Lessons from the
Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot

A focus on
Employment related Career Guidance

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Lessons from the Ballymun Youth Guarantee pilot: a focus on employment related career guidance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context
Youth Guarantee (YG) is an EU wide initiative aiming to provide young people aged under 25 with a quality offer of employment, education and training, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a four month period of becoming unemployed. The European Commission propose that all YG quality offers should be adapted to each individual need and situation. Employment opportunities should be suited to their education, skills and experience, and continued education and training should provide the young person with the skills and experience required for them to find a job in the future. The Youth Guarantee is based on the experience of Austria and Finland who demonstrate ‘that investing in young people pays off’ (p.29)\(^1\).

As a Preparatory Action, the EU funded 18 Youth Guarantee projects across the EU in 2013/2014. The Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee (BYG) was one of the first to be approved. A primary objective of the BYG was to develop an activation approach tailored to the needs of young people in a deprived urban area, pilot it, and extract the learning from it to inform the further development and implementation of the Irish national Youth Guarantee.

The BYG model was developed, and delivered during the period January – December 2014, by an interagency partnership of key stakeholders, including relevant Government Departments and agencies, employer and trade union representatives, education and training providers, local development and youth organisations.

Current Study
The BYG engaged an independent evaluator to assess the development of the pilot as it rolled out in Ballymun. This current study aims compliment that report by providing an in-depth view of the guidance related process used within the BYG, particularly the personalised approach, the guidance model, the quality of offers made and initial lessons learnt.

Guidance Model

\(^{1}\) Employment Policy beyond the crisis: Social Europe Guide, Volume 8 (2014). European Commission
The guidance model adopted by the BYG is a high support model developed by Ballymun Job Centre over many years of service provision which has proven successful for clients with multiple barriers to labour market access. The model consists of a number of steps:

1. An initial assessment of the individuals needs (education, training, skills, personal situation, etc.)
2. A tailored career guidance process – identifying the individuals latent skills, abilities, aptitudes, preferred behaviour style in the workplace, values; and building career clarity, career identity, improving self-esteem and career efficacy.
3. Development of a career plan which includes a career objective, a number of shorter term career goals, and the identification of potential barriers which may prevent progression
4. Implementation of the career plan in a supported and positive way

All BYG participants were offered this high support model as a method of identifying their labour market needs, supporting the development of both human and social capital, enabling progression to a quality offer and securing sustainable labour market attachment.

Methodology

A small qualitative study was undertaken which aimed to examine the guidance model adopted by the BYG (delivered by Ballymun Job Centre), and to use as a comparison the national Intreo service and an alternative model adopted by Swords Department of Social Protection office. The specific aims of the study therefore were to:

- Articulate the purpose/objective of the guidance process
- Describe the nature of the BYG and Intreo guidance process and the approach developed in Swords, including the timing and frequency of interventions, key elements of the guidance process, assessment tools and techniques, experience & qualifications of personnel.
- Assess/evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the various approaches.
- Extract relevant learning to inform the provision of the guidance elements of the national YG

The study was required to be completed within a limited time frame which restricted the methodology to an extent. The main elements of the methodology comprised focus groups and interviews with guidance providers, clients of guidance services, education and training providers and employers.

Summary of Findings

Meeting the needs of young people: BYG

From the consultation process, it appears that the BYG successfully met the needs of young people, specifically in relation to increased employability and enhancement of their prospects of finding employment. During the BYG, clients progressed to education, training, work
placement and employment. These include those clients with very high levels of need. The self-definition of clients was also positively impacted and this is likely to have long-term effects. Overall it appears from the findings that the in-depth model of guidance offered within the BYG has proven effective for young people including those with a high level of need. The elements of the guidance model which appear to contribute to the BYG client outcomes are very similar to those identified by the Eurofound (2012) report into good practice in providing services for the young unemployed.

In order to provide some comparisons with the BYGS model, the implementation of the Swords model and the Intreo approach were also examined. We have to note however that due to time limitations of the consultation process and difficulties in meeting with clients, the accounts below are not as detailed as we would wish.

**Meeting the needs of young people: Swords Model**

The Swords Model is based on a number of interventions with not all applicable to all clients.

1. Starting with a big event “Pathways to Education, Training and Employment Fair”, all clients registered as unemployed in the Swords area were invited to attend and meet with employers and training providers, while also accessing employment related supports such as CV clinics.
2. Clients who did not progress as a result of the “Pathways to Education, Training and Employment Fair” were invited to attend one to one meetings with case officers, where a more personalised approach supported clients in their progression towards employment, education or training.

Some of those progressing to employment did not go through the one to one process, so it is difficult to establish the overall impact of the personal support as distinct from being put in contact with employers at the Big Event.

The lower level of need among the Swords target groups (in contrast to the high need identified in the BYG cohort) must also be considered and the data suggests that that those with lower levels of need were able to ‘self-serve’. Those who engaged in the one to one meetings reported that this approach was effective and for these young people in particular it seems that the setting, the personal rapport achieved and the ongoing support were important elements in their perceived progression.

**Meeting the needs of young people: Intreo Approach**

In the time available to us, we have not been able to explore the Intreo model in as much depth as we would have wished. Nonetheless on the basis of the consultation with guidance providers in the other services looked at, and more especially on the basis of the consultation with young clients, there is some cause to question the suitability of the Intreo model, for this target group. The lack of a client centred approach, the adherence to process
and the early development of the progression plan are not compatible with what the BYG clients noted was beneficial for them.

Key elements of the guidance process identified from the findings

The consultation process identified a number of key elements of the guidance process which were important in ensuring that the engagement with clients was effective. These included:

- **A non-intimidating setting**: it was widely noted by both providers and clients that the setting within which the service is delivered can have an impact on the perception of the client and their ability to participate fully. This may be something to which younger clients are more sensitive.
- **Establishing trust and rapport**: this was crucial to ensuring the buy-in of the young person and enabling them to be motivated and positive about the process
- **Formal needs assessment**: a structured approach to identifying barriers helped motivate and incentivise young people as well enabling them to see how they might address barriers
- **Putting a career plan in place**: the development of career plans, appropriate to the needs and aspirations of clients provided a targeted approach to moving towards positive outcomes.
- **Providing ongoing guidance**: the provision of ongoing, in-depth guidance kept clients motivated and supported and facilitated re-engagement where necessary
- **Referral to a quality offer**: referral to a progression option that ensures a correct fit with the young person and helps them to progress to employment.
- **The team approach** and the element of peer support were important aspects of the service.

In short it is clear that the BYG, Intreo and the Swords approach utilise the same type of process:

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<th>Process</th>
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<th>Swords</th>
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<td>Engagement</td>
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<td>One to One meetings</td>
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However the following aspects impact the implementation of these stages in the process and in turn, their perceived effectiveness:

- **Context**: local intelligence / knowledge, local flexibility
• Approach: how the process is delivered (e.g. quality driven guidance, empathetic staff, client centred approach, focused on supporting the client into employment (as the overall objective), resources available (tools, methods, approaches)
• Staff: who delivers the process? Training, expertise, skill etc.
• Culture of the organisation delivering the service and its orientation (Internally focused/externally focused)

It is important to note that this study has enabled us to look at three approaches each delivering an activation service, whereby the objective is to support unemployed young people into the labour market and reduce their dependence on welfare. The three models take place within a control type context, characterised by rights, responsibilities and sanctions. It would seem that the use of sanctions supports the engagement of young people into the services, but the approach initiated within the service, namely empathy and guidance is the mechanism that retains the individual within the service and supports them into employment. So in that context it is really important to understand that the BYG model worked because of the aspects outlined above along with the disciplined structure of the BYG (in terms of the team, the leadership, the support of the Intreo/DSP team, the sanctions, the objectives / targets to be achieved etc.). Herein lies the challenge for wider scale implementation.

**Recommendations for mainstreaming the BYG**

The recommendations below are based on the findings of this study which highlight the effectiveness of guidance in moving young people towards employment. Within this overall formal model delivered in Ballymun, there is sufficient flexibility to cater for clients with different characteristics such as early school leaving, low level educational attainment, no work experience, history of substance abuse or criminality and so on. The fact that these different levels of need can be catered for within the model should not be seen as a “one size fits all” approach. On the contrary, it corresponds with the Eurofound (2012) good practice guideline of catering for a wide range of needs.

1. The national YG should be based on the objective of investing in young people in order to increase their employability and labour market sustainability in the long-term.
2. The good practice generated by the BYG pilot (in line with Eurofound research) should be noted and replicated at national level.
3. Skilled guidance officers are required to deliver the service. The approach of the guidance officer (which is based on good inter-personal skills and the ability to build rapport) should be an essential prerequisite component of the YGS model
4. The training of staff specifically in terms of Guidance practice is necessary to ensure consistency in the delivery of the service while also allowing for flexibility as indicated by individual needs.
5. A quality driven Guidance model / standard to which the guidance staff can work to is fundamental in providing a structured and systematic approach to the development of personalised career plans.

6. The guidance process should inform the development of a career plan. The content of the initial Guidance meetings should comprise the development of self awareness and self knowledge and this may include the identification of interests, aptitudes and preferred behavioural style. Once the personalised career plan is agreed, support regarding the implementation of the career plan should follow.

7. The frequency of client contact should be relative to the client’s needs: those with high support needs being seen more frequently, while those with lower support needs are seen less frequently.

8. Guidance practitioners should be consulted at local level in the design and delivery of education and training programmes specifically for younger clients, and formal contacts should be maintained between guidance practitioners, the providers of education and training and the clients during participation.

9. Assisting young clients to self-serve by organising Big Events (along the Swords lines) can have the effect of reducing the numbers requiring more in-depth guidance. This model is being implemented in North Dublin. The impact should be monitored in order to determine its relevance at national level.

10. Education, training and work experience options at local level should facilitate young people develop social and human capital. The value of combining work experience programmes with formal accredited training (e.g. TUS and CE) in particular was highlighted as an effective strategy in increasing the employability of young people.

The Ballymun YG pilot demonstrated that local inclusive planning, careful design and committed implementation can generate effective outcomes for a range of stakeholders, most importantly though for the young participants of the initiative. More specifically, the guidance process implemented by the Ballymun YG has impacted on the progress of the BYG participants towards their chosen career area and on their own perception of their employability. This is a significant outcome in terms of sustainability within the labour market and the BYG guidance model contributes towards this in supporting the development of career identity (e.g. seeing themselves as part of the labour market and having a clearly defined role within it), adaptability (e.g. the development of career management skills such as resilience, self efficacy and flexibility) and human and social capital (e.g. improved skills developed through their quality offer and improved social skills, team participation, interview skills).

The extent to which the BYG model is particularly appropriate for disadvantaged clients cannot be fully determined on the basis of this study. The Swords model catered effectively for less disadvantaged clients, many of whom it appears could self-serve. The Big Event approach, in particular, seems effective in acting as a ‘pre-interview’ intervention, potentially reducing the number of clients requiring one to one interviews.
In delivering the pilot, the model in Ballymun replicated those elements of good practice identified by Eurofound in 2012 based on its assessment of interventions to support young people into employment across Europe. In this regard, the BYG pilot can be seen to be an example of best practice in relation to the YG in Ireland. A combination of both the BYG and Swords model would merit further consideration within the context of a national Youth Guarantee for Ireland.
Youth Guarantee (YG) is an EU wide initiative aiming to provide young people aged under 25 with a quality offer of employment, education and training, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a four month period of becoming unemployed. The European Commission propose that all YG quality offers should be adapted to each individual need and situation. Employment opportunities should be suited to their education, skills and experience, and continued education and training should provide the young person with the skills and experience required for them to find a job in the future. The Youth Guarantee is based on the experience of Austria and Finland who demonstrate ‘that investing in young people pays off’ (p.29)\(^2\).

For successful implementation of a YG scheme, the European Commission advises structural reform in most EU member states particularly in relation to training, job-search and education systems. In some countries reform of the Public Employment Services (PES) will be required so as to ensure the provision of personalised advice on labour market opportunities leading to ‘a tailor made concrete offer within four months’\(^3\). Reforms may also be required in apprenticeships and in vocational education and training, so as to ensure the relevance of their content and skill development to the needs of the labour market. Member states are also encouraged to identify and engage those young people most distanced from the labour market, particularly those considered ‘Not in Employment, Education or Training’ (NEET).


As a Preparatory Action, the EU funded 18 Youth Guarantee projects across the EU in 2013/2014. The Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee (BYG) was one of the first to be approved. A primary objective of the BYG was to develop an activation approach tailored to the needs of young people in a deprived urban area (i.e. a model YG), test it Ballymun, and extract the learning from it to inform the further development and implementation of the Irish national Youth Guarantee. The model was developed and delivered by a partnership of key stakeholders, including relevant Government Departments and agencies, employer and trade union representatives, education and training providers, local development and youth organisations.

The model was operational from January 2014 to 31st December 2014. All unemployed young people under the age of 25 registered with (“signing on” at) the local Department of Social Protection Intreo Office were guaranteed access to career guidance/assistance leading to identification of an individual career plan with follow-through to training, education, work experience or full-time employment. Depending on the needs of the young person, steps in the career plan might include personal assessment, job search assistance, skills training, or work experience, but the objective in all cases was to lead the young person on a supported pathway to sustainable employment or further education or training.

During the roll out of the BYG pilot, the Irish Government (in December 2013) submitted to the European Commission a comprehensive plan to implement a national Youth Guarantee, intending to commence its implementation during 2015. A key aim of the BYG however, was to highlight lessons learnt from the pilot and to make recommendations for the national roll out. Alongside this the EU commission monitored the implementation of the national YG plans at both EU and country level and while recognising the significant efforts being made by member states, the Commission made an number of country specific recommendations.

The State of play of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee – Ireland\(^4\) acknowledges that ‘Youth unemployment is severe’ and recommends that the national roll out consider the following challenges:

- The time span within which a quality offer is made to clients, having medium to high probability of exiting the live register, should be reduced from 9 months to avoid potential scarring effects.
- The lack of clarity regarding the quality of offers needs to be addressed.
- A thorough strategy is required to engage NEET clients.

These challenges are important for the national roll out of the YG and pose significant questions for the PES in how they can be addressed and how they can ensure that the

\(^4\) http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1094&langId=en
implemented YG services meet the needs of all young unemployed. The learning from the BYG can provide direction and guidelines for this.

**Public Employment Services - Ireland**

In Ireland the PES is delivered by the Department of Social Protection and by the contracted Local Employment Services Network. However, much change has occurred in the delivery of the PES over recent years in response to the impact of the global and financial crisis on the Irish economy and the labour market. Unemployment rose to a high of 15.1% (2012) with Youth unemployment rising to 31% in the second quarter of 2012. With the PES already weighed down by the increase in claimants, the announcement of a Youth Guarantee at an EU level was welcomed. The Department of Social protection successfully bid for a pilot YG, with the aim being to identify and develop a model of employment support with would specifically meet the needs of younger clients.

As anticipated by the European Commission the Irish PES has undergone significant reform since 2012 and with the introduction of the new Pathways to Work policy (2012), Ireland moved closer to a job search focused activation system and away from the previously passive model of employment supports. In general, labour market activation policies seek to promote work in the labour market, however policies vary in the extent to which they require the unemployed to work for their unemployment welfare (cash) and to the extent to which they enable the unemployed to move towards sustainable quality work in the labour market.

Most Western EU countries favour a human capital-building approach to activation (Brodkin, 2013) of the unemployed as opposed to a workfare approach, although the underlying objective of both is to move unemployed people into the labour market and reduce dependence on welfare. Brodkin refers to activation as a continuum from 'control to enablement'. When supporting a low skill worker, activation through control tends to push people into low skilled and perhaps precarious work rather than enabling the individual to develop the human and psychological capital which may lead to employment offering greater financial security and quality of life. In Ireland the move towards activation of the unemployed can be seen in the application of the Pathways to Work programme and its interpretation at practice level in the Intreo services.

Current policies may need to be adapted to incorporate the lessons identified by the BYG and evidence from outside of Ireland on what works so as to ensure that the challenges as noted by the European Commission are successfully met.
Best practice in Youth Guarantee

A recent Eurofound paper (2012) reports on the analyses of 25 policy measures in nine member states and identified the following guidelines as essential for designing effective policies to support the young unemployed into the labour market. The National Steering Group of the BYG adopted these guidelines and aimed to ensure their implementation in the pilot.

1. Successful policy measures specify their target group and find innovative ways to reach them, for example, by establishing a good reputation or creating a positive ‘brand’ for the measure or working with relevant community groups for hard-to-reach groups.

2. It is important to note that young people vary in their level of labour market readiness and policies have to cater for a range of minor to complex needs.

3. Policy delivery relies on appropriate personnel, who need to be trained and supported.

4. Young people should be set up on a long-term sustainable pathway, for example by providing them with necessary skills and stable employment, rather than low-quality quick fixes.

5. Successful policies offer good quality career advice and comprehensive holistic guidance.

6. Youth employment measures should focus on the client, not the provider, for example by setting up one-stop-shops for young people or by offering tailored, personalised advice by mentors.

7. Inter-agency collaboration and involvement of all stakeholders can be a cost-effective way to implement policies, when the specific roles and responsibilities of different actors are specified.

8. Measures that aim to increase the employability of young people should focus on labour market needs and ensure a buy-in of employers and their representatives.

9. Youth unemployment requires flexible responses, which have to be adapted to economic cycles, whereas social exclusion is a structural issue and has to be addressed consistently.

10. Robust monitoring and evaluation should be used to inform policymaking and development.

As the current study is focusing on the Guidance elements of the BYG, Guidelines 2 – 6 are particularly pertinent and the BYG approach in relation to these guidelines will be discussed in Section 5.

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The relevance of Guidance in the PES and the YG

Guidance plays an important role in supporting employment transitions within the labour market, from school to work, from unemployment to employment, from one job to another. The European Commission’s Agenda for New Skills and Jobs (2012) highlights the importance of Guidance in assisting to develop a workforce which can endure and flourish within a flexible labour market:

‘A clear policy recommendation emerges. Promoting upwards careers, for instance by supporting continuous vocational education and training for all categories of workers, should become an essential ingredient of modern active labour market policy. Employment services also have to care not only for a quick placement but also for sustainable placements with high productivity potential and the prospect of more stable careers. The potential for increasing productivity in employment services, especially in career guidance, through information and communication technologies (e.g. e-profiling based on competencies) is still underexploited.’ (p.26) 

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN, 2014) presents evidence for the important contribution made by career guidance to active labour market policy measures but also outlines that as active labour market approaches tend to fail in their recognition of the contributing structural and systematic factors of unemployment, making the individual accountable for their labour market status, it can be difficult for guidance services to see how they can fit within the PES. However, the ELGPN emphasise that career guidance can ‘enhance unemployed individuals’ direction, purpose and confidence’ (p. 44).

