



Evaluation of Careers Yorkshire and the Humber

# Inspiration Activity and Good Practice Guide

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## Executive summary

The International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby was commissioned to evaluate Careers Yorkshire and the Humber's inspiration activity between January - March 2016. The purpose of the evaluation was to capture staff and stakeholders' views of the early operation of inspiration activities and make suggestions for the development of this work.

The research suggests that Careers Yorkshire and the Humber is making good progress in its inspiration work and fulfilling the expectations that it set itself in the Inspiration Plans spanning October 2014 – March 2016. Whilst celebrating its early achievements CYH is set on a journey of improvement and is actively seeking to continue to work collaboratively with partners, to make the most of its networks, to continue to provide impartial, labour market information and to grow the infrastructure (e.g. web portal) to meet the needs of young people and their advisers for reliable career-related information and support activities.

The inspiration activities described here have been characterised as skilful, expert and inspiring and there is much good practice to observe. That this work is having an impact is evident in interview respondents' positive comments - many of whom were able to offer suggestions for developing the inspiration work. These suggestions are provided in full below as recommendations not because respondents were critical of progress to date but rather because respondents were inspired to contribute their ideas in response to innovations begun by the inspiration work of CYH. The breadth and specificity of recommendations suggests a very real desire to continue to develop inspiration work in schools and colleges.

## Recommendations

### *Being more skilful*

- There is an on-going need to pool resources and have more joined-up thinking
- Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) should work more collaboratively across regional boundaries.
- Students in schools need to have opportunities to build relationships with employers
- National Careers Service (NCS) staff should negotiate better access for prisoners to digital resources.
- Consider the development of virtual reality work experiences
- Reduce inter-agency competition in prisons

### *Being more expert*

- Schools and colleges should look to engage with employers that they have not worked with before.
- Young people need to know more about what type of behaviour employers expect of them, e.g. punctuality.
- The NCS should work strategically with schools/colleges in developing their area action plans.
- More information is needed on higher apprenticeships.
- The NCS needs to identify which digital resources prisoners should see and negotiate directly with prisons on access to these.
- Physical as well as digital resources are required for those unable to access computers.
- Inspiration work needs to continue into workplaces to support integration into the labour market.
- Allocate more resources to the dissemination of local labour market information including the establishment of a working group across the region and tailoring information for particular audiences.

### *Being more inspiring*

- Motivate employers to see inspiration work with schools and colleges as an investment.
- The LEP work on adult skills should feed into inspiration activities in schools and colleges.
- Develop self-employment training and support that also confers generic work-related skills.
- Recognise that the large number of organisations involved in inspiration work is confusing for professional bodies as well as institutions.
- Clarify the relationship between the National Careers Service under the 'inspiration agenda' and the work of the Enterprise Coordinators and Advisers.
- Promote interactive techniques for working with young people and those hardest to help.
- Promote local success stories and achievements.
- Aim to maintain continuity 'through the gate' for those leaving prison.
- Fund effective continuing professional development to develop creative tools for inspiration work.
- Strengthen and share data bases of employers/businesses.
- Develop case studies of career progression within sectors, including the gender distribution of occupations.
- Provide more funding for prisoners to access training and qualifications that equip them to apply for jobs available in the local economy.

### *Building the web portal*

- Adopt a local case study approach to material on the website.
- Put Quick Response (QR) codes into areas of the website so that material

- could be accessed via mobile phones.
- Post contact details for local schools/colleges online.
- Create a 'one stop shop' web portal for young people that enables them to view career information and progress through to applications for apprenticeships, courses etc.
- Avoid duplication of web borne material available elsewhere and where possible to link to that.
- Acknowledge the view that the current drive for 'digital by default' does not obviate the need for face-to-face interaction – between schools and businesses, between young people and employers and young people and sources of advice and guidance.

### *Building LMI*

- Differentiate or tailor local job market to specific audiences: e.g. for parents, for those working with offenders etc.
- Provide staff development on how to use local labour market information (LMI) to support skills development in young people.
- Provide help with distinguishing 'quality' LMI from that which might be outdated or wrong.
- Develop LMI that reveals how businesses cluster together and operate as 'supply chains' to other businesses.
- Seek more feedback from users of LMI as a way of tailoring resources to meet their needs.

### *Challenging myths*

- Promote self-employment across the whole ability range as learning about becoming self-employed confers generic work-related skills and should not be restricted to either the very able or those thought likely to be unsuited to further or higher education.
- Promote information about working in particular sectors where research has revealed there could be critical skills gaps in coming years due to its aging workforce.
- Develop inspirational activities in workplaces.
- Support employers to understand their contributions can be inspiring, even where young people have no intention of working in the sector the employer represents.

### *Building professional collaboration*

- Use the development of quality standards to guide the work of education-business partnerships.
- There is a need to help schools and colleges to see how the work of all the

agencies and the wide range of initiatives cohere together.

- Hold webinars to connect schools with schools, and schools with businesses.
- Encourage businesses to go into schools and colleges as there is far less likelihood that teachers and students can go out to meet employers on their premises.
- Encourage collaborations with less well-known employers, including small-medium sized enterprises in the locality.
- Market and promote career and employability information via a wider range of channels, including local TV, public transport, shops, etc., in order to promote the availability of local routes and pathways.
- Use labour market information with prospective higher education students, particularly those in 'widening participation' groups, to inspire understanding of where and what graduates do.

### *Building in-custody work*

- Continue to develop the focus on 'through the gate' and 'pre-release' support.
- Tailor the inspirational activities to the type of prison and work closely with prison governance to negotiate prisoners' access to online resources.
- Develop collaborative relationships with other agencies working in prisons and avoid inter-agency competition.
- Focus on the development of prisoners' level of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Support prisoners to develop action plans that can be enacted on return to the community.

## Introduction and methodology

The International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby was commissioned to evaluate Careers Yorkshire and the Humber's inspiration activity between January - March 2016. The purpose of the evaluation was to capture staff and stakeholders' views of the early operation of inspiration activities and make suggestions for the development of this work.

