



Careers England Policy Commentary 33

This is the thirty-third in an occasional series of briefing notes on key policy documents related to the future of career guidance services in England. The note has been prepared for Careers England by Dr Siobhan Neary¹.

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance. First joint report of the Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees of Session 2016-2017. (July 2016)

1. **Introduction.** This report, produced by the Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and Economy, reflects much of the commentary concerning the quality and accessibility of careers provision for young people in England. The sub-committee is uniquely placed to examine careers work because it draws together the select committees that are responsible for scrutinising both the Department of Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The purpose of the committee is to *'bring a greater coordination to the scrutiny of education and skills policy and its impact on the economy'* (Pg 4).
2. The sub-committee launched its inquiry on 8th December 2015 and took evidence from experts in the delivery of careers services, Ofsted, national bodies with responsibility for the delivery of careers services and two responsible Ministers (at that time): Nick Boles (Minister of Skills in both the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) and Sam Gyimah (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Education). In addition to this 30 young people shared their experience and the committee visited two schools.
3. The report describes what careers education, information, advice and guidance currently looks like in England's schools. It goes on to make a series of recommendations that aim to create a more cohesive and coherent approach to the delivery of careers services to young people.

Key findings. The report rehearses much of the territory that has previously been presented by the House of Commons Education Committee², House of Lords Select Committee on

¹ Helpful comments on earlier version have been gratefully received from Tristram Hooley, David Andrews, Steve Stewart and Claire Shepherd

² House of Commons Education Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2012-2013, Career Guidance for Young People: The Impact of the New Duty on Schools, HC 632

Social Mobility³ and Ofsted⁴ reports over recent years. It identifies that many schools are not providing students with good quality careers information, advice and guidance; provision is generally 'patchy' and 'not good enough'. Evidence suggested that provision was 'patterned' rather than patchy with girls, minority ethnic, working class and lower attaining students less likely to receive careers education.⁵

- a) The report describes how a lot of work has been done focusing on enterprise and brokering links between schools and employers. There was broad support for employers having a greater role in careers education in schools through providing mentoring, helping students with CVs, conducting mock interviews, arranging work experience, giving talks and attending careers fairs. It was recognised, however, that it is not easy to develop links between employers, schools and colleges in all parts of the country. The Government has made overcoming barriers between schools and employers a key focus for its policy on careers education. This is being implemented through The Careers & Enterprise Company in partnership with the LEPs.
- b) Concerns were raised, that the focus on employers was being pursued at the expense of the contribution of professional careers practitioners and that few young people move directly from school to work. Young people told the committee that careers advice was not tailored to their needs. It was provided by non-specialist staff who lacked awareness of modern jobs and non-university pathways, apprenticeships or alternative routes were not explored. In addition there was a lack of support for students with special educational needs. Concerns were also raised that staff delivering guidance in schools were not properly qualified.
- c) Accountability was identified as an issue as careers education, information, advice and guidance is not a priority for schools in comparison to attainment. Schools with sixth forms in particular were often reluctant to provide impartial information and advice because of the funding incentive to encourage young people to stay on for A levels. It was suggested that Ofsted needs to give greater attention to careers provision and to do more to hold schools to account in this area of their work. The publication of destinations data could contribute to greater accountability for schools, there is however a time lag of two to three years before data is published which the Government is currently trying to reduce.
- d) The report identifies that one of the issues for the delivery of careers provision is the range of government departments that provide careers support including the: Department for Education; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills; the Cabinet Office; Ministry for Justice; Department for Work and Pensions; Department for

³ House of Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility, Seventh Report of Session 2015-2016, Overlooked and left behind: improving the transition from school to work for the majority of young people, 8th April 2016

⁴ Ofsted thematic review of Careers Education, September 2013

⁵ Archer, L. and Moote, J. (2016). *ASPIRES 2 Project Spotlight: Year 11 Students' Views of Careers Education and Work Experience*. London: King's College.

Communities and Local Government; and the Home Office. The report describes how the patchy nature of services was exacerbated by the number of organisations and initiatives currently involved. The establishment of The Careers & Enterprise Company and the work it has done so far were welcomed. However, there were concerns about the overlap of services provided by national organisations. For example, the roles of The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service were seen to overlap. There were also concerns about overlaps with the Jobcentre Plus initiative to provide 12-18 year olds with insights into the world of work and the vocational routes available.

