

**NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE:  
THE RIGHT ADVICE AT THE RIGHT  
TIME**

New Challenges, New Chances:  
Further Education and Skills  
System Reform Plan

5 APRIL 2012

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## Ministerial Foreword

### John Hayes, Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning

I believe strongly in the power of advice and guidance to transform lives. To be given the self-belief and determination to find and seize opportunities is a gift indeed.

Greater complexity and competition in labour markets means that getting the right information, advice and guidance on learning and work, at the right time, has never been more important. It is a vital part of building a sustainable economy, nourishing social mobility and feeding social justice.



Information should be easily available, and accurate. Advice and guidance should be expert and professional. So we are putting in place a range of new advice and support services that will help people to improve their prospects.

We have been on a journey to get to this point. The successful Next Step careers service for adults has tested different ways of providing information and advice. And we have taken a range of expert views on how best to strengthen the quality of advice services.

But we are now entering a new phase, where high quality, high status careers advice should be readily available where and when it is needed.

The National Careers Service will provide authoritative information on learning and work, and professional advice on how to use it. Schools will be responsible for ensuring their pupils have access to independent careers guidance which meets their needs. Local authorities will help young people re-engage with education and training, and the Youth Contract will provide new help for young people to get and keep a job. There will be a flourishing market in inspiring, exciting services and products to help people make career choices, including a Youth Inspiration Project being led by business and the voluntary sector.

Through the matrix quality Standard, we are making it easier to check that organisations providing information and advice meet national standards. Alongside that, I want those who provide careers advice and guidance for a living to take up their rightful mantle: as trusted experts, wise in their counsel and respected by those who look to them.

With the launch of the National Careers Service, we are signalling the start of a new chapter in information, advice and guidance to serve the common good by spreading opportunity. I am confident that everyone who works so hard to help people get the right advice at the right time will rise to the challenge.

## Introduction

1. The economy is changing. At the same time as new jobs are being created, there is a shortage in the number of jobs available in some places. New industries are growing, laying the foundations for future growth.
2. Alongside this, Government reforms are introducing new opportunities: free schools, Academies, University Technical Colleges, National Skills Academies, as well as the reform of Further and Higher Education.
3. Knowing what learning options are available – both academic and vocational – how they lead to different jobs, and what the job prospects are, is vital for making choices. Young people and adults need the right information and advice at the right time.
4. Information and advice about learning and work can come from a variety of sources including parents, teachers, careers advisers, the internet, colleges, universities and other public services. Young people particularly value informal sources of advice, including family and friends. 82% of adults who subsequently engaged in learning said that the information and advice they received was influential in enabling this to happen and 69% of those who started a job after receiving information and advice felt the same way<sup>1</sup>.
5. However, young people, adults and those who advise them commonly report that it is difficult to find the information they need. There is evidence to suggest that many young people drop out of post-compulsory courses because these do not meet their expectations or because their chosen course was unsuitable for them<sup>2</sup>. Around 22% of non-learners who would have liked to learn say that lack of awareness of which courses might benefit them prevented them from doing so.



<sup>1</sup> Impact Study of nextstep adult careers service (2007/08), Learning and Skills Council

<sup>2</sup> See for example Blenkinsop, S, et al (2006), *How do young people make choices at 14 and 16?*, DfES RR773; and Payne, J (2000), *Progress of Low Achievers After Age Sixteen (An Analysis of Data from the England and Wales Youth Cohort Study)*, London: DfEE

6. Evidence also suggests that people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to receive informal careers advice from their family and social networks. As set out in *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility*, not knowing how to achieve your ambitions can be as damaging as not having those ambitions at all.
7. In August 2010, the Government introduced Next Step, providing careers information and advice to adults. For the first time, careers advice for adults became available through one, integrated service. Next Step has been successful, testing new ways of providing advice and improving careers information.
8. Building on that experience, the Government is now introducing a new service – the National Careers Service – to make it easy for everyone to find accurate information about learning and work, with a helpline giving professional advice on making choices.
9. Many young people and adults can benefit from face to face guidance to help them plan their options and make career choices. Recognising the critical role that schools play in young people’s lives, and the importance of achievement at school in laying the foundations for life and work, schools are being made responsible for securing access to independent careers guidance for their pupils. For adults, the National Careers Service will provide a face to face careers guidance service in a wide variety of places in communities. It will work in partnership with voluntary, community and other local organisations to help people get the support they need.

