



NCGE AEGI Activities Summary Report 2015

Quantitative and Qualitative Reports

The Adult Educational Guidance Services are based nationally in the 16 ETBs and WIT. The Services are now funded by SOLAS under the FET budget for ETBs.

SOLAS also funds the NCGE to provide supports to the AEGS, and to provide reporting mechanism for qualitative and quantitative data gathering to support FET guidance planning.

This summary report informs the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and SOLAS through the National Centre for Guidance in Education on the work of the 39 Adult Educational Guidance Services (AEGS) for the year ending 2015. It provides both qualitative and quantitative data on service provision. These reports are generated by the AEGS twice annually and demonstrate how client feedback informs practice, how the AEGS prioritise planning in their respective services in order to more effectively support government policy objectives of increasing employment and reducing unemployment. Furthermore, the report focuses on the collaborative relationship between the AEGS and other key stakeholders, in particular the DSP (Intreo) services, where activation for the long term unemployed and young unemployed people is prioritised as outlined in the Pathways to Work strategy 2012-2015¹, the Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS,2014)² and Enterprise 2025³.

The report, through its qualitative and quantitative data, demonstrates how the AEGS continue to strengthen quality assurance and evidence base in keeping with the ELGPN Quality Guidelines 2015 which recommends a focus on 5 key elements of quality assurance for guidance services:

- Service Provision and Improvement
- Practitioner Competence
- Citizen/User Involvement
- Cost Benefits to Governments
- Cost Benefits to Individuals

Finally, the report details areas of professional development identified by practitioners and provided by NCGE annually.

Notably, the report reflects the AEGS engagement with other cohorts of people who, although not classified as unemployed jobseekers, have the potential and desire to play a more active role in the labour force. These people who are in the prime of their working lives are in receipt of one parent family payment (OFP), disability payments, carers allowance and are, in effect, excluded from the labour market. The AEGS through their guidance intervention and teaching of career management skills enable this cohort to stay in contact with the active labour market, thus minimising future

¹ Pathways to Work strategy (2012-2015)

² Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS,2014)

³ Enterprise 2025

welfare dependency and supporting social inclusion. This valuable approach will ensure that nobody is left behind in the economic recovery and Ireland's workforce is not just fully employed but is equipped to respond flexibly to the demands of a growing economy as is mirrored in the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities (2015)⁴ the Pathways to Work strategy 2016-2020⁵, the Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS, 2014)⁶, Enterprise 2025⁷, the National Skills Strategy⁸ and the new Action Plan for Jobs⁹

The report highlights the strong advocacy role of the AEGS practitioners within the local and national community. It details areas of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as identified by the AEGS practitioners and it highlights areas of good practice through representation of practitioners' work using case studies. The case studies detail the unique client/practitioner relationship which is central to the whole guidance process, they demonstrate the creative, collaborative and innovative practice of practitioners in their response to the government's agenda on economic recovery. They confirm that appropriate referral to education and training programmes within the ETB sector will strengthen learner participation, maximise retention rates and increase progression to education, training and employment opportunities.

Furthermore, the report highlights barriers to participation in education, training and employment, particularly in rural Ireland where lack of transport and prohibitive childcare costs continue to impact on people's ability to engage.

Significantly, this report demonstrates that the AEGS are engaging with the target groups as identified in the White Paper, (Learning for Life 2000)

Adult Literacy

VTOS

Community Education

BTEI from 2002

The unemployed (Activation Priority), identified as part of the Government's activation agenda and the long-term unemployed cohort continue to be prioritised and supported by the AEGS and the report shows that the delivery of quality guidance to this group is proving effective, efficient and sustainable. In addition the report confirms that protocols established at local level between the AEGS and the DSP (Intreo) services are working very well and referrals from case officers in the DSP (Intreo) services are on-going. Moreover, the report identifies all AEGS service beneficiaries including:

- Early school leavers 16-18 year olds, which continue to be a priority for government
- Disadvantaged men, including those experiencing rural isolation
- Disadvantaged women who have particular experience of barriers to participation
- Lone Parents and others with caring responsibilities that may prohibit their participation in full time courses
- Those not in work but not eligible to be on the Live Register

⁴ Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities (2015)

⁵ Pathways to Work strategy (2016-2020)

⁶ Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS, 2014)

⁷ Enterprise (2025)