Similar to the Eurofound guidelines, the following factors have been emphasised by Hawthorn & Alloway (2009) as noteworthy for guidance services to consider when working with unemployed clients:

- Services should understand, assess and attend to clients’ needs. This means taking a holistic approach to people’s problems rather than simply focusing on finding a job, and requires strong inter-personal skills from advisers.
- Services need to devote resources to reaching and engaging their target groups.
- Clients need to make clear progress throughout their interaction with a guidance service.
- Staff need to be well-trained and able to empathise with their clients.
- Close relationships with employers are essential for achieving good client outcomes.
- Links need to be made with other relevant support agencies to support appropriate referral.

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• Services need to be well-managed, engage with quality enhancement through a quality-assurance process, and committed to evaluating their impact.\(^8\)

Cedefop (2010) also propose that for Youth employment services to be effective:

• guidance needs to link closely to other agencies with which young people were interfacing

• guidance policies should not simply seek to solve individuals’ crises for them, but rather should empower them by utilising their existing personal resources and developing their aspirations and capacity to work.\(^9\)

Ultimately the purpose of career guidance according to the National Guidance Forum (2007) is to facilitate 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.

According to the OECD Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services.\(^10\)

This definition was adopted by the OECD based on findings from international reviews conducted by the OECD, the European Commission and the World Bank (OECD, 2004, Sultana, 2004; Watts & Fretwell, 2004).

It is important to note that Guidance aims to support individuals in identifying their strengths and limitations, in order to make informed career decisions so as to fulfil their potential. Guidance is about the individual and their journey towards education and training and into employment. The quality of the guidance process is limited to the interaction between the guidance service/practitioner and the client, and what takes place during that interaction. As the client moves towards the end of the guidance process, the ability of the guidance service to control the level of quality weakens due to the education and training options accessed or indeed the work environment being a separate context.

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The continued reference (Eurofound; Hawthorn & Alloway, 2009) to appropriately trained personnel who have the capacity to both empathise with clients and their needs while also providing a quality driven holistic guidance service is further emphasised by Cedefop. The following competencies have been adapted from the Cedefop Panorama “professionalizing career guidance – Practitioner competences and qualification routes in Europe” (2009). Cedefop define the key competences required for effective career guidance practice and propose that guidance practitioners should demonstrate an understanding and practical application of the following:

**Foundation competences**

1. **Ethical practice:** This involves knowledge of codes of practice and ethical guidelines, thinking how to apply standards in day-to-day behaviours, and awareness of legislation.

2. **Recognise and respond to clients’ diverse needs:** This involves gaining knowledge and becoming aware of your own attitudes to cultural differences, discrimination and stereotyping. Knowledge of equal-opportunities legislation and codes of practice is important. Respect for the differing values and world views of others is included.

3. **Integrate theory and research into practice:** This involves taking positive action to develop your knowledge of lifelong career development processes, career guidance theory and practice, and other theoretical fields relevant to your work role. This includes access to recent research and consideration of applying it in practice.

4. **Develop one’s own capabilities and understand any limitations:** This requires a reflective approach to consideration of own capacity and limitations, understanding professional boundaries and appropriate referral, and making use of management and peer support.

5. **Communication and facilitation skills:** Communication requires a range of skills, adjusted and customised to different work settings: listening and attention skills; questioning, probing, supporting and challenging; summarizing and ensuring two-way understanding; group and public presentations; writing; and interpersonal skills.

6. **Use of information and communication technologies:** This involves competent use of various media: telephone and video communication; e-mail and messaging; access to Internet for resources; and use of the Internet for interactions.

**Client-interaction competences**

7. **Undertake career development activities:** This includes building the relationship with the client, to enable the client’s self-understanding, to build the clients’ capability for career management, to explore new perspectives and to form strategies and plans.
8. **Enable access to information:** This involves identifying information sources, assessing the client’s information-handling skills, facilitating access to information, interpreting information and developing the client’s autonomous interpretation of information.

9. **Conduct and enable assessment:** This includes to clarify and to agree the need for assessment, to support the use of self-assessment activities, to administer formal assessment as well as to assess informally and explore options.

10. **Develop and deliver career learning programmes:** This includes designing programmes to meet identified needs, to deliver sessions and activities and to review and evaluate career learning programmes.

11. **Make referrals and provide advocacy:** This involves agreeing the need to involve others, to ensure the willingness and ability to take up referral, to facilitate contact with others and to provide or support advocacy.

12. **Facilitate entry into learning and work:** The main tasks are to agree placement options, to advise on the preparation of personal information for applications, the support of the application process and to promote learning from experiences.

**Supporting competences**

13. **Manage opportunity information services:** This includes identifying information needed for career development activities, obtaining and preparing information materials, classifying and storing materials and reviewing and updating information.

14. **Operate within networks and build partnerships:** This involves to identify a range of networks relevant to the work role and to exchange information with network members.

15. **Manage own caseload and maintain user records:** The main tasks are to create and maintain user records, to use records to support progress and to prioritise use of own time and resources.

16. **Design strategies for career development:** This includes understanding the needs of the target population, to establish aims, objectives and delivery methods for career development activities, to agree roles and responsibilities in delivery and to provide training and development opportunities for people involved in delivery.

17. **Engage with stakeholders:** This involves the identification of stakeholders and the development of the relationship to them.

18. **Engage in research and evaluation:** This includes to create and maintain user records, to use records to support progress, to prioritise use of own time and resources as well as to update own skills and knowledge.
19. **Update own skills and knowledge:** This involves reflecting on practice and plan development activities, to participate in development activities and to apply the new knowledge to the work role.

**The Current Study**

The BYG engaged an independent evaluator to assess the development of the pilot as it rolled out in Ballymun. This current study aims to compliment that report by providing an in-depth view of the guidance related process used within the BYG, particularly the personalised approach, the guidance model, how the guidance process links to the offers made and initial lessons learnt.
Section 2

Career Guidance in the Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee

Why the focus on Career Guidance?

The BYG utilises a high support guidance model to assist clients in developing realistic and appropriate career plans. This model will be defined further on pgs.15-17 in terms of the process and intended outcomes however the rationale for its inclusion in the BYG is important as it provides a context within which to view the BYG.

As part of the interagency approach used by the BYG, the Ballymun Job Centre was invited to provide the specific employment related guidance elements of the model and as a result, much of the guidance approach, methodology and process is based on their expertise in this area. The Ballymun Job Centre has delivered employment related support services to local people since its establishment in 1987. During this time, the organization has developed an approach to guidance which centers on a model of quality career guidance and which uses tools and approaches developed specifically for those disadvantaged in the labour market.

Many jobseekers accessing the services of the Ballymun Job Centre are often not in a position to fulfill their full potential in the labour market due to a lack of awareness of their own interests, specific aptitudes and personality style. This lack of self knowledge can inhibit the client in accessing appropriate vocational training and subsequently fulfilling employment. There is also often a lack of awareness of the options available coupled with a lack of appropriate career guidance, leading to uninformed career decisions often based on the availability of training/education courses.

Career Guidance can provide the client with clarity regarding their employment interests and aptitudes. It can help in identifying areas of employment that stimulates an individual’s interest and can greatly assist clients in making well informed decisions about the direction which best meets their needs.

Furthermore the outcome of the guidance process can play an important role in influencing the design and implementation of quality active labour market orientated interventions such as Momentum and Job Bridge which should aim to meet the needs of the unemployed.
Challenges for the Guidance Model

Ballymun is an area on Dublin’s north side with a population of 16,236 of which 16.6% are aged 15 to 24 and approximately 2,100 or 18% of individuals over 15 are single parents (Census 2011). The area has been characterised as a neighbourhood of high disadvantage, with considerable social, economic, educational and labour market disadvantage permeating since the 1980s. Census data (2011) shows that in terms of key labour market indicators, Ballymun performs quite poorly relative to the national average, with a significantly lower employment rate (44%) and higher unemployment rate (36%) when compared nationally (57% and 19% respectively).

In relation to Youth, their participation rate in the labour force in Ballymun is quite high (46% versus the national average of 30%) largely due to the fact that young people in Ballymun tend to leave the education system much earlier, with 41% having ceased full-time education compared to 33% nationally (Census, 2011). This is reflected in their low level of educational attainment with 88% of young people in Ballymun having at best, Leaving Certificate level. Consequently, the labour force in Ballymun consists of a larger proportion of unskilled/semi-skilled (21% compared to 14% nationally) workers.

A number of factors contribute to the higher levels of unemployment in Ballymun including the low levels of educational attainment, the predominance of unskilled and semi-skilled occupational roles, the inter-generational unemployment, including high levels of jobless households and the complex social issues which persist in the area. The Ballymun Job Centre (BJC) operating within this local context aims to address such labour market needs and provide long-term strategies that have the capacity to increase employability and enable people to compete for more sustainable and enduring employment. The BJC offers education, training and employment supports to all local people who are disadvantaged within the labour market.

The BJC, using a client centred approach, has a strong history of developing innovative initiatives that aim to tackle unemployment by addressing the barriers and needs presented by the clients. Many clients have multiple barriers to employment including low formal education, low basic skills, poor work histories/ long term unemployment, low self esteem/ coping abilities, dependency on welfare, involvement in antisocial behaviour, addictions, criminal histories, early school leaving, disabilities, and mental health difficulties for example. Multiple barriers alongside inter-generational and community impact can result in a high level of vulnerability and marginalisation in the labour market and individuals with multiple labour market barriers tend to be clustered in communities like Ballymun. The BJC therefore provides a wide range of services and activities to help overcome these barriers and support people towards the labour market. One important element in achieving these goals is the Career Guidance service.

Recognition of the needs of marginalised clients including younger clients is an essential component of designing a relevant and appropriate set of interventions which will assist clients into the labour market. Short term interventions will not provide this client group with sustainable labour market choice. A robust profiling of the needs of the young unemployed
informs the development of a range of appropriate interventions which can contribute to sustainable career management.

The Ballymun Job Centre proposed that for the BYG the provision of a more intensive career guidance process to those individuals finding it difficult to progress should form part of the model at a local level, enabling the clients to develop more detailed career plans.

They also recommended that career guidance should be the first step in any training, education or activation process particularly for those who have been unemployed or disengaged from the labour market advising that appropriate career guidance processes in themselves keep the unemployed close to the labour market by providing an opportunity to identify potential, gain self awareness, and build self confidence and motivation.

While they outlined the importance of the guidance process they also highlighted that successful implementation of a quality driven Youth Guarantee model is largely dependent on the skills and approach of staff. Furthermore, to implement the model staff should be provided with the resources to meet the individual needs of the clients.

The model of guidance implemented in the BYG pilot is explained further on pgs 13-16, however, the skill set of staff (qualifications, experience, specific competencies) and resources including robust profiling tools to identify level of need and specific labour market barriers, career guidance tools which identify key strengths (interests, behaviour and cognitive skills), instruments which indicate progressions e.g. Cantrils ladder, and approaches which support the development of career management skills, all resource a quality driven model of guidance practice sufficiently.

**Defining a Quality Offer**

The European Commission (2014) propose that every young person receives a quality offer within a four month period of engagement with a Youth Guarantee process. They define quality offer as the provision of personalised guidance leading to the development of an individual plan resulting in an offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship. Good quality offers should strengthen employability and lead to sustainable labour market attachment and integration. Furthermore, offers should meet the individuals need and should be acceptable to the individual\(^\text{11}\). The quality of an offer should be of a substantive nature such as to be equivalent to an offer of employment and, as such, be an end in itself.

The European Commission’s reference to the potential connection between a good quality offer and strengthened employability and sustainable labour market attachment, is also evident in employability literature. Within this literature a number of employability theories aim to explore and understand the underlying elements of the employability construct which enable individuals to access the labour market. Interventions should aim to further develop these underlying elements and so increase ones employability.

\(^{11}\) European Commission (2014). Frequently Asked Questions on the Youth Guarantee
Within more flexible labour market environments, the concept of employability has been identified as key to career success (Fugate et al., 2004; McArdle et al., 2007). Flexicurity has emerged as an important labour market strategy within the EU, defined by the European Commission as ‘an integrated strategy for enhancing, at the same time, flexibility and security in the labour market. It attempts to reconcile employers’ need for a flexible workforce with workers’ need for security – confident that they will not face long periods of unemployment.’12

Theories such as that proposed by Fugate et al. (2004), define employability as a psychosocial construct consisting of three components; Career Identity, Adaptability, Human and Social Capital:

- **Career Identity** refers to the way in which an individual defines themselves within a career or work context. Fugate et al. explain career identity as a ‘cognitive compass’ which reflects the ‘knowing why’ competencies (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994), based on ones past experiences and self awareness. For individuals who are not yet in employment or who have been unemployed for long periods, their career identity may be vague or uncertain. Interventions which enable awareness of personal values, motivations and career interests (Hall, Briscoe & Kram, 1997) can support the development of career identity which traditionally would have developed within a specific job or organisation over a long period. Career identity is important particularly during periods of transition as it supports the establishment of career goals and career decision making so that career opportunities can be identified.

- **Adaptability** is associated with the sustainability of employment, particularly from the individual’s perspective. It refers to the ability of the individual to adapt and change in response to changes in the working environment. According to Fugate et al. it refers to the willingness, as well as the ability, to adapt behaviours, feelings and thoughts in response to a changing work environment. This would seem to be particularly important for employees operating within a labour market characterised by flexicurity, where career management skills are key to sustained employment. Some researchers have linked adaptability to proactive personality which in itself is connected to feelings of control, self-efficacy, self-direction, coping and seeking out opportunities. Job loss research has identified factors such as internal locus of control, self-efficacy and problem focussed coping as important in the re-employment process (McArdle et al., 2007).

- **Human and Social Capital** refers to what the employee brings with them to the labour market in terms of ability to attend to particular tasks through use of skills, knowledge and expertise (human capital) and their ability to operate within the social environment of work, access to networks, interpersonal relations, communication and emotional intelligence (social capital). Human capital is developed by investing in continuous

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learning and by up-skilling in the workplace, this in turn building employability. Social capital and interpersonal connections have been shown to be important in building one’s self perceptions (Eby et al. 2003) and in providing social support particularly in stressful times (McArdle et al., 2007).

This model allows us to understand the core elements of employability giving us a sense of what type of ‘package’ the individual needs to have so as to successfully access and become sustainable within the labour market. It emphasises the interaction and indeed the interdependence between the three core factors, showing how for example an individual’s career identity can be reinforced through their social capital, and how the development of human capital can strengthen adaptability.

Quality offers, and the process used to identify and incorporate them into a longer-term career plan, would seem from the literature to be a critical aspect of a quality driven YG initiative. Furthermore the capacity of the YG to prepare a young person for a labour market characterised by flexicurity would seem to be an important underlying principle of the European Commission’s YG and the wider European Employment Strategy – the Commission note that member states should see this as a social investment as the costs associated with ‘NOT acting are far higher’.

‘... the long-term costs of unemployment to the economy, to society and to the individuals concerned, such as increased risk of future unemployment and poverty. The cost of doing nothing is therefore very high: the Youth Guarantee scheme is an investment’.13

Varying models of guidance provision

Throughout 2014, a number of different approaches were adopted across the DSP Dublin North Division to support young unemployed clients aged 18-24 into employment. Perceived effectiveness of each of these approaches has been documented in this study in an attempt to assess the value of each approach for the client and for the staff involved in its delivery. Three models of service to young people were examined specifically in relation to the effectiveness and efficiency of their guidance practice.

1. Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee

The career guidance aspects of the BYG was delivered by the Ballymun Job Centre (BJC), a community based organisation providing employment related supports and services to local people since 1986. It was established as a community response to a chronic unemployment situation and since 1996 the BJC has managed the Local Employment Services in the Ballymun area (under contract with Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership and funded by DSP). The BJC believes that people living in the greater Ballymun area have the capacity to realise their labour market potential and can access employment that provides them with a quality of life free from poverty and welfare dependence. The organisation implements models of good practice in employment services which aim to raise the skills, educational levels and labour market aspirations of individuals in the greater Ballymun area. Through this provision the BJC endeavour to provide individuals with greater labour market choice and the opportunity to improve their employability, increase their earnings and reduce their vulnerability to poverty.

Within this context the BJC was appointed by the Department of Social protection to deliver the career guidance aspects of the BYG and were deemed to have a great deal of expertise and skill to bring to the development of a quality driven, outcome focused, Youth Guarantee model. Five LES Mediators (guidance practitioners) were assigned to exclusively deliver advice, guidance and on-going support to the BYG client cohort.

Interagency Approach

The BJC is also the lead organisation in a locally based interagency network EQUAL YOUTH which aims to support young people aged 16-24 who are most distant from the labour market. This initiative was developed in an EQUAL funded project (2005-2007) and has continued at a local level by the key organisations delivering services to young people in Ballymun\(^4\). The EQUAL YOUTH network meet on a monthly basis and work through a case load of clients providing updates on progression and discussing cases which require more targeted support. This interagency approach enables the provision of a continuum of seamless support from career guidance, through education/training interventions and into the workplace. The BJC applied this methodology within the BYG pilot, thereby engaging the EQUAL YOUTH organisations to participate in the pilot and to provide a holistic approach in supporting the participants towards the labour market.

The BJC’s key role within the interagency context was the provision of quality driven career guidance and the use of well proven methods which provide more sustainable outcomes for the client. Over the past number of years the BJC has developed a model of guidance (see Appendix 1), based on tools and methods researched through various EU projects e.g.