### Pursuing your ambitions

Thanks to revamping her CV with some help from a careers adviser, aspiring fashion designer Chloe Studd, 22, from Lowestoft, is now on her way to her dream career in fashion.

After finishing university with a degree in Textile Design for Fashion, Chloe was struggling breaking into the competitive fashion design industry. Not knowing what to do, she looked for help.

“My careers adviser was a great help,” Chloe said. “She suggested I try to get a job in fashion retail to give me some experience.”

Chloe received help developing her CV, looking for jobs and interview techniques and, as a result, ended up with two jobs to choose from! She started work with Sawdust, an independent designer shop in Lowestoft, as manager.

A turn of good luck a few months later saw a relative working for designer Boden. Explaining Chloe’s desire to get into design, it was suggested Chloe forward her CV for consideration for a seven week work placement. Chloe was successful and she was offered the work.

Following the successful placement Chloe was offered a full-time permanent job with Boden as Print Design Assistant – and she is loving her new role.

10. Local authorities, and those they work with, including Local Enterprise Partnerships have a vital role to play in co-ordinating advice and guidance to young people, and

helping them to access the range of services, training and employment opportunities that are available.

11. More broadly, young people and adults should be inspired to seek out learning and career opportunities and seize them. The Government wants to support a flourishing market in exciting products and services which help people find a direction and realise their ambitions. Industry is already taking a lead, forming a new partnership with the voluntary sector to inspire young people about their futures.
12. Some young people and adults need additional support. They may be unemployed, have low or no qualifications, or face other barriers to learning and work. Local authorities have a duty to provide appropriate support for people in these circumstances, and as part of the Youth Contract there will be personalised help for the 16-17 year olds at greatest risk of dropping out of education and training. Adults facing one or more of a range of specific barriers will be able to get extra face to face support from the National Careers Service.
13. Making the right decisions about learning and work can, and does transform lives. The services and support described in this document will help young people and adults in England to identify opportunities and make informed choices.

