



# Career Development Professionals in the 21st Century

**A Blueprint of Learning Outcomes for Professional Roles in the  
UK Career Development Sector**

**March 2021**



# Professional Roles in Career Development

## Introduction

In a world changed by the global pandemic with many challenges and opportunities for individuals and societies, assumptions about careers are being turned on their heads. It is no longer possible to rely on the career ladders and working patterns of the past. Young people and adults need to be competent career managers with the skills and knowledge to design their own career paths, and the confidence to respond to career challenges and changing circumstances as they emerge.

For young people and adults, being able to access support from someone who is professionally qualified to help individuals develop these skills is vital. In schools such support can come from career education programmes, access to employers and from personal career guidance provided by professionally qualified Career Advisers. For adults, career guidance/coaching may be accessed free of charge from government funded organisations or paid for privately from a career coach or consultant or provided by an employer as part of a talent management/employee development programme.

## Career development services are of value to society

Research, such as “Personal Guidance in English Secondary Education: An initial Return-on-Investment” (Percy 2020) estimates the return on investment (ROI) of personal guidance. The report finds a positive return on investment with benefits outweighing costs. While the report focuses on the financial returns to personal guidance, it acknowledges the wider benefits to individuals and society. This builds on ‘The economic benefits of career guidance’ (Hooley and Dodd 2015) which demonstrates the value and impact of the profession and the importance of being able to advocate and articulate this to others.

Hooley and Dodd’s research says that the individual outcomes of career guidance for individuals are a building of skills and knowledge (human capital), an increase in their network (social capital) and an ability to transition from one part of their lives to the next. These three outcomes all affect the ability of an individual to find and keep work. When individuals are in appropriate work it can have important implications for the wider economy, e.g. increased labour market participation, decreased unemployment, an enhanced skills and knowledge base, and a more flexible and mobile labour market. There are also secondary benefits, such as improved health, decreased crime, increased GDP, tax revenue and decreased cost of social security benefits.

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## The Professional Role

Being a career development professional and helping people to maximise their human and social capital and make the most of the transitions throughout their working lives is a privilege. To be able to do this effectively requires professional training and the ongoing maintenance and development of skills and knowledge throughout the career development professional’s career. The NICE European Competence Standards (2016) developed by a range of European universities articulate this well.

- **Career Assessment & Information:** describes the professional role of supporting people in attaining relevant information about themselves (e.g. their interests, talents and competences), the labour market, and educational or vocational options – depending on their individual information needs
- **Career Education:** describes the professional role of supporting people in developing their career management competences
- **Career Counselling:** describes the professional role of supporting people in making sense of the situations they are experiencing, working through issues towards solutions, making career decisions, and realising personal change
- **Career Service Management:** describes the professional role of career practitioners to manage and assure the quality of their work
- **Social Systems Interventions:** describes the professional role of career practitioners to support people and organisations in designing and developing adequate career pathways.

All of this is underpinned by **Professionalism:** adopting professional values and ethical standards in all practice roles, developing and regulating relationships appropriately, engaging in continuous learning and critical thinking and advocating for the profession.

Career development professionals should be professionally qualified in all of these roles, although some may specialise in one or more of them.

These roles also align with the National Occupational Standards: Career Development which were developed by the Career Development Institute (CDI) in 2014.

## Blueprint of Learning Outcomes for Professional Roles in the Career Development Sector

To ensure that all professional level qualifications for the career development sector reflect these roles and holders are equipped to practise in any professional role in the sector, the Career Development Institute consulted upon and produced a Blueprint of Learning Outcomes for Professional Roles in the Career Development Sector in 2016. This document is the revised (2021) version and has again been consulted upon with employers and career development professionals across the UK.

The Qualification in Career Development (QCD), awarded by the CDI, is entirely based on the Blueprint.

<http://www.theccdi.net/Getting-Qualified/Qualification-in-Career-Guidance/QCG-D-Contact-Details>

The Blueprint is used to inform the content of any new or revised qualifications currently accepted for the UK Register of Career Development Professionals:

<http://www.theccdi.net/Professional-Register->

The following sections provide information on the Blueprint of Learning Outcomes for Professional Roles in the Career Development Sector and the Qualification in Career Development and the Register of Career Development Professionals.

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# 1. Qualification in Career Development (QCD)

This is based on the CDI Blueprint of Learning Outcomes for Professional Roles in the Career Development Sector and contains eight Learning Outcomes and Indicative Content.

Students undertake the QCD alongside a range of post graduate qualifications in career guidance/development/management. This post graduate level study means that students develop not only the skills of critical evaluation and analysis but also those of systematic and conceptual understanding and the ability to deal with complex issues methodically and creatively by synthesising information from a range of evaluated sources.

