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About Presenters:

Dr Kendra Gilbert is a BPS Chartered Counselling Psychologist, qualified for 10 years. Since qualifying, she has gained experience of working with individuals who have a range of mental health problems. She has also significant experience of working with young disadvantaged people, helping them with obstacles to the workplace and with career options. She currently works full time in academia teaching on a Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology preparing students for work in clinical settings. She also has a counselling practice. As a result of her varied experience, she has developed an interest in the integration of professional disciplines and has forged a working relationship with her colleagues in Careers Guidance. As a result of this, she has recently been awarded a research grant to develop psychological approaches to helping young unemployed people back to work and to design training programmes for professionals who work in the unemployment sector.

Professor Rachel Mulvey is currently Acting Dean of School and Chair in Career Guidance. After a first degree at Manchester University, followed by teaching in Malaysia, Rachel undertook professional training at UEL, then practised as a generic and specialist careers adviser (post 16) in London and the South East. Rachel is a fellow and past president of the Institute of Career Guidance, and a fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Rachel is Vice Chair of the parliamentary task force on the Career guidance profession. Convened by the Department of Children Schools and Families, this inquiry reports in summer 2010. Her own research centres on public policy for career guidance, and the management of guidance professionals. She is currently on the steering group for a pan-European Erasmus Network, led by the University of Heidelberg. Rachel has undertaken consultancy at local and national level; clients include Learndirect, the NHS, Career Management Futures and Skills Training UK.

Title of Paper: Resilience Training for Young Unemployed People: A Synthesis of Psychological and Careers Guidance Theory and Practice

Abstract:

Increasing numbers of young people are currently facing long term unemployment. With a view to increasing employment skills, the government have introduced the 'Flexible New Deal' (FND). This includes a mandatory training programme for young unemployed people (18-25 years) who have been unemployed for one year. Employment training is provided by private sector organisations, customer advisors play a key role in providing guidance with employment opportunities and skills development. Research suggests that this work is challenging, training for the role is inadequate and career prospects low.

In relation to this, research suggests that there are psychological difficulties relating to long term unemployment, including low self esteem and depression, consequently, job seeking assertiveness and job sustainability are compromised. Conversely, job related skills improve through increased psychological resilience, particularly self efficacy. Given the above, there is a strong argument for developing services for young unemployed people, and reconsidering the skills set of customer advisors.

With this in mind, grounded in psychological and careers guidance literature, a 6 week (2 hours once weekly) resilience training project was designed, delivered and evaluated. 15 young unemployed people were recruited from an employment training centre; all were at the start of their 13 week training and were offered the group as part of their training plan. In conjunction, to support the work of the customer advisors, weekly staff support groups were carried out.

The outcome and process of the group is discussed in the context of reflections from the two group facilitators, participant outcome interviews and customer advisor staff focus groups. For the young unemployed, two conflicting issues emerged; increased resilience and negative engagement. Increased resilience reflected positive outcome themes, including, self assurance, values and challenges, flexibility, and group cohesion through shared identity. Negative engagement was also apparent and is hypothesised to have compromised the development of resilience. Further themes of role conflict, commitment, institutional dilemmas and training deficit emerged from the customer advisor focus groups. In relation to improving career pathways and CPD training, recommendations for service delivery and customer advisor training are proposed.