

Careers Review 2014

**A report by an independent panel of
experts from education and employers on
careers education and guidance in
Northern Ireland**

October 2014

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Foreword

In March 2014 I was asked by the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education to chair a panel of experts from education, career guidance and business to conduct a formal review of the careers system in Northern Ireland.

With the comprehensive Inquiry carried out by the Assembly Employment and Learning Committee and other key publications as our starting point, we undertook to examine the careers system with the intention of making recommendations on the way forward for the future delivery of careers education and guidance.

The panel, supported by Professor Tony Watts, an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) expert in the field of careers education and guidance, examined current careers provision and drawing on expertise from the panel, a substantial body of evidence provided by the Committee Inquiry as well as international best practice, developed a set of recommendations which we believe will have a significant impact on the careers landscape in Northern Ireland.

As the review progressed, a number of key themes emerged as the foundation for our recommendations:

- exposure to the world of work and strong partnerships with employers;
- easily accessible, accurate information;
- access to impartial career guidance;
- support from modern information systems.

To ensure consistency of delivery across all of these areas we also recognise the need for a clear quality assurance framework for the entire careers system.

We as a panel are confident that, if fully implemented, the recommendations detailed within this report will deliver a significant improvement in the quality of careers education and guidance in Northern Ireland

The implementation of these recommendations should not place further pressure on public sector finance and I would ask both Ministers to look carefully at how

these recommendations could be implemented within existing resources. If Northern Ireland is to prosper economically and socially we need to ensure that we nurture our talent and develop the skills and qualifications that employers need.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Ambrose". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some overlapping letters.

Brian Ambrose

Chief Executive, George Best Belfast City Airport

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide advice to the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education on the overall direction for the careers education and guidance system in Northern Ireland for all young people and adults. The report builds on the Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning's Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, and other recent publications from employer representatives.

Having considered the seven themes from the Terms of Reference, as well as feedback from stakeholders, research, evidence and examples of international best practice, the Independent Panel has produced five key recommendations and 15 key actions.

The first recommendation deals with the issue of ensuring consistency and effectiveness through a system-wide accountability and quality framework. The Panel believes that the entire careers system should demonstrate its worth in terms of education and training outcomes; the functioning of the labour market; and social equity, social inclusion and social mobility measures. These are the three main reasons, as stated by the OECD, why a careers system should be publicly funded. While both Departments will ultimately be accountable for the outcomes, the process should be overseen by an employer-led careers forum comprising senior representatives from business, education, the community and voluntary sector and customer representatives to advise on provision and drive up quality.

The second recommendation deals with access and transparency. To ensure that the career system reaches as wide an audience as possible, the online offer must be greatly improved. The aim is to make the careers website the first port of call for reliable, relevant and user friendly careers information and advice for all. Labour Market Information (LMI) which is easy to understand and provides a 'single line of sight' needs to be a major component of the online offer. By maximising the use of technology including making the site interactive, all individuals at all stages in their career pathway - in education or training, in work, unemployed, those with disabilities or special circumstances - should be able to

find the information and support they need when they need it. Employers, parents, teachers and practitioners should also be encouraged to use this resource. Regarding transparency, the website should be used to share the standardised-format and user-friendly reports generated through the Accountability and Quality Framework (Recommendation 1) on each part of the system - schools, colleges, universities, careers service - so that the general public can see what is being achieved. Accreditation could be introduced for all providers of careers services through a CareersNI Kitemark system, underpinned by professional and service standards to recognise and share best practice.

Third, for young people in schools we are recommending that each year group from Primary 7 upwards receives a minimum specification of work experiences. While at school, this specification should be by year group and needs to be age appropriate. For those in further and higher education, it could be defined by the type of course. It should move away from the traditional one week approach, to something much more meaningful with the aim of broadening out the young person's understanding of the world of work and the opportunities available. Parents should be made aware of this entitlement and encouraged to support their children to make the best of the opportunities available through a central online portal accessed through the careers website. The Panel see this as an opportunity to promote STEM¹ and priority sectors and also to help address gender imbalance issues by promoting non-traditional occupations to females. Employers should be mobilised through the employer-led careers forum to help with the specification and design of the online system. The forum should also be used to encourage employers to actively support schools, through membership of Boards of Governors, and by inspiring and motivating young people to reach their full potential through class talks and other awareness raising activity.

Fourth, the Panel wants to ensure that individuals are encouraged to reflect and record all formal and informal experience of work from primary school through to higher education or training and beyond, a process which should help to develop a meaningful CV. Employers have told us that they want to see much more than just academic achievement from job applicants, with sporting achievements, cultural

¹ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

interests, voluntary work etc included against the backdrop of meaningful exposure to the world of work from an early age. The e-portfolio should have private and public space with the latter being used by practitioners and teachers to assess need and deliver the right type of support, for example to those at risk of dropping out of the system early.

Finally, the fifth recommendation recognises there will always be a need to provide face-to-face guidance for individuals at all ages. In particular, all young people should be able to access one-to-one impartial guidance before they access a post 16 option. This is to ensure they make the best use of the opportunities available to them and that they have considered all options, pathways, potential risks and consequences of particular choices. This guidance needs to be informed by online Labour Market Information (LMI) and parents need to be much more involved (Recommendation 2). The process should aim to widen out careers ideas using the experience already documented on e-portfolios and challenge misconceptions and very fixed career ideas. It should also identify those who need specialist help for example because of disability or learning difficulties, or those at risk of dropping out. It is vital that those involved in this process maintain the professional competencies required.

The panel considers that, when fully implemented, these recommendations will bring about a significant change to the careers landscape in Northern Ireland. We recognise, however, in the current economic climate, the need to ensure that the recommendations are affordable. Certainly there appears to be scope to modernise delivery systems, maximising the use of technology which would not only improve quality but also should prove more cost effective over time. There is also considerable alignment between the work experience portal and a commitment outlined in the NI Strategy on Apprenticeships for an online portal for the advertising and application of apprenticeship opportunities. There are considerable resources currently allocated to the provision of work experiences in schools, colleges and universities.

The panel believes, therefore, that by reallocation and reprioritisation these recommendations can be fully funded without significant additional resource.

Summary of Recommendations and Key Actions

Recommendation 1 – Ensuring consistency and quality

Develop a comprehensive **accountability and quality assurance framework** for the entire careers system.

To include:

- practitioner and organisational standards; and
- clear and measurable targets.

Timescale – within 5 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets).

Key Actions

1. Establish a standardised process to evaluate the careers system, focusing on short- and longer-term employment, skills and qualification outcomes. Consider using a CareersNI Kitemark system.
2. Publish, annually, careers performance data in a standard user-friendly format which holds both Departments to account and school management accountable to Boards of Governors, parents and other stakeholders.
3. Require, as a minimum, a nominated careers teacher in each school to undertake the bespoke Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme for careers education in schools developed by the Department of Education (DE). Careers teachers and careers advisers should maintain their professional competencies through ongoing CPD, awareness of labour market needs and adherence to professional standards.
4. Establish an employer-led Careers Forum to oversee and advise on future development of careers provision in Northern Ireland.

Recommendation 2 – Accessing meaningful information

Develop and significantly improve the current **careers website** via NI direct.

The careers website should be regularly updated and well promoted to all, in particular to young people and their families, to include self-help resources and expert labour market information, in a user-friendly format.

Timescale – within the next 2 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets).

Key Actions

1. Within 1 year, develop and publish on-line robust, user-friendly and up-to-date labour market information using the DEL skills barometer to assist with career decision-making.
2. Within 2 years, develop the current website through a digital delivery plan to improve access to careers information in Northern Ireland.
3. Within 3 years, demonstrate benefits in terms of customer satisfaction and cost efficiency.

Recommendation 3 – Gaining relevant experience

Establish a minimum specification for meaningful **work experiences** for young people in school (by year group from P7) and further and higher education.

Work experiences should include a requirement that all young people, and in particular females, are encouraged to explore career opportunities in STEM-related and growth sectors.

Timescale – within the next 5 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets)

Key Actions

1. Establish a central system to support all structured work experiences, including an online portal for the advertising and application of work experience placements.
2. Develop an employer engagement strategy, through the Career Forum, to increase, develop and ensure high quality work experience opportunities from all sectors.
3. Measure and openly report on the overall benefits of work experiences to pupils.

Recommendation 4 – Making a record of experience

Commencing in P7, all young people should create and maintain an **e-portfolio** which reflects all relevant work experiences, careers learning and relevant extra-curricular activities.

The e-portfolio should be used as a lifelong resource and to produce a comprehensive and meaningful CV in a standardised format.

Timescale – within the next 3 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets).

Key Actions

1. Commencing in Sept '16 establish a common e-portfolio in primary school for all P7 pupils which should be maintained and updated by the individual through secondary, further and higher education, apprenticeships and traineeships. To be fully implemented within 3 years.
2. Require careers teachers and practitioners to use the e-portfolio to assess career needs, including potential to disengage, offering personalised support. Through the Accountability and Quality Framework use the e-portfolio during inspections of careers to measure the quality and economic relevance of careers provision.
3. Link the e-portfolio to the Unique Learner Number (ULN), to enable effective tracking and monitoring of the individual's progress.

Recommendation 5 – Assisting in making career choices

Impartial careers advisers should engage with all young people (16-18 year olds) at critical decision points in their careers before starting a publicly funded course.

This engagement will:

- improve education and training outcomes;
- support the needs of the labour market; and
- identify and intervene with young people who require additional support to make a successful transition to further education, training or employment.

Timescale – incrementally within 3 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets).

Key Actions

1. Within 1 year, develop a monitoring system which will demonstrate that all young people 16-18 are able to access impartial careers advice and guidance in a way that suits their needs.
2. Develop information systems, eventually linked to the ULN and e-portfolio, to identify young people who may require additional impartial careers advice at critical decision points in their careers.
3. Demonstrate the effectiveness in terms of increased uptake of economically relevant skills and education opportunities, and fewer disengaged young people.

Section 1: Introduction

In March 2014, the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education established an Independent Panel of experts from education, business and career guidance research to provide advice on the overall direction for careers provision in Northern Ireland. The Panel was asked to build on the recommendations stemming from the Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning's Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance² and other publications on this issue from employers representatives.

The aim was to ensure that future provision reflects the needs of a modern vibrant and dynamic 21st century economy in which all individuals regardless of age, aspiration or ability, as well as key influencers such as parents and teachers, have access to independent, high-quality advice which helps them to maximise their potential and contribute to their community and the Northern Ireland economy.

The Review had a particular focus on the role of careers education and guidance in balancing skills supply and demand in the current and future labour market.

Background

In 2009 the Department of Education (DE) and Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) jointly developed a 5-year careers education, information, advice and guidance strategy: *Preparing for Success*.³

The strategy aimed to improve the partnership working between the two Departments to ensure that the careers education and guidance needs of individuals of all ages were met. A report on progress⁴ outlined the key achievements during this period, including a significant increase in the number of year 12 pupils availing of independent careers advice, improved data-sharing

² Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*. NIA Employment and Learning Committee Report 141/11-15. <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Employment-and-Learning/Reports/Inquiry-into-Careers-Education-Information-Advice-and-Guidance-in-Northern-Ireland/>

³ Department of Education & Department for Employment and Learning (2009). *Preparing for Success: Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance*.

⁴ Department for Employment and Learning & Department of Education (2013). *Preparing for Success Implementation Plan: Progress Report*.

agreements to facilitate better tracking and monitoring of young people, and a fourfold increase in the number of adult customers availing of career guidance.

In November 2013 the Assembly's Committee for Employment and Learning published its report following a comprehensive Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance and made recommendations for both Departments to consider, including the need to improve the quality and consistency of the careers system, and its responsiveness to the needs of the labour market. In response to the Committee report and various Confederation of British Industry (CBI) publications⁵ on this issue, both Ministers agreed to establish an Independent Panel to advise on the implementation of recommendations and the future direction of the careers system in Northern Ireland. In undertaking the work, the Panel examined the current system and international best practice. Its recommendations are designed to help ensure that decisions made by young people and adults are taken in a timely and fully informed manner, balancing their abilities and aspirations with the current and future needs of the economy. Good-quality careers education and guidance should maximise the return to the individual and to the economy from the investment in the wide range of opportunities including training, the apprenticeship programme and further study at schools, colleges and universities.

Methodology

The Panel considered issues related to 7 themes.