To be awarded the QCD, students compile a QCD Professional Report as part of their studies which is moderated by qualified and experienced CDI Moderators. This provides assurance to employers and clients that holders have met the QCD Learning Outcomes and the CDI requirements relating to

- professionalism;
- conducting client-focused career guidance interactions;
- facilitating career-related learning in groups;
- gathering, organising and using career-related information;
- undertaking relevant work-based learning as part of their studies.

This combination of post graduate and professional skills and knowledge will equip future leaders of the career development sector with the drive and capacity to develop and deliver services that will meet the ever increasing and divergent needs of clients in a globalised society.

## 2. UK Register of Career Development Professionals

The UK Register of Career Development Professionals provides assurance to clients, employers and stakeholders of the level of qualification held (minimum of 60 credits at QCF Level 6/SCQF Level 11 or above in a career development subject), adherence to the CDI Code of Ethics and the undertaking, recording and reflection on a minimum of 25 hours CPD each year in order to maintain and develop the skills and knowledge required to work at professional level in the sector.

Registrants can use the word Registered before their job title, use the post nominals RCDP and a bespoke logo.

People who hold a 20 credit Level 6 or above qualification in careers leadership can use the post nominals RCL and the Registered Careers Leader logo.

The Learning Outcomes and Indicative Content can also be used to guide qualified practitioners on topics to consider for continuous professional development following their initial training.

## 3. Opportunities for employment and self-employment

Opportunities for working in the sector are increasing. These can include career leadership or career guidance/development roles working with: young people in schools and colleges; adults who are seeking employment, training or a change in career direction; students in Higher Education or young people and adults on training programmes.

Opportunities also exist for working in local authorities, the NHS, the secure estate, in work and employability programmes offered by the DWP and for private companies offering talent management, career management and career coaching services. With experience, more specialist roles can be attained such as working with clients who have special educational needs/difficulties or in management, research, lecturing, inspection or consultancy roles.

In England there has been a notable increase in the number of career development professionals who are self-employed and provide career development services to schools or career coaching and consultancy to adults.

Vacancies for jobs throughout the sector can be found on the CDI Jobs Board - Careers in Careers. The site is very flexible and employers can load up their vacancies here and practitioners can add their CVs and apply for jobs directly. <http://jobs.theccdi.net/>

To be awarded the QCD, students compile a QCD Professional Report as part of their studies.

## 4. Why join the career development profession?

Being a career development professional is a very rewarding career. Although many people entering work in the career development sector do so as a second career, the work is also suitable for those who have recently graduated. Research undertaken by the International Centre for Guidance Studies in partnership with the CDI, Cotterill, Hanson and Neary (2016) looked at why career changers moved into the career development sector. The respondents said:

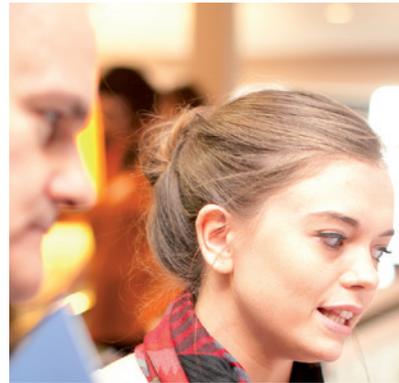
*"A position of great privilege." "Every day I'm able to help people in a very meaningful and tangible way." "This is one of the most challenging careers I have ever done or considered, however it is the most rewarding." "The challenges within education and the constant changes in opportunities and provision mean that you never stop learning." "I find it a rewarding, challenging and creative job. I keep learning and developing skills." "People who are driven to develop self and social awareness and who recognise the beauty, empowerment and necessity of lifelong learning will do well in career development work."*

## 5. Role of the Career Development Institute

The Career Development Institute is the UK-wide professional body for the career development sector. Our members (circa 5000) are career advisers, careers leaders, career coaches and career consultants working in the public, private, community, charitable and voluntary sectors.

Importantly the CDI is responsible for the UK Register of Career Development Professionals; the Career Development Sector Progression Pathway; the awarding body for the QCD; the Career Assured quality standard, and UK Career Development Awards.

We provide all the member services that you would expect of a professional body. We offer an extensive CPD programme with special rates for members; quarterly magazine; dynamic website with Members' Area, CPD Resources and a CPD recording system. Careers in Careers jobs board and fortnightly news emails. Critically we work with a wide range of stakeholders and government departments to improve career development services for adults and young people, speaking with one voice on behalf of the whole profession.



### References

- Cotterill, V., Hanson, J and Neary, S. (2016) A Career in Careers. Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies. University of Derby.
- Hooley, T. and Dodd, V. (2015). The economic benefits of career guidance. Careers England.
- Percy, C. (2020) Personal Guidance in English Secondary Education: An initial Return-on-Investment. Careers & Enterprise Company.
- C. Schiersmann, S. Einarsdóttir, J. Katsarov, J. Lerkkanen, R. Mulvey, J. Pouyaud, K. Pukelis, & P.C. Weber. Opladen: Barbara Budrich (Eds) (2016). European Competence Standards for the Academic Training of Career Practitioners. NICE Handbook Vol. II.

