



MAY
2014

INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL

STATUTORY GUIDANCE

CULTURE CHANGE

WHERE IS CAREERS ADVICE GOING?

VOCATIONAL AND/OR ACADEMIC

NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE

EMPLOYABILITY

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An impartial look at careers guidance despite experience



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To the generations of us who remember being asked what we wanted to be when we grew up and being told, no matter what it was, that we had to go to university, the idea of good careers guidance is a bit of an oxymoron.

I am sure I am not alone when I say careers advice was the only bit of my

education that let me down.

I was lucky enough to receive guidance outside my school, which led me to the eminently sensible decision to duck the low-hanging branches of an expensive higher education and get immediately out into the real world.

But others are not so lucky, and with the number of 16 and 17-year-olds not in education, employment or training (Neet) having risen from 31,000 between July and September to 38,000 between October and December last year, the need for advice which can get young people back into work or training is as strong as ever.

As so many of our knowledgeable experts in this supplement point out, we are living in a post-Connexions world in which schools have been ordered to fill the void, impartially.

The page opposite paints the picture of this world, how we got here, and what next.

New statutory guidance for schools is key to government hopes for the future of careers guidance, and it is covered across the following four pages.

The post-Connexions world was intended

to be one where the newly-established National Careers Service (NCS) would provide key support for schools, but it has faced its own issues surrounding the nature of its delivery and also funding. These issues are outlined on page 10, along with a view of the future of the NCS from its director, Joe Billington.

Skills Minister Matthew Hancock has previously spoken of the role of the NCS and has now ushered in the new statutory guidance for schools. He faces tough questioning on careers guidance on page 11, before fellow politicians from Labour and the Liberal Democrats have their say on page 12.

Amid the calls for action, and the issuing of new statutory guidance, came a key report on what a school's careers guidance service should look like — and what it would cost. Professor John Holman was the author and he discusses his report on page 13.

With this focus on schools and their provision, Ofsted gives its view on the situation bearing in mind its inspectors now look at the service, before the views of lecturers, learners and practitioners are represented, across pages 14 and 15.



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PAUL EELES
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
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Employability

The employability agenda is one of crucial importance, not only in terms of supporting those who are currently unemployed, but also in ensuring that young people are equipped with the skills to gain suitable and sustainable employment from the offset.

There are many pathways available to young people and adults; coupled with a fiercely competitive employment market, this makes well-informed information, advice and guidance (IAG) essential to the future for individuals.

We need to ensure that we are continually delivering an effective and impartial IAG service, which offers real outcomes that will benefit individuals.

As our young people compete for fewer jobs, employability skills will continue to be important.

Certainly Ofsted identified the development of these skills as a key responsibility of individual providers.

The key to an individual's success often lies in the information, advice and guidance that they have been given by employability

professionals.

Therefore, employability professionals need to have a clear understanding of the individual's personality, skills and interests, to ensure that the IAG is wholly relevant.

We must also remember the importance of remaining impartial. IAG should be aimed at the individual and should not be biased towards a certain pathway or organisation in order to meet recruitment targets.

Individuals will only remain engaged in a programme or qualification if it is the right pathway for them.

The Institute of Employability Professionals (IEP) and ABC Awards have developed a working partnership to offer a suite of level three and level four qualifications in the employability sector which will enable practitioners to provide effective employability support to their customers.

As a national awarding organisation, ABC Awards firmly believes that the professionalism of the workforce of the future relies on the quality and expertise of

those delivering training at the coalface.

Nationally-recognised qualifications, coupled with membership of IEP, give practitioners status and recognition as well as better job prospects.

Our qualifications are designed for staff who are involved in advising and supporting young people and adults into work. They aim to raise the performance of practitioners to offer the required support and guidance to individuals to enable them to move into sustained employment. These qualifications contribute to IEP membership criteria.

The IEP is the professional membership institute for individuals working within the employability sector. As a member of IEP, individuals are joining a network of passionate professionals with opportunities to share ideas, experiences and best practice. IEP membership reflects your commitment to the employability sector and is increasingly valued by employers.

The partnership between ABC Awards and IEP means that employers and their staff can now acquire both professional recognition and a relevant qualification which will enhance their career prospects in this dynamic and growing sector.

Visit www.abcawards.co.uk to find out more about the suite of Employment Related Services qualifications

Statutory guidance gets a legal grip on schools service

The duty of schools to secure independent and impartial careers guidance for pupils first became a legal requirement with the introduction of the 2011 Education Act.

But it wasn't until almost three years later that the FE sector got one of the things it had been demanding for many years — specific recognition of its offer in statute.

The new statutory guidance on careers advice for schools was published in April, and it was the first time specific references to vocational routes and apprenticeships were made.

It followed a build-up of pressure for action on careers guidance with the Education Act having shifted the provision of a careers service to schools from the duty of local authorities, delivered through Connexions — itself described by the DfE as “often costly, patchy and of poor quality”.

The number of those sounding notices of caution about the way schools were handling their new responsibility grew, and included Ofsted, the Association of Colleges and the Confederation of British Industry.

The Education Select Committee had worries, too. Its chair, Graham Stuart MP (pictured), questioned the advice of schools who, he said, “put their own interests ahead of that of their pupils, restrict access to other education providers and make the filling of their sixth form places more of a priority than their statutory duty to provide independent and impartial advice and guidance for pupils.”

The committee's report on careers guidance came out in January last year and went on to refer to the transfer of responsibility for careers guidance to schools as “regrettable,” adding: “We heard evidence that there is already a worrying deterioration in the overall level of provision for young people.”

“Urgent steps need to be taken by the government to ensure that young people's needs are met.

“Too many schools lack the skills, incentives or capacity to fulfil the duty put upon them without a number of changes being made.

“Young people deserve better than the service they are likely to receive

under the current arrangements.”

And just months after the committee aired its concerns, the National Careers Council (NCC), chaired by academic Dr Deirdre Hughes and set up to look at the problem, called for a careers guidance “culture change”.

At the launch of the NCC report, An Aspirational Nation: Creating a culture change in careers provision, was Skills Minister Matthew Hancock, who said: “Last year [2012] we created the National Careers Service to provide professional advice; and gave schools and further education colleges a powerful new responsibility to secure independent careers guidance for their students.

“This report sets out an ambitious new path for how careers guidance needs to progress — to inspire, motivate and inform — and I look forward to working with the NCC to consider the detail of its recommendations.”

And so we now have new statutory guidance. The legal nature of the documents means schools will have to prove they are telling pupils about vocational routes, or at least have a very good excuse to explain why they are not.