- 1. A statutory duty – developing a consistent approach**, including the need to:
 - examine alternative mechanisms and structures for delivery, taking account of practice in other jurisdictions;
 - examine separately the role of the careers adviser supported by DEL and the role of the careers teacher in schools;
 - consider how consistency of approach and high standards of service can be ensured;

⁵ CBI (2013). *Changing the Pace*. CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2013. CBI (2014). *Evaluation of Education and Employer Partnerships in Northern Ireland*. Confederation of British Industry NI.

- consider the effectiveness of the current statutory provision;
- ensure provision is fit for purpose and supports consistently high-quality careers education and guidance in schools and colleges;
- consider the costs of delivery;
- establish measurable outcomes and critical success factors.

2. The role of the curriculum and examples of good practice – including the need to:

- consider how careers education can be strengthened and developed;
- examine best practice in other countries including those highlighted in the Committee for Employment and Learning Inquiry report.

3. Overcoming barriers – with a particular focus on:

- those about to enter the labour market;
- those not in, or temporarily excluded from, the labour market;
- people with learning difficulties or disabilities;
- those needing financial advice regarding further and higher education;
- barriers to accessing higher education on an all-island basis;
- those in work – assist individuals to stay in work and progress up the skills ladder to promote social mobility;
- school-age children.

4. Promoting STEM subjects – including the need to:

- encourage and monitor uptake, particularly females, studying STEM subjects and, more specifically, the physical sciences, computer science and mathematics;
- establish measurable outcomes and critical success factors.

5. Providing information – including the need to:

- put labour market intelligence and information at the heart of the guidance process;
- consider whether the current careers website is fit-for-purpose;

- develop better web-based assistance;
- consider the development of the businesses/parents/careers teachers portal;
- maximise the use of telephony and social media;
- provide a brokerage role for entry to vocational and academic pathways;
- consider earlier interventions (i.e. correct points to engage with young people).

6. Engaging with business – including:

- how engagement between careers service, universities and colleges, schools and businesses can be better structured, integrated and improved;
- improving the quality of work experiences and student experiences;
- encouraging large employers to support SMEs' and micro-businesses' engagement;
- development of labour market intelligence;
- retaining talent in Northern Ireland and encouraging enterprise;
- supporting the growth and rebalancing of the Northern Ireland economy;
- contributing to meeting the current and future skills needs of the labour market;
- promoting apprenticeships.

7. Improving advice – including the need to:

- further develop the qualifications framework;
- provide appropriate continuing professional development;
- ensure consistency of approach and standards;
- consider existing and planned methods of recruiting and developing careers teachers and advisers;
- ensure that individuals, regardless of age, aspiration or ability, as well as key influencers such as parents and teachers, have access to information as well as independent high-quality advice.

Section 2: The rationale for careers education and guidance

The education to employment path is sometimes described as a road with three intersections: enrolling in post-16 education or training, building the right skills, and finding a suitable job.⁶ Careers education and guidance is concerned with supporting individuals along this path, preparing them to manage their careers throughout life. We have defined the word ‘career’ as the evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time.⁷

There is often a range of factors including peer and social influences, family expectations, costs and access to finance, and perceived social status, which underpin the career decisions individuals make. However, in order to weigh up the risks and rewards associated with various options and pathways, and to achieve a successful outcome both for the individual and for the wider economy, access to good-quality and impartial information, advice and guidance is vital.

Ideally, uptake of post-16 education and training provision would balance informed student preferences with employer demand. However, we know that employers are concerned that there is often an insufficient flow of talent into new and replacement employment opportunities. Coupled with this, many parts of the world including Northern Ireland have stubbornly high levels of youth unemployment.

Research carried out on behalf of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) in March 2013 found that there is a significant disconnect between the career aspiration of most teenagers and projected labour market demands.⁸ The report concluded that the UK labour market is not working efficiently, that employer signalling of opportunities is not being received effectively by young people, and that improved employer engagement in education, meaningful work experiences and career advice are needed to address this issue.

⁶ McKinsey & Co. (2014). *Education to Employment: Getting Europe’s Youth into Work*.

⁷ Arthur MB, Hall D T and Lawrence B S (1989) *Handbook of Career Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Canada.

⁸ UKCES (2013). *Nothing in Common: The Career Aspirations of Young Britons Mapped against Projected Labour Market Demand (2010-2020)*.

While sound career advice underpinned by reliable labour market information is important, planning and funding levers are also needed to make sure that the number of people skilled in different occupations matches current and future labour market needs. We know that student preferences on their own do not always adequately reflect labour market needs; however, it is also accepted that it is very difficult to forecast the exact skills needed in a given labour market.

An OECD report⁹ in 2010 stated that recognition of the preferences of individual students in the courses they study is important for at least three reasons:

- first, students are normally good judges of their own skills and the characteristics that may make them better suited to one job than another – so following their preferences leads to higher productivity;
- second, they also know more about what they most enjoy doing, so that even when the labour market outcomes are weaker, they are compensated in terms of their well-being; and
- third, coercing students to train or study in areas they do not want can lead to increased drop-out rates, at significant financial and human cost.

At the same time, it is important that these preferences should be well-informed in terms of likely labour market demand.

There has often been confusion about the distinction and relationship between careers education and career guidance, partly caused by the different ways in which the latter term is used. The OECD career guidance policy review¹⁰ used the term “career guidance” generically to cover “services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers”. Subsequent publications¹¹ have broken this down into three main components:

- **career education**, as part of the curriculum, in which attention is paid to helping groups of individuals to develop the competences for managing

⁹ OECD (2010). *Learning for Jobs*. OECD Policy Review of Vocational Education and Training.

¹⁰ OECD (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*.

¹¹ Watts, A.G. (2009). *Learning for Jobs: the Relationship of Career Guidance to VET*. Paris: OECD.

their career development. This includes exploring the world of work, partly through work experience, work shadowing, work visits, and work simulations such as mini-enterprises; it also includes self-awareness and the development of skills for making decisions and managing transitions, both now and in the future;

- **career information**, provided in various formats (increasingly, web-based), concerned with information on courses, occupations and career paths. This includes labour market information; and
- **career counselling**, conducted on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, in which attention is focused on the distinctive career issues faced by individuals.

The OECD report also cites three policy rationales for the delivery of career guidance:

- improving the functioning of the training and education systems – to improve efficiency and managing its interface with the labour market. If individuals make decisions about what they are to learn in a well-informed and well-thought-through way, linked to their interests, their capacities and their aspirations, investments in education and training systems are likely to yield higher returns;
- effective operation of the labour market, including improving the match between supply and demand and managing adjustments to change. If people find jobs which utilise their potential and meet their own goals, they are likely to be more motivated and more productive; and
- supporting social equity, social inclusion and social mobility, including ensuring that services are available to all, providing appropriate support to help individuals to maximise potential and progress up the career ladder.

Section 3: Current provision

The careers system in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland responsibility for the career system is split between DE and DEL. DE has responsibility for careers education and DEL has responsibility for the Careers Service.

In Northern Ireland careers education, or Learning for Life and Work (LLW), is a compulsory area of learning in the common curriculum for all grant-aided schools. DE specifies in legislation¹² the minimum content which all schools have to provide to their pupils at each key stage. There is also a requirement to develop cross-curricular skills (Communication, Using Mathematics, Using ICT) and other skills (Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities) to better equip young people for life and work. These skills are detailed in legislation.

Teachers in school have a considerable responsibility to support young people in their development to become rounded individuals with the academic, social and employability skills needed for a successful transition to the world of work. The three aims of the careers education programme are the development of self-awareness, career exploration and effective career management. Schools are free to decide on how the careers education programme is delivered, and the resources and expertise allocated to it.

Careers advisers work in partnership with schools to support the careers education programme with impartial advice and guidance. However, there are no published outcome measures in place to assess the effectiveness of this arrangement, which has been largely unchanged for many years.

The Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning report¹³ highlighted as an issue the different approaches to how, and precisely what, careers support is delivered in schools, the uncertainty around allocation of resources, and the variance in the importance attached to the subject within schools. The

¹² Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007.

¹³ Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*. NIA Employment and Learning Committee Report 141/11-15.

Committee's view was that it is difficult for stakeholders to know which Department is responsible and accountable for the careers system outcomes.

Ensuring consistency of approach and standards

To help ensure consistency in the provision of careers education and guidance, partnership agreements are in place between schools and the Careers Service in nearly all (98%) of post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. While schools, to an extent, can choose how they use the resource allocated to them, the Careers Service has a target to interview at least 85% of the year 12 pupils on a one-to-one basis.¹⁴ When this target was initially set in 2011, the number of year 12 pupils accessing interviews was approximately 70% of the year group. By setting the target and outlining to schools the value of impartial advice at this critical decision point, this figure has now risen to 92% (2013/14) of the cohort. The increased choice of subject pathways under the Entitlement Framework¹⁵ means that it is even more vital for young people to be provided with high-quality and impartial careers advice.

To ensure consistency of delivery, guidance is provided to schools on the importance of the relationship between careers education and guidance and the LLW component of the curriculum. In addition, schools need to augment this provision with timetabled careers education classes to meet fully all the aims and objectives of a high-quality careers education and guidance programme.

Support beyond school

When young people move to year 13 in school or transfer to further education, apprenticeship or training provision, the Careers Service continues to offer ongoing support to ensure that they are on course to achieve the skills and qualifications needed to fulfil their career goals. For a considerable number in the

¹⁴ Part of the rationale for this high figure is that a careers interview is valuable even for young people who seem to have a clear career goal, as a means of ensuring that their choice is well-informed and well-thought-through, and that possible alternatives have been considered.

¹⁵ The Entitlement Framework places a duty on all schools to provide access to a minimum number of courses from age 14, with at least one-third being general and at least one-third applied. www.deni.gov.uk/entitlement-framework.htm

16 - 18 age-group this can involve a number of changes until they settle into the option that is right for them, increasing the risk of drop out.

The perception expressed by many young of the people involved in the Panel's stakeholder engagement process was that the options available post 16 are sometimes difficult to access. While access to further and higher education is relatively straightforward and well understood by schools, with a clear coherent application process, for many young people an alternative like the apprenticeship option would be preferable if it was equally as straightforward to access. The evidence emerging from the discussions with young people suggests, if this was the case, many more might avail of this latter option, rather than the higher education route, to avoid student debt and to improve their employability. Whilst there is concern that many graduates are failing to secure a graduate-level job¹⁶ within a year of finishing university evidence would indicate that the graduate job market is improving. However, competition is high with more than one in three of the jobs on offer filled by graduates who have already worked for an organisation, through paid internships, holiday work or work experience¹⁷. Employers are also concerned that talented and motivated young people are often "drifting" into higher education without seriously considering alternative options.

The Panel believes the improvements to work experiences and the development of the e-portfolio as outlined in Recommendations 3 and 4, underpinned by timely, impartial and well-informed career guidance, should make a major contribution to addressing this issue.

Support for those with learning difficulties and disabilities

DE is responsible for the policy framework within which Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and schools provide services and support for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN), including the transition planning process.

¹⁶ Office for National Statistics (2013). *Graduates in the UK Labour Market 2013*.

¹⁷ Office for National Statistics (2013). *Graduates in the UK Labour Market 2013*.

Provision for all children and young people with SEN is met within the SEN Framework, which comprises SEN legislation, the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of SEN, and the Supplement to the Code. Within this framework, provision is matched to the individual needs of the child, with each case needing to be considered on its own merits.

All young people who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs have an annual review of their statement. Legislation states that the first annual review after their 14th birthday must provide the opportunity to develop a transition plan. The purpose of this plan is to draw together information from a range of professionals, including the careers advisers, and others within and beyond the school, in order to design a comprehensive pathway for the young person's final years at school and his or her subsequent transition to adult life.

Support for adults

For those young people who finish education at 18 and do not progress into an apprenticeship or employment, the Public Employment Service is the main source of help. The unemployment rate for the period Jun - Aug 2014 was estimated at 6.1% which is an improvement over the past year. The unemployment rate for 18 - 24 year olds has also improved since last year but remains high at 18%. The employment rate for those aged 16 - 64 was estimated at 68% and is below the UK average of 73% and is the lowest rate among the twelve UK regions¹⁸. While Northern Ireland has recently been very successful in attracting foreign direct investment, with 23,783¹⁹ new jobs announced in the past three years, there is still a perceived imbalance between the demands of the labour market and the availability of workers with the required skills. Many of these jobs are in the IT, engineering and financial sectors, offering good salaries and career prospects. The Careers Service currently works with the Employment Service to ensure that unemployed and low-paid workers have access to the advice and support they need to upskill and retrain to improve their chances of returning to work and to sustain and progress in employment. The Careers Service in Northern Ireland is

¹⁸ Source: Labour Market Report, Oct 2014.DETI

¹⁹ Source: Invest Northern Ireland.

ideally placed in this regard as both services are within DEL and issues like sharing of data which have proved problematic elsewhere in the UK have not been an issue here.

