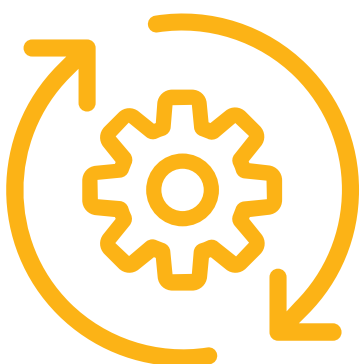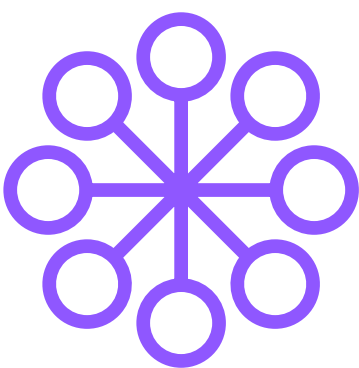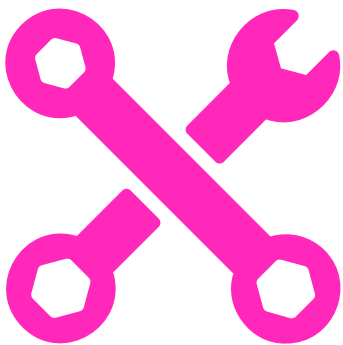# MEEG

Model of Enabling
Employment Guidance

Practitioner Toolkit

MEEG
Model of Enabling Employment Guidance

Practitioner Toolkit

Table of Contents

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Acknowledgements

Section 1

Introduction

1.1
Purpose of the practitioner toolkit

This toolkit was developed by the ACA PES[1] project as a response to limited detailing of employment guidance, and its implementation and practice in community based employment services.
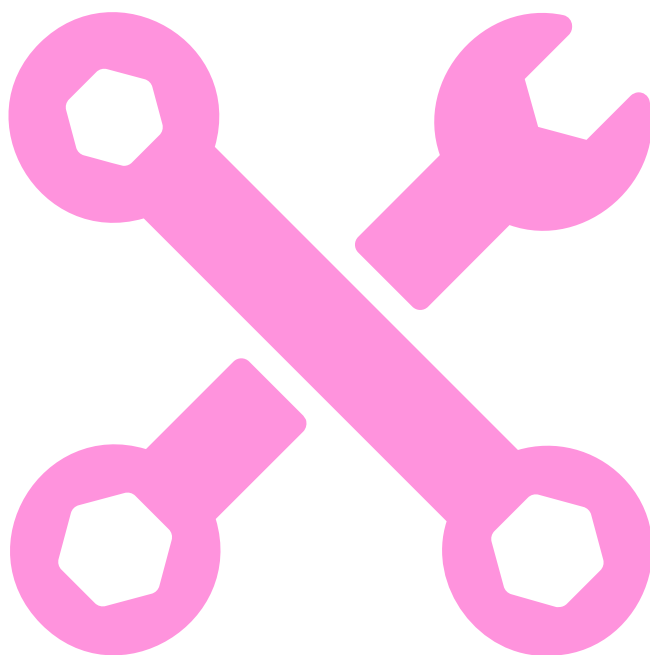
While there are existing models, most notably the Local Employment Service (LES) specialist occupational guidance model, developed in the mid-1990s, there is now a need to update and renew this and similar employment guidance models and ensure their relevance for the contemporary labour market.

The toolkit is aimed at practitioners and organisations delivering employment guidance services to people experiencing unemployment, including those who are first time job seekers, part-time workers, long term unemployed (LTU) or who find themselves at career transition-points between education/training and work, or between jobs.

The toolkit provides a set of guidelines and options to support those delivering and implementing services appropriate for a range of job seekers, job changers and in particular those more distant from the labour market.

The toolkit content has been informed primarily by best practice demonstrated by practitioners working in the LES, through the ACA PES project and other research (e.g. Whelan, 2018) and by international best practice models and academic studies, some of which will be referred to throughout the pages which follow.

1.2
Who is it for?

Many organisations are involved in delivering employment supports, for some it is their core function, for others it supplements their main activity which may include, for example, education and training, health, or housing.

Organisations delivering these services include public, private and not-for-profit organisations, who often deliver various employment assistance programmes to different cohorts of the unemployed based on certain criteria e.g. duration of unemployment. In the formal Public Employment Services (PES), the level of service available to individuals seeking employment support is often based on profiling systems which direct people into distinct types of services, with rules about compliance and participation which are often connected to welfare payments.

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[1] ACAPES is based at Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute
    https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/social-sciences-institute/research/ACAPES

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Employment related guidance, as a specific service, can seem fragmented at local and national levels with little cohesion with regard to models of delivery, service outcomes, continuous professional development of practitioners, or collaboration between services. Services working in this space include the LES, Intreo, Job Path, Employability, community organisations, youth services, adult education, private career coaches and more specialised services including addiction, homelessness, and social services.

This toolkit is aimed at practitioners working in public (e.g. Intreo) or community based employment guidance (e.g. LES, and Employability) or private sector (e.g. Job Path) who deliver employment guidance within the broader context of active labour market policy, but may also be of use to services on the periphery of more formalised PES.

This toolkit focuses specifically on the daily practice of employment guidance within these services rather than on the wider employment supports offered (e.g. activation, job seeking support, job matching, job placement). It encourages organisations to reflect on the level and type of employment guidance offered, and to consider how public, and other employment services can support and enable people seeking employment to access sustainable and decent jobs.

The toolkit aims to support and develop a professionally-led employment guidance service, that understands

- the route from unemployment to employment

- the supports required during career transitions, and across the life cycle

- the approaches to career planning that enable people to achieve their potential

1.3
Layout and how to use it?

The toolkit is designed in a way that allows practitioners to quickly access sections relevant to their daily practice.

Following this brief introduction, **Section 2** aims to define employment guidance within the context of lifelong guidance, distinguishing it from other forms of guidance, for example education guidance or school guidance.

Section 3 presents the theory of an enhanced model of employment guidance based on a work-life conceptualisation of employability.

Section 4 details the six stages of the Work-Life Model of Enabling Employment Guidance - The MEEG. It focuses on delivery and therefore we expect that this section will be most useful to practitioners in their daily practice and can be used with the complimentary practice poster.

Section 5 outlines important aspects of implementation recognising the importance of practitioners, resources, leadership and community.

Section 6 provides a framework for understanding outcomes and a measurement tool to assist organisations, practitioners and individuals assess distance travelled towards chosen careers, and progress in implementing career plans.
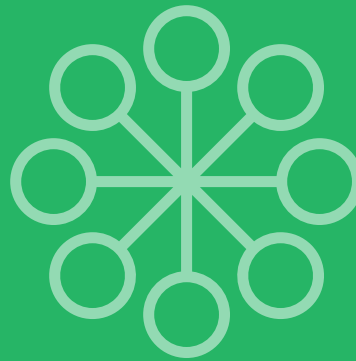
What is Employment Guidance?

2.1
Career guidance or employment guidance?

Practitioners generally use the term guidance to describe what they do. Terminology and definitions within guidance can be confusing as terms like lifelong guidance, career guidance, guidance, vocational guidance and employment guidance (amongst others) are often used interchangeably.

In this toolkit we have used definitions agreed by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) and the National Guidance Forum. We include these key definitions below but draw your attention to the wide range of definitions which can be found in the ELGPN glossary http://www.elgpn.eu/ publications/elgpn-tools-no2-glossary

Guidance is an umbrella term that encompasses counselling (active listening) as well as activities such as informing, coaching, teaching, assessment and advocacy (ELGPN).

Both the terms **Lifelong Guidance** and **Career Guidance** are defined as:

> *'A range of activities that enable citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used.'*
> *(ELGPN)*

Lifelong Guidance or Career Guidance is a continuous process that involves a range of activities - both individual and collective including[2]:

• information-provision
• counselling
• competence assessment
• support
• decision-making
• fostering career management skills

Lifelong guidance is considered an approach rather than a one-off or single point in time activity. The lifelong guidance approach promotes proactive delivery, accessibility throughout life and a lifelong perspective. It is also life-wide, accessible in formal, non-formal or informal settings across all sectors (education, initial training, employment and continuing training) and at any stage.

[2] European Council (2008) Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies

Career Guidance in schools	Transitions in Education	Transitions from education to work	Transitions, job change, re-entry, further education, re-education and rehabilitation	Late and end of career transitions
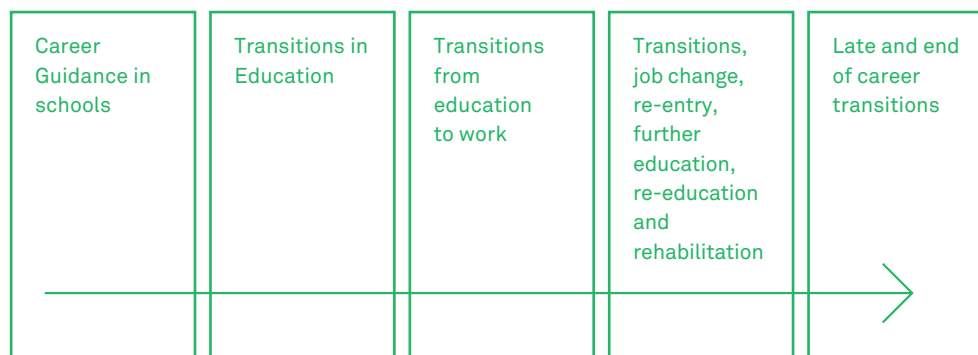
Figure 2.1
Phases of the Career Pathway (Arnkil, Spangar and Vuorinen, 2017b)

In Ireland the National Guidance Forum agreed the following definition of Guidance:

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
(National Guidance Forum, 2007).

Employment guidance

Employment guidance is a specific form of lifelong guidance which aims to build people's employability i.e. the ability to gain and maintain a job in a formal organization (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004), and self-sufficiency in the labour market. Its focus is on paid work, employment and careers.

Employment guidance involves a combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards, transition into, and sustain employment, and to progress during their careers. The employability of individuals depends on:

a)   personal attributes (including adequacy of knowledge and skills)

b)   the way these personal attributes are presented in the labour market

c)   the environmental and social context (incentives and opportunities offered to update and validate their knowledge and skills)

d)   structural issues such as transport, childcare, and the broader social organisation of work (casualisation, working days and times)

e)   the economic context

(ELGPN Glossary)

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Employment guidance is defined as *'Counselling or guidance that addresses one or more of the following domains: career/ occupational decision-making, skill enhancement, job search and employment maintenance. Activities include: assessment, development and implementation of an action plan, follow-up and evaluation.'*

It includes (but is not limited to) a range of activities, for example:

- assessment and development (individual attributes, competences, aspirations, preferences; psychological state; employability; informal and non-formal learning)

- screening and profiling

- career management coaching (Personal Action Plans; managing job changes)

- individual intensive employment counselling

- job brokering and advocacy

- vocational preparation (pinpointing skills/competences and experience for job-seeking)

- individual and group job-search assistance (job-search techniques; applications; CVs; interviews; work tasters)

- information on learning and labour market opportunities

- specialised employment counselling (addressing perceived challenges to re-employment e.g. addiction, homelessness, care, financial problems)

- working with particular groups of disadvantaged job-seekers (e.g. migrants, ex-offenders, ethnic minorities)

- referrals (to specialist services e.g. health, housing, social services).

(Arnkill, Spangar, and Vuorinen, 2017a)

Educational guidance by comparison helps individuals to reflect on personal educational issues and experiences and to make appropriate educational choices (ELGPN, 2015). It differs from employment guidance as its focus is on the individual within an education context. It is often used to describe a broader range of activities which includes advising pupils or students on their educational progress, on career opportunities, or on personal difficulties or anxieties (UNESCO).

In Ireland education and career guidance has generally been provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) at second level, in Further Education and Training (FET) through the Adult Education Guidance Service, and at third

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level through college and university career services. Employment guidance is generally provided by PES and through private recruitment employment agencies.

2.2
Delivering employment guidance

Employment Guidance as defined above refers to the help and support available to people who are job seeking and who wish to make choices about employment and career options. Career is described by Hooley (2017) as 'the passage of the individual through life, learning and work' where individuals utilise their talents and skills to create their own careers within the limitations of the education system and the labour market.

How employment guidance is delivered can vary depending on a range of factors including the practitioner and their approach and training, the organisation providing the service and their culture and funding, the labour market policy in place in the country, the labour market itself and its needs (amongst other factors).

For example, during times of high unemployment, the allocated time allowed for individual employment guidance meetings is often reduced due to high caseloads. Thus, how guidance services are organised and delivered can have a significant impact on their coverage and effectiveness (Cedefop, 2008c[3]).

Practitioners operate within these systems to support the individual to explore their talents, competences, skills and abilities. They focus on the structural issues inhibiting people's employability, like issues around transport, access to care, or secure housing. They create links with local services and employers and often advocate on behalf of the individual to enable access.

[3] Cedefop, 2008c. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4106_en.pdf

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2.3
Employment guidance in Ireland

The design and organisation of publicly funded employment guidance has evolved and changed in Ireland over the last five decades. In the 1960s the Irish PES, whose primary function was mediating supply and demand, and placing and guiding people into employment, was dominated by an enabling concept (IPA, 1968). Job seekers had conditional obligations to seek and accept employment and the policing of such conditions, and application of sanctions, was the function of the welfare system not the PES. The separation of benefits from job search was informed by an early Institute of Public Administration (IPA) report (1969) on the Placement and Guidance service which identified a major defect in the system at that time, being the dominance of the welfare payment function at the expense of the placement or guidance function. The IPA recommended that the placement service be 'entirely divorced' from the benefit paying function (p.33). Thus, from the 1970s, welfare recipients could claim job seeker benefits without being required to undertake upskilling, education and training, or work experience (McGauran, 2013; Whelan, 2018).

In the early 1990's countries around the world began to merge income supports and public employment services in what is known as 'the activation turn'. In Ireland however, a supportive enabling approach in the form of the Local Employment Service Network (LESN) was implemented. Originally designed to support the long term unemployed through the provision of a specialised guidance focused service, the LESN delivered services over a 1-2-year time frame. It aimed to enable the individual to focus on employment related challenges, access additional supports, improve soft and hard employability skills and move closer to the labour market. Its ethos facilitated a friendly, supportive and informal environment where people seeking employment could discuss their personal relationship with the world of work and their specific labour market challenges.

