

## Employer and Community Engagement Position Paper

### 1. About this paper

This paper aims to highlight the good practice in delivering Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) across a variety of venues and showcase the power of strong partnership working with employers.

CEIAG is delivered to people of all ages in a wide range of settings. Recent projects have seen careers work piloted with children in primary schools and service delivered to young people in secondary schools, further education colleges, training providers and in a variety of community venues. Adults access and receive services from a range of venues such as National Careers Service offices, Jobcentre Plus, employers' premises, children's centres, NHS venues and voluntary organisation / community venues.

In section three there are real-life case studies and stories which demonstrate the impact of delivering good quality CEIAG to clients. Section 4 includes a plea to policy-makers, backed up by evidence, for increased investment in the services which already exist to grow and develop.

### 2. What do we mean by employer and community engagement?

We have a clear definition of what good looks like in careers education, in the form of the eight Gatsby benchmarks. This definition is the foundation upon which the national strategy for careers was developed. It is based on extensive international research and has the support of the wider education, careers and business communities. Of the eight benchmarks, three relate directly to employers:

- 2. Learning from career and labour market information
- 5. Encounters with employers and employees
- 6. Experiences of workplaces

Increasingly, international evidence (as shown in the [Careers England paper on the economic benefits of careers guidance](#)) cites the importance of good CEIAG to increase productivity and improve social mobility. The work of the National Careers Service demonstrates the impact this support has. The new national retraining scheme - which is aimed at helping employees prepare for and plan their way through employment challenges of the fourth industrial age - focuses heavily on the value and importance of high-quality careers support.

The best CEIAG is delivered by highly qualified professionals in a variety of settings and venues. The principle followed is to 'deliver what the client needs, when the client needs it, in places that maximise attendance and participation'. Therefore, delivery takes place in a large range of venues including schools, colleges, National Careers Service offices, Jobcentre Plus, employers' premises, children's centres, NHS venues and voluntary organisation and community venues.

Clients often have a range of needs; ranging from college students wanting to develop their career plan and needing advice on the best learning route; to adults wishing to progress in their career or

retrain or upskill to improve their employment prospects; and individuals who are unemployed and desperate to get a job to improve their quality of life.

### **3. Case studies and stories**

#### **3.1 Ansbury Guidance**

This case study describes the work of Ansbury Guidance – a careers and employability organisation operating on the south coast. It begins with a description of the range of employer engagement undertaken and the community venues they operate from. It concludes with the stories of two clients describing the difference the careers help they received made to their lives.

Employer engagement examples

- Careers & Enterprise Company Employer Mentoring Programme – engaging with local employers to link them with secondary schools across Dorset. Employees are trained by Ansbury and become mentors, working on a 1:1 basis with young people in schools (years 8-10). Mentors support young people with range of activities from a workbook produced by Ansbury with a focus on preparation for working life. Examples of companies involved in this programme include Kwik Fit, Lush Cosmetics, HMRC and Nationwide.
- National Careers Service – working with local employers offering both workshops and 1:1 appointments; general careers advice, redundancy support, identifying training needs and CPD
- Direct employer work – with Barclays, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council and Royal Mail
- Local job fairs
- Employer Groups – Ansbury’s Chief Executive is on the Board of Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Community Work (NCS):

At Bournemouth & Poole College, Ansbury supports students at risk of exiting their course early, delivering workshops for English, Maths, ESOL, and access groups to help students prepare for their next steps.

A similar programme takes place in Weymouth College, and the college is also open to residents in Weymouth who are not on college courses. Weymouth is a priority area due to deprivation and high unemployment.

Local Training Providers offering adult courses at Level 2 or below (BEST & SWRAC) - offer 1:1 appointments for adults on various learning programmes, helping to motivate learners to complete their course and support them with planning next steps.

Ansbury runs drop in sessions and 1:1 booked appointments in a variety of community venues across Dorset, including Children’s Centres and libraries.

