

Policy Review : The End-to-End
Review of Careers Education and
Guidance



Careers England Policy Commentary 5

This is the fifth in a short series of briefing notes on key policy documents related to the future of career guidance services in England. This note has been prepared by the Board of Directors of Careers England, drawing upon an analysis prepared by Professor Tony Watts. It provides a summary of key points in the Review, together with some suggestions on priorities for action, from the perspective of England's principal employers of career guidance professionals.

The End-to-End Review of Careers Education and Guidance

1. The End to End Review of Careers Education and Guidance was undertaken between March and June 2004. Its publication was delayed so that it appeared on 18 July 2005 alongside the Youth Matters Green Paper.
2. Scope of the Review. Carried out by DfES officials and involving extensive consultations with all key interested parties, the Review focuses on careers education and guidance (CEG) provision in schools, colleges, and work-based learning providers. It includes a strong affirmation of the importance of such provision.

Careers England believes that it is important to consider this Review with 'key outcome' 5 (achieving economic well-being) of 'Every Child Matters' in mind. Enabling every young person to achieve and secure their economic well-being is essential for the overall economic health of the nation; CEG is the pivotal component of the 13-19 curriculum within which every young person should be enabled to gain the skills for effective planning of their learning and working lives. The Review needs to be set in the context both of the current statutory base for CEG (set out in para.16 below), and the Green Paper 'Youth Matters'. Policy Commentary 4 covers the latter in more detail.

3. Purpose of the Review. It is important to note that DfES End-to-End Reviews focus on 'the effectiveness of the delivery chain': they 'do not evaluate the underlying policy although they can identify aspects of policy that inhibit or promote effective delivery' (para.1.5). The report also stresses that for this Review, DfES had stipulated that 'a key assumption for the review is that there will be no increase in the budget for CEG in the future' (para.6.46).
4. Key conclusions of the Review. The key diagnostic conclusions of the Review are that:
 - 'insufficient priority is given to CEG in many Connexions Partnerships, schools, colleges and work-based learning providers, in Ofsted inspections and in policy making' (para.5.3)
 - 'Connexions has made good progress with targeted services for young people in the "not in employment, education or training" group, or at risk of becoming part of it'; but that 'Connexions Partnerships do not have the resources to deliver both targeted support and CEG' (Summary, p.5)
 - 'the significant flaws in the current arrangements for delivery of CEG mean that they are not sustainable' (para.5.2)

The second of these conclusions accords closely with a recent research study on Connexions, which concluded that Connexions looks more like two services than one, and is inadequately resourced to meet the demands of both universal and targeted provision.¹

¹ Hoggarth, L. & Smith, D.I. (2004). Understanding the Impact of Connexions on Young People at Risk. Research Report 607. London: Department for Education and Skills.

5. The key recommendation of the Review is:

- That 'the greatest potential for improving CEG delivery lies in driving up the quality and relevance of careers education in schools' (Summary, p.5).

Careers England suggests that this recommendation needs to be carefully examined in the context of a number of other sections of the Review, which indicate not only the current deficiencies of careers education (CE) provision in schools, but also the difficulties of addressing them.

6. CE/CEG deficiencies. The 46-page Review describes in some detail the current systemic deficiencies of careers education in schools. These include (para.5.10):

- the belief in the majority of schools that they do not have the capacity to provide appropriate CE programmes
- the lack of staff qualified to deliver CE programmes
- poor links with post-16 learning, employment and training providers
- partial and often outdated advice in many schools, reflecting the personal experience of teachers and tutors
- an under-valuation of CE as a specialism, resulting in part from the unchallenging nature of CE provision in many schools compared to other curriculum areas, and lack of standing in preparing teachers for promotion to senior roles within schools or the inspectorate
- limits on the time made available in the curriculum, arising from pressure from other subjects (notably Citizenship)
- the focus in schools on activities that have a direct impact on school performance and targets.

