



Accelerating Coaching and Counseling  
through e-Tools and innovative Training

## NATIONAL REPORT

### United Kingdom

Situation and Needs of Counseling and Guidance  
Practitioners/Coaches working with Hard-to-Reach  
Groups in the United Kingdom





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## I. Executive Summary

This report summarises the results of a survey completed by fourteen careers professionals, and interviews held with a further four careers professionals about their work with hard-to-reach groups in the United Kingdom. This research enabled the hard-to-reach groups, challenges, and training and working approaches that careers professionals face working with hard-to-reach groups to be identified. It also allowed their preferred training styles to be uncovered. These results will help develop the structure and design of an online course for careers professionals to help them more effectively work with these groups. Each module will address the difficulties experienced with each group and will be available at different levels. This will enable the module to be useful for all careers professionals as it accounts for the different levels of knowledge and experiences they have of each hard-to-reach group.

From this report, it can be seen that professionals work with a wide variety of hard-to-reach groups, so being flexible in their practice is vital, as is having extensive knowledge so that they are able to effectively work with the individuals who seek their advice. As a result, a training module of this kind would be hugely beneficial.

The main challenges that professionals face, and that will be addressed in the training course, are: communication, intercultural competences, interpersonal relationships and helping individuals to achieve their goals. Other challenges that professionals face are: motivating individuals, the use of IT and not having enough psychological knowledge.

Due to the busy schedule held by career professionals, training cannot last long, so should be of high quality in short, monthly sessions. To ensure this is the case, different experience levels will be available for each module so that the most relevant information can be accessed immediately, saving professionals time by not having to go through information they already know.

## **1. Context and Background of hard-to-reach groups in the United Kingdom**

### **1.1. Main characteristics of hard-to-reach groups and career guidance**

#### **1.1.1. Definition of hard-to-reach groups: early school leavers, long-term unemployed people, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers**

Hard-to-reach groups refer to specific sub-groups of the population that are difficult to involve or engage in particular services due to their physical and geographical location, or social and economic situation (Shaghagi et al, 2011). Although these populations are classified into groups - e.g. migrants - due to the complexity of each individual's situation and the factors that have led them there, there can often be very few similarities between members categorised within the same group. As a result of the multi-faceted nature of each group, and hard-to-reach groups in general, careers professionals working with these groups can find it difficult to provide the appropriate support. In regards to careers, we have identified that the most prevalent hard-to-reach groups are socio-economically driven, rather than geographically, and are: early school leavers, long-term unemployed, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and NEETs.

Early school leavers are people who have completed, at most, lower secondary school education, and are not involved in further education or training. Statistically, early school leavers are measured as a percentage of the people aged 18-24 who meet this criterion out of the total population of those within this age category. Up until a few years ago, young people in England could leave school at the age of 16. This meant that young people were able to leave school before completing any formal qualifications, therefore becoming an early school leaver. In recent years, this has changed and in England all young people must be in some form of education, employment or training up until the age of 18 – this can include higher education, apprenticeships or volunteering/working alongside completing part-time education (School leaving age, Gov.uk). Although some form of education or training is compulsory in England up

until the age of 18 (16 in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), early school leavers are still prevalent as people can leave education without qualifications.

Closely linked to this are NEETs. These are young people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training (Feng et al., 2013). Where NEET differs from early school leaver is that NEETs can hold qualifications – up to degree level – but it depends on their current employment status rather than their qualification or employability level. There is a link between early school leavers, or those with low educational attainment, and NEETs as, naturally, those with lower or no qualifications are less employable and can have less motivation to work so are more often NEET as opposed to those who have opted to pursue further education.

Long term unemployed people are those who have been out of work for 12 months or more. Statistically, the long term unemployment rate refers to the proportion of long-term unemployed people out of all people active in the labour market – whether are are employed or unemployed.

Refugees are people who have had a claim for asylum accepted by the government. An asylum seeker is someone who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country, so asylum seekers claim to be refugees, but this status is dependent on government approval. An individual will apply for asylum on the grounds that returning to their home country would lead to persecution on the account of race, religion, nationality or membership of a particular social or political group. Someone can also apply for asylum if they do not trust their country to protect them, for example during a time of war.

Unlike refugees and asylum seekers who move to a country out of necessity, migrants are people who have moved to a country by choice; whether that be for work, study or to join family members. Migrants are members of the population who are foreign-born or a foreign national. Using figures relating to country of birth is more accurate in representing migrant numbers as long-term migrants may have already acquired British Citizenship.