At Dorset Healthcare, Ansbury provides a 1:1 service for adults access mental health support; helping them explore career ideas, identify training and experience needs and supporting them with planning for their future. Similarly at Occupational Vocational Services a 1:1 service for adults working with Occupational Therapists is provided; helping individuals explore career ideas, identify training and experience needs and identifying suitable employment options based on their individual needs.

Ansbury works with Addaction and Streetwise (addiction recovery services) as part of their rehabilitation and community settling programme, running workshop activities focused on training options, job hunting, CV and interview techniques.

One-to-one appointments are also offered in the Ansbury office in central Poole, alongside Skype and phone appointments for rural clients or those that have difficulties in getting to a delivery location.

### Story 1 - Case study from BCP workshop – adviser perspective

#### Backgrounds

I first met MA (customer) when she was a Business Support and Information Officer in the Children, Young People and Learning department at Poole Council. The Council had announced that it was going to merge with Bournemouth and Christchurch and had asked us to run some CV and interview workshops to help staff prepare for internal interviews or applications outside the organisation. MA attended the interview skills workshop and during the session she advised that she was hoping to find her “dream job” as a library assistant. She also informed me that although this was her ideal destination, she thought it would not be possible as she had applied for library jobs many times before but was unsuccessful. She felt that the interview was the biggest barrier, citing her nerves and competency questions as areas that she really struggled with. By her own admission she also informed me that her preparation didn’t generally involve preparing model answers and practicing them as recommended during the workshop.

#### Session attended

MA attended the interview skills workshop which concentrated on preparation techniques and how to answer competency and behaviour questions. As MA had seen a Library Assistant post advertised on the Council’s website, I offered her some additional support with her application. After the workshop she sent me her personal statement for the Library Assistant role by email and was given advice on how to improve it so that it demonstrated her transferable skills and how they were relevant for the role. She informed me a week later that she had been selected for interview and requested 1:1 support. This was difficult to arrange due her job commitments but eventually we managed to organise a 1:1 appointment in Poole, to go through potential interview questions and answers based on the job person specification. I also spent some time helping MA improve her self-belief as she was still convinced that she would be unsuccessful. However, her attitude to interview preparation had completely changed and she was very motivated to use the new techniques she had learned on the interview skills workshop.

#### Achievements

MA sent me an email two days after her interview to inform me that the interview had gone much better than expected and in fact, she had been offered the role of the Library Assistant.

“I got the job at the Library - thank you very much for all your help. I could not have done it without you - I am so pleased - this is the right job for me. Thanks once again.”

As a result of her success, MA personally recommended the NCS workshops to her colleagues. We have built on this success and now been working with BCP Council for over 18 months.

### Story 2 – regional careers office support – client perspective

In 2018 I walked into Bournemouth careers office and met Nicky. She was lovely; made me feel welcome and basically just listened. I described how I was interested in working with supporting

families and individuals with mental health difficulties. Nicky advised me to contact Skills and Learning where I later signed up for a 15-week course on becoming a support worker.

I was so nervous stepping into a classroom of strangers and studying. At the same time I joined the Samaritans and started my training. I met new people, made friends; I listened and concentrated as it was fascinating! It helped me with my own mental well-being which was so important. I then decided to do an online e-learning course in Mental Awareness L2 a six-month course, I completed this in 9 weeks. OMG!

I then took the plunge and started an intense 8-week course, two evenings a week for my L2 in English. I'm now completing online e-learning Behaviour Management L2 and I'm about to sign up for my Maths L2 this summer. I went back to see Nicky and told her how much I have achieved since I last saw her. She gave me the confidence and self-esteem to move forward. Today, as a qualified Samaritan I am proud to say by listening and believing in yourself, you can achieve so much.

These courses have helped me to reflect on my own life as well as helping others and I'm so excited about the next chapter in my life. By doing maths L2, I will be able to apply for access to further education courses.

