



POLICY BRIEFING NOTE: 16

This is the 16th of a series of short Policy Briefing Notes

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“WE URGENTLY NEED GOOD CAREERS GUIDANCE IN SCHOOLS:

HERE'S HOW TO DO IT”

ACCORDING TO SIR JOHN HOLMAN

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK, AND A FORMER HEAD TEACHER.

Careers England is pleased to reproduce without any modification to its text, and make this article accessible as today we publish this PBN with full acknowledgement to the GUARDIAN website and reciprocally publicises below links to the Guardian website, Guardian Teacher Network and the @GuardianTeach Twitter feed.

Please also note that on behalf of Careers England its current Executive Director, Paul Chubb, served on the advisory group for the Gatsby Foundation project which Sir John chaired and which led to the full report and this summary article.

As a contribution to the on-going debates about the widespread concerns over the state of careers guidance in England's schools, Careers England is pleased to make the article and access to the full report widely available through our networks and our website.

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Posted by John Holman

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We urgently need good careers guidance in schools: here's how to do it

Careers advice is far too important to be a political football. John Holman sets out eight benchmarks for what good guidance could and should look like



Access to up-to-date career and labour market information can have a major impact on social mobility for students. *Photograph: James Davies / Alamy.*

“Careers guidance in our schools has had a tough time lately: criticised by Ofsted, MPs, charities and the Confederation of British Industry. Criticism is the easy bit, of course, but what would careers advice look like if it were good?”

On behalf of the Gatsby Foundation, I investigated best practice in career guidance across the globe. My research took me from Hong Kong to Canada via the Finnish Lakeland, as well as to home-grown schools.

What is clear is that no-one has found the "magic bullet" to providing good career guidance: quite simply it is about doing a number of things, consistently and well.

From my visits and research, I've identified a set of eight benchmarks for what good career guidance could and should look like in England.

I truly believe they are achievable and – crucially for headteachers – implementable.

A stable careers programme

Career guidance policy in England has been at the mercy of the government of the day since at least the Second World War. It should not stop evolving, but some cross-party agreement on external stability would be helpful, so that – once the right support and incentives are in place – schools can get on with developing and implementing their programmes.

Learning from labour market information

It's impossible for even the best-informed careers specialist – let alone a regular classroom teacher – to have all the facts about the ever-changing labour market at their fingertips. Access to up-to-date career and labour market information can have a major impact on social mobility. If pupils and their parents know what pay you get for different jobs and where and how numerous the vacancies are, they are more likely to make choices that will lift them socially and challenge their stereotypical assumptions about the right job for "people like me".

Addressing the needs of each student

Pupils have different career guidance needs at different stages. Good practice in other countries shows how important it is to have good record-keeping to address individual needs.

Linking curriculum learning to careers

Subject teachers see far more of their pupils than guidance specialists ever could, and often have a close relationship with them. These subject teachers can and should be powerful role models to attract pupils towards their subject and the careers that flow from it.

Encounters with employers and employees

Employers provide the "pull" to complement the "push" from schools. Careers are about employment, and too often the important part played by employers in the career guidance mix can be forgotten. Pupils need to have multiple opportunities through their school life to learn from employers – and their employees – about the world of work.

Experience of workplaces

Hearing and learning from employers is one thing, but pupils also need to gain their own experiences in the world of work to make more informed career choices. The changes to work experience requirements have alerted schools to the possibility of a more flexible approach. Extended periods of work experience and placements can have a greater impact than short encounters.

Encounters with further and higher education

For many pupils the immediate concern about their future will not be with work, but with their next stage of study. The most effective encounters are where pupils meet older students from universities, colleges or apprenticeships, especially if the students are alumni of the school or are from the same ethnic or socio-economic community as the pupil: "I did it, and you could too."

Personal guidance

Every pupil needs the chance to sit with an appropriately trained professional to discuss their career choices. It could be an existing member of staff or someone external; what is crucial is that, at a very minimum, pupils should have had at least one guidance interview by the age of 16 (and I'd argue at least another one by 18).

As I crafted these benchmarks I could hear people saying "All very nice, but how much is this going to cost?" We commissioned Price Waterhouse Coopers to answer that question, and found, based on a medium-sized school, **the price tag is £54 per pupil and less than 1% of schools' budgets.** The analysis shows

that good career guidance is within reach of every school that is prepared to prioritise it highly enough.

As a former head teacher I'm the last person to suggest extra statutory duties on schools, but schools do need to be incentivised to raise the priority of career guidance, in the interests of their pupils. Our report sets out ten recommendations for how to incentivise and support schools to implement the benchmarks, but in the end it all comes back to school leaders. It is for them to take the lead in prioritising career guidance more highly. By reaching these benchmarks they will put in place a career guidance system that measures up to the best we have seen, and they will help set up their pupils not only for their rest of their education, but for the rest of their lives.”

You can find the full report here below:

http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/jun/17/good-careers-guidance-in-schools-how-to?CMP=tw_t_gu

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