The Coalition Government's vision for Inspiration Activity (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013) made clear that careers education concerns aspiration as much as advice, that mentoring and motivation should come from people in jobs, and that employers, schools and colleges must do more in partnership together. The National Careers Service (NCS) plays a key role in bringing this about and from 2014 additional funds were made available for the NCS to stimulate inspiring activities for young people in schools and colleges. With the transfer of responsibility for careers education and the demise of the Connexions career services following the 2011 Education Act, schools and colleges have had to develop careers education practice and deliver inspiring activities to meet their particular local needs; the work of the NCS within the 'inspiration agenda' is aimed to help them do this.

### Evaluation approach

The evaluation comprised an examination of a range of administrative data provided by Careers Yorkshire and the Humber (CYH) in order to understand the policy background for the CYH Inspiration Plans and align programme data to the evaluation questions.

The second and major part of the evaluation comprised face-to-face or telephone interviews with CYH staff involved in delivering the inspiration agenda, and stakeholders in schools, colleges, businesses, professional bodies, trade unions, local government and other relevant agencies. A total of 20 in-depth interviews were conducted.

### Research questions

The evaluation was aimed to address the following broad research questions:

- How does the inspiration activity complement and supplement other initiatives aimed to support progression into employment and training?
- Does the inspiration activity increase understanding of the labour market and the range of work and employment opportunities that are available?
- What are the strengths and development areas of work undertaken under the Careers Yorkshire and the Humber inspiration plan?
- What do staff and stakeholders think is 'good practice' and what kinds of activities are working well?



## Inspiration Plans

Careers Yorkshire and the Humber developed two Inspiration Plans to span the period October 2014 to March 2016; both are ambitious and set stretching objectives for its inspiration work.

The aims for the first six months, to March 2015, were to:

*By 2015 we will provide an impartial, independent & inspirational Career Development Hub, that is uniquely embedded within the region's skills, employment support & delivery infrastructure and is:*

- *driving a culture change to inspire our employers, young people and adults alike*
- *informing and connecting skills demand effectively to supply;*
- *supporting economic growth and career development;*
- *inspiring individuals by spreading good news of economic growth sectors as identified by each LEP area;*
- *offering a menu of support and services that can be tailored to meet the needs of the stakeholders, customers and organisations we work with.*

*Every person, partner or stakeholder will be only one question away from inspiring help to move on in learning and work, whether this be via a digital channel, face to face or over the phone. However careers education and support is about aspiration as much as advice and access to information.*

*We will mobilise a partnership of professionals both within our teams and throughout our networks that will help realise the vision to support young people and adults to develop the career management skills they need to succeed.*

The second Inspiration Plan, to March 2016, further clarified target activities and an objective of providing an impartial 'inspiration portal'.

## Plans for 2016 onwards

It is the intention of CYH to continue its inspiration work. The priorities set by the Skills Funding Agency for inspiration work going forward are that specific delivery methods will not be prescribed – sometimes referred to as the 'black box' approach – and which places emphasis on outcomes rather than inputs, and that Inspiration Plans should:



- be designed to meet local needs
- build upon what has already been achieved
- should focus on 'cold spots' where there is currently relatively little careers-related activity within the school and limited links to employers
- take into account key government policy areas, particularly:
  - apprenticeships and their role in stimulating growth within the economy
  - the emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) careers and the skills shortages in these areas
  - the localism agenda – activities that evidence how the National Careers Service, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the Careers and Enterprise Company work together to work in 'cold spot' areas
  - the 'digital by default' agenda and the influence this will have on how careers develop

### Achievements to date

To put the Inspiration Plans into context, the CYH reported in a *Brief Report* on 'Inspiring Yorkshire and the Humber' that since March 2015 they have been working with 303 schools and 289 employers, have achieved a total of 1787 Twitter followers and that the Newsletter has 1071 subscribers and 6051 opens. The new web portal delivered over 7000 views during the month of July 2015.

Community liaison advisers had worked with 7 prisons in the regions, as well as employers, probation services and other transition organisations. A prisoner serving a 15 year sentence commented,

*"...after a lot of hard work on Sharon's shoulder, I'm proud to say I am now a fully qualified HGV/LGV 1 driver".*

The events attended by CYH staff, and job market information and resources made available online were particularly well-received by stakeholders.

Relationships with the LEPs and local authorities have also flourished, as the following local authority stakeholder comment indicates,

*"Sonia has supported the IAG Strategy with national policy updates and the Sheffield Standard in CEIAG along with planning the Sheffield IAG Strategy. Sonia's expertise will be crucial as we develop our relationship with the LEP. I see this as a critical role going forward for Sheffield."*

## Findings

The Findings reported here represent the key messages from the in-depth interviews conducted as part of this evaluation. Findings are reported in three sections focusing on evidence that the Inspiration Activity work undertaken by Careers Yorkshire and the Humber National Careers Service is,

- Skilful
- Expert
- Inspiring

Good Practice in Inspiration Activities is captured as a fourth section – the Good Practice Guide, which can be read independently of the full report and aims to describe both staff and stakeholders' views of good practice.

### Skilful

Inspiration activity is led by a team of four Partnership Coordinators whose function is to lead the development, promotion, coordination and delivery of the Careers Yorkshire and the Humber Inspiration Plan within the National Careers Service Yorkshire and the Humber Area, working with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), schools and other strategic partners.

The team comprises individuals with extensive experience of working at the interface of education and work and who include qualified career practitioners and recruitment and training specialists. Partnership Coordinators are employed by Careers Yorkshire and the Humber, hosted by member companies and are part of a wider infrastructure of NCS staff and services, including Community Liaison Advisers who work in prisons.

### Interpersonal skills

The way that Partnership Coordinators (and other CYH staff) work to support inspiration activities is predominantly through **brokerage**. Their role is to build relationships between schools/colleges and employers and to stimulate inspiring activities by working with, alongside and through others, rather than the provision of direct delivery of those activities. It has been described as a very complex form of service development aimed to build a sustainable infrastructure.

