



PRESS NOTICE

CONCERNS THAT DROPOUT RATES FROM LEARNING COULD COST THE COUNTRY £ MILLIONS

A Report by Leigh Henderson on behalf of Careers England is released today

(18 October 2011).

Because of its apprehension concerning what it considers to be ill-informed decisions being made about the future provision of career education and guidance for young people in England, Careers England commissioned Leigh Henderson (of CoHesion Career Development Consultancy) to survey its members on their service provision and outcomes for beneficiaries – the public.

As the Education Bill moves to its REPORT STAGE in the House of Lords, Peers are considering clause 27 which would replace the duty upon Local Authorities to provide a universal careers service for young people, with a new duty on schools, about which many commentators have voiced serious concerns.

Amongst its conclusions, the report (“Looking to the Future”) asserts:

“International evidence demonstrates that school-based provision is remote from the labour market, too subordinate to personal and study guidance if provided by those who are not career guidance specialists, and too linked to the self-interest of particular institutions. Instead, the evidence shows that a *partnership model* is required between an external careers specialist agency and the school. The OECD recommends that links with such agencies should be complementary to, rather than a substitute for, programmes inside the school¹.

Experience in New Zealand and the Netherlands² shows a reduction in career guidance activity if schools are required to commission it (rather than it being provided by a specialist external agency), despite additional funding being

¹ OECD (2004), Career Guidance and Public Policy, Bridging the Gap, OECD, Paris

² Watts, A.G., (2011) The Emerging Policy Model for Career Guidance in England: Some Lessons from International Examples, *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*.

provided to schools in both countries, which is not proposed in the UK. A report by the Education Review Office in New Zealand concluded that only 12% of secondary schools provided high-quality career education and guidance to their students.”

And it concludes:

“There is a real possibility that dropout rates amongst HE students could increase under the new arrangements proposed by the Education Bill without the required strengthening of access to impartial careers advice and guidance from professionals prior to entry.

As an example, one Careers England member estimates that in a Midlands city, there are 300 drop outs from further education courses annually. If the average cost per course is circa £4,000 p.a. then this amounts to a wastage of circa £1,200,000 annually. If rolled out across the country the costs would be approaching £400 million p.a.; twice the previous £200 million budget of career guidance for young people that has been cut.”

The full conclusions in the report by author Leigh Henderson are:

“My conclusions are drawn from the evidence gathered from Careers England members as well as from further authoritative published sources. Evidence has consequently been presented in this report with a particular focus on the interests of Careers England members’ clients – the young people and adults they serve across much of England.

The evidence and the analysis highlight the pressing need for the policies of the Coalition Government - with regard to all-age careers information, advice and guidance - to take close cognizance of the impact of specialist high quality careers service provision.

Anecdotal evidence can always be brought forward to criticise any profession or service. The consistent facts presented here, from quality assured sources, reveal something of what will be lost with the Education Bill in its present form unless it can be amended in its provisions in current clause 27.

These include:

- *Removal of the right of access for young people to locally provided, labour market informed, impartial guidance. The marketisation of the education and training markets requires access to impartial support now more than ever. Evidence presented in my report shows the power of collaborative working and this is supported by the Ofsted report and the Hughes Report. (Section 3)*
- *Serious reductions in the access to face-to-face professional career guidance. The likely ongoing impact on dropout rates from work-based learning, further and higher education and universities should urgently be considered. Estimates of the cost of wasted fees, let alone the human cost, as the evidence in my report indicates, clearly show the serious implications for the economy. (Section 4)*
- *Careers England evidence, the Education Select Committee and the Hughes*

Report all argue for retaining access to face-to-face support for young people from career advisers. It is obvious that most people use the Internet and social networking sites to find information and there is the prospect of ever more functionality for the individual. The flexibility to be able to use many channels to communicate with career advisers is well established and will improve.

However, none of this replaces the need for face-to-face interactions to establish trust and real communication services. People need to talk through issues with significant personal content with someone they can trust; the web and telephone help lines alone cannot do that. The case study on JD on page 14 of my report could not have had the outcome achieved by guidance by other channels. (Section 5)

- *It would be easy to seek to dismiss the evidence on satisfaction rates presented by Careers England members. Books could be written on how simple it can be to internalize helpful guidance and not acknowledge the support given. The facts remain that response rates to these satisfaction surveys were highly positive; and Careers England members are evidently committed to identifying areas for improvement for the sake of their clients, not just to meet the requirements of matrix and other quality standards.*

The immediacy effect diagram in Section 6.2 is more specific in its questioning on impact and shows that many people can work through career planning for themselves. However, many cannot. (Section 6)

- *Serious reductions in placing and supportive activity at a time when many young people at all levels need support not only to enter employment, education and training opportunities but to be retained in learning and work. The case studies included in my report show how many young people need significant counselling, advocacy and mentoring support if they are to make effective transitions into learning and work; and not only to participate but to achieve and to progress. (Section 7)*
- *A dilution of quality assured procurement, with serious concerns about public protection issues, all of which could be found wanting by independent scrutiny. The proposed arrangements are likely to exacerbate the variations in quality already noted by Ofsted after the devolution of Connexions to LAs in 2008. (Section 8)*

The weight of evidence I have gathered from a variety of sources in preparing and presenting this analysis makes powerful arguments against the arrangements proposed in the Education Bill for the future of careers education and IAG for young people, and I have not listed individual sources contained in the Hughes and Gratton literature review³.

My overall conclusion is this: if we are really concerned about providing young people with the best support for career planning, we will neither argue for the status quo nor for the proposals as they currently stand in the Education Bill. Rather we will argue for universally accessible specialist professional career guidance services. Such services for the future

³ Hughes, D.H, and Gratton, G. (2009). Literature review of research on the impact of careers and guidance-related interventions DMH Associates for CfBT Education Trust.

need to be based on the principles of impartiality, professionalism (with the resources to express that professionalism), informed by the labour market and complemented by intelligent application of web technologies to optimise efficiency and effectiveness. The costs involved in such a solution should be set against the structural wastage in transitions as demonstrated by the evidence presented in this report.”

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Careers England is the Trade Association for employers in the careers advice and guidance industry in England. It has consistently offered a supportive welcome to the proposal to establish an all age Careers Service (aaCS).
2. But increasingly the lack of details on transition from the current Connexions and Next Step arrangements to a National Careers Service, and failure of Ministers to assure face-to-face careers advice and guidance to young people, has led to serious frustration and widespread concerns. The concerns are based upon the evidence available internationally, and supplemented within England by Careers England members' experiences.
3. The full report “Looking to the Future: the impact of career guidance in England – evidence and an analysis” is attached.

FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE FROM
Leigh Henderson, 07970 829225
leighhen@googlemail.com

And

Paul Chubb (Careers England's Professional Adviser & Director) 07976 575536
paul.chubb@careersengland.org.uk or paul@boundarypartnership.co.uk