

Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Ireland

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Introduction

The [National Centre for Guidance in Education](#) (NCGE) is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) with the remit to inform the policy of the Department and to support the development of quality guidance practice in the education and FET (further education training) sectors. NCGE engages and collaborates with relevant stakeholders at national, regional and international level.

The [Management of Guidance Committee](#) of the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) is nominated by the Minister for Education and Skills with the role to support and oversee the work of the NCGE. Representatives of two government departments and various national stakeholder bodies are represented on the committee: the Department of Education and Skills; Léargas (The National Agency), Adult Guidance Association; Institute of Guidance Counsellors; National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals; SOLAS, The Further Education and Training Authority; the Higher Education Authority; the Committee of the Directors of Studies of Guidance Counselling; the Department of Employment affairs and Social Protection and Education and Training Boards Ireland.

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Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

Since 2011, the [National Centre for Guidance in Education](#) (NCGE) has coordinated and hosted the [National Forum on Guidance](#) (NFG), on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills; this meets twice per year to provide stakeholders the opportunity to discuss issues of interest and development in guidance across all sectors. It is attended by guidance practitioners, managers and representative organisations of school guidance, FET-based guidance, higher education guidance and labour market / unemployment / PES sector guidance. NCGE also convenes working groups and committees to focus on specific issues pertaining to guidance on behalf of the DES, including a focus on psychometric test use in schools.

In 2012, as a result of the government decisions on financial emergencies in public sector, there was a change to the previous level of DES funding to post-primary schools for the allocation of guidance in schools. However, since 2014 each successive government has gradually reintroduced the allocation of guidance hours to post-primary schools. While these changes occurred, and budgets nationally were affected, support programmes for guidance provision continued.

The Department of Education and Skills provides funding for the programme of [supervision of guidance counselling in schools](#). This is managed by Monaghan Education Centre, overseen by a representative steering committee, including NCGE, and coordinated through the branch network of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC). All guidance counsellors working in post-primary schools are encouraged to attend.

The [Institute of Guidance Counsellors](#) (IGC) is a professional body which represents guidance counsellors, the majority of whom are working in post primary schools and further education and training (FET).

The [Association of Higher Education Careers services](#) represents the guidance staff of the third level Higher Education institutions such as Universities, Institutes of Technology and private colleges. These Higher Education institutions provide education and training programmes at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) levels 6-10.

The [Adult Guidance Association](#) (AGA) represents the guidance staff of the adult educational guidance services, which are based within the Education and Training Boards regionally.

Further education and higher education institutions and colleges provide education and training programmes recognised and validated on the NFQ by [Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#) (QQI). To be considered for validation by QQI, programmes must be developed in relation to QQI policies and criteria.

The [National skills strategy 2025](#) provides the road map for many national strategies and developments, including guidance. It aims to improve education and training, and effective use of skills and technology in order to create sustainable growth and quality of employment. The six key objectives of the strategy are as follows:

- a. Education and training providers will place a stronger focus on providing skills development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy.
- b. Employers will participate actively in the development of skills and make effective use of skills in their organisations to improve productivity and competitiveness.
- c. The quality of teaching and learning at all stages of education will be continually enhanced and evaluated.
- d. People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning.
- e. There will be a specific focus on active inclusion to support participation in education and training and the labour market.
- f. There will be support to increase the supply of skills to the labour market.

The strategy includes reference to the development of career guidance services, information and tools and the strategic action to carry out a review of guidance services, tools and career information.

In 2018, the Department of Education and Skills contracted an independent company Indecon to carry out a [Review of Career Information and Tools](#) in line with the National skills strategy. The review would specifically focus on:

- a. existing policy framework for such tools and information;
- b. information sources, including online tools;
- c. organisational structures.

The [report](#) of this national review was published in 2019. The Review made recommendations in four key areas:

- a. reforms to governance and delivery arrangements;
- b. improvement in career guidance tools and career information;
- c. enhancement of enterprise engagement;
- d. promotion of inclusion.

In 2019, the Minister of Education and Skills appointed an Implementation Taskforce within the Department to consider the recommendations and to drive the proposed reforms that refer to:

- a. developing a National Policy Group to form a coherent, long-term strategy for lifelong career guidance;
- b. including an ongoing emphasis on evidence-based policy, including the organisation of a biennial stakeholder forum;
- c. establishing a support organisation to oversee technology-facilitated guidance services.

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Access to guidance

In 1998, the Government of Ireland published the [Education Act](#), in which Section 9 (c) states that a school shall use its available resources to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices. In post-primary schools (students aged 12 to 18 years), guidance counsellors are allocated based on the annual resource allocation indicated by department guidelines (circulars).

In the further education and training sector, access to guidance is currently provided via the [Adult Educational Guidance Services](#) (AEGS), based within the regional structures of the regional [Education and training boards](#) (ETBs). The AEGS services work with adults and those early school leavers aged over 16. The service is free and provides information and guidance counselling services. It is provided in group settings and on a one-to-one basis to adults attending various FET (further education training) courses. Information on adult education and progression opportunities is provided to the general public. The services are aimed at target groups within the social inclusion agenda.

