



NFG Report of Discussions

The purpose of this report is to document the views and inputs of National Forum on Guidance attendees to the information provided at the NFG May 2016 meeting on the theme of Opportunities for Guidance in the Skills Agenda. The facilitated group discussions provided opportunities for attendees to reflect on the presentations and information delivered by representatives from IBEC, SOLAS and DES. To bring structure to the discussions, the groups were asked to consider this information in light of four key questions.

What should guidance practitioners do or consider to ensure they incorporate skills into their guidance service provision?

Considering how guidance can ensure a focus of information skills into guidance provisions. The group identified that there needs to be clear distinctions made between actual job skills i.e. those skills needed for the particular disciplines – accountant, carpenter, etc. and the need for the interpersonal and transferable skills required by all.

The guidance forum attendees identified the need to ensure the development of teaching of career management skills i.e. developing and recognising interpersonal skills, how and where to source information and to develop decision making skills.

What could the role of guidance be in the Regional skills agenda discussions?

The group considered the role, if any, of guidance in discussions at Regional Skills Fora level. The feedback highlighted that the role of guidance services is to network and advocate for the client. It is the role of guidance services to adequately initiate systems change as per the National Guidance Forum Report 2007.

The group felt that while discussions at Regional Skills Fora level are currently being developed to include representatives at management level, the Guidance Forum felt that such representation may not ensure the involvement of, or feedback from, local guidance services, i.e. school, FET, HE, LES, DSP, etc. A representative from the guidance community with responsibility to advocate, inform and feedback would be welcomed.

The group suggested that the Regional Skills Fora would have a recommended composition of the fora to include guidance representation.

What can guidance do to support apprenticeships?

Considering the development of apprenticeships the group's discussion highlighted that once the information is available that guidance counsellors can and would include apprenticeships in the options available to students of all ages.

Guidance has a considerable role to support apprenticeships. Once information is clearly available, this can be promoted to students and adult learners as viable alternatives to going to college/university etc. Guidance can play a role in linking to employers also as appropriate.

Several issues emerged from guidance practitioners, particularly from those in INTREO, that there may be a need for clarification with employers about practicalities around apprenticeships e.g. for adults accessing apprenticeships will their DSP payments/rent allowance be affected? In recognition of diversity there may need to be a quota system introduced to ensure fair access for all.

Access is needed for more women to apply for apprenticeships of all types. A Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system needs to be in place also to ensure recognition of NFQ. Guidance forum attendees provided day to day examples around the need to clarify entry level requirements and competency RPL.

Finally, the Forum was asked to consider its recommendations to DES, SOLAS and IBEC in relation to the Regional Skills Fora.

Guidance Forum attendees suggested the following:

1. Guidance representative on Regional Skills Fora with role to represent and disseminate to wider guidance sectors.
2. Much work will need to be completed with employers to ensure they understand requirements and entry levels.
3. Public media rethink – e.g. Irish Times publication of schools does not list progression into PLC courses or apprenticeships or ETB courses. A rethink at regional level of the role of guidance.
4. Remember guidance is not just provided in schools but in FET, PLC, AEGI, prison services, Higher Ed Universities and 10 Institutes of Technology.
5. There is a need for clarification of funding and resources for the work of Regional Skills Fora and also guidance resources at regional level, i.e. school hours guidance, FET/AEGI/PLC guidance provision, career service in Higher Ed.