#### Creating a new career

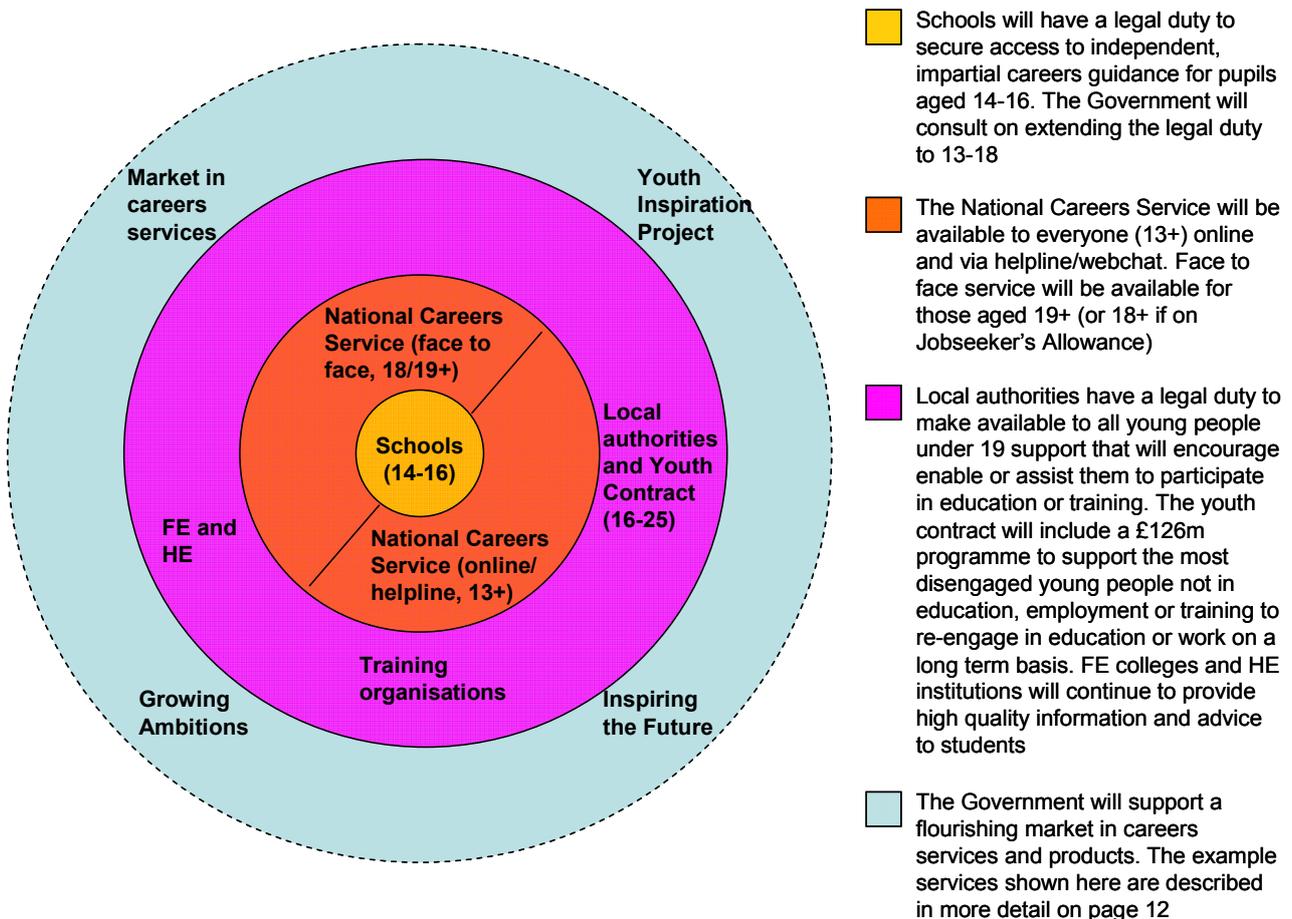
Nicholas, 40, had worked as a freelance copywriter in advertising for 10 years. However, after the birth of his first child he decided he needed a role with increased job stability.

Over the years, Nicholas had repeatedly found his attentions drawn to teaching as he was keen to help nurture young talent to enter the creative industries. Nicholas found careers advice online and was pleased to find that the service was not only free, but of a high quality.

Nicholas decided that he was interested in lecturing at a college and the careers adviser helped him plan how to go about it. He is now prepared to apply for a job in lecturing as soon as the right opportunity appears. He was really impressed with the service, "without the careers advice I received I would not have found a way of combining my expertise and my dream of teaching. Being able to discuss my options with an impartial expert really helped to clear my thoughts.

## The offer to young people and adults

Over the coming months, a range of services and support will become available for young people and adults. They are described in the diagram below:



## The National Careers Service

14. High quality information, and independent, professional advice and guidance for those who need it most, are a vital part of an efficient labour market which drives growth. We want people to make learning and career choices which are well-informed, so there is a supply of further education, work-based training and higher education which reflects individual, employer and labour market demand.



15. The National Careers Service will make it easy to find information about learning and work, with professional, impartial advice.

The National Careers Service will have:

- A **website**, helping people find out what jobs are growing and where the opportunities are, what skills and qualifications they need, and how to get them
- A **helpline** and **webchat** service, so young people and adults can discuss their options at a time and place which suits them, and make an informed choice
- A **walk in** service, directing people to the best source of help and advice whatever their needs
- For adults aged 19 and over (or 18 and over if seeking work), **one on one support** from an adviser, face to face

16. The service will be able to handle 1 million helpline calls from adults and 370,000 from young people, and 20 million hits on its website. It will also be able to give 700,000 people face to face advice each year.

