University of Warwick, Institute for Employment Research (IER)

Written Evidence submitted to the Joint Sub-Committee Inquiry into Careers Advice, Information and Guidance

20th January 2016

Dr Deirdre Hughes, OBE, Principal Research Fellow and Professor Jenny Bimrose, Warwick University, Institute for Employment Research (IER). Deirdre is former Chair of the National Careers Council in England (2012-2014) reporting to three Skills Ministers. Jenny is a former member of the Career Profession Task Force, convened by Government (2010-2012), lead manager for an ESRC seminar series on the careers profession (2010-2012) and Co Editor for the British Journal for Guidance and Counselling (2011-2015).

1. Introduction

1.1 We are pleased to submit evidence to this important inquiry into careers advice, information and guidance focusing on developments since the publication of the House of Commons Education Committee report ‘Careers guidance for young people: The impact of the new duty on schools’ (January, 2013). It is very encouraging to find a particular focus on six key thematic areas that merit further scrutiny.

1.2 Since 2013, a plethora of reports have been published by employers, educationalists, trade unionists and careers sector bodies, as well as Ofsted, the Education Select Committee findings1; the National Careers Council’s two reports commissioned by Government and a careers heatmap2. All reaffirm the critical and urgent need for improved careers provision for all young people across England. The careers market that has emerged over the past decade is largely unregulated, complex and confusing, with a multiplicity of providers offering both free and costed services in a highly competitive marketplace. Consequently, there is an imperative need to tackle the challenges of the diversity and fragmentation that has occurred.

1.3 Effective CEIAG provision must span all types of educational provision, including: academies; maintained school; community schools; foundation schools; free schools; independent schools; sixth form colleges; further education colleges; pupil referral units (PRUs) and other alternatives. There must also be synergies with higher educational establishments, be relevant and readily understood by businesses, teachers, advisers and – above all – by young people themselves. Across England, careers support for young people is not operating as it could and should. Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills, recently stated “Preparation for employment remains poor and careers guidance in both schools and colleges is uniformly weak.”3 Some major challenges include:

(i) With 1 in 5 vacancies in the UK difficult to fill because of a lack of the right skills in the labour market, the importance of developing the skilled and experienced workforce of tomorrow cannot be overstated. In current (and future) labour markets’ individuals will continue to experience new patterns of work, with changing expectations affecting the way we do things and how we behave. This has enormous implications for schools and colleges and their curriculum design and delivery in helping students to look ahead and prepare themselves for a very different world.

---

3 https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/ambitions-for-education-sir-michael-wilshaw
(ii) The new education landscape requires more young people to make early subject choice decisions (some from 13 years old upwards) and the raising of the participation age from 16-18 years old in 2015, signals a new and challenging era for this current generation of school pupils (and their parents and teachers).

(iii) Signals to young people (and parents) about the added-value of learning and work are becoming more blurred. For example, weighing up the costs and benefits of apprenticeship training versus higher education options is becoming more difficult for many young people and their parent/carers. It is often reported graduates typically have reported higher rates of employment and higher levels of earnings than non-graduates. In addition, the lifetime benefits associated with the acquisition of Apprenticeships at Level 2 and 3 are increasingly reported as very significant, standing at between £48,000 and £74,000 for Level 2 and between £77,000 and £117,000 for Level 3 Apprenticeships (London Economics, 2011). In certain sectors, higher apprentices could earn £150,000 more on average over their lifetime compared to those with Level 3 vocational qualifications (AAT & CEBR, 2013). Though it should be noted that there is significant variation in the estimated wage premiums of apprentices depending on the sector of employment as well as gender challenges. Choices and investment decisions are becoming more nuanced.

(iv) There are growing concerns about young people’s lack of awareness regarding the connections between their educational experiences and the realities of labour markets. Many young people remain caught in a Catch-22 situation finding it “difficult to get work without experience and difficult to obtain experience without work” (UKCES, 2015).

(v) Latest figures show 178,100 16 to 18-year-olds failed to complete post-16 qualifications started in 2012/13, and are at risk of becoming ‘not in employment, education or training’ (NEET). Analysis for the Local Government Association by the Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion indicates the cost to the public purse of this wasted education and skills provision is £814 million – 12 per cent of all government spending on post-16 education and skills (op cit).

