

The Roles of Employers and Career Professionals in Providing Career Support to Young People in Schools and Colleges

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1. Context

- 1.1. John Cridland¹, CBI Director General, recently said: ‘*We know careers advice is on life support in many areas, as schools struggle with the statutory duty... Businesses need to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in...*’
- 1.2. The Careers Alliance has called for more employer engagement in careers education and work-related learning in schools and colleges, and has emphasised the importance of improved co-ordination between employers, professional careers advisers and schools/colleges.²
- 1.3. The Education Select Committee³ welcomed ‘*the Government’s support for the increased involvement of local employers in careers guidance in schools, which is vital for effective careers provision*’. It added: ‘*We recommend that schools be required to set out in their careers plans their arrangements with local employers and how they intend to enhance them.*’
- 1.4. Yet Ofsted⁴ found that ‘*[l]inks with employers were the weakest aspect of career guidance in the 60 schools visited. About two thirds of the schools reported that they had cut down on their work experience provision... for budgetary reasons and because of the recommendation in the Wolf report.*’
- 1.5. International evidence from the OECD emphasises the value of information on jobs and careers ‘*obtained in a real workplace and through contacts with working people*’.⁵ Despite the value of employer involvement in schools, the Coalition Government cut funding for the Education-Business Partnerships (EBPs) and

¹ CBI Director General, Speech to Grammar School Heads Association, 19 June 2013.

² CSSA (2011). The Government’s proposed new arrangements for careers education and guidance: what will they mean for employers? *Briefing Note 8*.

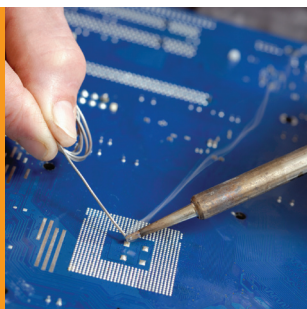
³ House of Commons Education Committee (2013). *Careers Guidance for Young People: the Impact of the New Duty on Schools*, p.29. HC 632-1. London: Stationery Office.

⁴ Ofsted (2013). *Going in the Right Direction? Careers Guidance in Schools from September 2012*, p.19. London: Ofsted.

⁵ OECD (2010). *Learning for Jobs*. Synthesis Report of the OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training. Paris: OECD.

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“Links with employers were the weakest aspect of career guidance in the 60 schools visited. About two thirds of the schools reported that they had cut down on their work experience provision for their students in Years 10 and 11, for budgetary reasons and because of the recommendation in the Wolf report.”

— Ofsted Review of Careers Guidance¹

¹ Ofsted (2013). *Going in the Right Direction? Careers Guidance in Schools from September 2012*, p.19. London: Ofsted.



Connexions which both provided brokerage between business and schools.⁶ The Coalition Government also removed the duties for work-related learning (including work experience) and careers education, consequently reducing the mandated space available for such school/employer links within the curriculum.⁷

1.6. A Pearson report showed over a quarter of state secondary schools reporting that there was less careers provision at their school in 2012/13 than in the previous year. Particularly sharp falls were reported in work experience (down 14%), careers libraries (down 12%) and individual careers counselling (down 9%)⁸.

1.7. In spite of these cuts to the education/employer infrastructure, there has recently been considerable rhetoric suggesting that this is an area in which the Coalition Government sees value. The Government’s recent *Inspiration Vision Statement*⁹ published alongside its *Careers Guidance Action Plan*¹⁰ places emphasis on ‘aspiration’, ‘inspiration’ and ‘motivation’ and explicitly links these concepts to contributions from employers and people in jobs. Schools are encouraged to adopt such activities as:

- Inspiring speakers and visits to real-world workplaces.
- High-quality work experience.
- Help with CVs and mock interviews.
- Mentoring and support for those at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

1.8. But in these recent announcements there has been little reference to the role of career professionals or explanation of how such links between employers and schools and colleges could best be brokered. Neither is there any mention of the crucial importance of employer contributions being embedded in an overall careers education and guidance programme¹¹ which is the key to ensuring such contributions are most effective.

