

UNEMPLOYED TEENAGERS AND INFORMATION ABOUT EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the various types of information services which are provided for unemployed teenagers, and the nature of teenagers awareness and expectations.

The point of view of various information providers is studied, and three case studies give an up-to-date picture of the current provision in parts of Scotland. In one area, a library dedicate to teenagers was in operation, and their awareness of information was extremely high. However, in the other two areas awareness of the information was low. Findings suggested that this was mainly due to a lack of promotion of the information service, and a lack of cooperation between agencies. The surveys also point to the unemployed teenagers' wish for better access to information about job vacancies.

INTRODUCTION

Teenagers are the potential workforce of the future, and the development of their skills and confidence is vital to society. Information needed by this group tends to be provided by several agencies. The resulting scatter may make it difficult for potential users to become aware of what is available, and to obtain full advantage from the provision made. For some teenagers, the fact that they are unemployed means that they can become isolated, and it may be even more difficult for them to utilise the available information about training and job opportunities.

No studies appear to have been published recording either the extent to which the agencies concerned with teenagers cooperate with each other in providing information on careers, welfare benefits, etc., or assessing whether unemployed teenagers are aware of the

information potentially available to them. An investigation was therefore carried out in 1989/90 to review these aspects of information provision and use.

As part of the investigation, studies were carried out in three towns in Scotland in areas which have suffered relatively high unemployment in the recent past because of the decline of local industries. This comprised a review of relevant aspects of information provision by the various agencies in the three towns, and of cooperation between the agencies.

Small scale surveys were also carried out to determine the awareness amongst local unemployed teenagers of current information provision in these towns, the extent to which they made use of it, and to identify their unmet needs. For the purpose of the investigation, unemployed teenagers were defined as those without a full-time or part-time job, who are seeking work and are between the ages of sixteen and nineteen inclusive.

The paper concludes by pointing to a number of matters which emerged from the case studies as needing careful consideration in the planning and operation of information services for unemployed teenagers.

UNEMPLOYED TEENAGERS

'Teenagers' as a group are important because they are no longer children, but they do not necessarily relate to the adult world. Life can be stressful for them as they experience leaving school, looking for work, supporting themselves and forming relationships with the opposite sex. Often their behavioural patterns attract suspicion and fear in the community. They, in turn, may not like organisations where the values and behavioural patterns differ from their own. Often:

"young people want a meeting place where they will be welcomed, they need an informal atmosphere where they can chat." (1)

The proportion who are 'unemployed' has dropped, but this may be because teenagers are more likely to have been placed on government sponsored training schemes, and are thus less likely to be officially recognised as unemployed than they were a decade ago. Unemployed teenagers must be one of the most disadvantaged groups in contemporary society. A significant number of young adults are in domestic situations which are neither supportive nor constructive. They, in particular, need positive information and guidance from other sources in order to help them make the most of their lives.

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries in England and Wales are under a statutory obligation to provide a comprehensive service, and there is a similar expectation in Scotland that they will attempt to meet the needs of the whole community. A Library Association policy statement issued in 1983 called on libraries to develop their services to disadvantaged groups⁽²⁾. Unemployed teenagers are clearly identifiable as a group and as potential users of public library information services. There is no doubt that they are also disadvantaged.

Many young people apparently feel intimidated in the premises of many public services. Libraries are, however, widely perceived as places where the young person is left to pursue his or her own devices, unless these are disruptive⁽³⁾. The public library does not charge fees, does not mandate attendance, and may be open on Saturdays and in the evenings when most public buildings (including Job Centres and Careers Offices) are closed.

INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION PROVISION

To identify the extent to which the information needs of unemployed teenagers had already been assessed, the published literature was searched to identify any relevant studies already completed in the UK. No studies appeared to have been published specifically relating to information for unemployed teenagers. However, three other surveys relating to the unemployed or to teenagers proved relevant to this investigation.

