



Careers services

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Author: Jack Evans
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Careers services offer advice and guidance to people seeking information on educational and training options, the jobs available in different sectors and the careers associated with different occupations.

This note outlines the current provision of careers services in England, then briefly outlines some of the services that have been replaced and also includes some comment from experts on current careers services.

Since education is a devolved policy area, different arrangements exist in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

From September 2012, schools in England have a duty to secure impartial careers advice for pupils in school years 9 to 11 (ages 13-16).

The [National Careers Service](#) was launched in April 2012 and provides online and telephone support to people of all ages, as well as face-to-face support to those aged 19 or over. The National Careers Service helpline number is **0800 100 900**.

Young people facing barriers to education or employment are the responsibility of local authorities. This includes young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

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1 Introduction

Careers services offer advice and guidance to people seeking information on educational options, the jobs available in different sectors and the careers associated with different occupations.

Traditionally, careers services have been focussed on young people in schools, colleges and universities. However, in recent years there has been a move towards careers services that support people of all ages and at all stages of their careers.

Various organisations provide careers services, including schools, colleges, universities, private organisations and charities. Careers services designed and funded by government have also existed for many years.

Government-funded careers services have undergone significant changes since May 2010. This note outlines the current provision of careers services in England, then briefly outlines some of the services that have been replaced and also includes some comment from experts on current careers services.

2 Careers services for people enrolled in school

The *Education Act 2011*¹ changed the duty of schools from *providing* careers education to pupils (careers guidance was provided by the Connexions Service), to “securing access to impartial and independent careers guidance” for every pupil in school years 9 to 11 (ages 13-16).² This duty came into force in September 2012. The government is consulting on extending this duty down to pupils aged 12 and up to pupils age 18 from September 2013.³

The mandatory characteristics of the careers services that must be secured by schools for their pupils are set out below:⁴

- The services should assist children to make educational, training or occupational choices to manage their careers.
- The services should demonstrably not encourage students to stay in formal education without also outlining other options and must show no bias towards a particular education or work option.
- The services should include elements provided by external staff or sources of expertise.

Schools can secure whatever careers advice they feel is most appropriate for the needs of their pupils. However, [statutory guidance](#) exists which outlines the sorts of provision that is expected by the Department for Education (DfE)⁵. Schools are expected to commission careers guidance from external careers providers.

¹ *Education Act 2011*, Section 29

² Department for Education, *The Education Bill - changes to the delivery of careers guidance*, April 2011, pp 1

³ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *National Careers Service: the right advice at the right time*, 5 April 2012, pp 10

⁴ These characteristics are adapted from DfE, *Statutory guidance for schools: Careers guidance*, 10 September 2012, pp 2

⁵ DfE *Securing independent careers advice*, 19 July 2012

2.1 Funding

Schools will meet the costs of securing careers guidance for pupils from their existing budgets.⁶ No money is specifically ring-fenced in the DfE schools budget for careers advice, although DfE will contribute some money to the newly created National Careers Service phonenumber.

2.2 Careers service activities

The government has deliberately not stipulated the content of careers services that schools secure for their pupils, or the methods used to provide careers services.

The content of the services may include careers information provision, assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling, interviews, careers education programmes, taster programmes, work search programmes and school-to-work transition services.⁷

Careers services may be provided face-to-face, via telephone help lines or via web-based services.⁸

2.3 Assuring the quality of externally provided careers services

The duty to secure independent careers services means that schools must commission services from external careers service providers.

The quality of careers service providers in England is assured by [Matrix](#). The [Quality in Careers Standard](#) (QiCS) also assures the quality of voluntary quality awards for schools and colleges after a thorough assessment and inspection process. A suite of material including a guide to the validation process, the application forms, guidance notes and notes on the appeals process, is hosted on the [Careers England](#) (the trade association for workers in careers advice and guidance) website.

The government recognises the QiCS validation and recommends that all careers services should be commissioned from providers with this validation.⁹

The government has asked OFSTED to carry out a review of careers guidance in schools. This review will begin reporting in September 2013 and will be ongoing, with [examples of best practice and case studies](#) published on the DfE website.¹⁰

3 Careers services for people over 16

The change from schools having a duty to *provide* careers services to a duty to *secure* careers services came about in conjunction with the introduction of a new careers service for people of all ages: the [National Careers Service](#).

