

FUTURE-READY SKILLS COMMISSION

CAREERS INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION: BRIEFING PAPER

Summary

- The purpose of this paper is to inform the Commission's thinking around priorities for action in the careers system, including the steps that need to be taken locally.
- Careers support is important because it contributes to individual motivation, career readiness and resilience, employability and social capital. At an aggregate level these improvements in individual capability lead to the improved operation of the labour market, a more efficient education and training system and greater social mobility and inclusion. There is then a direct link to productivity growth, higher pay and increased employment participation.
- The evidence suggests that an optimal careers system would have a lifelong focus, would empower people by developing their career management skills, would offer personalised support to reflect individual aspirations, would promote engagement with the world of work and would be delivered by qualified practitioners with services suitably quality assured.
- Some devolved areas are taking a place-based approach to careers support which seeks to bring greater coherence and effectiveness to the national services that are delivered locally. Careers support is an important lever for improving the responsiveness of the education and training system and meeting the needs of the local economy.
- The available evidence suggests that the quality of careers provision available to young people in England is improving, although this is primarily based on self-assessment by stakeholders rather than data relating to hard outcomes or feedback from young people.
- The critique of existing careers support focuses on its lack of perceived value among young people, a lack of resources needed to deliver high quality support, the fragmented and competing nature of the support landscape, its failure to sufficiently target those groups most in need of support, a lack of local relevance and a lack of accountability within the system.
- Proposals for change set out in our call for evidence and the wider literature include an increase in resources to raise capacity within the system, a shift to local commissioning of careers guidance services, a greater emphasis on quality assurance within the system and enhanced safeguards for impartiality and accountability.

1 Introduction

The Future-Ready Skills Commission's focus has three key themes:

1. Technical education and training
2. Careers information and inspiration
3. Workforce skills.

The Commission's next meeting on 15 May will consider the second of these themes. The purpose of the session is to identify priorities for action, based on a shared understanding of the outcomes we are seeking to achieve in respect of careers information and inspiration. Consideration will be given to the powers that need to be exercised locally within a devolved system in order to tackle these priorities in the most effective manner possible.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presents a broad definition of careers guidance which provides a useful working definition for this area of activity, consisting of interventions that seek to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers.

In producing our outline assessment of the state of play in the careers field we have developed a set of proposed outcomes. The purpose of the outcomes is to provide a focus on the things that really matter in the careers system and to offer a structure for identifying the current state of play and the issues that prevent us from making progress.

We have presented the outcomes as part of a wider logic model (see Figure 1) in order to show how a programme of careers interventions might produce these outcomes. It also shows how the outcomes can contribute to wider labour market and economic performance.

Figure 1: Logic model for careers information and inspiration

Area	Outputs	Outcomes			Impact
		Institutional outcomes	Personal outcomes	Labour market outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifelong career strategy • Personalised guidance • Careers content embedded within curriculum • Labour market intelligence • Employer encounters • Workplace experience • Encounters with apprenticeships, technical, further and higher education • Targeted support for the disadvantaged and for people with special educational needs or disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people receiving personal guidance • Number of people impacted by careers campaigns • Number of meaningful encounters between individuals and employers • Number of individuals undertaking workplace experience • Satisfaction with careers provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools, colleges and universities provide high quality careers support • Strong links between education and world of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are aware of and inspired about their career options • People make better informed choices about work and training • People are career-ready and employable • People have improved social capital • People have career management skills and are adaptable / resilient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attainment • Economically valuable skills • Improved career transitions / outcomes • Career progression in workplace is enabled further • “Outcome gap” is narrowed for disadvantaged groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased labour market participation, employment and pay • Flexible and dynamic labour market • Better skills alignment • Productivity growth • Inclusion and social mobility

2 Why careers support is important

The following section examines the importance of careers information and inspiration to the development of individual attributes and to show how these are associated with economic impacts. It also shows the importance of careers interventions to the effective working of the wider education and skills system. This commentary underpins the logic model we have presented (see Figure 1) and provides an overall rationale for action to increase the effectiveness of the careers system and its contribution to the effective working of the wider skills system including the achievement of wider social and economic objectives.

There is an extensive evidence base that demonstrates the effectiveness of careers support in helping individuals to manage their careers and maximise their potential. This contributes to the effective functioning of the labour market and through this the wider economy, impacting on macro-economic outcomes. Effective careers interventions are also critical to the efficient working of the wider education and training system.

Individual outcomes

Career guidance acts primarily on and for the individual. It helps individuals to make choices, to build their skills and to manage their careers, maximising their potential in the learning and the labour market.

Increasing human capital

The evidence shows that careers support can deliver human capital gains for individuals and that these in turn can contribute to wider economic gains.

