

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES: CALL FOR EVIDENCE
TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE CAREERS
PROFESSION IN ENGLAND

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A: PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of the report is to capture the results of the Task Force on the Careers Profession Call for Evidence.

B: BACKGROUND

2. The Task Force was set up on January 2010 with the aim of looking at what could be done by employers, the profession and the Government to attract well-qualified people from a variety of backgrounds into the profession; retain and motivate effective careers professionals already in the workforce; and ensure that professional practice is of a high standard and that practitioners receive the support they need to improve.
3. The secretariat issued a call for evidence on behalf of the Task Force on 31 March 2010, with a final deadline of 28 May.

C: KEY MESSAGES

4. Recruitment
 - Attract a diverse range of entrants to the profession by creating better opportunities and raising the profile of the profession.
 - Improve careers professionals' status and recognition by clear career structure based on achievements and qualifications.
 - Greater simplification and flexibility required around professional entry and progression routes.
 - Post qualification on the job training is required and could be implemented through a probationary year and/or 1:1 guidance.
5. Workforce Development
 - Careers professionals need a range of skills to support their knowledge, communications and development.
 - Careers professionals should be expected to undertake a minimum level of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) each year.
 - CPD should be funded through a national system with a central budget to maintain common professional standards.
6. Standards / Inspection
 - Professional practice can be assessed both internally and externally to raise the importance of high quality IAG.
 - Professional standards can act as a benchmark across professions to compare performance.
 - The best way to ensure consistently high practice across the profession is through; high quality initial training, CPD, effective assessment, inspection, sharing of best practice and through performance management mechanisms using appropriate indicators.
 - Connexions PAs are expected to undertake a wide variety of roles, including that of careers advisor. These competing job roles can

leave PAs feeling over-burdened and unable to successfully complete the tasks required of them

7. Linkages

- The partnership model for delivering expert careers advice and guidance is only successful in areas where sufficient commitment from supporting groups exist.
- Careers professionals need to work with a range of partners.
- Careers professionals should link their work with the wider workforce through networking and building partnerships.
- Youth guidance services can link with adult services by sharing a range of resources including visits to employers and data on clients.
- Provide more accurate information to wider networks about what careers professionals actually do and the quality of the service they offer.

D: RESPONDENTS

8. We have received 26 responses from the following organisations / individuals:

- 14-19 Learners Panel – a group of young people drawn together by DCSF
- Vince Pizzoni – Head of Professional Guidance at the Cheltenham Ladies College
- Katharine Horler – Chef Executive of Connexions Thames Valley
- Alison Chubb – Careers Guidance Practitioner
- Andrew Pugh – Education Improvement Advisor: CEIAG, Worcestershire County Council
- Professor Kate Myers – 14-19 Equality Advisor
- Angus Laing – North Nottinghamshire College
- Edge Learner Forum – 14-23 year olds from the South East and South West of England
- Mike Manson – Redbridge Solutions on behalf of Careers Information Managers in the South East and the Careers Writers Association
- Gail O'Malley – Connexions manager Worcestershire
- Duncan Bolam – Career Dovetail
- Kate Campion – National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services Operational Director
- Tim Warren – Head of Customer Support and Development
- Connexions – responses from a range of advisers across England.
- Julie Hughes – Head of 14-19 Workforce Development at Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)
- Carol James – National Champion for Advice and Guidance at Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
- Ann Poulter – 14-19 Policy Administrator at Association of Colleges
- Annette Wade – Marketing Manager at CASCAiD Ltd
- Andrew Burton – Head of Learner Services at City of Bristol College
- Hannah James – Information and Research Worker at Skill: National

Bureau for Students with Disabilities

- Gill Mills – Barking & Dagenham College
- Linda Sinclair – Principal at Hills Road Sixth Form College
- Claire Nix – VT Group Plc
- Sue Barr – ACEG Consultative Council Reflections
- Jane Haywood – Children's Workforce Development Council

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Some of the respondents have chosen to reply to all the questions, others have provided a partial response and finally some have chosen to send a statement of their beliefs for how the careers profession should operate. Below is a short summary of the responses according to the questions asked.

