

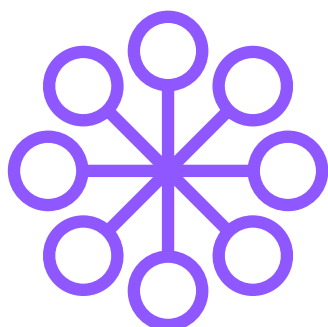
Section 4

A work-life model of enabling employment guidance – MEEG

This section outlines the implementation of the MEEG over six stages, each involving a number of meetings. It is likely that this process will take three to six months to complete depending on the individual needs of the person, the availability of training and education, the labour market situation, and the caseload of the practitioner.

In the six stages below, we outline:

- the suggested number of meetings
- the aims of the stage
- recommended resources and materials
- the approach
- some helpful tips to enable the implementation of a work-life balance informed, co-produced, enabling employment guidance model.





Stage 1 Welcome and information



**SUGGESTED
NUMBER OF
MEETINGS: 1 – 2**

This is arguably one of the most important stages in the employment guidance process. It focuses on establishing trust and building the person-practitioner relationship. During this stage, the service is introduced to the person, and the process is explained.

STAGE AIMS

Establish Trust

Welcome the person to the service

Make the person feel comfortable and at ease

Explain the service and what is available within the service

Resources required (practitioner checklist)

- ✓ Guidance framework
- ✓ Diagram of services
- ✓ Initial profile

The approach

The style used by many community-based employment services is friendly, caring and supportive, while also being clear and professional. People accessing the service should feel confident that they will be supported and empowered in their journey towards the labour market and feel hopeful for their futures. Thus, adequate time for discussion, feedback and debriefing should be allowed for and built into session planning.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did, but people will
never forget how you made them feel”

Maya Angelou

Meeting 1 Introductions

Introducing the practitioner, the service, and the individual

While it is assumed that the person is referred to you via a robust triage process, it is still important to introduce yourself and the service. This first session focuses on getting to know each other, and there are a number of important points worth making to ensure that the session is valuable to both you and your client. Some practitioners may decide to keep the session fairly fluid whereas others may like to have a structure to follow. Either way (and this is your preference as a practitioner) the session could include the following:

Explain who you are and what you are called e.g. a guidance officer, key worker, practitioner and the type of work you do e.g. employment advice and guidance, career guidance, job placement, employment coaching.

Explain what is available within the service including possible referral capability:

- ✓ Job search support
- ✓ CV and Interview preparation
- ✓ Career exploration
- ✓ Job placement
- ✓ Education and training
- ✓ Skills development





MEEG

- ✓ Work-life balance supports e.g. childcare, housing, transport
- ✓ Overcoming challenges e.g. addiction, health, mental health, criminal history, language or cultural barriers, low confidence
- ✓ Referral to other supports
- ✓ Other services

You could use a diagram or image to explain all that is available. You could also explain that as this is the first meeting, it is unlikely that you will decide on a concrete plan today, but that these supports are available as and when the person might need them. It is important to mention that for the coming weeks you will be the point of contact for the person and if you both decide to access any of these services that you will support the person while they receive this additional support or as they move on to the next step.

Next you could ask the person to say a little about who they are and why they are here today.

The following questions may help you get started

- ✓ Have you been to this service before...or to a similar service?
- ✓ Are you currently connected to other local services (or aware of services in the area) e.g. Youth services, Community services, SICAP etc.?
- ✓ What would you like to get from this service? (ideas around work, options, training etc.)
- ✓ Are there any initial questions you would like to ask or any information you need?
- ✓ Is there anything I can help you with at this first session e.g. completing a form or accessing information about an immediate issue?
- ✓ Do you have a CV? Is it up to date or an older version?

You may decide to have a second meeting where you will aim to gain a deeper insight into the person's work-related history, his/her strengths and challenges, education and training, generally gathering the type of information required to build a CV. If the person already has a CV you could ask them to talk you through their CV, picking up on how they explain previous jobs, their time in education, what they liked and disliked.

You could explain that the service concentrates on employment support and important in this process is both skill identification and development (such as identifying the hard skills they have developed so far and skills they could

strengthen) and personal strengths (self-confidence, well-being, career efficacy). Explain that you might therefore ask them to explain something further or look for more information as you go through the process. Consider how you might say or word this, as at this first meeting, it may seem daunting to some, whereas for others it might be expected that you will challenge them.

People may bring their concerns or worries (e.g. social welfare or financial issues, concerns around the conditionality aspect of their social welfare payment, concern that there are no jobs for which they are suited, health concerns) to these initial meetings. Allowing time for the person to express these concerns can be valuable as it enables trust building and helps the person relax so that you can focus on the guidance process. It is ok to explain that in some instances you may be able to help, in others you may not, but that you will endeavour to support the person accessing the relevant services to meet their specific needs.

At the end of stage 1:

- ✓ The guidance practitioner understands the person's current situation and need for the service
- ✓ The person is reassured, trust is established, and they have clarity about the process
- ✓ Key challenges (as the person presents) are identified (at least initially, others may be identified as the relationship develops)
- ✓ The pace of service delivery has been established
- ✓ The practitioner should have sufficient information for a basic CV

Here are some examples of tools and resources that may assist or support you in working through stage 1 with people engaging in the guidance process





EXPLAINING THE EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE PROCESS – A SIX STAGE EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE PROCESS

You can use this information to explain the process – you may choose to briefly give an overview by showing the person the diagram below or go into further detail (as explained in the text following the diagram). You should decide how much detail to go into at this stage, making sure not to overwhelm the person. For others they may ask for a more in-depth overview of the process.

