

Education Select Committee Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

Submission of the Association of School and College Leaders

A. Introduction

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents over 21,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million young people in more than 90 per cent of the secondary and tertiary phases, and in an increasing proportion of the primary phase. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
2. ASCL welcomes the opportunity to make a written submission to the Education Select Committee Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG).

B. Key points

3. In our recently published [Blueprint for a Fairer Education System](#) we have set out a vision for a system in which all children and young people receive a high-quality, broad and challenging education; in which no child or young person receives a lower standard of education as a result of their background or where they live; and in which schools and colleges are supported to do everything they can to counteract the socio-economic disadvantages faced by some children and young people. We have proposed five “building blocks” towards this vision and set out a series of changes we think need to happen to create those building blocks.
4. Building block 1 focuses on the curriculum, where we include teaching and learning activities that cover careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). We want to see students, at age 16, able to pursue different routes. These could be exclusively ‘academic’, exclusively ‘vocational’, or a combination of the two. However, all routes should be of a high quality and students will need to receive high-quality careers advice and guidance throughout their education in order to help them at all their transition points, but especially to be able to choose the best post-16 pathway for them.
5. We are very concerned that the capacity for young people to combine or move between pathways risks being undermined as a result of the planned removal of funding for large numbers of Level 3 qualifications. We are also concerned that careers advice and guidance on different pathways remains extremely patchy. In order to strengthen this curriculum building block over the next five years, we must have improved funding, training and support for schools and colleges to provide high quality careers advice and guidance, particularly for young people from less advantaged backgrounds.
6. Career activities should take place at an appropriate level throughout primary, secondary and post-16 education, to open children’s eyes to different possibilities, guide

their choices, and ensure a wide range of aspirational options remain open to them for as long as possible. It should build on what we know makes a difference to young people's decision-making, such as having dedicated careers professionals working across a group of schools and colleges, the availability of high-quality online resources, opportunities for young people to be mentored by people in different roles beyond the school or college, and the involvement of parents and carers. This should include curriculum options at Key Stage 4 which encourage vocational/technical take-up at Key Stage 5. Where there is a lack of these options at Key Stage 4, students are much less likely to choose vocational/technical options at Key Stage 5.

7. Effective, quality-assured careers education and guidance is a tool to motivate and inspire young people. This is especially important when considering the engagement of young people during the (hopefully) final stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and in its aftermath. We urge the Committee to ensure the removal of the postcode 'lottery' factor that exists for so many students depending on how engaged their local careers services are (for example whether or not they have access to enterprise advisers). Every student wherever they live, and whatever their background or circumstances, deserves access to the same high level of careers education and guidance.
8. A quality-assured careers programme such as the 'Quality in Careers Standard' can lead to increased social mobility, higher aspirations, greater ability to make positive informed choices, and increased understanding of the world of work. This can enable students to gain the range of employability/life skills and the understanding of the economic landscape required to make successful transitions through learning into productive work in our economy.
9. Quality-assured careers education and guidance can also help to reinvigorate students' motivation (especially during COVID-19 and in its aftermath). It can lead to better engagement in learning, higher aspiration in student choice and a feeling that there is a more hopeful future. Increased labour market uncertainty may well have a negative impact on the choices young people make, so well-informed careers advice and guidance becomes even more important, especially around transition points.
10. Building block 2 in our Blueprint focuses on teachers and leaders. We call for an increased commitment to ensuring all teachers and leaders have access to, and time to engage in, high-quality professional development. This should be achieved through ongoing support to enable all schools and colleges to embed the Early Career Framework, ongoing investment in the development of Early Career Teachers, and encouragement for every school and college to have at least one member of staff who has undertaken the new National Professional Qualification in leading teacher development. Within this CPD, as well as in initial teacher training, there needs to be a greater recognition that teachers and leaders will be one of the main sources of information and guidance for their pupils in directing their progression choices and career decisions (whether done consciously or unconsciously). Appropriate professional conversations therefore need to take place between relevant public bodies as to how teachers and leaders can be upskilled in this area.
11. Building block 4 focuses on resources. We call for all schools and colleges to have sufficient funding to ensure that children and young people receive the education to which they are entitled. This funding should be based on a detailed, 'bottom up' analysis of what is required at each phase, taking into account the core national curriculum and the need for schools to supplement this with their own local curriculum. Careers-related activities should be included here, as part of the broader support, services and extra-curricular activities that schools and colleges provide to their pupils. Sufficient funding needs to be in place for this to be delivered just like any other part of the curriculum.

12. ASCL is also a board member of the Quality in Careers Standard and encourages schools and colleges to participate in this. However, the Licensed Awarding Bodies for the Standard have to convince schools and colleges to buy in their support. They have to charge schools and colleges for the external assessment and for the accreditation. None of the Awarding Bodies receives any direct funding from the DfE. Their income is determined by what schools and colleges decide to buy. Awarding Bodies argue repeatedly that the reason why more schools and colleges do not register for the Standard is their already over-stretched budgets. Currently, the typical cost of gaining the Standard is £1500-£1700 for a secondary school or college (for an award which, depending on the policy of the Awarding Body, has a lifespan of two or three years before requiring reaccreditation). Establishing a fund for schools and colleges to apply for dedicated financial support to gain and maintain the Standard would help to overcome any barriers to engagement with the Standard and therefore benefit more students.
13. Lack of access to, or provision of, quality-assured careers education and guidance in Years 10 and 11 may mean that some young people choose inappropriate options in Year 12. As a result of this, some may drop out or fail and have to restart Year 12. In such a scenario the government needs to pay a school or college an approximate extra £4500+ per year (the base amount for a 19- year-old in 'Year 14'). If better careers education and guidance was available to pupils pre-Year 12 then a significant financial saving could result, which could be re-distributed back into school and college budgets.
14. Careers education is the foundation upon which overall careers provision and services related to the lifelong learning and development of children and adults are built. Careers education and guidance, therefore, should remain the responsibility of the Department for Education. The Department for Work and Pensions has a complementary role to play in getting people into work and in administering benefits and pensions, but its main role is quite distinct from the aims and purposes of careers education and guidance.
15. Careers guidance services are a 'public good' as a result of their contribution to personal, social and economic wellbeing. While we would support the idea of a national provider to co- ordinate the careers system, the naming of a national service is an important decision. We would suggest that for this to be badged as a 'national skills service' is too narrow, and that omitting 'careers' in the title would demean the contribution that careers guidance makes to people's wellbeing and the development of skills for working and adult life.

C. Conclusion

16. In summary, careers advice and guidance plays a crucial role in the future life chances of our young people. It needs to be properly funded in schools and colleges to prevent it from being given low priority within the conflicting demands of the present over-crowded curriculum. In addition to careers specialist staff, all school and college staff should receive appropriate training in CEIAG activities throughout their own teaching and leadership careers.
17. I hope that this response is of value to your consultation. ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

16 March 2022