

Careers England Policy Commentary 31

This is the thirty-first in an occasional series of briefing notes on key policy documents related to the future of career guidance services in England. The note has been prepared for Careers England by Professor Tristram Hooley.¹

London Ambitions: Shaping a Successful Careers Offer For All Londoners

Tristram Hooley (July 2013)

1. **Introduction.** In June 2015 the London Enterprise Panel and London Councils supported by the Mayor of London released *London Ambitions: Shaping A Successful Careers Offer For All Londoners*.² This is an important new document addressing career education and guidance in the nation's capital. It sets out an ambitious London-wide approach to career development based around seven key elements. The document sets out plans for the utilisation of substantial European funding and other funding sources to deliver the *London Ambitions* vision. It has been welcomed by many leading educationalists and employers alongside those in the careers field as it seems to offer the most substantial injection of new resource into careers provision for young Londoners for a number of years.
2. The *London Ambitions* report has been authored by Dr Deirdre Hughes, OBE, Principal Research Fellow at Warwick University's, Institute for Employment Research (IER) and Director, DMH & Associates Ltd. Hughes is leading figure in the UK, EU and international careers sector, a Commissioner at the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, chair of the DfE/CfBT Core Maths Support Programme (Promotions), formerly chair of the National Careers Council in England (2012 -2014) and a co-founder of the Careers Profession Alliance, now the Career Development Institute (CDI).³ Her selection as the author of the report emerges from her specialist expertise in careers policy, research and practice. She has previously worked with the London Assembly Economy Committee on careers support for adults in London.⁴ She is currently assessing the impact of the Mayor's '*Championing Careers Guidance in Four London Academies*'.⁵
3. An important context for this report has been a process of change which has seen London's schools drive up attainment levels.⁶ More recently the Mayor's Education Inquiry sought to

¹ Helpful comments on earlier versions of this draft were received from David Andrews, Yolande Burgess, Deirdre Hughes, Nicki Moore and Steve Stewart. The author is however solely responsible for the views expressed.

² London Enterprise Panel and London Councils. Supported by the Mayor of London. (2015). *London Ambitions: Shaping A Successful Careers Offer For All Young Londoners*. London: London Enterprise Panel and London Councils.

³ The Careers Profession Alliance supported the merging of four separate careers professional associations into a new UK-wide Career Development Institute (www.thecdi.net).

⁴ Hughes, D. (2013) *National, EU and International Literature Review: Adult Careers Information, Advice and Guidance*. London: London Assembly Economy Committee.

⁵ Hughes, D., Adamson, J., Peck, L. and Rog, R. (2014) *Championing Careers Guidance in Schools: Formative Evaluation: Lessons Learned Report*. Leicester: CFE.

⁶ See for example Greaves, E., Macmillan, L. and Sibieta, L. (2014). *Lessons From London Schools For Attainment Gaps and Social Mobility*. London: Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission; Baars, S., Bernardes, E., Elwick, A., Malortie, A., McAleavy, T.,

provide new impetus for school improvement in the capital.⁷ Key recommendations in this report argued that ‘*the Mayor should bring together schools, further education (FE) and higher education (HE) institutions and employers to develop better links between the education and business sectors*’ and the ‘*the Mayor’s office should play a practical role in helping schools improve links with business and HE, improving the information available on post-16 career pathways in all London schools to ensure school leavers are better informed, and promoting a more aspirational culture*’. This demonstrates that London Ambitions is part of an extended process of the development of London’s schools, colleges and universities and that careers elements are seen as being linked to a wider social, cultural and economic agenda across London.

4. There has been a longstanding tradition of interest in careers work within London. This stretches back to the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) but has more recently seen a variety of stakeholders in the capital seeking to deal with the transformation that the area of career education and guidance has gone through subsequent to the collapse of Connexions as a national offer and the introduction of the Education Act 2011.⁸ Discussions on the future of career education and guidance in London have focused on a range of issues including careers provision for young people and adult guidance (which is notably outside of the remit of *London Ambitions*) emphasising the importance of the activity to both ensure London’s skills supply and support social equity.⁹
5. **What is proposed by London Ambitions?** London Ambitions seeks to create a strand of career education and guidance that is unique to the capital: ‘*The distinctive features of London mean there is a compelling case for London to have its own unique careers offer for young people.*’ The report highlights London’s global position, its size, in terms of both its economy and population, and its economic and social diversity as evidence that there is a need for a new careers offer which recognises and addresses this particularity.
6. The document begins with three introductory statements from Boris Johnson (Conservative, Mayor of London), Peter John (Labour, London Councils’ Executive member for Children, Skills and Employment) and Jack Morris, OBE (CEO of London Design Group and Member of the London Enterprise Panel). This highlights the fact that this is a joint document and that it has broad-based political support from across London’s political leadership. The introductory statements situate the *London Ambitions* careers offer as a response to youth unemployment,

McInerney, L., Menzies, L. and Riggall, A. (2014). *Lessons from London Schools: Investigating the Success*. Reading: CfBT Education Trust.