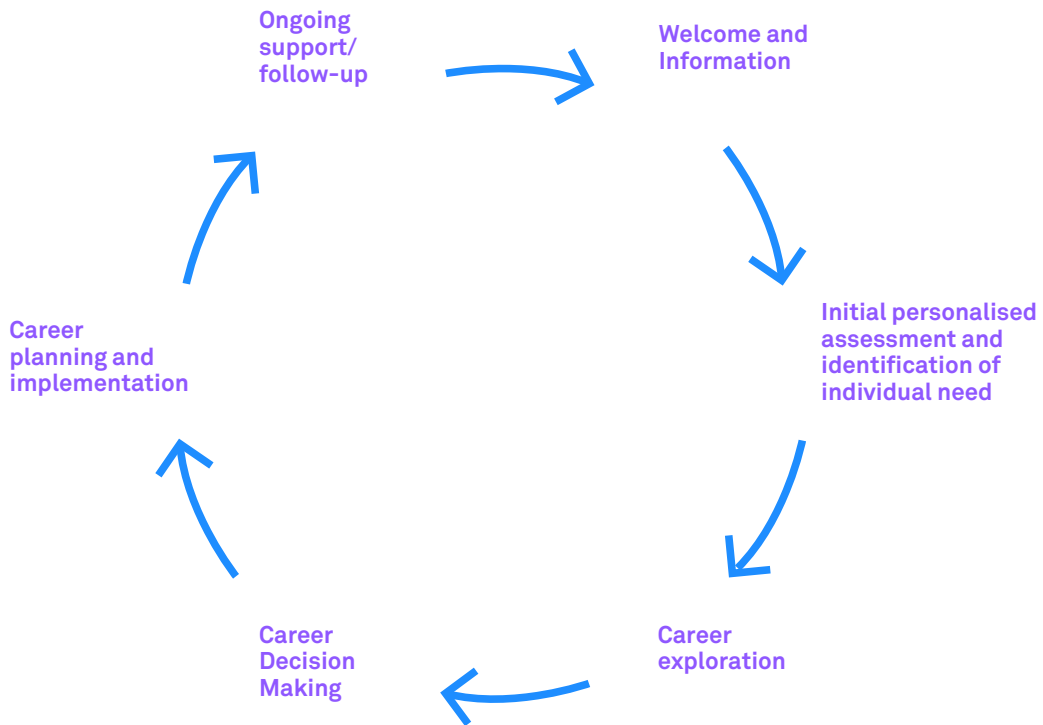


Figure 4.1
An enabling employment guidance process

‘Across and within these six stages we (the client and practitioner) will cover key steps which lead to the development and implementation of a career action plan.’

Stage 1 & 2:

'Your (the individual's) needs (education, training, skills, personal situation, employment history, perceived employability competencies, work values, challenges to employment, well-being etc.) will be explored using a registration or profiling form or questionnaire'.

'Identification and understanding of specific challenges is vital in identifying the types of supports and actions required to enable us to move towards the labour market. The outcome of the individual needs assessment (upon initial engagement with the service) determines the extent to which we (the person and practitioner) may need to access support from other appropriate services to address issues which pose challenges to progression (e.g. addiction, literacy). Interaction with other services and supports will be documented.'

Stages 3 & 4:

'We will then design and implement a tailored career guidance process to support you in identifying hidden skills, abilities, aptitudes, preferred behaviour style in the workplace, and values. This process aims to enable you to build career clarity, career identity, and self-esteem and career efficacy. We may also use vocationally orientated career guidance tools and approaches (e.g. career interest inventories, general and specific aptitude assessments, narrative enquiry, person-centred vocational counselling) to reveal hidden strengths, aptitudes and preferences, while also acknowledging and documenting limitations. This information will be used to inform the development of a detailed career plan.'

Stage 5 & 6:

'We (the person and guidance practitioner) will work together to develop a career plan which includes a career objective or aspiration, a number of shorter term SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound) career goals and the potential challenges to progression. We will discuss and work out a timescale for this plan and a method to achieve it, particularly in relation to responsibilities and the extent of contact required (e.g. weekly/ fortnightly meetings with the guidance practitioner).'

'We will then work on implementing the career plan in a supportive and positive way. This will involve us (the person and the practitioner) working together to accomplish the planned career goals, to maintain levels of motivation, to build resilience against setbacks and adapt and re-plan as required.'





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4

‘This employment guidance process is generally implemented on a one-to-one basis with you (the person) and me (the guidance practitioner) working together to identify key strengths, career identity and learning needs. The successful implementation of a career plan relies heavily on our (the person-practitioner) relationship and commitment to the plan.’

Note for the practitioner

This process is highly dependent on the skills and approach of the practitioner involved in delivering the service. It also relies on the continuum of support offered so that the person is supported throughout their journey toward, and into, the labour market. This involves building networks with those who can offer support, such as mentors within the education and training sector and within the workplace.



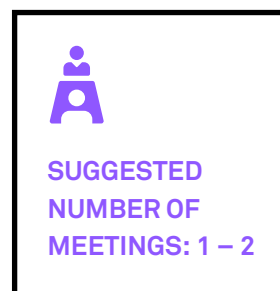
Provide the person with a guide to your own organisation, its services and opening times – this could be a leaflet or a website/ social media link

Provide the person with your name and contact details (email, phone, social media) e.g. a card / follow-up text

A card (or text) with the next appointment time

Stage 2

Initial personalised assessment and identification of individual need



This stage focuses on the individual and their life to date. It helps the person reflect on themselves and their experiences while also providing the practitioner with a good overview of the person's individual history. It also facilitates the identification of issues and challenges which may seem insurmountable and provides the practitioner with clues for referral to other services. Some information may be available through the Triage phase (if sufficiently comprehensive) (see sections 3.2 and 3.3). This stage still centres on building the person-practitioner relationship and the relationship with the service.

There may be some overlap between Stage 1 and Stage 2 however it is highly recommended that this stage is completed.

STAGE AIMS

- Identify previous experiences**
- Identify initial employment needs**
- Establish initial view of self**
- Identify challenges**
- Identify specific needs**
- Start to develop a CV**

Resources required (practitioner checklist)

- ✓ Profiling Tool
- ✓ Individual Scales
- ✓ Mind Map





The approach

This stage could be described as ‘fact finding’ where the practitioner aims to build a profile of the person. The approach should be one of curiosity where the practitioner uses gentle questioning to elicit the information required to build the profile. It should be borne out of interest rather than ‘prying’ or for conditionality purposes. An explanation about the importance of getting a good snapshot of the person and their life should be stated at the beginning of the session. It is likely that the practitioner will find the use of active listening skills such as *paraphrasing* and *summarising* beneficial during this phase.