Careers interventions increase human capital by supporting the acquisition of skills and qualifications by encouraging individuals to commit to and complete learning opportunities.

Crucially, this effect goes beyond general skills development to promote the acquisition of economically valuable skills that are relevant to the needs of the labour market.

Careers support can also promote the development of career management skills that help an individual to navigate a changing labour market and to understand the learning pathways that are central to career progression. At a basic level it can encourage the individual to internalise the need to take responsibility for their career and education and to enhance their employability, prioritising the importance of lifelong learning. In these various ways it can instil greater resilience and flexibility in the individual.

Analysis by the Gatsby Foundation shows that the economic returns of careers support, in the form of pay premia generated by the acquisition of formal qualifications, are considerable, relative to the costs of delivering career support.

Increasing social capital

Social capital refers to an individual's "ability to secure benefits through membership in networks and other social structures". It has an important bearing both on successful transitions to work and to longer term career success.

Although social capital is most likely to benefit individuals from families and communities which are powerful and well-networked, career support can offset some of the disadvantages arising from inequalities in social capital by providing access to information that lies outside individuals' immediate social network and by brokering access to networks (including potential employers). In this way careers interventions can promote increased social mobility.

Research¹ by the Education and Employers Taskforce found positive correlations between employer contacts at school and an individual's career confidence, their likelihood of being not in employment, education or training (NEET) and their future salary. This reinforces the importance of social capital enabled by employer engagement.

Research evidence suggests that when students have been exposed to substantial careers education from a young age, they are more likely to express broader career expectations and aspirations and are less likely to be constrained by societal and/or familial pressures to make early career compromises

Supporting transitions

Effective careers support can help to enable smooth and rapid transitions for individuals, addressing the challenges that arise during a shift from education to work, from unemployment to work and progression into further learning. It can also address other kinds of life transitions including return to work following illness or child care responsibilities and the transition to retirement and how to remain economically active for longer. It does this by promoting increased self-confidence and positive behaviours such as goal setting and active job search as well as practical assistance with issues like recruitment processes.

Economic outcomes

The above outcomes enhance an individual's capacity to earn and to contribute to the economy. In aggregate they have an influence on wider social and economic outcomes, as described below.

Labour market participation

Career information and inspiration supports increased labour market participation because individuals are better able to access a job that is most suitable for them, have the skills that employers require and can make the transition into employment more quickly and smoothly.

¹ <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/its-who-you-meet-why-employer-contacts-at-school-make-a-difference-to-the-employment-prospects-of-young-adults/>

It contributes to decreased unemployment by supporting individuals to find a job more quickly and by increasing the probability of finding suitable work. Careers support can also help to re-engage discouraged workers. It can help to prevent young people from becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) by helping to understand their risk of becoming disengaged and by helping them to clarify their goals and create a clear career path.

Skills

Careers interventions contribute to the overall stock of economically valuable skills available nationally or at local level by supporting individuals to make an investment in their own human capital in line with demand in the labour market as well as personal aspirations.

Labour market dynamism

Effective careers support enables the labour market to operate more flexibly and dynamically by promoting effective job signalling and job matching in a changing labour market. By making information available about the kind of work that is available and where this work is located careers support facilitates the movement of skilled labour into the most productive and best-paid sectors. In addition, career management skills enable individuals to read and respond to the requirements of a changing labour market.

Productivity

Productivity performance at the firm level and across the wider economy is strongly associated with the quality of skills available. As we have seen, effective careers support promotes investment in human capital and improves the alignment between that investment and the skills needs of employers. By developing a better understanding of the world of work careers interventions can enable the effective deployment of qualifications and skills within the workplace, leading to greater business efficiency.

Contribution to the wider skills system

High quality careers support is crucial to driving a more effective and efficient education and training system, through the following mechanisms.

By helping individuals to make informed decisions about learning and careers it builds their motivation and reduces the likelihood of individuals dropping out of education and training whilst increasing the likelihood of excluded individuals re-engaging with the system.

More broadly, it increases the return on investment in education and training by enabling individuals to become informed consumers who have information to choose learning pathways that are well aligned with labour market opportunities, resulting in a higher rate of positive outcomes.

High quality careers support has a particular role to play in enabling young people to navigate potentially complex pathways through post-compulsory education, work and

training, with an extensive range of choices and options offered by the education and training system.

Context

Careers information and inspiration are particularly important in view of prominent aspects of the current public policy landscape and developments in the wider economy.

Industrial strategies

As demonstrated above, effective careers provision has a substantial role to play in addressing the central objectives of industrial strategies around productivity growth and increased living standards by promoting better alignment between skills supply and demand and improving deployment and utilisation of skills.

