

# Additional guidance on inspecting the National Careers Service from September 2012

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## **This document has been archived.**

This additional guidance on inspecting the National Careers Service is for prime contractors and for inspectors to use during the inspection of prime contractors.

This guidance should be used in conjunction with the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2012*, including the grade characteristics: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012> and puts into context the types of evidence inspectors may find and the circumstances and differences inspectors need to consider on a National Careers Service inspection.

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# Contents

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<b>Introduction and context</b>	<b>4</b>
Types of providers	5
<b>Interpreting the Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills 2012 for National Careers Service inspections</b>	<b>5</b>
Outcomes for learners	7
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	9
Effectiveness of leadership and management	13
Overall effectiveness	17
<b>Terminology</b>	<b>18</b>

## Introduction and context

1. The National Careers Service was launched on 5 April 2012. It is available in England and provides information to those over the age of 13. It delivers this through a website that offers access to online tools usable by all ages, including:
  - a skills health check to test skills, aptitudes and preferences
  - a CV builder links to Jobcentre and apprenticeship vacancies
  - links to other careers resources, including the Talent Retention System and Plots
  - a telephone helpline and web chat service, so all ages can discuss their options with careers advisers
  - for adults aged 19 and over (or 18 if on out of work benefits), individual support from a qualified, expert adviser, face to face in the community.
2. The National Careers Service is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department for Education (DfE).
3. The Skills Funding Agency is responsible for the delivery, design and development of the National Careers Service. It replaces the Next Step service for adults and the Connexions Direct telephone helpline and online offer for young people.
4. The service is delivered by 11 prime contractors in 12 designated areas and the adult and young person's telephone services, making 14 contractors; the face-to-face service is further contracted to a network of approximately 350 subcontractors. The service is available in a wide range of locations in towns, cities and rural communities across England.
5. All organisations that deliver the National Careers Service have to be accredited to the matrix quality standard: that all National Careers Service advisers are required to hold appropriate professional qualifications and to commit to continuous professional development.
6. National Careers Service prime contractors are subject to an Ofsted inspection, including the adult and young people's telephone service.
7. Ofsted's inspections of prime contractors do not include their work in prisons. Ofsted reports on this work as part of inspections led by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

8. This guidance does not replace the *Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills 2012*<sup>1</sup>, which remains paramount in defining the standards against which inspection judgements are made. The Common Inspection Framework 2012, the guidance notes and the suggested sources of evidence do not constitute a checklist. Inspectors support their judgements with evidence drawn from a wide range of sources.
9. Inspectors will use the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2012*<sup>2</sup> and, where applicable, they will take into account the following contextual guidance. Annex A of the handbook has further guidance for prime contractors for preparation before and procedures during National Careers Service inspections.
10. The National Careers Service contractors are in scope for inspection from January 2013. For each regional prime contractor, inspection will cover any organisation which receives funding from that prime contractor, whether it is directly funded or subcontracted. The two national telephone helplines are single national contracts.

## Types of providers

11. Each of the 12 regional National Careers Service contracts is led and managed by a prime contractor. The National Careers Service is delivered by staff employed by the prime contractor (direct delivery) and by subcontractors. Prime contractors may be public or private sector organisations, companies limited by guarantee or not-for-profit organisations.

## Interpreting the Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills 2012 for National Careers Service inspections

12. For each of the three aspects inspected – outcomes for learners, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and leadership and management – inspectors will consider the main purpose of the provision. All three aspects are interpreted below for the inspection of the National Careers Service. The underpinning guidance in the main inspection handbook is adapted here to reflect the different terminology and nuances of National Careers Service inspections. Inspectors should use the handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012 to ascertain how these specific National Careers Service nuances apply to the grade characteristics when making judgements on each aspect.

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<sup>1</sup> *Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills* (120062), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/common-inspection-framework-for-further-education-and-skills-2012](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/common-inspection-framework-for-further-education-and-skills-2012).