⁸ National Skills Strategy

⁹ Action Plan for Jobs

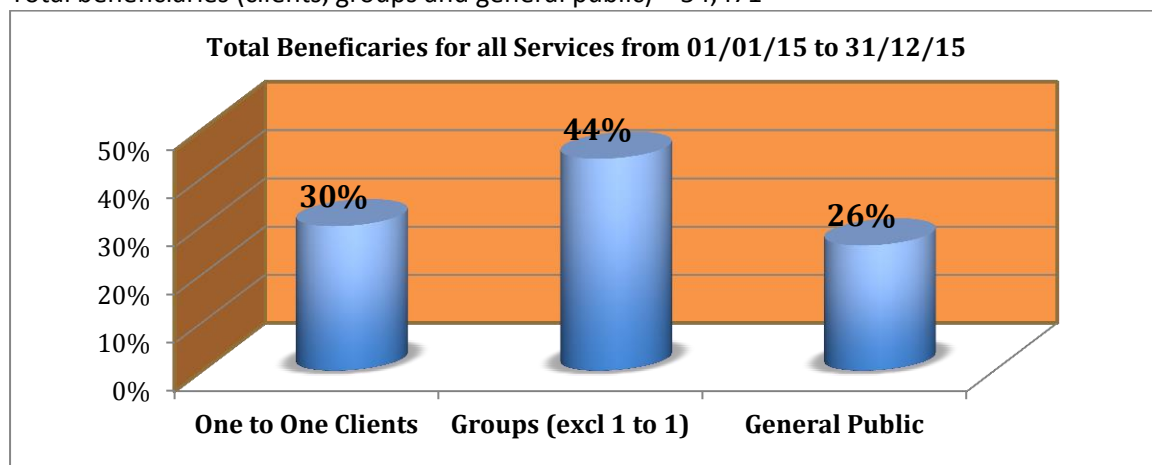
QUANTITATIVE REPORT

The NCGE Adult Guidance Management System (AGMS)¹⁰ data base provides statistical data on all aspects of service delivery and all data are available on request. This report focuses on key areas and presents the following analysis:

1. Total Beneficiaries for all Services from 1/1/15 to 31/12/15

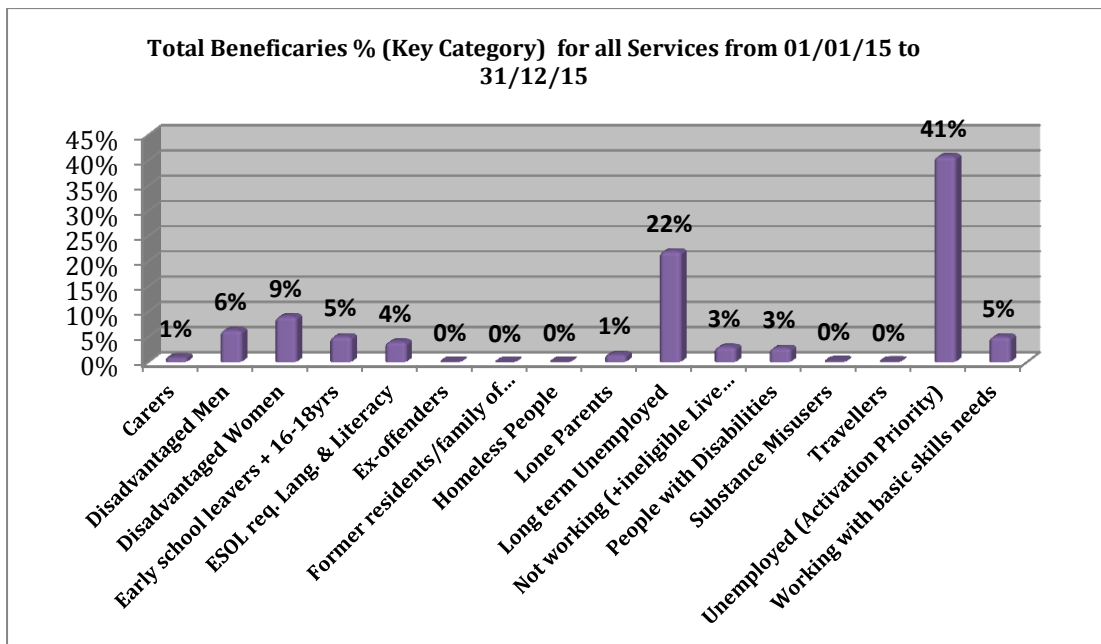
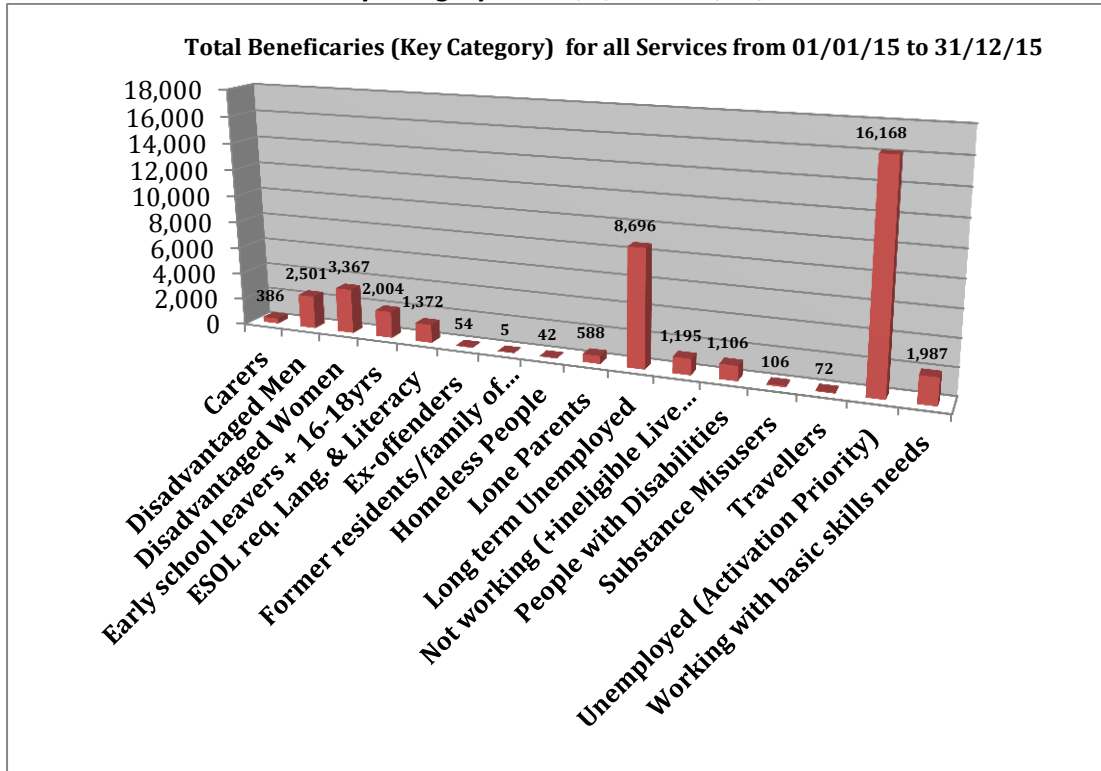
NCGE AGMS statistical report for the period January 1st 2015 to December 31st 2015 shows that the AEGS nationally had a total of **54,471** beneficiaries. 30% of all beneficiaries had one to one guidance intervention, 44% of all clients benefited from guidance in 'group' and 26% presented as general public, availing of the guidance information service.

