



The future of careers work  
in schools in England:  
what are the options?

A discussion paper

by David Andrews

## The author

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# Executive summary

Changes in national policy have introduced the biggest change in careers education and guidance services to young people in England for almost 40 years. An inquiry undertaken by the Education Select Committee has reported a worrying deterioration in the overall level of provision.

“We have concerns about the consistency, quality, independence and impartiality of careers guidance now being offered to young people... Urgent steps need to be taken by the Government to ensure that young people’s needs are met.”  
Careers guidance for young people: The impact of the new duty on schools.  
House of Commons Education Committee, 23 January 2013

This paper has been written to stimulate a debate about the future of careers work in schools. It examines the current situation and explores options for what arrangements might provide the most effective support for young people to enable them to progress successfully through learning and into work.

Young people need access to careers education and guidance of a consistently high quality if they are to make the right choices for them and to manage the transitions from one stage of their education, training or work to the next. For four decades the approach to providing such support to young people in schools in England was through a partnership between the schools and an external careers service. The National Careers Service (NCS) established by the present Government is not the all-age careers guidance service that many people thought originally it would be when it was first announced: it currently has no remit to provide face-to-face careers guidance to young people. Instead, the Education Act 2011 has transferred

responsibility for providing careers guidance from an external service and has placed a statutory duty on schools to secure access to independent guidance for their pupils. Schools are free to use any provider of their choice. At the same time the statutory duty on schools to provide careers education has been removed.

While there is evidence that some schools have responded to the new policy by establishing innovative provision that represents an improvement on what was available in the recent past, the overall situation in schools is a deterioration in the level of careers guidance. Schools are adopting a range of models for securing access to careers guidance for their pupils. The House of Commons Education Select Committee's recent inquiry into how schools are responding to the new duty reports concerns about the consistency, quality, independence and impartiality of careers guidance offered. The reasons for the inconsistent quality and overall deterioration of provision include the absence of any regulation of the providers of careers guidance for young people, the lack of support and funding for schools and the weak monitoring and accountability measures.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to stimulate a debate about possible approaches for the future. It presents three options: the current model but with new measures to make it work effectively; a return to the partnership model but in the context of the NCS; moving to a school-based model. The paper does not promote one option over any other: it seeks to prompt a debate on a range of options so that decisions about the future are based on a serious consideration of all the possibilities.

# Option 1

## School commissioned careers guidance

- This is essentially the current model but with additional measures to help ensure that all schools put in place arrangements of consistently high quality, accessible to all young people. Schools would remain responsible for securing access to careers guidance but the Statutory Guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) would be strengthened to highlight the importance of face-to-face guidance, to require schools to commission careers guidance only from providers with the matrix standard and to require schools to use only professionally qualified careers advisers. The model would be further enhanced by allocating schools funding for commissioning careers guidance.
- Support to schools for both careers guidance and careers education would be enhanced by giving local authorities a statutory responsibility to do so or by extending the remit of the NCS to undertake this role.
- Options for improving monitoring and accountability could include requiring schools to publish a publicly available statement of their arrangements for securing access to careers guidance for pupils, strengthening the position of careers education and guidance in the Ofsted inspection framework or requiring the NCS to monitor the arrangements that schools make.

## Option 2

# An all-age national careers service

- This is the model we might have had if the original vision for the NCS had been implemented. It is a return to the former partnership model but in the new context. It would require the remit and budget for the NCS to be extended to providing face-to-face careers guidance in schools. The service would be delivered through regional contracts with providers that were matrix-accredited and that employed professionally qualified careers advisers.
- The contracts would also require the providers to offer support to schools with developing their provision of careers education.
- Monitoring of the arrangements would be undertaken by the NCS.

## Option 3

# School-based career development advisers

- This option represents a radical departure for England. All schools would be required to employ their own career development advisers who would be responsible for providing face-to-face careers guidance to pupils and who could also work with teaching staff to plan and deliver programmes of careers education. Schools would be given an allocation of funding, based on pupil numbers, to appoint the advisers who would be required to hold, or be working towards, a relevant professional qualification.
- The work of the career development advisers in schools would be supported by labour market information supplied by the NCS and professional development opportunities provided through a partnership between the NCS and the new professional body, the Career Development Institute (CDI).
- Monitoring and accountability would be covered by revising the Ofsted inspection framework to require inspection teams to report on the quality and impartiality of careers education and guidance provided and the impact on pupil outcomes.

This is a discussion paper. A wide range of stakeholders should be engaged in the debate. The strengths and weaknesses of each of the three options, and possibly others as well, should be examined. Examples of practice in other countries should be studied. The goal is to decide what approach would best provide the high-quality careers support our young people deserve.