<sup>2</sup> *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills* (120061), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012).

13. In National Careers Service provision, judgements on attainment are based on the tangible benefits the National Careers Service brings to its customers, in particular the extent to which customers make progress towards their learning or employment aims.
14. The national targets are that:
  - a minimum of 50% of customers who receive advice that results in a skills action plan being created should achieve a positive outcome
  - a positive outcome is defined as:
    - getting a job and remaining in sustainable employment for 13 weeks
    - progression in work
    - entering a learning programme.

Receiving advice is defined as creating a skills action plan either facilitated by a telephone or face-to-face adviser.

15. Inspectors will need to consider the regional key performance indicators for each prime contractor. They take into account regional socio-economic factors and relate to:
  - a specific % of face-to-face customers who create a skills action plan and go on to enter learning or training
  - a specific % of face-to-face customers who create a skills action plan and go on to enter sustainable employment
  - a specific % of face-to-face customers who create a skills action plan and go on to progress in work.

## Outcomes for learners

### Criteria in the Common Inspection Framework 2012

In judging outcomes for learners, inspectors **must** evaluate the extent to which:

- all learners achieve and make progress relative to their starting points and learning goals
- achievement gaps are narrowing between different groups of learners
- learners develop personal, social and employability skills
- learners progress to courses leading to higher-level qualifications and into jobs that meet local and national needs.

16. Below is the interpretation of each criterion for 'outcomes for learners' from the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012* that inspectors need to consider when inspecting National Careers Service provision.

### **All learners achieve and make progress relative to their starting points and learning goals**

17. In relation to this judgement, inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate the extent to which:
- customers' starting points are clarified and this information is used to support their future plans
  - customers are motivated to take responsibility for their own progress and participate in developing their skills action plans (where that is applicable)
  - customers enter education, training or employment in line with agreed learning, career or employment goals
  - customers are motivated to take action to achieve their learning or employment goals, (such as keeping National Careers Service appointments and being punctual).

### **Achievement gaps are narrowing between different groups of learners**

18. In relation to this judgement, inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- how well customers progress from their starting points and meet the targets set in their skills action plans, with particular attention to progress by different groups of customers, especially those in the identified priority groups.

### **Learners develop personal, social and employability skills**

19. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- customers' improved awareness of the options and sources of support available to them
- the extent to which customers are more self-aware and can identify existing skills and knowledge
- customers' improved ability to identify and overcome personal or practical barriers, including those associated with literacy, numeracy or language skills.

### **Learners progress to courses leading to higher-level qualifications and into jobs that meet local and national needs**

20. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- customers' progression to a learning or training programme
- customers' progression into employment, with or without training.



## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

21. Judgements on this aspect of provision focus on how well advisers assess customers' individual needs; help them plan to meet their short and long term goals; and help them make progress. These statements relate to how effectively National Careers Service sessions are planned, managed and conducted, and the extent to which they contribute to positive outcomes for customers.

### Criteria

In judging the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, inspectors **must** evaluate the extent to which:

- learners benefit from high expectations, engagement, care, support and motivation from staff
- staff use their skills and expertise to plan and deliver teaching, learning and support to meet learners' individual needs
- staff initially assess learners' starting points and monitor their progress, set challenging tasks, and build on and extend learning for all learners
- learners understand how to improve as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from staff following assessment of their learning
- teaching and learning develop English, mathematics and functional skills, and support the achievement of learning goals and career aims
- appropriate and timely information and advice supports learning effectively
- equality and diversity are promoted through teaching and learning.

22. Below is the interpretation of each criterion for 'quality of teaching, learning and assessment' from the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012* that inspectors need to consider when inspecting National Careers Service provision.

### Learners benefit from high expectations, engagement, care, support and motivation from staff

23. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:
- the extent to which advisers use methods and styles of session that inspire and challenge customers

- the extent to which method and styles of session encourages customers to develop independently advisers and other staff motivate customers through high and realistic expectations
- how well customers are cared for and supported to achieve their skills action plans.
- whether procedures to monitor customers' participation, progress and attendance lead to prompt action to address identified problems.

