

## The National Careers Council

### Summary of evidence relating to Education, Employment and Skills presented on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2012 to the Lord Heseltine Review benchmarking UK performance against a range of economic indicators

#### 1.0 Background

1.1 The government's vision for a better quality of information, advice and guidance on learning and work is set out in the document [The Right Advice at the Right Time \(PDF, 2.2 Mb\)](#) , published on the 5 April 2012.

1.2 The National Careers Council was established by the Skills Minister (John Hayes MP) in May 2012. It will provide advice to government on a strategic vision for the [National Careers Service](#) and allied career support services in England. The Council is chaired by Dr Deirdre Hughes, OBE, with ten members and three associate experts ([members' biographies](#))

#### **Benchmarking UK performance against a range of economic indicators and carrying out international comparison of industrial strategies has become a major policy imperative.**

- Differing forms of public, private and voluntary/community sector alliances are on the increase.
- Major challenge: how best to harness resources, including new social partnerships, to help minimise mismatch between individuals' learning and work opportunities?
- Barriers on the supply and demand side are arguably linked not only to mismatch or shortfall in both technical and non-technical (generic or soft) skills, but also to rapid expansion in education and qualification systems across Europe.
- School-to-work transitions are more difficult in countries where the dominant transition model is 'study first, then work' (OECD, 2010a)<sup>1</sup>.
- In contrast, where combined study and work is more common – through, for example, work-experience placements, apprenticeships, internships, job placements, and seasonal and part-time work – youth transitions in particular are reportedly easier and safer (for example, in Austria, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands).
- Economic benefits of investment in careers services are often contested; however, there is growing interest across the EU and internationally on 'careers' as a policy lever being given greater attention by Governments.

1.3 The National Careers Council welcomes having this opportunity to feed the formal Review by Lord Heseltine. We believe investing in the skills of people is an intrinsic part of securing growth and prosperity for the UK.

#### 2.0 Transformation and benchmarking excellence

2.1 There has arguably never been a **time when the need for good quality careers provision** has been greater. This is particularly so with the fast pace of technological and labour market change, the advent of new career sectors and qualifications and the considerable personal and financial investment decisions that individuals and their families face in choosing own their pathways to success. Effective careers services perform a pivotal role in **stimulating demand for further education and skills in an environment** where learner choice is key. The shift to **freedom and flexibility for providers, in line with local determinism,**

<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010b). *Learning for Jobs*. Paris: OECD.

means that the **intelligent choices of learners** equipped with the full range of careers information, advice and guidance at their disposal have become of paramount importance.

2.2 There have been many **policy reviews** carried out within the last decade by OECD, the World Bank, the European Commission and its agencies, and other organisations.<sup>2</sup> A recent review of legislation on career guidance in member states (2012)<sup>3</sup> and statutory provisions underpinning National Fora in EU Member States (2012) highlight different **policy levers adopted by governments to strengthen national, regional and local arrangements for careers provision**. A summary of key findings are summarised in Appendix 1. Whilst these are context specific, they do highlight potential options for Government to benchmark existing arrangements and future possibilities.

2.3 The **environment in which careers education, careers information and careers advice and guidance now operates** in schools, colleges, higher education institutions and other community settings is both dynamic and uncertain. This requires clarity in the **future direction of travel**, key responsibilities and performance measures that demonstrate both relevance and impact. The Council is in the process of **'joining the dots'** in existing policy arrangements in order to identify key strengths and areas of overlap so that careers provision can be strongly promoted, and resources for careers provision can be pooled and strengthened, where necessary<sup>4</sup>.

2.4 The Council is further investigating **high performing systems on an EU and international basis to benchmark excellence and innovation in careers provision**. We have defined 'high performing' within a multi-dimensional framework i.e. terms of either *one or a combination* of the following: school performance; advancements in the use of ICT; utilisation of effective tracking systems and connectivity to the labour market; and/ or featuring some form of outsourcing contract arrangements<sup>5</sup>. Having a future vision for the National Careers Service and wider careers support market is necessary as this offers a point of continuity amidst the flux of economic changes<sup>6</sup>. The National Careers Service is first and foremost a 'local service', delivered by advisers who are deeply rooted in their local communities and understand local job markets and career prospects. Within this context, **workforce development** is a key issue. The Council is investigating potential linkages between the new 'Institute for Employability Practitioners'<sup>7</sup> and the emerging 'Career Development Institute'<sup>8</sup> in this regard.

