



House of Commons
Education Committee

**Careers guidance for young
people: The impact of the
new duty on schools:
Government Response to
the Committee's Seventh
Report of Session 2012–13**

Sixth Special Report of Session 2012–13

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The Education Committee

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Sixth Special Report

On 23 January 2013 we published our Seventh Report of this Session, *Careers guidance for young people: The impact of the new duty on schools*.¹ The response from the Government was received on 5 April 2013 and is published as an Appendix to this Report.

Appendix

Government response

Introduction

We would like to thank the Committee for their thoughtful contribution on the important issue of ensuring all of our young people have the best possible chance to succeed in life and the tools to progress into sustainable and rewarding careers. Making sure our young people receive a world class education is the way to achieve this. But careers guidance can help to raise the aspirations of some young people and support them to make informed choices about education and training options.

The Department for Education's reform programme is about creating a more highly educated society, in which young people can transcend the circumstances of their birth, fulfil their potential and become masters of their own fate. To achieve that, we are placing an emphasis on teachers and head teachers educating the next generation in a manner that equips them to go to university or secure a good job.

While the Committee's report does acknowledge the failings of the Connexions service, we are disappointed that the Committee describes our decision to transfer responsibility for careers to schools as regrettable. The report cites evidence of one survey carried out by the careers sector that suggests a reduction in the overall level of careers provision. It chooses not to highlight the examples of excellent practice across the country where schools have welcomed the new duty as an opportunity to commission a service more tailored to the particular needs of their pupils. At the time of the inquiry the duty had been in place for only one term so we feel strongly that greater consideration could have been given to the need to allow the new arrangements time to bed in and evolve before drawing such firm conclusions.

We agree with the Committee that there is scope further to develop careers provision and we will consider its suggestions carefully. This summer's Ofsted thematic review of careers will provide us with an important assessment of progress. The National Careers

¹ Education Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2012–13, *Careers guidance for young people: The impact of the new duty on schools*, HC 632–I

Council will publish its first annual report in May, advising the Government on improving the quality and coverage of careers services. We will take the findings of both reports into account in considering how best to support future improvements in careers guidance for young people.

We are pleased that the Committee welcomes our plan to extend the careers duty on schools to years 8–13 and to place an equivalent requirement on colleges through their funding agreements, from September 2013. This will be an important step to ensure young people can access the support they need at all their key decision points up to age 18. We will update the statutory guidance for schools and publish new guidance for colleges to support them in taking on their new responsibilities.

We were also disappointed that the Committee's report focuses on the process of planning and providing careers guidance, whereas the Government's priority is outcomes for young people. The inquiry prompted interesting debate about the strength of the evidence base for particular approaches to careers support. So far there is not, in our view, enough soundly based evidence for what works in improving choices and increasing aspirations to justify the Government narrowly prescribing particular approaches. Instead we have set guidance for how schools can implement the duty to meet the needs of their pupils and to develop their own practice continually to improve outcomes.

The report emphasises top-down accountability and calls for Ofsted to play a stronger role in inspecting the quality of careers provision. Ofsted have indeed confirmed that approach to the Committee. While Ofsted inspections are a key accountability mechanism, and one focused on outcomes, the report could have made more of the important role that local accountability has in driving improvement. Destination Measures play a key role here, as the report recognises, and schools and colleges will also wish to show parents and students the career and work-related activities they offer to support young people to help inform their choices.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the response below, the Committee's specific conclusions and recommendations are in **bold text** and the Government's responses are in plain text.

Transfer of the statutory duty

Our conclusion on the transfer of responsibility

1. The Government's decision to transfer responsibility for careers guidance to schools is regrettable. International evidence suggests such a model does not deliver the best provision for young people. The weaknesses of the school-based model have been compounded by the failure to transfer to schools any budget with which to

provide the service. This has led, predictably, to a drop in the overall level of provision. (Paragraph 31)

2. Nonetheless, we recognise that the new responsibility is now in place and further change would lead to greater uncertainty and upheaval, with a detrimental impact on young people. Whilst funding remains a concern, schools need to make careers guidance a priority within their budgets and we do not, in the current financial climate, recommend that additional funding be provided directly to schools. We believe that, instead, urgent steps must be taken by the Government to ensure that the current settlement meets the needs of young people. More precisely, we believe that the situation could be rescued by a combination of improved accountability and an enhancement of the role of the National Careers Service, including additional funding for that. (Paragraph 32)

We share the Committee's ambition for every young person to have access to high quality careers guidance. The decision to devolve responsibility for careers to schools was a response to mounting evidence from a range of respected sources that the national Connexions model was hugely expensive and of questionable value. While there was no explicit transfer of resources, when we made the decision to stop the Connexions service, by making savings on that and other centrally driven budgets we were able to prioritise and protect expenditure devolved to schools during this Spending Review period.

