



“Initial assessment does not highlight trainees’ needs i.e. motivation, behavioural, anti-authority, time-keeping, violence, drug-related problems etc. A young person can have the practical skills but (be) lacking the personal skills required to enter the “world of work”.

[A Training Provider]

“Young people with disabilities experience a range of assessments. These are usually based on a deficit model. There is little co-ordination between the various assessment procedures.... Some assessments seem to be based on what provision is available rather than the individual’s wants or needs.”

[SKILL]

“Information is vital.”

[AC SIS]

“Assessment should be recognised as a cyclical process; once the cycle is gone round once, the next cycle begins. Nor is assessment an end in itself; but should be regarded as an aid to decision-making.”

[SENSE SCOTLAND]

7 Improving Transition

Assessment

The Issue

7.1 The principle of Inclusiveness requires that education and training provision must match the needs, abilities and aspirations of the individual. To achieve this, there must be an effective process for identifying the type and level of learning needs, the range of existing skills and abilities and the goals of the young person. This process must also take into account other factors in the young person's life that may limit his/her access and participation. These are all factors which will influence the individual's ability to make a successful transition to post-school education and training and achieve their potential. **The issue is how to promote action across all agencies to address the factors that contribute to an effective assessment process; and how to ensure that the assessment leads to matching provision.**

The Committee's View

Assessment Practice and Procedure

7.2 To develop an Inclusiveness approach, there must be an assessment process which identifies – and helps us to understand – the whole range of a young person's learning and support needs. The needs may be tangible and quantifiable, such as literacy or numeracy or the need for a specific aid; or related to personal and social skills such as motivation, positive attitude and ability to work with others. These 2 types of learning need are now often described as "hard" and "soft" skills. Some level of competence and capability in both types of skills is necessary to enable young people to gain maximum benefit from learning. Indeed, for many young people, particularly those who have become disengaged from conventional education, it will only be through the development of the "soft" skills that they will begin to make progress in vocational and academic skills.

7.3 The Committee reviewed recent studies on assessment practice. Two studies carried out on behalf of the Scottish Enterprise (SE) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) in 1995 and 1996 showed that assessment practice and procedures in the national training programmes were

inconsistent and variable. Other work on assessment carried out by The Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID) and The Department for Employment and Education in England (DfEE) also highlighted the problems of transfer of information as a barrier to effective assessment. Following on from these studies, Professor George Thomson, of Edinburgh University, was commissioned by SOEID, SE and HIE to examine assessment practice across post-school provision. Professor Thomson examined the experiences of a cohort of young people drawn from training and the further education sector. He also interviewed careers advisers, training providers and young people themselves. From these studies we have identified the following problems:

- Variations in practice between agencies, and even within agencies;
- Assessments which do not seek to identify all the potential barriers to learning e.g. social or financial problems, housing or health, inadequate personal or life skills;
- Lack of information from school to post-school providers i.e. careers service companies, further education colleges, training providers; and lack of formal arrangements for transmission of information between agencies;
- Over-assessment i.e. young people are assessed and are re-assessed (for the same skills) by a series of agencies without sufficient recognition of progress;
- All agencies who could contribute to assessment are not involved (and vital information could be omitted);
- Lack of regular review and monitoring.

7.4 The Committee believes that an effective assessment process is essential for a smooth transition from school into further education or training, or into employment. We have identified a number of key principles for an effective assessment process:

- It must be open;
- It must be fair and accurate;
- It must be focused on the young person, not designed to accommodate the organisational structures or administrative practices of an institution or agency;
- It must respect confidentiality;
- It must encourage full participation and ownership of the young person;
- It must aid progression.

It should also:

- be continuous but not repetitive;
- be given adequate time and care;
- be carried out by competent and well-trained staff;
- be designed to allow the transfer of accurate, relevant and up-to-date information.

Putting Principles into Practice

7.5 This is the ideal. But in real life practitioners carrying out assessments will encounter situations where assessment is being done in less than ideal circumstances. Young people may be unwilling to participate, or to participate fully; they may have difficulty in communicating their views about difficult areas of their lives; there may be little or no previous information available; and their aspirations and expectations may be unrealistic.

7.6 The Committee believes that the key principles of assessment outlined above could be developed into an assessment framework. Such a framework could be developed by individual agencies. It is our strong view, however, that all the agencies who carry out assessments, or contribute to assessments, should collaborate to agree a framework for their assessment procedures. This would offer significant benefits both for the young people and the agencies themselves. The mechanism for developing such a framework within an area could be through the proposed Area Strategy Groups for Implementing Inclusiveness. Agencies already working in partnership on other aspects of provision would be well placed to agree standards and protocols for assessment. We, therefore, **recommend that the Area Strategy Groups should work with the lead agencies to develop an assessment framework setting out the key principles, roles and responsibilities of the agencies and pathways into and between assessment.**

The Committee has developed a model framework (see appendix to this chapter).