1.9. Recent Government announcements have thus helpfully highlighted the value of a stronger employer role in supporting career learning in schools, but have not provided a clear roadmap of how this can best be achieved. In the opinion of the Careers Alliance, recent policy statements have also set up an unhelpful dichotomy between the career support provided by career professionals and the career learning opportunities that are provided by interactions with employers.

1.10. This Briefing Note will explain how the roles of employers and career professionals are distinctive and complementary. It will also highlight how career professionals can provide brokerage for employers and ensure that young people are able to gain maximum benefit from their interactions with employers and working people.

2. The distinctive contributions of employers and working people

2.1. Employers and working people can contribute to the career development of young people, in four main ways:

- Providing **information, inspiration and advice** about the world of work through talks and other kinds of interaction with young people. This can include insights into particular occupations or sectors and the values and ethics that employers subscribe to in the workplace.
- Providing **opportunities to experience and learn about work and gain career-related skills** through placements, visits, shadowing opportunities, simulations and web-based resources.¹²

⁶ Hooley, T. & Watts, A.G. (2011). *Careers Work with Young People: Collapse or Transition?* Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

⁷ The Education Act 2011 also removed the statutory duty for schools to provide careers education, and work-related learning (WRL) was removed by statutory instrument in August 2012.

⁸ L. Coiffait (2013). *A Cloudy Horizon: Careers Services in England: Careers 2020 Phase Two*. London: Pearson Think Tank.

⁹ HM Government (2013). *Inspiration Vision Statement*.

¹⁰ Department for Education & Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2013). *Careers Guidance Action Plan: Government Response to Recommendations from Ofsted’s Thematic Review and National Careers Council’s Report*.

¹¹ The Careers Alliance recommends that all schools should put in place a CEG programme which follows a framework that has integrity. The best current framework is the CDI’s *ACEG Framework for Careers and Work Related Education*. See: <http://www.careersengland.org.uk/documents/public/Framework%20for%20careers%20and%20work%20related%20education.pdf> [Accessed 25 January 2014].

¹² British Chambers of Commerce (2014). *Skills and Employment Manifesto*. London.



“Inadequate careers information, advice and guidance means that few young people are able to make an informed decision based on the full range of opportunities available to them, and many focus on skills that are poorly matched to demand from employers.”

— British Chambers¹

¹ British Chambers of Commerce (2014). *Skills and Employment Manifesto*. London.



- Contributing to **careers education activities** within schools such as CV writing workshops, mock interviews and enterprise programmes.
- Providing young people with **contacts within the world of work** that may be useful in their career development (social capital).

2.2. Employers can work with teachers to bring the curriculum to life. They can show students the relevance of what they learn to the world of work.¹³ A local engineering company can, for example, demonstrate how the maths and physics curriculum in local schools is relevant in industry.

2.3. If employer contributions are to be effective, they require logistical support, curriculum space, and receptive schools and young people. They also need to be an integral part of *properly planned, delivered and reviewed careers education and guidance programmes run by schools*.¹⁴ Such support is particularly important if it is the aim to involve the full range of employers (from multi-nationals to SMEs) and working people (from all occupations, including sole traders). Many schools make use of contributions from individual working people (usually parents, alumni and volunteers) who may be giving time outside of their usual working hours. Forging this diverse range of contributions into valuable career learning opportunities presents schools with a challenge.

3. Benefits to employers and constraints

3.1. Many employers are already working with schools. A CIPD survey reveals that¹⁵:

- Two-thirds of respondents provide work-experience placements.
- Almost half arrange workplace visits.
- Almost half have gone into schools to talk about their job.
- A third have arranged job shadowing.
- A third report that employees have volunteered to be school governors.