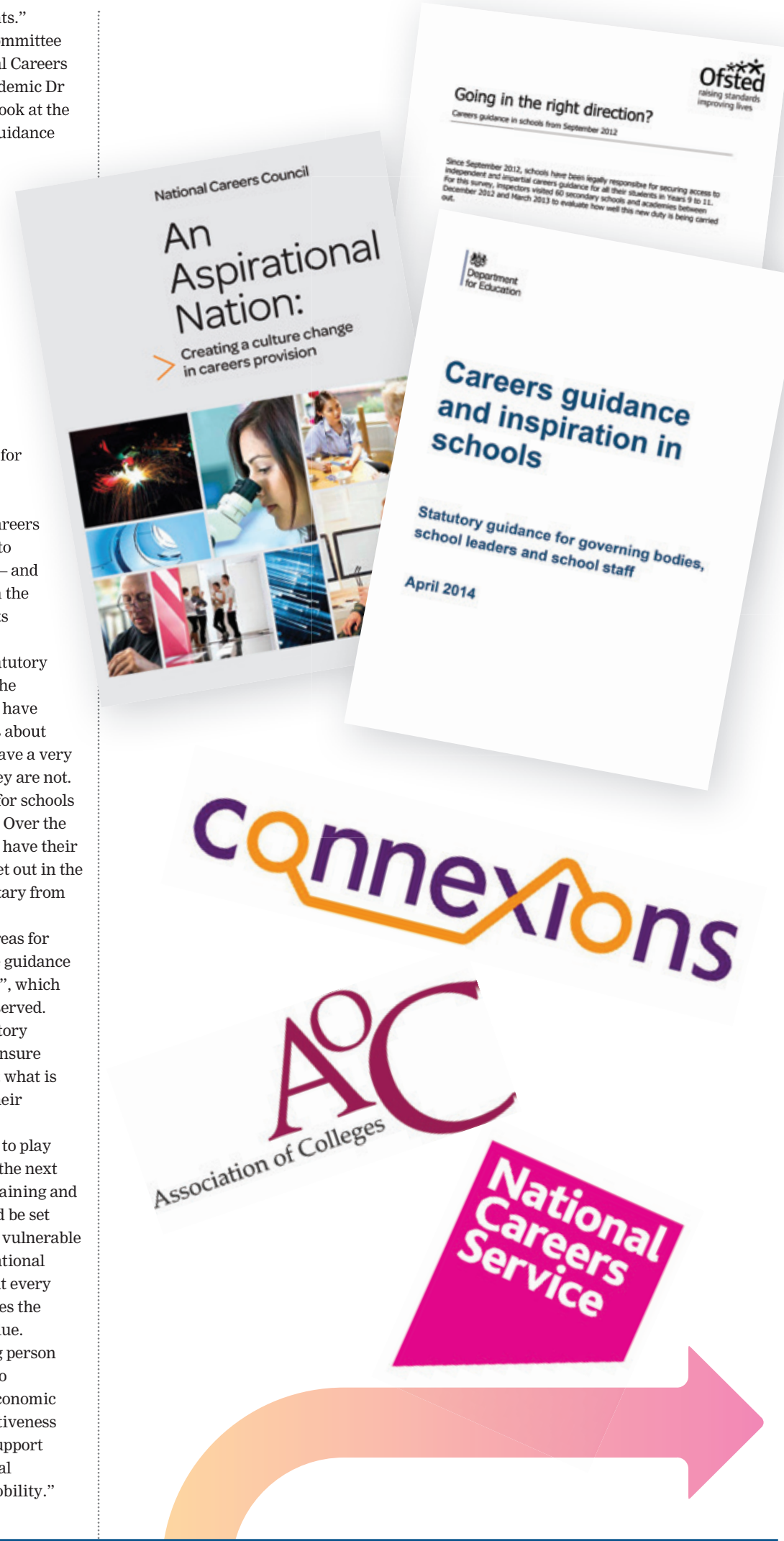
But does this new rulebook for schools across England go far enough? Over the next four pages, sector experts have their say on the key requirements set out in the guidance, along with commentary from NCC chair Dr Hughes.

As well as the five “must” areas for schools and their partners, the guidance includes a number of “shoulds”, which ministers hope will also be observed.

The report says: “This statutory guidance has been revised to ensure that all schools are clear about what is expected of them in meeting their duty.

“Schools have a critical role to play in preparing young people for the next stage of their education or training and beyond. Expectations should be set high, including for the most vulnerable and those with special educational needs and disabilities, so that every pupil is stretched and acquires the attributes that employers value.

“This will help every young person to realise their potential and so increase economic competitiveness and support social mobility.”



Sector leaders call for funding improvement and greater provider recognition

New statutory guidance for schools on careers advice has left question marks over the future of the service.

The 18-page document was hailed by the government as the answer to the nation's prayers, but seen by many sector leaders as something that didn't go far enough.

At the time of its release, Joy Mercer, policy director at the Association of

Colleges, said although it took "a few tentative steps in the right direction", it didn't "go far enough".

Over the next four pages, we examine the main legal requirements set out in the new guidance, and hear what relevant sector experts have to say.

And National Careers Council chair Dr Deirdre Hughes gives a running commentary across each requirement.

Legal requirement 1 — Schools must secure independent guidance that includes information on the full range of education and training options, including apprenticeships and vocational pathways. Guidance should encompass good, appropriate local FE, apprenticeships, and vocational education opportunities.



JOY MERCER
DIRECTOR OF POLICY,
ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES

Good independent careers advice and guidance is crucial if students are to make the right choices about their future. This update to the statutory duty on schools is a step in the right direction, but it by no means goes far enough.

Providing high-quality, impartial advice and guidance is no easy task and, while we appreciate schools are receiving no extra funding to support this statutory obligation, we wanted to see the legal duties more clearly defined. We believe more work needs to be

done, especially regarding the steps that will be taken to ensure that schools comply.

The inclusion of specific vocational routes is a positive move, but what is more appropriate is that advice and guidance about the correct options for the individual student is available.

We are pleased to see that the Department for Education has set down what 'good' advice and guidance looks like — making sure young people have information about all the options available to them post-14, post-16 and post-18.

The National Careers Service (NCS) should play a role in this and, through our Careers Guidance: Guaranteed campaign, we're urging government to improve its funding of NCS. The array of options can be bewildering for young people and their parents and we need to make

sure they understand which option to choose to get the career, and the future, that they want.

But as well as knowledge of what education options are available, young people must also know what is available to them in terms of jobs, so they can make sure they are gaining the right skills to join the local employment market.

Another 'ask' from our campaign is that all parties work better together locally to focus on the career information needs of our students. Government figures suggest that awareness of the NCS is increasing but there is more to do and it is right that the expanded role of the NCS as a broker between schools, colleges, local authorities and employers is enshrined in this statutory duty.

Training providers have always tried to work closely with schools

STEWART SEGAL

We wanted to see the legal duties more clearly defined

JOY MERCER

Legal requirement 2 — Schools must ensure young people are clear about what the raising of the participation age means for them.



STEWART SEGAL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ASSOCIATION OF
EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING PROVIDERS

The guidance rightfully stresses that young people and just as importantly parents should understand that they are not required to stay on school but that there are a number of options open to them. The combination of the raising of the participation age, which was not fully explained to parents, and the pupil funding formula for school sixth forms was in danger of keeping disaffected students in a classroom when a work based learning option was more appropriate to their

needs.

We have been lobbying on the need for impartial advice in schools for many years and our successful representations for a statutory requirement to be included in the Education Act 2011 were vital in our mission to raise awareness among young people about apprenticeships. But we knew that while this was a major step forward, it would only really count if the measure was being enforced especially at a time when the Connexions service was being dismantled across the country. The requirement to inform young people of all of their options is even more important as schools are longer required to set aside time for work experience, so it was

imperative that we did not allow schools to become detached, unwittingly or otherwise, from the world of work.