Total beneficiaries (clients, groups and general public) = 54,471



¹⁰ The AGMS was funded by DES, and now SOLAS, to support data gathering and guidance planning at local AEGI, ETB level and at national level in NCGE, DES and SOLAS

2. Total Beneficiaries for Key Category from 1/1/15 to 31/12/15



The bar charts above show that 41% of the **54,471** AEGS beneficiaries were the Unemployed (Activation Priority) 16,168, while 22% were in the Long term Unemployed category, 8,696.

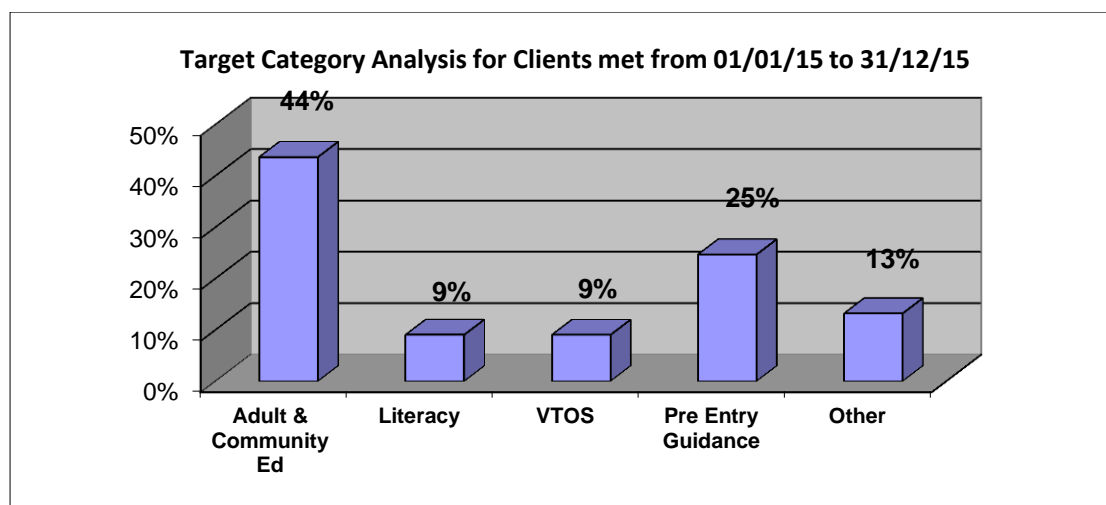
Significantly, disadvantaged women comprise 9% of the **54,471** total beneficiaries, a strong indicator of the traditional barriers to re-entry into education experienced by women. Disadvantaged men account for 6% of the total numbers while early school leavers total 5% of all beneficiaries. It must be noted that there are overlaps in some key categories, for example while lone parents account for

588 of the total numbers and those working with basic skills account for 1,987 these figures are also reflected in the 'unemployed groups'

Another statistic worth noting is the 4%, 1,372 ESOL students who require language and literacy skills, the 3%, 1195 individuals who are not working and ineligible for the Live Register and the people with disabilities who represent 3%,1,106 of total numbers.

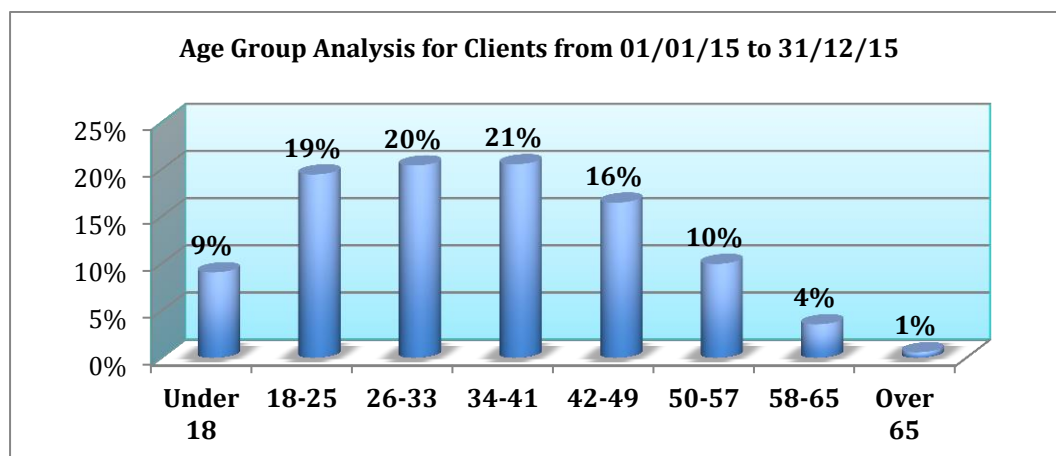
3. Target Category Analysis for clients from 1/1/15 to 31/12/15

The bar charts represent the traditional key categories as identified in the White Paper, (Learning for Life 2000). Adult and Community Education (which now includes BTEI and non-formal community education) accounts for 44% of the **54,471** total beneficiaries, Literacy and VTOS each account for 9% of the total numbers and Pre-Entry Guidance at 25% reflects the numbers who initially access the guidance service via the Information Officer and then follow up with referred guidance appointments.



