#### The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance: a Guide to Key Findings for Effective Policy and Practice

***Cover Note***

The fourth draft of the evidence guide follows. I have tried to pick up all of the main points that have been raised by ELGPN members and by other international contacts from whom we have sought feedback.

A key consideration in the redrafting has been to keep the document as focused as possible on the different audiences to whom it is addressed. I have adopted the suggestion for a three-level guide:

1. 2 pages aimed at high-level policy-makers.
2. 8 pages aimed at policy-makers with specific responsibilities for lifelong guidance.
3. A long document which provides detailed evidence and case-studies for lifelong guidance experts and for policy-makers who want more detail on specific issues.

All three are included here (the first two may also be published separately). Because of the pressure of space in the first two, they remain largely at a conceptual level, with the detail presented in the long document. Given the breadth of their scope, it would be difficult to include more detail in the short versions.

In the previous draft I removed sections that explored the possibility of a European strategy for evidence in guidance. No-one disagreed with this and so I have kept it out (although Section 7 makes a number of points about evidence gathering at the national level): I agreed with the feedback suggesting that this took the paper in a different direction and reduced the focus on summarising the evidence base. I have now tried to reinforce this focus and have left any recommendations on a European evidence strategy to be made by ELGPN in a future work programme.

More generally I have tried to do the following:

* To increase the emphasis on guidance as a lifelong process. While retaining the sectoral organisation of the guide, I have tried to make it clearer that guidance is best understood in a lifelong context.
* To increase the range of countries covered in case-studies and examples. In broadening the range of examples I have tried to be as open-minded as possible about what can be included. However, I have tried to ensure that all examples are adequately referenced in a report, article or conference paper that is in the public domain or could be requested by an interested party.
* To continue the process of strengthening the links with the QAE Framework – including inserting it as an appendix to this document. The original scope for this piece of work included reference to accountability frameworks. However, during the production of the guide it has become clear that this has already been covered through the development of the QAE Framework. I have accordingly tried to make clear links between the two wherever appropriate.
* To make the tone more positive. While there was some disagreement about this, in general the feedback received has stressed the need to sell the existing evidence more strongly. I do in fact believe that there is a strong evidence base on which to base policy-making in this area. However, I have also tried in Section 6 to provide a more critical commentary on the evidence and to present suggestions for further work. I hope that this strikes the right balance.
* To align the glossary in this document with the existing ELGPN glossary.
* To make a number of detailed structural and drafting changes in line with the feedback received.

Many thanks to all who have contributed to this process.

Tristram Hooley

#### The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance: a Guide to Key Findings for Effective Policy and Practice

#### Tristram Hooley (University of Derby, UK)

***with the support of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) and the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP)***

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# Using this guide

This guide is aimed at policy-makers, though practitioners and researchers may also find it useful. It builds on existing work by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), including the Quality Assurance and Evidence (QAE) Framework which provides an approach for policy-makers to address quality assurance and evidence-based policy and system development. The guide synthesises the existing evidence on the impact of lifelong guidance and suggests how policy-makers might want to make use of this evidence and contribute to its development.

The guide, produced by ELGPN, is aimed primarily at policy-makers in Europe, so European examples are used where possible. But it has been prepared in collaboration with the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy, enabling it to include relevant studies conducted in Australia, Canada, the USA and other non-European countries. These are used where European examples cannot be found or to supplement these examples. It is hoped that this will also make the guide of interest to a wider international audience.

The guide draws together what is already known and aims to present it in a way that is accessible to policy-makers. In order to do this, the main messages are summarised and illustrated with key examples drawn from the literature.

The guide begins with a two-page summary that is designed to give a top-level overview of evidence for the effectiveness of lifelong guidance and implications for system design. This is followed by an extended summary which distils the main policy-relevant messages. The subsequent main body of the guide explores these issues in more detail and provides a series of evidence case-studies with references to support further investigation. It is organised in a series of chapters, each of which seeks to answer a key question:

* What is the relationship of lifelong guidance to public policy?
* What is already known about the efficacy of lifelong guidance?
* What is the evidence on guidance in learning?
* What is the evidence on guidance for work?
* What further evidence is needed on lifelong guidance?
* What are the implications of the evidence base for policy and practice in lifelong guidance?

To help the reader to navigate through these chapters, a number of textual features are used:

Summaries of the material in a chapter or a section are denoted by bold and italic text in a light grey box.

Key literature reviews which define the evidence in a particular area are denoted by a light blue background in a box.

Examples of research studies that have been undertaken in the area are denoted by an orange background in a box.

Full references are given for all documents or publications on the first occasion that they are mentioned in the guide, and also at the end of the guide.

# Brief summary

Lifelong guidance describes a range of interventions which enable citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions, and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings.

The extensive research base on lifelong guidance recognises that there are many beneficiaries of such guidance, including individuals, their families and communities, and the organisations where they study and work, as well as society as a whole. Lifelong guidance impacts on: educational outcomes; economic and employment outcomes; and social outcomes.

This guide suggests that policy-makers should continue to develop this evidence base to ensure that policies are based on the best evidence available and that they work as expected. It builds upon earlier ELGPN work addressing quality assurance and evidence-based policy and system development.

There is empirical evidence to support the use of lifelong guidance as a key tool of education, employment, youth and social policies. Lifelong guidance supports responses to the current economic crisis and addresses Europe 2020 targets on education, employment, and poverty and social exclusion. Guidance is most effective when it is conceived as a lifelong system, though much of the evidence relates to its impacts in particular sectors.

**Guidance in learning.** Guidance can play a central role in learning systems by increasing individuals’ engagement with learning, making clear the pathways through learning and work, and supporting the acquisition of career management skills (for managing life, learning and work).

* Career guidance in **schools** can contribute to increasing students’ engagement and success in school by clarifying the relevance of subjects to future opportunities, and supporting transitions from school through providing information and skills to underpin good decision-making and helping them to establish successful lives and careers.
* Career guidance in **vocational education** has an important role to play in supporting individuals to see opportunity and value in vocational options and in helping those in vocational education to make the most of their skills and knowledge.
* Career guidance in **higher education** can support good career decision-making and effective transitions to the workplace, and can help to ensure that graduates’ learning and skills are well used.
* Career guidance in **adult education** can support adults to consider their return to education, enhance their skills and employability, and help them to utilise these skills effectively in the labour market.

**Guidance for work.** Guidance plays a critical role in effective labour markets, supporting individuals in transitions to and within the labour market, and helping them to make effective use of their skills and be resilient in the face of change.

* Career guidance is frequently used as a way to engage **unemployed adults** in the labour market. As such, it forms a key part of active labour market policies. The evidence suggests that, within the bounds of the broader performance of the labour market, career guidance can be effective in re-engaging unemployed people in work.
* There is an emergent literature which suggests that career guidance is important in helping individuals to manage **career breaks** and periods of caring responsibility.
* Guidance can be useful for **young people** who have failed to make successful transitions to the labour market. This can be an effective strategy, particularly where it is possible to develop approaches that recognise the diversity of the youth population and that seek to pre-empt and/or to manage failed transitions.
* Guidance for **working people** can take place within the workplace or outside it. It can benefit both the individual and their employer. A number of key business benefits have been identified, including increasing employee satisfaction and engagement, and supporting knowledge transfer and cohesion.
* Guidance can support the **mobility** of workers both in the home country and in the host country. It can support people to understand the opportunities and processes of mobility and to re-orientate themselves and become productive once they have moved.
* There is growing interest in the role of guidance with **older workers.** Guidance can be effective in supporting such workers to engage in learning and actively manage their staged retirement.

In addition to providing reassurance about the effectiveness of guidance, the evidence also indicates nine evidence-based principles to underpin the design of lifelong guidance services:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus on the individual** | **Support learning and progression** | **Ensure quality** |
| 1. Lifelong guidance is most effective where it is genuinely lifelong and progressive. 2. Lifelong guidance is most effective where it connects meaningfully to the wider experience and lives of the individuals who participate in it. 3. Lifelong guidance is most effective where it recognises the diversity of individuals and relates services to individual needs. | 1. Lifelong guidance is not one intervention, but many, and works most effectively when a range of interventions are combined. 2. A key aim of lifelong guidance programmes should be the acquisition of career management skills. 3. Lifelong guidance needs to be holistic and well-integrated into other support services. | 1. The skills, training and dispositions of the professionals who deliver lifelong guidance are critical to its success. 2. Lifelong guidance is dependent on access to good-quality career information. 3. Lifelong guidance should be quality-assured and evaluated to ensure its effectiveness and to support continuous improvement. |

The evidence base for lifelong guidance is substantial and diverse, but far from complete. Its sustained development can be enhanced through the Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop, in which implementation of new policies and services is followed by monitoring and evaluation, which in turn provides greater understanding on which future investment and initiatives can be based.

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# Extended summary

## Introduction

The Council of the European Union invites member states to… strengthen the role of lifelong guidance within national lifelong learning strategies in line with the Lisbon Strategy and with the strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Europe is experiencing a period of rapid economic and demographic change, posing major policy challenges for governments. How to address these issues and to ensure that individuals remain resilient during changing times is likely to be a key focus for public policy in the foreseeable future.

The Council of the European Union Resolution suggests that lifelong guidance services offer public-policy tools that can address these challenges. It notes that lifelong guidance refers to:

a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills.[[2]](#footnote-2)

ELGPN has already produced a Resource Kit for European policy-makers that explains the key features of a lifelong guidance policy system.[[3]](#footnote-3) This kit includes a Quality-Assurance and Evidence-Base (QAE) Framework which identifies a series of key elements that should be built into national systems to support quality service delivery and underpin the collection of evidence.

Understanding the evidence that supports lifelong guidance is key to effective policy-making. Such evidence can support the development of effective policies and ensure their successful implementation. This extended summary sets out an overview of this evidence for policy-makers. Further detail, including detailed references to the relevant literature, can be found in the full accompanying guide.

## Lifelong guidance and public policy

Lifelong guidance is a cross-sectoral activity which can contribute to a wide range of different policy aims. It covers interventions that help an individual to manage their progression in life, learning and work. Although guidance interventions are primarily focused on the individual, they can also have positive impacts for organisations, localities and regions, countries and the European Union as a whole.

The key public-policy areas to which lifelong guidance can contribute include:

* Economic development.
* Efficient investment in education and training.
* European mobility for learning and work.
* Labour market efficiency.
* Lifelong learning.
* Social equity.
* Social inclusion.
* Youth employment.
* Active ageing.

Effective lifelong guidance can empower individuals to achieve their potential and support them to overcome personal, social and economic barriers to their progression. Guidance helps individuals to navigate their way around the complex systems of the learning and labour markets and actively engages those who have failed to make successful transitions or have become socially disengaged.

The unique value of lifelong guidance is that it is a cross-cutting activity which can foster coherence for individuals as they engage with a range of different systems. It supports transitions between these systems, including challenging transitions between learning and work. Consequently, guidance can be found in schools, VET, adult education and higher education, and also with unemployed workers and those in work, as well as those who are moving from country to country, or are tapering their work towards retirement. In the context of current European policy, guidance can help to address Europe 2020 targets on education, employment, and poverty and social exclusion.

Given the importance of lifelong guidance to this wide range of policy areas, it is critical that interventions are based on the best available evidence and that their effectiveness is evaluated. ELGPN has already developed an approach to quality and evidence in this area: the QAE Framework. This guide builds on this framework by summarising the existing evidence in this field.

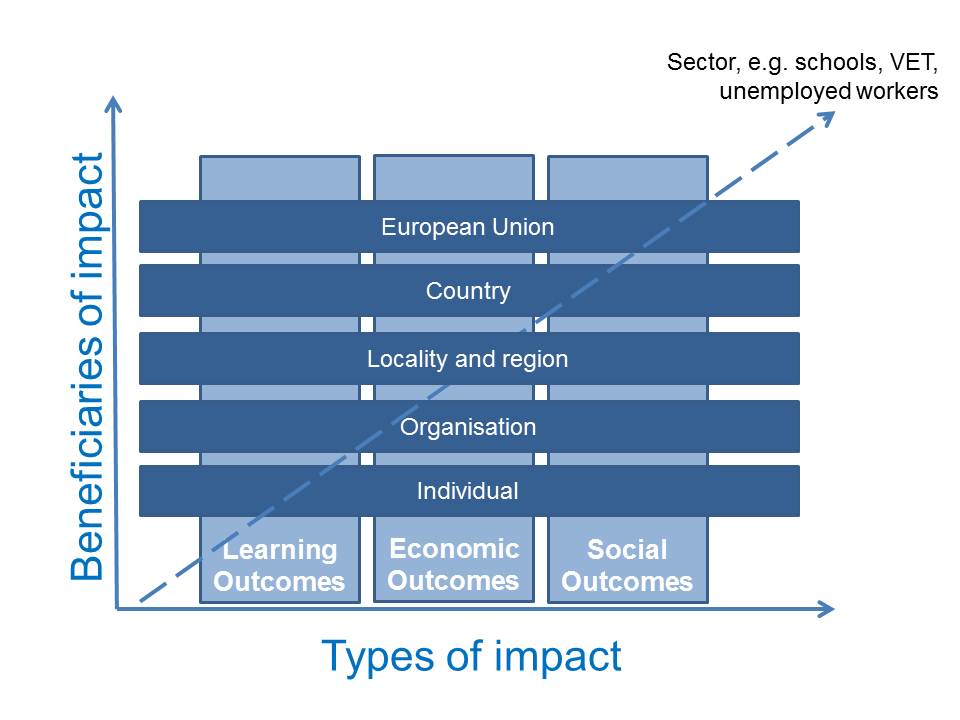
## The impact of lifelong guidance

There is an extensive research base on lifelong guidance which highlights a range of levels of impact. It recognises that there are many beneficiaries of lifelong guidance, including individuals, their families and communities, and the organisations where they study and work, as well as society as a whole. It describes the key areas that lifelong guidance impacts upon as being:

* educational outcomes;
* economic and employment outcomes;
* social outcomes.

Guidance impacts on a range of different areas in different ways for different beneficiaries. The figure below shows how these interact and build on each other, and how the sectors where guidance can be found cross-cut these impacts. So, for example, a guidance intervention with an unemployed worker can support that worker to improve their education, re-engage with the labour market and become more socially included. Such impacts are experienced by the individual, but also have benefits at broader political and economic levels.

**Figure: Types of impact and beneficiaries of impact[[4]](#footnote-4)**



There is empirical evidence which supports the use of lifelong guidance as a key tool in a range of different sectors and demonstrates its impact on relevant policy areas.

Much guidance takes place within the learning system. The following table summarises the key impacts that have been identified in relation to guidance in each of the sectors. It also highlights key policy concerns that are addressed by guidance activities within each sector.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Guidance in learning** | |  |
| **Key impacts observed by research** | **Key policy concerns addressed** | **Relevant  EU policies** |
| Career guidance in **schools** can contribute to increasing students’ engagement and success in school by clarifying the relevance of subjects to future opportunities, and supporting their transitions from school through providing information and skills to underpin good decision-making and helping them to establish successful lives and careers. | Engagement and participation in school  Learner attainment  Successful transitions to further learning and work / Preventing unemployment | Council Resolution on lifelong guidance  EU 2020 target:  Reducing school drop-out rates below 10%  Rethinking Education |
| Career guidance in **vocational education** has an important role to play in supporting individuals to see opportunity and value in vocational options and in helping those in vocational education to make the most of their skills and knowledge. | Enhancing the skills base  Skills utilisation  Successful transitions to work / Progression into further learning / Preventing unemployment | Council Resolution on lifelong guidance  EU 2020 target: Reducing school drop-out rates below 10%  Rethinking Education |
| Career guidance in **higher education** can support good career decision-making and effective transitions to the workplace, and can help to ensure graduates’ learning and skills are well used. | Skills utilisation  Successful transitions to work / Preventing unemployment | Council Resolution on lifelong guidance  EU 2020 target: At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third-level education |
| Career guidance in adult education can support adults to consider their return to education, enhance their skills and employability, and help them to utilise these skills effectively in the labour market. | Lifelong learning  Enhancing the skills base  Social and educational inclusion | Council Resolution on lifelong guidance  EU 2020 target: At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third-level education  Council Resolution on renewed European agenda for adult learning  E&T 2020 – Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality |

Guidance also plays an important role in the labour market. The following table highlights the key areas of activity and the key policy concerns that are addressed.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Guidance for work** | |  |
| **Key impacts observed by research** | **Key policy concerns addressed** | **Relevant  EU policies** |
| Career guidance is frequently used as a way to engage **unemployed adults** in the labour market. The evidence suggests that, within the bounds of the broader performance of the labour market, career guidance can be effective in re-engaging unemployed people in work. | Active labour market policies  Social inclusion and equality  Poverty | EU 2020 target: 75% of 20-64-year-olds to be employed  EU 2020 target: At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion |
| Career guidance can be important in helping individuals to manage **career breaks** and periods of caring responsibility. | Flexible labour market | E&T 2020 – Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality |
| Guidance can be useful for **young people** who have failed to make successful transitions to the labour market. This can be an effective strategy, particularly where it is possible to develop approaches that recognise the diversity of the youth population and that seek to pre-empt and/or to manage failed transitions. | Active labour market policy  Youth employment | EU 2020 target: 75% of 20-64-year-olds to be employed  EU 2020 target: At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion  Youth Guarantee |
| Guidance for **working people** can take place within the workplace or outside it. It can benefit both the individual and their employer. A number of key business benefits have been identified, including increasing employee satisfaction and engagement, and supporting knowledge transfer and cohesion. | Skills utilisation  Talent management  Employee engagement and retention  Flexicurity |  |
| Guidance can support the **mobility** of workers both in the home country and in the host country. It can support people to understand the opportunities and processes of mobility and to re-orientate themselves and become productive once they have moved. | Mobility  Skills utilisation | E&T 2020 – Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality |
| There is growing interest in the role of guidance with **older workers.** Guidance can be effective in supporting older workers to engage in learning and actively manage their staged retirement. | Active ageing  Skills utilisation |  |

## Ensuring effective services

The evidence suggests a number of key features of effective lifelong guidance policy and practice. In particular, the research suggests that guidance services which have impact:

* focus on the individual;
* support learning and progression;
* ensure quality.

