




executive summary

hidden talents: examples of transition of careers guidance from local authorities to schools

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Introduction

From September 2012, schools have a duty to provide independent and impartial careers guidance to students in years 9 to 11. This was previously the responsibility of local authorities (LAs) which are responsible for supporting vulnerable young people who are at risk of becoming, or who are, not in education, employment or training (NEET). LAs are preparing to support Raising the Participation Age (RPA) which aims for full participation of all 16 and 17 year olds, and maintain their duty to ensure all young people engage in education or training and that there are sufficient learning places for all 16–19 year olds. Effective careers guidance will play a considerable role in RPA strategies and in supporting vulnerable young people.



The Local Government Association (LGA) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to collate case-study examples of how LAs, identified by the LGA, are supporting schools in the transition of the responsibility for careers guidance from LAs to schools.

Key findings

What are local authorities doing to support schools to meet their new duty?

LAs are supporting schools to meet their new careers guidance duty in three main ways:

Firstly, by discharging their duties, they are encouraging the continued participation of young people in appropriate pre- and post-16 learning, tracking young people's destinations, and identifying those with no clear pathways. They are doing this by providing young people and their parents with information, via schools or online resources, on transition and future career pathways. They are also targeting their own LA resources on providing support for young people who have the potential to be, or who are already, NEET.

Secondly, by providing direct support to schools, for example, updates on policy matters and information and training on commissioning independent external careers guidance (if they are not offering their own traded service) and on how to quality assure providers (for example, by the matrix Standard). LAs are also encouraging schools to integrate universal careers guidance into schools' curricula.

Thirdly, LAs are supporting schools with the commissioning of careers guidance services from external providers. The evidence points to a range of levels of support from high levels to a more 'hands-off' approach. The range of inputs include: drawing up a list of local careers guidance providers for schools to use; quality assuring providers on schools' behalf; providing information to schools about the different types of providers they might want to use and how to quality assure them (for example, by supplying a quality assurance checklist for schools to use) and providing practical support in the process of commissioning (for example, on requesting quotations and drawing up contracts).

What are schools doing to meet their new duty to provide impartial and independent careers guidance?

The schools in this study (which were identified as examples of effective practice), report that what has helped them to feel well prepared to take on their new statutory duty is: being well informed and supported by the LA and local partnerships; embracing the new legislation and carrying out their own preparation for the transition; having a well-qualified careers coordinator on their staff (who has a significant time allocation for careers guidance); and building on their current careers guidance systems, which are already well established.

Furthermore, the schools indicated that they are developing their careers guidance strategies to meet their new duty by using a combination of internal resources and external support. Internal approaches include: ring fencing resources to provide careers guidance from year 9 and throughout key stage 4; providing young people and parents with online information on their school websites on all different post-16 pathways; giving links to various careers-related websites and tools; organising a variety of mentoring and careers activities including visits to the workplace, work experience, and talks from employers and representatives from higher education; and continuing to provide an ongoing programme of careers education. External support was reported to be used to assess the school's careers guidance needs and is commissioned to secure independent, impartial provision, for example, to provide face-to-face careers guidance from external providers at the transition stage for vulnerable young people and those at risk of becoming NEET post 16.

To what extent are schools working in partnership to meet their new duty?

In general, schools are collaborating with a variety of different individuals and organisations to provide universal careers guidance. These include; local employers and apprenticeship providers; colleges and universities; independent careers guidance companies; the local Chamber of Commerce; YMCA; Education Business Partnerships; their own LA, and other training providers.

In addition, they are working closely with their LAs to provide targeted support for vulnerable young people and those young people who are at risk of becoming NEET and to assist LAs in identifying young people who do not have plans in place for post-16 education or training.

However, on the whole, schools indicated that they do not work with other schools to commission careers guidance provision because their priority is to procure careers guidance that is designed to meet the needs of their own students. However, a few schools are working in partnership to deliver careers guidance, through, for example, shared sixth form delivery of careers guidance or through sharing good practice.

How is support progressing for vulnerable young people?