7. The Review also expresses concern about the impartiality of guidance offered within schools:

'A recurring theme among those we met, including careers coordinators in some schools, was about the lack of impartiality in the help offered by schools, colleges and other providers, especially in schools with sixth-forms and with tough recruitment targets. Many people spoke about the refusal of some schools to give their students access to literature produced by colleges and work based providers, permission to attend information giving events or in more general terms to give others a "fair hearing"' (para.6.2).

The Review affirms that:

'Our conclusion is that schools (especially those with sixth forms) do not always provide impartial guidance to 14-16 year olds on the full range of local learning opportunities' (para.6.4).

This endorses findings from a number of other studies.²

8. Policy levers. In addition to identifying these various concerns, the Review recognises the difficulties of addressing them. It acknowledges the perceived 'weakness' of current policy levers:

'Many people told us that the incentives, both financial and through the accountability system, to invest heavily in CE activities are extremely weak' (para.5.7).

² See e.g. Foskett, N., Dyke, M. & Maringe, F. (2004). The Influence of the School in the Decision to Participate in Learning Post-16. RR538. London: Department for Education and Skills.

The Review also indicates the impact of the Government's 'New Relationship with Schools', concerned to 'reduce bureaucracy':

'At the heart of the New Relationship is the proposition that every secondary school will have access to a school improvement partner (SIP) who will act as a conduit between central government, local authorities and schools, through a single conversation between the SIP and the school. The SIP will provide challenge and support around the school's targets, their self evaluation and how they are planning to build on existing strengths and tackle areas of weakness. The single conversation will be supported by more focused data on school and pupil performance, as well as the new school profile which will enable schools to report to parents on a broad range of quantitative and qualitative information in an easily comparable format' (para.2.11).

The Review accepts the primacy of this New Relationship:

'We will need to ensure that in putting the Review's recommendations into effect that we work with the grain of the New Relationship, using the levers of the single conversation and school profile, rather than requiring schools to produce additional plans which are not integrated within their overall approach to school improvement' (para.2.12).

Consequently, whilst 'many people' responding to the Review would wish to see stronger measures – such as making the 11-19 National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance compulsory or introducing universal Individual Learning Plans – these are ruled out as not being consistent with the New Relationship (para.6.50).

Given this context, Careers England believes that securing impartiality is the single most important task when the Review and the Green Paper are considered from a CEG perspective.

9. The other policy levers invoked to implement the Review's chosen direction must be seen as being set in the context of the New Relationship. They are based mainly on exhortation:

- publishing examples of good practice (para.5.13);
- 'encouraging' local quality awards for schools (para.6.39).

The same context must be applied to the Review's recommendations designed to assure impartiality:

- reaffirming every young person's entitlement to impartial careers information and advice
- facilitating much closer collaboration between schools, colleges and work-based learning providers to make it easier for young people to acquire accurate information and advice about progression routes
- increased CEG professionalism amongst staff in schools and colleges
- explicit references in Ofsted and ALI Guidance for Inspectors to address this issue
- a new focus on the quality and effectiveness of progression decisions alongside cruder measures of whether young people remain in learning at different stages (para.6.5).

The key is how to ensure that these measures will guarantee impartiality. Careers England's view is that they are desirable but not sufficient: that access to external career guidance provision is an essential component if impartiality is to be secured for all.

10. The impact of Connexions. The Review considers the external services provided to schools by Connexions. It notes the evidence of 'a relative reduction in the availability and expertise available from Connexions Partnerships' (para.5.8). The Review recommends that:

'The DfES should consider whether the current funding arrangements via Connexions Partnerships are the best way of delivering CEG' (para.5.24).

It further notes that 'there is confusion over the respective roles and responsibilities of schools and Connexions Partnerships' (para.6.22) and recommends that:

'Responsibility for delivery of both careers education and careers guidance should be brought together in one organisation in each area who would be clearly accountable for delivery' (para.6.28).

These recommendations are reflected in the Youth Matters Green Paper (see Policy Commentary 4).

