

DCSF IAG STRATEGY

A PAPER FROM THE 13-19 TASK GROUP Setting out comments to Mohammad Haroon & Jamie Weatherhead (lead officials at DCSF with responsibility for IAG Strategies) following the meeting at DCSF, Sanctuary Buildings on 15th July 2009

1. Introduction

1.1 Careers England is the trade association for business organisations involved in careers related services. As such it is an employers' organisation. As the only association of specialist career guidance businesses in the country, we exist to promote the benefits to the nation of utilising the distinctive skills of such organisations. From our perspective as specialist career guidance businesses, our strategic direction majors upon advocacy of the economic and social benefits of career guidance to the health of the nation, and the need for an effective all-age strategy for career guidance provision in England.

1.2 All of our members provide publicly-funded careers education & guidance services for young people, and most of our members also provide publicly-funded IAG services for adults.

1.3 For more information on Careers England please see www.careersengland.org.uk

1.4 Please contact us via PAUL CHUBB, Director and Professional Adviser, Careers England on 07976 575536 or mail to paul@boundarypartnership.co.uk or paul.chubb@careersengland.org.uk

2. Our Comments

2.1 This brief paper has been prepared by the team which met with Haroon & Jamie on 15.7.09.

2.2 As such it is a reflection based upon our thoughts arising from Haroon's detailed update on progress with the draft IAG Strategy and issues to be addressed. It is not a 'policy paper', but is offered as a reflection from those who met with Haroon & Jamie.

The paper has also been reviewed by the Chairman of the Board of Directors for CE and he has authorised its 'public use', hence this version will now be available on the CE website in the PUBLIC area. It was originally submitted to Haroon in a slightly different style (referring to 'you' rather than in the third person style in which this public version now appears).

2.3 Our starting point is that we welcome news from DCSF that Ofsted will be inspecting CEIAG more robustly, that draft statutory guidance to LAs on CEIAG duties will be forthcoming in the autumn alongside the to-be published Strategy, and that DCSF is determined to raise the standards of CEIAG universally.

2.4 Haroon & Jamie asked about our reflections in this context on the future of career advice and guidance (CAG) for young people. We have offered these thoughts based upon our experiences across the country.

2.5 RESOURCES: our over-riding concern is that unless there is increased accountability to DCSF for real expenditure on CAG in every local authority, improvements will not be achieved. Statements of 'desirable' actions will have limited impact. Requirements of 'essential' activity are needed.

2.6 ENABLING & DELIVERY: we support the thrust of the strategy towards enabling improvements in Careers Education in schools, and welcome that 'CEG consultancy support' by expert external specialists is to be promoted. However, we know from experience that access must also be assured to impartial and independent CAG, delivered by external specialists with knowledge of the labour market and no vested interest in any provider of learning or work options. Hence we support the partnership model of schools, enabled to provide universal and enhanced CE, working with an external (Connexions) specialist careers A & G organisation which delivers specialist and universally available support to all young people. Specialist CAG practitioners need to be employed by an independent organisation not by schools themselves; they must be demonstrably independent of all learning and work providers, skilled and knowledgeable of all options and routes, and manifestly impartial putting the needs of individuals first.

2.7 PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS: we endorse entirely Haroon's view that such agreements are the bedrock for securing the improvements required. These agreements need to be negotiated by the specialist external service with the school, scrutinised against the statutory guidance from DCSF to LAs and subject to Ofsted inspection. Each year a review of the quality of all aspects of CEIAG in each school must drive the subsequent agreement, and its content should refer to such a review. The specialist external partner should provide CEG consultancy support, information products (including LMI and data from local employers on opportunities), links to the NAS, workforce development and training for the school's staff and other external partners (such as youth workers, parent support workers et al). We welcome that Governing Bodies will be charged with ensuring that CEIAG is reviewed annually in

every school, and suggest that the partnership agreement should be presented to Governors for approval. Agreements should ensure that universal support is explicitly outlined, with additional targeted support specified. Since DCSF is advocating a whole school approach to CEIAG, the integration of enterprise education and work-related learning within such an approach will be facilitated and should be covered in the agreements. The development of personal learning and thinking skills amongst all students needs to be overtly writ large in the DCSF IAG Strategy and included in partnership agreements.

2.8 CAREERS EDUCATION: We warmly welcomed Haroon's views on increased employer engagement and the direct involvement of business/professional people in schools as part of CE programmes (the best CE has always included this). The involvement of people from the workplace, including offering mentoring support, within CE programmes which permeate the wider curriculum will support active learning by students and make the achievement of aspirations, often widened and raised, more achievable. This needs to be supported by access to specialist CAG, independent of learning provision to ensure all are supported to choose, decide and plan effectively irrespective of 'academic' ability. Within the overall CEIAG programmes it is not possible to over stress the essential engagement and involvement of parents and carers, whose influence is so strong and whose own knowledge of the changing and developing opportunity market has to be deeper and broader.

