

Getting to Chartered Status: Understanding the views of stakeholders: Executive summary



**Nicki Moore, Dr Hannah Blake,
and Terry Lai**

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Contact information:

International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS)
Institute of Education
University of Derby
Kedleston Road
Derby
DE22 1GB

T: 01332 591267

www.derby.ac.uk/iCeGS

Twitter: @iCeGS

Facebook: @iCeGS_UoD

LinkedIn: International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS)

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Moore, N. (2021). [Should Career Development be a Chartered Profession?](#) Career Matters, 9.4, pp. 30-31

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Contents

Executive summary	1
Attitudes to petitioning for a Royal Charter	2
Understanding the differences between an individual charter and the existing process of registration	4
Attitudes to assessment for an individual chartership.....	4
Challenges to a successful petition for a Royal Charter	5
Developing the evidence base	5
And finally.....	6
Actions specifically for the CDI.....	8
Actions for all professional associations and associated stakeholders	8
References.....	10
Bibliography	10

Executive summary

In 2021, The Career Development Institute (CDI) commissioned the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby to undertake scoping research into the potential for the career development sector to petition for a Royal Charter. The research was summarised in an article in Career Matters (Moore, 2021). The scoping research highlighted the need to understand the views of stakeholders about their feelings about becoming a chartered profession. This second phase of research has been commissioned to understand the implication and views of all those involved in the field of career development (for ease, referred to throughout this report as 'the sector').

This research captured the views of 657 individual research participants using an online survey, individual interviews and focus groups and it engaged practitioners working across all areas of career development practises and geographical locations across the UK, and beyond. This is an important piece of research which will inform the strategic decision making, not just of the CDI but other stakeholders who operate across the career development sector. The research data has provided answers to many questions and has provided a picture of the commitment of those working across all aspects of career development to have their professional practise recognised and to have opportunities to have their competence validated.

The context for this research is one of an evolving public policy agenda and innovation in the use of technology to deliver career development services in a post COVID pandemic world. In addition, there are new opportunities for people working in leadership roles in schools and colleges in England to undertake careers leader training, thus professionalising the support they provide in terms of strategic and operational leadership. Practitioners are developing and innovating their practices and whilst there is an opportunity to have these practices recognised through the CDI UK Register of Career Development Professionals, this is not an approach which is adopted by all of those practising career development. At the time of undertaking this research, there is no sector wide approach to recognising the

professional standards and performance of those working to support individuals to make and implement decisions about life, learning and work.

Attitudes to petitioning for a Royal Charter

The research found a strong appetite for a petition for a Royal Charter amongst those working in the sector. This was not dependent on where participants live, or what job they do. Nor was it dependent on which professional associations they belong to although there is a tendency for those who only belong to the CDI to be more in favour of this move. The professional role of practitioners did result in a significant difference in responses. People who work in schools were more likely than those working in universities to support the idea of petitioning for a Royal Charter. This might be explained by the fact that those working in schools are generally less well paid and less professionalised than those working in universities. University practitioners are also available to pursue professional recognition through Advance HE which offers a progression framework of fellowships which can be worked through (Fellow, Senior Fellow, Principal Fellow). Whilst there are some who do not support this move into chartership, there were a significant number who do, and research participants provided many examples of how the sector and its stakeholders would benefit. These included:

- an improved experience for clients due to a more consistent approach, role identity and quality standards;
- a higher profile, more recognition of the role, and respect for the work of career development practitioners;
- a greater commitment and recognition for the employers of career development practitioners leading to a potential increase in funding, recognition of the quality services they provide and an increased focus on developing the evidence base; and
- an increased awareness by governments of the positive impact that career development practitioners can have on the achievement of a variety of public policy goals.

These are positive and encouraging messages for those tasked with deciding on the future direction of professional recognition, support, and development for career

development practitioners across the UK.

Although the research suggests that this would be a positive move, there are some views which suggested this move might negatively impact on the sector. These issues can be grouped as follows.

- Concerns about divisiveness and a lack of equity due to different practitioner pay and conditions across parts of the sector
- The impact of a new process of individual recognition being applied unequally across parts of the sector and thus creating a new hierarchy and unequal access to advancement opportunities.
- The costs for individuals and employers.