2.5 Findings from the OECD (2011)<sup>9</sup> strongly suggest that policy makers must give greater priority to the challenges associated with youth unemployment given this is at least 2.5 times higher than the adult rate<sup>10</sup>. **More career opportunities linked to strong brokerage arrangements at a local and national level** should yield **'returns on investment'** in terms of informing and supporting the participation of young people in education, employment or training; and provide tracking arrangements to identify those not participating. Effective **brokerage systems** where careers professionals are working with local employers linking **supply to demand** and providing a direct route for individuals to local opportunities appear weak and fragmented. There is a clear need to **restore careers professionals' connectivity to employers and labour market opportunities**.

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<sup>2</sup> Watts, A.G. (2008). *Lessons learned from national reviews: implications for the United States*. Paper presented at a National Career Development Association Symposium, Washington, DC, USA.

<sup>3</sup> Hughes, D. (2012) *Improving Lifelong Career Guidance and ICT Support project: Legislation on Career Guidance in EU member states*, EU-funded project managed by the Croatian Public Employment Service and Tribal Education Ltd, February 2012

<sup>4</sup> A good example of this is current arrangements for delivery of the Youth Contract to 16-17 year olds which, according to recent findings by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2012) indicate four out of five bosses (78 percent) say they are either unaware or won't be making use of the government's Youth Contract scheme. <http://www.rec.uk.com/press/news/2180>

<sup>5</sup> **Does this accord with your work on benchmarking UK performance against a range of economic indicators?** If not, how can we best capture this to take account of your preliminary findings?

<sup>6</sup> This is a key priority that the National Careers Council plans to address and, where appropriate, we will point to relevant key findings from Lord Heseltine's Review

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/launching-the-institute-of-employability-professionals>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.eparegister.org/public/report.aspx?memberqueryid=4AF7BEE0-39EB-4579-8E58-01DA3CFFB06A&atc=aaa&nodeid=18601CA9-2B23-4E52-B480-86AF6BB5C834>

<sup>9</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2011). *Employment Outlook: Moving beyond the job crisis*. Paris: OECD.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Grayling MP recently launched a call to employers to engage more fully with the UKCES 'Youth Employment' Initiative

### 3.0 Raising the work-readiness of school leavers and those acquiring tertiary qualifications

3.1 **Literacy and numeracy** (English and Maths) are essential foundations for all members of the workforce. These aligned with access to pre-vocational and vocational opportunities, including through apprenticeships, are an essential component of a curriculum menu. Many individuals need opportunities to learn new skills and be supported with funding where this makes a difference to access. They should be able to open Lifelong Learning Accounts and access skills and ‘career development and skills health checks’ through contact with the National Careers Service and other relevant providers.

3.2 Schools and colleges highly value the involvement of employers. Major and smaller employers want to be involved as active partners to help young people and adults to contribute fully to the wider economy, through preparing them with accurate careers information, mentoring, work experience, interview skills and the development of confidence, responsibilities, communication, and relationships. **School and college leavers need access to independent and impartial** careers information, advice and guidance. Evidence shows that ‘where careers guidance is wholly school-based, links with the labour market can be weak’, and too linked to the self-interest of particular institutions<sup>11</sup>. Teachers’ ‘experience of the wider work environment can be limited and their formal or informal advice to students may be biased towards general education and university pathways’<sup>12</sup>. There is a clear need for impartial well informed careers support from outside careers services working closely with schools and local businesses as part of an integrated career learning curriculum. In this regard, **a key objective for the Council is to identify strategic models of good and interesting policies and practices that can act as ‘benchmarks for excellence’.**

