



All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education
Inquiry: Do schools prepare young people for their future careers?

Written evidence submitted by the Career Development Institute

The Career Development Institute (CDI) is the UK-wide professional body for the career development sector. Our 4,500 members are career teachers in schools and colleges and career advisers, career coaches and career consultants, working in the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. We share the concerns expressed by the All-Party Parliamentary Group and are delighted to have this opportunity to present evidence to the inquiry.

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1. What should our schools be focusing on in order to prepare young people for the future?

Our schools should provide a curriculum that equips young people to become active and responsible citizens, prepared to contribute to society and the economy in the 21st century. This will include both the transmission of knowledge and understanding in all subject areas and the development of skills such as literacy and numeracy, independent learning, employability skills, financial capability and career management skills.

It is important also that the school curriculum should not focus almost exclusively on 'academic' subjects. Young people, particularly those aged 14+, should have access to high quality technical and vocational options that meet their interests and aspirations. They should also have access to the highest quality, unbiased information on current labour market information and trends.

Finally, it is vital that all young people should have access to impartial careers advice and guidance from a qualified career professional.¹ Although schools have been given a statutory duty to secure access to impartial career guidance for all pupils, numerous studies and reports show that the current model, based on the twin principles of school autonomy and free market, with no additional funding and weak regulation, is failing to provide good quality career guidance for all young people. The Government should either reinstate a national careers guidance service for young people or fund schools adequately to appoint their own career advisers.

¹ The recognised definition of a qualified careers professional is someone who is qualified at least Level 6 in career guidance and on the UK Register of Career Development Professionals.

2. Should schools play a role in developing skills, or should subject knowledge be prioritised?

It is wrong to think in terms of skills or knowledge: young people need both. There are things that they need to know and to understand, but they also need to be able to apply that knowledge and understanding in their adult and working lives. The curriculum should reflect an appropriate balance between knowledge and understanding, and skills.

The current curriculum is too heavily weighted in favour of the acquisition of facts. It was a retrograde step to remove careers education and work-related learning as statutory parts of the school curriculum in 2012: these areas of skill development should be reinstated, along with the speaking and listening elements of the programme of study for English and some of the ICT skills which were also removed.

3. Who should be responsible for ensuring that young people develop soft, financial and entrepreneurial skills?

Schools should be ultimately responsible for the entire curriculum, including the development of the so-called soft skills and financial and entrepreneurial skills. For this to work effectively in practice however, teachers will need access to continuing professional development on how to teach such skills and schools will need to work in partnership with employers, career professionals and other external agencies such as the National Citizen Service.

4. Do education providers have the resources to prepare young people for the workforce?

The CDI has published a framework for careers, employability and enterprise education, which provides schools with recommended learning outcomes that they can use to design programmes to prepare young people for the workforce.

One of the most effective approaches involves pupils participating in carefully planned programmes of work experience and this should apply not only in 16-19 study programmes but also in key stage 4. However, the combination of reduced budgets and the removal of funding for education business partnerships have led to many schools dropping work experience for 14-16 year-olds. The recently established Careers and Enterprise Company offers help to schools with reviewing their strategies for engaging with employers but stops short of providing operational support.

To progress successfully into work young people need more than a set of qualifications and skills. They also need an understanding of the changing labour market. For schools to provide this, teachers need to be given regular and readily accessible sources of local and national labour market information and employ the services of career professionals who can provide context and interpretation, and challenge misconceptions.

- 5. To help the APPG create a practical set of approaches and recommendations:**
- a. What examples are there of schools and colleges preparing young people well for the workforce?**
 - b. What examples are there of employer-led initiatives that have had an impact?**

Over 1,000 schools have achieved, or are working towards achieving, one of the quality awards for careers education, information, advice and guidance, nationally-validated by the Quality in Careers Standard. Many of these exhibit examples of good and innovative practice in terms of preparing young people for their future careers. It is also worth noting that good practice is often seen in independent schools, particularly through their work with alumni.

Similarly, the Careers and Enterprise Company has identified a range of effective employer-led initiatives.

The challenge is finding ways of incentivising all schools to follow the examples demonstrated by the best.