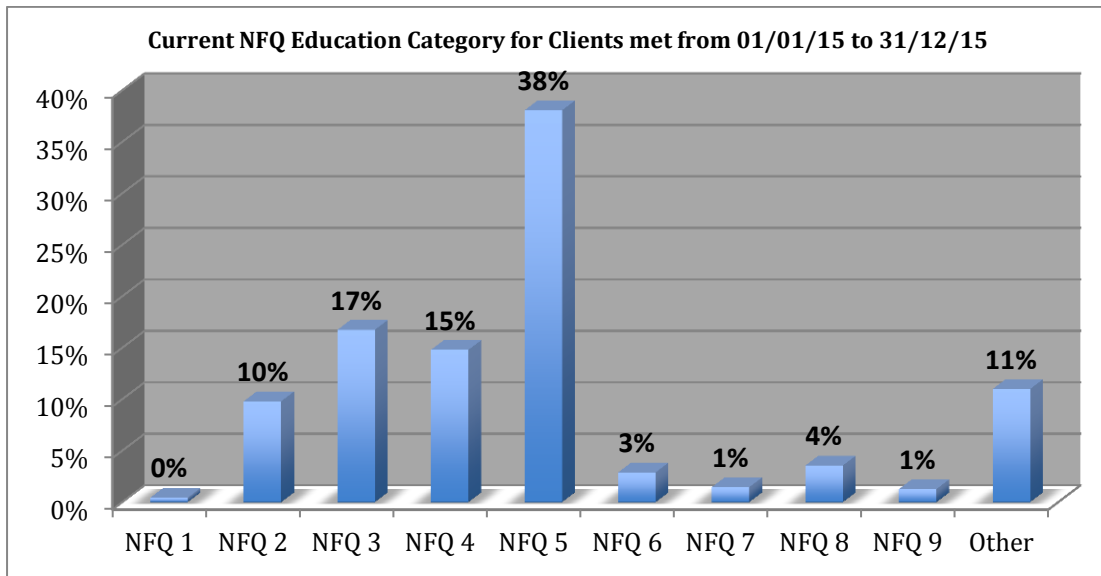
4. Age Group Analysis for Clients from 1/1/15 to 31/12/15

The bar chart shows that 67% of all beneficiaries who accessed the AEGS were between the ages of 25 and 57 while 28% of all beneficiaries were under the age of 25.



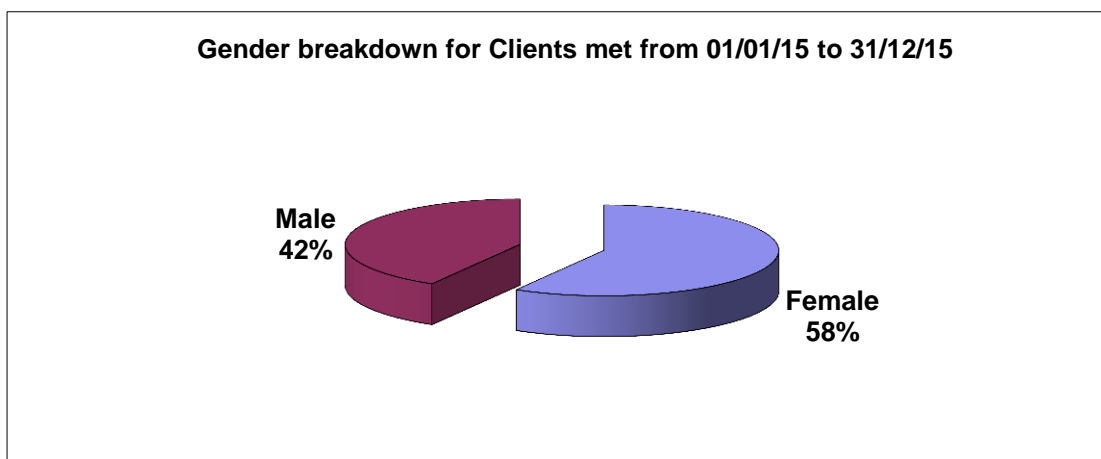
5. Current NFQ Education Category for Clients from 1/1/15 to 31/12/15

The bar chart highlights the education level of clients accessing the AEGS and reveals that 38% of the **54,471** total beneficiaries present with NFQ Level 5 while a staggering 42% of clients present with less than NFQ Level 5. Significantly, 17% of clients have NFQ Level 3 and 10% present with NFQ Level 2.



6. Gender Breakdown for Clients from 1/1/15 to 31/12/15

This pie chart shows that 42% of all clients accessing the AEGS in 2015 were male and 58% were female.



