

FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING

# Collaboration & Learning - Action & Reflection

## NCGE - MyFuture+ and its application to FET Guidance



**NCGE's role includes informing policy and supporting the development of quality guidance practice in the FET sector. In this context the development of useful and meaningful resources to support quality practice is key. Informed by Quality Assurance and Evidence Guidelines of the ELPGN, NCGE supports the development of practitioner competence, service provision and improvement. NCGE also recognizes the need for a cost/benefit for individuals and those funding the guidance service. To this end and acknowledging that Careers Portal designed My Futures+ specifically for the adult guidance community NCGE agreed to facilitate Guidance Counsellors in Adult Education and PLC Centres in engaging with a Pilot of 'MyFutures+'. The Pilot was run as an exercise to ascertain the real world uses of this programme within adult guidance.**



### MyFuture+ - A New Adult Education and Guidance Resource

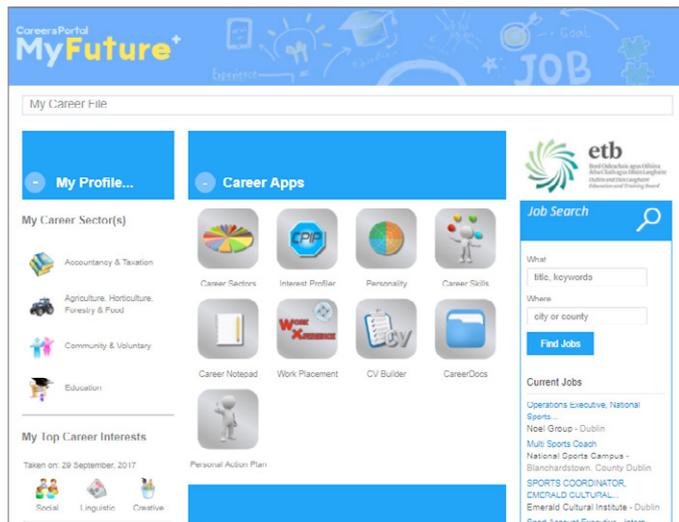
MyFuture+ is an innovative ICT adult career learning and development resource. Through a web-based career file, it aims to assist individuals to explore themselves in relation to career, education and employment opportunities available in Ireland. It is suitable for use with young adults and adults from the age of 16+ in both a one-to-one and group guidance context. Launched in June 2016, MyFuture+ has been developed by CareersPortal.ie in critical collaboration with adult guidance and education staff that support individuals with their career planning and decisions. Staff representing key organisations and services have worked together to shape the resource including: Adult Education Guidance Services, Youthreach/CTCs, Department of Employment Affairs and

Social Protection, Local Employment Services, Community Training Centre's and PLCs.

MyFuture+ has the unique administration advantage of allowing adult guidance counsellors to instantly view and track their client's self-assessment results and career research including their Career Interest Profiler, Career Skills assessment, Course preferences and Career documents. This process encourages greater collaboration between the guidance counsellor and the client. This is supported by the mobile compatibility of MyFuture+ and the on-line career file can be accessed at any time by the client from a mobile phone, tablet, laptop etc.

Another unique feature available is QQI Level 4 and 5 Work Experience module templates. This allows learners in FET centres and colleges to store their assignment content and

work experience diary reflections in their on-line career file that can be accessed and edited from any mobile device. The Guidance Counsellor or Work Experience Tutor can instantly view their work and provide live feedback on their assessments.



### The Pilot Group – A broad FET Guidance Perspective

NCGE and CareersPortal worked closely with a MyFuture+ pilot group from March 2017-March 2018. Capturing the experiences of guidance counsellors using MyFuture+ in different FET Guidance settings was a fundamental goal. Therefore, pilot members included adult guidance and education staff from various small, medium and large centres across the sector. A total of 8 FET guidance providers participated. The adult guidance practitioners involved work with clients in a one-to-one setting and with groups of adult learners. Adult learners who participated represented those undertaking QQI levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 programmes.

### FET Practitioner Collaboration and Learning

The coming together of this Pilot group provided more than an opportunity to trial a new resource. It became a unique learning space for practitioners to work together and explore diversity in their adult guidance practice, discuss challenges and support one another by sharing knowledge and expertise. Group members travelled from around the country to meet in NCGE offices on four occasions and reflected on their experience of using MyFuture+ with their clients and learners. In a very busy and crowded working schedule this was no easy task! It demonstrates the interest, commitment and openness of members to meet, share, learn and explore new ways to further support adult education and guidance philosophy and practice.

### An Action and Reflection Approach

The piloting of MyFuture+ within FET guidance offered an opportunity to learn from the members what worked well and reflect on areas for improvement and development.

The process of trialing MyFuture+ with clients and learners, gathering qualitative feedback and quickly adapting the resource to improve application, is reflective of an action-research approach. Action research by its very nature is about working with others to make improvements in practice. Darbey (et al. 2013 p. 2) describe this as a “process of collaborative self-evaluation, whereby practitioners reflect on their work and identify areas that need reconsideration and possible improvement in dialogue with others.” The pilot group engaged in a very practical and active “doing” process where suggested changes and new developments were integrated as quickly as possible by CareersPortal. A summary document of additions and improvements was shaped by the pilot: MyFuture+ Pilot Developments. These enhancements highlight the benefits of an action learning approach whereby MyFuture+ has continued to be shaped by adult guidance counsellors for guidance practice.