3.2. A UKCES report¹⁶ reviews research by Cooper and others¹⁷ and by the Education and Employers Task Force¹⁸ on the advantages to employers of engagement with schools, colleges and the labour market. These can be summarised as:

- **Direct benefits** through successful recruitment outcomes or access to a diverse future talent pool, skills or knowledge. Employers can also learn from their experiences with young people in schools and colleges on how to locate, nurture and develop their workforce of the future.
- **Indirect benefits** such as reputational advantages, fulfilling their corporate social responsibility or contributing to the communities in which they operate.
- **Workforce development benefits** derived from employees building skills and motivation through involvement in employer engagement activity.

3.3. There are, however, some constraints on the contributions that employers and people at work can make:

- This is not core business for them. They have organisations/businesses to run and jobs to do. The extent of the time they can devote to supporting students' career development is likely to be limited, and heavily dependent on their goodwill and enlightened self-interest.
- Their knowledge of the world is rich, but is confined predominantly to their own area of work and industry sector, and thus has an inherent partiality.
- Employers have limited knowledge of the complex educational choices facing young people which form a large part of their need for career support.
- Employers are unlikely to have in-depth conversations with individual students about the students' own strengths and interests.

¹³ Mann, A. & Dawkins, J. (2014). *Employer Engagement in Education: Literature Review*, Education and Employers Taskforce.

¹⁴ Andrews, D. (2013). *The Future of Careers Work in Schools in England*. Second Supplementary Paper.

¹⁵ CIPD (2012). *The Business Case for Employer Investment in Young People: Today's Young People, Tomorrow's Workforce*. London: CIPD.

¹⁶ Hooley, T., Devins, D., Watts, A.G., Hutchinson, J., Marriott, J. & Walton, F. (2012). *Tackling Unemployment, Supporting Business and Developing Careers*. pp.13-14. London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

¹⁷ Cooper, C., Mackinnon, I. & Garside, P. (2008). *Employer Engagement*. London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

¹⁸ Mann, A., Lopez, D. & Stanley, J. (2010). *What is to be Gained Through Partnership? Exploring the Value of Education-Employer Relationships*. London: Education and Employers Taskforce. See also Mann, A. (2012a). *It's Who You Meet: Why Employer Contacts at School Make a Difference to the Employment Prospects of Young Adults*. London: Education and Employers Taskforce. See also MacLeod, D. & Hughes, M. (2006). *What We Know about Working with Employers*. London: Learning and Skills Development Agency.



4. The distinctive contributions of career professionals

4.1. Career professionals (whether employed by a school or an external body) play an important role in bringing together schools and employers. Career professionals should be understood to include all practitioners qualified to Level 6 or above as recommended by the Careers Profession Task Force¹⁹. It is also important to recognise that there may be other staff concerned with careers work in schools, including teachers, who may work closely with career professionals to ensure that a properly planned careers programme is delivered in schools and colleges.

4.2. The contributions of career professionals are complementary to those of employers and people at work, in three respects:

- Providing **brokerage** to ensure that the contributions of employers and people at work are linked effectively to the needs of schools and young people, so saving time and adding quality on both sides.²⁰
- Managing **careers education and guidance programmes** within schools which incorporate and support the contributions of employers and people at work, so enhancing their value and ensuring their effectiveness.
- Providing **professional career guidance** which is impartial, addresses young people's distinctive interests, abilities, values and aspirations, and covers all areas of the labour market, as well as the career implications of subject and course choices.

4.3. Career professionals seek to address the following four issues in relation to employer contributions:

- The labour market is very broad and diverse; the interests, abilities, values and aspirations of young people, too, are very broad and diverse. Employers typically have experience of a limited range of sectors and occupations. Career professionals seek to balance these contributions with other options, wider labour market information and guidance personalised to student needs.
- The contributions of employers and people at work are much more likely to be effective if the young people involved are interested in what they have to offer. Career professionals can help to ensure that this is the case.
- Effective preparation and follow-up are crucial to the effectiveness of any experiences provided by employers and people at work. It is reflection that converts experience into learning. Career professionals can ensure that young people are prepared effectively for such experiences, and have opportunities to reflect on what they have learned and how it relates to their career planning.
- Career professionals are likely to have much more complete and up-to-date knowledge of the career implications of subject and course choices than are employers and people at work (or teachers).

