



Briefing Paper

March 2021

Careers Advisers and Careers Leaders in the 21st Century: Managing the Challenges of COVID-19

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Introduction

We are all aware of the profound impact of the pandemic on people's lives and livelihoods. The consequences are likely to be felt for years to come; but already people are thinking about the opportunities and possibilities of doing things differently and better in the future. This optimism has spread to the career development sector of which we are a part. How can we cope with the immediate challenges of COVID-19 while planning to bounce back stronger in the long term?

This briefing explores how we can:

- look after ourselves better by practising self-care and compassion
- re-think and enhance the way we do things by developing our professional practice
- support the recovery of the organisations we work for by putting career guidance at the centre.

The briefing also lists key resources and sources of support to help us find solutions to today's challenges.

Self-care and compassion

Careers advisers and careers leaders are used to juggling competing demands, but COVID-19 has certainly exacerbated the scale and complexity of these. We are supporting learners and clients facing deep uncertainty and striving to help them find fulfilling education, training or employment.

We have also been grappling with significant changes to our delivery models with the rapid move to digital solutions to make careers guidance accessible to users while respecting social distancing and lockdown measures. The recent Cedefop Report applauds practitioners' positive attitude to the use of technology in maintaining access to career guidance¹. While we acknowledge that the use of these platforms can present difficulties associated with the digital divide, safeguarding concerns² and connecting psychologically in a digital environment³, there have also been big strides forward in working digitally.

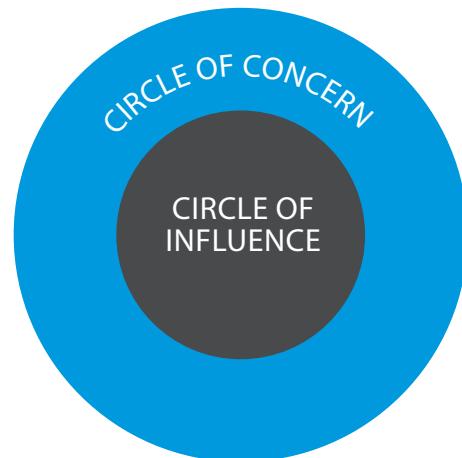


Students have valued easy access to advice and guidance and the chance for a series of short catch-up sessions online. I do find though that the pandemic means students are even more likely to want me to tell them what to do. Should I go to university or not?

(Clare Desai, Careers Adviser at Reading School)

Careers professionals have been grappling with these changes in practice and clients seeking help as they make sense of their situation. These pressures place a premium on the habit of self-care and compassion. Put simply, we need to look after our own physical and psychological health and wellbeing before we can provide effective careers support for others. Understanding the source of our personal difficulties and thinking about what we can do to overcome them is the first step in recovery. Choosing between different remedies – such as mindfulness-based therapies, meditation, escapist entertainment, physical activities, interacting socially with family and friends – is about discovering what works best for you.

As we think about how we get through each day and about how the education, health and labour market systems are holding up, it is reassuring to draw on Stephen Covey's advice about recognising our circles of influence and concern.⁴



He advised that we gather all of the worrying issues into a big circle of concern. Within that, there will be many things that are outside our control, for instance, government decisions over school and college re-opening and exam assessment. However, within this circle of concern, there are some situations we can influence such as how we help students to respond positively to home learning and teacher assessment. By focusing on our circle of influence, we become more empowered and positive. If we focus on our circle of concern, we can feel more stressed, anxious and helpless.

Lucy Hone, senior fellow at the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience has some good advice⁵.

"Most people have an inherent capacity to cope with tough times, which is not to say it is easy, it involves all emotions, saying, can someone help me on this, and showing yourself sufficient compassion to let yourself get through."

Establishing a habit of self-care goes way beyond the "because I'm worth it" kind of self-pampering! Everyone's approach will be different, but can include taking action in any of the six aspects of our lives featured below.

