

# Evidencing the Impact of Impartial Careers Advice: Key Findings from a consultation and roundtable discussion at the House of Lords

## Purpose of the consultation and roundtable.

Career Connect ran a national consultation (**‘Careers Advice is Vital for our Future: Assessing the Evidence’**) between **March-April 2024**. It sought to understand perspectives from across the sector on the current state of evidence demonstrating the impact of independent and impartial Careers education, information, advice, and guidance (CEIAG). A roundtable discussion between members of the House of Lords and representatives from the major national sectoral bodies for Careers was held on **May 15, 2024**, where the results from the consultation, and research priorities, were discussed.

Our consultation asked four questions:

- 1) If there were no impartial and independent CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance), what does current evidence tell us about the impact that this would have on:
  - How prepared young people are to make decisions that affect their future education and employment outcomes that are aligned with their aspirations?
  - The longer-term employment outcomes for young people?
  - Specific vulnerable groups that would be most seriously affected, how, and why?
- 2) What do you think are the biggest gaps in our current understanding of the impact of professional CEIAG, and what are the consequences of this lack of evidence? We are particularly interested in thoughts on gaps across life stages and populations, including:
  - CEIAG provided to school-aged young people.
  - Support provided to those during transitions from school to post sixteen provision.
  - Young people most at risk of poor education and employment outcomes.
- 3) Thinking about these areas of weakness, what do you think the top three priorities should be for research and evidence for the professional CEIAG sector?
- 4) Who has a role to play in filling these evidence gaps, and what are each best placed to contribute?

We are grateful for the thoughtfulness and quality of the responses provided and the extensive time that has clearly been given to these. This short paper provides a concise summary of the key points made.

## Findings From the Consultation

1

**The Gatsby benchmarks have provided a framework for good evidence to be generated as to the scope and scale of CEIAG delivery to school aged young people, but the absence of a similar framework for provision to young people aged 16-24 who are NEET is a barrier to evidence generation demonstrating impactful practice.**

- We now have a growing body of evidence about the extent to which the eight Gatsby Benchmarks for Careers provision in schools and colleges are driving improvements in the Careers support received by young people. We have a good understanding of how many schools are achieving which benchmarks and the (upward) trends. We have an increasingly detailed and up-to-date picture of provision across schools and colleges. This is a valuable part of the evidence picture.
- The success of Gatsby, however, serves to highlight the absence of similar benchmarks for provision of careers services to young people aged 16-24 who are NEET, and the absence of evidence of the scope, scale, and quality of Careers support for this group who we know are at significant risk of unemployment and under-employment over the longer-term.

2

**There is reasonably good evidence of the immediate, positive impact of CEIAG for young people being 'career ready' and reducing their risk of becoming NEET aged 16-24 years. There is much less evidence about the long-term impact on social mobility, or for specific groups that we know to be more vulnerable to employment outcomes later in life.**

- Without professional CEIAG, there is good evidence that young people would finish compulsory education:
  - Less likely to have aspirations aligned with their ability and with labour market opportunities.
  - Less prepared for making informed decisions and their next steps towards being career ready.
  - More likely to be Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) between the ages of 16-18 years of age, with potential longer-term negative consequences for employment outcomes.
  - At increased risk of under-employment and in work that is not aligned with their skills and abilities.

- Be at higher risk of NEET and under-employment if they face additional barriers to being career ready (e.g. SEND, care experienced young people, growing number of home educated young people), and/or have low social capital.
- Evidence of the longer-term impact on careers, employment and prosperity is hard to quantify, and we are largely reliant on modelling and assumptions rather than direct evidence - there is little empirical data linking high quality CEIAG to sustained destinations for young people. This is a gap that contributes to a de-valuing of the profession and under-investment in services.
- There is a need for more evidence on the specific needs and impact of professional careers support for those most vulnerable to poor outcomes in later life, including the growing number of electively home educating young people who are not served by school provision pre 16 and who are appearing in greater number in post-16 NEET cohorts.

**3** While there is good evidence around scope and scale of provision and shorter-term impact, there is much less about the conduct of professional careers practice, new ways of delivering guidance, and practice that best supports the needs of young people that are more vulnerable to poor employment and career outcomes in later life.