5. Conclusion

5.1. Employers (and people at work) and career professionals both have distinctive and complementary contributions to make to the career development and career planning of young people. Working together, within a planned programme of careers education and guidance²¹, they can provide far more effective help to young people than either could do on their own.



¹⁹ Careers Profession Task Force (2010). *Towards a Strong Careers Profession: An independent Report to the Department for Education*. London: Department for Education. The Career Development Institute (CDI) has implemented the recommendations of the Task Force by establishing national frameworks for professional practice, a code of ethics and a UK Register of career professionals.

²⁰ Davies, B. & Cox, E. (2014). *Driving a Generation: Improving the Interaction between Schools and Business*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

²¹ The Quality in Careers Standard (QiCS) offers a nationally validated standard for the work of England's CEIAG Quality Award providers. The QiCS encourages schools to secure the best careers support for their students through the active involvement of employers, career professionals and teachers – robustly quality-assured against an overarching national standard.



Annex 1: Good practice case examples

There is a wide range of different interventions that together can help young people to make effective decisions and transitions – careers education, events (such as the Big Bang, The Skills Show etc.), employer input, information resources (including the web) and professional career advice and guidance. The Cogent Sector Skills Council, for example, aims to facilitate more effective collaboration in the UK's science industry talent pipeline by triangulating industry, schools and careers advisers around an employer-led STEM careers quality charter. Many colleges have qualified career professionals providing careers support to their students and the community. Some, like Bridgwater College, have also developed a careers guidance offer for schools. Given their strong links with employers, Bridgwater is considering the development of work experience co-ordination for the schools it is working with.

The case examples below illustrate some of the approaches taken by schools.



St Peter's Catholic School is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive school located in Guildford, Surrey, with approximately 1,100 students and 185 students in the sixth form.

The Ofsted report of February 2013 deemed the school '*outstanding*' in every category, stating that students in all year groups benefit from: '*exceptionally strong advice and guidance about future education and career pathways.*'

Careers work

The school has a dedicated CEIAG Co-ordinator (qualified to QCF Level 6) who works alongside other members of staff in a Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) Group with other senior members of staff. The school has commissioned one-to-one careers guidance interviews for students in Years 9 to 11 – with some sixth-form provision – from two (external) fully qualified careers advisers, as part of a collaborative arrangement amongst the Guildford Schools Partnership.

Employer links

A new Work-Related Learning Programme for Year 10 students involves over 100 employers:

- *Business Day in Guildford:* Students can choose 2 companies of 24 to visit. They learn about how a business is run, the working environment and employment opportunities.
- *Future Options Day:* The school invites 45 local businesses, organisations and past students to speak with students about different professions and routes. All routes – university, college, and apprenticeships – are covered.
- *Personal Development Day:* This focuses on building core personal skills. Working with the Royal Navy, students learn team building, problem solving, lateral thinking, 'getting the job done', and working in non-friendship groups.
- *The Business Game:* Run by SATRO (local EBP), students work in groups to set up a business for the day. Local business people mentor the groups and school staff act as bankers, suppliers and buyers.

The school has recently been re-accredited with the Investor in Careers CEIAG quality award. St. Peter's won the UK Award for Best Practice in Engaging Employers in Career Development at the CDI Awards Ceremony in November 2013.



Nunthorpe Academy in Middlesbrough is a co-educational 11-19 comprehensive converter Academy with approximately 1,550 students. Judged to be '*outstanding*' by Ofsted in April 2013, it is part of an elite group of schools and academies in England – the top 1% in the country.

Nunthorpe Academy is committed to delivering careers education across the whole curriculum and across all years to the highest possible standards, through a series of activities that are appropriate to students' stages of career learning, planning and development.