The development of an assessment framework could also promote a direct link to key worker support. One outcome of assessment might be referral to a key worker. The key worker might then become the main channel for monitoring progress and transmitting information.

Recent Developments in Assessment Procedures and Practices

7.7 We have highlighted the importance of having an assessment process which identifies the "soft" skills i.e. the personal and social skills and attributes valued by employers. A number of assessment tools are now being developed specifically to help young people address their learning needs in those areas. Two of these, the New Futures Fund (NFF) Assessment and the Soft Measurement system being piloted by the Bridges Project, Aberdeen Cyrenians and the National Schizophrenia Society address the learning and support needs of young people who have chaotic and disordered lifestyles. There has also been a national field trial, funded by The Scottish Office, the enterprise networks and the Employment Service, of an assessment matrix

developed by Professor George Thomson as part of his research into assessment practices (Duncan 1999). The matrix is a method of summarising the information gathered by assessment and is designed to aid the transfer of information between agencies. It also specifically covers the "soft" skill areas. One of the important elements of the new tools is that they are designed to support the young person in setting realistic goals, even if progress can only be measured in small steps.

7.8 We have also looked at the new Progress File which will replace the National Record of Achievement. It is being introduced into schools in the 1999-2000 session, and is already available to the post-school sector. The Progress File offers young people tools for assessing their own skills and attributes, goals and aspirations as well as areas for improvement. There are tailored support materials for the post-16 group (and S1-4), adults and those with special educational needs. Importantly, the Progress File depends on a process of discussion and agreement with teachers, training providers, or college staff about the content but it is based primarily on self-assessment. The Committee sees great value in the new Progress File and wishes to endorse its use by post-school education and training providers. The Committee also wishes to endorse the importance of staff training and development at all levels to gain the maximum benefit from Progress File. Perhaps the most important step will be to encourage and support employers to value and use the Progress File. If employers ask young people to produce it, this will offer a significant boost to its currency.

7.9 We believe that the use of new assessment tools, which give much greater weight to the "soft skills" and attributes, will help both young people and education and training providers to identify the most appropriate learning opportunities and other support arrangements. But we are not yet at that stage, and certainly not in all parts of Scotland. There are a wide range of assessment tools and variation in standards. It has not been possible for us to carry out a systematic review of these tools. **We, therefore, recommend that there should be a review of assessment tools at national level to be undertaken by the lead agencies in assessment, with particular emphasis on the skills and attributes which contribute to employability. The lead agencies would include careers service companies, LECs, training providers, FE colleges and the voluntary sector.** The review should recognise the emerging discussions on employability of the advisory group to the National Centre: Education for Work and Enterprise.

Length of Assessment Period

7.10 At the moment there are a number of procedures and practices which are all described as "Assessment". For many young people the first assessment will be through an interview, or series of interviews, with a careers adviser. As we have already discussed, lack of information may make an effective assessment difficult. The careers adviser, under current arrangements, will decide whether the young person should be "endorsed" as having Special Training Needs (STN). When the young person goes to a training provider there may be another assessment, possibly over a 1-4 week period before a decision is made about the appropriate course or qualification for the young person to pursue. This is likely to be a pre-vocational qualification such as Numberpower

or Wordpower or an SVQ 1. For the most disadvantaged and disaffected young people, there are, in some areas, specially designed enhanced guidance and assessment programmes of 13 weeks or 26 weeks. These programmes, such as the Pathways Programme in Renfrewshire and the Assessment course at Kilmarnock College offer a range a provision including confidence building, personal development skills (e.g. personal presentation, response to authority), literacy and numeracy, job tasters, and work preparations. We have noted with interest that Renfrewshire Careers is now building on Pathways to develop an assessment service offering guidance, assessment, planning and review for young people entering supported training. Such provision is not, however, readily available to all who might need it. There will be a need for targeted activity to encourage some young people to participate. An important contribution can be made by community education and youth work organisations, working more closely with the providing agencies.