Cheshire County Libraries conducted a survey of the attitudes of the unemployed towards libraries in May 1984.⁽⁴⁾ The survey relates to the unemployed in general, rather than specifically to teenagers. Part of the investigation concerned whether the unemployed were aware of the employment related information available in the public library. Only 33% of library users and 12% of non-users said they were.

A survey of teenage attitudes to libraries was conducted by the London Borough of Waltham Forest Libraries in 1985.⁽⁵⁾ This showed that 54% of the teenagers interviewed in careers centres and in Job Centres rarely or never used a library.

In 1986 Susan Lord examined the provision of library services to the unemployed in Kent, and conducted a supplementary survey of the information needs of the unemployed.⁽⁶⁾ This showed that only 9% of interviewees knew about the availability of benefits information in the libraries in Kent, and only 36% knew about the collection of careers information.

SCOTTISH DISTRICTS SELECTED FOR THE FIELD SURVEY

In order to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of current information provision for unemployed teenagers, studies were made in three towns in Scotland. The areas which were chosen had reasonably comparable population sizes ⁽⁷⁾, and comparable levels of unemployment ⁽⁸⁾.

TABLE 1. *Population and unemployment data*

District	Population	Unemployed
Falkirk	143,206	6,068
Renfrew	201,295	9,190
West Lothian	143,629	5,490

One town from each area was selected. Bathgate in West Lothian District and Bo'ness in Falkirk District have similar populations (about 14,000 - 15,000), and each has suffered industry closure. It was not possible to obtain accurate unemployment figures for the towns because published data included other, adjacent areas. Johnstone in Renfrew District is slightly larger (c.20,000), but was selected because it is served by Johnstone Information and Leisure Library (JILL), the first teenage library of its kind in Scotland.

Preliminary visits were made to the selected towns to discover which information was being offered by each Job Centre, Careers Office, and public library. It was found that the towns were served in different ways. For example, in Bo'ness the Job Centre was integrated with the unemployment benefit office, whereas in Bathgate and in Johnstone the Job Centre and benefit office were housed in separate premises. In Bo'ness the public library had a separate careers section, whereas in Bathgate public library careers books were integrated with the main non-fiction stock. As has already been stated Johnstone has a separate teenage library. It was also discovered that the information provision in each library differed slightly. Further investigations were made to determine whether there were any other organisations in the areas chosen, e.g., Unemployment Centres, Resource Centres, and Citizens Advice Bureaus, which might be providing information services for unemployed teenagers.

Interviews were arranged with all Job Centre managers, local careers officers, school careers officers, and librarians and with a sample of unemployed teenagers. The interview structure was consistent within each group of interviewees, and varied only in matters of detail specific to the area. The sample of teenagers interviewed had to be restricted to a manageable number based on the time available and the number likely to be contacted. The preliminary visits, interviews and discussions proved beneficial as they not only provided factual information for the project, but also allowed individuals to speak freely about their experiences and opinions.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT: COLLECTIONS AND STAFFING

The management of any information service inevitably influences the use made of it. This influence is exercised principally through the approach to the selection and presentation of information materials, and to staff selection and training.

In the public libraries, the way in which the information for unemployed teenagers was selected and organised varied from library to library. In Bathgate library there was no separate careers section. Books on careers were simply filed in the general non-fiction sequence, and there were no posters or signs to indicate this. There was a separate teenage section which contained fiction books, some of which were related to careers. Only a few DSS leaflets were available, but these were displayed with other community information leaflets adjacent to the reference books and college prospectuses.

In Bo'ness library, there was a separate section for careers information adjacent to the reference collection. This contained books on applying for jobs, general careers books, college prospectuses, and leaflets on evening classes. A separate teenage collection was housed between the juvenile and adult section of the library. This contained fiction books, some of which were career orientated. A public computer terminal provided access to a community information file with names and addresses of people who typed CVs, local businesses, Job Centres, job clubs, etc. DSS leaflets were set out as part of the community information display, prominently situated near the main entrance. However, there were few

signs and guides to make the user aware of the complete information collection, which appeared rather fragmented.