(vi) The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (December 2014) has raised concerns that one hundred thousand plus young people (aged 16-18) are off the radar…too many young people simply disappear from all relevant public systems. The Fabian Society (December 2014) puts the estimate higher: “we have lost track of over 150,000 young people nationally, including over 50,000 NEETs”. This is a serious problem as research shows youth unemployment can scar prospects throughout adult working life.

(vii) Young men are a third less likely than young girls to apply to higher education, and the relationship between participation in higher education and disadvantage is such that the more disadvantaged young men are, the less likely they are to apply to higher education.

---

6 AAT and CEBR - Is a university degree the best route into employment?
7 http://www.educationandemployers.org/research/the-challenges-facing-young-women-in-apprenticeships/
8 op.cit.
9 http://www.local.gov.uk/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/6951000/NEWS
10 http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/commons/
Variations in gender balance in different subjects also persist (HoL, 2015).

(viii) According to the Office for Fair Access, teenagers from the richest 20% of families are 6 times more likely to go to the most selective universities compared with youngsters from the most disadvantaged 40% of families.

Careers provision is a public good as well as a private one. It is essential to keep more young people switched on to learning, to encourage them not to close down opportunities too early and to broaden their horizons. In England, the current patchwork system of careers provision is far too uneven in handling these essential tasks. To what extent can a largely unregulated careers provider market in England deliver in the public interest? Lessons from the Netherlands who have adopted a similar approach show marketisation of career guidance leads to an impoverished supply of services, both in the quantitative as well as in the qualitative sense (Hughes & Meijiers, 2014). There is a pressing case for change to achieve a careers support system fit for the 21st century, but change should focus on reducing fractures in the present system rather than constantly launching wholly new ones.

2.0 The quality and impartiality of current provision

2.1 Schools are increasingly acknowledging their responsibility to guide students in their career development. However, the guidance that is provided to schools in England focuses for the most part on helping students towards their academic achievement, and not on helping them develop competencies to manage their future career. Whilst some schools, colleges and local authorities are doing reasonably well, many institutions need to rise to the challenge of meeting their statutory and non-statutory duties to provide impartial and independent careers guidance. It is vital that leaders, governors and teaching staff understand the dynamic careers marketplace and the level and quality of services available from trained and qualified careers professionals, as well as volunteer advisers, employers/employees and Enterprise Co-ordinators. There is significantly more activity than any one school can readily keep track of, let alone a young person and/or parent/carer. The volume of disparate activity has multiplied and become self-defeating.

2.2 In countries such as Austria, Finland, Germany and Switzerland, these issues are addressed by ensuring that careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) feature prominently in their education and training systems (ELGPN, 2012) from an early age. For example, an OCED report (2009) summed up the strengths of the Swiss VET system as follows:

“Its [the Swiss VET system] many strengths include strong employer engagement within a well functioning partnership of Confederation, cantons and professional organisations. School and work-based learning are integrated; the system is well resourced, flexible and comprehensive, including a strong tertiary VET sector. VET teachers and trainers, examiners and directors are well prepared, quality control is ensured, career guidance is systematic and professional. Evidence is well developed and routinely used to support policy arguments.”

14 http://www.theguardian.com/education/2010/may/19/rich-students-university-access-better
2.3 The quality and impartiality of careers provision needs to be urgently strengthened at both a central government and local level. One possible approach that could be easily implemented would be to encourage all schools and colleges to meet set quality standards, as espoused by the government-owned matrix quality standard, which includes a requirement for institutions to promote equality and diversity, impartiality, confidentiality and professional integrity in all aspects of service delivery. This would also support greater use qualified and trained careers advisers and would also facilitate improved communication and closer working links between public and privately owned kitemarks. A further practical approach at a local level is to develop ‘careers clusters’ to share resources in improving awareness of labour markets and supporting school and college leaders in a whole-school approach to plan and deliver careers education, information, advice and guidance.