Other countries

In some countries, for example in Finland and the Republic of Ireland, careers education is largely delivered in school by school counsellors, who also provide career counselling. In others, school teachers deliver careers education – as a separate programme, as part of a wider programme, or as a cross-curricular theme – with an external careers service delivering an agreed programme of individual advice and guidance to complement it. The latter has been the pattern in Germany, for example, and in the UK (though provision in England currently varies considerably).²⁰

There is evidence that advice from a variety of sources delivering a consistent message is very effective. In Germany²¹ for example there is close working between schools and the Federal Employment Office where two years before the end of compulsory schooling young people are introduced to the issues facing them in getting a job and to the opportunities in the labour market.

In Germany, a co-operation treaty between the Federal Employment Office and the Permanent Conference of the Education Ministers of the German States (a co-ordination body between the states [*Länder*], which meets regularly and sets rules that apply to all states which in Germany have large autonomy in terms of their education policy) sets out the joint obligation of schools and employment offices to provide impartial, up-to-date and professional career advice. Schools are expected to provide students with basic information on the functioning of the economy and the labour market, on different occupations and on the principles of career choice. Schools and local employment offices co-operate in various ways. They form local and regional networks involving various stakeholders, such as employers and higher education institutions. Schools are involved in developing the information provided by employment offices and joint training courses are held for teachers and employment office staff. Schools and employment offices also harmonise their planned measures and projects every year.

²⁰ National Careers Council (2014). *Taking Action: Achieving a Culture Change in Careers Provision*.

²¹ Bundesagentur für Arbeit & KMK (2004).

Switzerland has established a strong system of career guidance and counselling to help students at various transition points in their education and career. Attending impartial career guidance sessions²² is mandatory for all students in their final years of compulsory schooling.

Stability and standardising the content of the careers offering in schools is also important. In Germany and Finland the career guidance arrangements are known and understood by all concerned: parents, employers and pupils.²³

In general, the international evidence indicates that the partnership between schools and an external all-age service, in place in Northern Ireland as in Scotland and Wales, is probably the strongest model for the delivery of careers services.²⁴ While there are lessons to be learned from other countries in relation to particular practices, as outlined above, they should be viewed as desirable enhancements of a basically sound model.

²² Students are introduced to the main institutions for guidance and counselling: the centres for occupational information (*Berufsinformationszentren, BIZ*). These are free-standing institutions providing unbiased information and counselling for all levels of the VET system.

²³ Gatsby Charitable Foundation, (2014). *Good Career Guidance*.

²⁴ Watts, A.G. (2010). National all-age career guidance services: evidence and issues. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 38(1): 31-44.

Section 4: The Strategic Vision

The Panel developed the following vision and mission to articulate how the various elements of the careers system should work together.

The Vision

The careers system will support all citizens to maximise and realise their career potential, to contribute to their community, and to support the social and economic prosperity of Northern Ireland.

Guiding principles

1. All careers services, irrespective of where and by whom they are delivered, should be high-quality and impartial and offered on an all-age basis to support those in education, those about to enter the labour market, those temporarily excluded from the labour market and those in work.
2. The system should provide a central, up-to-date and accessible online information service which will be the primary source of all career information and advice in Northern Ireland. This should include accurate, up-to-date and user-friendly labour market information to guide individuals towards a successful and sustained career and thus provide employers with the skilled workforce they need.
3. Individuals should be supported from an early age to become “career aware” and to “own” their career development. They should be encouraged to maximise all opportunities to explore future employment opportunities and the various pathways into those careers. By reflecting on and recording these learning and work experiences, the individuals, careers advisers, education and training providers, parents and employers will be able to support progress on a lifelong basis.
4. In order to derive the maximum benefit from investment in training and employment opportunities, decisions about education, training and employment need to be underpinned by sound and impartial careers advice.

5. Employers should actively engage in the careers process to inspire and motivate young people to acquire the necessary attitudes to work, general competences, career management skills, academic qualifications, and literacy and numeracy, which are valued by employers.
6. The entire system should be innovative and delivered in a way that is cost-effective and easily accessed by all who would benefit from it. As a publicly funded system it needs to demonstrate its effectiveness in meeting the needs of individuals, employers and wider society by being accountable, transparent and consistent.

A Career Development Model to support these principles is outlined in Annex 4.

Section 5: Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Ensuring consistency and quality

Develop a comprehensive **accountability and quality assurance framework** for the entire careers system.

To include:

- practitioner and organisational standards; and
- clear and measurable targets;

Timescale – within 5 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets).

Key Actions

1. Establish a standardised process to evaluate the careers system, focusing on short- and longer-term employment, skills and qualification outcomes. Consider using a CareersNI Kitemark system.
2. Publish, annually, careers performance data in a standard user-friendly format which holds both Departments to account and school management accountable to Boards of Governors, parents and other stakeholders.
3. Require, as a minimum, a nominated careers teacher in each school to undertake the bespoke CPD programme for careers education in schools developed by DE. Careers teachers and careers advisers should maintain their professional competencies through ongoing CPD, awareness of labour market needs and adherence to professional standards.
4. Establish an employer-led Careers Forum to oversee and advise on future development of careers provision in Northern Ireland.

Rationale

The Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning report²⁵ cites as an issue the lack of clarity regarding which Department is responsible for the careers system. For example, there are different approaches to how and what careers support is delivered in schools, uncertainty around allocation of resources, variations in the importance attached to the subject within schools, and lack of clear anticipated outcome measures articulated for both young people and adults. The Committee's view is that it is difficult for stakeholders to judge the performance of the system across the three public-policy rationales outlined in Section 2 (improving the functioning of the education and training systems;

²⁵ Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*. NIA Employment and Learning Committee Report 141/11-15.

supporting the effective operation of the labour market; and promoting social inclusion, equity and mobility).

Analysis of international evidence demonstrates that alongside school autonomy, accountability for student performance is critical in driving educational improvement.²⁶ All parts of the careers system, like the wider public sector, need to be accountable to stakeholders like employers and parents, as well as to young people and job-seeking or career-changing adults. Greater transparency and clear accountability measures are needed to demonstrate good practice throughout the system. This will also demonstrate that money is being well spent and delivering outcomes for the citizen. The Committee report and the CBI report on education and industry engagement²⁷ both make this point.

Current provision

Schools

DE sets a common statutory curriculum to be taught by all grant-aided schools to pupils of compulsory school age. The curriculum objectives are to develop young people as individuals and contributors to society, the economy and the environment.

The revised curriculum is much less prescriptive than was previously the case in terms of what teachers have to teach. Under the Education (NI) Order 2006, the amount of time to be spent per subject is not prescribed. However, schools must allow enough taught time to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum that includes all statutory requirements.

DE delegates considerable funding and decision-making powers to schools with the view they are best placed to assess the needs of their pupils; therefore, while there is a statutory requirement, the delivery of the curriculum is a matter for schools and teachers to determine. The effect of this delegation of responsibility, without robust accountability processes, was one of the main issues highlighted by the Committee report. While the Committee report recognised that good practice

²⁶ Department for Education (2010). *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010*.

²⁷ CBI (2014). *Evaluation of Education and Employer Partnerships in Northern Ireland*. Confederation of British Industry NI.

exists, it noted that there was little evidence of a consistently high standard across all schools in Northern Ireland.

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has developed resources to support schools as they deliver the curriculum. The Department has also provided specific guidance relating to the delivery of careers provision. The guidance offers comprehensive advice on the learning intentions for careers education and sets out the expected learning intentions and potential learning opportunities for young people from ages 4 to 19, expressed in terms of age-related achievement in different curriculum areas.

A key component of the revised curriculum is the Entitlement Framework. Its aim is to provide pupils with access to a broad and flexible curriculum so that they have access to a wide range of subject pathways, both general and applied, that will best meet their needs, aptitudes and interests. All schools are required to provide access to a minimum number of courses from age 14, with at least one-third being general and at least one-third applied.

This increased choice of subject pathways means that in order to help young people to make informed choices, there is a corresponding increased requirement that schools provide access to high-quality careers provision. This is vital if pupils are to be capable of making informed choices and understanding the implications of those choices in terms of future education and employment options.

As a result the DE guidance to support schools in planning for the introduction of statutory requirements of the Entitlement Framework included a substantial section on careers education and guidance. The guidance defined the overall objective of a careers programme as enabling learners to manage their own career development successfully, and set out three aims: self-awareness and development; career exploration; and career management.

To facilitate the delivery of the Entitlement Framework, schools have formed Area Learning Communities (ALCs) which are groups of schools working together. One of the strategic priorities of ALCs is the development and delivery of an effective careers programme. ALCs have formed careers subgroups to assist with the dissemination of best practice and development of careers programmes across

schools. However, responsibility for performance and outcomes still sits with the individual school management and the Board of Governors.

Regarding the evaluation of delivery, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), part of DE, is responsible for inspecting the quality of provision in schools. The school, parents and public, can access school inspection reports produced by ETI. From April 2010 ETI have inspected and reported on the quality of careers education in all standard post-primary inspections, informed by a set of Quality Indicators.

Schools are expected to take action on the feedback they receive and to implement improvements where these can be made. Through inspection, ETI also builds the capacity for self-evaluation through their activities. The Chief Inspector's report in October 2012²⁸ highlighted that there has been a significant improvement in the quality of careers education, partly as a consequence of these inspections. Nearly 70% of schools were evaluated as good or better during the reporting period.

In those schools evaluated to date as good to outstanding, a number of common features are evident. These include a clear strategic vision by senior management and the careers team for the school's careers programme, informed by knowledge of the pupils' needs and a commitment to whole-school development of the programme. Robust monitoring and evaluation of practice was evident, guided by knowledgeable professionals who referred to careers quality indicators and other self-evaluation tools. Links with employers, local communities and further and higher education providers were also well developed in these schools. In addition, there was good partnership working between schools and the Careers Service, supplementing and extending the range of information and advice provided for pupils.

However, careers provision forms only one part of the inspection process and for most schools takes place relatively infrequently. The Panel's view is that, although the inclusion of careers in the ETI inspection regime is welcome, this should not

²⁸ETI (2012), *Chief Inspector's Report 2010-2012* <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-general-documents-non-phase-related/the-chief-inspectors-report/the-chief-inspectors-report-2010-2012.htm>

be the only means by which schools are asked to demonstrate the effectiveness of their careers provision.

The Careers Service

The Careers Service sits within DEL and while a considerable portion of the resource is deployed with young people, the service is available to all ages.

Careers advisers operate from Jobs and Benefits Offices, Jobcentres and stand alone careers offices and deliver against a set of service delivery objectives which are reported through DEL. These include a target to interview at least 85% of all year 12 pupils on a one-to-one basis each year: (as noted in Section 3, the current figure is 92%) and to provide impartial, one to one advice to 15 000 adults per year. In addition advisers caseload and proactively support all 16 and 17 year olds who have yet to enter or sustain a place in education, training or employment after leaving school. They also take an active role in the transition planning process for young people with disabilities moving from school to adult provision or employment.

The Careers Service was awarded the Matrix Standard in January 2013. The Matrix Standard²⁹ is an externally assessed, UK national standard for the delivery of information, advice and guidance accredited by the Whitehall Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. It is designed to help organisations to assess and measure their advice and support services, which ultimately support individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals.

While it is recognised that significant improvements have been made over the past few years through the previous joint DEL/DE careers strategy *Preparing for Success*,³⁰ the targets outlined above focus on activity rather than outcomes. The Panel feels that both Departments need to develop impact measures which demonstrate to stakeholders that the activity has resulted in positive outcomes for the citizen and the economy.

²⁹ Matrix Standard, <http://matrixstandard.com/>

³⁰ Department for Employment and Learning & Department of Education (2009). *Preparing for Success*.