JILL acts as a specialist teenage library in a separate building from other library services in Johnstone. In JILL a section titled 'Information and Advice' contained a good collection of non-fiction and fiction books on careers, DSS leaflets, college prospectuses etc.

It was not only the selection of stock, its arrangement and guiding that varied markedly from library to library but there were also noticeable differences in the way in which library staff sought to become aware of teenage needs and interests. While the professional staff at JILL were able to devote considerable energy to assessing teenagers's needs and to training other staff to deal with those needs, in the other libraries the staff had many competing demands on their time and abilities. The staff at JILL had surveyed the current needs of local teenagers by administering a questionnaire. The staff of the other two libraries had not.

This is not only a problem of time and priorities. Selecting the appropriate staff for working with unemployed teenagers is important because teenagers need young professionals:

"who are sympathetic and able to understand their needs and interests and reflect them." (9)

When JILL was set up, the staff chosen to work there were all aged under thirty and keen to work with teenagers. Their attitude was probably a critical factor in the success of the new service.

A further critical factor may be the provision of staff training

"designed to inculcate awareness of teenage needs, current trends in teenage culture, develop people skills and encourage the proper attitude and approach to young people." (10)

In Bathgate library no staff training took place on matters related to the unemployed or teenagers. In Bo'ness library no staff training took place specifically on aspects of services to the unemployed or teenagers, although staff had attended general training courses on how to deal with the public. In JILL in-house training took place on how to deal with the unemployed and teenagers. A member of staff had also received training on how to advise teenagers, as many required advice as well as information.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN LOCAL JOB CENTRES, CAREERS OFFICES AND SIMILAR ORGANISATIONS

Job Centres and Careers Offices in the three towns provided information similar to that provided in public libraries. However, none of the Job Centres and Careers Offices held collections of company information, maps or bus timetables to help people who were planning for interviews.

Some public libraries have made arrangements with local Job Centres to display information about local vacancies. No such service was provided in Bo'ness or any other library in Falkirk District. The management at Falkirk Libraries, some years ago, had suggested to the local Job Centre that they would be willing to display the latest job vacancies on their Online

Public Access Computer (OPAC), where it would have formed part of the community information file. This would have been a particularly useful facility for the towns in Falkirk District that do not have Job Centres. However, the suggestion was rejected.

Availability of newspapers which contain job advertisements varied between the three towns, and between the different agencies.

Bathgate Job Centre and Bathgate Library kept a similar collection of national and local newspapers. However, at the Job Centre, the newspapers were not displayed for public use. The manageress said that they were mainly used for the Job Club, but were also available to anyone who requested them. However, as the Job Club was only open to people who had been unemployed for 6 months or more, it seemed likely that the short-term unemployed would not be aware of the newspapers. Bathgate Careers Office received only the two local papers, but they were both on display.

Both the Job Centre and Careers Office in Bo'ness received only the two local newspapers. These were not displayed, nor was their availability advertised prominently for public use. The Job Centre supervisor explained that the newspapers would be made available if anyone asked for them, but did not offer any reasons why they were not prominently displayed for public use. The Employment Assistants at the Careers Office said they did not display the newspapers as they themselves consulted them to determine the suitability of vacancies for unemployed teenagers. Bo'ness Library provided a wider selection of newspapers than the local Job Centre and Careers Office.

In Johnstone, the teenage library, the Careers Office and Job Centre all provided a similar selection of newspapers. The Careers Office and Job Centre clipped the job advertisements from the newspapers and displayed them in a folder each day for public use. These were observed being well used during visits.

Other organisations visited in the three areas studied included one school in each town. All three school libraries were found to have good careers information, although, once teenagers have left school they are not likely to return to use it.

Resource centres and unemployment centres were also investigated. In Bathgate the Legal Resource Centre offered a library containing up to date information on all aspects of employment law, welfare benefits, women's issues, health and safety, and many other facilities. It became clear after discussion with the secretary, that this centre attracted older unemployed people more than teenagers.