**Staff use their skills and expertise to plan and deliver teaching, learning and support to meet each learner's needs**

24. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- how well advisers help customers to plan to attain their short- and long-term goals and make progress towards them
- how effectively and creatively staff use resources, including accommodation, equipment and technology, and specialist advice and guidance, to promote and support learning
- the relevant qualifications, training, experience and expertise of advisers and other relevant staff
- the attention that is paid to the quality and safety of resources, particularly in specialist areas and practical settings, including information technology and the provision of confidential interview facilities, where required
- how effectively customers' development is monitored during advice sessions, including where customers are receiving additional learning support
- the promotion and development of independence in making and managing their career and employment plans, for example through the use of a range of technologies, including internet facilities.

**Staff initially assess learners' starting points and monitor their progress, set challenging tasks, and build on and extend learning for all learners**

25. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- the quality and effectiveness of an assessment of customers' needs
- how effectively skills action plans are negotiated with customers to ensure that they capture the discussion held and provide a clear record of actions to be taken
- how customers discuss and agree challenging short- and longer-term goals that are reviewed and updated regularly

- the suitability and range of resources relating to learning and employment opportunities that are available to, and used by, customers and advisers.

**Learners understand how to improve as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from staff following assessment of their learning**

26. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- the extent to which customers are encouraged to take responsibility for their own progress, and to develop and follow skills action plans for themselves
- in services that include more than one session, how well advisers monitor customers' progress against their skills action plans and support customers in making appropriate decisions about further actions, where relevant.

**Teaching and learning develop English, mathematics and functional skills, and support the achievement of learning goals and career aims**

27. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- how well advisers assess customers' English and mathematics needs, where appropriate, and use this information when identifying skills action plans (as appropriate) and planning further sessions
- the extent to which sessions support customers to develop the English and mathematics skills they need to achieve their career or employment aim, where appropriate, and how well their progress is reviewed
- the extent to which customers appreciate the importance of improving their English and mathematics skills as appropriate, in the context of their skills action plans and life ambitions.

**Appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance supports learning effectively**

28. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- where customers wish to involve others in the service they receive, whether their wishes are respected and all relevant people are informed
- whether customers have access to information on an appropriate range of support services, including those provided by external and specialist agencies
- the breadth, relevance and appropriateness of the information and advice provided for customers, to meet their short-, medium- and long-term education, training or employment goals

- the effectiveness of links between prime contractor and subcontractors in referring customers for specialist or alternative information and advice
- the effectiveness of links between the prime contractor or subcontractor and external agencies, in referring customers for additional or specialist information and advice
- the extent to which information and advice, or referral to specialist agencies helps customers identify and overcome barriers to participation
- the extent to which information that is provided for customers is accurate, up-to-date, impartial and easy to understand and follow.

**Equality and diversity are promoted through teaching and learning.**

29. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- whether advisers use resources and methods that promote equality and diversity
- the availability and location of sessions and how well different types of sessions are matched to customers' individual needs, especially those from the identified priority groups
- how well sessions meet the needs and objectives of customers from a wide range of backgrounds and in differing circumstances.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management

30. In National Careers Service provision, judgements on leadership and management are based on the strategic planning and leadership of the service and how well the prime contractor coordinates and evaluates its direct delivery and the services provided by its different subcontractors to meet the needs of customers and potential customers.

### Criteria

Inspectors must evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers at all levels, including, where relevant, governors:

- demonstrate an ambitious vision, have high expectations for what all learners can achieve, and attain high standards of quality and performance
- improve teaching and learning through rigorous performance management and appropriate professional development
- evaluate the quality of the provision through robust self-assessment, taking account of users' views, and use the findings to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement
- successfully plan, establish and manage the curriculum and learning programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local and national community
- actively promote equality and diversity, tackle bullying and discrimination, and narrow the achievement gap
- safeguard all learners.