This system of employment guidance remained in place until 2012 when, post the financial crisis, the Irish government adopted a work-first approach replacing the previous separated systems of payments and employment assistance, with a new and narrower 'activation' approach informed by the OECD 'mutual obligations' approach to activation.

As a result, in 2012 the LES under the statutory direction of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) was primarily used to 'soak up' Intreo overflow, and its original conception as a guidance led service for those more distant from the labour market was considerably restricted and diluted.

2.4
Employment guidance in PES

The place of guidance - in its broadest sense - in PES has always been problematic (Sultana & Watts, 2006). Tensions exist between the longer-term focus of career guidance towards sustained employability, and the short-term focus of PES in supporting unemployed individuals into employment as quickly as possible.

Practitioners within PES often have a dual role both to support people in career decision making while also protecting public resources through the monitoring and sanctioning aspects of conditionality (OECD, 2004). Employment guidance practitioners could be considered as belonging to 'human service professions' who manage and deliver services of the welfare state, but who are guided by a 'professional logic' which justifies their focus on social justice and allows them to act for the individual (Brante, 2014). This dual role could potentiality lead to role-conflict which arises when individuals are faced with inconsistent or incompatible demands (Biddle, 1986). Previous research (e.g. Tubre and Collins, 2000) suggests that role conflict should be minimised as it can lead to dissatisfaction, anxiety, lower commitment, and lower performance in the workplace.

Within this context, practitioners provide guidance within an existing policy system. The policy shapes the rules and objectives, the processes and procedures, the targets and metrics. In Ireland, the current labour market policy *Pathways to Work* is implemented through a range of public, private, and not-for-profit organisations. The mechanisms and approaches to service delivery differ within each of these settings with tensions between guidance and active labour market programmes (ALMPS) more pronounced in services that place more emphasis on an employment guidance approach.

Changes to the provision of employment guidance in the Irish PES

Prior to the financial crisis (2008-2009) PES were delivered through a dual stranded employment strategy with FÁS, the national training and employment authority, and the LES, a network of 24 community based employment services managed by local development companies and NGOs. However, as a consequence of the economic crisis, the significant job losses during 2008-2012[4] and significant pressure from the Troika[5], the Irish government

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4 329,000 jobs were lost during the period 2008-2012
5 The International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the European Central Bank referred to as the Troika

committed not only to the implementation of activation, but to reform of the institutions responsible for its delivery. In addition, internal corporate governance failures within FÁS, and a loss of public confidence in the organisation (Martin, 2015), led to its disbandment in 2011, and organisations which had previously been responsible for welfare payments, and PES, were subsequently amalgamated. The employment services function of FÁS along with the Community Welfare Services of the Health Service Executive (HSE) were subsumed into the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and a new public employment service *Intreo* – a 'one-stop-shop' or single point of contact for all job seekers - was established in 2013.

Roll-out of the *Intreo* service involved the establishment of 61 *Intreo* offices nationwide during 2013-2016 and the provision, not only of income support, but also assistance for job seekers in both preparing for and accessing employment. The vocational training function of FÁS moved to a new national agency called SOLAS, and to the new regional Education and Training Boards.

Since 2011 the LESs have been contracted directly by the DEASP on an annual basis to provide employment assistance, and since 2016, performance has been measured exclusively in terms of job placement (Indecon, 2019). Since 2015 the LESs role in the provision of labour market policy has changed numerous times and now appears as a service contracted to deliver a work-first approach, albeit within a less pressured context, due to its current grant funding model. There are currently 24 LESs, twenty-one are based in Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) across the country, and three are situated in NGOs. While not every area is covered by an LES, the LCDCs through their range of services and flexible and adaptive approach can provide pre-employment related services more widely.

Figure 2.2
Timeline of changes in LMP and Governance 1987–2021

1987–2011
FÁS

1996
Local Employment
Service Network
(LESN)

1998
EU NEAP
requiring
activation

2008
Crisis levels of
unemployment -
capacity levels

2009
OECD FÁS
evaluation

2011
Pathways to Work
2011– 2016

2011
FÁS Corporate
Governance scandal
and closure

2013 – 2016
Intreo Offices
established

2015
JobPath

2016
Pathways to
Work 2016–2020

2020
Crisis
Unemployment
(Covid–19) &
Pathways to Work
2020–2024?

2

2

Across the LES organisations staff maintain their commitment to the LES network ethos and continue within the constraints of a work-first model to deliver employment guidance. Staff include mediators, guidance practitioners, key workers, and case officers from varying backgrounds, disciplines and experiences. This multidisciplinary workforce ideally brings a variety skills and approaches to the practice of employment guidance. The objective is a model that can be personalised to meet individual needs rather than a prescribed model with little flexibility. This adaptable approach enables the provision of tailored supports where the practitioner is a conductor, a co-creator, an enabler, identifying approaches and methods suited to individual needs, connecting individuals to resources, and re-connecting them with their working lives.

In addition to the services provided by Intreo and the LES, the DEASP in 2015 procured a Payment-by-Results programme called JobPath to provide specialist services to the LTU. This nationwide programme commenced in July 2015 and is delivered by two organisations, Seetec and Turas Nua, who provide services in two divisions of the country. They are tasked with progressing the LTU into secure and sustainable employment achieved through one-to-one, intensive and regular engagement with a personal adviser, who assess skills, experience, challenges and work goals and assists them in finding full-time sustainable employment.

2.5
Who uses employment guidance services?

Employment guidance services are generally aimed at the unemployed, and others who depend on social welfare payments including some lone parents and people with disabilities, some of whom will have experienced short periods of unemployment, others will have longer unemployment spells, some individuals will be underemployed or job changers. Employment guidance uses a life-long approach, supporting young adults through to older workers, and is life-wide, acknowledging challenges across society such as care, early school leaving, addiction, housing, low skills, mental health etc.

Guidance for all is an important tenet of this model implying that differing levels of service should be available depending on individual need.

It assumes that an appropriate triage assessment, which includes the use of a profiling form or system, will be conducted by a skilled practitioner who will then recommend referral to an appropriate practitioner.

Approaches to profiling can be distinguished by whether they are *rule-based, caseworker-based,* or *statistically based*.

- **Rule-based** approaches rely on administrative eligibility criteria, such as age, benefit category, educational level, and/or unemployment duration. These approaches classify jobseekers into client groups for service targeting. Practitioners have little discretion or leeway for decision-making in tailoring support to individual client needs.

- **Caseworker-based** profiling, prioritises the professional judgement of practitioners when assessing client-needs (and is often supported by quantitative and/or qualitative tools to assist decision-making).

- **Statistical** models are increasingly being used to profile clients based on their estimated labour market disadvantage and predicted risk of experiencing long-term unemployment. For example, Ireland's PEX (Probability of Exit) profiling model, can be used 'to automatically classify jobseekers' in ways that override the professional judgement of caseworkers (Desiere, Langenbucher & Struyven, 2019).

2.6
Employment guidance provision

To date much of the career guidance available to adults has been provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) through the Adult Education Guidance Service. More widely guidance is provided at second level, Further Education and Training (FET) and at Third level and as such has been predominately DES led. Career guidance within this context is a well-developed profession with clear guidelines, standards, qualification requirements and provision at degree and post graduate levels.

Compared to education guidance, employment guidance lacks cohesion, is poorly defined and understood, and has been less developed through the public employment services where it is arguably an essential aspect of employment support. During the 1990s and 2000s FÁS employment officers and LES mediators participated in bespoke programmes delivered by Maynooth University[6],[7]. In more recent times the National College of Ireland and DEASP

[6] CERTIFICATE IN ADULT GUIDANCE THEORY AND PRACTICE | Maynooth University
[7] POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN ADULT GUIDANCE COUNSELLING | Maynooth University

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collaborated on the design of a range of professional programmes for Intreo and DEASP staff including case officers although these are only available to DEASP staff.

2.7
A community based model of employment guidance

Good practice in community based employment services incorporates activities which positively promote co-produced services (to some extent) with people experiencing complex challenges (rather than just skill deficits/lack of career clarity) and using therapeutic approaches (e.g. as simple as a friendly welcome, caring and listening) to positively impact a person's journey towards the labour market. These principles of high support and holistic employment focused guidance, directed towards the development of a career plan, aim to strengthen the human (skills and knowledge), social (connection with others) and psychological (hope, optimism, resilience and efficacy) capital required to implement this plan.

It recognises that employment guidance ought to be impartial and promote the best interests of the individual.

> **IMPARTIAL GUIDANCE means that the guidance offered is in the best interests of the person and does not favour any particular option. Guidance delivery should be transparent, neutral and should not inadvertently or openly promote particular options or fail to refer to alternative options.**

Current practice in employment guidance, for example some aspects of the LES approach, focuses on individual factors, personal circumstances and external factors. It generally consists of a process which aims to support the person in developing the skills necessary for labour market access and for sustaining decent work. It also focuses on building self-efficacy and self-esteem, and improving psychological well-being.
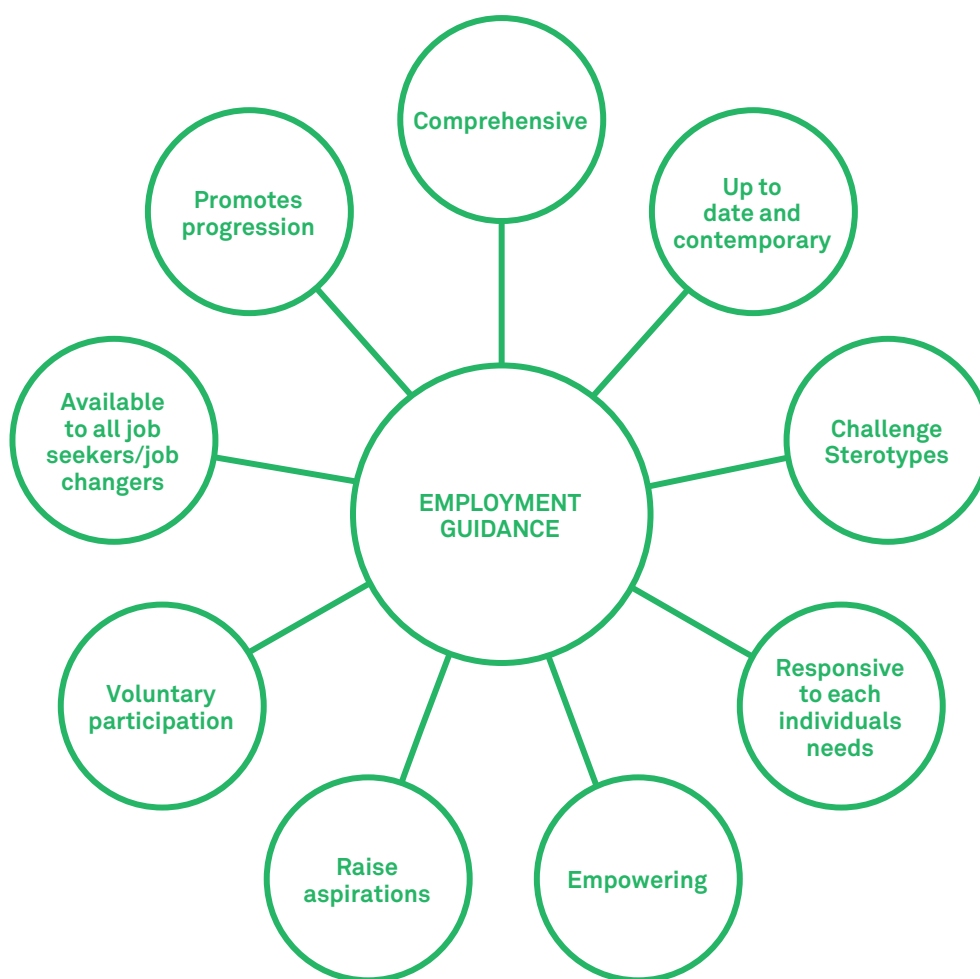
Figure 2.3
The focus of current practice in the LES (based on feedback from employment guidance staff June-Oct 2019)

2.8
Quality in employment guidance

While it is important that people have access to employment guidance, the quality of that guidance and its processes (the mechanisms, approach, tools and interventions) is also important. However, the intangible nature of guidance makes it difficult to measure its quality (Borsch, 1995) and we often use indicators such as job placement and customer satisfaction as markers.

2

Guidance has multiple personal, social, economic and work-related benefits (OECD, 2004). At an individual level guidance helps people recognise their own strengths and build on them; it helps to focus on the future; it envisages a desirable but attainable lifestyle and identity; it supports people work out what is important to them; it helps to set achievable goals (Robertson, 2019). For people who are unemployed, approaches which also promote well-being and which lead to sustainable and fulfilling work can help ameliorate the negative mental health effects of unemployment (Redekopp & Huston, 2019; Robertson, 2019). Similarly, for people with specific needs or circumstances e.g. disabilities, health, housing, care, which often impact career choice, the person-centred nature of employment guidance can ensure access to flexible yet fulfilling work.

These benefits are enabled through a process of understanding capabilities, strengthening motivation, and implementing career plans and are enhanced by employment guidance practitioner's supportive approaches. The process aims to support people to manage their return to the labour market and access decent and sustainable work. The quality of the employment guidance process has been found to be an important determinant of successful reemployment outcomes (Behrendt, Göritz & Heuer, 2019; Meyer, 1995). Interestingly, meta-analytic studies have found that intensity (i.e. the number and duration of the sessions) of the intervention is unrelated to its outcome and that the quality of the process is key (Liu et al., 2014). This is important when we consider the shift in recent years towards more administrative processes within PES and the limited focus on the design and quality of employment guidance services.

This toolkit aims to provide a starting point for a collaborative dialogue on what we mean by quality approaches, how we can achieve consistency in the way that employment guidance is delivered, and how we can provide opportunities for continuous improvement. This means both specifying the employment guidance process and envisioning the kinds of organisations that would be capable of creating and delivering these services (Hooley & Rice, 2019).

A useful typology proposed by Hooley & Rice (2019) to distinguish approaches to assuring quality in career guidance could form the basis for local and national conversations on quality assured employment guidance.