Meeting 1

As mentioned previously this meeting will have dual benefits for the practitioner and the person. It serves to both help the person take stock of where they are now and provides the practitioner with information to inform their understanding of the person within the labour market. The typical information captured during this phase includes:

| | |
|--|--|
| BIODATA | Name, age, address, phone, email, gender, nationality, ethnic minority, household status |
| EDUCATION DATA | Highest level of education (Post primary, Further Education & Training, Third level), Qualifications |
| BASIC SKILLS | ICT, Literacy, Driving |
| EMPLOYMENT | Employment history, volunteering, duration of unemployment, |
| PERCEIVED CHALLENGES | Care, transport, criminal history, disability, addiction, health, housing, family |
| ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL OR NATIONAL SERVICES | Youth, health, housing, addiction etc. |
| SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES/ SKILLS | Including soft skills, sector related skills |
| FUTURE WORK ASPIRATIONS | Career goals, ambitions, short-term/longer-term etc. |

Figure 4.2
Information captured during initial meetings in the guidance process

Many services have their own profile form which is a helpful tool to capture all of this information.

An example profile form (the *Participant Profile Form* which was adapted from the Ballymun Youth Guarantee and EMERGE projects (Ballymun Job Centre, 2010-2012) that could be adapted and personalised to your service is available in Appendix 3.

While profile forms are generally used at the beginning of the engagement to make an assessment of need, they also form an important part of the ongoing dynamic employment guidance process, as needs are continuously revisited – not least because people don't disclose everything in the early appointments, but also because their circumstances often change. The profile is important as decisions are often made with regard to accessing resources and support, based on information collected in the profile form.

The following questions may help you get started...

- *I am going to ask you a series of questions about yourself, the questions are related to information similar to the type of information we would need to put a CV together...do you have a CV?*
- *I have your CV here so we can refer to it if needed*
- *Are there any initial questions you would like to ask or any information you need before we get started?*
- *Why is that...?*
- *Did you enjoy that....?*
- *What happened then...?*
- *Tell me more about that....*
- *Was that a difficult decision...?*
- *Have you had any difficulties trying to sort that out...?*
- *How did that experience make you feel?*
- *What impact did that have on you...?*
- *It sounds as though that was hard for you....?*





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Reviewing the profile, the practitioner and the person should aim to clarify aspects that need further information e.g. exact name of a qualification or confirmation of childcare. This may require the person to check information or follow up on outstanding information. The practitioner and the person may agree a list of tasks that need to be completed for the next meeting. This session also requires that the practitioner provides feedback to the person on where they are currently at and may involve some debriefing so the client is clear about the purpose of the session and what the next steps will be.

Next steps could include:

Career Guidance: Assistance in exploring options and clarifying the areas of work that are most suited to the individual and guidance with regard to the education/training/employment skills required to pursue a career in that area.

Employment support: advice and support in job seeking or change of employment. This could include job seeking skills and accessing labour market information.

Training/Education: assistance with accessing and applying for education or training courses

Other supports: assistance with literacy or other challenges preventing re-employment

| Practical challenges | Human capital challenges | Internal and psychological capital challenges |
|--|------------------------------|---|
| Lack of care supports | Out-dated skills /no skills | Dilemma of working / looking after family / children |
| No Transport | Weak / no computer skills | Low confidence |
| Housing | No qualifications | Lack of career clarity |
| Health | Lack of communication skills | Allowing others to influence participation – peer pressure |
| Limited social support | Weak basic skills / literacy | Fear of only having choice of the jobs that no one else wants |
| Recruitment practices | Poor work history | Indecisiveness |
| Low pay | Early school leaving | Low self-esteem |
| Conditions of work, working hours | Weak Social Capital | Feelings of low well-being / low mood |
| Limited employment opportunities in local area | | Addiction (alcohol / cannabis) |

Figure 4.3
Example of perceived challenges

Practitioner work on behalf of the individual

An important part of the guidance process is that practitioners spend some time reviewing the person's profile, in terms of education levels, work history, their initial goals and aspirations and their personal disposition or how they have presented so far. Has the person attended all scheduled appointments? Have they been early/late? Are there concerns regarding their well-being or mental health? Are there particular challenges which have been alluded to? etc. This information is essential in designing an intervention or plan for and with the individual.





At the end of Stage 2:

- ✓ The guidance practitioner (and the person) understands the person's situation, their experiences and needs, and their pre-employment position
- ✓ The guidance practitioner and the person have a baseline understanding of the person's perception of self
- ✓ The person is reassured, trust is established, and they have clarity about the process
- ✓ There is a comprehensive understanding of need for referral and 'life' issues to be considered as part of career planning
- ✓ The practitioner has sufficient information to design a plan or intervention which will be outlined and discussed with the person at the next scheduled meeting

Here are some examples of tools and resources that may assist or support you in working through Stage 2 with people accessing the service



Life career assessment interview (Gysbers et al., 2003)

Aim: to identify career or life themes 'the way in which people express ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and values about themselves, others, and about the world - in general, their world views' (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnson, 2003). It is a technique that can lead to useful in-depth discussion of perceived strengths and limitations, values and interests (Kidd, 2006). It involves discussing:

- Work experience, and education and training – what was most liked and least liked
- Leisure activities
- A typical day
- Strengths and perceived barriers



Road maps or lifelines

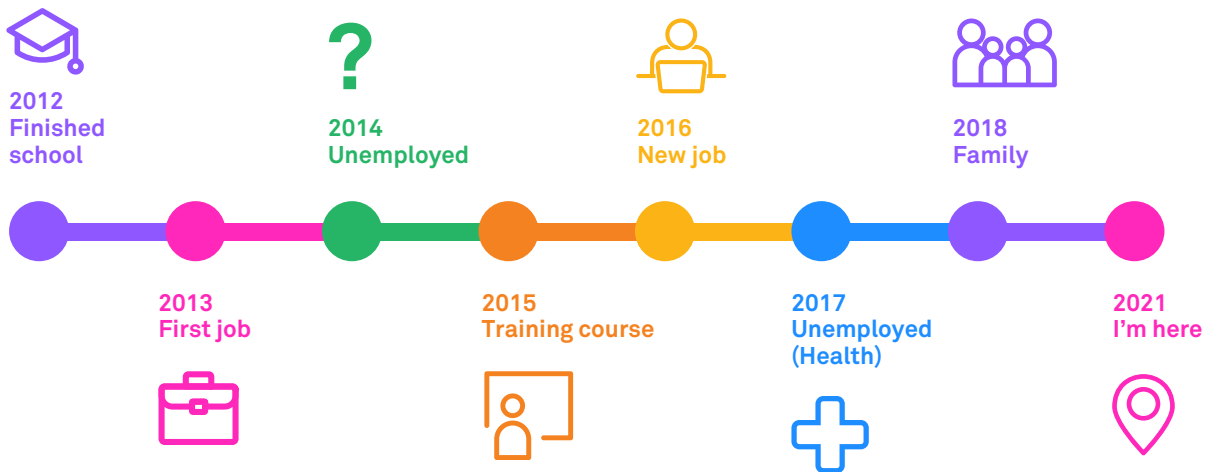
These types of visual tasks help the person to review their life up to the current point in time. They can also be used to project into the future.