These can be developed as a series of evidence-based principles for service design and development.

**Nine evidence-based principles for the design of lifelong guidance services**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus on the individual** | **Support learning and progression** | **Ensure quality** |
| 1. Lifelong guidance is most effective where it is genuinely lifelong and progressive. 2. Lifelong guidance is most effective where it connects meaningfully to the wider experience and lives of the individuals who participate in it. 3. Lifelong guidance is most effective where it is able to recognise the diversity of individuals and to provide services relevant to individual needs. | 1. Lifelong guidance is not one intervention, but many, and works most effectively when a range of interventions are combined. 2. A key aim of lifelong guidance programmes should be the acquisition of career management skills. 3. Lifelong guidance needs to be holistic and well-integrated into other support services. | 1. The skills, training and dispositions of the practitioners who deliver lifelong guidance are critical to its success. 2. Lifelong guidance is dependent on access to good-quality career information. 3. Lifelong guidance should be quality-assured and evaluated to ensure its effectiveness and to support continuous improvement. |

## Implications for policy and practice

The review of the evidence base thus demonstrates that there are clear and observable benefits from lifelong guidance. Such benefits have most usually been observed as impacts on the individual. However, there is also a strong strand of research which has explored the benefit of lifelong guidance from the perspective of public policy and economic development.

Many of the immediate implications of this work for the design and delivery of guidance services are spelt out in the section above. There are three more general implications for policy-makers:

### Recognising the strength of the evidence base

There is a broad research literature that demonstrates the effectiveness of lifelong guidance. This literature is cross-sectoral, includes studies from a range of countries, and utilises a range of methods. There is therefore a considerable evidence base which policy-makers can draw upon in the development of lifelong guidance policies. Such evidence provides both reassurance about efficacy and models of best practice that can be drawn on when implementing interventions.

### Committing to the Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop

Despite the strength of the evidence base, there is a need to commit to its ongoing development. Effective policy-making in this area can be conceived as a policy loop which encompasses: understanding the evidence, developing and implementing new policies and interventions, and monitoring their effectiveness.

**The Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop**

As the evidence base is developed, efforts should be made to enhance the overall quality of the evidence by addressing areas of weakness and increasing the level of methodological sophistication. This might include: the development of new meta-analyses; randomised control trials; longitudinal work; making use of new technologies; and further economic modelling and econometric analysis of the value of the impacts.

### Establishing effective quality systems and processes

The evidence base highlights the importance of quality processes to ensuring effective lifelong guidance. The ELGPN’s QAE Framework offers an established cross-national framework that can be used to enhance quality approaches and improve the quality of evidence collected.

# 1. Introduction

The Council of the European Union invites member states to…  
Strengthen the role of lifelong guidance within national lifelong learning strategies in line with the Lisbon Strategy and with the strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Europe is experiencing a period of rapid economic and demographic change. A mix of factors has meant that large numbers of Europeans are going through major changes in their lives and careers. These factors vary across countries, but typically include low levels of growth, decline of the public sector as an employer, reorganisation of education systems, changes in technology and high levels of youth unemployment. Another key change relates to demographic changes, with an ageing working population and increasing levels of migration. How to keep the existing workforce engaged and productive for longer whilst integrating new migrants represent major long-term public-policy challenges. How to address all of these issues and to ensure that individuals remain resilient during changing times is likely to be a key focus for public policy for the foreseeable future.

There have been a number of European responses to address these challenges. The Europe 2020 targets identify the focus for government actions as ensuring employment, investment in research and development, addressing climate change, improving participation in education, and challenging poverty and social exclusion.[[6]](#footnote-6) Such targets provide a broad framework for action, within which particular strategies such as lifelong guidance can be considered. The Council of the European Union Resolution on lifelong guidance suggests that guidance services offer public-policy tools that can address these kinds of challenges. It notes that “lifelong guidance” refers to:

a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Guidance is primarily a service directed towards the individual; however, bringing about changes in the behaviour of the individual can change the way in which wider systems operate. Such activities might include information and advice giving, counselling, competence assessment, mentoring, advocacy, and teaching career decision-making and career management skills. They may be collectively known by a variety of names, including “career development”, “educational / vocational / career guidance”, “guidance and counselling”, “occupational guidance”, and “counselling”.[[8]](#footnote-8)

ELGPN has already produced a Resource Kit for European policy-makers that explains the key features of a lifelong guidance policy system. The Resource Kit explores the skills for managing life, learning and work (career management skills) that such a system is trying to develop, how access can be facilitated, how quality can be assured, and the arrangements that can be developed to support the co-ordination of a lifelong guidance system and ensure that it works effectively with the wider education and employment system.[[9]](#footnote-9)

This guide focuses on the evidence that underpins the kinds of policies described in the Resource Kit. An understanding of the evidence can support policy-making, but does not answer all of policy-makers’ questions or supplant the need for policy debate. The design and nature of guidance services may not be wholly determined by the evidence, but hopefully are informed by it. Lunn’s description of the interaction between policy and evidence provides a good summary:

Regardless of one’s political views or values it is possible to use research evidence to improve public policy. Few would disagree with this claim. Policymakers of whatever stripe are more likely to achieve desirable outcomes if they are better informed about relevant facts and if they have superior understanding of the causal mechanisms that lead to those outcomes. In other words, inferences can be drawn from evidence about whether different policies are more or less likely to achieve their goals, whatever those goals might be.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Guidance practice draws on a wide range of research and evidence that has been conducted about the relationship between career, learning and work. Such work examines questions like how individuals develop career ideas, how the education system and social context shapes such ideas, how far an individual can be seen as fitting into a particular job, and what happens when they wish or are required to change career direction. This underpinning research draws on psychology, education, sociology and economics as well as many other disciplines. Describing this underpinning evidence is beyond the scope of this guide. Sources like the *International Handbook of Career Guidance*[[11]](#footnote-11) provide a good introduction into both the underpinning literature and how this literature has informed and shaped practice in the field. The present guide focuses more specifically on the evidence that demonstrates the impacts of lifelong guidance.

The evidence cited has been identified by ELGPN members and international colleagues, and gathered from a range of sources, including both the scientific literature in the field and key national and local commissioned evaluations. A pluralistic view has been taken with regard to the inclusion of evidence. The guide includes quantitative and qualitative studies, and studies produced by academics, public-policy evaluators and practitioners. It is hoped that this pluralistic approach provides a rich description of the existing evidence base on the impacts of lifelong guidance.

## Ensuring quality in lifelong guidance

This section summarises the ELGPN’s approach to quality and argues that quality assurance and evidence gathering are overlapping and complementary activities. It contends that the Quality-Assurance and Evidence-Base (QAE) Framework provides a strong basis for the quality assurance of lifelong guidance and also provides a foundation for developing the evidence base in this area.

Developing an understanding of the evidence is essential to ensuring the delivery of high-quality lifelong guidance services. ELGPN has done a considerable amount of development work on the issue of quality through the development of its Quality-Assurance and Evidence-Base (QAE) Framework.[[12]](#footnote-12)

ELGPN is involved in the ongoing piloting and testing of this policy development tool in order to support countries to gather robust data that will inform and improve the range and quality of their provision, shape their monitoring arrangements and drive forward the development of the evidence base. The QAE Framework identifies a series of key elements that should be built into national systems to support quality service delivery and underpin the collection of evidence:

* Practitioner competence.
* Citizen/user involvement.
* Service provision and improvement.
* Cost-benefits to government.
* Cost-benefits to individuals.

The Framework is included as an appendix to this document.

ELGPN has emphasised the importance of using evidence and monitoring data to drive service development. Evidence and quality are distinct, but related, concepts. In the ELGPN Resource Kit, the purpose of quality assurance is described as follows:

The aims of a quality-assurance system and mechanisms are to improve efficiency in service provision, to increase institutional financial accountability and to create transparency from the perspective of the citizen. (p.50)

**Quality** is concerned with understanding how services work and ensuring their consistency and accountability. **Evidence** seeks to describe and quantify whether lifelong guidance works, what its impacts are and what approaches are most effective. Clearly there is a strong relationship between these two concepts. The QAE Framework provides a powerful tool to draw them together.

Not all evidence is generated through quality processes: some evidence gathering may seek to assess the impact of an entire service or intervention, without necessarily attending to the quality processes within the intervention. For example, a researcher may seek evidence about whether a guidance intervention is likely to increase an individual’s chance of finding work by measuring whether receiving the intervention leads to employment; but such an inquiry may not explore the detail of how the intervention is delivered. There are also aspects of quality-assurance processes that are not directly addressed to the question of ensuring that services have an impact: for example, those associated with financial monitoring.

The approach that has been taken by ELGPN is to argue that quality and evidence are, and should be, strongly complementary in the development and management of lifelong guidance services.

## Monitoring and evaluation

The relationship between monitoring and evaluation is important in thinking about the role of evidence in lifelong guidance. Monitoring addresses the question “are we doing things right?”, while evaluation addresses the question “are we doing the right things?”.

One of the ways in which quality and evidence are inter-related is through the collection of data as part of service provision and improvement. The QAE Framework suggests that such processes include the collection of data on the career management skills people are acquiring, the level of adherence to national quality management systems, the utilisation of new technologies, the level of knowledge about conditions in the education system and the labour market, and the profile of the service users.

It is useful here to draw a distinction between monitoring and evaluation:[[13]](#footnote-13)

**Monitoring**

Monitoring is the routine collection, analysis and use of information about an ongoing development intervention. Its aim is to provide indications of the extent of progress and achievement. It should cover activities, outputs, the use of funds, indications regarding the achievement of the objectives, and some indications regarding unexpected effects or changes in the environment of the development intervention. It uses the operational plan as a reference and is usually carried out by individuals and organisations directly involved in the development intervention. The leading question is: “Are we doing things right?”

**Evaluation**

Evaluation is an assessment of an ongoing or completed development intervention. It should cover the rationale, design, implementation and results of the intervention. Evaluations should be as systematic and objective as possible. The aim is to determine whether the intervention fulfils a series of internationally recognised criteria, such as effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact and sustainability. It is usually carried out in co-operation with external evaluators or entirely outsourced. …. The leading question is: “Are we doing the right things?”

**Monitoring** is important in ensuring that a programme remains on track and continues to deliver against its objectives. It is an activity that needs to penetrate every aspect of a service as part of the management of that service, and is strongly related to the quality approach adopted by the organisation.

**Evaluation** is usually concerned less with operational management questions (although these will sometimes be examined) and more with strategic questions about the activity. Evaluation does not necessarily have to pervade all aspects of a service, and may require staff and clients involved in the evaluation to undertake activities that it would not be practical to deliver across all services.

An evaluation was conducted of Estonian Career Centres in 2011 and 2012.[[14]](#footnote-14) The evaluation used an online survey to collect data from service users one month after they had interacted with the service. It found positive impacts from both individual and group counselling, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the service had given them new perspectives, increased their confidence and helped them to put together a career plan.

Monitoring and evaluation activities can be important both to the enhancement of quality and to addressing questions of evidence and impact.

## The evidence on the impact of lifelong guidance

The evidence about lifelong guidance seeks to answer questions about the effective delivery of guidance and the impacts that can result from it. There is a considerable research base which has used a range of different research approaches to answer these questions.

Lifelong guidance can have a range of levels of impact, ranging from measuring levels of take-up through to measuring changes that take place at a societal level as a result of guidance programmes.

Lifelong guidance can have impacts on educational outcomes, economic and employment outcomes and social outcomes.

There are a range of different beneficiaries of guidance programmes, including individuals, their families, communities, employers and society as a whole.

This guide discusses the evidence that exists for lifelong guidance. At its core, this is about trying to answer some key questions that may be of interest to policy-makers:

* Do lifelong guidance programmes make a difference to the careers of individuals? For example, can they increase individuals’ aspirations or their chances of progressing?
* Do lifelong guidance programmes contribute towards policy aims such as supporting an effective education system, labour market efficiency, and social equity?
* Can lifelong guidance programmes reduce reliance on social security and welfare services?
* How are lifelong guidance programmes best designed and implemented?
* How can lifelong guidance programmes be improved and made more effective?
* Is anything known about what does not work and how best to avoid ineffective practices?

Such evidence has been collected by a wide range of people for a wide range of reasons. This guide refers to evidence produced by academics, public-policy researchers and consultants, and by policy-makers and practitioners themselves. In many cases there will be relatively little dialogue between each of these groups. Of course, each group has different motivations for the collection of evidence and different approaches to collecting this evidence. This guide has brought these different traditions together, in the belief that this will strengthen the overall understanding of the evidence for lifelong guidance.

**A note of caution on using and interpreting evidence**

It is important to remember that any attempt to measure impact is inevitably reductive. Any educational activity such as lifelong guidance leads to a range of impacts, many of which are difficult to predict or measure. For example, a relationship built during work experience may not result in a job for the individual involved, but that individual may pass on an opportunity to a friend or family member. Such happenstance connections are difficult to identify, but this does not make them any less real.

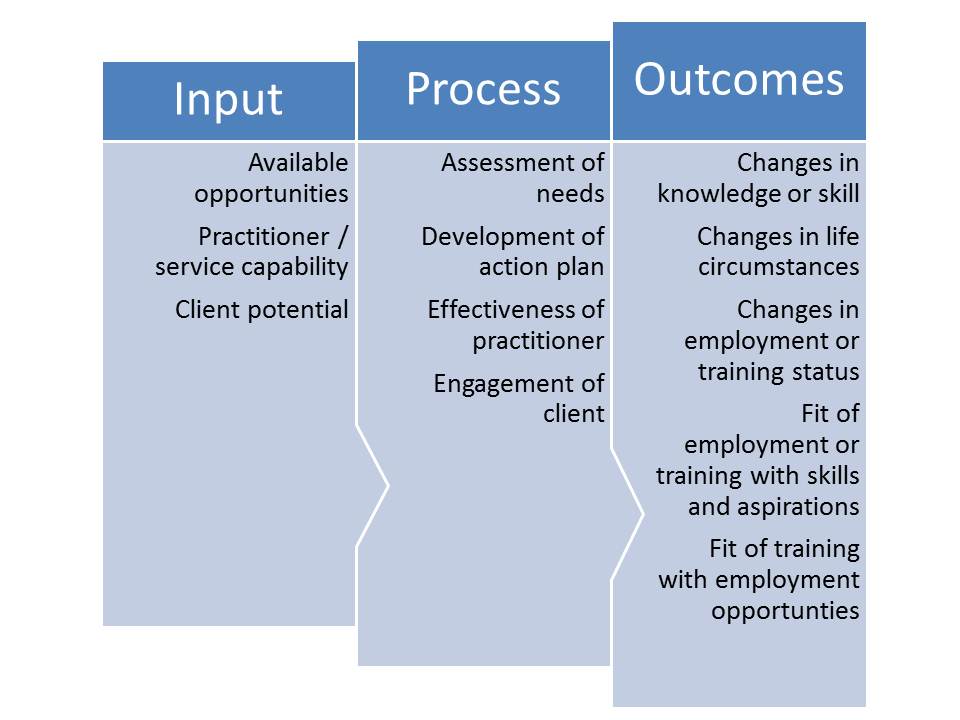
This is one reason why it is it important that monitoring and evaluation processes do not skew the delivery of programmes in ways that reduce their potential to have wider impacts. For instance, an excessive focus on immediate employment outcomes may have negative impacts in the long term if it reduces the opportunity for individuals to rethink their careers and consider more strategically where their talents might be best directed.