The new guidance encourages greater engagement between schools and the National Careers Service, and school visits by local employers and providers. Training providers have always tried to work closely with schools as they can provide a vital link between employers and schools. This activity is often hidden from government as providers see it as part of their role in engaging young people. If more schools recognise the support that they can get from the sector, there is every reason to be more optimistic about the quality of careers guidance which pupils will receive in future.

There is growing evidence of the high costs associated [with the] skills gaps and mismatch. We know the British youth labour market is not working effectively. There is a growing need for more engaging activities for young people (and parents) that connect them to the realities of available pathways and opportunities.

Labour market intelligence and ICT is currently under-utilised. The UKCES 'LMI for All' in association with Warwick University IER, has the potential to

support schools in embedding labour market signals from an early stage in the curriculum.

The more informed, realistic and certain initial teenager career aspirations are, the better young people do when they leave education - they more likely to be employed and to earn better (NCC, 2013 p.8) This means they need access to good quality information, intelligence and careers support.

DEIDRE HUGHES



**NATIONAL CAREERS COUNCIL,
CHAIR**

UK Commission for Employment and Skills, commissioner
International Centre for Guidance Studies, founding director
Warwick Institute for Employment Research, associate fellow
European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, consultant

Basically, what this is saying is we all need to take steps to ensure young people (and parents) are clear about the education and career routes and pathways available.

This lies at the heart of the government's 'inspirational agenda'. The guidance and non-statutory guidelines reinforce the point that we must be honest and open with all young people (and parents) about the full range of options available at key transitions points. This can be a big challenge for schools, particularly those with sixth forms keen to build their

cohort of students.

Many are becoming more aware of the scarring effects of wasted time and money spent by young people on the wrong course. The decision to place a statutory duty on schools is a step in the right direction and moving forward schools, colleges and local authorities will need to build skills and capacity in their workforce to help develop young people's character, career adaptability and resilience.

Careers guidance changes from the head teacher, local authority and governor’s viewpoint

Legal requirement 3 — Schools’ in-house careers guidance must be combined with advice and guidance from independent and external sources.

Legal requirement 4 — Schools must work with local authorities to support more vulnerable young people including those with special educational needs, and those who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging.

Legal requirement 5 — The governing body must ensure independent careers guidance is presented in an impartial manner, includes information on the range of education or training options, including apprenticeships and other vocational pathways and is guidance that the person giving it considers will promote the best interests of the pupils to whom it is given.



ROB CAMPBELL
CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HEAD TEACHERS' SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE AND PRINCIPAL OF IMPINGTON VILLAGE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

I have no problem with external advice — indeed I think it’s probably necessary to ensure impartial guidance is there. In some cases, and not surprisingly, schools that have sixth forms often encourage their students to ‘stay on’ at 16 so ensure good recruitment.

In addition children actually choose this too because of the lure of the familiar when it might be better they went elsewhere. I also think well-trained careers teachers or advisers will know the full range of what’s

available and do better at identifying and then encouraging the right choice for students.

As it stands currently, it will be a financial burden — something in the region of £8,000 to £10,000 for a school of my size (210 students in a year group) which is not inconsiderable given all the other pressures and demands on budgets; we know this advice is important but if schools feel they can provide it better themselves (and this may be the case) then they may seek to ignore it.

The other issue is quality; over the past decade the pool of well qualified careers staff has diminished so it will be a challenge to secure the right advice and guidance. Under Connexions, staff quality was varied and if this is replicated again, schools will be most reluctant to follow the advice to the letter (of the law).

A primary focus for careers work in schools is to prepare pupils for future working life. A combination of in-house and external arrangements is the best way forward. A three-pronged approach by employers, teachers and careers professionals working together to improve the life chances of all young people should be a key driving force in all schools across England.

Shifting your attention outside of the school is an important part of the big picture. Careers advisers, coaches and mentors act as key informants between the worlds of education and work. A strong international evidence base demonstrates these professionals complement and add value to employers/employees and teachers work in schools.



NICK FORBES
VICE-CHAIR OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S BOARD AND NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL LEADER

Councils have statutory duties to reduce youth disengagement and to secure enough suitable provision for all young people up to 19, and up to 24 for those with learning difficulties, and we welcome the acknowledgment of this by the reviewed guidance.

Overall, local government is doing a good job. The number of 16 to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training (Neet) has fallen throughout the recession and is now at all-time low. But more can be done and we think government needs to devolve

all re-engagement funding to continue improving.

In Newcastle, we were able to locally commission the Youth Contract, unlike most councils, and we used our local knowledge and partnerships to deliver much more successful outcomes than the national programme.

While councils have helped schools take on the duty to provide advice we have long held concerns about this move. We are worried schools have not been sufficiently funded and what government pressure on academic learning means for students most likely to go into vocational learning. We are not sure schools in isolation can offer independent advice, aware of the full complexity of local post-16 work and learning options.

A range of innovative activities are emerging in response. In Leeds, the council

is helping young people scrutinise and improve school careers advice and in Rochdale the council has created support for all, including pupils, parents, teachers and governors. In Suffolk the council has created a single website for pupils to access advice and apply for local opportunities. These initiatives are having some impact but councils are absorbing unprecedented cuts and cannot fund them forever.

We worry that our efforts to engage young people in learning will be undermined if learning is not right for the individual or for local employers. While 16 to 18-year-old disengagement is at all-time low, the proportion of 19 to 24-year-olds not in work or learning has grown to an all-time high. Without high quality independent careers advice, these trends risk continuing into a growing economy.

Considerable challenges face schools, colleges, local authorities and local enterprise partnerships in responding effectively to recent changes in careers provision. Schools and local authorities each have a responsibility to nurture and support young people, including those most

vulnerable and/or at risk.

I do have concerns that some young people are falling between cracks in the system. In many cases, young people and parents do not know where to go to for careers support, therefore, significantly more needs to be done

at a local and national level to address this important issue. Also, the SEN model of careers support for young people (and their parents) is has an exemplary track record, therefore, this approach must be retained in any future delivery arrangements.



EMMA KNIGHTS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION (NGA)

In the fast-changing labour market of today, young people need to be given effective, high quality careers advice. However, the introduction of the duty on schools to provide independent and impartial careers advice has given them an additional responsibility with no accompanying extra funding.

Therefore it is important that schools take a well thought out, strategic approach to their provision, and governors have a vital role in making that happen. Reports that schools are failing to meet their duties

should not be construed to indicate a lack of effort — for many the problem is a lack of experience. Few will have had any previous experience of providing careers guidance to the extent now required so National Governors Association welcomes the new statutory guidance, which is far more detailed than its predecessor, and the accompanying non-statutory guidance.

Governors want the best for the pupils in their school and we welcome the emphasis on ensuring pupils are given high quality advice on a wide range of careers pathways, including vocational qualifications and apprenticeships, as well as the options offered by other institutions. Of course it is not necessary for governors to be ‘forced in law’ to do this, and there are many examples

of excellent practice which pre-exists the statutory guidance.