You will need: A3 paper, pens, colour pencils

The person is asked to draw a picture of their choice to indicate their life so far. This this could be a road, an outline of a person, a spiral, a staircase, a snake or a simple timeline. They are then asked to write, draw, or colour in the lifeline to indicate their career trajectory so far. This could include time spent in education and training, previous jobs, leisure activities, volunteering, achievements etc.

See McMahon & Patton (2015) – Using Timelines in Career Counselling (pg. 202-203)

Timeline Techniques





4

Stage 3 Career exploration



**SUGGESTED
NUMBER OF
MEETINGS: 1 – 2**

This stage opens up the contemporary world of work to each person. It also helps the person identify their strengths and talents and uncover those which could be particularly valuable in the labour market. It allows the person time to think about who they are and what they would like to do in their futures. It provides the opportunity to gain greater self-awareness in terms of interests, values, cognitive strengths, work skills and other competencies relevant to career or employment decision making. This self-exploration phase can extend across a number of sessions depending on the depth practitioners and individuals decide is required or desired.

STAGE AIMS

Design a tailored employment and career guidance process

Identify interests

Identify abilities

Identify latent (hidden) skills

Identify aptitudes

Identify preferred behaviour in the workplace

Identify values and career vision

Build career clarity, career identity, career efficacy

Build self-esteem, motivation, hope, well-being

Resources required (practitioner checklist)

- ✓ Guidance framework
- ✓ Tools to indicate career interests, values, personality, specific aptitudes
- ✓ Initial profile

The approach

During this stage a caring, helpful and professional approach is suggested. People accessing the service can easily feel overwhelmed by the purpose and in-depth nature of this stage so guiding the person through the various stages, feeding back with clarity and interest in a constructive and open way, can help alleviate any feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability. Be curious in your engagement with the person linking questions back to the original profile (from Stage 2) and connecting ideas and themes that may emerge at this point. Some information may be already known to the person or can be gauged through previous qualifications e.g. leaving certificate Maths or particular work experience, other skills and competencies may be hidden and need to be uncovered.

While this stage is still practitioner led with person engagement, many of the activities will require the person to complete tasks, think about themselves in response to prompts and questions in various assessments, tools and worksheets. The practitioner suggests the type of information required, tools which may be useful and the pace of the session. It is a person-centred approach where the practitioner tailors the exploration to the needs of the person and conducts sessions within the context of the person e.g. being cognisant of personal circumstances, educational background, or mental health. Feedback is essential throughout this phase providing confirmation of skills, aptitudes, preferred behaviour etc.

Meeting 1 Deciding on the tools that may be required

During Stage 2 you will have gathered sufficient information from the person and his/her profile, to design a plan or intervention. This may include using an interest inventory to establish career interests e.g. social careers, or a values questionnaire to identify the aspects of work that may be important for job satisfaction e.g. independence.





The O*Net resource (<https://www.onetonline.org/>) provides an excellent overview of worker characteristics and requirements for various jobs and careers. It categorises these as follows:

- Abilities (Cognitive, Physical, Psychomotor, Sensory)
- Interests (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional)
- Knowledge (Specific occupation knowledge)
- Skills (Basic, Complex problem solving, Resource management, Social, System and technical skills)
- Work Activities (Information input, Interacting with others, Mental Processes, and Work Output)
- Work Context (Physical and social factors that influence the nature of work)
- Work Styles (personal factors that can affect how someone performs a job e.g. initiative, self-control)
- Work Values (aspects of work that are important for job satisfaction e.g. relationships or working conditions)

This list of factors is not exhaustive and there may be others that you and the person think might be important at this time. However, those mentioned above may be helpful in thinking about the person in the world of work. They provide a framework to enable the person to think about who they are, the skills they have already developed and those which they would like to develop, and the values and culture of organisations that are congruent with their own personal values.

Interest inventories are useful tools that can help the person think about some of these worker characteristics. They are generally based on a range of interest areas but provide the person and practitioner with a profile that enables discussion of some of these broader characteristics. One of the most widely used models of career interests is Hollands Vocational Interest model (1966, 1997). It is based on John Holland's theory which proposes that vocational satisfaction and achievement depend on congruence between interests or preferences and the work environment. It categorises careers/jobs into six interest areas:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Realistic | occupations that regularly involve work activities that are practical and hands-on, and may require working outside e.g. jobs that involve plants, animals, working with wood, tools, and machinery. |
| Investigative | occupations that frequently involve working with ideas, and thinking e.g. jobs that involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally. |
| Artistic | occupations that regularly involve literary, artistic, or musical expression, or working with designs and patterns e.g. jobs requiring self-expression, creativity, openness to ideas, and that do not need a clear set of rules. |
| Social | occupations that frequently involve working with people e.g. jobs in care, customer care, teaching, nursing, counselling |
| Enterprising | occupations that involve persuasion and leadership e.g. jobs in teaching, management, sales, politics or travel |
| Conventional | occupations that involve high levels of detail, administration and that have a high degree of structure e.g. jobs in administration, in a library or in banking |

For more information see:

<https://www.careers.govt.nz/assets/pages/docs/career-theory-model-holland-20170501.pdf>

The following questions may help you get started...