### **1.1.2. Recent situation, numbers, evolution and trends in the United Kingdom**

In 2017, 10.6% of the population aged 18-24 were classified as early school leavers – this is the same rate as the EU average. Early school leavers have decreased from between 13-14% in 2012. There are more male early school leavers than female, with 12.1% of men being an early school leaver whereas only 9% of women are. Interestingly, 7% of male early school leavers were employed and 5.2% were not employed in 2017 whereas equal numbers of female early school leavers were employed or not employed at 4.5%. This implies that male early school leavers have higher aspirations of gaining employment and that more female early school leavers are satisfied with being unemployed, which may be due to the higher numbers of women responsible for full time childcare and therefore being unable to work. This is supported by a larger percentage of unemployed female early school leavers not wanting employment (2.6%) compared to 1.9% wanting employment, compared to 3% of unemployed male early school leavers wanting employment compared to 2.2% not wanting employment (Eurostat, 2018).

There is not a large difference between early school leavers and their geographical location, but the lowest percentage of early school leavers come from rural areas (roughly 9%) and the highest percentage come from towns and suburbs (roughly 12%). This relatively small difference in early school leavers by location is one of the smallest in Europe (Eurostat, 2018).

Since the peak in 2008, the proportions of the population who are classified as NEET has been steadily decreasing - between October and December 2018, only 11.3% of 16-24 year olds were NEET. Out of this figure, 40.8% were unemployed and actively seeking employment and 59.2% were inactive in the labour market, be that for health, family or other reasons. NEET due to

unemployment has been falling since 2011 where it was at 55.3%, but NEET due to being inactive in the labour market has been increasing. There is an annual trend in the NEET rates of the UK, with the summer months (July to September) seeing a peak and the autumn months (October to December) seeing a trough in NEET figures. Females are more often NEET than males (in 2000, just over 15% of females were NEET compared to just over 9% of males), but this gap has been closing to the point where levels were the same in 2016. At the end of 2018, 11.0% of females and 10.7% of males were NEET (Department for Education, 2019).

In the third quarter of 2018 (June – September), the long term unemployment rate was at 1.1% - this is higher than the 1% seen in the second quarter of 2018 (Trading Economics, 2019). Although this rate was higher towards the end of 2018, this rate was much lower than the average of 2.04% seen between 1992 and 2018. Within this timeframe, the long term unemployment rate has reached a high of 4.3% in the second quarter of 1993 and a low of 0.9% in the third quarter of 2004. Compared to these figures, 2018 is very low. Long term unemployment rate has been declining across the past two years, decreasing from an average of 1.38% in 2016 to 1.18% in 2017 to 1.08% in 2018. Between July and September 2016, 434,000 were long –term unemployed. This was 82,000 people fewer than the year before.

In 2017, migrants (defined as those who are foreign born) made up 18% of the UK workforce - 7.6% of these migrants were born in the EU and 10.3% were born outside the EU. In 2017, 231,000 migrants were from EU countries and 346,000 were from non-EU countries. Due to emigration rates, the net migration was at 91,000 from the EU and 247,000 from non –EU countries, showing an overall increase in non-EU migration – particularly from South Asia, East Asia and Oceania (Office for National Statistics, 2018). In 2018, a further 627,000 people moved into the UK and non-EU migration was the highest in 2018 since 2004.





The number of migrants coming into the country for work in 2018 increased by 7% (176,000 in total) – this is the highest level seen since March 2009. 58% of these migrants were on skilled work Tier 2 visas, an increase of 9% from the previous year. In 2018, there was also an 8% increase in migrants coming to the country to study, resulting in 229,000 migrants entering for education reasons. 194,000 of these came for higher education, a 10% increase from the previous year leading to the highest number on record (Home office, 2019 (1))

The vast majority of migrants remain in England – in 2017, out of a total migration of 285,000, only 18,000 moved to Scotland and Northern Ireland, leaving 267,000 in England and Wales. In 2018, there were 29,000 applications for asylum in the UK, an 11% increase since 2017. Nearly 16,000 people were granted asylum, alternate forms of protection or resettlement - an increase of 8% from 2017. Notable increases in applicants were from Eritrea (2,158 in total, 50% increase from 2016), Iran (3,327, 29% increase) and Albania (2,001, 40% increase). In 2018, 7,600 people were granted asylum which is 2% more than 2017. The most notable changes in the population granted asylum were Turkish (332 more), Iranian (381 fewer), Eritrean (358 fewer) and Sudanese (315 fewer) nationals (Home Office, 2019 (2))

## **2. Career Guidance, Counselling and Coaching with hard-to-reach groups in the United Kingdom**

In order to understand the work of careers professionals with hard-to-reach groups in the UK, a survey was created and interviews were held. The survey contained 21 questions, most of which were quantitative (76%) in the form of multiple choice questions, some of which contained multiple answer choices. 19% of the questions were qualitative and 5% were a mixture of the two. The highly quantitative nature of the survey enabled the main hard-to-reach groups and

challenges faced by these professionals to be discovered, allowing more specific questions to be asked in the interviews.