The AEGI (Adult Education Guidance Initiative) model of guidance provision was developed in 2000 and is based on an integrated model of adult educational guidance counselling which is:

- a. inclusive of the pre-entry, entry, continuing and pre-exit stages;
- b. inclusive of personal, educational and vocational guidance;
- c. working in partnership at local level, meeting a spectrum of guidance needs of the target groups, employing a range of methodologies including information provision, one-to-one guidance, group guidance and outreach provision (Department of Education and Skills, 2012).

Target groups within the social inclusion agenda of the AEGI are listed within the DES [Operational guidelines 2012](#):

- a. adults and young people aged over 16 who left school with low or no formal qualifications or low literacy levels (where a young person aged between 16 to 18 years of age presents, AEGS staff should deal with them appropriately and in line with VEC child protection guidelines);
- b. the unemployed, particularly the priority groups identified as part of the Government's activation agenda;
- c. the long-term unemployed and those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed, especially those in the older age groups;
- d. those not in work but not eligible to be on the 'live' register;
- e. those in the workplace with basic skills needs;
- f. disadvantaged women who have particular experience of barriers to participation;
- g. disadvantaged men, including those experiencing rural isolation;
- h. lone parents and others with caring responsibilities that may prohibit their participation in full time courses;
- i. young people aged over 16 are eligible to participate in Back to Education Initiative and adult literacy programmes;
- j. travellers, homeless people;
- k. substance misusers;
- l. ex-offenders;
- m. people with disabilities;
- n. people for whom English is not the mother tongue, who require language and literacy supports;
- o. former residents of designated education institutions and eligible family members.

The first DES and [SOLAS](#) Further education and training strategy 2014-2019 provided an outline for the development of [FET based guidance services](#) into the future. The development of the FET integrated guidance strategy will begin in 2020, in accordance with the new [SOLAS FET Strategy for 2020-2024](#), at which time the target groups of the FET guidance services will be further defined.

Guidance is provided within the Further Education Colleges of the ETBs, which provide qualifications at NFQ levels 4 to 6, by suitably qualified guidance counsellors who are employed by and based within the colleges. They work with admissions to programmes, student support and student career guidance provision.

Guidance in higher education institutions and universities is provided via the career advice services offices.

In the labour market and public employment sector, guidance services for job seekers is provided via the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection [INTREO](#) offices (the local office for job seekers and accessing social welfare supports) and local employment services. Intreo offices identify the clients' probability of exit from the labour market (PEX) which allows the Intreo case officer to determine the appropriate support required. Intreo offices operate the provision of support using a model of assessment, preparation, packaging, opportunities, support.

[Qualifax](#) is the current national database of education and training courses at all levels of the national framework. Funded by the Department of Education and Skills, this is managed by the [Qualifications Quality Ireland](#).

[FETCHCOURSES.ie](#) is the national portal for education and training programmes within the FET Sectors. Managed and provided by SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, information is provided on all courses offered by ETBs regionally.

[CareersPortal](#) is an independent career guidance portal developed under public/private partnership between industry experts, government

Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Ireland

departments and public organisations, companies/organisations and colleges and further and higher education institutes. It aims to provide information and updated LMI (Labour Market Information) to all those involved in providing or requiring career advice and guidance in Ireland.

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Quality assurance

Quality assurance of guidance provision will depend on the sector and the management of the guidance services. In 2007, the **National Guidance Forum** (NGF) published a report regarding the **Quality Guidelines in Guidance** that informed the development of quality practice. Ireland was directly involved as a lead country in the development of the ELGPN quality assurance and evidence framework (2015), which has in turn informed developments in Ireland.

The National Guidance Forum report identified a code of principles which should underpin the guidance service and form the basis on which quality is assessed. These included accessibility, appropriateness, confidentiality within the law, equality of opportunity, impartiality, an integrated approach, individual ownership and responsibility. Also specified is ensuring quality standards of service: provision of information to individuals detailing service delivery; complaint procedure for clients and system for obtaining client feedback; accurate and current information; staff with appropriate skills, knowledge and training; appropriate facilities and resources related to their target group and level of service.

The **National Centre for Guidance in Education** (NCGE) provides online handbooks detailing guidelines for good practice for guidance counsellors in schools (further information can be found [here](#)) and the further education sector (further information can be found [here](#)).

Quality assurance of the **Adult Education Guidance Services** (AEGS) requires the completion of a qualitative and quantitative report for the Department of Education and Skills / SOLAS and NCGE twice per year, which provides details of access, barriers to progression, service planning and self-evaluation and case studies. This is compiled using the bespoke adult guidance management system (AGMS) (data gathering system and database), managed and monitored by NCGE. Executive summary reports are provided by NCGE annually. The **2015 - 2018 reports** are provided as example.

The AGMS is currently under review to enhance and develop this data gathering system to support the planning and evaluation of wider FET based guidance services into the future. Furthermore, the NCGE monitors and provides support to the Adult Educational Guidance Services (AEGS) to provide quality guidance.

The **Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection** (DEASP) issues circulars for the provision of standard practice service to all Intreo offices. These offices work nationally under the activation agenda to support unemployed people back into the workforce. Case officers complete training in the certificate in professional practice in employability services to support their role.

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Career management skills

The career management skills approach values collaboration with different employers and stakeholders. Representatives from companies are involved in career events, work placements, work shadowing and interviews.