17. Information and advice will be available on:

- Apprenticeships – the Government’s flagship training programme allowing you to earn whilst you train
- Courses offered by Further Education colleges, including what proportion of students go on to employment
- Higher Education programmes of study
- Funding for learning, including grants, loans and other awards. From 2013, new loans will be available for Further Education courses
- Learning with private training providers

- The job market, both nationally and in individual sectors of the economy. Information about the job market will be brought together from a range of expert sources, including Sector Skills Councils, employers, Local Employer Partnerships, the Labour Force Survey, employer associations and chartered institutes
18. As well as this, the service will offer a range of online tools to help customers explore their interests, assess their skills, develop an action plan for finding the right job, and write a good CV.
19. The helpline will have long opening hours, and a range of ways to get in touch: telephone, webchat, email, text message and online forums.
20. The service has qualified, expert advisers whose job is to know all about career options, learning and training options, and the local and national job market.
21. Careers advice needs to be available to adults everywhere, so that where people live is not a barrier to finding support. The National Careers Service will be available in a wide range of locations in towns, cities, and rural communities, including:
- Dedicated National Careers Services premises
  - Further Education colleges – the service will be available through 250 colleges by the end of the year
  - Jobcentres – careers advisers will provide professional advice to help those seeking work
  - Community centres – so that careers advice is available in the community
  - Housing associations
  - Libraries
  - Council service outlets
22. Making as much useful data as possible open access is a Government priority. The information and resources of the National Careers Service will be available to young people through the new web portal being developed by the Youth Inspiration Project, providing a one stop shop for ideas, inspiration and opportunities (further details are on page 14). We will explore other ways to help people and businesses use and re-use the data the service provides.
23. The Government is establishing an independent National Council for Careers, to ensure that the National Careers Service reflects the latest developments in providing information, advice and guidance. The Council will advise Government on the future development of the service.

The National Careers Service will provide expert advice in new ways, building on the best examples from the current Next Step service:

- In Greater Manchester, advisers have joined the housing association information bus which travels the region
- In Wallsend, careers advisers have been fully integrated into the work of the Jobcentre, providing expert advice on learning and work to those seeking employment
- In the South West, trained community ambassadors are using venues such as primary schools and community centres to help people access careers advice

## The role of schools, colleges and universities

24. Young people and adults seek advice on learning and work from a wide range of sources. Educational institutions play a key role in helping people get the advice they need.
25. Schools help young people achieve their best and aspire to be all that they can be, and attainment by pupils in school has the single most significant impact on their future prospects.
26. Further Education colleges have an equally strong commitment to ensuring their students are well-informed about the world of work and their options for employment, and student support services provide a range of high quality information and advice. Career services in Higher Education institutions operate a range of successful and quality assured models for providing advice to students and helping them make contacts in work.
27. We recognise the critical role that schools play in young people's lives. From September this year, all schools will have a new legal duty to secure access to independent, impartial careers guidance for their pupils on the full range of 16-18 education and training options, including Apprenticeships. Schools will be free to choose how to meet this duty: it could mean purchasing high quality careers guidance services from the market, including from organisations delivering the National Careers Service. Pupils will also have access to the National Careers Service website and telephone helpline.
28. The new legal duty for schools will come into force in September 2012, applying to pupils in years 9-11. The Government will consult on extending this down to year 8 and up to age 18 for students in schools and colleges from September 2013. Alongside this, we will explore the case for requiring more of providers of work-based learning.

### On the path to success

Teenager Jenny Simpson is on course to her dream job as a midwife thanks to some expert careers advice.

Jenny, 17, from Bristol, had always dreamed of becoming a midwife but just needed a little help on the road to success. Entering the jobs market for the first time is a daunting experience and in the current climate, young people have to be better informed and more committed than ever if they are to achieve their goals and secure their dream career.

Now, only a month after getting in touch with an online careers adviser, Jenny is doing work experience every week with a community midwife and is on track to a university course to help her fulfil her dreams.

Longer-term, Jenny will have to study in higher education to gain the right qualifications, so she has used what she has learnt to identify the best university course for her. She is on track to apply, and has identified sources of support for the application process. Jenny is well on her way to achieving her dream career.