- e) More needs to be done to coordinate the various initiatives at national level; none of the initiatives individually had sufficient resource to meet the challenge but the funding collectively could make a difference. The sub-committee estimates that there is currently £90 million of direct government funding available for careers work in England. The complexity of the picture of disparate initiatives at national level is considered as counterproductive to a national system of careers provision.
- f) There is a need to raise awareness of quality standards and to rationalise the existing 12 awards within the Quality in Careers Standard and the matrix Standard to provide a coherent approach to quality assurance. There are a vast range of companies that provide careers education, information, advice and guidance services, creating a congested market place. This is perceived as providing confusion for schools, colleges, parents and young people: there are 240 careers providers in London alone. As the market is unregulated there were concerns that parents and young people could be vulnerable.
- g) Concerns were raised about several sectors in the UK economy that are experiencing skills shortages including: engineering; IT; accounting and medical care. More can be done to help young people to align their aspirations with available labour market opportunities. Other issues raised included underemployment and people being over qualified for their jobs: over 58% of graduates are currently working in non-graduate roles.
- h) The need for high quality labour market information (LMI) was emphasised, the roles of UKCES and LMI for All⁶ were promoted as being highly recognised. UKCES has been cut as part of the 2015 spending review. LEPs were recognised as providing good information at local level, however this is not consistent across all LEPs and more needs to be done to ensure that young people can access quality labour market information.
- i) The removal of the duty at Key Stage 4 to provide work-related learning has resulted in limited opportunities for young people in years 10 and 11. There were criticisms that many of the work experience opportunities these young people had access to were not meaningful and therefore did not contribute a great deal to learning. Many young people now only participate in work experience as part of study programmes in Years 12

⁶ <http://www.lmiforall.org.uk/>

and 13. Many students are now missing out on developing workplace skills which will be useful for the future.

4. **The recommendations.** The report offers many wide ranging recommendations which aim to reduce the number of young people leaving education without being able to fully consider their future options and how their skills and experiences meet the needs of the market place. The recommendations focus on the following.
 - a) **Incentivising schools.** The committee feel that more needs to be done to 'encourage' schools to positively engage with delivering careers provision for young people. There are a number of ways that are recommended including: publicising and enforcing the imminent legislation to make schools collaborate with colleges and training providers to provide information on vocational routes and apprenticeship. It is recommended that Ofsted introduces a specific judgement on careers information, advice and guidance for secondary schools and sets the criteria for making these judgements. They also recommend schools rated as 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' in their careers provision cannot achieve an outstanding grade overall. The Government is requested to provide a comprehensive plan for improving destinations data. This should cover a longer period of time and consideration should be given to how the data is presented.
 - b) **Coordination.** The committee recommend that a single Minister and Department should have responsibility for coordinating careers provision for all ages and that the existing provision should be rationalised. The Careers & Enterprise Company should be given an umbrella remit and the Jobcentre Plus support for schools and the National Careers Service should be transferred to the Company.
 - c) **Quality.** It is also recommended that the matrix Standard and the Quality in Careers award should be merged to establish a single quality brand covering all providers. In addition, the statutory guidance should be amended to require those delivering careers education, information, advice and guidance in schools to have a minimum relevant level 6 qualification.
 - d) **Labour market.** The committee expressed disappointment that UKCES is being closed down and urged the Government to continue to fund the LMI for All dataset. They challenge the Government to set out how they will ensure that the high quality of LMI produced by UKCES will continue. The LEPs are challenged and encouraged to take responsibility for providing up to date quality LMI for schools, colleges and career professionals within their areas. Their capacity to undertake this role will be increased through funding gained as a result of the rationalisation of national organisations providing careers support.
 - e) **Employers.** The Careers and Enterprise Company is charged with supporting the LEPs in brokering local links with employers and schools. They recommend that the Government works with employers and schools to ensure all Key Stage 4 and 5 students have the opportunity to have meaningful work experience.
5. **Reflection.** The report makes a number of welcome recommendations. In particular, it is essential that if all schools are to take their responsibilities concerning the provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance seriously recognition of the importance

of this work, connected with sanctions, is required. The suggestion to limit the overall Ofsted grading if careers provision is weak is not likely to be popular with schools. Together with the focus on destinations data, this suite of incentives would encourage schools to prioritise longer term investment in students rather than just the delivery of exam results.