Embarking on such reforms inevitably means that there is a transition period to work through. We have supported local authorities and schools to navigate those changes and the introduction of the new statutory duty on schools in September 2012 is an important milestone. A number of schools have embraced the new duty as an opportunity to assume ownership of careers guidance provision for the first time and commissioned a more bespoke service for their pupils, achieving better value for money. However, we acknowledge that some schools are still adjusting to their responsibilities under the new duty and need to learn from each other. We believe this is happening with schools actively reviewing and developing their careers provision. We recognise that schools have to take difficult decisions when it comes to budgeting for careers guidance, but it is right that we give schools complete control over their budgets so they can decide how best to fulfil their core functions.

At the time of the inquiry, the new duty had only been in place for one term and it is too early to judge schools. Ofsted's thematic review of careers, reporting this summer, will assess how schools have responded to their new duty in the first year and this will provide a benchmark for future improvements. We intend to consider Ofsted's findings carefully alongside the Committee's report in looking at how well the framework is operating, rather than rushing into any immediate changes at a time when schools are still evolving their careers programmes to best meet their new responsibilities.

International evidence submitted to the inquiry provides some interesting descriptions of careers delivery models in other countries but we have yet to see any clear evidence that ties a model directly to impact on attainment and progression outcomes for young people. Our priority is the impact of careers policy on those outcomes rather than the specific elements of a careers programme and we do not start from the assumption that more careers guidance activity necessarily leads to better outcomes. Our continued commitment to developing Destination Measures is encouraging schools to focus on ensuring pupils have the support they need to progress to the next stage of their education or training.

We agree with the Committee that the role and remit of the National Careers Service could be strengthened further, including the National Careers Service role in bringing business, schools and colleges together and promoting local opportunities. The re-procurement of the National Careers Service from April 2014 provides Government with a good opportunity to revisit this.

Extension of the statutory duty

3. We welcome the Government's decision to extend the duty to young people in Year 8 and to 16 to 18 year-olds in school or college. (Paragraph 35)

We are pleased that the Committee welcomes our decision to extend the age range of the careers guidance duty so that more young people can access the support they need at key transition points. This will take effect from September 2013 and we are supporting schools and colleges by providing guidance this spring.

Coherence and consistency

Current provision

4. The Department for Education should encourage local authorities to promote greater consistency in the provision of careers advice and guidance in their areas so that, while there is room for innovation and variation, all young people have access to good quality, independent and impartial careers guidance, regardless of where they live or which school they attend. (Paragraph 37)

The Department agrees that all young people should have access to good quality careers guidance regardless of where they live. Local authorities are offering a range of support to schools including providing assistance with the commissioning process or a list of approved suppliers, giving briefings on the new duty, publishing prospectuses setting out the options available in a local area and holding careers fairs. Local authorities and schools are also working together to identify young people who may need additional support if they are to make a successful transition to post-16 education and work.

Where we identify good practice we will promote it, for example we published a practical guide for schools that includes a case study outlining how the local authority is supporting schools in Blackburn with Darwen to get to grips with their new responsibilities. The Department has worked with a number of local authorities to develop innovative approaches to supporting post-16 participation in the run up to the raising of the compulsory age of participation in education or training, including through work with schools.

We know there is more to do. While local authorities have continuing statutory duties to ensure that young people are supported to engage in education and training post-16, we know that some are progressing more quickly than others. We will be publishing more data on young people's progression post-16 so that local people can hold their Councils to account, and will work with areas that are performing poorly, helping them to diagnose local issues and providing support from more experienced authorities to develop plans to improve. National events will help local authorities to meet their commitments.

