

Submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review

Joined-up careers services

Introduction: The current state of careers services in England

The Education Secretary has remarked that she sees no reason to doubt Ofsted's assertion that 80% of careers advice services delivered in schools and colleges in England are not good enough. The recent Confederation of British Industry (CBI)/Pearson Education & Skills Survey of employers shows just 7% of them believe careers advice is up to scratch. The Industry Apprentice Council's (IAC) latest annual report states that 40% of apprentices believe the careers advice they received at school was poor or very poor, while 5% of apprentices didn't receive any at all. This should come as no surprise – 2012 research undertaken by Careers England suggested that after the duty to provide careers advice was switched from local authorities to schools and colleges, 83.5% of schools reduced their provision.

It is against this backdrop that the previous government introduced the Careers and Enterprise Company, and that this government is bringing in JobCentre Plus (JCP) staff to deliver careers advice in schools. The former is an indication of the recognition of the seriousness of the problem, while the latter will provide a link with local employers and local labour market need.

However, we are concerned that with three government departments now having a stake in provision of careers advice (BIS, DfE, DWP) there is a significant risk of duplication of services, which will in turn lead to inefficiencies and wasting of public money. We feel there is real scope for a joined-up approach which links the work of all three departments together under one umbrella and ensures that careers service provision is comprehensive, independent and targeted.

Our sector needs better careers advice

We consulted with employers when putting together our *Skills Vision* programme of advice for the government and the section we included on careers advice was broadly agreed with by the over 100 individuals who responded on their organisations' behalf. Our policy was relatively modest: we called on the government to ensure that all schools and colleges are fulfilling their statutory duty to provide clear and comprehensive careers advice, and called for Ofsted to be given the ability to downgrade in its rankings schools and colleges which fail to comply with that duty.

For employers in the advanced manufacturing and engineering (AME) sector, the case for better careers advice is clear. By the Royal Academy of Engineering's estimate, the UK will need over 800,000 science, engineering and technology technicians to be trained up by 2020 to avert a skills shortage. We cannot hope to meet that need without young people entering the sector upon completion of their studies and taking up apprenticeship places.

However, according to the findings of the IAC annual report more than three in five apprentices were partially or completely unaware of the range of career opportunities available to them in their chosen sector before taking up their apprenticeship. The AllAbout School Leavers 2014 annual research report, meanwhile, saw 76% of respondents putting university as an option they were considering after leaving school or college, against just 14% who were considering an apprenticeship. This is explained by STEM Alliance data showing that 89% of STEM teachers see providing careers information as part of their job, but only 10% know about apprenticeships. One survey of teachers showed that 82% don't feel confident in giving careers advice, while only 36% of STEM teachers feel confident in giving engineering careers advice.

Young people are not being given the full range of information by schools and colleges that they need if they are to make an informed decision about their next step in education or training. This is exacerbated by parental biases – AllAbout School Leavers' research shows that just 20% of parents agree or strongly agree with the statement "I definitely want my child to do an apprenticeship", compared with 55% for "I definitely want my child to go to university", while the Institute of Engineering and Technology's (IET) *Inspiring the next generation* report shows that a minority of parents feel they know enough to be able to talk to their children about engineering.

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We know from discussions with employers in our sector that when they want to go into a school or college to talk about the range of careers they can offer, they are too often given the underachievers and the troublemakers to talk to – when what they really want are young people who are bright, enthusiastic and talented. Part of the problem is that many teachers enter their profession directly after graduating from university, without any work experience in industry – they simply lack an understanding of what a job in the AME sector entails and, having gone through university themselves, then default to the university route when advising their students on their next steps.

Graduate recruitment is important to AME, with 63% of manufacturers intending to recruit an engineering graduate within the next three years, but it is just one piece of the skills jigsaw. 26% of employees within the AME sector are former apprentices, compared with just 10% across the whole workforce.

The risk of duplication

At the moment, there are three ministerial departments involved in the delivery of careers advice in schools and colleges – BIS, the DfE and the DWP – in addition to the National Careers Service, the new National Careers and Enterprise Company (NCEC) and myriad other organisations working at a more local level under the national Connexions brand.