Such concerns about ensuring that lifelong guidance is understood and evaluated in the round highlight the importance of using a range of different evaluation approaches. Quantitative measures can identify relationships between interventions and measurable impacts. Qualitative measures can help to identify broader and more subtle types of impact. However, no research can ever describe all of the impacts that result from an intervention.

Researchers use a range of different strategies to explore these questions. Maguire provides a useful summary of different approaches that can be taken to measure the outcomes of guidance, highlighting both the importance of doing so and the value of both formative and summative approaches to evaluation.[[15]](#footnote-15)

In general, researchers seek to measure or describe what is happening and to trace relationships between interventions and possible outcomes. A Canadian group (CRWG)[[16]](#footnote-16) has argued that it is helpful to see this as a simple input-process-outcome framework.

**Figure 1: Input-process-outcome framework (based on the CRWG model)**



However, identifying relationships between inputs and outcomes (and the level of contribution made by participation in the process) is not always straightforward. The ongoing Canadian programme from which Figure 1 is derived has invested considerable time in considering what input, process and outcome measures it is useful and possible to measure in different contexts. It has also sought to examine the interactions that exist between these different factors. Such a recognition of complexity also recalls Scheerens’ reminder that input-process-outcome models in education take place in a context.[[17]](#footnote-17) Similar inputs, processes and outcome do not always produce the same results within different contexts. So an unemployed client might receive identical guidance and learn just as much about career in two different contexts; but depending on the occupational structure, economic situation and level of competition, he or she might experience a very different result.

The input-process-outcome models are therefore a useful tool for thinking simply about complex problems. Such models raise big questions, such as where do we start (with inputs, processes or outcomes?) when we are designing services and then when we are evaluating them. Ideally they encourage movement towards a position where service design and evaluation are conceived together, so that we are identifying what we want to achieve at the same time as thinking about how we will check that it is being achieved. Ultimately this takes us towards an evaluation-cycle or policy-loop approach. This will be discussed later in this guide.

Deciding how best to capture the impacts of lifelong guidance interventions can be challenging, as they are frequently nested in other educational interventions, and their impacts are bound up with the personal, social and educational history of the individuals involved. Furthermore, it is not always clear what particular interventions are meant to achieve. For example, is the aim of a guidance programme working with unemployed workers to get those individuals a job, or to support their long-term career planning? It is possible that research might find that it was effective in one of these aspirations, but not in both.

Despite these reservations, there is a considerable body of research that has explored these issues, identified impacts and clarified what effective practice looks like.

### Levels of impact

Researchers can measure a range of different levels of impact. A useful place to start is to measure:

* **inputs** (resources, time, human capital);
* **take-up** (breadth and depth of usage) of the services.

Measurement of many of these factors is addressed in detail in the QAE Framework (see appendix). There is clear value in building consensus around a common range of elements that should be measured across different services. There will be important findings in both of these respects, especially if it is possible, given local data-protection regulations, to analyse them in relation to existing administrative data about clients. For example, it may be possible to identify which types of client are using which types of service and to what extent, and this may in turn be useful in enhancing efficiency and efficacy.

However, looking at inputs and take-up does not necessarily answer the kinds of questions posed above. In establishing impact, we need to go further. Kirkpatrick[[18]](#footnote-18) identifies four levels of impact that can result from training and development interventions. These levels can be adapted to structure thinking about the impacts of lifelong guidance:

1. **Reaction.** How do participants in guidance describe their experience? Did they enjoy it and do they feel their participation has been worthwhile?
2. **Learning**. Is it possible to quantify what has been learnt? Measuring learning is particularly important because guidance is essentially a learning process, by which individuals learn about the world of learning and work and acquire the skills that they need to be successful within it (career management skills). An example of impact at this level therefore might include assessing the acquisition of career management skills (CMS) against a CMS framework.
3. **Behaviour.** Do learners change their behaviour as a result of participating, e.g. working harder, actively exploring their careers, or entering a new course or job?
4. **Results.** Are there any observable impacts on systems, organisations or individuals, e.g. increased retention or academic attainment, improved transitions, increased career and life success?

### Types of impact

It is also possible to recognise that guidance may result in different *types* as well as different *levels* of impact. It is possible to describe these impacts as those that relate to:

* **educational outcomes,** e.g. increasing participation in education and training, or improving attainment rates;
* **economic and employment outcome,** e.g. increasing salary, improving employee retention, or increasing someone’s likelihood of funding work;
* **social outcomes**, e.g. reducing the likelihood of engaging in criminal activity, or increasing social mobility.

For policy-makers these types of impact might be viewed through a range of different policy lenses, to link with wider policy agendas. These might include European initiatives such as those related to flexicurity[[19]](#footnote-19) or youth unemployment[[20]](#footnote-20), such as the Youth Guarantee[[21]](#footnote-21), or helping countries to fulfil education and employment components of the European Semester.[[22]](#footnote-22) Alternatively, the types of impact might link with local political and economic concerns such as increasing engagement in vocational or higher education, or addressing problematic youth transitions to the workplace, or tackling long-term unemployment.

### Beneficiaries of impact

Finally, it is possible to identify a range of different possible beneficiaries of guidance. Guidance is primarily a service directed towards the individual, but any change in the behaviour of the individual is likely to have wider consequences.

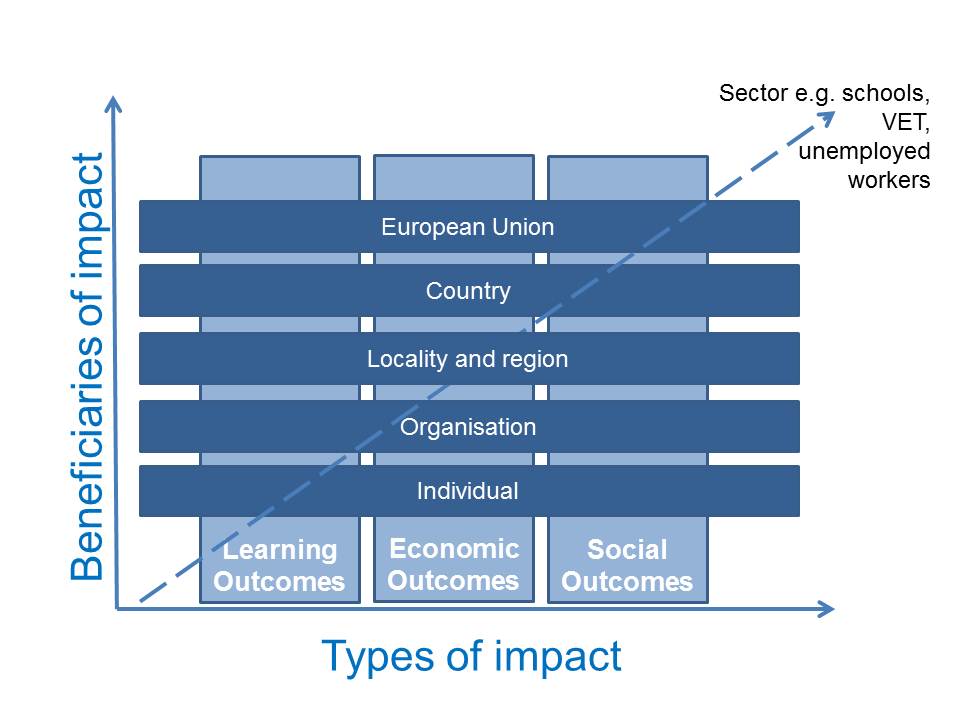
**Figure 2: The beneficiaries of guidance services**

Figure 2 provides examples of how this might work. It is not comprehensive: for example, it is also important to acknowledge impacts on family and various levels of community. But it demonstrates how a service which offers individual benefits can support wider community, organisational and social goals. It is important to consider the desired beneficiaries both during service design and in the evaluation of services.

One of the issues raised by the diverse number of beneficiaries is the question of who is able to report an impact and what might constitute evidence of such impact. An individual might tell a researcher that they have experienced benefits from an intervention, but this may not be apparent in terms of their labour market position. Equally, the reverse is true: researchers may find that the level of engagement with lifelong guidance services has a significant benefit on the local economy, but individuals may not attribute their success to the services they have accessed. Such questions are largely technical ones for researchers to think about when designing evaluations and research studies. However, the recognition of a range of impacts and a range of beneficiaries inevitably requires the utilisation of a range of different types of evidence.

Figure 3 provides a summary of the types and beneficiaries of impact that we might expect to see in relation to lifelong guidance. It highlights that we might be looking for learning, economic or social impacts, and seeking to register them at a number of different levels.

**Figure 3: Types of impact and beneficiaries of impact[[23]](#footnote-23)**



## Research and evaluation approaches

The identification of the levels and types of impacts that are possible, as well as the possible beneficiaries, is an essential element of understanding and measuring the impact of guidance. Different kinds of studies seek to measure different kinds of impact, and utilise a range of different research approaches and methods to do so.

People often distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods:

**Quantitative** methods seek to *measure* what is happening. They can be useful to identify clear and simple relationships between interventions and the impacts that result from them.

The Future to Discover project in Canada examined the impact of a guidance intervention on over 5,000 students in New Brunswick and Manitoba.[[24]](#footnote-24) The study conducted surveys with participants who were randomly assigned to receive one of two interventions, both interventions, or none. The survey data was linked to administrative data sets, e.g. college enrolment data, to allow real-world impacts to be traced. The intervention found that receiving a guidance intervention enhanced attainment and made some groups of students more likely to enrol in post-secondary education.

**Qualitative**methods seek to *describe* and *understand* what is happening. They can help to identify broader and more subtle types of impacts.

A qualitative study conducted in Portugal explored how a particular approach to lifelong guidance (career construction counselling) brought about change in clients’ ideas about career.[[25]](#footnote-25) The study involved detailed tracking of counsellor/client interactions and a careful process of coding these transcripts to allow for rigorous analysis. The research found that clients became progressively more likely to be creative and purposeful about their career throughout the counselling process.

Both methods can contribute to a range of ways of demonstrating impact and exploring efficacy. However, as noted above, no research can ever describe all of the impacts that result from an intervention.

Some approaches that have been utilised effectively in this area include:

**Snapshots.** Taking a picture of what is happening (using a survey, series of interviews or observation) and identifying whether stakeholders feel that it is useful.

Research in the Netherlands[[26]](#footnote-26) has looked at the use of portfolios or personal development plans to support students’ career development. This qualitative study found that such portfolios were perceived to be useful by teachers, career counsellors and students when they were used to complement and provide a focus for wider career conversations. Where they were not used as part of a broader career learning process, they were generally not seen as useful.

**Benchmarking.** Taking a snapshot of what is happening and comparing it to a target or goal. Benchmarks can be defined either theoretically (what *should* be happening) or empirically (what *has* happened when this has been tried elsewhere).

**Before-and-after studies.** Taking two snapshots before and after implementation of the programme, to try and identify what changes have happened as a result.

A study in Italy examined the impact of a guidance intervention on adolescents’ career decidedness and career planning.[[27]](#footnote-27) Participants were measured before participating in the intervention and then subsequent to the intervention to see how much they had changed. The research also used a control group. Following the intervention, the experimental group (those who had received the intervention) showed higher levels of continuity, hope and career decidedness than did the control group.

**Then-and-now studies.** Asking research participants to identify what has changed and to remember back to what things were like before implementation.

In a chapter discussing approaches to evaluating the impact of lifelong guidance services, Hiebert et al. present an evaluation approach used in Canada.[[28]](#footnote-28) In a study examining online guidance for higher education, student participants were invited to use a form of retrospective self-assessment to indicate what they had learnt. More specifically, they were asked: “Given what you know now about career planning, for each item mentioned below rate yourself before you started the program and rate yourself now.”

**Longitudinal tracking**. Ongoing engagement with research participants to explore the long-term impacts of guidance.

A study in Australia investigated students' experiences of a school guidance programme in rural and isolated areas of Australia.[[29]](#footnote-29) Nine students who participated in the programme were interviewed 18 months later to explore their recollections of the experience. Results of the study revealed three themes pertaining to the value of career planning: information; elaboration and confirmation of career thoughts; and the social connectedness and positive experience the programme provided.

**Controlled trials**. Comparison of what happens to a cohort of clients who access career development services (the experimental group) in comparison to another similar cohort who do not use them (the control group). Researchers’ confidence in this kind of study increases if individuals can be randomly allocated to these different groups.

A Portuguese study used a control trial to examine the impacts of a one-year career intervention on 183 ninth-grade students.[[30]](#footnote-30) The intervention promoted career exploration and supported students in their career decision-making difficulties. Students were divided into a treatment group (who received the intervention) and a control group (who did not). The study found significant differences in the two groups’ capacity to effectively undertake career exploration.

**Cost-benefit analyses.** Exploration of the relative size of the inputs and outputs of a process. This is usually quantified by using financial measures.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these approaches. There is also considerable value in adopting a pluralistic approach to establishing the impact of lifelong guidance.

# Lifelong guidance and public policy

Lifelong guidance provides a range of interventions that help an individual to manage their life, learning and work. The ELGPN Resource Kit identifies the key public policy areas to which lifelong guidance can contribute:

* Efficient investment in education and training.
* Labour market efficiency.
* Lifelong learning.
* Social inclusion.
* Social equity.
* Economic development.

It is possible to add further more detailed policy areas to this list, including:

* Active ageing.
* Active labour markets.
* Effective skills utilisation.
* Employee engagement.
* Labour market flexibility/flexicurity.
* Participation in vocational and higher education.
* Addressing youth transitions and unemployment.
* Supporting and enabling European mobility for learning and work.

Guidance is therefore addressed to a wide range of policy concerns. In many cases there is a well-developed research base which outlines the nature of these concerns and identifies the key social and economic costs that emerge from them. It is beyond the scope of this guide to discuss these costs in detail. However, a brief case-study focusing on student drop-out from higher education is used to demonstrate some of these wider costs and how guidance addresses them.

**Case-study: Student drop-out from higher education**

Student drop-out from higher education provides a useful case-study of how guidance can contribute to wider social and economic aims. Higher education represents a considerable personal and social investment. The policy aspiration is to create an informed and highly skilled population: higher education has been used as an instrument to drive this. However, many students drop out of education and fail to complete their studies.

This process has been mapped at a European level through both quantitative[[31]](#footnote-31) and qualitative[[32]](#footnote-32) studies. There is also evidence to suggest that drop-out is related to various forms of social and economic disadvantage[[33]](#footnote-33). High student drop-out leads to a range of undesirable outcomes including wastage of resources, lowering the levels of skills available to the economy and reducing social mobility.

The level of student drop-out is clearly related to systemic factors in the higher education system as well as to wider economic issues. Unfortunately such systemic factors are very difficult to act upon. However, one factor that is often advanced in both research[[34]](#footnote-34) and policy is the importance of purposeful educational choice-making. Students who know what they are doing and are clear about how it fits into their longer-term goals may be less likely to drop out. Guidance can offer a useful solution where the problem is constructed as being about insufficient knowledge of learning or labour market systems and poor decision-making.

Recent large-scale longitudinal research undertaken in England suggests that guidance may indeed offer at least part of the solution to higher education drop-out. In a study based on all university entrants in 2005/06, McCulloch[[35]](#footnote-35) found that both the amount of advice on higher education that an individual had received (from all sources) and their satisfaction with the career guidance that they had received were correlated with reduced likelihood of dropping out.

## The “lifelong” policy frame

Lifelong guidance is a cross-sectoral, long-term investment which frequently impacts on the policies of two or more government departments. This can mean that the main impact of guidance interventions is not always felt within the area that they take place. So for example, the provision of guidance in schools has a number of benefits for the school system, but it also has benefits for VET, universities and the labour market. It is important to consider this lifelong frame of reference when designing policies and seeking to ascertain their impact.

There are a range of ways in which lifelong guidance policies can be constructed. One is building co-ordination processes between different sectors; another is constructing a national strategy for guidance; a third is creating an all-age service which acts as the spine of a lifelong guidance system. This guide largely discusses lifelong guidance in sectoral contexts, because most systems and consequently most evidence-gathering proceed from a sectoral focus. However, there is also a range of evidence which highlights the value of a lifelong strategy to effective policy-making in this area.[[36]](#footnote-36) There is also evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of all-age services as the centrepiece of a lifelong guidance policy.[[37]](#footnote-37)

The development of a lifelong guidance system in Hungary is a recent example of an attempt to link up activity in schools, in higher education, and in the public employment service.[[38]](#footnote-38) The Hungarian lifelong guidance services were evaluated using an online survey (300 responses and an equivalent-size control group) and 45 in-depth interviews.[[39]](#footnote-39) The evaluation (focusing on the period 2008-11) found that the service had a positive impact on clients’ ideas about the future and on their capacity for career planning and career management. The evaluation also highlighted the diversity of career needs addressed by the lifelong guidance provision in Hungary. It suggested that there were four distinct types of clients who needed to be supported in different ways: the conscious career developers; those in need of career security; those who needed intense emotional support; and those who were required to access the service despite being initially unwilling to use it. The evaluation thus supported both the lifelong framing of guidance and the need to tailor services to individual needs.

