

## The Government's proposed new arrangements for careers education and guidance: what will they mean for employers?

28th June 2011

### 1. The context

- 1.1. Employers have a strong interest in the quality of careers education and guidance in schools<sup>1</sup>. The better-prepared young people are in terms of their career decision-making, the more work-ready they are likely to be. Employers have much to contribute to the quality of careers education and guidance programmes<sup>2</sup> in schools, through providing work experience<sup>3</sup>, talks, mentoring etc. Many employers work with schools and with career guidance professionals to help young people understand the world of work. Much is being done to harness such contributions. But employers recognise that the scope and effectiveness of such contributions is significantly dependent on the existence, accessibility, quality and extent of careers education and guidance programmes in schools. A recent report produced by Deloitte for the Education and Employers Taskforce<sup>4</sup> has emphasised the role that employers play in schools, but that more must be done.
- 1.2. We need to better harness the partnership working between employers, schools and careers advisers to shape government policy on careers education, information, advice and guidance.

### 2. The concerns

- 2.1. The Coalition Government has supported the recommendations of the Careers Profession Task Force and has indicated its intention to establish an *all-age National Careers Service*. These steps have been widely welcomed by the UK Careers Sector Strategic Forum<sup>5</sup> but it is very concerned that there is no transition plan as yet to establish the new all-age service and that the service's funding base appears to have been significantly eroded.
- 2.2. In particular, the funding provided for the career guidance component of Connexions (estimated at £203 million) seems to have been totally removed. It appears that the Department for Education contribution to the National Careers Service (to complement the £84.4 million being provided by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills for career guidance for adults) will be confined largely or wholly to the £7 million currently given to telephone/web-based services. Schools wishing to provide the face-to-face services, previously received free of charge, will have to provide these themselves or purchase them from an external service within their existing budgets (which in many cases are also being reduced). Meanwhile, many Local Authorities (despite their continuing statutory duties) have made major reductions and closures of their current Connexions

<sup>1</sup> CBI and EDI (2011) 'Building for Growth: business priorities for education and skills, education and skills survey'.

<sup>2</sup> The reference in terminology to 'career guidance' covers a wide range of activities: some are referenced specifically and others are covered more broadly under the general term 'career guidance'. The Forum is concerned about high-quality provision of all types of careers education, career advice and guidance, career information (including LMI data), work-based learning and work experience.

<sup>3</sup> CBI and Edexcel (2008) 'Taking stock: CBI education and skills survey report'.

<sup>4</sup> Education and Employers Task Force (2010) 'Helping Young People Succeed: How Employers Can Support Careers Education'.

<sup>5</sup> UK Careers Sector Strategic Forum (2010) 'Design Features for an All-age Careers Service in England', Briefing Note 5.



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“Business engagement in the education system should be a powerful tool in helping raise achievement... ensuring more young people leave the education system with the skills needed for success in their working lives”.

CBI, 2010

services, including massive staff redundancies<sup>6</sup>. The Forum is concerned that the career(s) guidance profession is haemorrhaging talent at an alarming rate. This means that up to 2 million young people in schools will be without career guidance support this year<sup>7</sup> and that future provision is very uncertain.