### **3.2 Education Development Trust**

Education Development Trust supports employers and employees across Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Surrey and West Sussex under the National Careers Service 50+ Futures. This case study tells the story of support for older workers.

Education Development Trust were invited to support 125 employees over the age of 45 by working with 10 employers from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

A wide range of employers were contacted at the start of the project and the greatest interest by far was from organisations including the NHS, City, County and District Councils and Government Agencies.

The 50+ Futures project was aimed at supporting employees over 45, however many employers, whilst keen to promote to our offer to older employees, did not want to exclude employees under 45 and so we opened many of the workshops up to all ages. However, we naturally achieved a minimum of 65% of employees over the age of 45 at every workshop.

In just four months the Education Development Trust accepted requests for:

- Redundancy & re-deployment Support for a city council, a county council, a district council and an organisation in the private sector
- Support with redundancy & re-deployment for employees working in nursing homes, refuse services, an insurance company and a public health team.
- One to one career coaching
- Support with Career Progression
- Supporting a Government Agency during Inclusion week by developing and delivering a Career Inclusion workshop for employees.

By the end of September, Education Development Trust had delivered:

- Twelve one to one career coaching appointments for County Council Senior Leaders over the age of 45
- Seven 'Education for All' workshops to promote internal apprenticeship programmes and other development opportunities across Surrey, in partnership with Health Education England.
- Three career progression workshops for one city council to promote their new apprenticeship programmes.
- Two mid-life career review workshops to district council staff in September 2019 to ensure employees remain motivated, continue to develop and progress in their careers until they are ready to retire.

Feedback from both employers and employees has been very positive and the funding has already made a significant difference to organisations to address skill gaps, fill vacancies and effectively manage redundancy and redeployment. It has benefitted individuals as they take up training opportunities, study towards valuable qualifications; from level 2 English, maths and IT, through to post-graduate qualifications, enabling them to stay in employment and gain career progression within their organisations. In some cases the funding has prevented individuals from facing a period of unemployment by giving them confidence in their own ability and skills, presenting them with options and opportunities they would have otherwise not considered.

### **3.3 Career Connect**

Career Connect offers a range of inspirational programmes to customers, to support employability, enterprise, work experience transition support and raising aspirations. These three client stories cover retraining, redundancy support and adult apprenticeships.

- Case study 1 – retraining (age group 40 – 50)

1. When did you first contact the National Careers? Have you spoken with an adviser on the telephone, face-to-face, online or a combination of all three? How many times have you been in touch with the National Careers Service so far?

***Cust A contacted the National Careers Service for a face to face meeting in a local community library.***

2. What were the circumstances that led you to contact the National Careers Service? For example, did you need help in getting into work, changing career or moving to a better job?

***Cust A has accessed the service today as he was looking for a change in career. Currently is a self-employed fitness tutor, which is a role he enjoys. Long-term he feels he needs to look at other career options.***

3. Please tell us about your National Careers Service experience. How did the National Careers Service adviser help you (for example the Action Plan)? What advice did they give you? In what ways have you followed their advice?

***I found the service to be extremely valuable, to sit down face to face to spend quality time and talk through my current situation and thoughts, in terms of career options. I didn't feel pressurised or time limited (60mins), we had an open conversation which felt very non-judgemental and constructive.***

***I had a loose idea of retraining in ICT – Louise helped with the details and the careers analysis tests, the results led me to confirm the trends and that I was following the correct career path. I feel it helped me to think more broadly about my future career and the support was very comprehensive.***

***We discussed the actions to take forward, identified a course of study and explored potential volunteer opportunities to gain ICT experience and become more employable in this new field.***

***We accessed the National Careers Service website and Prospects website to look at job profiles, skills health check, research on LMI, skills and quals required for my chosen career path and I was also provided with the ‘find a course’ link.***

4. What has happened as a result of contacting the National Careers Service? Have you got a new job or gone on to further learning? How is it going? Do you think your prospects have improved as a result of speaking to the National Careers Service?