QUALITATIVE REPORT

The AEGS provide a professional, quality assured, guidance and information service to adults who are returning to education or training. The service is delivered at pre-entry, entry, pre-exit and follow-up stage. Clients comprise, for the most part, the unemployed (Activation Priority), the long term unemployed including the young unemployed, disadvantaged men, disadvantaged women, early school leavers, those working with basic skills and ESOL students. (see Graph 2 above)

The AEGS also engage with community groups, carers, people with disabilities, lone parents, travellers, substance misusers and people who are not working but not on the Live Register.

Guidance is delivered on a one to one basis or in group depending on the situation and requirement. The AEGS Co-ordinator liaises with the local course co-ordinators (e.g. VTOS, BTEI, ALO) to identify the needs of the group and to plan the scheduling of the guidance delivery as appropriate.

Qualitative data indicates that guidance with 'groups' takes many forms depending on the intervention that is needed. Factory employees facing redundancy are provided with workshops on CV preparation, networking and proactive job-search skills. ITABE groups benefit from confidence building and belief workshops. Induction and study skills form the basis for the work with the incoming NFQ Level 3 and Level 4 groups. CAO workshops are provided annually for learners progressing to higher education. The AEGS deliver group sessions on a myriad of topics including:

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Motivation
- Educational Experiences / hopes
- Vocational experiences / hopes
- Decision making
- Education system
- Personal goals (outside but including skills base)
- Information and Advice
- Guidance input to initial Literacy Tutor Training

DSP provides initial guidance intervention to their clients in the DSP (Intreo) as per Interim Protocols. Referral is made to AEGS for more in-depth guidance which is provided at the request of the client or the referring case officer.

Clients' needs are central to the whole guidance process and client feedback informs service provision. Qualitative data suggests that there has been a notable shift in what clients are looking for from the AEGS. During the years of economic decline, clients' primary focus was on accessing third level education, now the AEGS report that there is a clear demand for a more targeted approach to securing employment. Clients are looking for more labour market related opportunities, skills enhancing courses, assistance with CV preparation, social media and interview skills. The AEGS have responded by providing workshops on LinkedIn, mock interviews, CV preparation thus ensuring that clients are equipped with key enabling skills so they can reach their full potential in a fast changing world.

The AEGS have further responded by advocating to their ETBs for locally and regionally adapted, labour market-relevant courses that will enable clients to secure sustainable employment.

Furthermore, the AEGS continue to forge links with their local employers through the Skills for Work programme, DSP Employers Week, and Recruitment agencies in order to ensure a flexible suite of educational and training opportunities is available to meet the needs of individuals and employers.

The launch of the Regional Skills Fora is welcomed by the AEGS as this collaborative approach will enhance the quality of engagement with all the relevant stakeholders, SOLAS, ETBs, DSP, LEOs and employers, who together will meet the challenge of reintegrating the unemployed into the workforce.

Priority planning is critical to the effective delivery of the AEGS and planning on service provision is dictated by the prevailing economic climate. There are still 150,000 on the Live Register for more than 12 months. Critically, 60% of these people have been unemployed for three years or more, of whom about 70% are males aged over 25¹¹.

AEGS quantitative data shows that 42% of all clients for the year ending 2015 were male and 67% of all clients fell into the 25-58 age bracket. Coupled with this, 42% of all clients had less than upper second level education (Level5), with 38% at level 5 on the NFQ.

The likelihood of unemployment correlates with the level of educational attainment as was evidenced during the economic recession when the unemployment rate for people with lower secondary or less education was 15.7%, compared with 10.8% for those with higher secondary and 5.1% for those with higher education honours degrees¹²

Access to appropriate education and training is therefore key to reducing unemployment levels. While the AEGS acknowledge that every individual has a responsibility for their own skills development and career management, they also recognise that the long term unemployed need more support in accessing education and training opportunities.

Guidance intervention and skills development for this cohort remains a priority and the AEGS have been working collaboratively with the DSP (Intreo) to help reintegrate these groups into the labour force. Group guidance in the Intreo offices, followed by intensive individual guidance forms the initial approach with individuals, in order to establish where they are on the NFQ and where their skills deficits lie.

Confidence building is crucial for this cohort and is therefore integral to all course planning. Flexible, tailor made courses are then offered through the ETBs under BTEI provision. DSP (Intreo) works in tandem with the ETBs' AEGS to ensure that the unemployed person is on a career path appropriate to his needs.

Youth unemployment was also a strong feature of the recession and while the level of youth unemployment appears to have stabilised, it remains high at 19.5%. AEGS quantitative data shows that 28% of all clients accessing the services for the year ending 2015 were under the age of 25.

The Youth Guarantee for the 18-24 year olds, who are unemployed for a period of more than four months, is an offer of training, education or work experience. This programme is being rolled out in a number of ETBs with the combined co-operation of the AEGS and the DSP (Intreo).

Again, qualitative data confirms the collaborative on-going work between the ETBs AEGS and the Intreo services to prioritise support and improve employment outcomes for this group. A number of AEGS are working directly with the DSP (Intreo) in responding to the needs of the young

¹¹ IRELAND'S NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY (2025)

¹² IRELAND'S NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY(2025)

unemployed and in implementing the Youth Guarantee, The Pathways to Work 'Implementation of the EU Council Recommendation for a Youth Guarantee' 2013 (Ireland)¹³

The AEGS are central to the whole process with the approach being one of partnership with the young person where the young person learns to accept responsibility for his career management.