2.9 THE QUALITY OF THE WORKFORCE: We welcome the plans DCSF is implementing to increase the knowledge and skills of every teacher in respect of the foundations for CEIAG. The influence of subject teachers and others within the school must never be underestimated. We welcome plans to raise the standard of professionalism amongst teaching staff involved in CE programmes, coupled with developing enhanced and 21st century CAG professional skills and knowledge (through the revisions the excellent LLUK/CWDC projects will secure). We would support the current IAG QS for YPs being supplemented by a national standard (derived from the many excellent CEG Quality Awards) which assesses every school's organisational capability in respect of CEIAG & the workforce delivering the overall service (internal and external staff). LAs need to be required to take the lead on this, and to report upon it to HMG (perhaps part of the role of GOs?), thereby increasing accountability.

2.10 SEEING THIS THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUNG PEOPLE: the journey for all young people will require smooth transitions and progression through the 11-19 (25 for those with learning difficulties/disabilities), with opportunity to access supportive and challenging (positively) interventions from skilled and knowledgeable staff (internal and external) as well as access to business/professional people directly. The implementation of the overall strategy needs to be tested by young people themselves who must have assured means to influence the processes.

2.11 THE EXTERNAL SERVICE: within each of the aspects of our reflections above, we have sought to emphasise the added value of the specialist external partner to the school and its students. DCSF can and should specify to LAs in the new statutory guidance what it requires of this part of the Integrated Youth Support Service arrangements in every LA. This is the IAG for learning and work specialism within Connexions. The external service partner must operate at strategic and influential levels within each LA area, not simply the operational. Within Children's Trusts we would see the service acting as the lead for economic well-being. We would support the external service, through the LA duty, being required to meet national organisation quality standards and demonstrate that its workforce has the required qualifications, skills and knowledge (with mandatory initial training and on-going CPD). There should be greater accountability, with evidence assessed by competent and knowledgeable GO teams/Ofsted, including 'customer feedback', data on outcomes for young people, and the direct involvement of young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of services. THE CCIS will be an even more critical component as enhancements are secured and measured; as a real-time caseload management system, it will enable all interventions and interactions to be recorded and evidenced, enabling coherent follow-up, tracking and destinations data, resulting in reliable management information to inform future provision including evolving partnership agreements with schools. In addition to its specialist CAG support for students, which should be an entitlement which the student may access if/when he/she chooses, the Connexions provider will work in community and neighbourhood settings, of which every school should be aware through the partnership agreement. The external service should also be charged with providing feedback to the LA to support the commissioning of appropriate post 16 learning. Young people within FE and work-based learning also must be assured of the availability of this accessible specialist external career support service as part of their entitlements.

2.12 NEET: With the raising of the age of leaving learning to 18, there should be no pre 19 NEET young people. The key will be to ensure that every step is taken to prevent those leaving learning at 18 from failing to make a smooth transition into learning and work. Lead responsibility for this needs to be specified, and every LA should be required to establish links with the new AACCS (and it in turn with each LA area it serves). The role of the LA IYSS in respect of NEET young people, and that of the Connexions service need to be explicit.

3. RESPONDING TO THE ADDITIONAL NEWS OF THE MILBURN REPORT ON SOCIAL MOBILITY AND THE PROFESSIONS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR "CAREERS" SUPPORT

3.1 We have added this section as a direct result of the publication at the end of July of the 'Milburn Report'. England's former Careers Service providers demonstrated in 1998/9 their readiness and ability to 'refocus' their greatest efforts to assist the hardest to help young people. They responded quickly and effectively to that change in Government policy.

3.2 All that we have said above stands, and in addition, in simple terms today, we would suggest that the best way to respond to the 'Milburn challenge' would be to refocus the Connexions Service as a universal careers service that is strong and independent of learning and work providers, delivered by a range of organisations which meet robust national organisational quality standards and employ (and develop) a skilled workforce of career guidance professionals with direct links with the labour market.

3.3 This refocused service should be required to establish strong links at every local level with the economic development and skills agendas of Local Authorities and Regional/national bodies, as well as effective partnership working with the much-needed universal careers service to be offered to adults within the new Adult Advancement & Careers Service. Both the refocused service for young people and the new AACS should be charged with promoting social mobility for all, and services measured on their effectiveness in this as part of their accountability.

3.4 We support entirely the need for a professional careers service to support all young people (and adults), but there is no shred of evidence from any national or international source to support the devolution of specialist CAG funding to schools. We reiterate the points made in 2.6, 2.7 and 2.11 above, in respect of the Milburn report's fundamentally flawed proposal for such a devolution (and it is our intention to present further detailed evidence from international studies to underline the folly of such an approach).

3.5 Financially it makes no sense at all to devolve funds for specialist CAG to schools; economies of scale (e.g. in use of information resources), and the benefits of real time case management through the CCIS recording would be lost, and professional workforce development impaired. It is also worth stressing that such a devolution of funding to schools would involve a tremendous volume of TUPE transfers of staff; this would make the old saying of rearranging deckchairs on a sinking ship particularly apposite.

3.6 Only an independent, specialist, professional service, working from the perspective of the labour market, which puts individuals' interests first, rather than those of providers, will secure the outcomes required to achieve the Milburn report's ambitions to unleash aspiration.

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