- *Tell me about what you like and what you dislike- in general in your everyday life, in jobs you have previously held, in education or in other aspects of your life.*
- *What are you good at?*
- *What skills do you think you have?*
- *What type of work environment would suit you best – outdoors, office based, social...?*
- *What do you value – money, status, friendships, good conditions?*
- *What are your beliefs and ideals? Is there something you feel strongly about? (for example, the environment, social justice, health, animals)*
- *Do you have a clear sense of where you can go in your career?*
- *Do you have a clear sense of the type of job you would like to get?*
- *Do you believe in your ability to get the best job possible?*
- *Are you hopeful for the future?*





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An example of how the meeting could run

1. Start by asking some of the questions above - this will help you get a sense of how well the person knows him/herself and whether they have a career plan
2. A useful tool to start with is an Interest Inventory. This can help to open up the world of work and the types of jobs that are available. It is especially useful if the person is unsure of their career direction, have a limited understanding of the range of jobs available, or if they have been working in a specific area and now need/want to change direction. This can be completed by the person or by the person in collaboration with the practitioner, depending on the tool itself and its design.
3. Once the person has completed an assessment the practitioner reviews the results and feeds back the information. This can really help to narrow down areas of work, while also introducing the person to a wide variety of work tasks and careers. Many individuals confirm through this process the career areas they have already chosen, while others may for the first time identify a career that they might not have previously considered (due to jobs available in local area or types of industry/jobs typically undertaken by family members).
4. This feedback session can be transformative for the person (and the practitioner), opening up areas of interest, changing how the person thinks about themselves, expanding possibilities and learning about new career opportunities. It can act as a motivational tool helping the person to narrow down options to areas that they are interested in and might not have previously known that they could work in. In a way, this session allows the person to dream, to create a career vision. It gives them permission to think outside the world of job seeking and to consider all the possibilities.
5. The next step is for the practitioner and the person to think about how to turn these career interests into a realistic career plan, taking into consideration the person's personal circumstances, issues or challenges, and their specific needs.
6. If it is a case that the career areas chosen require education, training or specific qualifications the practitioner should then focus on the level of cognitive skills required to achieve the qualifications e.g. numerical ability, spatial reasoning, identifying if the individual has specific cognitive strengths which could be enhanced via learning.
7. Similarly, the type of work environment should be considered perhaps using a values or personality questionnaire as this may further guide the person towards a more specific career within a wider sector e.g. Warehousing operative versus Transportation, Accountant versus Sales

Checklist

- ✓ Interest assessment – Feedback – confirmation of broad career areas
- ✓ Values assessment / Behavioural (Personality) assessment – Feedback – confirmation of the preferred work environment and types of tasks
- ✓ Review and reflection - narrowing down to more specific types of careers / jobs
- ✓ Questions to ask:
 - Are there specific aptitudes required?
 - How do these types of jobs interact with the person's personal circumstances?
- ✓ Career plan

At the end of Stage 3:

- ✓ Increased knowledge and understanding of own interests / likes and dislikes - tasks/environments
- ✓ Increased self-knowledge
- ✓ Increased awareness and value placed on hidden skills - based on everyday life and on soft, generic, transversal skills
- ✓ Increased recognition of core and specific aptitudes (this could be based on educational achievements but in the absence of qualifications, it may be important to identify strengths based on reasoning ability with various forms of information e.g. verbal, numerical, diagrammatic, spatial, mechanical, perceptual speed)
- ✓ Increased understanding of preferred behaviour (across all of these factors):
 - Openness to change - Adaptability
 - Conscientiousness - Pace
 - Extraversion - Social
 - Agreeableness - Independence
 - Emotional stability - Resilience
- ✓ Work ethic, status, honesty, humility, reliability, quality, role models
- ✓ Understanding and view of job, employment, career into the future in terms of what life will look like then
- ✓ Understanding of one or more careers, the type of tasks and environment, and some sense of how to get there





MEEG

- ✓ A sense of what it would feel like to be part of this group of workers, how will I see myself
- ✓ Perception of agency

Here are some examples of tools and resources that may assist or support you in working through Stage 3 with people accessing the service.

During this phase of the process the use of informal assessments and standardised psychometric assessments is useful in identifying strengths, values, interests, preferred behaviour styles, transferable skills etc.

Informal assessments are widely available and are often free or low cost and require minimum training.

Psychometric assessments involve a lengthier process, require training and can be costly but do give a more accurate, reliable and valid measure of a person's attributes relevant to occupational choice.

Informal assessments are generally not supported by data and rarely have known psychometric properties and therefore should only be used to indicate preference or as a dialogue tool to open up or guide a discussion.



Interest Explorers:

- Qualifax.ie – Interest assessment
- EGUIDE Interest Explorer (Ballymun Job Centre) <https://bmunjob.ie/>
- Careers portal - career sectors <https://careersportal.ie/sectors/> and Careers explorer
- MyFuture+ Interest profiler
- What do I like doing (Moving On pg. 23) (See Appendix 5)



Values:

- My Values worksheet (Moving On pg. 19) (See Appendix 5)



Transferable skills:

- Jack & Una worksheet (See Appendix 5)
- Systematic Reflection on Experience – based on Kolb’s (1976) model of experiential learning (see Kidd, 2006, pg100)
- Understanding my Journey (Ballymun Job Centre)
<https://bmunjob.ie/>



From *Ideas for Career Practitioners* (McMahon & Patton, 2015)

- **Employability Skills Compilations** (Gibson) My STARS worksheet (pg. 98-102)
- **The Career Cycle: Visualising your Career** (Furbish) (pg.90 – 94)
- **Matchmaking your Career Options** (Harris) (for Job Changers) (pg.103-105)
- **Career Development Workshop: Choosing your Career** (For Groups) (pages 106-114)



Graphic and written portrayals

Using written or graphical methods, the person is asked to portray themselves



Descriptive words

Ask trusted friends and family for one or two words that they would use to describe you. Often people outside of ourselves see strengths we may not see ourselves.



Careers Portal

Careers Portal has a range of worksheets focused on Career Skills, CAO, Career Sectors, Career Interests, Career Investigation etc. which may be useful at this point in the employment guidance process: <https://careersportal.ie/guidance/careersguidance.php>





Stage 4 Career decision making



**SUGGESTED
NUMBER OF
MEETINGS: 1 – 2**

During this stage the practitioner and the person work together gathering all of the information from previous sessions and organising it so as to identify strengths, preferred behaviour, interests, values etc. It is important to consider and use previous experience and qualifications, hobbies and skills to inform decisions.