The typology includes four types of approaches to quality assurance:

(1) REGULATORY approaches which focus on legal requirements imposed on providers as a way of improving quality, for example, standards for compliance and inspections

(2) ADVISORY approaches which describe what quality looks like, for example best practice guidelines and benchmarking resources

(3) ORGANIC approaches which regard quality as being defined locally (and often co-produced) by providers and professionals, for example quality circles and peer mentoring

(4) COMPETITIVE approaches which focus on customer responses and feedback, and are often linked to funding arrangements such as payment by results systems.

Of course there are pros and cons to using the various approaches, however they provide a useful conceptualisation to enable greater understanding of quality and to support all stakeholders as they strive for continuous improvement in processes.
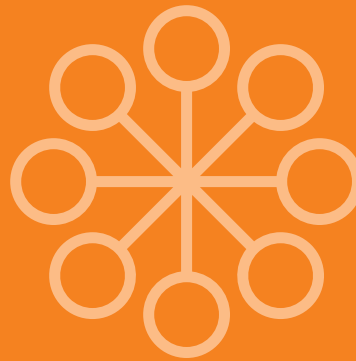
A capability-led work-life inspired employment guidance model

3.1
Employment guidance and labour market policy

In this section we use an employability continuum to explain the various labour market policy options available to governments and PES (see Figure 3.1). We position the dominant Work-First model at one end and the Life-First capability informed model at the other. Between these models are the Human Capital Development and the Work-Life Balance models.

Figure 3.1.

An employability continuum (Whelan, Murphy, and McGann, 2021: own elaboration based on examples and theoretical developments in Dean, 2003; Dean et al., 2005; Lindsay et al., 2007; McQuaid, & Lindsay, 2005; Peck and Theodore, 2000; Lindsay, 2016; Bussi, 2014)

DIMENSIONS

WORK–FIRST ACTIVATION

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

FLOURISHING WORK–LIFE BALANCE

LIFE–FIRST (CAPABILITY, WELL–BEING)

EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE

- Rationale for employability programmes
- Program targets
- Intervention model
- Relationship to labour market
- Relationship with individuals (engagement)
- Locus of control
- Conceptualisation of the individual
- Institutions involved
- Time
- Employability type
- 'Missing middle' implementation
- Role and extent of employment guidance

WORK–FIRST

PES employment guidance as a subset of lifelong guidance. Labour market focused, prioritising short-term outcomes related to rapid employment attachment. Limited and short-term, still adheres to monitoring and sanctions. Focus is on job-matching (some use of person -environment fit)

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Limited to those who need it, time-bound, monitored, driven by an understanding of the self (person - environment fit). Medium-term outcomes including the development of employability and career management skills, and those education or training outcomes which lead to employment

WORK–LIFE

Available to all, goes hand in hand with good triage and needs assessment, driven by an understanding of the self and an understanding of context (narrative and developmental). PES guidance focuses on longer-term outcomes including the development of employability and career management skills, leading to sustainable employability across the lifecycle

LIFE–FIRST

Widespread availability, recognises intersectionality, driven by an understanding of the self, an understanding of context, and a belief in transforming contexts (life design/ psychology of working). PES guidance focuses on enabling career management and making educational, training and occupational choices that are right for the individual. It helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications, skills and talents

TYPE OF EMPLOYABILITY

MARKET/FUNCTIONAL EMPLOYABILITY

FOSTERING EMPLOYABILITY

ENABLING EMPLOYABILITY

EMPOWERING EMPLOYABILITY

3

Each of these employability models has been defined in terms of a number of dimensions (*Dean, 2003; Dean et al., 2005; Lindsay et al., 2007; Peck and Theodore, 2000; Lindsay, 2016; Bussi, 2014; Whelan, Murphy, and McGann, 2021*) related to activation and labour market policy, from for example, the rationale for the programme to the ensuing type of employability. Our approach in this toolkit aims to conceptually expand the notion of employability to include the role of employment guidance and to illustrate that the extent and delivery of employment guidance is determined by the labour market policy in place at that time.

For example, in Ireland, the predominant model in recent years has used a **Work-First approach**, characterised by intensive job search, which in its most basic form aims to move people from welfare into unsubsidised jobs in the shortest time possible. This quick return to the labour market proposes that any job is better than no job (Mead, 2003). It uses short education, training and work experience to overcome barriers to employment while also monitoring job seekers levels of activity and compliance, and uses sanctions rather than trust, 'or carrots and sticks' as a way to motivate the unemployed (Sol & Hoogtanders, 2005).

This approach aims to avoid prolonged unemployment, particularly for the young, which can cause long-lasting 'scars' on future earnings, employment prospects and health and well-being. Critiques of Work-First models (Lindsay, 2010) link it with a low paid supply side policy direction, increasing pressure on the unemployed to access the labour market as soon as possible. Others have applauded its ability to keep people connected to the labour market but highlight the need for quality support and the availability of decent work. For those who require further support in terms of skill development, and overcoming barriers to employment, this model has been found to be less effective (Card, Kluve & Weber, 2015; Martin, 2015; Whelan et al., 2021).

It is limited in its employment guidance provision as its focus is on job matching or functional employability, leaving little reason or time for career exploration. It is responsive to the needs of employers rather than the career ambitions of the individual.

The **Human Capital Development model** aims to facilitate skill and competence development, thereby improving sustainable access to the labour market, long-term employability and in-work transitions. It requires well-funded education and training and recognises the importance of integrated services (e.g. links to health providers, care sector) to address work related barriers. It also has a social inclusion function as it assists those marginalised from the labour market into employment and society. This model fosters employability through guidance into active labour market programmes or education and training for those who need it (rather than being accessible to all). Employment guidance in this context focuses on person-environment fit and promotes upskilling and career reorientations (e.g. reskilling manual and semi-skilled older workers) to meet the needs of the labour market.

3

The Work-Life Balance model, informed by the capability approaches of Sen and Nussbaum, recognises the need to work as an essential need within an individual's life, but only insofar as it is capability and well-being enhancing. It sees participation in meaningful work as important for well-being for most people but prioritises well-being over employment. It aims to empower individuals to develop capabilities while also allowing them freedom to choose. This means having the freedom to refuse participation in, for example, activation programmes. It encourages co-design of appropriate interventions and services. It aims to improve long-term individual employability and achieve sustainable labour market access for all, promoting well-being and quality of life. It sees the individual within a life context and uses holistic and tailored individual coaching to attend to people's work needs, life balance and (career) aspirations, promoting life-long learning and career development (Murphy et al., 2020). Employment guidance within this model is available to all. It aims to enable employability through narrative and developmental guidance approaches to self-reflection and strengths identification, and sees the process as well-being enhancing in itself.

The Life-First approach is holistic, prioritising the life needs of individuals above an obligation to work. It promotes the right to work, rather than the opportunity or obligation to work, and emphasises human capabilities and well-being as ways to realise this right. It acknowledges the time and space required to realise potential and to resolve life problems as they arise. The life needs of people who face multiple challenges, who may be vulnerable and marginalised in the labour market and in society are balanced with the need to work. Viewed from this perspective, employment guidance empowers people to make life choices some of which may relate to employment on the open labour market. It is informed by Savickas' narrative life design paradigm where 'people use stories to organize their lives, construct their identities, and make sense of their problems' (2015, p.9). Importantly this model promotes adequate time and benefits to support people 'without actively promoting employment as the best choice for individuals' (Laruffa, 2020, p. 6).

3.2
Delivering a work-life employment guidance model

While this toolkit attempts to move towards a life-first approach it is anchored in the more pragmatic work-life employment guidance model.

The rationale for using this type of approach is to improve people's long-term employability in decent work. This means achieving sustainable, meaningful, long-term labour market access for all people, and building a resilient labour force that promotes well-being and quality of life for all workers.

Its aims to develop short-term goals towards longer term career plans which build upon strengths and choice and which enable both life and work choices.

The person is considered within the context of their life (not only as a job seeker), often with multiple roles, talents, interests, agency, capabilities and needs.

The type of intervention used to achieve these aims includes holistic tailored support, co-production of services and interventions, the use of robust triage and needs identification.
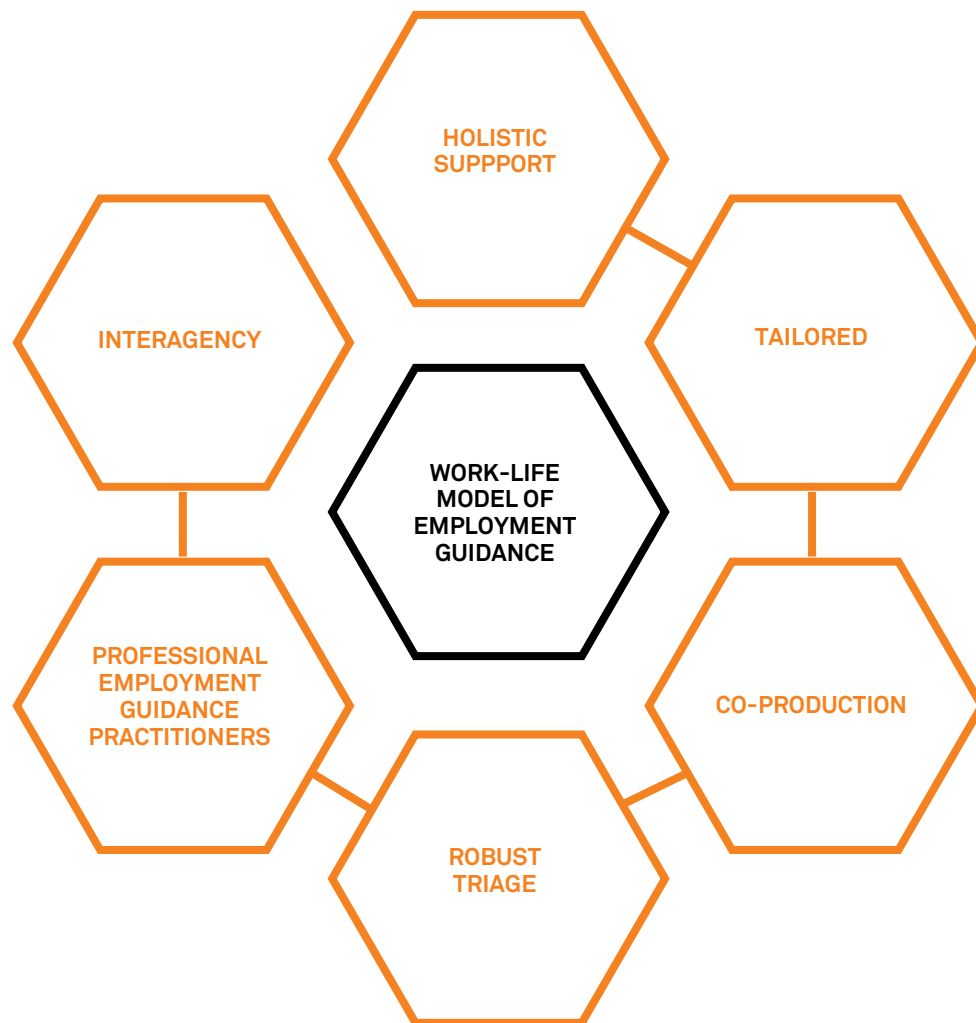
Figure 3.2
Elements of a work-life model of employment guidance

Services are delivered by skilled employment guidance practitioners who use coaching approaches and have access to a range of interventions and supports. They operate in an interagency way and draw on local supports, while also providing supports to other organisations and their clients. Practitioners attend to peoples work needs, their life balance and career and life aspirations.

Using this approach, services promote upskilling so as to enable access to a wider range of opportunities, therefore increasing choice and adaptability within the labour market for people who are job seeking. To achieve this, practitioners encourage life-long learning and career development, and in-work transitions.

Employment guidance within this context starts with an exploration of the individual's relationship with the world of work. Methods, including the use of tools such as mind maps, narrative inquiry and psychometrics, are used to uncover strengths, interests, dreams and aspirations and to support self-awareness and reflection leading to decision making. The practitioner's role is to support the individual in their self-exploration, while also researching and providing career information relating to jobs, the future world of work, career paths, levels of pay etc. So while one aspect relates to understanding the self and the work-life relationship, the other part of the process relates to resource/information investigation and research, and information provision. This process requires commitment by both the individual and practitioner so that well-informed career decisions can be made.

The benefits of this type of holistic service can be maximised through voluntary participation and co-production.

3.3
Co-production and co-creation

Co-production is defined here as the process by which job seekers 'produce and shape their own services' (Lindsay et al., 2018c, pg. 39) in collaboration with their guidance practitioner. It uses 'active dialogue' and 'engagement' between service users and services (Burns, 2013, pg.31). It recognises individual strengths, talents and aspirations but also unique needs and promotes tailored services to support individuals meeting those needs.

These principles of co-production expand beyond the individual – practitioner relationship enabling the possibility to create new partnerships or interagency working to support other needs that the employment service may not have the capacity to meet. These include training and education, health including mental health, disability, addiction, housing, social care, criminal justice and other specific needs.

3

Services of this nature are driven by principles of quality, empowerment, and collective engagement. They are underpinned by a recognition that people are untapped sources of expertise in their own lives, and affords them equal voice in decision-making. They require an environment where mechanisms of co-management and co-governance at an inter-organisational level facilitate inter-agency collaboration. This type of approach is built upon trust, relationships and an ethic of care. It is delivered sensitively and skilfully. It requires time, a non-threatening and informal environment, and a commitment to collaboration and shared responsibility.

It acknowledges the barriers which hinder agency and choice, and supports and empowers the individual to recognise and manage these barriers.

It is available to all job seekers and job changers. Its success requires good triage and needs assessment at the outset, ensuring as far as possible that compatible individual and practitioner relationships are enabled. This requires services to be substantively personalised, person-centred and reflective, with skilled and knowledgeable triage staff rather than seeing triage merely as an administrative process.
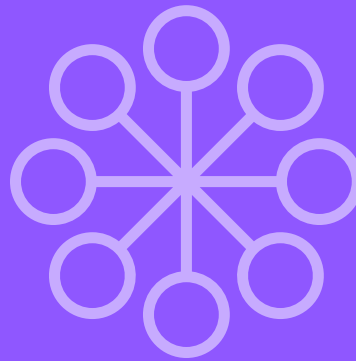
Section 4

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.
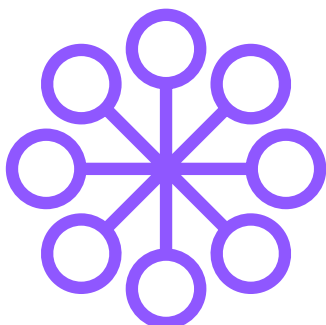
Stage 1
Welcome and
information

**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.

4

> **"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

✓ 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

4

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.

