

## Careers England Policy Commentary 30

*This is the thirtieth in an occasional series of briefing notes on key policy documents related to the future of career guidance services in England. The note has been prepared for Careers England by Professor Tristram Hooley.<sup>1</sup>*

### Career guidance and inspiration in schools (March 2015)

#### Tristram Hooley

1. **Introduction.** The government released new guidance for schools on career guidance and inspiration in March 2015.<sup>2</sup> This replaces the previous version of this guidance (April 2014).<sup>3</sup> The new version of the guidance is considerably different to the previous version. The changes relate largely to wider changes in the policy environment, including the announcement of new funding for careers and the formation of the new careers and enterprise company.<sup>4</sup> However, there are also a number of other changes, most notably the introduction of a new section on quality assurance. In general the new version of the guidance is stronger than the previous version and will be welcomed by many in the careers community as a step in the right direction.
2. The government has also released a new version of the guidance for colleges and sixth forms.<sup>5</sup> This has been revised in a far less substantial way than the guidance for schools. This commentary will focus on the schools document. The commentary will begin by summarising what the guidance means for schools and move on to review how the guidance has changed from the previous version. Finally it will reflect on the wider implications of the decision to update the guidance in this way.
3. **Implications for schools.** The statutory guidance sets out what schools must have regard to when carrying out duties relating to career guidance. Three levels of requirement are set out in the guidance.
  - a. The term “*must*” denotes something that a school has a legal obligation to do.
  - b. The term “*should*” denotes something that a school should have regard to, but which is not a legal obligation.

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<sup>1</sup> Helpful comments on earlier versions of this draft were received from Steve Stewart, Nicki Moore and David Andrews. The author is however solely responsible for the views expressed.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education (2015). *Career Guidance and Inspiration in Schools: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies, School Leaders and School Staff* (March 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Department for Education (2014). *Career Guidance and Inspiration in Schools: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies, School Leaders and School Staff* (April 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Morgan, N. (2014). Oral Statement to Parliament (11th December 2014). Available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nicky-morgan-speaks-about-young-people-and-work> [Accessed 23rd March 2015].

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education (2015). *Career Guidance and Inspiration in Schools: Guidance for General Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges* (March 2015).

- c. The terms “*may*” and “*can*” are also used during the document to denote things that schools may wish to consider but for which there is no formal expectation.
4. **Musts.** The term “*must*” is used sparingly throughout the document. However a number of clear requirements are set out for schools.
- a. The guidance states that the statutory duty requires governing bodies to “*ensure that all registered pupils at the school are provided with independent careers guidance from year 8 (12-13 year olds) to year 13 (17-18 year olds)*” (para. 16). This duty is further defined by a requirement that the governing body *must* ensure that this guidance is impartial, includes information on a range of education and training options and is in the best interests of the pupils to whom it is given (para. 17).
- b. The responsibility assigned to the governing body is reinforced in paragraph 39 which states that schools *must* secure independent guidance that includes the full range of education and training options. This paragraph emphasises that pupils’ educational and career choices should be their own and in their best interest and that these choices should be informed by career guidance. It also highlights the importance of providing career guidance in good time before key decision points, particularly highlighting the choice of 16-19 study programme and the education and work choices that follow this.
- c. While schools can retain in-house arrangements for providing advice and guidance to pupils, these arrangements *must* be combined with advice and guidance from independent and external sources (para.12).
- d. School *must* ensure that pupils understand that they are now required to continue in education or training until at least their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (para. 48)<sup>6</sup>. In particular schools *must* be clear that this does not mean that young people are required to stay in school and that they should be made aware of the full range of ways in which they can learn or combine working and learning.
- e. Schools *must* provide relevant information about all pupils to local authority support services. The sharing of data is to enable the provision of support and to allow their participation in education, employment or training to be tracked. However, schools *must not* do this if a pupil over 16 or a parent has asked for their data not to be shared (para. 48 – 49). Schools also *must* notify local authorities as soon as possible when a 16 or 17 year old leaves an education or training programme before completion (para 54).
- f. Students with an Education, Health and Care plan or a ‘statement’ *must* include a focus on preparing for adulthood (including employment) in this plan (para. 64). In addition schools *must* co-operate with local authorities in SEN provision (para. 65).