Professional development and training

Careers teachers

For careers teachers, DE has developed a bespoke CPD programme which focuses on the management and delivery of appropriate learner-centred careers education. The four modules which make up the programme will be available to teachers from autumn 2014. The learning activities have been designed specifically to support careers teachers in building their capacity, while making reference to the statutory and professional obligations. The learning activities are based on models of best practice and practical examples which can be built upon and implemented within teachers' own school contexts. The four modules are:

- a. leading and managing,
- b. personal career planning,
- c. careers across the curriculum, and
- d. monitoring and evaluation.

Further support and the dissemination of best practice for careers teachers is also provided through Area Learning Communities' careers subgroups, as identified in ALC annual Implementation Plans. Schools identified by the ETI during the inspection process as being satisfactory, unsatisfactory or inadequate within the area of careers also receive ongoing, targeted and intensive support from their Education and Library Board.

Careers advisers

All 100 careers advisers³¹ are professionally qualified to postgraduate level or equivalent, and are members of the Career Development Institute³², the main UK-wide professional body for careers practitioners. A requirement of this membership is adherence to the Institute's code of ethics which includes a commitment to continuing professional development and accountability for their actions and advice to the public.

³¹ Whole-time equivalent.

³² www.thecdi.net

Further to their professional qualification, DEL and the Careers Service provide each careers adviser with professional development activities to ensure that their knowledge and skills are fully up-to-date. These activities include placements in industry, information sessions on current and future employment opportunities, priority and emerging skills requirements, social inclusion policies and principles, graduate development opportunities, and new initiatives within DEL.

Further and higher education

In Northern Ireland the further education colleges and local universities employ their own careers advisers. Often the job is combined with a general student support role, developing links with industry and helping departments and faculties to secure work placements for their students. Support is also available for students after they leave: in Higher Education Institutions (HEI), ongoing support is available for up to three years after graduation, to help the individual secure employment in a sustainable career path. Universities throughout the UK also produce key information sets outlining the destinations of their graduates and other performance data.

With easier access to reliable LMI as described in Recommendation 2, the advisers in colleges and universities will be able to help students understand the opportunities in growth sectors and perhaps use the placement year, or shorter work placements, to encourage students to explore areas they might not previously have considered.

Many of the advisers employed in colleges and universities have the same professional background and qualifications as DEL's careers advisers, and experience from recent recruitment exercises show that there is an adequate supply of suitably qualified people to meet demand.

Issues

While there is undoubtedly a considerable amount of good-quality guidance and support provided by both Departments, ETI and the ELBs, the extent to which consistent good practice prevails throughout the entire system (not just in schools)

is unknown. It is this issue in particular that the Committee report stated as needing to be addressed.

The Panel has found that some schools in partnership with the Careers Service are providing an excellent careers programme. Data-sharing agreements are in place with nearly all post-primary schools and 92% of year 12 pupils avail of impartial advice in school. However, there are issues with lack of consistency and clarity on what pupils can expect to receive across the careers system. The Panel believes more transparency on how the careers programme is delivered, and more accountability, would help to ameliorate this. Parents would be aware of what to expect from a good careers programme and Boards of Governors would be supported in making sure this was in place. The revised 2009/10 curriculum is less prescriptive in content than was previously the case and gives schools and teachers the flexibility to tailor their teaching to best meet the needs of their pupils. Whilst there are benefits with school autonomy³³, this can also lead to considerable variation in how the curriculum is delivered in different schools.

The Committee report³⁴ and several other publications have suggested there is a need for more legislation to ensure consistency and drive up quality. However, the Panel feels that curriculum content is good and already enshrined in statute, giving us a much stronger legislative basis than elsewhere (e.g. England). Guidelines to schools via minimum content statutory rules are also sound. The Panel believes therefore that a clear, consistent and robust accountability system applied across the entire system would deliver better results. The aim would be to ensure that all stakeholders and customers are assured that the system is delivering the results expected and make clear who is accountable for making this happen. Ultimately, this accountability must fall to both Departments with additional systems in place at a more local level, for example with school management and Boards of Governors, to support this process.

³³ OECD (2011). School autonomy and accountability: are they related to student performance. *PISA in Focus*, 9.

³⁴ Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*. NIA Employment and Learning Committee Report 141/11-15. <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Employment-and-Learning/Reports/Inquiry-into-Careers-Education-Information-Advice-and-Guidance-in-Northern-Ireland/>

The Committee report³⁵ is very clear and the Panel agrees that the careers system would be greatly improved if more consideration was given to the professional development of careers advisers and teachers. In addition, the report recommends that alternative and consistent approaches should be considered to support the provision available in schools, colleges, universities, and careers offices – including their interface with employers. However, some key features of the existing system, which many other careers services aspire to, need to be retained, including for example the professional standards applied to careers advisers.

Accountability and Quality Framework

While the effectiveness of the delivery of the curriculum is currently assessed by ETI through its inspections, school management and Boards of Governors should be more accountable to parents and other key stakeholders like employers about the effectiveness of provision. To increase visibility and accountability, a mechanism should be introduced whereby schools publish annually on their websites in a standardised and clear format exactly what pupils can expect to receive and details of how the school has met that promise.

In addition a standardised process to evaluate the entire careers system – pupils in schools; further and higher education students; the unemployed, those with disabilities or disadvantaged; those in training; and people of all ages in work, should be developed to ensure consistency across the whole system. This should include clear outcomes, focusing on short- and longer-term employment and qualifications outcomes for customers. The level of proficiency attained could be recognised through a ‘Career NI’ brand with different levels of service identified through a Kitemark system – gold silver or bronze depending on how the service performed against the overall standards. This would allow customers and stakeholders to know exactly what standard of service each organisation was providing. Lessons learned from the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

³⁵ Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*. NIA Employment and Learning Committee Report 141/11-15. <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Employment-and-Learning/Reports/Inquiry-into-Careers-Education-Information-Advice-and-Guidance-in-Northern-Ireland/>

(ELGPN) Quality Assurance and Evidence (QAE) Framework³⁶ could be helpful in this regard

OECD evidence³⁷ shows that countries where schools are held to account for their results through posting achievement data publicly, alongside autonomy in resource allocation, tend to do better than those with less autonomy. All education and training providers should be required to publish key performance data on their websites. Most HEIs already do this through the Key Information Sets³⁸. This information should be published in a standard format so that parents can quickly understand performance across subjects, vocational courses, percentage achieving grade C or above in mathematics and English, and details on the destinations of all school-leavers, including the attainment and progression of disadvantaged pupils and other non-academic achievements. While this information is already compiled by schools and presented to Boards of Governors, it is not readily available to parents unless they know to ask for it and is not easy to access on most school websites.

Establishing a Northern Ireland Careers Forum to advise on delivery and development of careers provision in Northern Ireland

The Panel believes that employers should be given a much greater role in developing and promoting the careers system to improve the operation of the labour market. Recommendation 3 describes the key role employers can play in providing work experience opportunities. The Panel believes that in addition consideration should be given to establishing an employer-led Careers Forum, comprising senior representatives from industry, education, the community and voluntary sector and customer representatives to advise both Departments on the future of careers provision. Broadly similar to a key recommendation in the recent

³⁶ European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (2012) <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no1-resource-kit>

³⁷ OECD (2009). *Pisa 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices*. Paris: OECD.

³⁸ The Key Information Sets on the Unistats website provide comparable sets of information about full- and part-time undergraduate courses.

National Careers Council report³⁹, this would be in line with other lifelong guidance policy forums which have now been established in most European Union countries: useful lessons can be learned from the experiences of these countries.⁴⁰

³⁹Hughes, D (2014). *Taking Action: Achieving a Culture Change in Careers Provision*. National Careers Council

⁴⁰ European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (2012). *European Lifelong Guidance Policies: Progress Report 2011-12*, Annex 4. Jyväskylä, Finland: ELGPN. Also CEDEFOP (2008). *Establishing and Developing National Lifelong Guidance Policy Forums*. Thessaloniki: CEDEFOP.

Recommendation 2 – Accessing meaningful information and advice

Develop and significantly improve the current careers website via NI direct.
The careers website should be regularly updated and well promoted to all, in particular to young people and their families, to include self-help resources and expert labour market information, in a user-friendly format.
Timescale – within the next 2 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets).

Key Actions
1. Within 1 year, develop and publish on-line robust, user-friendly and up-to-date labour market information using the DEL skills barometer to assist with career decision-making.
2. Within 2 years, develop the current website through a digital delivery plan to improve access to careers information in Northern Ireland.
3. Within 3 years, demonstrate benefits in terms of customer satisfaction and cost efficiency.

Rationale

Up-to date and accurate career information is essential for high-quality advice. It enables informed labour market decisions and supports the match between labour supply and labour demand.⁴¹

People source and obtain information from a range of sources both informal and formal. Whilst informal sources such as friends and family are useful, formal sources of information are also required in order to ensure impartiality and equity of access, and to broaden horizons.

The use of technology has numerous benefits⁴². It can provide a direct source of real-time information without the need for intermediaries; it can extend access to services for clients by increasing the speed and flexibility of delivery methods, and it can provide convenience and choice.

⁴¹ OECD (2004), *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*.

⁴² Bimrose, J., Hughes, D., & Barnes, S.A (2011). *Integrating new technologies into careers practice: Extending the knowledge base*. London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills. <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/bispartners/ukces/docs/publications/integrating-new-technologies-into-careers-practice.pdf>

Technology can be used to provide information, and as a communication tool.⁴³ The Committee report recognised that whilst the current website is well used, further work is required to develop the on-line offer to make it more fit for purpose.

Current provision

Website

The current careers website provides a central source of career information, including education and training, career planning, career events, information on occupations, current and future labour market trends, and career software tools. Hosted on the NI Direct platform, the careers portal remains the second most visited section of the NI Direct website, with nearly 150,000 visits in the year 2013/14.

Labour market information

The labour market is constantly changing and has become so complex that no single adviser or teacher could possibly keep up-to-date with the volume and range of information required by their clients or pupils. Often clients are faced with too much information⁴⁴. It is important for career practitioners to ensure that the information provided is manageable and easy to access and navigate. It is also essential that the information provided is accurate, comprehensive and can be quickly and regularly updated.

DEL currently communicates labour market information through sector specific Industry Fact Sheets, which provide information on job prospects, and relevant skills and entry requirements. In addition there is a wealth of data produced by economists and statisticians from a local, European and international perspective published on government and other reliable and reputable websites. While it is accepted that predicating the short and longer term needs of any labour market is a difficult process and subject to many variables, it is increasing by becoming more important in the careers guidance process. The issue therefore is not the

⁴³ Hooley, T., Hutchinson, J. & Watts, A.G. (2010). *Careering through the Web*. London: UKCES.

⁴⁴ IER/Pontydysgu/RayCom/Rewired State(2013) *LMI for All Developing a Careers Database: Phase 2A report* Wath-upon-Deerne: UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)

absence of information but the translation of this data into a form that is easy for people to use effectively in career decision-making.

Recommended provision

Development of the website/web portal

Both the Committee report⁴⁵ and a CBI report⁴⁶ recommended the further development of the careers website to ensure it is inclusive and fit-for-purpose and includes up-to-date labour market information. The development of the website is of particular importance for students in schools and colleges, who – when asked about the usefulness of information sources – ranked careers advisers and careers website first and second respectively⁴⁷.

With regard to labour market information, DEL in association with the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy is developing a Skills Barometer mechanism which will provide a clear indication of where the skills gaps/shortages are currently (by occupation/sector/skills level), where they are emerging, and where they are likely to emerge over the longer term. The focus of this work is not only on the content of the information but also its accessibility and ease of use by the customer.

Consideration should also be given to using the LMI data portal developed by the UKCES and Warwick University Institute for Employment Research (IER) which provides easy access to a range of national data-sets. The data tool includes LMI that can answer the questions people commonly ask when thinking about their careers, including “what do people get paid?” and “what type of person does that job?” It includes data about characteristics of people who work in different occupations, what level of qualifications they have, and how much they get paid, and will allow people to make comparisons across different jobs and regions. It could show where people progress to on completion of a course, employment

⁴⁵ Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*.

⁴⁶ CBI (2014). *Evaluation of Education and Employer Partnerships in Northern Ireland*. Confederation of British Industry NI.

⁴⁷ Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*.

statistics, and likelihood of unemployment or need for further study. Findings from early prototypes tested in a range of careers delivery settings show promising results in making data more personalised and relevant to the end-user.