3.0 How careers advice in schools and colleges can help to match skills with labour market needs

3.1 Across England, every school and college should have up-to-date, user-friendly, high quality labour market intelligence/information (LMI) and destination data readily accessible to inform curriculum developments and to support young people, teachers and parents/carers to make informed choices.

3.2 The government funded UKCES ‘LMI for All’ initiative has made available reliable and robust open source data, with some excellent examples of how content from the application programme interface (API) is being embedded within careers education and student support, particularly in colleges e.g. Barking and Dagenham College. With the government’s recent announcement regarding the future of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) this raises three key questions: (i) Who has oversight and responsibility in England for the whole system from a future jobs and skills requirement for the UK economy against the career aspirations, intentions, skills and qualifications that young people are working towards? (ii) Who is responsible for providing high quality robust, real time, reliable careers and labour market information that can be accessed by schools, colleges, young people and parents? (iii) What policy incentives or levers can be used most effectively to drive up accessibility and quality in careers support services for young people, particularly those most vulnerable in our society?

4.0 The role of the new Careers and Enterprise Company and its relationship with other bodies such as the National Careers Service

4.1 This new Company was formally established in March 2015.18 It is employer-led and independent of government with its own governance and advisory board arrangements19. The company intends to position itself at the heart of the careers and enterprise ecosystem – as a ‘market maker’ - to deliver transformational impact enabling young people to access opportunities to progress with their careers. The National Careers Service has a formal ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ with the new company. (It had a 5% allocated budget from the Skills Funding Agency for ‘brokerage services’ to schools and colleges). In December 2015, the Minister for Skills formally announced:

“We have agreed that the National Careers Service should be re-focussed on the new priority groups, young people aged 19-23 not in touch with schools/colleges, lower skilled adults aged 24 plus and adults (25 plus) with learning difficulties and disabilities. The service should build on the digital first approach already in train, using a triage approach to help citizens make informed choices about learning and work and determine their career pathway and

---

18 Secretary of State for Education evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee available to download at: http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/education-committee/careers-guidance-followup/oral/17257.pdf
19 Secretary of State for Education evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee available to download at: http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/education-committee/careers-guidance-followup/oral/17257.pdf
suitability for programmes including apprenticeships and traineeships as well as other learning and skills programmes intended to boost UK productivity” (December 2015).  

This shift in policy represents a potential further reduction in trained and qualified careers advisers supporting schools and colleges at a local level. Nonetheless, the Careers and Enterprise Company can be viewed as part of the solution towards improving careers initiatives for young people. Its intention is primarily to act as ‘a strategic umbrella organisation’, supporting sustainable programmes, filling gaps in provision and aiming for coverage across the country. But this new arrangement is not without its own challenges. For example, this new independent organisation has to find a way of securing future investment, competing with social enterprise, philanthropist, charitable foundations and corporate organisations. The Company must secure value for money from public funding and whilst corporate support during the inception phase of the Company is evident this is unlikely to be a long-term funding strategy of the Company as this risks the independence and standing of the Company. Also, the reach and cost-efficiency of services to help young people (and others) into work is also being addressed elsewhere in other government departments to drive up co-location and co-partnering arrangements. It is too early to comment on the effectiveness and impact of its working relationship with external organisations such as the National Careers Service and other agencies. We do know that schools and colleges remain confused by the introduction of the Company when the National Careers Service - through the Inspiration Agenda - has made solid contributions in supporting schools and colleges over the past year. The extent to which employers within the new careers and enterprise company may lead the way in setting out new careers policies and practices has yet to be determined.

4.2 The initial investment of £20 million for the Careers and Enterprise Company (over two years) comprises only around 5% of the level of investment in careers work prior to 2011. The company has started to roll out a new network of enterprise advisers across parts of England, volunteers who will work with a school to develop ways of engaging with local businesses and building careers and enterprise advice into the curriculum. The volunteers will be supported by paid co-ordinators, the first 23 of whom have already been appointed (January 2016). The is some confusion about how this approach differs from Young Enterprise, the Princes Trust, Business in the Community (BiTC) who are each actively involved in delivering successful brokerage services at a national and local level. The Prime Minister’s recent announcement to direct £70m towards careers in this Parliament is a welcome announcement. There are plans to launch a new national campaign, led principally by the Careers and Enterprise Company, to work with business, charities and the public sector to build a new generation of high-quality mentors for young teenagers, with a focus on the 25,000 about to start their GCSEs who are underachieving or at risk of dropping out. So far, there is no mention of harnessing careers professionals’ expertise in this regard.