11. The Review also comments briefly on the 'problem' of responsibility for CEG policy and other elements of schools and post-16 learning policies resting with different Ministers and being supported by different officials in different parts of DfES (para.5.3).

Careers England recommends that DfES reviews the responsibility lines for CEG so that it becomes aligned with Work-Related Learning and Enterprise Education.

12. The Review notes the importance of 'impartial careers advice and guidance from qualified professionals' (para.4.6). It reports that around half of the people delivering Connexions have a NVQ level 4 qualification in careers guidance (para.5.18). This contrasts markedly with the position in schools, where the review quotes the National Audit Office statistic that around two-thirds of schools do not have any staff with CEG qualifications (para.5.10); also, those that have such qualifications are often qualified in careers education rather than careers guidance. In addition, the Review notes that much of the current support for in-service training of school staff is provided by Connexions (para.6.13).
13. The Review proposes that a 'new vision' should be defined for CEG-related activities, based upon career development skills. It frames this in the following terms:

'young people by the age of 19 should have acquired the career development skills, work habits, knowledge and understanding to make mature informed decisions about employment and associated learning progression' (para.4.2).

It suggests that this goal should be embedded in all organisations offering learning to 11-19-year-olds. The Review also refers to research carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) which indicated that such skills were most effectively developed where schools 'worked closely with providers of professional guidance' (para.5.9). This research³ is strong testimony to the benefits of the partnership between schools/colleges and Connexions/Careers Services.

Careers England proposes that strengthening such 'partnership' working is key to the success of any measures that are adopted to strengthen CEG following the Review. International evidence underlines the importance of policy-makers ensuring that providers of career guidance are informed by knowledge of the labour market.⁴

³ Morris, M., Lines, A. & Golden, S. (1999). The Impact of Careers Education and Guidance on Young People in Years 9 and 10: a Follow Up Study. RD 20. London: Department for Education and Employment.

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap. Paris: OECD.

14. The Review makes two further points that implicitly support strengthening the partnership model. First, in considering the need for greater 'employer engagement' in CEG, the Review notes that:

'Several people with a long-standing involvement in CEG mentioned the extent to which Connexions staff appeared to be more remote from the day-to-day workings of the job market than was the case ten years or more ago. Equally, some employers and their representatives were critical of CEG arrangements, especially the accuracy of information given to young people and their responsiveness to employers' (para.6.16).

Young people themselves, in contributing to the Review, suggested that improved 'information on local and national employment trends and more contact with employers' should be available to them (para.5.6).

Careers England suggests that the logical recommendation arising from this would be to emphasise the need for Connexions staff to pay more attention to labour market information and intelligence (since it is much more difficult for school-based staff to be expected to do so).

15. Secondly, the Review comments that:

'One of the characteristics of the existing CEG arrangements is that none of the main participants has CEG as their main preoccupation. The priority of each of the front-line delivery organisations lies elsewhere; as a result, CEG often fails to capture the sustained interest of organisational leaders who have to manage complex portfolios of activities, objectives and targets' (para.6.20).

Careers England is concerned that the need to raise the status of CEG is hampered by its lack of profile within the current targets and performance measures for Connexions. It suggests that the current statutory base for CEG provides the framework to secure a stronger partnership between learning providers and the external provider of the statutory 'careers service' (currently Connexions). This would require two policy changes: the CEG statutory base throughout years 7-11 and within 16-19 publicly funded learning should be strengthened, as para.16 below proposes; and universal performance measures including CEG should be established, as para.17 below proposes.

16. The current statutory base for CEG. Section 8 of the 1973 Employment & Training Act (as amended by the 1993 Trade Union Reform & Employment Rights Act) places a duty upon the Secretary of State (SoS) to ensure the provision of a 'careers service' in each locality in England. This duty is currently discharged through the powers the SoS has under the Learning & Skills Act 2000. In addition, the 1997 Education Act (Sections 43 and 44) places a duty upon all publicly-funded schools to have in place a policy for careers education for all pupils in years 7-11 (the extension from years 9-11 to include years 7 and 8 took effect from September 2004).