STAGE AIM

Shift from helping with career decision making to managing own career

Gather all information and start to narrow down options

Research learning and employment options relevant to strengths

Consider personal circumstances in decision making

Resources required (Practitioner checklist)

- ✓ Employment Guidance framework
- ✓ Feedback sheets / results from career tools e.g. career interests, values, personality, specific aptitudes
- ✓ Worksheets/ Mind map indicating challenges, external factors, practical issues
- ✓ Initial profile
- ✓ Labour Market Information
- ✓ Vocational counselling
- ✓ Possible training / education
- ✓ Realistic Job Preview
- ✓ Site visits / employer contact

The approach

This stage is crucial in the employment guidance process as it aims to transfer management of the process from the practitioner to the person. It requires a careful balance between empowering the person to manage their own career and career decisions and overwhelming them. In the first instance reminding, clarifying, focusing and prompting may be important to enable the person to pull the information together and start to make sense of it. This could be followed by a supportive approach where the practitioner uses active listening skills (Paraphrasing, Summarising, Reflecting, Affirmation etc.) to assist the person in their decision making process.

The practitioner will also remain conscious of challenges and the person's disposition, guiding them through the reality of overcoming these obstacles. This may involve liaising with other support services.

Meeting 1

This session begins by reaffirming the various pieces of new information gathered through the previous sessions. By reaffirming these strengths and by discussing their relevance to the labour market the practitioner helps the person to build self-esteem, establish career clarity and improve hopefulness and well-being.

A mind map is a useful way of organising this information and presenting it on one page. You can use a template (see below) or create your own



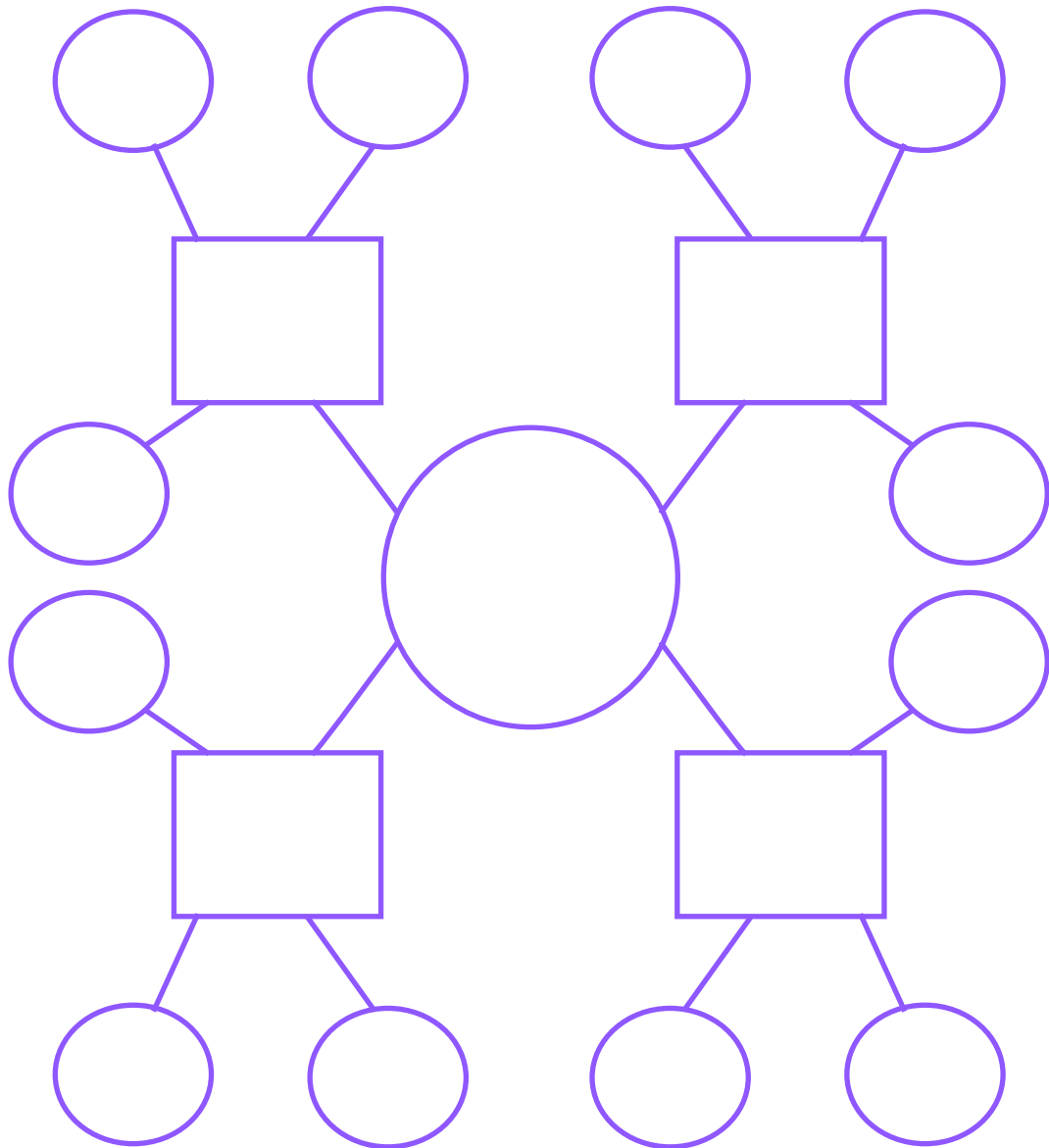


Figure 4.4
Mind map template

Meeting 2

Review the mind map and narrow down career areas / job choice. If there are a number of preferred career or job choices it could be useful to rank choices in order of preference. As part of this process practitioners could consider advising the person to use an exercise like a SWOT analysis (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, **T**hreats) to compare various options. You can use the mind map to help you answer the SWOT analysis questions below:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Strengths</p> <p>Think about the skills and experience you have that are applicable to your career choice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you good at? • What skills do you have? • What are your interests? • What are your values and personal qualities? • Think about your Network | <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Think about the skills and experience the career or job requires that you may not have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there skills you need to develop? • Are there qualifications you need to gain? • Do you need specific work experience? • What personal qualities might you need to develop? • Are there aspects of the career you would not enjoy doing? |
| <p>Opportunities</p> <p>Think about the opportunities that may be there for you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there things that you always thought of doing but never had the chance? • Are there positive trends in your chosen career area? • Are there opportunities for career advancement or promotion? • What have people suggested to you that might be interesting? | <p>Threats</p> <p>Think about the disadvantages, the obstacles and the risks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would the impact be on your personal circumstances, e.g. family, home and relationships? • Who might you be competing with? • Are there any typical requirements you can't meet, e.g. are you required to drive but don't have a car? • Are there any specific challenges you might need to overcome? • Are there negative trends in the sector? |

Figure 4.5
Example of a SWOT analysis focused on career decision making





4

The following questions may help you get started...