Governors can also be a resource in themselves, for example by providing links to local businesses. It has been suggested that governing bodies have a designated careers governor but, as the governing body operates on the principle of collective responsibility, NGA recommends that an issue as important as careers education is addressed by the whole governing body or a committee.

“Building careers education into the school or college development plan is a good way to ensure it remains a strategic priority, as well as integrating it into the governing body’s work without creating an excessive additional burden.

Governors have a key role to play in ensuring schools careers provision is planned at a strategic level and delivered well within a whole school approach. Effective governing bodies add significant value in the critical areas of school improvement and compliance.

On May 15 an alliance of school governor bodies will launch a campaign to get more people to volunteer as governors [The Inspiring

Governors Alliance was launched om May 15]. I hope more people with come forward with a strong interest in young people’s transitions, careers and labour market intelligence. The National Careers Council has been working with the National Governors Association to strengthen communication on the statutory guidance and non-statutory guidelines for schools.

Awarding Qualifications for Life

Deliver Effective Employability Skills with ABC Awards

ABC Awards is a leading national awarding organisation which has a long-established reputation for developing and awarding high quality vocational qualifications.

We work with over 900 centres nationally and many tens of thousands of learners achieve an ABC Awards qualification each year.

Established in 1998, ABC Awards combines more than 180 years of examination and assessment expertise but at the same time integrates a responsive, flexible and innovative approach to the needs of our customers.

Our comprehensive portfolio of over 600 Ofqual regulated qualifications covers a range of industry sectors and is designed for all ages and abilities post-14.

We have developed all of our qualifications with the support of relevant stakeholders to make sure that they meet the needs and standards of industries across the UK.

Employability

We understand the importance of providing our centres with solutions to deliver effective employability skills to their learners, and have developed a range of products in response to this need.

All of our qualifications provide learners with the opportunity to progress onto a sustainable career. Our Employability Package complements our qualifications by developing transferable employability skills to help learners to enter into the employment market.

"As our young people compete for fewer jobs, employability skills will continue to be important."

Certainly Ofsted identified the development of these skills as a key responsibility of individual providers."

Paul Eeles, Chief Executive

Support for Your Learners

Employability Skills

Our Employability Skills qualifications enable learners to develop skills and knowledge to help them understand about the world of work and encourage them to enter and progress into employment.

These qualifications give centres and learners flexibility with the combination of units to achieve a qualification which reflects their individual needs.

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t: 0115 854 1620 e: businessdevelopment@abcawards.co.uk

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These qualifications are also supported with the provision of an online e-learning portal which is available to all registered learners.

The Level 3 Award is also being delivered as a one-day course in Nottingham at various dates throughout the year.

For further information please contact us on 0115 854 1626 or e-mail enquiries@emfec.co.uk

New careers service hit with delivery and funding issues

For careers advice and guidance, 2012 was the year it was all supposed to change. The Education Act, given royal assent in 2011, meant schools for the first time were responsible for ensuring the advice they offered to pupils was independent and impartial.

Connexions, a relic of the early years of the Blair government, was a target and while it may have boasted personal, face-to-face advisers, it had been viewed negatively in some quarters with varying levels of service.

It was replaced by the National Careers Service (NCS) in 2012, but far from the fresh start the government had hoped for with the end of Connexions, the NCS has faced criticisms of its own.

The National Careers Council (NCC) last year wanted to see a large expansion of the NCS brief and called for face-to-face careers guidance to be available to all pupils from the age of 12 (Year 8).

It was a criticism picked up at the time by Brian Lightman, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders. He said: “A national telephone helpline and a website are useful for information, but

they are no substitute for a conversation with a qualified, knowledgeable careers professional who can help young people make informed choices.”

And in September last year, Ofsted’s report, *Going in the right direction?* Careers guidance in schools from September 2012, also had tough words for the NCS and its web-based service.

However, deeper concerns came last year from former NCC members Professor Tony Watts and Heather Jackson over the way the NCS was funded.

Professor Watts and Ms Jackson were not the only ones who questioned why so much of the NCS budget came from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and yet so little from the Department for Education (DfE).

Even the Ministry of Justice gave more than the DfE, prompting a headline in the national media to read ‘More job cash for jailbirds than kids’.

It was an issue raised with Skills Minister Mathew Hancock when he appeared before MPs on the Education Select Committee in May last year.

“Will the minister reassure us that the

DfE is committed to supporting the work of the NCS properly? Will the DfE realise the opportunity that the NCS provides to ensure that we have an all-ages, competent, re-professionalised careers service?” said committee chair Graham Stuart.

Mr Hancock said: “The funding issue has been raised many times. Times are, of course, tight for funding, but the central point is that the legal duty to secure independent and impartial advice in schools needs to be delivered from the schools budget.

“Schools have a whole budget to deliver

this, not just the £7m the DfE puts into the NCS.”

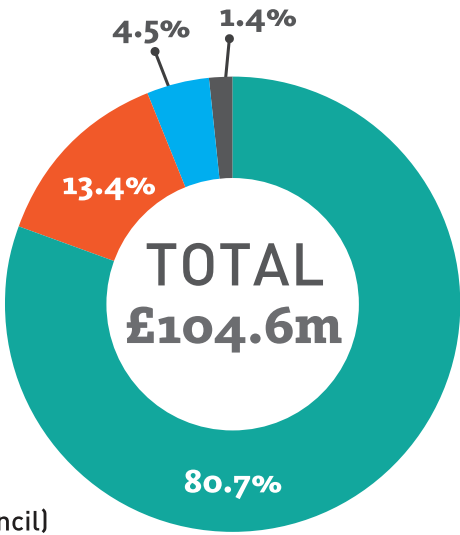
The NCS started 2014 with a lot to prove, and the sector’s eyes will stay on it as England adapts to new rules for schools on careers advice and guidance.

The NCS is jointly funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Department for Education (DfE), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

National Careers Service Budget 2012/13

BIS	£84.4m
MoJ	£14m
DfE	£4.7m
DWP	£1.5m

(Source: SFA/ National Careers Council)



The service has provided advice and guidance to more than 1.5m new customers since it was launched. We have delivered 2.5m face-to-face sessions with adults, handled 788,000 phone calls, emails and webchats, and received 22.7m web visits.

At the same time we have been evolving a new model for operating to meet the new challenges facing careers provision. We have been re-contracting the whole service for October 2014 to provide an enhanced offer which builds on our achievements.

Our ambitious agenda requires contractors to provide the highest quality service focused on positive outcomes relating to customer satisfaction, personal career management, and progress in employment and learning. It focuses on services provided by highly skilled careers professionals working to improve continuously; and delivered in partnership with local organisations and businesses.

Our new service will establish national standards and expectations of quality and service. It will be supported by a national contact centre that will hold information and advice for individuals, employers and schools and a national website through which customers will be able to manage their own careers plans and actions through personalised online tools and information.

But at its heart will be a local service combining digital, telephone and face-to-face services and working in partnership with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, employers, schools, higher

education, FE and the voluntary sector to provide young people and adults with inspiring experiences, information and guidance that will help them take advantage of the opportunities in their locality.