The QAE Framework (see appendix to this report) offers a tool which can support both the delivery of high-quality lifelong guidance and the collection of relevant evidence to support the measurement of its effectiveness.

## Why is it important to understand and develop the evidence base for lifelong guidance?

Policy-makers can use an understanding of the evidence base to shape the design and delivery of lifelong guidance services. A key part of this is the evaluation of interventions and the continued development of the evidence.

The Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop sets out a process of evidence-based service development that policy-makers may wish to adopt.

There is a growing consensus that public policy should be based on the best evidence available. Evidence-based policy-making helps policy-makers to be clear about what the right decision is and its likely impact. In practice, however, accessing evidence can be challenging, not least because it is frequently scattered across a wide range of publications, each of which only provide a part of the story. This is particularly the case for lifelong guidance, where the evidence is spread between books, academic journals and government reports, as well as housed in different academic disciplines (education, psychology, business and organisation studies) and in different government ministries (education [sometimes including distinct ministries or departments for schools, higher education, vocational education, and lifelong learning], employment, business and a range of others).

Even when it is possible to find the evidence on lifelong guidance, it can sometimes be difficult to interpret. What works in one context may not easily transfer to a different country with different education and employment systems. This guide draws out the key features of the evidence in different areas and clarifies how policy-makers might interpret such evidence.

It is important to continue to develop the evidence base as new policies and interventions are introduced. EU member-states have signed up to the idea of a cyclical policy development process through the European Semester.[[40]](#footnote-40) ELGPN in turn is committed to the idea of continuous improvement as a key part of its activities.[[41]](#footnote-41) This guide builds on this through the dissemination of the Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop which recognises the need to develop and evaluate guidance policies in a dynamic and evidence-based fashion.

**Figure 4: The Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop[[42]](#footnote-42)**

The Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop is designed to support a logical process of service improvement based on the best evidence available. It moves beyond a conception of evidence as simply being about the evaluation of policy, and encourages policy-makers to use evidence in the development of policy as well as in making summative judgements about its success. Lunn argues that thinking more broadly about the role of evidence in policy-making offers advantages, noting that “evidence has the capacity to inform policy at every stage of the development of a policy, including the initial identification of the challenge that the policy is designed to meet”.[[43]](#footnote-43) The cyclical nature of the Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop provides a framework for this kind of engagement with evidence and so can help to ensure that the evidence base continues to grow and to support continuous improvement.

It is important to recognise that guidance is often an embedded feature in broader policy development cycles. In such cases it is possible that other policy development frameworks, such as the EQAVET quality assurance tool[[44]](#footnote-44) in the case of VET, may offer alternative frames for the development of guidance systems. However, there remains a challenge to ensure that where guidance is embedded in other systems it receives sufficient focus and attention as part of evaluations, and also that the lifelong policy frame is maintained. For example, evaluations of guidance within VET provision should not just examine how to make VET work more effectively, but should also identify impacts that might happen beyond the immediate frame of VET provision.

# What is already known about the efficacy of lifelong guidance services?

There is a considerable evidence base in the area of lifelong guidance. However, it is important to understand the complexity of this evidence base, to enable it to support policy-making. A number of general studies exist which demonstrate that career guidance has impact.

Evidence exists to demonstrate the positive impacts of career guidance on clients’ reactions, learning, behaviour and results.

There is an extensive body of literature which has found that lifelong guidance delivers a range of impacts. Some of these impacts are demonstrated and quantified in a series of articles by Susan Whiston and her colleagues.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Whiston *et al.*[[46]](#footnote-46) undertook a meta-analysis which drew together 47 studies which utilised controls and involved a total of 4,660 participants. They identified that across all of the studies, which sought to identify a diverse range of impacts, participants who had received a guidance intervention were more likely than those who had not to display an identifiable impact. They found impacts across all types of career interventions, but individual career counselling was much the most effective for the client, whereas computer-based and classroom/group interventions were more cost-effective in terms of counsellor time.

There are many other literature reviews which describe the impacts of lifelong guidance on individuals’ career building across a range of domains and life stages.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Another example of the impacts of career guidance is provided by Bimrose *et al.*[[48]](#footnote-48)who undertook a five-year longitudinal tracking study of 50 career guidance clients. These clients initially encountered career guidance in a range of different settings including further education, higher education and public employment services. The study found that one-to-one guidance interventions were regarded as useful by clients, and that guidance services can support adults to make successful transitions in a turbulent labour market.

There is also research which has illustrated that the impacts of lifelong guidance can be brought about through a range of different approaches to delivery. Such research has highlighted the impacts of one-to-one counselling, paired counselling, group work, and telephone and online provision.

The NUOVE development project in Finland evaluated a pilot telephone guidance service for adults.[[49]](#footnote-49) The evaluation found that lifelong guidance services were services suitable for phone-based provision. The evaluation observed a range of positive impacts on clients following their use of the service, including the clarification of their career objectives, accessing training and moving into employment. A similar study was conducted in the UK a few years earlier which also found positive impacts from telephone guidance.[[50]](#footnote-50)

Online guidance has also been evaluated and found to be effective.

An evaluation of an internet-based system for self-directed career planning was undertaken in Croatia.[[51]](#footnote-51) The system provided a rich career exploration environment offering information, advice and career assessment tools. The evaluation explored the experience of over 2,000 of the site’s users. Users were satisfied with the guidance accessed through the system and the analysis supported the validity of online advice through an exploration of a variety of factors in the user data and the congruence between the advice provided by the system and that given by expert human counsellors.

Such research thus suggests that there is good empirical evidence to support the use of lifelong guidance to achieve a range of impacts.

## 3.1. Levels of impact

The idea of different levels of impact was introduced earlier in this guide (Section 1.3.1). There is evidence at each of the four levels: reaction; learning; behaviour; and results. Inevitably, however, it is more demanding to demonstrate level 4 impacts (that lifelong guidance has led to organisational, social or economic change) than level 1 impacts (that participants in guidance reported that they had a good or useful experience). This section will provide examples of research that demonstrate the impact of lifelong guidance at each of these levels.

**Ensuring a baseline of service quality**. The QAE Framework offers a clear way to be sure of the baseline quality of service provision. It provides a framework through which the *inputs* (resources, time, human capital) and the *take-up* (breadth and depth of usage) of the services can be effectively monitored. The Framework also supports the gathering of evidence in relation to higher levels of impact. However, the careful mapping of the nature and usage of the service is essential in providing a framework for measuring the impact of services.

In Greece, a thorough process has been undertaken with respect to providing a strong framework for quality. The *National Framework for Quality Assurance of Lifelong Learning* has been used to provide a policy framework for this work alongside the ELGPN’s QAE Framework. A mixed-methods approach has then been taken to evaluate services against this quality framework and to provide a benchmark for service improvement and future evaluation.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Other countries including Austria, Finland and Ireland have also developed quality and evidence approaches, often based on the QAE Framework.[[53]](#footnote-53)

**Level 1 (Reaction)** impacts seek to describe how learners feel about the programmes in which they participate. Such evidence is commonly collected through feedback forms and customer satisfaction surveys. A wide range of studies demonstrate this kind of impact.

*Voices of Users*[[54]](#footnote-54) provides a strong summary of the experience of career guidance clients across Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The paper argues that identifying and understanding the experience of the service user should be a critical element of service design and evaluation. The study found that the majority of participants were satisfied with the service that they had received and felt that the counsellor that they had worked with was supportive and understanding.

Other examples of studies that have demonstrated positive client reactions to guidance interventions can be found in Croatia[[55]](#footnote-55), England[[56]](#footnote-56), Ireland[[57]](#footnote-57) and a host of other countries. In general, such studies reveal that users value access to guidance services and report positively on their interactions with such services.

**Level 2 (Learning)** impacts seek to describe what has been learnt from the experience of participating in guidance. There are a number of studies that seek to measure such learning against a wide range of learning outcomes.

A literature review in the UK[[58]](#footnote-58) identified 40 studies that examined the learning outcomes of guidance. It concluded that there was strong evidence that guidance led to a range of different outcomes, including increased self-awareness, opportunity awareness, decision-making skills and transition skills. It identified multiple studies in which each of these learning outcomes had been observed.

In the context of lifelong guidance interventions, the skills that are learnt are often described as career management skills.[[59]](#footnote-59) These are the skills that individuals need to make career decisions, manage transitions, build their career and manage change and setbacks. An established literature details how lifelong guidance interventions can positively impact on career management skills.

Researchers in Finland conducted a randomised control trial to examine the impacts of a group intervention on career management, mental health, and job retention.[[60]](#footnote-60) The intervention was based within employing organisations and sought to provide employees with better preparedness to manage their own careers. A total of 718 eligible individuals were randomly assigned to either an intervention (N = 369) or a comparison group (N = 349). Those in the intervention group were invited to group intervention workshops, whereas those in the comparison group received printed information about career and health-related issues. The 7-month follow-up results demonstrated enhanced career management skills which led to significantly decreased depressive symptoms and intentions to retire early.

**Level 3 (Behaviour)** impacts have also been found in a number of studies. To successfully identify changes in behaviour, it is important that studies return to clients after a period of time, and use sophisticated methods to ensure that actual behaviours as opposed to reported behaviours are being observed.

A Swiss study[[61]](#footnote-61) examined the impact of career guidance over a year. The study used mixed methods to explore the long-term impacts of career guidance with 199 clients. It looked at participants’ levels of decisiveness about their career, their satisfaction with their life, and their ability to act on their plans to impact positively on their career. Results indicated a continual decrease of career indecision in the long term, and stabilisation with regard to clients' satisfaction with life. Some of the benefits of guidance became more apparent over the longer term.

Many researchers use established psychological tools to help them to understand and measure behaviours. This usually involves adopting questionnaires that have been developed by other researchers and found to reliably measure attitudes or behaviours.

A study in Portugal examined how guidance impacted on students’ engagement with school and their ability to engage in career exploration.[[62]](#footnote-62) The study examined students who had received guidance and those who had not by using the the Students’ Engagement in School four-dimensional scale[[63]](#footnote-63) and the Career Exploration Scale[[64]](#footnote-64). The study found that guidance was positively correlated both with engagement with school and with career exploration.

**Level 4 (Results)** have frequently been difficult to evidence in detail. However, there are some studies which observe the systemic impacts of lifelong guidance on individuals’ performance within learning and work organisations.

In a review of six studies examining the link between school counselling and educational attainment, Carey & Dimmit[[65]](#footnote-65) found consistent evidence of a positive relationship between well-organised school counselling programmes and the educational outcomes of students.

A number of studies have explored the social and economic impacts of guidance[[66]](#footnote-66). For example, Hughes highlights potential impacts on GDP, public spending on education, social exclusion, social security benefit, policing, tax revenue, health care, incapacity benefits, stress, and supporting mobility.[[67]](#footnote-67) By assuming a small impact from guidance on each of these areas, it is possible to conceptualise a substantial benefit to the economy. Thus, for example, if lifelong guidance makes people more likely to find appropriate work and less likely to make poor learning choices, its impacts will be found across the economy. A similar thought experiment was run by Taylor who modelled the impacts of a reduction in the availability of guidance to young people on the basis of a series of assumptions based on the observed impacts of lifelong guidance.[[68]](#footnote-68)

A report in Northern Ireland examined the impact of the Educational Guidance Service for Adults on the Northern Ireland economy.[[69]](#footnote-69) The study used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, including detailed analysis of the service’s client data, to estimate the economic value of the service. This was estimated to be £9.02 net additional tax revenue for every £1 of public money invested. The study also identified the service’s impacts in reducing unemployment and supporting progression within work. Such economic modelling of the overall impacts of guidance is useful, in part because it highlights the multi-faceted range of impacts associated with guidance.

A current study in the municipal educational guidance service of Dresden is seeking to systematically map the cost-benefits (including capturing the economic outcomes in monetary terms) of the intervention through detailed research observations and data-matching. The project’s findings will be particularly valuable because it is based on cross-sectoral co-operation and so will provide opportunities to capture lifelong impacts rather than merely sectoral ones. The data are gathered as managerial data in the municipal guidance service and will be matched with data on the individual users’ later occupational pathways taken from the official labour market statistics.[[70]](#footnote-70)

There is clearly a need to continue to develop research in this area to allow for more confident quantification of the economic benefits of guidance.

## 3.2. Interpreting the evidence

Key to understanding and making use of the evidence base in lifelong guidance is recognising how findings from the research evidence can be generalised.

Many studies on career guidance explore specific questions relating to the wide range of contexts in which lifelong guidance can be found.

Literature reviews and meta-analyses are particularly important in drawing out the conclusions from the research base.

The context within which guidance is undertaken has the potential to reshape the way in which it works and what we know about what is effective. What works in supporting young people to understand the world of work may not work in the same way for adults seeking labour market re-entry after being made redundant. What works in each case is likely to depend on the policy environment, the immediate context and the individual psychology of the individual. Of course, this does not mean that no generalisation is possible: in practice we will need to assume that some of what works in one context can be transferred. However, such considerations of the evidence base need to be handled carefully, so that we do not conclude that because a form of guidance worked once, it will always work. This can be illustrated by the following case-study.

In *Career Guidance in Communities*[[71]](#footnote-71), Thomsen used a qualitative research approach to examine how guidance could support a group of factory workers in Denmark who were being made redundant. The study found that in order to be effective, the guidance worker needed to leave her or his guidance corner and actively engage the workers in the spaces where they spent their time (such as the lunch space). Thomsen explained that by doing this, the guidance worker was able to engage the workers and to help them to work together to understand their situation and take practical action to address it.

From Thomsen’s work, therefore, we might be able to make the following assumptions:

* It is possible to provide effective guidance in the workplace.
* Guidance can help workers who are being made redundant.
* Career guidance in the workplace may require a more active approach to engaging clients.
* There is value in providing guidance in a social context.

If a policy-maker or employer was considering introducing lifelong guidance into workplaces, they would be well-advised to be mindful of Thomsen’s findings. In practice, however, it may be that in different kinds of workplace or in countries other than Denmark, things work out differently because, for example, workers are more used to accessing guidance in the workplace or because redundancy periods are shorter and require more intense interventions. Nonetheless, in the absence of other more specific information, such findings constitute useful evidence. If the approach set out in the Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop is followed, such evidence can provide an informed place for the development of a policy or service which can then be subsequently checked. Even greater caution might though be exerted about generalising Thomsen’s findings to other contexts such as career guidance in schools or in higher education.

Research studies like Thomsen’s tend to be specific. Researchers are encouraged to narrow down their studies to try to reach conclusive findings. So if they are going to ask 100 people a question, it is usually better to ask 100 fairly similar people the same question, so that they can be more confident about any patterns they find in the answers and what they mean. If they ask 100 people drawn from all across Europe a series of different questions, it may be difficult to make much sense of their answers.

Research on lifelong guidance is therefore typically specific and this raises challenges in generalising findings. Fortunately there is another important type of study, known as a literature review, which seeks to overcome this. A literature review is a study of studies that seeks to identify patterns in what other researchers have found.

Hughes et al.[[72]](#footnote-72) reviewed 27 research studies that examined lifelong guidance in the workplace. The review found that interventions fell into four categories, which it described as: (i) formal training/development, within and outside the workplace; (ii) informal training/development, within and outside the workplace; (iii) human-resource-led initiatives; and (iv) involvement of intermediaries. The review highlighted that access to lifelong guidance and the success of any interventions were highly dependent on the workplace context. It found considerable qualitative evidence for both employer and employee benefits, but concluded that further quantitative research was needed.

As can be seen in this example, literature reviews do more than just group together studies that have been done before. They also organise the findings conceptually and make an overall assessment of the strength of the evidence base. Literature reviews are therefore an important part of understanding the evidence base in lifelong guidance and will be referred to extensively in this guide.

There is also a particular type of cross-study analysis known as a statistical meta-analysis which uses statistical methods to combine existing quantitative studies that have been carried out on a similar basis. Such studies have been important in establishing a robust evidence base in medicine and health-care through organisations like the Cochrane Collaboration.[[73]](#footnote-73) The meta-analysis approach has been used on a number of occasions to investigate lifelong guidance.

Baker and Taylor[[74]](#footnote-74) used a statistical meta-analysis approach to explore the impact of career education interventions in schools on student outcomes. They combined the results of 12 studies conducted between 1983 to 1996, and were careful to only include studies that used control groups for comparison, that were published in refereed journals, and had participants from grades K–12. Their meta-analysis demonstrated that such interventions have a statistically verifiable impact on academic achievement.

However, such approaches are relatively rare in lifelong guidance. It is also important to note that not everything that is called a “meta-analysis” is a genuine statistical meta-analysis: some are simply relabelled literature reviews. The limited number of meta-analyses in lifelong guidance is in part because of the limited number of quantitative studies that have been conducted and the relatively small size of the research base in the field, in comparison to medicine where such approaches have been most influential. This is an area that we will return to when we ask what further evidence is needed on lifelong guidance.