In the context of RPA, all the LAs in this study have their own information systems to identify young people who might be at risk of disengagement from post-16 education or training. Additionally, most LAs have developed a list of risk of NEET indicators (RONI) to use in their own information management systems or for schools in their authority to use. These systematic processes for identifying potential young people who are at risk of becoming NEET are used together with schools' personal knowledge of their own students (gleaned, for example, from one-to-one discussions with them) to identify young people at risk of becoming NEET early and to target support at those most in need.

In terms of young people who are already NEET, the LAs reported using various strategies to track them. For example, liaising with schools, post-16 providers, and other services within Children's Services and either encouraging young people to refer themselves or using a call centre to track them. Once contact is made, LAs provide the young people with careers guidance and one-to-one support and reengagement provision. They draw on a range of professionals, such as health and social workers, to facilitate reengagement in learning. LAs found it difficult to estimate how much of their resources was allocated to supporting young people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, NEET. Evidence suggests some LAs are allocating substantial resources to targeted careers guidance and re-engagement provision for young people who are NEET.

The main challenges in effectively delivering careers guidance

LAs feel the challenge to be, firstly, the lack of clarity to the meaning of 'independent and impartial' careers guidance within the statutory guidance; a view shared by schools. They believe that schools are, in some cases, unsure whether or not to employ their own staff to provide careers guidance or to commission external providers.

Secondly, LAs believe there is a tension between the need for schools with sixth forms to maintain their sixth form numbers and remain competitive with other schools and the requirement to provide guidance on all available post-16 pathways.

Recommendations

For policy:

Policy makers should provide greater clarity in terms of what is meant by 'impartial and independent' careers guidance. Young people need more than, for example, to be referred by schools to the National Careers Service (NCS), for careers guidance to be considered to be 'independent and impartial'.

Clear and transparent accountability is needed to ensure young people receive independent and impartial careers guidance. This is important for parents as well as young people. Destination tables can help with this process.

There needs to be an assessment made of the extent to which the new careers guidance model is addressing young people's needs in the current economic context. Securing employment is challenging and young people need as much careers education and guidance as possible to help them navigate their way through the educational opportunities and career choices available. It is hard to see how this can be achieved without one-to-one support.

The LAs in this research believe that they have developed effective links with schools in their local area, and supported them practically to take on their new duties. It is also clear that through effective local partnerships, young people who are, or are at risk of, disengagement can be identified. Support, which considers the range of other local support services and is provided through locally tailored and personalised, preventative or reengagement measures, may be needed.

For local authorities:

LAs must continue to give careers guidance a high profile and maintain ongoing dialogue with all their schools (including academies) both in terms of enhancing partnership working and sharing good practice. Local authority maintained schools and academies need continuing support and clear guidance from the LA on policy, commissioning external careers providers and sharing good practice.

LAs need to balance their provision of traded careers guidance services with support for schools and academies to provide effective careers guidance to maximise participation of young people in learning.

To support vulnerable young people more effectively, especially in the context of raising the participation age, LAs should further develop their strategies for identifying the reasons why young people disengage from learning and the careers interventions needed to reengage them both pre- and post-16 years old.

For schools:

Schools need to take advantage of the flexibility and greater ownership of careers guidance they have to procure the careers guidance that best meets their students' needs. Critically they need to fully embrace the spirit of 'impartiality' and secure the best possible careers guidance to enable young people to pursue their preferred pathway.

In order for careers guidance to thrive and secure a high profile within schools, and to fully support young people, the senior leadership team (SLT) need to wholly give their backing to careers education and guidance. For example, securing a school-based careers coordinator with sufficient time allocation and status would help to achieve this aim.

The study

The purpose of the study was to collate case-study examples to demonstrate how LAs are supporting schools to undertake their new duty, which came into effect from September 2012, to provide independent and impartial careers guidance to young people in their school.

The LAs and schools that took part in this study were identified by the LGA as offering examples of effective practice in terms of meeting the new duty. Telephone interviews took place in July 2012.



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