4.3 In March 2016 (one year on), the company will formally announce successful bids from a £5m investment fund for careers innovation. The balance of investment funding for brokerage and dedicated careers professional inputs that will reach schools and young people (14-24 years old) has yet to be determined. In a very crowded landscape, the new company will have to be clear on the actual problem it is trying to solve. In contrast to other government public sector investments in careers provision, this government has not set a ‘target driven’ culture for the Careers and Enterprise Company e.g. ‘payment by results’ and there is no representation on the Company Board or Investment Steering Group of professionally trained and qualified careers professionals i.e. business and education leaders only.

4.4 The extent to which Lord Young’s enterprise agenda becomes the dominant theme is something to be reconciled. Concrete agreements will need to be reached and radically improved

---


careers information, advice and guidance for students needs to be achieved. The current Government is now looking ahead to assess the efficacy of existing arrangements and it seems likely further measures will be considered to help move beyond current statutory and non-statutory requirements for schools and colleges.

4.5 The DWP Youth Guarantee\textsuperscript{22} and Queen’s Speech (May 2015)\textsuperscript{23} with a new Full Employment and Welfare Benefits Bill include a commitment from government to provide a Jobcentre Plus adviser in schools with piloting now underway. Careers provision delivered by local authorities and LEPs with their local partners (reliant mostly on European Social Funds) remains patchy. The recent announcement that Jobcentre Plus (funded by DWP) will also work with schools complicates this picture further.\textsuperscript{24}

4.6 The government needs to articulate very clearly the mission and aims of the various national organisations - the Careers and Enterprise Company, the National Careers Service, Jobcentre Plus - to schools, colleges, local policy-makers and most importantly to young people and families. Without this, confusion will remain about roles and responsibilities and what is on offer, and questions will continue to be asked about value for the public purse.

5.0 The balance between national and local approaches to careers advice

5.1 An effective careers advice, information and guidance system must accommodate differences in context and local circumstances. What works in one part of England - or in a particular local community - may not work in other parts. Local approaches are far more effective in meeting the nuanced needs of local areas but this need to be adequately resourced at a central level.

5.2 In England, the process of rebuilding and re-engineering careers provision for young people has been slow, with false starts and setbacks. There exists a crowded, confused and complex landscape, with a multiplicity of disjointed careers initiatives.\textsuperscript{25} Bradford, Hull, Leeds, London, Solihull, Newcastle, Cornwall and many other parts of England are now forging ahead independently with implementing a local careers offer for young people. For example, London Enterprise Panel (LEP), launched ‘London Ambitions: Reshaping a careers offer for every young Londoner’ (July 2015).\textsuperscript{26} This provides a vision and sets out a pragmatic way forward to tackle some of the challenges that young people face when trying to make the right career choices. If it can happen in London, it can happen elsewhere. But it won’t happen by accident or by being left to chance.

6.0 Careers advice and apprenticeships

6.1 The government aims to achieve full employment in the UK, with the highest employment rate in the G7 group of nations. Achieving this requires action on skills to bridge information gaps and to improve learner destinations and outcomes. For apprenticeships to be available to young people and adults across all sectors of the economy and at all levels, including degree level, there will need to be a strong combination of pull factors (ensuring more apprenticeships are readily available) and push factors (ensuring individuals are fully aware of the options and likely returns available). This requires having access to informed, reliable and impartial careers advice, information and guidance, delivered by a triage system of suitably qualified and well-trained staff.