# Introduction

A recent paper published by the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby (Hooley, Marriott and Sampson, 2011) sets out the evidence for the positive impact of career development activities on young people's readiness for further and higher education and for work. The report uses the term 'career development' to encompass a range of practices including, among other things, careers guidance and careers education. It presents evidence that such activities help young people to engage in schooling and remain in learning, have a positive impact on young people's academic achievements, help smooth young people's transitions from school to further and higher education and to work and have a positive effect on individuals' career and life success.

Young people have always needed access to high quality careers education and guidance, to help them make choices in education, training and employment and to manage the transitions from one stage of learning and work to the next. The current economic climate and the changes in education and training, including the raising of the participation age, highlight the importance of such support. Young people in schools are facing major changes in the qualifications available, and in the types of school and college where they can study. On leaving school they are facing a potentially bewildering range of further education courses, traineeships, apprenticeships and higher education opportunities, and high levels of youth unemployment and graduate under-employment. If young people are to progress successfully through learning and into work we

need to assure them access to careers education and guidance of consistently high quality.

The Education Act 2011 transferred responsibility for careers guidance away from an external service that was free of charge to schools and direct to schools with effect from September 2012. While schools have been given this new duty, they have been given no additional funding to cover the costs of fulfilling their responsibilities. At the same time, the statutory duties on schools to provide programmes of careers education and work-related learning and enterprise have been removed. These changes are in line with the Department for Education's over-riding policy principle of school autonomy and schools are now free to determine what arrangements to put in place for their students. While there is evidence that some schools have responded to the new policy by establishing innovative and improved provision (Andrews, 2013), the House of Commons Education Committee's recent inquiry into career guidance in schools found a worrying deterioration in the overall level of provision for young people (House of Commons, 2013).

This paper outlines the background to the new national policy, examines the current position of careers work in schools and sets out three possible options for the future. It is intended as a contribution to moving the debate on from a critique of the present situation, to a serious exploration of possibilities for the future. The options include suggestions for rectifying some of the flaws in the present situation, as well as two, quite different, alternative approaches to meeting the careers education and guidance needs of all young people in schools.

# Historical background

Forty years ago the Government established a nationally available, universal careers guidance service for all young people in England. The Employment and Training Act 1973 gave the Secretary of State statutory responsibility for ensuring that all young people had access to careers guidance. Each local education authority (LEA) was required to provide a careers service for young people and those LEA careers services worked in partnership with schools to provide support to pupils making choices about options within school and opportunities post-school (Peck, 2004). The careers services reported to the Employment Department and were inspected regularly by teams of Careers Service Branch Inspectors. These arrangements remained in place for the next two decades but in the twenty years since the beginning of the 1990s there have been four major changes, with the most recent being the biggest of them all.

Firstly, the careers services were privatised but still funded by central government and working to a remit set by the Secretary of State. Then, at the turn of the century, the careers services across England were replaced with 47 Connexions partnerships which had a particular focus on priority groups of young people who, for a variety of reasons, were at risk of not engaging in education, employment or training (i.e. NEET), while still trying, with varying degrees of success, to provide access to a universal careers guidance service. When the strains of Connexions attempting to provide both a targeted and universal service became evident (NAO, 2004 and DfES, 2005) the Government dissolved the 47 partnerships and transferred responsibility for both parts of the service to local authorities (DfES,

2006). This took place in 2008 in most parts of the country, although some areas decided to implement the change a year earlier. Throughout the three reorganisations the basic model remained the same: young people in schools had access to careers guidance from an external service which worked in partnership with the schools and which was free of charge to the schools.

The fourth change in four decades has changed the model fundamentally. Schools no longer have access to a universally available careers service, funded by central and local government. Instead they are required to make their own arrangements and to pay for the service from their existing budgets. The Secretary of State still has responsibility for ensuring that young people in England have access to careers guidance services but the Education Act 2011 has devolved that responsibility to schools. Local authorities are no longer required to provide a universal careers service but retain responsibility for providing support for young people deemed to be vulnerable and disadvantaged, including students with special educational needs (SEN) or learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), and those 16-18 year olds who are NEET or considered to be at risk of not engaging in education and training. The services previously offered by one organisation, Connexions, have, therefore, been split into the universal careers guidance service, which is now the responsibility of individual schools and academies, and the targeted youth support service, responsibility for which remains with the local authorities.