NCS contractors will work in conjunction with the new statutory guidance on careers guidance and inspiration in schools to help schools, colleges and employers to work together. And our new model will mean we are in better shape to take this forward.

From October 2014, prime contractors delivering the service will be engaging with schools, parents and employers as well as FE and higher education institutions, to establish the relationships through which young people can benefit from employers experience through talks, mentoring, coaching and work experience.

Our new service will establish national standards and expectations of quality and service

The NCS is stepping up to play its part and we look forward to working with colleges and learning providers together with employers, schools and others in inspiring people to realise their potential.

The Skills Minister’s ‘culture change’ Plan

The state of careers advice and guidance has preyed on the minds of ministers for generations, but never has there been so much pressure placed on government to improve the system.

In an exclusive Q&A session with *FE Week*, Skills Minister Matthew Hancock talks about the “culture change” which he sees as happening in career advice.

Q: The new statutory guidance recently published will force schools to specifically promote apprenticeships and vocational routes. What is the government going to do to make sure this actually happens and what powers can it use where this doesn’t take place?

A: Schools have a responsibility to promote all routes, including apprenticeships and vocational — and act in the interests of pupils. The guidance sets out clearly how schools will be held to account, confirming Ofsted’s intention to take greater account during school inspections of the quality of careers guidance and of pupils’ destinations. I hope that will encourage schools to broaden the advice they offer; schools will have no excuse for not opening their doors to the different options.

Q: Do you think the onus should be entirely placed on schools, or does the FE sector need to do more to promote itself?

A: Many FE colleges work hard to ensure that young people are aware of the learning opportunities they offer, including apprenticeships and other vocational offers. We want young people to be aware of the full range of choices available to them and that is why we have been even more explicit in the guidance that schools should give colleges and give other providers who wish to do so the opportunity to inform pupils directly about what they offer. We announced our aim to ensure that in every local area, young people aged 16 have access to a single online portal which will give them access to the range of education and training opportunities available in their area. We are currently looking at how best to implement this. I expect colleges to take up all the opportunities available to set out the options available.

Q: What would you say to head teachers who argue their schools are under pressure to keep learners on post-16 because of fears about funding?

A: We want schools, colleges and other providers to offer high quality options, about which young people can make an informed decision. It’s right that funding should follow those choices. Head teachers should recognise where it may be in the best interests of pupils to pursue options



beyond the school. What matters is the needs of the young person — and how schools can best raise their aspirations and enable them to consider a broad and ambitious range of careers.

Q: Might funding incentives be used somehow to address the problem?

A: Our funding reforms are designed to remove perverse incentives. We are funding institutions ‘per student’ allowing sufficient income for each student to undertake a full programme of study, whether vocational or academic. This moves away from the difficulties of the previous qualifications-based funding system to give all institutions the flexibility to deliver for the student.

Q: What would the role of an FE college be in the model example of a school’s careers guidance service? Would independent learning providers (ILPs) and employers be involved? How, practically speaking?

A: This will be different according to the needs and ethos of the school. There is no one correct model — it will vary by local circumstances — but I would envisage strong partnership working between schools, local employers and other education and training providers. I want to see colleges and other providers giving information directly to pupils about the options available, alongside contact with inspirational employers. This ensures that young people can benefit from direct, motivating experience of the world of work to inform decisions about future education

and training options. The new departmental advice document contains a number of case studies and paints a clear picture of what good careers guidance in schools looks like.

Q: What should colleges/ILPs/ employers do if they feel they’re being excluded from playing a part in school information, advice and guidance (IAG) services?

A: The guidance is clear that schools should give other providers who wish to do so the opportunity to inform pupils directly about what they offer. It is good practice for schools to have a named contact on their websites, to make it easier for employers to get involved. I have asked the National Careers Service (NCS) to act as a facilitator between schools, colleges and employers to broker closer engagement. This will allow pupils/students to get more first-hand experience of employers and be inspired about the world of work. If there is a case where this is not working properly, then I would expect discussions to take place first with the school and other local partners. The expectations are very clear and it would be a serious matter if anyone behaved unreasonably and disregarded the statutory duty and guidance.

Q: Should Ofsted’s role in schools IAG be greater or different altogether?

A: Ofsted has already given careers guidance a greater priority in school inspections. This sits alongside our new accountability rules — new league tables — for schools.

Q: Should any other bodies, such as local authorities, play a role?

A: Yes. Local authorities play an important role in supporting more vulnerable young people and should work with schools to identify and support those young people who are at risk of dropping out of education or training.

Q: Where does you see careers advice in five years’ time? Is real improvement likely in that timeframe?

A: I think we are in the midst of a big culture change. Placing a duty on schools was an important step towards improving the quality of advice and guidance young people receive. Following the publication of our statutory guidance on April 10, no school has an excuse not to be engaging local employers. And from October this year, we are extending the role of the NCS to work with schools, colleges and employers to facilitate more employers engaging with young people to inspire them through informative talks, mentoring, coaching and work experience. More and more employers are getting involved, and a multitude of inspiring organisations like Careers Academies and Speakers for Schools are being set up. Alongside the new league tables setting out pupils’ destinations as well as their exam results, and Ofsted’s enhanced scrutiny of this area, I think this will result in a big culture change — which I believe will lead to better outcomes for young people.

EXPERT



JOE BILLINGTON
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE

The ‘ambitious agenda’ for a new model careers service

Having been set up two years ago, the National Careers Service is set to evolve later this year, explains Joe Billington.

Back in September last year, Skills Minister Matthew Hancock set out the case for a culture change in the provision of careers advice and guidance for young people and adults.

In order to address the mismatch of skills shortages and high unemployment, we all need to play a part in inspiring people to seize the opportunities presented by the world of work, economic growth and new industries and jobs.

People are living and working longer: careers last a lifetime, but often involve several jobs, various skill sets, multiple employers and numerous career decisions.

To meet these challenges, careers advice must inspire people to look ahead, seek the next opportunity, and develop new skills to prepare for the future.

It needs to give people relevant up to date information and experiences to guide them, providing insights into workplaces, clear next steps to realise their goals and enabling them to develop and grow.

The best motivation comes from real experience of the workplace, seeing how skills and knowledge translate into success and achievement, hearing from people in jobs themselves, who can pass on their enthusiasm and knowledge.

This is why it is crucial that employers and schools and colleges work more closely together: to provide inspiration and real-life contact with the world of work so that when young people come to make big decisions, they understand where different choices could take them in the future. The National Careers Service (NCS) will help build those partnerships.

The launch of the NCS in April 2012 marked the start of an exciting new chapter in careers information, advice and guidance.



RUSHANARA ALI

SHADOW JUNIOR EDUCATION MINISTER

An action plan to improve careers guidance services

Armed with criticism from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Rushanara Ali puts forward her view of where the National Careers Service is failing — and how it can improve.

Young people’s aspirations can be transformed by top-quality, timely and independent careers guidance. Young people deserve to be guided along the best pathways to achieve their potential.

With almost 900,000 young people in the UK currently not in employment, education or training, the need to give all young people clear, independent advice on different pathways could not be clearer.

