

Policy Review · General Election 2005  
Party Manifestos



## Careers England Policy Commentary 3

This is the third in a short series of briefing notes on key policy documents related to the future of career guidance services in England. The notes are being prepared for Careers England by Professor Tony Watts.

### Party Election Manifestos

#### 1. Labour Party

The Labour Party election manifesto includes a number of broadly relevant statements in its section on the Economy. The most specifically relevant statement is under the heading 'skills at work', which includes reference to:

'A nationwide system of advice – bringing together support on skills, jobs and careers – helping people to get on at work.'

It adds:

'A strong partnership with trade unions to boost workplace training including ... continued support for Union Learning Reps.'

Under 'full employment', it states:

'We will continue to welcome new independent and voluntary sector partners to provide job-seeking services.'

Under 'fostering entrepreneurship', it states:

'To foster the entrepreneurs of tomorrow, by 2006 every school in the country will offer enterprise education, and every college and university should be twinned with a business partner.'

The only relevant statement in the section on Education is under the heading 'Parents as partners', where it states:

'Parents should have the information and support they need to encourage their children, from the first reading book to the key choices they make at 14 and 16.'

There is no mention of youth policy or of Connexions.

#### 2. Conservative Party

The Conservative Party election manifesto is brief, and contains no mention of career guidance or Connexions. But its Education Manifesto, issued on 3 February 2005, announced under the heading 'providing better information' that:

'To get the most from skills education, all learners, young or old, need to know the options available to them. A Conservative Government will scrap the Connexions Service and establish a new careers service for England. It will have a remit of advising on educational and training options as well as on career paths.' We will encourage a strong business involvement in the new service. The remaining Connexions responsibilities will be passed to local authorities with the expectation that as much work as possible will be contracted out to the voluntary sector.

In an accompanying Press Release, Charles Hendry MP, Shadow Minister for Young People, commented:

'After nearly four years it has become clear that the current Connexions service is structurally unable to service the needs of all our young people. As a targeted service, focusing upon NEET young people, it has had some success, but it has failed in its brief to provide support to all young people.

'Nowhere has this failure been more evident than in the field of career guidance – a service that is crucial to the personal advancement of any young person, regardless of their background or ability. The Government's insistence that Connexions focuses its efforts upon reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training, has meant access to career guidance for any other young person has become extremely difficult. Furthermore, as qualified career guidance practitioners are forced to spend their time advising young people on other issues, the expertise of the profession is being threatened, as is the quality of guidance available to young people.

'We urgently need to transform this situation and recognise the worth of a strong careers service to the benefit of the country as a whole. Our new service will do just this and provide people with access to high quality and impartial information and guidance, so they can make informed decisions over their education, employment and career options.

'At the same time, by delivering Connexions' other responsibilities through local authorities, we can more adequately meet local needs and problems, particularly in maintaining the commitment to reducing the NEET cohort. By expecting this service to work in genuine partnership with the voluntary sector, we will also be handing greater authority to those organisations who most closely reflect the needs of individual communities, and who have such a fantastic track record and helping young people.'

### **3. Liberal Democratic Party**

The Liberal Democrat Education Manifesto includes a commitment to:

'Reforming the Connexions Service to give every student a mentor who will help them choose what courses to take, in consultation with their teachers and parents, and who will ensure they make the best use of their time.'