**Review of Apprenticeships**

***Response from the National Careers Council***

***7th September 2012***

1.1 The National Careers Council welcomes the opportunity to feed into this formal Review. We believe investing in the skills of people is an intrinsic part of securing growth and prosperity for the UK. The government’s vision for a better quality of information, advice and guidance on learning and work is set out in the document [The Right Advice at the Right Time (PDF, 2.2 Mb)](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/n/12-677-national-careers-service-right-advice-right-time.pdf) , published on the 5 April 2012.

1.2 The National Careers Council was established in May 2012 to provide advice to government on a strategic vision for the [National Careers Service](http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills/national-careers-service-for-england) and allied career support services as key economic drivers of business growth and opportunities in learning and work. The Council will **champion a fresh vision for careers services** drawing on leading-edge developments to ensure **high quality provision**. The Council is chaired by Dr Deirdre Hughes, OBE, with ten members and three associate experts ([members' biographies](http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills/national-careers-council/national-careers-council-members)), drawn from education, industry and the careers sector.

* 1. There has arguably never been **a time when the need for good quality apprenticeships and effective careers provision** has been greater. This is particularly so with the fast pace of technological and labour market change, the advent of new career sectors and qualifications and the considerable personal and financial investment decisions that individuals and their families face in choosing own their pathways to success. Effective apprenticeships and careers services perform a pivotal role in **stimulating demand for further education and skills**. The shift to **freedom and flexibility for learning providers, in line with local determinism**, means that the **intelligent choices of learners** equipped with the full range of careers information, advice and guidance at their disposal have become of paramount importance.

1.4Key issues

* The talent pipeline is blocked and young people are being crowded out of apprenticeships by older workers (25+).
* School-to-work transitions are more difficult in countries where the dominant transition model is ‘study first, then work’ (OECD, 2010)[[1]](#footnote-1). In contrast, where combined study and work is more common – through, for example, work-experience placements, apprenticeships, internships, job placements, and seasonal and part-time work – youth transitions in particular are reportedly easier and safer (for example, in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands).
* The evidence is compelling - ‘good quality’ apprenticeships work for young people.
* There is a need to harness local and national resources, including new social partnerships, to help *minimise mismatch* between individuals’ learning and work opportunities.
* Barriers on the supply and demand side are arguably linked not only to mismatch or shortfall in both technical and non-technical (generic or soft) skills, but also to rapid expansion in education and qualification systems across Europe and changing labour markets. Young people need improved access to opportunities in the labour market.
* Many young people (parents and teachers) do not fully understand the ‘Apprenticeship Offer’. Also, there are clear opportunities to strengthen the ‘Apprenticeship Brand’.

1.5 The Council has identified **four key components** **that can strengthen Apprenticeships and stimulate growth:**

* employer engagement, dynamic and locally structured to facilitate entry and re-entry into the labour market;[[2]](#footnote-2)
* apprenticeship planning correlated with detailed analysis of the projections given by employers and careers service providers to result in ‘trusted LMI’ analysis and usage;
* careers services to meet people’s needs and closely aligned to the labour market; and
* high quality career development support, delivered by suitably trained individuals meeting required quality standards, for those working with both young people and adults.

**2.0 Content**

***What should the aims and objectives of apprenticeships be?***

* 1. The aim should be to inspire young people to make the most of their talents, interests and experiences through a pathway of blended high quality ‘learning and earning’.
  2. Two key objectives:

1. A good job that offers young people training, skills and future prospects.
2. A vital component that supports business productivity and individual’s performance.

***Who should apprenticeships be for?***

2.3 Primarily, though not exclusively, for young people between 16 – 24.

2.3.1 Apprenticeships should include job prospects and high quality training that supports young people’s transition from education to work. An apprenticeship should include worthwhile activities, recognised through a combination of skills development, qualifications and work experience.

***What outcomes should Apprenticeships aim to deliver?***

* 1. The main outcomes should be vocational skills and employment opportunities for more young people in the workplace.

2.4.1 *For individuals:*

* Paid work with high quality training that blends ‘learning and earning’.
* On-the-job training on employers premises.
* A set of qualifications and experiences highly relevant to industry and individuals’ needs.
* Exposure to develop and broaden knowledge, skills and experience that can be applied and utilised in a range of settings, where necessary.
* Technical and career competences, including career management skills that equip individuals to be adaptable and resilient in fast changing labour markets.
* A foundation that helps individuals to develop and further extend literacy, numeracy and IT skills.

2.4.2 *For employers:*

* A talent pipeline of highly motivated entrants joining a sector and/or industry committed to vocational learning.
* A competent and well qualified skilled workforce that meets set industry standards, agreed nationally and monitored locally.
* Occupational skills that are transferrable linked to formal and informal learning.
* Productive workers engaged in vocational learning with increased economic output.
* Strong signals on labour market requirements and feed into careers information on labour markets, particularly local developments.
* Reductions in the cost of recruitment and training if the apprentice is subsequently taken on as a full-time employee.
* A strong narrative shared with others to promote business development and inspire more career opportunities for young people (and adults).