Government guidance

5. We welcome the publication of the statutory guidance and practical guide for schools. However, the statutory guidance is seriously weakened by its permissive tone and the practical guide can be disregarded by schools, should they so wish. The fact that the guidance for schools is spread across two separate documents further diminishes its impact and authority. (Paragraph 40)

6. We believe that Government could do more to promote consistency in the offer to young people through central guidance. We note that the Minister was not opposed to the proposition of combining the two documents into one, if there was “broad consensus around that”. We consider that this would help to encourage consistency between what was offered in different schools and different areas, and therefore we recommend that the statutory guidance and practical guide be combined in a single document. References to “statutory guidance” in the rest of this report should be taken to mean this unified document. (Paragraph 41)

We have arrangements in place to update statutory guidance and non-statutory advice from the Department on a regular basis to ensure that any policy changes are reflected. The practical guide was welcomed by the Association of School and College Leaders and schools found its examples of policy and practice helpful. We remain open to the suggestion of combining the practical guide with the statutory guidance if this will provide more concise and consistent information, and feedback from schools indicates they would find this useful. We will consider this recommendation further in the summer, drawing on any views which emerge from the Ofsted thematic review about the support required by schools.

Approaches to collaboration

7. We commend the efforts made by some local authorities to support their schools in taking on the new duty, particularly by working with them to form consortia and partnerships to procure independent and impartial careers guidance. We recommend that the Government's statutory guidance is strengthened to emphasise the benefits of this approach. We also recommend that the Government promotes the activities of the best performing local authorities so that best practice can be shared. (Paragraph 46)

8. We conclude that a collaborative approach to commissioning careers guidance services has many advantages for schools, particularly in promoting consistency and quality and in realising economies of scale. We recommend that the statutory guidance is strengthened better to reflect the benefits of this approach. (Paragraph 49)

We agree that some of the best examples of careers guidance provision are underpinned by schools working collaboratively and in close partnership with their local authority. These approaches enable the sharing of effective practice and the pooling of resources, achieving good value for money. The benefits of working collaboratively are already highlighted in the statutory guidance and practical guide. But we need to be very clear that schools can always make their own separate arrangements when they believe this will best meet the needs of their own pupils.

Through the thematic review, Ofsted is exploring careers provision in a range of settings and this will highlight good practice. We will consider saying more about collaborative approaches in our statutory guidance, following the publication of Ofsted's review.

Accountability

The Ofsted framework

9. We welcome the undertaking that Ofsted is to conduct a thematic survey of careers guidance provision in schools which will report in the summer of 2013. We also welcome the Minister's assurance that he will take the findings of this survey seriously. Nevertheless, a survey of provision cannot provide sufficient incentives to encourage individual schools to implement a good quality, independent and impartial careers guidance service. (Paragraph 55)

10. We note the disconnect between the Minister's view of the role of Ofsted in enforcing accountability on schools through its inspection framework, and Ofsted's own view. The limitations which Ofsted set out to us—the fact that its inspections do not make a clear judgement on careers guidance provision in schools, that it does not inspect against statutory compliance in this area and that it does not routinely

inspect all schools—means that the Ofsted framework is not a credible accountability check on the provision of careers guidance by individual schools. (Paragraph 56)

Careers guidance is an important area for Ofsted. Ofsted will draw on the findings of the thematic survey and will consider if any changes are required to its inspection frameworks. Any changes will be disseminated to the sector once agreed.

Ofsted's current inspection framework is a credible accountability check on the extent to which young people are prepared for their next step as they move through school and on to the next stage of their education, training and employment.

We are pleased that the Committee welcomes Ofsted's commitment to a thematic review of careers guidance. The review, and Ofsted's work more generally, is not intended to be the only incentive for individual schools to improve their careers guidance provision. Destination Measures data, alongside local accountability driven by student and parent choice, will encourage schools to put in place effective careers guidance for their pupils.

