



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# **National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance: Strategic Action Plan (2024-2030)**

December 2023

# Introduction

The [National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance \(2024-2030\)](#) outlines the vision, pillars, objectives and outcomes of lifelong guidance in Ireland over an eight-year term.

This Strategic Action Plan (2024-2030) outlines the strategic actions that will be undertaken at a national level, to achieve the identified outcomes. This Strategic Action Plan provides a roadmap for lifelong guidance. Drawing on the collaborative approach of the National Policy Group, relevant government departments and bodies will lead on the strategic actions outlined below.

The strategic actions outlined in this document are presented under each of the four pillars supporting the framework:

1. Visibility and awareness of lifelong-guidance services and information provision;
2. Standards and quality throughout the lifelong-guidance system;
3. Access, inclusion and universal design and;
4. Career-management skills and lifelong career mobility.

In addition, each strategic action is linked to one of eight specific objectives listed in the [framework](#):

1. Enhance co-operation and co-ordination between those responsible for lifelong guidance with clear division of responsibilities and strong co-ordination;
2. Ensure greater awareness and access to lifelong guidance to make meaningful, well-informed and conscious decisions about education and careers in an ever-changing world;
3. Embed lifelong guidance within the world of work;
4. Improve clarity around standards and quality in lifelong guidance;
5. Further develop evidence-based policies that will help to improve the quality and impact of lifelong guidance;
6. Promote inclusion and equity of access through the provision of lifelong guidance, which is underpinned by a universal-design approach;
7. Strive to ensure career planning and management skills will be a consistent focus of guidance provision and;
8. Support career mobility for individuals through guidance provision throughout the lifespan.

Target dates are allocated to each action. This Strategic Action Plan and the framework for lifelong guidance will operate between 2024 and 2030. Within this publication:

- 'short term' refers to a period of three years;
- 'medium term' refers to five years and;
- 'long-term' indicates a seven-year timeframe.

A review of the implementation of the framework will be undertaken towards the end of this timeline, as noted in relation to Pillar 2 below.

<b>Pillar 1: Visibility and awareness of lifelong-guidance services and information provision and strong co-ordination</b>			
<b>Objective 1 Enhance co-operation and co-ordination between those responsible for lifelong guidance with clear division of responsibilities and strong co-ordination</b>			
<b>Action number</b>	<b>Strategic action</b>	<b>Delivered by</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1.1	Identify and map the continuum of lifelong guidance and interconnections between services in the current lifelong-guidance system. Identify any possible areas of duplication and potential gaps, if any, for innovative development and enhancement.	DE supported by the other National Policy Group departments	Short term
1.2	Continue to implement the recommendations of the Ireland OECD Skills Strategy 2023 in particular, as they relate to career guidance and career information and the navigability of information available on the skills ecosystem and career options.	DFHERIS supported by DE and other relevant departments/bodies	Short-medium and long term
1.3	Enhance modes of communication between sectors and services.	DE supported by All National Policy Group departments	Short term
1.4	Confirm scope of practice of practitioners and roles and responsibilities across all aspects of lifelong guidance in order to enhance co-operation and co-ordination of services across the lifelong-guidance landscape.	DE supported by DFHERIS and other relevant departments/bodies	Short term
<b>Objective 2 Ensure greater awareness and access to lifelong guidance to make meaningful, well-informed and conscious decisions about education and careers in an ever-changing world</b>			
<b>Action number</b>	<b>Strategic action</b>	<b>Delivered by</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
2.1	Develop mechanisms to generate greater public awareness, visibility and clarity of lifelong-guidance services in tertiary education and for the workforce generally, access routes and supports including, wherever practicable and appropriate and	DFHERIS supported by all National Policy Group departments	Medium term

