



Careers England Policy Commentary 32

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Careers Provision for Young people – Where Next?¹

In its election manifesto the Conservative Party set out its ambition to make this the most vibrant and dynamic country in the world.² Delivering on this ambition and sustaining our nation's economic success depends on the skills, drive and talents of its people. We need to make the most of these and to give everyone the chance to enjoy the satisfaction and rewards that come from a successful working life. That means ensuring young people succeed in making the transition from education into work and work-related training that is right for them as individuals. Careers England (CE) welcomes the Department for Education's renewed interest in careers and the recently stated commitment to this area by the Secretary of State, Nicky Morgan MP. This was reiterated in a keynote speech in London on 3 December 2015, by the Minister responsible for careers advice, Education and Childcare Minister Sam Gyimah MP.³ This paper is intended as a contribution towards the Department for Education's forthcoming plan to publish "a comprehensive careers strategy in the coming weeks."

We (alongside others) have met with Department officials to share national, EU and international evidence-based findings and to explore potential solutions to a careers ecosystem in England that has become complex, is not working as well as it should, and has a direct impact on the prospects of young people. CE strongly recommends that career education and guidance is provided through a local delivery model, co-ordinated by a national strategy and overseen by an independent stakeholder body.

In this paper we set out:

- The scale of the skills problem and its impact on productivity
- The legacy of underachievement among many young people
- The welcome action the government is taking to reshape the framework for skills
- The need for young people to be guided through this increasingly complex landscape
- Policy measures that could drive accessibility and quality in careers education and guidance.

¹ The issues outlined in this paper relate to careers provision for young people. It should be emphasised, however, that Careers England is committed to development of an effective strategic framework for careers advice and guidance provision for people of all ages across England.

² Page 17, The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015, <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/manifesto2015/ConservativeManifesto2015.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/sam-gyimah-where-next-for-careers-education-and-guidance>

Britain has a long-standing skills problem that is holding back productivity

In many parts of the economy, employers are experiencing major skill shortages and see little prospect of improvement. At the same time tens of thousands of young people coming out of our schools and colleges are slipping into unemployment and inactivity. We are also dogged by mismatches between young people's career aspirations, their qualifications and the opportunities open to them. Effective careers guidance and inspiration is central to tackling these issues. The current system is not rising to the challenge.

There are persistent skills shortages that prevent many businesses securing the skilled people they need. The UKCES Employer Skills Survey⁴ reported that skills shortage vacancies – where vacancies cannot be filled due to a lack of applicants with suitable skills or experience – increased by 60% between 2011 and 2013. These shortages cover more than one in five of all vacancies and are particularly severe in sectors critical to growth, such as manufacturing and business services.

These skill shortage problems are the product of a peculiarly British mismatch. By most international standards the UK workforce is well educated. Nearly half of the workforce will be qualified to degree level or above by 2020 (overtaking the USA).⁵ And the UK has outstanding excellence in scientific research: with only 0.9% of the world's population and 4.1% of its researchers, Britain still accounts for 16% of the world's most cited scientific publications.⁶ But as a country we struggle to translate these advantages into innovative products for the marketplace. And our productivity growth remains slow compared to other international competitors.⁷ Subdued labour productivity is holding back living standards.

There is also a legacy of underachievement to tackle

In the election manifesto the Conservative Party set the aim of abolishing long-term youth unemployment.⁸ This is a very welcome ambition. There has been real progress in reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). In the three months to September 2015 there were 848,000 young people (aged from 16 to 24) in the UK who were NEET, down by 106,000 from a year earlier.⁹ But this still means more than one in eight of all young people in the UK are NEET (11.7%). Yates et al (2011)¹⁰ have shown that young people who were uncertain or unrealistic about career ambitions at 16 went on to be three times more likely to spend significant periods of time being NEET as an older teenager than comparable peers. And a number of other recent studies have reached similar results – the more realistic and certain initial teenage career aspirations are, the better young people do when they leave education – they are more likely to be employed and to earn better (Sabates et al, 2011).¹¹ Far too much talent is going to waste and too many young people are

⁴ UKCES (2013) Employers Skills Survey. London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukces-employer-skills-survey-2013>

⁵ Bosworth, D.L. (2014) UK Skill Levels & International Competitiveness, 2013, University of Warwick, Institute for Employment Research (IER) on behalf of the UK Commission for Employment & Skills

⁶ <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21648003-lack-skilled-workers-and-managers-drags-country-down-mind-gap>

⁷ http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oced/economics/oced-economic-surveys-united-kingdom-2015_eco_surveys-gbr-2015-en#page1

⁸ Page 18, The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015

⁹ Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), November 2015, ONS Statistical Bulletin, 19 November 2015, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_423800.pdf

¹⁰ Yates, S., Harris, A., Sabtes, R., and Staff, J. (2011). Early Occupational Aspirations and Fractured Transitions: A Study of Entry into 'NEET' Status in the UK. *Journal of Social Policy*, 40, pp 513-534.