The survey was emailed to careers professionals and was also published on the aspire-international Facebook and Twitter social media channels, resulting in a total of fourteen professionals responding to the survey. An additional four professionals were interviewed.

The interviews lasted between 25 and 55 minutes and contained 15 questions addressing job experience, challenges, the use of e-Tools and skills recommended for the course. In total, four career professionals were interviewed, two of which work in schools and the hard-to-reach groups they encounter are those with English as a second language, people from different cultural backgrounds, those at risk of dropping out of school and those at risk of becoming NEET. One of the interviewees works in a special educational needs school. Another of the interviewees works with unemployed adults and therefore encounters long term unemployed, NEETS, early school leavers, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, over 50s and those with disabilities. The obvious limitation of this data collection is the small sample size and therefore the limited and possibly biased results and analysis. It is reassuring that the main difficulties experienced that arose from the survey were also reflected in the interviews.

## **2.1. Personal, Educational and Professional Background**

### **2.1.1. Professionals' Characteristics**

From the survey, 71% of respondents identified as female and 29% as male. This aligns with national findings where careers professionals are predominantly female. Careers professionals tend to be older with increased numbers in higher ages. 43% reported to be between the ages of 51-60 years, 29% between 41-50 years, 21% between 31-40 years and only 7% aged between 20-30 years. From this survey, the average profile of a careers professional is a female aged between 41-50 years.

### **2.1.2. Qualifications and Professional Training**

The highest held qualification by 43% of survey respondents are postgraduate diplomas, all of which are in careers guidance qualifications (67% in careers guidance). 36% of respondents' highest held qualification were 'other' qualifications. These are all specific careers guidance qualifications. After these two categories, 7% of respondents' highest qualifications are a Master's degree (in careers guidance), a Bachelor's degree (in counselling and psychology) and upper secondary school qualification. None of the respondents have a doctorate degree and all are educated above elementary school level.

The interview respondents also all received specialist training. This includes Level 6 in careers leadership and Level 7 in careers advice, which has enabled them to be prepared for working with all types of groups, including those that are hard-to-reach. One of the survey respondents also received training in special needs but highlighted that although she does feel prepared by this training, what has enabled her to feel most prepared is experience. This shows that exposure over time, and picking up knowledge and advice is really valuable when working with these groups. All of these accounts show that that careers professionals are highly qualified in the UK, having attained specific high level qualifications in their field.

As indicated by qualifications held, 63% of respondents have attended careers guidance training in addition to their qualifications. The other respondents have also attended training in careers guidance but these have been more specific, covering advanced interview skills, NEETs and courses dealing with more vulnerable groups in society.

### **2.1.3. Institutional and Professional Profile**

43% of respondents have the title 'Career Advisor' and 14% hold each of the following: 'Careers consultant', 'Engagement advisor', 'Engagement Coordinator' and 'CEIAG Officer'. This range in

titles shows how broad careers professionals' jobs are and that there are specific needs in each of the different areas of careers provision. 25% of these professionals work in careers services and the rest work in a variety of types of learning institutions or the education development trust.

#### **2.1.4. Collaboration and Career Development of hard-to-reach groups**

From the survey, 50% of users work full time with hard-to-reach groups. Of this 50%, 75% work 37 hours per week and 25% work 30 hours. Out of the other 50% who work part time with these hard-to-reach groups, 13% work 24 hours, 13% work between 12-15 hours and the remainder 24% work the hours needed as it depends on the situation if they work with hard-to-reach groups or not.

From the interviews, it was made clear that career development for hard-to-reach groups takes more time, particularly for the more disengaged groups such as NEETs and potential early school leavers/underachievers. It was stated that “a lot of them don’t want to plan; they don’t want to do anything which puts them out of their normal safe routines”. This shows that an element of some hard-to-reach groups may be a lack of confidence and fear of the unknown - such as entering a new job. This mindset often results in these hard-to-reach groups focusing on the barriers they have rather than potential opportunities so career management needs to be focused on achieving short-term goals. It is important to understand that career management for hard-to-reach groups may not lead to a career in the normal sense – instead, it may involve volunteering, changing jobs, part time work etc.