Social mobility

The promotion of social mobility is a key objective of government policy and there are concerns over the lack of progress being made in this area. As outlined above careers support can contribute to increased social capital and enhanced career prospects for individuals, thus acting as a transmission mechanism for social mobility.

Financial implications of careers decisions

Career decisions increasingly have substantial financial implications for the individual, particularly with regard to the student loan system in higher education and the introduction of learner loans in further education. This lends greater importance to the availability of high quality careers support to inform these key decisions.

Automation

Occupational patterns of employment are changing and there is the potential for them to be disrupted by workplace automation, driven by technologies like robotics and artificial intelligence. Estimates of the level of potential impact of automation vary but there is a degree of consensus that a substantial proportion of jobs are susceptible to computerisation. This creates a need for greater adaptability and resilience within the workforce which in turn needs to be underpinned by high quality careers support.

Changing economic conditions

Sources of change within the economy are not limited to automation / technology and there are a range of other long term drivers such as the ageing of the population which impact on labour demand. Future economic shocks could also be highly disruptive to the labour market. Again this supports the case for career adaptability and resilience among individuals and access to lifelong careers support.

3 What does a good careers system look like?

The previous section examined the considerable potential of careers support in improving individual prospects and contributing to economic outcomes. This raises the question of what a well-designed system should look like in order to deliver on these benefits. The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network has used the available evidence base on lifelong guidance to distil a series of key principles that should be embodied within careers services (see Figure 2)². Many of these principles are embodied in the Gatsby Foundation's benchmarks for good careers guidance (Appendix 1)

Key points include an emphasis on all-age support that reflects the lifelong nature of people's careers; the need for personalised support to reflect the diversity of individual need; the importance of developing careers management skills to empower individuals and enable them to take their career into their own hands; the value of direct exposure to the world of work through employer and workplace encounters; the central role of high quality information about career opportunities in informing effective decision-making; and the requirement for properly qualified and skilled practitioners in delivering high quality provision.

The current position of the careers system in meeting these requirements is considered in section 6, below.

² <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no.-3-the-evidence-base-on-lifelong-guidance>

Figure 2: Evidence-based principles for the design of lifelong guidance services

Focus on the individual	Support learning and progression	Ensure quality
<p>Lifelong and progressive - as a career is built across the life-course, guidance services need to support this process rather than simply focusing on a single life-stage</p>	<p>Services work best when a range of interventions are combined</p>	<p>Skills, training and dispositions of the practitioners are critical to its success</p>
<p>Connects to the wider experience and lives of the individual - In learning, this includes building a meaningful connection to the curriculum; in work, to wider human resource management processes</p>	<p>Should aim to support the acquisition of career management skills – in order to empower individuals and to provide them with the personal resources, skills and abilities with which to develop their own careers</p>	<p>Success is dependent on access to good-quality career information – ability to make meaningful decisions about participation in learning and the labour market requires a reliable information base to allow judgements to be made about the outcomes of different actions</p>
<p>Services should recognise the diversity of individuals and relate support to individual needs</p>	<p>Services need to be holistic and well-integrated into other support services - A wide range of life issues has the potential to impact on individuals' capacity to build effective careers</p>	<p>Should be quality-assured and evaluated to ensure its effectiveness and to support continuous improvement</p>
	<p>Should involve employers and working people, and provide active experiences of workplaces</p>	

Source: ELGPN Tools No. 3: The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance

4 What are the main elements of the current careers system?

A key feature of the current careers landscape is the statutory provision of support to young people at a local level by a variety of organisations, including schools, colleges and local authorities.

The National Careers Service (NCS) is also a major player, delivering a range of careers information, advice and guidance services. Its main focus is on adults, and it is particularly incentivised to assist the unemployed, although there is an overlapping responsibility to provide support via online and telephone channels to young people.

The national Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) has a remit to link employers with schools and colleges through the national Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN), and implement best practice in careers education including the targeting of funding for proven interventions that can be scaled. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) play a key role in both co-funding and delivery of the EAN and local coordination of activities with employers, schools and colleges.

Information, advice and guidance forms an important part of the employment support offer from Jobcentre Plus. As well as supporting adult benefit claimants, Jobcentre Advisers are invited into schools to work with young people who are at risk of becoming NEET.

Figure 3: Key players in the careers system

Organisation	Careers role
Schools	<p>Local authority maintained schools (and many academies and free schools) are subject to a statutory duty to provide impartial careers guidance to pupils in years 8 to 13. They must ensure that there is an opportunity for a range of education and training providers to access all pupils for the purpose of informing them about technical education qualifications or apprenticeships.</p> <p>Government has also made a pledge to ensure that 100 per cent of primary schools will offer career-related learning.</p>
Further education (FE) colleges and sixth form colleges	As part of their funding agreements, all colleges are subject to a requirement to secure access to independent careers guidance for students.
Higher education (HE)	There are no statutory requirements around the provision of careers advice in higher education institutions, although it is an important student service offered by all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), staffed by professionals who are trained in this area. There is a mandatory requirement for HEIs to supply information on destinations of recent graduates and quality of teaching is assessed partly on employment-related metrics.