Recruitment

Question 1. How do we ensure that we attract a diverse range of entrants to the profession?

Creating better opportunities for those from under represented groups.

Most of the responses to this question highlighted the need to raise the profile of the careers profession as a stand-alone job. There is a need to promote the range of tasks and the challenges in order to attract higher quality entrants. The profession must maintain high standards whilst attracting a diverse range of entrants. Entry routes must be varied in order to encourage a wider range of applicants with a range of high-quality relevant qualifications.

Many comparisons were made with the teaching profession with regards to conveying a better image to potential male entrants. There is currently a gender imbalance in the profession, with more females than males practising.

Respondents expressed the importance of promoting the profession and provided a range of routes on how best to take this forward.

- Better publicity for the profession to raise the profile and status to ensure that it is an attractive career option;
- A clearly defined purpose on what the profession is trying to achieve (e.g. Increased social mobility, engagement in learning and work)
- Clear boundaries with other professions;
- Liaison at school level to ensure careers work is given a high profile within education, so that teachers with an interest in this area can be encouraged to develop their expertise alongside full-time, external careers advisers;
- Raise awareness of the profession within the private sector to make this work attractive to well qualified new entrants and also to career changers as they bring valuable life experience;
- Ensure those from minority groups are targeted in recruitment campaigns by advertising vacancies in wider range of media to attract non-traditional entrants, with the aim for the careers profession to reflect the diversity of the community it serves.
- Recognise prior skills, knowledge and expertise within recruitment and training of professionals with a range of pathways into the profession including jobs at different levels with clear career progression routes.

Question 2. How can we ensure that careers professionals are given the same status and recognition as other professionals with whom they work?

Many responses highlighted the lack of recognition of the importance of careers work within schools. This has not been resolved despite legislation clarifying the responsibility of School Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) for careers education provision. This could be improved by identifying schools that are not delivering effective careers education been given a mandate to improve by Ofsted.

A lot of comparisons were also drawn to the status of teachers vs. careers professionals and the need to raise careers professionals to an equal level. By transferring responsibility for careers work within schools and colleges to senior members of staff, and embedding the careers programme within the curriculum for all students.

The key ways forward that have emerged from the responses are:

- A clear career structure based on achievements and qualifications. Recognising all competencies and qualifications must be set at similar levels to other professions, while allowing different pathways to achieve it. Higher Education qualifications should be a qualifying requirement along with minimum CPD and 1:1 guidance hours in practice. This greater clarity on the parity of qualifications will support the individual benefits as well as the wider economic benefit of IAG.
- A need for a more robust accreditation process and compulsory membership to a single professional body i.e. ICG to enable someone to practice and ensuring quality and professional competencies are met. Limiting unqualified staff undertaking the role of advice and guidance if they do not meet the required skills to advise correctly.
- Consistency on the level of qualification. Differing views by LLUK and CWDC on the level of qualification need to be immediately addressed. With CWDC suggesting; teachers, social workers and probation officers are at Level 6 while career guidance professionals are at Level 5. The new qualification in the Qualification and Credit Framework at QCF Level 6 (equivalent to graduate level) in Career Guidance is preferable.

Question 3. How can we ensure that entry to and progression routes in the careers profession are clear?

The respondents agreed the pathways into and through the profession are unclear and are a major disincentive. This indicates a need for simplification and flexibility around entry requirements depending on qualification levels, experience and the circumstances desirable.

There is a need for consistent standards, as new entrants arrive; employers should be able to have a clear expectation of what they can do and where

further development should be needed. Again, a role was suggested for a single professional regulating body to be introduced, with powers to control levels of competency based on i.e. years in practice, minimum hours of contact to meet required skill level, CPD requirements and different levels of career adviser to be made clearer.

Other common options submitted were;

- Introduce a simple framework that crosses pathways and age groups and is accessible to both teachers and support staff.
- A nationwide branded campaign on encouraging people to think about a route into careers, benefits and any financial help that can be given;
- The Government to introduce mandatory entry levels and pathways into the profession; and
- Clearer pathways through to professional level, allowing entry at lower levels particularly for those from voluntary and community backgrounds, but with the opportunity to progress

Question 4. Is the current range of qualifications adequate to provide the skills needed to be a high quality careers professional?