29. The Department for Education published statutory guidance for schools on their new duty on 26 March. This makes clear the importance of face to face guidance, particularly for the disadvantaged, and how schools can find information on the quality of careers guidance services as they decide what guidance to secure for their pupils. The link to this guidance is <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory>.
30. The Government has asked OfSTED to carry out a thematic review of careers guidance to identify good practice and establish a baseline for future improvements in the quality of provision. This will report in Summer 2013. OfSTED inspections of schools will consider the support that schools make available to give pupils a good understanding of the options and challenges facing them as they move through school and beyond. This will be informed by feedback from pupils and parents, schools' own evaluation of their provision and data on the destinations of school leavers.
31. From September, Higher Education institutions will begin providing a range of comparable information on their offer to students, available on their websites. They will be encouraged to continue to provide in-house careers services, drawing on the expertise of those in specific occupations.



## Support for those facing additional barriers

32. Many young people and adults face additional barriers to learning and work. Frequently, they need more than just information and advice.
33. Local authorities have a legal duty to support young people up to the age of 19 to participate in education or training. The duty also applies to those with learning difficulties or disabilities up to the age of 25. They can support this duty using the Early Intervention Grant. The services that local authorities offer may include information, advice and guidance on learning and work, but are likely to include support to help young people address specific barriers to participation.
34. Local authorities also play a role in securing local education and training and services and activities to improve young people's wellbeing.
35. The £1 billion Youth Contract announced by the Deputy Prime Minister in November, is supplementing the role of schools and local authorities with a range of important opportunities to help young people access education, training and work:
- 160,000 job subsidies to business worth £2,275 each to take on an 18-24 year old from the Work Programme
  - An extra 250,000 work experience placements over the next three years, with an offer of a work experience place for every 18-24 year old who wants one, before they enter the Work Programme
  - At least 20,000 incentive payments worth £1,500 each for employers to take on young people as Apprentices
  - Extra support through Jobcentre Plus in the form of weekly, rather than fortnightly signing on meetings, more time to talk to a Jobcentre adviser and a careers guidance session with the National Careers Service
  - Extra places in sector based work academies
36. There will also be separate Youth Contract provision for 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training and who are at greatest risk of long term disengagement. This programme will target young people with low or no qualifications and providers will be free to determine the support they offer to help these young people achieve positive outcomes. The programme will receive £126

Adults in the following groups will be able to get up to three sessions of face to face guidance from the National Careers Service:

- Those with low skills (without a Level 2 or Level 3)
- Those aged 18-24 not in education, employment or training. New funding from the Youth Contract means that the service can provide help to young people aged 18-24 who have been seeking work for up to three months
- Those facing redundancy, newly redundant or distant from the labour market
- Those on out of work benefits
- People with learning difficulties and disabilities
- Offenders in custody or and in the community under the supervision of probation services and ex-offenders

million of funding over three years in England and providers will be paid on the basis of the outcomes they deliver.

37. The National Careers Service is provided by a range of organisations, including many from the voluntary and community sector. It will reach out to adults needing additional support, helping them get the advice and direction they need.



## A flourishing market in careers services

38. The National Careers Service, educational institutions, and local authorities, will all play a role in providing access to information, advice and guidance.
39. Beyond that, the Government believes that there should be a flourishing commercial market in products and services that help people make career choices, driven by innovation and a desire to help people make the most of their lives.
40. Responding to the call from the Prime Minister to business to get involved, many outside Government are developing exciting new ways to inspire young people and adults to make career choices. The Government is pleased to support these programmes.
41. **Inspiring the Future** is a free service which will see thousands of people from all sectors and professions volunteering to go into state schools and colleges to talk about their jobs, careers and the education routes they took.
42. **Growing Ambitions** provides free information for teachers and careers professionals to help channel the aspirations of young people. The site already contains over 3500 resources from some 140 organisations which can be downloaded and used in lessons.
43. **The Youth Inspiration Project** is a partnership of business exploring ways to inspire young people to think about their futures with optimism, explore their options and make positive choices, by developing online services which allow young people to build up a personal profile. It is being led by a partnership of business and is supported by No.10, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Cabinet Office.