3.3 Evidence suggests<sup>13</sup> that good-quality careers guidance interventions in schools have a positive impact on **decision-making processes, reduce course switching and drop-out rates, and contribute towards successful transitions** within statutory and further education. Findings from the OECD (op.cit) and other studies<sup>14</sup> highlight that **within many schools, career education programmes that develop career management skills are lacking** and that their careers provision appears to remain concentrated upon individual assistance for those about to leave school. The Council is gathering intelligence on this issue to identify how schools have adapted to the new arrangements emerging from the Education Act and new Statutory Guidelines<sup>15</sup>. There is also scope to involve parents more fully in supporting their child (ren), as illustrated in ongoing labour market intelligence and information (LMI) developments in North America<sup>16</sup>.

3.4 Similarly, **employers** are keen to directly support more vulnerable young people who have few opportunities such as those in care or otherwise without family links to open access to potential work opportunities. This particular issue requires some form of ‘careers brokerage service’ from professional ‘skilled helpers’ i.e. **career development professionals** working with employers and training providers within a **quality assured market place**. The Council has identified three strong approaches, including the matrix standard recently supported by Government to assure quality careers provision. We will be monitoring the arrangements as they unfold; we also welcome a recent development by UKCES to strategically position **‘Investors in People’ alongside services standards for careers providers.**

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<sup>11</sup> OECD (2004), Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap, OECD, Paris.

<sup>12</sup> Hughes, D (2010) Social Mobility of Young People and adults in England: the contribution of and impact of high quality careers services. Careers England.

<sup>13</sup> Bowes, L., Smith, D., and Morgan, S., (2005). *Reviewing the Evidence-base for Careers Work in Schools: A systematic review of research literature into the impact of career education and guidance during Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 on young people’s transitions*. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies

<sup>14</sup> Sweet, R. et al. (2010) *Making Career Development Core Business*, Victorian Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development and Department of Business and Innovation, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>15</sup> Department for Education (2012). *The Education Act 2011: the Duty to Secure Independent and Impartial Careers Guidance for Young People in Schools: Statutory Guidance for Head Teachers, School Staff, Governing Bodies and Local Authorities*. London: DfE.

<sup>16</sup> The Council is currently in dialogue with the Canadian Career Development Foundation and selected EU member states.

3.5 In developing high class apprenticeships to **Craft, Technician and Advanced Technician** standards there is a need to reflect on the linkages and efficiency gains that could be accrued from **closer working links between and across careers providers** operating in the National Careers Service and the wider system. For schools and colleges the OECD (2004) promotes a **partnership model** and highlights the limitations of an exclusively school/college-based model of CEIAG delivery. Strong CEIAG **leadership and vision** are two essential components required. The development of the UTCs and their close links with HE and Employment provide considerable potential for **higher education careers services to share their ‘careers intelligence’** further down the chain into the National Careers Service, schools and colleges. At present, these vital linkages seem missing from current arrangements.

#### 4.0 Remediating skills deficiencies in the current workforce

4.1 **Many sector skills** areas have developed highly active programmes of employer-engagement (such as STEM), and many large employers have dynamic joint programmes. There is however considerable room for enabling and supporting structures and central leadership – particularly locally, organised through **local employment partnerships (LEPs)** or similar bodies. The National Careers Council is currently in dialogue with LEPs, through the UK Commission for Employment & Skills, and with the CBI and Federation of Small Businesses on this particular issue.

4.2 NIACE **proposals for a mid-life career review** were [endorsed in Parliament on 17 July by the Minister for Skills, John Hayes](#). The Council broadly welcomes this development to encourage and support people to review the learning and skills they need to successfully manage the second half of their lives. With more and more people remaining in paid work beyond state pension age (currently over 50,000), there is a need for adults to review their career aspirations, training, health, finances and retirement plans before age-discrimination and ill health begin to limit choices. This approach complements ideas raised by Lord Nat Wei in his recent report [Next steps: Life transitions and retirement in the 21st century](#).