Career development and helping these groups is made harder as, even though they can be grouped into a category, there are often very little similarities between them: “if people are going through a similar education process, then some things will fall into a pattern but hard-to-reach

groups don't fall into those patterns". This means that a lot more time needs to be invested into the individuals belonging to these groups and more specialised and specific advice and support needs to be offered.

#### **2.1.5. Clients' Characteristics**

All survey respondents stated that their clients are predominately male. Clients also tended to be younger, with 57% of clients aged under 18 years old. This is followed by 31-40 years (29%) and 18-30 years (14%). This shows that careers guidance is needed less in older populations as they were not the primary client of any of the respondents. This may be because these people have a wider range of skills and knowledge about how they can be applied, so are less confused and in need of guidance. It may also be due to the fact that these groups may seek out less ambitious career opportunities due to coming closer to the end of their working life, therefore requiring less guidance.

50% of interviewees work with under 18s who are difficult to engage at school, whether that is due to poor levels of English, misbehaviour or underachievement due to a lack of confidence, making them at risk of becoming an early school leaver or NEET. A lot of these groups "lack self-esteem, lack knowledge about themselves and their skills, they have skills but are not encouraged to develop them or recognise the ones they have". One of the interviewees works with under 18s who have learning difficulties and additional needs. These groups have their own unique challenges which can act as barriers to careers. One of the interviewees works with adults and these hard-to-reach groups tend to be: single-parents; people with mental health issues; long-term unemployed; people with no qualifications; migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; older people and people with a criminal record. Some of these people cannot read or write very well

in English and struggle to use computers – something that is imperative when applying for jobs in today's society.

From the interviews it can be seen that professionals work with a wide variety of hard-to-reach groups – this is also reflected in the survey results (Figure 1) as each of the respondents tend to sometimes or often work with each of the different groups and very few professionals never work with a particular group.

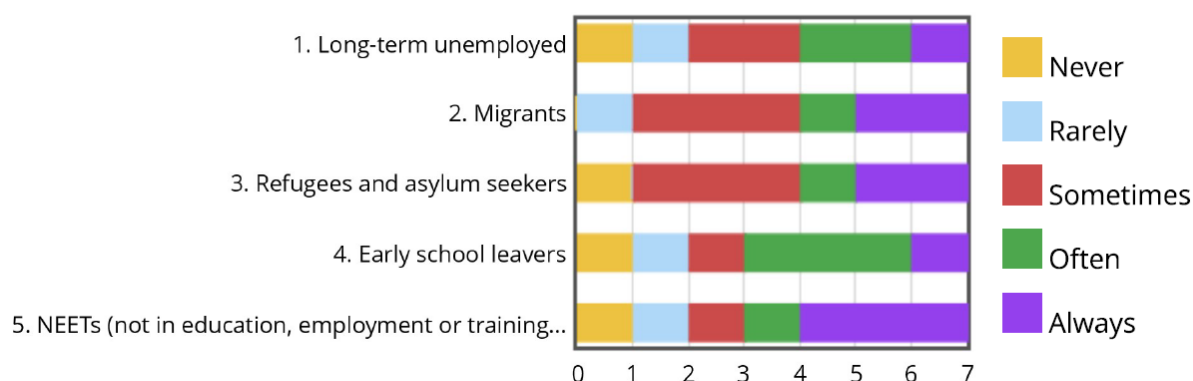


Figure 1 – Frequency of work with hard-to-reach groups by careers professionals

## 2.2. Working Challenges, Difficulties and Training Needs

### 2.2.1. Working Challenges and Intervention Concerns

From the interviews, the main challenges that working with these groups presents are: communication (particularly when English is not their first language), the diverse range of learning difficulties, obtaining personal information, engagement and dealing with unrealistic expectations.

Naturally, communication can be very difficult when you are working with people who do not speak English well – this is particularly the case for refugees and asylum seekers, as it can be difficult to understand what they want and what their needs are.



For the challenge presented by working with those with learning difficulties, due to the diverse range of learning difficulties that a person can have, every session needs to be specifically tailored to each individual:

For the challenge of not having enough information, it is important to be aware that a person's circumstances and personal issues have a large impact on their career choices. This can be difficult when working in a school as information about those who are struggling tends to be confidential. For example, if a person is homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, that is the biggest issue and needs to be tackled before you can start discussing career options. If a family member or friend has died, then focusing on how to combat that is of higher importance than career guidance. It is knowing about these other life issues that are important as careers are only a part of someone's life.

Engagement can always be challenging, particularly when people don't want to come to see a careers advisor and don't see the benefit of it. There are some incentives for people to come – such as the threat of removing benefits – but once they do arrive there is the additional challenge of connecting with them and helping them to see that you want to help them achieve their goals.