Destination Measures

11. We conclude that destination measures as they currently stand are not effective for ensuring that schools meet their statutory duty. Measures taken too soon do not provide a complete picture while those taken later remove the direct accountability on schools, as other factors may have influenced an individual's destination. Furthermore, the measures do not show the quality of the careers guidance provision in a school. (Paragraph 59)

12. There is therefore no immediate prospect for schools to be held to account for their provision of careers guidance by means of destination measures. Nevertheless, we recognise that the measures could be beneficial in other ways. We recommend that the Department for Education continues to pursue the inclusion of employment as well as improved education destination measures to make the data more meaningful. We also welcome the Minister's ambition to expand the timeframe of the destination measures in the future. (Paragraph 60)

We recognise that Destination Measures are not, in themselves, a direct measure of the quality of careers guidance provision in a school and that the destinations reported in the measures depend on many factors, not just the quality of careers guidance provision in a school. However we believe that the Destination Measures will encourage schools and colleges to focus on ensuring that all their students have the support and opportunities they need to progress to the next stage of education, training or work. This includes enabling them to take qualifications that offer them the best opportunity to gain the skills they need, providing impartial, independent careers guidance and supporting them to prepare for continuing in education or training. The Destination Measures capture sustained participation at the next phase of education. This puts a

particular emphasis on good choices: if students take a choice which they conclude isn't right for them, and drop out, this is reflected in the figures.

We are making a number of improvements to the Education Destination Measures in preparation for their publication in summer 2013. This includes plans to provide information on the admissions policy of the institution and data on the characteristics of students. We are also making the tables easier to manipulate by users and providing clearer explanations of the data. We will publish Key Stage 4 Education Destinations on the Performance Tables website and, subject to data testing and evaluation, we also plan to publish employment destinations for the first time this year. In the longer term we will investigate the possibility of expanding the range of institutions for which Destination Measures are published and of expanding the timeframe of the measures.

School careers plan

13. We recommend that the Department for Education introduces into the statutory guidance a requirement for schools to publish an annual careers plan, to include information on the support and resources available to its pupils in planning their career development. Schools should be required to review the plan systematically on an annual basis, taking into account the views of students, parents, employers and other learning providers. (Paragraph 63)

The Government has radically cut back bureaucracy for schools. Since 2010 we have cut the volume of guidance issued to schools by more than half and removed a number of data collections. A mandatory careers plan would re-introduce bureaucracy of the kind we have tried so hard to remove, and it is not clear that the document would improve the quality of careers programmes. There would be numerous issues to resolve around responsibility for producing the plan, use of content and monitoring arrangements.

In their response to the Committee's report, the Association of School and College Leaders suggest that an annual report would be 'a bureaucratic exercise' and the NASUWT's view is that this would be 'completely inappropriate and a distraction from schools' core purpose of focusing on teaching and learning'. We are confident in head teachers' ability to plan their provision in a way that works best for them.

On this basis, we do not plan to adopt this recommendation.

Schools and the National Careers Service

14. We recommended in our Fourth Report of session 2010–12, *Participation by 16–19 year olds in education and training*, that an “all age careers service should be funded by the Department for Education for face to face career guidance for young people.” Our view on this has not changed. However, given the statutory duty has only recently been passed to schools, we believe that the best way of delivering the

Government’s vision and providing the service that young people need is through the capacity-building and brokerage model. (Paragraph 72)

15. We recommend that the remit of the National Careers Service is expanded to enable it to perform a capacity-building and brokerage role for schools. As part of its capacity building role, the National Careers Service should work with individual schools in designing their annual careers plan of provision for careers guidance as well as provide schools with local labour market information. Clearly, this would have funding implications and so we further recommend that the Department of Education instructs the Skills Funding Agency to cost the options of the National Careers Service remit being expanded in this way. (Paragraph 74)

We have made careers guidance available for all ages, delivered in the ways that work best. Provision by web chat, by telephone and online is simple and fast to access. Young people can access support through educational institutions, who know their students best. For adults facing barriers in their lives, support is delivered in Jobcentres and other community locations. We have put in place a flexible, agile system which can respond to the economy.

The National Careers Service is already an important player in the local infrastructure that supports growth, employment and the development of the local economy through supporting a more effective labour market. We agree with the Committee that this role can be developed further to bring together business, schools and colleges. The re-procurement of the National Careers Service from April 2014 provides Government with a good opportunity to strengthen its role as a facilitator for schools, colleges and employers. As set out under recommendation 13, we do not envisage this role specifically incorporating support to help schools develop careers plans. In developing the role of the National Careers Service, we will take account of the National Careers Council’s annual report.