The **National Centre for Guidance in Education** (NCGE) was directly involved in the ELGPN career management skills guidelines development. The NCGE, following national collaboration, published the *Whole School Guidance Framework* which outlines a continuum of support model, adapted from the National Educational Psychological Service approach, for the school guidance programme, outlining **guidance for all, guidance for some and guidance for a few**. The framework further identifies three areas of learning to aid student development in eight areas of competence. The areas of learning include: learning relating to oneself (personal/social development), educational opportunities (educational development) and career decision making (career development). These include *Developing myself, Developing my learning, and Developing my career path*.

Further resources are provided free by NCGE to support guidance provision in school (for additional information please see [here](#)). Also, the **Institute of**

Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Ireland

[Guidance Counsellors](#) provides resources to its members to support their guidance provision.

[GRADireland](#) is an online portal for university graduates to support their career and employability planning. The career services of higher education institutions provide links to this portal to support graduates nationally.

[CareersPortal](#) has developed relevant programmes, which are sold to schools, for the delivery of career management skills. This is a public-private partnership, not free for schools, so it is not used by all of them. These programmes include:

- a. [REACH+](#), is a comprehensive career and college preparation programme, spanning through to sixth year. It uses classroom-based learning using student workbooks, as well as web-based learning on the REACH+ section of the CareersPortal website.
- b. [MyFuture+](#), is a career management skills programme provided by Careers Portal which has been developed to support adult learners in their career learning and development.

Other examples of private companies providing resources for school classroom-based career guidance programmes are available [here](#).

Within the FET sector, in the colleges of further education and training centres, career management skills are developed through work experience and preparation programmes and modules. These modules are set at the relevant level on the QQI [National Qualifications Framework](#). They may be delivered by education staff and not specifically the guidance services (further information can be found [here](#)).

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Evidence, monitoring and assessment

Currently in Ireland there is no formal system for gathering evidence and the assessment of career guidance, which is used as a standard across all services.

In 2017, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) required post-primary schools to complete a [compliance survey](#) to provide initial baseline data on guidance provision in schools. In addition, the National Centre for Guidance in Education (2017-2018) hosted a transnational cooperation activity to focus on the issue of data gathering in guidance in schools. The [final report](#) with recommendations was made available in May 2018.

In the post-primary school sector (students aged 12 to 18 years), the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) carries out inspections of guidance and makes recommendations for improvements within the relevant reports. Inspections of guidance are conducted by the Inspectorate in the context of a 'subject inspection'. In 2009, the DES published its guidelines on school inspections for guidance in [Looking at guidance: teaching and learning in post-primary schools](#).

The DES Inspector will evaluate learning and teaching in guidance under the headings of teaching, learning and assessment; subject provision and whole-school support; planning and preparation. The draft findings and recommendations from the evaluation are discussed with the school principal and guidance counsellor and the school board of management are invited to comment on the report. Once agreed, the report is then published on the DES website under the heading [Subject inspections](#).

Monitoring and evaluation of the Adult Educational Guidance Services is carried out by NCGE. This is compiled using the bespoke adult guidance management system (AGMS) (data gathering system and database), managed and monitored by NCGE. Executive summary reports are provided by NCGE annually (i.e. the [2016](#) and [2017](#) and [2018](#) reports).

In private provision, the mechanisms used for assessing the effectiveness of a practice like [CareersPortal](#) include:

- a. continuous feedback by its users, mainly via asynchronous modes of communication (emails);
- b. the advisory groups, set up with guidance counsellors that inform CareersPortal on developments in labour market and education and discuss how these can be integrated in the initiative;
- c. the organisation and hosting of the national career skills competitions, which promote employability as they evaluate and assess the skills students have acquired during their work experience. During the competition, the students must complete a career investigation and illustrate which career skills they observed and which they have already or need to develop.

Students are not officially included in evaluation mechanisms; their input is obtained via personal communication performed during the education and labour fairs organised by the different colleges and higher education institutes of Ireland throughout the year. As explained by the interviewees, due to lack of resources, the portal has not been formally assessed to date (Cedefop, 2018).

The [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#) (DEASP) provide national data annually for government in relation to the national unemployment figures.

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Career information, ICT in guidance

SOLAS is the national further education and training authority. It provides the [Further Education and Training Course Hub](#), which offers information on all FET courses available in the [education training boards](#) (ETB) sector nationally. In addition, the SOLAS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) provides data and analysis on LMRU to the ETB sector (further information can be found [here](#)) and manages the [National Skills Database](#).

Qualifax provides the national database of courses and interest profile assessment for potential learners, while [CareersPortal](#) provides up-to-date and relevant career information and resources to those needing or providing career guidance. The site is a valuable tool for guidance professionals throughout the country. It is supported by both public and private organisations, disseminating the most up-to-date information about careers and courses across all sectors of the economy. This includes regularly updated labour market information, occupational data, career videos, career sectors; career interest profiler; personality assessment; CV templates and career news; and information on education courses, schemes/benefits for the unemployed. All visitors can create and manage their own free online career file.

There have been significant developments over the last three years in the development of apprenticeships in Ireland, including non-traditional apprenticeships such as in the financial sector. All information is available online, in the [Generation Apprenticeship](#) website, managed by the Further Education and Training Authority, SOLAS, in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority.

Various national websites provide job search information. For instance, [JobsIreland.ie](#), is the job search website for the Department Employment Affairs and Social protection.