Another challenge can be dealing with people's expectations, and helping them when they are currently unrealistic. One interviewee mentioned that she works with people who do not have any qualifications and are unaware that they often need at least GCSEs to enroll onto a course, or that long-term unemployed want to go straight into paid work, but without any recent experience (such as voluntary work) they will struggle.

Most of the UK careers professionals interviewed don't tend to have many intervention concerns. This is due to the general structure of having one-to-one sessions, as opposed to group sessions, so the needs of each individual can be addressed. Asking the right questions, and tracking progress, to identify any possible intervention concerns is also important and those interviewed were aware of the importance of this. One of the professionals did highlight that an inability to read or write, or speak English well can be a concern as the right help cannot be given. This is also the case if someone cannot operate a computer as so much of the current jobs market is computer-based.

### **2.2.2. Experienced Working Difficulties**

Across all of the listed hard-to-reach groups, respondents found that their biggest difficulty was 'helping individuals to achieve their goals', accounting for 46% of all difficulties. The interviews highlighted this is also difficult as there is not enough time to follow up on clients' progress after interviews. This can also be the case when people are in denial about their ability level, or unwilling to take the necessary steps to reach their goals. This is particularly seen with long-term unemployed as they can be unwilling to take voluntary posts to help them gain experience before they seek paid work.

This was followed by 'communication' (32%). These two types of difficulties were present across all of the listed hard-to-reach groups. This may be because these hard-to-reach groups, naturally, are more disengaged from the labour market and therefore harder to motivate and effectively communicate with. The interviews highlighted that communication was a large barrier, particularly with people who don't speak much English, as it can be difficult to understand what they want or need. It is also worth noting that "people tend to feel that they understood at the time but get home and don't". This highlights the importance of effective communication and



checking that you have been understood. Luckily this issue can sometimes be overcome through the use of translation tools and having others available to translate.

The problem of interpersonal relationships (15%) was only relevant for early school leavers and NEETs. This may be due to their age and inexperience of the labour market, and their hesitancy to interact and fully engage with careers professionals. This was also reflected in the interviews. People having poor interpersonal skills are also a worry to these professionals as it is a necessary part of life. The professional working with students with learning difficulties says that they try to help students increase their interpersonal skills by helping them complete day-to-day activities such as getting a bus, managing their own time and money etc.

The problems arising around intercultural competences (7%) were only relevant to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The interviews also highlighted this difficulty around intercultural competences, but it tended to be with adults only. For those working with under 18s, intercultural competences are only a problem when parents got involved through influencing their child's careers choice. This tends to be because they moved here to give their children a better education, and as a result have high expectations about the kind of life they want their child to lead, regardless of their ability level and what sort of career is attainable, so dealing with these expectations can be difficult. For migrant and refugee adults seeking work, the biggest difficulty is helping them to assimilate with British culture, particularly for refugees.

For long-term unemployed individuals, 86% of the difficulties working with them were around helping them to achieve their goals and 14% was due to communication. For migrants, 50% of the experienced difficulties were communication, as language may be a barrier, followed by helping them to achieve their goals (38%) and intercultural competences (13%). For refugees and

asylum seekers, there is a larger difficulty that arises around intercultural competences (25%) – this may be due to these populations having less time to adjust to British culture and coming from backgrounds that are more complex. Conversely, careers professionals working with refugees and asylum seekers experience fewer difficulties with helping individuals to achieve their goals (25%), but have the same problem with communication (50%) – Figure 2. For all three of these groups, interpersonal relationships were not a difficulty. This may be due to these groups being adults and therefore being more willing to engage and communicate.