The bulk of the responses received believed the choice of qualifications currently available are inadequate and do not focus thoroughly on the specific nature of information, advice and guidance. Two of the key areas were lack of theory base and practical skills, with some qualifications strong on the first but than weak on the second. The NVQ is particularly unpopular, with a number of the respondents commenting that the NVQ vs. the HE route creates a two-tier system. This alongside the removal of the probationary year from the career professional qualification has lowered the status amongst other professions, leaving practitioners without the skills to manage the demands of the job.

The current suite of qualifications are also criticised for not providing students with the right skills to be effective. They focus mainly on advice and guidance and not on building the actual knowledge base to provide the correct advice and guidance required in relation to provision and opportunity, nationally and regionally. To overcome this, many respondents have suggested further emphasis to be placed on the use of technology to support careers education delivery. An option could be to create effective online communities to ensure strong high quality networks and knowledge base. This could be carried out using online resource tools to take on the essential roles in delivery, utilising their benefits, including; flexible access to information, advice and guidance, ensuring information is valid and impartial and saving time by giving the student/client a starting point for exploring and discussions about career options.

Many respondents suggested carrying out a mapping exercise on the choice of qualifications and pathways that underpin the careers professions, to gain a better understanding of overlap and where qualifications differ. Highlighting the different skills from professional group to group and how each varies in

between the social and economic agenda.

Question 5. Should any post qualification on the job training be required, such as the NQT year for teachers?

The respondents returned a unanimous yes to the question, differing only on the means of Continuing Professional Development. The most common suggestions were a probationary year and 1:1 guidance. To provide opportunities to generate evidence of mentoring and management support, leading to an assessment of performance against the national occupational standards in careers guidance.

The respondents were cautious that the need for this was dependent on the individual's background and experience. If there were to be a post qualification year, some of the respondents requested a clear framework for the standards and skills that were expected to be accomplished.

Workforce Development

Question 1. What skills do careers professionals need to have now and in the future?

The majority of the respondents felt a careers professional needs more than just skills but also knowledge, specific attitudes and behaviours to be successful.

Knowledge

Careers professionals need to have access to, and be able to interpret and apply accurate information. Labour Market Information (LMI) was mentioned in many of the responses. Understanding employer and HE entry requirements and the use and manipulation of information through electronic media are important in developing and maintaining a good knowledge base.

An understanding of equality and diversity issues is important in raising aspirations and challenging stereotypes.

Communication

This takes many forms and was also mentioned by most respondents

The ability to listen to and empathise with a wide range of young people is an important skill for a careers professional, as is working in partnership with other professionals and parents and carers. Negotiating and influencing skills and the ability to work on a one-to-one or group basis were mentioned.

Development

In terms of future skills, respondents felt that it is the environment that changes but the skills of good guidance remain the same so the high quality Careers Adviser needs the will and the ability to reflect on their practise, keep up-to-date and maintain their own CPD and professional competencies.

It is important that careers professionals have the skills to provide CPD to the wider workforce, as required. The ability to review and evaluate their work in order to measure impact was mentioned as an important skill for a careers professional to have. The common core of skills and knowledge suggested were;

- How to use LMI with young people
- Up to date knowledge of the changing qualification system
- Action planning
- Skills for challenging young people and raising aspirations
- Working with young people with LDD, EBD
- Motivational skills
- How to involve parents/carers in career planning
- Multi agency working to the benefit of young people
- Group work skills and interview skills
- Reflective practitioner
- Skills of engagement
- Assessment of need and risk assessment
- Communication skills

- Research, find and use information
- Recording and report writing
- Ability to affect change

Question 2. Should careers professionals be expected to undertake a minimum level of CPD each year?

Given the changing nature of 14 – 19 education, the response to this question was unanimously yes, with each respondent suggesting an amount of time that should be given over to this e.g. 5 days per year. Again, flexibility was highlighted as key, with the need for practitioners to choose their own CPD topics and delivery method. These could be chosen from a common core or mandatory suite of topics that could be recommended by the relevant professional body.