1. Workplace or professional self-care – finding a good work/life balance, taking breaks, knowing when to say ‘no’ to avoid burn-out, learning from mistakes, celebrating wins, perhaps through taking part in peer networks, talking to a more experienced colleague or engaging in regular supervision, having outside hobbies and interests

2. Physical – doing things that are healthy and comforting for your body by, for instance, eating well, sleeping well, taking regular walks or, a great favourite, dancing (For starters, try Oti Mabuse & Marius Iepure <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOJ8emheU4>)

3. Psychological - addressing things that could be contributing to issues such as anxiety or depression through making time to engage with positive friends and family, keeping a reflective journal or avoiding unhelpful temptations

4. Emotional – being aware of your feelings and promoting positive emotions in yourself through, for instance talking to a friend about work and life demands, writing down three things that went well at the end of each day, or developing a personal music play list (Try Yolanda Brown’s Inheritance Tracks podcast featuring *What’s Going On* by Marvin Gaye and *Don’t You Worry ‘Bout A Thing* by Tori Kelly! <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0946rzc>). Paul Gilbert founder of the Compassionate Mind Foundation (<https://www.compassionatemind.co.uk/>) identifies the importance of developing a compassionate mindset in relation to ourselves and to others as a lot more important and systemic than finding fleeting ways to feel better.

Working from home whilst trying to school your own children and advise other people’s children is almost too hard. Remember you are human, give yourself a break. No-one is going to be the best parent, the best home teacher and the best careers adviser during this horrible time. (Clare Desai – independent Careers Adviser and Careers Leader.)

5. Spiritual – connecting to things that are bigger than yourself, finding the joy in what you are doing, such as a belief or a cause, or engaging in meditation. Many people have said how important nature has been to them with the turn of the seasons highlighting how essentials continue even when much of life is on hold

6. Relationships - ensuring relationships are enriching and supportive perhaps by prioritising close relationships with friends or family.



Although the last year has highlighted the problems caused by the digital divide it has also yielded a number of interesting, encouraging new approaches with use of shorter more sharply focused interventions over a longer period, and use of visual prompts such as Zoom whiteboards and scaling questions to engage clients. Liane stresses that digital tools provide a variety of ways to interact with clients with blended use of small video clips of the adviser introducing themselves, video conferencing and follow up phone calls and email.

The new ways of working by careers advisers in schools have involved a greater number of phone calls to the home. It is reported that a positive by-product of this has been greater engagement with parents and more shared exploration of challenges and commitment to the way forward.

Liane also highlighted encouraging research into the delivery of guidance carried out between December 2019 and August 2020 using phone and other online contact. Forty in-depth interviews were undertaken in Wales into the value and impact of careers support⁶ with redundant and at-risk clients. The findings highlight the value of blended support including phone contact as well as the contribution of guidance to client wellbeing and the positive impact of the skills and empathy of the careers advisers on clients’ outlook and hope.

Re-thinking and enhancing our professional practice

The last few months have seen careers advisers and careers leaders experimenting with a range of fresh approaches to meet the needs of their clients during the pandemic. These have included greater use of email, webinars, virtual work experience and internships, online open days and job fairs, YouTube tutorials and guidance sessions using channels such as Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Facebook community groups.

Liane Hambly, who runs a range of workshops for the CDI, has highlighted the importance of building rapport in the online environment including tone of voice, reflective skills and sharing use of visual resources to stimulate exploration and feedback.

“I was the lowest I could possibly be when I left that job. I thought this is the end here. She made me feel that I’m not the only one that’s feeling like this. She gave me confidence in myself. They did everything and more – I was in that dark place and then it was like there’s the key, the door is open, the lights are on, let’s go for it!”

“getting their number was a real lifeline and saved my life... they inspired me to carry on and to take advantage of the REACT funding.”

“Everything was sorted quite quickly. Without her help I’d still be struggling. I don’t trust information on the internet – there’s too much fake stuff out there – she knows what she is doing – she is well informed and I trust her answers.”

There has also been wider use of different approaches to guidance interventions and a valuable recognition of the extended range of tools available to us. Julia Yates of City, University of London has identified five approaches that respond to the need for more customised individual responses and that recognise the current profound levels of uncertainty.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) - gives a way of thinking that helps clients to manage anxiety and low-confidence and identify and pursue their value-driven career goals. Rather than trying to reduce anxiety, ACT offers a number of techniques that help people to minimise the impact that it causes. <https://act-in-lob.eu> offers materials that can be adapted.