7.11 We believe that this kind of enhanced guidance and assessment service would meet a real need. Many young people may drop in and out of further education or training because of their personal difficulties and inability to sustain a commitment to a regular learning environment. This kind of enhanced provision offers an intensive level of support from staff and, in many cases a one to one relationship between staff and young people. Clearly, this is expensive. One of the difficulties, however, is that it is difficult to see a recognisable output, which in turn would trigger an appropriate level of funding. We believe that within the context of an assessment process which takes into account the "soft" skills, and acknowledges that progress may be measured in small steps, there is scope to allocate funding more effectively towards this kind of provision. **We recommend, therefore, that the Area Strategy Groups work with the relevant agencies – careers service companies, LECs and training providers, colleges, the local authority and appropriate youth work organisations – to develop a wider range of enhanced guidance and assessment programmes supported by appropriate funding mechanisms.**

Key Areas to be Addressed

7.12 There are 3 main areas to be addressed in developing an assessment framework and its practical implementation. These are **ownership, information flow and confidentiality.**

Ownership

7.13 In our consultation, we have found 2 distinct views on who should "own" the assessment; the young person or the agency. This is a difficult and sensitive issue. The solution may lie in developing an effective assessment process with a clear understanding and agreement about how the information would be used, including safeguards for confidentiality.

7.14 The case for ownership by the young person is based on the belief that young people must be allowed the right to make their own decisions about what agencies should know about them. It is also based on the assumption that young people who have left school are willing, and

able, to take full responsibility for their future choices. They also have rights of access to information held about them. The case against sole ownership by the young person is that young people who have a high level of learning and support needs are more than likely to want to conceal some, if not all, of their problems.

7.15 Effective assessment depends on up to date and accurate information about the young person. Experience with the National Record of Achievement has shown that some young people may choose not to pass on information or may "lose" it. There is also some evidence from the New Deal Gateway that, in some areas, young people with particular problems are not being identified early enough. In some cases young people are not being open with personal advisers about difficulties relating to poor numeracy, literacy, team working skills, and other basic skills. These are some of the difficulties that many of the young people who are the subject of this report will also encounter. If young people are not willing to allow information on their learning and support needs to be passed on to the next appropriate agency, they are unlikely to receive the support required to allow them to fulfil their potential. Ultimately, this is not in the best interests of the young person.

7.16 It is our view that this tension between the rights of the young person and the need for more accurate information may be resolved by encouraging greater participation and ownership by the young person. Openness about the nature and purpose of the assessment will be particularly important. The level of participation may be constrained by circumstances, but a sensitive and open approach by practitioners may, over time, encourage the young person to collaborate more freely in the assessment process. The young person should know who is involved at every stage of the assessment, what issues are being discussed and what assessment is being made about particular aspects of learning and support needs. The young person should also be able to participate at every stage if they so wish. As a practical illustration of participation and ownership, he/she should be able to sign the form which sets out the outcome of the assessment process. If he/she does not agree with the assessment, there should be an opportunity to record disagreement. If the result of such openness is a greater level of trust, the young person may understand and accept the importance of passing on vital information. This process would require time and care, which is one of the key principles of assessment.

7.17 Where self-assessment is encouraged as part of the overall assessment process, it is also more likely that the young person will feel ownership of the outcome. We have noted that some of the new assessment tools, such as the NFF assessment and the Soft Measurement system, combine self-assessment and a more objective professional assessment. The self-assessment can be used to give an initial indication of the needs and abilities of the individual before a more objective assessment can be carried out or to act as a check on how the professional assessment is shaping up.

7.18 It is one of the most important principles of assessment that it should be realistic. Where the young person wishes to minimise or ignore a problem area, the practitioner may have to step in and give a more realistic assessment of the level of difficulty which the young person is

experiencing. Conversely, a sympathetic practitioner may be tempted to gloss over some of the most problematic areas so as not to paint too bleak a picture. We believe that bland assessment reports are unhelpful and potentially damaging because other agencies will not offer the necessary level of support. In this context, we have noted with great interest that the Bridges Project "Soft Measurement" system is quite specific about identifying problems or "deficits" while being specifically designed to encourage progress.

7.19 There is another important aspect of realism. Some young people will have aspirations and expectations of their job prospects that are unrealistic in the light of their existing skills and capabilities. There is no benefit in encouraging young people to pursue a course of learning for which they lack the skills. The outcome is liable to be disappointment and disillusion at yet another 'failure'. Assessments must be fair, accurate and realistic. The important factor is that they should overall be positive in tone and emphasise and encourage progression.

7.20 We also believe that it is important to acknowledge that there may be instances where a young person may legitimately wish to go on to the next stage of transition with a "clean slate". The practitioners who have been involved in assessing and supporting that individual may agree that this is a legitimate and realistic decision. This is an area where a key worker might have an important role. If a key worker has been involved with a young person over a period of time he/she should be well placed to make a judgement about what information should, or should not, be passed on. Even more importantly, if the key worker has built up a trusting relationship, the young person may accept advice more readily about the value of not concealing important aspects of their life and experience.