Although many people entering work in the career development sector do so as a second career, the work is also suitable for recent graduates.

## 6. Blueprint for professional roles in the career development sector

**Career information and assessment:** supporting people in attaining relevant information about themselves (e.g. their interests, talents and competences), the labour market, and educational or vocational options – depending on their individual information needs.

**Learning Outcome 1: Demonstrate critical understanding of issues relating to the production, application and client use of sources of career and labour market information and assessment tools and techniques.**

### Indicative Content

1. Rationale for clients developing information management skills
2. Information requirements of individuals using the service including social media and web-based information sources
3. Interpreting information and tailoring it to the needs of clients and others
4. Client evaluation and use of information to make informed decisions
5. Occupational information and LMI
6. Changing context and range of employment, education and training provision available to clients
7. Selection and recruitment tools used in the current labour market
8. Insights into the contemporary world of work and learning and the implications of these insights for individuals
9. Client awareness of options including unfamiliar new ideas and sources of information
10. Career-related information and its use in career education and career guidance and development contexts
11. Range, sources and types of information, which are, or should be, available to clients
12. Methods to retrieve information and obtain the information needed, including the appropriate use of information technology e.g. social media and web-based information sources
13. Management and organisation of career development information to ensure accessibility for individuals
14. Local, regional, national and international labour market intelligence including its relationship to societal developments, e.g. technological trends, policy-making
15. The evolving labour market and organisational career structures
16. Different diagnostic tools, tests, assessments, interventions, techniques and approaches and how to decide when it is appropriate to use them
17. How to enable clients to access bilingual information or information in community languages

**Career education:** supporting people in developing their career management competences.

***Learning Outcome 2: Demonstrate critical understanding of principles of learning design and apply them to a range of career-related learning activities.***

**Indicative Content**

1. Theories, models and frameworks for the design and delivery of an effective career learning curriculum
2. Scope, rationale and purpose of employability and enterprise education
3. Major modes of delivery of career-related curricula including delivery within the whole organisation
4. The role of career-related learning in supporting the development of career management skills
5. The range of resources that are available to support the delivery of career-related learning and the delivery of career learning programmes
6. Concepts / methods of validation and evaluation, and how they can be applied to the enhancement of career learning within organisations
7. The potential impact of career learning on the individual
8. The impact of drivers (political, economic, social and technological) on career learning
9. The role of opportunity providers, other education, employment and training providers and relevant stakeholders in career-related learning programmes
10. Rationale for facilitating groups
11. Activities to enable individuals to fully engage with their development through active learning
12. Group dynamics and interpersonal communication
13. How people learn
14. Learning outcomes and activity planning including the use and blend of relevant resources that best meet the identified development needs of individuals
15. Appropriate and client-focused techniques and approaches
16. Continuous and post-delivery evaluation methods

**Career counselling:** supporting people in making sense of the situations they are experiencing, working through issues towards solutions, making career decisions, and realising personal change.

***Learning Outcome 3: Demonstrate critical understanding of theoretical approaches to the study of career development from a range of disciplinary areas.***

**Indicative Content**

1. Theories, concepts, models and techniques
2. Selection, tailoring and application of theory, concepts, models and techniques to support career development activities
3. Change and transition management and application
4. Motivation theory and application
5. Decision making theory and application
6. The influence of opportunity structure on career choice
7. Influence that interested parties, e.g. family, carers, teachers, organisational stakeholders can have on clients' career plans
8. Processes, tools and strategies involved in helping clients to plan, manage, implement and review their career throughout their lives
9. Ways in which people can research, attract and secure career opportunities e.g. happenstance /social media/networking
10. Practical application of theory to practice

**Career counselling:** supporting people in making sense of the situations they are experiencing, working through issues towards solutions, making career decisions, and realising personal change.

***Learning Outcome 4: Utilise and critique a range of approaches and techniques for conducting client-focused career development interactions with individuals using a variety of delivery modes.***

**Indicative Content**

1. Client range: young people and adults in a variety of settings
2. Techniques and approaches which can be used with individuals and groups and the situations in which they may be applicable
3. Individuals' backgrounds, community, work history, personal and educational achievement and how these can affect their self-awareness, decision making, motivation, opportunity awareness, confidence, aspirations and approach to learning
4. Concepts and approaches for working with different target groups and for dealing with questions of diversity, age, gender and culture
5. Communication skills to encourage active engagement in the process, including face to face and remotely by telephone or digital offer
6. Skills in establishing a professional relationship, exploration and clarification, analysis of client need, aspiration and expectation, challenging, supporting and reframing
7. Skills in building and maintaining trust
8. Client autonomy and the selection and recording of realistic and achievable courses of action that will help clients progress to meet their short/medium and long term goals and objectives
9. Use of digital technologies within an intervention
10. Use of client records to effect change and monitor progress
11. Intended impact of career development activities on clients and how to measure this
12. Time management within an intervention
13. Client entitlement and the service offer
14. Caseload management and the provision of a holistic offer
15. Prioritisation of need and provision of on-going support to clients through a variety of different types of intervention and media
16. Continuous and post-delivery evaluation methods

