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**The Workforce of the Future Inquiry call for evidence**

**Respondent information:**

**1. What is your name and role?**

*Kieran Gordon, Executive Director, Careers England*

**2. Which institution or organisation are you submitting evidence on behalf of?***Careers England*

**3. Do you give permission for the Commission to quote your submission?***Yes*

**4. Can we attribute the submission to the institution/organisation?**

*Yes*

 **5. Can we attribute the submission to you personally?**

*Yes*

**General Questions**

**What do you think people need to receive from careers information, advice and guidance in the current circumstances to help them successfully transition into work?**

*-An independent and skilled voice from a knowledgeable professional to enable them to navigate and understand the options available in the short, medium, and long term. Someone who is there for them and not constrained by a need to make referrals to specific government assisted programmes, when this is not appropriate to their needs. It is important to distinguish between the role of Work Coaches as employed in Jobcentres and professional Careers Advisers. The former work within the parameters of a welfare benefits system and focus on the movement of people (claimants) into prescribed work or training programmes. The latter are not constrained by the welfare position of the individual and seek to broaden horizons for individuals by active exploration of their interests, aptitudes and abilities in the context of broader labour market opportunity, which may include government assisted programmes. This is more likely to lead to a sustainable outcome for the individual.*

**o What does really good careers advice and guidance consist of in the current circumstances?**

*It Provides:*

*- individual assessment and analysis of interests, aptitudes and abilities in the context of career choices. Enabling the setting of career goals and a plan of action for their achievement, incorporating education and training routes*
*- access to relevant, up-to-date and authentic careers and labour market information that is realistic for the individual and in their best interests. This will entail acting as an enabler and mediator to help individuals search for information and assistance in interpreting its use.
-Impartial brokerage of options which enables individuals make a reasoned choice based on the range of options available and local labour market information.*

*In addition to these factors, the Gatsby benchmark framework provides a useful structure to guide careers education development within the context of schools and colleges, for young people.*

 **o What do organisations need in order to provide this?**

*-Professional Careers Advisers with Level 6 or 7 qualification in careers guidance, supported by para-professionals qualified to Level 4.*

*-Comprehensive careers and labour market information resource, including high quality local labour market information drawn from real time engagement with further education, training and employer organisations.*

o Do you believe there should be any changes to the status or function of careers professionals?

*The Government’s Taskforce on the Careers profession reported in 2010 on the need for recognised training and qualifications at Level 6 or 7 for careers professionals. This was not a new concept as the professional standard has been at postgraduate level hitherto. However, evidence indicates that as Government policy focused less on supporting careers guidance for young people in schools and colleges the demand for professional advisers declined. This has resulted in a skills deficit and one which needs addressing urgently to ensure that the quality of careers guidance support available to young people and adults is consistent with the demand for expert help in a rapidly changing economy and labour market. The Government’s National Careers Service, which mainly services adults, cited a minimum qualification of Level 4 for Advisers; this has devalued and led to an underfunding of careers provision over many years. Funding for careers service activity led by Government does not adequately support an investment in Level 6 or & professionals, which it ought to.*

**• As COVID has transformed many people’s use of digital tools, are there previously inconceivable ways of designing and delivering careers services that may now be possible using digital technology?**

*Yes. All careers service providers have embraced the use of technology, including social media platforms to reach out to and engage with young people and adults throughout this period; evidence shows that this preceded the onset of Covid, but the pandemic has ramped up the level digital interaction considerably. Careers England believes that this will continue to be the case post-pandemic and will support its members to build on the lessons learned. It is also important to understand the demand there is for face-to-face services from even amongst the most tech-savvy individuals. A blended approach will be the new service norm, with digital tools providing instant and rapid access to information and initial interactions with careers professionals, as well as direct in-person contact where personal careers plans can be discussed, developed and enacted. The personal approach helps to overcome barriers for people who: are not confident in the use of technology; who are concerned about granting access to their digital profile; or who value the interpersonal interaction with a trusted adviser in discussing such important issues.*

 **• Are there any other key concerns or factors we should consider which are not covered in this call** **for evidence?**

*Although the CEC has built an infrastructure to support careers education in schools and colleges through its Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs, underpinned by the Gatsby Benchmarks (of which ‘Personal guidance’ is one of eight components), there is still no guaranteed access* *for all young people to free independent and professional careers advice and guidance, irrespective of their background or their location. There are areas of the country where there is a much higher level of access to professional careers services than others. With the withdrawal of funding for Connexions Services across England there has developed a patchwork of provision. A number of Connexions providers adapted by changing their model to become more commercially minded whilst remaining not-for-profit. They have been squeezed during this prolonged period of austerity, but have fought hard to keep going, driven by their mission locally. England cannot afford to leave the availability and access to professional careers support solely to philanthropic enterprise and endeavour when the funding market for such activity is reducing. In 2014, the National Careers Council, established by the then Government, made a number of important recommendations, a number of which have not been acted upon:*

[Taking action: Achieving a culture change in careers provision (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355473/bis-14-1080-taking-action-achieving-a-culture-change-in-careers-provision.pdf)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-national-careers-council>

**The role of government and publicly funded organisations**

 **• Do you think any changes should be made to the government’s strategy for careers advice and guidance? If so, what might these be?**

