Guidance and counselling for adult learners (aged 19 years and over) is delivered alongside adult education courses by a wide range of providers, although further education (FE) colleges[1] stand at the centre of this sector.

### Academic guidance

Providers of adult learning are largely free to decide what guidance to offer students and how to deliver it. However, providers must, under the Equality Act 2010[2], make reasonable adjustments for and offer relevant support to students who have learning difficulties or disabilities.

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
- information about courses, fees and any financial support available.

The inspection framework is a further influence on further education and skills providers. In line with guidance[3] on the inspection of such providers, Ofsted inspectors will ‘judge how well learners following academic or vocational qualifications make progress and achieve, compared with all learners on the same programme’ (p. 42). They will also verify that ‘the curriculum ensures that all learners benefit from high academic, technical and vocational ambitions’ (p. 54) and that it ‘[supports] learners to develop their knowledge and skills beyond the purely academic, technical or vocational.’

Information and advice on further education courses is also available through the government website[4], and through the Learning and Work Institute[5], 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)[6], 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[7]. 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

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.

As outlined in the Further education and skills handbook [3], under the external inspection process carried out by Ofsted [8], providers are judged on whether they are ‘providing an effective careers programme that offers advice, experience and contact with employers to encourage learners to aspire, make good choices and understand what they need to do in order to reach and succeed in their chosen career’ (p. 55) as part of the ‘personal development’ key judgement. This applies to learners aged 16-19, adult learners, those following apprenticeships and traineeships, and learners with high needs. The Technical and Further Education Act 2017 [9] 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.

For younger learners, there are additional specific requirements. Since September 2013, there has been a legal requirement for all further education (FE) colleges [1] 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 [10] (or Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) [11]). Government guidance [12] 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 Talents [13]. The strategy includes measures aimed at improving the quality of careers guidance, such as requiring all schools and colleges to have a dedicated Careers Leader and developing 20 ‘careers hubs’ to link schools, colleges, universities and local businesses.

National Careers Service

The National Careers Service [14] was launched on 1 April 2012. 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.

GOV.UK website

The 'Working, jobs and pensions' [15]' 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 [16] services which support people of working age into work, and help employers to
fill their vacancies through JobCentre Plus [17].

Tailored advice and support is available for those with disabilities from Disability Employment Advisers [18] 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 [19]’ page of the GOV.UK website.

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Links
[1] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/glossary-74_en#FurtherEducationCollege
[10] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/glossary-74_en#EHCPlan
[14] https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/home
[15] https://www.gov.uk/browse/working
[16] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions
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