Ongoing support/follow-up

Welcome and Information

Initial personalised assessment and identification of individual need

Career exploration

Career Decision Making

Career planning and implementation
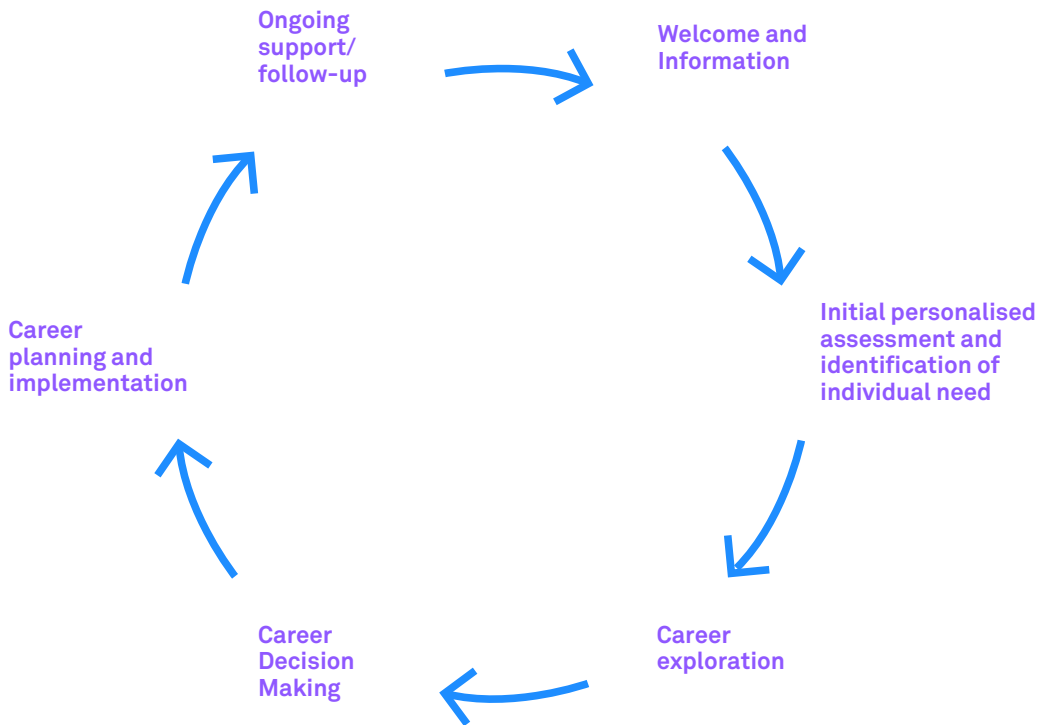
Figure 4.1
An enabling employment guidance process

'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.'

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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.'

'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

SUGGESTED NUMBER OF MEETINGS: 1 – 2
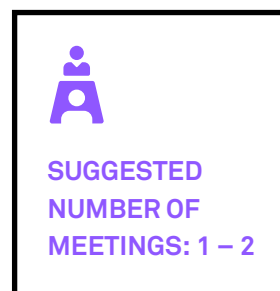
This stage focuses on the individual and their life to date. It helps the person reflect on themselves and their experiences while also providing the practitioner with a good overview of the person's individual history. It also facilitates the identification of issues and challenges which may seem insurmountable 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

4

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

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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….?*

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

4

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.

4

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

4

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

2012
Finished school

2014
Unemployed

2016
New job

2018
Family

2013
First job

2015
Training course

2017
Unemployed (Health)

2021
I'm here
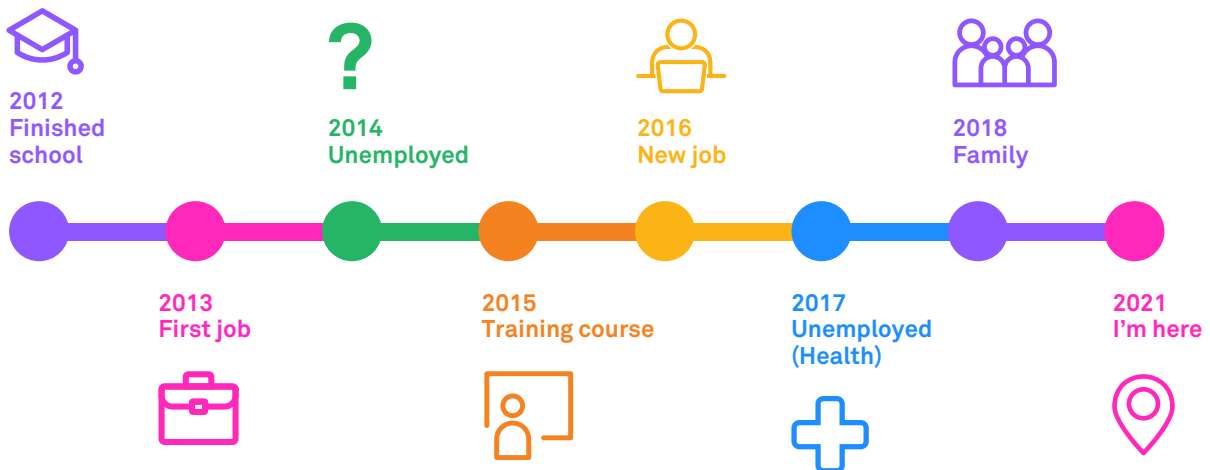
Stage 3
Career exploration

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

4

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:

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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?*

4

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

4

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
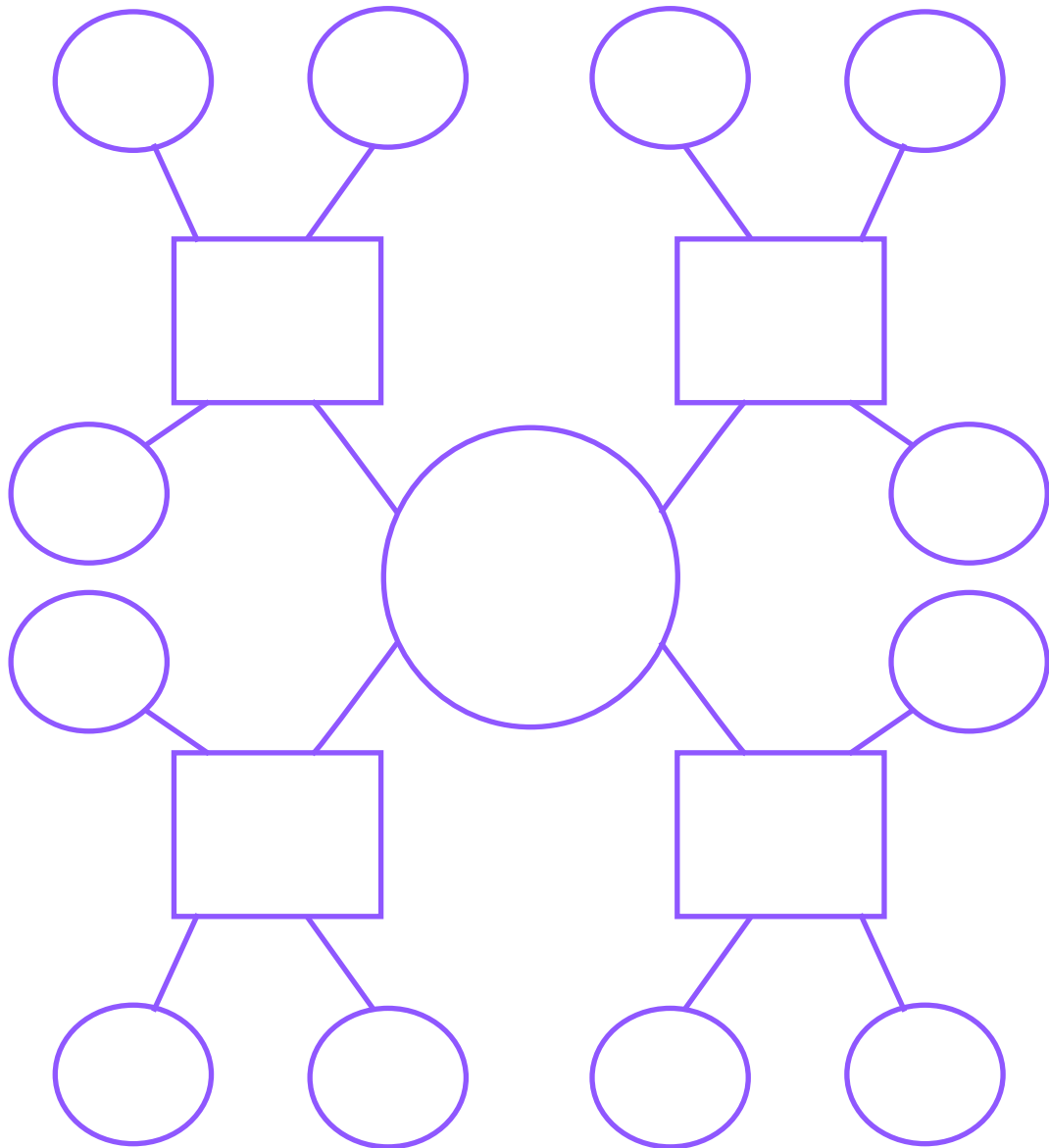
Figure 4.4
Mind map template

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:

4

Strengths

Think about the skills and experience you have that are applicable to your career choice.

- 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

Weaknesses

Think about the skills and experience the career or job requires that you may not have.

- 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?

Opportunities

Think about the opportunities that may be there for you:

- 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?

Threats

Think about the disadvantages, the obstacles and the risks.

- 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

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)

4

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 combing 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

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

- **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									

4

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

4

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.

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

4

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: s*et 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*

4

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/

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…
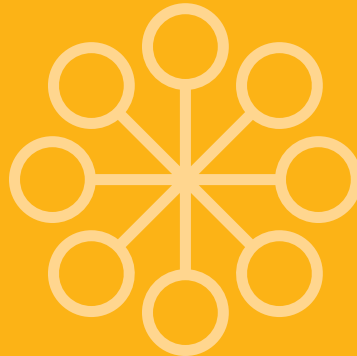
Section 5

Implementation and environment

This section outlines some important considerations for practitioners and service managers when implementing an employment guidance service.
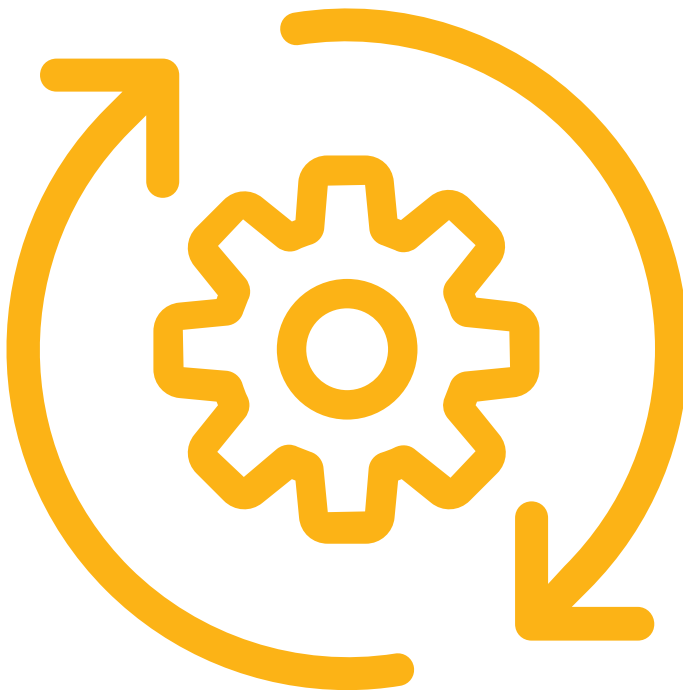
Employment guidance generally involves a one-to-one interaction between a person using the service and an employment guidance practitioner, who work together to explore options and decide on the actions required to progress these options. The process aims to empower individuals to utilise their resources to make employment related life decisions and to manage their own careers.

While it is predominately delivered through one-to-one meetings, in some instances group sessions such as career information sessions or sessions delivered as part of pre-employment or Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes are common. It is a multi-channel activity with multiple roles and approaches to access.

Community based employment services often have low threshold entry points i.e. the individual does not need to be 'job ready' or meet specified employability criteria to access services, as may be the case in a private recruitment agency. These services allow walk-ins, are person oriented and person centred.

In some cases, service users are involved in the design of the service, others offer career 'crafting' where the individual creates their own unique way to relate to work. The co-creation approach is mostly 'strengths-based' using principles of positive psychology and coaching in its delivery. It includes people as equal partners with equal voice and say over the design of their employability plans.

5.1
Principles of employment guidance service delivery

The ELGPN outlined ten key principles to support the development of career guidance systems (Hooley, 2017), all of which could equally be applied to the development of employment guidance systems:

1. Lifelong and Progressive

2. Connected to wider experience

3. Recognises the diversity of individuals and their needs

4. Involves employers and working people, and provides active experiences of workplaces

5. Not one intervention but many

6. Develops career management skills

7. Holistic and well-integrated into other services

8. Ensures professionalism

9. Makes use of career information

10. Assures quality and evaluates provision and impact

5.2
Practitioner skills

Practitioners working in employment guidance come from a range of backgrounds and disciplines. We focus here on outlining skillsets and core competences rather than recommending specific training or qualifications.

Practitioner core competencies

Core competences refer to the skills, knowledge and attitudes common to all career development practitioners, regardless of their employment setting[8]. The following core competencies were adapted from The **Canadian Standards & Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners** used extensively in Canada in shaping professional practice. They have been recognised by the OECD and underpin the competency framework established by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG).