Consideration has to be given to the assessment and affordability of CPD. Many respondents suggested that CPD should be part of the formal appraisal system and the impact of CPD should be measured.

In order to reduce costs and time out of the office technology should be investigated as a way of delivering, e.g. webinars and e-learning.

Networking and sharing best practice are considered to be valuable.

Question 3. How should CPD be funded / commissioned?

There were a variety of suggestions but no overall consensus on how CPD should be funded. Suggestions included the Sector Skills Councils, private employers, Local Authority, regional or national Government and the practitioner's employer.

Opinions were expressed about the benefit of a national system with a central budget to maintain common professional standards and conversely, local funding to meet individual needs and to accommodate multi-agency learning.

Most respondents thought that CPD should be written into the commissioning of services and saw this a local authority responsibility and that it should be funded in the same way as mandatory CPD for teachers and social workers is funded, ie through a staff development budget.

One suggestion included a sharing of costs between the individual and their employer, but with the support of public sector grants for the individual.

Question 4. Would there be a benefit in specialist CPD to cover particular subject areas e.g. STEM?

The majority of respondents were in favour of specialist CPD and recognised STEM as just one area to be covered. They thought broader specialisms warranted coverage included learning difficulties and disabilities, Higher Education and Labour Market Information.

A clear definition of basic requirements for all careers professional should be presented as an 'essential base' on which to build specialist knowledge gained from CPD. The specialist CPD should focus on gaps in knowledge and national / regional priorities.

One respondent suggested that the best way to highlight careers in areas such as STEM is through classroom teaching, and for the teacher to work in partnership with the careers professional.

Standards / Inspection

Question 1. How can professional practice be assessed and what role should inspection play?

There is a role for both internal self assessment by careers services and external assessment, such as by Ofsted. School based staff can be assessed alongside teachers during Ofsted inspections but for this approach to be credible, it is important that careers is given sufficient focus and that inspectors are suitably knowledgeable and experienced. Strengthening the IAG element of the Ofsted inspection framework is also seen as a good way to convince head teachers of the importance of high quality IAG and the potential impact on school standards.

Regular, consistent internal assessment can be carried out through mechanisms including observations and peer assessment with a clear link to continuing professional development. The application of accredited standards is also important. However, the range of assessment regimes in place raises a real issue about the ability to benchmark and moderate staff performance across organisations.

For some Connexions companies, there is a feeling that the large number of inspection systems currently in operation don't really fit their demands when they may be operating across several LAs and fulfilling a number of contracts. There are some advocates for the development of a specific set of standards by which the careers profession is assessed and monitored. However, opponents of this idea have concerns about the numerous standards and awards that already exist and the level of understanding of career guidance that any new inspectorate may have. A return to specific Ofsted inspections of IAG providers is put forward as an alternative solution. Comprehensive Area Assessments were felt to lack in depth inspection of practice.

In addition to observations of individual practice by assessors, there is strong support for gathering feedback from clients on the quality of service offered. This can be supplemented by a review of data trends within the client group including destinations and retention data. Performance against the IAG Quality Standards should be assessed where appropriate.

Question 2. What role should professional standards have?

There is widespread agreement that standards are beneficial in providing a benchmark to compare performance across organisations and local areas. However, standards can only be used in this way when there is a single standard for all practitioners that is linked to initial training, qualifications, CPD and quality awards. Rigorous assessment to agreed standards would elevate the status of the careers profession, creating a positive impact on recruitment and retention. Once again, the critical point is that standards must be fit for purpose and have genuine 'teeth' in order for them to be credible and widely used.

Rather than introducing completely new standards, there may be merit in mapping against existing standards including NOS and teaching standards, linked to progression routes. The IAG Quality Standards also provide a useful tool but are most effectively used to inform quality in IAG service. Another option is to develop a Code of Practice that all careers professionals can sign up to.

There is also clearly a role in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and in-service CPD for teachers, tutors and careers professionals for a Code of Practice to inform the design, delivery and evaluation of ITT and CPD. All teachers have a role in careers education and IAG so it is essential to have the issues covered in ITT.