Organisation	Careers role
Office for Students	A non-public body of the Department for Education (DfE), it regulates and is the competition authority for the higher education sector. It oversees the funding and delivery of widening participation through national collaborative outreach projects. Phase 2 of the delivery model, commencing in August 2019, will be through 'Outreach Hubs' in 29 local areas that will support schools access routes to accessing outreach activities with a ranges of HEIs. This is designed for learners in identified wards that may not traditionally access Higher Education (HE) but have the potential to do so.
Ofsted	Required to comment in school and college inspection reports on the careers guidance provided to young people.
Local authorities (LA's)	Have a range of statutory duties to support young people to participate in education or training, as with LEPs some local authorities continue to invest and deliver above statutory requirements.
Local enterprise partnerships (LEPs)	As part of wider remit to support local economic development, all 38 LEPs work in partnership with the Careers and Enterprise Company to deliver Enterprise Adviser Network at local level. Some LEPs also seek to join the dots in career provision by leading the development of local careers hubs although there is a huge variation in the scale of LEP activity
Mayoral Combined Authorities	The new mayoral combined authorities ³ and Metro Mayors will take control of multi-million pound investment funds, and hold powers over skills, employment and a range of other areas including transport, planning and housing. A number of mayoral authorities are taking a place-based approach to careers in support of their economic strategy.
Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC)	<p>Remit is to broker partnerships between schools, Further Education colleges and employers in order to give pupils aged 11 to 18 better access to advice and inspiration in finding a career. Its Enterprise Adviser Network consists of volunteers, drawn from business and other employers, who work directly with help to develop effective employer engagement plans.</p> <p>Clusters of schools, colleges and Enterprise Advisers are supported by a full time Enterprise Coordinator.</p>

³ The following six areas have elected Metro Mayors: Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Tees Valley, the West of England, the West Midlands and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.

Organisation	Careers role
National Careers Service (NCS)	Provides people over 13 years old with information, impartial advice and guidance on learning and work opportunities, supported by qualified careers advisers digitally and through their phone service. NCS services are provided face-to-face by locally based advisers, via telephone or online. Face-to-face services are provided only to adults, and priority is given to the unemployed. The NCS uses 7 area-based contractors in 12 locations. Its services are delivered across more than 1,000 delivery locations by over 1,300 professional advisers.
Opportunity Areas	The opportunity area programme aims to help more children and young people achieve their full potential through targeted funding in 12 areas facing the biggest challenges to social mobility. Each area is working in partnership with local nurseries, schools, businesses and charities to overcome the barriers that hold children and young people back. This includes a focus on careers information and inspiration.
Jobcentre Plus	Careers support forms a key part of the Jobcentre Plus offer to unemployed adults. Work Coaches are front-line Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff based in Jobcentres. Their main role is to support claimants into work by challenging, motivating, providing personalised advice and using knowledge of local labour markets. In addition, under the Support for Schools initiative, local Jobcentre Plus advisers offer 12 to 18 year old pupils insight into the world of work and advice on options like traineeships and apprenticeships as well as helping schools to offer high quality work experience. Support is targeted on students at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training) or otherwise disadvantaged in the labour market.
Office for Students	As the independent regulator of higher education in England, it aims to ensure that every student has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers. It is committed to ensuring that good quality, impartial, up-to-date information advice and guidance is available to HE students and prospective students.
Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs)	SAPs are a government initiative that aims to increase the capability of local partnerships to identify skills investment priorities in their areas using robust labour market intelligence. Local Enterprise Partnerships and Mayoral authorities have been charged with bringing together employers and education training providers within the membership of these panels, in order to arrive at a shared understanding of these priorities. A further objective of SAPs is to use intelligence about the local labour market to inform the delivery of high quality careers guidance.

Organisation	Careers role
National Retraining Scheme	The government has pledged £100m for a new careers guidance service for adults and the delivery of flexible courses. Support will be targeted at adults aged 24+, without a degree, who are in work, with a focus on those in occupations at risk of technological change.
National Apprenticeship Service	Funded by DfE Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) programme of activity includes offering free support to schools so that young people have the knowledge and are able to apply for an apprenticeship. Amazing Apprenticeships is a national campaign targeted at increasing participation in apprenticeships.

4.1 What approach is being taken to careers in local areas?

An examination of the approaches taken by local areas, and particularly those with a devolution deal, provides the potential for insight into areas of best practice that could be adopted more widely. A number of local areas have adopted or proposed a place-based approach to the delivery of careers support that is explicitly designed to mitigate the weaknesses of the existing national system.