Psychological capital - is a combination of four attributes that when put together, help people to manage their career paths, and cope with whatever challenges get in their way. The four attributes are: Hope, Efficacy (confidence), Resilience and Optimism (HERO), and there are activities which can help people to develop each of them here: <https://positivepsychology.com/psychological-capital-psycap/>

Possible selves - is a technique that helps clients to think creatively about their own future. It encourages them to visualise different possible versions of their future identity - different versions of the person they could be in two- or five-years' time. It is particularly useful for clients who cannot see beyond the current challenges or barriers in their lives: <https://coachingincareers.blogspot.com/2017/02/possible-selves.html>

Strengths Coaching - strengths are things that we enjoy doing and that we do well. They are broader than skills, in that they include aspects of personality and other attributes (such as zest, and humour). Working with strengths cards can be a great way to get clients to focus on the positive things they have to offer.

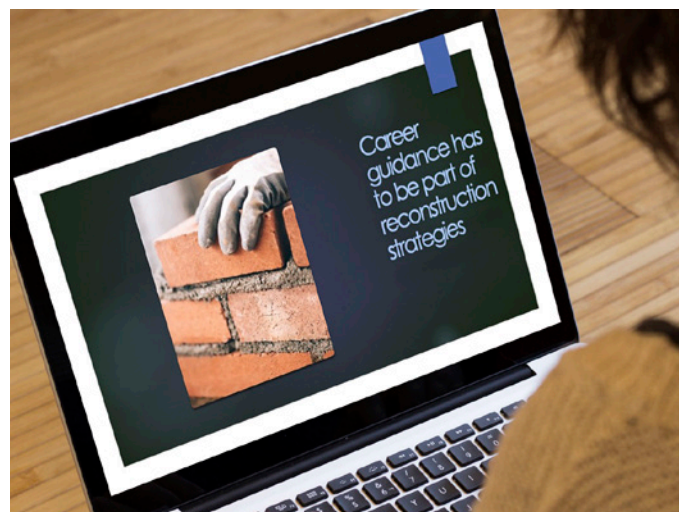
Five ways to wellbeing - a review of the literature on wellbeing identified five changes that people can make which make them happier: Connect with others, Be active, Take notice, Keep learning, Give. <https://neweconomics.org/2020/03/five-ways-to-wellbeing-at-a-time-of-social-distancing>

Some of these can be explored further through expert training sessions and webinars offered by the CDI.

Contributing to your organisation's recovery plan

In light of the growing negative impact of Covid-19 on national labour markets and people's lives, the role of career guidance has become ever more important to individuals, families, communities, the workforce, employers and society. It is now more important than ever to intensify the cooperation between government ministries and agencies, service providers, employers and other stakeholders in rethinking and repositioning guidance in the national Covid-19 recovery strategies.

(Cedefop (2020). *Career guidance policy and practice in the pandemic: results of a joint international survey – June to August 2020*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_766518.pdf)



What's happening at the moment is making our work more important but also more challenging:

- unemployment is rising and competition for jobs is increasing
- the fast-changing labour market means uncertainty on where the new jobs will come from or what they will be
- the disadvantage gap is growing, especially for young people whose education has been disrupted and who have missed out on normal career development opportunities such as work experience or mentoring support
- job insecurity has got worse
- employers' demand for higher level skills has intensified at a time when developments in technical education, training and apprenticeship opportunities have been hit
- pre-existing issues still need to be tackled including the climate emergency and social injustice.

As career development professionals and as individuals we can sometimes feel powerless in the face of these challenges, but we can make a positive difference so, what are the strategies and tools that can help sustain hope and optimism?

Whatever kind of organisation we work with or for – be it school, college, MAT or career guidance company – leaders and managers will need to both develop long-term recovery plans as well as to address immediate priorities and deficits. What are the strategies that careers advisers and careers leaders can adopt to support the organisation's recovery plans?

Put career guidance and support at the centre – by putting career guidance centre stage, organisations can create a culture which focuses on innovation, creativity and continuous improvement.

This process of challenge and innovation often does not result in the compromise which we anticipate; instead, we often surprise ourselves. In response, our solutions are more creative, current and centred on the needs of our cohort. For example, the traditional work experience had remained the same for decades ... Our response to this is to move towards a virtual project-based work experience; allowing the workplace to set a clear outcome for the period of the placement. Their project will utilise the skills and knowledge relevant to the sector, offering the student genuine direction, growth and workplace insight.