In the partnership model of careers work described above, the careers guidance provided by the external service was complemented and supported by careers education provided in the school curriculum. The Education Act 1997 gave schools a statutory duty to provide careers education in the curriculum for pupils in years 9, 10 and 11, and in 2004 this was extended to include pupils in years 7 and 8 as well (Andrews, 2011). The latest legislation has removed this statutory duty and decisions about whether or not to include careers education in the curriculum are now left to individual schools. The Government has also removed the statutory duty on schools to provide work-related learning and enterprise in key stage 4, and the funding that was given to education-business partnerships to support work experience.

# The National Careers Service

Under the partnership model that existed from 1973 to 2012, schools took lead responsibility for providing careers information and careers education, and often also offered some initial advice and guidance, while the external service took lead responsibility for careers guidance but also offered support to schools with developing their provision of careers information and careers education. This approach served students well, combining the respective and complementary professional expertise of teachers and careers advisers, and making good use of the former's knowledge of the students and the latter's links with the labour market and providers of further and higher education and of work-based training including apprenticeships.

In the early days of the current Coalition Government it appeared that the Government planned to continue with the partnership model, particularly when it announced its intention to establish in England an all-age careers service building on the best of the adult service, Next Step, and the young people's service, Connexions (John Hayes, Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning in a speech to the Institute of Career Guidance annual conference, Belfast, 4 November 2010). However, by the time what is now known as the National Careers Service was launched in April 2012, it had become clear that the vision of an all-age careers guidance service in England had been replaced in practice by a re-branded careers service for adults, with increased investment from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and with the addition of access for young people to its website and telephone advice service. The National Careers Service currently has no remit to provide face-to-face careers guidance to young people, no remit to work with schools, and no funding for services to young people beyond the online and telephone facilities.

# The current position and emerging practice in schools

Instead of providing a national careers guidance service for young people in England, the Government has devolved responsibility for careers guidance support to over 3,000 schools. With effect from September 2012 all state-funded schools with secondary-age pupils, including academies and free schools, have been given a new statutory duty to secure access to independent and impartial careers guidance for pupils in years 9, 10 and 11. The duty will be extended to pupils in year 8, and to 16-18 year-old students in school sixth forms and in sixth form and FE colleges, from September 2013 (DfE and BIS, 2012). The duties to provide careers education and work-related learning in the curriculum have been removed. Under these new arrangements schools decide what careers guidance services to make available for their pupils and whether or not to provide careers education. The Education Act 2011 requires schools to secure access to careers guidance from a source that is external to the school but schools are free to commission services from any provider of their choice, and the former partnership model has been changed to a 'client-contractor' relationship. The approach combines the principles of school autonomy and the free market.

Six months into the first year of implementation, evidence is emerging of how schools are responding to the new arrangements. Practice varies from one local authority area to another, and within individual local authorities. In part this is explained by the different approaches taken by the local authorities. Some are continuing to offer a universal careers guidance service but on a traded basis; a few are even continuing to provide a funded service for at least the current year;

others are offering varying degrees of support to schools, ranging from commissioning a service on behalf of schools, through providing assistance with the commissioning process or a list of approved suppliers, to giving briefings on the new duty (Filmer-Sankey and McCrone, 2012).

The schools themselves can be split into two broad categories, those that are commissioning careers guidance services from an external provider and those that are attempting to make their own internal arrangements (Andrews, 2012). The range of providers from which the former group of schools are buying services include local authorities, private careers guidance companies, individual careers advisers working as sole traders and new social enterprises established by groups of careers advisers. Other organisations are also active in the market place: for example, some education business partnerships have recruited careers advisers and now offer schools integrated careers guidance and work-related learning support services and some FE colleges and university careers services are promoting careers guidance services to schools. New suppliers of careers guidance services, often based around the use of computer-based tools, are also emerging.

Many of the schools that are commissioning careers guidance from an external provider are doing so as individual establishments but others are working in consortium arrangements. Some new models are emerging: for example, a sixth form college and its neighbouring FE college are working with some of the local 11-16 schools in an arrangement where the colleges employ a team of careers advisers who provide careers

guidance in the schools. Those schools that are not commissioning careers guidance services from an external provider are also adopting a variety of approaches. Some have employed a professionally qualified careers adviser or have arranged for a member of the school staff to receive training in careers guidance, while others, more worryingly, have given the job to someone who is not qualified or trained. Of even great concern are the schools that are providing no access to careers guidance for their pupils.

While it is difficult at this stage to quantify accurately the proportions of schools adopting each of the different models and sub-models, the available evidence suggests that a significant number of schools are not buying in face-to-face careers guidance from an external provider and that many of those schools that are commissioning services are buying fewer days than they had received in the previous year (Barrett, 2012 and Careers England, 2012a).

