



## **THE FUTURE OF CAREERS GUIDANCE**

### **ACCESS, EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE**

#### **Ensuring opportunities for career development for everyone**

#### **SUMMARY**

Careers England believes that it is time for a radical rethink about how we can better deliver accessible, high quality career education and guidance, to all ages. Current provision, particularly for young people, is patchy and fragmented. 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. 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.

This position paper highlights the importance of high quality career education and guidance in support of the government's educational, social, welfare and economic agendas. It sets out the need for a lifelong and strategic approach to career education and guidance to ensure a better, fairer and more equitable deal for all.

Career education and guidance can be delivered in a range of contexts. Careers work should be carried out by career professionals, although it may also involve other key professionals such as managers and teachers. Currently in the UK it is possible to find careers work delivered by schools, colleges, universities, training organisations, Jobcentre Plus, stand-alone careers services, individual practitioners, employers and community organisations. Wherever it is found it is focused on empowering individuals to make informed choices about their life, learning and work.

Career education and guidance can be important to individuals at all stages of life (in learning, in work, or out of work). It serves to clarify pathways through learning and work, engages individuals with learning and work and supports the development of skills.

Evidence shows that career education and guidance impacts on educational, economic, employment and social outcomes.

#### **The policy context**

Career education and guidance is directly relevant to a number of the commitments made in the Government's manifesto. The Government has already stated that it is committed to: supporting the development and widening of the apprenticeships offer, improving vocational and practical training, improving participation to higher education, enhancing social mobility, reducing youth unemployment and NEET levels, improving the take up of STEM subjects, raising attainment, reducing the skills gap, improving productivity and delivering a more efficient labour market in which supply of talent and skills meets the demands and requirements of employers.

There is an extensive evidence base that demonstrates the effectiveness of career education and guidance in addressing all of these issues<sup>1</sup>, which provides the Government with a range of insights about how best to set up career education and guidance systems so that they are consistent, efficient and effective.

Individuals making good, informed choices, supported by professional guidance, to secure employment, benefits the Treasury, while reducing calls on the social and welfare budgets. In addition to these economic benefits, career education and guidance helps individuals maximise their potential which is a moral, social and economic good.

At the moment, responsibility for career education and guidance is spread across a number of government departments. The Department for Education, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Work and Pensions all fund provision in this area. The Ministry of Justice also works with the National Careers Service in prisons. In addition, there is funding through Local Enterprise Partnerships, local authorities and other parts of government. It would be possible to organise this spending more strategically and more efficiently.

Existing funds need to be rationalised, managed in smarter ways, more creatively, and with more forensic targeting, to secure the desired outcomes. Government has a responsibility to ensure public funds are spent wisely, and that the funding streams, protocols and accountability are transparent. It is also important that efforts within government departments and agencies work towards the same outcomes rather than pulling against each other or overlapping in unhelpful ways. This is about a long term investment, with real returns for the taxpayer. Investment in careers education and guidance is an investment for the economy.

### **Not fit for purpose**

Although there is evidence of outstanding practice in the provision of career education and guidance at local level, it is now widely accepted that the current career education and guidance system is both patchy and fragmented. It amounts, in practice, to a postcode lottery, where individuals' ability to access career education and guidance is dependent on where they live, and, for young people, where they go to school.

Confidence has, accordingly, leached from the system, as evidenced in a tranche of reports from, inter alia, the CBI, Ofsted, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission and the Education Select Committee. Policy, both in concept and implementation, has been piecemeal, disjointed and reactive. Therefore, what is urgently required is a radical rethink; a strategic, integrated holistic approach that maximises the return on investment for taxpayers and helps the government deliver on its educational, social and economic objectives.

### **Where we are we now?**

In early December 2014, the Secretary of State for Education announced plans for a new independent careers and enterprise company in England. The new company will 'ensure employers are supporting young people with decision-making and career development at every stage of school life'. The new company's work, with £20m start-up funding, will be aimed at schools, to transform the provision of careers education and advice for young people and inspire them about the opportunities offered by the world of work. This will focus on young people aged 12 to 18 and will 'help to broker relationships between employers on the one hand and schools and colleges on the other' - Department for Education.

However, in practice, the Government now has three distinct infrastructures for delivering career education and guidance, organised by departmental silos:

1. For young people, there is delivery in schools, regulated by the recently strengthened statutory guidance, soon to be supported by the new, independent careers and enterprise company (DfE)

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<sup>1</sup> See Hooley, T. (2014). *The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance*. Jyväskylä, Finland: European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN).

2. For adults there is the National Careers Service (BIS), which went live on 1st April 2012, which provides online and telephone services for all ages, but face-to-face services only for adults, and gives priority to the unemployed. Confusingly, since October 2014, the National Careers Service has also been given the remit to broker relationships between schools and employers.
3. For unemployed adults there is Jobcentre Plus and the Work Programme (DWP). Again confusingly Jobcentre advisers are now being invited into schools to work with potentially NEET young people, as part of the recently announced 'Future Youth Offer'.

In addition, there is a range of other, sometimes overlapping, support programmes, of variable quality and reach, targeted at NEET young people, commissioned, among others, by local authorities.

The current fragmentation of careers provision is inefficient and lacks strategy.

There has been a particular focus on the important role played by employers in support of careers guidance. Employers can provide information and inspiration to young people and ensure engagement through high quality work experience. This is important and should be part of a package of career support measures. However, there has been a tendency to downplay the important role that qualified, independent, professional advisers play. Careers professionals can ensure that people have the necessary range of information to enable them to make informed choices. It is not either access to employers or professional careers advisers which young people require, it is both. They are two sides of the same coin.

### **The Principle**

There must be an all age entitlement to professional, independent careers education and guidance. This should be appropriately resourced, supported by a national strategy and delivered locally.

### **Key Recommendations**

The Government should:-

1. Convene a cross departmental review of activities and funding streams that impact on all career education and guidance to ensure a more cost effective, fair and equitable system.
2. Establish a single brand for a national all-age careers service. This brand should be overseen by an independent stakeholder board to include representatives from the world of work, education, government and the careers sector.
3. Deliver services through a local delivery model, co-ordinated by a national strategy and overseen by the independent stakeholder body.
4. More closely monitor and enforce the existing statutory guidance for schools and colleges to ensure that young people have access to independent, professional and quality assured guidance.
5. Ensure lifelong career support for both those in work and those who are unemployed.
6. Put a greater focus and investment on building capacity throughout the system and within schools to support the delivery of high quality career education and guidance.
7. Ensure a commitment to quality assurance, using tools such as matrix, the Quality in Careers Standard and the Career Development Institute (CDI) register. There should also be a strong commitment to evidence based practice and the development of the evidence base in the field.
8. Ensure greater awareness among School, Further Education and Higher Education leaders of the importance of career education and guidance, and make it integral to teachers' professional development.

9. 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 throughout the system.

## **Conclusion**

Any policy related to career education and guidance must ensure that it is joined up, easily accessible, equitably resourced and professionally delivered. It must also be based on evidence of what works and international best practice. At present there is ample evidence of good practice and much to build on, but the system is currently too fragmented. Careers England seeks an approach that embraces strong independent strategic direction from the top, combined with a diversified local delivery model, operating through effective partnership working and collaboration. We are keen to work, as we have done over the last few years, with the government and other key stakeholders, to secure a better, more inclusive careers system which can meet the needs of individuals, society and the economy.

**Note:** *Careers England is the trade association for employer organisations and traders involved in the provision of career education and guidance in England.*

Careers England  
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