Qualitative data reveals that this has not been an easy process and the younger long term unemployed client is proving challenging. Issues around childcare, and transport in rural areas were highlighted as barriers to participation. One service reports that while guidance intervention is key at all stages of the process, equally, suitable practical course provision is crucial in order to retain this cohort in learning. Collaboration with all stakeholders, SOLAS, the ETBs, DSP (Intreo) is central to the integration of the young unemployed. The approach has to be multifaceted in order to ensure the desired outcome.

CASE STUDIES

The work of the AEGS practitioners is mirrored in the qualitative data, in particular the case studies, which demonstrate all elements of a holistic guidance process which serve the individual to reach his full potential in life. Collaboration and partnership with all key stakeholders are central to good practice and the case studies will reflect this approach and indeed the pivotal role the AEGS play in linking all agencies together for the benefit of the client.

The following four case studies from AEGS practitioners highlight good practice and the quality of the client/ guidance counsellor relationship. Furthermore, the case studies demonstrate the vital role of the Information Officer in providing up to date accurate quality assured information in the area of education and training. They also confirm that 'strengthened guidance, close to the provision of education and training, can be important in supporting young people in these decisions'¹⁴

The 4 Case studies are presented with the permission of the AEGS Services in Monaghan, Kilkenny, Longford and Cavan. Identifiers have been removed or replaced to preserve the identities of those involved.

Case study 1

Co Monaghan Adult Educational Guidance Service

Co Monaghan Adult Educational Guidance Service is a typical example of collaborative practice. When the national media announced the upcoming closure of a large factory in Co Monaghan, the town's population was shocked. The majority of staff had worked there since leaving school and their children frequently secured summer employment there. Working conditions were described as excellent. This was a huge blow to a county which already suffered high unemployment.

This case study illustrates the creative and innovative work of the AEGS within the community. Furthermore, it shows how the AEGS is the conduit building links with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that high quality services are delivered to the unemployed.

¹³ Pathways to Work 'Implementation of the EU Council Recommendation for a Youth Guarantee' 2013 (Ireland)

¹⁴ Pathways to Work 'Implementation of the EU Council Recommendation for a Youth Guarantee' 2013 (Ireland)

Within a few days of the closure announcement the guidance counsellor met with management of the factory to show support and concern for the workers. She outlined how the guidance team might provide guidance and information to staff, whatever their level of education. Over the following weeks the AEGS delivered presentations to 140 staff members, liaised with Skills for Work staff and helped to organise classes both on-site and in the local learning centre; provided ongoing lunchtime drop-in sessions on site; offered one-to-one guidance appointments (facilitated by HR manager who released staff to attend during working hours); assisted with CV and interview skills. The guidance service also provided support and guidance counselling to individual staff members, some of whom had worked their way up to supervisory level but had very little formal education. Throughout the pre-redundancy and post-redundancy period the AEGS regularly advocated on behalf of workers with DSP.

There were, of course, many challenges to overcome:

- Gaining the trust of management and staff initially
- Recognising and responding to the needs of the individuals in groups, for example, the wide age range 26-65 and level of education within each working group
- Timing of supports was critical.
- Encouraging staff to participate in Skills for Work classes was key. Initially management had left a box in the canteen for people to put their name in. After 2 weeks there were only 5 names in the box. However, following the guidance presentation 78 people signed up for classes.
- Helping staff to see the possibility of a new beginning
- Helping them to recognise the employability skills they already held but were taking for granted
- Encouraging the 'older' staff members to participate in classes
- Providing 'out-of-hours' guidance in order to facilitate people to attend one-to-one appointments
- BTEA changes - By receiving jobseekers benefit with the factory closing in May, people were hoping that getting on BTEA would secure them for their year at college. However new changes in BTEA meant that some would be reassessed during their time on the course and would lose BTEA if they were now ineligible for a job seekers allowance payment

Key Outcomes

The outcomes were effective in terms of an improved service provision across all organisations, greater partnership with employers, enhanced progression opportunities for clients, greater awareness of the Skills for Work programme for employers and staff.

Social inclusion is a key determinant of general welfare and well-being and Co Monaghan AEGS ensured that this community had the necessary supports to optimise their re-entry into the labour force:

- Management were very welcoming and grateful for the supports offered by the guidance team and by the adult education service in general.
- They provided a space at the factory for meeting groups and clients whenever needed
- Being there from the early stage (pre-factory closure) was key, because by the time of the actual factory closure staff were already participating in classes, some had made applications to college, some had found work with the assistance of CV preparation and mock interviews.

- Following on from the Skills for Work programme (which finished within a few weeks of the factory closing) the ETB provided a 'Learning to Learn' programme throughout the summer months, and some office admin modules through BTEI.
- A number of ex-workers are currently doing NFQ Level 5 in Healthcare Support locally
- The quick and ongoing response by the guidance service was recognised and appreciated by management and workers at the factory.
- Clients have regularly reported that the information and supports they received in those first few weeks and months helped them to see possibilities and prevented them from becoming depressed
- In the week that the factory was officially closing, some clients reported that they were so busy doing assignments for their classes that they hardly noticed, and were surprised by this.
- A lot of students progressed from the Skills for Work and the 'Learning to Learn' module into the local PLC College and are enjoying their courses.
- The timing of the actual closure of the factory (May) made it possible for people to apply to PLC. The announcement in January made it possible for the guidance counsellor to assist some staff with CAO applications. This prevented people having to wait another year to apply to college.