7.21 We have already recommended that the proposed Area Strategy Groups should develop a framework for assessment. One of the key principles which should underpin that framework is participation and ownership. **We recommend that the Area Strategy Groups work with the relevant agencies to agree arrangements for encouraging the participation and ownership of the young person which take full account of the individual's rights and wishes as far as possible. There should also be agreed arrangements about the process of referral to a key worker and the ongoing role of the key worker in the assessment process.**

Information Flow

7.22 One of the major problems identified in Professor Thomson's assessment research and throughout our consultation exercise is the variable content and quality of information from school to post school providers (careers service companies, FE and training) about young people. This lack of information can lead to inadequate assessment and subsequent inappropriate provision. The other problem, however, about the transfer of information, as described above, is that it is often a serious anxiety for the young person and an area of great difficulty for practitioners.

7.23 The Committee has taken the view that all young people leaving school should be entitled

to fair and accurate reporting of their abilities and achievements but also of areas where they have a learning or support need. The objective would be to aid transition to appropriate and relevant post school provision by ensuring that providers are better informed about the individual's learning and support requirements. We have been supported in this view by a number of responses to our consultation exercise. In particular, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland proposed that:

- An agreed transfer document for all post school providers would greatly improve the transfer of information. The knowledge held by schools should be more effectively accessed and utilised;
- A more focused information giving/requesting process could potentially result in better and more useful assessment and identification of individual needs.

7.24 The Committee has built on work carried out by a small Working Group led by HMI on how to improve information flow from schools to post-school providers. The Working Group took the view that there was an important issue of equality to be addressed. They made a comparison with the UCAS report which teachers complete for University applicants. There is no comparable exercise for many pupils who leave school after 11 or 12 years with no standardised record or report of their strengths and weaknesses, achievements or goals. The Working Group's objective was to improve procedures for recording and reporting key information about young people who are likely to need additional support to participate in post-school provision. Such a report would ensure better information for careers service companies, training providers, FE colleges and employers and enable them to offer the appropriate level of support and make the most of the young person's skills and abilities. The focus of the Working Group's considerations included both young people who had a Record of Needs and the wider group whose support needs were not 'recorded' but had been identified within school. There was a specific interest in improving information about young people who had poor or irregular patterns of attendance. [The report of the Working Group is in Annex F.]

7.25 The Committee has reviewed and developed the proposals of the Working Group for a **common approach** to recording and reporting by schools, including the use of a standard form containing a core minimum set of information. It is our view, however, that an Inclusiveness approach would require this approach to apply to all young people. **We, therefore, recommend that there should be a Transition Form for all young people which contains up-to-date and accurate information (as far as possible) about achievements, goals and learning and support needs.** The key elements should be:

- A common approach across all schools to recording and reporting of information and the use of a standard form containing a core or minimum set of information;
- The information gathering should be part of an ongoing process, not a one-off exercise. It should link to, and draw on, information available within the Progress File;

- Strengths and achievements should be recorded as well as learning and support needs;
- The guidelines accompanying the form should contain guidance on confidentiality;
- There should be training for staff in the use of the recording and reporting system.

7.26 The Committee's objective in recommending the development of a Transition Form is to inform future assessments and ensure that young people receive post-school learning and support which matches their needs, abilities and aspirations. We would expect that the process of completing the Transition Form would actively involve the young person, and their parents, over a period of time. We would also expect that the Progress File would be a valuable source of information. There is a distinction, however, between the Progress File, which involves a significant amount of self-assessment, and the more objective stance of our proposed Transition Form. There may be cases where, because the young person is not attending school regularly, there is limited or no involvement by the individual or a parent. In those cases, we believe that the school should have a responsibility to offer the best available information in the Transition Form, drawing on previous records and professional judgement.

7.27 In making this recommendation for a recording and reporting system designed to aid the transition from school to post-school learning, or employment, we believe that there is an excellent opportunity to build on the proposals for Personal Learning Plans set out in the White Paper, "Targeting Excellence". The White Paper identified the importance of children having their needs, abilities and achievements recognised. The aim is to develop an individual plan for each child taking into account their needs, experience and progress. The Personal Learning Plan will involve the pupil and parents, agree targets and monitor progress. As the young person progresses through school, he/she will take more responsibility for their own development and will be encouraged to use the Progress File to assess and record achievements, goals and areas for improvement.