31. Below is the interpretation of each criterion for 'the effectiveness of leadership and management' from the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012* that inspectors need to consider when inspecting National Careers Service provision.

### **Leaders and managers demonstrate an ambitious vision, have high expectations for what all learners can achieve, and attain high standards of quality and performance**

32. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- the extent to which the prime contractor gives clear direction for high quality provision to meet local and national priorities and the needs of customers

- whether the prime contractor sets appropriate and demanding participation and progression targets for the service as a whole, and for individual subcontractors within the service
- how well leaders raise standards through clear and realistic strategies for planning, developing and improving the service
- whether demanding targets are set and met throughout the service and quality and performance are monitored rigorously
- how well advisers and other staff demonstrate high ambitions for all customers and a commitment to securing sustained improvement
- how effectively the prime contractor and subcontractors cooperate with each other and with external agencies such as Jobcentre Plus to provide a coherent range of services for customers
- the support and development provided for direct delivery and subcontractors to enable them to provide a high quality service.

**Leaders and managers improve teaching and learning through rigorous performance management and appropriate professional development**

33. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- the prime contractor monitors the performance of subcontractors and its direct delivery to evaluate the quality of the information and advice they offer
- strategies are effective in improving the standard of information, advice and guidance sessions and other sessions
- leaders and managers constantly review and develop the performance of advisers through dialogue, coaching, mentoring and support and training
- systematic and rigorous performance management is effective, including using appropriate procedures for tackling underperformance
- leaders, governors and supervisory bodies (where appropriate) monitor the quality of the experience provided for learners and their outcomes
- leaders seek out and share best practice contributing to a coherent programme of professional development
- resources, including staff, accommodation, facilities and technologies, are developed and used to support staff development
- managers ensure that all staff have the experience and skills needed to carry out their roles.

**Leaders and managers evaluate the quality of the provision through robust self-assessment, taking account of users' views, and use the findings to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement**

34. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- the prime contractor has a sound track record of improvement and has developed the capacity to sustain improvement
- the contractor's self-assessment process is rigorous and the subsequent evaluations are appropriately detailed and accurate
- subcontractors understand their role within the National Careers Service
- leaders and managers evaluate the quality of subcontracted provision through rigorous self-assessment, taking account of the views of customers, users such as employers, subcontractor and prime contractor staff, and use the findings to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement
- there are effective arrangements for quality assurance that maintain high standards and identify and tackle underperformance
- customers are fully engaged in reviewing, reflecting on and improving provision
- the analysis and evaluation of data on customers' development and progression are used effectively to improve standards
- quality improvement plans include ambitious and realistic targets, and associated actions that show how the provision will be developed for customers and potential customers
- the implementation and impact of actions to improve quality are monitored and evaluated.

**Leaders and managers successfully plan, establish and manage the curriculum and learning programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local and national community**

35. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- how well the National Careers Service prime contractor matches its services to the employment status, educational background, social circumstances, geographical mobility and aspirations of groups of customers and potential customers
- the extent to which services take account of the needs of individuals and communities across the region served by the prime contractor

- whether the range of services and sessions is accessible in terms of timing, location, mode of delivery and duration, and is structured to provide a variety of interesting and useful activities to meet customers' individual needs, including for those under-represented in learning and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- whether the sessions and skills action plans include appropriate attention to improving customers' English and mathematics, where appropriate and ensuring the development of their employability skills
- the extent to which customers receive appropriate information, advice and guidance and take part on appropriate sessions, where appropriate.

