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GETTING TO CHARTERED STATUS: AN UPDATE



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PRESENTS
INITIAL
RESEARCH ON CDI
MEMBERS' VIEWS
ON CHARTERED
STATUS**



In 2021, the CDI commissioned a scoping exercise to understand the potential for the career development sector to petition for a Royal Charter. The first stage of the research was reported in *Career Matters* in 2021. The research recommended a further exploration of sector stakeholders' views on chartered status. This article provides an update on the project and the latest phase of research. The research captured the views of 657 research participants using an online survey, individual interviews and focus groups and it engaged practitioners working across all areas of career development practices and geographical locations across the UK and beyond. This is an important piece of research which will inform the strategic decision making, not just of the CDI but other stakeholders who operate

across the career development sector.

Attitudes to petitioning for a Royal Charter

The research found a strong appetite for a petition for a Royal Charter. Whilst there are some who do not support this move towards chartership, there are a significant number who do and research participants provided many examples of how the sector and its stakeholders would benefit. These included:

- an improved experience for clients due to a more consistent approach, role identity and quality standards;
- a higher profile, more recognition of the role and respect for the work of career development practitioners;

- a greater commitment to and recognition of the employers of career development practitioners leading to a potential increase in funding, recognition of the quality services they provide and an increased focus on developing the evidence base and
- an increased awareness by governments of the positive impact that career development practitioners can have on the achievement of a variety of public policy goals.

Although the research suggests that this would be a positive move, there are some views which suggested this move might impact negatively on the sector. The issues are summarised as follows:

- Some people were concerned about divisiveness and a lack of equity due to different practitioner pay and conditions across parts of the sector;
- Others were concerned about the impact of a new process of individual recognition being applied unequally across parts of the sector and thus creating a new hierarchy and unequal access to advancement opportunities;
- There was a more general concern about the costs for individuals and employers.

Once a Royal Charter has been received it will then be possible to develop and offer individual charterships to practitioners who meet a set of pre-determined standards. Unlike the existing register which recognises the qualifications that an individual has and their intention to adhere to the Code of Ethics and undertake 25 hours of CPD annually, an individual charter would go beyond this, assessing an individual's ability to apply their competences at a level of expertise which has previously neither been assessed or recognised.

The research participants were all very clear that they would be prepared to undertake an additional assessment beyond initial training and a majority (albeit small) felt that this should be benchmarked at postgraduate level. Research participants indicated that they would like to see individual chartership form part of a framework for professional recognition. A re-visioned framework of professional development for the sector could encourage practitioners to join as members and then progress through a series of levels which could include Registered Practitioner, Chartered Practitioner, Fellow and Senior or Principal Fellow. What's more, there is room within the process of individual charterships to differentiate individual roles. It is possible that the organisation who receives the Royal Charter could offer individual charterships for a range of roles such as a chartered careers adviser, a chartered careers leader or a chartered careers coach.

What might get in the way of success?

Although the research has suggested that there is very strong support for this move, success will be difficult to achieve and there will be challenges. The career development sector is complex; its practitioners work to different job titles and across different segments of the sector. This has the potential to undermine the success of a petition to the Privy Council, as one of the critical factors is that a petitioning body should be

representative of the sector for which the Royal Charter is intended. One organisation will need to lead the planning and development of a petition to the Privy Council. The research revealed that irrespective of which professional organisation individuals belonged to there was a feeling that the CDI as an umbrella organisation was best placed to move this forward on behalf of the sector. The implications of this are severalfold; for example, the professional organisations will need to align their codes of ethical practice and agree a framework of qualifications and progression frameworks.

Next steps

There are several things which need to happen if a petition for a Royal Charter is to be made. The Boards of all the professional associations will need to agree this move and then they will need to come together, led by the CDI to establish a plan of action. This will not be a quick fix! The petition will need to be thoroughly evidenced and one task will be to map the existing evidence base and identify any gaps. A research strategy will then need to be developed and implemented. Some areas for further research suggested by this phase of the project included:

- An analysis of the work of private career development practitioners to understand their existing relevant qualifications, experiences and areas of the sector in which they work;
- Understanding the public awareness and experiences of career development activities.

And finally

The research has highlighted several outcomes of a successful petition for a Royal Charter. It has the potential to raise the value of the sector in governments', policy makers' and the public's consciousness. It could serve to highlight quality in the career development services which the public seek. For the sector, it could result in consistency in the standards, qualifications, practices, values and quality assurance approaches across the UK and would ensure transferability of knowledge and skills across the Home Nations and across different parts of the sector.

The overall message from this research is very positive. Practitioners across the sector support the idea of the CDI leading a petition to the Privy Council for a Royal Charter for the sector. This is not without challenge and the sector needs to come together to speak with one voice on behalf of their members and to align some organisational policies and practices. It is suggested by the research that if this can be achieved, the users of career development services, practitioners and those who employ them will all benefit.

References

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