7.28 Personal Learning Plans will be piloted through the New Community Schools which we believe to be an exciting development. New Community Schools will promote an inclusive approach for school-age children by tackling the barriers to learning caused by a history of low attainment, social disadvantage and a cycle of poverty, unemployment and overall underachievement. As we have said elsewhere, the Committee has been made aware of serious concerns about the 14-16 year-olds (and even younger children) who reject school and are at risk of social exclusion. New Community Schools will offer an integrated approach to education, social work and health needs at school level. We believe that our proposals for collaborative multi-agency working to address the learning and support needs of 16-24 year-olds should be a parallel development.

7.29 We recommend that the Scottish Executive Education Department, working together with COSLA and the teaching bodies, should develop our proposal for a Transition Form with appropriate reference to the development of the Progress File and in

conjunction with the work now going on in the Education Department and local authorities on Personal Learning Plans. The process of discussion and involvement of the young people and their families from an early stage in the Personal Learning Plans would offer an ideal basis for completing the Transition Form. In particular, if the teaching staff is able to build on relationships already established with the young people, they are more likely to want to make a positive contribution to the Transition Form and may be more ready to acknowledge areas where they are likely to require support in the post-school period.

7.30 At a practical level, there is also an opportunity to minimise the duplication of work for teaching staff by drawing on the body of information built up for the Personal Learning Plan and the Progress File. The Scottish Executive Education Department is now engaged in implementing a Data Interchange Agreement (DIA) as part of the Schools National Management Information Systems Project in every school in Scotland. The DIA will include all the requirements of the Scottish Executive Education Department, local authorities, SQA and the schools themselves. The target is for all secondary schools to be exchanging data by September 2000. The DIA will contain information on individual pupils and work is now going on to assess the information requirements of schools in relation to Personal Learning Plans and the Progress File, and how this can be integrated within the school's NMIS system. These developments, in our view, offer considerable scope for building on the Personal Learning Plan and Progress File to produce more accurate and up-to-date information for post-school providers to use in the assessment process.

7.31 We understand that local authorities will have flexibility to develop the Personal Learning Plans according to the local needs of their schools and pupils. The Committee's proposal is for a common approach to the Transition Form, or more specifically, to the core content of the Form in order to promote a consistent standard of information available to post-school providers e.g. careers service companies, colleges, and training providers. While we understand the view that there should be flexibility in the approach to Personal Learning Plans, **we recommend that the Area Strategy Groups should promote and encourage the development and use of a standard Transition Form within their own area.**

Confidentiality

7.32 At the centre of our proposals on assessment and transfer of information is the issue of confidentiality. We have looked at ways to encourage greater participation and ownership by the young person and, in particular, we believe that **openness** must be at the heart of any assessment process. However, there is no doubt that confidentiality will remain an issue of great concern to young people and the agencies who come into contact with them. Some agencies feel that it is not appropriate to share information with another agency. Social Work professionals, for example, are sometimes dealing with extremely sensitive issues which young people will almost certainly not want to be discussed. We have found, however, that there is a greater willingness to pass on verbal information than to produce written reports. While this is understandable, it is an ad hoc and unreliable way of transmitting information. The extent to which information may be made available about a young person should not be subject to such an uncertain procedure.

7.33 Although we respect the concerns of professionals in the field, we believe that confidentiality has to be considered in the wider context of the young person's long term future. We are also aware of the view among a range of individuals and agencies that confidentiality can be used as a barrier to effective communication between agencies and as a justification for not transferring information. We firmly believe that there should be strict protocols governing confidentiality which serve the best interests of the young person and not the practices of individual agencies.

7.34 The important point is that agencies which gather information on young people should treat it in a confidential manner. The young person should be able to confide in someone and know that sensitive information will not be passed onto another agency without his/her knowledge and under strict safeguards. Permission should always be sought before passing on information to another agency. It should be acknowledged, however, that there are likely to be limits to confidentiality in certain circumstances e.g. to establish entitlement to benefits. There may be other occasions where information on a young person's learning and support needs should be passed on to another agency to ensure that they are not offered inappropriate further education, or training, or do not receive support that they require to help them make the most of the opportunity. There are other cases where there could be significant health and safety implications e.g. if a young person has epilepsy and a training provider is not aware of it.

7.35 The Committee is in no doubt that the issue of confidentiality is in all respects challenging and difficult to resolve. We believe that improved assessment practice, and in particular an open process which closely involves young people, will do much to build the confidence of the young people in the overall process. If this is allied to a system for transferring information which assures young people that only relevant information will be passed to another agency, so that they can receive the support they require, they are more likely to take a positive view. The support of a key worker or mentor would also help young people to develop confidence in the process.

