

PLYMOUTH CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRUST BOARD REPORT

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF CAREERS WORK

In this paper the term "careers guidance" will be used, as Ofsted uses it, to refer to the whole range of school based activities including careers education (normally delivered through lessons) and the small group or one to one guidance provided through a careers adviser.

High quality, impartial careers guidance brings substantial benefits to society and the economy. It does this by benefitting:

- **Individuals** so that they plan for sustainable careers that enable individual prosperity and community cohesion
- **Employers** so that they have a well matched and skilled workforce that enables them to be productive and competitive
- **Post-16, post-18 opportunity providers** so that dropouts are lowered and human and financial losses reduced because individuals know what they are applying to and where it leads
- **Government** so that people can prosper and contribute to the economy

Provision post the 2011 Education Act

The Education Act, which received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011, allows local authorities to retain their statutory duty to encourage, enable or assist young people's participation in education and training. The peninsula local authorities of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay have commissioned Careers South West to manage and deliver "Transition Support for Young People into Education, Employment and Training".

A one year contract for 2012-13 it provides youth support at 3 levels:

- **Early Intervention** for those at risk of not participating effectively in education and training. This group includes those whose aspirations do not relate to their abilities; who do not attend school regularly; who have learning difficulties or disabilities, who are unlikely to achieve as they should
- **Targeted** interventions with individual young people to make a successful and sustained transition post 16 and maximise engagement with education, training or employment. This may be a relatively short term piece of work that will seek to (re)engage the young person quickly where appropriate or provide longer term on-going support to young people whose needs require longer term support
- **Intensive** support for those facing substantial multiple problems preventing them from engaging with learning who are likely to be involved with a number of different professionals engaged in education, social welfare, health and housing. Young people in this category need youth support to take effective action on their behalf to help them gain access to a range of more specialist service, to ensure that barriers are addressed in a co-ordinated way and to maintain in contact with progress being made. Some young people receive daily key worker interventions and support for the whole family .

This contract essentially targets vulnerable young people i.e. those with multiple and complex needs demonstrating a history of low resilience and a lack of resourcefulness with respect to dealing with problems or challenges in their life.

The Act while removing the statutory responsibility for the provision of universal careers services or a Connexions service from local authorities, passes these range of duties to schools and colleges for the first time. With no additional funding to schools to cover the cost, it is highly likely that schools will seek to deliver their new responsibilities at the lowest possible cost and/or to the lowest number of students.

The division of roles between schools and local authorities for the first time splits the responsibilities for targeted services and universal services. This may prove to be unhelpful and confusing for young people and their families, as well as risking both duplication of and gaps in provision.

Level of provision

Due to financial and curriculum pressures most schools will find it difficult to deliver the independent, impartial and up to date careers guidance that the Act speaks of. It will cost each school more to deliver high standard careers guidance themselves than it would to commission an already up to speed external service operating with several schools, colleges, universities and training providers. One school in Plymouth has decided to deliver the service themselves, despite the statutory guidance which states that the service must be independent from the school, the rest have contracted Careers South West to deliver careers guidance. With some exceptions, most schools in Plymouth are buying in one to two days a week for work with years 8-13. This is considerably less than was provided previously by the local authority.

Quality

The quality of careers education provided by schools has for many years been variable. In schools the use of unqualified school or careers staff as careers co-ordinators with no clear career pathway is evidence of this. In 2010 Ofsted reported:

“In six of the 18 schools visited for this survey, the staff who taught careers education did not always have sufficient current knowledge of career paths or the world of work outside education to support students effectively or to challenge stereotypical career choices.”

Ofsted: “Moving through the system –information, advice and guidance” Report No.:080273 (2010) (Para 21 p12)

In Plymouth most careers coordinators are unqualified school staff without a careers qualification. A few schools in Plymouth are working with Careers South West to enable their careers coordinators to undertake a technician grade careers qualification. Careers South West is working with Plymouth Learning Trust (PLT) on basic and continuing professional development and setting up a careers association for the careers coordinators in Plymouth.

In the best schools quality awards are used to evidence best practice in careers guidance. The major quality award in England is the Investors in Careers award run by Careers South West. Assessment is based on standards required by legislation or nationally produced guidelines on good practice, so schools/colleges are not being asked to do anything that is not already established as being of value to their students. The award has been written and revised by careers education and guidance professionals, teachers and senior managers in schools and adopts an external assessor/panel approach. Most schools in Plymouth have this award and PLT has re-stated its commitment to the award.

Impartiality

Government has a particular concern about the nature of guidance provided by schools with sixth forms:

“Competition between institutions for students mean that schools with sixth forms tend to encourage students to stay in school, whereas these pressures are not present in schools without sixth forms”

- 53% of teachers do not feel confident giving advice about apprenticeships
- 62% of school leaders said they still have no firm plans in place
- many schools are planning to cut back on work experience at the same time as they take on their new responsibilities

Preparation for work – the work related learning curriculum

The recent Ofsted review of work experience (March 2012) reports that young people who take part in work experience or vocational study at school are more likely to succeed in an apprenticeship than those who have no exposure to the workplace. It is clear that meaningful work experience, vocational study and course tasters can contribute to improving life chances.

However the Government has endorsed all of the recommendations of Professor Wolf in her review of vocational education, including removal of the statutory duty to deliver work-related learning (e.g. work experience) to key stage 4 students. In addition the 1997 statutory duty on schools to provide a careers education programme for all students in years 9 to 11, extended to years 7 and 8 in 2004 will be repealed under the Education Act from September 2012.

Ministers still expect schools to provide careers education and work related-learning in order to contextualise careers guidance and ensure that it is not episodic. The issue will be one of sufficiency and targeting as schools step away for example from universal work experience, or make it optional for students to have a placement.