- *Why is that important to you?*
- *Why did you choose that strength...?*
- *What's attractive about that type of environment?*
- *What about the practicalities...?*
- *What might the first step be...?*
- *Have you considered your expressed interest in...?*

At the end of stage 4

- ✓ The person has started to think about setting career goals
- ✓ The person has some career clarity
- ✓ The person has started to develop a career identity
- ✓ The person has completed the decision making process
- ✓ The person has developed problem solving skills
- ✓ There is evidence of positive affect / improved well-being
- ✓ The person has increased self confidence
- ✓ The person has increased motivation / agency

Here are some examples of tools and resources that may assist or support you in working through Stage 4 with people engaged in the process



My Ideal Job (Haskell, 1993) (pg. 109 in *Ideas for Career Practitioners*)



My Ideal Job (*Moving On handbook*, Pg. 86), **My Ideal Employee** (*Moving On handbook*, Pg. 87) (see Appendix 5)



Influences on Career Decision – McMahon & Patton (2014) Systems Theory Framework of Career Development (pg. 199 - 201)



Making a Decision Using Grid Analysis (White, Ideas for Career Practitioners, pg. 256)



www.mindtools.com recommend combining problem solving and decision making processes when making complex decisions. This enables you to make fully informed decisions. They suggest a seven-step strategy:

1. Create a constructive environment
2. Investigate the situation in detail
3. Generate good alternatives
4. Explore your options
5. Select the best solution
6. Evaluate your plan
7. Communicate your decision, and take action





4

Stage 5 Career planning and implementation



SUGGESTED
NUMBER OF
MEETINGS: 1 – 2

During this phase the person starts to develop a realistic career plan with short to medium term achievable goals. It is therefore important that the person has made a career decision and has ranked their career choices in order of preference. Start by developing a career plan for the person's first choice. This phase is person led with practitioner support. As with the previous stages it is likely that the person's self-confidence is growing and they may feel more confident leading a little more than before. While this stage focuses on short-medium term career planning, identifying longer term career objectives may be useful but not always.

STAGE AIM

Develop a career plan

Implement the career plan

Identify and set short term goals

Identify and set medium term goals

Consider the clients career objective and longer term goals

Further develop CV in this direction

Resources required (Practitioner checklist)

- ✓ Career plan template (see template on following pages)
- ✓ Career steps - potential challenges at each stage - how can these be overcome
- ✓ Labour market information
- ✓ Specific training information
- ✓ Basic training information
- ✓ Assessment of job search skills - CV, interview, online applications etc.

The approach

As with previous phases the approach should be supportive, encouraging, helpful and constructive. Practitioners may need to further clarify, remind, and help the person to remain focused. Use of core Active Listening skills, (Paraphrasing, Summarising, Reflecting, Affirmation) will continue to be important during this phase.

Meeting 1

This part of the process requires practical planning, identifying the steps required to achieve the career goal. It is useful to consider using a career plan worksheet (see example further in this section) or online career planning tool. The following example illustrates these steps:

- **Career goal:** My career goal is to be an IT support specialist in two years.
- **Steps required to achieve this goal:** To achieve this, I will complete a level 5 course in Software development and Data Analytics at a FET college and get work experience with an IT company, attend relevant workshops on job seeking and CV preparation.
- **Education, training, skills required:** Level 5
- **Challenges identified:** limited childcare, out of education for 10+ years, no transport
- **Steps required to overcome these challenges:** engage with the childcare services locally to see what supports are available, check with my guidance officer if there are additional education supports available e.g. a preparatory education course, meet the course organisers in advance of the course starting, work out possible routes to the college





MEEG

- **Additional supports:** link in with local mental health service, access study skills supports
- **Additional resources:** ask the practitioner if there are any financial funds that I am eligible for
- **Timeframe:** week 1 make an appointment to meet the course co-ordinator, week 2 apply for the education course, week 3 apply for additional financial support and meet the childcare provider locally, check if there are childcare supports available

This plan should remain fairly fluid so that it can be amended and adapted when required. Challenges may appear at each step in the career plan. It is important to review it regularly as challenges may become more visible as the person implements the plan. Additional support services may also be required and these should be included in the plan as they are needed. The practitioner and person should talk through each step of the plan as this will help career visioning. There are many videos available online (e.g. <https://careersportal.ie/careers/index.php>) offering the person a work preview which can build career aspirations and efficacy.

Achievement of each step will be an important milestone for the person and should be recognised.

Figure 4.6
Sample Career Action Plan

| | Goal | Steps | Training/ education needs | Competencies /skills needs | Challenges – steps to overcome | Additional supports | Resources needed | Timeframe | |
|-------------|------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| | | | | | | | | Start | Complete |
| Short term | | 1. 2. 3. 4. | | | | | | | |
| Medium term | | 1. 2. 3. 4. | | | | | | | |
| Long term | | 1. 2. 3. 4. | | | | | | | |
| Notes | | | | | | | | | |





The following questions may help you get started...

- *How can we achieve this first step...?*
- *What might stop us from getting there...how can we overcome this....?*
- *Have you got all of the information you need in order to plan out the career steps....?*
- *What would help you at this stage...?*

Meeting 2

Once the career plan has been designed and the person and practitioner are satisfied that they have sufficient information to implement the plan, a timeframe should be agreed. The plan can include mini goals and short timeframes or more global goals and longer term planning. This can be decided by the practitioner and the person and may be something which evolves and changes over time e.g. starting with short time frames leading to longer term planning.

- One of the core outcomes of career development is building self-esteem. It is essential therefore that implementation of the plan is not overwhelming i.e. by setting unachievable goals. Aim to set **SMART** goals!
- **Specific:** Goals should be specific, clear and concise. Eliminate any confusion or uncertainty about what you want to achieve. Try to be accurate and exact in your goal description.
- **Measurable:** How will you know if you have achieved your goal? Think about how you might measure whether your goal has been achieved. This will help you know when you have achieved your goal or whether further steps are necessary to achieve it.
- **Attainable:** Goals should be attainable and realistic. What do you need to achieve these goals? Are the resources required available to you at the current time?
- **Relevant:** Are your employment goals relevant to the outcome of the guidance process? Are your employment goals compatible with your career interests, values, strengths?
- **Time-Bound:** Make sure to include a deadline for achieving short term goals, medium term and longer term goals. This deadline will differ for each individual. Some people might not achieve their longer term career goal for many years, others may achieve it in a shorter timeframe.