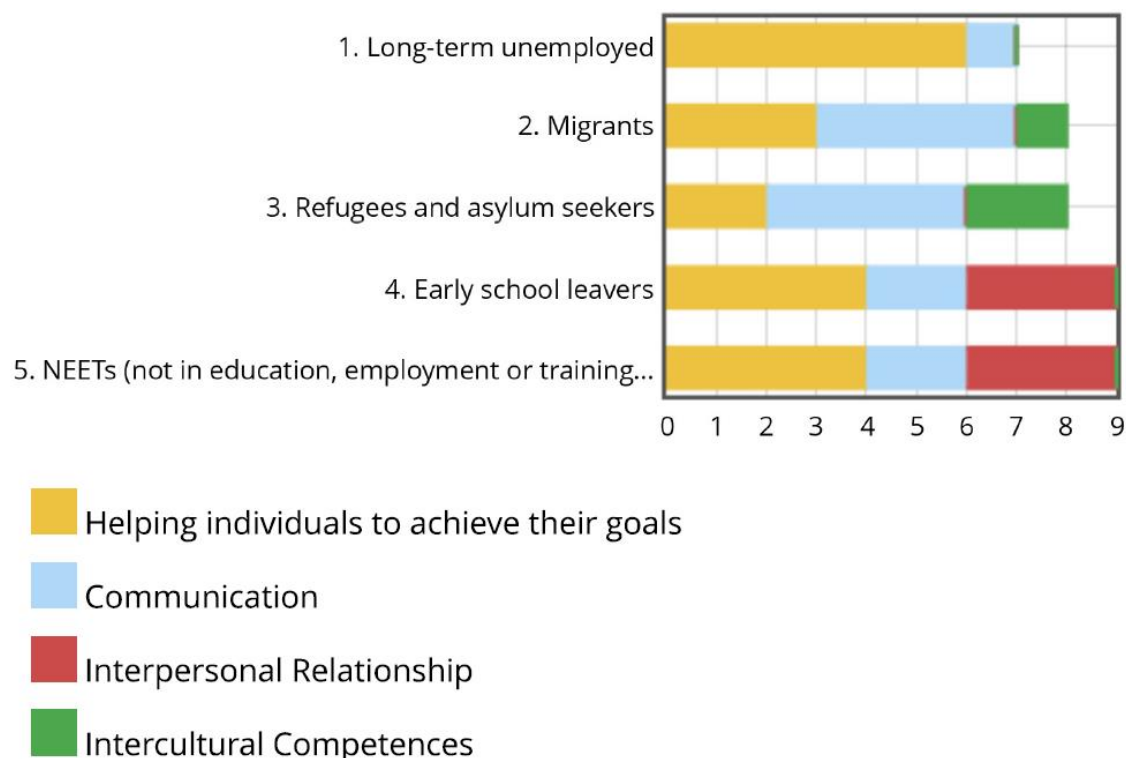


Figure 2 – difficulties experienced by careers professionals working with hard-to-reach groups by hard-to-reach group



For early school leavers and NEETs, 44% of difficulties experienced by careers professionals arose around helping individuals to achieve their goals. This is followed by interpersonal relationships (33%) and communication (22%).

In addition to these four main issues, other difficulties experienced by interviewees include developing people's IT skills, helping them with their soft skills and helping other hard-to-reach groups that require further specialized training. This includes people who have been in prison, and people who are deaf and/or blind and therefore more limited in what they can do as not all institutions/organisations and resources are adapted to meet their needs.

### **2.2.3. Frequency, Motivation and Areas of Needed Training**

From the survey, 31% of respondents stated that they would like to receive more training in the area of psychological knowledge (Figure 3). Although the interview respondents did not feel like they personally needed further information about psychological knowledge, they did state that it is important to be aware of, particularly the science behind learning and the acquisition of knowledge and how to effectively connect with your client.

23% of respondents stated the use of e-Tools would also be a beneficial area to receive more training. 75% of interview respondents also stated that the use of e-Tools would be very useful to learn more about, particularly if they are specific to each of the hard-to-reach groups.

23% of survey respondents felt that coaching methods were important to know more about. 50% of the interviewed professionals don't have counselling as part of their job so don't see the value personally of learning more about coaching methods, but one of the participants thinks that it would be highly valuable to learn more about.

These three methods further deepen the interaction between careers professional and client by helping them to better understand their client and help them engage with job opportunities they may have. They are all valuable to learn about as they are the “areas that we never feel as if we know enough about because things change”.

The areas that were less important to receive further training in were career development models (15%), intercultural competences (8%) and no respondents stated that they would like more training in helping individuals to achieve their goals (Figure 3). This is interesting as helping individuals to achieve their goals and intercultural competences are two areas where a lot of difficulties were experienced, but increased psychological knowledge, coaching methods and use of e-Tools may lessen these experienced difficulties as helping individuals to achieve their goals is a complex problem.