The new e-delivery service needs to be attractive and engaging, with end-user design a key development principle. Consideration should be given to providing specific sections/portals within the re-designed website for different users, e.g. young people, parents, graduates and employers, with the content, look and style tailored to the specific audience.

Initial option analysis suggests the following:

- improved layout/feel and usability,
- improved structure of website,
- smart-phone/device compatibility,
- improved marketing and promotion,
- improved social media access,
- NI-specific content but with UK, Europe-wide and international links,
- online chat facility, and
- online appointment function.

Other access channels / alternative portals

The careers system needs to deliver a service in formats and at times and places that meet the individual needs of clients. In line with international best practice⁴⁸, these self-help options should include exploring and researching career information, self-assessment tests and drawing up career plans. However, for some clients this self-help process will still require support and interaction with the careers adviser. Whilst often this may be through face-to-face discussion, it may also be at a distance, through use of multi-media channels.

⁴⁸ OECD (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*.

International examples

Telephone career guidance is an established mode of delivery in a number of countries including New Zealand, where it was initially piloted to 15-30-year-olds before being extended to an all-age service. The focus is to make career guidance more accessible to people, particularly those without access to one of their offices or the internet. The evaluation of the pilot highlighted increased accessibility and improved efficiency. Whilst the current careers system allows clients to contact careers advisers by telephone, the benefits of providing a stand-alone telephony system could be further explored.

Originally use of ICT in delivering career interventions was concerned with automating existing processes; however, its application can go beyond this to include virtual online simulations, availing of online chat, computer-assisted career guidance and counselling, accessing social networks, online assessment tools and virtual career centres⁴⁹.

Some countries including Denmark have given priority to developing an e-delivery careers system. The e-guidance system was launched in Denmark in January 2011, providing individual and personal guidance to all citizens via various virtual communication channels: chat, telephone, SMS, e-mail and Facebook⁵⁰. Denmark's e-guidance system is especially targeted at resourceful young people and their parents, to give them easy access to independent information and guidance and motivate them to continue the search and clarification process on their own. The majority (80%) of careers advice in schools has shifted to the e-guidance service, the remaining 20% being delivered face-to-face. Denmark is also further developing e-guidance through the use of webinars with guidance counsellors in schools.

⁴⁹ Sampson, J P. & Osborn D S. (2014, February 19th). *Using Information and Communication Technology in Delivering Career Interventions* [PowerPoint slides]. <http://www.elgpn.eu/news/slides-of-sampsons-presentation/>

⁵⁰ Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation (2012). *Guidance in Education – the Educational Guidance System in Denmark: E-Guidance and Lifelong Guidance*. http://ufm.dk/en/publications/2012/files-2012/guidance_in_education_2012.pdf

Lessons learned from the Denmark model include ensuring that e-guidance is fully integrated with existing guidance activities. Young people like to use digital media, but to be effective it has to be integrated with guidance activities that are ongoing at the place of study.

Parents' portal

Parents are a key influencer in young people's future study and career choices. However, in the rapidly changing world of work, parents are finding it difficult to keep up-to-date with developments. In order to support young people with their decision-making, parents need access to accurate information. This needs to include information which will allow them to weigh up the pro and cons of a particular careers choice or pathway over another: for example, the job prospects and earnings potential leading from a particular course, or the value of the apprenticeship route compared to higher education. In particular, there should be practical financial advice to parents and potential students who may consider access to finance as a barrier to further and higher education.

Parental involvement and encouragement can have a direct and long-lasting effect on a child's educational achievements and career aspirations. The Education Works advertising campaign aims to inform and engage all parents, but in particular those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, to become more engaged in their child's education and career development. The development of work-experience opportunities and the e-portfolio mentioned in Recommendations 3 and 4 will also assist parents in this process.

Issues

Whilst statistics would indicate that the careers website is currently well used, stakeholder feedback suggests that many clients are not aware of the website and would not use it as the primary source of careers information.

To be truly effective and beneficial to clients, the updated website needs to be effectively marketed and promoted through a range of methods including social media. Coupled with this, the development of the website provides an opportunity to consider alternative methods of delivery. Through the stakeholder engagement

process we know that young people in particular would welcome the opportunity to access help through live-chat and email rather than always relying on face to face intervention. In line with other countries Northern Ireland should aim to develop an online offer which becomes the first port of call for careers information and advice. Not only will this widen access but it should also prove more cost effective. A key action would be the design of a digital delivery plan in consultation with young people and key customers, to develop and encourage the uptake of digital access channels.

Recommendation 3 – Gaining relevant experience

Establish a minimum specification for meaningful **work experiences** for young people in school (by year group from P7) and further and higher education.

Work experiences should include a requirement that all young people, and in particular females, are encouraged to explore career opportunities in STEM-related and growth sectors.

Timescale – within the next 5 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets)

Key Actions

1. Establish a central system to support all structured work experiences, including an online portal for the advertising and application of work experience placements.

2. Develop an employer engagement strategy, through the Career Forum, to increase, develop and ensure high quality work experience opportunities from all sectors.

3. Measure and openly report on the overall benefits of work experiences to pupils.

Rationale

The Committee report highlighted that work experience has a key role to play in ensuring that individuals are well connected to the labour market and in helping employers to communicate their skills needs to young people.

The CBI report⁵¹ examining education and employer partnerships found that while there was some evidence of good practice, many schools tended to have “insufficient linkages to the economy and to the growth sector areas”. The report recommended that “mandatory work experience should be provided for young people over the summer or mid-term breaks and should be for more than one week”. It went on to suggest the need for a wider selection of work experience placements reflecting future labour market needs; and the need for these placements to be matched to the career aspirations of pupils, ensuring both the pupil and the employer derive maximum benefits from the experience.

Work experience can be either *exploratory* (work sampling, work shadowing, mini-enterprises, etc.) or *preparatory* (which forms part of vocational education and

⁵¹CBI (2014). *Evaluation of Education and Employer Partnerships in Northern Ireland*, p.18. Confederation of British Industry NI.

training programmes).⁵² There is a considerable body of evidence which supports the benefits of work experience and greater employer engagement in education. The Heseltine Review⁵³ of strategies to promote economic growth, OECD (2010⁵⁴, 2012⁵⁵), CBI⁵⁶ and UKCES⁵⁷ provide overwhelming evidence that work experience is one of the key elements in a successful transition from school to work.

Mann and Percy also indicate that a higher level of employer contacts for older school pupils does, on average, give them advantages in early adulthood in relation to employment outcomes and earnings over their broadly matched peers without such engagement with employers.⁵⁸

The Committee report⁵⁹ highlighted the need to start discussions about career choices as early as possible, with more real-life contact with the world of work. Research in England concluded there is a “need to move beyond thinking of work experience as a one or two week spell at age 14-16, to a broad and varied series of engagements”⁶⁰.

All of these reports agree that employers have a role to play in motivating and inspiring young people to maximise their potential. Employers can support young people through mentoring, mock interviews, workplace visits and inspirational class talks in schools, but of particular value are activities involving young people in active work-related experiences, whether in school or in a workplace environment. These will encourage young people to manage their understanding of the world of work and their learning in tandem, which in turn will influence decisions about subject choices, academic or vocational study, traineeships or

⁵² Watts, A.G. (2009). *Learning for Jobs: the Relationship of Career Guidance to VET*. OECD.

⁵³ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2012). *No Stone Left Unturned in Pursuit of Growth – Lord Heseltine Review*.

⁵⁴ Field, S., Hoeckel, K., Kis, V. & Kuczera, M. (2012). *Learning for Jobs – Synthesis Report of the OECD reviews of VET*. OECD.

⁵⁵ OECD (2012). *Better Skills, Better Jobs Better Lives – A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies*.

⁵⁶ CBI (2013). *Changing the Pace*. CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2013.

⁵⁷ Mann, A., Massey, D., Glover, P., Kashepadkel, E. & Dawkins, J. (2013). *Nothing in Common: the Career Aspirations of Young Britons Mapped against Projected Labour Market Demand (2010-2020)*. UKCES.

⁵⁸ Mann, A. & Percy, C (2013) ‘Employer engagement in British secondary education: wage earning outcomes experienced by young adults’. *Journal of Education and Work*.

⁵⁹ Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*.

⁶⁰ UKCES (2012). *The Youth Employment Challenge*, p. 4. UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

apprenticeships. So, rather than telling young people about the importance of STEM subjects, literacy/numeracy, interpersonal skills and attributes, the system should let them experience and reflect on their application and importance in the world of work.

Pupils are more likely to be motivated to succeed if they can experience a tangible goal which they value – i.e. a job in which they are interested.⁶¹ The value pupils place on gaining qualifications in fundamental subjects such as maths may also increase, if they can see how that subject is applied in the world of work. Work experience can also play a key role in broadening pupils' knowledge and awareness of alternative career opportunities. Similar to provision in Sweden in the 1980s⁶² and in Finland now⁶³, students should have the opportunity to experience a minimum number of weeks in a variety of sectors at certain age points, irrespective of their career orientation. As part of this, pupils should be encouraged to consider at least one placement with a STEM/priority-sector employer, to broaden their awareness of opportunities in these areas and challenge misconceptions about certain types of careers and pathways. For example, female students who are considering one of the career areas in which females are over-represented, such as medicine or allied-health professions, might be encouraged to explore areas in which females are under-represented, such as computer science and engineering.

Accessing valuable work experiences can also be an issue. Some young people have access to work-experience placements through family or social networks, whilst for others these opportunities may not be so readily available. Although using family contacts can be valuable, care needs to be taken to ensure that this does not reinforce inequalities. A central system hosting all work experience opportunities could not only stimulate interest in careers not previously considered, but also allow all young people equal access to these opportunities.

⁶¹ Inter-Ed (2004). *Career Goals and Educational Attainment: What Is the Link?* Careers Scotland.

⁶² This Swedish scheme is notable because students were required to include at least one week's work experience in each of three main work sectors – manufacturing, commerce and social services – to broaden their awareness and combat gender stereotypes. Miller, A., Jamieson, I. & Watts, A.G. (1991). *Rethinking Work Experience*, pp.39-41. Falmer.

⁶³ Holman, J. (2014). *Good Career Guidance*, p.27. London: Gatsby Foundation.

A minimum specification for work experience for young people in school (by year group from P7) and further and higher education, which all young people have a right to receive, together with effective brokerage arrangements, could help to rebalance certain inequalities in the current system.

Current provision

There is currently a strong focus on *preparatory* work experience in training and apprenticeships but perhaps less so in the Entitlement Framework applied subjects, and in some further and higher education courses.

Exploratory work experience is not just confined to year 12. DE has a much wider definition including: work shadowing, work-based assignments, industrial visits, mock interviews, industry days and enterprising activities – across all year-groups. Each Education and Library Board (ELB) has its own policy on work experience. In each ELB area, officers support and advise careers teachers on matters relating to the role of work experience in preparing pupils for the world of work.

Work-Related Learning Experiences are recognised as a key element in ensuring that learners become effective career decision-makers. They provide an opportunity for planned and appropriate experiences of the world of work to increase learners' motivation and to develop their employability skills.

Schools can use any resources, programmes or services to support their curriculum provision in any subject, including Careers, and it is for schools to decide what resources to use. This can lead to inconsistencies and variations in quality.

Current delivery framework

DE-funded business education activity is mainly delivered via a number of third-party partners delivering front-line engagement programmes directly to pupils. The framework has a twin approach through delivery of regional generic employability, enterprise, entrepreneurship and work experience programmes, and a local focus to address the particular needs of pupils in a cluster of schools in a particular area.

Regional delivery

Facilitation of work experience activities by regional delivery partners evolved from the significant amount of administration and bureaucracy encountered by schools and businesses. As a result, some organisations withdrew their offer of work-experience placements due to the considerable resources involved in the administration of placements. Similarly, schools were finding it increasingly difficult to find the time required to undertake the necessary administrative work in setting up work placements.

Local delivery

A local focus is delivered via 13 Business Education Partnerships dispersed across Northern Ireland, undertaking a range of pupil engagement activities including industry visits, mock interviews, enterprise activities and careers conventions. The Committee's report and other publications have found that there are considerable inconsistencies in how this is delivered.

Issues

Definition of work experience

Work experience allows young people to learn about the world of work in a "real life" working situation. However, for the recommendation to be effective work experience needs to include more than, and go beyond, the traditional one-week placement with an employer that young people in school currently receive. It should include a range of opportunities i.e. formal and informal work experience, mini enterprise, volunteering, work shadowing, sandwich placements, internships, earning and learning through part-time jobs, apprenticeships.