(Eppie Silverman, Careers Leader – Shoreham Academy)

The *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong learning for opportunity and growth* White Paper (January 2021) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth>) is an opportunity to focus on developing technical education and helping schools and colleges to gain the skills they will need in the future, even if the overall ambition of the White Paper is limited (see the CDI briefing on *The Skills for Jobs White Paper – Implications for career development* https://www.thecdi.net/write/CDI_Briefing-Skills_for_Jobs_FINAL.pdf)

Reset the organisation’s careers practice – we can do this by consolidating approaches that we have had to use during the pandemic which have the potential to become permanent features of the careers landscape such as by having a clear view of how to combine in-person and remote careers learning and support in a blended approach to career development and by co-partnering with clients, students and their supporters (e.g., parents/carers and staff in schools and colleges)

Lockdown has given us the opportunity to re-think how we share careers learning and opportunities. We are able to use platforms such as Google Classroom to create a central resource base for students to access to up-to-date careers and labour market information that moves with them throughout the school.

(Emma Honey, Careers Leader – Trinity Church of England School)

I am a secondary Careers Leader who, in the past, has struggled to find time (and agreement) to squeeze much of my careers offer into an already crammed school day. Now that I have Teams, and the skills to maximise its use, I am able to fit in all kinds of contact and delivery, both individual and group to our cohort on demand.

(Helen Ward, Careers Leader – Cranbourne, Hants)

Give clients and students hope – by cultivating hope and optimism students will become more resourceful, adaptable and resilient. A positive outlook is infectious and will improve their wellbeing, perhaps sharing the Stephen Covey model or the seven hope action competencies.

Make it happen – by putting our plans in writing they are more likely to be accomplished than those we store in our heads! Possible steps include taking on a challenge which brings together the whole organisation such as achieving the Gatsby benchmarks and the Quality in Careers Standard in the next 12-18 months or updating your careers programme in line with the new Career

Development Framework. Do not overlook the benefit of taking small pragmatic steps as well.

We found the positive in “less is more”. Having a much more scaled-down provision allowed us to focus on doing fewer things but doing them really well.

(Ollie Riches, Careers Leader – Ark Charter Academy, Portsmouth)

Colleagues will be grateful for help in developing resources and delivering sessions. Remember it is not all negative and there is plenty of support available.

I am inundated with virtual WEX and employer encounter opportunities. I think companies and businesses are seizing the virtual world to build stronger links with the education sector.

(Laura Langley, Careers Leader – Warlingham School)

Finding resources and solutions to today’s challenges

Getting the most from your CDI membership

The CDI has many Communities of Interest/Practice:

<https://www.thecdi.net/Communities-of-Interest>

<https://www.thecdi.net/Community-of-Practice-for-Careers-Leaders>

<https://www.thecdi.net/Community-of-Practice-for-Career-Development-Professionals>

The CDI’s annual mentoring scheme, interview observations and supervision guide also have a particular relevance to the current challenges

CDI (<https://www.thecdi.net/Home>) delivers the fortnightly News by Email straight to members’ inboxes

Career Matters magazine is published quarterly and since April 2020 has included articles on strategies for coping with the pandemic including well-being and LMI in a Covid world.

CPD Newsletter is published monthly

Read the latest items posted on the Covid-19 Research and Reports, along with other CDI Briefing Papers <https://www.thecdi.net/Covid-19-Research-and-Reports>

CDI offers a full programme of free and paid for training and events for members and non-members including Free Digital bytes. <https://www.thecdi.net/Skills-training-events>. Recordings are available on the website.

- CDI partners with NICEC (National Institute for Career Education and Counselling) to offer members ‘Cutting Edge’ events and free online access to the NICEC journal on the CDI website

Join the UK Register of Career Development Professionals - full CDI members who hold specific qualifications in career development can join the UK Register of Career Development Professionals as proof of their level of qualification, adherence to the CDI Code of Ethics and updating their skills and knowledge by undertaking 25 hours of CPD each year. They can call themselves a Registered Careers Adviser or Registered Careers Leader, and have use of a bespoke logo.

Participate in a local CDI regional group as a member or non-member <https://www.thecdi.net/Skills-training-events>





- The new CDI Career Development Framework is particularly well designed to respond to the challenge of Covid-19 recovery. It identifies the skills that young people and adults need in six learning areas: grow throughout life, explore possibilities, manage career, create opportunities, balance life and work, see the big picture. The website has a downloadable poster and guide with a list of useful teaching and learning resources. Handbooks and other useful resources are under development.