Bo'ness did not have a resource centre, unemployment centre or a job club in the town.

In Johnstone the St Margaret's Resource Centre was visited. It offered a full collection of DSS information leaflets, advice on employment, income support, and leisure facilities. It also tended to attract older unemployed people rather than teenagers.

COOPERATION BETWEEN LIBRARIES AND OTHER AGENCIES

A leading Scottish public librarian has emphasised how important it is for librarians:

"to build bridges to other groups and agencies in our communities and go and talk to social workers, community education, the Workers' Educational Association, trade union and unemployed groups, voluntary groups, Careers Service, Job Centres and Citizens Advice." (11)

In Bathgate there were links between the library, the local Job Centre, Unemployment Benefit Office, Careers Office, Unemployment Centre, and Citizens Advice Bureau. This was mainly confined to exchanging posters and displaying leaflets. However, the library also displayed job vacancy information supplied by the Job Centre. The librarian felt that there should be further contact, mainly to find out what Job Centres and Careers Offices did, to determine the needs of local unemployed teenagers, and to discuss methods of promoting services. The staff interviewed in Bathgate Job Centre had never visited the local library, but said that they were aware of what it provided. However, the manageress assumed that, as job vacancy information cards were supplied to West Lothian District Libraries, they would be on display in all libraries. This was not in fact the case in Bathgate. She also thought they provided a video on careers advice and employment which they did not. The Job Centre staff did not refer unemployed teenagers to Bathgate Library itself, but they did advise callers from surrounding areas with no Job Centres to visit local libraries, to consult job vacancy boards. The local Careers Officer had never visited Bathgate Library, and was unaware of the information provided for unemployed teenagers. He agreed that more cooperation was necessary. The school careers officer for Bathgate Academy had also never visited Bathgate library and was unaware of the information it provided.

In Bo'ness, the library had contacts with the local Job Centre, Careers Office, and the local schools, but only to the extent of exchanging posters and leaflets. The librarian in Bo'ness had visited the Job Centre, but had not visited the Careers Office. She was not aware of everything offered by the two organisations and felt it would be a good idea for more cooperation to take place, since each organisation had clients in common. The supervisor in the Job Centre had never visited Bo'ness Library or contacted the staff there, but she had liaised with other libraries outside Falkirk District such as Linlithgow and South Queensferry as these libraries displayed job vacancies for Bo'ness Job Centre. The Employment Assistants in Bo'ness Careers Office were not aware of all the information offered by Bo'ness Library. They referred unemployed teenagers to the library on occasions to consult 'job advertisements in newspapers', but were not aware of all the newspapers received by the library. The school Careers Officer for Bo'ness Academy had only been in the post for one month. She was not aware of the information offered in the library and had not yet visited it.

In Johnstone, the staff at JILL claimed to work closely with the local Job Centre, Unemployed Benefit Office, Careers Office and Unemployment Centre. However, the librarian from JILL was not aware of everything offered by the local Job Centre and Careers Office. As in Bathgate and Bo'ness they exchanged posters and leaflets. The Deputy Officer in charge of Johnstone Job Centre had visited JILL and was aware of the information it provided. She had taken part in a video, made by teenagers for the library a few years earlier. The video pointed out the various organisations in the area that were helping unemployed people. The Deputy Officer said that on occasions she referred teenagers to JILL if they were looking for somewhere to spend their free time, but did not think all the employees in the Job Centre were aware of the information the library provided. The local Careers Officer in Johnstone was aware of everything on offer at JILL. Occasionally she informed teenagers that the library was another source for information. On the other hand, the school careers officer in

Johnstone was not aware of all the information. However, meetings also took place in JILL once each month of people working with unemployed teenagers, for example, employees of the Social Work Department, Community Education and various special projects in the area. The purpose of these meetings was to determine what each group was doing, exchange ideas and views, and identify which activities were proving successful.