To do this, staff have utilised a range of **interpersonal** skills. One stakeholder described this role as catalytic and referred to the Partnership Coordinator (PC) as the 'glue' binding parties to inspiration activity together. Another described the PC as joining-up and coordinating activities and helping to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

### Partnership working

Most stakeholders referred to the approach taken by CYH as being one of

partnership and as “*something we do well.*” The **partnership** approach extends beyond the boundaries of Yorkshire and the Humber and stakeholders are aware of the way that PCs interact with other National Careers Services to develop good practice locally. One commented that:

*“Sonia has been working with Northampton and Leicester ...she will pull together existing materials and it will become a really valuable resource ...we’ll get them reproduced as an A5 booklet or posters for use in classrooms or could put them on the web as a PDF.”*

Partnership working was always the goal and was envisaged as a way to ensure that all parties in inspiration activity could be facilitated to play to their strengths. Within the small team of PCs there is acknowledgement that they each have subtly different strengths and capabilities and that by working **collaboratively** with each other and with external agencies they can achieve more than they could by working independently. This approach both brings and depends upon a partnership style of working; one PC described this “*bringing people together*”, often referred to as brokerage, as sometimes challenging as it includes bringing together those who may have conflicting views.

Collaborative, **partnership** working is fundamental in brokering the kinds of relationships that are needed to sustain and develop inspiration in schools and colleges.

Several respondents noted that each locality in Yorkshire and the Humber has its own needs and priorities. One of the challenges addressed by PCs is the need to support schools/colleges to **tailor opportunities** and resources to meet the needs of local students. Finding out what those needs are and guiding institutions’ planning and delivery approaches was described by one as ‘match-making’ and thought to be best achieved by using typical **career practitioner skills** of listening, clarifying, feeding back, advising, providing information, signposting, etc., and above all by being trusted to be impartial.

Other respondents identified that the approach taken by CYH had a powerful **staff development** effect. Some felt that their own practice had been developed “*hugely*” through contact with the PCs and others noted that value of contact with CYH on other staff members.

*“Yes it’s developing peoples’ understanding of what it all means ... the old model of careers being dumped on someone is going. We can see what good progression means. We’ve gone all out for joint CPD across schools in Barnsley and the network is really successful. We only have 1 or 2 meetings a year but they are really well-attended.”*

## Networking

The strength of stakeholders’ relationships with CYH appeared to hinge upon frequent meetings/contacts. Several respondents commented that they had known individual CYH staff members over many years and had built up a

sense of knowing and trusting them as professionals. That the CYH staff belonged to strong, well-established **networks** within the localities was clearly evident. Much of this pre-dated the current inspiration work but was also noted by those newer to the employer-education interface. One employer felt that the ending of the Connexions service had resulted in employers needing to do more to bring their opportunities to the attention of students, and welcomed the involvement of an intermediary who had good contacts in schools and colleges.

Another employer respondent described CYH as the “*professional backstop*” and very much welcomed the collaborative, partnership working as a way of using resources effectively.

The inspiration work in custody relies upon similar interpersonal skills in staff as that in the wider community but is reported to require staff to also think ‘outside the box’ in order to build bridges between in-custody and community based career services. For example, employers are reported to be contributing to activities inside prisons, such as interview role plays, and becoming more aware of what prisoners can offer as a result of the training they receive in custody. Inspirational activities for prisoners now include motivational speakers, job fairs, and training events and are better aligned with future job opportunities in the community.

Inspiration work appears to be subtly changing the focus of the skills needed to be effective. Staff report that they need to be increasingly strategic; one PC commented:

*“Careers Yorkshire and the Humber is a collaborative, enterprising place where people care about you ... you have to focus your attention ... I have had to try out lots of ideas and am now becoming more strategic.”*

Although the deployment of high level interpersonal skills key to relationship-building is to the fore, CYH staff also reported that inspiration work has developed their technical skills. In particular learning how to design and present information for inclusion on the website, using Twitter to send key messages, discussing resources with institutions and local authorities, etc., all require staff to engage with digital technology.

The skills base of CYH staff appears to have been extended and exploited by working in inspiration work; inspiration work is highly skilful.

Interview respondents offered a range of suggestions for taking this skilful approach further:

- There is an on-going need to pool resources and have more joined-up thinking
- LEPs should work more collaboratively across regional boundaries.
- Students in schools need to have opportunities to build relationships

with employers

- NCS staff should negotiate better access for prisoners to digital resources.
- Consider the development of virtual reality work experiences
- Reduce inter-agency competition in prisons

## Expert

The knowledge base of CHY in relation to its inspiration work focusses on its expertise in understanding and using local **labour market information**. This, when combined with knowledge of how individuals enact careers and the sorts of career trajectories available locally, provides the kind of expertise that both employers and institutions need and thus consolidates CYH's broker role.

### Accurate local labour market information

It is important that labour (or job) market information used in careers work is current. One employer stakeholder commented that parents locally have a view of engineering work as “dirty” and are not aware of the way modern technologies have transformed STEM occupations for both men and women. This employer saw the transmission of accurate, up-to-date labour market information as key to inspiring both young people and their parents. Another commented that there is little understanding of the way companies locally are sometimes part of bigger, national or multi-national groups and that training with such companies could open up opportunities all over the world.

### Close working relationship with LEPs

CYH's expertise in labour market information is enhanced by its close working relationship with LEPs. For example, skills growth plans and analyses developed by LEPs are **interpreted for use** by schools/colleges by CYH and summarised on the web portal. This expertise is important because the notion of growth may be counter-intuitive to parents, teachers and others who have witnessed contractions following the recession in 2008/09 and not been aware of changes in the local economy that now give rise to skills shortages and gaps. One stakeholder commented on the value of this knowledge:

*“Helga is an absolute fountain of knowledge ...we have a really good partnership and she always keeps me in the loop and offers advice ...always sharing knowledge and fantastic to work with”.*

Another felt that the use of up-to-date labour market information by CYH is important to, “*counter the negative Press on issues like Tata Steel*” which have had a discouraging impact on inspiring people to apply for work in the steel industry in Sheffield.