\(^4\) Organisations involved in EQUAL Youth include Ballymun Job Centre, Ballymun Community Training Centre, Ballymun Youthreach, Young Persons Probation, Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force, Ballark Community Training Centre, An Garda Síochána, Trinity Comprehensive, Ballymun Regional Youth Resource, and DSP.
EGUIDE, eMERGE. The model consists of a set of clearly defined steps in a guidance process:

1. An initial assessment of the individual's needs (education, training, skills, personal situation, etc.)
2. A tailored career guidance process – identifying the individual's latent skills, abilities, aptitudes, preferred behaviour style in the workplace, values; and building career clarity, career identity, improving self-esteem and career efficacy.
3. Development of a career plan which includes a career objective, a number of shorter term career goals, and the identification of potential barriers which may prevent progression
4. Implementation of the career plan in a supported and positive way

This process is generally implemented on a one to one basis with the guidance practitioner and the client working together to identify key strengths, career identity and learning needs. The outcome of this process aims to increase self awareness, improve self esteem, build career and self efficacy and assist the individual to become more resilient in the labour market. The process also aims to build both the human and psychological capital of the individual. The implementation of a career plan relies heavily on the client-practitioner commitment to the plan and the success of this relies on the client-practitioner relationship. This model therefore is highly dependent on the skills and approach of the practitioner involved in delivering the service. The model also relies on the continuum of support offered by the interagency network so that the client is supported throughout their journey towards and into the labour market. This involves continued support by mentors within the education and training sector and mentors within the workplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools used within the BYG guidance process</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The tools outlined below are available to the Guidance practitioner to be used as and when they are deemed to be appropriate or relevant to the needs of the client.</td>
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</table>

1. **Equal Youth & Emerge Profiling:**

   The profiling tools are generally used during step 1 of the Guidance process (as above). These tools are obligatory and assist the practitioner in gaining an in-depth view of the client’s human capital but also an understanding of their needs, labour market barriers and perception of self.

   - **Time Sheet for YG:** Name, address, PPS, Personal ID: Appointment Date, Appointment Duration (to be completed for each scheduled meeting)
   - **BJC Client Referral Form:** personal details, referral source, educational qualifications, Colleges/Training, Work experience, Work skill summary, Job search details, other information, status, signed declaration
   - **BYG Profile Form**
- Includes all potential barriers: Care of others, Childcare, Eligibility – Social Welfare status, Eligibility – lack of qualifications, Experience – lack of relevant work experience, Family issues, Finance, Health related restrictions, Language skills, Literacy, Personal Disposition

- Identification of most serious barriers

- Competences scale of 1-5: Self awareness, Self belief, Resilience, Recognition of employers needs, Employment motivation, Hope, Adaptability

- Target group recommendation:

Target group 1 (Junior Certificate/equivalent or less and little or no work experience)
Target group 2 (Leaving Certificate/equivalent or some work experience)
Target group 3 (above Leaving Certificate/equivalent or good work experience)

Equal Youth Profile & Planning Statement:

- Personal information

-Education, Training/ Employment Plan: includes an assessment of need scale 1-5: Unemployment duration, Work experience, Qualifications, Basic Literacy & Numeracy, English language skills, Commitment / Attendance, Career Challenges

-Personal Plan: Emotional well-being, Family relationships, Confidence & Expectations, Communication skills, Substance use issues, Risk of offending

-Practical Plan: Accommodation, Income/Benefit, Mobility/Transport, Health Issues.

Equal youth profile & planning document includes Goals to be achieved, Measure of progress, Career Action Plan: Goals, start date, activity, Key worker

2. Career Guidance tools

The following tools are available to guidance practitioners to use as they see fit. Not all clients will benefit from using all tools but may benefit from using elements of relevant tools, based on their specific needs. The objective is to support the client in gaining greater self awareness so that an informed career decision can be made.

EGUIDE: a web based career guidance tool consisting of a number of career guidance assessments (which form part of the EGUIDE Quality Framework for guiding disadvantaged job seekers (BJC, 2007). In traditional guidance processes the practitioner assists the client to become more aware of their Interests, their preferred behavioural style and their specific aptitudes. The EGUIDE tool aims to support the practitioner in this process, so clients undertake all or part of the following:

Interest Explorer: Identification of areas of interest (Task and Environment) which fall into 6 career areas: Realistic, Investigative, Social, Enterprising, Conventional, Artistic
Personality Discovery Quiz: identification of behavioural preferences in the workplace - based on the Big Five Personality Factors Model - Openness, Conscientious, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Negative emotions

Cognitive Explorer: Contains four cognitive sub assessments: Verbal Reasoning, Fluid Reasoning, Perceptual Efficiency, Visual Spatial Reasoning

When complete the practitioner receives the client report from the EGUIDE system and a feedback session is prepared. The practitioner and client discuss the findings from the system and start to narrow down the types of tasks and environments most suited to the client’s strengths and interests. This forms the basis for a career plan.

Manage Your Career (BJC, 2010): A competency framework for supporting clients in the development of career management skills such as resilience, self awareness, career identity, understanding employer needs

Cantrils Ladder: a 10point scale used to measure perceived ‘distance travelled’ towards employability/career goals. This ladder is used at the beginning of the process (normally during the first meeting and again at various key transition points in the guidance process – as deemed appropriate by the guidance practitioner. It can help the client to reflect on their achievements to date and provides a simple way of thinking about distance travelled in relation to achieving their career plan. It can also be used to gather quantitative data on the distance travelled by a group of clients engaging in a process with pre and post scores compared.

Join in a Job (Hafelekar, 2010): a range of worksheets which provide a framework within which to think about work activities, materials, work environments:
- Work activities ‘WHAT’
- Working Materials ‘With WHAT’
- Place of Work ‘WHERE’
- My favourite Jobs

As outlined above, the successful implementation of the BYG model of guidance is highly dependent on the skill set of the guidance practitioners delivering the service. The BJC guidance staff hold at a minimum the Certificate in Adult Guidance (Maynooth University) along with specific training in guidance related approaches and tools e.g. Motivational Interviewing, Level A & B in Psychometric testing (British Psychological Society), Counselling skills, EGUIDE, in order to continuously develop competencies as defined by Cedefop in their Panorama “professionalizing career guidance – Practitioner competences and qualification routes in Europe” (2009) as outlined in Section 1.
The combination of skilled staff, effective tools and a quality framework for the delivery of career guidance aims to ensure that clients receive a comprehensive service.

2. Swords Model

The model delivered in the Swords area was coordinated by the Department of Social Protection local office and operated during the period February 2014 – February 2015. A small team of two case officers and the service manager planned and delivered this programme and were given considerable flexibility, with staff referring to it as a ‘no template’ model.

All unemployed clients under 25s were initially invited to a “Pathways to Education, Training and Employment Fair” which took the form of an integrated approach by local employers, DSP and local training providers and where clients were presented with a wide variety of progression opportunities and encouraged to self-select from those advertised, avail of on-site CV clinics, and other employment related supports. Clients, who were unable to identify a suitable offer from the Pathways Fair, then received follow-up engagement in the form of individual one to one meetings with a dedicated case officer and a personal progression plan was agreed.

On average case workers had 3 to 4 meetings with clients during their engagement. Progression options for the young person included employment (full and part-time, Internships, TUS and Gateway), progression towards employment (further education and training, Back to Education, specific skills training) and Other options (not available for employment or actively job searching).

The case officers in this instance were recruited specifically to work with the under 25 age group as the manager felt that a particular approach was required. The case officers themselves identified that they have different skill sets that complement each other and they worked very successfully as a team.

The Case Officer role description within the Intreo service states that Case Officers will ‘Provide clients with a career development and guidance service to enable them to become job ready and work with them to prepare, execute and monitor a personal progression plan’.

It also specifies that case officers will both case manage clients (including conducting one to one meetings, providing a guidance process, discuss a range of options including Job bridge, Jobs club, Education & training options, amongst others) and provide activation follow up to monitor the implementation of the personal progression plan.

There are a variety of skill sets within the case officer staff of DSP and this can be attributed, at some level, to the merger (beginning in 2012) of FAS, the Community Welfare Services and the Department of Social Protection to from the new Intreo services. This process involved the assimilation of staff of the three organisations into the newly integrated
employment and support service. Many staff, particularly those who moved from FAS to the DSP had a background in Adult Guidance, with case officers in some services using models of guidance to guide and support the services delivered to clients.

One of the most widely used models of guidance is the Ali Graham (1996) model which stresses the importance of a structured framework which at the same time is flexible enough to be adapted to meet the specific needs of individual clients. The model is explained in four phases: a clarifying phase which sets the scene, develops empathy, hears the client’s story and allows initial assessment; an exploration phase; an evaluation phase; and an action planning phase. An important factor in the success of this model is the use of counselling skills as proposed by Culley (1991) and Egan (1998). In fact a variety of skills are required at different stages in the process including those highlighted by Fielding & Vautier (1994:38) who refer to a ‘bank’ of skills including active listening, reflecting, negotiating, making links, questioning, paraphrasing, summarising, immediacy, clarifying, drawing threads and challenging. According to Ali and Graham, using this approach enables the client to move towards a realistic plan of action, while at the same time supporting the client to develop the skills and motivation to continue the process independently. Staff in the Swords service incorporated this model into their guidance practice and utilised a counselling approach in their interaction with clients. The Swords approach is explained further in Section 4.

3. The Intreo Service

The Intreo service delivered in the Ballymun area is one of 44 Intreo services nationwide. It is a new national service from the Department of Social Protection providing a single point of contact for all employment and income supports. It aims to provide a more efficient approach offering practical, tailored employment services and supports for jobseekers and employers.15

Key characteristics of the new service include16:

- Integrated Services/One-stop-shop model: designed to streamline processes for clients
- Case Management/Client Profiling: all relevant client information (education, training, skills, employment experience etc.) is compiled to create a profile of each individual forming the basis for a ‘pathways to employment’ personalised progression plan which is the focus of engagement between the client and Intreo. The Case management approach aims to integrate the system and place the customer at the centre of the service. The client profiling system (PEX) identifies the level of support required by each individual client in relation to their likelihood of remaining unemployed.
- Rights and Responsibilities: clients are informed that along with their right to a payment, comes a responsibility to seek employment and to break their dependency on their payment. If the client does not engage with the process a reduction in, and potentially a withdrawal’ of payments is imposed.
- Engagement with Employers: Intreo endeavours to build and maintain strong, commercially based, relations with employers and private sector recruitment agencies.

• Strong links with education/training sector: strong links are being established with SOLAS - the new further education and skills authority. A formal service level framework agreement, allows Intreo to have input into the identification and selection of courses offered and on the terms and conditions under which its clients can access these courses.

• Control of Fraud: minimising fraud and error in the social welfare system continues to be a key focus and an integral part of the Intreo approach. Client interviews (part of the case management approach) provide an opportunity to assess the client for risk of fraud, complementing the on-going work of the Special Investigation Unit.

The Activation model delivered by Intreo consists of the following elements:

• Case officers operate in a team-based structure along with a support team and are responsible for:
  • Scheduling of Group Engagement sessions based on the client’s profile
  • Follow-on guidance interview (one-to-one) with a case officer where the personal progression plan is agreed and signed up to by the client – the timing of this interview depends on the client’s Probability of Exit (PEX)
  • Ongoing appointments/activation reviews are systematically in place over a 12-month period with a case officer and/or the support team to monitor progression towards employment, training and education – again, the frequency of these appointments will depend on the client’s profile
  • After 12 months, various levels of activation follow-up by the support team (depending on the client’s profile and based on the agreed personal progression plan) and Assessment of the level of engagement by the client and, where deemed to be unacceptable, recourse to a penalty rate of payment or suspension of payment17

According to the DSP, the purpose of activation policy is to ensure the engagement of the clients of working age, who are in receipt of specified social welfare payments/benefits in order to support them and their families in progressing into employment and/or other appropriate progression.

In accepting payment of benefit, assistance and/or support, the client agrees to meet the relevant job search and availability for work conditions, and avail him or herself of the appropriate support measures offered during the course of the activation process, including employment, education, training and/or placement in employment schemes.

The Intreo process starts when the client makes an application to sign on for unemployment benefit supports. The one-stop-shop approach enables the client to access services and plan their return to work. As part of the initial engagement with Intreo, each client is profiled using a tool developed by the Department of Social Protection in conjunction with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to assess their probability of exiting (PEX) the Live Register in the following year based on previous statistical data, including the person’s highest level of educational attainment and previous work experience. PEX ratings

are used to assist in targeting resources at clients who are at greater risk of long-term unemployment and influence the timing and frequency of engagement with Case Officers.

A client's PEX score indicates the level of service he/she receives, with those scoring high receiving mainly encouragement and job search assistance while those scoring medium and low receiving one to one support and direction toward the most relevant education/training courses or work experience based on their PPP.

Intreo did not provide a guidance service within the framework of the BYG, apart from the initial group engagement. The model is looked at here for comparative purposes as it is the model which operates outside of the pilot BYG and Swords Model providing employment support service to 18-24 year olds nationally.

While the three services outlined above provide employment related supports to young clients, a core component of the BYG pilot and indeed the EU wide Youth Guarantee is to provide each client with a quality offer within a 4 month period.
This study was commissioned by the Department of Social protection. The Terms of Reference were to:

- Articulate the purpose/objective of the guidance process
- Describe the nature of the BJC and Intreo guidance process and the approach developed in Swords, including the timing and frequency of interventions, key elements of the guidance process, assessment tools and techniques, experience & qualifications of personnel.
- Assess/evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the various approaches.
- Extract relevant learning to inform the provision of the guidance elements of the YG

The study was required to be completed within a limited time frame which restricted the methodology to an extent. The main elements of the methodology comprised focus groups and interviews with guidance providers, clients of guidance services, education and training providers and employers. More detail is provided on these below.

**Focus groups and interviews with guidance providers**

Focus groups with guidance providers were undertaken. These focus groups explored the approach to delivering guidance services to the young clients, the model used and the process implemented. The overall views of providers on the effectiveness of their models were also elicited.

The following focus groups took place:

- A focus group with the six staff members of Ballymun Job Centre who were involved in delivering the BYG pilot. These included the team of five mediators and the team leader.
- A focus group with the two Case Officers involved in delivering the Swords Model in Swords and their manager.

We had hoped to undertake a focus group with the staff of Intreo, but for various reasons this did not take place. Instead we interviewed one Intreo staff member who was able to
make himself available. Given this (and the fact that Intreo could not provide clients for us to consult with) it is not possible to address all of the issues noted in the terms of reference. Instead we outline the nature of the Intreo service and note some available data on the client experience.

**Focus groups and interviews clients of guidance services**

The consultation with clients of the guidance services sought to establish the extent to which they had benefited from the services they received, in terms of increasing their employability and accessing quality offers, and prospects of employment. Focus groups and interviews focused on the clients’ experience of the guidance process, their experience of undertaking education, training and work placement programmes and their perceptions of the impact of the service on their employability and progress towards the labour market.

The following focus groups and interviews were undertaken with clients:

- Four focus groups were held with clients of the Ballymun YG, each of which had three participants.
- Six clients of Ballymun YG were interviewed individually.

Participants consulted with included those at the start of the BYG process, those at a midway point and those coming to the end of the process. This allowed elements of the client ‘journey’ to be identified.

- One focus group was undertaken with clients of the Swords Model. This was attended by 8 clients.

Efforts to arrange a focus group with clients of Intreo were unsuccessful.

Written feedback (in the form of an email) on the process was received from six clients of the Ballymun YG and from one client of the Swords Model.

**Focus groups with education and training providers**

A focus group with three education and training providers who had catered for clients of BYG in Ballymun was undertaken. This explored the experiences of these providers, the types of programmes they implemented, the outcomes of these programmes and the learning generated.

Employers who were involved in providing work place training or work experience programmes as part of the BYG were also invited to take part in the consultation. Despite repeated attempts to contact these employers, they did not respond.
Focus groups and interviews with employers and HR practitioners.

Focus groups and interviews were also conducted with selected employers and HR practitioners. The objective here was to establish their understanding of employability and what they looked for in recruiting and selecting employees. Three organisations were involved in this part of the consultation. These were Ulster Bank, Jurys Inns and Business in the Community.

Given the time constraints and other difficulties, we acknowledge some weaknesses in the methodology, particularly in relation to the Intreo service and to the limited consultation with clients in Swords. Nevertheless, the findings of the consultation are clear in many respects and these are presented in the next section.
Section 4

Findings of the Consultation

Introduction

In this section, we look first at the findings of the consultation with staff and clients of the BYG and with education and training providers. Later we look at the findings from the consultation with staff and clients in Swords, and with the Intreo staff member.

The focus of the consultation with providers and clients of BYG was on identifying the key elements of the guidance process, how these impacted on clients and how they contributed to positive outcomes for clients.

Three key questions are addressed in this section. These are as follows:

- What are the key elements of guidance which proved effective in delivering positive outcomes to young people in Ballymun?
- What are the views of education and training providers regarding the provision of guidance to the client group of BYG?
- What were the links between the BYG and increased employability of young people?

A. The Elements of Effective Guidance Provision in Ballymun YG

The BYG Pilot was between January 2014 and December 2014 and catered for over 700 young people during that time. The objective was to provide a structured guidance service leading to a ‘quality offer’ of education, training or work experience within a four month timeframe. The quality offer was understood as a stepping stone to achieving the young person’s career plan and increasing their employability in the longer term. These quality offers were not considered to be an end in themselves, nor as the last stage in the process. This understanding varies slightly from the EU definition of a “quality offer” which states that an offer of education, apprenticeship or traineeship should be of a substantive nature such as to be equivalent to an offer of employment and, as such, be an end in itself. At the outset, the BYG partners acknowledged the challenge of supplying sufficient numbers of quality offers and also recognised that marginalised clients may not have the capacity to avail of them. They agreed that the focus should be on the provision of offers suited to the needs of clients that would support them on a pathway to sustainable employment.
The BYG pilot dealt with 789 clients of which 255 (35%) were categorised as Target Group 1 (highest level of need), 345 (47%) were Target Group 2 and 139 (18%) were Target Group 3 (lowest level of need). Clients presented a high level of need and very significant labour market barriers including no employment history, poor educational qualifications and limited expectations regarding employment. In this respect, they reflected the local Ballymun context which as noted in Section 2 is characterised by high levels of unemployment, youth unemployment and welfare dependency. The objective of the BYG was to improve their long term sustainability on the labour market and not merely the achievement of short term outcomes. The four month YG timeframe offered an opportunity to equip young people with the attitudes, information and skills to progress to employment beyond this timeframe.