The issue of cost was raised on several occasions. Participants indicated that their preferred level of fee for an individual chartership was set at a level which didn't reflect the actual costs associated with the assessment process which will be required. Phase one of the research suggested several models of support for the process including a process of mentoring and assessment offered by individuals and organisations who could be commissioned to do this on behalf of the lead organisation, in a similar way to that offered by the organisation Advance HE.

These issues raised by research participants should be examined carefully, and a risk assessment undertaken to ensure that these potential problems are mitigated. The success of this activity will also rely on a strong process of communications with individuals involved in delivering aspects of career development across all of the home nations and all other professional associations and organisations to ensure there is total clarity of purpose and process.

Understanding the differences between an individual charter and the existing process of registration

The research demonstrated some confusion in people's understanding of the differences between the current arrangements for registration offered by the CDI and those for an individual charter. These two processes are different but could coexist within a developmental framework. Whilst most research participants had a view of the current register as one which communicated positive messages about their qualifications, commitment to the CDI Code of Ethics and undertaking 25 hours of continual professional development (CPD) per year it will be important that in any future processes of professional recognition, the processes of monitoring and accountability will need to be clearly communicated. Should a petition for a Royal Charter be successful, a decision will need to be made on whether to award individual charters. The research suggests that this would be a positive move and one which would be taken up by practitioners. This move would require some consideration of whether to revise the current register and the individual chartership process into one developmental framework.

Attitudes to assessment for an individual chartership

People indicated that they would be prepared to undertake, and pay for, an additional assessment for this status. The preferred qualification level for an individual charter is postgraduate level and this is consistently the answer irrespective of the level of qualification individuals have achieved during their initial training. This indicates that practitioners are hoping for recognition of their competence which provides stretch. There is also a suggestion by this research that the offer of an individual charter could form part of a re-visioned framework of professional development for the sector. This could encourage practitioners to join as members and then progress through a series of levels which could include, Registered Member, Chartered Practitioner, Fellow, and Senior or Principal Fellow.

There could also be a place within the framework for individuals who wish to join a directory of qualified practitioners which could be a list made available to the public so that they can identify a practitioner to meet their career development needs. The

criteria for each level would need to be developed if and when a successful petition for a Royal Charter was completed.

There have been a variety of assessment processes suggested for an individual charter. The most popular was for those seeking this status to submit a portfolio of artefacts demonstrating competence. For many the process should involve several activities including professional discussion, observation of practice and reflective writing.

Challenges to a successful petition for a Royal Charter

The research suggests that whilst there is a very strong level of support for the sector becoming chartered, the success of this project is not without challenges. There are several professional organisations who have a stake in this activity and phase one of the research did show that any organisation who petitioned for a Royal Charter should be representative of the sector seeking it. The career development sector is complex, and its practitioners work to different job titles and across different segments of the sector. This has the potential to undermine the success of a petition to the Privy Council. The research revealed that irrespective of which professional organisation individuals belonged to there was a feeling that the CDI as an umbrella organisation was best placed to move this forward on behalf of the sector. The implications of this are severalfold, for example organisations will need to align their codes of ethical practice, agree a framework of qualifications and progression frameworks. There is room within the process of individual charterships to differentiate individual roles. It is possible that the organisation who receives the Royal Charter could offer individual charterships for a range of roles such as a chartered careers adviser, a chartered careers leader or a chartered careers coach.

Developing the evidence base

Although growing evidence exists concerning the impacts and outcomes of career development activities, it will be important to further develop the research base so that it covers all segments of the career development sector to support a successful petition to the Privy Council. Examples of further future research which have emerged from this phase of the research include;

- A mapping exercise to understand the recognition of career development practitioners' competence in other international contexts.
- An analysis of the work of self-employed career development practitioners to understand the numbers involved and their existing relevant qualifications, experiences and areas of the sector in which they work.
- An analysis of the qualifications of those operating as career development practitioners.
- An exploration of the media's understanding of career development activities and their impact.
- Understanding the public awareness and experiences of career development activities.
- Mapping the outcomes of career guidance and how these meet public policy goals.
- Consideration of alternatives to Royal Chartership which could achieve similar goals.