Over decades, providing universal careers guidance has posed a particularly difficult public policy challenge.

The recent Gatsby report reminds us there is no ‘magic bullet’ to solving the issue. Yet it is clear that, since 2010, this government has pushed careers guidance

in the UK to the point of crisis and their shocking record deserves to be called out.

Instead of raising life-chances by creating a world-class youth careers provision ecosystem, this government — according to the CBI — has left our nation’s career-guidance provision on “life-support”.

The way in which the government decided to transfer the duty for careers guidance to schools has received blanket disapproval throughout the FE sector. Also, we are left wondering why not a penny of the almost £200m previously spent on the Connexions service has not found its way into school and FE college budgets.

Last year, Careers England found that five in six schools were spending less on careers guidance than the previous year. At the same time, the government has left many young people unprepared for work by removing the entitlement to work experience. Ofsted’s own judgement on this government’s performance was clear: not

good enough.

Looking to the future, Labour’s vision for careers guidance rests on three main insights. First, the Labour Skills Taskforce highlights the need for a much closer relationship between schools, FE colleges and local employers.

Today’s labour market is changing rapidly. Global shifts in production, technological changes and the financial crisis leave schools and FE colleges with the impossible task of keeping a detailed understanding of dynamic, local economies. After all, young people starting out today will change careers much more frequently than their parents’ generation. To support them, we need employer-led partnerships which leave employers, educators and — most importantly — young people better off.

What does that look like in reality? The CBI’s report to the taskforce shows us ways in which employers start raising awareness of new opportunities. For example, the optics sector’s campaign, New Dimensions, provides schools with interactive, engaging material to complement teaching.

Young people realise the value of a new career; employers nurture fresh talent ready to meet their needs. This is aspirational careers education in action.

Secondly, we need a step-change in our approach to providing careers services nationally. Currently, the National Careers Service (NCS) simply does not reach

enough young people. We need to enable it to perform much more effectively. It could play a vital part in ensuring young people universal, independent and impartial guidance, brokering partnerships between businesses, schools and young people.

The government’s guidance for schools published last month failed to recognise the urgency of this challenge. Where schools and colleges can now contract providers to carry out independent careers guidance provision, the same providers cannot effectively market themselves to schools and colleges as NCS providers.

Finally, careers guidance should encompass all routes. Careers guidance needs to reflect the transformed landscape Labour intends to create in terms of FE, apprenticeships and technical careers opportunities.

As things stand, the Association of Colleges found that only 7 per cent of pupils could name apprenticeships as a post-GCSE qualification. We need to signal to young people that all routes — not just the route of academic progression — are available and open to them given the right guidance. Labour’s Technical Baccalaureate, coupled with our work to continue strengthening the status of FE, means we are creating a new landscape.

Now, more than ever, we need partnerships of professionals to come together to help young people find their way.

careers advice is delivered by teachers who, with an academic background, usually encourage university as the best option.

We need to establish independent careers advisers: local employers and businesses able to give first-hand advice on the wide variety of opportunities available to young people and the fact that there are varied and different routes into work which may prove to be more attractive and offer better career advantage.

Students and young people left me with the very clear impression that they were not receiving adequate support in choosing a career and were unsure of the options post-16

I was therefore very pleased that the Department for Education recognised the crucial benefits that independent careers advisers could bring and have set out plans for a proper system of careers advice to be implemented across schools in England.

Ofsted will be looking more closely at the quality of careers advice and support available when it inspects schools.

In government, the Liberal Democrats have given schools responsibility for securing access to careers guidance for pupils in years nine to 11 — and published statutory guidance and a practical guide to implementation, learning from examples of good practice.

Furthermore, the National Careers Service provides a high quality helpline and web chat service which was used more than 67,000 times by young people in its first year alone, and a website which has attracted 7m visits.

We have made it clear to schools that pupils can use this free service as part of their careers guidance, but I am in no doubt that face-to-face conversations are crucial to ascertain the most useful information about a pupil’s aspirations and deliver the best advice possible.

Ensuring all pupils have access to an extensive careers advice service and appropriate work experience is crucial for children to have their horizons lifted from an early age and make certain they are not held back by low expectations or a lack of knowledge about options.

In my own area of Burnley, we have a wonderful independent careers advice service set up by Lesley Burrows called the ‘job junction’. Using visual aids she demonstrates to local pupils the careers and jobs available in the area and what exactly the work entails.

It is a simple but effective idea which I would love to see replicated across the country.

Putting the cost on a priceless school service

The Gatsby Foundation report Good Careers Guidance has been heralded as a wake-up call for government and schools alike.

It came out in late April and here, report author Sir John Holman, who is York University emeritus professor in chemistry and education adviser to the Wellcome Trust and the Gatsby Foundation, talks to *FE Week*.

Even before he visited six different countries and five English independent schools, Sir John Holman knew something was not right with careers advice and guidance in England.

Sir John said he had always been acutely aware of the issues faced by young people in seeking the best route for their studies or working life.

But he doesn’t believe the blame for the current state of play should be laid at the door of any agency or government. Simply, he hopes all political parties will pay attention to his 10 key recommendations.

He said: “We have not really got this right for several generations, and the system has been letting young people down and leaving them in the dark for at least as long as I have been involved in secondary education.

“I think one of the things I discovered in my overseas research is that you need to have a system which is both stable and well-understood. If you keep changing it that makes it very difficult for people to actually understand how the system works.”

Sir John highlighted Finland and Germany as examples of good practice — two countries where the guidance system has, he said, not changed in a long time and is widely understood.

“That makes life much easier to operate in, both from the point of view of the employers and the schools,” he added. Sir John has welcomed new statutory guidance on careers advice, but shares the view of the Association of Colleges (AoC) in that it does not go far enough.

He said: “There is a very strong emphasis on employers and the need for schools and colleges to engage with them, but where the guidance is still not meeting international best practice in my view is that it’s not requiring the schools to both engage with employers and have an active school-based careers guidance programme.

“Most teachers themselves went the university route. It is a route they are familiar with, and many teachers, particularly in schools, often know very little about vocational routes and indeed the opportunities for apprenticeships.

“I said very strongly in my report that



schools must make sure that pupils have an opportunity, not just to hear about these courses and apprenticeships, but to actually visit colleges, visit apprenticeship training schemes and have ambassadors who are themselves taking part in such programmes coming back into the school and talking to them.

“I think the guidance could certainly go further if it is going to meet the eight benchmarks I set out in my report. It’s certainly a step in the right direction in the respect of employers, but as my research shows, this is not a single dimension.

“You have to be doing a lot of things and you need to be doing all of them well. Employer engagement is a very important one, but it is nowhere near enough.”

One of the key elements of Sir John’s report is eight benchmarks which he says every school must meet to provide good independent and impartial careers advice and guidance.

The benchmarks include requirements that everyone in a school understands an “embedded” programme of career education, and emphasise the need for staged advice, access to workplace experience and information about a full range of opportunities, both academic and vocational.

Sir John said he welcomed the response from the AoC and other organisations to a costing of the benchmarks by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, which showed

that meeting all eight could cost as little as £38,472 a-year for some schools.