- People working in an employment guidance capacity should demonstrate certain **attitudes**. They need to be:
  - *insightful*
  - *honest*
  - *open-minded*
  - *results-oriented*

- People working in employment guidance need to have certain **skills**. They need to:
  - docum*ent interactions and progress with people who are job seeking*
  - *accommodate diversity*
  - *collect, analyse and use information*
  - *convey infor*mation clearly when speaking and writing

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[8] https://career-dev-guidelines.org/the-standards-guidelines/core-competencies/

- People working in employment guidance need to have certain **knowledge**. They need to know:
  - career de*velopment models and theories*
  - *the change process, transition stages, and career cycles*
  - *components of the career planning process*
  - *the major organisations and resources for employment guidance and career develop*ment

- People working in employment guidance need to be guided by a **code of ethical behaviour**.

Employment guidance competencies

The National Forum on Guidance (2007) devised a Competency Framework[9] for Guidance Practitioners for the Irish context and grouped competencies into five main areas – these have been adapted below for employment guidance. For a further expansion of these competencies see Appendix 2.

These competencies may vary depending on the nature of the specific service or the wider organisation within which the employment guidance services are offered. In some services practitioners may demonstrate all competencies whereas in other services these competencies may be spread out across the wider staff.

1. Theory and practice of vocational, employment and personal/social guidance throughout the lifespan

2. Labour market education and training

3. Coaching (see Appendix 1 for brief outline of coaching approaches)

4. Information and resource management

5. Professional practice

Organisations delivering employment guidance could consider developing in-house training or continuous professional development (CPD) for staff in methods, approaches or specialist skills.

This ongoing focus on practitioner skills will give people using the service confidence that the employment guidance activities offered are provided by staff that have the knowledge, skills and competences required to do so[10]. It also serves to ensure that staff can respond better to the needs of their clients, and enables those clients to make meaningful employment choices.

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9 https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/nationalguidance/documents/NGF_Competency_Report%20Final.pdf

10 ELGPN Tools no.6. Guidelines for Transversal Components of Lifelong Guidance Policies and Systems (2015)

In addition to CPD and in-house training for practitioners, services can achieve good practice through ensuring that they:

- Promote ethical standards and behaviour

- Use evidence-based practices

- Strengthen links with appropriate professional, research and training associations

The following diagram illustrates how staff skills such as active listening and mentoring (amongst others) impact on important relational aspects of the employment guidance process such as developing trust and setting realistic career goals, as well as wider outcomes including quality services.

	Casual mechanisms →	Impacts →	Outcome
Staff Skills →	Active listening Analytic skills Mentoring Researching Challenging Curiosity Caution	Hearing individual needs Setting realistic career goals Developing trust Regulating speed and intensity of the engagement	Quality individualised service Autonomy Freedom and scope Job satisfaction

Figure 5.1
Staff-related factors: causal mechanisms, impacts, and outcomes (Whelan, 2018)

Boundaries of employment guidance practice

Frontline practice often involves addressing a range of persistent employment barriers (including for example, health related issues, domestic and caregiving issues, low education, and social issues amongst others), in addition to personal issues that the individual may be experiencing at that point in time, while also implementing active labour market policies. Practitioners need to be aware of these employment barriers, and in some cases, personal issues, in order to put career and employment options into an appropriate perspective (Ali and Graham, 1996, 2003).

Being able to deal appropriately with these issues, and their level of impact on the person (from the issue being an ongoing frustration for the person to a full-scale crisis), requires practitioners to be clear about what is within their range of expertise and the amount of support they can offer. Within this context support typically ranges from listening to active referral.

- **Listening** offers the person space to voice their issues. This may be the first time the person has spoken about the issue 'out loud'. Practitioners should have some basic awareness training in, for example, mental health first aid, dealing with challenging behaviour, suicide awareness, domestic violence awareness, homelessness, and addiction, to enable them to actively listen and support the person in an appropriate way.

- **Active Referral** requires understanding and knowledge of local networks, and this can be enabled through interagency and collaborative working. Having an up-to-date directory of local services in your organisation will assist the practitioner in seeking appropriate support and enable them to make referrals to specialist services.

A work-life employment guidance model requires recognition and focus on these challenges, however, there are limits to the amount of time and support that a practitioner can realistically offer. Ideally, it should be sufficient to assess the potential impact on the person and their employment, and to offer moral support and understanding of their situation. Dealing effectively with these issues within the boundaries of guidance practice may require the practitioner to restate the focus and limits of employment guidance.

Ali and Graham (1996, 2003) identify a number of steps that may enable a practitioner to assist the person to access further support while remaining focused on their role as an employment guidance practitioner:

1. **Recognising the need for referral**: the practitioner recognises that he/she is approaching the boundaries of his/her knowledge and expertise. The practitioner may feel the need to check (with colleagues or a specialist) how to progress or resolve the issue. If the client keeps returning to the personal issue and cannot seem to focus on the employment guidance process, then it is likely that a referral may be needed.

2. **Being aware of other services and specialists**: having this information to hand can reassure the client that they are in good hands and that these types of referrals are normal practice. This information should be kept up to date by the organisation (and not individual to each practitioner!)

3. **Raising the issues of referral**: practitioners may not feel comfortable broaching the issue of a referral with a client as they may be concerned that they are 'letting the client down' or abandoning them. Suggesting to the client, for example, 'this is not my area of expertise, but I do know a

service/practitioner who would be able to support you with this. Would you like me to make a referral?' or 'Would you like to contact them from here to make an appointment?' The client may decide not to take up the offer, but the practitioner can come back to it in future meetings if the personal issue keeps arising.

4. **Making an effective referral**: ideally this should involve the person, practitioner, and specialist so that it is a collaborative and consented process. The specialist should receive sufficient information (verbally or in writing) from the practitioner and person so as to understand why the referral is being made. If it is not possible to make the referral there and then, an agreement should be made that either the practitioner or person will follow-up to make the appointment and a date set to have this completed by.

5. **Following up a referral**: It may be possible to agree that the person return to the employment guidance process in a few weeks' time when sufficient support has been received. The door should be left open to discuss re-engagement should the person and specialist see it as beneficial to continue the process in tandem with the additional supports.

Balancing employment guidance and activation administration

Frontline practice is often strongly influenced by different labour market policy frameworks. Practitioners' capacity to provide holistic support may be reduced in more work-first oriented policy implementation (often time bound and more administratively oriented) or increased in work-life balance approaches. Practitioners are often required to move between these administrative routines and the demands of professional practice (Nothdurfter and Olesen, 2017), creating ambiguity and tensions.

Acknowledgement by policy makers and employment services managers, of this on-going tension for practitioners and for their practice, is important for staff morale and organisational culture. Support structures including supervision, peer support, or a community of practice may be useful in discussing these tensions and progressing employment guidance practice within PES and activation oriented labour market policies.

5.3
Supervision, peer support and community of practice

Support around professional practice in jobs where there is intensive interaction with people is important for staff well-being and CPD. The focus is often on practice and providing the best possible service for clients. However, it also serves as a personal development and self-awareness opportunity for practitioners, described by Carroll (2010) as a learning-through-reflection process. A reflective practitioner develops 'the capability to reflect critically and systematically on the work-self interface … fostering a personal awareness and resilience' (Gillmer and Marckus, 2003, p. 23).

In some settings 'supervision' offers practitioners this type of support in their professional practice and provides a 'safe space' to tackle stressful situations and feelings. It is often provided by an independent external practitioner who understands the employment guidance work.

Peer-support is a less formal support process, often set up within an organisation for (and by) a group of practitioners, as a 'safe space' to support and challenge each other, facilitating learning and shared practice. It enables practitioners to reflect on their practice with the assistance of colleagues. Within this context, practitioners use case study discussions, role play exercises and observer learning to discuss their practice, and to support each other's understanding of their own practice, and develop skills and capacity within the organisation.

Similarly, a **Community of Practice** is a group of people who come together to build and share knowledge, to build and share skills, to build networks, and to build recognition. Three key components of an effective community of practice were identified by Wenger (1998) and maybe a useful starting point for practitioners wishing to establish their own Community of Practice:

Mutual Engagement: practitioners share or commit to a professional development program to engage in their learning, professional development and practice.

Joint enterprise: by committing to their professional development, practitioners embark on a joint enterprise toward a shared goal – in this case the shared goal is to improve employment guidance practice.

Shared repertoire: practitioners share knowledge and learning experiences, resources, methods and activities that have been developed for effective employment guidance practice.

You may already be part of a Community of Practice or a peer support network within your own organisation, but it might not be formalised.

5.4
Guidance settings

The space where Employment Guidance happens is important. We can think of space on a number of conceptual levels from physical space, for example, an office or room, to online space where information is easily accessible.

Most employment guidance services are based in public offices or community based centres.

We suggest that settings should be:

- Friendly and Welcoming
- Perceived as part of the community
- Recognisable as offering employment guidance
- Professional yet non-threatening
- Trusted and perceived as high quality

EXAMPLE:
LES are generally located in local communities with good visibility to people on main streets or close to town centres. This is important for accessibility.

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Physical space

Within employment services private rooms suitable for one-to-one collaboration and discussion are recommended. These spaces enable confidentiality and privacy.

Health, safety and security requirements should guide the design of these spaces, with some visibility to the outside office, good lighting, enough space for required physical distancing etc. The office should offer privacy but also a connection to the larger employment service.

These spaces could include a desk, chairs, a whiteboard or flip chart where ideas can be collected, a PC for use of online tools, a phone, career resources and information, a notice board with up-to-date opportunities.
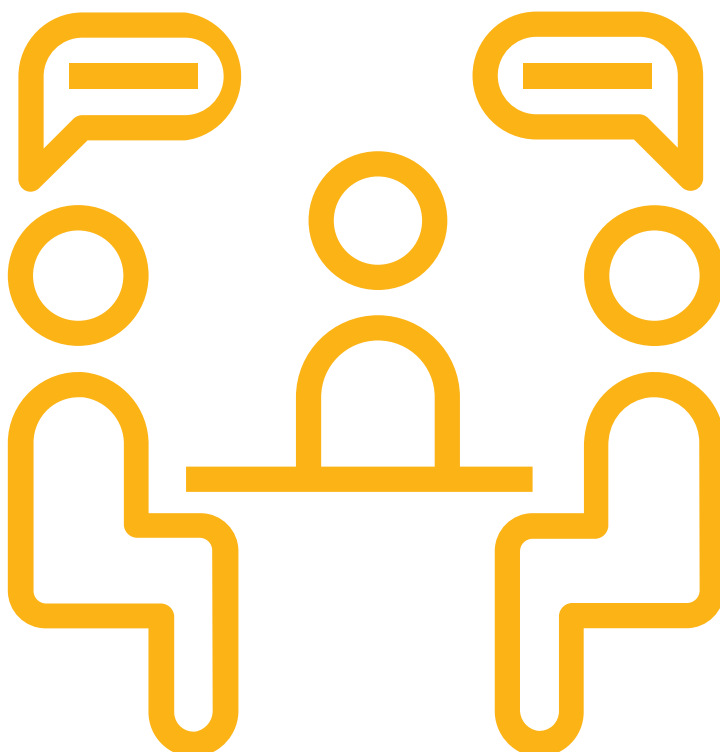
The following diagram illustrates how service setting such as community based and non-formal (amongst others) contribute towards the creation of trusting, supportive and respectful environments.

Service Setting	Casual mechanisms	Impacts	Outcome
	Community based service (Non-public office)	Facilitated person centred process Created an environment where it was ok not to know	Open trusting environment where real needs are identified
	Reception	Warm & friendly atmosphere	Respectful 'non official' environment, puts person at ease
	Separate from conditionality / penalties	No fear of financial penalty driving the interaction No punishment Supportive environment	Focus is on meeting the needs of the person rather than directing the person based on maintaining payment Facilitates person if they make the wrong decision – they can come back
	Non – system driven	Flexibility Person centred	Focus is on the person rather than facilitating a system

Figure 5.2
Service setting related factors (Whelan, 2018)

Virtual space - digital inclusion and support

Digital and online service delivery platforms (e.g. Zoom, Teams) provide alternative possibilities for expanding employment guidance services.

Employment guidance offers a multi-channel platform for supporting and assessing career choices, opening access to education and training opportunities enabling job search, and also connecting people with employers and labour market information (Arnkil et al., 2017). It changes how we think about employment guidance by enabling shared collaborative career exploration spaces and enabling co-construction of careers.

There has been a shift in this direction in terms of emergency responses to Covid-19 however the use of mobile phones (text and phone calls) in the first instance has been preferred by practitioners and people using the services. The move towards the integration of digital and virtual communication challenges practitioners and services as it moves beyond the traditional way of working and requires a mind-set and cultural shift.

The shift towards 'digital first' or digital-by-default as seen in wider employment services in some countries (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands, Australia), where jobseekers register for employment assistance services online and access services via video conferencing and messaging platforms, has not, so far, been replicated in employment guidance in Ireland.

There is a risk that people who face digital skills challenges and digital access will be at a significant disadvantage if employment guidance were to move completely online. Conversely, some shift in this direction e.g. the automation of repetitive and administrative tasks, could enable practitioners to spend more time on the therapeutic elements of employment guidance (Murphy et al., 2020).

Blended approaches are more likely (post-Covid 19) with the use of telephone guidance, and online platforms (e.g. Teams, Zoom) in addition to face-to-face meetings. Therefore, it is important for practitioners to consider how their existing skills can be transferred to these other mediums. Resources such as **GUIDANCE FROM A DISTANCE:** *A Guideline promoting good practices & processes in online Mediation/Guidance within LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICES* and the **NCGE's** WEBINAR RECORDING - Telephone and Remote Platform Approaches to Career Development | NCGE - National Centre for Guidance in Education are useful in thinking through the requirements for your own workplace and staff, and ensuring that practitioners have the skills, expertise and confidence to move towards a more blended delivery.

Face-to face services could also be enhanced and supplemented through the use of online tools for assessment (e.g. interest inventories, values, work readiness) and for the provision of up to date career and labour market information. Traditional tools are widely available online and often use gamification as a way of engaging people and motivating them to complete assessments. Other tools such as worksheets and Mind Maps are also visually appealing in online formats and could be considered by practitioners to enhance existing services.

For a more detailed discussion, the ELGPN (2015) outline seven policy and implementation challenges associated with the integration of digital and virtual platforms and ICT more generally in widening access to employment guidance:

- coherence and consistency in service design

- channelling

- differentiation

- penetration

- targeting

- marketing

- co-creation the services

A wider discussion on the shift towards more blended approaches is recommended for individual services, taking into consideration the people who use the services and the supports which may enable more effective delivery.