Question 3. How can we ensure consistently high practice across the profession?

There is a general consensus amongst careers professionals that consistently high practice can be ensured through; access to high quality initial training, CPD, effective assessment, inspection, sharing of best practice and performance management mechanisms using appropriate indicators. This can best be achieved when the profession is afforded the status it deserves and the employer values the skills inherent in the profession's and invests in developing them. A clear link to leadership and management is needed to demonstrate a line of accountability for effective careers provision.

Other options put forward for maintaining consistently high professional standards include the introduction of a 'licence to practice' for careers professionals, national professional standards or a central body which validates standards, entry and progression routes and inspections.

Question 4. What is expected of careers professionals and are these expectations realistic? To what extent are these expectations successfully communicated to the wider workforce?

There is widespread agreement that a lot is expected of careers professionals as they are required to provide careers advice as well as wider information, advice and guidance. This approach has broadened the role considerably to a point where many Connexions PAs have found themselves stretched to act as advisers on topics including housing, substance misuse and teenage pregnancy. Many young people and parents will of course expect an adviser to take on this 'umbrella' role building strong partnerships with other social agencies. The expectations are made even more challenging by the resource constraints under which the profession is operating.

The respondents suggested that these issues can be addressed through a clearly defined job specification that is communicated to both the wider workforce and clients to create a shared understanding of the role. It is realistic to expect careers professionals to support clients to make realistic, well informed decisions based on accurate and up to date information. However, it is not realistic to expect professionals to know the detail of every

job/course and to secure employment or course places for clients, and this should be made clear at the outset. Currently expectations and roles vary considerably across local areas.

Given the broad range of expertise expected from careers professionals, it may be more realistic to consider the development of specialisms or for professionals to work in teams where these specialisms complement each other. Some of the key attributes required by a careers professional include:

- A broad range of skills and the ability to apply them appropriately;
- Support progression in learning and work and remove barriers to learning and work;
- Raise aspirations;
- Inspire and motivate young people;
- Carry out career coaching when appropriate;
- Supporting tutors in embedding careers education and advice on curriculum;
- High levels of IT skills;
- Agreement on levels of practice and a continued commitment to improve through accredited training;
- Supporting local and organisational requirements and local labour needs; and
- Actively participating in networks, building bridges and understanding local context and supporting strategies.

Linkages

Question 1. How effective is the partnership model for delivering expert careers advice and guidance?

The partnership model is reported as being successful, but it relies heavily on the work of individuals including students, parents, teachers, personal advisers and the business community to make it work. Where sufficient commitment and interest does not exist, the model is less effective resulting in a lack of consistency across the country. This problem is particularly apparent in schools where the influence of expert resource, most of which sits within Connexions, has been diluted to meet the needs of targeted groups of young people. The model has also not worked well for colleges in some instances. Provision is variable as a consequence of a lack of clear standards. Colleges need to be able to highlight when a careers service is not meeting the needs of their students. Colleges need to be equal partners with local authorities and schools given that most 16-18 year olds are in colleges.

There is some agreement that as a model, it is the only one which can be effective. Each constituent element of what makes up the careers profession has a distinct and specialist role to play in supporting young people through making informed decisions and successful transitions, and as such the collaborative partnership model is appropriate. However, it is important that there is clarity in who is taking responsibility for each element of CEIAG and how provision is integrated to ensure that every young person receives the education, information, advice and guidance they are entitled to.

Clearer models are required for protocols, partnership agreements and service level agreements. If there was a clear business plan, this could also help teams formulate local delivery plans, which could clearly state what could happen locally against county aims and objectives. It would also make monitoring and evaluation a lot smarter.

Question 2. Which other areas of the workforce do careers professionals need to connect with?

Careers professionals need to work with a range of partners who are relevant to client need including:

- Teachers
- Lecturers
- School/college support staff
- Training providers
- Universities
- Employers
- Education Business Partnerships
- HR professionals
- Parents
- Voluntary sector
- A range of specialist agencies that can support career

progression and barriers to progression e.g. substance misuse, social, health and welfare services)

- Integrated Youth Support Service
- Social services
- Probation services
- Youth offending teams
- Jobcentre Plus
- Police
- Community links
- Health professionals

Question 3. How should careers professionals link their work with the wider workforce? What structures and processes support this?