The next two sections address guidance in learning and guidance for work. They will discuss the evidence base in the key contexts in which lifelong guidance exists. Each section will summarise what is known and then illustrate this with a brief case-study.

# What is the evidence on guidance in learning?

Education remains a critical policy area, with considerable debate about its form and functions within society. The European Commission’s Communication on Rethinking Education suggests that there is need for a more effective alignment between education and the labour market:

European education and training systems continue to fall short in providing the right skills for employability, and are not working adequately with business or employers to bring the learning experience closer to the reality of the working environment. These skills mismatches are a growing concern for European industry's competitiveness.[[75]](#footnote-75)

The Communication identifies lifelong guidance as an important tool in the realisation of this agenda. For example, it highlights trends to provide education through more “flexible and individualised pathways”. Guidance can support individuals to make good decisions about their learning and progression pathways, and can enhance their career management skills to provide them with a greater capacity to manage the complexity that results from this enhanced flexibility.

Lifelong guidance has a long history of supporting the alignment of learning and work. Much lifelong guidance is located in learning organisations like schools, colleges, vocational education providers and universities. Learning organisations provide opportunities for lifelong guidance (a developmental ethos; the opportunity to provide the service alongside other kinds of learning and personal development) as well as challenges (the common disconnection of learning programmes from the labour market; the focus on subject-based curricula). This section will explore the evidence base for guidance in learning and explore how it can be effectively utilised.

## Schools

Career education and guidance in schools is well-researched. Researchers have identified a range of impacts associated with school-based careers work.

Careers work in schools can:

* increase students’ engagement and success in school;
* support their transitions from school;
* help them to establish successful lives and careers.

The evidence also suggests that such programmes are best implemented in ways that connect career learning to the curriculum, and within schools where they are supported by the school leadership and built into the wider school ethos.

Career education and guidance has a long history in many European school systems. Many young people need some help in thinking about the career implications of the educational decisions they make in schools. Careers work within schools also seeks to help people to move on from school and make successful transitions to further learning or work.

Careers work in schools can take many forms, but typically includes a mix of:

* career education (work in class groups around a career-related curriculum);
* one-to-one guidance and/or group-work provided by a specialist;
* provision of information;
* extra-curricular career support.

In some schools it may also include work experience and other direct connections with the labour market, often through parents, employers or alumni.

Career education and guidance in schools has been researched extensively, demonstrating that well-run careers programmes can have impacts on learners’ effectiveness within the school system, as well as their ability to make effective transitions to work or further learning and to build successful careers.

In *Fostering College and Career Readiness*[[76]](#footnote-76), Hooley, Marriott & Sampson looked at over 100 studies on careers work in schools. They concluded that across this literature, four main types of impacts were associated with careers work. Where a school’s programme was well-run, studies indicated that it would be possible to identify impacts on the school’s retention rate, on the academic attainment of the students, on the ability of students to make successful transitions from school, and on their longer-term life and career success.

Researchers have identified statistically significant impacts from career education and guidance programmes and have explored a range of different kinds of impact including impacts on school attainment.[[77]](#footnote-77)

A career workshop was developed in Switzerland to promote the career choice readiness of young adolescents. In an evaluation of the workshop with 334 Swiss students in the 7th grade, Hirschi & Läge found that three months after the workshop, participants reported significant impacts. In particular, they significantly increased their performance in terms of career decidedness, career planning, career exploration, and vocational identity.[[78]](#footnote-78)

A range of different research approaches have been used to demonstrate these impacts, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative approaches have often tried to trace the relationship between the implementation of a guidance programme and other observable data such as graduation rate, level of enrolment in post-secondary learning opportunities and post-school employment rate.

Lapan *et al.*[[79]](#footnote-79) looked at implementation of a comprehensive school-based career education and guidance programme in the state of Missouri, USA. They examined data from 22,964 students attending 236 Missouri high schools. They found that schools with more fully implemented guidance programmes had students who were more likely to report that: (a) they had earned higher grades, (b) their education was better preparing them for their future, (c) their school made more career and college information available to them, and (d) their school had a more positive climate. These positive effects were found after removing differences due to school enrolment size, socio-economic status, and percentage of minority students in attendance.

The question of what kinds of career guidance programmes are effective in schools has also been addressed in the research literature. Hooley *et al.*[[80]](#footnote-80) mapped all the different kinds of career interventions made in schools. They concluded that it was not any one of these interventions (e.g. work experience or one-to-one guidance) that was critical to the effectiveness of guidance in the school: rather it was how these interventions were connected together into a meaningful whole.

Schools may adopt a curriculum-led approach, in which career is seen as an important focal point for learning, with a body of knowledge, skills and pedagogic approaches connected with it. In a learning approach, the various careers work components are integrated into the mainstream curriculum to provide a coherent, meaningful and developmental education. There is evidence both from the UK and internationally demonstrating that this approach is the most effective mode of delivery for careers work in schools. However, given the centrality of the curriculum, these approaches require substantial buy-in from school leaders, with support from partners and in-school champions.

A systematic study by the Danish Clearinghouse for Educational Research[[81]](#footnote-81) examined the effectiveness of career education and guidance interventions in schools. It concluded that there is evidence that such interventions support individuals to clarify their career ideas and make effective decisions. It noted a number of features of effective provision, including the use of a range of interventions that are organised into a coherent whole and are well-connected to curriculum, the development of a strong personal connection between the career counsellor or career educator and the students, and the importance of well-trained and knowledgeable career professionals.

The importance of integrating career guidance in schools has been explored through a range of quantitative and qualitative studies that have helped to illuminate how this can work in practice.

Research by Morris *et al.*[[82]](#footnote-82) looked at the practice of career education and guidance in 30 schools across England. They found that career education and guidance could make a positive contribution to the effectiveness of a school, by providing a vehicle to refocus the curriculum, by supporting students’ self-esteem and motivation, by reducing drop-out rates, and as a means of increasing the relevance of the curriculum to young people’s lives. They also found that such benefits were strongest where there was strong buy-in across the schools’ teachers and leadership.

The evidence base for careers work in schools is probably one of the strongest elements of the overall lifelong guidance evidence base. Thus we have a good idea of what kinds of benefits are associated with such programmes (enhanced retention, achievement, transition and success) and how best to achieve them (strong connections to curriculum; integration into the school’s wider ethos).

## Vocational education

Lifelong guidance has an important role to play both in supporting individuals to consider vocational options and in helping those in vocational education to make the most of the skills and knowledge that they have learnt as they make their transitions to the labour market.

The evidence in the area tends to highlight concerns about the failure to provide adequate guidance to support young people in considering vocational options. Beyond this, the evidence is patchy and in need of development.

The existing evidence suggests that career guidance in vocational education is likely to be most effective where it is holistic and integrated into programmes.

Cedefop argues that “attractive, open, modern and inclusive vocational education and training (VET) is a pillar of knowledge economies”.[[83]](#footnote-83) Such claims highlight the importance of VET to the wider economy and stress the need to align education with the labour market. The Cedefop paper goes on to argue that lifelong guidance has a critical role in supporting this alignment and ensuring the development of an effective VET system.

The evidence base relating to guidance in vocational education is less developed than that in relation to schools. It also differs from career guidance within schools in an important way, as people may seek career guidance to help them to decide whether to enter vocational education as well as whilst they are within vocational education. Furthermore, the occupational focus of vocational education means that the nature of career conversations can be reframed from “what career should I pursue?” to “how can I most effectively pursue the career that I have chosen?” However, it is also important to recognise that not everyone pursues their vocational pathway into the directly related part of the labour market.

Much vocational education includes elements of career guidance in its core learning approach, notably work experience and support for the initial transition to the labour market. In practice, of course, not all vocational programmes straightforwardly determine a career, nor do all vocational learners find that they want, or are able, to pursue their initial vocational ideas beyond the course.

Watts[[84]](#footnote-84) concludes from the available evidence that the career guidance given prior to entry in VET is often inadequate. While this situation varies across different national contexts, there is a widespread tendency for schools (often in concert with parents and wider cultural values) to favour the academic route over the vocational one for many of their students. This may be combatted by providing students with access to external career guidance from outside the school. Such guidance should include the following information:

* The available VET options.
* The qualifications to which VET options lead and progression routes from these qualifications.
* The occupations to which these qualifications provide access and the likelihood of gaining work following obtaining the qualification.
* The salary/wages offered by these occupations.
* The projected demand for these occupations.

In this sense career guidance has an important role in ensuring that individuals and training routes are well connected to the labour market. Such provision can help to prevent vocational programmes failing to meet labour market needs.

Within vocational education, career guidance has another key role to play in supporting individuals to identify how they can best make use of the skills and knowledge they have received through vocational education in order to build fulfilling careers. In public-policy terms, this positions career guidance as part of a strategy to ensure a return on investment for public investment in vocational education. Despite these strong rationales for the involvement of career guidance in vocational education, practice is variable across Europe. However, research has demonstrated that career guidance can be a useful and effective part of vocational education programmes.

A quantitative study in the Netherlands investigated the impact of guidance and career learning within vocational education on the development of career management skills and career outcomes.[[85]](#footnote-85) The study included 3,499 students and 166 teachers. It found that guidance, where it was based on dialogue, contributed to motivation, decision-making and career outcomes. It also demonstrated a positive relationship between career management skills and career outcomes.

A recent discussion of effective career guidance practice in vocational education published in Australia[[86]](#footnote-86) summarises the features of effective practice as follows:

* Building the development of career management skills into all vocational education courses.
* Providing career information through online technologies.
* Providing a broad universal provision of guidance services, but with comprehensive career development services targeted at the most vulnerable learners.
* Developing comprehensive learner support services, with career development as a central focus.
* Building better approaches to sharing resources and expertise, especially through more effective networks and partnerships.
* Providing appropriate initial and ongoing training and professional development for career development professionals and others, especially those who are key influencers on career decisions.
* Providing pre-entry guidance.
* Involving employers in the delivery of both guidance and vocational education.
* Evaluating the quality and impact of guidance services.

## Such research tends to suggest that there is much transferability to VET from what has been more systematically learnt in the case of career guidance within schools. However, there is clearly a need to develop the evidence base more systematically in relation to career guidance prior to, within and on exit from VET.

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## Higher education

Career guidance is well-established within higher education in some countries. Provision is usually delivered through institutional careers services which provide students with a range of services.

There is good evidence to suggest that employer involvement and work-related learning opportunities support positive employment outcomes for students.

Beyond this the research base is in need of development, but suggests that there are benefits in offering a diverse range of services that link both to the academic curriculum and to the needs of graduate employers.

Career guidance has a strong tradition in higher education within some countries, though less so in others. Higher education careers provision is often delivered by a careers service inside the institution, subsumed within the institution’s general running costs, although there are other ways to resource such services, through public employment services or students’ unions, for example. A summary of guidance across Europe is given by Katzensteiner *et al.*, including country reports and some analytical summaries of provision.[[87]](#footnote-87)

Cullen[[88]](#footnote-88) used a mixed-methods approach to review guidance across a range of European countries and made a series of proposals for best practice. The review was particularly interested in exploring how guidance could support non-traditional students to engage in higher education and make successful transitions to the labour market. The review found a high demand for guidance services.

OECD[[89]](#footnote-89) also highlights the range of different approaches that are taken with respect to higher education career guidance across OECD countries (which it describes as counselling services, integrated student services, placement services and specialised careers services).

The tradition of higher education careers work in some countries (notably the UK and the USA) has been closely bound up with the needs and interests of large graduate recruiters, who have utilised higher education careers services as a key channel through which to access potential applicants for graduate schemes. Many higher education careers services retain strong links to such employers, although increasingly their activities have broadened to cover a broader range of destinations as well as supporting the acquisition of career management and employability skills.

The ELGPN Resource Kit discusses the issue of career management skills development in higher education, highlighting examples in France, Lithuania and Portugal. This issue is also addressed by Bridgstock who argues that career management skills must be seen as an essential graduate employability skill.[[90]](#footnote-90) Rott draws together a series of case-studies which demonstrate how European higher education guidance services have been using the concept of career management to develop provision which is addressed to identified student needs and which aligns well with the learning cultures within higher education institutions.[[91]](#footnote-91)

It is also worth noting that there is an important tradition of pre-entry guidance to higher education, which often links closely with that delivered through the school system. Such guidance, however, usually pays little or no attention to career guidance, including the career implications of course choices.[[92]](#footnote-92)

Evidence on the impacts of higher education career services is still emergent. A recent study in Latvia highlights the need for the further development of guidance services in higher education.[[93]](#footnote-93) It argues that the development of robust monitoring and evaluation is essential for the further development of the sector and proposes a series of performance indicators to support this.

Other research suggests that work experience, work-based learning and employer involvement in higher education can have strong impacts on graduate employability.[[94]](#footnote-94) Guidance can have a strong relationship with work experience, preparing students for placements, and supporting them to reflect on what they have learnt and to operationalise their career learning; though this is not always the case.

Further research explores the direct impact of guidance on higher education students.

A study in the USA found that both career counselling and career courses could have positive impacts on higher education students.[[95]](#footnote-95) The study of 269 students participating in guidance activities identified impacts on career thinking and effective decision-making. The overwhelming majority of participants were also able to identify at least one change that they had made over the semester in reference to their career, including declaring a major, applying to a job or internship, or deciding on a career.

Research on higher education has tended to emphasise the following features of effective career guidance:

* Pre-entry provision, including a range of different services that are provided to individuals before they enrol at the institution.
* Provision of information and resources, including careers libraries and websites, vacancy information and broader kinds of labour market information.
* Career assessments and tests, including psychometrics, personality tests, interest inventories and other kinds of career assessment.
* One-to-one advice, coaching and counselling services, including approaches delivered through a range of media including face-to-face, phone and online.
* One-to-many/group interventions, including workshops, webinars and group counselling interventions.
* Curriculum-based interventions, including both stand-alone careers/employability modules and interventions which align with the existing subject-based curriculum.
* Provision of employer engagement opportunities, including careers fairs and employer talks and workshops.
* Provision of work-related and work-based learning, including placements and voluntary work.
* Provision of a framework for reflection, including e-portfolios, personal development planning (PDP) processes and other interventions designed to support reflection.
* Awards and other mechanisms to recognise and accredit experiences related to the development of career management skills.
* Graduate and alumni services, including a range of services provided to individuals following their graduation from the institution.

However, the depth of the research base on higher education career guidance remains limited. There is far more description of what is needed and provided than empirically based assessments of what works and how it works. Higher education therefore represents another area where policy-makers and leaders within the higher education sector need to encourage further research.

## Adult education

Lifelong guidance has a central place in adult learning. It can support adult learners to consider their return to learning, enhance their career management skills and employability, and aid in the utilisation of their learning.

The evidence in this area is emergent, in part because guidance interventions in this area are often strongly embedded in other provision. However, there is research that demonstrates the benefits of guidance for confidence and progression.

Lifelong guidance can play an important role in supporting adults to return to learning and to realise the potential of the learning in which they engage. The European Council Resolution of 2008[[96]](#footnote-96) locates lifelong guidance within the framework of lifelong learning. More recently, the Council of the European Union has developed a Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning as a response to the economic crisis.**[[97]](#footnote-97)** This Resolution also locates lifelong guidance as a key component of adult learning, and articulates the aims of adult learning in ways that align well with the objectives of lifelong guidance. Adult learning provides a means of up-skilling or reskilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as making an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. The focus on adult learning is also picked up in the EU 2020 targets and in Education & Training 2020.

Adult education is a highly diverse sector which ranges from basic literacy provision through to advanced professional development and liberal arts programmes. The place of guidance within this system is likely to vary across different programmes.

Guidance within adult education typically takes three forms:

* Pre-entry guidance which supports adults to consider whether to participate in adult learning and what programmes might be right for them.
* Guidance as an integral part of adult education programmes. Some adult education programmes are strongly focused on career planning or on the development of employability and career management skills: in these cases lifelong guidance is often built into the core of the programme.
* Exit guidance which supports graduates of adult education programmes to consider how they can use what they have learnt to support their progress in further learning and work.

There are a range of ways to organise guidance services within and around adult education, as outlined in the ELGPN Resource Kit. The Adult Educational Guidance Service in Ireland offers a strong model which has been evaluated and found to be effective.[[98]](#footnote-98) In Ireland the adult guidance services are independent of any single adult education provider.

There has been limited research on the impact of lifelong guidance in adult education. In part this is because it is often so difficult to separate out the guidance and the educational parts of the experience. Much of the existing research has highlighted the distinctive challenges associated with talking to adults about their career, in relation to working with young people. Research has also identified a number of clear benefits from such guidance, related to confidence and progression in learning and work.