As of the end of December 2014, 60 clients had dropped out of the BYG leaving 729 clients who had completed or were completing the process. Of these, eleven were on pre-offers\(^\text{18}\). A total of 556 clients were involved in training, work programmes or employment. The largest single number was engaged in FETAC training programmes (338 or 46% of the total number of clients). Nineteen percent (141) were involved in CE or TUS, internships, gateway or job sampling. Seven per cent of clients were in employment (51) and 3.5 % were in part time employment. Outcomes by target group show that TG 1 and TG 2 were most likely to be on training programmes (both 47%) compared to TG3 (38%), whereas TG3 was most likely to be in employment (20%) compared to 4% for TG1 and 11% for TG 2.

The BYG service was delivered by 5 experienced and qualified staff referred to as mediators. These were led by a Team Leader who did not deal directly with clients but provided support to the team in terms of progression of clients, specifics of the guidance process, development of team peer support, organisation of interventions (training & education, and employer supported initiatives) while also providing administrative support to the overall BYG. The client to mediator ratio therefore was 158:1.

The consultation with the mediators focused on their engagement and work with the BYG clients. The four key stages of the guidance process were noted in Section 2. It is evident from the consultation that in delivering these elements, three aspects of the engagement with the young person are important. These are the initial engagement, the ongoing delivery of guidance and the referral to a quality offer. These are looked at in turn below.

**Initial engagement**

The BYG aimed to offer a high quality guidance model based on previously developed practice and resources and in line with the philosophy and ethos of Ballymun Job Centre as outlined in Section 2. The initial engagement with individual clients followed on from the group engagement with Intreo. This first session had three key objectives as follows:

- Building rapport: This was an important first step in the process, in which the focus was on the individual client for the first time. It involved getting to know the client,

\(^{18}\) The BYG implemented a pre-offer stage for those most marginalised including addiction counselling and mental health support. This was to allow the participant the time to engage with supports that would assist them to address their issues prior to their formal engagement with the BYG.
building trust with them and securing their buy-in to the process. During this interview, the guidance process was explained to the client and they were informed how long it would take, what it involved and so on. In the view of the mediators, it takes a lot of skill and expertise to be able to build rapport at this initial stage but it is vital to the success of the process that this is achieved.

- Developing understanding: Early in the process, the clients were made aware of a number of concepts and terms that they needed to understand. Concepts such as self-awareness, resilience and adaptability were explained in detail to them and this was perceived as very positive for clients. The needs of employers were also explained to them as were the attributes that employers look for at interview and beyond. Clients were helped to understand that the questions they were asked were not meant to be intrusive but were necessary to help them increase their employability and achieve positive outcomes.

- Identifying a way forward: This was based on developing a comprehensive profile of the client including identifying their barriers and setting short and long term goals. A number of formal assessment tools were used during this process, identified in Section 2 some of which (as noted) have been developed by BJC. The questionnaires developed for this purpose differ from those used by Intreo and by the Swords approach and sought additional data on which to develop the client profile. Clients were then helped to think about the barriers they face (often for the first time) and the starting point of their BYG plan. If mental health issues needed to be addressed, then this was the starting point of their BYG plan. The comprehensive profile helped the mediator to get to know the client while the direct questions allowed their strengths to be identified and built up quickly. The mediators considered that a great deal of skill is required to ask these questions appropriately.

Model.

Achieving all of the above in one hour was sometimes difficult and two sessions were often required. Mediators also noted that that because the Group Engagement took place in Intreo offices, clients were sometimes apprehensive in approaching BJC initially although they were usually put at ease during their first meeting. In the later discussion of the Swords approach and the Intreo model, the importance of the setting in putting clients at ease was also raised. This is not an issue we could explore in any depth in this study, and it may be something which affects young people specifically, which would have significant implications for the national delivery of the YG.

Ongoing guidance

After the first meeting, ongoing contact was maintained with clients to continue the guidance process, to ensure they stayed motivated and to keep them informed of any opportunities that were suitable for them, including training, work experience programmes or employer based placements. Contact was maintained with clients through regular formal guidance meetings, more casual contact and by staying in touch via text messaging and phone calls.
• Over 2,000 formal guidance meetings were held with clients during the process or an average of just under three per client. The average number of meetings was broadly the same across all target groups, although within each target group some individuals had more meetings than others. This approach is in keeping with the guidance model used whereby the level of intervention and engagement is based on individual needs rather than assumptions about group needs.

• In addition to the formal meetings, informal ‘drop-in’ contacts were frequent, often weekly and mediators also stayed in touch via phone and text messaging.

• During the ongoing process, the core objective was the development of the client’s career plan based on the increased knowledge of the client on the part of the mediator and the clients’ greater understanding of the process. The mediator guided the client towards the development of their career path, identifying the barriers they would face and the steps they should take to address these. The objective was not to tell the clients what to do but to work with them and guide them to identifying the most appropriate direction and course of action.

• Each mediator got to know their clients well and could remember their action plans. So when appropriate opportunities appeared, the client was immediately contacted and ‘fast tracked’.

Through this ongoing contact, the client was supported to continue to assess their strengths/weaknesses and to agree their career path. They received ongoing support as they implemented their career path, including reminders about course start dates. The mediator was also able to assess how the client was getting on and to respond to issues arising so as to continue to support the client along their journey.

The imposition of financial penalties when clients failed to engaged or subsequently disengaged from the process was a delicate issue. The standard DSP approach is to impose a financial penalty when a client fails to respond to two invitations to engage or who declines or drops out of a suitable intervention without a satisfactory explanation. However, the DSP trialled a more relaxed regime following representations from BYG partners. Mediators feel that when applied strategically it was a constructive element of the model, allowing young people to re-engage and start over. Good communications with the Department and with service providers helped to ensure that penalty rating was beneficial to the client and sometimes avoided. Young people were helped to realise that penalty rating was based on concern, not control, and that their participation reflected their responsibility within the BYG process.

Mediators also took part in weekly team meetings which proved to be hugely beneficial for both mediators and clients. These meetings provided support to the mediators, gave rise to
new ideas, provided links with other BJC services, and identified and alleviated new barriers for clients. Team meetings also helped to identify opportunities for clients. The team element, the peer support and the commitment of the team were considered to be key factors in the effective implementation of the BYG pilot and essential elements of the overall model.

Making Referrals to a Quality Offer

The direct engagement with and the delivery of guidance to the young clients were the key elements of the BYG pilot, but important changes to the local context facilitated its implementation. Within the framework of the pilot, additional resources were put in place to cater for clients. For example, the City of Dublin ETB provided funding to a number of organisations to provide additional training programmes. Employers were also invited to provide work based placements. Importantly, there was a reduction in the age criteria for CE and TUS opening up participation on these programmes to young people.

The BYG committed to ensuring that the clients received a quality offer within four months. In Ballymun, the mediators understood the term “quality offer” to mean referral to an opportunity whether education, training, work placement or employment which:

- met the aspirations of the client,
- helped progress their career plan and
- provided a good ‘fit’ between the client and the programme / placement.

An important understanding on the part of the mediators was that education and training interventions were not an end in themselves but were a step within the individual client’s career path, an intervention which would support their ultimate employment entry and underpin their longer-term wellbeing in the labour market. Some clients did receive a substantive offer equivalent to an offer of employment (in line with the EU definition). Others received an offer reflecting a supported pathway to employment.

Overall a total of 593 offers were made to clients, the majority to education and training programmes. Maintaining the value and quality of the BYG process as the client transitioned from the guidance process to their placement was challenging as the design and delivery of interventions were frequently outside the control of the mediators. This was a concern for mediators who were reluctant to refer clients to placements which they considered did not represent suitable offers. Mediators felt they should be consulted with in the design and delivery of offers as they have very good insights into what will work for young people. This was a view shared by the education and training providers, and is looked at in more detail later.

Overall Views of the Mediators on the BYG Pilot

Mediators were very positive about the BYG model and that positivity helped fuel their commitment and drive. They noted that the BYG had a marked impact on their ability to address the needs of the young people in Ballymun and it had a positive impact on the
young people’s prospects for employment. They believed the BYG had worked very well and had given them the scope to do more on behalf of their clients. The additional education, training and work experience provision and the sharing of information had prevented young people from ‘getting lost in the gaps’ and the four month guarantee had instilled hope in clients. They also believed that the BYG had generated huge learning for all involved, including in relation to the need for flexibility and autonomy at the local level. Key factors in contributing to the success of the BYG were identified as follows:

- Good collaboration between agencies allowed clients’ needs to be met more efficiently
- The age reductions for CE and TUS opened up very important progression routes for clients.
- Work placements could be a positive element but they needed to be well organised with appropriate supports and collaboration with employers.
- The networking with DSP was very positive, facilitating two way learning and compromising.
- Penalty rating worked because of the shared systems and approach between Ballymun Job Centre and the Department.

The mediators noted significant problematic issues with the IT system, the duplication of data entry across multiple systems and the overall administrative burden.

BYG Guidance process: The Client Experience

In total 18 BYG clients took part personally in the consultation. These were randomly chosen to allow a mixture of those at different stages of the process to be included as well as those who had different experiences of education and training during the process. All but three of the clients were considered to have successfully completed their training and work placement offers. A number of clients also contributed their views in writing.

The views of clients are noted below in relation to their experience of the guidance process, the offers they received and their overall assessment of BYG. The clients who took part in the consultation process were focused, motivated and optimistic, happy that they were benefitting from the BYG and positive about their futures.

Experiences of the guidance process

It was clear from the consultation that all clients had achieved a rapport with their mediator and that they were encouraged and motivated by their initial contact with the guidance service. The impact of their BYG ‘journey’ was also clear. Those at the start of the process, although somewhat uncertain of the direction they would ultimately take, were optimistic that it would benefit them. “It’s going to be easier with the YG” was a typical comment. Those mid-way through were enthusiastic about the training / work placement programmes they were about to undertake. Those at the end of the process expressed satisfaction about the courses they were participating on or had completed and were optimistic about finding employment.

“I was at a dead end before I came here. But I’m on the road now”
Clients quickly developed a rapport with their mediators and referred to a sense of reassurance at having their mediator to support them and to show belief in them. Clients said they felt encouraged, hopeful and motivated knowing that there was someone who could help. Specifically, they credited their mediator with:

- encouraging them to think about their future and to realise that employment could be part of that future. Two clients said they had assumed they would never work until they had spoken to their mediators; both were now actively engaged in the YGS process.
- helping them to identify and overcome obstacles and learn to accept setbacks on their journey towards employment: this was important in maintaining motivation especially for the minority of clients who did not get on well in their first placement.
- helping them to realise they need to be open minded and to explore different opportunities and different ways of getting into work

“I was introduced to the YG in January 2014 and shortly afterwards I attended Ballymun Job Centre where I met my Mediator. I had been on Job Seekers Allowance for about 3 months at that stage having left college early, having lost my first full time job and having lost confidence in myself as regards job hunting. To be perfectly honest if my attendance at Ballymun Job Centre wasn’t compulsory I probably wouldn’t have gone. I was totally stuck in a rut mentally and couldn’t even consider the next step in any direction. After the first meeting with my mediator the outlook had already brightened. I was totally comfortable with her and she invited me to speak openly about my issues in my previous employment and my own personal issues. I think this really helped both of us to understand where I was and where I should be going”

Clients also identified positive elements throughout the ongoing guidance process. The continuity of the relationship with their mediator was important to them and they felt that that continuity and the regular contact was indicative of the ongoing support available to them while on BYG. Many expressed the view that the mediator was genuinely concerned about their future and was working on their behalf. They cited the weekly meetings and regular phone calls and texts as evidence of the ongoing work being done on their behalf.

“I knew my mediator was thinking of me and that gave me confidence in myself”

Clients credited the guidance they received with:

- giving them the confidence and enthusiasm to try training and work experience;
- helping them to recognise the need to train for work although mostly they would prefer to work than train.
- keeping them focused and keeping some pressure on them but in a supportive way.
- A number of YGS clients were referred to the Jobs Club and found this to be very beneficial, particularly working on their CVs and developing interview skills.
Clients also referred to the good career advice they had been given:

“I am a shy person and I don’t like dealing with the unexpected. I thought I wanted to work in a shop because I could not think of anything else. My mediator helped me to realise that shop work might be stressful for me and I should think about office work. She helped me apply for a payroll course and I loved it. It was hard at first because of all the strange terms. I have never worked. I did not even know what net pay meant. But the tutor was great and spent a bit of time helping me so I did not fall behind. Now I am looking for work and my mediator is helping me with applications”.

Quality offer

All of the clients consulted with had been referred to a training course, a work experience programme or to an employer based work placement, although some were waiting to take up their places. Clients expressed a wide range of views on what they consider to be an appropriate or good referral.

• The consensus was that placements should enable them progress to employment; provide them with the support they need to participate; be clearly relevant to their aspirations and plans.
• A good quality offer should build on their previous experience, or help them identify a future direction or help them confirm their career choice.
• A good offer should bring them closer to employment by providing them with good experience, enabling them get a reference and building links to employers.
• Clients were focused on gaining employment but also recognised the need for training. Many clients felt that training should be relatively short term, practical and clearly linked to employment opportunities. In line with the objectives of the BYG, clients stated their aspirations in terms of ultimately securing employment while in the short-term focusing on training or work experience. In this respect, it was evident that they were learning how to implement their career plan.

“Before the YGS I had a blank CV. Now I have work experience, accreditation and a reference”

It is notable from the above that what clients considered an appropriate or suitable offer was similar to the views of the mediators. It is particularly notable that while clients wanted employment they had come to realise that it may be necessary to train first. This awareness reflected the outcome of the guidance process.

A further positive element which clients referred to was the availability of financial support when taking up a place on a training or education programme. For many clients they would have been unable to participate without that financial support.
**TUS and CE**

The availability of CE and TUS proved very important in providing placement opportunities for young people and in opening up opportunities for clients that would otherwise be unavailable. The fact that clients could also engage in accredited training while participating on CE was very positively viewed and a number of clients were using this as a strategy to simultaneously enhance their practical experience and their qualifications. Having funding available to do additional training was also a benefit. Five of the clients consulted with were participating on CE or on TUS and all were extremely positive about the contribution it was making to their career plans: Examples

- One young man was building on his interests in and experience of sport by participating on a CE scheme with a youth organisation where he was responsible for introducing sport. He was also undertaking a Level 6 FETAC course in child psychology. He had made considerable progress towards his objective of finding employment in the youth sector and was open to the need to undertake more training if necessary.
- One young woman was gaining an enormous amount of experience on a TUS scheme where she had a lot of administrative responsibility and had made a valuable contribution to the organisation she was working with. She believed she had a very good chance of securing employment with that organisation at the end of the Scheme.
- Another young man was finding his CE scheme with a youth organisation was helping him identify a direction and giving him the experience and confidence to explore options in that area, including additional training,

"The CE programme has been very beneficial to me so far. I was offered a placement in a crèche and have gained a lot of experience in childcare. I know now childcare is definitely the right path for me. I have also gained confidence and a better knowledge of childcare. I am to start my FETAC level 5 on Tuesday and also have child protection and a play workshop completed. I am so grateful i was given this opportunity. I intend to make this my life long career path. Without this opportunity i would have felt stuck and not knowing how to achieve my goals. I am flying along now and doing very well in the crèche”

It seems clear from the above that the combination of work experience and formal accredited training can work very effectively for some clients. From the mediators’ perspective, the fact that CE was available meant they had more options available to which to refer clients thus keeping the client motivated and focused and as noted by clients, confirming them in their career choices.

**Unsuccessful placements**

Just three of the clients consulted with had unsuccessful placements. Two of these were training programmes and one was a work-based training and employment programme. The clients attributed their lack of success to a lack of support from the organisation delivering
the training or work experience and problems with other participants. To an extent some of these problems reflect the context within Ballymun and particularly the large number of young people who had a poor experience of school. In the views of guidance practitioners and education/training providers, these difficulties also reflect the failure to collaborate with guidance practitioners in the design and delivery of interventions which resulted in unsuitable training programmes – as discussed later.

R had applied for the blended learning Warehousing programme. He got a place on the programme along with seventeen other young people, most of whom were known to R. The programme was delivered over six weeks. Each week participants were trained in employability skills for two days and worked on the floor for one day. R identified a number of issues with the programme which he did not like:

- He did not like the classroom setting. It was too much like school which he had not enjoyed, some of the ‘messers’ from school were also on the programme and so the messing started from the outset.
- He felt the content of the programme was too basic and could not see the relevance of it.
- He found it impossible to focus on the possibility of getting a job when he was surrounded by guys he knew for years and with whom he had a particular dynamic (i.e., messing)
- He did not like having to discuss his goals, obstacles and so on in the group and felt that there was too much of this type of content in the programme and it appeared to be repeated regularly.
- He found it hard to switch between the classroom (which was like school) and the work setting (which was where he wanted to be) and did not see the relevance of the training to the work.

Ultimately, R clashed with one of the tutors and was let go from the course. He says he was bit disappointed with himself as he recognises that in work situations you cannot get on with everyone. However, he also said he was losing interest in the course when he realised that the most the employer could offer at the end of it was a zero hours contract.

R was one of four participants who did not complete this programme. Fourteen participants did complete it and nine of these have been referred to an agency which manages casual employment for the employer. Five participants who completed the programme have been referred back to their mediator for ongoing support. From the perspective of the mediator, R was a high support client, he was recruited for the programme without adequate collaboration with the mediator and he was let go from the course without any consultation with or information being provided to the mediator.

This appears to be an example of a mismatch between the client and the placement. Greater collaboration between mediators and the course provider before and during this course could have increased its value to clients like R.
For clients who did have a poor experience of education or training, the important thing was that they would maintain contact with their mediator and would re-engage with the BYG process. This happened most of the time.

K. had expressed an interest in working in childcare. Her mediator helped her find courses she could do and helped her apply for them. She was accepted onto two courses, and chose the one she considered would be better for her CV. She started the course and was enjoying it, but another participant began making problems for her. Things deteriorated and K left the course. Although she had a negative experience while on the course, K felt she did learn a good deal, that the experience was beneficial, and that it confirmed for her that childcare was the area she wanted to work in. She returned to see her mediator who recommended she apply for a CE place in a crèche. K did so, was accepted and was due to start in Jan 2015. She was also reapplying for a FETAC Level 5 course in childcare.

Overall views of the BYG Pilot (of relevance to the guidance process)

Clients were very positive about the BYG, even those at the start of the process expressed optimism about the benefits they would receive. The dominant view amongst those newest to the process was that the BYG would improve their prospects of finding work. These new clients felt they would find something quicker through the BYG that it would not be so difficult with BYG on their side and that having a speedy offer within four months was a very positive element.