2.4.3 *For the wider economy:*

* Long-term investment in a flexible, adaptable and well qualified workforce for immediate, intermediate and long-term economic and social prosperity.
* High quality vocational pathways clearly understood and valued by individuals, families and communities.
* Culturally relevant ‘learning and earning’ opportunities that reflect business needs, support local communities and the national economy to thrive and prosper.
* Business growth and improvements in economic output.

***What should the defining features of a high quality apprenticeship be? What should a high quality apprenticeship contain?***

2.5 The defining features should include ‘key components’ and employers should not be encouraged to deviate strongly from this, though there will be a need for flexibility to design programmes to meet local and regional needs. Ultimately, apprenticeships should be required to operate within an established framework that is widely recognized and highly valued by individuals as well as employers.

2.5.1 Key components should include:

* A paid work opportunity.
* A relevant high quality on-the-job and off-the-job learning experience, supported by a structured and personalised development programme.
* Supervision, mentoring and support to ensure the conditions for individuals’ success can be assured.
* Technical skills and competences that can be assessed to industry standards.
* Career adaptability competences and resilience that support the transfer of learning into related and differing contexts, as and when necessary.
* A visible quality assured experience, clearly understood by schools, colleges, employer bodies (including training providers), the National Careers Service, careers professionals and those operating in the wider careers support market.
* Access to impartial and independent careers information, advice and guidance, as and when necessary.

***Should this differ for different sectors, types of learners or types of employers?***

2.6 Key components should apply to all apprenticeships, with some scope for flexibility to accommodate different companies, sectors and regions. The Council recognises that ‘one size *does* *not* fit all’ and agree the duration and apprentice wage levels will need to be set at a local and national level. Lessons learned from good and interesting policies and practices from EU and international experiences may be useful in this regard.

***How can we ensure the training offered really reflects employers’ needs?***

2.7 Employers should know what their particular needs are to improve productivity and enhance business performance. This demand needs to be articulated back into schools, colleges, higher education institutions and careers services more clearly. Those employers working closely with trade unions, through industrial and/or social partnerships, are likely to discuss and agree the apprenticeship journey and outcomes to be achieved, and any other requirements including pay agreements and grading to be used.

2.7.1 There are models of good and interesting policies and practices that could benefit from further showcasing which include young people’s career development in the workplace. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Chambers of Commerce have an important role to perform in this regard. Linked to this, the National Careers Service and local careers brokerage services can inform and complement such provision.

***What role should qualifications play in an apprenticeship?***

2.8 Qualifications matter to most young people and their parents. There is confusion and market failure in the system on the perceived added value returns of certain qualifications and quality of certain apprenticeships.

2.8.1 The issue of ‘mistrusted information’ exists with major shortfalls in understanding of valued apprenticeship qualifications and employment/career pathways. A more dynamic ‘careers brokerage’ approach is likely to be required as national and local systems change and develop at a rapid pace.

2.8.2 Greater emphasis should be given to ‘apprenticeship learning outcomes’ as a result of taking the work-based route rather than young people collecting many separate individual qualifications that, in some cases, are not widely recognised or valued by employers.

2.8.3 Qualifications should enhance individuals’ employability and career adaptability to equip them to become motivated to upskill and reskill on a regular basis.

**3.0 Delivery**

***What should government’s role be with regard to apprenticeships?***

3.1 Create the conditions for high quality and sustainable apprenticeships by:

* clarifying the Apprenticeship Offer and Apprenticeship Brand outlining the key components, agreeing arrangements with employers and trade unions, monitoring progress and the impact of new arrangements on a systematic basis.
* ensuring better targeted communications and marketing of apprenticeships, especially aimed at parents and teachers.
* strengthening the connectivity between the National Careers Service, business and wider career support market building upon findings from the National Careers Council.

***What should employers’ role be?***

* 1. To take ownership and leadership responsibility for communicating effectively with schools, colleges, higher education institutions and careers services on what apprenticeships the sector / business needs, design what these look like, and support the delivery moving beyond individual company needs.
* Quality assure delivery in the workplace so that apprentices can reach the required standard and promote the benefits of this route to the next generation.
* Offer collaborative support and take individual responsibility for recruiting, mentoring, and supporting apprentices, including providing apprentices with opportunities for personal growth (self-confidence, employability, career adaptability, life skills etc.)
* Investing in their people for improved performance and productivity.

***Who should pay for what?***

* 1. A tripartite arrangement between government, employers and apprentices should exist.

3.2.1 *Government pays for:*

* Outlining and making explicit a clear industrial policy designed to achieve economic growth
* Contributions to apprenticeship costs (in line with public funding policy)
* Maintaining, monitoring and reporting on Apprenticeship policy and oversight.

