



Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy's Inquiry into Careers Advice, Information and Guidance:

Written evidence submitted by Young NCB

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1.0 Executive Summary

- Young NCB members value careers advice and guidance
- Young NCB members who have a clear idea of what they plan to do after school tend to benefit the most from careers advice
- Those Young NCB members who are unsure of what they want to do tend to place a lower value on the careers guidance offered
- Young NCB members recommend that careers advice should be offered in schools in year 8 or 9
- Young NCB members believe that careers advice should maintain relevance and be kept up to date (e.g. including 'new' careers such as web design)

2.0 Introduction

2.1 The National Children's Bureau is a leading research and development charity that for 50 years has been working to improve the lives of children and young people, reducing the impact of inequalities. We work with children, for children to influence government policy, be a strong voice for young people and front-line professionals, and provide practical solutions on a range of social issues.

2.2 For many years, NCB has championed the meaningful involvement and participation of children and young people in all matters that affect their lives. NCB actively engages young people through its many work programmes and projects and Young NCB members design and deliver their own youth led campaigns, with two Young NCB members sitting on NCB's Board of Trustees.

2.3 Young NCB is a free membership for children and young people to speak out about the important issues and decisions that affect them. It is open to all children and young people aged 18 and under who live in England and Northern Ireland.

2.4 In 2014, Young NCB members chose '*Is school preparing us for life?*' as their priority topic to focus on, and cited the issue of access to careers guidance as being one of the key concerns in relation to this topic. This paper, submitted to inform the Education, Skills and the Economy's Inquiry into Careers Advice, Information and Guidance, provides a summary of the views of Young NCB members with regard to the provision of careers guidance in schools.

2.5 Young NCB members were asked the following four questions:

- a) What do you like about the careers guidance provided by your school?
- b) Have you noticed any change in careers guidance in your school over the past 2 years?

- c) Has it supported you to reflect on careers and higher education/training?
- d) In what ways could careers guidance be improved?

3.0 Question 1 - What do you like about the careers guidance provided by your school?

3.1 The young people consulted tended to value the careers guidance that they had received, but they all had recommendations for its improvement. For example, some young people said that the guidance received about the route to university, such as how to use UCAS and write personal statements, was good but they would have liked to have been informed more about the other options into work, as University was often presented as the only credible way to get a good job.

3.2 Quotes from Young NCB members:

"The careers guidance that my school provides is okay from what I hear. They give us leaflets for the colleges we can go to from my school but I haven't actually met the careers adviser because there wasn't time at the end of Year 10".

"I like that they now invite people from outside companies in to talk to us about their careers, but these people are ones that the teachers select rather than people the students want to hear from".

4.0 Question 2 - Have you noticed any change in careers guidance in your school over the past 2 years?

4.1 Most of the young people consulted had not noticed any change in the provision of careers guidance in their schools over the past two years, mainly because they did not have older friends or siblings with which they could compare experiences. However, some young people had noticed that careers guidance appeared to have become more prevalent within their schools and that teachers and school staff appeared to be more engaged and willing to support pupils to secure meaningful work experience placements.

4.2 Quotes from Young NCB members:

"When I was in year 11, work experience was arranged by you but now I have seen that the school is helping to arrange placements".

"When we had to make our subject choices in Year 9, they gave us some information and websites which could help us but it was just two weeks before we made our choices so we didn't have much time to research. My [older] sister had a workbook and more information much earlier in Year 9".

5.0 Question 3 - Has it supported you to reflect on careers and higher education/training?

5.1 Young people had mixed responses to this question. On the whole, young people who had a clear idea of what they planned to do after school tended to benefit the most, as they were offered more accurate information, guidance and signposting. Those who were unsure of what they wanted to do tended to place a lower value on the careers guidance offered. Young people also said that the careers guidance that they received was often 'too late' (i.e. after they had chosen their options or even applied to Universities).

5.2 Quote from a Young NCB member:

“The advice was more about how to get into university rather than a career beyond that point. I think a combination of what I was told at school and independent research online helped me to reflect on careers and higher education”.

6.0 Question 4 - In what ways could careers guidance be improved?

6.1 The young people consulted made the following recommendations:

- Careers guidance sessions should take place in year 8 or 9, before GCSE choices are made so that GCSEs and other qualifications can be viewed as part of a skill set for beyond school;
- Improving communication and engagement between careers advisers and students to ensure that young people have access to careers guidance throughout their entire time at the school. This could be done through:
 - 1-2-1 sessions being made available for all students via a booking system;
 - Compulsory sessions for all young people to ensure that they have at least one;
 - individual careers guidance session with a trained professional during their time at that school;
 - Assemblies towards the beginning of every school year, introducing the careers guide and informing pupils how they can book a session.
- Ensuring that careers guidance is available for pupils in year 9 or earlier, before they choose their GCSE options (Schools now have a duty to provide careers guidance from year 8 onwards.)
- Ensuring that careers guidance is up-to-date and relevant (e.g. including ‘new’ careers such as web design);
- Ensuring that a range of information on the different routes to a job is available in a variety of ways (e.g. leaflets, careers guides, signposting to other organisations and websites);
- Ensuring that the careers adviser is available more often is important, especially at ‘peak times’ such as when pupils are undertaking work experience, applying to colleges or choosing their GCSE options.

6.2 Quotes from Young NCB members:

“IT and Technology careers are increasing but we never get anyone in to talk about those. They also invite universities in but hearing their talks in Years 10/11 is a bit late if you've made the wrong GCSE choices”.

“My school focuses on people continuing on to university and I know many people who don't want to go to Uni. I think it would be good for them to speak to us about apprenticeships too so as many careers are introduced to us this way”.

‘I believe that employers should engage far more in schools, colleges and universities to offer young people advice and guidance on their future careers. Whilst graduate fairs, Prospects and regional careers advice services (i.e. The National Careers Service in England) are fine, young people also need real guidance at a local level and not just some websites.’



'If the Government want to curb youth unemployment, they have to equip young people with the work ready skills in order to maximize productivity within both the education system and in finding their first job.'

'I believe that what should have happened for me at age 14, was for the careers advice to focus on me as an individual and the subjects that I was really interested in rather than the very generic, informal advice that I was given.'