¹¹ Sabates R, Harris A L & Staff J (2011) Ambition Gone Awry: The Long Term Socioeconomic Consequences of Misaligned and Uncertain Ambitions in Adolescence, *Social Science Quarterly* 92, 4: pp. 1-19

missing out on fulfilling their potential. The government is aiming to tackle this legacy of underachievement through action on a variety of fronts:

- The cross-government 'Earn or Learn Taskforce'¹² intends to create a 'no excuses' culture to support youth employment. A new three-week programme will give young jobseekers an unprecedented level of support to make sure they are well equipped to find work or training within six months
- The reach and cost-efficiency of services to help young people (and others) into work is being improved through co-location and partnering, such as basing *Improving Access to Psychological Therapies* (IAPT) therapists in over 350 Jobcentres (to provide support to claimants with common mental health conditions)¹³ and placing Jobcentre Plus advisers in food banks¹⁴
- The intention to provide Jobcentre Plus adviser support in schools across England to "supplement careers advice and provide routes into work experience and apprenticeships."¹⁵

These are valuable initiatives. But it is critically important that action is taken to stem the future flow of young people into NEET status. A more effective system of careers education and guidance that supports inspiration, with appropriate independent and impartial advice, has a central role to play.

The government is moving fast to reshape the framework for skills

The government aims to achieve full employment in the UK, with the highest employment rate in the G7 group of nations.¹⁶ Achieving this requires action on skills as most of the new jobs created in the period up to the early 2020s are expected to be skilled ones.¹⁷ Since the election in May, the government has moved rapidly to reshape the framework for developing skills and equipping young people to take up these opportunities:

- The 2015 Spending Review and Autumn Statement¹⁸ announced a cash terms protection of the current national base rate per student for 16 to 19 year olds in school sixth forms, sixth form colleges and further education colleges in England for the rest of the Parliament
- Recognising apprenticeships are now the cornerstone of the skills system, three million apprenticeships will have started by 2020 (up from 2.3 million in the last Parliament).¹⁹ The Chancellor has announced details of the new apprenticeship levy which will help fund this expansion. This will contribute towards doubling the level of spending on apprenticeships in cash terms compared with 2010-11
- The government is creating five National Colleges and will support a new network of Institutes of Technology across the country. The National Colleges will train an estimated 21,000 students by 2020 in sectors that are crucial to future prosperity such as digital skills, high speed rail, onshore oil and gas, and creative and cultural industries²⁰

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hancock-every-young-person-should-be-earning-or-learning-from-april-2017>

¹³ Para 1.236, Budget 2015, HC 1093, March 2015,

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416330/47881_Budget_2015_Web_Accessible.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11959999/Job-Centre-advisers-will-be-based-at-food-banks-Iain-Duncan-Smith-reveals.html>

¹⁵ Section 1: Full Employment and Welfare Benefits Bill <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/queens-speech-2015-what-it-means-for-you/queens-speech-2015-what-it-means-for-you>

¹⁶ Page 18, The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015

¹⁷ Working Futures 2012-2022: Evidence Report, UKCES, March 2014,

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/298510/working-futures-2012-2022-main-report.pdf

¹⁸ Spending Review and Autumn Statement, Cm 9162, November 2015,

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/479749/52229_Blue_Book_PU1865_Web_Accessible.pdf

¹⁹ Fixing the Foundations: Creating a More Prosperous Nation, Cm 9098, July 2015,

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/443898/Productivity_Plan_web.pdf