4.3 **Labour market information and intelligence**, when used in interesting and creative ways, is of benefit to young people and adults to help them make choices which are economically sensible. The Council plans to host a special ‘invitational event’ in November 2012 to engage more fully with employers to find potential solutions for strengthening the connectivity between the National Careers Service and employers. Also, we will be noting the implications for the wider careers support market, including quality assurance and workforce development strategic priorities. This complements the ongoing work of DBIS and the UKCES ‘LMI for All’ project. Our work should set out what is needed to **create the conditions for strong employer led partnerships that inform and make an impact on high quality careers provision**.

4.4 The recent review of the UK’s technological readiness indicates how the Government is examining ways of ensuring that the most disadvantaged young people are not left behind because they lack the technical facilities they need in their homes. There is equal concern about adults who are disadvantaged because they lack crucial digital life and work skills. It needs to be remembered, therefore, that there is a real danger that **disadvantaged individuals, with a particular need for career guidance support, will be excluded if service delivery comes too depend on access to ICT** before national policies address the twin issues of digital infrastructure and digital user skills.

#### 5.0 Addressing the longstanding NEETs problem

5.1 Reducing unemployment and maintaining relatively low levels ultimately rests on having **sufficient jobs available** and people with the right skills, knowledge and behaviours to fill them. We believe there is a **need to strengthen localities to stimulate growth**.

5.2 The Council has identified **four key components** that can strengthen localities and stimulate growth:

- careers services allied to meet people’s needs and closely aligned to the labour market;

- employer engagement, dynamic and locally structured to facilitate entry and re-entry into the labour market;<sup>17</sup>
- systematic and coherent tracking to identify support to those dropping out of the system;
- high quality careers interventions delivered by suitably trained career development professionals meeting required quality standards, particularly for those working with vulnerable young people and adults.

5.3 **The National Careers Service (NCS)** focuses on providing IAG to unemployed people aged 18+ to help them achieve employment and learning outcomes. **Co-location arrangements** in a wide range of community settings are beginning to emerge, including Jobcentre Plus offices and further education colleges. **The Skills Funding Agency and DBIS are currently reviewing the available intelligence on progress being made to feed into the Council's work.**

5.4 **Local authorities retain responsibilities to support vulnerable young people** more widely. Young people aged 13+ can be referred to the NCS helpline and website; and the NCS has a walk-in facility for young people below 19 in its face-to-face locations, designed to signpost young people to the most appropriate form of support. But funding for 1:1 support for contractors to work with this age group appears missing. Vulnerable young people fare worse than their peers in terms of the rates of participation in education, employment and training (EET) post 16; e.g. against a national NEET rate of 5.9%, those with special educational needs of 11.6%; for Care Leavers of 57%; and teenage mothers of 29%. **The Council's ongoing dialogue with LEPs should be helpful in this regard.**

5.5 The **value of qualifications and skills acquisition** has not always been matched by **labour market realities**. In countries such as Estonia, Greece and Italy, around one-fifth of young people with a tertiary education degree are NEET (Eurofound, 2012)<sup>18</sup>. Removing barriers to employment for this group (and other sub-groups) presents major policy challenges. For example, a number of countries have recognised that for migrants and minorities, language difficulties restrict entry and progression in education and/or training. Language support measures in such countries as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Sweden have been identified as important means of addressing this issue (GHK, 2012)<sup>19</sup>. **The National Careers Service offers significant potential to reach into communities and make an impact.** Urgent central investment in the marketing and promotion of the telephone helpline service is required to increase access and usage, particularly from NEET young people and adults.

## 6.0 Encouraging apprenticeships and support for the lower skilled

6.1 In many countries, young people's moves from learning to earning are proving more problematic in general terms (Keep, 2012)<sup>20</sup>. More diverse young people (including some high achievers) are not in education, employment or training (NEET), with fewer jobs on offer and less 'decent work' available (as opposed to temporary low-skilled work), and the skills of young people are generally not in high demand from employers. **Career management skills (including career adaptability and resilience)** are much more on the agenda of national core curricula compared to a decade ago; however, there is also growing evidence of **systemic failure in giving sufficient attention to such skills** (Keep, 2012; ELGPN, 2012<sup>21</sup>; GHK, 2012<sup>22</sup>).