CDI is a founding member of the Career Development Policy Group (CDPG) which is a lobbying and campaign group working to influence and shape policies and initiatives that support career development. You can follow its activities at <https://www.thecdi.net/Reports---Resources>

- The CDI is working to establish a public evidence-based repository for practitioners to help them understand, articulate and promote the evidence base that informs and supports their practice (keep an eye on the News by Email for the latest updates)

Getting help with self-care

Take positive action to improve your health & manage your anxiety by Lisa Allen is a practical guide to self-care (https://www.thecdi.net/write/Managing_Anxiety.pdf)

Reach Out (<https://schools.au.reachout.com/articles/self-care-for-professionals>) is an Australian website with sections for young people, parents and schools that promotes mental health and wellbeing. The schools section also has classroom resources <https://www.headspace.com/bbc> - BBC resources to help you stress less, move more, and sleep soundly.

The Compassionate Mind Foundation (<https://www.compassionatemind.co.uk/>) is dedicated to alleviating mental health difficulties and promoting wellbeing

Work and Well-being (2015) is a TUC resource (<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/work-and-well-being-2015.pdf>)

Identifying charities, projects and resources that promote the health and wellbeing of young people

Young Minds (<https://youngminds.org.uk/>)

Reach Out (www.reachout.com) promotes activities to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young Australians.

UK Youth (<https://www.ukyouth.org/>) runs The Reach Up programme in partnership with Coca-Cola European Partners to tackle the problem of NEET

Youth Employment UK (<https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/>)

HSBC UK (https://www.hsbc.co.uk/financial-education/?cid=EML_UK_EN_J20647_10&dclid=CInh88rym-4CFQRB9gddbDIMzg) has created financial education resources with Young Money (<https://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/>)

Indeed Career Guide (<https://www.indeed.co.uk/career-advice/>) advice for young adults on job hunting

LifeSkills young people hub (<https://barclayslifeskills.com/young-people/>) for CV writing, interview preparation and virtual work experience. A new Toolkit developed with Time to Change, offers coping strategies to help young people understand the significance of mental wellbeing to their future and career prospects. <https://barclayslifeskills.com/educators/lessons/wellbeing-toolkit/>

MoneySense (<https://natwest.mymoneysense.com/students/students-16-18/>) interactive resources and games to promote financial capability

SACU (<https://sacu-student.com/>) includes links to the student life coach including mental health and well-being resources.

Re-thinking and enhancing professional practice

Cedefop; European Commission; ETF; ICCDPP; ILO; OECD; UNESCO (2020). Career guidance policy and practice in the pandemic: results of a joint international survey – June to August 2020. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_766518.pdf) provide a snapshot of how career guidance policies, and services are adapting and the role for career guidance in pandemic recovery measures

The Career Coaching Toolkit by Julia Yates (Routledge 2019) offers a practical guide to 34 career coaching techniques to help practitioners encourage their client's thinking. Each of the 10 chapters explores the links between the technique and the research on which it is based

Creative Career Coaching: Theory into Practice by Liane Hambly and Ciara Bomford (Routledge, 2019) aims to promote innovative practice by combining creativity with traditional coaching practice

Introduction to Career Counselling & Coaching by Hazel Reid (Sage, 2015) is a practical guide to established and emerging theories and models of careers work

The Chaos Theory of Careers developed by Jim Bright and Robert Pryor (<https://runninginaforest.wordpress.com/2015/04/18/the-chaos-theory-of-careers-theories-every-careers-adviser-should-know/>) helps individuals to understand and manage the uncertainty, risk and complexity involved in career planning.

The Life Design Research Group (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287768964_Life_designing_A_paradigm_for_career_construction_in_the_21st_century) emphasise that individuals need to construct their own selves, identities and careers; make their own work; manage anxiety and insecurity; build hope, adaptability and resilience

The Hope-Centered Career Group (<https://www.hopecenteredcareer.com/>) focus on seven hope-action competencies: hopefulness, self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting and planning, implementing and adapting

Liane Hambly's Creative Career Coaching blog (<https://creativecareercoaching.org/blog/>) discusses the latest issues in careers practice

Tristram Hooley's Adventures in Career Development (<https://adventuresincareerdevelopment.wordpress.com/>) news and views about what's happening in the careers world.