SETTING GOALS

Having and setting goals provides us with a sense of meaning and life purpose. They give us a sense of identity and direction in our daily lives. Goal setting is an important element of self-regulation and behaviour change, helping us to plan and implement our career decisions.

(Emmons, 1999; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009; Schippers et al., 2020)

Research by Locke (2019) and Locke & Latham (2019) has linked goal setting to desires in our current and future lives. According to Locke:

Writing actualises our goals and values: it brings them from our consciousness into tangible reality 'from in there to out here'. Because the goals are now on paper, they seem more real and we are more likely to act on them.

Writing helps to clarify goals and values; they may have been 'vague and wandering and meandering in one's head' so writing them down helps make them unambiguous.

Writing helps to bring our thoughts from the subconscious into conscious awareness, so taking these thoughts out of storage.

The point outlined above for writing our goals may help increase our commitment to action these goals.

The processes involved in writing and actioning our goals may increase self-efficacy.





4

Practitioner work on behalf of the person

During this stage the practitioner takes on a coaching role supporting the individual as they implement their career plan (see Appendix 1 for a brief outline of some commonly used coaching approaches). This may involve identifying specific training or education courses, referral to other support services (e.g. health, housing), support accessing additional funding (e.g. for specific training or professional clothing) and crucially supporting the person in overcoming challenges and the steps required to do so. Importantly, the practitioner should keep the person in their mind should relevant opportunities arise that may assist the person in the further implementation of their career plan. This could include regular phone calls, texts, video communication, face to face meetings.

Self-determination will be an important outcome of this phase and achieving this will require an environment and process that facilitates proactivity and engagement by the person. Enabling competence, autonomy and relatedness leads to increased self-motivation and good mental health (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Implementing the career plan with the support, encouragement and belief of the practitioner is fundamental in enabling the self-determination of the person.

Further questions that may help you support the person...

- *How are you getting on?*
- *Is there anything preventing you from moving forward?*
- *What's your gut feeling on this – what are the real issues?*
- *What could you do to move things forward?*
- *What support to you feel you need right now?*

Building social capital

During this phase supporting the person to build his/her network will help the person develop a career vision and career identity.

1. It lets others know that the person is job searching
2. It helps the person make connections with people who work in their chosen career area
3. It builds career identity and career knowledge
4. It can inform the person about relevant seminars, career fairs, training sessions
5. It can help the person gain work experience
6. It provides access to volunteering opportunities relevant to the chosen career area

Using your network effectively e.g. by compiling a list of family, friends and work contacts who might be able to help and by planning what to say to them can give the person confidence and ownership.

The duration of this phase can vary depending on how well developed the person's career is, the labour market (the level of local / regional demand), the challenges identified and their persistence etc. Thus, the benefit of this tailored approach to each individual is essential in meeting their specific career and employment needs.

At the end of stage 5:

- ✓ The person will have set career goals
- ✓ The person's self-determination and self-esteem will be enhanced
- ✓ The person will feel an improved sense of hopefulness and confidence in their ability to achieve their career goals (agency/goal setting)

Here are some examples of tools and resources that may assist or support you in working through Stage 5 with people accessing the service



Core Values: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/core-values>





My Priorities worksheet/ Grid from 'What Colour is your Parachute' by Richard Bolles.

| My Priorities | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Material /rewards | Power /influence | Personal achievement/ fulfilment |
| Job interest | Recognition | Innovation/creativity |
| Satisfying relationships | Autonomy | Security |
| Status | Location | Family |
| Health | Learning / development | Hobbies/ social life |

Figure 4.7

Consider what your priorities in life are



Stressful situations worksheet from Moving On pg. 68 (Threats, Change, Demands, Relationship challenges) (see Appendix 5)

How does stress make you feel physically and mentally?



Setting goals: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/setting-goals-to-improve-your-career>

- Be positive: *use positive language to express what you want*
- Be precise: *set dates, times, and amounts. This will help you know when you have achieved your goals*
- Prioritise: *which goal should you focus on first? Setting too many goals can make you feel overwhelmed*
- Write down your goals: *so they are clear and can be visualised*
- Break into small, achievable tasks: *this will give you a sense of achievement, help you recognise progress and reduce feelings of being overwhelmed*
- Set SMART goals: *achievable and within your control*



Managing Time: Think about your day, how do you manage your time? What will change when you start a new job? What do you need to consider?



CV and talking about myself

- Draft CV
- Telling your story
- What words can you use to describe yourself, your strengths and limitations, your ambitions and talents? Can you describe some of the activities and exercises you have used in this employment guidance process to help you put words on these aspects of your life?



Looking at the labour market

https://careersportal.ie/work_employment/labourmarket.php

https://careersportal.ie/careers/index.php?jobs_in_demand=1&default=1&parent=40&ed_sub_cat_id=298&menu_parent_id=

<https://ie.indeed.com/High-Demand-jobs-in-Dublin> (Search all counties)

<https://www.irishjobs.ie/careeradvice/ireland-job-market/>





4

Stage 6 Ongoing support and follow-up



SUGGESTED
NUMBER OF
MEETINGS:
ONGOING

During this final stage the practitioner and the person work together on an ongoing basis until the person feels he/she has the resources and skills to manage their own careers. As many services utilising this guidance toolkit will be community based the ongoing connection with the community is core to their ethos. These services generally offer impartial, non-judgemental and unbiased supports which aim to assist individuals make changes in their lives.

For many people getting a job will bring an end their connection with the service. For others, they may like to keep the connection while they enter the early stages of employment. Some may wish to return for further employment or career advice as their job changes or develops or if they experience further periods of unemployment. Knowing that the service is there in the background can be reassuring for some.

Practitioners may agree to keep in touch with people who have accessed the service via email, phone contact, or by appointment in the early stages of employment, to review progress, offer reassurance, advise on upskilling or next steps.

Some questions which may help with this stage of the process...

- *How is your career plan going, how is it progressing?*
- *Is there anything I can help with?*
- *Is there anything you would like to review or discuss?*



Services can often show their ongoing support by promoting what they do through local campaigns and news updates... The door is always open...