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Training and qualifications

The [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#) (DEASP) provides the public employment service through the [INTREO](#) offices. Case officers of the DEASP attend appropriate training coordinated through the DEASP, a certificate in employability services, provided by the National College of Ireland.

There are four programmes in three Universities (Dublin City University; University of Limerick; and Maynooth University (Education Department and Department of Adult and Community Education) in Ireland providing post-graduate initial education programmes in guidance counselling. Previously, University College Cork, University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin also provided these courses. These universities are subject to the [Department of Education and Skills](#) (DES) review process under the programme recognition framework: this is the guidelines published by the DES on the requirements for training of guidance counsellors working in the schools and FET sector since 2016.

The programme must be a post-graduate qualification at minimum NFQ Level 8 (EQF Level 6), according to the [Programme Recognition Framework: Guidance Counselling. Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers](#). Furthermore, NCGE provides updated information on courses (past and present) approved by the Department of Education and Skills, for employment as guidance counsellor in the education and training sector (further information can be found [here](#)).

Guidance counsellors working in schools are also required to have a teaching qualification in addition to their guidance qualifications, while guidance staff working in the higher education career services will usually hold a primary BA degree (honours) in any subject and a relevant postgraduate qualification: guidance counselling, executive/career coaching, training and development, and occupational psychology are examples.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is considered vital for the continuation of professional practice in guidance counselling and provision. The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) provides online information ([school guidance handbook](#) and [FET guidance handbook](#)) and guidelines to guidance professionals in the education and skills sector.

NCGE developed and provides a free online CPD in mobility guidance counselling course for Irish guidance counsellors (further information can be found [here](#)) as part of the Euroguidance Centre Ireland remit. Aligned to the guidelines provided, NCGE provides seminars, CPD workshops and webinars on various guidance related topics to inform good practice, such as the [webinar on GDPR](#) issued for guidance practice.

The Department of Education and Skills funds the provision of guidance counselling supervision for guidance counsellors in post-primary schools, to support continuous professional practice. In addition, guidance professional representative groups provide CPD for their membership depending on needs of staff and target groups ([Association of Higher Education Career Services](#), AHECS and [Institute of Guidance Counsellors](#), IGC).

[CareersPortal](#) also supports professionals working with early school leavers and people with disabilities by offering legal and institutional support information, as well as information on special pathways to learning and employment.

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- National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) (2019). *School Guidance Handbook (SGH)*. <https://www.ncge.ie/school-guidance-handbook/>

Funding career guidance

The [Department of Education and Skills](#) funds the provision of guidance in post-primary schools and post-leaving certificate (PLC)/colleges of further education through the funding of the guidance counsellor based on the DES teacher allocation for that school/college. Post-leaving certificate/colleges of further education provide adult education and vocational education at NFQ levels 4 to 6.

DES circulars are issued to schools and PLC colleges annually outlining the allocation for the following academic year. An example of such a circular can be found [here](#).

The [Adult Education Guidance Services](#) (AEGS) are funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) through the SOLAS grant allocation to [education training boards](#) (ETB) annually.

[Guidance in Youthreach / community training centres](#), for those young adults who have left school early, is allocated by SOLAS based on the previous [DES Guidelines](#) for allocation of guidance counselling and psychotherapy resources.

Career services in higher education institutions and universities are funded from the [Higher Education Authority](#) institutional budget allocation to provide student support services.

The [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#) (DEASP) Intreo offices are funded in accordance with government priorities and the DEASP budget allocation.

ESF funding

In Ireland, ESF-funded project, provided with other government funding, may include levels of guidance provision. One such project is the Social Inclusion and Activation programme [[Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme \(SICAP\) 2018 - 2022](#)]. SICAP targets innovative, locally-led approaches to support disadvantaged communities and individuals including unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on a low income, members of the Traveller and Roma community and other disadvantaged groups. The programme is managed at a local level by 33 Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) using a community development approach. Services include helping people to find work or to upskill, providing CV training or a personal development course or helping them onto a work placement programme.

The [Programme for Employability, Inclusion And Learning](#) (PEIL) is the only ESF programme in Ireland for the 2014-20 period. It was formally approved by the European Commission in February 2015 and was launched in April of that year. The programme involves a total investment of EUR 1.157 billion; over EUR 544 million each from the ESF and the Irish Government and a special allocation of just over EUR 68 million from the EU's Youth employment initiative. There are five priority areas listed:

- promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling Measures and supporting labour mobility;
- promoting social Inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market;
- investing in education, training and lifelong learning with a view to upskilling and reskilling the labour force;
- youth employment initiative;
- technical assistance.

Programmes funded by the ESF include return to education programmes and youth employment programmes as listed in this [link](#).

Sources

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- Department of Education and Skills (2019). *Circular 0012/2019 Voluntary Secondary Schools Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts 2019/20 School Year*. <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/0a0a488ebd0f4ba9a015560f76ef6de2/>
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- National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) (2019). *Adult Educational Guidance Services*. <https://www.ncge.ie/ncge/adult-educational-guidance-services>

Career guidance for school pupils

The 1998 Education Act, Section 9 (c) states that a school 'shall use its available resources to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices'.

According to the [Guidelines for second level schools](#), guidance in schools 'refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance' (DES, 2005).

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) states in [annual circulars](#) that resources (i.e. allocation of teachers hours) can be allocated to guidance and to guidance counsellors. Guidance counsellors must be qualified teachers who also have a department recognised postgraduate qualification in guidance.