²⁰ Para 1.178, Spending Review and Autumn Statement, Cm 9162, November 2015

- A series of area based reviews of the further education sector has been launched.²¹ Each review will assess the economic and educational needs of the area, and the implications for post-16 education and training provision, including school sixth forms, sixth form colleges, further education colleges and independent providers. The reviews will then focus on the structure of further education and sixth form colleges to achieve a transition towards fewer, larger, more resilient and efficient providers, and more effective collaboration across institution types. A critical aspect will be to create greater specialisation, with the establishment of institutions that are genuine centres of expertise
- The currently over-complex system of technical and professional education is being simplified. The government is working in direct partnership with employers to ensure the new system provides the skills most needed for the 21st-century economy.²²

Young people need to be guided through this increasingly complex landscape

The landscape of training and qualifications is increasingly complex. Signals to young people (and parents) about the added-value of learning and career pathways are becoming more blurred. Their sources of careers information are often coming from distorted or unreliable sources such as TV and social media. And many of today's young people will go into jobs that did not exist when their parents left school. Weighing up the costs and benefits of higher education can be difficult for many young people, even though graduates typically have higher rates of employment and higher levels of earnings than non-graduates.²³ In stark contrast, there is significant variation in the estimated wage premiums of apprentices depending on the sector of employment as well as gender challenges.²⁴ Choices are becoming more difficult.

Our education system requires young people to make early subject choice decisions (some from 13 years old upwards). Raising of the participation age from 16 to 18 years old in 2015 signals further challenges for this current generation of school pupils, parents and teachers. There is also evidence that children begin to eliminate their least favoured career options between the ages of 9 and 13.²⁵ By those ages it is argued that they have abandoned the 'fantasy' associated with the very young and started to become more aware of potential constraints on their occupational choice. But they are often poorly informed about career possibilities and routes into them. Researchers at King's College London investigating young people's science and career aspirations aged 10-14 found that most young people and parents were not aware that science can lead to diverse post-16 routes.²⁶

Our dynamic, growing economy means more opportunities for skilled, rewarding careers are opening up. And there are new – and more – routes for young people into those careers. But if young people are to be able to make the most of the opportunities available to them, they need the right information and advice at the right

²¹ Reviewing Post-16 Education and Training Institutions, BIS, July 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-education-and-training-institutions-review>

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/technical-and-professional-education-revolution-continues>

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/graduate-labour-market-statistics-april-to-june-2015>

²⁴ <http://www.educationandemployers.org/research/the-challenges-facing-young-women-in-apprenticeships/>

²⁵ Gottfredson, L. S. (2002). 'Gottfredson's theory of circumscription, compromise, and self creation' In D. Brown (Ed.), Career choice and development (4th ed., pp. 85-148). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Cited in Gutman and Akerman (2008), Determinants of aspirations, Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, Research Report 17. IoE

²⁶ King's College London (2015) Aspires: Young people's science and career aspirations, age 10 -14. London: Department of Education and Professional Studies, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/aspires/ASPIRES-final-report-December-2013.pdf>

times tailored to them as individuals. Recognising this, in countries such as Austria, Finland, Germany and Switzerland careers education and guidance feature prominently in their education systems.²⁷

We know what good careers guidance looks like. CE recognises the complementary roles of career development professionals and employer interactions with schools and colleges, but these need to link up better. There is widespread consensus on the elements that make up effective guidance to help young people into successful working lives.²⁸ The biggest challenge is delivery. Over the last three years, the track record of careers policy in England has been one of repeated confusion, with a mismatch between the scale of the challenge and the service delivered in practice, as highlighted by the National Careers Council.²⁹

The recently established Careers and Enterprise Company for Schools is part of the solution.³⁰ It will act primarily as a strategic umbrella organisation, supporting sustainable programmes, filling gaps in provision and aiming for coverage across the country. The key need now is to build the grass-roots infrastructure that can innovate, design and deliver practical programmes of careers guidance to a consistently high quality. There are a range of policy measures that can help in building that infrastructure and driving accessibility and quality in 21st century careers education and guidance.

What could be done? – Policy measures that could readily be implemented

There is a broad consensus that the current system of careers provision is not working properly. The process of rebuilding and re-engineering careers provision for young people has been slow, with false starts and setbacks. There exists a crowded, confused and complex landscape, with a multiplicity of disjointed careers initiatives. There are, however, a number of policy measures which could help drive accessibility and quality in 21st century careers education and guidance.