***Cust A has now started on an IT fundamentals badges course to develop his skills to follow this new career path. He is aware that he needs to achieve all ‘badges’ to progress and find suitable employment. He is doing distance learning due to the cost comparison.***

***Cust A feels that he has developed more confidence to move forward which will hopefully, in turn, improve his prospects. “It has given me a mental boost to take action”.***

5. Do you now have a clearer idea of where you are heading and how to get there? (Where do you think you would be if you had not contacted the National Careers Service?)

***Yes – I probably would have been ‘umming and arring’ and delayed taking action without the intervention.***

6. Have you encouraged anyone else to contact the National Careers Service? What would you say to someone who was considering contacting the National Careers Service for some advice but was nervous about doing it?

***I haven’t come across anyone to recommend the service to, but I would and will as and when it happens.***

## Case study 2. Redundancy support

### Background

Part of The National Careers Service contract is to provide help, information, advice and guidance to employees who find themselves under threat of redundancy, working in collaboration with Job Centre Plus and other agencies.

Over the past 12 months, Career Connect has delivered Rapid Response Redundancy Support to several employers including Tesco, Merseyside Police, Cammell Laird, John Lewis, Clas Ohlson, 20/20 Legal and Taskers.

Delivering the service within a working environment can be quite challenging, being mindful of the employees’ situation, whilst at the same time being aware that they are continuing to carry out their

daily work duties, and delivering a professional service requires the support from the company manager in question.

### Case Study Example

Working with a Tesco Metro Store which was due for closure in Wavertree, Career Connect delivered individual one to one sessions with the staff who were under threat of redundancy. This involved organising the times and days advisers would be in the store to fit with shift patterns, setting up diaries and liaising with the store manager for the staff to be released to attend the sessions.

On the first delivery day it became apparent that a private room had not been made available for the sessions. After we spoke with the manager and confirmed that this was a requirement, it was duly organised. The advisers were proactive in their approach which resulted in more employees requesting an NCS session. All staff involved in the redundancy process were accommodated, and those staff who worked the night shift were seen as they finished their shifts at 8am.

Prior to delivering the sessions local labour market information was sourced which found that a new 'Range' store was due to open in Edge Lane, Liverpool in the next three months. During the sessions staff were made aware of the job roles which would be available. Advisers worked with Job Centre Plus and the recruitment team at The Range to enable employees who were interested to prepare their CV and be invited for interview. They were also supported with the interview process. This resulted in positive outcomes for most employees finding work at The Range.

### Case study 3. Adult apprenticeships (age group 40 – 50)

1. When did you first contact the National Careers Service? Have you spoken with an adviser on the telephone, face-to-face, online or a combination of all three? How many times have you been in touch with the National Careers Service so far?

***I first contacted the National Careers Service for a face-to-face appointment and then met with them again during a face-to-face meeting with two different NCS advisers.***

2. What were the circumstances that led you to contact the National Careers Service? For example, did you need help in getting into work, changing career or moving up the career ladder? Were you unemployed?

***I was claiming the ESA benefit at the Job Centre. My Job Coach pointed me in the direction of the National Careers Service so that they could give me advice on a change in career and to also help me to develop my CV according to my new choices.***

3. Please tell us about your National Careers Service experience. How did the National Careers Service adviser help you? What advice did they give you? In what ways have you followed the advice?

***The National Careers Service advisers gave me valuable advice including the NCS website that gives you great pointers on what jobs/careers requires what skills, how I could edit and amend my CV to reflect the position I was applying for.***

4. Did you complete an Action Plan? Did you use the website and the online tools, such as the CV builder or Skills Healthcheck? Have you set up a Lifelong Learning Account? What did you think of these tools?