There is a clear overlap between the roles and remits of these organisations, and therefore a clear risk of duplication of services. At a time when departmental budgets are being cut, and when maximum value must therefore be extracted from public spending, there is a real risk of wasteful spending, along with a risk of confusion about the various stakeholders' roles both internally and externally.

We are absolutely in favour of a multi-faceted approach, and we support the government's plans to involve the DWP in the process. However, we believe that there is a clear demand from employers both within and outside of the sector we represent for them to be more involved in the process, and we believe that harnessing their enthusiasm and willingness could save the taxpayer money and lead to a more effective and targeted service.

The policy response

We know from the CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Report that 71% of businesses provide careers advice and talks already, and that 60% are willing to get more involved, with 71% willing to expand their roles with local schools and colleges.

We welcome the establishment of the National Careers and Enterprise Company, and we believe that having JobCentre Plus (JCP) staff deliver careers advice in schools and colleges will provide a much-needed link with local employer demand.

There is, however, a real risk of duplication of services and advice. It would be wasteful for DWP staff to spend their time, and therefore taxpayers' money, delivering advice on careers available with local employers when those same employers are ready and willing to deliver that advice directly.

The CBI/Pearson report also shows that 37% of firms would be willing to get more involved through national programmes. There is clearly scope for them to link up with the new National Careers and Enterprise Company. Given that just 2% of employers active on the STEM Exchange offer CPD opportunities to local boost careers advice at local further education institutions, much more needs to be done to encourage employer involvement.

We would suggest that the new National Careers and Enterprise Company be used as the umbrella organisation under which all careers advice is organised.

- BIS, the DfE and the DWP (through Ministers and officials) should all have an input into the NCEC's priorities and strategic direction, and there should be a prominent role for employers to do so too.

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- Once national priorities and strategic direction have been set, and mindful of the statutory requirement of schools and colleges to provide comprehensive and impartial careers advice, JCP staff should then be given flexibility over how it is delivered within the schools and colleges in their catchment areas.
- Schools and colleges should be mandated to set aside a certain amount of time for the provision of careers advice and guidance for each class of children between the ages of 11-18 each year, with the amount of time increased for the 14-16 and 16-18 age groups. That mandatory time should then be split between JCP officials and local employers. Employers could then use their time for careers talks, roundtable discussions with groups, site visits or any other method which they feel will engage with and inspire young people. Employers should be encouraged to send role models such as recent apprentices or graduate programme completers, in order to provide direct advice about what young people can expect from a career there.
- Pupils themselves should be given the power to decide which employers' sessions they wish to be involved in, as if teachers are given the power to decide there is no guarantee that employers will get to engage with young people with the right aptitudes and attitudes. They should be given literature produced by employers beforehand so that they are able to make up their own minds about whether they would like to hear more about the opportunities they offer.
- JCP officials should be able and encouraged to link up with local Connexions and other locally-run careers advice services and, where appropriate, either contract out to them their allotted time for careers advice or refer young people directly to them.

We believe that this will prove to be a more cost and time efficient way of organising and delivering careers advice for the following reasons.

- Keeping JCP staff members' 'outside' time to a minimum means more time spent doing their primary job, which is to assist the unemployed with finding work. There is a double saving here, as fewer JCP staff will be needed and the staff JCPs do have will be able to process more cases each day.
- There is no cost to the taxpayer when employers give up their own employees' time to go into schools and colleges and talk to young people about their career options. There is a cost to the employer but this will be more than negated if they are able to recruit the right young people as a result, especially in AME where turnover and GVA per employee are both much higher than the national averages and where the return on investment in an apprentice can be expected within as little as 2.5 years.
- Having all three government departments with a stake in careers advice working under the umbrella of the NCEC will eliminate duplication of services and ensure one consistent set of guidance and advice is produced to which JCP staff, employers and teachers can refer.
- Having one umbrella organisation with ultimate control over the national strategic direction of careers advice will free up staff within BIS, the DfE and the DWP to do other jobs, lessening those departments' recruitment needs and keeping their payroll costs down.
- Having one clear national set of guidance will help JCP staff to effectively engage with local employers and ensure that local employers have the confidence that their involvement in the process will be welcomed.