Brokerage

It needs to be recognised that delivering against this agenda could place an unreasonable burden on employers and schools. While the CBI report⁶⁴ stated that many employers are willing to help, it is important to put in place a supporting structure which streamlines the administrative and organisational processes. The CBI report also called for business and school engagement to be co-ordinated through one government Department with overall responsibility and accountability. Technology should be harnessed in this respect, as in Finland⁶⁵.

In Finland, the objective of the TET-tori project (Practical Professional Orientation for 13–16-year-olds) is to improve pupils' knowledge about professions and working life. During the PPO periods (stipulated in the general curriculum of the Finnish compulsory school for 7-16-year-olds) pupils go out into working life for a short period of time, which gives them the opportunity to gain the kinds of experiences that can help them choose better their future education and profession. To reach these goals, close co-operation between business, employers and schools is necessary. The TET-tori website is set up to provide information for employers as well as to provide information about the employers to the future employees in the region. The website has been a success and is used in almost 2/3 of the Finnish municipalities. Success factors include:

- improved organisation and scheduling of PPO,
- improved communication between schools, companies and the students,
- pedagogical support for the schools how to link the PPO to career education and the development of career management skills, and
- consistency of the administration and legal basis of the PPO periods.

It is clear from stakeholder engagement that the development of a central system to support the promotion and management of work experiences would have a positive impact at all levels. It would reduce the administrative burden for employers offering and schools organising work placements, by providing a full end-to-end service, including sourcing, facilitation and advertising of opportunities as well as advice and guidance for employers on the development of an effective work-experience programme. Work-experience opportunities should be sought from a wide range of employers including SMEs and across all sectors including the public sector.

⁶⁴CBI (2014). *Evaluation of Education and Employer Partnerships in Northern Ireland*. Confederation of British Industry NI.

⁶⁵TET-tori project, <http://www.peda.net/veraja/tori/english>

Recent employer-led initiatives like the Skills Exchange⁶⁶, which aims to enable employers to facilitate the secondment of highly skilled members of staff to other organisations and SMEs in the surrounding area, could also be considered. This project encourages employers to share skills, offer work-experience opportunities, and develop practical ideas that will assist capacity issues and improve staff development and retention, allowing more efficient deployment of people and skills. This type of business engagement between larger employers and SMEs could be further developed to support a large-scale, structured work-experience programme for young people. Students in universities and further education colleges could also be included in this type of structured, central work-experience/placement system.

Employer engagement strategy

Employers have an important role to play in providing young people with exposure to and experience of the world of work. To meet this challenge, employers in Northern Ireland should be given the opportunity through the Career Forum outlined in Recommendation 1 to develop and provide a range of meaningful work-experience opportunities advertised through a central online portal.

A coherent and comprehensive employer engagement strategy should be developed to encourage and increase employer participation and provide support and guidance to employers in the delivery of work experiences. Consideration could also be given to how employers might be recognized through an awards scheme for engaging and investing in the provision of meaningful work experiences.

Boards of Governors

There is an opportunity for the business community to become more involved in the education system by serving on Boards of Governors of schools, particularly in schools that serve disadvantaged areas. The Boards of Governors oversee the running of the school and hold the Principal and management team to account.

⁶⁶ Skill Exchange NI is being funded by Dunbia, Harland & Wolff, JTI, Michelin, Moy Park, Northern Regional College, Ulster Bank and Wright Bus, allowing smaller SMEs and others to benefit from the skills exchange free of charge. Four regional online Hubs will focus on the North East, North West, South East and South West, which will be centred respectively in Belfast, Craigavon, Derry and Ballymena.

There is the potential to influence the way in which careers education is delivered in schools and ensure minimum standards are met, as well as providing advice and support to careers staff.

There could be a role for business organisations not only to encourage their members to think about putting themselves forward as governors, but also to be proactive in assisting with the application process and providing support for members who undertake this role.

Quality

The Committee report stressed the importance of being able to measure the effectiveness and quality of work placements. During the stakeholder engagement process, the Panel heard how there are significant variations from school to school in the time allocated to the work-experience programme. While the central system as outlined above will help with this, careers teachers will also need to support pupils to outline personal and professional goals in advance of the placement and to reflect on the experience afterwards. Schools need to demonstrate and openly report on how the work-experience programme has helped pupils to develop their understanding of the world of work and in particular has exposed them to careers in growth sectors which hitherto they may not have considered. This should apply to all pupils regardless of ability or career orientation. For example, many high-achieving young people can be very fixed on a particular occupation or career pathway because it is all they know. This could become a problem if the focus is on a declining sector where supply is outstripping demand. Work experience needs to be organised on a more transparent and equitable footing to tackle gender stereotyping and to ensure that it is not only those with social or family connections who can access work experiences in certain professions.

Recommendation 4 – Making a record of experience

Commencing in P7, all young people should create and maintain an **e-portfolio** which reflects all relevant work experiences, careers learning and relevant extra-curricular activities.

The e-portfolio should be used as a lifelong resource and to produce a comprehensive and meaningful CV in a standardised format.

Timescale – within the next 3 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets).

Key Actions

1. Commencing in Sept 16 establish a common e-portfolio in primary school for all P7 pupils which should be maintained and updated by the individual through secondary, further and higher education, apprenticeships and traineeships. To be fully implemented within 3 years.

2. Require careers teachers and practitioners to use the e-portfolio to assess career needs, including potential to disengage, offering personalised support. Through the Accountability and Quality Framework use the e-portfolio during inspections of careers to measure the quality and economic relevance of careers provision.

3. Link the e-portfolio to the Unique Learner Number (ULN), to enable effective tracking and monitoring of the individual's progress.

Rationale

Young people today experience a completely different economy and labour market than previous generations. Historically the education system was predicated on preparation for lifelong careers with large companies and employers. In Northern Ireland 89% of businesses employ fewer than 10 people⁶⁷ and the prospect of leaving education and working for the same employer for his or her entire career is no longer a realistic or desired option for most young people. Instead young people are far more likely to work with multiple employers, ranging from global multinationals to small and micro employers.

Effective careers education and guidance encourages the individual from an early age to take ownership and responsibility for his or her own career development. Careers teachers and advisers together with online tools and information are there

⁶⁷ ONS (2013). *UK Business: Activity, Size and Location*.

to support this process at various stages during an individual's lifetime, but it is the individual himself or herself who should own this process.

Research conducted for the skills survey *Changing the Pace*⁶⁸ states that employers place more value on an individual's attitude and aptitude towards work than on academic results. This suggests that there needs to be a move away from narrow measurements of success, to create a better balance between academic achievement and personal attributes and attitudes. Employers believe that it is important for children to develop communication skills, self-management and personal behaviour early, as a prerequisite for effective future learning and success in the work environment.

Raising awareness of the importance of STEM subjects, priority economic sectors, and the skills and attributes which employers value, needs to start as early as possible and progress at the right pace for the individual. It also helps to make careers education more meaningful.

Some children will be very focused on a particular career from a young age and are reluctant to consider any alternatives. These are often high-achieving pupils with lots of options, but in some cases may be considering careers in declining sectors. In order to understand the full consequences of pursuing a particular career and pathway, young people need to have a good knowledge of their own strengths and aspirations but also the needs of and the potential opportunities in the labour market. Equally, some pupils will not start thinking about their careers until they are faced with subject choices at year 10 or 12. An ill-informed decision at this young age can have significant longer-term consequences for career possibilities, leading to unfulfilled potential and issues for labour market supply and demand.

The e-portfolio

To deliver against the three core rationales for careers education and guidance – supporting the labour market, improving the outcomes from education and training, and enabling social inclusion, social equity and social mobility – the

⁶⁸ CBI (2013). *Changing the Pace*. CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2013.

careers system needs to develop a mechanism by which a young person can record their “whole story”.

Recommendation 3 outlines the need for structured work experience, starting as early as possible in school. In order to maximise the benefits of this process, young people should be encouraged to document and reflect on career activities and learning, in a form which the individual can update as they progress through education, training and work.

All experiences of work and activities which make an individual more attractive to employers, and which the individual feels is relevant to their career development, should be compiled in a standard web-based format referred to as an e-portfolio. This could also be used to support career-related learning, linking the skills and qualifications needed for a particular career choice to the individual’s skills and aspirations, similar to the “skills passport” and “enterprise passport” being considered in England.

In Hillyfield Primary Academy, Walthamstow, East London (a primary school), the ‘skills passport’ is used to determine pupils’ progress in key skills in all foundation subjects. It is used to ensure coverage and development of skills and as a record of achievement for pupils. On demonstrating mastery of a skill, children stamp the skill in the passport. The passport is maintained throughout key stages 1 and 2, and builds a clear picture of the pupils’ achievement across all foundation subjects. The system means that pupils are able to develop a clear understanding of their own abilities and what they need to do to progress.

In Germany, too, the e-portfolio is now playing an important role.

In Germany, a portfolio *Berufswahlpass* (career choice passport) is now integrated into careers education (*Arbeitslehre*) in most of the federal states. Its standard features include: information for career orientation; help to assess and evaluate personal strengths and interests through self- and external assessment; and checklists to match career orientations and personal strengths. The portfolio is also designed to help pupils to document the steps in their career choice process and to manage and store relevant personal documents.

The e-portfolio would allow the individual to record everything they have done to improve their employability, including sporting achievements, work experiences, and voluntary work, alongside educational qualifications. The development of the e-portfolio should continue into further and higher education and into training and

apprenticeships, for career planning as well as self-presentation. In self-presentation terms, this would enable parents, schools, universities, colleges and employers to take a rounded view of the individual rather than just assess academic achievement alone.

The continued use of the e-portfolio in HE could be explored through developing appropriate linkages between Personal Development Planning (PDP) and the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR). The former is a national process that supports students to reflect on their personal, career and academic development: this is already often captured in an e-portfolio. The latter provides opportunities to record academic and extra-curricular activities, and as such provides a richer picture of student achievement.

For career guidance purposes, the e-portfolio could be used as an indication of career readiness and progression to ensure the right support is offered at the right time. In particular, for young people at risk of dropping out of school, the e-portfolio could be reviewed by careers practitioners to identify and intervene and to determine the type of help needed. Early intervention is critical to ensure young people do not become disengaged.

Current provision

Education

Currently DE has two methods of recording pupil achievement and progress in relation to careers: a Record of Achievement and a Progress File.

The Record of Achievement is the responsibility of the school and forms part of the statutory regulation on school recording and reporting. Schools are required as part of their annual report to provide a summative record of achievement which includes:

- any qualification, award or certificate (full or credit) gained by the pupil;
- brief particulars of any school societies, clubs or activities in which the pupil was involved in the course of his or her attendance at the school or at any other school; and

- particulars of any position of responsibility held by the pupil in the school or in any other school attended by him or her or in any societies, clubs or activities.

The Progress File which can be either paper or electronic can start as early as year 8 and is the responsibility of the pupil. It can be used to:

- equip young people with the knowledge, understanding and skills to plan and manage their own learning, including making effective and sustained transitions within and between education, training and working life;
- increase individual motivation and confidence to achieve, and promote a positive attitude to lifelong learning;
- stimulate learning to gain knowledge and skills, including that not formally recognised in national qualifications; and
- assist young people to present those attributes they have which are relevant to future education, training and career goals.

The two activities should be interlinked. If pupils have been engaged in Progress File activities from year 8, the production of documents for the Record of Achievement should have evolved through this process. Although the Progress File belongs to the pupil, he/she can choose to share its outcomes with their teacher. This would be the normal practice to support reflection and feedback.

However, the Progress File process varies from school to school. An ETI⁶⁹ report noted that whilst some schools demonstrate best practice in the use of the Progress File, in the majority of schools the file is not used well. In particular, it is not used to inform target-setting or the regular collaborative review process between the teachers and the pupils. Stakeholder engagement also indicated that that the Progress File is not valued by pupils.

⁶⁹ ETI (2010). *A Report of an Evaluation on the Quality of Learning Guidance in Post-Primary Schools*.

Career guidance

All clients, both young people and adults, are required to complete an application form for guidance prior to availing of a career guidance interview with a careers adviser. The application form helps the client to think about themselves and the things that are important when planning their future career, and also provides important background information which will be used by the careers adviser in the career guidance interview.

