

Careers England Policy Commentary 19

This is the nineteenth 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 Tony Watts.¹

Government Response to Heseltine Review

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1. The Heseltine Review on ways of stimulating economic growth² was commissioned by the Coalition Government and was published in late October 2012. Its 89 recommendations included attention to improving employment outcomes from the education and skills system. More generally, they placed a strong emphasis on devolving responsibility for stimulating economic growth to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) now to be given substantial funding through a ‘single funding pot’, thereby allowing priorities to be determined at local level.

2. In his Budget Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that one of the ways in which the Government sought to support enterprise was ‘to give our great regional cities and other local areas much greater control over their economic destiny and to back sectors that are a global success’. It accordingly accepted ‘Michael Heseltine’s excellent idea of a single competitive pot of funding for local enterprise’.³

3. The Government has also issued its detailed response to the Review.⁴ This announces ‘a radical approach to decentralisation that will give business-led LEPs the power to make choices that are right for their local economies’ (p.5), through a Single Local Growth Fund. It accepts 60 of the recommendations in whole and 21 in part; rejects five; and puts three on hold until the 2015/16 Spending Round is completed this summer.

4. **Careers advice.** In its section on schools, the Review included a short sub-section on ‘careers advice’. This emphasised the value of information on jobs and careers ‘obtained in a real workplace and through contacts with working people’ (para.6.37); it also stated that ‘careers advice is vital and I believe that this needs a much more localised focus’ (para.6.36). It then referred to the National Careers Service:

¹ Helpful comments from Paul Chubb and Dr Tristram Hooley on earlier drafts of this Policy Commentary are gratefully acknowledged. The author is however solely responsible for the views expressed.

² Heseltine, M. (2012). *No Stone Unturned: In Pursuit of Growth*. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

³ George Osborne in the House of Commons. *Hansard*, 20 March 2013, col.938.

⁴ HM Treasury & Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2013). *Government’s Response to the Heseltine Review*. Cm 8587.

‘The Government’s recently launched National Careers Service is suitable for providing a high level national perspective and information relating to sectors. However, a centralised system like this is not a substitute for good on the ground advice with sound local knowledge. I agree with the recent Work and Pensions Committee report⁵ which found that the “National Careers Service offer of online and telephone advice to younger students is not an adequate alternative to face-to-face careers guidance”’ (para.6.38).

It accordingly recommended (Recommendation 80) that:

‘The existing budget lines for adult careers advice should be included in the single funding pot. Each LEP, as part of its local economic plan, should consider how careers advice is best provided in its area to meet the needs of both the adult population and the requirement under the Education Act 2011 for careers advice in schools.’

5. This section of the report lacked clarity and precision, and demonstrated a lack of understanding both of the Education Act and of the structure and remit of the NCS. It included no discussion of the face-to-face service for adults, currently based on regional contracts. It failed to address directly the issue of whether the current role of the NCS in relation to schools and young people should be extended beyond telephone and online advice to cover face-to-face advice, currently confined to adults. Instead it slipped from an argument about the importance of face-to-face advice for young people in schools (outside the remit of the NCS and therefore of the ‘single pot’) to the localisation of a service for adults (which might include some unspecified extension to schools).

6. Potentially, however, the recommendation could be enormously important, with the risk of effectively ending the NCS as a national service. If the NCS funding were moved into the single pot, without any ring-fencing, it would be up to LEPs to determine whether any of this resource was to be used for careers advice, how much, and how it was to be deployed. The Conservative Party’s manifesto commitment to ‘create a new all-age careers service so that everyone can access the advice they need’⁶, and John Hayes’s vision of ‘a single, unified careers service’⁷, both of which have only been partly implemented⁸, would have been abandoned.

7. The Government response to the Review makes no explicit reference to the NCS. It states that the Government decision on Recommendation 80 is ‘to be decided as part of the Spending Round’. In this respect it is in the same position as two other areas of current funding:

⁵ Work and Pensions Committee (2012). *Youth Unemployment and the Youth Contract*.

⁶ Conservative Party (2010). *Invitation to Join the Government of Britain: the Conservative Manifesto 2010*, p.17.

⁷ John Hayes (Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning) in speech to Institute of Career Guidance Annual Conference, Belfast, 4 November 2010.

⁸ See Careers Sector Stakeholders Alliance (2012). *National Careers Service: Strategic Options for Building a World Class Service*. Also Watts, A.G. (2012). *Careers England Policy Commentary 15B: The Coalition’s Emerging Policies on Career Guidance*.

- ‘The budget for vocational training for learners aged 19 and over, and all funding set aside for apprenticeships for those aged 16 and over’, including the continuation of the Skills Funding Agency (Recommendation 81).
- Action to address NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training) (Recommendation 83).

Decisions on these three areas are to be announced in the summer of 2013 (possibly 26 June).

8. **Other recommendations.** The Review also made four further recommendations potentially relevant to career support for young people: on business engagement with the curriculum; on work experience; on employers as school governors; and on destination measures.

9. On **business engagement with the curriculum**, Recommendation 76 stated:

‘Business engagement should be incorporated far deeper into the school curriculum in order to develop young people’s understanding of business, increase their employability, and further their understanding of career and future training options and where they might lead. LEPs should consider how they engage with local schools and work with chambers to facilitate this.’

The Government accepted this recommendation, stating:

‘The Government encourages direct employer links with schools, as a way of inspiring and informing young people. Lord Heseltine noted the benefits of new University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools in involving employers directly with the education system. Alongside these programmes, all schools can join successful free initiatives such as Inspiring the Future and Business Class, as well as local initiatives that aim to connect schools with the business world and capitalise on the expertise that employers can offer. LEPs and other local networks can facilitate this engagement’ (Response, para. 1.87).