Guidance in post primary schools, for students aged 12 to 18, encompasses the three elements of personal, career and education counselling, and is delivered in classroom-based activities and in one-to-one sessions with the guidance counsellor. At post-primary level, schools are required, by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), to develop a whole school guidance plan as part of their overall school development plan, considering students' needs, resources and contextual factors. The plan details the roles and responsibilities of all involved in the delivery of guidance in the school and takes into consideration student needs, school infrastructure and other factors.

In 2017, following a collaboration with stakeholders and public consultation, the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) published the [Whole school guidance framework](#). This outlines the framework for planning guidance services and competence development for students in guidance-related learning from first year up to the sixth. It also provides the framework for the delivery of Guidance for all, Guidance for some and Guidance for a few, based on the continuum of [support model](#) of the Department's National educational psychological service.

Students have also an opportunity to access work experience in the transition year programme (fourth year) and to attend college/university open days during senior cycle, (i.e. fourth, fifth and sixth year in post-primary school). Guidance counsellors provide information to parents via parents' evenings. Many schools include a "Career Guidance" section on the school website to provide general information for parents and students.

Sources

Department of Education and Sciences Inspectorate (2005). *Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students' access to appropriate guidance*. Dublin: Stationery Office.
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National Educational Psychological Service (2007). *A continuum of support for post-primary schools: guidelines for teachers*. https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_post_primary_continuum_teacher_guide.pdf

Guidance for VET participants

In Ireland, vocational education and training is referred as further education and training (FET) and includes adult education, post-leaving certification level (i.e. NFQ Levels 5 to 6) and vocational training programmes.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) [FET Strategy 2014-19](#) outlined the planned strategy for the development of FET guidance services, which will be established following departmental decisions on the implementation of the recommendations of the DES career guidance review in 2019. There are several systems within FET for the provision of guidance:

- post-leaving certificate/colleges of further education: guidance is provided in line with the post-primary school allocation. Guidance is provided in information seminars, group-based activities and one-to-one guidance counselling provision;
- training centres of the education training boards (ETBs) provide information and advice to students on career progression options, although guidance is not formalised. Some access the Adult Education Guidance Services (AEGS) within the ETB
- SOLAS is currently developing the new apprenticeship models and examining how guidance could be provided to this cohort. There are ongoing discussions on access to and requirements of guidance for those accessing or attending apprenticeships;
- the Adult Education Guidance Services (AEGS) are based within the FET sector, providing access to information and guidance to support return to education for adults and over 16s.

The DES/SOLAS [FET strategy 2014-19](#) outlined the national plans for the development of the newly formed FET sector in Ireland, to encompass adult education, vocational education and training, and apprenticeships. Section 10 on guidance outlined the proposed developments of a FET integrated guidance strategy. The DES / SOLAS FET Strategy 2020-2024, due for publication in Spring 2020, will inform these developments further. This strategy remains on hold pending the outcome of the DES national review of career information and tools.

Please see the description of VET system in Ireland [here](#).

Sources

Cedefop; Further Education and Training Authority (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe: Ireland* [From Cedefop; ReferNet. Vocational education and training in Europe database]. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/ireland>

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Guidance for higher education students

Career advisory and appointments offices and student counselling services develop career guidance activities for students in universities and institutes of technology. The model of guidance provided depends on progression options to work and/or further studies and developments in the institution itself.

Employability modules/career management skills may be offered as an integrated element of course curriculum in some institutions with agreement and in collaboration with the academic staff.

[Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Ireland](#)

The basic method of service delivery is information, advice and guidance via the helpdesk, quick queries and one-to-one consultations. Career services in most institutions refer students to student support/ personal counselling services when appropriate.

The [Association of Higher Education Career Services \(AHECS\)](#) provides support to career advisers based within the HE sector, nationally. AHECS supports standards of practices across the careers services.

[Gradireland](#) is accessed by all HE careers services and is also available to higher education graduates.

Sources

Association of Higher Education Careers Services - AHECS. <http://www.ahecs.ie/>

Gradireland. <https://gradireland.com/>

Guidance for adult learners

Career guidance is provided through drop-in and coordinated and targeted provision to adult/FET centres by the [Adult Educational Guidance Services \(AEGS\)](#). Operating within the further education and training sector (FET), these services were established in 2000 by the [Department of Education and Skills](#) and are now managed within the regional structures of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

The AEGS services work with adults and early school leavers over 16 years. They provide free up-to-date information and guidance on education opportunities to the designated target groups, including early school leavers, the unemployed, lone parents, and disadvantaged adults. They also make and accept referrals from the DEASP [INTREO](#) offices. One-to-one guidance counselling is provided where appropriate and services coordinate the delivery of guidance based on individual needs and the needs of the adult learner groups.

The guidance model is based on an integrated model of adult educational guidance counselling which is:

- a. inclusive of the pre-entry, entry, continuing and pre-exit stages;
- b. inclusive of personal, educational and vocational guidance;
- c. working in partnership at local level, meeting a spectrum of guidance needs of the target groups, employing a range of methodologies including information provision, one-to-one guidance, group guidance and outreach provision (Department of Education and Skills, 2012);
- d. based within the education and training boards.