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<sup>6</sup> See Department for Education (2014). *Participation of Young People in Education, Employment or Training* (September 2014).

5. **Shoulds.** In addition to the requirements (*musts*) the guidance also sets out a range of things that schools *should* do. These include that schools should:
- a. have a strategy for career guidance. This strategy should be embedded in a programme of outcomes, provide access to a range of inspirational activities that bring young people into contact with employers, working people and a range of representatives of post-secondary education. Such activities should encourage young people to consider a wide range of careers and destinations including university, apprenticeships and entrepreneurship;
  - b. consider how best to quality assure their careers provision by making use of the quality awards recognised by the Quality in Careers Standard<sup>7</sup> (for the school's careers programme), the matrix Standard<sup>8</sup> (for independent providers of information, advice and guidance) and the professional standards overseen by the Career Development Institute<sup>9</sup> (for the professionalism of careers workers);
  - c. provide face-to-face advice and guidance. The guidance states “while most young people can benefit from face-to-face guidance, it is likely to be particularly useful for children from disadvantaged background” (para. 47). However, the distinction between professional career guidance and face-to-face interactions with career informants such as employers is poorly articulated. This could result in a reading of the guidance which suggested that professional career guidance could be substituted with access to employers. The guidance would be enhanced if these roles were more clearly distinguished and seen as complementary;<sup>10</sup>
  - d. encourage students to use websites and digital resources to support their career building. However, the provision of access to such resources is not sufficient to meet the statutory duty (para. 11).
  - e. work closely with key partners such as the new careers company, the National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus;
  - f. work to avoid stereotyping in the advice and guidance that they provide; and
  - g. make clear to pupils the importance of achieving grade C or better in English and Maths and clarify that they will be required to continue to study these up to the age of 19 if they do not achieve these grades. They should also make it clear that STEM subjects underpin a very wide range of careers.

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.careersengland.org.uk/quality.php>.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://matrixstandard.com/>.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.thecdi.net>.

<sup>10</sup> See Careers Sector Stakeholder Alliance (2014). The Roles of Employers and Career Professionals in Providing Career Support to Young People in Schools and Colleges (Briefing Note 13A). Available from <http://careersalliance.com/2014/06/15/cssa-briefing-note-13a/> [Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015].

6. **What has changed?** At first glance the March 2015 and April 2014 versions of the guidance look remarkably similar. While they retain much text in common (the guidance itself refers to this as a “minor update”), the new version has been changed considerably and contains a number of important additions and rewritten sections. These changes shift the tone of the guidance in important ways.
7. The guidance now begins with two new paragraphs which make the case for career guidance far more strongly than in the previous version. The opening sentence situates the purpose of schooling far more broadly than in much recent rhetoric: “*Every child should leave school prepared for life in modern Britain.*” Career guidance is seen to be “*crucial*” in enabling this aim by “*helping pupils to emerge from school more fully rounded and ready for the world of work*” as well as helping them to be “*well-informed*” (para. 7). The guidance then goes on to highlight Ofsted’s criticisms of career guidance<sup>11</sup> and to reaffirm the importance of getting it right.
8. The new version of the statutory guidance contains a number of drafting changes which include restating material, moving it from one section to another and making minor changes. In general these changes help to improve the clarity of the document and make it easier to see what is required.
9. More substantially the document also includes a number of changes which take account of wider changes in the policy environment. There is new material relating to the new 16 to 19 study programmes<sup>12</sup>, to the raising of the participation age, plans to develop a post-16 choices portal, the growing focus on tracking students’ post-school destinations and other wider policy changes. The decision to connect the statutory guidance on careers to these wider policies helps to embed it further in broader government youth and skills policy.
10. The announcement of the new careers company is also addressed within the new guidance. The company is positioned as an important new resource for schools which will support their engagement with careers through the provision of advice and brokerage. The company is linked to the proposal by Lord Young to introduce a digital Enterprise Passport for young people.<sup>13</sup> However, no further details are provided on this idea or the likely implications for schools. In reality the new careers company is still embryonic and it is likely that further detail about the inter-relationship between it and schools will follow in subsequent versions of the guidance.
11. Finally and most substantially the guidance includes a new section on quality assurance (para. 67-68). This section adopts the “three pronged approach” to quality assurance which has been advocated by Careers England and others in the sector, and endorsed by the Education Select

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<sup>11</sup> Ofsted (2013). *Going in the Right Direction? Careers Guidance in Schools from September 2012*. Manchester: Ofsted.

