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Pocket Watch – A new vision for careers guidance in England?

Introduction

Cultural change can be hard to effect but it's what the National Careers Council is calling for in its strategic **Report** on careers provision in England out today. Having conducted some pretty extensive research over much of the last year, the Council believes that "*major culture change is needed to help address the mismatch of skills shortages and in particular high youth unemployment.*" Its preferred vehicle for this is a modernised and expanded National Careers Service, given new muscle with the creation of an employer-led Advisory Board and with an extended remit "*to support schools, colleges and young people.*" The Service, which was set up in April 2012, currently provides a range of online, face-to-face and support services for adults but these recommendations would allow it to tackle two of the most pressing problems in careers provision at present: the lack of substantive provision for young people and secondly, the alarming mismatch between individual expectations and labour market realities

Context

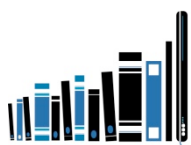
The tribulations that the careers service have been going through in recent months have been well documented in series of Reports and Inquiries. Some of this, such as the emergence of the knowledge economy and rapidly changing nature of work and technology, in turn making the task of a single careers professional almost impossible, would be hard to lay at the door of politicians but others such as the decimation of funding and the shifting of responsibility on to schools, more so. It's this latter area that has provoked the most concern. The Education Committee notoriously called the decision to shift responsibility "*regrettable*" and in its recent research Pearson found that only a third of teachers surveyed felt confident that their school was providing adequate careers advice. No wonder, as CIPD put it, '*employers are from Mars, young people are from Venus.*' The dangers of relying on a purely school-based model of careers provision have been well highlighted not least by OECD and it's thus no surprise that at least five of the Report's seven recommendations refer to young people in particular

What's the Report recommending?

In all, the Report makes 7 recommendations supplemented by 36 practical steps. The overall vision is of a transformed National Careers Service, with six identified priorities, working closely with a new 'high-level' Employer Advisory Board, spreading the word and sharing good practice, ensuring among other things that face-to-face guidance is available to all pupils from age 12 and ultimately leading the charge for a cultural change in careers provision

What now?

The Government has already indicated that it sees the re-procurement of the National Careers Service from April 2014 as an obvious opportunity to rejig provision but equally is waiting to see what comes out of this summer's Ofsted thematic review before getting into too much detail. A more immediate concern may be funding; this Report is not keen on careers funding being thrown into the single funding pot envisaged by Lord Heseltine but that would mean shoring up funding from already hard pressed Depts



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National Careers Council Report June 2013