planning; can involve self-assessment, 'skills you need' inventories, careers based interest guides, psychometric testing, skills in exploring client self awareness/clarifies/feeds back/ provides information/assists in drawing up an action plan.
INFORMATION	Providing details about opportunities available.
The Client	(a) Knows what he/she is looking for and has already decided that it is a realistic option.
	(b) Client is unsure what he/she is looking for, links to advice.
The Member of Staff	(a) Uses existing knowledge or retrieves information from prospectuses, databases, information centres, a careers library, helplines.
	(b) Refers client for advice.
ADVICE	Helping the client to interpret information and choose the most appropriate option.
The Client	Is unsure whether his/her aim is realistic/appropriate.
The Member of Staff	Uses information sources/knowledge/interpretation skills/experience/feedback from providers.
COUNSELLING	Working with individuals to help them to discover, clarify, assess and understand their needs and the various ways of meeting them.
The Client	Is unsure what his/her needs are, be they personal/social, educational/training or vocational.
The Member of Staff	Provides a caring and supportive environment in which the client can be helped by various counselling techniques and strategies to identify and satisfy his/her needs.
REFERRAL	May need referral for additional specialist guidance/assessment.
The Client	Referrals should be made in accordance with each organisations' agreed procedures.
The Member of Staff	Knows when and how to make an appropriate referral. Staff should not attempt to deal with issues that are outside their area of expertise.

Appendix 03

HUMAN RESOURCES AND FACILITIES NEEDED TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE SERVICE

The following features will be important in supporting quality delivery in guidance related settings:

Skilled Staff

- » Training
- » Qualifications
- » Competence
- » Experience
- » Professional skills
- » Attributes and personal qualities

Premises

- » Health and safety
- » 'Fit for purpose'
- » Reception/interviewing area
- » Storage/display?
- » Information area?

Equipment

- » What to include?
- » Resources – paper?
- » Computers – databases, interest guides, computer based assessment software?

Appendix 04

CLIENT / CUSTOMER CHARTER

The Charter below sets out the standards of service that Clients/Customers can expect to receive.

The Services provided are guided by our client/customer values:

- » Care about our clients/customers;
- » Attitude towards our clients/customers is courteous, friendly and attentive;
- » Help our clients/customers to define their requirements and assist them in finding solutions;
- » Responsive and flexible in meeting clients'/customers' needs.

This Quality Service will be delivered under the following headings:

Staff/Client/Customer: Support a client/customer service ethos amongst all members of staff. This Charter confers on clients/customers and staff the same levels of respect and courtesy.

Best Practice: Adopt best practice in the provision of services.

Client/Customer Information: Promote awareness of all services available.

Equality: Provision of services to all clients/customers in a courteous, fair and impartial manner and in full compliance with all equality legislation. Facilitate access to services for people with disabilities.

Health & Safety: Provision of services in settings that comply with occupational and safety standards.

Privacy and Confidentiality: All dealings with clients/customers are conducted in a manner that respects their rights to privacy and confidentiality within the Law.

Consultation/Feedback: All comments, suggestions and views on any aspects of our service are welcome as this will help us to better satisfy clients/customer needs.

Promptness: Reply to all letters, emails and voicemail, etc promptly and efficiently.

Complaints: Deal with queries in an open, objective and fair manner. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of both parties.

Appendix 05

CLIENT PROFILES

Learners from pre-school to postgraduate:
» Pre-school children;
» Children in Primary school;
» Post-primary students;
» Youthreach;
» Persons participating in alternative education programmes;
» Students at risk;
» Students in higher and further education;
» Parents.

Employed people (full-time/part-time):
» Wanting to improve skills or qualifications for present job;
» Planning job changes within present occupational field;
» Planning a major career change into a new occupational field;
» Planning a career break;
» Planning retirement;
» Facing redundancy.

Thinking about some kind of next step:
» Taster programmes;
» Work experience;
» Work shadowing.

People wishing to return to work:
» Unwaged;
» Unemployed/short/longterm;
» Returning after a break;
» Newcomers to the country;
» Returning from time in the armed forces, e.g., army, navy, airforce;
» Ex-offenders;
» Having taken early retirement;
» Returning after illness (physical or mental);
» Returning after maternity/paternity leave.

People planning self-employment.

People wishing to return to education and training.

People in full or part-time education and training:
» Planning a career;
» Choosing a subject/field of study/course;
» Wanting to improve study skills;
» Planning a change of subject;
» Those with special need, learning or physical disability;
» Those who require personal guidance;
» Psychological counselling;
» Other areas

People wishing to contribute to community development.

People in transition.
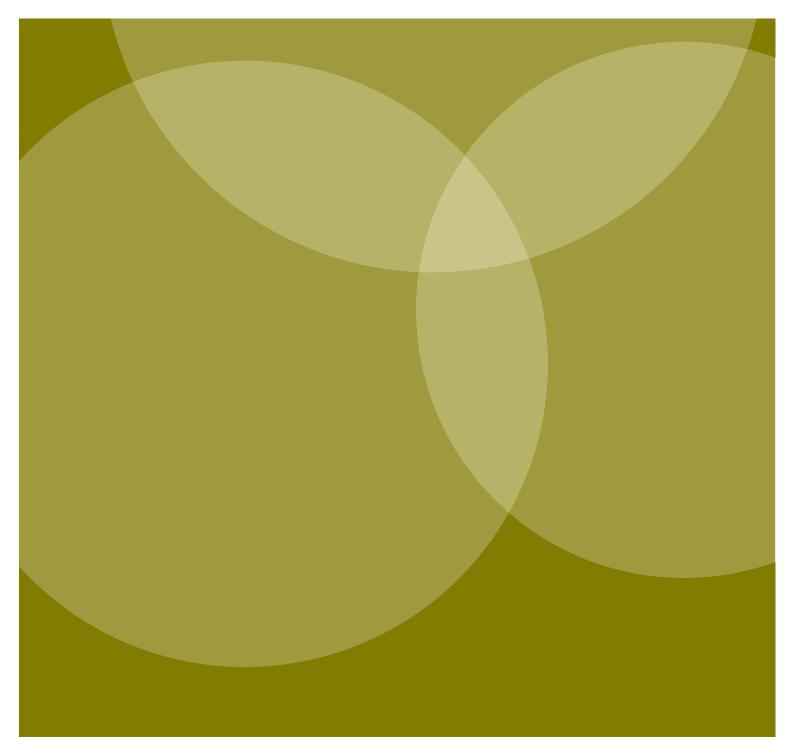» Prisoners;
» Persons from different cultural backgrounds.

ACTIVITY PROFILE

Target group / individual profiles:
» Age groups;
» Gender;
» Ethnic origin;
» Level of education/training at time of seeking guidance;
» Reasons for interest in guidance;
» Total number of employers seeking to use guidance services;
» Size of employer/number of employees.

Guidance services used:
» Interview by appointment;
» Formal assessment, e.g., skills, abilities, personality etc.;
» Computer-assisted guidance;
» Assessment and/or accreditation of prior learning;
» Careers education;
» Counselling;
» Referral to other agencies;
» Coaching in job-seeking skills;
» Support in obtaining work experience/job-shadowing;
» Support in obtaining jobs;
» Support in enrolment in education or training;
» Advocacy on behalf of individuals;
» Support groups.

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