Overall, there appears to be a need for more contact between the various organisations serving unemployed teenagers. This is true even in Renfrew District where meetings already take place, as not all the staff of the various agencies are fully aware of what each other provides. Most interviewees agreed that more liaison was probably necessary.

None of the staff interviewed at three schools told pupils about the information available at the local library, nor did they take them to the library to point it out. However, the teachers and librarians interviewed agreed with the importance of acquainting young people with the public library when they are in their final weeks at school, and recognised the difficulties of reaching some teenagers after they have left school.

UNEMPLOYED TEENAGERS AS INFORMATION USERS

Thirty six unemployed teenagers, aged 16 to 19 inclusive, were interviewed to assess their information awareness, needs, wants, etc., and in order to determine whether their information needs were being met effectively. Twelve of the teenagers interviewed were from Bathgate, twelve from Bo'ness, and twelve from Johnstone. The sample was deliberately small because of the limited time period for the study and the availability of interviewees. A particular problem was that of arranging a suitable meeting place at a convenient time, and the failure of some teenagers to keep appointments. Nevertheless, care was taken to ensure that, as far as possible, the sample was equally representative of the age range from 16 to 19, and of males and females.

Teenagers from each town were asked if they were a member, or had ever been a member, of their local library. In order to gauge levels of active usage, those who were registered were asked when they had last used the library.

Table 1. Registered users/Active users of public libraries

Total Sample = 12			
Town	% who had Registered	% Registered who had Visited	in last 5 years
Bathgate	50%	25%	
Bo'ness	67%	25%	

Johnstone	83%	83%
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Earlier studies have suggested that teenagers as a group are not usually regular library users⁽¹²⁾, and the survey carried out by Alan Hasson throughout Renfrew confirmed this⁽¹³⁾. The percentage using JILL (83%) is therefore extremely high. It is also interesting that in Bathgate and Bo'ness there was a marked difference between alleged registered users of the library and acknowledged active use. In Johnstone, by contrast, there appeared to be a very high proportion of active users of JILL.

Bathgate and Bo'ness did not have separate teenage libraries and, when the teenagers were asked if they would prefer this, 83% from Bathgate and 83% from Bo'ness said they would. It is interesting that the proportion of teenagers in Bathgate and Bo'ness who thought it would be a good idea to have a separate teenage library matches the proportion who actually use JILL. Reasons for their interest were given as:

"You would see your friends there and people the same age."

"You would meet some of the people you were at school with and be able to discuss your problems."

"You would meet other people in the same boat as yourself."

"You wouldn't get all the older people that are normally in libraries."

"You wouldn't have complaints from all the older people."

"You would feel as though you should be in it if it was for teenagers."

"It would be a better atmosphere."

These comments confirm their disenchantment with conventional library services, and the need for a completely separate building which

"can create its own image and atmosphere in a way that a library room or area reserved for the same purpose cannot and that it is important that the teenage library has a proper atmosphere." (14)

The teenagers were asked if they were aware of the various types of information/facilities provided in their local libraries. The results show that there is a good overall awareness of 'books on careers' i.e., 83% of teenagers in Bathgate, 83% of teenagers in Bo'ness and 100% of teenagers in Johnstone knew about these. Additional comments indicated that this was because many youngsters simply presume that libraries keep 'books' and because they are familiar with 'careers books'.

In general, however, the contrast between teenagers in Johnstone and the other two towns is marked. The awareness of the majority of information provided in Bathgate was low: only 33% knew about the availability of college prospectuses, leaflets on evening classes, DSS leaflets, and leaflets on voluntary work. None of the teenagers knew about the information on clubs and societies. The awareness of the majority of information materials provided in Bo'ness was also low, e.g. 42% knew about newspapers with job advertisements, but only 8% (1 person) knew about leaflets on voluntary work, leaflets on starting businesses, and information on clubs and societies.

