



Consultation on careers guidance
for schools, sixth form colleges
and further education
institutions

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About NFER

NFER is the UK's largest independent provider of research, assessment and information services for education, training and children's services. We make a difference to learners of all ages, especially to the lives of children and young people, by ensuring our work improves the practice and understanding of those who work with and for learners.

NFER's purpose is to provide independent evidence which improves education and training. As a charity we are always thinking about ways in which we can achieve this purpose. In particular, we are focusing attention on the use of evidence for improvement, taking a proactive approach to setting the research agenda for education and children's services in order to make a real impact on policy and practice.

About this document: Careers guidance

In 2012 the Department for Education held a consultation on *Careers guidance for schools, sixth form colleges and further education institutions*. The NFER submitted a response to this consultation. This is set out in this paper. We welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the consultation by drawing on our:

- extensive track-record of research on young people's decision making at Key Stage 4 and post-16 and careers education, information, advice and guidance provision
- Programme of Research *From Education to Employment* strand which reviews careers professionals' and employers' involvement in schools and is currently examining which interventions, such as those related to careers guidance, help to engage those at risk of disengagement.

Related documents

A broader picture of the issues affecting young people at key stage 4 can be seen from responses that NFER has submitted to other consultations:

- Reforming key stage 4 qualifications
- Work related learning
- Vocational education (the Wolf Review).

These are available on the NFER website.

In addition, an NFER paper, *Policy Developments and the Risk to NEET Young People*, draws attention to the impact of policy proposal on some groups of vulnerable young people: this is also available on the NFER website.

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Should we extend the new duty on schools to secure independent, impartial careers guidance for their pupils, downwards to Year 8 (age 12-13), from September 2013?

We agree that the new duty on schools to secure independent, impartial careers guidance for pupils should be extended downwards to Year 8. The fragmentation of schools, through, for example the introduction of UTCs, Studio and Free Schools, means that pupils, and their parents, will need to be better informed about alternative qualifications, school specialisms and pathways at an earlier stage. We believe it is important that all learners (and their parents) receive information, advice and guidance early enough in order to make fully informed decisions. The failure to provide careers guidance early enough means young people make decisions based on incomplete information. For example, the NFER evaluation of Diplomas indicated that many learners had only received Diploma-related specific IAG *after* expressing an interest in the qualification, meaning many young people never received any information on Diplomas at all. <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/IIDG01>

Furthermore, young people need to develop their self-awareness (including an understanding of one's strengths and weaknesses and preferred learning styles), decision-making skills and broader awareness of the world of work *before* they receive careers guidance. We believe where young people have been supported, through careers education, at an earlier stage of their education, they are better equipped to subsequently make use of careers information, advice and guidance. For example, evidence from the NFER key stage 2 career-related learning pathfinder evaluation shows that where pupils in Year 6 were made more aware of the world of work they developed an increased understanding of the link between education, qualifications and careers and had a more positive attitude towards school and education: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/91037/>

In addition, NFER's summary of evidence on support for young people making informed decisions and choices in a widening 14-19 landscape, indicates that young people clearly make decisions in different ways and at different paces and need time to assimilate careers' information and what it means for them in terms of their subject choices. This underlines the importance of extending the duty for young people to receive careers education and guidance to Year 8. <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/SMD01/>

Should we extend the new duty to secure independent, impartial careers guidance, upwards to young people aged 16-18 in schools, sixth form colleges and further education institutions, from September 2013?

Please Note: If the consultation supports the extension of the new duty to 16-18 in schools, sixth form colleges and further education institutions, the Government will consider extending to other provision including Work-Based Education and Training. However this is out of scope for this consultation.

We believe, in light of the Raising of the Participation Age, the more diversified, broader post-16 pathways and the decreased focus on work experience pre-16, young people will need more careers guidance aged 16-18 in schools, sixth form colleges and further education institutions. Evidence indicates that there is a high degree of 'churn' amongst young people between education and employment (highlighted by Wolf's Review of Vocational education: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00031-2011>) and we believe that a greater focus on careers guidance for young people aged 16-18 would help to reduce churn and increase engagement in education, training and sustained employment. NFER's Programme of Research strand *From Education to Employment* highlights in its review of careers professionals' involvement with schools, the importance of coherent careers education and guidance programmes that are well-structured and are appropriately timed to support all key decision or transition stages from Year 7 to Year 13: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/RCPI01>.

In addition, the NFER review of existing evidence of the benefits and challenges of raising the participation age and training to 18 revealed that suitable post-16 pathways, high-quality careers guidance and support (pre- and post-16), and good alternative pre-16 provision will encourage voluntary participation. <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/RPA01/>

Any other comments?

We believe that the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) will want to know whether the new duty on schools and colleges, to provide impartial and independent careers guidance, is working and in what ways it can be improved.

Furthermore, in light of the development of an increasingly more autonomous school system (outlined in the schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching* (2011)), we believe there are additional points to the duty on schools and colleges to provide independent and impartial careers guidance, to consider. For example:

- Schools and colleges should get feedback from teachers, parents and young people about the effectiveness of their independent and impartial careers guidance.
- Schools need to consider how they will ensure they are using external careers' providers that have been quality assured.
- Parents should be supported, and included, by schools and colleges to enable them to navigate their way through the widening alternatives for young people aged 14-19 and the best ways to support their children.

This information should be used to improve the careers guidance offer and DfE and BIS should look at ways to encourage schools to do this.

Providing independent evidence to improve education and learning.

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