Those clients who were slightly further along the process were also positive. They believed that BYG had given them ‘tools’ to help them find work and that their participation on BYG would help to remove the barriers to employment

Those coming to the end of the process were equally positive. They believed that the BYG provided routine, had enabled them ‘update stuff’, and they had seen other young people get work as a result of training and this encourages them. It ‘helps people realise the opportunities out there’. Many felt that thanks to the BYG they were now job ready, others recognised the need for further training.

_The Youth Guarantee Scheme has helped me a lot since last year. They got me an 8 week shadowing experience which resulted in me gaining full-time employment. They’ve also gave me a €200 clothing grant for work clothes when i started. Since I’ve been working I have gotten a lot of experience in Electronics, Building Management Systems and Facilities services. I’ve improved my Computer skills dramatically, I now know how to use excel correctly and to put postal orders on our system to name a few things. I’ve gained a lot of experience and would highly recommend this Scheme to anyone. I’m very grateful for the Ballymun Job Centre and Youth Guarantee Scheme have done for me_
B  Delivering Education and Training to Clients of the BYG

Maintaining the quality and value of the BYG service across the transition to placement was identified as an important aspect of ensuring the overall value of the BYG. This was underpinned by the availability of quality offers as understood both by mediators and by clients. Not all of the provision made available to clients was appropriate to client needs however. In this section we look at the views of three organisations who were involved in delivering training programmes to BYG clients. Employers who had offered work based placements were also invited to take part in the consultation process but did not do so.

The three agencies which participated were:

- ICTU who had collaborated with Ballymun Job Centre on providing a six week training and work experience programme for young people accredited at FETAC Level 5;
- BRYR who delivered a nine month class-room based employability programme via LTI and accredited at Level 3.
- Dublin City ETB who put in place summer courses for BYG clients who had been offered places on PLC Level 5 courses to provide basic understanding of science and study skills.

The following table provides a summary of the programmes and their outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Retention</th>
<th>Progression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICTU / BJC</td>
<td>Six week training and work experience FETAC Level 4</td>
<td>TG 1 / 2 18 – 25 years</td>
<td>32 recruited (2 courses of 16 participants each)</td>
<td>75% retention</td>
<td>16% progressed to employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRYR</td>
<td>9 month classroom based LTI FETAC Level 3</td>
<td>TG 1 16 – 25 years</td>
<td>28 recruited with some difficulties</td>
<td>10% - 25%* retention</td>
<td>Approx. 25% progression to jobs, further training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETB</td>
<td>Summer pre-PLC courses</td>
<td>Those offered place on PLC Level 5 courses</td>
<td>50% of those offered places participated</td>
<td>50% of those who started completed the course</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*some participants left to take up jobs or places on other programmes

The three providers had very different experiences of the programmes and the participation of young people. However both the positive and negative experiences contributed to learning for the BYG as noted below.
The ICTU/BJC programme was delivered over six weeks to two intakes of 16 participants. One group attended in the mornings and the other in the afternoon. Participants who it was felt could benefit from the combination of employability training and work experience were referred to the programme by the mediators in BJC. The programme was based on two weeks classroom work, followed by two weeks work experience, and a further two weeks in the classroom. The representative of the organisation who attended the focus group had been involved in the morning training programme and noted that the participants in that programme were enthusiastic, motivated and focused. This created a positive group dynamic within the classroom. Participants wanted to work but were happy enough to engage in training as they saw that as helping them to find work: this attitude was most likely the result of the guidance process.

This programme was the most successful of the three looked at in retaining young people and in enabling them get accreditation and work experience. This programme displayed many of the features identified by young people themselves as desirable in a training programme. Firstly, the fact that the training element was short, and led directly to the work experience element was considered to be a positive feature fitting in with young people’s express desire to work rather than train. Secondly, it was delivered by a single trainer so the young people had continuity over the duration. Thirdly the fact that it was accredited at Level 4 meant a further contribution to the young people’s CV. The high retention rate was attributed to the fact that the programme suited the participants' aspirations and the group dynamic was very positive. Participants were asked at the beginning for their expectations ‘what would you like to get out of this’. Their comments were considered in the overall design of the course with the inclusion of short courses such as Safe Pass, Manual Handling and First Aid. Work placements were secured because employers had been contacted personally and asked to provide work experience for specific individuals and the employers had received support during the placement. At the time of the consultation the programme was just coming to an end. Sixteen per cent of the participants had secured employment directly as a result of the programme, and there was a possibility that more would do so. (One of the clients who took part in the consultation had been involved in this programme. He had not yet found work but enjoyed the work placement in a warehouse and felt this was an area he would like to gain more experience in).

The programme run by BRYR was very different to that described above and was not considered a success. However it did generate a lot of learning and BRYR were keen to share this learning. As well as contributing to the discussion at the focus group, BRYR also sent on a report they had produced documenting the challenges, issues and learning associated with this programme.

The programme was based on an LTI and extended over 9 months in a classroom setting and offered accreditation at Level 3. BYG mediators had concerns about this model and its suitability for young people and were reluctant to refer clients to it. As
a result, BRYR struggled to recruit sufficient numbers and in the end recruited young people through their street outreach work. BRYR also reduced the age to 16, effectively bringing in non-YGS participants. From the outset, the lack of guidance and appropriate referral became apparent: there were difficulties with the classroom dynamic as many of the young people had ‘history’ with each other; there was also a very high level of need presented by participants which had not been anticipated due to the lack of a formal referral process. As many of the participants were not clients of the guidance service, there were no consequences for non-attendance and this was also considered an impediment, and had a negative impact on the level of engagement of those who did attend. Finally, the duration of the programme, the formal classroom setting and the level of accreditation on offer were also perceived not to suit the needs and aspirations of the young people: features which had caused the initial concerns among the BYG mediators. A core group of participants did do well on the programme, but the overall retention rate was very low.

According to BRYR, this experience highlighted the inappropriateness of LTI as a model for this client group. This opinion was shared by the ETB who suggested that the LTI had no credibility as a model for young people. The experience also highlighted the need for formal referral process and the need for greater collaboration between education and training providers and mediators.

➢ The ETB programme reported on the day was targeted at young people who had been offered places on PLC courses. The ETB courses were designed to equip the young people to better participate on the PLCs but succeeded in attracting only half of those eligible, (although there may be data errors here that overstated the number of PLC places offered) and this could be due to a number of reasons (timing of the programmes during summer months, perceived need, caring duties etc.). Data available indicates that 58 referrals were made across the three programmes, 26 clients started the programmes and there are currently 49 BYG clients on PLC courses. However it is not known why people did not participate, or how many referrals/starts on the pre-programmes actually took up their places on the PLC courses.

Despite the different experiences of the programmes looked at above, some shared points of learning were identified for the provision and delivery of education and training programmes to BYG clients and also for guidance services.

Lessons for Guidance Services

- The formal assessment of need on the part of clients is important as this can have implications for the resources required to cater for them, particularly if they have mental health issues, chaotic lives and so on.

- The guidance process is also very important in ensuring that the right participants are referred to the right courses. The fact that all clients go through the first and second
stages of the guidance process (pg.17) helps to ensure this. Client barriers to education and training can be identified and discussed, and supports can be put in place to assist the client to overcome their own specific barriers. Furthermore the guidance process aims to identify latent strengths, specific aptitudes and particular interests, assisting clients to match their own potential to appropriate and relevant education and training. We recommend that for clients with little or no career clarity and who present with a complex range of needs, stage two of the guidance process is essential in minimising the risk of inappropriate referrals to education and training and increasing the likelihood that individuals are successful in accessing and completing their chosen programme.

- Young people want to work and to have jobs. Young people (especially disadvantaged young people) will undertake training but it must be something they really want to do and see the relevance of and ideally be embedded within opportunities to get work experience. There is an important role for guidance in helping young people realise the value of training.

- Greater collaboration between mediators and education and training providers is necessary in order to ensure that provision meets the needs of young people, that the referral process is appropriate and that ongoing support can be provided as necessary to the young people,

- It is important that participants are motivated, enthusiastic and optimistic. Participation and engagement are better when clients are on programmes that they want to participate in. Conversely lack of motivation leads to drop-out, poor engagement and poor peer dynamics.

- Establishing the level of client motivation can be facilitated by asking the right questions at the initial meeting. But client motivation is impacted by external factors and, for example, can decrease if a course disappoints. This highlights the importance of ongoing guidance and contact with the mediator as this can help to keep clients motivated. Such ongoing contact can include short meetings or phone calls to see how the education/ training programme is going for the client, or to check if there are any issues arising, or if the client needs extra support, and so on. Discussions could include getting the client to reflect on how this programme will assist them in meeting their overall career objectives, what elements of the programme they are enjoying most, or identifying elements which are posing difficulties.

- Feedback from clients in relation to education and training interventions could be fed back by guidance practitioners to education and training providers/organisers or to interagency networks. This type of forum would enable continuous quality improvement of interventions for the unemployed and ensure that resources are being maximised to fully meet the needs of participants. This in turn will aim to improve the retention rates and successful outcomes from education and training.
• Education and training providers also believed that clients should be linked into and made aware of other opportunities while they participate on programmes. There is a role here for the guidance practitioner and for the ongoing contact between the practitioner and the client.

• Employers also need support when offering work experience and when recruiting clients from work experience to employment. Mediators can help provide this support by breaking down fears and increasing the level of understanding on the part of employers about the needs of different types of clients. This could form part of the Memorandum of Understanding In relation to the provision of work experience opportunities (see Appendix 2).

**Factors in the delivery of training and education to Young People**

In relation to participation, retention and progression, some key shared points of learning were also identified. These echoed the views of young people themselves.

• Work placements are a positive incentive to participate in training and proved an attractive option for young people. The reduction in age for CE and TUS should be extended and the potential to develop CE as a work experience programme within the private sector for young people should be considered.

• Training courses must be suitable to the needs of young people and be able to take account of their circumstances. Courses should be at the right level, have built in supports and non-classroom activities. TG 1 in particular require a high level of support including a small group learning environment, personal development, psychological supports, literacy interventions and so on. Mental health issues are also very significant and often unrecognised. An additional budget is necessary to fund extra supports and to provide for extra-curricular activities. Additional funding is also necessary to support tutors in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

• The classroom environment and dynamic is important: there may be a case for not confining courses to specific age groups, particularly in an area like Ballymun where all the young people know each other.

• The LTI is too restrictive for young people and should not be used as a model. The LTI has no educational component and is not relevant to young people’s lives. Long hours in a class room will not work for young people and large groups with multiple needs cannot be adequately catered for. Flexible models are needed including flexibility in the concept of progression.
• The prospect of incentivising participation rather than penalising non-participation was raised by some providers (and also by clients). This could include training allowances, or a lunch allowance. Reward-based trips proved successful in motivating learners to complete academic tasks etc.

• The repetition of courses should be addressed, as should the gaps in current provision, to ensure a comprehensive range of options is in place for young people.

C Linking Guidance to Employability

The concept of employability, or job-readiness, is important within the context of the Youth Guarantee Scheme. However, the DSP have not provided a definition of this concept. The closest measure available is that relating to the PEX ratings, which measure likelihood of leaving the Live Register within specified time frames. The PEX ratings are intended for use in targeting resources at those deemed most at risk of long-term unemployment and have proved to be robust in the regard. It is clear from the consultation that the PEX ratings are not considered to be of use in determining an individual’s needs, what interventions they might need or their level of employability or job-readiness. In the first instance, therefore, it is important to develop a definition of employability that can be shared and understood by employers, clients and providers.

As part of the consultation process, we consulted with employers and HR practitioners from the banking, hospitality and community sectors. The aim was to identify what they understand as employability and what attributes they looked for in young people. During the focus groups, the participants placed little emphasis on qualifications per se, with the exception of the banking sector in which Leaving Certificate is a minimum entry requirement. The attributes and qualities looked for by the HR practitioners and employers at interview stage were as follows:

• Attitude: a positive ‘can do’ attitude was considered essential at interview stage.
• Company fit: being right for the role and suited to the company. It was considered essential that the guidance process address this ‘tailoring’ if young people are to be prepared for appropriate job placement.
• Trust and integrity: this was an important attribute for all sectors.
• Resilience and confidence: employers felt this was an area where more work could be done to show young people how to display these qualities
• Previous experiences: employers were open to considering transferable skills including experience gained in jobs outside their industries, from volunteering, school business projects, transition year activities etc. Employers felt that more could be done to help young job seekers to see the relevance of past experiences and how to relate them to future jobs.
• Personal branding: being able to combine skills and past experiences and then match them to the key competencies being looked for during the interview process.
• Overall employers felt it was important for young job seekers to:
  ➢ Put value on their experiences
  ➢ To be specific in their responses at interview
➢ To be able to translate from past experience to the present requirements
➢ To be able to package or brand their competencies.

Employers also expressed the view that short term training in a classroom context followed by work placement was the best approach and yielded very positive results for both the young person and the employer. It was felt this approach kept things grounded in a reality and was more helpful than long-term training without the link to the workplace. Notably, this was a viewpoint shared by the young BYG clients.

For their part, BJC mediators noted that at the outset clients did not have a sufficient grasp of what employers want beyond the most basic requirements such as punctuality. As increasing the employability of clients was a key objective of the BYG in Ballymun, during the guidance process clients were helped to understand what employers were looking for when interviewing and recruiting and what attributes and attitudes the young people should try to acquire. From the consultation with clients at different stages of the BYG process, it is apparent that the nature of the BYG guidance process did help young people to understand what employers want and what employability means. By the end of the BYG process, clients were able to identify the following elements of employability, which revealed a remarkable similarity to what employers themselves said:

• Employers are looking for confidence, self-belief, and the ability to sell yourself at interview,
• They want some who will fit in with the company culture and present themselves well
• They want someone who can work as part of a team, knows their skills and weaknesses, and is able to do the job,
• They want somebody with maturity, good time management, drive and ambition, and who is able to think on your feet.
• Ideally they want work experience and a good CV

Helping young people reach this stage of understanding also helped them to realise the steps they need to take to become of interest to an employer in general and in their chosen sector and to identify what may help them to take those steps. This was appears to have been a large part of the motivation on the part of young people to undertake training.

Bringing young people to this level of awareness about the needs of employers was one of the core elements of the guidance process looked at earlier. It was achieved through the ongoing process per se, by helping the client recognise generic employability skills and by helping them recognise those specific to a particular employer or sector. The latter was part of the preparation for interview and CV development. Tools such as the Manage Your Career competency framework (see Appendix 3) are useful in providing a framework for supporting practitioners to enable their clients to develop career management skills and generic employability skills. This framework was developed with the needs of the individual, the needs of the guidance practitioner and the needs of employers in mind. It provides a structure within which core employability skills such as resilience, adaptability, recognition of
employer’s needs, self belief, self motivation etc. can be identified and developed as part of the guidance process.

Over and above their awareness of what employers were looking for and what they consider to be job ready, the young people were also developing a sense of themselves as future workers as a result of the guidance process. This is in line with Fugate et al. (2004) employability model discussed in Section 1. The young clients we consulted with were clearly developing definitions of themselves that included the possibility of being a worker.

“When I left school, I thought that was it. I thought with no education and where I’m from I would be on welfare for ever. Now I know I can get a job. I can train”

“I know now that I can look for work and I can find work. I will have to train. But I want to do that too”

Those clients consulted with who were at the end of the process were able to determine their own level of job-readiness and in particular to recognise if they needed further training.

“I know I am ready for work now but in this sector a third level qualification is important. I will think about going to college but I want more experience so first I will explore other ways of getting a job in the sector”

“I am almost ready to look for work because now I have experience and I know what I want. But I think it will be better for me to do some more training first”

Summary

From the consultation process, it appears that the BYG has successfully met the needs of young people, it has increased their employability and it has enhanced their prospects of finding employment. During the BYG clients have progressed to education, training, work placement and employment. These include those clients with very high levels of need. The self-definition of clients has also been positively impacted and this is likely to have long-term effects. Overall it appears from the findings noted above that the in-depth model of guidance delivered within the BYG has proven effective for young people including those with a high level of need.

The elements of the model which appear to contribute to these outcomes are very similar to those identified by the Eurofound (2012) report into good practice in providing services for the young unemployed. These are looked at again in the following Chapter where we identify learning for a national YG. First though, and in order to provide some comparisons with the BYGS model, in the paragraphs below we look at the implementation of the Swords Model and the Intreo approach. We have to note however that due to time limitations of the
consultation process and difficulties in meeting with clients, the accounts below are not as
detailed as we would wish.

**Swords Model**

The model looked at in Swords was implemented by staff of the Swords DSP in their own offices during the months February 2014 to December 2014. The Initiative targeted young people aged 18 to 24 on the Live Register living within the catchment area, with the objective of fast tracking them to employment or other progression opportunities.

The model implemented in Swords differed from that in Ballymun in a number of important respects, although there were some similarities too. In Swords a ‘Big Event’ called “Pathways to Education, Training and Employment Fair” was organised instead of a group engagement. All eligible young people – 418 in total - were invited to this event which was attended by training providers and by employers who had training to offer and vacancies to fill. On the day, 218 young people participated and more were subsequently contacted. At the end of the event, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form and to specify their next steps.

It has not been possible to date to get accurate data on the numbers of young people engaged with during the one-to-one process which followed the Big Event. It appears that some young people were recruited on the day itself although we do not have numbers for these. From other data available, it seems that a total of 325 young people were eligible for the service. The PEX scores for these were 16% Target Group 1 (53 clients); 69% Target Group 2 (228 clients) and 15% Target Group 3 (48 clients). How many of these were actually met with by Case Officers, we cannot determine.

There was a high level of level of placement and progression in the first two months of the process and as a result, there was only 74 clients left to work with at the end of April 2014 as 292 clients had progressed at that stage (an unknown number of whom had ‘self-served’). By mid-October there was only 51 clients left to work with as a further 23 clients had progressed during the previous months. The provision of intensive guidance was not required throughout the process therefore.

The outcomes data from Swords are as follows. By October 2014, 33% of clients had progressed to full time employment, 10% to casual or part time employment and 11% to work experience programmes or internships. A total of 17% were participating in education or training programmes and a further 13% were awaiting places on programmes. Fifteen per cent were seeking work.

