

Developing a World Class Career Guidance System:

A pre-election statement by the Careers Alliance

29 April 2015

Career guidance is critical to ensuring the future skills supply. Where it is available it supports individuals to realise their potential and employers to harness the best talent. The OECD has noted that where it is most effective career guidance is organised on a lifelong basis.

Governments of all colours have failed to deliver an effective career support system for England. The systems in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are better developed and offer models that England can learn from. However, even in the devolved administrations careers would still benefit from additional investment. The Careers Alliance calls on all political parties to include career guidance in their manifestos for the forthcoming general election (May 2015) and for the elections in May 2016, and for the next governments to develop policies which enhance the nations' career guidance systems. Key elements for policy in England in this area are as follows:

- 1. The development of a national strategy for careers.** Government should develop a coherent national strategy that connects activity in different Ministerial departments, clarifies individual's entitlement to career support and the outcomes that they can expect from this support, and have a strategy which raises the profile of career development.
- 2. Enhancing career support for young people.** Young people, whether they are in the education system, employment or NEET should have access to career support. The government should tighten up the existing statutory guidance, enhance accountability and quality assurance, release new funding and emphasise the importance of education/employment links.
- 3. Expanding career support for adults.** Career support should be available to people throughout life. Government should ensure access to career support for people in work as well as those who are currently unemployed.
- 4. Building professionalism and capacity within the careers workforce.** Careers work should be carried out by professionals. The government should endorse the findings of the Careers Profession Taskforce (2010) that careers professionals should be qualified at least to degree level. It should also recognise that there are a large number of allied professionals who provide careers support (notably teachers in schools and those supporting the Work Programme) and invest in building their capacity.
- 5. Enhancing quality assurance and accountability processes.** It is important that publicly funded careers services are of a good quality and deliver real outcomes. We already have strong tools for assuring quality (Matrix, the Quality in Careers Standard (QICS), the Career Development Institute (CDI) Register). Government should make use of these tools and work with stakeholders to measure the outcomes of careers provision and invest in independent evaluation.
- 6. Increasing the efficiency of the existing public spend on careers and investing in the area.** Departmental spending on careers needs to be reviewed to identify overlaps and identify efficiencies. The National Careers Service in England should be reconstituted as a genuinely all-age and universal service and confirmed as the core delivery infrastructure for all career-related programmes. There is also a need for new funding if we are to move towards a world class career guidance system.





1. Developing a world class career guidance system

- 1.1. Career guidance is critical to ensuring the future skills supply. Where it is available it supports individuals to realise their potential and employers to harness the best talent. The OECD has argued career guidance is important for ensuring the effective working of the education system, labour market and supporting social equity.¹ It has also noted that where it is most effective career guidance is organised on a lifelong basis allowing people to access support in school, in college, in university and in the workplace.
- 1.2. Governments of all colours have failed to deliver an effective career support system for England. The systems in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are far better developed and offer models that England can learn from. However, even in the devolved administrations careers would still benefit from additional investment. The forthcoming election and a new government offers an historic opportunity to address this.
- 1.3. There is a clear recognition across the political spectrum that the next government must do better on careers. Many organisations are calling for reforms in the career guidance system as part of their engagement in the election process. In creating this document we have reviewed policy proposals from AELP, ASCL, British Chambers of Commerce, Careers England, the Career Development Institute, Gatsby, NIACE, NUS, Teach First, the TUC, the Sutton Trust, UCU and Unison. Each of them calls for changes to the career guidance system. This document seeks to draw these calls together and to create a strategic and systemic set of proposals that could be taken forward by the next government.
- 1.4. The Careers Alliance is a national sector body that brings together a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in career guidance. It seeks to influence policy and practice in ways that support the development of a world class career guidance system in the UK. This pre-election statement has been developed by the Alliance through two meetings (in Glasgow and London) and through online consultation with its membership.
- 1.5. The Careers Alliance calls on political parties to include career guidance in their manifesto and develop policies to enhance the nations' career guidance systems. It is particularly addressed to policy makers in England as the 2015 election will not directly impact on the education systems of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. As has already been noted, the career guidance systems in these countries are already in advance of that in England. However, there will be areas where the development of a national strategy for career guidance will have a UK-wide impact. This is particularly in relation to areas which are managed at the UK level by the Department of Work and Pensions such as Jobcentre Plus. Addressing these intersections is likely to be an area for the devolved administrations to tackle in conversation with the new government following the election.
- 1.6. The remainder of this document addresses the six career areas that have been identified by the Careers Alliance as underpinning the development of a world class career guidance system.

2. The development of a national strategy for careers

- 2.1. Careers has suffered from a plethora of initiatives and too little strategy. This has been wasteful and has seen multiple, often short-lived, projects. It is important that a new government announces a national strategy for careers at the start of a new Parliament. This should be lifelong and available to all people in England. It is important that any national strategy attends to existing practice and harnesses and enhances it rather than reinventing the wheel. A key component of developing this national strategy is likely to be consultation with LEPs and local government to acknowledge and incorporate existing local strategies.



¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: OECD.



2.2. Key elements of this strategy should include:

- **Reconstituting the National Careers Service as a genuinely all-age and universal service².** Such a service can play a number of roles including delivery of advice and guidance, education/employer relationship building and capacity building of the broader careers infrastructure. Most critically, it is important that the NCS role is conceived as a strategic one closely aligned to the implementation of the national strategy.
- **A national strategy.** Government should ensure appropriate leadership for the national strategy for careers and hold the National Careers Service and the new careers and enterprise company to account. This process should include representatives from the education and skills sector, business, the unions and the careers profession.
- **Greater stability.** A greater degree of stability in funding for career guidance provision would aid its long-term development. The National Strategy for Careers should be developed to cover the length of the Parliament and provide a strong indication about what funding for careers is likely to be available.
- **A protocol for inter-departmental collaboration on careers** to avoid the present situation where DWP, DBIS, DFE and other public bodies are all funding overlapping initiatives and yet still leave gaps in provision.
- **The development of a national career management and employability skills framework** to provide clarity about the outcomes that individuals can expect from interacting with careers services.
- **The marketing and promotion of career development** as something that all citizens should attend to. As part of this the government should seek to provide citizens with increased clarity about what career support services they are entitled to access through public funding.

3. Enhancing career support for young people

3.1. The last five years has seen a decline in the quality of career support for young people in England. We have seen the end of Connexions, Aimhigher, and Education Business Partnerships. In their place schools have had to take on new responsibilities with no money. A new government should address this by:

- **Tightening up the statutory guidance** so that it emphasises the importance of impartial face-to-face provision and a curriculum-led approach to career guidance. It should provide schools with greater clarity about what they are expected to deliver. New statutory guidance should highlight the importance of young people learning about the full range of post-16 learning opportunities, and explicitly require schools, colleges and training providers to deliver a quality-assured career education programme and work-related learning. The adoption of the Gatsby Benchmarks³ would be one way to achieve this.
- **Continuing the current government's focus on education/employer links.** However, it is important that new guidance and initiatives in this area recognise that the involvement of employers is complementary to that of teachers and career professionals and needs to be embedded in the careers provision of a school or college⁴.
- **Releasing new funding** to support enhanced provision in schools, colleges and work-based learning providers.

4. Expanding career support for adults

4.1. The launch of the National Careers Service in England under the current government has been one of the highpoints of recent years. While it has not yet become a genuinely all-age service it has provided many adults with access to career support. However, the National Careers Service has become overly focused on unemployed workers with very limited provision for the wider population. This is regrettable as career guidance can benefit a wide range of workers, particularly those in work who are wishing to progress or to improve the utilisation of their skills.



² Careers Sector Stakeholders Alliance (2012). *National Careers Service: Strategic Options for Building a World Class Service* (Briefing Note 12).

³ See <http://www.gatsby.org.uk/GoodCareerGuidance>

⁴ Careers Sector Stakeholders Alliance (2014). *The Roles of Employers and Career Professionals in Providing Career Support to Young People in Schools and Colleges* (Briefing Note 13). The Careers Alliance has also issued a campaign on 'Securing Our Future Talent' with the support of almost 70 national organisations - leading national employers, professional bodies, trade associations, the unions and national education and skills organisations. <http://careersalliance.com/future-talent-campaign/>



4.2. Key elements of a policy to provide adults with career support would include the following measures:

- The National Careers Service should be funded to **provide at least one career guidance interview** to anyone who wants to access this.
- The existence of the **National Careers Service should be marketed more effectively** to inform individuals that they have the right to access the service.
- **Additional career support should be made available to low-skilled workers** to support them to upskill and progress in ways that meet economic and labour market need.
- There should be **further development of the Mid-life Career Review**⁵ to enhance career support for older people and harness the skills and contribution of the over-fifties.
- **Unionlearn** provides career support to large numbers of people in employment. It is suggested that **funding for this initiative is increased** and the potential for extending this kind of voluntary career support through other civil society organisations is explored.
- **Adult career support** should be linked up with the high quality career guidance provision that already exists within many higher education institutions. In particular it is important that new models are developed to enable graduates to gain access to career support.

5. Building professionalism and capacity within the careers workforce

5.1. At present there is no clear requirement from Government on the qualifications of careers workers. In order to achieve a high-quality service the country needs high-quality, trained professionals. The current government endorsed the Careers Profession Task Force⁶ recommendation that careers professionals should be qualified to degree level or equivalent (QCF level 6). The new government should work with the Career Development Institute to ensure that all relevant professionals are qualified to this level. This should be the case for both school-based services and adults. Government should express its commitment to professionalism through acknowledging professional standards in relevant statutory guidance and funding agreements.