<sup>17</sup> Linkages to the National Careers Service and the wider careers support market are currently being examined by the Council in this regard.

<sup>18</sup> Eurofound (2011). *Young People and NEETs in Europe: First findings (résumé)*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Retrieved 20 May 2012 from: [www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2011/72/en/2/EF1172EN.pdf](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2011/72/en/2/EF1172EN.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> GHK (2012). *Recent Policy Developments Related to Those Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEETs)*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Retrieved 26 May 2012 from: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2011/72/en/2/EF1172EN.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Keep, E. (2012). *Youth Transitions, the Labour Market and Entry into Employment: Some Reflections and Questions*. SKOPE Research Paper No. 108. Cardiff: Cardiff University.

<sup>21</sup> European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (in press). *Lifelong Guidance Policy Development: a European Resource Kit*. Jyväskylä, Finland: ELGPN.

6.2 **Apprenticeships are an absolutely vital component of the skills strategy** across most sectors of the economy-not just in the more traditional apprenticeship sectors of construction and manufacturing. **Apprenticeships need to be presented openly and fairly to school and college leavers alongside other options and to adults** where they are eligible. Pre-apprenticeship routes need to be made accessible as well as opportunities for higher level apprenticeships.

## 7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The National Careers Council has been given a unique opportunity to inform and provide advice to Government advise Ministers, and to engage with other interested parties, on **solution-focussed approaches that assure quality careers provision for young people and adults**. Helping individuals to make a success of their lives in challenging times and to feel suitably equipped to make decisions on future work and learning opportunities requires good quality information and support networks. The Council's task is to consider **how careers provision can become more accessible, and to find ways of ensuring individuals can better understand the labour market, the qualifications and the experiences that employers' value**. We are looking at high performing systems, within and outside of England, that offer fresh ideas and new thinking.

Dr Deirdre Hughes, OBE  
Chair  
On behalf of the National Careers Council

30<sup>th</sup> August, 2012

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<sup>22</sup> GHK (2012). *Recent Policy Developments Related to Those Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEETs)*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Retrieved 26 May 2012 from: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2011/72/en/2/EF1172EN.pdf>

**Extract from:**

Hughes, D. (2012) *Improving Lifelong Career Guidance and ICT Support project: Legislation on Career Guidance in EU member states*, commissioned by the Croatian Public Employment Service and Tribal Education Ltd, February 2012

A Summary Table 1 is available in the full report which provides an overview of current legislation on career guidance in each of the 27 EU member states<sup>23</sup>.

**SUMMARY**

The policy landscape is moving fast, as illustrated in the responses received from national experts, whereby government departments are, in many cases, downsizing and/or merging: this has resulted in the size, shape and nomenclature of government departments changing. New management and delivery arrangements, legislation, decrees and regulation are unfolding at a rapid pace, for example, in **Hungary, Ireland and Greece**. The necessity for clarity on existing legislation on career guidance becomes even more crucial as new players become involved in career guidance policy formation. In the absence of this, there is a real danger that careers provision and entitlements may not be fully understood, misinterpreted, or indeed, lost in the quagmire of renewal and policy proliferation.

Some EU countries do not have formal legislation regarding career guidance, for example, **Cyprus and Malta**. Instead, systems are in place to bring key stakeholders together to formulate plans and priorities. In many cases, member states have put in place National Strategic Plans designed to strengthen communication, co-operation and co-ordination between agencies, for example, **Austria, Northern Ireland and Germany**.

Differing EU member states have designed and implemented alternative forms of legislation some which are best described as being broadly generic rather than specific to career guidance, for example, **Czech Republic and Netherlands**. In contrast, countries such as **Finland, Denmark, Italy, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Slovak Republic and Germany** have detailed and specific legislation that has been recently updated or is in the process of being reviewed. In countries such as **Sweden and Spain** legislation on career guidance exists but this is left mainly to communities and regions to self-regulate. Across the EU, a move from centralised to decentralised governance structures provides more fragmented provision across the relevant countries.

