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Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Jan Ellis
Chief Executive, Career Development Institute

By email: jan.ellis@thecdi.net

1 August 2020

Thank you for your letter of 6 July, also sent on behalf of your other co-signatories, regarding a Career Guidance Guarantee.

You highlight the unprecedented difficulties that young people are likely to face in the labour market as a consequence of COVID-19. I recognise that this is a challenging time for all and agree that high quality careers education and guidance is essential to supporting young people and adults to make decisions about their next steps in education, employment and training.

I am committed to making sure that no young person is left behind as a result of COVID-19. That is why, on 8 July, we announced a package of measures to boost skills, which included:

- £32 million to March 2022 to help 269,000 more people receive advice from the National Careers Service;
- A new payment of £2,000 to employers in England for each new apprentice they hire aged under 25, and a £1,500 payment for each new apprentice they hire aged 25 and over, from 1 August 2020 to 31 January 2021;
- £111 million to triple the scale of traineeships: with three times more funding available to providers in 2020-21 to support 30,000 new places, and for the first-time introducing payments for employers to expand work placements at £1,000 per trainee;
- £100 million for a brand-new offer to give 18 and 19-year-old school and college leavers the opportunity to study high value Level 2 and 3 courses when there are not employment opportunities available to them;
- £17 million to triple the number of sector-based work academy placements in 2020/21, enough funding to support 32,000 more vocational training placements.

Further to the above, we have taken a number of important steps to make sure that young people can continue to access the careers support they need while schools are closed.

In line with the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, schools and colleges are expected to provide a personal guidance interview for every student by age 16 and a further such interview by age 18. We expect schools and colleges to continue to provide personal guidance interviews and to do so virtually, rather than over the phone, wherever possible.

We introduced additional flexibilities to the National Careers Service contracts, enabling their advisers to offer information, advice and guidance for young people and their parents, with a focus on those young people who had their exams cancelled. This additional avenue of support is designed to supplement and complement existing local provision for careers education, advice and guidance and is being promoted via local networks and through social media.

Young people aged 13 and over can continue to access impartial careers guidance through the National Careers Service, via the website, web chat or helpline. The Exam Results Helpline will operate from 12 to 28 August to ensure that young people receiving their BTEC, GCSE and A Level results this summer can get advice from qualified advisers, with ongoing support beyond those dates for those who need it. We will put in place additional communications to raise awareness of exam results support.

In addition to contact with careers advisers, we think it is important that young people continue to have access to a wide range of careers activities. Through The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC), we are supporting schools and colleges to deliver virtual careers activities to students and continue to highlight the best online careers learning resources available. This includes working with CEC's employer and provider networks to adapt their activity and support the delivery of alternative programmes with best practice and guidance.

We have also been supporting young people on the cusp of transitions. The CEC have created a 'Work It' series of video career talks by young people for young people aimed at Year 11 and 13. 35,000 media views of the videos have taken place so far. The 'Work It' series can be viewed online at: tinyurl.com/Y7DM7W69.

The CEC partnered with Oak National Academy, National Careers Service and Learn Live to facilitate strong employer engagement as part of 'My Week of Work' from 8 to 12 June. Further information on this is available at: tinyurl.com/YCAWRC3W. There were over 84,000 students and 750 schools who registered for interactive sessions with leading employers. A national online event will take place in early August, with input from Learn Live and National Careers Service advisers, aimed at supporting young people aged 15-19 during the next steps of their career journey.

We will keep this package of support under review and assess its impact.

Finally, thank you for your kind invitation to meet with members of the Career Development Policy Group to discuss this matter further. Unfortunately, due to heavy diary pressures, I am unable to do so at present. However, I know that you have good working relationships with my officials, and I encourage you to continue your helpful discussions with them.

Thank you for writing on this important matter and I would be grateful if you would share my response with your co-signatories.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Williamson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education