



Department  
for Education

# **Mapping careers provision in schools and colleges in England**

**Research brief**

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## Introduction

This Research Brief presents findings of a study carried out by CooperGibson Research on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) to map careers provision in schools and colleges in England. The aim was to explore across a range of providers, the array of careers provision available, use and value of the provision and nature of delivery.

This summary provides an overview of survey responses of participating institutions (34 schools with sixth forms, 34 schools without sixth forms and 39 further education providers). Most respondents reported that careers guidance was the main part of their job (45%) or part of their leadership responsibilities (39%).

Some methodological limitations have been acknowledged in the reporting of these results. As with any self-reported assessment, a degree of caution should be exercised as to whether the respondents would have a particularly positive or representative view of the provision within their school. It is also possible that those responding to the survey on behalf of their school or college could have strong careers provision compared to those not responding.

## Key findings

The following analysis is based on the responses of 107 members of school and college staff (each from different institutions) with some responsibility for careers provision. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Respondents not answering the questions are excluded from the analysis.

### Careers provision

Careers provision offered across all types of institution responding to the survey, regardless of year groups taught, encompassed a broad range of activities and formats through which students could access careers education, information, advice and guidance. Much of this provision was aimed at higher year groups (Years 10 to 12) to support key decisions at transition stages.

**Careers information** Respondents reported that their institutions used a wide range of activities and formats through which to disseminate careers information on learning and work opportunities to students. A leading method was via websites, nearly all institutions reported using this approach. At least 90% also said they disseminated information through organised events such as careers fairs and visiting speakers, and the use of printed materials. Signposting to external services, such as printed materials, talking directly to institutions and national websites, was also very common practice.

**Careers advice and guidance** Careers advice and guidance appeared to be provided by a range of staff and multiple staff within institutions. It was most commonly reported to be provided by internal staff - those not qualified as professional careers advisers (to level 6), teachers and tutors, and other internal staff (including those qualified to levels 3 and 4<sup>1</sup>, student services and support staff). Use of internal professional careers staff and external professionals were fairly common – each used by around half of institutions.

Nearly all respondents said that personalised careers advice and guidance was offered, generally from Year 10 onwards although one-third of institutions were offering this to Years 7 to 9. Although it tended to be offered across year groups, it was sometimes targeted, most often to those in lower year groups, for example for students who were said to have ‘additional needs’ and gifted and

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<sup>1</sup> Qualifications are grouped together in different levels on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The level shows how difficult each qualification is – from entry level up to level 8. Level 3 is equivalent to A levels on the National Qualifications Framework and level 6 refers to, for example, Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards.

talented students.

## **Careers education**

The majority of respondents reported that students received careers education in the form of lessons/classes that teach them about how to identify and pursue career opportunities (16% reported that students do not receive careers education in this format).

It was delivered most commonly via tutor periods (59%) and Personal Social Health and Economic Education (PSHE, 50%) and by internal staff (not qualified as professional careers advisers), teachers and tutors and others (84% said it was delivered by teachers and tutors).

Careers education was most often provided to Years 10 and upwards, although compared to other aspects of careers provision, reasonable proportions (48%) offered it to Years 7 to 9.

## **Skills development/ employability education**

Skills development and employability education was offered by the majority (88%) of institutions surveyed, and again was most common among older year groups (Year 10 onwards). It appeared to be delivered across a range of lesson types (PSHE, tutor periods, subject lessons, other lessons).

## **Links to employers**

Nearly all institutions helped students to gain contact with employers to learn about careers/jobs. This was through a range of methods, common ones being, external employer speakers, lecturers or industry specialists visiting schools/colleges, workplace visits and work experience. These links were more likely to be offered to older year groups (Year 10 onwards). Some institutions did not use these methods at all, 13% said they did not provide workplace visits and 8% said they did not provide work experience.

## **Work experience**

Just over one third of respondents (35%) reported that work experience was the responsibility of a dedicated work experience co-ordinator. One-fifth (20%) said it was the responsibility of a dedicated careers adviser/careers staff, teachers, tutors and other internal staff. Several staff noted that there was an emphasis on students to arrange their work experience with support from a wide range of staff.