*A national funding model and commitment to a careers guidance entitlement must underpin the Government’s national careers strategy. We need the benefit of a national investment which ensures a locally delivered service that it is attuned to regional and local labour markets.*

**o What needs to be considered within an updated careers strategy to ensure that we have a genuinely all-age careers service, and to ensure that educational institutions are not necessarily the primary providers of this?**

*Statutory Duties for schools and colleges in respect of the provision of careers information, advice and guidance provide an expectation on institutions to comply, without it being mandatory and without the funding to enable it to happen. We ought to recognise the many competing priorities for schools and colleges and the burden of targets they are expected to report on in understanding why careers lacks the status it should be afforded. A recent report commissioned by the Careers and Enterprise Company as part of their funding to support the development of personal guidance evidences the positive return on investment from personal careers guidance for young people. Treating this as an investment rather than a cost will have many benefits for individuals, businesses and for Government.*

*By creating local partnerships of schools, colleges with professional careers service providers along with the funding to enable them to deliver will take pressure off schools and colleges at the same time as bringing in expertise needed to provide well informed guidance linked to local, regional and national employers and well maintained local careers and labour market information.*

**• How should we tackle the challenges faced by some adults in accessing quality career guidance, such as not knowing where to access it, how to access the services, or not falling into the eligibility criteria?**

*The National Careers Service provides a national blueprint for careers advice services for adults but does not provide the authority or capacity for local providers to expertly market the Service to customers. This national blueprint prioritises customer groups and sets a funding tariff of paid outcomes without taking account of local demographic or labour market differences. The NCS must be enabled to reach all communities, the current payment-by -results system is not sufficiently tuned to the challenges faced by service providers in their localities.*

**• Do you feel that the current system of monitoring the provision of careers advice and guidance in educational institutions is sufficient?**

*No. The current system of monitoring promoted by the CEC via its Compass tool goes only part of the way to enable schools and colleges to adequately monitor provision. The Gatsby benchmarks are a sound measure of what needs to be done and achieved and whilst self-evaluation against these is both valuable and critical, the system could be strengthened through further objective assessment of in-school/college monitoring to ensure the appropriate rigour is applied.*

**• How well do you think the government’s Plan for Jobs will tackle the economic consequences of the pandemic, including rising unemployment?**

*As an emergency measure it can only realistically be expected to ameliorate the worst of the unemployment crisis caused by the pandemic. The Plan for Jobs should be a longer-term investment strategy which works across Government to ensure sustained support for business and individuals. The Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education have not adequately linked the different initiatives (e.g. expansion of Traineeships and Kickstart from DWP and the National Careers Service uplift from DfE), which risks a disjointed approach with internal inconsistencies and competition between programmes to provide assistance to individuals in need. If the NCS was built into the pathway of support available to people via DWP programmes there would be a greater chance for them moving into the right opportunity and reduce the revolving door effect common in welfare to work programmes.*

**• Do you engage with the Careers & Enterprise Company or the National Careers Service? If so, is there anything about how they function that you think could be improved?**

*We engage regularly with the Careers & Enterprise Company and their Interim CEO attends our Board meetings. For CEC to function more effectively it needs to be part of a more coherent and comprehensive national careers strategy at the local level. Alongside the establishment of Careers Hubs and the Enterprise Adviser networks by the CEC working closely with LEPs there should also be greater linkages with local careers providers operating in schools and colleges. Further to this and as indicated above, it would benefit from operating within a clear funding framework which includes the engagement of  professional careers advisers working with schools and colleges in the delivery of careers education, advice and guidance.*

**• Do you believe that the National Careers Service priority groups (viewable here) fully reflect those who are most in need in the current situation? If not, how should they be changed?**

*No. The NCS Priority Groups were set before the latest economic shock brought about by the pandemic. Consequently, there are many adults who are not sufficiently prioritised in the way funding is channelled to providers to ensure that those recently unemployed are guaranteed the level of support they need to re-enter employment.*

In order to address this the government needs to review the way in which the National Careers Service is funded and make the following changes.

● *Ensure that all adults, from 18 until retirement, who are at risk of redundancy or currently unemployed, are identified as a priority for the National Careers Service. The Service’s funding principles need to be changed accordingly.*

*● National Careers Service providers should be allocated a proportion of the new funding up front to allow them to recruit, train and develop staff to deliver quality services against the new level of demand.*

*The Government should establish an Employer-led Advisory Board reporting directly to relevant ministers comprising senior representatives from employers, education and the career development profession. Such a body would advise on careers provision, guide the work of the National Careers Service and ensure value for money.*

**• Is there anything more you think the government should be doing to tackle the economic and labour market consequences of the pandemic, including the particularly negative consequences for disadvantaged groups**

*Studies have shown that we have lost track of over 150,000 young people ages 16-18; and over 50,000 of these are believed to be NEET; ‘the hidden NEET’, before the pandemic struck. There is a danger that they will be further left behind as the country grapples with the immediate consequences of spiralling unemployment amongst young people more generally.*

*Within this there group there are a range of specific needs, such as:*

* + *young people with SEND; 52% of disabled people were in employment compared 82% non-disabled pre pandemic*
	+ *30% of children already living in poverty pre-pandemic growing up in households with a commensurate poverty of aspiration and sense of hopelessness*
	+ *Young people and adults from BAME, are disproportionately represented in the NEET and unemployment cohorts as well as amongst those living in poverty*