3.2.2 *Employers pay for:*

* Collective arrangements (industrial partnerships), establishing the standard, registration, certification, and self-regulatory arrangements
* Recruitment, mentoring, work-based learning and assessment
* Apprentices’ wages
* Pastoral care and well-being during the apprenticeship and any additional training

Business cost of apprenticeship linked to longer-term added value returns on investment.

3.2.3 *Apprentices pay for:*

* Own day to day living expenses.

## 4.0 Delivering value for money and boosting access

***How can we ensure value for money for government investment in apprenticeships?***

4.1 Ensure effective use of, and publish findings on, labour market intelligence and information relating to good quality apprenticeships and their take up, participation and progression rates.

* 1. Identify intermediaries that add value to business and individuals’ growth and de-clutter the landscape, where necessary.
  2. Close the gap in careers information, advice and guidance to young people (and their parents) by the National Careers Service and strengthening its connectivity with young people, business and the wider careers support market.
  3. Promote and track employer investments in apprenticeships.

***How can we boost employer and learner demand for apprenticeships?***

* 1. There are at least seven possibilities for boosting demand as outlined below:
* Incentivise employers to offer apprenticeships that are sustainable pathways for young people’s career development.
* Reduce the ‘brand stretch’ that has created a proliferation of short-term provision.
* Encourage employers to work collaboratively through local and national partnerships to design, deliver, quality assure, and promote apprenticeships more broadly, as well as those within their specific sector.
* Create more opportunities for learners and use careers services to promote ‘learning and earning’.
* Offer learners more accurate and relevant careers information, advice and guidance on apprenticeships and potential opportunities.
* Utilise online and offline intermediaries who can provide good quality information and support to motivate more young people to take action.
* Educate parents on the changing labour market landscape.

***How can we ensure that learners of all abilities get fair access to apprenticeships?***

4.6 Utilise schools and local authority destination measures and focus on three strategic priorities that:

* Improve the advertising of apprenticeships and remove the stereotypical perception of these as being male, manual and menial.
* Reinforce and monitor the impact of legislative and statutory responsibilities.
* Strengthen careers support at a local and national level as a policy lever[[3]](#footnote-3) to promote fair access and to brokerage support for all young people and adults.

**5.0 Summary**

5.1 The **environment** in which careers education, careers information, advice and guidance now operates in schools, colleges, higher education institutions and other community settings is both dynamic and uncertain. The **future direction of travel**, key responsibilities and performance measures that demonstrate both relevance and impact need to be more explicit. The Council is in the process of **‘joining the dots’** in existing policies in order to identify key strengths and areas of overlap so that careers provision can be strongly promoted, and resources for careers provision can be pooled and strengthened, where necessary.[[4]](#footnote-4)

5.2 Eviden**ce** suggests[[5]](#footnote-5) that **good-quality careers guidance interventions in schools have a positive impac**t on **decision-making processes, reduce course switching, drop-out rates, and contribute towards successful transitions** within statutory and further education. Findings from the OECD[[6]](#footnote-6) and other studies[[7]](#footnote-7) highlight **career education programmes that develop career management skills (including career adaptability and resilience)** in many schools are lacking. The Council is gathering intelligence on this issue and will be reporting in May 2013 on how schools and colleges have adapted to the new arrangements emerging from the Education Act and new Statutory Guidance[[8]](#footnote-8).

5.3 Employers should work more with schools and careers services to give young people better access to the information and support needed to make well informed decisions about learning and work opportunities.

**Consider inviting the National Careers Council to build upon the main findings from the Richard report and incorporate these, where appropriate, within the Council’s report to Government in May 2013.**

Dr Deirdre Hughes, OBE

Chair

On behalf of the National Careers Council

7th September 2012

1. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010). *Learning for Jobs.* Paris: OECD. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Linkages to the National Careers Service and the wider careers support market are currently being examined by the Council in this regard. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Economic benefits of investment in careers services are often contested; however, there is growing interest across the EU and internationally on ‘careers’ as a policy lever being given greater attention by Governments. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For example, linkages between the National Careers service and National Apprenticeship Service merit further investigation. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Bowes, L., Smith, D. & Morgan, S., (2005). *Reviewing the Evidence-base for Careers Work in Schools: A systematic review of research literature into the impact of career education and guidance during Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 on young people’s transitions*. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. OECD (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: OECD. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Sweet, R. et al. (2010)*Making Career Development Core Business*, Victorian Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development and Department of Business and Innovation, Melbourne, Australia. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Department for Education (2012). *The Education Act 2011: the Duty to Secure Independent and Impartial Careers Guidance for Young People in Schools: Statutory Guidance for Head Teachers, School Staff, Governing Bodies and Local Authorities.* London: DfE. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)