For example, **West Midlands** Combined Authority proposes to⁴:

- Create a Career Learning Hub to develop and co-ordinate an all-age careers offer.
- Set out a clear strategy and investment plan, overseeing and coordinating existing investment from national sources (CEC, NCS) and stimulating new investment, particularly through the private sector.
- Seek to co-commission any new careers related activity funded through central government, to ensure that it takes account of local circumstances and what has proven to work in the region.
- Trial a place-based approach to careers education to better evaluate what works for young people and work towards becoming a centre of excellence for developing approaches to career learning.
- Improve the range and impact of the career planning advice that unemployed and low-paid adults can access to support entry into and progression within work, through more targeted interventions with the National Careers Service.

In 2018 the West Midlands was also able to strike a £69m skills deal with government, comprising £49m of government funding and £20m of local investment. This included up to £5m for work with employers to develop a National Retraining Scheme pilot and another £1m to improve careers advice for young people, including for a new careers hub.

⁴ <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/2267/regional-skills-plan.pdf>

A number of devolved areas, including **Greater Manchester** and Liverpool City Region, have developed or are developing “UCAS-style” online portals, designed to help young people to access apprenticeships and other technical education options⁵.

Tees Valley Combined Authority’s “Inspiring Our Future” skills plan⁶ sets out a determination to create a high quality, co-ordinated and consistent all-age careers system across the area, ensuring the better alignment of careers education with business needs, improving the experiences of young people to ensure they are better informed and prepared for work and increasing the quality of careers education for adults.

The plan involves a commitment to engage 1,000 businesses in schools to shape and deliver careers and enterprise education, to involve every school in the area in careers and enterprise initiatives and to ensure all 11-18 year olds receive seven meaningful employer engagements. All schools are expected to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks by 2020.

There is an emphasis on better strategic coordination of careers activities and provision with a single point of contact for all employers and learning providers.

With regard to support for adults, Tees Valley’s Routes to Work programmes aim to provide multi-agency support to individuals that most need it to progress in their journey to a sustainable job, centred on a key worker to mentor the person and provide holistic, tailored support.

5 How is the system currently performing?

The following section focuses on published data relating to the performance of key parts of the careers system.

Careers provision in schools and colleges

As of autumn 2018, 61% of mainstream schools and colleges in England were part of the Enterprise Adviser Network. The latest analysis produced by the Careers and Enterprise Company shows progress against all dimensions of careers support among participants in the network, but with considerable scope for further improvement. It should be noted, however, that this analysis is based on a limited sample of schools and that the results are entirely based on self-assessment by schools.

On average, schools are now achieving 2.7 out of 8 Gatsby benchmarks (see appendix 1), although 50% are achieving the benchmark ‘Encounters with employers and employees’. The proportion not achieving any benchmarks is 18.1%.

⁵ *Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram Launches Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Portal* < <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/metro-mayor-steve-rotheram-launches-liverpool-city-region-apprenticeship-portal/>>; *Greater Manchester’s ground-breaking UCAS-style technical education portal set to go live in autumn* < <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/greater-manchester-s-ground-breaking-ucas-style-technical-education-portal-set-to-go-live-in-autumn/>>

⁶ <https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/EES-Strategy-Brochure-LRez.pdf>

Schools and colleges serving disadvantaged areas have seen particularly strong progress, perhaps reflecting a determination to target resources on issues relating to social mobility.

Moreover, schools and colleges that are part of the Enterprise Adviser Network perform better than average, even though Network membership is targeted on institutions that are in greatest need of support.

Schools and colleges are generally very satisfied with the support they have received through the Enterprise Adviser Network⁷. Four out of five believe that the support from Enterprise Co-ordinators has helped them to improve their careers provision, with a similar proportion expressing the same view about support from Enterprise Advisers. Nine out of 10 institutions are satisfied overall with the support from their Enterprise Adviser.

Schools and colleges are particularly positive about the Network's positive influence on their performance against Gatsby Benchmark 6: encounters with employers and employees. Three-quarters believe that participation in the Network has helped them to move forwards in this area.

The Network's impact has been most pronounced in engendering a more strategic approach to careers provision within schools and colleges (70% flagged this), promoting pupil engagement with the careers programme (65%) and increasing the engagement of the senior leadership team (63%).

Significant proportions of schools and colleges believe that the Enterprise Adviser Network has contributed to positive outcomes for pupils, with 62% saying that they were more career ready and 66% indicating that they have improved employability skills.

An evaluation⁸ of the implementation of the Gatsby benchmarks in the North East found that there was a positive impact on learners, with an increase in some aspects of career readiness and tentative increases in some aspects of GCSE attainment.