The current Department of [Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-19](#) provides an outline for the development of FET-based guidance services into the future. In addition, there are youth information centres (YICs) nationwide, managed by a variety of organisations. YICs offer an information service on a wide number of issues including employment matters, local community services and education and training to young people.

Sources

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SOLAS Further Education and Training Authority (2019). *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019*. Dublin: SOLAS. <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Further-Education-and-Training-Strategy-2014-2019.pdf>

Guidance for the employed

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) [INTREO](#) offices provide a wide range of supports and services to assist employers and to access potential employees as well. Those adults who are working in low-skilled jobs and wish to return to education – in basic education, literacy and numeracy and IT skills, to part-time qualifications in areas such as childcare, social care, business studies – can access the [Adult Educational Guidance Services](#) for information and guidance.

Sources

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (2019). *Intreo*. <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/fb84c0-intreo/>

National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) (2019). *Adult Educational Guidance Services*. <https://www.ncge.ie/ncge/adult-educational-guidance-services>

Guidance for unemployed adults

DEASP [Intreo](#) offices and local employment services provide employment services to access the labour market and the public employment sector. Case officers also refer to the [Adult Educational Guidance Services \(AEGS\)](#) for educational guidance where appropriate. Unemployed adults attend a group information session first, followed by a one-to-one meeting with the case officer for assessment and support. The AEGS provide guidance services to access education opportunities for upskilling or reskilling.

[Springboard](#) (a specifically funded programme of the [Higher Education Authority](#)) provides opportunities for unemployed adults to access higher education. A telephone-based guidance service is offered annually from May to October to provide information and guidance to those wishing to access the Springboard system.

Local employment services (LES) (funded by the DEASP) provide career guidance and employment support in targeted areas. Local employment centres, such as the [Ballymun Job Centre](#) (BJC), provide access to education and training opportunities, and career guidance services for unemployed adults. In 2012 the Irish government created the Action plan for jobs policy instrument consisting of annual action plans. In 2018, the [seventh annual Action plan for jobs](#) was launched by the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation outlining the following strategic goals:

- a. create 200,000 additional jobs by 2020, including 135,000 outside Dublin;
- b. grow trade and investment in existing markets and diversify into new markets;
- c. deliver strong competitive regions to drive regional employment;
- d. develop and attract high quality talent;
- e. become a global innovation leader to grow and diversify the composition of our exports;

- f. drive productivity across all sectors of the economy;
- g. achieve a top five competitiveness ranking.

A network of [regional skills fora](#) were established as part of the Government's national skills strategy to provide an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of their regions. More structured engagement on the skills agenda and the work of the fora is expected to contribute to better outcomes for learners and support enterprise development. Each of the nine regional skills fora will provide:

- a. a single contact point in each region to help employers connect with the range of services and support available across the education and training system;
- b. more robust labour market information and analysis of employer needs to inform programme development;
- c. greater collaboration and utilisation of resources across the education and training system and enhancement of progression routes for learners;
- d. a structure for employers to become more involved in promoting employment roles and opportunities for career progression in their sectors (further information can be found [here](#)) (Department of Education and Skills, 2016).

The Action Plan for Jobs is complemented by various other strategies, such as the [Pathways to Work strategy 2016-2020](#), which aims to go beyond job creation, by implementing actions which ensure that unemployed people have a clear and feasible pathway to employment, and the [Enterprise 2025 strategy](#), aimed at building a new economy based on exports and enterprise, and delivering full employment on a sustainable basis and enhancing employment prospects.

Sources

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- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (2016). *Pathways to work strategy 2016-2020*. <https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/PathwaysToWork2016-2020.pdf>
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (2019). *Intreo*. <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/fb84c0-intreo/>
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- National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) (2019). *Adult Educational Guidance Services*. <https://www.ncge.ie/ncge/adult-educational-guidance-services>
- Springboardcourses.ie. (2019). *HEA - Springboard+*. <https://springboardcourses.ie/>

Guidance for older adults

Older adults are entitled to access the [Adult Educational Guidance Services](#) (AEGS) and the local [Intreo](#) office of the DEASP.

Sources

- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (2019). *Intreo*. <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/fb84c0-intreo/>
- National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) (2019). *Adult Educational Guidance Services*. <https://www.ncge.ie/ncge/adult-educational-guidance-services>

Guidance for early leavers

[Central Statistics Office](#) reports, state that in the second quarter of 2018, 5% of those aged 18 to 24 were defined as early school leavers, a reduction from 14% during the second quarter of 2004.

Early school leavers are entitled to access the [Adult Educational Guidance Services](#) (AEGS) nationally. Also, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) has the responsibility of implementing the Youth guarantee scheme through competence check-ups, career guidance, work-based learning opportunities and cooperation with different stakeholders.

The implementation plan aims are that young people under the age of 18, who have left the school system without completing secondary education, and who have failed to find employment, will be provided with quality 'second-chance' educational /training pathways outside the school system such as Youthreach or be supported in re-entering the school system. Young people aged 18 to 24 who become unemployed (whether on loss of a job or while seeking a first employment) and register with the benefits/employment service, and who subsequently remain unemployed for four months, will be provided with assistance to secure work or alternatively with a quality offer of training, education or work experience (see below: Pathways to Work). Reports of the implementation of the youth guarantee, which were published in 2016 and 2020, are available here:

- a. [Pathways to Work](#)
- b. [The Irish Youth Guarantee](#)

The YESS - [Youth Employment Support Scheme](#) (YESS) was developed in October 2018, under the Youth Guarantee, to support long-term unemployed young people back into the workplace. YESS aims to give young people the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment, while on a work placement in a host organisation. The programme is aimed at those aged 18-24, unemployed and receiving a qualifying social welfare payment for at least 12 months (further information can be found [here](#)).