7.36 We believe that, linked to the arrangements for improving participation and ownership of the assessment process, the key agencies should agree protocols and standards for confidentiality. **We recommend, therefore, that the Area Strategy Groups should work with the key agencies to develop agreed protocols for the transfer of information which set out specific arrangements for confidentiality.**

Staff Development and Training

7.37 In this Chapter we have discussed the importance of an effective assessment process in developing an Inclusive approach across all agencies. We have made a number of proposals and recommendations on key aspects of assessment. One of the most vital aspects is the commitment and expertise of the staff who are engaged in assessment. They require the skills to carry out interviews and tests and the ability to understand the difficulties and problems which may make the young people reluctant to participate and respond. There is also an important

issue about achieving a consistent standard of assessment. The studies carried out in the past 3 years demonstrated variations in practice even within agencies. We believe that both of these aspects must be addressed in developing an improved assessment process. **We, therefore, recommend that the agencies – careers service, the enterprise networks, training providers, colleges and other agencies – who are involved in assessment should ensure that staff receive training in assessment practice. We also recommend that the Area Strategy Groups work with the key agencies to promote joint staff training to develop consistent standards and practices in assessment across agencies.**

From Assessment to Provision

7.38 The assessment process is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to identify the learning and support needs of the individual and provide the basis for education and training providers to offer appropriate, matching learning opportunities and, where necessary, for colleges, training providers or other agencies to make available additional support. An Inclusiveness approach requires that this should not mean simply allocating the young person to the "best fit" which is available. In some cases suitable provision may already be in place. In many other cases, it will mean drawing together strands of provision and other support into a "package" of provision. This is the challenge of Inclusiveness.

7.39 For those young people who have multiple problems, matching provision to their assessed needs may be a complex exercise. It may also have to be recognised that progress may be in small stages because of the range of their support needs. One example is where young people have a disordered and chaotic lifestyle and find it difficult to sustain a programme of study or training. Progress in personal, social or even emotional development may not be recognised within existing systems, and in particular, may not attract funding. The most obvious example is the funding for training which is targeted primarily towards the attainment of qualifications. In further education there is provision for special programmes and extended learning support to assist young people who need tailored learning or additional support. While the funding arrangements in FE are different, there is evidence from the FE Survey that there is scope for change. The specific funding issues and our proposals are discussed in Chapter 10. We highlight them here as part of the context for our proposals to provide a systematic follow-up to assessment.

Individual Profile and Action Plans

7.40 We have developed proposals for an individual profile and action plan to take forward the outcome of the assessment process in a systematic way designed to recognise the needs, abilities and aspirations of the young person. The aim is to encourage and assist the individual in making progress at a pace and towards agreed goals which are suitable for him/her; and to encourage and assist the provider agencies to design and deliver the appropriate "package" for learning and support. The personal profile would also support the development of a funding regime which recognised the time needed to build up basic skills and improve personal skills; and reward

progression in the "soft" areas.

7.41 The underpinning of a personal profile should be an assessment procedure which clearly identifies both hard/tangible areas of need eg literacy, numeracy, specific aids; and "soft/intangible" areas such as attitude, motivation, punctuality and willingness to learn. The challenge for the practitioners is to develop measurable indicators of progress in the "soft" areas (often referred to as attributes) which could then be used as the basis of funding. A key objective would be to help the young person reach a level of competence and confidence where they could benefit from more vocationally based training. We have identified the following key elements of drawing up a personal profile:

Assessment:

An effective assessment process which identifies the individual's learning and support needs, abilities and aspirations

Personal or Individual Profile:

The profile should include:

- The type and level of learning and personal skills support needs (from assessment) ; and the type and level of skills and abilities;
- Particular circumstances (social/emotional/behavioural) likely to create barriers to learning and/or employment;
- Aspirations of the individual e.g. job, training, further education, a house, drug rehabilitation, money;

Action Plan:

The profile should be the basis of an individual(ised) action plan which is discussed and agreed with the young person. The action plan should specify:

- the areas/aspects to be addressed;
- the activities which will form part of the training programme;
- other actions to address other problems e.g. housing, drugs, and the agency responsible;
- what will constitute progress and how it will be measured;
- dates for reviewing progress and who will be involved;
- the main contact for the young person.

7.42 The objective is to design a programme for each young person which meet his/her needs i.e. an individualised profile and action plan. Regular reviews and ongoing assessment will be crucial to the programme's effectiveness. It may be more accurate, therefore, to describe it as an **action planning and review** system. We attach the greatest importance to ensuring that there is a 'next step' following the assessment which is focused on the individual and designed to match the provision to his/her learning support needs. **We, therefore, recommend that the assessment framework should include a profile and action planning system agreed by all the relevant agencies.**

Role of Agencies

7.43 Where a young person has multiple needs, it is vital that all agencies who do have a contribution to make to assessment, whether funding, information, or other forms of support, are brought into the process. For such young people, a key worker may be assigned who can then act as the 'broker' and liaison point between the other agencies. As described in Chapter 5, we are proposing that the key worker should have the power to co-ordinate the activities of all the relevant agencies. We have also suggested that there could be local multi-agency practitioner teams to oversee the progress of the young people. This team may decide the appropriate key worker.