3.1 National Careers Service

The National Careers Service (NCS) was launched in April 2012.¹¹ The NCS operates through its website (including webchat services, moderated chat rooms and message

⁶ HC Deb 19 January 2012 c969W

⁷ DfE, [Statutory guidance for schools: Careers guidance](#), 10 September 2012, pp 2

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Department for Business Innovation and Skills, [National Careers Service: the right advice at the right time](#), 5 April 2012, pp 15

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp 11

¹¹ Department for Business Innovation and Skills, [Press release: launch of the National Careers Service](#), 5 April 2012

boards), via a telephone helpline (0800 100 900), and using face-to-face advisors (for adults only). Each year, the service hopes to handle 20 million hits on its website, 1 million phone calls and 700,000 face-to-face meetings.¹²

The NCS website provides a wide range of careers services. The catalogue of occupations is comprehensive and includes descriptions of an exhaustive range of jobs, along with expected career earnings, available training and useful contacts. The NCS site also features the results of local and sector specific research which show how the job market has performed recently in relevant areas. In addition, the website features a number of 'Career tools' including a CV builder, a learning record and funding eligibility guide.

Face-to-face services

The NCS also offers a range of face-to-face services. Some face-to-face sessions will be held in dedicated premises, many of which previously housed Next Step advisors (Next Step was a careers service which operated from 2010-2012). NCS advisors are also available in some Further Education colleges (250 colleges will offer this service by the end of 2012), in some Jobcentre Plus premises, in some community centres and in some local libraries.¹³ In July 2012, face-to-face NCS services were offered in over 3,250 locations in England.¹⁴

Face-to-face NCS appointments can cover a range of topics or can focus on a specific issue, such as the skills required in a specific sector or developing a CV. Appointments will take up to an hour and will normally be structured around the issues agreed upon when the session is set up. An action plan will be agreed at the end of the interview and a catch-up interview will be offered on some occasions.

Every adult over the age of 19 is entitled to one face-to-face session with a National Careers Service advisor each year. All 18-24 year olds not in education, employment or training, benefit recipients and other people with disadvantages in the labour market will be entitled to three face-to-face meetings each year.¹⁵

Funding of the National Careers Service

The NCS will be mainly funded by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS). DfE will also contribute some money for the maintenance of an existing telephone helpline that was previously funded through Connexions Direct.¹⁶

In the 2012/13 financial year, contributions to the NCS budget will total £84.4 million from BIS and £4.7 million from DfE.¹⁷

3.2 Further Education institutions

The recent changes to careers services policy have not had a major impact on careers services provided by Further Education institutions. How Further Education institutions provide careers guidance to their pupils will continue to be up to the individual institution to design and fund. However, some Further Education colleges will host advisors from the National Careers Service. These advisors will be paid by the NCS.¹⁸

¹² BIS, *National Careers Service: the right advice at the right time*, 5 April 2012, pp 8

¹³ *Ibid*, pp 9

¹⁴ John Hayes, *Letter to MPs*, 3 July 2012

¹⁵ BIS, *National Careers Service: the right advice at the right time*, 5 April 2012, pp 12

¹⁶ BIS, *National Careers Service policy note*, September 2011, pp 3

¹⁷ *Ibid* and *HC Deb 6 Feb 2012 c124W*

¹⁸ BIS, *National Careers Service: the right advice at the right time*, 5 April 2012, pp 10

3.3 Higher Education institutions

Recent changes to careers service policy have not affected Higher Education institutions in any major way. Higher Education institutions will continue to design, deliver and fund careers services in the way that they deem to be most appropriate to their students' needs. From September 2012, Higher Education institutions will be encouraged to publish comparable information about the careers services that they offer so that potential students are able to compare the careers services offered by different institutions.¹⁹

4 Careers services for people facing barriers to work or education

Young people who are considered to be at particular risk of being unemployed or becoming economically inactive are targeted with specific careers services not normally available to other people.

Careers services for young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) will be partly provided through the National Careers Service. NEETs under the age of 25 will be entitled to 3 face-to-face sessions with an NCS advisor each year.²⁰

Local authorities have a legal duty to support NEETs up to the age of 19. This duty extends to at risk young people and those with learning difficulties and disabilities up to the age of 25. Local Authorities have a duty to work with schools and other community organisations to identify and monitor these young people. Once these young people have been identified, local authorities have a duty to make available support that will enable them to participate in education or training. Local authorities can invest in careers services which enable young people to make choices about which educational options are most suitable for them.²¹

Support for disengaged young people is also available through the Youth Contract, a package of measures launched in April 2012 and designed to tackle youth unemployment.²² More information on the operation of the Youth Contract and the services it offers is available in the House of Commons Library Standard Note on the [Youth Contract](#).

5 Careers services pre-May 2010

From 2001 until 2011, careers advice and guidance for 13-19 year olds was provided by the Connexions Service. It was the responsibility of Local Authorities in England to fund this service.