⁷ Greater London Authority (2012). *The Mayor’s Education Inquiry* (Final Report: Findings and Recommendations). London: GLA.

⁸ See Hooley, T., Matheson, J., and Watts, A.G. (2014). *Advancing Ambitions: The Role of Career Guidance in Supporting Social Mobility*. London: The Sutton Trust, pp. 14-20 for a commentary on these changes.

⁹ London Assembly Economy Committee. (2013). *Tailor-Made: Improving Adult Careers Services in London*. London: London Assembly; London Councils. (2013). *Pioneering Careers Work in London* (A London Councils Member Briefing). London: London Councils; London Skills and Employment Observatory. (2012). *The Career Guidance Lottery*. London: Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion.

the need for high level skills in an increasingly competitive global labour market and employers' desire for work-ready young people with appropriate employability skills.

7. The core of the *London Ambitions* idea is a series of seven elements which are to inform the careers offer for young Londoners from primary to tertiary level. Some of these elements set out an entitlement for young people, some provide guidance on how schools and colleges can deliver effectively on these entitlements and others offer commitments about the creation of local and London-wide systems. The elements can be summarised as follows.
 - i. **Access to careers education, information, advice and guidance.** All young people in London should have '*access to impartial, independent and personalised careers education, information, advice and face-to-face guidance in their local community.*' The report highlights the importance of considering quality in delivering on this and endorses the three pronged approach to quality in careers consisting of: the Quality in Careers Standard for schools; the matrix Standard for organisations that schools contract with; and the register of careers professionals for quality assuring the professionals who work in this area.
 - ii. **At least 100 hours experience of the world of work by the age of 16.** Young people should have '*first hand experiences of the world of work*'. These experiences are defined broadly to include a wider range of work-related learning activities. It is imagined that experiences will occur during both primary and secondary school with the focus of activities shifting from exploration to transition as the young person gets older. When understood as a nine year (from ages 7-16) undertaking a 100 hours is a relatively modest target and one which schools should be able to achieve.

An additional aspect of this element concerns the creation of a personalised digital portfolio that captures and records '*hard*' and '*soft*' skills. The analogy of an Oyster Card¹⁰ is used to illustrate how young people can be supported to monitor and keep track of their own progress and achievement. A similar ambition (the creation of an '*enterprise passport*') was set out in Lord Young's recent report and is planned to be taken forward by the Careers and Enterprise Company.¹¹ Presumably those responsible for taking forward *London Ambitions* will seek to align these two similar proposals. The establishment of an e-portfolio of this kind is an ambitious aim. There is some good evidence supporting the value of portfolio based learning,¹² but portfolios of this type are notoriously difficult to implement as they require buy-in from all stakeholders as well as co-ordination across a young person's life to ensure that the e-portfolio remains

¹⁰ An Oyster card is a plastic smartcard which holds pay as you go credit and can be used to travel on almost all forms of public transport in London.

¹¹ Young, D. (2014). *Enterprise for All: The Relevance of Enterprise in Education*. London: DBIS; Department for Education and Morgan, N. (2014). New careers and enterprise company for schools. Available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-careers-and-enterprise-company-for-schools> [Accessed 5th July 2015].

¹² See for example Solberg, V. S., Phelps, L. A., Haakenson, K. A., Durham, J. F., & Timmons, J. (2012). The nature and use of individualized learning plans as a promising career intervention strategy. *Journal of Career Development*, 39(6), 500-514.

relevant as they move from school to college to work and perhaps spend periods both inside and outside of London. However, some pilots of the idea are already running in institutions in London.¹³

- iii. ***Secondary schools and colleges should publish a careers policy and an annual report on its delivery.*** The report suggests that schools and colleges should have a publically available policy which sets out the school's approach to career education and guidance (including setting out a careers curriculum), employer engagement and the progression of young people. The school should then report annually to make it clear how it has performed in relation to its plan. This idea is similar to that outlined by the Education Select Committee in its Inquiry on Career Guidance.¹⁴ Such a proposal could help to make schools careers provision more transparent in a way that would enable parents to exert some influence on this aspect of schooling.

London Ambitions also outlines a Pan-London Careers Curriculum framework which is designed to offer schools a practical framework that they can adopt. This offers a complementary approach to the curriculum to that suggested by the Career Development Institute (the ACEG Framework).¹⁵ A key area of difference between the two is the inclusion of learning outcomes on '*resilience, determination and grit*' which align well with current government interests in these areas and connect them conceptually to career education.