Quality of careers guidance

Forms of guidance: Face-to-face guidance

16. Access to face-to-face guidance is an integral part of good quality careers guidance. All young people should have access to such provision from a qualified, independent provider, should they choose to take up the opportunity. We recommend that a minimum of one personal careers interview with an independent adviser who is not a teacher should be available for every young person and that this is made explicit in the statutory guidance. (Paragraph 81)

We agree that face-to-face guidance can play an important role in ensuring that pupils have the right support when choosing subjects, courses and places of study. We have already made it clear in statutory guidance that face-to-face support should be secured where it is the most suitable support for young people to make successful transitions,

particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who have special educational needs, learning difficulties or disabilities.

We believe that guaranteeing a personal interview for all young people is not the correct way to drive up standards of provision. Research shows that young people value advice and information from a wide range of sources. The choices young people make are influenced not just by careers advisers but also by their peers, family and friends. The duty gives schools the flexibility to commission support that is right for their pupils—and employers have an important role to play in this through the provision of inspirational talks, visits and mentoring.

Where schools do buy in face-to-face careers guidance then there is an onus on careers practitioners to demonstrate that they are highly skilled and able to offer impartial guidance on the full range of education, training and employment options. A demonstrable impact on pupils and positive feedback will encourage schools to invest in careers guidance.

Overall, we want to see pupils succeeding in education and schools supporting their transition into further education, training or employment that is right for them. This clear focus on outcomes, rather than the number of interactions a young person has with a careers advisor, is the right approach to getting the best for pupils.

Online information

17. Websites are a valuable source of information about careers for young people. They cannot, however, replace face-to-face guidance, nor are they sufficient in themselves to fulfil the requirement on schools to provide independent, impartial guidance. To ensure that schools do not over-rely on directing their students to websites, we recommend that the Department for Education amends the statutory guidance to schools to make it clear that the signposting of independent websites is insufficient to meet their statutory duty. (Paragraph 86)

We agree that websites alone cannot offer young people the careers information, advice and guidance that they need. However young people's needs are not all the same. In some cases, young people may prefer to get their information from the website and seek impartial, independent guidance via a web chat or over the telephone—and this should not be discounted. What matters is that, taken together, the external sources of guidance commissioned by schools should provide information on the full range of options and access to face-to-face support where needed.

The Ofsted thematic review will offer a view on the range of careers guidance offered to young people, including the signposting to websites. If Ofsted's findings show the need for a stronger line in the statutory guidance then we will look at this.

Independence and impartiality

18. We recommend that, as part of an overall careers plan, schools are required to publish details of the alternative providers they allow to meet with their pupils, including the name of the provider and the nature of the contact. (Paragraph 90)

19. We welcome the Government's support for the increased involvement of local employers in careers guidance in schools, which is vital for effective careers provision. We recommend that schools be required to set out in their careers plans their arrangements with local employers and how they intend to enhance them. (Paragraph 93)

As previously stated, we do not agree with the Committee's recommendation that all schools should be required to publish a careers plan.

We are concerned to ensure that schools act impartially and support pupils to pursue options outside of the school where it is in the pupil's best interest to do so. This requires cooperation with other local education and training providers to ensure that young people are aware of the full range of post-16 options available in their locality, including Apprenticeships. We have highlighted this issue in the careers statutory guidance.

The Ofsted thematic review will look carefully at this issue and report on it in the summer. Online surveys with current first year college students will be carried out to explore their views on the breadth of information, advice and guidance they received prior to leaving school, although we acknowledge that this was before the introduction of the new statutory duty. We will consider if any changes need to be made to the statutory guidance to underline the importance of schools cooperating with other education and training providers in the light of Ofsted's report.

In carrying out their new duties, schools are expected to work in partnership with employers as appropriate. Good careers advice should be informed by labour market intelligence so that young people's future plans are grounded in the realistic context of the needs of today's employers and the opportunities available. The best way for pupils to gain an insight into the workplace is through employers and there are excellent examples of this, including the 'Inspiring the Future' programme and STEMNET's STEM Ambassador programme, which has created a unique nationwide network of over 25,000 volunteers from science, engineering and technical companies or academia who work with schools across the UK.

