

Department of Education and Skills
Guidelines for the Integration of Contracted Guidance Staff
Within the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI)
2014

1. Introduction

The Further Education and Training Strategy, published by SOLAS in May 2014 outlines in **Section 10 “Guidance and FET”** that

“all guidance staff employed by ETBs, outside of the current AEGI and PLC structure, would be linked to the adult guidance service to ensure quality assurance of service, reporting mechanisms and access to national supports and continuous professional development programmes”

Designing an integrated approach to guidance provision in Adult and Further Education should ensure the best use and value for money of finance and resources, in terms of supporting adult clients. This is particularly relevant now in the context of the establishment of the new ETBs, SOLAS and the FET Strategy above.

Currently, ETBs provide guidance to learners / potential learners via the Adult Educational Guidance Services and through the employment of contracted guidance staff. The Adult Educational Guidance Service (AEGS) could have up to 4,500 potential clients in their area and one guidance co-ordinator / guidance counsellor to support them. In these circumstances, innovative and co-operative ways of working are essential, especially to provide services to those identified in the Activation Agenda and referred by DSP.

The following provides guidelines, based on current practices, for the integration of these two provisions to

- (i) support and ensure cohesion and quality of adult guidance services
- (ii) allow for maximising of resources within adult education and training in a cost effective way
- (iii) provide an integrated approach to documenting guidance outcomes at local and national level.

2. The AEGI Model of guidance provision-

The staffing model for guidance provision in the AEGI is laid out in the Department’s AEGI Operational Guidelines ¹ and includes an Adult Educational Guidance Co-ordinator/Guidance

¹ http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/AEGI_Operational_Guidelines_2012_FINAL.pdf

Counsellor, additional Adult Educational Guidance Counsellors and an Adult Guidance Information Officer(s) as set out in Department Circulars 70 / 04² and 0015 / 2007³.

The AEGS offers free, impartial, client centred guidance and quality and often tailor-made information to adults, engaging in education and career planning or returning to education. The work of the Services reaches approximately 60,000 people nationally per annum inclusive of pre-entry, entry, on-going, pre and post exit guidance and/or information.

3. The Role of the Adult Education Officer (AEO)

Within the ETB/WIT, the Adult Educational Guidance Co-ordinator reports to the Adult Education Officer (AEO) or the Education Officer (EO) or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or WIT manager as appropriate. The AEO supports both the integration of the AEGS into the Adult Education Services of the ETB, or within adult education by the WIT manager, and the provision of service to the wider community through local networking and partnership.

4. Integration of external contracted guidance staff

Qualified guidance counsellors are employed directly by the ETB on an 'hours only' contract basis and those employed on an 'hours-basis' to a BTEI programme do not currently access the support services and quality assurance mechanisms for guidance provision available to their counterparts within AEGI. Contracted guidance counselling staff are increasingly becoming part of some Adult Education Services however, they may not currently access guidance counselling supervision which is a requirement of AEGI and provided by DES to AEGS and school based guidance counselling staff.

The role of the AEGS Co-ordinator, as designated in Circular 70/04 is to manage and supervise the work of guidance and information staff. It would be appropriate for the "hours- basis" guidance counsellor to link with the AEGS team and work with the Co-ordinator, to ensure quality provision under DES and NCGE national guidelines.

The CPD currently provided by NCGE for AEGS staff can be provided to contracted hours staff, whether by attending regional or national workshops or online webinars etc. Recent NCGE Guidelines issued to AEGI in relation to provision of guidance to 16 and 17 year olds should inform the guidance practice of *all* guidance practitioners across ETBs to ensure adherence to national policy such as Children First Guidelines⁴ etc.

5. Integrating AES "hours only contractual guidance staff" with AEGI

AEGI staff will continue to be employed by ETBs and WIT as per the relevant DES Circulars.

² Circular 70/04, Pay and Conditions for Adult Education Guidance Counsellors and Adult Education Guidance Co-ordinators

³ http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Archived-Circulars/cl0015_2007.pdf

⁴ <http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/Publications/ChildrenFirst.pdf>

Each local AEGS can be required to act as the 'anchor' or base of the guidance provision to that adult education service. Where staff contracted on an 'hours' -basis are integrated into the AEGI, the following model will avoid duplication and ensure quality and accountability. This will reflect a more accurate national and local overview of guidance provision and activity. Guidance Counsellors contracted on an 'hour's basis' by the Adult Educational Services will be managed with the following reporting and support systems in place:

- Reporting to AEO as manager of the AES / equivalent WIT manager, while accessing guidance provision support from the AEGS Guidance Co-ordinator;
- Required to have appropriate and relevant qualifications as recognised by DES (i.e. DES Circular 70/04 re: Guidance Counsellor and Circular ppt 12/05 re Information Officer)
- Guidance activities i.e. client 1-1 meetings and group guidance provision will be documented within AEGI provision e.g. DES / NCGE Qualitative and Quantitative Reporting via the Adult Guidance Management System database. Training can be provided by AEGS Co-ordinator and/ or NCGE
- Work as part of the AEGS team to ensure the best guidance provision;
- Facilitated to access AEGS up-to-date guidance information and resources;
- AEGS may facilitate work shadowing for contracted guidance staff
- Attendance at AEGS staff meetings as appropriate to ensure coherence of approach and adherence to national guidelines
- Attendance at guidance counselling supervision support for each contracted guidance counsellor to ensure maximum benefit to the client.
- The sharing of local networks established within the AEGI nationally;
- AEO / WIT manager will request that contracted guidance staff would make contact with NCGE to ensure appropriate access to relevant resources and supports etc.
- Provision of access for "contracted" staff to NCGE resources and national guidelines for guidance practice e.g. resources; models of group guidance etc.
- Contracted staff will be invited to attend NCGE delivered CPD to ensure quality provision and enhance skills development, peer sharing, peer learning and networking opportunities.

For further information contact

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