Most of the progression appears to have taken place in the first six to eight weeks of the process and as noted above some of this reflects self-serving on the part of the clients. It also appears that those with the highest level of need were least likely to progress: at the end of the process 75% of those who had not progressed were Target Group 1 (compared to 16% at the start) while just 3% were Target Group 3 (compared to 15% at the start).
The work with the young clients was undertaken by two employees of the DSP referred to as Case Officers with the support of their Manager. These Case Officers also dealt with 1391 other clients. Due to the lack of overall clarity regarding the number of young clients engaged with on a one to one basis, we cannot ascertain the overall client to Case Officer ratio but it appears to be quite high. We understand that the Case Officers use the Ali Graham model of guidance with their clients, although on the day they stated they did not operate to a specific model of guidance but tried to respond to individual circumstances, drawing on their own background and experience. The Case Officers considered the absence of a formal guidance model to be positive, allowing them the personal flexibility, autonomy and control to do their jobs as they consider best.

The short time frame available for the consultation did not allow the process in Swords to be explored in great depth. However additional material was requested and provided subsequently and this is also incorporated into the discussion below.

*Initial Engagement*

From the consultation with the Case Officers, it is again apparent that establishing rapport with the young people was a vital first stage in the process and something that had to be achieved in the very early stages. Clients were met with individually in the office in Swords. Unlike the situation in Ballymun, when the Swords clients came in for the 1-2-1 they already had their progression route in mind. According to the service manager, they knew exactly what they wanted to do, or indeed in some case what they didn't want. The Case Officer went through the evaluation forms on which they had outlined their next steps before they arrived and it gave them a flavour of what the client wanted or in some cases what they had already committed to.

The first meeting had a number of objectives:

- The first task of this initial contact was to build the trust of the young person. The Case Officers felt that building trust was difficult in the early stages, and the impact was difficult to document. But it was vital to achieving the overall outcomes. Case Officers noted that clients were often wary at the first meeting and did not open up till the second meeting.

- A second task was to assess the needs, skills and interests of the client. During this, they discussed the progression plans that the young people had identified on the evaluation forms. The Case Officers did not base their assessment of clients on the use of specific tools. Instead they relied on their own instinct and intuition and drew on their background experiences.

- A further objective was to improve the presentation of the client’s CV.
Case Officers noted that PEX ratings were not helpful in determining the actual level of need experienced by the client as the same labour market barriers could be experienced by those in all PEX groups.

Ongoing contact
The Case Officers maintained ongoing contact with clients and on average clients had four meetings during the process. (We are not sure if this is the average for all clients or for those who required most support). From May to October there were 74 young clients, although as noted above the Case Officers also dealt with older clients. During the meetings the case officers helped clients to identify what they wanted in terms of progression and to develop progression plans.

- They identified what education, training or work opportunities might be available for clients. The Case Officers stated that they used Google as the main resource in researching options along with access to a detailed local services directory and the course calendar of the CSS.
- Their objective was not to ‘hand hold’, but to give autonomy and responsibility to the client.
- Clients who failed to attend were re-contacted several times and encouraged to re-engage.

The case officers noted that they each have different skills which allowed them to complement each other and to provide a better service to their clients. They considered this to be a key element of the success of the approach, along with their personal background, skills and personality.

Overall views
The flexibility of the model was highly rated by the case officers as was the fact that they had total accountability and control over their own work. They also believed that the two person team had complimentary skills as well as individual experience. They experienced significant difficulties with the IT system and the admin system finding them cumbersome and duplicative. The lack of supportive contextual factors such as age reductions for CE and TUS and additional funding to support participation, was noted as hampering the implementation of the approach.

The Swords Model: The Clients Experience
Eight participants in Swords took part personally in the consultation and one client contributed by email. Among the eight who participated, five were involved in training courses or participating on schemes at the time, one was on a waiting list to participate in a training programme and two were job-seeking having completed short courses including career planning. None were in employment at the time of the consultation nor did they have a sense of where or how they might find employment. We were not able to consult with participants who achieved positive outcomes from the services, although the one participant who contributed by email was very positive about their experience and outcome.
The Experience of the Guidance Process

It was clear the clients had a very positive experience of engaging with the case officers. Clients stated that:

- They found the case officers to be friendly, helpful and supportive.
- They felt they were treated like adults, and like individuals and were not viewed as lazy due to being unemployed.
- Clients felt that the staff cared about them and would do everything they could to help them.
- The noted the positive differences between the Swords environment in which they were interviewed, and that of the Welfare office in Northumberland St.

In contrast to their positive views on the initial engagement, there were mixed views on the value of the guidance they had received.

- Clients said they found the regular contact with their Case Officer good and felt that this had helped to increase their motivation.
- Clients said that overall they were satisfied with the service they had received.
- Some clients felt their views were not fully taken into account in deciding on appropriate training or other opportunities and they had been referred to programmes they found irrelevant.
- A number of clients had participated on Career Planning courses. They said they enjoyed these although they noted their participation did not lead to them having a career plan in place.

Clients also had a number of criticisms of the offers they received. As noted above, some clients felt that the offers they received were not relevant to their aspirations and that there was a low level of match to their individual interests. They attributed this to the lack of relevant courses and to them not being certain what they wanted. Others felt that course providers were misleading in the information they provided; and the fact that courses were not free or that there was no funding for necessary equipment presented barriers for some.

Clients expressed broad satisfaction with the initiative although some were pessimistic about being able to find work. Some clients felt that getting work experience in an area they were interested in would help them secure employment. Others felt it was important not to be ‘thrown on courses just to keep your money’.

Summary

As far as we can ascertain, some of those progressing to employment did not go through the one to one process, so it is difficult to establish the overall impact of the personal support as distinct from simply being put in contact with employers at the Big Event. The lower level of need among the Swords target groups, must also be considered and the data suggests that
that those with lower levels of need were able to ‘self-serve’. This would have implications for a national model, but at this point we cannot be definitive given the lack of detail with the data, quality of employment, sustainability and so on. Some additional research may be warranted to explore this issue more fully.

Nonetheless it does appear that this approach was effective for some young people and for these in particular it seems that the setting, the personal rapport achieved and the ongoing support were important elements.

The Intreo Model

The Intreo model is the national model of guidance for job seekers.

Intreo did not provide a service within the framework of the BYG, apart from the initial group engagement. The model is looked at here for comparative purposes. Efforts to organise a focus group with staff members of Intreo were unsuccessful and the following is based on an interview with one staff member who was available to take part in the consultation.

The roles and responsibility of the Intreo Case managers have been noted in Section 2 and there appears to be some overlap with the approach of the BYG. However, from the following account, it is clear that the Intreo model is process driven, rather than client driven. In this respect, elements of the intervention and the timing of engagement are dictated by the process rather than the needs of clients.

The process, as outlined to us on the day, is as follows:

- The client makes an application to sign on
- Subsequent to this, they are allocated a PEX rating, which indicates the likelihood of leaving the Live Register within a specified amount of time
- Two weeks later a group engagement (GE) takes place based on age group (i.e., over 25 and under 25).
- Two weeks after this a 45 minute one to one interview is held with each client. The objective of this meeting is to develop their background and history, discuss possible courses, up-skilling, and jobs. (The Customer is given an appointment date for their one-to-one meeting at the GE. This meeting usually takes place within five days of the GE)
- Those who are given a low PEX rating (very high needs) or a medium rating (high needs) are given a further one to one interview in two months. Those allocated a high PEX rating are re-interviewed after six months.

A significant difference between the Intreo and the Ballymun model is that in the former, the first meeting is used to develop the progression plan and subsequent meetings monitor this and the clients’ efforts to progress it. In Ballymun, the first meeting identifies some possible
directions but the detailed career plan is not put in place till later in the process and the focus of ongoing meetings is to develop this plan and support, not control, the client.

The Intreo staff member also expressed his views on the BYG. His view was that the BYG had worked well and had really focused on ensuring the right offer for clients. He viewed the key elements in ensuring its success as follows:

- The in-depth model of guidance delivered in Ballymun was very effective in addressing the needs of the clients.
- The lowering of the age threshold for CE and TUS was very instrumental in enabling the YGS to work effectively
- The partnership approach, interagency work and in particular the integration of services worked well and was very effective.
- The fact that it is was not delivered by a Government Department or agency or within the offices of a Government agency helped too, as this can be intimidating for young clients

Clients of Intreo

We had hoped to consult with Intreo clients, in order to have some comparative data with that in Ballymun and in Swords. However, this did not prove possible. In the absence of this type of data, it is worth looking at the findings of the INOU consultation with clients of Intreo conducted in mid 2014.

The INOU consulted with clients of Intreo in two settings, Dublin and Sligo and also with INOU members nationally. Approximately 56 clients participated in focus groups and 66 in telephone interviews. The consultation focused on the group engagement session, the initial meeting with the case officer, review meetings and outcomes. The findings were largely positive although there were some criticisms.

Many of the participants did not find the GE useful. They noted it that it did not actually engage with them, and that the presentations, although detailed, did not provide clear information. In contrast, the overall impression of the initial meeting with case officers was that these were positive. Clients said they were satisfied with the duration of the meetings and that they were treated with courtesy and respect. They did, however, comment on a ‘tick box’ mentality on the part of the Case Officers and some clients felt it would be more useful to have two meetings with the case officer before developing the progression plan.

While many of the clients were happy with the support received and found it beneficial, what is described as ‘a significant minority’ had less positive experiences. Some referred to what they saw as the case officer putting pressure on them to find work where they were eager to pursue education or training. Similarly others felt pressurised to take-up programmes where they had no interest in either the programme or where they might lead to. Others felt the case officers were ‘out of their comfort zone’ and suggested they needed training.

One aspect that was raised by a number of Focus Group Members and Telephone Respondents was how much they would welcome and how positive it would be if the Case
Officer would contact them if for instance they saw a good job, training or educational opportunity that they thought the person might be interested in.

There were a number of good examples where the Intreo service and the Case Officer provided information on and assisted unemployed people to access suitable education and training courses. A number of the Focus Group and Telephone Interview participants also accessed work. However, none of these attributed finding work to the Case Officers or the Intreo system. Some of the participants outlined how they had got work based on previous contacts, others as a result of their own job-seeking efforts. Participants felt there was a need for Case Officers and the Intreo service to provide people with the necessary supports to find work, that the Intreo system should be a partnership between the Case Officer and the individual that focuses on looking for work for the individual and that the Intreo service (and Case Officers) would engage with, and support the individual until they became unemployed.

Summary

In the time available to us, we have not been able to explore the Intreo model in as much depth as we would have wished. The above can at best be seen as providing some indication of its implementation and impact. Nonetheless on the basis of the consultation with guidance providers in the other services looked at, and more especially on the basis of the consultation with young clients, there is some cause to question the suitability of the Intreo model, for this target group. The lack of a client centred approach, the adherence to process and the early development of the progression plan are not compatible with what the BYG clients noted was beneficial for them.
Section 5

Identifying learning for a national youth guarantee scheme

The BYG Pilot as delivered in Ballymun was successful in increasing the employability of young people and enabling them to improve their situation on the labour market. The ultimate outcome cannot be assessed at this stage but it is clear from the data to date that the vast majority of the clients of the BYG have made significant progress towards their employment goals.

The consultation process identified a number of key elements of the guidance process which were important in ensuring that the engagement with clients was effective. These included:

- A non-intimidating setting: it was widely noted by both providers and clients that the setting within which the service is delivered can have an impact on the perception of the client and their ability to participate fully. As noted previously, this may be something to which younger clients are more sensitive.
- Establishing trust and rapport: this was crucial to ensuring the buy-in of the young person and enabling them to be motivated and positive about the process
- Formal needs assessment: a structured approach to identifying barriers helped motivate and incentivise young people as well enabling them to see how they might address barriers
- Putting a career plan in place: the development of career plans, appropriate to the needs and aspirations of clients provided a targeted approach to moving towards positive outcomes.
- Providing ongoing guidance: the provision of ongoing, in-depth guidance kept clients motivated and supported and facilitated re-engagement where necessary
- Referral to a quality offer. Referral to a progression option that ensures a correct fit with the young person and helps them to progress to employment.
- The team approach and the element of peer support were important aspects of the service.

The guidance aspect of the BYG pilot as delivered in Ballymun displayed all the above elements and was successful in catering for young people with severe barriers to employment. The Swords model also contained some of the above elements in particular
the non-intimidating setting, the development of trust and rapport and the provision of ongoing support. In contrast, the Intreo model, as described to us, did not share many of these features.

An important point to note is the fact that the guidance aspect of the Ballymun YG pilot was delivered by an NGO. The central involvement of NGOs has been recognised as valuable approach within labour market interventions, particularly for excluded groups. The benefit of using such organisations to deliver interventions to disadvantaged groups was most recently highlighted by the Mount St Trust Employment Initiative (MSTEI, 2014). Ballymun Job Centre was one of three NGOs which participated in designing and delivering the very successful MSTEI and the final report on the Initiative noted that the expertise of these organisations was evident in all elements of the intervention. The specific expertise of NGOs relates to their capacity to engage with and encourage the participation of disadvantaged groups, to implement interventions in a culturally sensitive manner and to support individuals dealing with challenging life circumstances. The use of appropriately trained staff, operating from a culture of sensitivity and respect is also a contributing factor. Overall, the MSTEI noted that the involvement of NGOs in labour market programmes for long-term unemployed people can contribute significantly to successful implementation and outcomes and to overall cost effectiveness.

**Contributing to Good Practice in Youth Guarantee Programmes**

In delivering the pilot, the guidance model in Ballymun replicated those elements of good practice identified by Eurofound in 2012 based on its assessment of interventions to support young people into employment across Europe. In this regard, the BYG pilot can be seen to be an example of best practice in relation to the YG in Ireland. In the following paragraphs we look at the key learning the BYG has generated in relation to the Eurofound good practice elements and the implications of this for a national Youth Guarantee Scheme.

1. **Successful policy measures specify their target group and find innovative ways to reach them by establishing good reputation, creating a positive brand or working with relevant community groups**

   The ‘branding’ of the BYG succeeded in creating a positive view of the Ballymun pilot on the part of young people.

   This branding was based on three elements. These were (a) the delivery of the BYG in a non-intimidating setting, (the value of a non-intimidating setting was also recognised in Swords and by Intreo staff) (b) the involvement of the Ballymun Job Centre as a community based organisation which has a positive track record and credibility in the area and (c) the reputation established by the BYG among young people due to the method of working and the outcomes it achieved. Mainstreaming the guidance aspect of the YG to the national level should be informed by these features. It is also likely that the relaxed penalty regime introduced by DSP for the BYG helped with the positive branding; mediators noted this was beneficial to clients and helped them take responsibility for their own participation.
2. **Young people vary in their level of labour market readiness and policies have to cater for a range of minor to complex needs.**

The detailed needs assessment (stage 1 of the guidance process) implemented with the BYG clients allowed their specific issues to be identified and addressed and enabled the service to be tailored to the needs of individuals. The formal identification of needs also enabled young people to recognise and address their individual barriers. This was empowering for the young people and increased their employability. In contrast, the inappropriateness of the PEX system for determining the level of need was widely noted. The fact that all the BYG clients could avail of the first stage in the guidance process was instrumental in ensuring the full range of needs were identified and addressed.

3. **Policy delivery relies on appropriate personnel who need to be trained and supported.**

The BYG pilot was delivered by a team of highly skilled, experienced and qualified mediators who operated within the framework of a formal structured model of guidance. The team was supported by a team leader and peer support and regular team meetings were important aspects. The fact that the team had confidence in the model they used was also a positive feature. The deployment of appropriately trained personnel with the right attributes for working with young people was of central important to the success of the pilot.

4. **Young people should be set up on a long-term sustainable pathway rather than low-quality quick fixes.**

The core objective of the BYG pilot was to make an investment in young people to enable them be sustainable on the labour market in the long-term by increasing their employability. Within the Pilot, making a referral to education or training programmes were not necessarily considered to be an end in themselves but a stepping stone on the career path of the young person. The evidence to date from the pilot suggests the success of this approach with the clients expressing their confidence in their future direction and ability to move towards employment.

5. **Successful policies offer good quality career advice and comprehensive holistic guidance.**

The provision of good quality career and comprehensive holistic guidance was the core of the BYG pilot. This was based on the expertise and experience of the skilled team of mediators and on the tools that have been developed to support their work. The benefits of career advice were apparent in the consultation with clients and had a notable impact on their employability.

6. **Youth unemployment measures should focus on the client not the provider for example by offering tailored, personalised advice by mentors.**

The system of guidance used was client led from start to finish, and the guidance process was driven by the clients’ needs. The model of guidance was sufficiently flexible to allow it be nuanced to the needs of individuals. The fact that the same mediator provided support for
the young person throughout the process was also beneficial to the clients. The potential for
the mediator to remain in contact with the client as they participate on training programmes
was highlighted.

7. *Inter-agency collaboration and the involvement of all stakeholders can be cost effective
when the roles and responsibilities of different actors are specified.*

The BYG pilot in Ballymun benefited from the existence of the EQUAL Youth inter-agency
network. This provided a holistic approach in supporting the clients towards the labour
market. Collaboration in the design and delivery of education and training programmes is
important and within this, it is necessary to recognise and respect the specific expertise of
guidance providers. In addition, the benefit of the mediators or guidance practitioners
maintaining formal contact with training and education providers during the delivery of
programmes was also highlighted. The positive relationship developed with the Department,
particularly in relation to penalty rating, also contributed to the effective implementation of
the BYG.

8. *Measures that aim to increase the employability of young people should focus on labour
market needs and ensure a buy-in of employers and their representatives.*

A very positive factor in enabling clients of the BYG to gain relevant work experience was
the lowering of the eligible age criteria for participation on TUS and CE. This proved very
beneficial in enabling young people move towards their employment goals. The provision of
work based placements and training by employers was also positive, but the need for
guidelines for employers (see Appendix 2) and appropriate collaboration between mediators
and employers is highlighted. The issue of support for employers could not be explored in
any depth in this study, but does warrant further research.

It is also worth reiterating the fact the Swords model shared some of the above
characteristics. Moreover the Big Event appears to have been effective in enabling young
people (most likely those closest to the labour market) to self-serve and progress to
education, training or employment.

**Following through from best practice to Implementation at a national level**

In implementing the YG at a national level, it is important that the key elements noted above
which underpinned its success are replicated as far as possible. On this basis, the steps
needed to undertake a national roll out of the BYG Guidance process are as follows:

- The specification of suitable premises
- The identification of appropriate staff, (capable of building rapport and trust with
  young people). Based on the client mediator ratio in the BYG pilot, a maximum of
  300 guidance practitioners would be required to cater for all those aged under 25 on
the Live Register. This number could be reduced through facilitating self-serving by some clients.