### Youth Inspiration Project

The Youth Inspiration Project is an industry led and funded response to a specific challenge set out by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in May 2011 which called for industry and the voluntary sector to get involved in an initiative to inspire young people about their futures. It has been established with active support from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Cabinet Office and No.10 Downing Street.

The founding sponsors include Serco, Centrica, McDonald's, Eversheds, Engine Communications, Microsoft and Salesforce.com, supported by charities IEBE and The Ideas Foundation. They are also receiving advice and support from leading technology providers such as Facebook, IBM, LinkedIn, Cisco and Blackberry.

Their aim is to develop a campaign that will inspire young people about their futures supported by a range of free online services for young people that will grow in functionality over the next 2-3 years. The enterprise will eventually become self-sustaining through additional services to schools, employers and others. In the short term they are approaching a wide range of other industry supporters for further sponsorship.

The project will aim to create the online destination of choice for young people aged 11-24 to begin their career journey. It will bring together the best careers information, guidance and opportunities in one place.

## The importance of quality

44. Wherever people seek advice on learning and work, they should know that they are getting a high quality service.

45. There will be clear national quality standards. The matrix Standard is the Government's badge of quality for information and advice about learning and work, and organisations accredited to the Standard have to demonstrate that they provide a high quality and impartial service.

All the advisers in the National Careers Service will:

- **Understand their customers** – helping them identify their ambitions, motivations and preferences
- **Give the best advice** – finding the right information, whether from themselves or one of their colleagues
- **Reach out** – finding new ways to help customers get what they need
- **Always try and improve** – by developing their skills, and asking customers for their feedback on the service

46. There will be an online register of all organisations accredited to matrix, so that young people, adults, schools, employers and others have access to this information. The National Careers Service will be accredited to the matrix Standard, ensuring that it provides advice which is expert and impartial, and supports its advisers to achieve recognised professional standards.

47. Responding to the Careers Profession Task Force in 2010, the Government set a challenge for everyone that works in careers guidance services: to raise the professional status of careers advisers, so that they have the recognition and respect they deserve.

48. From April 2012, there will be a new set of professional standards for careers advisers; a register of advisers holding postgraduate qualifications; and guidelines on how advisers can develop their own skills and gain higher qualifications. This has been led by an alliance of professional bodies for the careers sector.

49. As well as the matrix Standard, many outside Government are helping to assure the quality of careers education, information advice and guidance:

- **CEIAG quality awards for schools, colleges and work based learning providers** – these local awards are highly valued, and demonstrate to parents and young people that learning providers are offering good quality support to young people
- **The Quality in Careers Standard** – providing national validation for the CEIAG quality awards, ensuring that they meet robust national standards, as recommended by the Careers Profession Task Force

50. Careers advisers in the National Careers Service will go through a programme of development in expert skills. This will cover identifying the needs of customers, using labour market data, building confidence and motivation, and working with employers and other local services.
51. There will be a programme of evaluation to identify the benefits the National Careers Service brings to its customers, including an annual survey to show what happens to customers after they receive advice.



## What happens next?

52. The National Careers Service will be available from April this year. It will be provided by a range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations, under contract to the Skills Funding Agency. There will be 12 regional contracts for the National Careers Service, and 2 helpline contracts specialising in advice to young people and adults.
53. During its first year, the service will:
- Make stronger links with social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and others)
  - Bring in improvements to the way advisers in the service share knowledge and ideas
  - Become available in an ever wider range of locations, including Further Education colleges, community centres, and places of worship
  - Put more data about the labour market out on the internet, so that it can be used by anyone to develop new tools and applications
54. The success of the National Careers Service will be judged by the impact it has on people's lives. The impact of the service will be fully evaluated, and the results published.
55. The new legal duty on schools to secure access to independent careers guidance for their pupils will come into force in September but schools should be preparing now, having regard to the recently published statutory guidance.
56. The new support available as part of the Youth Contract, including personalised help for 16-17 year olds at the greatest risk, will begin from June 2012.
57. If you would like to know more about the National Careers Service, go to [nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk).

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