He said: “I welcome the fact it is seen as relatively low cost, and I would say that nevertheless schools are going to have to find this, and the most important thing is that school leaders prioritise careers guidance and take seriously the need to find this funding in their budgets.”

He also said it was also up to colleges and other providers to make an effort when it comes to promoting vocational routes.

He said: “The best thing that FE providers can do is to send young ambassadors into schools. Former pupils of schools can be the best ambassadors of all, because if the pupils look at someone who has come in and think ‘I can be like that’ — that is highly effective.

“FE could be doing much more to send people into schools to talk about what they have achieved.”

Holman recommendations

- 1 Schools should be guided by eight benchmarks (see below) when setting their own careers programmes, and Ofsted should be aware of them when making judgements.
- 2 Every secondary school should be required to have a careers plan, published on the school’s website.
- 3 Every secondary school should be responsible for publishing the destinations of all pupils for three years after their leaving date
- 4 The remit of the National Careers Service (NCS) should be extended to give it unequivocal responsibilities towards schools. To make it more responsive to employers, the NCS should be reconstituted as an independent agency with its own board on which employers are strongly represented, alongside schools and colleges.
- 5 Alongside career information, live labour market information should be available to all schools through the ‘LMI for All’ service through the NCS website.
- 6 The National STEM Centre, National Science Learning Centre, and National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics should lead exemplary work to show how curriculum resources for science, technology, engineering and mathematics teachers can more effectively showcase career learning opportunities.
- 7 Employers, their representative organisations and organisations promoting business links should cooperate in a comprehensive review of what they offer.
- 8 Every school should have a member of their governing body who has a remit to encourage employer engagement and to take a strategic interest in career guidance.
- 9 Employers and further and higher education institutes should investigate the potential for greatly expanding existing programmes for sending young ambassadors into schools from apprenticeships, colleges and universities.
- 10 The government’s guidance for schools should be amended to make it clear that personal guidance can be provided by both internal and external advisers.

Schools fail to hit Holman benchmarks

As part of his research for Good Career Guidance, Sir John Holman asked schools across England to rate their own performance against his eight benchmarks for good careers guidance.

He received a total of 361 responses. Of those responses, 55 per cent came from schools which have sixth forms, and 45 per cent came from those which did not. Survey respondents were asked if

they were aware of their statutory duty to secure access to independent and impartial career guidance. Of these 85 per cent said they were aware, and 84 per cent said they did secure such access.

But when it came to the benchmarks, none of the respondents were able to claim they met all eight benchmarks, or even six or seven of them.

Don't wait for an inspector's view — be critical, says Ofsted

School leaders should not wait to find out from inspectors whether their careers guidance provision is up to scratch, Ofsted's new director of FE and skills has said.

In an exclusive interview with *FE Week*, Lorna Fitzjohn said schools should be focused on improving their guidance services before the inspectors call.

"We urge all schools and providers not to wait for inspectors to tell them if their careers guidance is any good," she said.

"We expect all providers to be self-critical in their own evaluation of the guidance they offer to young people, to ensure that they are properly informed of the education and training opportunities that are available to them to help them make informed decisions about their next steps."

It comes after a report, *Going in the right direction?* Careers guidance in schools from September 2012, released last September by Ofsted, gave a damning commentary on careers guidance in schools.

At the time of the report, released a year after the legal requirement placed

on schools to deliver impartial and independent advice by the Education Act 2011 came into force, Ofsted boss Sir Michael Wilshaw said "too few schools" were "doing enough".

Mrs Fitzjohn said progress had been made since the report came out, but urged schools to be pro-active in improving their careers advice offer to pupils.

She said: "The quality of careers guidance is an important area of work for Ofsted. Indeed, Sir Michael Wilshaw recently told MPs on the Education Select Committee that good careers advice was 'absolutely vital'."

"We have therefore increased our focus on the inspection of careers guidance since the publication of our thematic review last September and we have revised the school inspection framework and subsidiary guidance accordingly."

"Inspectors of schools and the FE and skills sector have received training on how to evaluate the quality of careers guidance provision and we are beginning to evaluate the impact of these initiatives."

Mrs Fitzjohn also welcomed the

government's new statutory guidance, which further stipulates the legal requirements schools now face.

She said: "We were pleased to see the government publish its updated guidance for schools on providing young people with careers advice."

"We welcomed the stronger focus on ensuring schools know what to do in providing advice and guidance for their students, as is their statutory duty, as well as the greater flexibility outlined in the guidance to help meet the needs of students through the involvement of employers, careers professionals and the wider sector."

Last September's report, which was commissioned by the Department for Education, said that few of the 60 schools visited for the survey had brought in adequate service from external sources, and further criticised schools for not working well enough with employers to provide students with direct experience of the world of work.

Vocational training and apprenticeships were rarely promoted effectively, especially in schools with sixth forms, the report said.



Lorna Fitzjohn

EXPERT



GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS AND LECTURERS (ATL)

DR MARY BOUSTEAD

Rebuilding career guidance after government 'naivety'

There is no magic answer to careers guidance — "no silver bullet" — but the government has a "moral obligation" to do better, says Dr Mary Boustead.

It is a national scandal that careers guidance in England is not fit for purpose.

The government was absolutely reckless, especially in a period of high youth unemployment, to scrap the careers service without providing a proper replacement.

Careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) was a bit of a mouthful, but the title highlighted that young people need a complex range of support to help them make decisions about their route through education to employment. There is no silver bullet.

The government has been naïve to think its threadbare system, over-reliant on poorly-supported schools, would do. Many in FE have also been concerned about the capacity of schools to provide fully

independent advice.

Young people are badly-served across the board. I have criticised the dismantling of expert, independent, professional face-to-face support as have many across education and industry. This affects everyone.

But it particularly affects those with a more complex set of choices ahead of them than 'do A-levels, then go to university'.

And it especially affects those most in need of CEIAG — those who haven't determined what they want to do, and those at risk of being not in education, employment and training (Neet).

A website and call centre are no substitute for face-to-face advice, and even with the will to succeed, schools and colleges cannot be expected to fill the gap alone when they face severe pressures on time and money.

The Department for Education's much-delayed statutory guidance for schools highlights the benefit of face-to-face guidance, saying this "is likely to

be particularly useful for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, those who are at risk of disengaging or those who have special educational needs, learning difficulties or disabilities."

So I ask Education Secretary Michael Gove, why did you take this away? And why not properly fund a substantial system of face-to-face support which young people can rely upon? Simply mandating schools to do more won't help.

So what needs to change? I believe the government has a moral obligation to properly fund CEIAG that is accessible to all young people, and individually tailored as far as possible. For those that say the economic climate makes this impossible, the recent report from the Gatsby Charitable Foundation makes interesting reading. It says the saving from keeping one pupil from becoming Neet can fund significant CEIAG for 280 young people.

The Gatsby report says there is no single answer to effective CEIAG. My priority is for investment for professional development within and outside schools to support collaborative working.

Many teachers and lecturers want to help, and many students will turn to them, so a rebuilt careers system should not exist in isolation from our schools and colleges, but must also involve other experts. Responsibility for CEIAG should be shared within partnerships of professionals and involve cross-sector working between local authorities, schools and colleges,

universities, young offender institutions, employers and Jobcentre Plus.