This picture is largely corroborated by the results of Ofsted inspections⁹. Based on a representative sample of around 120 school inspection reports it found that careers guidance within schools is improving, with evidence of integrated, coherent and effective careers strategies in more schools, with more frequent opportunities for pupils to access workshops, themed events, work experience and contact with employers. Ofsted argues that the publication of the careers strategy has given schools and colleges a solid framework to build their careers offer around.

⁷ These results are drawn from the Careers and Enterprise Company's Enterprise Adviser Network Evaluation survey.

⁸<https://derby.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10545/623538/Interim%20exec%20summary%20FINAL.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>

⁹ <https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2018/06/12/building-confidence-encouraging-aspiration/>

Performance of the National Careers Service

The Education and Skills Funding Agency's annual report provides an overview of the performance of the National Careers Service¹⁰.

In 2017-18, more than 451,000 customers benefitted from a personalised face-to-face careers advice session with a local adviser whilst, the national helpline provided advice and information to more than 112,000 customers. The website exceeded its target of 8 million users and achieved 47 million visits.

Customers of the National Career Service rate its provision highly. Overall 85% of face-to-face and telephone customers were satisfied overall, with 41% very satisfied, whilst 78% of website users were satisfied.

Of those receiving personalised support from local advisers, just over 44% achieved a positive employment or learning outcome within 6 to 9 months of receiving support.

However, an economic evaluation of the National Careers Service (2017) "could not identify a positive impact of the National Careers Service on employment or benefit dependency outcomes," but did "identify a relatively strong positive effect in relation to education and training."¹¹

6 Challenges

The careers system has been subject to sustained criticism, particularly since the abolition of Connexions, a dedicated careers guidance service for young people, in 2010. A number of issues have been highlighted that are perceived to constrain the system in meeting its underlying objectives.

Perceived lack of value of careers support

A key challenge is that, in spite of evidence of its benefits, careers support is not seen as important by young people. According to a survey¹² by City and Guilds, just 5% said that a careers advisor would help the most in getting a job they would be satisfied with. Only 8% of those surveyed agreed that a lack of good careers advice is a barrier to getting a good job. According to a survey¹³ of institutions, students were not always aware of the provision on offer to them, or how to access provision.

Adults typically do not seek out information and advice about retraining opportunities, or know to do this, even when their job is at risk¹⁴.

Resources

Funding available to support careers activity in schools and colleges is much reduced since the government decided to terminate the annual £200 million funding

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-and-skills-funding-agency-annual-report-and-accounts-2017-to-2018>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-careers-service-economic-evaluation>

¹² <https://www.cityandguilds.com/news/november-2015/great-expectations-research#.XMG45rftyUk>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mapping-careers-provision-in-schools-and-colleges-in-england>

¹⁴ <https://feweek.co.uk/2019/01/28/what-will-the-national-retraining-scheme-look-like/>

allocation for the national network of Connexions centres (a dedicated careers guidance service for young people). Since 2010, widespread concern has been voiced (e.g. from Ofsted, the National Careers Council and the Education Select Committee) regarding the consistency of provision as schools have struggled to meet the new requirements without additional funding.

A recent survey¹⁵ of institutions providing 16-19 education in England found that over the past year, funding pressures have led to a reduction in extra-curricular provisions, including careers advice. Among respondents to the survey, 41 per cent of institutions had removed or reduced support for careers guidance in the last year as a result of funding cuts, with the same proportion removing or reducing support for the development of employability skills.

Patchy nature of support

A key criticism of the system relates to its patchy nature. As schools have taken on responsibility for the provision of careers support to pupils but without a dedicated envelope of funding to resource this activity, divergent approaches have emerged between institutions. This means that individuals' ability to access career education and guidance is dependent on where they live, and, for young people, where they go to school.

Even though the Careers and Enterprise Company has been created to serve a co-ordinating role and promote good careers support within institutions, coverage of its network is not universal, meaning that young people may be missing out on essential services.

Only two-thirds of schools included career education in the curriculum in both Years 10 and 11¹⁶. It has been observed that the extent to which schools use their curriculum to prepare pupils for world of work varies according to the degree of priority assigned to this issue by school leaders in each institution.

Evidence indicates a reduction in careers advice provision in the majority of schools¹⁷, with many young people, parents and teachers are not receiving appropriate guidance about labour market trends¹⁸.

According to Ofsted¹⁹, lack of capacity and capability among teachers can mean that information students receive about careers is too narrow, meaning that they are unaware of the wide range of occupations and careers that they might consider.