Several respondents indicated a concern with the **quality** of labour market information, and their own lack of knowledge about how to judge that quality. They are reassured by the involvement of CYH in the dissemination of labour market information and make extensive use of material on the inspiration portal.

### Understanding schools and colleges

A corollary of being expert in the use of labour market information is that the PCs are in a position to support schools, colleges and prisons in how to use it to inspire young people and adults. Sometimes labour market information has to be very specific to a particular locality. One stakeholder commented:

*“We did an audit of schools and found that schools were spending a lot on activities which aren’t always strategic. There are gaps in their knowledge [for example] in some regions there are lots of SMEs and in others lots of very large companies”.*

Both stakeholders and staff identified that it is difficult for institutions to keep up-to-date on developments in the local labour market and emphasised the importance of having access to this information through the web portal as and when needed.

One institutional stakeholder who linked her own Moodle subject resources to labour market information in the CYH web portal felt that:

*“Digital information should go hand in glove with face-to-face advice [because] it makes it more real, they can ask extra questions, delve deeper.”*

PCs and Community Liaison Advisers were reported to bring expertise in understanding how the **education system** operates; that is, which individual or group in the community does what, when and with whom. This particular form of local knowledge enables employers to be connected with institutions at the right level. For example, one employer sought access to careers coordinators in schools and wanted to target information about working in that sector to staff working directly with young people. Another employer envisaged a broader, more strategic role in helping institutions help students to understand their rights and responsibilities during working life.

Knowledge of the educational system locally enables CYH to tailor connections and help schools, colleges and employers to avoid wasteful ‘telephone journeys’ and unread emails. Brokering relationships effectively requires this type of expertise.

Again, respondents to the evaluation made suggestions for development of expertise:

- Schools and colleges should look to engage with employers that they have not worked with before.



- Young people need to know more about what type of behaviour employers expect of them, e.g. punctuality.
- CHY should work strategically with schools/colleges in developing their area action plans.
- More information is needed on higher apprenticeships.
- The NCS needs to identify which digital resources prisoners should see and negotiate directly with prisons on access to these.
- Physical as well as digital resources are required for those unable to access computers.
- Inspiration work needs to continue into workplaces to support early integration into the labour market.
- Allocate more resources to the dissemination of local labour market information including the establishment of a working group across the region and tailoring information for particular audiences.

## Inspiring

There is a strong view among staff of CYH that the inspiration funding has enabled work to be undertaken that is needed and valuable. The funding has directly purchased both staffing and technological resources. The list of activities and initiatives undertaken by CYH and its partners is extensive; some are listed here:

Ambition Barnsley  
 Career coordinators meetings  
 Dress to Impress Day  
 Employability Passport  
 I know I can  
 Intertrain  
 Made in Sheffield  
 North Yorkshire County Council careers project  
 Presenting at the Wakefield Vocational and Academic Board  
 Teach Meet Careers group meetings  
 Web portal briefings  
 Yorkshire Man of Steel and STEM inspiration  
 Your Future

## Hoped-for goals for inspiration work

Inspiring people to take their own career management seriously is a task that demands soft as well as hard skills and extensive expertise. Having a sense of shared vision about what inspirational activity should focus upon has been important in developing this work. The focus on stimulating the development



of effective career management skills and education-business engagement may not be new but it had to be approached with care. One PC captured this as:

*“Employer engagement needs to be mediated by effective careers education, information, advice and guidance – even if [employers] are coming into school they can be partisan. In the context of a careers programme, their contribution is evaluated as part of a broader range of information.”*

The principles of effective careers education, information, advice and guidance drive the inspiration work in Yorkshire and the Humber. The goal is to inspire autonomy in career management by using all the resources of the wider community to give young people and adults insight into their future career pathways. One adviser described it as to *“help them to leave strong.”* Another explained it as:

*“...the employer-led approach needs to be part of a tapestry of different interventions and stakeholders. Within that, careers advisers, teachers and employers and even parents can make a contribution.”*

The inspiration work has also integrated aspects of CYH's work with adults and young people as employers have an interest in recruiting both. One member of staff captured this:

*“...it's made a nice link through from age 13 to adults and demonstrates that there is an all-age service. Making young people aware of the NCS could lead to more use of the service when they are older.”*

Some respondents described the inspiration work as having led to a culture change in the way that labour market information is conceptualized as part of career management. The use of labour market information was described as having become 'professionalised' by the involvement of CYH in stimulating inspiration activities in schools and colleges.

For example, respondents in institutions described the PCs as fulfilling the function of a bridge between them and the wide range of career-related resources. PCs encouraged the sharing of ideas and information between institutions and helped staff in schools and colleges to achieve curricular balance by explaining how career material can be biased.

### Inspiring activities

The range of inspiration activities is broad and highly sensitive to the local context. Inspiration activities appear to both respond to local needs and also reflect them. An employer described his work in schools as being aimed to *“ignite interest”* in future opportunities and felt that activities that are interactive were more likely to engage people than passive activities. The

idea of experiential learning rather than simply hearing about the world of work seems to have widespread appeal among stakeholders in businesses and elsewhere. Utilising quality awards in careers education and guidance, such as the Humber Gold award, stimulates career activities to be embedded in the curriculum.

Respondents' comments suggest that institutions and employers may be adopting a more strategic approach to their interactions with one another. To what extent this is driven by the potential interest of Ofsted in this area, the collection of data on students' destinations, the involvement of LEPs and the Careers Enterprise Company or the Prime Minister's announcement on mentoring - remains unclear – but it does not seem unreasonable to infer that the arrival of funding for inspiration work at the same time as these developments is creating 'the perfect storm' of interest in careers and employability. Whilst recognizing that inspiration work is new, one institutional stakeholder described it as:

*“... [the inspiration] work is absolutely fantastic...it's amazing what's been done already.”*

There is no shortage of development ideas for being ever more inspiring. The following ideas were suggested:

- Motivate employers to see inspiration work with schools and colleges as an investment.
- The LEP work on adult skills should feed into inspiration activities in schools and colleges.
- Develop self-employment training and support that also confers generic work-related skills.
- Recognise that the large number of organisations involved in inspiration work is confusing for professional bodies as well as institutions.
- Clarify the relationship between the National Careers Service under the 'inspiration agenda' and the work of the Enterprise Coordinators and Advisers.
- Promote interactive techniques for working with young people and those hardest to help.
- Promote local success stories and achievements.
- Aim to maintain continuity 'through the gate' for those leaving prison.
- Fund effective continuing professional development to develop creative

tools for inspiration work.