²⁷ http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/ELGPN_resource_kit_2011-12_web.pdf/

²⁸ For example see Good Career Guidance, The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014 <http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf> and the London Ambitions Careers Offer, <https://lep.london/publication/london-ambitions-careers-offer>

²⁹ An Aspirational Nation: Creating a Culture Change in Careers Provision, National Careers Council, June 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/354644/bis-13-919-national-careers-council-report-an-aspirational-nation-creating-a-culture-change-in-careers-provision.pdf

³⁰ <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/>

Careers England has consistently argued for a radical rethink about how we can better deliver accessible, high quality career education and guidance to all ages. Evidence indicates that access to good lifelong guidance would support the government in the delivery of its educational, social, welfare and economic objectives. But to achieve this there needs to be a comprehensive review of the resources that are currently available in the system and for these resources to be more strategically managed and targeted.

1. **Update, closely monitor and enforce the statutory guidance for schools and colleges to ensure that young people have access to independent, professional and quality assured guidance**

The statutory guidance for schools on careers guidance and inspiration³¹ contains many valuable ideas. The challenge is in ensuring they are applied with the drive and commitment needed to be effective. There is a strong case for **updating the current guidance**, moving beyond statements such as 'should' and 'may' and 'can' to ensure careers education and guidance receives the strong focus and priority needed. Steps to raise the profile of careers education and guidance within schools and colleges must include:

- **Face-to-face careers guidance for young people**

Under current guidance schools should secure access to face-to-face careers guidance where it is the most suitable support for young people to make successful transitions. The importance of face-to-face discussion and independent and impartial advice cannot be overstated. It should be a requirement for every young person on a regular basis. This of course has resource implications which we seek to address below.

- **Access to up-to-date, user-friendly labour market intelligence/information**

The guidance should urge that every young person should have access to up-to-date, user-friendly labour market intelligence/information (LMI) as part of their schooling. This is an essential part of countering the distorted or unreliable information that is so widespread. In a world where the great majority of young people are comfortable in accessing data online, there is scope to share information and resources across universities, colleges, schools and jobcentres in a locality. While there is plenty of open source LMI at national level,³² making high quality LMI available in an easily accessible form that is meaningful for non-specialists is a challenge. This can be achieved by learning from good practice that already exists in other parts of the system.

- **Accountability for delivery of a publicised careers policy**

Under current guidance, schools should have a strategy for the careers guidance they provide to young people. There is a strong case for going further to require every secondary school and college to have in place an explicit publicised careers policy and careers curriculum on young people's experiences of the world of work, links with business, careers provision and measurement of destination outcomes. That

³¹ Careers guidance and inspiration in schools, DfE, March 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools>

³² For example the 'LMI for All' resource developed by UKCES: <http://www.lmiforall.org.uk/>

policy should be reviewed and approved by the governing body at least every three years. All schools and colleges should also report annually on delivery of the careers policy and curriculum. The destinations of leavers are every bit as important as exam attainment.

- ***A new emphasis on experience of work***

The current guidance does not place sufficient emphasis on this important issue. Different policies in different localities have emerged to address it. For example, in London and elsewhere, the drive towards at least 100 hours of experience of the world of work by the age of 16 has captured the imagination of young people, parents, teachers and employers.³³ There is a real opportunity to incorporate best practice delivered by primary schools³⁴ in the statutory guidance and to systematically build upon those activities that work from a young person, parent, teacher and employer perspective. As part of the updating process, we strongly urge the Minister to bring together leaders from education, business and the careers profession to find ways of addressing a 21st century expectation that no young person should reach 16 without having had some exposure and/or experience of work.

- ***A nominated governor with special responsibility for ensuring the organisation supports students in relation to careers and the world of work***

Under current guidance, the governing body should provide clear advice to the head teacher on which he/she can base a strategy for careers advice and guidance. This runs the risk of fragmenting responsibility, with the consequence that it becomes one among many competing priorities for governors as a whole. The status of careers guidance could be better reinforced if schools and colleges are expected to have a nominated governor with special responsibility for leading on the issue, ensuring the institution supports students to relate their learning to careers and the world of work.

Other policy measures

The current fragmentation of careers provision is inefficient and lacks strategy. In addition to updating the statutory guidance to schools, there are a range of initiatives that could help in building the right infrastructure and driving accessibility and quality in careers guidance and inspiration.