### Integrating ICT Career Resources into Adult Guidance Practice

The internet as a phenomenon is increasingly being interwoven into every aspect of everyday life and provides a significant platform from which people can explore and develop their career thinking, learning and development. Research indicates that engagement with ICT blended with face-to-face adult guidance counselling practice is highly beneficial. Reid (2016, pg. 223) argues that “I do not view the internet or digital technologies within careers work as offering a complete service, nor, of course, do face-to-face services.” She recognises that to effectively and competently integrate ICT within careers work that “specific learning or training is required for practitioners to support their digital career literacy” (pg. 238). The MyFuture+ pilot process from its formation has been conscious of supporting the members throughout the timeframe; training in using the resource was immediate, followed by consistent checking in by phone, email and meetings.

### MyFuture+ – A Qualitative Case Study

This pilot process was a tangible way to objectively evaluate how a new ICT adult guidance resource applied to FET guidance practice. The term “data gathering” although crucial in building evidence based practice can often feel dry and somewhat removed from personal engagement with clients and learners. It was important to NCGE and CareersPortal to capture as much as possible the experience of those involved. Feedback was documented throughout the process at meetings and through survey monkey with members and their clients/learners. In particular, each member provided a comprehensive and in-depth qualitative case study example of using MyFuture+ in a one-to-one or group context. These reflections allowed unique insight into how ICT guidance resources can impact and support the adult guidance counselling process. The following is one example of such; highlighting both the adult guidance counsellor experience and that of the client.

## An Adult Guidance Counsellor’s Reflection of MyFuture+

### Background Information:

This student is in the first year of an Animation course (She is working towards a QQI Level 5 Award in May). Normally students would either progress to the HND Award or go onto a Higher Education Institute. She worried that her dislike and lack of skill in the computer element of the course would mean that she would not pass the year. By the time she came to see me she was lacking in confidence and very unsure about her ability or desire to continue with this course of study. I explained to the student that if she was having doubts about her course we could use some of the resources on the MyFuture+ software to help clarify her career interests/personality type and career values. We could also use it to research suggested careers. We began by using the Career Interest Inventory as this student was uncertain about her choice of PLC course. We began with a career interview and identified that this student was primarily interested in caring and working with people. We then used the ‘Personality Profiler’ which showed her to be an Idealist and finished by looking at videos of social care workers and job opportunities in this arena.

### Key Outcomes from integrating MyFuture+ into my practice:

- The student identified that she wished to keep art as a hobby and something that she could use as relaxation and take pleasure in. At present, her love of art and drawing was eroded as it was now a “chore” and there was constant pressure to “improve” or “start again”.
- The student also clarified the value she put on job security and stability and expressed her worry that a career in the creative arts might not necessarily provide this stability.
- The student identified that she wanted to work with people in a caring capacity and also wished to learn about the therapeutic benefits of art.
- The student decided to research an Applied Social Studies Award and applied for a place on a QQI Level 5 course starting next September.

- She used the information she has learned about herself and the work of a social care practitioner to prepare for the interview. She was successful and was offered a place on the course.
- In this instance I was able to write a reference for this student in support of her application to an Applied Social Studies course. I was able to refer to the results of her Career Interest Inventory, the ‘Personality Profiler’ results and the career interview which I conducted. One of the questions which was bound to come up during the interview process was “why have you decided to change from an Animation Course to an Applied Social Studies course?”. The interviewers would need to be convinced that the student had made an informed decision based on her career interests, personal preferences, skills and knowledge. MyFuture + provided us with the opportunity to do all of this and to look at videos of Social Care workers.

### Client Perspective:

"MyFuture+ allowed me to figure out my interests, complete a personality profile, as well as a careers test and find out my career skills that all followed an informative piece of writing to help you understand more. My results were linked together in terms of the type of person that I am (an idealist) and the job sector I would enjoy finding a profession in (social and caring). You are able to click on certain areas of industry and see helpful information such as a full list of possible occupations, what jobs are in need at the moment, videos, skill sets and more one can use to comprehend the area more. They also compact all of the possible education routes making it easier to do all of the work on one website. After finding out that the course I'm doing in my first year of college is not the right one for me to progress in, it is a very concerning and overwhelming time regarding the direction my career will take me in the future. Overall MyFuture+ has helped me choose the next step in the progression of my education and has made me think"

Providing guidance services to FET learners involves a huge variety of situations and learning environments, such as PLC, Adult Education, Youthreach/CTC's etc. Piloting this resource across this diversity of FET based guidance services has provided the opportunity to show the potential for using this resource with adult clients wherever they are based.

## References

Darbey, L. McNiff, J. Fields, P., (2013) Evidence Based Handbook: Guidance Case Studies. National Centre for Guidance in Education.

Reid, H., (2016) Introduction to Career Counselling & Coaching. London: SAGE.