¹⁵ <https://www.raisetherate.org.uk/>

¹⁶ CDI (Career Development Institute) 2015. Survey of Career Education and Guidance in Schools and Links with Employers. Stourbridge: Career Development Institute with Careers England

¹⁷ Careers England. 2012. School and Careers Guidance: A Survey of the Impact of the Education Act 2011 (September– October 2012). London: Careers England

¹⁸ National Careers Council. 2013. An Aspirational Nation: Creating a Cultural Change in Careers Provision. London: National Careers Council

¹⁹ Ofsted, Going in the right direction? Careers guidance in schools from September 2012, September 2013

Schools policies and practices are patchy in relation to building skills and capacity in their workforce, learning from best practice, and accessing reliable labour market information.

Shortage of personalised guidance

An Office for Students consultation found that although there is a large amount of information available to inform decisions about careers and learning pathways there is a shortage of advice and guidance within schools and colleges to help students navigate the information and personalise it to their own situation²⁰.

Unequal participation

One study²¹ suggests that the current provision for English secondary schools is mostly provided in the form of one-to-one support and that this provision is not just patchy (with less than two-thirds of Year 11 students reporting receiving careers education) but is patterned i.e. students most in need, including girls, minority ethnic, working-class, low-attaining students and those who plan to leave fulltime education post-16, are less likely to receive Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) by the age of 15/16. The evidence suggests that the careers model is essentially one of self-referral, contributing to the further reinforcement of patterns of unequal participation in careers education and work experience.

In the higher education sector it has been observed²², by the Social Mobility Commission and others, that undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to use university careers services relative to their advantaged peers.

Lack of accountability within the system

The nature of the organisations involved in the delivery of careers support to young people raises questions about their impartiality in delivering guidance and the need for accountability mechanisms to ensure that individuals are supported in a way that best reflects their needs and aspirations. There have been criticisms to the effect that the interests of schools and pupils not aligned and that progression routes including vocational training, apprenticeships and higher education are rarely promoted effectively. This is especially the case where there is competition for learners post 16 among FE colleges, schools with sixth forms and independent training providers. The Baker Clause (amendment to the Technical and Further Education Act 2017), stipulates that schools must allow colleges and training providers access to every student in years 8- 13 to discuss non-academic routes that are available to them.

²⁰ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/ofs-strategy-on-student-information-advice-and-guidance/>

²¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02671522.2016.1271005>

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/unpaid-internships-are-damaging-to-social-mobility>

Lack of support for adults

It is argued²³ by some that the information, advice and guidance provided alongside Jobcentre Plus provision is insufficient in volume or depth of intervention to work to best effect for other client groups, particularly adults in work.

Moreover the funding model for National Careers Service incentivises advisors to target face-to-face support on the unemployed, meaning that people in employment, who may be in low-paid work, for example, and in need of guidance in order to progress their career are less likely to receive support. This is reinforced by an assumption among employed people that the support available within Jobcentres (including from co-located National Careers Service advisers) is solely for the unemployed²⁴.

Best practice evidence suggests that a coherent, lifelong approach to careers support is required but the current system is disjointed and disconnected with limited options available for adults.

Complex / silo-ed support landscape

A number of government departments are involved in careers policy at the national level and this is reflected in a fragmented, reactive approach at the local level. As we have seen support is characterised by multiple organisations with overlapping remits, offering similar support to the same target audience.

Employer engagement

Engaging employers in careers activities and securing sufficient number of work experience placements is often problematic. This is reflected in “limited” chances for children “to take part in meaningful work-related learning or work experience” at key stage 4.

According to a report by British Chambers of Commerce, relationships are often hampered by poor communication between school and business staff and a lack of clarity over what is wanted from the partnership.

²³ <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/2267/regional-skills-plan.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/in-work-progression-advice-trial-evaluation>

Figure 4: Responses to the Commission’s Call for Evidence

Responses to the Commission’s Call for Evidence

The purpose of the Call for Evidence is to seek wider views and input on the issues under consideration that can be used to inform the findings and recommendations of the Commission. The call for evidence ran from 25 February until 12 April 2019.

20 responses were received, drawn from a wide variety of groups including employers, local authorities, colleges, training providers, employers and their representative organisations and careers providers.

The Call for Evidence contained a number of specific questions about the provision of careers information and inspiration support, focusing on the effectiveness of current arrangements and potential improvements to the system. These are summarised below.

Current performance of careers system

All respondents to the call for evidence were of the view that not enough is being done to build the career readiness and employability of young people before they enter the world of work. This degree of consensus does not exist in respect of other topics covered by the consultation.

When asked to rate the current arrangements for careers information advice and guidance for young people, a majority rated them as either “slightly effective” or “not effective”. Respondents gave a similar rating to the effectiveness of current careers support available to adults.

Key issues

The main focus of the responses was on careers support for young people, with relatively little focus on services for adults.