Mental space

Employment guidance also provides the mental space to think about work, careers, aspirations, and futures. Our lives are busy, and it can be difficult to find focused time to really think about, and reflect on, strengths, skills, disappointments, challenges, the meaning of work in our lives, the opportunities available, and the steps and actions that could lead us there.

It provides the time and space to develop career understanding, career plans, and recognise and develop strengths and skills.

Importantly, this space could enable both learning and social development.

EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE AS AN 'ENRICHMENT SPACE'

- a service that supports individuals to mould and shape their working life

- provides individuals with time and freedom to think about their personal relationship with work, the working life options they have and how these interact in a supportive dialogue with practitioners and their peers.

- the concept 'space' refers to a learning space, psychological, social, physical and virtual space for development.

(Arnkil et al, 2017)

5.5
Time

Sufficient time is an important aspect of service delivery. It enables the development of long-term meaningful career plans rather than 'revolving door' type outcomes, such as one-day training courses (in the absence of a career plan) or unstructured 'hap-hazard' job search. It allows the person space to think about options and limits quick decisions. It allows participants to change direction and return to the service if the option is not right. Importantly it is an essential component of building a trusting relationship between the person and practitioner.

Ideally services should offer a no-time limit engagement and flexibility for the practitioner and person to decide on length of meetings. However, tensions exist between the longer-term focus of employment guidance towards sustained employability and the short-term focus of PES in supporting people into employment as quickly as possible. This issue of adequate time to provide sufficient employment guidance, to fulfil administrative tasks, and to meet service targets is an important consideration for practitioners and organisations delivering services within a labour market policy context.

While this longer-term perspective can be time consuming, its potential benefits have impact at individual, organisational and societal levels. For people accessing the service it may enable longer term career thinking and goals, and create a culture within which career self-identity and self-efficacy can develop; for practitioners it may lead to increased job satisfaction and adherence to ethical obligations; and for society it can lead to more inclusive labour markets and a more resilient labour force.

5.6
When does employment guidance happen?

Guidance is a life-long process however services are generally accessed at **Transition points** in individual's lives, for example at the transition from second level to third level education, transitions between jobs or careers, transitions due to a redundancy or return to work, or transitions due to family care or sick leave. Transition points are challenging, presenting risks to individuals and

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their families in terms sustainable futures. It is important that employment guidance offers security, hope, and access to resources to connect people to the world of work.

Within PES, guidance is generally delivered as part of an ALMP, and the individual is therefore required to attend meetings with a guidance practitioner. The conditional nature of the engagement can impact the way services are delivered and received, as non-attendance can lead to sanctions in the form of welfare cuts. Recent evidence from the UK has found that a work-first model with associated sanctioning does not lead to sustainable labour market outcomes (Taulbut, Mackay, and McCartney, 2018).

This approach may suit people who are short term unemployed and others who are close to the labour market, but there remains much debate over its effectiveness for people more distanced from the labour market, and whether it leads to low pay and poor quality employment. As mentioned earlier, tensions exist between activation and employment guidance and whether the two can operate to their full potential within one system is unclear.

The approach outlined in this toolkit moves away from work- first and towards a work-life approach arguing for more personalised engagement, tailored to meet specific needs, that takes the individuals wider social context and life needs into account, and that co-creates a plan that can be implemented over a longer timeframe. It seeks to offer the security, hope, and access to resources and opportunities required by many when faced with the challenges of unemployment.

Recent research findings from Ireland identified five important outcomes from a tailored employment guidance process (Whelan, 2018):

- Increased confidence

- Increased motivation and goal setting

- Increased ability or belief that career goals could be achieved

- Increased career clarity

- Hope for the future

In this study, participants identified a number of important contributors to the achievement of these outcomes (see Figure 5.1) including the approach, the process, the practitioner skills, and the service setting.

DRIVERS OF CHANGE	CASUAL MECHANISMS	OUTCOMES
The Approach	Personalised service	Increased Confidence
Staff Skills	Supportive approach	Achieving Career Goals
The Process	Challenging the barriers	Career Clarity
Service Setting		Goal Setting and increased Motivation
		Hope for the future
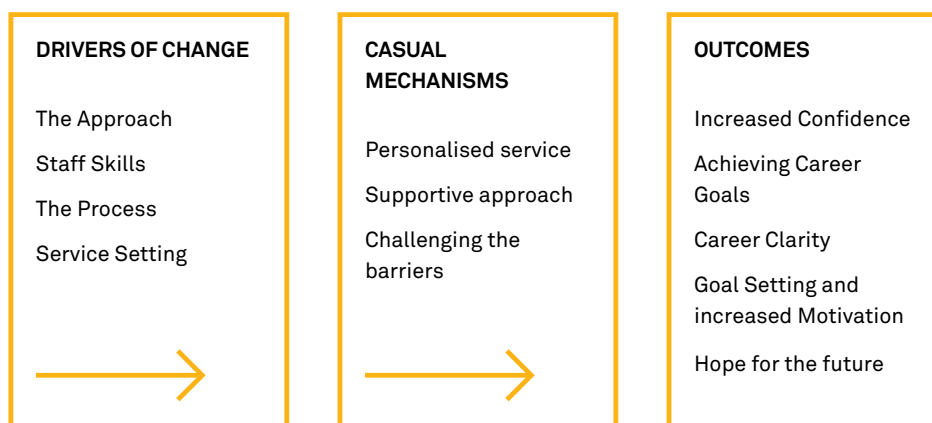
Figure 5.3
Key drivers of change, causal mechanisms, and outcomes as identified by participants (Whelan, 2018)

5.7
Ethics in employment guidance practice

The purpose of a Code of Ethics is to provide a guide for employment guidance practitioners who offer services to the public. Many organisations delivering employment guidance will have their own set of ethical principles that guide service delivery and assist the organisation in achieving high standards of service provision (e.g. through quality standards such as Q Mark, ISO). The following ethical principles may overlap with existing codes but relate more specifically to the role of the employment guidance practitioner and aim to assist in thoughtful decision making and resolving ethical dilemmas.

- Client safety

- Practitioner competence

- Respect for the client's self-determination

- Contracting – between the individual and the practitioner

- Confidentiality

- Practitioner accountability

- Referral

- Supervision – one to one and peer

- Duty to maintain the professions reputation

Practitioners need to be aware of the ethical and moral assumptions and values that they bring to their work and have a responsibility to act in an ethical manner (Kidd, 2006).

It is advised that organisations develop their own code of ethics to guide practitioners in their daily work.

Equity, diversity and discrimination

A person's career development can be affected by factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, age, religion or disability (amongst other factors). Assumptions and attitudes towards minority groups can impact on education and employment opportunities, resulting in unequal life chances. Awareness by employment guidance practitioners of structural barriers and equal opportunity issues is essential in countering the negative effects of discrimination. Similarly, an understanding of complex lives and the additional challenges faced by some people, for example people experiencing homelessness, is important in planning and implementing career action plans.

Awareness of your own behaviours, use of language, thoughts and expectations is essential to the provision of equitable and unbiased employment support. This means reflecting on the ways we as individuals see differences. Often our biases are unconscious, so taking time to slowdown and reflect on our thoughts, attitudes and behaviours when we encounter differences or diversity is essential in understanding our unconscious biases.

The Diversity Wheel below helps us see the many ways that people differ from each other.

Fig.5.4
Diversity Wheel (John Hopkins)

Nathan and Hill (1997, 2006) provide equity and diversity promoting guidelines to enhance career counselling practice which are equally relevant to employment guidance:

• Develop an understanding of how society is structured and how the system operates with regard to education and employment opportunities

• Reflect upon and examine your own unconscious biases, the language you use, the assumptions you make, and how your own gender, cultural background, and social class impacts on your practice.

• Think about factors which may affect how you listen and empathise effectively with people accessing your service

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- Accept as legitimate the anger and frustration that people faced with and experiencing discrimination may feel in their employability.

- Encourage the examination of a broad range of career options so as to reduce occupational segregation and limiting people to gender or racially stereotyped occupations.

- Consider the cultural appropriateness of the approach, methods and interventions used in your practice.

5.8
Locally based services and Interagency working

Employment services are generally based in towns and local communities serving, in the first instance, the employment needs of local people. Many have been formed locally and are considered an important part of the community fabric. They concentrate on helping people, and on issues in the immediate locality, and in doing so, proactively listen to the community needs. They have the flexibility to be innovative in their solutions and responses.

They are frequently the first point of contact for local people, and many operate a no wrong door policy, connecting people with relevant and appropriate services including housing, health, education, and social welfare. While their purpose and vision relate to employability, they recognise the life needs of the community and have an insider view of the challenges and issues specific to that community. This important contextual information enables appropriate employment guidance which acknowledges and respects the life needs of each person and enables an integrated services approach, drawing on its local interagency partners to provide holistic support.

Interagency working

The changing world of work and the complexity of challenges faced by many who seek sustainable employment requires an approach which operates within an interagency or networked system. At national levels, PES have formal, informal, and legally binding relationships with a wide variety of public, NGO, and private institutions (PES Network, 2020). These types of partnerships are increasingly important to meet the challenges faced by services supporting employability. Similarly, employment guidance and locally based employment services cannot

alone meet the specific needs of each individual. An interagency approach enables effective and efficient referrals ensuring quality at transition points between guidance and other services e.g. health, housing, education, training, youth services. This type of coordinated approach has the advantage of ensuring access to the range of services needed to tackle multiple barriers.

Interagency networks and partnerships can realise new ways of working together, can capitalise on the experience and expertise of partners, and can help identify gaps and solutions (Devlin, 2015), thus having real impact on the range and quality of supports available and accessible to individuals.

Lloyd et al (2001) defines the various forms of coordinated service delivery as follows:

Interagency working: more than one agency working together in a planned and formal way, rather than simply through informal networking (although the latter may support and develop the former). This can be at strategic or operational level.

Multiagency working: more than one agency working with a client but not necessarily jointly. Multiagency working may occur as a result of joint planning or replication due to poor interagency co-ordination. The terms 'interagency' and 'multiagency' are often used interchangeably.

Joined-up working, policy or thinking refers to deliberately conceptualised and coordinated planning, which takes account of multiple policies and varying agency practices.

While the above are the most common types of partnership working co-configuration is a participatory model, where 'interagency' relationships include clients as well as practitioners. The advantage of this form of cooperation is that it encompasses more actors and different forms of knowledge including the experiential knowledge of service users. More recently this is known as **co creation or co-production**.

The culture of the organisation delivering employment guidance is fundamental for successful partnership working as it can enable or prevent collaboration in local and national contexts. Sustainable partnerships require adequate resources, good management and buy-in from all agencies involved.

Many local areas already have some form of interagency networks established which could be drawn upon as a supportive network for employment guidance services.

A small mapping of services study (Murphy, Whelan & McGann, 2021) conducted as part of the ACA PES project indicated that LES operate within an interagency network consisting of the following types of services:

Care
Childcare and elder care Providers City and County Childcare committes

DEASP Employment Services
Intreo, job path

Local Partership Employment Services
Employability, SICAP Jobclubs

Public Services
Transport, Housing, Health

Mental health
HSE Community Serivces

Human Resources
Basic skills (e.g. Literacy, IT, safe Pass, Driving)

Education and Training Career guidance

Local & Community
Community Development

Sports/Schools etc

PPN

LESN

Labour Market
Measures Commuity Employment, TUS, YESS etc

Other

Local Labour Market
Area Based Partnership Chambers of commerce Trade Unions Regional Skills Foras

Specialist Support,
addiction, crime, probation, Domestic Violence

Recruitment
Local Employers Recruitment Agencies

Equality & Discrimination
womnen, youth, ethnic, disability

Policy Change/ Campaigns
National NGOs Poltiical actors

Welfare and Money
Advice MABS and CICs Society Vincent de Paul Credit Union

Self Employment
LEO's, Partnerships

Figure 5.5
A Collaborative Approach to Public Employment Services – Mapping Local Employment Services Referral Networks

5.9
Leadership

How the employment service is managed and governed, including its purpose, strategy and vision, impacts on the type and range of employment guidance delivered. Leaders implement the organisational strategy and set the tone of the workplace and service. Good leadership is crucial to the success of any organisation, however leading a community based employment service requires adaptability and flexibility to steer the service within continuously changing community and labour market environments. For example, changes in the types of jobs available (and their quality), and the restructuring of jobs (and their conditions), requires a wide overview of the labour market. Similarly, as these organisations operate within communities, many with their own specific challenges, the leader must guide the organisation within the community and its network, remaining conscious of local politics, tone and relevance.

Alongside this, employment service leaders are often concerned with governance issues related to funding, the labour market policies in place at national levels, their relationship with the wider public employment services, the quality of the employment guidance provision and building relationships with employers. This range of challenges requires various leadership strategies to enable employment guidance to be meaningful to the individual, appropriate to their specific needs and relevant to a contemporary labour market.

Heifetz and colleagues (2009) identify the importance of technical and adaptive leadership strategies[11] and recognising when each is required depending on the type of challenge faced. Thus, different types of leadership strategies are required for different types of leadership challenges.

TECHNICAL　　　　　　　　　　**TO**　　　　　　　　　　**ADAPTIVE**

[11] https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/module-2/leadership-drivers

MEEG

Technical leadership is required when the challenge is clearly defined and when there is a clear path to the solution. These types of challenges can be managed and require the leader to 'be in charge'.

Adaptive leadership is required when the definition of the problem is unclear and when the views of a range of stakeholders are required to come to viable solutions and pathways to that solution. Often getting to the solution is a learning process for all involved. The leader is a facilitator of this process.

Within the context of community based employment services moving between adaptive and technical leadership approaches may be required to effectively manage employment guidance provision within a complex community and labour market environment.
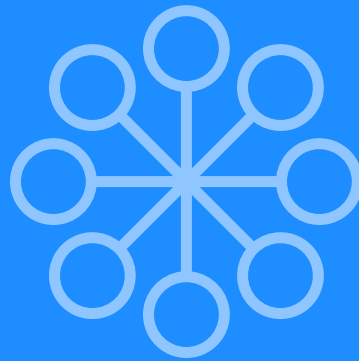
Section 6

Evaluation

This sections focuses on the outcomes of employment guidance and its impact at individual, community and societal levels. Guidance has social and economic outcomes. It can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education, training and the labour market through its contribution to reducing drop-out, preventing skill mismatches, increasing job sustainability and boosting productivity; it also addresses social equity and social inclusion (ELGPN, 2012).