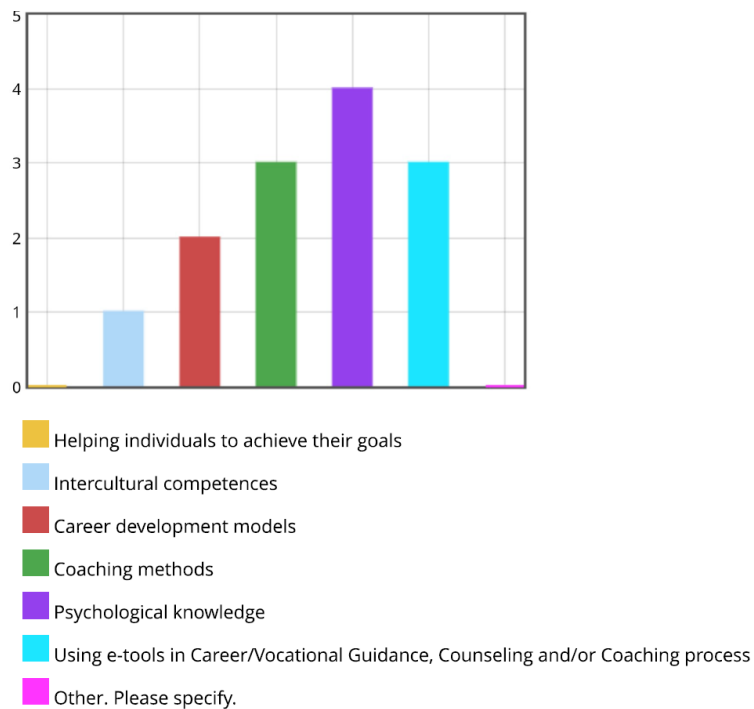


Figure 3 – The areas careers professionals would like to receive more training

The top three reasons that motivate respondents to receive further training, at 17% each were: acquisition of new knowledge, personal or careers development and adaptation to emerging changes in client base. This was followed at 14% by: specialisation in a specific area, solving/overcoming an identified skills gap and a need to always be better at my job. Only 6% specified that it was to help change their working conditions. As well as independently studying towards gaining new qualifications, the professionals interviewed also receive annual training in their workplace, but a lot of knowledge is acquired through the day-to-day work itself.

## **2.3. Learning Content and Environment**

### **2.3.1. Content and Type of Training**

In the training programme, 56% of survey respondents stated that they would like to explore operational tools and resources. The interviews reiterated this through stating the need for increased training in IT and incorporating skills analysis into their work. 22% of respondents would like to explore intervention strategies, 11% methodological approaches and 11% other skills, more specifically cognitive and behavioral theories – this echoes the wish for further psychological knowledge. The interviewees also stated motivating (both clients and the organisation e.g. school staff members) was important as well as communication and challenging the tendency for these groups to self-stereotype.

The learning styles that respondents prefer are blended learning (38%), online workshops (25%), e-Learning (13%), video podcasts (13%) and group sessions (13%) – Figure 4.

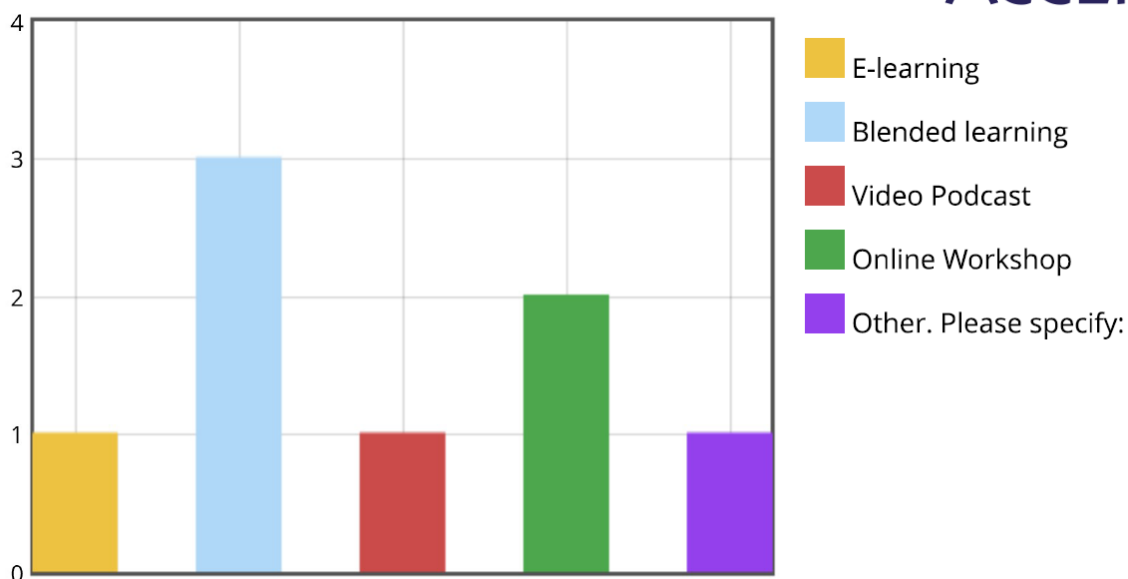


Figure 4 – Learning styles preferred by careers professionals

### 2.3.2. The Use of e-tools and e-learning Training Structure

All of the interview respondents use e-Tools as part of their work. These tend to be fairly short and comprised of questions and answers to help you see what sort of job or career would be suited to you or involve searching a scene (such as a cityscape) and finding out about specific types of jobs. These can be useful and are a good starting point for delivering careers guidance.