- Staff training in the use of guidance tools and guidance delivery. It is estimated that three days training would be required to enable guidance practitioners use of the BYG pilot tools
- Detailing the guidance roles and objectives. This requires a specification of the exact role required of the guidance practitioner. For example to provide advice, guidance and support to assist clients to agree a personal progression plan, based on an assessment of ability/competence and need; to support the client on his/her journey to sustainable employment: to remind clients of obligations to engage and of consequences of not: to assess local area FET needs; to liaise with local FET providers: to assess local labour market needs and engage with employers.
- The establishment of work teams and supportive management structures
- Testing the model at local level and identifying local flexibility /nuancing
- Building inter-agency Networks and developing formal relationships between guidance practitioners and education and training providers
- Making contact with employers and supporting their participation and collaboration with guidance practitioners.

Concluding Comments and Recommendations

The Ballymun YG pilot has demonstrated that local inclusive planning, careful designing and committed implementation can generate effective outcomes for a range of stakeholders, most importantly though for the young participants of the initiative. More specifically, the guidance process implemented by the Ballymun YG has impacted on the progress of the BYG participants towards their chosen career area and on their own perception of their employability.

In the section above elements of the Ballymun YG guidance model have been highlighted alongside the principles of good practice identified by Eurofound (2012). With the roll out of a national Youth Guarantee in 2015, the learning generated by the BYG pilot provides an appropriate guidance template for replicating good practice on a national level. The BYG model has demonstrated the type of guidance approach which meets the needs of a highly disadvantaged group of young people whose social, educational, economic and labour market disadvantage consistently challenges their employability.

The findings of this study as outlined in Section 4 demonstrate that from the perspectives of both the participants, and the staff involved in the delivery of the service, the BYG guidance model contributes towards the development of career identity (e.g. seeing themselves as part of the labour market and having a clearly defined role within it), adaptability (e.g. the development of career management skills such as resilience, self efficacy and flexibility) and
human and social capital (e.g. improved skills developed through their quality offer and improved social skills, team participation, interview skills).

The extent to which the BYG model is particularly appropriate for disadvantaged clients cannot be fully determined on the basis of this study. The Swords model catered effectively for less disadvantaged clients, many of whom it appears could self-serve. The Big Event approach, in particular, seems effective in acting as a ‘pre-interview’ intervention, potentially reducing the number of clients requiring one to one interviews.

**Challenges for a National Youth Guarantee**

1. **Perception of the labour intensity and high resources required to deliver the Ballymun YG model**

From the outset the high support individualised nature of the Ballymun YG guidance model has differentiated it from the various other models of activation in Ireland. In this study its comparison to the Swords model and the Intreo services aimed to highlight those differences. However the high support nature of the guidance approach creates a perception that it is labour intensive. This study suggests that this may not be the case although additional work is required to establish the exact cost of the BYG model vis-à-vis the other approaches looked at here.

Although we cannot establish the client mediator ratio in Swords, it does appear that the number of guidance meetings was comparable across the two services, with practitioners having on average 3 to 4 guidance meetings per client with additional contact time via text messages, phone calls, and drop-ins. However, this level of service was provided to all 729 clients in Ballymun as distinct from approximately 20% of Swords clients.

The Ballymun client ratio compares will international examples. According to the ILO (2011), during the period 2008-2009, Germany, in an attempt to ensure that disadvantaged job seekers and long term unemployed received the right placement services and other supports to avoid the risks associated with unemployment, recruited 9,200 additional case managers so as to reduce the ratio of clients to case workers. In April 2011 the ratio for young people was 86:1 and for adults was 158:1.

It is difficult to extract the guidance model from the overall BYG model in terms of its value. This is due to the nature of the guidance process whereby clients are referred out of the guidance service to undertake education, training, employment etc. and the quality of the intervention/external impacts on the client are no longer within the quality control of the guidance service. Hooley (2014), writing on behalf of the ELGPN recommends further focus on the ‘need to disentangle the impact of career guidance from that of a broader range of active labour market policies’ (pg.53).
Although a value for money study was not feasible within the timeframe allocated for this current research, such a study as suggested earlier, could provide further evidence for the value of the guidance process and support for the levels of resources required.

2. Process driven approach vs. Client centred approach

The activation model delivered through the Intreo service is quite process driven, following a number of stages:

- Clients are selected randomly and invited a Group Engagement session.
- Client receives a one to one interview with a case officer where the Personal Progressions Plan is agreed
- Monthly meetings thereafter focus on the clients progress.

Staff in all three services in this study voiced concerns that this process driven model will prevail with little or no investment in the type of guidance model piloted in the Ballymun YG. One of the fundamental differences between the Intreo model and the Ballymun YG guidance model is the content of the meetings or how the allocated time is used.

As was demonstrated by both the Ballymun YG and the Swords model an average of three to four guidance meetings were required for clients. The Ballymun YG model uses these meetings to conduct an initial in-depth needs assessment, career exploration and guidance (often utilising appropriate tools and methods as outlined in Section 2) and career planning. Time is spent developing the career plan with the clients rather than checking on progress. Clients and staff monitor the implementation through ongoing communication such as phone calls, drop-ins, text messages and where required further formal meetings.

It is difficult to say that there are specific elements of the guidance process that should be replicated as opposed to replication of the totality of the model, due to its client centred approach. This approach allows practitioners to decide what elements of the model are specifically required by the client based on the initial assessment of need.

Replication of the model requires careful planning and implementation particularly in relation to the expertise and skills of staff delivering the service, the overall guidance approach used, the culture of the organisation tasked with delivery (and its flexibility in allowing staff to deliver at the required pace), the tools and methods available for use by staff, and the systems put in place to support and document progress.

3. Requirement for local flexibility and inter-agency approach

The Ballymun YG pilot included an interagency approach, Equal Youth, which in many ways provided the guidance process with added supports to enable it to respond quickly and ‘fast track’ clients whether it be to additional support services such as the Addiction services, literacy supports, specific education etc. The pilot was also supported by a local
implementation group (LIG) and a national steering group (NSG) both of which enabled local flexibility and as such, additional support for the success of the guidance process. Many local areas have some form of interagency or networks already established which could be drawn upon as a supportive network for the establishment of a national youth guarantee.

4. Policy challenges: Workfare vs. Activation towards Employability

The Ballymun YG had as its main objective the investment of time and effort in young people in order to increase their sustainability on the labour market in the long term. This is particularly important in the current labour market context of flexicurity where equipping an individual with the skills and attitude to manage their labour market well-being over time will be a more cost effective approach. Above all else, the learning from the BYG has demonstrated that a guidance led approach to career development and career planning is effective for young people.

In short it is clear that the BYG, Intreo and the Swords approach use the same type of process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common elements of the 3 approaches</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>One to One meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment &amp; Action Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review &amp; Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exit &amp; Offer</td>
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However the following aspects impact the implementation of these stages in the process, and in turn their perceived effectiveness:

- Context: local intelligence / knowledge, local flexibility
- Approach: how the process is delivered (e.g. quality driven guidance, empathetic staff, client centred approach, focused on supporting the client into employment (as the overall objective), resources available (tools, methods, approaches)
- Staff: who delivers the process? Training, expertise, skill etc.
- Culture of the organisation delivering the service and its orientation (Internally focused/externally focused)
It is important to note that this study has enabled us to look at three approaches each delivering an activation service, whereby the objective is to support unemployed young people into the labour market and reduce their dependence on welfare. The three models take place within a control type context, characterised by rights, responsibilities and sanctions. It would seem that the use of sanctions supports the engagement of young people into the services, but the approach initiated within the service, namely empathy and guidance is the mechanism that retains the individual within the service and supports them into employment. So in that context it is really important to understand that the BYG model worked because of the aspects outlined above along with the disciplined structure of the BYG (in terms of the team, the leadership, the support of the Intreo/DSP team, the sanctions, the objectives / targets to be achieved etc.). Herein lies the challenge for wider scale implementation.

Recommendations

In this final section we make some recommendations as to the core features of a best practice guidance service that the evidence suggests should be adopted in the national context. These recommendations are based on the findings of this study which highlight the effectiveness of guidance in moving young people towards employment. Within this overall formal model delivered in Ballymun, there is sufficient flexibility to cater for clients with different characteristics such as early school leaving, low level educational attainment, no work experience, history of substance abuse or criminality and so on. The fact that these different levels of need can be catered for within the model should not be seen as a "one size fits all" approach. On the contrary, it corresponds with the Eurofound good practice guideline of catering for a wide range of needs.

1. The national YG should be based on the objective of investing in young people in order to increase their employability and labour market sustainability in the long-term.

2. The good practice generated by the BYG pilot (in line with Eurofound research) should be noted and replicated at national level.

3. Skilled guidance officers are required to deliver the service. The approach of the guidance officer (which is based on good inter-personal skills and the ability to build rapport) should be an essential prerequisite component of the YG model

4. The training of staff specifically in terms of Guidance practice is necessary to ensure consistency in the delivery of the service while also allowing for flexibility as indicated by individual needs.
5. A quality driven Guidance model / standard to which the guidance staff can work to is fundamental in providing a structured and systematic approach to the development of personalised career plans.

6. The guidance process should inform the development of a career plan. The content of the initial Guidance meetings should comprise the development of self awareness and self knowledge and this may include the identification of interests, aptitudes and preferred behavioural style. Once the personalised career plan is agreed, support regarding the implementation of the career plan should follow. This must include supporting clients to increase their employability and to demonstrate this at interview with regard to the evidence of employability sought by employers. Use of tools such as the Manage Your Career competency framework (see Appendix 3), have been found to be useful in this regard.

7. The frequency of client contact should be relative to the client’s needs: those with high support needs being seen more frequently, while those with lower support needs are seen less frequently.

8. Guidance practitioners should be consulted at local level in the design and delivery of education and training programmes specifically for younger clients, and formal contacts should be maintained between guidance practitioners, the providers of education and training and the clients during participation.

9. Assisting young clients to self-serve by organising Big Events (along the Swords lines) can have the effect of reducing the numbers requiring more in-depth guidance. This model is being implemented in North Dublin. The impact should be monitored in order to determine its relevance at national level.

10. Education, training and work experience options at local level should facilitate young people develop social and human capital. The value of combining work experience programmes with formal accredited training in particular was highlighted as an effective strategy in increasing the employability of young people.

11. From a guidance perspective the interagency approach enables effective and efficient referrals ensuring quality at transition points between guidance and the quality offer. However, better data systems, which acknowledge the differences across organisations, could help improve our understanding of transition points between guidance and education/training/employment interventions etc. and facilitate continuous quality improvements.
Section 6

Key Lessons for National Youth Guarantee

Key issues arising from the research project for the DSP to consider are:

- The role of the guidance service within the YG
- The nature of the service to be provided - standard process or flexible client-centred
- Links with other agencies/FET providers and employers
- Competencies and skills of guidance practitioners
- Tools and supports required to successfully deliver the service

Definition of the ‘guidance service’ and its role within the PES and YG

According to the OECD ‘Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services.’

Guidance plays an important role in supporting employment transitions within the labour market, from school to work, from unemployment to employment, from one job to another. The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN, 2014) presents evidence for the important contribution made by career guidance to active labour market policy measures and emphasise that career guidance can ‘enhance unemployed individuals’ direction, purpose and confidence’ (p. 44).

Guidance is about supporting the individual in their journey towards education and training and into employment. It aims to assist individuals in identifying their strengths and limitations, in order to make informed career decisions so as to fulfil their potential. Cedefop advise that guidance policies should empower individuals to utilise their existing personal

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resources and develop their aspirations and capacity to work and not simply seek to solve individuals’ crises for them.21

The quality of the guidance process is limited to the interaction between the guidance service/practitioner and the client, and what takes place during that interaction. As the client moves towards the end of the guidance process, the ability of the guidance service to control the level of quality weakens due to the education and training options accessed or indeed the work environment being a separate context.

Beyond defining the role of the Case Officer22, the Department of Social Protection does not appear to have more fully articulated its policy in relation to the PES guidance service. Given the important role that guidance can play in supporting the transition from unemployment to employment, consideration should be given to the adoption of a broad guidance policy and operational framework specifying the role of guidance within the public employment service generally and the delivery of the Youth Guarantee in particular. Clear objectives and clear definitions of the main concepts for example ‘guidance’, ‘employability’, ‘quality offer’ should also be provided.

Nature of the guidance service- key elements
Lessons from the Ballymun pilot Youth Guarantee would support research23 which suggests that the following factors should be considered when working with disadvantaged unemployed clients:

- Guidance policies should not simply seek to solve individuals’ crises for them, but rather should empower them by utilising their existing personal resources and developing their aspirations and capacity to work24
- Guidance services should understand, assess and attend to clients’ needs. This means taking a holistic approach to people’s problems rather than simply focusing on finding a job, and requires strong inter-personal skills from advisers
- Clients need to make clear progress throughout their interaction with a guidance service.
- Staff need to be well-trained and able to empathise with their clients.

22 Case Officer Role Profile lists the role objective as “to encourage, support and assist jobseekers to secure and sustain employment” and role summary “to provide jobseekers with a career development & guidance service with the ultimate goal of securing employment by working with them to agree, prepare, implement and monitor their Personal Progression Plan”
• Close relationships with employers are essential for achieving good client outcomes.
• Links need to be made with other relevant support agencies to support appropriate referral.
• Guidance services need to devote resources to reaching and engaging their target groups.
• Services need to be well-managed, engage with quality enhancement through a quality-assurance process, and committed to evaluating their impact.

1. Assessing client needs

Guidance services should understand, assess and attend to clients’ needs. This means taking a holistic approach to people’s problems rather than simply focusing on finding a job, and requires strong inter-personal skills from advisers and appropriate tools and supports to assist in the identification and assessment of need. The DSP PEX Profiling Questionnaire captures a range of client data which it uses to predict the Probability of a client Exiting the Live Register. It would appear that this data is, however, of limited value in determining client need, e.g. in relation to mental health, motivation, self-awareness, self-esteem, confidence issues, etc. Ballymun Job Centre uses a broad range of tools to capture additional critical information in respect of disadvantaged young people (See Appendix 4). While considered valuable in respect of this client cohort, it may not be necessary or indeed appropriate in relation to clients who do not experience multiple barriers. Consideration should be given to identifying the core data set required to adequately identify and assess client needs/barriers and the means (tools and processes) by which this information is best captured.

2. Clients should make clear progress throughout their interaction with the guidance service

During 2015 the Department intends to engage with all newly registered and all long term unemployed jobseekers under 25 years of age. Low PEX and LTU clients (selected randomly) will be given a guarantee of a reasonable offer of education, training, work-experience or employment within 4 months of attendance at a Group Engagement session, and Medium/High PEX clients will be given an offer within 9 months. In broad terms, the DSP YG client engagement process envisages an invitation to attend a group information session, followed by a 1-2-1 meeting with a guidance practitioner to agree a Personal Progression Plan, followed by monthly review meetings to review progress thereafter.

Over the past number of years the BJC has developed a model of guidance designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged clients (see Appendix 1) based on tools and methods
researched through various EU projects e.g. EGUIDE, eMERGE. The model consists of a set of clearly defined steps in a guidance process:

- **An initial assessment** of the individuals needs (education, training, skills, personal situation, etc.)
- **A tailored career guidance process** – identifying the individuals latent skills, abilities, aptitudes, preferred behaviour style in the workplace, values; and building career clarity, career identity, improving self-esteem and career efficacy.
- **Development of a career plan** which includes a career objective, a number of shorter term career goals, and the identification of potential barriers which may prevent progression
- **Provision of ongoing support to the client to implement the career plan.**

The *initial session(s)* focus on:

- **Building rapport:** This focuses on getting to know the client, building trust and securing their buy-in to the process.
- **Developing understanding:** Early in the process, the clients were made aware of a number of concepts and terms that they needed to understand, such as self-awareness, resilience and adaptability. The needs of employers were also explained and the attributes that they look for at interview and beyond. Clients were helped to understand that the questions they were asked were not meant to be intrusive but were necessary to help them increase their employability and achieve positive outcomes.
- **Identifying a way forward:** This was based on developing a comprehensive profile of the client including identifying their barriers (including potential mental health issues) and setting short and long term goals. A number of formal assessment tools were used during this process, which differ from those used by Intreo. This comprehensive profile helped the mediator to get to know the client while the direct questions allowed their strengths to be identified and built up quickly.

Achieving this often required a number of sessions – particularly for clients with multiple barriers. For some clients with multiple barriers the 4-month target date for providing an offer may not be appropriate.

Offers of education, training, work experience or employment must be suitable to the needs of the clients. While intended to be of a substantive nature, many disadvantaged clients are far removed from the workplace, or indeed the classroom, and may require a number of preparatory interventions. The focus should be on providing clients with a supported pathway to sustainable employment.

**Ongoing guidance**

Once the personal progression plan was agreed (for some clients this may take a few sessions to agree, depending on their needs), ongoing contact was maintained (via face-to-face meetings, texts and phone calls) to ensure that clients stayed motivated and were kept
informed of suitable opportunities and reminded of course start dates. The guidance practitioner was also able to assess how the client was getting on and to respond to issues arising. Clients who failed to engage or subsequently disengaged from the process were reminded that financial penalties could be imposed.

The BYG guidance process is implemented on a 1-2-1 basis with the guidance practitioner and the client working together to identify key strengths, career identity and learning needs. The outcome of this process aims to increase self awareness, improve self esteem, build career and self efficacy and assist the individual to become more resilient in the labour market. The process also aims to build both the human and psychological capital of the individual.

Once the personalised career plan is agreed, guidance practitioners support the client to implement it. The implementation of the career plan relies heavily on the client-practitioner commitment to the plan and the client-practitioner relationship is a critical success factor.

The frequency of client contact is relative to the client’s needs: those with high support needs being seen more frequently, while those with lower support needs are seen less frequently.

Clients are not homogenous and vary with regard to the level of guidance required. Consideration should be given to the adoption of a more flexible client-centred guidance service both at the initial stages, focussed on agreement of a personal progression plan; and in supporting the client to successfully implement it.