There are schools that have responded positively to the new arrangements and that are using their new freedoms to increase and re-focus the provision of careers guidance for their pupils, but the overall position, as reported by the House of Commons Education Committee's inquiry, is one of a worrying deterioration in the level of provision for young people. The Committee has concerns about the consistency, quality, independence and impartiality of careers guidance now being offered to young people and has called upon the Government to take urgent steps to ensure that young people's needs are met.



# Careers education

Careers education complements impartial careers guidance. Through careers education pupils are helped to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to understand themselves, research opportunities, make choices and manage transitions in learning and work. The DfE described its decision to repeal the statutory duty on schools to provide a programme of careers education in the curriculum as 'permissive' (DfE, 2011). The Department said that the removal of this provision did not imply that careers education activities were unimportant but it did not consider it necessary to legislate for them, arguing that schools should be free to decide what their pupils needed. However, from 1998, when the duty for careers education was introduced, schools had continued to enjoy a high degree of autonomy over what to provide. Careers education was never a national curriculum subject, with a prescribed programme of study. Schools were free to decide what to teach, how much time to allocate to careers education in the curriculum and how to teach it. The duty simply ensured that all pupils had an entitlement to careers education. The only additional freedom that repealing the statutory duty gives school now is the freedom to drop careers education from the curriculum.

Early evidence suggests that many schools are continuing to provide careers education in the curriculum, but not necessarily across the full age range covered by the previous statutory duty. Young people need the knowledge, understanding and skills developed through careers education to make effective use of the careers information, advice and guidance provided. Careers advisers can usually tell within a few minutes of



starting a guidance interview whether or not a young person has received any careers education: if he or she has not, then the adviser cannot provide careers guidance without first providing an individual careers information and careers education session. Trying to provide careers work through individual sessions alone is highly inefficient and not cost effective. Furthermore, individual guidance interviews will make only a very limited contribution to helping young people develop their career management or employability skills. Young people need both a programme of careers education and access to impartial career guidance.

To support schools to provide high quality programmes of careers education in the curriculum the professional association for careers education, the Association for Careers Education and Guidance (ACEG), now being merged with three other careers professional associations into the Career Development Institute (CDI), has published a framework for careers and work-related education 7-19 (ACEG, 2012) and a users' guide to help careers teachers implement the framework in practice. For the past twenty years there have been several local quality awards that schools can use to promote and support the development of high quality programmes of careers education and guidance and these have been strengthened recently by the introduction of a national validation, the Quality in Careers Standard (Careers England, 2012b).

Although there is no evidence to suggest that careers education is disappearing from many school timetables, the quality of provision was already variable (Ofsted, 2010) and

is now at risk of further erosion. The removal of the statutory duty sends an unhelpful message about the importance of careers education and does nothing to improve its position in the school curriculum. Many schools organise their provision of careers education as an integral part of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. In July 2011 the Government announced a review of PSHE education: the fact that the report has yet to be published adds to the continuing uncertainty about the position of careers education in schools. The consultation document on the National Curriculum framework published on 7 February 2013 makes no reference to careers education.

# The new duty to secure access to careers guidance: will it work?

To return to the new statutory duty on schools to secure access for pupils to independent and impartial careers guidance, the important question is whether or not it will work in practice. As the legislation was passing through Parliament concerns were already being expressed about how schools would respond to the new duty (Hooley and Watts, 2011) and it is significant that the House of Commons Education Committee decided to set up its inquiry even before the policy had been introduced in schools. In previous times, when concerns were expressed about whether the Connexions service could still deliver a universal careers service alongside the targeted provision, it took three years for the then Department for Education and Skills to set up the end-to-end review of careers education and guidance. In 2012 the Select Committee set up its inquiry three months before the duty came into effect: this suggests that MPs could foresee problems ahead. Ofsted is now undertaking a review of careers guidance in schools, through visits to 60 schools and academies in the spring term 2013, and this will provide further evidence of the impact of the statutory duty.

There are schools that have responded positively to the new duty, and have established arrangements for careers guidance that represent an improvement on what was in place in the years immediately previous to the present time, but it must be a matter of concern that the Select Committee reports inconsistent quality across schools and an overall deterioration of provision. So let us examine the reasons for the inconsistency, the lack of quality and the reduction in careers guidance for young people in schools.