7.44 In the light of our recommendations that different approaches to multi-agency working and the organisation of a key worker should be tested out, we will not make specific proposals about how agencies should collaborate in the assessment process. However, there are a number of ways in which key worker support and a multi-agency team could operate to ensure that the individual profile and action planning system is working for the maximum benefit of the young person. How it works in practice will depend on how, and when, the young person comes into contact with the careers service company, the further education sector, the training provider or a LEC. **We are proposing, however, that arrangements for referral to a key worker or appointing a multi-agency team should be the responsibility of the Area Strategy Groups.**

Staff Development and Training

7.45 The introduction of an individual profile and action plan is another area which would require staff development and training for all the relevant agencies. There would also be a need for joint training to ensure that staff in the various agencies had a mutual understanding of the purpose of the action plan and were fully committed to monitoring and reviewing implementation.

Future Needs Assessment: Post-School Implementation

7.46 In Chapter 6, we noted the concerns raised by parents about the operation of the Future Needs Assessment process; for example, the lack of communication between agencies and the difficulty for young people and parents/carers in putting across their views. The Social Work

Services Inspectorate also raised these and other concerns about the FNA process, including problems with the follow-up arrangements, in the 'Sensing Progress' report. The issue of post-school implementation is of particular concern to this Committee and in "Sensing Progress", the SWSI asked us to consider how it might be improved.

7.47 The main problem seems to be that, where the follow-up arrangements break down, no one professional or agency has responsibility for re-negotiating the package of learning and support. This has clear parallels with the experiences of other vulnerable young people. While only a small percentage of young people are involved in the FNA process, it is important that they have the same access to post-school arrangements for education and training as other young people who have additional support needs. **We recommend that our proposals for co-ordination of services by Area Strategy Groups should encompass post-school provision for young people who have been involved in the FNA process.** It could be part of the FNA process for a referral to be made to a key worker while the young person is still at school so that the key worker would be familiar with the learning and support needs of the young person if, at a later stage, the post school provision does not go according to plan. If no referral is thought to be necessary when the young person is still at school, it should be possible for the young person (or the parents/carers,) as well other agencies who are involved with the young person, to seek a referral after the young person has left school.

7.48 Some of the evidence that we have received also suggests that the education and training needs of some young people are not adequately addressed in the FNA process. There may be an initial destination i.e. a college or training provider, but no long-term plan or arrangements to address the need for subsequent transitions. It is our view that young people who come into post-school provision through the FNA process should have access to the individual profile and action planning system which we are recommending for their peers. The links to the profile and action planning system should be explicit while the young person is still at school. **We, therefore, recommend that the Area Strategy Groups should work with the relevant agencies, and specifically with the local authority Education Department, to ensure that the FNA process has clear links to the key worker support arrangements; and that the needs of the young people are addressed in the profile and action planning system.**

Summary of Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

The Area Strategy Groups should work with the lead agencies to develop an assessment framework setting out the key principles, roles and responsibilities and pathways into and between assessment.

(Paragraph 7.6)

There should be a review of assessment tools at national level to be undertaken by the lead agencies in assessment, with particular emphasis on the skills and attributes which contribute to employability. The lead agencies would include the careers service companies, LECs, training providers, FE colleges and the voluntary sector. (Paragraph 7.9)

The Area Strategy Groups should work with the relevant agencies – careers service companies, LECs and training providers, colleges and the local authority to develop a wider range of enhanced guidance and assessment programmes supported by appropriate funding mechanisms. (Paragraph 7.11)

The Area Strategy Groups work with the relevant agencies to agree arrangements for encouraging the participation and ownership of the young person which take full account of the individual's rights and wishes as far as possible. There should also be agreed arrangements about the process of referral to a key worker and the ongoing role of the key worker in the assessment process. (Paragraph 7.21)

There should be a Transition Form for all young people which contains up-to-date and accurate information (as far as possible) about achievements, goals and learning and support needs. (Paragraph 7.25)

The Scottish Executive Education Department, working together with COSLA and the teaching bodies, should develop our proposal for a Transition Form with appropriate reference to the development of the Progress File in conjunction with the work now going on in the Education Department and local authorities on Personal Learning Plans. (Paragraph 7.29)