The respondents thought that this could be done using existing structures such as consortia, IYSS, CWDC and Children's Trusts. However, they would like the number of groups to be streamlined as involvement in them all is very time consuming. There was widespread belief that inter-agency cooperation can best serve the needs of customers of career guidance rather than fully integrated services where expertise can become blurred and confused.

Professionals should be constantly reminded via CPD, supervision and performance management that they should be networking effectively and building partnerships in whichever organisations they are involved. Formal processes such as partnership agreements should complement and support this. This should be part of a joined up local authority approach included in 14-19 education plans, progress checks, inspections and TYS panels. A curriculum based on cross-curricular approaches enables careers professionals to make links across subject areas. Careers professionals need to be involved in the planning of these approaches.

Commissioning structures for IAG services should include support for the wider workforce and reciprocal arrangements with commissioning for other areas, e.g. learning provision, which are dependent on high quality IAG should acknowledge the importance of IAG and provide access to the wider workforce.

Question 4. How can youth guidance services link with adult services?

Particular weaknesses exist around 18-24 year olds. In theory post 19 their support should come from Jobcentre Plus but this support is limited and often much more is required. Careers professionals do not exist in Jobcentre Plus and therefore access to real careers guidance is limited. This is felt to be caused by the unrealistic expectations that are set for Jobcentre staff.

Youth and adult services could undertake joint visits to employers, sharing data on clients that both organisations are seeing. This could include the sharing of vacancy and labour market information, joint delivery of services at 18+, joint planning and review of overlapping services. An exploration of new approaches to reach adults and young people is suggested with areas such

as virtual guidance and reaching out to potential adult clients through alternative mediums and venues. Personal planning tools such as ILPs have an important role to play but are only effective where there is broad buy in. An individual needs access to a method of recording their plans and achievements which also offers signposting to sources of IAG.

A number of respondents felt that an all-age careers service would be the more effective way to link youth and adult services. Within an organisation delivering the service to all ages, the core skills are the same and there does not need to be a distinction or specialism in adult and/or young people's workers.

Question 5. How do we ensure that the wider workforce and those who have an influence on young people's decisions, like parents, employers, third-sector organisations and mentors – have the skills and knowledge to make a positive contribution?

The respondents were clear that the key here is that the wider workforce has accurate information about what careers professionals actually do and the quality of the service they offer. They all felt that perceptions of careers professionals were often unfairly described as poor because of negative publicity or their own bad experiences. This can be tackled by contracts with clients, which set out what they can expect from a careers professional.

There was agreement that the knowledge of others who have an influence on young people's decisions can be developed through education. This can include ensuring information is out in the wider workplace and community to enable influencers to be updated with new developments. Information can be shared through relevant sessions for parents and carers, teacher training, governor training, employer visits and contact by phone and careers guidance providers joining relevant employer groups. However, the point was made that achieving heightened awareness is a real challenge and requires adequate resources to do it effectively.

Question 6. How can careers professionals help to support those who give advice as part of their role, but would not consider themselves careers professionals?

If the climate around careers guidance becomes more positive with a greater recognition and value placed on careers work, this will be much easier to achieve. Others need to see it as part of their role but many don't and are apprehensive about providing this support.

Those with management responsibility for careers work in schools and colleges need to organise training events for all relevant pastoral teams so that impartial advice and guidance can be delivered effectively. This can be done with some external input from specialist advisers (e.g. Connexions) and needs to be supported by mentoring groups throughout the year. Knowledge and confidence can also be increased by engaging with and participating in any INSET training, assessment and CEIAG local networks. Packs and

training materials should be made available to enable practitioners to present to school management teams, community groups and third sector organisations. However, in considering the best approach this, it is important not to add to the burden of careers professionals who are already very busy working with large caseloads of clients.

Organisations have a responsibility to ensure that all staff understand the boundaries of their roles and their competence and can refer effectively when necessary. Clear protocols for referring young people for specialist support should be agreed.