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Hooley (2014), while reviewing the evidence for lifelong guidance more generally concludes that:

"There is an extensive research base on lifelong guidance….It recognises that there are many beneficiaries of such guidance including individuals, their families and communities, and the organisations where they study and work, as a well as society as a whole. Lifelong guidance impacts on: educational outcomes, economic and employment outcomes; and social outcomes" (p.7)

The provision of publicly-funded employment guidance is connected with labour market policies. Therefore, it is important that there is clear evidence of its effectiveness and usefulness, along with established ways of measuring its impact and outcomes.

The purpose and expected outcomes from employment guidance can change depending on the policy in place, the broader labour market context, and changing economic conditions. For example, in a work-first model, success is measured in terms of job placement, returns to unsubsidised employment, and off-benefits exit rates. In a Human Capital model, outcomes are measured by progressions to education, training and employment.

Importantly, the duration of time over which these outcomes are measured lead to different interpretations of success. For example, measuring outcomes over 1-2 years favours a work-first model whereas measuring outcomes over 3 to 5 years tends to show larger benefits of human capital type approaches.

In the next section we explore how employment guidance could be measured in a work-life model. We identify the outcomes considered important for progression towards the labour market, the timing of measurements and collective methods which could help build an evidence base around what works.

6.1
Value what matters

The effectiveness of employment guidance has traditionally been evaluated in terms of the number of 'hard outcomes' such as progressions into employment or into education and training. However, significant progress in the form of sub-steps towards employment and employability are often made by individuals throughout the guidance process but are rarely measured. As this 'distance travelled' is seldom captured in a systematic way, it makes measurement of

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these 'softer outcomes' more complex. In addition, these individual changes are often internal and therefore more difficult to measure.

Using only one type of measure does not provide the 'full picture' of the impact or effectiveness of employment guidance. Distance travelled is a way of measuring the progress made by a person in achieving 'soft outcomes' that may lead to sustained employment in the future (Barnes & Wright, 2019). These valuable outcomes are often lost or not recorded, and distance travelled gives us a way of capturing them.

Dewson and colleagues (2000), in their guide to measuring distance travelled, define distance travelled as "the progress that a beneficiary makes towards employability or harder outcomes, as a result of the project intervention" (pg. 2). They define soft outcomes as "outcomes from training, support or guidance interventions, which unlike hard outcomes.... cannot be measured directly or tangibly" (pg. 2). These may include problem solving abilities, self-confidence or time keeping. The terms 'soft outcomes' and 'distance travelled' are often used interchangeably.

Shared measurement

In addition to the measurement of hard outcomes, many organisations use in-house metrics to evaluate the work they do and the progress made by the people engaged in their services. However, collectively, there is no common approach to assessing this progress, making it more difficult to demonstrate value, to understand what works and for whom and to improve employment guidance practice.

A shared approach to capturing distance travelled can help build an evidence base around what works. It requires organisations to have an agreed understanding of outcomes and how to measure them.

Designing a shared measurement tool

Next, we present a model to enable services and people engaged in an employment guidance process to measure and track incremental and meaningful changes. It collects and analyses rich and important information on outcomes related to employability and career development. These outcomes have been identified and agreed by practitioners, people accessing the services, employability experts, and through in-depth academic literature reviews.

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Our methodology follows a standard process for developing validated tools (Barnes and Wright, 2019; Dewson, 2000) and involves an exploration of the literature, consultation with employment guidance practitioners, and analysis of existing tools (e.g. PRIME tool (Canada), My Journey Distance Travelled Tool (SICAP) to generate concepts, outcomes, and items. The following five factors, each defined by a number of concepts, were identified as important to a person's progress towards the labour market:

a. **Personal**: Well-being, Quality of Life, Sense of Meaning, Accomplishment

b. **Attitudinal (emotional capabilities)**: Confidence, Resilience, Self-esteem, Motivation, Self-Efficacy & Planning, Hopefulness, Career clarity, Aspirations

c. **Structural (personal circumstances)**: Pre-employment, Transport, Care, Housing

d. **Practical employability**: Relevant and up to date key Work Skills, Job Search

e. **Future employment (employability)**: Job Maintenance, Career vision, Responsibilities and expectations of employment, Acting on feedback, Getting advice and support

Next, a consultative process, as recommended by Barnes and Wright (2019), of co-creation with practitioners, service managers, and key stakeholders was undertaken to reduce a long list of items, to appraise the language and tool content, to assess the usability and make recommendations on its use within services.

At the time of writing the MEEG tool is in the development stage with ongoing testing and psychometric analysis of the items, and improvements to the design and layout for usability. For more details on the MEEG tool please see Appendix 4 (for most recent updates).
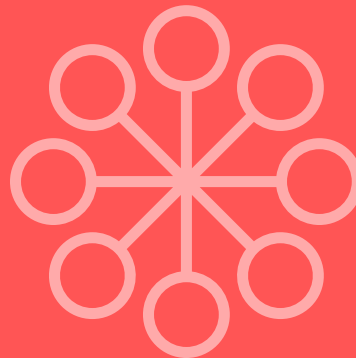
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Appendices

Appendix 1:
Using Coaching Approaches in a Work-Life
inspired Employment Guidance Model

Appendix 2:
Employment Guidance Competencies

Appendix 3:
Example profile forms

Appendix 4:
MEEG Metric

Appendix 5:
Sample Worksheets

Appendix 1:
Using coaching approaches in a work-life inspired employment guidance model

There are many styles and approaches used in an employment guidance context. Some (e.g. person-centred) are just that, approaches, underpinning your practice, while others have a defined structure (e.g. motivational interviewing). For the purpose of this toolkit we have described a sample of approaches and models that may assist practitioners in guiding people who access employment guidance services. Coaching approaches can be plotted on two continuums from suggesting to exploring, and from confronting to supporting (Yates, 2014). All approaches presented below are situated in the exploring and supporting quadrant.

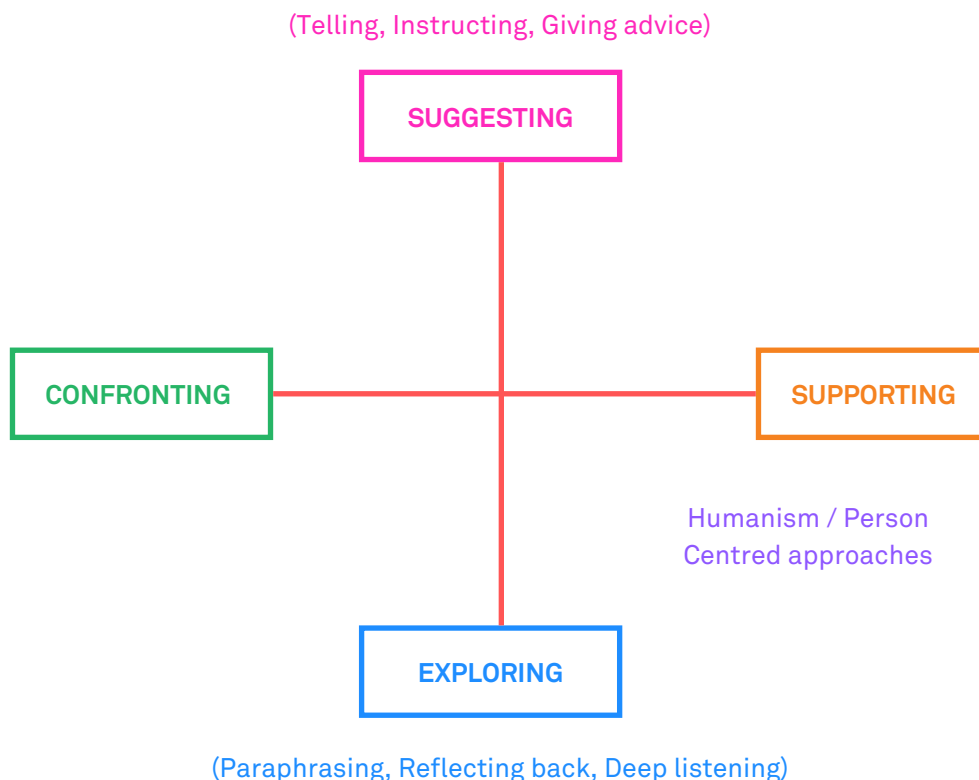(Telling, Instructing, Giving advice)

SUGGESTING

CONFRONTING   SUPPORTING

Humanism / Person Centred approaches

EXPLORING

(Paraphrasing, Reflecting back, Deep listening)

Figure 7.1
Adapted from De Haan (2008) by Yates (2014)

Person-centred or humanistic coaching

This approach is based on and influenced by the work of Carl Rogers. In this context it can be considered a philosophy underpinning practice. It aims to help individuals on their journey towards self-knowledge and career direction and clarity, becoming fully functional i.e. able to be oneself, not swayed by others, accepting of self and others, and responsible for own behaviour (Yates, 2014). The approach is non-directive and is based on a belief that people are best placed to make their own decisions. In practice, the practitioner allows them to do so. While the individual decides on the content the practitioner controls the process, ensuring that the goals are set and achieved.

It is based on principles of self-determination (i.e. individuals are best placed to make decisions about themselves and for themselves, the individual is the only person who can decide if this is a suitable way forward) and self-actualization (self-improvement and growth). The practitioner's role is to provide the context to enable self-determination and self-actualisation.

Rogers (1957) proposed six core conditions necessary for change to take place. These can guide practitioner's interactions with people accessing employment guidance services and the frameworks practitioners choose to use.

1. The **psychological contract** is between the practitioner and client

2. Incongruence –between the Individual's current state and ideal state

3. Congruence – the practitioner is authentic and genuine

4. Unconditional Positive Regard – required for a client-centred non-judgemental approach, the attitude of the practitioner towards the individual is accepting of the individual

5. Active Listening (involves all four levels of listening)

- Attending listening (providing time and space for the individual to talk) being silent

- Accurate listening (listen so as to reflect back and paraphrase)

- Empathetic listening (listen to words and feelings (or meanings)

- Generative empathetic listening (picking up on more than just words i.e. body language, tone, what is left unsaid)

6. Empathy – the individual perceives that the practitioner understands them and where they are coming from

Adapted from De Haan (2008) by Yates (2014)

Some questions that may be useful using this approach:

- *How did that experience make you feel?*

- *What impact did that have on you?*

- *It sounds as though that was hard for you...?*

Other theories based on this model include: Carkhuff's (1969) two-stage model and Egan's (1975) three-stage model

For more a more detailed account of this approach see:
Kidd, J. M. (2006). *Understanding career counselling: Theory, research and practice.* Sage. (Pg. 52-57)

Yates, J. (2014). *The career coaching handbook.* Routledge. (Pg. 83-92)

Strengths-based coaching

This approach has its origins in **positive psychology** (Csikszentmihalyi & Seligman, 2000) and focuses on **strengths** rather than deficits. It has been found to be a more motivating process for the individual, impacting on **self – efficacy** and **action planning**. It supports people to choose careers that utilise their strengths rather than their weaknesses.

Practitioners use **strengths inventories** to enable people identify their strengths and often explore the application of those strengths with the person in a collaborative and participatory way.

The Strengths Based Inclusive Theory of Work (S-BIT of Work) (Owens, Allan, & Flores, 2019) is a good example of more recent theories which recognise the importance of strengths based approaches to support more diverse populations.

This **inclusive** and **strengths-based** approach focuses specifically on vocational supports for diverse populations. It proposes that individuals who experience greater supports (e.g. educational, family, social supports) and fewer barriers across their lives are more likely to attain a work context that enables career progression which in turn, leads to fulfilling work. A central outcome of the S-BIT of Work theory is '**fulfilling work**' or the experience of well-being within a work context (Owens et al.,2019). This approach focuses on developing positive psychological constructs - Hope, Strengths, Adaptability and Empowerment- that could benefit individuals and promote fulfilling work.

- **Hope**: the ability to generate multiple routes to achieve goals (i.e. pathways) and the motivation (i.e. agency) to use the pathways identified to reach these goals (Snyder, 1994).

  – *Think about and articulate clear goals*

  – *Think about multiple pathways to achieve the chosen goals*

  – *Talk about how you feel about achieving these goals*

  – *Reframe perceived obstacles*

- **Strengths**: "positive traits or skills that promote optimal functioning" (Owens, Baugh, Barrett-Wallis, Hui, & McDaniel, 2018, p. 266). Identify and develop the individual's positive traits or skills:

  – *Use a strengths tool to identify strengths*

  – *Feedback strengths and discuss how they can be further developed*

  – *Visualisation activity - Envision yourself;*
    * In a job where you regularly use your strengths and experienced success doing so (strengths group)
    * in a job you enjoyed and that aligned with your interests (interests group)
    * or in a job that aligned with your interests and strengths (combined group)

- **Adaptability**: the ability to flexibly respond to unpredictable or novel situations:

  – *Activities (worksheets, visualisations, role plays etc.) that focus on concern, control, curiosity, and confidence in resolving career changes*

- **Empowerment**: '*a means to support individuals in articulating, strengthening, and capitalizing on their abilities to effect positive change in their environments (Blustein, 2006; Richardson, 2000). Works to meaningfully connect people, who may feel at the mercy of larger cultural and socioeconomic systems, to the strengths and resources within themselves, their cultural systems, and their communities.

  – *Interagency working, linking the person with activities and groups within the local community*

  – *Linking with family*

  – *Small pre-employment programmes encourage peer support*

Some questions that may be useful using this approach:

- *'Can you tell me about some of the key strengths that emerged for you?'*

- *'How might you use these strengths in implementing the next phase of your career plan?'*

Exercises could include 'Three good things in life' where the client writes down three things that went well during the day, why they went well and the client's involvement (Seligman et al., 2005)

For more a more detailed account of this approach see:
Owens, R. L., Allan, B. A., & Flores, L. Y. (2019). The strengths-based inclusive theory of work. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *47*(2), 222-265.

Grant, A.M. & Atad, O.I. (2021) Coaching psychology interventions vs. positive psychology interventions: The measurable benefits of a coaching relationship, The Journal of Positive Psychology, DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2021.1871944

Solution Focused coaching or brief therapy

This approach focuses exclusively on **possibilities**. It assumes that people are resourceful and have their own **solutions** and uses goal setting and action planning as ways of enabling the person progress towards the labour market. It also makes assumptions about change, that it can happen quickly, and that how the problem is viewed can prevent change happening.