**Leaders and managers actively promote equality and diversity, tackle bullying and discrimination, and narrow the achievement gap**

36. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- equality and diversity are built into the prime contractors' strategic plans, the impact of plans is monitored and follow-up action is taken to address areas for improvement provision is promoted and provided to widen participation including by those from the identified priority groups
- training in equality and diversity is effective and leaders, managers, governors or supervisory bodies (where appropriate), staff of prime contractors and subcontractors and customers understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity
- subcontractors are selected and used to target under-represented and disadvantaged groups and how effectively the prime contractor and subcontractors promote inclusion and encourage participation
- customers' progress is analysed to identify the performance of different groups and the effectiveness of action taken to reduce any significant variation in the achievements of different groups
- the prime contractor assesses the impact of its actions on equality and diversity and takes action in response
- the extent to which the prime contractor monitors and evaluates subcontractors' approach to equality and diversity and takes action if necessary
- incidents and complaints specifically about equality, diversity and bullying are proactively managed and acted upon, including where appropriate, providing counselling and support.



## Leaders and managers safeguard all learners

37. Inspectors on National Careers Service inspections will evaluate:

- prime contractors' safeguarding arrangements are in place and reviewed regularly to keep any young people and vulnerable adults safe
- advisers and other staff who have regular and frequent contact with customers receive appropriate training on safeguarding, which is updated regularly
- leaders, governors and supervisory bodies, where appropriate, fulfil legislative requirements, such as those for disability, safeguarding and health and safety
- appropriate arrangements for health and safety protect staff and customers from harm
- those in need, or at risk of significant harm, are effectively identified and appropriate action is taken.

## Overall effectiveness

To reach this judgement, inspectors must consider how effective and efficient the provider is in meeting the needs of learners and users, and why.

Inspectors **must** take account of:

- outcomes for learners
- quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- effectiveness of leadership and management.

38. The inspection report will use these headings. The text will use the terms appropriate for the inspection of the National Careers Service, such as 'customers' for 'learners', as explained in the glossary on the following pages.

## Terminology

<b>Term used in the Common Inspection Framework 2012</b>	<b>Equivalent term in the National Careers Service provision</b>	
<b>provider</b>	The National Careers Service prime contractor	The organisation responsible for managing the National Careers Service in each of the 11 regional areas and the adult and young person's telephone services.
	The National Careers Service	The overall provision of the National Careers Service, nationally and within the 14 National Careers Service contracts.
	subcontractor	Any organisation subcontracted by a National Careers Service provider to offer any aspect of the National Careers Service to customers.
<b>learner</b>	customer	Anyone approaching a provider or subcontractor for information or advice, whether this constitutes a one-off session or a series of sessions, individually or in groups, including webcam or webchat sessions.
<b>individual learning plan</b>	skills action plan	A written record of a National Careers Service session that lists the main points discussed and the actions that the customer has agreed with the adviser agreed to carry out.
<b>Teaching or programme</b>	session	Any instance of information or advice given to a customer face to face or over the telephone by a provider or subcontractor, including initial and subsequent sessions.
<b>Curriculum</b>	the National Careers Service offer	The range of services available to customers.

**Other terms used in National Careers Service provision include:**

<b>advisers</b>	Those employed directly by the National Careers Service prime contractor or subcontractor to give information or advice. This activity may form all, or part, of their usual work roles.
<b>information</b>	The provision of information about learning or work, without any discussion of the relative merits of the options.
<b>advice</b>	A longer and more in-depth session than just the giving of information. It may be spontaneous or pre-arranged, and may be offered on an individual or group basis, in person or at a distance (for example, by telephone).
<b>achievement/learning</b>	Customers' take-up of education, training or employment. Outcomes such as increased confidence, self-awareness and motivation, the ability to overcome barriers to participation, the identification of clear goals, and knowledge of opportunities and sources of support will also be considered as achievements, as well as progression in employment.
<b>external organisations</b>	Funding bodies, other providers, and other organisations with which providers or contractors interact for the benefit of customers, other users and the National Careers Service.
<b>barriers to participation</b>	Personal or practical barriers that hinder a customer's ability or willingness to participate in education, training or employment.
<b>complementary support services</b>	Agencies offering specialist support, for example in counselling, housing assistance or debt management, to which prime contractors or subcontractors refer customers.