The current infrastructure across England includes differing forms of schools and college based provision, local authority targeted services, National Careers Service – Inspiration agenda, National Apprenticeship Service, a Careers and Enterprise Company, Jobcentre Plus in schools, colleges, food banks and elsewhere. An effective careers education and guidance infrastructure needs to work with the diversity of schools and colleges. It also has to reach out to those young people currently not participating in education, and to others such as apprentices who are re-considering their future career direction.³⁵ Experience has shown no one organisation can do that on its own. Achieving it calls for a system that provides consistently high-quality careers support, in line with statutory responsibilities, including more employer engagement, experience of work opportunities and

³³ The London Ambitions Careers Offer, <https://lep.london/publication/london-ambitions-careers-offer>

³⁴ See for example: 'Primary school children get a taste of TV at Sky Academy Skills Studios', <http://news.cbi.org.uk/news/primary-school-children-get-a-taste-of-tv-at-sky-academy-skills-studios/>

³⁵ Despite improving completion rates, each year tens of thousands of young people fail to complete their apprenticeships: Achievement and retention in post 16 education, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion/GLA, February 2015: <http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/11431/Achievement+and+retention+in+post-16+education%2C%20February+2015/746a1fb2-2a89-49e9-a53b-f5339288d4b1>

high-quality, independent and impartial advice and guidance as part of a 21st century multi-faceted, integrated careers strategy.

2. Convene a cross-departmental review of activities and funding streams that impact on careers education and guidance to ensure a more cost effective, fair and equitable system

A useful starting point for reconsidering existing approaches could be an evidence-based review of quality and policy systems drawing on lessons learned from within and outside of England. At present a number of central government departments are supporting and/or funding initiatives for young people, parents, teachers, and/or employers. A multi-faceted, integrated careers strategy, based on evidence of what works, now needs leadership and co-ordination across government departments to review investments and set national priorities. We urge the Minister and Secretary of State for Education to take the lead in this regard.

3. Put a greater focus and investment on building capacity throughout the system and within schools to support the delivery of high quality careers education and guidance

Making regular face-to-face guidance for every young person a reality depends on building capacity in the system. At a time when resources are constrained, this must rely on a partnership of teachers, careers and enterprise advisers and other local players with skills and expertise developed through joint projects and joint training, led by experts. In this context, careers professionals trained and experienced in building capacity in the system are a resource significantly under-utilised. For example, in Scotland³⁶ (and elsewhere in Europe)³⁷ career coaches are performing a key role in supporting schools and colleges in careers system design and delivery. Having everyone know what success looks like in a 21st century careers curriculum, starting from Key Stage 2 upwards, would be a helpful starting point. There are also economies of scale to be achieved through schools and colleges being centrally supported to embed LMI within their portals, aimed at students, parents and employers, and having greater awareness of tried and tested LMI dashboards and apps for student support and curricular developments. If every school simply does its own thing in isolation, there is a real risk of unnecessary cost, duplication of effort and lack of sharing good practice.

4. Put in place incentives in the accountability framework and regulatory regime to encourage schools to invest in, build on and disseminate best practice in careers education and guidance to ensure this is widely shared

There should be incentives as well as challenge for schools and colleges to engage in being more attentive to careers education and guidance – moving away from ‘pain share’ towards ‘gain share’. Whilst Ofsted performs an essential role in accountability and performance monitoring, other gains are required at a local level. For example, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have access to rich local data and have the potential to bring together all parties concerned with careers provision to deliver more effectively. In some instances, partnership

³⁶ http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/WestLothianFINALCIAG200814_tcm4-837170.pdf

³⁷ http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/ELGPN_QAE_tool_no_5_web.pdf/ - refer to page 18

may be most effectively cemented through 'clusters' and 'co-location' of services. Career development professionals (qualified to level 6 or above) should be enabled to support clusters to meet their statutory responsibilities. This would help deliver a multi-agency, one-stop shop of careers guidance and support in each locality. The Careers and Enterprise company investment fund (£5m) should provide a helpful start to support the scaling up of existing and successful initiatives and the piloting of innovative local models.

The case for change

Careers provision is a public good as well as a private one. It is essential to keep more young people switched on to learning, to encourage them not to close down opportunities too early and to broaden their horizons. The current patchwork system of careers provision is far too uneven in handling these essential tasks. But CE strongly supports the Minister in his view that "a period of consistency and stability for this sector will have greater impact than major structural reform."³⁸ There is a pressing case for change to achieve a careers and inspiration system fit for the 21st century, but change should focus on reducing fractures in the present careers ecosystem system rather than launching a wholly new one.

³⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/sam-gyimah-where-next-for-careers-education-and-guidance>