***In the first session we completed an action plan which provided action points which were then completed in terms of the CV. I then was re-referred for further support with career goals. We***

***discussed apprenticeships and explored job profiles including the benefits of a skills health check, and covered the Mid Life Career Review paperwork. I was happy with the variety of tools used in and outside of the sessions, they really made me think of my career chances outside of my previous experiences.***

5. What has happened as a result of contacting the National Careers Service? Have you got a new job or gone on to further learning? If so, what is your job? How is it going? Do you think your prospects have improved as a result of speaking to the National Careers Service?

***I am now in a full time apprenticeship as an Administrator Officer with the Department of Work and Pensions that runs for 14 months. I am really enjoying my new position as I feel I am part of civilization once again and have a purpose in life.***

***I would not have considered re training as an apprentice at my age, I am happy that somebody gave me advice and confidence that I could do this.***

6. Do you now have a clearer idea of where you are heading and how to get there? Where do you think you would be if you hadn't contacted the National Careers Service?

***If I hadn't contacted the National Careers Service I would most probably still be looking at the same type of work that I had always done in the past and not realised that I had all of the potential that I had gained through my previous roles and years of work. I had not realised the benefits offered by adult apprenticeships when considering an alternative career role.***

7. What difference has contacting the National Careers Service made to your life? What has been the best thing about it?

***The National Careers Service appointments were those in a line of stepping stones that led me to this apprenticeship role. If I hadn't gone to meet with the National Careers Service Advisers I might not have arrived where I did.***

8. Has contacting the National Careers Service improved your confidence? If a lack of confidence was preventing you from improving your life, in what ways has this changed?

***As I had been out of work for one and a half years and also suffered from a health condition during that time. Most of it had been spent indoors and out of public company. Hence my confidence had taken a huge slump. In all the recent appointments undertaken no matter with whom or for what, collaboratively these services they have helped me to start to regain my self-confidence. The National Careers Service appointments were one of these important steps in this process.***

9. What is your ultimate aim/ambition?

***To gain employment from this apprenticeship and once employed remain employed with an employer with whom I feel confident can accommodate my medical considerations.***

10. Have you encouraged anyone else to contact the National Careers Service? What would you say to someone who was considering contacting the National Careers Service for some advice but was nervous about doing it?

***I have directed numerous people toward the National Careers Service due to my apprenticeship position at the DWP and I feel confident in doing this as I received such a good service from them.***



11. Please provide any further information about yourself which you feel might help us understand a little more about your life and current situation.

***Where I previously lacked self-belief and motivation I now feel I am better aware of opportunities available to me and the adult apprenticeship has provided a way forward.***

#### **Section 4. Where next?**

Demand for all aspects of careers help is greater than the supply. The digital and face to face services aren't yet meeting the demand from all schools and adults. This is regularly demonstrated in reports about skills shortages and gaps. Employers are concerned about people of all ages not getting the information, advice and guidance they need about the opportunities on offer and how best to access them. The case studies and stories in this paper demonstrate how good careers support changes lives for the better. This is the same whether an individual is at school or college, unemployed, looking to retrain or at risk of redundancy. Careers England members believe that if we are to improve social mobility and increase productivity of our nation's workforce then a strong all-age, well-resourced and properly funded careers strategy is required. This will help to build a highly professional workforce, grow provision and increase access to services. We will continue to champion the case for increased funding from government.

#### *About Careers England*

Careers England Ltd is the sole trade association for organisations involved in the provision of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) products and services in England for people of all ages. Our members provide aspects of some, or all, of the four components of CEIAG: • Careers Education (Career Learning) • Careers Information • Careers Advice • Careers Guidance

The members of Careers England Ltd comprise the majority of prime and sub-contracted deliverers of the National Careers Service. They also deliver careers guidance services for local authorities, schools and colleges across England. Most of our members are charities and social enterprises. We also have a number of sole traders and other organisations who, although not delivery services, are engaged with the careers sector. Full details of all Careers England members, our activities and our publications can be found at [www.careersengland.org.uk](http://www.careersengland.org.uk)