Careers work

The school has a Director of CEIAG who works closely with the Senior Leadership Team and colleagues across the Academy responsible for work experience, the Careers Convention and external agencies such as Redcar & Cleveland Connexions (which provides external professional career advisers to come into the Academy).

- Key Stage 3 – students learn about understanding themselves and career decision-making. The students develop their own careers action plan and explore what skills are needed in the world of work.
- Key Stage 4 – students learn about the different options, routes and providers after Year 11, as well as application processes and interview techniques. They also get access to work experience and impartial careers guidance interviews.
- Key Stage 5 – students receive CEIAG provision through tutorials where they continue to look at different routes to employment, application processes, mock interviews and access to impartial careers guidance interviews.





Employer links

Employers participate in the Careers Convention to provide information on local employment opportunities, offer apprenticeships and help with mock interviews.

Nunthorpe Academy was awarded the Investor in Careers CEIAG Quality Award in May 2013, a national quality mark recognising the commitment of a school to deliver high-quality and impartial CEIAG to all students.



Sir Robert Pattinson Academy in Lincolnshire is a 11-18 comprehensive school in Lincoln offering a holistic, high-quality education to 1,250 students. Its specialisms are languages, mathematics and science. The 2011 Ofsted report on the Academy stated that ‘*students are suitably prepared for the next stage in their education or progression into employment.*’

Careers work

The school has a dedicated CEIAG Co-ordinator on the staff who works closely with the Senior Leadership Team and colleagues in PSHEE, Education Business Partnerships and the external careers adviser (additionally bought-in). Close links are maintained with employers, other schools, further education colleges and higher education institutions.

Employer links

Activities involving employers are wide-ranging, and include: preparation for work experience interviews; providing insights into careers within their company through a series of “Lunch with...” talks; mentoring sixth-form students; supporting curriculum delivery in ICT, Technology and Languages, and providing work-experience placements.

Sir Robert Pattinson Academy has gained the CEIAG Quality Award ‘Career Mark’ for its CEIAG programme which complies with the Quality in Careers Standard (QICS), the nationally validated standard.



Davenant Foundation School is an 11-18 converter academy in Loughton, Essex. It is a Teaching School and has 1,160 students which includes 345 students in the sixth form.

Careers work

The school has a teacher appointed as careers co-ordinator with an independent careers adviser (externally secured) in attendance one day per week. There is relevant administrative support for CEIAG, and a careers office and library on site.

- Careers education is delivered through a seven-week module in Personal, Social, Health and Careers Education (PSHCE) lessons in Years 7 to 9.
- In Years 10 and 11 students meet the careers teacher and/or the careers adviser.
- Support for sixth-form students includes mock interviews (50% of Year 12) and high-quality work placements (75% of Year 12) through links with local and City firms.
- The school website describes the availability of careers staff and resources. Davenant’s Virtual Learning Environment hosts a range of resources that students access either as part of their taught curriculum for CEIAG or as part of their independent research.

Employer links

The school works with a local careers IAG group and has strong links with the local further education college. An annual local ‘CareersFest’ is organised collaboratively and involves local employers; they offer apprenticeships, work-experience placements, mock interviews, and insight talks about the world of work. Links with a local 14-16 project helps students deemed to be at risk of being NEET on leaving the school.

Davenant’s CEIAG work has been accredited by the Essex Recognition of Quality Award (RoQA) for CEIAG which is nationally validated under the Quality in Careers Standard (QICS).

Source: Case studies published with the permission of [Careers England](#) and the case-study schools.

The Careers Sector Stakeholders Alliance is a strategic leadership network of careers sector stakeholders. It aims to formulate a national strategic framework for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to address the issues of access, transparency, quality, equality, and continuity, and to identify areas where UK-wide co-ordination would be helpful.

Chair: Dame Ruth Silver

Convening Committee: Keith Herrmann (Convenor), Ian Borkett (TUC), Vivienne Brown (Scotland), Sarah Finnegan-Dehn (Careers Wales), Paul Redmond (AGCAS), John Wastnage (British Chambers), Prof. Tony Watts

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