**Career Service Management:** managing and assuring the quality of own work.

***Learning Outcome 5: Demonstrate critical understanding of the development of contemporary career-related policy and its impact on service delivery and practice.***

**Indicative Content**

1. History and development of career development policy and practice in the UK
2. Social and economic benefits of career development
3. Role of career development in social mobility, raising aspiration, lifelong learning and workforce development
4. Local, regional, national and international public policy frameworks
5. Responses of learning organisations to government policies including any statutory requirements and the role of the practitioner in supporting learning organisations in meeting these requirements
6. Use of data in career development practice
7. Methods to monitor, evaluate and report on service effectiveness including, where appropriate the use of quality awards or standards
8. Promotion of the value of career development to individuals, learning providers, stakeholders and policy makers
9. Own role in influencing and informing policy
10. Scope and any limitations imposed by delivery contracts

**Social Systems Interventions:** supporting people and organisations in designing and developing adequate career pathways.

***Learning Outcome 6: Demonstrate critical understanding and awareness of professional networks and partnership working.***

**Indicative Content**

1. Specialist services available to support individuals and the processes to follow to refer individuals to them
2. Recording the outcomes of referral so that examples of success and failure can be monitored and shared
3. Services offered by other organisations and how to use and access them for the benefit of clients and the co-ordination required
4. Boundaries and limits of own professional expertise
5. Additional needs and the value of partnership working with others to support particular groups, e.g. SEND clients, economically disadvantaged clients, clients who are in care or left care, young carers, offenders and ex-offenders, clients with mental health issues and clients from ethnic minorities
6. Relationships between organisations in the career development sector
7. Networks available for the benefit of clients and own personal support and development
8. Community networks and partnerships including the role of statutory and voluntary agencies, other professional ,specialist and voluntary support agencies
9. Employers, employer networks, where relevant Local Enterprise Partnerships and other opportunity providers used to support clients to succeed in the labour market
10. Confidentiality and security of individual information that meets relevant legal requirements and organisational policies
11. Role of brokerage and advocacy in the removal of barriers to learning and progression
12. Importance of constructive working relationships and methods to resolve conflict
13. Approaches to leading, managing, influencing, negotiation, co-ordination and persuasion
14. Principles of effective partnership and team working, brokerage and advocacy
15. Use of service level agreements

**Professionalism:** Adopting professional values and ethical standards in all practice roles, developing and regulating relationships appropriately, engaging in continuous learning and critical thinking and advocating for the profession.

***Learning Outcome 7: Demonstrate critical understanding of personal values and beliefs, ethical and legal issues and their application to career development practice.***

**Indicative Content**

1. Methods for recognising the impact of own values, beliefs, prejudice, bias and attitudes on own work practice, learning and development and why it is important to do so
2. Own beliefs and attitudes including unconscious competence/bias/ influence on own practice
3. Ethical practice required of own role by your organisation and profession
4. Conflicts which may occur between own and organisational values and contract requirements
5. Methods to support and develop professional practice
6. Recognition of the need for supervision and appraisal
7. Equality legislation and its major provisions
8. Incorporation of legislation and guidance relating to equality, diversity, social justice and data protection into policy and practice
9. Relevant ethical principles and codes of professional ethical practice and the consequences of not adhering to them
10. Implications of equality, diversity and inclusion on professional practice
11. Measures to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults
12. Boundaries of confidentiality, when it is appropriate to disclose confidential information to others and the processes required
13. Enabling access to bilingual services

**Professionalism:** Adopting professional values and ethical standards in all practice roles, developing and regulating relationships appropriately, engaging in continuous learning and critical thinking and advocating for the profession.

***Learning Outcome 8: Demonstrate a commitment to continuous professional development as a career development practitioner.***

**Indicative Content**

1. Being a professional in the career development sector
2. Theories and methods of reflective practice, and the use of these in relation to professional practice
3. Targets and objectives for professional development, based on self-assessment and feedback from assessors, peers, clients and supervisors
4. Participation in continuous professional development activities
5. Different types of resources used for continuous professional development
6. Commitment to self-reflection and self-evaluation
7. Contribution of research to the body of knowledge in the profession
8. Breadth of research methods
9. Strategies to manage the effects of change on self and the development of positive mental attitude



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