These duties could be strengthened if Section 45 of the 1997 Act were to be implemented; this provides the power to the SoS to require all publicly-funded 16-19 learning providers to put in place a policy for CEG. Careers England advocates that the SoS should exercise this power.

17. Performance measures. To secure the improvements in CEG provision which the Review seeks, changes are called for in the performance measures set for CEG providers. The Review highlights that one of the concerns with the Connexions arrangements has been that its performance targets have related exclusively to the targeted 'NEET' group, and that there have been no targets specifically for CEG (para.6.41). It accordingly suggests that a clear methodology should be developed for measuring the success of CEG programmes in outcome terms. It suggests that the work already taking place to develop measures of success in post-16 learning (para.6.43) provide the starting point.

Careers England wishes to support such developmental work to ensure that future measures incorporate an adequate 'performance measurement and evaluation programme for career development and progression planning' (para.6.42) for all young people.

18. Quality standards. The Review supports the establishment and promotion of local quality standards for CEG (paras.6.37-6.40). This recommendation is taken up by the Green Paper in a strengthened form.

Careers England suggests that a key requirement for the future is that every provider of CEG should be required to meet a 'nationally recognised' quality mark; existing local standards should be assessed against the 11-19 National Framework for CEG and only be 'recognised' if they fulfil the framework's objectives.

19. Conclusions. The diagnostic judgments of the Review are sound, and are supported by other research. There are elements which Careers England strongly wishes to support, including those set out in the paragraphs above.
20. In respect of the principal recommendation of the Review, that 'the greatest potential for improving CEG delivery lies in driving up the quality and relevance of careers education in schools' (Summary, p.5), schools and colleges alone will not be able to bring the improvements required. Partnership with an external specialist agency is a prerequisite.
21. International evidence needs to be considered, including the OECD Career Guidance Policy Review⁵ (based on 14 countries). This persuasively indicated the limitations of an exclusively school/college-based model of career guidance delivery, in three respects:

- Its weak links with the labour market, and its tendency to view educational choices as ends in themselves without attention to their longer-term career implications.
- Its lack of impartiality, and the tendency for schools to promote their own provision rather than college-based or work-based routes.
- Its lack of consistency: the policy levers on schools and colleges to deliver services in this area tend to be weak, and services to be patchy both in extent and in quality.

OECD accordingly strongly favoured a delivery model based on a partnership between schools and colleges on the one hand, and on the other an external service that is closer to the labour market and is able to provide impartial guidance at a consistent standard.

22. **Careers England suggests that future policy in England, in the light of the identified current deficiencies, should be informed by the European Union's Council Resolution (May 2004) on 'Guidance Throughout Life', and the subsequent Ministerial Agreements on European Political Priorities for Lifelong Guidance, supported by the jointly-published European Commission and OECD publication 'Career Guidance: A Handbook for Policy Makers' (2004).**
23. The option of moving towards a partnership with an all-age guidance service, as in Scotland and Wales, should also be considered. Recent reviews of both Careers Wales and Careers Scotland⁶ have produced positive findings that contrast markedly with the deficiencies of CEG in England presented in the End to End Review.

⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). Op. cit.

⁶ See Watts, A.G. (2005). Careers Scotland: Progress and Potential. Glasgow: Careers Scotland. Moulson, R. & Prail, S. (2004). Careers Wales Review – Final Report. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

24. Overall, **Careers England believes that the Review provides the basis for future developments in CEG to be determined, provided that these five key issues are addressed:**
- **impartiality is guaranteed**
 - **quality standards are established and become a mandatory feature of provision**
 - **universal performance measures are set**
 - **the needs of the labour market inform provision**
 - **partnership working is strengthened.**
25. Since the Government invites comments on the Review's recommendations to be made as part of the Green Paper consultation process, Careers England recommends that every opportunity should be taken to advocate options which will secure the economic well-being of every young person in England.