



Career Guidance Guarantee Roundtables

February & March 2022

In February and March 2022, the *Career Development Policy Group* convened three roundtables to discuss the career guidance system in England and inform the development of the *Career Guidance Guarantee*. The three round tables focused on schools and young people (chaired by David Morgan), higher education (chaired by Professor Sue Rigby) and adults (chaired by Dame Ruth Silver).

The *Career Guidance Guarantee* states that every person in England should have access to career guidance. It then goes on to highlight the key actions that government would need to take to reform the existing career guidance system and improve access. The *Career Guidance Guarantee* was developed during the pandemic and launched in October 2021. So far it has been warmly welcomed by the careers sector.

The roundtables were designed to engage a wide range of organisations in conversation about the need for a Guarantee and to update the Guarantee for the post-pandemic world.

This note records the key findings of the roundtables, focusing on the areas where there was consensus or near consensus. We are grateful for the input of all participants but want to stress that attendance does not imply endorsement of the *Career Guidance Guarantee*. Some organisations, including those directly funded by government, are unable to formally support the Guarantee.

The roundtables were attended by representatives from the following organisations.

Adviza	CRAC	Matrix
AGCAS	Department for Education	Newcastle College
AELP	DMH Associates	Office for Students
Alleyn's School	Edge Foundation	Qdos Education
AOC	Education and Training	Sutton Trust
ASCL	Foundation	TASO
CBI	Gatsby Charitable	Timpson Group
Career Connect	Foundation	Transform Society
Career Development	Hartlepool BC	University of Derby
Institute	ISE	University of London
Careers and Enterprise	JISC	University of Warwick
Company	Labour Party	University of the West of
Careers England	Lancashire & South Cumbria	England
CIPD	NHS Trust	UKRI
City and Guilds	Learning and Work Institute	

Why we need a Career Guidance Guarantee

Career describes the individual's pathway through life learning and work. Everyone has a career and everyone, at some time would benefit from help and support with their career. When people actively manage their careers there are benefits for individuals, for organisations including learning providers and employers, and for the economy and society. Career guidance describes a range of interventions that support individuals and groups to learn about, manage and improve their careers.

Yet, the roundtables agreed that the entitlement to career guidance in England is very patchy. Many people cannot get the help that they need. While government does fund a range of career guidance services, the variety of services on offer is confusing with many gaps and overlaps and a lack of visibility for many services.

Many participants in the roundtables expressed concern about whether the career guidance system in England is fit for purpose and capable of delivering on current government agendas around skills and levelling up. Many participants argued that there is a need for substantial reform to improve access, ensure quality and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the system. However, it is important that reforms build firstly on the evidence about what works in this area, and secondly on the existing infrastructure.

Key concerns highlighted across the roundtables included:

- The lack of strategy, vision and operational coherence in the current system
- Patchiness of delivery across different localities, sectors and age groups
- Inadequate funding
- A depleted and demoralised careers profession

Issues for young people

The roundtable for young people discussed how the development of the Gatsby Benchmarks has created a strong framework for career guidance provision. But it was also recognised that the achievement of the full eight Benchmarks remain as an aspiration rather than a reality in most schools. While, for those young people who are not in school or college, the situation is considerably worse.

Key concerns highlighted in this roundtable included:

- The lack of a consistent national approach to the delivery of careers in primary schools.
- The need for further support for schools and colleges to continue to improve their provision.
- A recognition that some Benchmarks are more challenging for schools to deliver and require further support and funding.
- Noting that the implementation of the Baker Clause has been patchy.
- The absence of student voice in the development of policy in this area.
- The lack of adequate support for NEET and unemployed young people and others outside of education.
- Concerns about the capability and suitability of Jobcentre Plus for work with young people.
- The lack of a coherent approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

Issues for higher education

Higher education has an enormous power to transform lives and propel graduates into a new phase of their career. It is also an important place where people access a variety of forms of career support that aid them to choose and develop their careers.

Key concerns highlighted in this roundtable included:

- Inequalities of outcome in the graduate labour market in relation to a range of different demographics and backgrounds.
- The Covid pandemic has exacerbated many inequalities and disrupted students' careers.
- There is inconsistency in the entitlement career support for current students.
- Participation in career guidance in higher education is often voluntary, but there are concerning patterns about who does not access the available support.
- While many universities have good relationships with employers, it can be more difficult to build effective relationships with small and medium sizes enterprises (SMEs).
- Career success for graduates is often defined quite narrowly solely in terms of salary. These performance metrics do not drive best practice in career development and employability.
- There are big questions about the varied entitlement to career support for graduates.