	feasible facilitating greater access and inclusion and championing a universal-design approach.		
2.2	Advance work on the establishment of a careers-information portal to provide access to careers information and proactively engage users in an accessible format.	DFHERIS	Short term
2.3	Explore the potential to build on existing regional ETB models by considering an enhanced universal design for accessing guidance-related services, supports, cornerstone employers and education opportunities.	DE supported by ETBs and ETBI	Medium term
2.4	Continue to implement a personalised employment support service to connect individuals with sustainable employment opportunities by matching or developing skills and competencies to labour-market employment opportunities.	DSP	Medium term
2.5	Introduce a 'whole-school approach' to guidance at primary level.	DE	Long term
2.6	Ensure provision of guidance supports to students in special schools delivered by appropriately trained professionals.	DE	Short term
2.7	Explore measures to increase the informed-participation of parents/guardians and the wider community to support students in educational and career decision-making.	DE	Short term
2.8	Develop transition year micro-modules that support teaching and learning in areas such career exploration and work experience.	DE and NCCA	Short term
2.9	Develop supporting guidance material to embed the learnings from existing programmes in special schools and post-primary schools to support transition planning and positive transitions to further education, employment or disability day services, as appropriate.	DE lead with support from DFHERIS / DCEDIY	Short term

<b>Objective 3</b>			
<b>Embed lifelong guidance within the world of work</b>			
<b>Action number</b>	<b>Action strategy</b>	<b>Delivered by</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
3.1	Progress work on the development of an employer-engagement action plan in consultation with employer representatives to further enhance and connect guidance services across sectors with enterprise, business, voluntary, etc. involving such things as work experience, apprenticeships with a view to underpinning a shared approach to progressing the workforce development agenda.	DFHERIS supported by all National Policy Group departments and IBEC	Short
3.2	Enhance links, collaboration and sharing of data between research bodies and departments on labour-market analysis to inform ongoing development of lifelong-guidance policy.	DFHERIS supported by All National Policy Group departments/ SLMRU , EGFSN	Short term
3.3	Continue to ensure that up-to-date, accessible information is available on existing educational programme provision on Qualifax.	QQI	Short term
3.4	Seek to support all individuals including those who are marginalised or have disabilities to access person-centred opportunities such as work-shadowing/work-experience.	DE and DFHERIS supported by DCEDIY	Short term
3.5	Promote self-employment/entrepreneurship as a career, including through the entrepreneurship initiatives of Local Enterprise Offices and Enterprise Ireland.	DETE	Short term
<p><b>Strategic actions relating to Pillar 1 will aim to achieve the following outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals will have access to appropriate and impartial guidance throughout their lifespan;</li> <li>• Individuals are clear on the guidance services that are available and will know how to access guidance services;</li> <li>• All individuals have access to comprehensive and high-quality, user-friendly, accessible and appropriate support and;</li> <li>• Individuals will have access to greater work-related opportunities due to enhanced links between the world of work and guidance services in all sectors.</li> </ul>			

## Pillar 2: Standards and quality in the lifelong-guidance system

### Objective 4

**Improve clarity around standards and quality in lifelong guidance**

Action number	Strategic action	Delivered by	Timeline
4.1	Review the existing Programme Recognition Framework for the initial training and qualifications of guidance counsellors to take account of an evolving guidance landscape.  Seek to ensure that CPD provision is in line with training needs in relation to all aspects of guidance (personal, social, educational and career).	DE lead with support from DFHERIS	Medium term
4.2	Clarify the standards associated with particular guidance roles and responsibilities across the sectors.	DE lead with support from DFHERIS / DCEDIY	Short term
4.3	Explore mechanisms of increasing guidance counsellor supply through provision of training programmes.	DE	Short term
4.4	Explore means of potential to ensure high-quality standards and consistency to strengthen guidance provision in post-primary schools.	DE	Short term

### Objective 5

**Further develop evidence-based policies that will help to improve the quality and impact of lifelong guidance**

Action number	Action	Delivered by	Timeline
5.1	Continue engagement with research at all levels of the lifelong-guidance system (local, regional, national and international) to support an evidence-informed approach to lifelong guidance.	DE and DFHERIS	Long term
5.2	Provide fora to share opportunities to reflect on, develop, promote and disseminate new knowledge and learning throughout all aspects of lifelong guidance including professional development.	DE and others as appropriate	Annually
5.3	Carry out a review of the impact of the national strategic framework on lifelong guidance and the strategic action plan.	All represented departments	Long term