- Strengthen and share data bases of employers/businesses.
- Develop case studies of career progression within sectors, including the gender distribution of occupations.
- Provide more funding for prisoners to access training and qualifications that equip them to apply for jobs available in the local economy.

## Good Practice Guide

### What is inspiration activity?

The Coalition Government's vision for Inspiration Activity (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013) made clear that careers education concerns aspiration as much as advice, that mentoring and motivation should come from people in jobs, and that employers, schools and colleges must do more in partnership together. The National Careers Service (NCS) plays a key role in bringing this about and from 2014 additional funds were made available for the NCS to stimulate inspiring activities for young people in schools and colleges.

With the transfer of responsibility for careers education and the demise of the Connexions career services following the 2011 Education Act, schools and colleges have had to develop careers education practice and deliver inspiring activities to meet their particular local needs; the work of the NCS within the 'inspiration agenda' is aimed to help them do this.

### The inspiration team in Yorkshire and the Humber

Inspiration activity is led by a team of four Partnership Coordinators whose function is to lead the development, promotion, coordination and delivery of the Careers Yorkshire and the Humber Inspiration Plan within the National Careers Service Yorkshire and the Humber Area, working with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), schools and other strategic partners.

The team comprises individuals with extensive experience of working at the interface of education and work and who include qualified career practitioners and recruitment and training specialists. Partnership Coordinators are employed by Careers Yorkshire and the Humber and are part of a wider infrastructure of NCS staff and services.

### Good practice in action

The following examples of Careers Yorkshire and the Humber's inspirational work are offered as a guide to good practice.

#### *Inspiring Yorkshire and the Humber web portal*

The flagship output of the inspiration work is a web portal 'Inspiring Yorkshire and the Humber' which provides easy access to careers education and job market information written in an accessible style. Primarily addressed at staff in institutions and businesses it utilises an interactive map to enable browsers to find local information; provides in-depth job market information by sector, includes video commentaries explaining how schools/colleges can work effectively with employers, provides links to training and inspiration providers

and sector skills organisations, and stimulates the use of quality standards in careers work.

The web portal was designed as a lasting legacy for the inspiration work led by the NCS and is continually being extended and updated. Its scope is ambitious and one of its major contributions is to keep those involved in careers work across Yorkshire and the Humber up-to-date. Partnership coordinators regularly use the Twitter feed on the portal to make announcements, showcase activities and provide news of developments in the world of work.

The portal also provides ready access to a wide range of learning resources to support careers and inspiration work in schools and colleges and provides links to other web-borne information resources.

Stakeholders repeatedly commented that particularly schools are ‘bombarded’ with information about how to support career progression in pupils and lack certainty about how to judge the quality of offerings that appear via email or advertising. The availability of a web portal dedicated to the delivery of inspiring activities has been welcomed, not least because it helps those in schools and colleges to sift through potential sources of help in the knowledge that inclusion on the website confers authenticity and reliability, although no specific endorsement is made on the site. It fulfils the desire for a ‘one stop shop’ for materials to support inspiration work.

Stakeholders reported using the web portal “a lot”. One refers to the job profiles (**Plain Guides**) “every day” and saw it as a valuable and growing resource.

Several made suggestions for how the inspiration portal could be developed:

- One argued for a local case study approach to material on the website, and felt that it needs, *“really good case studies and marketing so that people can see what’s going on locally ... see the diversity of opportunities that are available.”*
- Another suggested putting Quick Response (QR) codes into areas of the website so that material could be accessed via mobile phones.
- One professional organisation felt that it is difficult to find contact details for local schools/colleges and that a list could be posted online.
- There was enthusiasm for a ‘one stop shop’ web portal for young people that enabled them to view career information and progress through to applications for apprenticeships, courses etc.
- There was also a desire not to duplicate web borne material available elsewhere and where possible to link to that.

- Whilst welcoming the development of the web portal, several stakeholders and NCS staff expressed the view that the current drive for 'digital by default' did not obviate the need for face-to-face interaction – between schools and businesses, between young people and employers and young people and sources of advice and guidance.

### *Providing job market information*

The provision of job market information is a key function of the NCS. Job (or labour) market information can be very difficult for schools/colleges, students, parents and employers to access due to its complexity and statistical nature. Yet job market information is an essential component of careers education and understanding what is available across the Yorkshire and the Humber area is necessary if young people are to be inspired.

A great deal of job market information is now included in the web portal. In particular stakeholders valued the **Plain Guides**, which provide local, sector-based information via infographics and plain English text.

As a result of the inspiration work, the CYH LMI team has invested in data-mashing software that enables it to **aggregate data on job vacancies** supplying information that provides intelligence on employment trends across the region, as well as sub-regions and districts. The data included is scrutinised carefully and supported by intelligence derived from the Partnership Coordinators knowledge of what is happening in the localities.

The establishment of effective working relationships between the CYH and the **Local Enterprise Partnerships** (LEPs) have improved the availability and quality of local labour market information (LMI) across the region. In particular CYH is able to inform its partners about skills growth and shortages and changes in the local economy. LMI is reported via the web portal, LMeye eNewsletter, Twitter, face-to-face, through materials development and via Partnership Coordinators contributions to events, working groups, professional groups, etc.

The work of CYH enables LMI to be used to “*counter misconceptions*” about what it is like to work in the region and the work of Partnership Coordinators was reported as a key channel through which LMI passes into schools and colleges. One stakeholder commented,

*“The inspiration portal has a huge amount of information ...it forms a sort of tool kit for the Enterprise Coordinators. [I know that] head-teachers want a single point of contact for LMI. It would be great to position the inspiration portal as the single point of contact.”*

Stakeholders not only valued the provision of local job market information but also relied upon it. One reported that subject-specific LMI from CYH had been

integrated into Moodle learning software. Others commented that the reliability and availability of LMI through CYH had strengthened their role within the institution and with their stakeholders.

