



Policy Briefing Note 23: 31st October 2014

State of the Nation 2014

This is the 23rd in the series of short Policy Briefing Notes published by Careers England. It examines the 'State of the Nation 2014: Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain' report as published on the 20th October 2014, focussing on the report's coverage of careers advice.

1. Introduction

The State of the Nation 2014, as published by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission¹, is the second annual report to be presented to Parliament. The report assesses what the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments are doing, what progress is being made and what might happen in the future. The report also examines the role of employers, schools, colleges and universities and makes a number of recommendations for action.

2. 2020 challenge – recommendations for careers advice and youth unemployment

The reports central conclusion is 'the next government will have to adopt radical new approaches if poverty is to be beaten, mobility improved and if Britain is to avoid becoming a permanently divided society'. This is how the report defines the 2020 challenge and is the focus of a number of key recommendations which need to be reached by the year 2020. These key recommendations cover a number of areas, including careers advice and youth unemployment, as follows:

- Ending illiteracy and innumeracy among primary school leavers by 2025 and a new focus on quality careers advice, character development and extra-curricular activity in secondary schools
- Long-term youth unemployment to be ended by 2020 through a package of measures including half of all larger workplaces providing apprenticeships and a new Day One support service to help unemployed young people get straight back into work or education (SMCP Commission 2014)

¹ The Social Mobility and Child Poverty (SMCP) Commission was created in 2012 as an independent and statutory body to monitor the progress of government and others in improving social mobility and reducing child poverty in the UK. For more information on the SMCP visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-and-child-poverty-commission>

Careers advice is examined in Chapter 3, 'Progress on educating the next generation'.

3. Careers advice

The report focusses on careers advice in Chapter 3, points 70 – 73 (pages 90-92) and the following is replicated direct from the report.

'70. Young people need to be well-informed when making subject and career decisions. Good careers advice is key for disadvantaged young people as they are less likely to have a network of family and friends who can give advice. Providing improved careers advice and guidance will ensure that young people can select educational routes that are suitable for them and allow them to achieve their aspirations and potential.

71. The quality of careers advice offered in secondary schools is of real concern. Ofsted expressed worries in relation to this in 2013.² As recently voiced by a report by the National Careers Council, there is plenty more to do and 'one year on, we cannot pretend that the picture now is as we hoped it would be'.³ This is demonstrated by the fact that only 21 per cent of schools take young people on two or more university open days and only 39 per cent of schools ensured young people had a meaningful engagement with an employer by age 16. Recently the Gatsby Foundation developed eight benchmarks (see box below) which represent high-quality careers advice and guidance. They found that only 2 per cent of schools are delivering this type of high-quality provision.⁴ On work experience alone the United Kingdom falls behind international comparators. Less than half of British young people have access to a high-quality work experience placement, piling in comparison to France where 85 per cent of students have completed a placement; the European average is 61 per cent.⁵

Costs of providing excellent careers advice

Good-quality careers and advice does not come cheap, but is an investment worth making. Estimates by the charity Gatsby show that:

- Giving good careers advice and guidance which prevents one young person becoming NEET pays for careers guidance for 280 young people;
- Providing good careers advice in an average secondary school would cost £53,637 in the first year and £44,676 per year thereafter. This is less than 1 per cent of a school budget, or £54 per pupil.⁶

72. This year, the Government published statutory guidance setting out expected standards on careers advice. But it is yet to be seen how this will be implemented in practice. The introduction of destination data is meant to drive behaviour change in how schools see their role in preparing pupils for the world beyond school. But it is unclear whether this is a powerful enough driver. The risk is that a number of schools may not put in place adequate provision, or fail to support those who need most guidance. Too often careers advice is seen as an afterthought for schools.

² Ofsted, *Going in the right direction? Career Guidance in schools from September 2012*, 2014

³ National Careers Council, *Taking Action: achieving a culture change in careers provision*, 2014

⁴ Gatsby, *Good Career Guidance*, 2014

⁵ McKinsey Center for Government, *Education to Employment: Getting Europe's Youth into Work*, 2014

⁶ Gatsby, *Good Career Guidance*, 2014

73. Improving social mobility and escaping child poverty is reliant on young people making choices that lead to good qualifications and jobs. But as the changes to vocational options and the apprenticeship system bed in there is a chance that some careers advice will fail to keep pace. The Commission believes there needs to be clarity on how advice and guidance will be monitored, what will trigger intervention, what form this intervention will take and how schools will be held to account.⁷ Indeed, we believe that from 2015, Ofsted should consider not scoring a secondary school higher than 'requires improvement' in relation to leadership and management if careers advice is not up to the standard of the statutory guidance. Similarly, schools should not be able to score 'outstanding' unless work experience and employer engagement is deemed to be of high quality.' (SMCP Commission, 2014).

In addition to the above, the report references 'eight benchmarks to provide high-quality careers and advice guidance' (Gatsby, 2014). It also states that 'the jury is still out on how well schools are doing in preparing young people for the world beyond schools' (SMCP Commission, 2014). It concludes the chapter by making a number of recommendations which include the following:

Recommendation for UK Government

Give more focus to preparing children for the world beyond schools. It should develop a new outcomes-based means of assessing school performance so that schools focus on the quality of extra-curricular activity, character development and careers guidance. School should not be rated as 'outstanding' without being able to demonstrate the quality of their extra-curricular activities, or how they build character or resilience and have excellent careers advice (SMCP Commission, 2014).

Recommendations for employers and universities

Employers should increase their links to local schools. This means employers ensuring staff can actively support the delivery of inspirational work experience, mentoring opportunities and careers guidance and offering talks in schools.

Schools should have an employer representative on every school governing body tasked with providing young people with greater exposure to the world of work and careers pathways, thereby ensuring that the many employers who want to get involved in helping young people can do so.

Universities need to increase links to local schools and provide more detailed guidance for pupils, schools and colleges on courses and career choices (SMCP Commission, 2014).

Careers England welcomes the publication of the State of the Nation 2014 and the recommendations regarding careers advice. As an organisation we will continue to promote social mobility, achievement and economic well-being and our Policy Statement⁸ published in September 2014 set out our views on the future of services for both young people and adults.

⁷ CBI, *Future Possible: the business vision for giving young people the chance they deserve*, 2014

⁸ 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>

4. References

Gatsby (2014) *Good Career Guidance*, available from <http://www.gatsby.org.uk/~media/Files/Education/Gatsby%20Sir%20John%20Holman%20Good%20Career%20Guidance%202014.ashx>

Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014) '*State of the Nation 2014: Social Mobility and Child poverty in Great Britain*', available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2014-report>

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 or contact us at:

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