- iv. ***Schools should have a governor with oversight of careers and employability activities.*** Governors are playing an increasingly important role in the leadership of school. The implications of this for careers work have already been recognised in guidance from the National Governors Association and the Career the National Careers Council as well as the Career Development Institute.¹⁶ This proposal builds on these initiatives by arguing that London's schools should identify a governor who can lead this area.
- v. ***Secondary schools and college should make use of labour market intelligence/information (LMI).*** The report articulates the idea that good quality information and intelligence about the labour market underpin effective careers work. It argues that LMI should be provided in a format that is accessible by young people, teachers and parents/carers and highlights Skillsmatch London, UKCES '*LMI for All*' and

¹³ Personal communication from Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director, London Councils, 13th July 2015.

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

¹⁵ ACEG. (2012). *The ACEG Framework: A Framework for Careers and Work-Related Education*. Available from http://www.thecd.net/write/ACEG_Framework_CWRE.pdf [Accessed 5th July 2015].

¹⁶ National Governors Association and the National Careers Council. (2014). *Focus on: Career Education and Guidance*. London: National Governors Association; Wright, K., Barnes, A., Walking, A. (2014). *Careers Guidance: Making All the Difference A Guide for Governors*. Stourbridge: Career Development Institute.

the National Careers Service as useful sources of LMI that might connect with more local LMI.¹⁷

- vi. **Schools and colleges should form ‘careers clusters’** to share and co-ordinate resources used in the delivery of career education and guidance. The report argues for the creation of clusters to support sharing and the effective use of available resources. The ‘careers clusters’ are imagined as consisting of around six schools and colleges. These clusters may be organised around the geographical proximity of institutions or on some other basis. The report also makes the point that funding is likely to be important in bringing these clusters into existence and possibly in extending their role beyond meeting the immediate needs of the schools and colleges involved in delivering them.
 - vii. **A new website will be created (the London Ambitions Portal)** to co-ordinate information for schools about career development programmes and resources. The report notes that there are more than 240 careers providers in the capital and proposes the creation of a new website to aid schools in identifying and accessing this provision.
8. The *London Ambitions* vision is an ambitious one. If it were to be realised in all of the capital’s schools and colleges it would represent a profound shift in the quantity and quality of provision. The London Enterprise Panel, the Greater London Authority, London Councils and the Mayor are all signed up to implement the report. In the context of London this coherent leadership is critical and bodes well for the initiative’s success. In particular this leadership will be important in helping to co-ordinate the plethora of governmental and non-governmental careers initiatives that are currently running in London including the National Careers Service. It could also work to integrate new initiatives like the Careers and Enterprise Company into this developing landscape. An implementation plan is currently being drafted and will be supported and co-ordinated by London Councils and the GLA.¹⁸ Effective co-ordination is likely to be critical for the success of the initiative.
9. Despite strong leadership the organisations involved in the *London Ambitions* initiative have limited levers with which to realise this vision. Schools which choose to ignore *London Ambitions* are unlikely to face any sanctions beyond the displeasure of the city’s leadership and peer and parental pressure. However, if sticks are limited, the report does imagine a number of carrots designed to drive engagement. In particular three main sources of funding are identified that could support implementation.
- i. London Councils will sponsor the Career and Enterprise Hub at Skills London.¹⁹

¹⁷ See Skillsmatch London (<http://skillsmatch.intelligentlondon.org.uk/>), LMI for All (<http://www.lmiforall.org.uk/>); and the National Careers Service (<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>) for further information.

¹⁸ Personal communication from Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director, London Councils, 13th July 2015.

¹⁹ Skills London is an annual large scale jobs and careers event in London see <http://www.skillslondon2015.co.uk/> for further details.

- ii. The European Social Fund (ESF) will be used to fund key developments outlined in the report. This will include funding: the career clusters; delivery of career information; education and guidance; initiatives to support traineeships, internships and apprenticeships; support for young people who are not in education, employment or training; and a range of targeted support for groups that face particular barriers in integrating into the labour market. In the past ESF funding has been used to resource similar types of activities, but it has often lacked a strategic framework of the kind that is proposed in *London Ambitions*. In particular the *London Ambitions* proposals suggest that ESF funding for careers, skills and employability activities will be used to underpin a coherent universal offer for young people in London rather than focused, as it has been in the past, largely on those young people who are not in education, employment or training.
 - iii. It is also proposed that the Mayor's Education Fund could be used to support the professional development of teachers to play a greater role in career education. In considering how to structure any investment of this kind it may be useful to review recent work commissioned by Teach First about teachers' roles in careers and employability learning.²⁰
10. London's political leadership is committed to taking forward *London Ambitions*. It has already been written into ESF funding plans and an implementation plan is currently being drafted which will guide other activities and the allocation of other relevant funding (e.g. that associated with the Careers and Enterprise Company and the Skills Funding Agency). London Councils and the GLA will be taking forward a series of activities to implement the proposals.²¹
 11. **A reflection on the wider implications of *London Ambitions*.** Careers work in the UK has been repeatedly reorganised with an important aspect of this being the frequent shifting of responsibility between central and local government. For example, the end of Connexions was precipitated by cuts to local authority budgets. At this point much of the focus in relation to careers policy moved to the national level despite the fact that the decisions made by local authorities continued to have profound impacts on young people's access to services.²² The release of *London Ambitions* suggests that localities are likely to be driving much of the direction of career education and guidance over the life of this Parliament.
 12. London is not alone in seeking to create a vision for career education and guidance at a local level. Recent work in Kent offers another example, as do current projects in Derbyshire and