Contributing to your organisation's recovery plans

FE News (<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/labour-force-survey>) regularly publishes stories related to careers and the world of work

SecEd website (<https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/>) publishes news, blogs, best practice articles, resources and coronavirus updates

Steve Besley's education eye (<https://edcentral.uk/edpolicy>) brings you the latest developments in education in one place

The Careers & Enterprise Company (<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/>) publishes a twice-termly Careers Leaders' newsletter. The website has useful resources such as the 'Careers in Context 2020 A Can do guide'. It also runs Career Leader training and provides local support through the Enterprise Co-ordinators such as Career Booster funds and virtual work experience resources

The Gatsby Foundation (<https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/good-career-guidance>) is committed to improving career guidance in England

The Quality in Careers Standard (<https://www.qualityincareers.org.uk/>) is the national award for careers education and guidance in England



Researching the latest employment, recruitment and labour market information

Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces detailed reports and weekly summaries on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the UK economy and society (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-populationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsand-diseases/bulletins/coronavirustheukeconomyandsocietyfaster-indicators/28january2021>).

Emsi (<https://www.economicmodeling.com/>) produces webinars, reports and blogs on key labour market topics such as the expansion of AI and remote working

CIPD produces quarterly labour market outlooks in partnership with Adecco <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/trends/labour-market-outlook>

Institute for Employment Studies (IES) (<https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/>) is a leading independent centre for research and evidence-based consultancy. See their website for news and commentary including COVID-19 updates

Institute of Employment Rights (<https://www.ier.org.uk/coronavirus-and-work/>) offers proposals and analyses from a worker perspective

Institute of Student Employers (<https://ise.org.uk/>) is an independent voice for student employers undertaking research on trends in graduate, intern and apprenticeship recruitment and development

Learning and Work Institute (<https://learningandwork.org.uk/>) is a policy, research and development organisation focusing on lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion with recent studies into mid-life career crises as a result of COVID and other relevant topics

NOMIS (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>) provides local labour market statistics



The Work Foundation at Lancaster University (<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/work-foundation/>) carries updates and news related to improving work in the UK

Centreforcities (<https://www.centreforcities.org/>) produces reports, blogs and podcasts on the economic performance of the UK's largest cities and towns

Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) (<https://www.ifs.org.uk/>) aims to inform the public debate on the effectiveness and impact of economic and social policies

OECD produces international reports and analyses including the results of the recent survey on *Dream Jobs? Teenagers' Career Aspirations and the Future of Work* (<https://www.oecd.org/education/dream-jobs-teenagers-career-aspirations-and-the-future-of-work.htm>)

Skills Development Scotland (<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/skills-planning-alignment/>) publishes labour market assessments for Scotland

Careers Wales (<https://careerswales.gov.wales/careers-professionals/labour-market-information>) publishes labour market information for Wales

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research agency (NISRA) (<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/labour-force-survey>) publishes labour market information for Northern Ireland

There are a range of less formal sources on LinkedIn and Twitter that offer a helpful commentary on the developing situation such as <https://alanbullockcareers.com/author/alanbullockcareers/>

Promoting social justice and social change

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (<https://www.jrf.org.uk/>) promotes action and change to overcome poverty in the UK

Resolution Foundation (<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/>) focuses on improving living standards for those on low to middle incomes and produces regular reports on the labour market

Fair Education Alliance (<https://www.faireducation.org.uk/>) brings together over 200 organisations committed to tackling inequality in the education system. It is represented on the CDPG. Members include the Career & Enterprise Company, Education and Employers and other well-known organisations in the careers sector

World Economic Forum published *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 4.0* (June 2020), a toolkit for leaders to accelerate social progress in the future of work (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_NES_DEI4.0_Toolkit_2020.pdf)

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5. https://www.ted.com/talks/lucy_hone_3_secrets_of_resilient_people
6. Working Wales provides tailored one-to-one employability advice and guidance including help with job searching, CV writing, interview preparation and training and upskilling. This research was undertaken on behalf of Careers Wales to inform a new 5-year strategy (Brighter Futures)

With thanks to Jill Collins, Mark Fox, Liane Hambly, Mandy Ifans and Julia Yates



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