\textsuperscript{22} https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/helping-people-to-find-and-stay-in-work  
\textsuperscript{26} https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/shaping_report_interim_19_june_sp.pdf
6.2 The recent Ofsted report highlighted that secondary schools are still not doing enough to promote apprenticeships to young people:

“The continued poor promotion of apprenticeships in schools restricted students’ access to reliable information. The apprentices interviewed by inspectors reported that they had typically been determined, resilient and resourceful enough to find out for themselves the opportunities available to them and to overcome the barriers repeatedly placed in their way. They relied heavily on advice from family and friends.” (p.18)

“Poor advice in schools led to a small number of apprentices interviewed initially starting an A-level course that they felt had delayed their career. There is clearly still a misconception that apprenticeships are not for young people with a good academic record.” (p.18)

Of the 22 providers visited by Ofsted, all reported that they were either prevented from offering information about apprenticeships to students in at least some of the schools in their area or that school-leavers rarely had sufficient knowledge of apprenticeships.

6.3 Sir Michael Wilshaw has recently stated that if he was leading a group of schools “Careers advice across the federation would be a priority, with a real focus on Year 9 to ensure that each student, at the end of Key Stage 3, had a clear sense of the different pathways in front of them.” International research findings support this, as well as other evidence on the benefits of starting early in primary schools. Initiatives such as ‘Primary Futures’ appear to be making a positive impact in this regard.

6.4 There is widespread consensus on the elements that make up effective guidance to help young people into successful working lives. The biggest challenge is delivery. Over the last three years, the track record of careers advice, information and guidance policy in England has been one of repeated confusion, with a mismatch between the scale of the challenge and the service delivered in practice. England is lagging behind other nations (both within and outside of the UK) when it comes to ensuring informed and impartial careers advice, information and guidance for young people. This represents a serious threat to the future success of apprenticeships in England. This country has historically been viewed as having one of the strongest career development systems in the world. A major international symposium (USA, 2015) revealed many other countries are now challenging England in this role. Countries as diverse as Canada, Estonia, Japan, Norway, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Scotland are all investing significantly in their career development systems.

7.0 The potential for employers to play a greater role in careers advice

7.1 In order to bring about the culture change needed in careers provision for young people (and adults) we need to create a movement that includes employers, education and career development professionals. Employers should encourage their employees to volunteer to go into schools and colleges to give students insights to different careers, enthuse them about the world of work and provide access to active experience of work, in particular to help address mismatches in young people’s career aspirations. The concept of young people gaining at least 100 hours experience of work before the age of 16 merits greater policy attention.

---

28 http://www.educationandemployers.org/programmes/primary-futures/
A report by Warwick University IER, on behalf of the Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS), sets out findings from a study focused on understanding the link between employers, schools and the National Careers Service (BIS, 2014)\(^{31}\). Whilst many employers are doing great work with schools, colleges and universities more need to step up and offer young people more work experiences and opportunities. This is a major challenge given findings from a survey of just over 300 employers which highlights over 50% did not engage, had no plans to engage in working links with schools because they saw no real benefits to their business and there are too many restrictions to navigate (BIS op. cit.). This may also help explain the Government, Careers and Enterprise Company and Skills Funding Agency’s focus on the need to strengthen ‘brokerage arrangements’ between schools and employers.

8.0 Possible ways forward

8.1 Convene a cross-departmental review of activities and funding streams that impact on careers advice, information and guidance to ensure a more cost effective, fair and equitable system

8.2 Put a greater focus and investment on building capacity throughout the system and within schools and colleges to support the delivery of high quality careers advice, information and guidance.

8.3 Put in place incentives in the accountability framework and regulatory regime to encourage schools, colleges and universities to invest in, build on and disseminate best practice in careers advice, information and guidance to ensure this is widely shared.

The University of Warwick established the Institute for Employment Research (IER) in 1981. IER is one of Europe’s leading centres for research in the labour market field. Its work includes comparative European research on employment and training as well as that focusing on the UK at national, regional and local levels. The Institute is concerned principally with the development of scientific knowledge about the socio-economic system rather than with the evolution and application of one particular discipline. It places particular emphasis on using social science in the effective development of policy and practice and in collaborating with the policy and practitioner communities to bring this about.

Contact:

Dr Deirdre Hughes, OBE
Email: deirdre.ughes@warwick.ac.uk
Tel: 07533 545057

Professor Jenny Bimrose
Email: jenny.bimrose@warwick.ac.uk
Tel: 07972619544