Again suggestions were made for development of job market information:

- Several stakeholders asked that local job market information be differentiated by or tailored to specific audiences: e.g. for parents, for those working with offenders etc.
- Another would welcome staff development on how to use local labour market information (LMI) to support skills development in young people.
- One sought help with distinguishing 'quality' LMI from that which might be outdated or wrong.
- Another felt there is scope for developing LMI that revealed how businesses cluster together and operate as 'supply chains' to other businesses.
- Seeking more feedback from users of LMI was suggested as a way of tailoring resources to meet their needs.

### *Engagement with employers*

A key focus nationally, of the NCS' inspiration activities is that it should stimulate the involvement of employers with schools and colleges. Employer engagement is manifest through a wide range of activities including visits to institutions, provision of work experience, support of the subject curriculum, etc.

CYH stimulates the engagement of employers with institutions by making introductions, offering suggestions to schools about which employers to contact, by responding to requests for help, identifying inspiring individuals within the community and encouraging employers to volunteer.

Good practice in stimulating employer engagement seems to hinge upon the capacity of staff in CYH to network effectively. **Networking** appears to be a particular strength of the Partnership Coordinators, who regularly speak at or attend events where they expect employers to gather, Tweet messages that employers might find interesting, and harness known contacts to contribute to inspiration activities.

An example of the capacity of the Partnership Coordinators' ability to engage an employer's attention is the 'Man of Steel' project in Sheffield. The goal of the project is to erect a large man of steel sculpture, which is both a public work of art but is also a way of re-asserting social identity within the



communities affected by the widespread reduction of steel-making. The Partnership Coordinator recognised that the story of the creation of the man of steel and its broader economic goals to develop a visitor centre and museum, to stimulate interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) careers and to ignite interest in Sheffield's heritage – could be inspirational to young people. The Partnership Coordinator engaged the sculptor's interest via Twitter and invited him into school to provide what was a very inspirational insight into the way that STEM careers can be developed even in the face of large-scale contraction in particular sectors.

The sculptor noted, that *“it was inspiring for me too”* and emphasised that if employers can be persuaded to want to contribute to careers education, then they will find the time to do so. Importantly schools/colleges (and those supporting them) need to **motivate employers to invest** in future generations. Sometimes this means recycling or re-inventing ideas and making them appear new. Employer engagement is not a new concept but he goes on to note *“every generation of employers has to learn about it for themselves.”*

It is likely that this employer will continue to contribute to careers education because he wants to, and because his interest in STEM and economic development aligns well with the policy agenda around inspiration.

Good practice in engaging employers appears to hinge upon working with what employers can and want to do and **creating the impetus** to turn interest (in inspiring young people) into action.

### *Myth busting*

Information on career progression and job opportunities is prone to error if it is not collected systematically or interpreted wrongly. For example, parents' experience of progressing into the labour market may not reflect current conditions and advice based upon it risks misleading young people to avoid (or take up) opportunities that may not be in their best interests. Nationally the NCS has a key role to play in ensuring that **accurate, impartial information** is widely disseminated.

The CYH Inspirational web portal, as a key repository of career information, is supplemented by newsletters, briefing notes and the active participation of Partnership Coordinators and other CYH staff in meetings of groups of teachers and careers coordinators.

The goal of CYH here is to ensure that clear, accurate, comprehensive and impartial information reaches schools and colleges across Yorkshire and the Humber.

A current challenge in providing impartial information is that inspiration work is conducted in a **policy context** that actively promotes the take up of apprenticeships and traineeships as part of a broader industrial strategy; there

are risks in this approach. One respondent commented:

*“If I had my way, we wouldn’t push apprenticeships ...it pushes up demand and although there are apprenticeships for 16 – 18 year olds, there are not many at the higher levels”*

Other respondents felt that there is need for the presentation of alternative routes and **pathways** (including apprenticeships) as a counter to recent policy drivers to increase participation in higher education.

One respondent queried whether impartial careers information would be better produced on a national basis. She felt on balance, that what is really important is the availability of local information that young people can relate to, and that good sources of nationally-delivered information from for example, sector bodies, can supplement this.

The **digital by default** approach to the delivery of impartial information has found expression in the web portal, however, there remain concerns that some young people may never be inspired by material presented in this way. One stakeholder explained that at her institution, students with no or partial sight cannot access digital material and so consideration was being given to producing career materials in Braille. Similarly students for whom English is a second language or who do not have access to computers are disadvantaged – and the same goes for their parents – by a lack of access to reliable information.

Again suggestions about how to manage impartial information were offered:

- One stakeholder welcomed the current policy interest in promoting self-employment as an inspiring pathway but felt that awareness needs to be achieved across the whole ability range. Learning about becoming self-employed confers generic work-related skills and should not be restricted to either the very able or those thought likely to be unsuited to further or higher education.
- Another aimed to promote information about working in a particular sector because research had revealed there could be critical skills gaps in coming years due to its aging workforce.
- A stakeholder recommended that CYH develop its inspirational activities in workplaces because *“professional careers advice would be good for the economy”* and also because *“we cannot expect young people to be fully work-ready in their first job.”*
- One respondent observed that it is important that employers understand their contributions can be inspiring, even where young people have no intention of working in the sector the employer represents.

### *Inter-professional collaboration*

The predominant approach used by CYH in the delivery of inspiration activities in schools and colleges is an indirect one; its work is channelled through career and employability professionals, teachers and leadership teams in institutions and businesses.

Stakeholders and staff identified a wide range of ways in which CYH works alongside and partners with other professional groups. For example, through contribution to working groups and forums, membership of governing bodies, joint development of resources and materials, assistance with activities in schools and being the go-to professional for questions about career progression.