Sources

- Central Statistics Office (2019). *Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2018*. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/eda/educationalattainmentthematicreport2018/>
- Citizens Information (2018). *Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS)*. https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment_and_redundancy/employment_support_schemes/national_internship_scheme.html#10b79
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Oomen, A.; Plant, P. (2014). *Early School Leaving and Lifelong Guidance*. Jyväskylä. ELGPN concept Note; No. 6. <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/elgpn-concept-note-no.-6-early-school-leaving-and-lifelong-guidance/>

Guidance for NEET

The [Adult Educational Guidance Services](#) are accessible to those in the NEET category who wish to consider their education or career options. Referrals can be made to appropriate organisations as necessary.

The [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#) (DEASP) has the responsibility of implementing the Youth guarantee scheme through competence check-ups, career support, work-based learning opportunities and cooperation with different stakeholders.

[Youth information centres](#) (YICs) provide a free, confidential information service to young people and those who work with them on a wide range of subjects including careers, education, employment matters, rights and entitlements, leisure, sport, travel and European opportunities. Located around the country, they are a first point of contact for a young person seeking information on any subject of interest or concern (Youth Work Ireland, 2017).

For the PEIL programme, see section [Funding career guidance](#).

The Youth employment initiative (YEI), which is Priority 4 of the [PEIL programme](#), is delivered using ESF support. The youth employment target group is young people under the age of 25 not in employment, education, or training, in various activities: Back to work enterprise allowance (BTWEA) scheme, JobPlus, Youthreach, Defence forces employment support scheme, Community training centres, Momentum, and the Youth employment support scheme (European Social Fund, 2015).

Sources

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2019). *Youth Information Centres*. <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=4839&ad=1>

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/home.aspx>

European Social Fund (2015). *ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020*. <https://www.esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/>

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Youth Work Ireland (2017). *Youth information*. <https://www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/youth-information>

Guidance for young people at risk

The [Department of Education and Skills](#) (DES) requires that all schools provide a whole school guidance approach to the guidance provision. This ensures that all school staff are involved in identifying young people at risk and implementing an appropriate response and support. This includes the delivery of personal/social, career/vocational and educational guidance. The guidance counsellor in the school provides one-to-one personal guidance counselling with appropriate referrals to mental health and other specialists if required.

[Youthreach / Community Training Centres](#) provide supports and education and training to young people at risk. In this context guidance is provided as required in line with guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills. Centres can decide if the cohort requires personal counselling/therapeutic interventions or career guidance supports.

[Youth information centres](#) provide material for young people to access information on education, training, volunteering, travelling etc.

Young people who have left school early, or who are at risk, are entitled to access the [Adult Education Guidance Services](#) (AEGS) nationally. The Services operate to [guidelines](#) for good practice in supporting young people under 18 years old. These guidelines outline the need to develop a policy with local management on issues such as consent, record keeping and referral procedures

Sources

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NCGE National Centre for Guidance in Education (2014). *Adult Educational Guidance Initiative. Guidelines on the Provision of Adult Educational Guidance Services to clients aged 16 to 17 years old*. https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/NCGE_Guidelines_Provision_of_AEGS_to_16_and_17_Year_Olds__March_2014.pdf

Guidance for persons with disabilities

The DEASP supports the [EmployAbility](#) service. This is a nationwide service that provides employment support for people with a health condition, injury, illness or disability and recruitment advice for the business community. There are 24 services located throughout the Republic of Ireland. EmployAbility services have a team of employment support specialists (job coaches), supported by a coordinator and administrator. The Employability service is a service of the local employment service.

The National Learning Network (NLN) is contracted by Education and Training Boards (ETBs) regionally to provide specialised training and support to people with disabilities; support includes employment-based training programmes. All programmes offered include a work experience module, some centres include a 'jobs club' and in some of the NLN centres guidance is provided.

Sources

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (2017). *EmployAbility service*. <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/EmployAbility-Service.aspx>

Guidance for immigrants

Immigrants and refugees are entitled to access the AEGS services nationally. In some regions the [Adult Educational Guidance Services](#) (AEGS) work in collaboration with local Education and Training Board (ETB) services for immigrants and refugees through the ESOL programmes (English for speakers of other languages). In 2018 a pilot [Scheme for Asylum Seekers](#) was set up to support asylum seekers meeting certain criteria of the protection system to pursue certain courses in [further education or at undergraduate level in higher education](#) and the [labour market](#). Furthermore, refugees attending education programmes or those unemployed are entitled to access the same national guidance services as others, within schools, colleges and DEASP.