These sorts of e-Tools can be at a higher-level and demand an older reading age, which makes them difficult to use with hard-to-reach groups, as those who achieved poorly at school, don't speak English as a first language or have any sort of disability or learning difficulties cannot read as well and can struggle with the terminology used. Because of this, elements of each tool can be used to help with careers, but ones specifically designed around each of these hard-to-reach groups, and their needs, would be beneficial. For these groups, very visual, but simple, specific and short e-Tools would be best as they can easily communicate different jobs but aren't too

long or broad, in terms of the types of jobs offered, and don't involve much technical language. This will help to motivate these groups rather than put them off due to a lack of understanding.

For the e-Learning structure, 50% of respondents prefer step-by-step e-Learning, 25% prefer quizzes and 25% prefer working to deadlines.

### **2.3.3. Training Schedule, Frequency, Duration and Information**

What has arisen from the survey is that UK careers professionals would prefer to complete the e-Learning course across short training periods, within normal working hours, once a month and receive information about the course via email.

71% of respondents state that they would prefer to complete training within working hours whereas only 14% stated they would like this to be after working hours or at the weekend. The shortest training duration is preferred with 50% of respondents preferring 45 minute training sessions. Longer sessions increasingly become less popular with 38% preferring 90 minutes and only 13% preferring 120 minutes. A longer training period is preferred with 38% of respondents wishing to attend the training programme monthly, followed by 25% bimonthly and 25% weekly.

As email is the most popular way to communicate professionally, 57% of respondents would prefer to receive information about the training course via email whereas 29% would like this to be via social networks and 14% via the ACCEnT website. These two methods may be less preferable as social media tends to be a personal platform and with a busy work schedule, it may be easy to forget to regularly check the ACCEnT website.

### 3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Those who work with hard-to-reach groups in the United Kingdom are highly qualified professionals, all of whom hold careers-related qualifications, with the most frequent level being a postgraduate diploma.

These careers professionals work with hard-to-reach groups in very different frequencies. 50% work with hard-to-reach groups full time and will therefore have more knowledge and experience and feel more prepared to work with other individuals in hard-to-reach groups. The other 50% work part time with hard-to-reach groups - this ranged from 1 to 24 hours, to whenever needed. This shows that this group of professionals may have very different levels of experience and may therefore need a different level and content of training to those who work full time. Although professionals may work with a variety of hard-to-reach groups, they don't all work with each category so will have a high level of knowledge with some groups and limited knowledge with other groups. It may be a good idea for the training course to have multiple experience levels to cater for this, but to also allow these levels to be chosen per module. This would allow for the course to be fully tailored to the experience level of each individual user and provide them with the most support.

The characteristics that are present across all of these groups are a lack of confidence/self-esteem in their abilities and awareness of the skills that they possess. This is closely linked to the largest difficulty faced by careers professionals: helping individuals to achieve their goals. This challenge is not easy to overcome, but communication and managing people's expectations are other experienced difficulties which feed into helping individuals to achieve these goals. Communication, including language barriers and how to engage the individual with the topic area, is vital for careers professionals and often one of the largest areas that they struggle with. Focusing on how to effectively communicate with each group in an easy to understand and approachable way will be vital for the course, as well as how to engage and encourage them to





see sessions as beneficial rather than compulsory. Managing people's expectations and helping them to identify their skills and a realistic career path is also crucial in helping them to achieve their goals as it provides direction. Learning how to help individuals identify their abilities and strengths for all hard-to-reach groups is also a vital area in helping them achieve their goals.

The areas that respondents would also like training to address are operational tools and resources, e-Tools – all those asked use them currently but would like more training and to be able to discover ones that are more applicable to each hard-to-reach group – and psychological knowledge. Psychological knowledge is one of the most requested areas to know more about as it helps with communication, engagement, interpersonal relationships and promoting confidence.

It can be concluded that professionals, from both the surveys and the interviews, would like a flexible training environment where a variety of different topics at varying levels of difficulty can be explored. Due to their busy work schedules, they would prefer this training to be contained in short sessions within working hours and to occur once a month.

## II. Annexes and/or Appendixes

### Annexe I – References

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