There was a high awareness of the majority of information available at JILL. 75% of the teenagers surveyed in Johnstone knew about the availability of newspapers with job

advertisements, leaflets on starting businesses, information on clubs and societies, and leaflets on voluntary work. However, only 25% of the teenagers were aware of the facility for using the telephone for advice on benefits, etc. The librarian could not give reasons why the awareness of this was so low, as the facility had been promoted for some time by means of a poster displayed at the entrance.

The teenagers were also asked if they were surprised that a public library should keep such a variety of information. The percentages expressing surprise were 92% in Bathgate, 100% in Bo'ness, but only 67% in Johnstone.

When asked if they had ever experienced difficulty in locating any of the information elsewhere in the town, there was a wide variation in responses. In Bo'ness 67% said they had had previous difficulty, whereas the figures for Bathgate and Johnstone were 33% and 17% respectively. It is perhaps pertinent to note that Bo'ness does not have a Resource Centre, Unemployment Centre or Job Club, and only a part-time Citizens Advice Bureau and Careers Office, whereas both Bathgate and Johnstone have Resource Centres, Citizens Advice Bureaus, and Job Clubs.

When asked if they would in the future consult the information in the library which had been drawn to their attention, 75% of the teenagers interviewed in Bathgate and 83% in Bo'ness indicated that they would. The majority (50% of the sample in both towns) said that this would be to consult newspapers with job advertisements. 17% of the teenagers in each area said they would be likely to make use of college prospectuses.

UNEMPLOYED TEENAGERS AND THEIR INFORMATION NEEDS

Having given the teenagers some idea of the kinds of materials that teenagers might consult, it was important to try to find out what they felt their most important need was. Teenagers in the three areas were, therefore, asked what information they were most likely to need.

In all three towns, the most commonly expressed demands were for newspapers, college prospectuses, and DSS leaflets. This reflected what appeared to be the teenagers' three main areas of interest: jobs, training, and benefits. There was a greater demand for newspapers with job advertisements than for any other information. This contrasts markedly with what librarians and careers officers thought teenagers were most likely to need. None of them mentioned information about job vacancies specifically, although they acknowledged the teenagers' need for college prospectuses and DSS leaflets. The information needs suggested by librarians and careers officers also included:

- 'How to compile a CV'*
- 'Careers Information.'*
- 'Details about YTS places.'*
- 'Details on Training Schemes'*
- 'Getting organised for Interviews.'*

Unemployed teenagers in Bathgate and Bo'ness suggested that libraries should provide advice or summarised information on 'What they were entitled to claim when unemployed' and 'Information concerning rights'. There was a greater expressed demand for DSS leaflets in Bathgate and in Johnstone. One might have expected the need to be greater in Bo'ness, as

there were not as many organisations there providing these leaflets. Perhaps the teenagers in Bo'ness had a lower level of expectations because of the lower level of provision?

Teenagers were asked if it would have been helpful to have had an organised visit to the local library while still at school to have this information pointed out. In Johnstone one teenager did not think this was necessary as he said, *'It's been in the paper'*. All other respondents were in favour of this kind of awareness raising. Even those who were not interested in libraries would like to have been informed about this information while still at school.

The teenagers were also asked to suggest any other types of information that libraries could provide for them. The aim was to try to identify any information needs which teenagers had which were not met by the existing range of information provided. The responses to this enquiry are illustrated in the following table:

Table 2. Information services in demand.

	Bathgate Sample = 12	Bo'ness Sample = 12	Johnstone Sample = 12
Information Suggestions			
Job vacancy boards		17%	33% 25%
Display job vacancies from papers		8%	8% 0%
Your rights when unemployed		25%	17% 0%
Poster/chart of claim entitlements		25%	0% 0%
No suggestions		25%	42% 75%

The table shows that job vacancy boards were suggested as necessary in all three libraries, even though these were provided in local Job Centres close by. In Bo'ness one teenager also suggested that displaying job vacancy clippings from newspapers would be helpful. The respondent explained that newspapers were popular in libraries and, therefore, not always obtainable. In some instances, it had also been found that the job vacancy pages had been removed.