It is likely that this research agenda is too much for one organisation to bear and therefore a cross sectoral approach should be established to audit existing research and identify gaps and allocate responsibility for conducting research to support the interests of the sector as whole and to expedite the development of a petition to the Privy Council for a Royal Charter for the career development sector.

And finally

One of the questions posed by some participants in the research was 'what problem does the CDI see as existing that a Royal Charter would solve?' There was no specific purpose in re-opening this discussion other than as a scoping exercise and research to provide an evidence base for strategic decision making, however, the research has highlighted several outcomes which a successful petition for a Royal Charter would achieve which could be seen as resolving some longstanding problems for the sector.

For the public, a successful petition would also raise the understanding of what constitutes quality in the services which they seek out for life-long decision making

about life, learning and work.

For practitioners, a successful petition would improve the status of the career development profession and those that work within it. This would in turn raise the value of the profession in governments', policy makers' and the public's consciousness. The CDI captures the values of career development practitioners when they note that

“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” (CDI 2021: P2)

This altruism has long gone unrecognised, and a Royal Charter would help connect and recognise the work of hardworking and dedicated practitioners to the important national and local policy objectives of improving economic and social outcomes of the population.

For the sector, a successful petition would result in consistency in the standards of qualification and practice, values and quality assurance across the UK-wide career development sector and would ensure transferability of knowledge and skills across the Home Nations and across different parts of the sector.

The overall message from this research is very positive. Practitioners across the sector support the idea of the CDI leading a petition to the Privy Council for a Royal Charter for the sector. This is not without challenge and the sector needs to come together to speak with one voice on behalf of their members and to align some organisational policies and practices. It is suggested by the research that, if this can be achieved, the users of career development services, practitioners and those who employ them will benefit.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have merged from the research and relate specifically to the preparation for making a successful petition to the Privy Council for a Royal Charter and not for the career development sector more widely. The recommendations have been grouped under the following headings:

- Actions specifically for the CDI
- Actions for the professional associations representing and supporting career development practitioners to take.

Actions specifically for the CDI

Once the CDI Board has considered the evidence and arguments set out in this research, a decision will need to be taken about whether to continue to explore the potential for a Royal charter and to agree a way forward. Following a positive outcome to this discussion, there are two immediate actions:

- Undertake research to understand the views of the current process for becoming and maintaining registered career development practitioner status.
- Draw together a strategy group with the specific purposes of collaborating on a plan to prepare for and complete a petition to the Privy Council for a Royal Charter on behalf of the UK career development sector.

Actions for all professional associations and associated stakeholders

Each stakeholder organisation will need to discuss the outcomes of this research and determine a response. Following this, they will wish to consider the extent to which they wish to be involved in some or all of the following actions:

- Undertake research to determine some consensus about job titles and how these might align to a new framework of individual chartership
- Agree a communications plan across all sector organisations to elaborate and promote the advantages of a Royal Charter in an evidenced manner to everyone working in the sector.
- Develop a clear picture across the UK of the academic levels of those practicing in career development.
- Undertake research to map the outcomes and impact of career development activities on the public policy agenda.

- Set out a joint programme of research to support the evidence base for a Royal Charter. This should include research into the following
 - A mapping exercise to understand the recognition of career development practitioners' competence in other national contexts.
 - An analysis of the work of private career development practitioners to understand the numbers involved and their existing relevant qualifications, experiences and areas of the sector in which they work.
 - An analysis of the qualifications of those operating as career development practitioners
 - Research to explore the media's understanding of career development activities and their impact
 - Research to understand the public awareness and experiences of career development activities.
 - Consideration of alternatives to Royal Chartership which could achieve similar goals.

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Contact information:

Nicki Moore
International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS)
Institute of Education
University of Derby
Kedleston Road
Derby
DE22 1GB

T: 01332 591267

E: icegsenquiry@derby.ac.uk
www.derby.ac.uk/iCeGS

Twitter: @iCeGS

Facebook: @iCeGS_UoD

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