6. The focus on the need to coordinate and rationalise services at the national and local level is of interest. The fact that so many government departments are involved in the provision of career guidance is an acknowledgement of its relevance across the life course. However, this arrangement is inevitably wasteful with many services being duplicated. The recommendation for one Minister and one Department to oversee an all age service is to be welcomed as this would provide a much clearer focus for policy.
7. The call for the integration of the National Careers Service under The Careers & Enterprise Company umbrella is potentially problematic. It does make sense that the work that the Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service undertake with schools could be better aligned by being brought under The Careers & Enterprise Company. However, the National Careers Service has a much wider remit in relation to adults which at present is outside of the Careers & Enterprise Company's remit.
8. The report makes a number of references to all-age provision. However, what this all-age provision would look like is not explored nor clearly articulated. The focus of the report is on schools and young people. If the integration of the whole of the National Careers Service is to be seriously considered further work needs to be undertaken to view careers work from an all-age perspective.
9. It is interesting to note the recommendation that the quality awards should be merged with the matrix Standard. This suggests a lack of understanding of the awards and the purpose they have been designed for. The quality awards nationally-validated by the Quality in Careers Standard (QiCS) focus on the provision and content of careers education and IAG support for young people in schools. Matrix has a much wider brief and is aimed at quality assuring access to careers IAG provision by publically funded services including the National Careers Service, Colleges and Universities. That said, the call for greater clarity and some rationalisation is understandable and the organisations involved could usefully explore how they could present a less confusing picture to school leaders, governors and others.
10. There is recognition in the report of the important role that UKCES has played in gathering and providing LMI. With the closure of UKCES there is clearly a gap going forward for this activity. While LMI for All will continue there are some big questions about the collection of the data on which LMI for All draws. The committee presents LEPs as organisations that will be central to the provision of LMI going forward. Although they suggest that the rationalisation of national provision will fund this, it is unclear how this might work in practice.
11. Work with employers is set to continue as the central activity for supporting young people to be better prepared for the workforce. The Careers and Enterprise Company working with the LEPs have started to create a national infrastructure for linking employers with schools. It must be remembered that access to the types of employers that have the resource to develop these relationships is not universal. In some rural areas of the country access to

employers will be limited for young people. It is also important to recognise that employers provide part of a range of support that young people need not the totality of it.

12. Although the importance of independent and impartial careers guidance and the qualifications of practitioners is highlighted, there is no clear steer as to how the Careers & Enterprise Company should be addressing this. If the Company is to deliver its remit it needs to focus on the careers element to the same extent, it has focused on the enterprise element. Independent, impartial careers support together with engagement with employers can provide young people with a richer understanding of themselves and the opportunities available to them.
13. **Conclusions.** The report presents many of the concerns and issues that have been raised over recent years in relation to the provision of careers support for young people in England. It offers a helpful review of progress that has been made including the Gatsby Benchmarks, the Careers & Enterprise Company and the role of LEPs in implementing work with employers within the local area.
14. It raises a number of issues concerning the fragmentation of careers work, noting that this is exacerbated by the increasing number of organisations and initiatives competing at national and local level to provide services to schools and young people. It articulates the frustration that schools and employers must feel with the lack of coherence in providing careers services. Fundamentally it describes the societal and economic imperatives that drive the need for quality, accessible coherent careers education, information, advice and guidance for young people.
15. The report is a very useful articulation of the current situation in careers work with young people. It reflects many of the anecdotal messages which are frequently cited concerning the quality and availability of careers support. It provides a number of interesting recommendations including the centralisation of careers within one Department and Minister; incentives to schools to engage fully in providing careers provision to their young people; ensuring the provision of high quality LMI and providing further support for the importance of having qualified careers practitioners delivering services that meet young people's needs.
16. It has arrived at a time of unprecedented change in the UK. We will soon leave Europe, we have a new Prime Minister and a new Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening. The announcement of the inclusion of Further and Higher Education and skills within the Department also offers new opportunities. The implications of this for the Skills Funding Agency and the National Careers Service are currently unknown.
17. This report makes some useful recommendations but it is unclear how the policy agenda moving forward will change. Although this report does not have any power *per se*, together with the Careers Strategy and the Statutory Guidance which are both soon to be published, it provides a blueprint that the new Government should follow.