²⁰ Teach First. (2015). *Careers Education in the Classroom*. London: Teach First; Hooley, T., Watts, A.G. and Andrews, D. (2015). *Teachers and Careers*. Derby, International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

²¹ Personal communication from Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director, London Councils, 13th July 2015.

²² Langley, E., Hooley, T., & Bertuchi, D. (2014). *A Career Postcode Lottery? Local Authority Provision of Youth and Career Support Following the 2011 Education Act*. Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

Nottinghamshire, North Yorkshire and many other LEPs.²³ These local efforts have recently been given a boost by the invitation from the Careers and Enterprise Company to bid for funding in order to deliver a network of Enterprise Coordinators across the country.²⁴ However *London Ambitions* is by far the most substantial of these local proposals and has the greatest amount of political capital attached to it. A key question will therefore be whether it starts a trend amongst LEPs²⁵ to prioritise careers more highly.

13. A related issue is whether the development of *London Ambitions* signals a heightening of the 'careers postcode lottery'. While London may decide that it is appropriate to focus on career education and guidance other localities may take a different perspective. This has already been the case with respect to local authority resourcing of careers work, but the use of ESF funding threatens to increase the disparities between different localities. On the one hand this might be viewed as an inevitable consequence of increased local autonomy. On the other it risks opening up large discrepancies in young people's entitlement to career support between different LEP areas.²⁶ These concerns are further heightened by the LEPs lack of clear democratic accountability as well as by ongoing budgetary challenges that are being experienced by local authorities.
14. Finally it is worth noting the funding basis on which *London Ambitions* is proposed. Beyond the positive influence of the local political leadership's willingness to advocate for career education and guidance the proposal is largely based on ESF funding and other relatively soft funding sources. While it represents a creative and strategic use of this funding it does raise the question as to whether careers work in England is ultimately to be dependent on European funding. In the past ESF funding has served a more supplementary purpose, complementing and augmenting government programmes such as Connexions and the Youth Contract. At present it looks like it may be the most substantial funding source available. If this does prove to be the case it places English careers work on a fragile footing and leaves it exposed to shifts in the focus of European funding programmes, as well as raising a major question mark about what its future might be in the case of a Brexit or substantial renegotiation of the relationship between Britain and the European Union.
15. **Conclusions.** *London Ambitions* offers a powerful vision for career education and guidance in London. It is backed by all of the key players in London and so has a strong chance of being translated into reality. It is possible that the report signals a new locus for career guidance at the

²³ Hooley, T. (2015). *The Kent Model of Career Education and Guidance*. Maidstone: Kent County Council; the D2N2 LEP is currently in the process of developing an employability framework; an initiative is underway in North Yorkshire to develop school-based career education and guidance; and many other LEPs have similar initiatives.

²⁴ Careers and Enterprise Company. (2015). Invitation to Local Enterprise Partnerships to be at the heart of our national programme. Available from <http://www.sctp.org.uk/documents/TheCareersEnterpriseCompany-aninvitation.pdf> [Accessed 5th July 2015].

²⁵ Because of London's unique governance arrangements, the LEP's role in London is not the same as LEPs elsewhere in the country. The London Enterprise Panel is a non-incorporated consultative and advisory body established by the Mayor under sections 30 and 34 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999.

²⁶ Many of these concerns were discussed in Watts, A.G. (2013). *Government Response to Heseltine Review (Careers England Policy Commentary 19)*. Careers England.

level of the LEP. If career guidance funding continues to be localised in this way there are dangers that it will result in deepening of the career guidance divide between young people in different areas. Despite these areas of concern the report has been welcomed by many in the careers sector as it demonstrates a new political leadership on career education and guidance. If its vision can be realised it would put London's young people in an enviable position.

16. *London Ambitions* shows that, in London at least, there is a willingness to reinvigorate career education and guidance, to resource it properly and to place it at the centre of the education system. It can only be hoped that other LEPs and local government actors seek to follow its lead.