Case study 2

Co Kilkenny

This case study will demonstrate how the AEGS use active inclusion as a guiding principle when working with people with disabilities, who are not currently active in the labour market as outlined in Pathways to Work 2016-2020. Active inclusion is a European and Government priority and is supported by education and training policy. It means enabling every citizen, including those experiencing barriers to the labour market(for example, people with a disability, early school leavers or those with lower levels of skills) to fully participate in society; to access a range of quality services including education and training; and to have a job¹⁵

Moreover, the case study highlights the significant role the AEGS and the FET sector play in helping people to lead fulfilling lives, supporting some of the hard-to-reach individuals and groups to achieve their potential and reducing the costs to society of exclusion.

Joan (not her real name) was in her middle 20s when she was referred to the Adult Guidance Service. She had been unemployed for nearly 10 years year's and was on a social welfare payment during this time. She suffered from epilepsy and had developed a high level of anxiety in relation to her condition and managing everyday living. Her life included frequent visits to the hospital, medical appointments and the management of medication, all of which were negatively impacting on her well- being and her educational and career progression. When Joan started working with the Guidance Counsellor it became clear that she was very frustrated and depressed with her current situation. While she had potential for progression, she was also suffering from low motivation and fear of moving forward due to health and emotional difficulties.

The Guidance Counsellor approached Joan's situation holistically and both client and Guidance Counsellor agreed a plan of action with regard to moving forward. This plan attempted to deal with Joan's issues on a number of levels and from a number of different angles. Joan was referred to the personal development group, organised by the service. This group focussed on enabling participants to develop coping skills for everyday living. As part of the one to one guidance process, the Guidance Counsellor introduced a career interest inventory so that they could identify areas of

¹⁵ FET Strategy (2014-2019)

educational/vocational interest. They explored a number of educational options that matched Joan's interests and that were available locally. Joan joined a local part time BTEI group in the county and worked towards completing a number of QQI Level 5 computer modules. Staying locally meant that Joan would be given the opportunity to build a positive educational experience and to develop her personal strengths and confidence. This was the first step in Joan's educational journey as an adult learner.

There were a number of key challenges including:

- The client's ongoing health difficulty and her struggle to manage it (including medical appointments and medication)
- The client's inability to participate effectively in education and everyday living
- The client's low level of confidence and high level of frustration and fear regarding educational/career progression

However the AEGS supported the client in recognising:

- The client's potential for educational progression, as she possessed an intelligence and ability to undertake and advance educational experience and level
- The availability of part time education in the client's local area, allowing her to access education without leaving her community
- The availability of a personal development group, which allowed the client to focus on building her coping skills, identify her strengths and deal with anxiety

Once the client engaged with the part time course, this experience enabled her to build her confidence and provided a productive and positive focus in her life.

The client reported the following key outcomes:

- Successful completion of the BTEI part time course and future plans for third level education.
- The client reported a general improvement in her health and well-being and a reduction in the number of seizures.
- The client reported a re-engagement with everyday life which was obvious through her involvement in volunteering in the local family/community resource centre.

Case Study 3

Co Longford Adult Educational Guidance Service

This case study is an example of the key role of the Information Officer in the AEGS. Quality assured information provision is integral to the delivery of a professional guidance service.

The Guidance Service Information Officer attended an Access To Training Group (DSP referred) and the Information Officer gave a presentation on educational opportunities available through LWETB, to a group of young unemployed people. The Information Officer invited those present to call to the guidance service if they had any queries or wished to make an appointment to speak to one of the Guidance Counsellors.

After a period of time, a young non-Irish national from the group presented to the guidance service, to see the Information Officer, to explore the courses on offer through LWETB. The

Information Officer furnished the individual with the relevant information and explained possible progression routes. It emerged during the course of the meeting that the individual had third level qualifications from her own country. The Information Officer advised that she should get her qualification recognised through QQI and helped her through the process. Her qualification was recognised at Level 8 on the NFQ. This resulted in a huge confidence boost for the client who was then ready to apply for courses at a level appropriate to her needs.

There are many challenges working with foreign nationals:

- Language barriers often prevent progression opportunities
- Different cultural norms can impede communication
- Meeting their needs and addressing their concerns on all levels involves a holistic approach with a professional practitioner who has expert and quality assured information and the skills and experience to deal appropriately with the client.

The Information Officer in this service was successful in communicating with the group in such a manner that the client felt comfortable and confident to come into the guidance service. The Information Officer listened to the client and imparted quality assured information. The outcomes for the client as a result of this intervention resulted in:

- Creating awareness around NFQ and QQI for this client and other clients who may have foreign qualifications
- Enabling the client to pursue a course appropriate to her needs and ultimately reach her full potential
- Building client's self-esteem

Case study 4

Co Cavan Adult Educational Guidance Service

This case study is an example of the AEGS working with a group of early school leavers 16-18 year olds in order to develop their personal skills and to support and encourage them to identify their own progression options. It is an example of collaborative practice where the AEGS link the learners with all services within the ETB to create awareness around progression opportunities.