3. Trained Guidance Practitioners

Research and practice within the BYG emphasises the need for to appropriately trained personnel who have the capacity to both empathise with clients and their needs while also providing a quality-driven holistic guidance service. The deployment of appropriately trained personnel with the right attributes for working with young people is considered to have been critical to the success of the pilot. The BYG guidance service was delivered by a team of highly skilled, experienced and qualified practitioners who operated within the framework of a formal structured model of guidance. They hold at a minimum the Certificate in Adult Guidance (Maynooth University) and, in addition, have specific training in guidance related approaches and tools e.g. Motivational Interviewing, Level A & B in Psychometric testing (British Psychological Society), counselling skills and EGUIDE in order to continuously develop competencies.

Furthermore the following points are worth consideration:

- Peer support and regular team meetings were identified by the BYG guidance practitioners as important aspects in the provision of a quality service. The discipline of the BYG pilot created a tight and focused team approach to supporting the clients to access the available ‘offers’ in a very short period of time. The experienced and

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qualified nature of the team, along with the quality driven model and the guidance tools and resources available supported the practitioners in their work.

- Practitioners knowledge of the context, or local intelligence (awareness of the context within which the individual operates e.g. the type of area, the family disposition, the provision available, practical barriers (location, transport, childcare) enables the practitioner to ensure that the clients plan is relevant within the clients own context.

- Practitioner's implementation of the model can be dependent on/influenced by the approach of the organisation delivering the service. For example, the use of empathy, the user-friendliness of the service, the setting, the resources available, the quality standards, the discipline of the service delivery.

It is estimated that 3 days training would be required to enable guidance practitioners use of the BJC profiling and assessment tools.

During 2013, the Department of Social Protection significantly increased the number of Case Officers by redeploying personnel from other service areas. While all of these new guidance staff attended a mandatory 2weeks training course, many do not hold professional qualifications in career guidance. **Consideration firstly should be given to the acceptance and provision of a quality driven guidance model, and as the delivery of a quality guidance service relies on appropriate personnel who need to be trained and supported, consideration should be given to identifying how this is best addressed, particularly for new Case Officers who have no professional career guidance qualification.**

### 4. Links with other relevant support agencies to support appropriate referral

Recognition of the needs of marginalised clients including younger clients is an essential component of designing a relevant and appropriate set of interventions to support them along a pathway to sustainable employment. Many disadvantaged jobseekers are often not in a position to fulfill their full potential in the labour market due to a lack of self-awareness of their interest, specific aptitudes and personality style. This can inhibit the client in identifying, accessing and completing appropriate vocational training and/or sustainable employment. A lack of awareness of the options available coupled with a lack of appropriate career guidance can lead to poorly-informed career decisions. There is also a risk that decisions are made based on the availability of existing training/education courses, albeit that they may not be suitable to the needs of the client. This can result in poor client motivation leading to failure to attend or clients dropping out of courses or poor rates of progression - all of which have significant adverse consequences for the client and providers.

The guidance service is an active contributor to the broad partnership responsible for delivering the BYG. Evidence from the pilot indicates that the guidance service can have a critical role
highlighting gaps in current service provision, identifying the need for and elements of appropriate interventions and informing the relevant provider

- assisting clients to make informed decisions about course choice
- supporting the client to overcome access barriers and providing on-going support to clients while on programmes, including information about potential supplementary activities, supports or services
- addressing issues arising from clients dropping out of interventions
- providing a feedback loop from clients who drop out of/complete courses and are back in contact with the guidance service

The BJC is a partner in a multi-agency network (Equal Youth) which successfully case-manages clients who face multiple barriers, providing of a continuum of seamless support from career guidance, through education/training interventions and into the workplace. The culture of the organisation delivering the service is a fundamental prerequisite for successful interagency working. The organisation must have the capacity to engage with the context within which they operate. Consideration should be given to the wider adoption of the multi-agency/multi-disciplinary case management approach to support clients facing multiple barriers.

5. **Close relationships with employers are essential for achieving good client outcomes**

A primary objective of the BYG is to support clients along a pathway to sustainable employment. Clients are not homogenous – for job-ready clients the journey may be short; others will require a higher level of support and multiple interventions before they reach that destination. A key question however is what is meant by “job ready”? How is it determined? How can we improve client employability? A key focus of the BYG was to build links with employers, not just to improve take up of existing services and supports which incentivise recruitment from the Live Register, but also develop new innovative work placement/experience opportunities and to better ensure that the guidance element of the guidance process was appropriately labour market focussed.

**Career Guidance can provide the client with clarity regarding their employment interests and aptitudes, help identify areas of employment that stimulates an individual’s interest and assist clients in making well informed decisions about career direction and choice.**

HR practitioners and employers highlighted the following as key attributes and qualities that they looked for from candidates at interviews:

- **Attitude**: a positive ‘can do’ attitude was considered essential at interview stage.
• **Company fit**: being right for the role and suited to the company. It was considered essential that the guidance process address this ‘tailoring’ if young people are to be prepared for appropriate job placement.

• **Trust and integrity**: this was an important attribute for all sectors.

• **Resilience and confidence**: employers felt this was an area where more work could be done to show young people how to display these qualities.

• **Previous experiences**: employers were open to considering transferable skills including experience gained in jobs outside their industries, from volunteering, school business projects, transition year activities etc. Employers felt that more could be done to help young job seekers to see the relevance of past experiences and how to relate them to future jobs.

• **Personal branding**: being able to combine skills and past experiences and then match them to the key competencies being looked for during the interview process.

• Overall employers felt it was important for young job seekers to:
  
  o put value on their experiences
  o be specific in their responses at interview
  o be able to translate from past experience to the present requirements
  o be able to package or brand their competencies

For their part, guidance practitioners noted that many clients presenting did not have a sufficient grasp of what employers want beyond the most basic requirements such as punctuality.

During the guidance process clients were helped to understand what employers were looking for and what attributes and attitudes they should try to acquire. Tools such as the Manage Your Career competency framework (see Appendix 3) are useful in providing a framework for supporting practitioners to enable their clients to develop career management skills and generic employability skills. This framework was developed with the needs of the individual, the needs of the guidance practitioner and the needs of employers in mind. It provides a structure within which core employability skills such as resilience, adaptability, recognition of employer’s needs, self-belief, self-motivation etc. can be identified and developed as part of the guidance process.

Consultation with clients suggests that the approach was successful.

**Consideration needs to be given to the degree to which the current client profiling and assessment processes capture information on core ‘soft skills’ and the suitability of interventions that build client capacity in this area.**

Employers also expressed the view that short-term training followed by work placement was preferable to long-term training without the link to the workplace. Notably, this was a viewpoint shared by BYG clients.

Employers who were not in a position to offer employment were willing to provide work-experience for clients. Some were willing to provide some experience to marginalised clients with no history of employment. **Consideration should be given to providing employers with guidelines on quality work placements and the support that they may need when dealing with clients with multiple needs.**
6. Guidance services need to devote resources to reaching and engaging their target groups

The BYG guidance service was delivered by the Ballymun Job Centre, the Local Employment Service. Clients were referred following a DSP Group Engagement session. BJC guidance practitioners noted that some clients, particularly those with multiple barriers were initially apprehensive and seemed to have a negative perception of the DSP. This negative perception was also evident in client focus groups organised by the BRYR (the local youth service who are also members of the BYG local partnership) to elicit views from clients as to their reasons for not engaging in the process. **There is a challenge for the DSP to build trust with this cohort.** This begins with the tone and content of correspondence and presentations, providing a setting that puts clients at their ease and skilled guidance practitioners investing the time and resources to build effective relationships.

It also highlights the importance of developing meaningful partnerships with community-based NGOs which may have a deeper understanding of and more credibility with this client group.

Engagement by some clients was problematic and required considerable effort on the part of the guidance practitioners – to get them to engage in the first place and to maintain engagement. Some clients had to be contacted repeatedly by phone/text to remind them to keep appointments and to keep their motivation levels up.

The DSP facilitated a relaxation on a trial basis of the standard regime regarding the imposition of financial sanctions for non-engagement without a satisfactory explanation. This was effective in many cases, but for a small number it proved to be the only way to ensure their engagement. The degree to which these clients can be said to have genuinely engaged is questionable. Consideration should also be given to conducting a study of the effectiveness (or otherwise) of the current Penalty Rate regime in securing genuine engagement with the process.

7. Guidance Services need to be well-managed, engage with quality enhancement through a quality-assurance process, and committed to evaluating their impact

Comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the youth engagement and guidance service is critical.

Young people are not homogenous are vary enormously in terms of their need and proximity to the labour market. The BYG model was designed to meet the needs of a severely disadvantaged community and individual clients with multiple barriers. It is a high support model and the client: guidance practitioner ratio of 158: 1 compares favourably to some European countries, e.g. Germany the client: guidance practitioner ratio is 86:1 for young people and 158:1 for older clients (2011). It is, however resource intensive by Irish standards, which has a national average client: staff ratio of 500:1.
The research also examined an alternative engagement approach, initially trialled in Swords, but since rolled out across the DSP network in Dublin North Division. And it is useful to consider the relative effectiveness of this approach also.

The “Swords Approach” involved inviting all existing YG clients to large events attended by local employers (who were recruiting employees) and a wide range of education and training providers. Clients were encouraged to inform themselves of the range of opportunities available, interact with recruiters and providers and avail of the opportunity to self-serve if they found a suitable opportunity. Clients were asked to complete an evaluation, indicating, inter alia, what supports they felt they required if they found nothing suitable on the day.

Clients who did not find a suitable progression path were subsequently invited to attend 1-to-1 guidance meetings with a Case Officer and Personal Progression Plans agreed and thereafter reviewed.

It should be noted that client profiles were very different from Ballymun with only 16% of clients within the Low PEX range. Outcomes were positive: 33% of clients had progressed to full-time employment, 10% to part-time employment and 11% to work experience programmes or internships. A further 17% were participating in education or training programmes and 13% were waitlisted for courses.

The approach builds effective links with employers and further education and training providers and provides an opportunity for clients to ‘self-serve’ thereby significantly reducing the number that require guidance counselling. The initiative was delivered by 2 Case Officers who also managed a large number of older clients and had a combined client:staff ratio of 1:911.

The approach demonstrates the advisability of facilitating local flexibility to develop appropriate responses to youth engagement depending upon the client profile and the availability of progression opportunities and resources.
References


Appendix 1

BYG Career Guidance Process

**ENGAGEMENT**
Needs assessments / profiles

**ASSESSMENT**
Guidance Interview/s
Participant’s questionnaire T1 (Cantril’s Ladder)

- Mind Map Option
- Guidance Tools: EGUIDE/ Inform Option

**CAREER PLANNING**
Strengths, interests, Barrier Identification

**CAREER PLAN**
Job Master/CSS: Career Plan, Goals and Actions

**IMPLEMENTATION OF CAREER PLAN**
Career Development
Participating in education, training, other actions
Career Engagement
In employment related to career plan

**CAREER MANAGEMENT**
Maintaining Career Path – Self Management with support
Appendix 2

Memorandum of Understanding
In relation to the provision of work experience opportunities

- This Work Placement will provide the Trainee with a meaningful quality work experience that enhances their employability and skills. It will also give an opportunity for Trainees to put into practice skills they have acquired in the training programme.
- The Work Placement will include a well-planned induction which will help the Trainee to settle in as quickly as possible. At the end of the induction program, the Trainee should be familiar with the operating procedures of the business, including Health and Safety procedures and have all the basic knowledge to carry out their duties.
- The Work Placement will be based on a well-designed work plan. The work plan will set out what the Trainee and the Employer expect from the placement. The Employer should ensure that there is a dedicated person, a Mentor, who has planned time to monitor the work experience and conduct regular performance reviews with the Trainee, including a final review to evaluate the entire experience.
- As part of their role, the Mentor will assist the Trainee to settle in quickly and to provide support and information about the work they are doing. The Mentor will focus on supporting the Trainee, providing practical tips and advice and act as an initial point of contact for any concerns the Trainee may have.
- It is agreed that the Work Placement is based on the trainee as an addition to the staff complement. The Trainee will not replace staff members or lead to a reduction in hours allocated to existing staff.
- The Congress Centres Network will provide a point of contact for both the Trainee and the Employer throughout the placement in order to ensure the Work Placement is as successful as possible for both.
- The first point of call for the Trainee, should any issues arises and need to be resolved, should be the Mentor. Where applicable, the resolution mechanisms of the Employer should be availed of. However, should this not be deemed feasible or applicable, the CCN as the programme provider and overseer, should play a role in resolving any such issues.
On a practical front the Trainee agrees to practice good timekeeping, communicate any difficulties with attendance, be presentable and to fully participate in and complete the work placement.

The Trainee understands that this is an unpaid, work experience placement, not a job offer.

The Trainee shall work a maximum of 30.5 hours on the basis of the Employer’s normal work patterns.

Useful Questions to help measure the Work placement

- What the intern learned and how have they developed over this internship? Achievement of objectives and goals as set out.
- Biggest/proudest achievements.
- Projects completed or contributed to.
- How internship has better prepared the jobseeker for the jobs’ market (this can include ‘soft’ skills as well as specific projects)
- How well they have performed (in general and/or on specific projects)
- What are their strengths and areas for further development?
- What areas of development do you suggest that they concentrate on in future jobs?

Defining the role of the Mentor

The Mentor should be a person who has both the expertise and the availability to carry out this role. The role of the Mentor is defined as a supportive work colleague and a point of contact for any concerns that the Trainee may have and may occur informally. The Mentor will be responsible for agreeing the work plan, performance expectations and assessing how these are being achieved. Assessing their achievement would take place in more formal meetings.

To that end the work plan will form the basis for regular conversations about the Trainee’s performance in terms of their achievements, attaining goals and development. The Mentor will ensure the intern is not distracted from the plan and conduct a performance review to evaluate the success of their time spent in the organisation.
**Work Plan**

The Work Plan will establish the key duties and role for the Trainee for the period of their work placement. The Work plan will set out what is expected in terms of performance and should be jointly agreed between the Trainee, Mentor and CCN. The Trainee should be clear about the location or locations that they will work, the hours of work, starting date and potential training, learning and development opportunities.

**Information on performance reviews**

It is good practice to conduct performance reviews on a weekly basis, if possible, at the beginning of the work experience but could subsequently change to every two/three weeks. The Mentor will carry out these reviews with the Trainee and should keep up informal conversations with the Trainee through-out the work experience.
Appendix 4

Tools used within the BYG guidance process

These are used by the guidance practitioner when considered relevant and appropriate.

1. Equal Youth & Emerge Profiling:

The profiling tools are generally used during step 1 of the Guidance process (as above). These tools are obligatory and assist the practitioner in gaining an in-depth view of the client’s human capital but also an understanding of their needs, labour market barriers and perception of self.

- **Time Sheet for YG**: Name, address, PPS, Personal ID:
  Appointment Date, Appointment Duration (to be completed for each scheduled meeting)

- **BJC Client Referral Form**: personal details, referral source, educational qualifications, Colleges/Training, Work experience, Work skill summary, Job search details, other information, status, signed declaration

- **BYG Profile Form**
  * Includes all potential barriers: Care of others, Childcare, Eligibility – Social Welfare status, Eligibility – lack of qualifications, Experience – lack of relevant work experience, Family issues, Finance, Health related restrictions, Language skills, Literacy, Personal Disposition
  * Identification of most serious barriers
  * Competences scale of 1-5: Self awareness, Self belief, Resilience, Recognition of employers needs, Employment motivation, Hope, Adaptability

  * Target group recommendation:
    > Target group 1 (Junior Certificate/equivalent or less and little or no work experience)
    > Target group 2 (Leaving Certificate/equivalent or some work experience)
    > Target group 3 (above Leaving Certificate/equivalent or good work experience)

**Equal Youth Profile & Planning Statement:**

- Personal information
  - Education, Training/ Employment Plan: includes an assessment of need scale 1-5: Unemployment duration, Work experience, Qualifications, Basic Literacy & Numeracy, English language skills, Commitment / Attendance, Career Challenges

- Personal Plan: Emotional well-being, Family relationships, Confidence & Expectations, Communication skills, Substance use issues, Risk of offending

- Practical Plan: Accommodation, Income/Benefit, Mobility/Transport, Health Issues.

Equal youth profile & planning document includes Goals to be achieved, Measure of progress, Career Action Plan: Goals, start date, activity, Key worker
2. Career Guidance tools

The following tools are available to guidance practitioners to use as they see fit. Not all clients will benefit from using all tools but may benefit from using elements of relevant tools, based on their specific needs. The objective is to support the client in gaining greater self awareness so that an informed career decision can be made.

EGUIDE: a web based career guidance tool consisting of a number of career guidance assessments (which form part of the EGUIDE Quality Framework for guiding disadvantaged job seekers (BJC, 2007). In traditional guidance processes the practitioner assists the client to become more aware of their Interests, their preferred behavioural style and their specific aptitudes. The EGUIDE tool aims to support the practitioner in this process, so clients undertake all or part of the following:

Interest Explorer: Identification of areas of interest (Task and Environment) which fall into 6 career areas: Realistic, Investigative, Social, Enterprising, Conventional, Artistic

Personality Discovery Quiz: identification of behavioural preferences in the workplace - based on the Big Five Personality Factors Model - Openness, Conscientious, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Negative emotions

Cognitive Explorer: Contains four cognitive sub assessments: Verbal Reasoning, Fluid Reasoning, Perceptual Efficiency, Visual Spatial Reasoning

When complete the practitioner receives the client report from the EGUIDE system and a feedback session is prepared. The practitioner and client discuss the findings from the system and start to narrow down the types of tasks and environments most suited to the client’s strengths and interests. This forms the basis for a career plan.

Manage Your Career (BJC, 2010): A competency framework for supporting clients in the development of career management skills such as resilience, self awareness, career identity, understanding employer needs

Cantrils Ladder: a 10point scale used to measure perceived ‘distance travelled’ towards employability/career goals. This ladder is used at the beginning of the process (normally during the first meeting and again at various key transition points in the guidance process – as deemed appropriate by the guidance practitioner. It can help the client to reflect on their achievements to date and provides a simple way of thinking about distance travelled in relation to achieving their career plan. It can also be used to gather quantitative data on the distance travelled by a group of clients engaging in a process with pre and post scores compared.

Join in a Job (Hafelekar, 2010): a range of worksheets which provide a framework within which to think about work activities, materials, work environments:

- Work activities ‘WHAT’
- Working Materials ‘With WHAT’
- Place of Work ‘WHERE’
- My favourite Jobs