Evidence from Ofsted and quality assurance mechanisms such as Investor in Careers suggests that the most effective model for delivering careers and the work related curriculum is through separately timetabled elements with learning outcomes set within an integrated course of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, taught by a team of specialist PSHE education teachers and supplemented by some suspended timetable activities such as curriculum days. This is not the model most schools adopt due to pressure on the curriculum and the lack of specialist knowledge.

Against a back drop of concern from employers nationally and locally during the last 6 years that young people do not have the employability skills that they require, employers and employer groups are concerned that schools may minimise access to the work related curriculum further and further reduce the level of employability skills of school and college leavers.

With effect from 1 September 2012 PLT has commissioned Careers South West to deliver work experience and elements of the work related curriculum. Considered by Heads in Plymouth as the bedrock for careers guidance, there is a will to retain as much of the careers education and work related curriculum as is possible. This is despite no additional funding being made available to fund the work due to the removal of national grant funding to cover the cost of work experience.

Trained guidance staff from CSW will put work experience preparation and debrief in the context of local and national opportunities and entry and progression routes into further, higher education and employment. We believe that this integrated model of work related and careers learning will embed the learning from work experience, inform learner choice, and is an exciting and innovative development.

Ofsted has called on the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to develop “a national set of expectations” for the outcomes of work experience placements, ensuring all young people are prepared for work. Careers South West is working with PLT to develop a locally recognised set of expectations.

Careers South West is working with Mark Looker (PCC Worklessness Coordinator) to set up an Employer and Education Summit to understand and address employability skills issues within the city.

Choice at the end of compulsory schooling (DfES Research Report 414, 2003) p47 (Foskett and Hesketh 1997).

Under the previous centrally funded system there were situations in a limited number of cases where young people and independent careers advisers were put under pressure to direct applications to school sixth forms over other options. With the duty to provide careers guidance now moving to schools and where funding is a concern, impartiality could become more of an issue.

Face to face guidance

Until 1995 almost all young people were offered face-to-face careers guidance. With the advent of Connexions the situation varied widely across the country. In Plymouth Careers South West continued to find it possible to maintain this level of face-to-face contact within the budgets provided until the major cuts to the Area Based Grant in 2010, however Plymouth continued to be one of the better funded areas for careers work in schools, achieving around 50% face-to-face contact.

Statutory guidance issued alongside the Act implies that face-to-face careers guidance is “appropriate” for those facing difficult transitions rather than being a fundamental part of the decision making process for the majority of young people. The “Transition Support for Young People into Education, Employment and Training” contract for 2012/13 has reduced face-to-face contact to around 20%, being with the most vulnerable, and focused on those likely to disengage from learning. However with the level of contracted services from schools we can expect a significant deterioration in the levels of access to face-to-face careers guidance when compared with previous years, with the most able students possibly being the hardest hit. Given the economic recession, high levels of youth unemployment and high dropout rates from higher education, this is of concern.

The link between careers guidance and the choices young people make on leaving school

Research evidence reports that careers guidance can be a catalyst bringing a sense of urgency to decision making and that substantial evidence exists both in the UK and USA to show that careers guidance affects decision-making skills, self-awareness, opportunity awareness, certainty of decision making and decisiveness.

(Choice at the end of compulsory schooling (DfES Research Report 414, 2003; p42))

Maguire and Rennison (2005) found that young people who were NEET were less likely than those in post 16 learning to report having received formal guidance or to have attended a careers interview whilst at school.

(Sue Maguire and Jo Rennison (2005): ‘Two years on: the destinations of young people who are not in education, employment or training at 16 – Journal of Youth Studies Volume 8 issue 2. (On line version available at: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a713996633>)

In their study Simm et al.(2007) reported that early leavers from FE cited one of the main reasons for discontinuing was that the course was not what they had expected and that course switching was associated with restricted access to careers education and guidance.

(Claire Simm, Rosie Page, Linda Miller (2007): Reasons for Early Leaving from Further Education and Work-based Learning Courses – DCSF research report 849. (On line version available at: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR849.pdf>)

Most individuals do not make confident career choices; lack of self and opportunity awareness and contacts is not just confined to the less traditionally prosperous, more so now than ever. The challenge for policy makers and funders is how to deal with reduced access to high quality independent careers guidance.

Schools’ preparedness to deliver their new duties

The national picture reported in the *Times Educational Supplement* on 6th July 2012 reported that:

- almost half of teachers believed the quality and quantity of careers advice will deteriorate when the responsibility is passed to schools

The overall coherence of the careers guidance offered to young people

Even at the time of the report "*Choice at the end of compulsory schooling (DfES Research Report 414, 2003)*" the variability of provision in schools was seen to be an issue. This is likely to increase further with the dropping of the career related learning from the statutory curriculum and the reduction in contact from a qualified careers adviser in many schools from September 2012.

The majority of parents remain unaware of the changes from September 2012. Thresholds of vulnerability can be unclear to some school and other agency staff and to young people and their families; therefore there may be some difficulties in determining whether responsibility for careers guidance for a particular individual sits with a school or the local authority. Explaining who is responsible for what is likely to prove problematic.

As school models vary so much no sense of consistency or entitlement has been established as yet - what one school considers "sufficient" work experience or careers guidance is different from another. Plymouth Learning Trust is aware of this issue and will be working with Careers South West to understand and articulate entitlement. Funding entitlement is likely to continue to pose a challenge for most schools.

Overall the issues outlined in this paper are likely to make increasing aspiration, addressing youth unemployment, improving employability skills and increasing social mobility a more challenging series of tasks than they have been in the past.

This paper is based on evidence submitted to the House of Commons Education Committee short inquiry into careers guidance for young people with additional commentary added to enable the Plymouth context to be given to the Plymouth Children's and Young People's Trust Board.

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