- 2.3. The rationale for these policies within DfE is the Government’s policies regarding school autonomy. Whilst there is strong evidence for school autonomy in terms of pupil attainment, **there is no evidence whatsoever that it brings improvement to support for career choices and transitions**. Indeed, the evidence is to the contrary. International studies<sup>8</sup> demonstrate that school-based guidance systems tend to have weak links with the labour market, to view educational choices as ends in themselves rather than as career choices (which they are), to lack impartiality (promoting their own provision rather than college- or work-based routes) and to be patchy in extent and quality. In two countries which abandoned the partnership model in favour of school commissioning (the Netherlands and New Zealand), the outcome was significant reductions and poorer quality in career guidance provision. This happened despite the transfer of funding to schools, whereas schools in England are being given the responsibility but are not receiving additional funding.
- 2.4. At the same time, there are concerns from head teacher bodies<sup>9</sup> that careers education programmes within schools are being weakened. The current statutory duty to provide careers education within the curriculum is being removed; funding for programmes like Aimhigher and Education Business Partnerships is also being withdrawn; work experience and work-related learning pre-16 seems likely to become much less common. There is also **a very significant risk of inconsistent careers provision** across England, with school students suffering from a ‘post-code lottery’ in what they are likely to receive, depending on the resources and priorities of their particular school.
- 2.5. The exemption for academies and free schools from the statutory duty on careers guidance provision exacerbates these issues. All schools should be required to provide careers education and guidance to pupils to achieve the legislative intent expressed in the Education Bill.
- 2.6. The infrastructure and expertise that can help young people make subject choices, make choices about different pathways into college and university and make choices about possible careers are thus being dismantled. This is happening at a time when **professional help to support well-informed choices are even more critical for young people**. Young people are the losers, but so too are employers as they lose access to the bright minds urgently needed for the UK’s future knowledge economy<sup>10</sup>.
- 2.7. In particular, these policies have serious implications for the links employers have with schools. Careers advisers often play a crucial bridging role in connecting employers and schools. They help young people make sense of the nuances of university selection policy and the criteria that employers use for recruitment. Careers advisers are frequently the animators, facilitators and contact points that help employers support improved employability, social mobility and access to the professions for all young people, but particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds. This latticework of expertise is at risk of disappearing with the current budget cuts affecting local authorities and schools.
- 2.8. The Careers Profession Task Force made a number of recommendations about the quality of career guidance provision; these were accepted by the Coalition

<sup>6</sup> TUC and Unison database; and Unison Briefing on the Careers Service issued on 7 January 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Sourced from ASCL (2011) The number of young people in years 9, 10, and 11 who will be affected by the gap in career services from 31 April 2011 to April 2012, between the scaling down of Connexions and the introduction of the new careers service.

<sup>8</sup> Watts, A.G. (2011) ‘The Proposed Model for Career Guidance in England: Some Lessons from International Examples’. A paper prepared for the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

<sup>9</sup> ASCL (2011) ‘Careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in schools in England’, a briefing paper with ACEG, Careers England and ICG

<sup>10</sup> HSBC (2011) ‘The Future of Business Report’



Government and are being actioned by the careers sector. The Careers Profession Alliance is developing new professional standards for career guidance practitioners, supported by a code of ethics. Work is being undertaken to update the Matrix organisational standard for careers service providers. In addition, Careers England is working with providers of existing quality awards to develop a national kite mark to cover careers education, IAG and work-based learning in schools and colleges. These benefit young people, parents, schools and employers. **Employers should back these new quality standards** by requiring them in the careers programmes they support and contribute to in schools.

### A bridge to work

- The Education and Employers Task Force hopes to recruit 100,000 people from all sectors and professions into schools and colleges to talk about their jobs and career routes.
- The Bridge Group hopes to work with universities to mobilise support from university alumni to help students from non-traditional backgrounds better understand the world of work, provide student placement opportunities and gain access to graduate employment opportunities.
- The STEM Ambassadors programme run by STEMNET has a network of 27,000 volunteers who go into schools to provide insights to the work of STEM-related jobs.
- The Science Council has launched the Hidden Science Map to help teachers to link careers work to STEM employers in their communities.

### Employers working with schools %



Source: CBI, 2011

## 3. The actions

3.1. The UK Careers Sector Strategic Forum urges employers, large and small, to work actively and urgently through their respective trade associations and business chambers to ensure that the following steps are taken:

- Seek to influence policy on careers education, information, advice and guidance to achieve the shared goal of giving all young people the best possible preparation for their working lives.
- Encourage the government to ensure that sufficient resources are provided to ensure that young people can access quality-assured, impartial face-to-face career guidance provision alongside telephone and web-based services.
- Emphasise the importance of improved co-ordination between employers, professional careers advisers and schools for greater employer involvement in careers education and guidance, so ensuring that businesses are able to recruit from a wider talent pool.
- Support the quality of careers education, IAG and work-related learning programmes within schools by promoting national quality standards recognised by employers, schools and professional careers advisers.

3.2. These actions by employers are important, not just for the sake of inspiring futures for young people, but because it will help meet their future skills requirements. Action is needed by employers now to ensure that there will be careers programmes that they can work with.



Convened under the auspices of the CIHE, the UK Careers Sector Strategic Forum is a strategic leadership network of careers sector stakeholders. It aims to formulate a national strategic framework for careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) 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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