Inter-professional working also extends networks and spawns more inspiration activity. One employer reported listening to a presentation by a Partnership Coordinator about the value of work experience, and as a result now provides work experience with the express purpose of encouraging young people to find out about work in that sector.

Making presentations is a particularly effective method for CYH to deliver key messages and influence participation in inspiration work.

Suggestions to strengthen good practice in this area include:

- The development of quality standards to guide the work of education-business partnerships was suggested.
- There is a need to help schools and colleges to see how the work of all the agencies and the wide range of initiatives cohere together.

### *Collaboration with other career professionals*

Several career professionals working in schools and colleges described having an effective relationship with CYH

*“If I email her [the Partnership Coordinator] I always get a reply, straight away.”*

A new group of career professionals has emerged, supported by funding from the Careers and Enterprise Company and LEPs, to support employability and enterprise in schools. Enterprise Coordinators support schools to develop strategic action plans and also assist them to recruit Enterprise Advisers from among the local business community.

There is a sense in which the roles of Enterprise Coordinator and the Partnership Coordinator overlap but as one stakeholder involved in piloting the Enterprise Coordinator/Adviser initiative noted, CYH made a valuable contribution to the pilot.

*“There’s a wealth of careers advice out there. There are almost too many things being offered to schools and they need to become more sophisticated about being an informed consumer. We hope the business person [Enterprise Adviser] will bring insight and act as critical friend to this”.*

CYH facilitates inter-school contacts by assisting with and setting up career coordinator groups and **stimulating communication** between careers professionals working in rural areas, as well as school-employer contacts.

Harnessing the enthusiasm of career professionals in the localities has been effective. One Partnership Coordinator felt that she was using her personal and professional skills – of listening, supporting, advising – to support career professionals in schools and colleges. She felt it was *“just being a good careers adviser really”* and that the priority in the coming year would be to focus on ‘cold spots’ where schools and colleges are delivering fewer inspirational activities.

Making judgements about which institutions would be likely to benefit from support from CYH and where to **focus limited resources** is an ongoing challenge. There is a consensus that supporting staff development in career professionals will have more impact in the long term than attempts at supplementing delivery. One Partnership Coordinator commented that they do not generally communicate directly with young people but instead encourage schools to embed ‘career conversations’ with students into the curriculum. Supporting the delivery of careers education from within the institution is seen as important as engaging employers to contribute to the curriculum.

Suggestions to strengthen collaboration between career professionals include:

- Holding webinars to connect schools with schools, and schools with businesses.
- Encouraging businesses to go into schools and colleges as there is far less likelihood that teachers and students can go out to meet employers on their premises.
- Encouraging collaborations with less well-known employers, including small-medium sized enterprises in the locality.
- Marketing and promotion of career and employability information via a wider range of channels, including local TV, public transport, shops, etc., in order to promote the availability of local routes and pathways.
- Using labour market information with prospective higher education

students, particularly those in ‘widening participation’ groups, to inspire understanding of where and what graduates do.

### *Working ‘through the gate’*

CYH responsibility within the inspiration agenda includes people in custody. This work is particularly aimed to ensure that offenders transition ‘through the gate’ into jobs and learning opportunities that enable them to participate in the economy and avoid returning to prison.

Offenders are often described by NCS advisers as leading troubled and chaotic lives and they are ‘priority’ customers of CYH within its NCS contract with the Skills Funding Agency. Offenders can be ‘hard to help’ and inspire.

CYH has developed its practice in working with offenders via a range of strategies. These include, working closely with prison learning and skills professionals, drugs counsellors, health services, contributing to prison governance arrangements, providing direct face to face interventions such as role playing interviews, and supporting offenders in planning how to manage their transition out of prison.

One particular initiative has been the piloting of a **hub of agencies** working together to provide advice and support at the moment of release. In this way offenders are released into the community having had immediate contact with professionals who can provide housing, drug dependency and employment/training information and advice. The hub aims to ensure that people leave prison with contact details for agencies they are likely to need to access in the early days of release.

CYH staff inspire interest in future employment by inviting employers and other speakers into prison and the development of career management skills through coaching and **mentoring approaches** from an early stage in the sentence. Currently CYH is piloting a new mentoring model which is the subject of a separate external evaluation.

One stakeholder described this process as,

*“We are trying to make sure that prisoners take their career seriously... prisoners do not have good career management skills. They have not worked and live ad hoc lives...they haven’t got the skills to think about careers ... we need early intervention to start this thinking off.”*

CYH work in prisons is very much tailored to the category of prison and the particular regime set by the governing body. In most prisons there are constraints about the use of web-borne career resources and there are difficulties in transferring information from one NCS provider to another as prisoners are moved around the UK. This means that CYH works flexibly and

proactively often **team-working** with other professionals (such as housing specialists) and sharing group delivery time. The development of strong partnership working is key to providing prisoners with career support.

Maintaining contact with offenders on release is challenging. Many do not want continued relationships with those they met in prison; others do not have stable addresses. Several suggestions were made to enhance the support provided to young offenders in prison and upon release;

- Continue to develop the focus on ‘through the gate’ and ‘pre-release’ support.
- Tailor the inspirational activities to the type of prison and work closely with prison governance to negotiate prisoners’ access to online resources.
- Develop collaborative relationships with other agencies working in prisons and avoid inter-agency competition.
- Focus on the development of prisoners’ level of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Support prisoners to develop action plans that can be enacted on return to the community.

A stakeholder felt that despite the difficulties of working with a transient, hard to help population, that CYH is achieving a great deal and that *“we have the best delivery in the country here”*.

### *Stimulating innovative practice*

Inspiration activities have stimulated innovation in a range of settings; the following examples illustrate this.

Innovative practice to **inspire motivation** in young people includes the promotion of the Employability Passport, the use of speed-interviewing, encouraging employers to bring objects (sculptures, vehicles) into school.

Innovative practice to inspire young people through **supporting staff** in schools and colleges includes helping teachers to integrate LMI into the curriculum, setting up and contributing to ‘Teach Meet’ meetings, providing staff development on key themes (e.g. how to set up quality work experiences), contributing to whole school staff development activities, promoting the use of local career awards including helping schools to make use of national quality enhancement instruments (e.g. the Gatsby Benchmarks).