This is a group of young early school leavers working to achieve a full Level 4 QQI award. Many of the group have overcome multiple challenges to engage with the programme. Working with the tutors and course organiser it was agreed that it was important to motivate and inspire the group to work towards their award and also to be aware of all the options open to them after the programme. The Guidance Counsellor:

- Worked with programme tutor in assisting the group to discover interests and to set goals.
- Used this information to discuss possible work experience options to further assist with experiences and options.
- Informed the group of education and training options locally available;
- Organised information sessions with Apprenticeship Coordinator and Contracted programme coordinator
- Arranged and accompanied the group to open day at local PLC. Arranged meeting for group with Guidance Counsellor at PLC where the group were introduced to other services and brought on tour of facility

There were many challenges working with this group of early school leavers:

- Motivating the students

- Encouraging the group to start planning early
- Enabling self-belief
- Overcoming barriers to participation including funding concerns for training options

However, the AEGS were successful in:

- Providing a support network for the students
- Assisting each student to be more aware of the range of services and supports that are available to them and how they can engage.
- Linking students with all aspects of training and education within the FET to facilitate learners in connecting, if they so choose.
- Demonstrating to learners that moving forward is possible despite leaving school early in life.
- Creating awareness around local education and training options, the progression routes offered and understanding of how to access same.
- Helping learners to identify obstacles and assisting them in making a plan to traverse these pot holes on their journey.

Continuous Professional Development

International research indicates that high-quality initial and continuing education for staff involved in direct provision of FET is essential to fostering better learner outcomes. (FET strategy 2014-2019)

The CPD for the AEGS staff is informed by the practitioners themselves, who through reflective practice identify areas of skills development that are essential to the delivery of a quality guidance service in a fast changing economic landscape.

CPD is provided by the NCGE annually, who acknowledging the diversity of the roles within the service, Guidance Coordinator, Guidance Counsellor and Information Officer offer targeted training to suit the various roles. This CPD programme is funded by SOLAS within the NCGE SOLAS grant allocation.

CPD organised by the NCGE is supported by the ETB management who facilitate staff participation. The training for AEGS staff focuses on what they identify, through the appropriate sections of the Qualitative reports, as relevant to their clients' needs and these needs are continuously evolving. In 2015, AEGS staff articulated a need for training in the use of social media, psychometric testing and solution focused therapy.

Additionally, they sought support and up-skilling in areas around mental health, drug addiction, substance misuse, domestic violence and working with people with disabilities. Many AEGS working with the early school leavers 16-18 year olds wanted to learn more about the legal and ethical implications of working with this cohort. Information on skills shortages and links with industry and employers were emphasised by other service providers.

Self-care is critical to the practising guidance professional and guidance counselling supervision is mandated by the DES through the NCGE.

In Summary

- In 2015, there were a total of 54,471 beneficiaries of the Adult Educational Guidance Services nationally, who accessed the services for information, group and 1-1 guidance
- It is clear from both qualitative and quantitative data that the AEGS Model of Guidance works in the best interest of the client and society. The person-centred impartial approach ensures adults

are enabled to make meaningful and sustainable informed educational/ training/ employment choices, thus minimising 'course hopping' and drop out while enhancing individual employability

- Guidance 'group' sessions are tailored to suit the needs of the group as agreed and in cooperation with the course coordinator or tutor
- Embedded well within the ETB structures and in the community with highly developed networks, the AEGS is trusted and well placed to support the active inclusion of the most socially and economically disadvantaged
- The AEGS is the key service working in collaboration with the DSP (Intreo) to reintegrate the long term unemployed and the young unemployed into the labour market
- The AEGS provide guidance and support to those people who are not currently active in the labour force, as outlined in Pathways to Work 2016-2020, namely homemakers, qualified adult dependents, those ineligible for social welfare payments, those with a disability, carers (when caring is complete), lone parents and part-time workers. This allows people to keep in contact with the labour market, update their skills and prepare themselves for future employment
- The AEGS advocate and network with a range of local and national agencies e.g. ETBs, third level institutions, HSE, Probation Service, National Learning Network among others on behalf of clients
- The AEGS continue to strengthen links with local and national employers to identify skills needs in the community
- Guidance provides a cost benefit to the government in terms of economic and social returns (ELGPN 2013-2015)

Considerations for the FET Integrated Guidance Strategy

- The recognition of the AEGS Model of Guidance as the model of best practice to inform further developments within the FET Integrated Guidance Strategy (FET strategy 2014-2019).
- Gathering of appropriate data – quantitative and qualitative – is key to informing guidance planning and service provision.
- The current model of data gathering, for quantitative and qualitative data, developed by DES and NCGE for the AEGI services is accepted by practitioners as a key element of good practice and has been highlighted at EU level as such.
- A review, further development and updating of the data gathering system is essential within the context of the development of the ETB FET Integrated Guidance Services.
- In line with the Strategic Objectives of the FET Strategy, the AGMS provides relevant data twice yearly, which can be used nationally to inform Strategic Goal 3 Quality Provision and Strategic Goal 4 Integrated planning and funding *and* Evaluation of effectiveness.

- A review of the data now required by SOLAS, ETBs and the AEGI/FET Guidance services themselves is essential to inform local, regional and national planning.
- In the implementation of DSP national referral protocols across all DSP services, the qualitative data suggests that protocols are more driven by individuals rather than policy and this should be addressed nationally, regionally and locally.

Finally, the AEGI / FET Guidance Services are continuously working towards the goal to make the FET 'vision' on guidance a reality i.e. that 'everybody who engages with FET, whether employed or unemployed or wishing to engage with FET for the purpose of learning, can access a high quality career guidance, counselling and labour market information service' (FET strategy 2014-2019).

For further information please contact Mary Stokes, Guidance Programme Co-ordinator (FET)
mary.stokes@ncge.ie

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