The Committee described the Government's decision to transfer responsibility to careers guidance to schools as 'regrettable'. It is not only the policy decision itself that has led to concerns about consistency and quality, but also the absence of any regulation of the providers of careers guidance for young people, compounded by the lack of support to schools to help them take on their new responsibilities. The Statutory Guidance (DfE, 2012a) leaves schools free to determine how best to implement the new duty, in line with the DfE's principles of school autonomy, but with very few checks and balances to protect the best interests of young people. It is left to schools to decide which pupils should have access to impartial careers guidance from an external source: there is no entitlement for all pupils to have access to such support. Schools are free to commission careers guidance services from any provider of their choice. There is no regulation of the market: any organisation or individual can offer career guidance services in schools. Unlike the providers of careers guidance to adults working under contract to the National Careers Service, there is no requirement for providers of careers guidance to young people to be matrix-accredited<sup>1</sup>; neither is there any requirement for the careers advisers to be professionally qualified. The Practical Guide for Schools (DfE, 2012b) that supplements the Statutory Guidance offers information on the matrix standard and on the professional qualifications for careers advisers, but stops short of

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<sup>1</sup> The matrix Standard is the quality framework for providers of information, advice and guidance on learning and work

requiring, or even recommending, that schools use only accredited providers with qualified advisers.

Other than the two documents referred to in the previous paragraph, which can be found on the DfE's website, there has been no other support from the Government to assist schools with taking on the new duty placed upon them: no regional briefings, no transition plan and no funding. In relation to the last point, the Government's own figures indicate that, in 2010-11, local authorities spent just under £200 million on the universal careers service element of Connexions: none of this money has been transferred into schools' budgets. Schools can use their pupil premium funding that was introduced in 2011 to provide additional support to pupils from low income families but it is not only the children of low income families that need access to careers guidance.

Schools do not even have access to a directory of career guidance providers: they have been left to search this new and unfamiliar market themselves, although at least one local authority has published a list of approved suppliers which have met a number of quality criteria. It should also be noted that, aside from voluntary networks established in some local authorities and in some academy chains, there are no widely accessible means of sharing examples of good practice between schools.

In these conditions it is not surprising that the quality and level of independent and impartial careers guidance varies from one school to another, as reported in the evidence submitted to the Select Committee. The support that young people receive to help them progress successfully on

to the right course for them will depend on what their school decides to provide and how much money the school is prepared to invest in this provision. Some pupils will continue to receive support through the targeted service provided by the local authorities but, again as the Select Committee reports, even this support differs from one area to another, depending on how the local authority interprets the terms 'vulnerable' and 'disadvantaged'. Definitions of which young people constitute the targeted group and what support services they receive vary. In some areas the support provided through the targeted service includes impartial careers guidance but other local authorities have taken the view that, while the targeted information, advice and guidance (IAG) service should provide support to encourage participation and assist with transitions, responsibility for providing impartial careers guidance for all pupils now rests with the schools themselves. Other young people will receive some careers support through their families, although this is not an adequate substitute for professional careers guidance. In the middle are the large majority of young people who will be entirely dependent on how their particular schools respond to the new duty.

Alongside the limited support provided by the DfE, the variable support offered by local authorities and the lack of funding, the DfE is not monitoring how schools are responding and there is what the Select Committee report describes as a 'disconnect' between Ministers' views of the role of Ofsted in enforcing accountability on schools through its inspection framework, and Ofsted's own view. Ofsted itself says that it does not inspect against statutory compliance and, anyway, it

does not routinely inspect all schools. The DfE's view is that the recently introduced destination measures will hold schools to account for their provision of guidance but, while scrutiny of the data may cause Ofsted to look more closely at the provision schools make, the destination figures themselves will not indicate whether schools are implementing the new duty to secure access to independent and impartial guidance. At present, therefore, there is no monitoring of the new duty, and there are no sanctions for non-compliance.

Some schools have responded to the new duty by establishing improved arrangements for careers education and guidance but the lack of funding, the limited support available, the weak accountability measures, the lack of clarity over how the duty is to be monitored and the absence of any sanctions for non-compliance, have combined to result in the serious concerns expressed in the Select Committee report. Ofsted's thematic review will collect more detailed information on how schools are responding and the findings will provide a useful baseline for any future policy development.

# Where do we go from here?

If young people are to progress successfully through learning and into work they need access to careers education, information, advice and guidance of a consistently high quality. To be specific, they need access to accurate and up to date careers information on opportunities and progression routes, and to impartial careers advice and guidance, underpinned by careers education that helps them make effective use of the information and guidance and to develop their career management skills and employability skills. The Heseltine Report on wealth creation (Heseltine, 2012) recognises the value of face-to-face careers guidance for students and recommends an approach where the provision is planned at a local level. The challenge ahead is to find the right balance between localism and a national entitlement, between locally-determined approaches to meet local needs and ensuring that all young people in England have access to appropriate and effective support wherever they attend school. These are not mutually exclusive concepts.