Innovative practice to **inspire employers** to engage with institutions includes collaborating with chambers of commerce and industry, setting up business

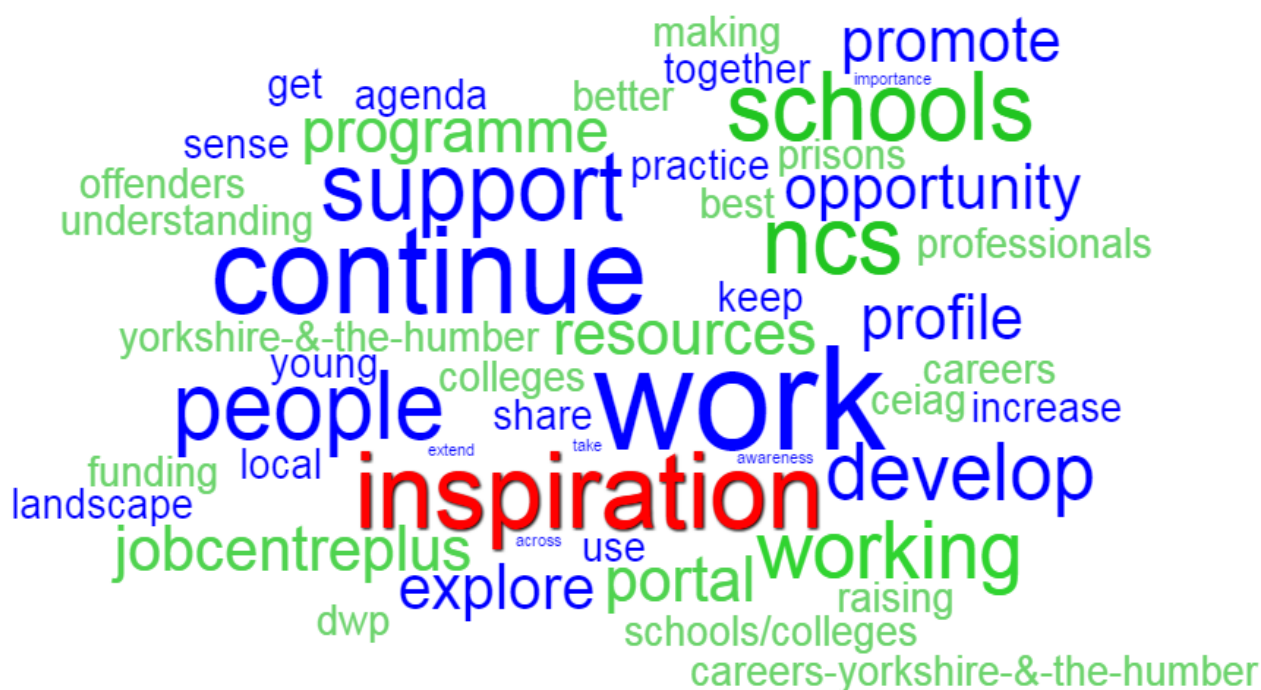


lunches to bring employers and institutions together, providing contact details and connecting people.

Innovating practice to **inspire agencies** to work effectively together includes working collaboratively with LEPs, employer groups and professional bodies, challenging misconceptions with robust labour market information, working with Enterprise Coordinators, identifying inspiring individuals, disseminating good practice.



Conference organisers sought to capture the views of participants about their top three priorities going forward – about what they would like to do next. The word cloud below summarises their comments. What stands out clearly is a desire to continue to develop their inspiration work; there is a very clear sense that this work is worthwhile and there is scope for improvement and extension. Some of their specific suggestions are reported below.



Several comments called for continuation: continue to communicate and share resources, continue to promote progress, continue to improve, seek feedback and raise the profile of the work, continue to develop the web portal and dissemination of LMI and to continue to attract funding.

Other comments emphasised the need to work more closely with prisons to develop the in-custody work and its interface with in-community work. One commentator felt that it would be necessary to discuss how funding is used in prisons early on in the inspiration contract – another suggested that colleagues should spend time in a prison.

There were calls to strengthen and extend work with employers and to recognise that employers have interest in both adults and young people.

There was a strong thread within comments about the need to develop a joined-up approach and to develop yet closer working relationships with adjacent agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and the Department for Work and Pensions, and increase collaboration. One suggestion was to explore how CYH could work more effectively with Jobcentre Plus in supporting people with disabilities and health problems.

Some comments related to the developing relationship with Enterprise Coordinators and Enterprise Advisers and the need to ensure accurate messaging to stakeholders such as parents and staff in schools and colleges – to help them to make sense of the ‘crowded landscape’.

One suggested the promotion of the take up of Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance Quality Standards in schools and colleges and another felt there is merit in sharing good practice beyond the Yorkshire and the Humber region. Some felt there is a need to deepen understanding of how CYH can work with local careers services to make the best use of resources and avoid competitiveness and duplication.

## Conclusion

The research suggests that Careers Yorkshire and the Humber is making good progress in its inspiration work and fulfilling the expectations that it set itself in the Inspiration Plans spanning October 2014 – March 2016. Whilst celebrating its early achievements CYH is set on a journey of improvement and is actively seeking to continue to work collaboratively with partners, to make the most of its networks, to continue to provide impartial, labour market information and to grow the infrastructure (e.g. web portal) to meet the needs of young people and their advisers for reliable career-related information and support activities.

The inspiration activities described here have been characterised as skilful, expert and inspiring and there is much good practice to observe. That this work is having an impact is evident in interview respondents' positive comments, many of whom were able to offer suggestions for developing the inspiration work. These suggestions are provided in full in the Executive Summary as recommendations not because respondents were critical of progress to date but rather because respondents were inspired to contribute their ideas in response to innovations begun by the inspiration work of CYH. The breadth and specificity of recommendations suggests a very real desire to continue to develop inspiration work in schools and colleges.

## Reference

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2013) *Inspiration Vision Statement*, London.