The general picture painted by responses was one of many young people continuing to lack awareness of the world of work, with implications for career readiness and with many drifting into courses or career options at 16 rather than on the basis of informed choices.

The key issues raised:

- A lack of resources and capacity in schools and colleges to engage with the careers agenda properly.
- Inconsistent quality of support on offer to young people because it is too dependent on the approach of each school.

- A support landscape that is overly complex and needs better co-ordination and better strategic oversight to simplify access for schools and to ensure a quality offer.
- A lack of impartiality among schools, resulting in technical options not being presented to pupils, or to a limited range of pupils only.
- A growing reliance on online careers resources rather than face-to-face support, the latter often being more appropriate to the needs of the client. One respondent highlighted that the National Careers Service website is a useful resource for adults, but that not all adults are aware of it or how to access/utilise it to their benefit.

Suggestions for change

- There was a general feeling that resources need to be increased if young people are to receive the support that they need. In particular, dedicated resources are required to fund high quality, impartial, careers guidance services.
- A greater commitment to quality assurance is required linked to recognised benchmarks such as Matrix and/or Quality in Careers Standard.
- Pupils should be formally assessed on their career readiness in order to target support more effectively, while employers should play a greater role in setting standards for work-readiness behaviours.
- Interventions should be targeted on disadvantaged pupils from an early stage before they show signs of becoming NEET.
- There should be local commissioning of lifelong careers services from independent, third-party providers to ensure impartiality, consistent quality of provision and better ease of access.
- There is a need for a greater emphasis on ongoing career support rather than the current concentration on the transition point at age 16.
- An increased focus on raising the career awareness of parents is required, as they are often the defining influence on the perspectives of young people.

7 Proposals for change

A wide range of recommendations have been made regarding potential improvements to the working of the careers system.

Resourcing

- Additional funding to enable every school and college to meet the requirements of the Gatsby benchmarks.
- Ensure that targeted resourcing is available for schools and teachers to engage and support disadvantaged students.

Coherence

- Simplify careers policy at the national level by placing a single government department in charge of this area or by bringing all government initiatives under the umbrella of a single body, such as the Careers and Enterprise Company. A coherent approach nationally would make local delivery more straightforward

Minimum standards and quality assurance

- Implement a standard citizen entitlement to careers support at all stages of the life course.
- Ensure that all school leavers have a planned progression route in place.
- Ensure that all students at Key Stage 4 have the opportunity to take part in meaningful work experience

Delivery

- Move towards an embedded model of careers education, in which curriculum learning is systematically linked to a wide range of real-life careers and applications. This would have the advantage of reaching all students but would mean building careers education more firmly into the role of teachers.
- Work with parents to raise awareness about career routes and to challenge potentially damaging stereotypes.

Early engagement

Research²⁵ suggests that the difference between children's career aspirations at age seven and age 17 are marginal and are often based on gender stereotypes, socio-economic backgrounds and by TV, film and radio. This supports the case for early careers interventions at primary school level, particularly greater access to career role models.

²⁵ <https://www.educationandemployers.org/drawing-the-future-report-published/>

Support for adults

- Integrated /holistic career advancement/skills escalator programmes to encourage and support adult retraining and progression, involving advice and guidance, support with funding, childcare and transport.
- Focus on face-to-face engagement in connecting adults to opportunities via the National Retraining Scheme.

Employer engagement

- To encourage every business to mentor or otherwise meaningfully reach out on careers and enterprise skills to at least the same number of young people as they have employees²⁶.
- A number of local areas have proposed a single point of contact for employers with regard to engagement with the education sector, to act as an honest broker for the range of initiatives that are in play.

Accountability

- Ofsted should introduce a specific careers guidance judgment attached to overall ratings for schools and colleges. Others have suggested that the development of accountability framework beyond Ofsted inspection is required.
- Greater weight should be given to the student voice in assessing the fitness for purpose of careers provision. At present data are collected mainly from school management and staff.
- Greater monitoring of participation (not just provision) – a particular emphasis should be given to ensuring the participation of girls, minority ethnic students, working-class students.

²⁶ <http://www.northernpowerhousepartnership.co.uk/publications/educating-the-north-driving-ambition-across-the-powerhouse/>

Appendix 1

The Gatsby Benchmarks

Benchmark	Description
1. A stable careers programme	Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by pupils, parents, teachers and employers.
2. Learning from career and labour market information	Every pupil, and their parents, should have access to good-quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil	Pupils have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each pupil. A school's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers	All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. For example, Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths.
5. Encounters with employers and employees	Every pupil should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes.
6. Experiences of workplaces	Every pupil should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.
7. Encounters with further and higher education	All pupils should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.
8. Personal guidance	Every pupil should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a careers adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all pupils but should be timed to meet their individual needs.