In a mixed-methods study of and adult guidance service in Ireland, Hearne found that the overwhelming majority of clients reported benefits from engaging with the service.[[99]](#footnote-99) Clients described the benefits that they had experienced as being in the areas of: personal development, access to professional expertise, information provision, signposting of options and appropriate referral. An overwhelming majority had experienced changes in their situation (usually in terms of accessing education or career development) following guidance, with most attributing these changes to the help received from the guidance service.

# What is the evidence on guidance for work?

While lifelong guidance activities are typically best embedded in the education system, there is also a strong tradition of activity and associated research that seeks to support individuals to find and keep work. This section will discuss this activity in relation to youth transitions (where there has been a considerable policy focus), unemployed adults, individuals returning to the labour market after a break in employment, provision in the workplace, and interventions designed to support the tapering of work and the transition to retirement.

## From unemployment to work

Career guidance is frequently used as a way to engage unemployed adults in the labour market. As such, it forms a key part of active labour market policies.

The evidence suggests that within the bounds of the broader performance of the labour market, career guidance can be effective in re-engaging the unemployed in work.

Guidance acts on the individual to increase their motivation and make them more work-ready.

There is also some evidence which provides insights into effective implementation, suggesting that practitioner competence, employer engagement and holistic and networked service provision are important to service effectiveness.

In addition, there is an emergent literature which suggests that career guidance is important in helping individuals to manage career breaks and periods of caring responsibility.

Career guidance can play a number of roles for adults who are not in work. It can help them to build confidence, to examine their skills, to gain an assessment of the labour market and to understand processes of transitions. It can also help adults to identify and weigh up the value of further postponing labour market re-entry in favour of further education and training.

In policy terms, when addressed to unemployment, career guidance is frequently subsumed within broader active labour market policies (including training and wage subsidies). In particular, there is an extensive body of research and thinking about how lifelong guidance services should relate to public employment services (PES).[[100]](#footnote-100)

Active labour market policy describes governments’ aspirations to manage unemployment by “activating” individuals to re-engage with the labour market. Active labour market approaches have been criticised for failing to acknowledge the existence of the structural and systemic factors that contribute to unemployment, and for locating the responsibility solely with the individual. The evidence which addresses the contribution of career guidance in this area frequently wrestles with these questions: about how much it is possible to expect such an intervention to achieve in a challenging labour market or in relation to sub-optimally organised education and training systems.

Despite concerns about the level of expectations that can be placed on career guidance, there is clear evidence that it can have impact on unemployed people. One area that the evidence highlights is the role that career guidance can play in enhancing unemployed individuals’ direction, purpose and confidence.

Research in Canada has found that a careful combination of career practitioner assessment and self-help career development resources leads to an identifiable impact for users of public employment services. Following a needs assessment, individuals were given a four-week programme of guidance based on self-help resources. Participants improved in skills, knowledge and attributes at statistically and clinically significant levels. They were also more likely to find employment that fitted with their career aspirations. The overwhelming majority of participants indicated that the improvements were due to their participation in the programme.[[101]](#footnote-101)

An evaluation of a career guidance intervention in Wales[[102]](#footnote-102) for unemployed clients found that it had a number of identifiable benefits. The majority of participants had increased knowledge and confidence in job searching and had applied for a job. Around half had received an interview, and some had successfully transitioned back to the workforce. Participants were generally positive about the experience of engaging with career guidance, and felt that it had helped them to improve their career direction.

Other research in Australia also finds that unemployed people find career guidance useful and that it supports them in improving their confidence, finding a career direction and generating possibilities for job searching.[[103]](#footnote-103)

Research by Hawthorn & Alloway[[104]](#footnote-104) suggests a number of key success factors that guidance services should attend to when working with unemployed and disadvantaged adults:

* 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.
* Encouraging clients to take up volunteering opportunities and work experience can be an effective strategy to help them to re-engage.
* 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.
* Services need to be well-managed, engage with quality enhancement through a quality-assurance process, and committed to evaluating their impact.

### Other kinds of return to work

Not all people without work fall into traditional conceptions of unemployment. Career breaks can be used by individuals for a variety of purposes, including periods of caring responsibilities and as the beginning of a career change or shift. How individuals who are going through a deliberate process of withdrawal and re-entry to the labour market manage this process is a key concern for individuals, employers and public policy. If such career breaks are managed poorly, there is a danger that human capital is lost. Career guidance can play an important role in avoiding this loss.

While for some the idea of the career break is an active choice, for others it is compelled through personal circumstances. Where the individual has low levels of educational, financial and cultural capital, such enforced disconnection from the labour market can be highly challenging. In this case, as with individuals who are outside the labour market for extended periods of time, guidance can play an important role in ensuring that a disconnection from the labour market does not become permanent.

The research base in this area is still emergent. However, there is some evidence[[105]](#footnote-105) which suggests that career guidance may have an important role to play in supporting women to consider how best to manage periods of maternity leave and the subsequent return to work.

## Youth transitions to work

Guidance has an obvious utility for young people who have failed to make successful transitions to the labour market. This is recognised by many European governments, who typically build guidance into policy responses to youth unemployment.

The evidence base suggests that this can be an effective strategy, particularly where it is possible to develop approaches that recognise the diversity of the youth population and that seek to pre-empt and/or to manage failed transitions.

However, the evidence base also highlights the lack of systematic evaluations in this area, suggesting that policy-makers should attend more to this in the design of future services.

Many young people find the initial transition to the labour market difficult, especially during periods of high youth unemployment. This has led to the provision of services and interventions designed to help young people to understand the education and employment system, to make wise decisions about it and to participate in it successfully. Lifelong guidance policies address these aspirations.

During periods of high youth unemployment, governments frequently respond with a range of active labour market interventions, that may include various forms of career guidance. Hughes & Borbély-Pecze[[106]](#footnote-106) reviewed current European policies to address youth unemployment. They noted a range of approaches that are being employed, including work experience, improving the relationship between education and employers (by targeted programmes linking disadvantaged learners to employers), youth guarantees, job-search support, promotion of entrepreneurship, provision of careers information, careers fairs, seminars and events, in-school, college and university career guidance/counselling programmes, apprenticeships, internships, personal training records, active citizenship and volunteer activities. A further recent ELGPN review[[107]](#footnote-107) has focused in on the Youth Guarantee Initiative and again has identified a wide range of practices that utilise guidance as part of strategies to re-engage young people. From this it is clear that lifelong guidance policies form a key element of the policy-maker’s tool-kit for addressing concerns about youth transitions.

A recent cross-European study published by Cedefop[[108]](#footnote-108) identified the use of lifelong guidance policies across a range of European countries to address concerns about youth unemployment and disengagement from learning. The study used a mixture of policy analysis and country-specific case-studies to build up a picture of policy implementation. It highlighted that to be effective, guidance needed to link closely to other agencies with which young people were interfacing. It was also important for guidance interventions to recognise that young people in transition are a heterogeneous group, from diverse backgrounds and with varied needs and aspirations. The report argued that effective 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.

Interventions that are designed to address problematic youth transitions can seek either to pre-empt failed transitions (in which case they typically interface with the education system) and/or to manage the transitions (in which case they more typically interface with benefits systems and public employment services). Considerable research has examined both of these types of intervention.

The Federal programme “Coaching for the Transition to Work“ (Berufseinstiegsbegleitung nach §431s SGB III) in Germany provides a coach to help young people achieve their school-leaving qualification and avoid drop-out. The coach also supports transition by helping the young person to find an apprenticeship placement and ensuring the stability of the apprenticeship. The evaluation of the programme is based on quantitative and qualitative data derived from multiple perspectives including data from different stakeholders and actors involved (school principals, teachers, parents, PES, etc.) and using various methods including controlled trials. The evaluation is ongoing, but the interim results have identified a range of impacts, including higher attainment, more realistic career goals and more successful transitions. Further impacts will be identified when the longitudinal aspects of the evaluation are reported.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Pre-emptive interventions to address failed youth transitions frequently build on the kinds of practices already described in relation to school-based careers work. In addition, there is often an attempt to identify individuals who may have difficulty in making such transitions.

Filmer-Sankey & McCrone[[110]](#footnote-110) have described a range of processes being utilised in England to identify this group. They argued that such processes need to help school staff to identify the *causes* of potential disengagement, the *effects* of disengagement, and the *solution* (i.e. the appropriate intervention that could be used to re-engage the young person).

Research on disengaged 16- and 17-year-olds in England[[111]](#footnote-111) highlighted the need to segment services aimed at disengaged young people, to recognise the diversity of this population. The research emphasised the importance of providing career information and guidance services to young people before they leave education or employment, to prevent them from becoming disengaged.

For those young people who have failed to make successful post-school transitions, there are a range of services and programmes that seek to support their transitions and help government to manage youth unemployment. The evidence provides some insights into what may determine the effectiveness of such interventions.

Qualitative research examining the role of personal advisers (PAs) from England’s Connexions service[[112]](#footnote-112) found that they could be influential in supporting young people to access opportunities and resources. The research highlighted the importance of the relationship built by the personal adviser with the young person, arguing that for some young people faced with complex and challenging circumstances, the relationship with their PA provided a uniquely stable and valued source of support.

In general, the research highlights the importance of effective mentoring and providing young people with access to the social and educational resources that can help them to re-engage. But the research in this area also strongly highlights the structural and systemic factors that contribute to youth unemployment, and cautions against assuming that guidance can resolve youth unemployment without any wider changes.

Despite the existence of research examining the impacts and efficacy of guidance policies in relation to failed youth transitions, a recent review has critiqued the strength of the evidence base, noting that policy-makers too rarely build robust evaluation into such programmes.

Research for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions[[113]](#footnote-113) found that lifelong guidance and other active labour market interventions are a common policy response to youth unemployment by European governments. Such interventions are typically poorly evaluated. However, the balance of evidence suggests that they are broadly successful. The research highlights the fact that diverse interventions are needed, due to the heterogeneity of young people in transition.

Such evidence therefore suggests that guidance can be an important element of a strategy to address youth unemployment. However, it is also clear that further research is needed and that evaluation should be more strongly built into the delivery of such programmes.

## Guidance for working people

Guidance has an important role to play for working people by helping individuals to think about how best to utilise their skills and progress within their workplace and the wider labour market.

The evidence in this area is emergent but suggests that working people appreciate the opportunity to access lifelong guidance services.

There is also a range of guidance provision that is delivered within the workplace by employers, unions or other stakeholders (discussed further in Section 5.3.1).

Most people spend most of their life in employment. The span of working lives varies, but it is not unusual for an individual to be employed for 40-50 years. During this time, most individuals will have to deal with a range of personal and economic changes which may affect their career and working lives. Some might decide to actively develop their careers through pursuing further learning, changing career direction, changing employer, taking on further responsibilities or seeking promotion. For others, their career may develop more pragmatically in response to changes in their circumstances, the organisation or the wider environment. Lifelong guidance interventions aimed at working people help individuals to manage such changes and develop their careers.

Some countries provide access to guidance services for those in work as well as the unemployed, through the provision of a public career guidance service. While in some cases such services are located within public employment services[[114]](#footnote-114), in other cases they are organisationally distinct. There is an emerging body of evidence which highlights the positive reactions of adults who have used such services.

An evaluation of career centres in Norway found that the centres are often accessed by groups of adults who are in vulnerable job situations or who have limited education.[[115]](#footnote-115) The users are very satisfied with the available provision, and report that the guidance they get has had a positive effect. More than half of the users have engaged in education after receiving guidance. Nearly as many have changed their job situation, either by starting a job after having been unemployed, by changing jobs, or by a change (i.e. promotion) in their current job. The users state that the guidance received has been a crucial factor for change.

While accessing support through public career guidance services provides a route for many adults to access guidance, it is dependent on national policies on entitlement to such services. However, many working adults also access services through the workplace.

### Guidance in the workplace

The evidence on lifelong guidance in the workplace suggests that there are considerable benefits for both the individual and their employer.

A number of key business benefits related to the use of career guidance have been identified, including increasing employee satisfaction and engagement, and supporting knowledge transfer and cohesion within the organisation.

A range of strategies are used to deliver such benefits: generally these involve building internal capacity to deliver lifelong guidance, alongside the strategic use of external specialists.

Career interventions within the workplace are usually, but not exclusively, paid for by the employer (alternative ways to resource such services include provision by trade unions or professional associations, or services purchased directly by the individual; there may also be support from public funding). Accordingly, much of the evidence gathering has focused on how such interventions advance the interests of the employer by enhancing employee engagement, retention or productivity.

In a series of linked research projects in Canada, a number of workplace-based guidance interventions were piloted and evaluated.[[116]](#footnote-116) The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to capture the impacts on a range of beneficiaries including both employers and employees. The study found that when employees examine their own competencies, reflect on their career goals, and become more aware of job possibilities within their current organizations, their job satisfaction increases and they are more likely to remain within their current employment setting. Consequently, promoting employee career self-management is likely to have a positive effect both on the employee and on the organisation.

Hirsh & Jackson[[117]](#footnote-117) have articulated the main benefits to employers engaging in career development for their employees as including:

* Careers are how higher-level and business specific skills and knowledge are acquired. Employees undertaking sequences of work experiences progressively grow these skills.
* Careers are how skills and knowledge are deployed and spread in organisations, as employees move from one job to another in response to where they are needed.
* Such deployment and knowledge sharing are critical to organisational flexibility. Career movement is also how culture and values – the “glue” of the organisation – are transmitted, and how personal networks are extended and strengthened. Corporate culture and networks are often key to rapid and effective action.
* Career development is a major tool for attracting, motivating and retaining good-quality employees.

In a small-scale quantitative study of 90 employees in Australia, Barnett & Bradley[[118]](#footnote-118) explored the link between workplace guidance and employee career management and satisfaction. They found that where employees reported their organisations as offering guidance programmes, they were more likely to actively manage their careers and to report career satisfaction.

Hooley et al.[[119]](#footnote-119) also highlight the important role that lifelong guidance can have in the recruitment of new talent, the management of existing talent, and supporting individuals and organisations through periods of redundancy and redeployment. There is evidence relating to the effectiveness of lifelong guidance with workers in a wider range of occupations and at all skills levels. For example, a study in Portugal highlighted the positive impacts that a guidance intervention can have on very high-skill workers within universities.[[120]](#footnote-120) There has been considerable research that has explored these issues from the perspectives of the individual and the employer, and the overlap in their interests.

A survey of 28,000 employees by Scales[[121]](#footnote-121) found that employers who provide career development opportunities have better employee engagement, are less likely to lose talent and are more productive than equivalent organisations that do not.

Hirsh[[122]](#footnote-122) notes that very few organisations pay people to work full-time delivering lifelong guidance to their employees. However, she also summarises the range of strategies that are used to deliver effective lifelong guidance in the workplace. These include:

* increasing the capacity of line managers to provide career support for their staff;
* human relations (HR) professionals delivering one-to-one career discussions or career workshops for groups;
* providing self-help information on career options and learning opportunities;
* providing online career planning tools;
* use of volunteer “career coaches”, usually a sub-set of HR people and/or line-managers, who are given special training to provide career support, often to people they do not know, in addition to their normal work roles;
* utilising external lifelong guidance specialists to deliver expert services to staff (such external specialist services are often used extensively during periods of large-scale redundancy or redeployment).

Guidance therefore can play an important role in the workplace, addressing under-employment, supporting progression and easing organisational transitions. Guidance in the workplace is frequently less dependent on public-policy interventions, but can be encouraged and supported by them.

## Supporting mobility

Guidance can play an important role in supporting migration and mobility. Such guidance may take place in the home or host country and can aid in decisions to move, integration into the host country and effective skills utilisation.

There is some high-quality evidence in this area, but there is a need to expand its breadth to take fuller account of the diversity of mobility experiences.

Lifelong guidance can play an important role in supporting migrant workers. While in their country of origin, guidance can contribute to their thinking about the opportunities that might exist elsewhere. Guidance can also support them in understanding the processes of mobility and the challenges that they might experience. Once they have moved, guidance can help people to re-orientate themselves in a new culture and labour market, support credentialing processes and aid successful integration.

In research on migrant women in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany and the UK, Clayton[[123]](#footnote-123) found that access to lifelong guidance both in the home country (before migration) and in the host country (after migration) supported women’s self-confidence and their ability to successfully operate in the host country’s labour and learning markets. Where such services did not exist, the migrants often found it difficult to access basic support services (such as language classes) and consequently found integration to be more challenging.

The literature on guidance and mobility recognises the diversity of migrants (economically, culturally, linguistically and motivationally) and suggests that lifelong guidance services need to recognise and respond to this diversity. The research in this area also tends to view lifelong guidance as part of a holistic range of support services including cultural orientation, language classes, training and re-credentialisation.

## Older workers

The role of guidance with older workers is increasingly recognised. Such services remain relatively new, so the evidence base is emergent. However, strong policy interest in this area suggests that it is likely to develop rapidly.

Existing evidence indicates that guidance can be effective in supporting older workers to engage in learning and actively manage their careers.

Evidence also suggests that efforts need to be made to stimulate understanding of and demand for such provision.

