

# A successful careers offer



Schools have a duty to offer independent and impartial careers guidance. **Dorothy Lepkowska** looks at research into how London schools are successfully delivering on this duty

**T**he duty to provide independent and impartial careers guidance was passed to schools in 2012. Although many schools have risen to this requirement it is widely recognised that careers provision in England is still currently patchy.

To support London schools in their careers provision, the London Ambitions careers offer was developed by the London Enterprise Panel and London Councils and launched in 2015.

Some schools have proactively taken on board the new challenge to ensure their students were prepared for leaving school. In November, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and London Councils published the findings of a report into emerging promising practice in the delivery of impartial and independent careers advice and guidance in several London schools.

NFER researchers carried out an in-depth study on how five institutions – a primary school, a special school, two secondary schools and a further education college (identified by London Councils) – were successfully preparing their learners for the world of work.

The study – *London Ambitions Research: Shaping a successful careers offer for all young Londoners* – found that all five schools were outward-looking and placed a great deal of focus on responsive provision that was tailored to the needs of their students, as well as the local context of the communities they served (see panel, above right).

A successful strategy requires senior leaders to value the place of careers education and guidance, and to support its development, by making sure appropriate staff and curriculum time were available to deliver it effectively. In the college, each student was assigned a personal tutor, while one of the schools brought in careers advice to provide one-to-one input for year 11 students who were not aiming at university.

Senior leaders were backed by governors, who were able to assist with their own business contacts, but also to ensure that careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) was delivered across the school.

Among the most important aspects of delivering effective CEIAG was engagement with employers. All the institutions involved in the study were proactive in making these links to “widen their students’ horizons and provide them with multiple opportunities to interact with different types of employers”, the report said.

In one school, for example, the professionals who worked with the students included a radiographer, computer programmer, chef, accountant and musician.

One headteacher described the value of external input: “The visitors are great. Wherever we can get real-life people that do various things is wonderful because children are actually so fascinated.”

Meanwhile, a student told researchers: “It kind of felt exciting learning about jobs, because some of them I didn’t really know about.”

Furthermore, the successful schools and college recognised the importance of developing students’ employability skills, including team-work, problem-solving and communications. They ran workshops on aspects such as CV-writing, getting into university and discussions about Apprenticeships. In one school, students took part in a “speed-dating” event where they were able to spend short sessions with employers to question them on their business. In the primary school, meanwhile, staff organised a Family Careers Day, which was attended by parents and saw external speakers from a variety of sectors come into school to talk about their work.

The report recommended that if CEIAG is to become successfully implemented in a school, then it has to be delivered through a whole-school approach supported by senior leaders, with everyone in the school fully understanding its importance. It suggested teachers would benefit from CPD on the importance of CEIAG, and that it should be prioritised across the school into a structured approach across all year groups.

Schools also needed to ensure that the learning experiences given to students were meaningful, so they are able to make informed choices about what lies ahead.

**“Many young people do not realise what a job involves, so enhancing business partnerships will help young people make the right choices regarding their education and employment opportunities”**

“The world of work should permeate all types of learning in school so that young people acquire a clear sense of the purpose of the subjects they are learning and the skills they need to develop in order to progress in study or employment,” the report’s authors said. Exposure to employers, it added, gave them a clear idea of what a particular job involved.

At the same time, more employers needed to be encouraged to become involved in schools, in order to offer opportunities of the work of world that awaits today’s young people. The report added: “Employers’ input into the education of young people and the development of young people’s skills for the workplace is vital to the UK’s industrial strategy and productivity”.

Peter John, deputy chair of London Councils and

executive member for business, skills and Brexit, said: “With youth unemployment in the capital at nine per cent, NFER’s report reinforces the importance of London schools, colleges and businesses working together to deliver a successful careers offer for all young Londoners.”

“It is encouraging that young Londoners are already starting to reap the rewards of schools and colleges working more closely with businesses. They can do more by signing up to the London Ambitions Portal, a website that links schools and colleges with local businesses, as well as getting further inspiration from the London Ambitions Careers Curriculum.”

Tami McCrone, one of the authors of the report and senior research manager at NFER, added: “The schools and college we spoke to have already made significant steps in providing a high-quality CEIAG programme for their students. This report emphasises that giving CEIAG a priority in schools and colleges is important in raising aspirations and motivation in young people to succeed in the world of work.”

“Many young people do not realise what a job involves, so enhancing business partnerships will help young people make the right choices regarding their education and employment opportunities. Students need to be prepared for the opportunities that are available and good CEIAG can help support that.” SecEd

• Dorothy Lepkowska is a freelance education journalist.

## Further information

- To support school leaders and teachers, NFER and London Councils have released an accessible PowerPoint guide, which provides evidence-based illustrations of delivery of careers education and guidance within some London schools and colleges. The free guide can be found at [www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAMB01/](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAMB01/)
- The NFER and London Councils report, *London Ambitions Research: Shaping a successful careers offer for all young Londoners*, can also be found at [www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAMB01/](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAMB01/)
- More on London Ambitions can be found at <https://londonambitionsportal.london.gov.uk>

## Bring the world of work to school

- Develop a whole-school strategy to provide CEIAG, led by senior leaders.
- Organise on-site careers events and workshops for pupils and their families.
- Organise external taster days and visits to workplaces and colleges/universities.
- Plan work experience placements for pupils, including in community settings.
- Hold mentoring sessions for pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable, about opportunities on offer.
- Give advice about Apprenticeships as a part of careers advice and guidance.



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