Connexions provided printed information and some online services to young people interested in researching career options. Personal advisors were also employed by Connexions to offer advice and guidance in face-to-face sessions at Connexions offices and in schools.

The Connexions Service was criticised by a number of independent reports. The Education Select Committee found that Connexions provided inconsistent services across the country. The Committee stated that "...some Connexions services have been more successful than others in discharging [their] duties equally successfully."²³

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp 11

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp 12

²¹ *Ibid*, pp 7

²² DWP, [Youth Contract](#), April 2012, website

²³ Education Select Committee, Fourth Report of 2010-12, July 2011, [Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training](#), pp 54

Alan Milburn's 2009 report, [Fair access to the professions](#), went further. This report found that Connexions was functionally not fit for purpose:²⁴

...throughout our work, we have barely heard a good word about the careers work of the current Connexions service.

Following the publication of these unfavourable reports, and in light of various other arguments in favour of reform of the careers guidance system in England (discussed in more depth during a House of Commons debate on the topic in September 2011²⁵), responsibility for careers advice and guidance for school-aged children was transferred from local authorities to schools by the *Education Act 2011*.

In August 2010, an adult careers service called Next Step was launched. This consolidated a number of existing services and initiatives for adult career information into one service. Next Step provided guidance on careers in different occupations, information on essential qualifications and training, and advice on how to get financial and other forms of support. This service was a face-to-face and helpline service supported by a website hosted on the Direct Gov website.²⁶

In November 2010, the Government announced that an 'all-ages careers service' would be launched in 2012. This service would provide "...a unified, consistent service that [would offer] seamless support..." to both 13-19 year olds and people aged 20 and over.²⁷ The service was intended to be a comprehensive careers advice and guidance service and would remove the distinction between advice for young people and advice for adults which had been the norm in England. Plans for this service were widely welcomed by careers advice and guidance professionals, for example, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS).²⁸

However, it was [decided in August 2011](#) that the all-ages careers service would not go ahead, but its functions would instead be fulfilled by the National Careers Service.

²⁴ Alan Milburn, [Unleashing aspiration: final report of the panel on fair access to the professions](#), July 2009, pp 75.

²⁵ [HC Deb 13 September 2011 c958-1006](#)

²⁶ CEGNET, [CEIAG for young people: a policy commentary](#), October 2010

²⁷ BIS, [Press release: New all-age careers service to launch in England in 2012](#), 4 November 2010

²⁸ AGCAS, [New all ages careers service for England](#), July 2011

6 Comments on current careers services policy

The changes to careers services introduced since May 2010 have attracted some comment from professional bodies involved in careers guidance and from other experts in the field.²⁹

6.1 Careers guidance in schools

The Times Education Supplement (TES) stated that many schools were "...unclear' as to their new responsibilities." The same article also called for "...clarification on the NCS's involvement with schools..."³⁰

The Work and Pensions Select Committee report, *Youth unemployment and the Youth Contract*, raised concerns from careers professionals about what was expected by government from the careers services secured by schools. The Committee also indicated that how schools would deliver these services had not been made clear by government:

We did not get a clear sense from Ministers of how the Government expects schools to provide good quality "independent and impartial" careers information.³¹

The Institute of Career Guidance have urged the government to put in place "robust arrangements" to ensure that young people can access careers services whether they are in school or not.³²

6.2 NCS

The Work and Pensions Select Committee report mentioned above also commented on the introduction of the NCS. The report stated:

We do not consider the National Careers Service's offer of online and telephone advice to younger students to be an adequate alternative to face-to-face careers guidance.

AGCAS described the decision to launch the NCS rather than the original vision of an all-ages careers service as a "significant reduction" in the scope of careers services provided by government. AGCAS also stated that careers workers had raised "widespread concerns about the destruction of careers services across the country".³³

The Institute of Career Guidance have echoed this argument by stating that the NCS does not fulfil the proposed role of the all ages careers service because the NCS does not provide dedicated support to people in school and people with barriers to employment. The Institute of Career Guidance stated that the name of the NCS is "an illusion...a clear misrepresentation with regard to careers services for young people..." since careers services for some young people are the responsibility of other organisations.³⁴

²⁹ Careers England, *Commentaries on careers guidance changes*, website

³⁰ TES, *Careers revamp likely to cut 'overall capacity'*, 5 August 2011

³¹ Work and Pensions Committee, *Youth unemployment and the Youth Contract*, HC 151-1 2012/12, para 209

³² Institute of Careers Guidance, *National Careers Service and Education Act updates*, website

³³ AGCAS, *Government Advisory Group Voices Concerns on Widespread Destruction of Careers Services for Young People*, 8 August 2011

³⁴ TES, *Government fails to deliver on promise of unified careers advice*, 21 April 2011