Government will continue to look for opportunities to encourage employers to make innovative and inspiring contributions to careers work. One example is the new online service www.plotr.co.uk, formed by a partnership of businesses, supported by the Government, to inspire young people about careers and connect them to opportunities

(jobs, Apprenticeships, courses and volunteering). Plotr will be launched formally later this year.

Government is also strengthening the links between local employers and the National Careers Service to ensure that there is an improved flow of local labour market intelligence available to all its users and partners. From July 2013 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) local skills priorities will be published on the National Careers Service website, supported by local labour market information brought together by the LEP.

Teachers and careers guidance

20. We acknowledge the important role that teachers play in guiding and advising young people. We also recognise the constraints that they are under when performing the role and that they cannot substitute for fully-qualified, independent and impartial advisers. (Paragraph 99)

21. We agree with witnesses from business that it would be beneficial for teachers to have a greater understanding of the world of work, particularly that of the local labour market, and we recommend that teachers should undertake regular professional development to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the work place. The local focus and infrastructure of the National Careers Service could be invaluable in enabling this, and we recommend that this is incorporated within the NCS capacity building role outlined above. (Paragraph 100)

People come into teaching from a range of backgrounds, and while clearly links with industry and working with employers can be very beneficial, schools will know best how to address their teachers' level of understanding of the workplace. Decisions about professional development for teachers are made by individual schools, based on their particular needs and circumstances.

Government wants to support the development of a self-improving teaching profession which has the capacity to take responsibility for its own development and improvement, without prescription from central Government. We are creating a national network of Teaching Schools (there are over 200 to date, with an ambition of 500 by 2014/15), these sit at the hub of local clusters as centres of excellence in teacher training and professional development. We are considering how we can encourage and support teachers to engage with high-quality research.

We envisage that careers guidance specialists will provide impartial and expert advice and guidance wherever and whenever schools decide it would best meet a particular need of a pupil or group of pupils. We are not expecting teachers to provide careers guidance themselves but recognise that they still have a role to play and that young people will be influenced by their views. Teachers should be aware of the independent sources of careers guidance which they can signpost pupils towards.

National Careers Service providers have access to extensive training and development resources for their careers advisers. Some schools pay for their teachers to benefit from these resources and we would encourage any school thinking of doing this to speak to the local provider.

22. We concur with our colleagues on the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee that awareness of apprenticeships is limited within schools. We recommend that the National Apprenticeship Service's remit be extended to include the promotion of apprenticeships in schools. (Paragraph 101)

We agree with the Committee that young people need better advice on Apprenticeships and that is why the new duty includes an explicit requirement for schools to secure information on Apprenticeships for every pupil in years 9–11.

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) already carries out a number of activities in schools to promote Apprenticeships. Resources available on the NAS website have been developed specifically for use by teachers and careers advisers in schools so that they can communicate full and relevant information about Apprenticeships to pupils. Teachers and other careers professionals can feed back any suggested improvements or questions to NAS via the NAS website.

NAS is also operating through a strong network of primary partners such as the Association of Schools and College Leaders and the National Governors Association to ensure that school leaders are adequately informed about Apprenticeships and are encouraged by governors to inform pupils about Apprenticeships. NAS works with the Education and Employers Taskforce and supports their 'Inspiring the Future' initiative which facilitates entry of speakers (including Apprentice alumni and Apprenticeship employers) into schools to explain and promote different career paths. NAS supports partners and training provider networks to visit schools across the country, delivering presentations about Apprenticeships and providing practical help to students who wish to apply for an Apprenticeship.

We do not propose to extend NAS' work in schools beyond its current remit which already focuses on making Apprenticeship information advice and guidance available and easily accessible to schools.

23. We recommend that the Government requires schools to:

- **achieve the Quality in Careers Standard;**
- **secure independent careers guidance from a provider with the Matrix standard; and**
- **ensure that advice is provided by a level 6 qualified careers advisers.**

We further recommend that the National Careers Service's role should be expanded to include a duty to promote to schools the benefits of working to these quality standards. (Paragraph 105)

We agree that the quality of careers provision is vital if it is to help young people effectively. The practical guide for schools already suggests that schools should consider the three aspects of quality assurance highlighted by the Committee: the quality of the school careers programme, the quality of the independent careers provider and the quality of the careers professionals working with the school. Schools are free to work towards the Quality in Careers standard or the Matrix Standard should they wish.