The remaining section of this paper sets out three possibilities for the future. The options are presented as alternatives with the intention of stimulating a debate about the best way forward. They focus primarily on different approaches to making impartial careers guidance available to young people. The paper is not arguing for every young person to have a careers guidance interview but examines ways of ensuring that any young person who wants, or needs, careers guidance has access to such support from an impartial adviser. A recent paper from the iCeGS and The Pearson Think Tank (Hooley, Marriott, Watts and Coiffait, 2012) argues for a greater emphasis on curriculum-

led approaches in schools, where career learning is integrated into the school curriculum, and for more effective support to assist schools from middle tier (i.e. between schools and Government) organisations. This is to be welcomed: enhancing career learning and examining different models for the provision of careers guidance are complementary activities, with a shared aim of improving careers work in schools. Young people need both high quality careers education and access to impartial careers guidance. Each of the options that follow includes a discussion of the role of middle tier organisations in helping schools to deliver careers education: one of the questions in the debate about the different models should be which approach offers the greatest potential for developing career learning in the school curriculum.

In 2012 the Government established an independent National Careers Council to provide it with advice on a future strategic vision for the National Careers Service and allied career support services. The Council's workplan (BIS, 2012) covers services to young people as well as to adults. The Council is gathering intelligence from a wide range of public, private and voluntary/ community sector bodies, and from careers practitioners, in the UK, along with evidence on high performing careers systems within the European Union and other parts of the world. The work is focusing on themes such as access, quality, professionalism, innovation and impact. Several government departments, including DfE and BIS, and non-governmental organisations, are exploring future possibilities with the Council. This paper will contribute to the Council's first annual report to Government which is due to be published in May 2013.

# Option 1

## School commissioned careers guidance

In essence this first option is the current model that has been put in place by the Education Act 2011, but with additional measures to help ensure that all schools put in place arrangements of consistently high quality, accessible to all young people. The approach is similar to that taken by the Select Committee, whose specific recommendations were set within the current political agenda and economic climate, but includes further suggestions that extend beyond the Committee's proposals.

In this model schools would remain responsible for securing access to independent and impartial guidance but the guidance from the DfE would be strengthened to highlight the importance of face-to-face guidance, to require schools to commission guidance only from providers that had already achieved matrix accreditation or had given a commitment to achieve the standard and to require schools to use only professionally qualified careers advisers. The Select Committee recommended that the two current documents – the Statutory Guidance and the Practical Guide for Schools - should be combined into a single document, and the DfE is committed to updating the guidance to take account of the recent extension of the statutory duty to year 8 and to age 18, so there is an opportunity to strengthen the guidance in the ways proposed.

The support to schools could also be strengthened and enhanced to provide opportunities to share good practice. Here there are several possibilities. Local authorities, as middle tier organisations, could be given a statutory responsibility to support schools. Although they are no longer required to provide a universal



careers service, it could be argued that local authorities have a continued responsibility to ensure that the schools put in place appropriate provision, under their obligations to encourage and assist participation of all 16-18 year olds in education or training and their duty of care to all young people. The growing number of schools that are changing to academy status, however, would not have access to this support, unless they chose to opt into the local authorities' support service. Alternatively, as proposed by the Select Committee, the remit of the National Careers Service (NCS) could be extended to include supporting schools with taking on their responsibilities. A team of NCS regional advisers might be employed to provide such support direct to schools, or through local authorities. There is within this model the potential to strengthen also the support for careers education if the role of the proposed NCS regional advisers were to include both support to schools with putting in place appropriate arrangements for securing access to independent and impartial careers guidance and support for planning and developing careers education in the curriculum.

Monitoring and accountability would also need to be improved. As argued in an earlier section of this paper, and in the Select Committee report, the current Ofsted inspection programme and the DfE's destination measures alone do not provide effective measures. The Select Committee recommends that schools should be required to publish an annual careers plan, setting out the support available to pupils, which should be reviewed systematically taking into account the views of pupils, parents, employers and other learning providers. This idea deserves further investigation.