Suggestions in Bathgate and in Bo'ness both included requests for information about benefit claims and entitlements. Two kinds of information were suggested:- information on benefits, and step-by-step information charts explaining how to claim them. This suggests that some teenagers still experience difficulty in understanding officially produced documents, such as DSS benefit leaflets, despite recent efforts to improve their readability.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was prompted by a personal interest in unemployed teenagers. Further interest had been stimulated by a visit to a Job Centre, during which it became evident that the staff were unaware of what the local public library were providing. For example, one teenager was told by a member of staff that she would have to wait two days for a copy of a DSS leaflet, as it was out of stock in the Job Centre. Yet unknown to both of them, the local library (4 minutes walk away) was dispensing a full range of DSS leaflets, as well as retaining a set for reference purposes.

The case studies of three public libraries conducted as part of this small survey showed that management approaches vary from library to library in the areas of staff responsibility, training, and organisation of material. These differences appear to influence the services provided, and the impact of those services on teenagers' awareness of those services. It could be argued that, in general, staff training programmes should be developed to enable staff to assist users who may not be aware of the library in the first place or who may be lacking in the confidence required to ask for help in locating information. In particular, training should enable all library staff and also those in Job Centres to become more aware of teenagers' needs and interests, and to develop the skills to relate effectively to them. More attention also needs to be given to selecting staff and to creating specialist posts for this task.

The surveys suggest that unemployed teenagers in two of the towns were unaware of much the information available locally, and consequently were not taking full advantage of the assistance potentially available to them. This appeared to be due to:

- a) Variations in the promotion and presentation of the available information.
- b) The extent to which cooperation between information providers occurred.
- c) Whether there was specific attention to the perceived needs and attitudes of teenagers.

Job Centres, Careers Offices, public libraries, and school careers services provide the same types of information. However, provision was very variable. There are quite comprehensive collections of material relevant to the needs of unemployed teenagers in some organisations and in some towns, yet not in others. There were also noticeable failings in staff awareness of the range of information available in other agencies in their town. There is a clear need for more cooperation between the various organisations serving unemployed teenagers, and not only to ensure that gaps in information collections and services are remedied as far as practicable. The aim should also be to ensure that all employees of the relevant agencies are fully aware of the information available in their locality, and to facilitate referral of 'clients' with particular needs for information or advice.

The leading role of public libraries in the provision of information services in their community suggests that the responsibility rests with the public libraries to take the initiative in making contacts, and in compiling a directory of what information sources and services each organisation provides. Regular meetings between the staff of the various agencies would also be a useful method of exchanging experience, ideas and plans.

The way in which the information for the unemployed in general and for teenagers in particular was presented within the various agencies' offices varied quite noticeably. Informal observation suggested

that the teenagers were finding information for themselves rather than asking for help. Presentation, arrangement, and directional signing are, therefore, of particular importance.

There is clearly also a need for more promotional work to alert unemployed teenagers to information relevant to their needs. This must be targeted specifically at the group if it is to be effective. Promotional methods which should perhaps be considered by all the agencies concerned would include greater use of local radio. It is a medium which is particularly attractive to teenagers.

The results of this small survey surveys suggest that teenagers want information about job vacancies more than any other type of information, and that there is a greater need for newspapers with job advertisements than any other kind of information. Similarly, job vacancy boards were suggested as a useful addition to the facilities of libraries, even though these might be provided in local Job Centres close by. This is perhaps an indication that teenagers would like to consult information about vacancies in a neutral environment rather than in Job Centres or Careers Offices where they may feel under pressure. These needs are not at present fully recognised by the staff of the various agencies.

Despite its initial emphasis on the role of public libraries, this study has pointed to a number of broader issues which need to be considered by the agencies involved in supporting unemployed teenagers. The main cause for concern emerging from this limited study is the questions which it raises about the effectiveness of current service provision. In the context of current developments, a general review by all the agencies concerned of their practices, policies and priorities is clearly urgent.

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