The Government has always seen a role for the National Careers Service to act as an exemplar in the delivery of high quality professional careers guidance. We have set a vision for its workforce that by April 2015, 50% of its careers advisers will be registered as a career development professional with the Career Development Institute (CDI), for which they have to be qualified to NVQ level 6. The remainder will have to have a minimum qualification at level 3, recognising the new professional framework and career progression routes that the CDI have set out. Other agencies, including schools, are free to follow this example when they commission careers guidance provision. As set out under recommendation 13, we are giving schools responsibility for planning their provision in a way that works best for them.

Careers education and work-related learning

24. The Government's decision to remove the statutory duty on schools to provide careers education and work-related learning has been heavily criticised by witnesses to our inquiry. We are persuaded of the benefits of both these former provisions and we recommend that the Government's statutory guidance to schools is strengthened to require schools to provide careers education and work-related learning as part of their duty. (Paragraph 109)

The removal of the careers education and work related learning duties reflect the fact that schools are best placed to decide how best to deliver the broad range of activities which make up careers education and work-related learning, within the framework of accountability set out elsewhere in this response. We do not believe it is necessary to underpin this with legislation, as this can lead, as it did in the past, to perverse incentives, poor provision and a lack of value for money.

Targeted support

25. We believe that careers guidance services are an integral part of the support package needed by vulnerable young people. We are concerned that there appears to be too much variation in local authorities' interpretation of what constitutes a targeted group. We recommend that the Department of Education promotes the activities of the best performing local authorities so that best practice in identifying and delivering services to targeted young people is shared. (Paragraph 115)

Evidence shows that a young person's educational attainment at 16 is the single most important factor in whether or not they go on to participate after 16. That is why we have designed the Youth Contract to target young people who are the most likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) and to be NEET for longest—those with no or low qualifications, those in or leaving care and those leaving custody. The Youth Contract is intended to help local authorities to meet their duties to support all young people, and especially those hardest to help, into education or training.

In addition, identifying other young people who would benefit from targeted support has been an objective of several of the Raising the Participation Age Local Delivery Projects. Different approaches have been trialled including the development of 'Risk of NEET Indicators' which look across a range of factors and characteristics such as gender, ethnicity and place of residence as well as educational attainment to identify young people who would benefit from targeted support. These projects have been evaluated and both the evaluation report and tools to support local authorities have been made available on the Department's website. We have also encouraged authorities to share models of effective practice on the Local Government Association's 'Knowledge Hub' and to demonstrate their work at regional and national events.

The Department is supporting a number of local Councils to develop their arrangements for supporting young people's participation, helping them to diagnose local issues and develop plans to address these with the support of authorities who are performing more positively. Thematic events, bringing these authorities together to discuss common issues and share effective practice are planned for spring 2013.

Youth contract

26. We recommend that the Government ensures that discussions take place between local authorities and the regional Youth Contract providers about the delivery of the Youth Contract on a local level. (Paragraph 121)

We agree that it is essential that Youth Contract providers work closely with local authorities. That is why we have made it a service requirement that every prime contractor for the Youth Contract works with the local authorities in its area throughout the life of the programme; in particular to identify young people in the target group for the programme. This will ensure that young people, identified as being most in need of

support to participate in education and training, are able to access the Youth Contract programme thus also supporting the delivery of local authorities' statutory duties in this area.

Following discussions with the Local Government Association we published a document which outlines the role of local authorities in supporting the Youth Contract (at <http://tinyurl.com/b3lgy2l>). We continue to provide support in the establishment and maintenance of good working relationships between Youth Contract providers and local authorities.

Conclusion

The Government's policy on young people's careers guidance has heralded significant changes and we believe it is sensible to give the new arrangements sufficient time to bed in before judging their impact. We have therefore agreed with a number of the Committee's recommendations in principle but will await the findings of Ofsted's thematic review of careers, reporting this summer, before taking any further action. We will also take account of the National Careers Council's annual report. This will ensure we are in possession of as much evidence as possible to inform next steps. In other areas, where we do not agree with the Committee's recommendation, we have provided a full account of the reasons for our decisions. We would like to thank the Committee for its careful consideration of the range of issues impacting on careers guidance for young people and for its subsequent report and recommendations.