Following a career guidance interview, the careers adviser prepares a Career Guidance Action Plan in conjunction with the client, which summarises the career ideas discussed during the interview and action points to help achieve their career plan. This is agreed and signed by both the client and the careers adviser. At present this is a manual system, with copies retained by the adviser and issued to the client. The action plan can be used by the adviser and client at future interviews.

For those beyond secondary school, there are various types of action plans and records used to record progress through further and higher education and training. None of these documents are linked, to provide the individual with a complete picture of their career development, skills and educational achievements.

Issues

We are aware that systems similar to the e-portfolio are currently available in schools, but the panel has found that they are not used consistently, valued enough by the pupil, nor do they provide a comprehensive record of all activity relevant to employability.

The careers e-portfolio will not only provide a comprehensive, standardised record of career-related activity, careers learning and both formal and informal work experiences: it will also include a record of all career guidance and action planning. In addition, the e-portfolio could be further developed to support the creation of a comprehensive and meaningful CV in standardised format.

The e-portfolio could also be used to support the transition from school to post-16 provision. Linking the e-portfolio to the Unique Learner Number⁷⁰, which is due to be introduced into post-primary schools from 2015/16, may be one method of achieving cross-phase tracking of progress. At present, client information does not transfer with the client: instead, training providers, further education colleges etc. are required to establish a new client record. Care should be taken to distinguish “private” and “public” spaces within the e-portfolio, and to have clear rules for password access, to ensure that individuals retain ownership and privacy, but also allowing for the information to be easily shared with people involved in supporting career development, in line with data protection and information assurance.

The panel considers that there is value in introducing the concept of an e-portfolio as early as possible and encouraging students to commence recording and reflecting on their work experiences, career learning and relevant extra-curricular activities. However, in order for the e-portfolio to be both effective and valued by all, it needs to be well designed with the correct support systems and processes in place prior to implementation. All stakeholders - individuals, parents, teachers, employers, careers and employment advisers, further and higher education institutions and those involved in assessing the quality of careers provision, including ETI – should be encouraged to value and use the e-portfolio.

⁷⁰ The Unique Learner Number is a 10-digit number which is unique to the learner. It is being introduced in England, Northern Ireland and Wales to be used by awarding organisations to populate a central Personalised Learner Record in relation to qualifications achieved by the learner within the Qualification and Credit Framework.

Recommendation 5 – Assisting in making career choices

Impartial careers advisers should engage with all young people (16-18 year olds) at critical decision points in their careers before starting a publicly funded course.

In order to:

- improve education and training outcomes;
- support the needs of the labour market; and
- identify and intervene with young people who require additional support to make a successful transition to further education, training or employment

Timescale – incrementally within 3 years (with annual agreed milestones and targets).

Key Actions

1. Within 1 year, develop a monitoring system which will demonstrate that all young people 16-18 are able to access impartial careers advice and guidance in a way that suits their needs.

2. Develop information systems, eventually linked to the ULN and e-portfolio, to identify young people who may require additional impartial careers advice at critical decision points in their careers.

3. Demonstrate the effectiveness in terms of increased uptake of economically relevant skills and education opportunities, and fewer disengaged young people.

Rationale

The Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning's⁷¹ report highlighted the importance of objective, impartial, pre-entry advice and guidance to support young people's career decision-making.

The CBI report⁷² examining education and employer partnerships also recognised the importance of access to impartial guidance at critical decision points, recommending that all year 12 and 13 students should have an interview with a DEL careers adviser who can provide professional and impartial advice.

⁷¹ Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*.

⁷² CBI (2014). *Evaluation of Education and Employer Partnerships in Northern Ireland*, p.18. Confederation of British Industry NI.

Ensuring that people, particularly young people and their parents, are fully informed about the risks and rewards of various career options and pathways is a central tenet of career guidance. The options available to young people through the Entitlement Framework, further and higher education, apprenticeships and training mean that there are more options and pathways than ever before. However, this increased choice has made decisions more complex and has increased the need for sound, timely and impartial advice.

The OECD suggests that if formal sources of career guidance are not available, students will rely on informal sources, such as family and friends. While such sources have their strengths, they may lack reliability and impartiality or confine choices to the known and familiar rather than opening up new horizons.⁷³ Insufficient or unreliable information at the critical moment may undermine motivation and cause students to drop out.⁷⁴

Careers practitioners need to help the individual to make sense of the influences and information around them before he or she makes potentially life-changing careers decisions. Such support needs to be provided to all at these critical decision points, for reasons of efficiency and equity.⁷⁵

In addition, for those beyond school wanting to upskill either to sustain or improve their careers, it can sometimes be very difficult to know where to start or whom to ask for advice. Making the decision to invest in further or higher education or skills development is a decision which, in different ways, faces the individual, employers and Ministers. As with all investments, there needs to be an indication of short-, medium- and longer-term return measured against personal, social and economic factors.

Current provision

The Careers Service is the primary provider of impartial career guidance in schools, supporting and building on the careers education programme provided by careers teachers.

⁷³ OECD (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*.

⁷⁴ OECD (2009). *Learning for Jobs*. OECD Policy Review of Vocational Education and Training: Initial Report.

⁷⁵ OECD (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*.

The Careers Service is an all-age, all-ability service that provides impartial, information, advice and guidance to young people and adults in education, employment and training and to the unemployed, or economically inactive.

All 14-18 year-olds in school are offered one-to-one, personalised careers support with particular emphasis placed on pupils at key transition points, i.e. years 10 and 12. In addition, a range of careers services is offered appropriate to the needs of the pupils, e.g. group work, class talks, attendance at parents' evenings, etc. Careers advisers also have an active role in the transition planning process for pupils with a statement of special educational need.

Careers advisers continue to offer support to young people on leaving school, providing advice and guidance to young people participating on the DEL programme Training for Success and actively case-loading all young people aged 16 and 17 who do not have a positive destination when they leave school or who drop out of provision early. The aim is to help them to secure and sustain suitable employment, education or training provision.

Careers advisers also provide advice and guidance to adults looking for work, working closely with the Employment Service to offer clients tailored career guidance to help them further develop their skills and to gain employment, as well as helping adults in work wanting to upskill and possibly change career direction.

Providing advice to special groups

Disabilities and learning difficulties

Throughout Northern Ireland there are many young people in mainstream schools with physical disabilities and learning difficulties; in addition, there is a small number of special needs schools. Careers advisers work closely with schools and social services to facilitate a smooth transition from school to adult provision, but the Committee report noted that for some young people this system is not working effectively enough and that more needs to be done. Ensuring that individuals of all ages with learning difficulties or disabilities, but particularly young people at key transition stages have access to the appropriate advice and support, is an essential element of an efficient and equitable system. DEL is producing a

Disability Employment and Skills strategy outlining how this support will be provided in the future, which will include close collaborative working between the careers advisers, and specialist employment advisers from the Disability Employment Service. The aim is to ensure that young people with learning difficulties or disabilities are offered a seamless education, employment and training advisory service from school to adult life.

Disadvantaged and those at risk of becoming disengaged

The Committee report⁷⁶ highlighted the importance of being able to respond to individual need. The careers system must be able to recognise and intervene when more intensive support is required at various times during the individual's lifetime. Career guidance can help to raise the aspirations of individuals of all ages and support them in gaining access to opportunities that might otherwise have been denied to them. This is particularly important for young people from socially disadvantaged groups, who often need additional support to enter and sustain training, employment or continuing education. Those at risk of dropping out of education; young people who leave school with little or no qualifications; young offenders; and individuals of all ages with family or social problems all need special assistance in relation to social and occupational integration.

The Careers Service has a key role in "Pathways to Success", the Northern Ireland strategy for those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)⁷⁷. Careers advisers actively caseload young people who do not have a positive destination when they leave school or drop out of provision early and through effective partnership working continue to provide support to those participating in NEET provision.

In addition, parents with young children, those returning to work after a prolonged absence, people with a migrant background, and older workers, all need to be able to access the personalised support they require.

⁷⁶ Committee for Employment and Learning (2013). *Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland*.

⁷⁷ <http://www.delni.gov.uk/del-pathways-to-success-v6.pdf>

There is a significant amount of good practice in this regard already in place across schools, further education colleges, universities and organisations, but it is not always consistent, visible and easy to access by individuals and parents.

Issues

The Panel believes there is much to commend the current system: the good partnerships and data-sharing arrangements between the Careers Service and schools; the high number of young people in year 12 accessing impartial advice; the inclusive nature of the education and guidance ensuring that those with barriers are properly supported; and the all-age provision. However, the careers system in Northern Ireland now has a unique opportunity to build on this by developing an innovative, lifelong and outcome-focused approach to careers. The goal is to provide all individuals with access to impartial, high-quality, personalised and lifelong support from primary school, through secondary and tertiary education, training, and apprenticeships, to a successful and sustained working life. It is vital that those involved in the provision of advice throughout the careers system have the appropriate knowledge, skills and working environment to support individuals and their families about choices which offer fulfilment, progression and lifelong learning and work opportunities. As the 2009 OECD ⁷⁸ report sets out, the effectiveness of the careers system needs to be demonstrated in a better alignment between skills supply and demand, improved outcomes from education and training in terms of attainment of economically relevant qualifications and skills, and fewer people disengaged and potentially socially excluded.

Guidance at critical decision points

It is important to provide impartial and professional careers advice to all pupils at critical decision points in their careers (16 -18 year-olds) to maximise the return on investment in education and training. Better alignment between the skills and qualifications of our working-age population and those needed by existing and potential employers will contribute to economic growth and benefit everyone, in

⁷⁸ Watts, A.G. (2009). *Learning for Jobs: the Relationship of Career Guidance to VET*. Paris: OECD.

terms of personal development and also immediate and longer-term employment prospects.

It is recognised, however, that the careers system alone cannot always bring about the changes outlined above. In the current economic climate funding and planning arrangements for post 16 provision should better reflect labour market needs and result in better alignment between skills supply and demand. To support this, impartial and professional careers advisers should engage with all young people (16 - 18year-olds) at critical decision points in their careers and before the individual progresses to further provision, i.e. prior to entry to 6th form, further education, training, apprenticeships or higher education.

In addition, careers teachers and advisers, as required, should intervene at key transition points from age 14 onwards. Having assessed the evidence in the e-portfolio as discussed in Recommendation 3, they should determine the type of career support needed.

This system needs to apply to all young people and all abilities, to ensure we make the best use of talent and to identify those who may need additional help. The e-portfolio should contain evidence that the young person has accessed impartial advice and has been made aware of the various options and pathways available. This record should also outline the potential risks and rewards associated with these options (6th form, further education, training, apprenticeships or higher education) which the young person can reflect upon and possibly share with their parents and others to inform discussions. As previously recommended, the e-portfolio could be developed to link to the Unique Learner Number (ULN) to facilitate the tracking and monitoring of progress.

Provision beyond school

In Northern Ireland nearly all the careers advisers are co-located with the employment service advisers in Jobs and Benefits Offices and Jobcentres. They provide professional advice alongside employment advisers to jobseekers of all ages.

The recent report from the Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland, *Appreciating Age*⁷⁹, attaches an economic value to contributions made by older people to highlight the positive roles they play across Northern Ireland. Many older people need support and guidance to up-skill in order to sustain and advance in employment, particularly as working lives will be much longer in the future. The Careers Service currently provides face to face guidance to just 2% of the working age population. While it is recognised that the current online provision is well used the Panel believes that the ambition for the future should be to make the system responsive to a much larger number of adults so that we make the best use of our talent. The revised website as outlined in Recommendation 2 will greatly contribute to this, providing an opportunity to modernise and re-think delivery systems. In addition, consideration should be given to developing different layers of expertise so that resources can be targeted better to suit the needs of the individual client. Across Europe there seems to be a greater focus on case specific and individualised service provision taking into account a range of factors interacting in a person's life (educational, professional, familial, local, institutional, and economic)⁸⁰. A multi-channel delivery mechanism combining different types of service (e.g. online, face to face) can ensure they complement each other and better meet the needs of a diverse clientele. However, attention should be paid to make sure the overall service provision also caters for the needs of people who do not necessarily have the skills or tools to access web based services. The accountability framework as described in Recommendation 1 with the inclusion of professional and service standards would further support these arrangements.

⁷⁹ COPNI (2014). *Appreciating Age*.