The Area Strategy Groups should promote and encourage the development and use of a standard Transition Form within their own area. (Paragraph 7.31)

The Area Strategy Group should work with the relevant agencies to develop agreed protocols for the transfer of information which set out specific arrangements for confidentiality. (Paragraph 7.36)

The agencies – careers service companies, the enterprise networks, training providers,

colleges and other agencies who are involved in assessment – should ensure that staff receive training in assessment practice. (Paragraph 7.37)

The Area Strategy Groups should work with the relevant agencies to promote joint staff training to develop consistent standards and practices in assessment across agencies. We also recommend that the Area Strategy Groups work with the key agencies to promote joint staff training to develop consistent standards and practices in assessment across agencies. (Paragraph 7.37)

The assessment framework should include a profile and action planning system agreed by all the relevant agencies. (Paragraph 7.42).

The arrangements for referral to a key worker or appointing a multi-agency team should be the responsibility of the Area Strategy Group. (Paragraph 7.44).

The co-ordination of services by Area Strategy Groups should encompass post-school provision for young people who have been involved in the FNA process. (Paragraph 7.47)

The Area Strategy Groups should work with the relevant agencies, and specifically with the local authority education department, to ensure that the FNA process has clear links to the key worker support arrangements; and that the needs of the young people are addressed in the profile and action planning system. (Paragraph 7.48)

Appendix 1

Outline Framework

The Committee has drawn up an outline assessment framework. It includes the key principles agreed by the Committee and suggests pathways in, through and out of the various stages of assessment.

Pathways

We know that many young people will come in and out of post-school education and training. We also believe that each of the agencies that come into contact with young people e.g. community education workers, should be able to make referrals in to the assessment process. The structure and the framework should be flexible enough to support multiple entries but in such a way that young people are not always going back to the starting point. The same process as above would come into play where young people experience a number of transitions.

Principles of Assessment

It must be open

It must be fair and accurate

It must be focused on the young person and not designed to accommodate the organisational structures or administrative practices of an institution or agency

It must respect confidentiality

It must encourage full participation and ownership by the young person

It must aid progression.

It should also:

- be continuous but not repetitive;
- be given adequate time and care;
- be carried out by competent and well trained staff;
- be designed to allow the transfer of accurate, relevant and up-to-date information.

The Purpose of Assessment

To identify the type and level of learning and support needs, the abilities and the aspirations of the young person;

To communicate assessment to the appropriate provider(s); and

To draw up an action plan and set goals.

Roles and Responsibilities

School:

Identification of problem areas/learning and support needs which might prevent participation in post school education, training, and employment.

Recording and reporting: transfer of information (Transition Form) to post school providers (careers service companies, colleges and training provider).

Referral (if appropriate) to key worker.

Career Service Companies:

Guidance on career choice, entry routes and employment, education and training programmes in school and post-school.

Initial assessment of learning and support needs.

Contribute to FNA process.

Contribute to multi-agency working.

Referral to key worker.

Referral to training provider for enhanced assessment or pre-vocational or skills based training funded by LEC.

Referral to employers for job vacancies after school, FE or training.

Training providers:

Assessment (probably not initial assessment)

Enhanced Assessment

Ongoing Assessment and review

Contribute to multi agency team

Referral to key worker (if appropriate).

Community Education

Contact and support for hard to reach young people

Referrals

Contribute to assessment

Contribute to multi-agency team

FE Colleges:

Initial assessment

Follow-up with more in-depth assessment

Referral to key worker (if appropriate)

Ongoing assessment and review

Participate in multi-agency team

Social Work:

Referral to careers service companies, LEC, college

Referral to key worker service (if appropriate)

Contribute to assessments

Participate in multi-agency teams

Employment Service:

Initial contact and assessment (for 18-24 year olds under the New Deal)

Referral to key worker (if appropriate)

When (should it be done)?

- Regularly – but not too often: and not the same assessment repeated on several occasions.
- Pre-leaving school (Future Needs Assessment, other types of recording and reporting and assessment).
- On leaving school – careers service companies training providers, college.
- At prescribed intervals when the young person is on a training programme or FE course.
- At every transition (whether through progression or as a result of "scheme-hopping").

What it Should Cover?

- Qualifications
- Core skills
- Attributes (personal/life skills)
- Employment ideas or independent living goals
- Other circumstances (social, financial, behavioural) which might affect participation and progression

What it Should Measure?

- Level of competence and capability in each area
- Type and level of learning needs
- Type and level of support need

Outcome

An individual profile and action plan with agreed goals.

Protocols on

Ownership

Confidentiality

Transfer of Information

Roles and Responsibilities