Certainly we know that annual review and development plans provide a very useful tool to support continuous improvement, but these are internal working documents that are not published to a wider audience. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), which represents the majority of headteachers and principals of secondary schools and academies in England, has said that it is not convinced that the annual plan would be anything more than a bureaucratic exercise so other ways of strengthening monitoring and accountability might need to be explored alongside this approach. Requiring schools to publish, in their prospectus, on their website, or in some other form, a statement of what careers provision they make available to pupils would provide a powerful and public means of accountability to parents. In an earlier section of this paper reference was made to the previous role of the Careers Service Branch Inspectorate. Teams of inspectors used to routinely visit careers services and publish a report with recommendations for areas of development. In the new context, NCS regional advisers could be given a monitoring and challenging role, alongside their support role. Alternatively the DfE could seek to resolve the position of Ofsted and require inspection teams to report on how schools were implementing the duty to secure access to independent and impartial careers guidance as part of the inspection framework. This idea would appear to have the support of HM Chief Inspector. Responding to a question about the inquiry into careers guidance at a House of Commons Education Committee hearing on his Annual Report, on 13 February 2013, Sir Michael Wilshaw said, "It is really important that impartial advice is given to students on progression routes, and



I am not sure that is the case. In our adjustment to our inspection framework from September, we will give the inspection of careers advice a priority”.

All of the above suggestions are intended to help make the current model work for the benefit of all young people, but there has also to be an acknowledgement by Government that schools have been given no additional funding in their budgets to pay for the careers guidance services that they are now required to purchase. The money that was previously spent by local authorities on the careers service part of Connexions could be devolved to schools. In turn the schools would have to be held accountable for how this money is used, but the allocation of additional funding in their budgets to pay for the careers guidance services that they are required to commission might help the schools to accept the increased monitoring and accountability measures. £200 million is a lot of money to an individual but for the nation it is a small investment compared to the social and economic costs of young people not making the right decisions about further and higher education, training and work.

## Option 2

# An all-age national careers service

This second option is the model it seemed we might have had if the original vision for the National Career Services (NCS) been implemented. It is a return to the former partnership model, but in the new context. Put simply, it would require the remit, and budget, for the NCS to be extended to providing face-to-face careers guidance in schools. The young people's part of the service could be delivered in a similar way as the adults' service, through regional contracts, and the providers would be required to negotiate partnership agreements with schools, which would be reviewed at least annually.

The benefits of this model are that it would ensure access to independent and impartial careers guidance for all young people and it would enable all the labour market intelligence gathered for use in the adults' service to be readily available to advisers working in the young people's part of the service. The young people's service would operate under the same conditions as currently apply to the adults' service, for example, the providers would have to be matrix accredited. The central team within the NCS would need to be expanded to take on the role of monitoring the young people's service. The role of this team could also be extended to include a research and development function in relation to the provision of careers education and guidance services. With regard to support for careers education, the contracts for the regional providers of the young people's part of the NCS could be extended beyond the provision of face-to-face guidance to young people, to include also support for schools to develop their programmes of careers education.

In many respects this model would be the most straightforward to implement and would use an approach that has proved to be very successful in several other countries, including, in the past, England. Obviously it would need to be funded, but it is likely that the costs of delivering a service through nine regional contracts would be less than through 152 local authorities. The model would also seem to have the greatest potential for restoring the placing service which was undertaken by the former careers services and Connexions but which appears to have been neglected in the current arrangements. In the context of the raising of the participation age the focus of the placing service would now be on helping to place 16 and 17 year-olds into work-based training or employment with training and 18 year-olds into work, preferably with training. While this should be part of the targeted IAG support service provided by local authorities, it should not be assumed that it is only young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET who might be looking for such opportunities. A national careers service for young people delivered by regional contractors could provide a strong link between the guidance work in schools and the placing of young people into work-based training or work with training.

# Option 3

## School-based career development advisers

While Option 1 is a strengthening of the current model and Option 2 is a return to a previous model but in the new context, Option 3 represents a radical departure for England. Under this third alternative, all schools would be required to employ their own careers advisers who would be responsible for providing face-to-face careers guidance to pupils and could also work with teaching staff to plan and deliver programmes of careers education. Such an approach would raise major questions, particularly about impartiality, and these points will be examined below, but the model should be considered alongside the other two options.

Firstly, let us examine how the model would operate in practice. It does represent a very different approach to those which have been applied in the past, and so would require a carefully prepared transition plan and commensurate funding. Schools would be given an allocation of funding, using a formula based on the number of pupils on roll, to appoint a careers adviser. Because of the potential dual role of providing careers guidance and working with others to lead on careers education, the adviser might perhaps be given the title of career development adviser. The advisers would be required to hold an appropriate professional qualification or to be working towards such a qualification. In time, a new qualification in career development would need to be developed, building in the current Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG) and Level 6 Diploma in Careers Guidance and Development, and some of the certificates and diplomas in careers education. In fact, because of the recent blurring of roles between careers advisers and leaders of careers education, several of the QCG

centres are already reviewing their offer of courses and new units on careers education have been proposed for the Level 6 Diploma. Initially the advisers recruited by the schools would hold one of the existing qualifications, but then seek to enhance their professional development as their roles evolved.