Neither the Review nor the Response referred specifically to careers education. But the expanded role of LEPs could in principle strengthen the brokerage support for local education-business links, including support for careers education programmes in general and work experience in particular, if the LEP chose to give attention to this (and had the required expertise).

10. On **work experience**, Recommendation 77 stated:

‘The bureaucracy and paper work around work experience and work placements must be streamlined. DfE must be clear about what is absolutely necessary. Government must then ensure the removal of all regulations and requirements that place unnecessary burdens on employers, schools and colleges.’

The Government accepted this recommendation, stating that it ‘will continue to cut red tape and reduce the legislative burden on business to help increase the supply of work experience places’ (Response, para.1.83). It is however noteworthy that the Review emphasised the value of work experience and work-related learning for all students aged 14-16 (Review, paras.6.24-6.25); the Government Response effectively ignored this, confining its discussion of these matters to students aged 16-19 on vocational study programmes (Response, para.1.82).⁹

11. On **employers as school governors**, Recommendation 78 stated:

‘All boards of governors in secondary schools should include two influential local employers, at least one of whom should have good connections with the wider business community. This could be coordinated by the local chambers of commerce.’

The Government accepted this recommendation in part, stating:

‘It is essential that governing bodies are made up of people with the necessary skills and experience to enable them to carry out their demanding functions, including successful business people. The Government does not believe in dictating who sits on governing bodies but it agrees that business leaders should seek opportunities to get involved with school and college governance, and will continue to encourage business leaders to take advantage of the government-funded Governors’ One-Stop Shop, a free service which helps schools and colleges to recruit skilled governors from the business world’ (Response, para.1.88).

Employers on governing bodies are potentially influential advocates on the importance of careers education and guidance (and work-related learning) programmes. They are also likely to provide access to networks for supporting the school in these respects. The importance of governing bodies is recognised in the Quality in Careers Standard (QiCS), which expects careers education, information, advice & guidance (CEIAG) quality awards to require schools to demonstrate leadership and governor involvement.¹⁰

12. On **destination measures**, Recommendation 79 stated:

‘Local authorities should publish the Destination Measures for all secondary schools in their areas alongside academic attainment so that parents can make

⁹ In this respect, Government policy has followed Professor Alison Wolf’s recommendation that work experience for 16-18-year-olds should be prioritised and that ‘the blanket requirement to give all KS4 pupils “work experience” ... has served its time’ (Wolf, A. (2011). *Review of Vocational Education – the Wolf Report*, p.131. London: Department for Education). For strong contrary evidence of the benefits of pre-16 work experience, see Mann, A. (2012). *Work Experience: Impact and Delivery – Insights from the Evidence*. London: Education and Employers Taskforce.

¹⁰ QiCS national validation criteria 1.1-1.3 www.careersengland.org.uk

better informed choices, and to incentivise schools to give a higher priority to developing the employability of their leavers.’

This recommendation reinforced existing Government policies. The Government accepted it, stating:

‘... the Department for Education has led the way in the creation of destination measures, which were published for the first time in July 2012. These are new pieces of information that parents and students can use in choosing between places to study, and provide an incentive to institutions to ensure that young people are able to progress. From 2013, the Government plans to include employment destinations in the data, giving a measure of how well institutions develop their students’ employability. In addition, for the first time, later this year, destination measures for 16 year olds will be incorporated in school performance tables. This is a significant development in England’s accountability regime, putting the onus on schools and colleges to consider the effectiveness of their provision in helping young people to develop and progress’ (Response, para.1.84).

Destination measures can be valuable in addressing attention to careers provision¹¹, though – as the Education Select Committee noted – they do not of themselves ‘show the quality of the careers guidance provision in a school’¹².

13. **Commentary.** The Government’s response to the Heseltine Review offers some limited potential for strengthening aspects of careers programmes in schools at local level. But the central proposal for the inclusion of the NCS in the ‘single funding pot’ continues to hang like the sword of Damocles over its service for adults, despite the lack of any supporting argument in the Review related directly to this service.

14. There are some arguments for decentralisation of powers to localities, particularly following the closure of the Regional Development Agencies. But:

- Such localisation would inevitably involve fragmentation of practice in any field which is not regulated.
- LEPs represent only one of several possible vehicles for a localisation agenda. The most obvious alternative is Local Authorities, which would have the advantage of democratic accountability.
- The accountability of the LEPs is far less clear. They were established in 2010 as a voluntary strategic partnership between business and civic leaders to drive local economic growth.
- A new Ofsted report indicates that ‘even by the autumn of 2012, there were still significant variations across the country in how well the LEPs were established,

¹¹ QiCS validation criterion 1.8 requires careers awards to address destination measures in order to demonstrate impact and outcomes for young people.

¹² House of Commons Education Committee (2013). *Careers Guidance for Young People: the Impact of the New Duty on Schools*, para.59. HC 632-1. London: Stationery Office.

and to what extent they were taking a leading role in identifying and planning provision to meet local area needs'.¹³

15. The situation regarding the future of the NCS will be resolved in the summer. Meanwhile, there are opportunities to argue the case either for excluding it from the 'single pot' (with the LEPs possibly given a role in determining priorities to be written into local accountability of the national service) or for ensuring that its inclusion is strongly ring-fenced (possibly by giving the NCS a statutory basis which would guarantee minimum levels of service).

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¹³ Ofsted (2013). *Local Accountability and Autonomy in Colleges*, p.21.