For a young person, CEIAG is about both jobs and education: which qualifications to take, and development of useful skills. I think the national curriculum can and should include developing the decision-making skills that are crucial to plotting a future, and the ability to persevere.

We will only achieve a multi-layered careers system when our government takes CEIAG seriously.

A website and call centre are no substitute for face-to-face advice

Until then, schools and colleges will cope because they have to. And resources, such as the good practice brief the ATL published with the National Foundation for Educational Research, Association of School and College Leaders and the 157 Group in April, can help.

Good quality CEIAG can make a huge difference to young people's lives and change is urgently needed. The longer government waits, the more young people will have their futures unnecessarily put at risk, to the detriment of us all.

EXPERTS



VICE PRESIDENT FOR FE, NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS (NUS)

The danger of personal bias in searching for the right path

With teachers having usually taken the academic route themselves, many learners hear the benefits of university — but not of vocational options, warns Joe Vinson.

One of the biggest decisions a young person will ever make is choosing the right path to take so they can achieve the career they want.

In my life I've gone from wanting to be a QC, to wanting to be a doctor, to becoming the vice president for FE at the National Union of Students. And in all honesty, I'm still questioning where I will end up once I've done this job.

Many young people are left to navigate the complicated world of qualifications, providers, further study or work options either alone or with minimal support.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) in both schools and colleges is unacceptable and inefficient.

Much of this stems from the current source of careers advice. Too often it is teachers who are acting as careers advisers.

While it is useful to gain the perspective of these people, their opinions are often influenced by their personal biases. Teachers or lecturers have often been through a more 'traditional', for the most part academic, system of education and are not the best placed to give well-informed advice on options such as apprenticeships or vocational courses.

Too often the message from schools is that if 'you're smart you stay in school and if you're stupid you go to college'

There is a desperate need for an independent body which can offer impartial advice and has a broad knowledge of all the options available to young people.

The National Careers Service currently fails to fill this gap. Students need face-to-face advice in their school or college, not a website or an advice line. Help once a student has left school or college isn't good

enough.

Many students also speak about the problem of the relationship between schools and colleges.

There seems to be a stigma attached to colleges and an element of competition between the two.

Too often the message from schools is that if 'you're smart you stay in school and if you're stupid you go to college'.

This means students stay at school doing courses which are completely unsuitable, taking them on an inappropriate career path. There should instead be cooperation on IAG to ensure the right outcome for the student rather than the institution.

Effective IAG must begin long before the age of 15 or 16. It needs to be an on-going conversation throughout school, starting at primary school with conversations about careers incorporated into learning.

Teenagers are more likely to say they want to be a footballer than a sports physiotherapist, but young people need to learn how they can transfer their skills and interests across different types of careers. They also need to be exposed to a range of role models and not just signposted towards the traditional career paths such as doctor or lawyer.

The NUS has become so concerned about the state of IAG that it launched a student-led investigation into the state of the current provision, drawing on opinions from across the sector from the Association of Colleges, University College Union, UNISON, notgoingtouni, Careers Sector Stakeholders Alliance and the Institute of Education.

Recently, the Gatsby Report showed how little it would actually cost to provide a good quality careers advice. The NUS broadly supports the recommendations in this report.

They echo what our members and the sector have been telling us around the need for face-to-face careers guidance, and making IAG student-centred.

The proposal for a 'stable careers programme' for schools and colleges would remove the postcode lottery effect of patchy IAG delivered through outsourced local providers.

It's clear that IAG needs a radical overhaul so it can start supporting the learner, and ultimately society, more effectively. In a society where there is so much pressure to get a job, the support to do so needs urgent reform.



KAREN O'DONOGHUE

PRESIDENT OF THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The first cut is the weakest

The government's careers guidance action plan last month was, says Karen O'Donoghue, particularly welcomed. She explains how further guidance, issued last month, has improved matters.

The first cut of the statutory guidance for careers provision [the government's careers guidance action plan, September 2013], was widely accepted to be a truly awful document so it's rather obvious to say the new guidance [careers guidance and inspiration in schools, April 2014] is better than the one it replaced. Let's face it, the line goes, how could it be any worse?

Actually, my view is that the position could be much worse and that there are elements to celebrate within this guidance while acknowledging that there is some distance to travel.

For example, this guidance makes it clear that provision wholly internally-focused is simply not appropriate; nor is the provision of access to a website, offered on its own, a suitable alternative to an appropriately tailored independent careers offer.

The loss of the statutory duty to deliver work-related learning pre-16 is also addressed, at least a little, again an improvement of what went before, and this is helpfully linked with important role that mentors can play in supporting the aspirations of young people.

Skills Minister Matthew Hancock's 'inspiration vision' and the recommendations of the National Careers Council (NCC) are much in evidence here and the wider concept of careers including developing employability skills is, in my view, a good thing as long as it remains clear that require different approaches to achieve different outcomes.

The role of the National Careers Service (NCS) in brokering relationships with employers and potentially offering services as part of sold services to schools and colleges is also to be welcomed.

We'd sound a note of caution here which is that there are those new prime contractors who are unfamiliar with some of the geographical areas that they're now working with and will need time developing clear understanding of local partnerships before they are to get to grips with their brokerage role for schools

and colleges — a new responsibility that has brought with it only marginal funding.

We are naturally pleased to have been referenced to as a source of quality assured guidance practitioners, using the UK Register of Career Development Professionals.

The reference to the provision of one-to-one guidance is valuable, though of course the need for guidance isn't determined by an individual's intellectual ability or level of job aspiration as is implied by the targeted approach.

The area of greatest disappointment has to be the lack of reference to the intrinsic role of a careers professional; neither a properly trained careers educator operating as the ring master to the experiences that young people receive, nor the clarity that a careers guidance adviser operates to clear professional standards (level six) and a recognised Code of Ethics that demands impartiality.

We will start to help with this by creating a Directory of Careers Services that schools and colleges can access, including quality assured products, organisations and individuals.

We make this investment as an act of faith since without an obligation to access the services we cannot be certain that such a directory will be valued.

Nevertheless, we hope this will support schools and colleges deliver a program that best meets the needs of their students in the most cost efficient way.

In line with the NCC recommendation that also picks up such a directory we hope that colleagues in the Skills Funding Agency will support production mobilising NCS providers to engage.

Many in our sector are disappointed with the rigour of this guidance and I share some of this frustration as a provider of careers guidance services in the North West.

The wider picture though, is that the engagement of employers and their commitment to developing a broad-based careers offer with the responsibility laying directly with schools and colleges as opposed to a remote third party and the potential of developing the NCS, at least creates a foundation to build a broad-based careers offer for all young people that has looked to be almost unattainable for the last year.



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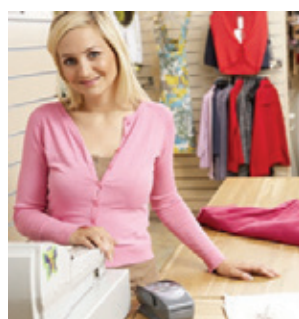
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