The division of Ministries with separate responsibilities for Education, Vocational Education and Training, Higher Education and Employment Acts and regulations can often impede the ongoing development of all-age career guidance provision. The formation of a National Lifelong Guidance Forum, underpinned by legislation and direct inter-ministerial support can help to address this ongoing challenge, as reported in **Denmark, Luxembourg and Estonia**. In **France** an Information and Guidance Delegate reports to the Prime Minister, and is appointed by the Council of Ministers. In **Portugal** the Directorate-General of Vocational Training, under the scope of the Ministry of Education, is responsible for a National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences providing strategic leadership on adult guidance. These examples indicate the critical importance of having a clear sense of vision and leadership in career guidance provision, where key roles and responsibilities are made explicit. It is in this context that a National Lifelong Guidance Forum can perform a significant role in influencing Ministers and other interested parties on priorities that will enhance current and future lifelong guidance policy developments. This involves having a shared sense of purpose and focus among key stakeholders in areas where separate and/or joint action can be achieved, ideally linked to cost benefit savings.

There are some notable examples whereby Governments have decided to legislate and / or regulate career guidance policies. For example, in **Denmark**, a National Dialogue Forum is firmly embedded within a clear legislative directive which outlines specific responsibilities and priorities and in **Greece** a National System for

<sup>23</sup> Iceland and Norway are included since they too contributed to the overview of findings.

Quality Assurance of Life Long Learning (P3)” incorporates principles and quality indicators for Career Guidance underpinned by legislation. However, this is an exception rather than common practice across the EU. Some other alternative examples of good and interesting policies and practices can be found in EU member states such as **Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia and Poland.**

Legislative arrangements in place that guarantee a right of access to vocational / career guidance provision are prevalent in **French-speaking Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Norway and Slovenia.**

In some countries, there is a growing trend towards a new duty upon teachers in schools to deliver career education linked to policy goals for greater freedoms and autonomy, as illustrated in the examples provided by **Greece, Ireland, England and Scotland.** Also, the extent to which curriculum content and contact time with students is supported by formal legislation and /or statutory and non-statutory regulation varies considerably across EU member states. For example, **Austria, Hungary, Latvia and Poland** provide some interesting examples. In **Wales**, regulatory frameworks for careers and the world of work exist but are often weakened by failure of schools to adhere to the recommended requirements.

The professional competence and qualifications of careers counsellors have been given specific attention within legislation in countries such as **Poland, Iceland and Finland.** In some cases, regulation by professional bodies is a preferred approach often linked to quality standards and licence or professional register developments such as in the **UK and Germany.** Furthermore, the critical importance of multi-professional and inter-disciplinary approaches for professional development has become a major imperative across EU member states.

Government requirements for more individuals to take opportunities and responsibility for their own learning and work by using financial incentives or vouchers for participation have attracted interest in some countries, for example, **Flemish-speaking Belgium.** New policies rather than state legislation that support the active engagement of employers and greater utilisation of career information centres, labour market intelligence and ICT systems are also prevalent in many EU member states.

Legislation on career guidance targeted on marginalised or particular groups appears to be embedded within a wide variety of Acts. In the case of **Poland**, specific attention is given to vocational guidance for professional soldiers or former professional soldiers. A common theme across much of the legislation is that those most vulnerable or ‘at risk’ are highlighted as a priority. For example, in **Lithuania** the law on handicapped social integration (2008) addresses vocational guidance, counselling and assessment of skills as a part of professional rehabilitation services.

In many cases, higher education legislation does not have an explicit statement on guidance but student entitlement for individual study plans is included, for example, in **Finland and France.** **Germany** provides an interesting example of close co-operation between higher education institutions and the **Public Employment Service.** As an alternative, regulation through quality assurance arrangements led by Government-funded agencies and professional bodies appear quite common, for example in the **UK.**