

“... better information, career guidance support and an education that builds their confidence and capabilities with regard to decision making.”

In August 2016 the Careers & Enterprise Company published a research paper¹ on how education outcomes data can support better informed career decisions. At the same time, the company published its response to the research, in the form of a discussion paper². In the latter document the company invited comments from stakeholders and this paper represents the views of the Career Development Institute (CDI), the single, UK-wide professional body for everyone working in career education; career information, advice and guidance; career coaching.

The original research was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The two Departments asked the Careers & Enterprise Company to explore how longitudinal education outcomes data, i.e. data relating individuals' education and their subsequent employment and earnings, might be used to support informed career choices by young people. The company commissioned two pieces of work: firstly, research into how young people think about career decisions and how they use information; secondly, a review of the current range of products and services providing information to support career choices.

The research concluded that young people find making career choices hard. They face many options but have few ways of making sensible comparisons between them. This can prompt young people to disengage from the process or simplify it by fixing upon a single option. They appreciate the potential benefit of making more informed choices but struggle to find answers to questions such as: what options are open to me; what will it be like to do a particular job; what would I need to do to get there? Lack of information is not a problem: the problem is making use of the range and diversity of the information available to them.

The report goes on to identify two approaches to raising levels of engagement in informed choice. Firstly, increasing inspiration and the desire to know more through real encounters with the world of work. Secondly, providing more personalised information through better information, better career guidance support and an education that builds young people's confidence and capabilities with regard to decision making. The researchers examined almost 50 different information services to help people make choices of jobs, careers, qualifications or educational institutions. They concluded that, while there is considerable innovation in the sector, we are not yet at the point where young people can access personalised information across the full range of options relevant to their situation. While this is undoubtedly true, it is unfortunate that the products examined did not include some of the more rigorously researched and developed tools such as Kudos, Morrisby and Centigrade. The report did conclude that longitudinal education outcomes data can improve the

¹ The Careers & Enterprise Company (2016). *Moments of Choice: how education outcomes data can support better informed career decisions*. Research paper. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company

² The Careers & Enterprise Company (2016). *A response to the Moments of Choice research: a programme to support informed choice*. Discussion paper. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company

quality of information available to young people, although it is interesting to note that the young people did not identify longer term earnings as a priority factor in their decision-making.

From the CDI's perspective, representing the professional interests of those working in career education, information advice and guidance, it is good to see recognition that while encounters and information are important, it is also important that young people in schools are helped to make sense of the information through access to career guidance support and an education that helps them to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to make career decisions.

The report does not use the term 'career education' but that is what it describes when it refers to "the necessary understanding and information to make sensible decisions" (p.7). In its response to the research the Careers & Enterprise Company says "This requires not only that those around the young person have the skills to help them make decisions but also that the young person has ... the skills and knowledge to engage with these decisions." (p7).

In its discussion paper the Company says that it has focussed on encounters in its first year of operation and that it is now ready to turn its attention on how it can support schools, careers advisers, parents and young people to make better sense of the choices they face. Furthermore, the Company does not wish to do this alone: it makes a commitment to engage with key stakeholders and the CDI is named specifically as a valued partner. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Company on the next phase of its work to support schools and colleges to, in turn, help young people make more informed career choices.

The Company's proposed approach

The Careers & Enterprise Company's role is to support activities that contribute to better careers choices for young people. The paper sets out the Company's initial view on how it could support 'informed choice', a concept it defines in terms of both the degree to which young people have information about possible futures as well as the degree to which they have support and the capabilities to make sense of information and reach a decision. The CDI would recognise such support as *career guidance* and the capabilities to make sense of information and reach a decision as the outcomes of *a programme of career education*.

The Company does not intend to provide individual advice to young people or to create more information tools. It acknowledges that family, teachers and career guidance professionals are the most trusted sources of support. It proposes to arm schools, colleges and careers professionals with the information they need to support young people, through a programme of research, consultation with education, business and the careers sector and dissemination.

The CDI welcomes this collaborative approach to a public information campaign to foster better informed and supported career choice. However, information alone will not be enough. Just as young people need support and help with building their capacity to make sense of careers information, schools will also need support to build their capacity to take the key messages about informed choice and to implement them into their professional practice.

The national pilot using the Gatsby benchmarks in the North East and Teach First's recently extended pilot for developing careers and employability leaders are showing the way forward. Both programmes set out to improve and enhance careers support in schools: one through using a framework of benchmarks to help a school review and develop its careers programme; the other through developing a middle or senior leader's capacity to review and develop the school's careers

programme. The CDI would like to see the Careers & Enterprise Company working with the Gatsby Foundation and Teach First to design *a phased national programme of support for schools* to help them establish 21st careers programmes. We believe that the programme could be led at a local level by Career Development Co-ordinators, possibly based within the LEPs and working closely with the Enterprise Co-ordinators. The role of the Career Development Co-ordinator would combine elements of the jobs currently being undertaken by the national facilitator for the Gatsby Project and by the programme managers for the Teach First pilot.

We believe that the combination of well-researched evidence about what works, and a nationally available and locally delivered programme of support for schools and careers professionals, will enable us to bring about the step change required to remove the current patchiness and inconsistency in provision for young people.

Relationship to the Gatsby benchmarks

The eight benchmarks of good career guidance set out by the Gatsby Foundation in its 2014 report³ are increasingly being seen as the template for programmes of careers support in schools. The CDI has welcomed and promoted the benchmarks and has expressed the view that the DfE's revised statutory guidance should be organised around this framework. In its 'Moments of Choice' discussion paper, the Careers & Enterprise Company says that it bases its work around the benchmarks, having first re-formulated them into three clusters: encounters; information; a plan.

In its first year the Company has focused on encounters, specifically encounters with employers as set out in Benchmarks 5 and 6 (*Encounters with Employers and Employees* and *Experience of Workplaces*). The 'Moments of Choice' paper moves the Company into addressing other benchmarks, in particular 2 *Learning from Career and Labour Market Information*, 3 *Addressing the Needs of Each Pupil* and 8 *Personal Guidance*. But 'Moments of Choice' does not focus only on careers information, advice and guidance; it also makes the case for education to help young people develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to make and implement career choices (namely, without using the term, 'career education'). This analysis highlights an omission from the Gatsby benchmarks: that nowhere is there an explicit reference to a planned programme of career education.

Many practitioners had assumed it to be implicit in Benchmark 1 *A Stable Careers Programme*, but this benchmark refers to the management, publication and evaluation of the school's careers programme which are, of course, important matters. The only reference to curriculum provision is in Benchmark 4 *Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers*. Again, it is important that teaching in all subjects makes links to careers, but there is also a need for pupils to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to research career opportunities, make choices and secure jobs and places on courses. Now that the Careers & Enterprise Company has acknowledged the need for such education in schools, it would be helpful if the Gatsby benchmarks could be amended to make this explicit too. Then they really would represent a comprehensive framework of best practice.

³ The Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2014). *Good Career Guidance*. London: Gatsby