Guidance for older workers seems most effective when it is placed in the context of a lifelong guidance strategy.

Europe is experiencing twin processes of increased longevity and falling fertility.[[124]](#footnote-124) The concept of active ageing policy therefore has both economic and social rationales. Key to this is the idea that workers will need to remain in the labour market longer and successfully to manage a range of career shifts and changes as they move towards retirement and beyond. Late career decisions, including those that take place after paid work has ceased, are still career decisions and therefore can be supported by lifelong guidance.

Older workers are frequently neglected in discussions about career guidance. However, late career workers have a range of key decisions to make, notably about how long work will be prolonged, how engagement with work might be tapered, how and when to cease paid work, and what activities might take the place of paid work. Career guidance can support older workers to work through these decisions in ways that support active ageing policies.

The evidence is emergent in this area, but is developing rapidly due to considerable policy interest. A range of interventions are being developed or piloted and there is a growing body of evidence that suggests their effectiveness.

A study of guidance for older people in Scotland[[125]](#footnote-125) indicated that they appreciated how guidance helped them to manage uncertainty and change in the current employment climate. The intervention had supported individuals through a series of stages to reflect on past experiences, build confidence and motivation for future planning and learning, and encourage goal-setting. Levels of engagement in lifelong learning were variable and associated with background and prior educational ability. Thus career guidance can support social-equity goals in relation to lifelong learning and older people.

However, it is also clear that there is a lack of understanding amongst many individuals about the role of guidance in relation to the careers of older workers. Mitton & Hull[[126]](#footnote-126) argue that there is a need to stimulate demand for such provision amongst older workers.

There have been a number of recent international reviews of practice in guidance of older workers. A study from New Zealand has reviewed practice across the English-speaking world[[127]](#footnote-127), while a Cedefop study[[128]](#footnote-128) has explored successful European policy implementations. The Cedefop report highlights successful practice from France, Portugal, Scotland and Sweden, and sets out three key principles that should underpin the design of such services:

* Guidance should be conceived as a lifelong process. A key aspect of this is to recognise that inter-generational career development needs might be complementary: for example, if older workers are supported to mentor younger workers, there may be career benefits for both parties.
* Guidance provision should be accessible, comprehensive and systemic. Key to achieving this is the development of strategies to tailor guidance to individuals’ needs, at the same time as identifying and addressing systemic barriers to older workers’ career development.
* Guidance provision should involve all stakeholders including employees, employers, local and national governments (the social partners), and others.

The New Zealand review makes similar points based on an exploration of practice in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA. It stresses the importance of guidance services being organised on a lifelong basis, of engaging participants in service design, and of ensuring that guidance services link to other support services.

# Recommendations for further evidence gathering

The evidence base for lifelong guidance is substantial and diverse. The rest of this guide has highlighted its strengths and sought to draw out what it tells us about the impacts of lifelong guidance and the most effective approaches to delivery. However, the evidence base is far from complete.

The Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop and the QAE Framework both provide useful tools for thinking about how the evidence base can be further developed to support policy aims.

This guide has provided an introduction to the existing evidence base. In doing so, a number of judgements have been made about areas of this evidence base which can be described as under-developed or emergent. However, even in the most developed aspects of the lifelong guidance evidence base, it is possible to identify areas in which researchers or policy-makers would like more answers. A recent study in the Netherlands highlighted these limits and argued that policy makers should “encourage and co-ordinate continuous scientific and practice-based research for an ongoing investigation of what works”.[[129]](#footnote-129)

It is hoped that some of these concerns are addressed by the current guide’s efforts to bring together the European and international evidence base. While evidence is often patchy in a single country, there are frequently examples of relevant evidence from elsewhere in Europe and the wider world that can support effective policy-making. While caution should be exerted in applying such examples across countries, it is important to recognise the contingent and contextual nature of all learning interventions and the research that examines them. It is unlikely that we will ever discover an intervention that works with every individual and in every context.

Through the QAE Framework, ELGPN has already established some key areas of focus for the enhancement of the quality of services and the development of the evidence base. The Framework provides a useful starting point for policy-makers seeking to develop evidence related to their policies. However, the evidence base will always be work in progress: hence the Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop set out in Section 2.1. Taken together, the QAE Framework and the Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop provide a practical approach to the development of evidence-based policy in this area.

Table 1 provides a summary of the existing evidence base and suggests a range of areas on which further research might focus.

**Table 1: Understanding and extending the lifelong guidance evidence base**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Key strengths** | **Areas for development** |
| **Schools** | Extensive range of studies which describe the activity and set out impacts and guidance on efficacy. | More quantitative impact studies and detail on the return on investment for different ways of organising guidance in schools. |
| **Vocational education** | Emergent literature which is helping to define activity within the area. | Increase the range and extent of studies in this area. |
| **Higher education** | Extensive range of studies which describe the activity and set out impacts and guidance on efficacy. | More detailed research looking at the impacts on student employment rates and other factors. |
| **Adult education** | Emergent literature which is helping to define activity within the area. | Increase the range and extent of studies in this area, including ones that specifically address the guidance elements of adult education. |
| **Unemployment to work** | Extensive range of studies which describe the activity and set out impacts and guidance on efficacy. | Need to disentangle the impact of career guidance from that of a broader range of active labour market policies.  Also need to explore returns to work following career breaks. |
| **Youth transitions to work** | Growing range of studies which describe the activity and set out impacts and guidance on efficacy. | Need to disentangle the impact of career guidance from that of a broader range of active labour market policies.  Also need to more clearly define the long-term impacts of such interventions. |
| **Mobility** | A select number of high-quality studies. | Increase the range of studies to explore the impacts of both home and host country guidance. |
| **Workplace** | Growing range of studies which describe the activity and set out impacts and guidance on efficacy. | Need to disentangle the impact of career guidance from that of a broader range of human resource development approaches.  Further work on return-on-investment, of interest to employers who typically fund delivery. |
| **Older workers** | Emergent literature which is helping to define activity within the area. | Increase the range and extent of studies in this area. |

A recent literature review by the Danish Clearinghouse for Educational Research, though focused on guidance in schools, identified a number of areas that are worth considering in relation to the broader literature:

* the optimum timing of guidance interventions (not too early and not too late);
* the role that the duration of the guidance process has for its effects;
* the longer-term effects of guidance.

Such research questions could prove useful for future studies.

It is also arguable that the existing literature is too narrow methodologically and that it is important to broaden the range and types of studies as the evidence base is developed. A number of researchers have argued[[130]](#footnote-130) that there is a need for further research using randomised control groups to evaluate impact more thoroughly. Solberg *et al.*[[131]](#footnote-131) link this to policy, with a call for a more systematic examination of the impact of career development and the development of national metrics through which impact could be measured. The ELGPN’s QAE Framework provides a good example of a shared framework for evaluation that is now being applied in a number of countries across Europe. In the context of discussion about how the evidence base could be improved, it is also worth mentioning the What Works Clearinghouse’s *WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook*, which sets out detailed, robust and useful standards that could be used to shape further efforts to gather evidence in this area[[132]](#footnote-132).

Hooley *et al.*[[133]](#footnote-133) argue that the future research agenda for lifelong guidance needs to include:

* new meta-analyses based on recent research;
* randomised control trials examining career development interventions;
* further longitudinal work based on longer time periods than much of the existing research;
* further studies examining the nature, role and impact of technologically-mediated career development.

The final point also raises the possibility of new methodological approaches which utilise naturally occurring data produced during online interactions as part of the measurement of their impact.

It is also important to continue to develop systemic studies of the economic impacts of guidance, both through the development of economic modelling approaches and through empirical work designed to increase understanding about the scale of impacts of guidance in various policy areas and their financial value.

On this basis, it would be possible to begin to design a more strategic research programme for future work in this area. The production of such a document could be one of the first tasks of any new European initiative on evidence for lifelong guidance.

# What are the implications of the evidence base for policy and practice in lifelong guidance?

An examination of the evidence base in lifelong guidance suggests a number of areas of action for policy-makers and their partners. This section will first consider what the evidence tell us about the design of a lifelong guidance system, and then how the Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop and the desire to develop the evidence base can be addressed as part of such system design.

## Implications for the design of an effective lifelong guidance system

The evidence base in lifelong guidance is highly contextual. Nonetheless, it is possible to draw out a number of key principles that should inform the design of lifelong guidance systems.

In general, these principles emphasise lifelong, integrated provision which connects meaningfully to other aspects of an individual’s life and develops their capacity to manage their own careers.

It also emphasises the importance of well-trained professionals who have the capacity to work with other professionals to deliver holistic services in order to meet client needs.

The evidence base in lifelong guidance is complex and contextually bounded. Different facets of the lifelong guidance system have been understood in different ways, and there are differing levels of evidence depending on where one looks in the system. Nonetheless, it is possible to observe some patterns across the entire evidence base and to summarise some principles that should influence system design.

Firstly, it is possible to argue that there is strong evidence that well-designed interventions can support individuals to increase their understanding of themselves and of the labour and learning markets and to take action to develop their careers. Such interventions can act on both individuals’ career decidedness (“what do I want to do with my life?”) and their career management ability (“how do I go about building my life, learning and work in a way that works for me?”).

It is possible to identify both individual benefits from such interventions and social benefits, and to make the argument, as OECD[[134]](#footnote-134) does, that there are three main public-policy rationales for the delivery of careers education and guidance: firstly, that it supports engagement with learning and improves the functioning of the education and training system; secondly, that it contributes to the effective operation of the labour market; and thirdly, that it supports social equity and facilitates social inclusion and social mobility.

The evidence base also offers considerable insights about what works, highlighting that effective services:

* **focus on the individual** by enabling individuals to develop and be supported across the life course whilst recognising their distinctive experiences and diversity;
* **support learning and progression** by developing individuals’ career management skills through a range of interventions organised in a programmatic way;
* **ensure quality** through the use of skilled practitioners and robust quality-assurance processes such as those set out in the ELGPN QAE Framework.

Table 2 sets out evidence-based principles that should inform the design of lifelong guidance services.

**Table 2: Nine evidence-based principles for the design of lifelong guidance services**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus on the individual** | **Support learning and progression** | **Ensuring quality** |
| Lifelong guidance is most effective where it is genuinely lifelong and progressive.  Lifelong guidance is most effective where it connects meaningfully to the wider experience and lives of the individuals who participate in it.  Lifelong guidance is most effective where it recognises the diversity of individuals and relates services to individual needs. | Lifelong guidance is not one intervention, but many, and works most effectively when a range of interventions are combined.  A key aim of lifelong guidance programmes should be the acquisition of career management skills.  Lifelong guidance needs to be holistic and well-integrated into other support services. | The skills, training and dispositions of the practitioners who deliver lifelong guidance are critical to its success.  Lifelong guidance is dependent on access to good-quality career information.  Lifelong guidance should be quality-assured and evaluated to ensure its effectiveness and to support continuous improvement. |

### Connecting services to the individual

* **Lifelong guidance is most effective where it is genuinely lifelong and progressive.** The evidence demonstrates that in many cases guidance services are fragmented and poorly connected. It also suggests that as career is built across the life-course, guidance services need to support this process rather than simply focusing on a single life-stage.
* **Lifelong guidance is most effective where it connects meaningfully to the wider experience and life of the individuals who participate in it.** In learning, this includes building a meaningful connection to the curriculum; in work, to wider human resource management processes. However, the value of connecting guidance to the individual’s context is broader than this, and may include a host of other contextual factors (community, family, hobbies and interests).
* **Lifelong guidance is most effective where it recognises the diversity of individuals and relates services to individual needs.** The recognition that career is an individual experience and that individuals bring a range of resources, interests, barriers and concerns to guidance processes needs to be built into the design of the lifelong guidance system.

### Programmatic design

* **Lifelong guidance is not one intervention, but many, and works most effectively when a range of interventions are combined.** The recognition that a diverse range of strategies can be used to support individuals to develop their careers is repeatedly endorsed across the evidence base. There are also benefits where these interventions are combined and sequenced in a programmatic fashion and are well integrated into wider educational and active labour market interventions.
* **A key aim of lifelong guidance programmes should be the acquisition of career management skills**. Lifelong guidance should seek to empower individuals and to provide them with the personal resources, skills and abilities with which to develop their own careers. Such an empowered populace are more likely to be able to positively manage economic and political changes.
* **Lifelong guidance needs to be holistic and well-integrated into other support services**. Whilst there is value in distinctive career-focused services, the boundaries of career support are permeable. A wide range of life issues has the potential to impact on individuals’ capacity to build effective careers. Thus it is important that individuals’ problems are identified holistically and that lifelong guidance services are able where appropriate to refer clients to services where their other needs can be met.

### Underpinning quality

* **The skills, training and dispositions of the practitioners who deliver lifelong guidance are critical to its success**. A recurring theme in the evidence base is that the success of guidance processes is strongly influenced by the initial training, continuing professional development, competencies and personal capacities of the professionals that deliver it.[[135]](#footnote-135)
* **Lifelong guidance is dependent on access to good-quality career information**. The capacity to make meaningful decisions about participation in learning and the labour market requires a reliable information base to allow judgements to be made about the outcomes of different actions.
* **Lifelong guidance should be quality-assured and evaluated to ensure its effectiveness and to support continuous improvement**. Effective services can learn from customer feedback, the observation of outcomes and the wider evidence base.

Such principles have been derived from the evidence base and can be utilised to support the design of lifelong guidance systems.

## Implications for ensuring efficacy

There is a strong imperative for policy-makers and service designers to build efficacy into service design.

This requires the development of an evaluation strategy which takes into account the distinction between monitoring and evaluation, and which considers both how evaluation can enhance service delivery and where it might impact negatively on the experience of the individuals using the service.

Such an evaluation strategy should identify clear aims, approaches and levels of resourcing for the evaluation and set out how the findings of any evaluation should be used. The Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop provides a useful framework for developing such strategies.

While the evidence base is useful for developing lifelong guidance services, it is also clear that evidence gathering has frequently been ad hoc rather than systematic. Policy-makers now have the opportunity to consider approaches that embed evaluation more strategically into the design of lifelong guidance systems.

As a first step in this direction, it is important that what is known about effective provision is made use of during the implementation of lifelong guidance services, so that research knowledge about efficacy is transformed into practice. Neary & Hutchinson[[136]](#footnote-136) found that career practitioners rarely made use of this kind of research; it is not clear whether their managers or those charged with service development or design are any more regularly engaged with current research. Given this, efforts need to be made to ensure that those involved in service delivery have both the incentive and the opportunity to understand what the evidence base says about effective practice and to consider its implications for their own practice.

In Ireland the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) has developed the School Guidance Handbook as an online resource to provide practitioners and schools with access to key evidence to support practice.[[137]](#footnote-137) Content developed for the Handbook has been written by experts in the disciplines of guidance, education, psychology, law, and other related subjects and has been approved by an editorial panel. Alongside this, the NCGE has also published a handbook setting out case-studies which demonstrate how guidance practitioners can develop an evidence-based approach to guidance in schools.[[138]](#footnote-138) Taken together, these two resources are designed to support strong practitioner engagement with evidence.

Beyond the question of how the existing evidence base informs policy, service design and practice, there are important questions about how it can be enhanced and developed in ways that support the delivery of lifelong guidance.

There are some clear advantages in building evaluation into service monitoring. If it is possible to collect evaluation data at the point of service delivery, this makes it possible to collect large amounts of data without any need for sampling. If it is possible to talk to everyone who has used a service, the picture that is built up will inevitably be more accurate than if one only talks to a few people.

However, building evaluation into service design becomes more problematic as one moves up Kirkpatrick’s hierarchy of impacts (see Section 1.1). So it is relatively easy to ask client to give a reaction to the service that they have received and to routinely record this as a part of monitoring. Such forms of evaluation can provide useful ongoing management information, including meeting service targets (e.g. to consistently achieve an 80% customer satisfaction rating). However, it is far more difficult to routinely investigate learning, behaviour or results of services, as these generally happen outside the normal service interaction. Whether someone leaves a career guidance session and actually goes on to implement what they have discussed, for example, is not normally information that is available to those involved in service delivery, and requires additional resourcing to collect.

There are also further difficulties in combining monitoring and evaluation. If handled improperly, bringing in more routine monitoring can skew service design and impinge on the customer experience. For example, it might be desirable, from the perspective of evaluation, to have every client complete their programme by sitting an examination on their career management skills. However, this may not be desirable from the perspective of the client themselves. Similarly, if evaluation gets too tied up with monitoring that is linked with contract compliance and payment by results, the reliability of the evaluation is likely to be reduced.