Sources

Department of Education and Skills (2018). *07 September 2018 - Student Support Scheme for Asylum Seekers to continue for coming year*. <https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/PR18-09-07.html>

Department of Justice and Equality (2020). *Permission to access the labour market*. <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/labour-market-access>

National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) (2019). *Access to Further Education and Training for Eligible International Protection Applicants*. <https://www.ncge.ie/fet-guidance-handbook/access-further-education-and-training-eligible-international-protection>

National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) (2019). *Adult Educational Guidance Services*. <https://www.ncge.ie/ncge/adult-educational-guidance-services>

Guidance for other groups

In some regions, guidance is available through the Education and Training Boards support for ex-prisoners. As an example, the [Pathways Centre](#) in Dublin City facilitates the reintegration of former prisoners through:

- guidance counselling;
- social and peer support work;
- personal/addiction counselling;
- educational programmes.

The [Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities](#) (IASIO) provides the community-based [LINKAGE](#) service, providing career guidance support for those referred by the Probation Service including:

- personality profile;
- building your confidence;
- reading and writing skills;
- looking at your interests;
- finding and keeping a job;
- finding a college/training course;
- writing a CV/cover letter;
- CAO application;
- disclosing your offence.

The [Adult Educational Guidance Services](#) (AEGS) nationally cater for a wide range of target groups, as listed above including:

- adults and young people aged over 16 who left school with low or no formal qualifications or low literacy levels;
- the unemployed, particularly the priority groups identified as part of the Government's activation agenda. The long-term unemployed and those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed, especially those in the older age groups;
- those not in work but not eligible to be on the 'live' register;
- those in the workplace with basic skills needs;
- disadvantaged women who have particular experience of barriers to participation;
- disadvantaged men, including those experiencing rural isolation;
- lone parents and others with caring responsibilities that may prohibit their participation in full-time courses;
- travellers;
- homeless people;
- substance misusers;
- ex-offenders;
- people with disabilities;
- people for whom English is not the mother tongue, who require language and literacy supports;

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Coronavirus Update

The [National Centre for Guidance in Education](#) (NCGE) is an agency of the [Department of Education and Skills](#), with the role to inform policy and support the development of quality guidance practice in the education and training sector.

As a response to the Covid-19 public health emergency, the government announced temporary [social welfare payment schemes](#) for all those effected by the Covid-19 work closures. Many staff have been redeployed within the sector to address the dramatic increase in applications for such payments. The usual role of case-officer in supporting guidance related activities has been temporarily suspended but these will be reinstated once public health restrictions are eased. Employer engagement activities are ongoing to support businesses as appropriate.

Following the announcement by An Taoiseach (the Irish Prime Minister) of the closure of schools and the delivery of teaching and learning and school supports, from home, from 13th March 2020, the [National Centre for Guidance in Education](#) (NCGE) carried out an online survey via the NCGE communications bulletin to guidance counsellors in post-primary schools and FET settings in order to collect information on the needs of guidance counsellors. The results of both surveys informed NCGE contingency planning and strategy of supports as two key documents were published to provide support to key stakeholders. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) clarification on the continued delivery of the state-funded programme of guidance counselling supervision, for post primary school guidance counsellors, would be continued via online/remote group supervision sessions. Concurrently the Department of Education and Skills also issued guidance on the continuity of schooling, providing general guidelines to schools on the continued provision of school teaching, learning and assessment during school closures. In this context, it was vital to ensure that, as guidance counsellors are employed as teachers within the post-primary school settings, that the legal requirements of school provision and adherence to overarching school policies was deemed as essential.

The NCGE provided [dedicated space on the website](#) to highlight policies, practices and procedures in provision of quality guidance provision at this time. This online space provides links to national government and departmental guidelines to promote a coordinated national approach to supports that inform guidance practice. For Guidance specifically, the NCGE and some professional organisations are providing information to support guidance practice.

NCGE was directly involved in the development and publication the DES Guidelines for the Continuity of Guidance Counselling . In April, further support information was published by NCGE to support FET based guidance practice. In May, in collaboration with the DES, NCGE coordinated and delivered a series of Webinars to support schools to continue to deliver quality guidance services remotely until the end of the academic term. Further webinars are planned for June / July to support FET guidance provision.

Relevant links include the following:

1. [\(Covid-19\) Continuity of Guidance Counselling - Guidelines for schools providing online support for students](#)
2. [\(Covid-19\) NCGE Support information for Guidance Counsellors in Schools](#)
3. [\(Covid-19\) Accompanying presentation to DES Guidelines & NCGE Information for Schools](#)
4. [NCGE School Handbook Resources](#)
5. [NCGE FET Handbook Resources](#)
6. [\(Covid-19\) NCGE Support Information for Guidance Counsellors and guidance practitioners in Further Education and Training \(FET\)](#)
7. [NCGE Post Primary School Webinar series](#)

The Adult Educational Guidance Services, (AEGS) provided by the 16 regional Education and Training Boards (ETBs), offer careers and education information, group and one-to-one guidance counselling. The AEGS provide information at local and regional level via various methods, have now adapted their practices to ensure that more up-to-date and relevant information is available through regular online bulletins and social media. Telephone guidance and email facilities ensure that all clients can access the services appropriately.

Additionally, Ireland was addressing the recommendations of the [Indecon Review](#) report of careers information and tools. The key recommendations included:

1. appoint a National Policy Group to develop a coherent, long-term strategy for lifelong career guidance;
2. ongoing emphasis on evidence-based policy, including through organisation of a biennial stakeholder forum.

While the Department of Education and Skills are working on the priorities of the recommendations of the Indecon Report on Career Guidance Review, such proposed developments, to support national co-ordination and co-operation in guidance provision, would be even more necessary than before.

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