5.2. There is also an important role for para-professional staff in the careers field. Many para-professionals are qualified to (QCF) level three or four. Para-professionals may be involved in assessing client need, providing information, triage processes and supporting career professionals. However, there should be clear and well-enforced distinctions within publicly funded careers work about which activities require professional status. There should also be support for para-professionals who wish to increase their skills and progress to professional status. The new government should endorse the progression pathway for the career development workforce that has been developed by the CDI.

5.3. In addition there is a need to increase the capacity of allied professionals (teachers, senior school and college leaders, lecturers, social workers etc.) to support the careers of the individuals that they are working with. This should not be about turning them into careers advisers, but rather about providing them with skills and knowledge that enhance their existing professionalism. The need to address this is most acute with respect to teachers who have responsibility for leading careers work where it is suggested that the government invests in a capacity building initiative to train these teachers in careers leadership⁷.

6. Enhancing quality assurance and accountability processes

6.1. It is important that publicly funded or supported careers provision is effective and of a high quality. There are already some key tools and standards that we can use to quality assure provision, including: the Matrix Standard, the Quality In Careers Standard⁸ and the CDI professional register.

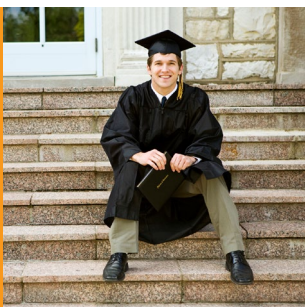


⁵ NIACE (2014). *Mid-Life Career Review: Extending working life through career review at mid-life*. Leicester: NIACE

⁶ Careers Profession Task Force (2010). *Towards a Strong Careers Profession: An independent Report to the Department for Education*. London: Department for Education. The Career Development Institute (CDI) has implemented the recommendations of the Task Force by establishing national frameworks for professional practice, a code of ethics and a UK Register of career professionals.

⁷ Hooley, T., Watts, A.G. & Andrews, D. (2015). *Teachers and Careers: The role of school teachers in delivering career and employability learning*. Report prepared for Teach First. Derby: University of Derby.

⁸ The Quality in Careers Standard (QICS) offers a nationally validated standard for the work of England's CEIAG Quality



- 6.2. It is suggested that a future government builds these existing quality processes into its thinking about accountability, e.g. by suggesting that Ofsted inspections note whether schools and colleges are working to these standards and that schools address the quality of their provision in their school development plan.
- 6.3. In addition to these careers-specific approaches to quality assurance there are also a range of wider quality processes that address careers to varying degrees (e.g. Investors in People or Ofsted). It is important to ensure that the careers elements of these broader quality processes are addressed consistently by assessors for whom this may not be their primary expertise of focus.
- 6.4. Despite useful work that has been undertaken by the DfE on destination measures and the Skills Funding Agency on the outcomes of the National Careers Service at present there is no clear framework for measuring the outcomes of career guidance. In particular, the schools destination measure has a number of limitations relating to data quality. It is important that the next government attends to this and develops sensitive and sophisticated measures which capture the range of short- and long-term outcomes that career guidance can support. A key part of this is investing in independent evaluation of publicly funded careers provision and new policy innovations.

7. Increased efficiency of public spend and further investment

- 7.1. There are considerable opportunities for cost savings in the public investment in career support. At present there is spending on careers provision from the following Departments: Education; Business, Innovation and Skills; Work and Pensions; and Justice. There is also considerable ongoing local government investment in this area.
- 7.2. The development of a national strategy could help to increase the efficiency of public investment in career support. A key component of this would be to view a reconstituted National Careers Service as the core delivery infrastructure for all career-related programmes.
- 7.3. However, in recent years there has been considerable disinvestment in this area. Since 2011 around £200 million of funding has been removed from career support for young people. Consequently there is a need for an appropriate level of new funding if England (and the wider UK) is going to move towards a world class career guidance system.
- 7.4. There is good evidence to suggest that investment in career guidance pays dividends in terms of increasing the efficiency of the labour market and education system and supporting social equity. Reducing the number of NEETS depends on young people making choices that lead to good qualifications and jobs⁹. The role of high-quality career support in this is crucial. The costs of inaction are substantial: the current most conservative estimate of the net present value of the cost to the public finances of youth unemployment over the next decade is in aggregate a sum of £28billion¹⁰.
- 7.5. The six recommendations from the Careers Alliance for developing a world class, universal career guidance system are vital for the nations' future success.

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Award providers. The QiCS encourages schools to secure the best careers support for their students through the active involvement of employers, career professionals and teachers – robustly quality-assured against an overarching national standard.

⁹ Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014). *State of the Nation 2014: Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain*. London: HM Stationery.

¹⁰ ACEVO (2012). *Youth unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford*. The ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment. London: ACEVO

The Careers Sector Stakeholders Alliance is a strategic leadership network of careers sector stakeholders. It aims to formulate a national strategic framework for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to address the issues of access, transparency, quality, equality, and continuity, and to identify areas where UK-wide co-ordination would be helpful.

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