Consequently, policy-makers, funders and service designers have an important role in balancing monitoring and evaluation, and making wise decisions about what issues are to be investigated through each. Most critically, this question addresses how far it is appropriate to adjust service delivery to ensure robust evaluation processes. Given this, it is likely that the development of an evaluation strategy for a lifelong guidance intervention will seek to make distinctions between what should be routinely monitored (e.g. client throughput; initial reaction) and what information might be collected in a more purposeful way from a sample of clients (levels of career management skills acquired; longer-term impacts). There are therefore key decisions to be taken about what kinds of information falls into each of these categories. For example, should the first (and even the second) employment destination of client be routinely monitored? There is a cost to all data-collection processes: it is important that such costs are considered and weighed up against possible efficacy benefits.

An alternative, or perhaps complementary, strategy is to seek to foster a culture of evaluation within the career profession itself. If career professionals are trained, managed and expected to understand the evidence base, adapt their practice in line with it, and seek to extend it through their own activities, then the development of the evidence base is assured. While this does not negate the value of national or service-level initiatives, it can have the advantage of ensuring that evaluation is strongly related to the delivery of services and that national evaluations have a stronger picture of effective practice to build upon.

Given this, it is suggested that a key element of lifelong guidance service design should be the development of an evaluation strategy and the identification of resources to support such a strategy. In particular, such a document could address the following questions:

* How does our evaluation approach fit with national and European approaches to evaluation? In particular, how can it be aligned with the ELGPN’s QAE Framework?
* What level of impact data should funders require and how should the collection and analysis of data be funded? What level of resourcing is needed to support both monitoring and evaluation?
* What are the objectives of service evaluation? What kinds of impacts can and should be identified? How can Kirkpatrick’s four levels (reaction, learning, behaviour, results) be used to help to refine evaluation aims?
* What should be monitored routinely? How will such monitoring data be used to inform service development? How will such data be used to provide a basis for evaluation?
* How will evaluation be used summatively to explore the impacts of the service and to identify the return on investment?
* How will evaluation be used formatively to support service development? How will findings be fed in to support strategy development? How will findings be fed back into service delivery?
* How will practitioners and managers be engaged in understanding, acting and developing the evidence base for the services that they deliver?
* Who will be responsible for conducting the evaluation? Will professional evaluators be utilised? Will an independent, external agency be responsible for overseeing or undertaking the evaluation?
* How will results from the evaluation be published to contribute to the broader evidence base in the field?
* How will evaluations connect to wider policy goals in a way that supports the development of evidence-based policy?

In conclusion, it is useful to return to the Lifelong Guidance Policy Loop. Arguably, such an approach of continuous and incremental development of the evidence base should underpin the development of all lifelong guidance provision.

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# Appendix: Quality-Assurance and Evidence-Base (QAE) Framework

Quality assurance and evidence-based policies and practices to support lifelong guidance systems and services operate in six broad contexts: schools, vocational education and training (VET), higher education, adult education, employment settings, and social inclusion initiatives. This Framework is designed to build upon earlier work undertaken by the ELGPN (2009/10) and to extend this further in the form of a common set of **quality elements, criteria, indicators** and **possible sources of data** that can be utilised and further developed by policy-makers and other interested parties to jointly assess progress being made in relation to these six broad areas of lifelong guidance policy development.

The Framework can be used:

As a **simple checklist,** to jointly assess and record what information, if any, already exists within your country.

To **list the sources of data** **that currently provide the type of information** which are available at national, regional and/or local levels and reflect on where gaps exist and how they can be addressed as part of a continuing improvement plan.

To identify **any known sources of data that could potentially be** **used by policy-makers** that have not been used so far in quality-assurance and impact-assessment developments within your country. This might include, for example, a PISA study report, National Youth Cohort studies, regional assessment reports on lifelong guidance services, local/regional/national kitemark results, etc.

To **note the context in which these quality elements, criteria and indicators are being applied,** where this is possible, i.e. schools, higher education, VET, adult education, public employment services, social inclusion initiatives.

To **consider whether or not there is scope for improved ‘read across’** to develop more coherent and consistent lifelong guidance policies and practices.

The Framework is designed not as a ‘perfect scientific approach’ but rather as a useful starting-point fort countries to begin a practical assessment of the extent to which they have access to available data and where the gaps are in present arrangements**.** It is not advisable for policy-makers to use it as a comparative assessment tool between countries. Each country has its own unique and varying set of circumstances, including diversity in size, population and geographical context, and these factors are strong influences on lifelong guidance service design and delivery.

Across Europe there are several quality-assurance and evidence-base frameworks being used or developed. This Framework is designed to support and complement these, taking into account the current data-collection and quality-assurance approaches adopted in each country. The primary aim here is to produce a European QA framework that will enable policy-makers to identify *robust* and *useful* quality assurance and evidence-based policies, including impact measures such as cost-benefits to governments and individuals. A key goal is to develop a strong culture of evidence-based policies that recognise cross-cutting themes within a lifelong guidance policy context.

**COUNTRY**:.....................................................................................................................................................................................

**POLICY SECTOR: (1) Schools; (2) VET; (3) Higher Education; (4) Adult Education; (5) Employment; (6) Social Inclusion**

**COMPLETION DATE**:..................................................................................................................................................................................

**KEY CONTACT PERSON**:.........................................................................................................................................................................

**Completed by** …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

**Reviewed by** ………………………………………………………….……………………………………………………………………………..

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Quality Element | Criteria | Indicator | Examples of Possible Data | Policy Review Comments |
| 1. Practitioner competence 11. Practitioner competence. Practitioner Competence | 1.1. Recognised qualifications relevant to careers sector | Qualification level specified**[[139]](#footnote-139)**  Careers Sector requirements  % fully qualified  % partially qualified  % none qualified below a certain level | National regulations / legislative requirements  Careers Professionals National Register  Provider reports  Funder reports  Government database |  |
| 1.2.  Engaged in Continuing Professional Development | Nos. of CPD hours undertaken in 1 year at a:  careers practitioner level[[140]](#footnote-140)  manager of career development services level[[141]](#footnote-141)  Nos. signed up to a professional code of ethics at a:  careers practitioner level | National database  Outsourcing reports  National Kitemark  National quality standards report(s)  Application of CEDEFOP Competence Framework (2009)  Inspection report(s)  National Kitemark  National quality standards report(s)  National Register of Careers Practitioners |  |
|  | 1.3. Membership level of Careers Professional Association(s) | Total in careers sector workforce  % members of Careers Professional Association(s)  e.g. membership of 1; 2;3;3+ | Policy reports  Provider reports  Inspection reports  Careers Professional Association (s)  Self-reporting |  |
| 22. Citizen/user involvement.  Citizen/user involvement2.  Citizen/User involvement | 2.1.  Ease of access to relevant services and products | Actual numbers of citizens/users accessing the services:  on the web (*nos. of visits including differing types of careers support services being accessed);*  by telephone (*nos. of callers*);  individual sessions (*nos. of clients*);  group sessions *(nos. of clients)*  Specific policy and targets set for equality and diversity in service design and delivery  % of citizens from diverse backgrounds representing their views on careers service design and delivery | Careers practitioner and management data, including time spent on searches and IP address  on-line and updated career portfolios  service performance reports and self reporting e.g. in-house systems; ICT tracking systems e.g. Google Analytics  Action planning reports  Records of clients’ involvement in careers service design and delivery  Equality and diversity policy  Client self-reporting  Inspection reports |  |
| Careers dedicated staff to client ratio e.g. *nos. of clients in set time period* divided by *nos. of staff hours in set time period.* | Human Resource data  Client throughput data  Practitioner feedback reports |  |
| Cost per intervention e.g. *nos of staff hours and overhead costs divided by nos. of differing types of interventions.* | Management information e.g. datasets on differing types of interventions, including timings and costs. |  |
| 2.2. Client satisfaction with services provided, including level of awareness in differing sectors e.g. schools, VET, HE, Adult Education, Employment settings and Social Inclusion initiatives. | An agreed level of client satisfaction expressed as a percentage *(%)*  Follow-up telephone or online surveys at agreed set intervals  *e.g. 3, 6 and/or 12 months+*  An up-to-date customer charter or entitlement statement | Client satisfaction surveys online and off-line. Appointment lead-in times  Practitioner and/or independent evaluation surveys  Quality kitemark  Client survey response |  |
| 2.3. Participation of users in planning and programming of Service’s activities and action plan. | An agreed percentage of citizen/end-user representatives informing the management team responsible for the annual and long-term planning | Annual planning with quantitative and qualitative set targets  Action plan  Minutes of meeting of the Board of Directors etc  Focus Group reports |  |
| 2.4. Participation of users in self and external evaluation of the Service. | An agreed level of user participation in follow-up evaluation surveys  An agreed percentage of user representatives involved in controlling bodies | Client evaluation surveys  External evaluation reports (e.g. ISO reports)  Quality standards feedback reports |  |
| 33. Service provision and improvement. Service provision and improvement3.  Service provision and improvement | 3.1. Learning and applying  career management skills (CMS) | Learning outcomes related to specific aspects of CMS *e.g.* *career management competencies* *linked to national ‘Blueprint for CMS’* | Pre- and post- treatment assessment/ evaluations |  |
| 3.2. Quality management system (QMS)[[142]](#footnote-142) | Evidence of a QMS to an agreed national common standard to include measures of: (i) *practitioner competence;*  (ii) *citizen/user involvement*;  (iii) *connectivity to education and labour markets*;  (iv) *benchmarking and actions for continuing improvement.* | Inspection and audits in-house, as well as by independent verifier.  Self reporting  Client usage figures and satisfaction surveys  Labour market intelligence reports  Online LMI portal data  Human Resource information |  |
| 3.3.  Appropriate ICT tools and software | Level of financial investment in ICT equipment and software *e.g. break down of actual costs compared to previous year.* | Expenditure costs  Assessment reports on  ‘added-value returns’ |  |
| 3.4.  Up-to-date knowledge in and expertise of education and labour markets | Level of investment in labour market information resources *and training*  e.g. access to national, EU and international databases on learning and work opportunities/ qualification equivalences/ job descriptions  e.g. breakdown of costs for developing on-line and off-line publications and materials  e.g. staff time spent on LMI training and resource developments compared with option of buying in consultancy expertise | Expenditure costs  Assessment reports on  added value returns |  |
| 3.5.  Profile and characteristics of service user groups *(clearly defined linked to policy target groups)* | Level of investment in staff training  e.g. % *nos. of staff trained and associated costs*  *e.g. on-the-job training; HEI training; other.*  *e.g. % nos. supported to attend conferences and CPD events and associated costs*  *e.g. % nos. of staff investing in their own attendance at conferences and CPD events* | In-house training audit system |  |
| 4. Cost-benefits to governments 44. Cost benefits to society.  Cost benefits to society | 4.1. Immediate, medium and long-term savings to public purse from specific forms of interventions[[143]](#footnote-143) | Percentage of users progressing into employment, education/ training, unemployed,  including evidence of follow up  Duration and rate of progression into learning and/or work  e.g. *duration of time spent on unemployment register or prolonged staying on rates in education.*  Keeping track of the progress of individual advisees to the next stage of their employment, career path or of the education and training process  e.g. *nos of individuals no longer claiming benefits as a direct result of specific intervention*  *e.g. nos of reduced drop-out rates from schooling, FEd and/or HEIs and cost implications*  *e.g. transfer rates from NEETS into education, training and/or employment.* | Destination measures  NEET monitoring system  Balance Score Card system  Longitudinal studies  Control Group studies  Register of clients  Breakdown of intervention measures  Costs or cost savings linked to telephone or web-based approaches  Pre and post- treatment assessments |  |
| 4.2. Savings on expenditure  national telephone helpline service  national web portal for careers service  face-to-face delivery | Annual expenditure costs on:  *e.g. national telephone helpline service*  *e.g. national web portal for careers service*  *e.g. face-to-face delivery* | Audit report  Business accounts |  |
| 5. Cost-benefits to individuals 5. Cost benefits to individuals.  Cost benefits to individuals | 5.1.  Increase in household income | Reduced dependency on welfare benefits through employment  *e.g. higher earnings/ salary information captured by careers practitioners* | Annual performance and reporting plans |  |

# Glossary

ELGPN has already produced a glossary to provide a common set of definitions for lifelong guidance (LLG) policy development and related guidance terminology. This glossary is available on the EPGPN website at <http://www.elgpn.eu/glossary>. Where appropriate, terms from the existing glossary have been reproduced here.

The following glossary is designed to explain some of the technical terms associated with research and evaluation that are contained within this guide. Definitions are given in the context of lifelong guidance.

**Balanced scorecard.** This is a strategy performance management tool which uses a semi-standard structured report and series of monitoring tools. Policy-makers and managers can use a balanced scorecard to keep track of the activities within their control and to monitor the consequences arising from these actions.

**Before-and-after studies.** Taking two snapshots before and after implementation of the programme, to try and identify what changes have happened as a result.

**Behaviour (impact level).** Any changes that it is possible to observe in how participants act following a guidance intervention.

**Benchmarking.** Taking a snapshot of what is happening and comparing it to a target or goal. Benchmarks can be defined either theoretically (what should be happening) or empirically (what has happened when this has been tried elsewhere).

**Beneficiaries.** The individuals and groups who may gain from lifelong guidance.

**Controlled trials**. Comparison of what happens to a cohort of clients who access career development services (the experimental group) in comparison to another similar cohort who do not use them (the control group). Researchers’ confidence in this kind of study increases if individuals can be randomly allocated to these different groups **(Randomised control trial)**

**Cost-benefit analyses.** Comparative analysis of the costs and benefits of a guidance service or particular guidance activity – and of the value of that service or activity – to select the most financially beneficial solution.

**Economic and social outcomes of guidance.** Guidance has social and economic outcomes: in particular, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of education, training and the labour market through its contribution to reducing drop-out, preventing skill mismatches, increasing job tenure and boosting productivity; and also addressing social equity and social inclusion.

**Effectiveness**. Extent to which the objectives of a policy or an intervention are achieved, usually without reference to costs.

**Evaluation**. An assessment of an ongoing or completed development intervention.

**Evidence.** The information presented to support a finding or conclusion. Evidence should be sufficient, competent and relevant: there are four types of evidence: observations (obtained through direct observation of people or events); documentary (obtained from written information); analytical (based on computations and comparisons); and self-reported (obtained through, for example, surveys).

**Evidence-based policy and practice**. The conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current evidence of what works best, and most cost-effectively, to inform lifelong guidance policy and practice. More generally, any activity, intervention or way of working that has been designed on the basis of evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of the particular approach (policy or practice) being used.

**Guidance outcomes.** Guidance has economic, social and learning outcomes, and these reflect both its personal impact and the wider societal benefits.

**Impact**. General term used to describe the effects of a programme, policy or socioeconomic change. Impact can be positive or negative, as well as foreseen or unforeseen.

**Indicator**. Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor.

**Intervention**. A deliberate and organised attempt to impact on the career of an individual or group.

**Learning (impact level)**. The set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a guidance activity or through participation in the guidance process.

**Literature review**. A study of other studies that seeks to identify patterns in what other researchers have found.

**Longitudinal tracking**. Ongoing engagement with research participants to explore change as it happens.

**Monitoring**. The routine collection, analysis and use of information about an ongoing development intervention.

**Outcome.** Positive or negative longer-term socio-economic change or impact that occurs directly or indirectly from an intervention’s input, activities and output.

**Output.** Immediate and direct tangible result of an intervention.

**Performance measures/indicators.** Data, usually quantitative, that provide a measure of an individual’s, team’s or organisation’s level of attainment, against which the level of others can be compared.

**Qualitative methods.** Research methods employed in many academic disciplines which seek to describe and understand phenomena.

**Quantitative methods.** Research methods employed in many academic disciplines which seek to measure what is happening through the collection of numerical information.

**Quality assurance**. Activities involving planning, implementation, evaluation, reporting, and quality improvement*,* implemented to ensure that guidance activities (content of programmes, design, assessment and validation of outcomes, etc.) meet the quality requirements expected by stakeholders.

**Quality-assurance framework.** Set of common principles, guidelines, criteria and tools adopted by a group at a local, regional, national or international level in order to develop and assure quality in guidance delivery and in relation to the qualification of guidance practitioners.

**Randomised control trial.** See **Controlled trials**.

**Reaction (Impact level)**. How participants in guidance describe their experience.

**Research methods.** An approach to collecting and analysing data for the purpose of exploring an issue or answering a question.

**Results (Impact level)**. Whether it is possible to observe any changes to systems, organisations and individuals following a guidance intervention.

**Snapshots.** Taking a picture of what is happening (using a survey, series of interviews or observation) and identifying whether stakeholders feel that it is useful.

**Statistical meta-analysis**. A study which uses statistical methods to combine existing quantitative studies that have been carried out on a similar basis.

**Then-and-now studies.** Asking research participants to identify what has changed and to remember back to what things were like before implementation.

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140. Please comment on the requirements for CPD and name of the organisation or government department that sets this specific requirement. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Ditto above [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. This may refer to a national, sectoral, service and/or provider setting [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Section 4 can be adapted to focus on a range of differing lifelong guidance interventions including cost benefit returns to employers and government(s) [↑](#footnote-ref-143)