<sup>12</sup> See Department for Education (2015). *16 to 19 Study Programmes* (March 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Young, D. (2014). *Enterprise for All: The Relevance of Enterprise in Education*. London: DBIS.

Committee.<sup>14</sup> It says that schools should take into consideration the Quality in Careers Standard, the matrix Standard and the professional standards maintained by the Career Development Institute. The inclusion of this in the statutory guidance represents a substantial shift for the government.

12. **A reflection on the changes.** The period since the formation of the Coalition has been a turbulent one for career guidance policy.<sup>15</sup> The government initially seemed positive about career guidance, but the early commitments were quickly swept away as substantial cuts were made to the Connexions service, responsibility for career guidance was transferred to schools and the statutory guidance which was issued was weak and confusing.<sup>16</sup> However, following the appointment of Nicky Morgan as the new Secretary of State there has been a clear change in policy. The shift started in December with the announcement of the new careers company and is continued with the revision of this statutory guidance. There appears now to be a willingness to consider both additional funding (currently at a very small scale) and a greater degree of regulation and guidance for schools.
13. It is important not to overstate the level of policy change that this document represents. The new guidance still includes relatively few *musts* in comparison to a large number of *shoulds*. This obviously raises questions as to what sanctions might be applied to schools which failed to comply with either the responsibilities that they *must* fulfill and those that they merely *should* fulfill. Ofsted is unlikely to inspect at this level of detail and no other clear incentive or sanction for schools currently exists.
14. In addition many of the criticisms raised by Watts in his commentary on the April 2014 iteration of the statutory guidance stand.<sup>17</sup> The new guidance remains weak on the role of career education, unclear on the distinction between career professionals and career informants and without any clear definition of “career guidance” or “inspiration”.
15. An additional concern relates to the remit of the guidance. While the guidance for schools has been substantially revised, the revision of the guidance for general further education colleges and sixth forms is far more superficial. Most of the concerns outlined by Watts in his commentary on the 2014 version of the guidance remain.<sup>18</sup> It is unclear why the government believes that further education colleges and sixth forms do not need an equivalent level of guidance on this issue to schools. Furthermore there is also a need to consider the career guidance needs of young people who are undertaking apprenticeships and other combinations of work and learning. At present this group of young people is outside of the regulation and yet their career guidance needs are likely to be equivalent or even greater to those who remain wholly inside education.

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<sup>14</sup> House of Commons Education Committee (2013). *Careers Guidance for Young People: The Impact of the New Duty on Schools*. London: Stationery Office.

<sup>15</sup> See Hooley, T., Matheson, J. & Watts, A.G. (2014). *Advancing Ambitions: The Role of Career Guidance in Supporting Social Mobility*. London: Sutton Trust, pp.14-21 for a summary of these changes.

<sup>16</sup> See Careers England Policy Commentaries 15, 16, 22, 27 & 28.

<sup>17</sup> Watts, A.G. (2014). Revised Statutory Guidance and Non-Statutory Departmental Advice on Careers Guidance and Inspiration in Schools (Careers England Policy Commentary 27).

<sup>18</sup> Watts, A.G. (2014). Revised Guidance for Colleges (Careers England Policy Commentary 28).

16. **Conclusion.** In conclusion the new statutory guidance represents an important step in the right direction. However, it should be seen as the beginning of the journey rather than the end. The current government clearly has one eye on the imminent election and has sought to address this issue at least in part to deal with an area of policy where there have been perceived failures. Other political parties have also shown a growing interest in career guidance over recent months although there have been no firm commitments made so far. It is hoped that a strong commitment to the continued improvement of career guidance will feature in the party manifestos and the programme of the government formed following the general election. Regardless of the party that is elected there is clearly important work for a new government to do in implementing this guidance and the new careers company and in ensuring that England moves further towards an effective lifelong career guidance system.