Adult education is aimed at individuals aged 19 years or over (see the chapter on ‘Adult Education and Training’). Guidance and counselling for adult learners is delivered alongside adult education courses by a wide range of providers, although further education (FE) colleges stand at the centre of this sector. Further information on providers is included in the article on ‘Main Providers’. The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for adult learning and skills in England.

**Academic guidance**

Providers of adult learning are largely free to decide what guidance to offer students and how to deliver it. Further education colleges generally offer learners:

- help in setting targets and goals for their studies
- regular reviews to ensure they meet their targets
- support from experienced and qualified tutors and careers advisers
- relevant support if they have learning difficulties or disabilities
- information about courses, fees and any financial support available.

Information and advice on further education courses is also available through the government website, GOV.UK, and through the Learning and Work Institute, an independent policy and research membership organisation in the area of inclusive lifelong learning.

**Psychological counselling**

Institutions offering adult learning courses may offer students and staff counselling services as part of their student support services. Counselling services may cover educational problems, health issues or personal problems.

BACP Universities and Colleges (BACP UC), which is a division of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, promotes student and staff counselling as an integral part of the
educational process in further and higher education institutions. The organisation offers advice and professional support to those involved in the management and delivery of counselling services in further and higher education by disseminating research and best practice guidelines across its network.

**Career guidance**

**Provision in further education**

Since September 2013, there has been a legal requirement for all further education (FE) colleges in England to secure access to independent and impartial careers guidance for all their younger students up to the age of 19. This requirement extends to adults aged 19 to 25 if the individual has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (or Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA)). Government guidance is provided on meeting this requirement. This was updated in October 2018 following the December 2017 publication of the Government’s all-age Careers Strategy: Making the Most of Everyone’s Skills and Abilities, which includes measures aimed at improving the quality of careers guidance such as:

- introducing new for career guidance in schools and colleges
- requiring all schools and colleges to have a dedicated Careers Leader
- developing 20 ‘careers hubs’ to link schools, colleges, universities and local businesses.

Further education colleges also provide careers guidance for students of all ages undertaking a course at their institution. Providers of traineeships and apprenticeships offer careers guidance also.

Under the external inspection process carried out by Ofsted (the inspectorate), providers are judged on ‘the extent to which learners receive thorough and impartial careers guidance to enable them to make informed choices about their current learning and future career plans’ (page 43 of the Further Education and Skills Inspection Handbook). This applies to learners aged 16-19, adult learners, those following apprenticeships and traineeships, and learners with high needs. The December 2017 Careers Strategy has also introduced a requirement for Ofsted to comment in college inspection reports on the careers guidance provided to students aged up to 19, or up to age 25 with an EHC plan. (This statutory requirement was introduced under Section 125 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, as amended by Section 41 of the Technical and Further Education Act 2017.)

**National Careers Service**

The National Careers Service was launched on 1 April 2012 (replacing and building on the former ‘Next Step’ service). The Service provides adults with information and guidance on learning, training and work opportunities via its website, by email, over the telephone and through webchat. National Careers Service advisors are also available to help adults to:

- write effective CVs
• develop interview and networking skills

• search and apply for jobs

• access job profiles

• search for courses and training schemes

• identify their key strengths and skills

• explore their career options

• choose training routes that fit their lifestyles

• develop an action plan to help them achieve their goals.

The Service is also available to young people (aged 13+) in schools and colleges.

The Department for Education’s (DfE’s) priorities for the National Careers Service for 2017/18, as outlined in the 2016/17 [17] letter to the Skills Funding Agency (now part of the Education and Skills Funding Agency, ESFA) and confirmed in the 2017/18 [18] letter, are that it should focus on priority groups, which are:

• young people aged 19-23 not in touch with schools / colleges

• lower skilled adults aged 24+

• adults (aged 25+) with learning difficulties and disabilities.

**GOV.UK website**

The 'Working, jobs and pensions' [19] section of the GOV.UK website provides information on finding work, employment rights and pensions. It also provides links to the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions [20] services which support people of working age into work, and help employers to fill their vacancies through JobCentre Plus [21].

Tailored advice and support is available for those with disabilities from Disability Employment Advisers [22] who are based in JobCentre Plus branches. Extra support available includes an employment assessment to find suitable work for individuals, referrals to appropriate services and information about employers. Further information is available from the ‘Work and disabled people’ [23] page of the GOV.UK website.