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## National Forum on Guidance

*The National Forum on Guidance (NFG)* met on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2017  
in the Clock Tower, Department of Education and Skills.

Attendees included representatives from IGC, AONTAS, AEGAI, DES, TUI, National Youth Council, Youthreach, DSP, NAPD, SOLAS, AHEAD, ACCS, Ballymun Job centre, Local Employment Support Network, NEPS, TCD, DCU, UL, Careers Portal and QQI.

The theme of discussions was “Data Gathering in Guidance and for Guidance”. This theme reflected the “Action Plan for Education 2017” which includes reference to “strengthening guidance counselling” and particularly Objective 1.1 - Action 10 “DES will work with the NCGE to gather data on how guidance resources are currently allocated in schools...”

Presentations with opportunities for questions and answers were followed by facilitated group discussions and a feedback session.

### Presentations:



1. Show me the evidence! Considerations for practice and policy in Ireland  
**Dr Lucy Hearne**, School of Education, University of Limerick



2. An application of data gathering within guidance – A Swiss model.  
**Andrea Eller**, KBSB/CDOPU - the board of the Swiss Conference of vocational, academic and career counselling directors

### Group discussions were facilitated to discuss the following 2 questions:

1. How can what you have heard in the presentations inform data gathering systems in guidance?
2. How can guidance data be used to:
  - a. Inform public perception?
  - b. Inform policy for guidance locally / regionally / nationally?



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Each table of attendees was asked to consider, discuss and note their responses to the 2 questions above and the following outlines their responses:

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE RESPONSES FROM THE DISCUSSION GROUPS AND REFLECT THE VIEWS AND OPINIONS OF THE ATTENDEES THEMSELVES.

**Q1. How can what you have heard in the presentations inform data gathering systems in guidance?**

*It can inform by highlighting:*

- the need for recording both hard data and soft data and the challenges of doing so
- the need for recording 'useful' data
- the need for recording evidence based data
- the fact that it can lead to greater interdepartmental support
- how / where it can potentially be collected
- who best engages in its collection / collation (including outside of service / other stakeholders incl. clients)
- that it needs to be relevant, timely and focussed
- that it needs to be encompassing (it needs to take account of different audiences)
- that it needs to be integrated (data should be gathered in such a way that it allows for cross sectoral comparison)
- the fact that data gathering is complex
- the need for planning to ensure that the data reflects a suitable range of issues
- the consideration of core vs discretionary issues – opportunity to protect confidentiality of student / client
- the fact that often barriers to accessing services a big problem
- what the actual purpose is of data gathering, for whom and why?
- the fact that data gathering needs to be driven by a guidance agenda and not be fragmented or perceived to be so
- the need for caution around categorization of service beneficiaries
- the fact that data is not just numbers – stories and case studies – people remember stories.
- the need for resourcing guidance provision appropriately
- the need for individual tracking (longitudinal)
- that sharing information is critical
- that data gathering should be part of and build on and within existing frameworks
- that any system needs to be appropriate, sustainable and user friendly
- that it needs to be perceived to be of value by all stakeholders



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**Q2. How can guidance data be used to:**

**(a) Inform public perception?**



- it can help define 'guidance' today and provide value and recognition
- it can aid in ensuring that guidance services are delivered fair & equally
- it can aid in identifying formal v informal, qualified and unqualified provision and subsequently aid increasing the standard of delivery to the public
- it can assist in strengthening the case for guidance to be recognized legally as a profession
- it can inform trends, for example emerging trends in career paths
- it can challenge and inform public general perception on guidance (empirical reference pts)
- it can help further conceptualize the complexity of what it is to be a human being
- it can assist in demonstrating effective outcomes and therefore publicly justify public investment
- it can help identify to service users the function and role of guidance and increase its visibility to the public
- it can further clarify the role and scale of work involved in the profession
- it can demonstrate how guidance interventions make a positive impact within society
- it can assist in shaping people's expectations
- it can be leveraged in generating positive messages around guidance

**(b) Inform policy for guidance locally / regionally / nationally?**

- it can help develop an interdepartmental approach that will assist in the further recognition of guidance
- in the context of limited resources can be used to make the case for guidance
- by stressing that data should not always be national – that local and regional collation has effective value for their specific context
- it can contribute to strategic planning in the relevant service and organization
- it fits into a 'bottom up' approach to shaping and evaluating provision for feed back into national policy development
- it can become a lobbying tool to inform policy
- it is a way of sharing best practice
- it can inform CPD
- it can positively inform legislation (require guidance interventions in law)
- it can assist in the appropriate deployment of resources – allocation of time etc.
- in a school context it can assist in the development of a whole school guidance plan



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**Agreed outcome of discussions:**

It was agreed that NCGE will use this information and feedback as part of the basis for discussion with DES and The Minister in the context of developing a data gathering framework under the "Action Plan for Education 2017"

NCGE were very pleased to have had The Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton TD attend and highlight the important role that guidance has in the educational experience. The Minister made particular reference to the importance of data gathering.

*'I welcome the work the NCGE is doing with my Department to seek to examine the impact and usage of the restoration of guidance posts to schools 'outside of the quota'. It is important that we are able to measure the results and impacts of our actions, to ensure that the best use is being made of public resources committed to this area. There is also an opportunity to learn from best practice. I note that the theme of the forum today is 'Data Gathering in Guidance and for Guidance' and I welcome the shared importance attached to this issue'*

**He also expressed his understanding that:**

"It is important that we start to think about evidence gathering I am equally conscious that those at the coal face worry about the 'bean counters' who might impose very rigid measurements on them. In the ideal environment what we are trying to do is to set some core measures that are important in every school or sector but also have the flexibility that people can choose their own measures relevant to their unique setting"



**NCGE is pleased that The Minister is encouraging further national dialogue on the need for up to date data, both quantitative and qualitative, to inform national policy.**

**For more information about the National Forum on Guidance, please contact NCGE directly.**

**Ph.: 01 8690715 or e-mail: [ncgeinfo@ncge.ie](mailto:ncgeinfo@ncge.ie)**