



## Policy Briefing Note 22: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014

### Sutton Trust Report – Advancing Ambitions

This is the 22nd in the series of short Policy Briefing Notes published by Careers England. It examines the Sutton Trust report ‘Advancing Ambitions – The role of career guidance in supporting social mobility’, published on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

#### 1. Introduction

‘Advancing Ambitions – The role of career guidance in supporting social mobility’<sup>1</sup> written by Tristram Hooley, Jesse Matheson and A.G Watts, was published on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014 by The Sutton Trust.<sup>2</sup> The report was published following a study to explore ‘the relationship between career guidance and social mobility ... [which sought] to answer the following questions: What can career guidance contribute to social mobility?; How have the policies of the coalition government impacted upon the provision of career guidance in state schools and colleges in England?; What does quality career guidance look like?; [and] What evidence is there of the impact of quality career guidance?’ (Hooley, Matheson and Watts, 2014, p10).

#### 2. The study

The study was comprised of three areas. The first was a literature review of existing evidence on effectiveness career guidance in schools and colleges and a detailed analysis of recent policy within the careers guidance area. Second, the creation of a new dataset to quantify the impact of careers guidance programmes in schools and colleges. This was required as the study identified ‘at present there are no systematic, comprehensive data on how schools and colleges are discharging their career guidance responsibilities’ (Hooley, Matheson and Watts, 2014, p10). The new dataset included information on 820 schools and colleges which held a Quality Award and therefore has enabled the study to provide results on the impact of holding such an award. Third, detailed interviews and case-study work was undertaken with 14 schools. These schools were chosen if the data revealed them to have performed well with regards to progression or attainment or if they had been identified as an example of good practice. As a result of the study in these three areas the report is able to make a number of recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Advancing Ambitions – The role of career guidance in supporting social mobility’ is available to download as a pdf from the Sutton Trust website at <http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Advancing-Ambitions-16.10.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Sutton Trust, founded in 1997, aims to improve social mobility through education. For more information visit their website at <http://www.suttontrust.com/about-us/us/>

### 3. Report conclusion

The report is concluded with the statement the ‘study has made the argument that career guidance is a valuable part of the public-policy tool-kit to enhance social mobility’ (Hooley, Matheson and Watts, 2014, p32).

Careers England finds it encouraging the study has found career guidance has survived and flourished in some schools and colleges. However, it is a concern this is in the minority, and is thus creating a “postcode lottery” of provision. This concern is highlighted in the Careers England Policy Statement <sup>3</sup> published in September 2014, where we call for a consistency of independent careers guidance provision to which all young people should be entitled across the country.

The report also concludes ‘the Quality Awards can be considered as a definition of good-quality career guidance’ (Hooley, Matheson and Watts, 2014, p32). This was revealed through the quantitative analysis which identified ‘at GCSE, Quality Awards are associated with an improvement in GSCE performance and a decrease in persistent unexplained absences ...[and] at A-level... are associated with a decrease in persistent unexplained absences, ...an increase in performance, [and] improved destinations’ (Hooley, Matheson and Watts, 2014, p4).

Careers England welcomes the inclusion in the study of the quantitative analysis on schools and colleges holding the Quality Award. As an organisation we continue to be committed to the issue of quality and recognition through a Quality Award. This is supported by the Careers England Business Plan for 2014/2015 <sup>4</sup>, in particular through our involvement with the Quality in Careers Standard (QiCS) <sup>5</sup> and the Quality in Careers Consortium.

### 4. Report recommendations

The report offered ten recommendations for the future for career guidance in England. The recommendations, whilst offered for a number of stakeholders, are primarily aimed at the government, suggesting the Secretary of State for Education should consider them to ‘move the government’s careers policy in a direction that is more supportive of social mobility’ (Hooley, Matheson and Watts, 2014, p32). The recommendations which are separated in the report under a number of sub-headings are summarised below.

#### 4.1 Changing the role of the National Careers Service

The report offers two recommendations for the role of the National Careers Service (NCS). These are to strengthen the NCS by giving it a clear role to support schools with free access to professionally qualified careers advisers made possible through additional resourcing.

Careers England is broadly supportive of these recommendations, of the continuation of the NCS and the strengthening of its role. In our Policy Statement published in September we called for additional funding to be made (proportionally) available to schools to support careers

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<sup>3</sup> The Careers England Policy Statement (pdf) as published in September 2014, can be downloaded from <http://www.careersengland.org.uk/documents/Public/13.19%20and%20adults%20policy%20statement%209.2014.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The Careers England Business Plan for 2014/2015 is accessible via the Careers England website to members only.

<sup>5</sup> The QiCS is the national validation available for England’s range of Quality Awards for careers education, information and guidance. Information on this and the Consortium is available via the Careers England website <http://www.careersengland.org.uk/quality.php?page=introduction>

education, information, advice and guidance and a strengthening of the NCS will enhance the support schools are able to provide (Careers England, 2014).

#### 4.2 Enhancing quality and accountability in schools

The report offers five recommendations for enhancing quality and accountability in schools. These include a strengthening of the statutory guidance, Ofsted recognising careers Quality Awards as an indication of good provision, providing clarity of the statutory and non-statutory guidance through the development of a single document and requiring schools and colleges as part of their statutory duty to develop and publish their policy on career guidance.

Careers England is broadly supportive of these recommendations. In our Policy Statement published in September we call for all schools with pupils at age 11+ to work towards and achieve a careers Quality Award which is nationally validated by QiCS, ensuring every schools careers provision offers consistency of support (Careers England, 2014)

#### 4.3 Data and new technologies

The report offers two recommendations for data and new technologies. These are for the Department of Education to enhance the quality of data it collects on student progression and for the Government to review the online technologies it supports.

#### 4.4 Evidence- based policy

The report offers one recommendation for evidence-based policy. This is that all new career guidance policies should be evidenced-based.

### 5. Conclusion

Careers England welcomes the report published by the Sutton Trust. It not only provides a number of recommendations for future policy direction but helps keep the issue of quality, impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance firmly on the agenda.

### 6. References

Careers England, *Policy Statement: September 2014*, available from <http://www.careersengland.org.uk>

Hooley, T. Matheson, J. and Watts, A.G. (2014) *Advancing Ambitions – The role of career guidance in supporting social mobility*, The Sutton Trust, available from <http://www.suttontrust.com>

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**Careers England** is the trade association for employer organisations and traders involved in the provision of products and services promoting careers education and guidance in England. For more information visit our website at [www.careersengland.org.uk](http://www.careersengland.org.uk) or contact us at:

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