The differences between career information, career advice and career guidance

The following illustrates the distinctions between career information, advice and guidance and the benefits to the client and society of utilising the expertise of a Level 6 or above qualified Career Adviser/Registered Career Development Professional.

Chris is a Year 11 pupil and as part of the career education programme in his school he attended a talk by the Fire Service and spent some time as an observer at his local fire station and has decided that he would like to be a Firefighter. At the fire station he learned that entry is very competitive and that how you complete the application form is a key part of the process. Back at school he requested some career information from the Careers Co-ordinator and was directed to the National Careers Service website, https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/planning/jobprofiles/Pages/firefighter.aspx where he found information on the entry requirements and discovered that he will need to be 18. He also attended a career advice session where he learned how to complete application forms and how to write a CV.

Chris is predicted to do well at GCSE level but currently thinks that he will leave school, get some sort of a job on a building site, try and get fitter and then apply to the Fire Service when he is 18. His parents are not keen on him joining the Fire Service and feel that his poor level of physical fitness will let him down and they would rather that he went to university.

Having received the above career education, information and advice he is in danger of leaving school with information and advice but not the career guidance and career management skills which would help him to realise his ambition or to find another route should his application to the Fire Service be unsuccessful.

The road analogy

Years ago many people were on a straight road, deciding what they wanted to be at 16 and starting out on the journey to get there. Careers work was a mixture of matching one’s interests and strengths to the opportunities, providing information on jobs and routes, and ensuring that people had the job search and presentation skills required. The labour market was more static and predictable and people tended to stay in the same field and with the same employer.

Today the road is more unpredictable, with twists and turns, constant changes and choices to be made. People need more than information and CVs to navigate the journey – they need a positive and resilient mindset, the ability to network, seize opportunities, step outside the comfort zone and change one’s mind when the intended destination is no longer available or suitable. Knowledge of transferable skills, curiosity to explore alternatives, information management skills are more important than a set career plan. Career guidance might entail providing information, but the primary aim is to probe behind the presenting information needs to ensure that the client has the career management resources to make use of information and to confidently meet the decisions and challenges ahead.
Therefore, if Chris had a career guidance interview with a Career Adviser who was professionally qualified to at least QCF level 6 he would be able to:

- reflect on his mindset, how confident, flexible, motivated he is to face the decisions ahead as well as taking personal responsibility and control for the research required;
- discuss what appeals to him about joining the Fire Service; where does the idea come from? Has he arrived at the choice by exploration of his interests and looking at a range of opportunities or has he just picked something obvious and familiar? How effective is he at making decisions?
- discuss what other ideas he has had and why he has rejected these (is it through considered reflection or the influence of others or negative experiences)?
- consider biographical information such as his skills, aptitudes and values which would make him suitable for this role but also identify what are transferable to a wider range of occupations;
- learn where to find more detailed career information provided by the Fire Service which would explain what exactly the Fire Service is looking for from an application. [http://www.fireservice.co.uk/recruitment](http://www.fireservice.co.uk/recruitment);
- learn information management skills required to effectively sift through information and what websites to trust
- discuss how he could develop the skills required over the next two years which would enable his application to be as good as possible;
- discuss the physical entry requirements and how he could address these e.g. referral to different types of sports activities;
- reflect on his existing network and networking skills and how these can be developed;
- discuss the features and benefits of all of the post-16 routes: staying at school, Further Education or an Apprenticeship and which of these would best suit him;
- discuss undergraduate routes into the Fire Service;
- look at Labour Market Information on where Firefighter vacancies may be and what the possibility is of working locally;
- look at alternative careers which may also suit him and which he could use as a back-up plan in case his application to the Fire Service was unsuccessful;
- ask the Career Adviser to meet with his parents to discuss all of the above which may help to alleviate their anxieties;
- receive guidance on how to complete the Fire Service application form once he is 18;
- learn where job vacancies are advertised for both the Fire Service and other jobs.

All of the above will help Chris to develop career management skills which he could use both now and in the future. His human capital will be increased as he will have developed increased motivation for learning, job search skills and attitudes and behaviours that help when working efficiently and effectively. His network will have increased e.g. sports referrals, thus building his social capital and he will have developed the ability to make transitions from one part of his life to the next, which is a lifelong skill.

As a result of this career guidance intervention a successful outcome for both Chris and the school would be that at the end of Year 11 he went on to a post 16 route which could ultimately enable him to realise his ambition and help him to develop skills and knowledge which he could use in his role as a Fire Fighter or in another career should his application to the Fire Service be unsuccessful.
The economic benefits of Chris receiving career guidance would be that he could pursue a post-16 route which was suited to his needs and would be less likely to become unemployed or at risk of not using his skills and knowledge fully. Knowing how the labour market works and the fact that he may need to move to find employment as a Fire Fighter will also enable him to be part of a more mobile and flexible workforce.

The Career Development Institute
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