Around half reported that their institution did not have formal links with employers to arrange work experience. Where arrangements were in place, these varied from no formal contract to partnership agreements and formal contracts. Although nearly half (46%) said that they did not have formal arrangements with employers, the majority did feel confident in working with and finding external

partners.

## Impact of careers provision

**Rationale for provision** The two main drivers for the careers programme in their institution were; (1) the institution knowing that students needed this to prepare them for transitions/working life (87%); and (2) to avoid students making poor choices (58%).

**Value to students** Respondents were very positive about the value of careers provision for their students, with face-to-face discussion being thought of as the most valuable aspect. Other elements respondents thought were useful were visits from guest speakers, visits to universities/employers, careers fairs and mock interviews.

**Challenges and improvements** Although they were generally very positive about the impact and effectiveness of delivery, nearly one-third of respondents (31%) thought that students were not always aware of the provision on offer to them, or how to access provision.

The majority of respondents (87%) felt that their institutions' provision was of high quality. The key improvements suggested were more funding and staffing capacity: in particular, staff wanted more time to coordinate, manage and deliver careers provision; funding to organise visits and events; dedicated posts focusing on careers provision; time within the curriculum to deliver careers guidance and education; better collaboration with other organisations; better employer engagement and student engagement; and training for teaching and non-teaching staff.

**Evaluating provision** The majority (80%) of respondents reported that the provision in their institution was evaluated regularly, with destinations data as a common measure as well as formal student feedback.

They were generally very positive about their provision (perhaps reflecting the level of responsibility and involvement they have in careers provision). Respondents thought that the provision in their institution offered up-to-date information, advice and guidance that helped students make informed choices and that it is an effective career planning service for all students.

## Methods

The research took the form of a survey with schools and colleges which could be completed either online or via telephone. The questionnaire was designed with mainly closed questions although some open text responses were used to provide contextual and deeper understanding of institutions' career provision.

Over 500 institutions were selected and contacted via email and/or telephone to request that they complete the survey in Spring 2015. In total, there were 107 responses to the survey, a response rate of 21%.

Respondents represented a range of institution types, with the most common being general further education colleges (19%), maintained schools without a sixth form (16%), maintained schools with a sixth form (15%), academy schools with a sixth form (14%) and academy schools without a sixth form (13%). The sample also included free schools (6%), sixth form colleges (8%), tertiary colleges (4%), specialist colleges (4%), and other institutions, including university technical colleges and specialist designated colleges (4%). All regions in England were represented in the sample with slightly more in the North and South regions.

Most responding institutions completed via the online survey (90) with the remaining completing by telephone (17).

## Areas for further consideration

**Feedback from students, parents/carers and staff:** Further research with these groups would provide a more holistic view of provision in terms of their awareness, use (including frequency of use), reasons for not using the provision, perceptions, experiences and perceived benefits.

**Targeting/personalised provision:** It would be worthwhile for institutions to assess their approach to delivery and the efficiency of offering provision to whole year groups or targeting to certain students.

**Relationships with industry:** Further exploration of good practice in engaging with employers, how institutions could be better supported to work with employers in their local area and how networking and partnering might support employer engagement to make this engagement more efficient. It would be worthwhile to explore with different institutions, how they work with employers, their contractual arrangements and how they could better utilise employers to work with younger age groups.

**Innovative delivery:** With limited resources being a key issue for institutions, a timely project would be some practitioner-led research, guided by a research team, which explored innovative methods to engaging with students and delivering careers provision, and how best to meet the needs of students, parents/carers and staff.

**Improving practice:** Some action research projects could explore these issues with a drive to continuously inform and improve practice. Research on staff skills and knowledge needs and how best to meet these needs, would be particularly beneficial, especially for those who are qualified at levels 3 and 4 and those who are not qualified or not careers specialists.

**Evaluating provision:** It would be useful to gather more in-depth information on the self-evaluation activities that institutions undertake, the range of measures in place for quality of provision and how changes/improvements to provision are monitored. Further consideration could be given to the value of exploring the perceived quality of provision in relation to destinations, student feedback and performance measures.

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