5.4	Consider the effectiveness of the guidance-allocation model in post primary schools with a view to strengthening the quality of guidance counselling services.	DE	Short term
<p><b>Strategic actions relating to Pillar 2 will aim to achieve the following outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear and transparent standards of guidance are evident across all levels in all sectors;</li> <li>• Training and development of expertise and professionalism of those involved in delivering lifelong guidance is ongoing and;</li> <li>• Evidenced-based decision-making and a collaborative approach towards sharing key information throughout the system and between sectors.</li> </ul>			
<b>Pillar 3: access, inclusion and universal design</b>			
<b>Objective 6</b>			
<b>Promote inclusion and equity of access through the provision of lifelong guidance, which is underpinned by a universal-design approach</b>			
Action number	Strategic action	Delivered by	Timeline
6.1	Advance work to support access for diverse cohorts and those at greatest risk of disadvantage to appropriate, meaningful and person-centred guidance services.	DE supported by ETBs, ETBI, HEIs	Long term
6.2	Promote the uptake of diverse pathways to education, training and the world of work.	All National Policy group departments	Medium term
6.3	Continue to ensure information on pathways to and within education and to the world of work are delivered impartially through a range of accessible formats, consistent with a universal-design approach.	DFHERIS lead with support from other National Policy Group departments as appropriate	Medium term
6.4	Explore the potential for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to be recognised formally as part of qualifications/training in relation to guidance counselling.	DFHERIS and HEIs	Short term
6.5	Continue to ensure accessibility, inclusion and universal design are integrated into all relevant	DE, DFHERIS,	Ongoing

	policy coming within the terms of the strategic lifelong-guidance framework.	ETBs, ETBI, HEIs, DSP Supported by NDA	
6.6	Develop, create and share resources to enhance guidance practice in post-primary schools	DE supported by Guidance Team in Oide	Ongoing

**Strategic actions relating to Pillar 3 will aim to achieve the following outcomes:**

- All individuals have access to comprehensive and high-quality, user-friendly, accessible and appropriate support;
- All individuals have access to comprehensive, holistic, impartial and high-quality lifelong-guidance services;
- Disadvantaged groups, in particular as identified in the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy, have access to comprehensive holistic, impartial and high-quality lifelong-guidance services and;
- Guidance provision is universally designed for all.

**Pillar 4:**  
**Career-management skills and lifelong career mobility**

**Objective 7**

**Strive to ensure career-management and planning skills will be a consistent focus of guidance provision**

Action number	Strategic action	Delivered by	Timeline
7.1	Take steps to help support the integration of the development of career-planning and management skills into guidance teaching at post-primary level and the availability at FET and HE levels of relevant modules/programmes and throughout the lifespan, as outlined by the Transversal Skills project.	DE, DFHERIS, ETBs, ETBI and HEIs	Long term
7.2	Support the work of advancing learner career-management and planning skills across the lifespan through the development of suitable awards standards.	ETBs, ETBI, QQI	Long term



<b>Objective 8</b>			
<b>Support career mobility for individuals through guidance provision throughout the lifespan</b>			
8.1	Seek to enhance the provision of access to guidance at key stages so that an individual may upskill and retrain, thereby enabling career mobility of the workforce.	All represented departments	Long term
<p><b>Strategic actions relating to Pillar 4 will aim to achieve the following outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All individuals can access person-centered support in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Developing career-management skills</li> <li>– Upskilling</li> <li>– Reskilling</li> <li>– Mobility</li> <li>– Self-employment and the world of work</li> <li>– The labour market</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			

## Abbreviations

DE – Department of Education

DETE – Department of Trade Enterprise and Employment

DFHERIS – Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

DSP – Department of Social Protection

ETB – Education and Training Boards

ETBI – Education and Training Boards Ireland

HEI – Higher Education Institute

IBEC – Irish Business and Employers Confederation

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SLMRU – Skills and Labour Market Research Unit

EGFSN – Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland