

# SecEd Guide to...



## Careers Guidance

### Key content

- A summary of the new statutory obligations for delivering careers guidance for students in years 9 to 11.
- How schools can meet the requirement to provide "impartial and independent" advice.
- Advice on assuring the quality of external providers and working with local authorities and other partners.
- A summary of further information and best practice websites and resources for schools.
- Case studies of best practice.

In association with

**ASCL** Association  
of School and  
College Leaders

# GUIDE TO... Careers Guidance

Under the Education Act 2011, from September 2012 schools will take on key responsibilities in relation to careers advice and guidance for young people in years 9 to 11. The move follows the scrapping of Connexions services by many local authorities as a result of central funding cuts.

The government now expects schools to become more accountable for the progression of pupils to further and higher education and into employment.

This is to be achieved by providing access to "impartial and independent" information and guidance on the options available to them.

This role will become increasingly important as young people will be required to participate in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013, and to their 18th birthday from 2015.

A National Careers Service was launched in April 2012. This caters largely for adults but does offer a free telephone support service for young people as well as a website.

Statutory government guidance on meeting the new duty was released in March which emphasises the importance of face-to-face advice, but also that it is for schools to decide what careers guidance to make available, dependent on the needs of their pupils. Schools will have to meet the costs of this provision from their overall budgets, including the Pupil Premium.

## Impartial and independent

The crucial aspect of the new duty is how schools can ensure that the careers guidance they provide is "impartial and independent".

The Education Act 2011 states that careers guidance must be presented in "an impartial manner" and must promote the best interests of pupils. It should include information on the options available in respect of 16 to 18 education or training, including apprenticeships. In order to be impartial, it must be "guidance that the person giving it considers will promote the best interests of the pupils to whom it is given".

It adds: "Careers guidance is independent if it is provided other than by a teacher employed or engaged at the school or any other person employed at the school."

The government guidance, meanwhile, defines independent as "external to the school" and impartial as "showing no bias or favouritism towards a particular education or work option".

However, the government guidance also contains a number of more flexible definitions. For example, it states that "schools will be free to make arrangements for careers guidance that fit the needs and circumstances of their students, and will be able to engage, as appropriate, in partnership with external, expert providers".

It also adds: "In fulfilling their new duty, schools should secure access to independent face-to-face careers guidance where it is the most suitable support for young people to make successful transitions, particularly children from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who have SEN, learning difficulties or disabilities."

The statutory guidance does stress, however, that young people benefit most from face-to-face guidance where they can discuss their options with a suitably qualified person who can explore how a young person's circumstances, abilities, interests and aspirations may affect decisions about their future learning and career.

When pushed on the question of how schools should meet the "independent" requirement, the Department for Education (DfE) told *SecEd*: "We recognise that some schools already have excellent in-house arrangements in place and employ a qualified careers advisor to provide careers advice and wider support to pupils. There is no reason why those arrangements cannot continue.

"The statutory guidance simply says that where pupils require face-to-face support, they should have access to an external and independent perspective on the range of post-16 options available to them. Therefore, in those cases schools will want to think about complementing any

in-house arrangements with face-to-face support from external sources such as careers advisors, employers or mentors. Basically the new duty prevents a school from fulfilling its duty by asking a teacher, supply teacher or another individual employed by the school to provide all careers guidance."

A DfE spokesperson added that where schools decide that pupils require it, independent advice should be sought and that this could be from employers, mentors, FE or HE as appropriate. She added: "We are not being prescriptive in that way, but where teachers think that it's necessary, independent advice should be sought."

As well as the above, there is an expectation that schools will have regard to the following aspects when deciding on the most appropriate forms of careers guidance.

### Quality of external providers

Schools may work individually or in partnership with other schools to commission face-to-face external independent careers guidance which is likely to be offered by a range of providers from sole traders to national companies.

The Skills Funding Agency will require providers of the National Careers Service to be accredited to the revised version of the Matrix Quality Standard by April 2013. Schools are free to purchase careers guidance from any provider they wish, but they are encouraged to use Matrix-accredited organisations.

In order to achieve the Quality Standard, providers will be assessed against a range of criteria including service delivery, quality improvement, and resources. It is hoped that this will help schools to make well-informed decisions. The company EMQC Ltd is responsible for administering the Quality Standard on behalf of government and will provide a list of organisations that are accredited.

### Adequate support for pupils with SEN

Schools will be required to provide pupils with SEN and disabilities with impartial advice about the mainstream and specialist education and training opportunities on offer. Schools should continue to work closely with local authorities who have an important role to play through the provision of SEN support services.

### Local learning providers

Schools have a responsibility to act impartially and recognise where it may be in the best interests of some pupils to pursue an apprenticeship or college course, for example. To this end, schools should maintain links with local post-16 learning providers, FE colleges, universities and work-based training providers, to ensure that young people are aware of the full range of academic and vocational options. This might include arranging visits for 14 to 16-year-olds to those organisations and having reciprocal arrangements so that they can come into schools to discuss the courses on offer.

### Wider careers opportunities

The requirement for schools to provide a programme of careers education has gone. However, the statutory guidance states that schools should consider "a range of wider careers activities" including engagement with local employers and work-based education and training providers as well as further and higher education institutions. Other suggestions include involvement with local employers in the form of mentoring, workplace visits, work experience, work shadowing, enterprise clubs and employer talks.

### Local authorities

Once schools have taken on the new duty, local authorities will no longer be under any obligation to provide a universal careers service. However, their statutory responsibility under the Education and Skills Act 2008 to "encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people in education or training" will remain unaltered.

As such, local authorities will be required to assist the most vulnerable young people, including those with SEN and those at risk of disengaging with education or work. The statutory guidance adds: "Local authorities are also expected to have arrangements in place to ensure that 16 and 17-year-olds have received an offer of a suitable place in post-16 education or training."

Local authorities will continue to track young people's participation through their local Client Caseload Information System to identify those at risk of finding themselves not in education, employment or training post-16, or those in need

of targeted support. They will need to work with schools in recording young people's post-16 plans and the offers they receive along with their current circumstances and activities.

Local authorities must ensure that schools are aware of what specialist services are available from them (costed and uncosted) and how schools can refer young people to the most appropriate support. Legislation being put in place from 2013 for raising the participation age will place a duty on schools and colleges to notify local authorities whenever a 16 or 17-year-old leaves learning.

### Other developments

The government is working with the Careers Profession Alliance (CPA), an umbrella organisation of professional career associations, to develop standards and qualifications for all careers practitioners, which will include a national register. It is intended that the CPA will be replaced in 2013 by a new professional association, the Career Development Institute (CDI), which will represent all those working in careers education and guidance.

### ASCL/AoC guidance

Guidance from ASCL and the Association of Colleges has also been published. It suggests that a combination of internal and external resources is the preferred approach and urges schools which employ a member of staff, such as a former Connexions advisor, to ensure they are fully qualified and have the relevant training to be able to give impartial advice. Brian Lightman, ASCL general secretary, said: "The government guidance is very general and there is still some inconsistency in the messages. We do not necessarily agree that independent = external. If a qualified careers professional is employed by the school they can still be independent. The most important thing is 'being beneficial to the young people'. Schools should focus on best practice provision which will be integrated with a well-planned programme of careers education. I would focus on providing guidance that enables all students to get the careers information they need which is in their best interests and ensure the information is not in the interests of one or more institutions."

## Useful links and contacts

Statutory government guidance on meeting the new careers advice duty: <http://bit.ly/H7HfSK>

The National Careers Service: **0800 100 900** or <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

The ASCL and AoC document *Putting Young People First* sets out best practice for schools and colleges which work together to meet the new duty: [www.ascl.org.uk/resources/library/contents](http://www.ascl.org.uk/resources/library/contents)

A set of case studies highlighting good practice in the area of careers information, advice and guidance is available on the Local Government Association's Communities of Practice website: <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/comm/landing-home.do?id=1685686>

Association for Careers Education and Guidance: [www.aceg.org.uk](http://www.aceg.org.uk)

Education and Employers Task Force: [www.educationandemployers.org](http://www.educationandemployers.org)

Institute for Education Business Excellence: [www.iebe.org.uk](http://www.iebe.org.uk)

Institute of Career Guidance: [www.icg-uk.org](http://www.icg-uk.org)

Learning and Skills Improvement Service: [www.lsis.org.uk](http://www.lsis.org.uk)

National Apprenticeship Service: [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

National Citizen Service: <https://nationalcitizenservice.direct.gov.uk/>

DirectGov careers advice for young people: [www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople)

# Buying-in expertise...

## Case study: Andy Gardner

Andy Gardner seems like “part of the furniture” at JFS School in Camden, north London, and many pupils don’t actually realise that he comes in just once or twice a week.

Mr Gardner is a freelance careers advisor and has worked with students at JFS, and La Sainte Union Catholic School, in Camden for more than 20 years, initially as a local authority employee.

“I am paid by invoice and I am not a member of staff though the pupils think I am because I have been coming in for so long,” he said. In future, more people with his expertise will be sought by schools as the new careers service structure takes shape.

The advantages of hiring an external advisor are many and varied. Schools may save money by not employing someone on the staff to fulfil the role, but by paying a daily rate – a freelance can expect to earn a minimum of £250 a day – and using the advisor as and when needed.

They are also more likely to fulfil the requirement that careers advice should, in future, be impartial and independent.

Tim Miller, deputy head of JFS, said: “Schools are now being asked to ensure that guidance is presented impartially and that the separation be made between the school and the person providing the guidance. As we have been doing this for so long, we seem to have been unconsciously ahead of the game.

“Students tend to listen to someone who is from outside of the school environment precisely for that reason,” he added.

Mr Gardner works specifically with students in post-16 and his expertise lies in the transition from 6th form to university or the workplace.

“Some of them want advice but they already know what they need to do and come to me for information on how they can achieve their goals,” he said. “For example, they might want to do pharmacy so they may need to know how best to put together their personal statement,

how to prepare for an interview, and what the requirements are. In a sense this is the easiest part of the job because they tell me what they want.

“Then there are those who are considering various ideas and who need someone to talk it through with. They may, for example, be considering biology or management studies, which are two entirely different areas, so I might be able to help them find information about their recruitment prospects. I also get those who are not sure what they want to do, so I talk to them about apprenticeships or other options.”

Mr Gardner said the potential opening up of the market on careers advice means that schools need to be wary about who they take on. In particular they need to check that the person they employ has a qualification in careers advice,

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such as a Diploma or an NVQ Level 4 in advice and guidance.

“Both schools I work for were keen to have someone in the role who is not involved with the day-to-day life of the school and so can offer a truly independent and impartial service, though I have never met any careers advisor who would guide students onto a path they were not suited for,” Mr Gardner continued.

“The fact I don’t know these students in their learning environment means I am not distracted by anything they may have done at school. I am there simply to discuss their options. Young people are quite discerning and won’t be pushed into something they don’t want to do.”

# An advisor on staff...

## Case study: Northampton School for Boys

Naomi Shaeffer was employed as careers advisor at Northampton School for Boys six years ago, at a time of perceived need for such a role.

"There was a feeling that many pupils needed to be supported to make the appropriate decisions for their future," she told *SecEd*, "and that this was an important role within the school generally as part of the education it offered."

Ms Shaeffer, who previously worked for the Connexions service, started out working with year 11 students, but gradually began to oversee support for younger pupils too.

She continued: "Really, I provide a blanket support but some students need one-to-one guidance over a long period of time so I also offer differentiated services – for example, to those who have barriers to overcome in terms of their learning."

Having been employed by the school solely for this purpose, Ms Shaeffer envisages her role expanding as schools are expected to bear the bulk of responsibility for careers guidance and education.

She says she is still not clear how this will evolve, "but we are working on it". "Losing Connexions will be a big blow because their input has been invaluable, and we will also be losing Access Point in Northamptonshire, which was a drop-in service for young people offering one-to-one advice," she added.

"We have to remain conscious of the fact that not all young people have access to the internet to find the information they need, or the confidence to find what they need to know."

Ms Shaeffer offers a bespoke service to her pupils and is confident she can retain the impartiality that ministers insist upon. Her links with local business meanwhile will ensure the school meets the requirement to provide "independent" advice.

For example, if a student is looking for a career in law, then Ms Shaeffer will find a local firm to give



them a work placement. She has excellent contacts with local businesses from her days in the Connexions service, which she continues to expand upon. She added: "I try to find work experience for pupils in the holiday so it does not impinge on their school work."

During the school's annual Enterprise Week she invites employers in to talk to students and encourages them to deliver workshops so young people can get a good flavour of what their business involves.

"My advice is always impartial and I treat every student as an individual. It is about their needs and nothing else, and every interview is tailored towards them," she added. "We have a very healthy 6th-form but this is not the right path for everyone and significant numbers of our pupils also want to look at college or apprenticeships.

"I would like to think I've made a significant difference. I support students through their UCAS and apprenticeship applications, and am always available for discussions with parents at open evenings or individually to talk through their children's needs.

"The point is not to spoon-feed them but to guide them in the right direction and get them to look at different opportunities themselves and think about what they want to do, so that when they start writing their CV they are thinking about and have a clear idea of what their skills are."

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