- We have a major gap in research and evidence around personal guidance and the work of professionally qualified career advisers. There is a need for research around practice development and new ways of delivering guidance. Theoretical frameworks that address the career needs of women, SEND and minority ethnic groups are limited. We need a greater understanding of how Gatsby Benchmark 8 (personal guidance) is being achieved, or who it is being delivered by. This may mask issues about the shortage of qualified Careers Advisers and the maintaining of a sustainable careers workforce.
- The Career Guidance Guarantee (Career Policy Development Working Group) endorses the standard that impactful Careers provision for young people needs to be delivered by professionals with a minimum Level 6 qualification. We lack evidence of the extent to which this is happening and the consequences when not delivered by qualified personnel. This lack of evidence presents threats to the future scale-up of high quality and impactful provision by appropriately qualified Careers professionals.

**4** There are multiple priorities but the most commonly occurring can be grouped into four areas:

- 1) Empirical evidence that allows us to produce stronger models and estimates of the long-term impact of Careers support for young people.

- 2) Stronger data on how Gatsby 8 (Personal guidance: every pupil should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a career adviser, trained to an appropriate level) is being met and the impact of advisers having L6/L7 qualifications as set out in the Career Guidance Guarantee.
- 3) The development of new, evidence-based models of delivery of quality Careers guidance and support.
- 4) Greater use and accumulation of evidence from standardised measures of the short-term outcomes of Careers support, and their deployment to understand short-term outcomes for those most vulnerable to poorer outcomes later in life.

## 5

**National bodies, universities, and delivery organisations all have a role to play in conducting research and filling evidence gaps, but the sector would benefit from greater alignment of effort and more collaborative working, supporting more work at scale.**

- There is broad consensus that closer coordination of research and evidence generation across the sector would be beneficial for several reasons:
  - It would lead to more collaborations between organisations, which will produce more impactful evidence at larger scale.
  - Reduce duplication of effort and encourage organisations to focus on the areas where their opportunities to contribute to evidence gaps are greatest.
  - Provide environment for more cross-promotion of evidence and greater familiarity with evidence being produced across the sector.
  - Be more appealing to research funding bodies, motivated by larger scale studies, including funding bodies that are independent of government, government agencies and third sector delivery organisations, and their vested interests.

## Key Points from the Roundtable

The **roundtable discussion** explored these points in depth, and some additional areas for focus, including:

- The need for research on **how much schools spend on career guidance** and association with quality of provision and outcomes.
- A better understanding of the **level of awareness among young people of the Gatsby benchmarks** and the opportunities which these require schools to provide.
- The opportunity **for insight on long-term outcomes through the linking of databases** enabling the tracking of people through life stages.

- The relative **effectiveness of face-to-face versus virtual careers guidance** for young people and an understanding of the contexts in which each is appropriate and brings benefits.
- The opportunity and **value of learning from other countries**, particularly the other constituent countries of the United Kingdom. England has a quite different approach to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and there seems much to learn from these nearby contexts.
- The need for the sector to have a better understanding of the **demand for research and evidence among parliamentarians and those influential in the policy development process** – think tanks, political advisors, senior civil servants.

The roundtable discussion further strengthened consultation findings about the need for a more coordinated approach to evidence generation across the Careers sector. Career Connect will seek to engage colleagues from across the sector in this effort over coming months.

## Next Steps

Following on the first recommendation from the consultation for a national best practice framework for provision of IAG services to NEET young people, Career Connect held a one-day workshop in September 2024 with our eight local authority partners in the North West to explore current best practice.

We also held a workshop at the Career Development Institute national conference in November 2024, to present and validate the emerging framework, together with the Education Development Trust.

We will be doing more over the coming months to develop and promote the framework with the aim of ensuring that all young people aged 16-17 can benefit from the new Youth Guarantee.

We will also be releasing a report on transitions from school to post-16 provision for the growing number of young people with social, emotional, and mental health conditions.

## Thank you to those who participated.

We would like to thank the representatives from the following organisations for participating in the roundtable discussion.

### From the House of Lords:

- Lady Morris of Yardley
- Lord Aberdare
- Lord Storey

### From the careers & employability sector:

- Oli de Botton, Careers and Enterprise Company

- Katharine Horler, Careers England.
- Lauren Mistry, Youth Employment UK
- David Morgan & Michelle Stewart, Career Development Institute
- Professor Siobhan Neary - International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby
- Anna Round, Youth Futures Foundation
- Eliabeth Taylor, Employment Related Services Association
- Clare Viney, Careers Research and Advisory Centre