Issues for adults

Adults are currently facing a highly turbulent and unpredictable labour market. Meanwhile government is involved in reforming lifelong learning and 'levelling up' opportunities for the population. Where career guidance is available to adults it can help to support all of these agendas.

Key concerns highlighted included:

- The need for a greater understanding that career guidance is about helping people to build a long-term career plan rather than about slotting people into immediately available jobs.
- Adult career guidance services are patchy and under-resourced with responsibility spread across multiple government departments, which promotes inconsistency in approach and a lack of coherence for service users.
- Most adults cannot access any government provided career guidance, either because they are not entitled or because they are unaware of their entitlement.
- The National Careers Service is too narrowly focused on unemployed people and too poorly funded.

The Career Guidance Guarantee

Following the roundtables we have updated the *Career Guidance Guarantee* as follows:

Publish a careers strategy

The economy benefits from a strong link between education and employment. Working people also need career development and support for career change to underpin a dynamic labour market. Yet, at present, support for career development is fragmented and unclear.

What is needed?

- A national lifelong strategy for career guidance involving employers, education providers and careers professionals.
- A clearer and more coherent system capable of guaranteeing access to career guidance for the population.
- An opportunity for local government, local employers and other key local stakeholders to influence the career guidance services available in their area.
- Investment in building the evidence base and clarifying what works.

Finish the Gatsby Revolution

The Gatsby Benchmarks provide a useful framework for careers provision in schools and colleges. However, we are still a long way from all schools and colleges meeting all the Benchmarks.

What is needed?

- Funding and protected time for 'careers catchup' for students who missed out on careers provision during Covid.
- A trained careers leader in every school and college with protected time to do the job.
- Addressing careers in initial teacher education and CPD.
- All schools and colleges to be in a Career Hub.
- Funding for personal guidance, delivered by qualified careers professionals, for all students.
- An initiative to improve the quality of destination data available to schools, colleges and other stakeholders.

Challenge youth unemployment

Youth unemployment remains persistent, even in a tight labour market. Yet, most careers support is available through the education system, making it difficult for other young people to access help.

What is needed?

- An entitlement to career guidance for all young people.
- Funding for local authorities and the National Careers Service to support NEET young people and other young people who are outside of the formal education system.
- The integration of professional career guidance into all government funded youth programmes.
- Improvement in the quality of tracking of young people outside of learning and work.

Develop graduates' careers

The graduate job market is always competitive and filled with inequalities, which makes 'success for all' an ongoing challenge. It is unclear where career support should be accessed by graduates.

What is needed?

- An initiative to embed career development more fully into the curriculum and culture of higher education.
- Prioritise resourcing the levelling up of outcomes for graduates from low-income or minoritised backgrounds.
- Funding to support SMEs to recruit graduates.
- A clearer and more coherent national system capable of guaranteeing access to career guidance for graduates.

Support lifelong career development

Working people are facing challenging times in their careers. Many need to retrain, upskill or change their jobs. England has a high-quality National Careers Service (NCS) serving adults. But too few people know about it and can access it.

What is needed?

- Ensure that everyone over the age of 18, including all working people, has access to the National Careers Service.
- Clearly articulate what career guidance adults are entitled to and communicate this through a national information campaign.
- Provide intensive career support for people facing redundancy and who are unemployed.
- Give the National Careers Service a clear remit to work closely with employers and trade unions to ensure access to career guidance for working people.
- The achievement of all of this is dependent on an increase in funding for the National Careers Service and the reform of its funding model.

Ensure quality and professionalism

An effective career guidance system is built on the practice of high-quality professionals, but the benefits of professionalization are poorly understood. The profession has been neglected and demoralised for many years, leading to capacity, recruitment and retention issues. Furthermore, the requirement for professionalism is applied inconsistently across different government programmes.

What is needed?

- Recognition that career development is a valued profession.
- Acknowledgement that career guidance is a specialism that requires practitioners to be qualified to a minimum of Level 6.
- Assurance that those who provide career development services within all government programmes are appropriately qualified.
- Incentives in the form of a government bursaries and enhanced starting salaries to encourage people to join the profession.