Although this model would be new to England, it is one that is used in several other countries, in different forms. The concerns it raises are the risk to impartiality, the separation of the adviser from the labour market, how to assure quality and how to maintain professional development and support (OECD, 2004).

Clearly the risk to impartiality is a big issue, with the argument that a careers adviser employed by a school could be put under pressure to promote opportunities offered by the school over other options that might be in the best interests of the young person. This cannot be denied but such risks are present whatever model of careers guidance is adopted. Under the model that currently applies in England there is an attempt to ensure impartiality by requiring schools to commission guidance from an independent source, but the employment status of the careers adviser is a weak lever with respect to ensuring impartiality. The adviser might not be on the payroll of the school, but a school can still put pressure on the adviser and could, ultimately, terminate the contract. Even in the days when every pupil had an interview with a careers adviser from a service external to the school, there was evidence of schools themselves putting pressure on pupils to take certain options. The threats to impartiality come from systems for funding schools and measuring their performance. These are major forces

which influence the behaviour of schools in ways that are too strong for independent careers guidance alone to challenge. The important principle to hold on to is that of impartiality, i.e. providing careers guidance that serves the best interests of the young person and does not promote one option over another. An adviser does not have to be employed by an external organisation to be impartial: requiring advisers to be professionally qualified and to adhere to a professional code of ethics are among other factors that can help to promote impartiality.

The question of advisers' links to the labour market, when based full-time in a school, is another important issue. Here there is a role for the National Careers Service (NCS), to make available to schools, in a readily accessible form, and at regular intervals, the labour market information (LMI) it already collates for the adult service. The role of monitoring could be covered by revising the Ofsted inspection framework for schools and requiring inspection teams to report on the quality and impartiality of the careers education and guidance provided by the career development advisers and its impact on outcomes for pupils. This leaves the issue of professional development and support and here there is a role for the NCS to work in partnership with the recently established Career Development Institute (CDI) to provide a range of national and local development opportunities for the school-based career development advisers.

In some respects the model is similar to the current approach, as the Secretary of State would still be devolving the statutory duty to provide careers guidance to schools, but the schools would be funded to employ

the advisers and the advisers would be required to hold a relevant professional qualification in career development, which could cover not only careers guidance theory and practice but also the leadership and management of career learning in a school. This model, like the other two presented in this paper, has the potential for strengthening the position of careers education in the school curriculum. It would still be left to schools to decide on their arrangements for careers education: some might continue to give responsibility to a teacher but others might choose to extend the role of the adviser. There have already been several examples of schools appointing careers advisers to the role of careers leader and under the current commissioning arrangements some schools have transferred responsibility for careers education to the careers adviser working under contract with the school. A career development adviser, with professional development for career learning and without the commitment of a subject teaching timetable, working with teachers responsible for PSHE education and work-related learning can make a real difference to the quality of the careers programme. To support this approach the continuing professional development opportunities offered by the NCS and the CDI would need to include elements on career learning.

Introducing this model would not be without major challenges but it would be consistent with the principles of school autonomy, enhance the role of the new bodies such as the NCS and the CDI and reflect existing practice in several independent schools and in FE colleges and universities.

# So what next?

The Select Committee report has raised serious concerns about the current provision of careers guidance in schools. Ofsted is currently undertaking a thematic review of the same provision. Nothing is likely to change until after the Ofsted report is published in July 2013 but it seems clear that some changes will be needed so now is the time to start exploring the possible options. In this paper I have set out three alternatives: (1) making the current arrangements work more effectively; (2) returning to a partnership model but in a new era; (3) moving to a school-based model. Each deserves serious scrutiny and debate. We also have examples of practice in neighbouring countries from which we could learn: while we undertake what some commentators have referred to as the 'English experiment', Wales is moving to a single, publicly-funded all-age national careers guidance service, the Republic of Ireland has a long-established school-based system and Scotland is placing greater emphasis on the development of career management skills in the school curriculum. The investigation of models in other countries should not be limited to those in the UK and Ireland: we should look seriously at all the possibilities and decide what model would provide the high quality careers support our young people deserve. The debate should involve all interested parties, including: careers practitioners and school leaders; academics and policy-makers; employers, colleges, training providers and universities; and, not least, young people and parents.

# Key questions

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of the three options presented in this paper?
2. Which of the three models has the greatest potential to ensure consistently high quality and effective careers education and guidance for young people in schools?
3. Are there other options that should be examined?
4. What further work is needed to investigate each of the options?
5. What actions could be taken to move the debate forward and to engage the key stakeholders?



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