Similar to cognitive behavioural change, solution focus coaching helps the person to see their problems in a new way. It shifts from a focus on the problem (which can often seem overwhelming and all encompassing) to a focus on the possible solutions.

The practitioner helps the person **re-frame** the problems as solutions. The questions used in this approach encourage '**blue-sky thinking'** and **imagination**. An effective technique associated with this approach is the miracle question where the person is asked to imagine that the problem has disappeared, and then asked – 'what's different about the situation for you now?', 'how do you know the problem has disappeared (what does the situation look like without the problem)'? The approach allows the person to focus on the future and what it might look like.

In addition to reframing and changing the view, practitioners encourage individuals to build upon and use techniques that have worked well for them in the past.

Some questions that may be useful using this approach:

- *'Tell me about a time that you enjoyed work – what made it enjoyable?*

- *'How did you make the decision to apply for that job?'*

- *'What was different about that day?'*

- *"What gives you hope that this problem can be solved?"*

- *'What have you found that is helpful in managing this situation?'*

For more a more detailed account of this approach:

Bezanson, B. J. (2004). The application of solution-focused work in employment counseling. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 41*(4), 183-191. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1920.2004.tb00891.x

Motivational interviewing

This approach helps individuals become more intrinsically motivated. It is based on the idea that change happens because the individual desires that change for its own sake. It differs to other types of behavioural change which may offer external (i.e. extrinsic or instrumental) rewards for change e.g. increase in pay.

The approach is based on a **collaborative** approach between the practitioner and client. It recognises that change is difficult and that there will always be some **ambivalence** to change, and a desire to keep the status quo. It acknowledges possible resistance to change, the push and pull of change, and explores this with the client. **Cognitive dissonance** is accepted, and the person is encouraged to see the positive outcomes and values associated with change and to identify the **discrepancy** between these two positions. Important to this approach is the practitioner's belief that the person has the ability to change, and that they may need support building **self-efficacy** or confidence in their ability to create change.

The approach focuses initially on **increasing motivation**, and then on getting the person to identify the **steps required** to make the change happen. During the first phase the practitioner uses the humanistic approach of open ended questions and active listening. The interview then shifts towards motivation for change, the reasons for change and the individual's ability to change. Rating scales are often used to discuss how the person feels about change, and to discuss what needs to happen for the person to feel more positive about change. The practitioner gently guides the individual in **setting goals** and **agreeing actions**.

Some questions that may be useful using this approach:

Listening techniques and person centred questions are used: Can you tell me a bit about how you are feeling about that...? So it sounds like you are feeling very low about it...? From what you are saying....it sounds like you really enjoyed that job? Tell me, was there anything that you disliked about that job?

Motivation for change questions are used: Tell me about why you are looking for a new job? What do you think things would be like if you found a really good new job? So if I asked you on a scale of one to ten, how you feel about the idea of getting a new job, where would you position yourself?

It sounds like you are very motivated to get a new job (considering all that you have done so far)?

Can you tell me how that would change things for you?

For more a more detailed account of this approach see:

Yates, J. (2014). *The career coaching handbook*. Routledge. (Pg. 102-112)

COUNSELLING SKILLS

MORE INFLUENCE   **STRENGTHENING EMPATHY**

INTERPRETATIVE SKILLS

UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Figure 7.2
Ali & Graham (1996)

Ali-Graham counselling approach to career Guidance (Ali and Graham, 1996)

This approach proposes the use of counselling skills, identifying that certain skills are more basic than others but that all are essential for an effective session. The pyramid contains the building blocks for an effective counselling relationship, with Active Listening Skills at the base, followed by Understanding Skills and finally Interpretative Skills.

Active listening involves listening to the content of what is being said, how it is said, the possible meaning of what is said, the feelings expressed and the nature of any silences. It is concerned with the foundation of empathy which is required for the remaining session and the ongoing practitioner-client relationship.

Understanding skills involves restating, paraphrasing, summarising and asking open ended questions (e.g. what and how questions)

Interpretative skills involve challenging, immediacy and self-disclosure, leading to the practitioner conveying their interpretation of the issues and challenges faced by the client.

For more about this approach see:
Ali, L and Graham, B. (1996). The Counselling Approach to Careers Guidance

Addition frameworks widely used in employment guidance include:

- LEAP Model - Learn Engage Apply Perform (Whitten, 2011)

- GROW model (Whitmore, 2002; Alexander, 2006)

- Cognitive Behavioural Change approaches

- Transactional Analysis

Appendix 2: Employment guidance competencies

The National Forum on Guidance (2007) devised a Competency Framework[12] for Guidance Practitioners for the Irish context and grouped competencies into five main areas – these have been adapted below for employment guidance.

These competencies may vary depending on the nature of the specific service or the wider organisation within which the employment guidance services are offered. In some services practitioners may demonstrate all competencies whereas in other services these competencies may be spread out across the wider staff.

Theory and practice of vocational, employment and personal/social guidance throughout the lifespan.

- The Competency to Facilitate Career/Life Choices through the Lifespan
  - *Plan, design, implement and evaluate lifelong employment/career development programmes and interventions that support career self-management*
  - *Assist individuals in identifying their employment/career development needs*
  - *Empower individuals to set realistic goals, employ effective strategies and manage change and transition*
  - *Assist individuals in developing employment related plans and in identifying labour market opportunities*
  - *Use career resources and techniques as appropriate to prepare individuals for the labour market*
  - *Deliver employment guidance services in a range of policy and operational contexts*
  - *Collaborate and cooperate with other stakeholders to maximise the benefits of the employment guidance service*
  - *Refer individuals to appropriate resources and supports within the community.*
- The Competency to Facilitate Personal/Social Choices through the Lifespan – Assist individuals to
  - *Develop self-awareness of their personal values, attitudes, beliefs and those of others*
  - *Develop strategies for building self-esteem*

- *Identify and expand existing coping strategies*
- *Understand the importance of emotional expression and develop appropriate ways to express feelings in different contexts*
- *Develop communications skills*
- *Use positive thinking*
- *Understand the impact of stress on emotional and social health and assist them in developing personal skills for managing stress*

- Use tools, including psychometric tools, in career planning
- Be aware of Issues and dynamics in career planning
- Understand the decision making processes and factors affecting this process
- Recognise Individual diversity and factors affecting specific groups
- Be aware of and continually update resources – materials and tools available to support the process
- Utilise referral processes and networks
- Understand and keep up to date with Labour Market needs
- Have an awareness of National and EU policy on employment guidance

Labour market education and training

- Facilitate and support individuals in employment transitions
- Support individuals to manage their work/life issues
- Utilise the range of educational and training opportunities and resources available
- Have awareness of cultural differences and how they may affect a person's expectations of the labour market
- Have awareness of how the labour market operates, its trends and likely future direction
- Awareness of macroeconomic context of the labour market, employment/ unemployment, immigration, labour demand and labour costs
- Awareness of how the current labour market relates to people's aspirations, skills and needs
- Collect, organise and maintain up-to-date information on educational and training opportunities for people in the labour market and those wishing to enter or re-enter the labour market

[12] https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/nationalguidance/documents/NGF_ Competency_Report%20Final.pdf

Coaching

- Engage with individuals around issues related to employment and careers.
- Make appropriate referrals to specialised professionals in cases where individuals disclose issues such as suicide ideation, addiction, self-harm, sexual abuse.
- Help people to develop a work - life plan
- Demonstrate an ability and commitment to engage in appropriate supervision
- Be open to ongoing reflection on one's own life narrative and its impact on the coaching relationship

Information and resource management

- Develop, maintain and review information management strategies
- Use information technology to support practice
- Keep up to date with technological developments
- Establish and maintain records
- Utilise planning, time and project management skills
- Follow case and project management procedures
- Collect, organise, disseminate and provide up to date employment and career information.

Professional practice

- Engage in collaborative work with individuals/ stakeholders and colleagues
- Develop relationships and networks with other professionals
- Behave in accordance with ethical guidelines
- Engage in consultation with stakeholders to improve and develop practice
- Undertake research
- Engage in ongoing continuing professional development to improve practice and to engage in supervision as appropriate
- Contribute to the development of good practice.
- Evaluate the service provided to individuals

Appendix 3:
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

MEEG

(EMERGE, EEPIC, BYGS) PROFILE FORM

CURRENT Practitioner:

ID NUMBER:	DATE OF PROFILE:		
COHORT	ENGAGING WITH SERVICES		JOB READY
	YES ☐　　NO ☐		YES ☐　NO ☐
PHONE / EMAIL ADDRESS			
DOB/AGE/ GENDER:	MALE ☐　　FEMALE ☐		
NATIONALITY	IRISH ☐　　EU/EAA ☐		NON EU/EAA ☐
MEMBER OF TRAVELLING COMMUNITY	YES ☐　　NO ☐		
HOUSEHOLD STATUS	LIVES ALONE ☐　WITH FAMILY ☐　WITH PARTNER ☐		
	OTHER:		
CHILDCARE	NO. OF CHILDREN ☐	LIVING WITH CHILDREN YES ☐　NO ☐	OTHER
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	NONE ☐	JC ☐　LCA ☐	LC ☐
	OTHER:		
POST-SECOND LEVEL TRAINING/EXCLUDING ICT	PLC ☐	TECHNICAL COLLEGE ☐	UNIVERSITY ☐
	OTHER:		
ICT SKILLS	NONE ☐　BASIC ☐	INTERMEDIATE ☐	ADVANCED ☐
DRIVING LICENCE & CPC	LEARNER'S PERMIT - B,C,D,E+ ☐　　CPC ☐ FULL LICENCE -　B,C,D,E+ ☐ NONE ☐		
DIFFICULTY WITH LITERACY	YES ☐	NO ☐	
HAS CLIENT EVER WORKED	YES ☐	NO ☐	
DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT	< 1 YEAR ☐	1 -3 YEAR ☐	> 3 YEARS ☐
DISABILITY	YES ☐	NO ☐	
SUBSTANCE USE ISSUES	1 ☐　NON USE	2 ☐　3 ☐　4 ☐	5 ☐ HIGH USE
CRIMINAL BACKGROUND	YES ☐	NO ☐	

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USE OF SERVICES		CURRENT (include notes/dates)	
		YES	**NO**
	YOUTH TRAINING SERVICES	☐	☐
	COMMUNITY RESOURCE SERVICES	☐	☐
	BALLYMUN JOB CENTRE	☐	☐
	LITERACY	☐	☐
	DRUGS, ALCOHOL SERVICES	☐	☐
	PACE	☐	☐
	OTHER SERVICES, IF SO, NAME_____		

WORK HISTORY	1-3mths ☐	3mths-1year ☐	1 year + ☐
VOLUNTARY WORK	CURRENT ☐	PREVIOUS ☐	NONE ☐

COMPETENCIES (circle number)	EXAMPLES
SELF- AWARENESS LOW HIGH 1 2 3 4 5	- Realistic aims/goals/ expectations - Understanding of skills & their transferability (personality, interests, aptitude, empathy, interpersonal skills etc.)
SELF- BELIEF LOW HIGH 1 2 3 4 5	-'I can do it', -'I will…' – aiming high - not selling themselves short -'I believe I can with some help'
RESILIENCE LOW HIGH 1 2 3 4 5	- Speaks about bad experience but has learnt from it - Asks for feedback from unsuccessful job applications: accepting constructive criticism - Sent out 20 cvs but will send out more - Holding onto their goals and believing in them
RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYERS' NEEDS LOW HIGH 1 2 3 4 5	- Knowledge of company/sector (personal labour market) - Knowledge of specific needs- matching - Flexible/open to change - Evidence of good work ethic - Job skills- transferable/ generic
EMPLOYMENT MOTIVATION LOW HIGH 1 2 3 4 5	- Passion/want to action/energy - Ownership of own career - Achieve a goal or improve - Willingness to overcome barriers - Action plan -'I want to… '
HOPE LOW HIGH 1 2 3 4 5	- Positive expectation for the future - Willing to continuously engage
ADAPTABILITY LOW HIGH 1 2 3 4 5	- Willing to change- lifelong learning career - Mobility up skilling: have done so

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FUTURE WORK (APPEALING FACTORS) RATINGS 1-5 –in order of importance				
WORK/LIFE BALANCE	**LOCATION**	**WORK ENVIRONMENT**	**SALARY**	**CAREER CHOICE**
WORK ETHIC VALUES RATINGS 1-5 –in order of importance				
ATTENDANCE	**PUNCTUALITY**	**FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS**	**PRESENTATION (DRESS)**	**ATTITUDE**

GUIDELINES TO DETERMINE BARRIERS PREVENTING RETURN TO WORK (tick all that apply and include notes)

BARRIER TYPE LIST	EXAMPLES
CARE OF OTHERS	CARER FOR FAMILY MEMBER
CHILDCARE	TAKING CARE OF CHILDREN, EFFECT HOURS OF TRAINING OR WORK
ELIGIBILITY- SW CRITERIA	JOB BRIDGE, MOMENTUM
ELIGIBILITY –LACK OF QUALIFICATIONS	FOR COURSES OR JOBS
EXPERIENCE- LACK OF WORK/SKILLS	NOT REQUIRED WORK EXPERIENCE
FAMILY ISSUES	LACK OF SUPPORT
FINANCE	UNABLE TO AFFORD COLLEGE FEES, OR BUS FARES
HEALTH RELATED RESTRICTIONS	ADDICTION ISSUES OR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
LANGUAGE SKILLS	POOR LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR WORK OR TRAINING
LITERACY	POOR OR LOW LEVELS OF READING, WRITING, PREVENTING FROM PARTICIPATING IN COURSES/JOBS
PERSONAL DISPOSITION	ATTITUDE, MOTIVATION, SELF-ESTEEM, VALUES
YOUR MOST SERIOUS BARRIER EXPERIENCED	

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Appendix 4:
MEEG Metric

Appendix 4 will be updated once the MEEG Metric is fully piloted. For updates please see https://activationinireland.wordpress.com/meeg/

Appendix 5:
Sample worksheets

Please see https://activationinireland.wordpress.com/meeg/ for updated Worksheets

MEEG

Practitioner Toolkit