⁸⁰ CEDEFOP: Lifelong guidance across Europe reviewing policy and future prospects. Luxembourg, 2011

Ministerial Statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly, Monday 31 March 2014

The Careers Review

With your permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the review of policy and practice on careers education and guidance which my Department together with the Department of Education intends to undertake over the next few months.

Members will recall that in November, in my response to the debate on the Committee for Employment and Learning's report into careers, I announced that my Executive colleague, the Minister of Education, and I had agreed to conduct a formal review of careers during 2014.

I am now in a position to formally announce the commencement of that review and to provide more detail on how the review will proceed.

The extensive work carried out by the Committee has highlighted several key issues which we intend to take forward as part of this review.

I would like to once again commend the Committee for their very thorough examination of this issue and the insightful recommendations in the Committee report. I would also assure the Committee members that the review will address all the points raised.

The review will also consider other key publications, including the recent CBI report on education and industry links. The recommendations and the research evidence in both reports provide us with an excellent base on which to advance.

It will also take account of international best practice to consider what can be done to ensure that the curriculum nurtures young people's insights into the world of work and raises aspirations.

The main reason why the two Departments have commissioned this review is the need to ensure that careers education, advice and guidance supports both economic growth and social mobility, and is in tune with the needs of the labour market.

I have always viewed careers to be the foundation stone of everything both my Department and the Department of Education are trying to achieve; and I know that Minister O'Dowd concurs with that view.

While both Departments have made progress through the implementation of the current joint strategy *Preparing for Success*, we recognise that much more needs to be done.

Both the Committee Inquiry and the CBI report highlight the perception held by many employers that the current careers system is not serving them well. They feel that too many young people have a limited understanding of the full range of career pathways and opportunities available to them.

We still have a significant problem in some key sectors, with skills shortages and a mismatch between labour supply and demand. A considerable number of young people, including some who are very well qualified, are leaving school without the specific skills and qualifications needed by employers; and are consequently struggling to find sustained employment.

Matching skills and qualifications to the needs of employers, while supporting people to realise their full potential in the workplace, is therefore key to our economic growth and long-term prosperity and is therefore a central tenant of this review.

To address these issues the terms of reference for the review have been agreed and will be published on both Departments' websites today.

The aim of the review is to ensure that careers provision reflects the needs of a modern vibrant and dynamic 21st century economy in which all individuals regardless of age, aspiration or ability, as well as key influencers such as parents and teachers, have access to independent, high quality advice which helps them

to maximise their potential and contribute to their community and the local economy.

It will have a particular focus on the role of careers education and guidance in balancing skills supply and demand in the current and future labour market.

The review will focus on seven key issues;

Firstly, the Review will consider the need for a statutory mechanism to ensure consistency of approach and high standards of careers services across schools, colleges and universities.

Whilst there are many examples of good practice one of the main criticisms levelled at the current system is the considerable inconsistency in how careers is delivered, causing employers and other stakeholders to lose confidence in its effectiveness.

Many young people and their parents are not aware of the various routes and opportunities available other than the traditional academic pathway. Yet for many choosing a professional and technical route aligned to their chosen career and profession will be more appropriate and just as valid.

This aspect of the Review will examine separately the role of the careers adviser supported by DEL and the role of the careers teacher in schools. **Secondly**, the review will examine the role of the curriculum, and how careers education could be strengthened.

Careers education is the responsibility of the Department of Education and delivered by schools, while responsibility for careers guidance, which is an all-age service, sits with my Department.

The Department of Education recognises that with the increased choice offered under the Entitlement Framework at both Key Stage 4 and post-16, it is vital that all young people, irrespective of which school they attend, are provided with impartial careers advice to inform their decisions.

Careers education enables learners to develop their knowledge, and understanding of job opportunities, to manage their career development, and make relevant informed choices, ensuring successful transition into education, training or employment.

Careers guidance builds on this knowledge and understanding, providing impartial and personalised advice, taking into account aspirations and ability, helping any person to make the right career choices to fulfil their potential.

Young people make decisions at aged 14 about subject choices which could affect their careers for the rest of their lives. At 16 young people make further decisions about staying on at school moving to a FE college or into training and at 17 and 18 young people make further decisions about higher education, an apprenticeship or employment.

It is vital that the curriculum prepares them for the world of work and provides them with the necessary career management skills to make sound decisions.

The third issue is the need to support people who are disengaged from education, employment or training to overcome barriers. This is an area of vital importance to both Departments.

All pupils and students can benefit enormously from careers education which challenges misconceptions, broadens their outlook and guides them onto a successful path.

This is particularly true of those young people who do not have the social networks which can connect them to inspiring figures in different occupations; or those who come from families with a long history of unemployment; or those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The review will consider the needs of those who are about to enter the labour market, those not in, or temporarily excluded from, the labour market; people with learning difficulties or disabilities; those needing financial advice regarding further and higher education.

It will also examine the barriers to the accessibility of higher education on an all-island basis arising from inadequate careers information.

In addition, as highlighted in the draft Economic Inactivity strategy, our inactivity rate remains stubbornly high. The Committee report observed that, effective careers guidance can play a significant role in supporting and motivating those people in that category who would benefit from working.

The fourth issue which the review will address is the need to promote STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

My Department's Skills Strategy sets out what is required if Northern Ireland is to be internationally competitive in 2020. We need a stronger focus on higher level skills in general and STEM skills in particular.

However, the committee report highlighted that there has not been a significant increase in uptake of STEM subjects over the past seven years

The review will examine how the considerable work that is ongoing in both Departments, and elsewhere, to promote the importance of STEM can be further strengthened, through for example more careers insights and exposure to STEM related careers.

A particular focus in this regard must be how to promote greater participation by females in STEM subjects and progression into relevant careers.

Put simply, we cannot hope to fully compete in the global marketplace if we are not making full use of the local marketplace of talent.

The fifth area to be examined by the review is the need to provide reliable careers information in a way that is accessible and easy to understand.

Key to the guidance process is a sound knowledge of the current and future labour market trends. Understanding, as far as we can, where the jobs of the future will be, what skills and qualifications are required, can guide any person towards a successful and sustained career and provide employers with the skilled workforce

they need. Accurate labour market intelligence is therefore recognised as a core pillar of a modern and effective careers system.

In terms of delivery, more work is needed to develop a fit for purpose careers website which will modernise and improve access to information and on line support for individuals of all ages. The review will consider how careers services can be enhanced by maximising the use of technology to make service more accessible and efficient.

The sixth issue focuses on engaging with business.

Minister O'Dowd and I are in agreement that employers will play a significant role in how the new service will be shaped. Considerable work has already been carried out by Employment and Learning Committee and the review will take full account of the Inquiry report's findings in this regard.

Ensuring that young people have ongoing exposure to the world of work through meaningful work experiences and mentoring programmes is vital.

Well-targeted, career-focused employer contacts could broaden a young person's understanding of the range of jobs particularly in the growth sectors which might suit their interests. Employers can be a great source of inspiration.

The CBI report highlighted the need for employer engagement with schools and young people to become much more focused and better organised.

I am aware of the potential for employers to become overwhelmed by requests for work experience to the extent that they may switch off. As part of the review we will consider how a brokerage system could be introduced which will co-ordinate this process better to ensure that we maximise the benefits to both the young person and the employer.

The seventh and final issue is the need to improve the quality of advice and guidance

All careers advisers are professionally qualified and all undertake significant amounts of continuous professional development including spending time in industry.

It is vital that all people are fully aware of the opportunities and consequences of their decisions and I believe this can only be done through high quality, impartial career guidance provided by the expertise of careers advisers.

The Department of Education is developing a professional development programme for careers teachers and will support all teachers to link their subject areas to potential careers opportunities.

Both Departments recognise the need to ensure that all practitioners involved in providing careers education and guidance are properly qualified and undertake continuous professional development. It is also essential that careers advice is underpinned by reliable and high quality labour market information.

A key aspect of this which the review will take forward will be the effective monitoring and evaluation of careers provision in schools, colleges, universities and careers centres.

Both Departments recognise that effective outcome measures are needed to provide a level of assurance to stakeholders that the system is responsive to the needs of the economy, and this issue will also be considered as part of the review.

While as mentioned earlier the Committee report and other recent publications like the CBI report, provide us with an excellent evidence base on which to go forward, both Minister O'Dowd and I are keen to take the view of a panel of experts from education, careers guidance and employers.

The careers review will therefore be supported by an independent panel.

I am appointing four of the panel members primarily from the business community. John O'Dowd is appointing four members, from education.

The panel will be chaired by Brian Ambrose, Managing Director, George Belfast City Airport and will be supported by an international OECD expert in careers education and guidance.

The panel will provide advice to Minister O'Dowd and me, and undertake substantial and structured engagement with key stakeholders such as young people and their parents; unemployed and employed adults; individuals with learning difficulties or disabilities; and employers.

We want this to be a thorough review of policies and practices across both Departments. It needs to be evidence based and pragmatic, but also visionary and imaginative. We will also want to learn from the best experiences both from across these islands and internationally.

We will also keep members of this Assembly and the Committee for Employment and Learning advised of our progress through regular communications.

The full Terms of Reference will be published on both Departments' websites today.

Membership of the independent panel will also be published on both Departments' websites within the next few days.

The review will conclude in the autumn of this year. It is likely that we would then proceed to formal public consultation on the provisional conclusions of the review. Once our officials, and Minister O'Dowd and I have considered the responses, we will formalise new policies and practices and seek to implement changes as soon as possible.

Careers Review Independent Panel Members

Name	Organisation
Brian Ambrose (Chair)	George Best Belfast City Airport
Professor Tony Watts	OECD, International Careers Policy Expert
Gordon Parkes	Confederation of British Industry
Joy Chambers	All State
Marie-Therese McGivern	Belfast Metropolitan College
Wayne Pickering	Colaiste Feirste, Belfast
Fionnuala Vallely	Dominican College, Fortwilliam, Belfast
Paula Burns	Omagh High School, Omagh
Damian McGivern	University of Ulster
Frances O'Hara	Review Team (DEL)
Angela Rooney	Review Team (DEL)
Jonathan Lynas	Review Team (DEL)
Rebecca Cope	Review Team (DEL)
Barbara Ward	Review Team (DE)
Joan Cassells	Review Team (DE)
June Ingram	Departmental Observer (DEL)
David Hughes	Departmental Observer (DE)

Stakeholder Engagement

A summary of evidence from stakeholder events and focus groups.

Introduction

The stakeholder engagement process for the careers review took place throughout September 2014, finishing on 1 October 2014. The purpose of this engagement was to test the panel's emerging thinking with key stakeholders and customers as outlined in the Terms of Reference before making final recommendations to both Ministers. This included young people, those with disabilities (physical and learning), adults and parents.

The engagement process included two large events and 22 focus groups to get the views of a range of key stakeholders. A full list of those organisations and customers that participated is included at the end of this annex.

This report provides an overview of the responses from the two events and focus groups. It highlights the main issues raised and questions asked during this evidence gathering process.

The Panel wish to thank all the participants who contributed to this important aspect of the review to help inform their final recommendations.

The engagement process aimed to test the panel's five main recommendations on the following areas:

- ensuring consistency in the delivery of careers
- accessing meaningful careers information,
- work experience
- making a record of experience, and
- assisting in making career decisions

The following sections provide an overview of the main themes that emerged from the stakeholder engagement process.

1. Ensuring consistency in the delivery of careers

Across the two large events there were a number of common themes that emerged relating to governance and accountability. These include:

- careers practitioners should have appropriate training and industry; experience – importance of continual professional development;
- quality standards for organisations help to improve quality e.g. Matrix standard;
- clear, measurable targets which are outcome based should be set;
- roles and responsibilities between Departments should be clear with accountability measures in place;
- an independent, overarching committee or panel should monitor the delivery of careers education and guidance across all areas; and
- careers education should be added to school development plans and be monitored by the Board of Governors.

2. Accessing meaningful careers information

Across the two large events and focus groups, feedback from stakeholders highlighted a number of areas around improving the current careers website. They include:

- currently a lack of awareness exists of the Careers Service website;
- the content and presentation of the website should be tailored to the needs of the different customers using it;
- more careers information, particularly labour market information, and advice should be available online;

- the Careers Service and the website need to be better promoted using social media to customers to raise its profile; and
- live online chats with career advisers to get instant advice, email and apps for mobile phones would be welcome.

3. Gaining relevant experience

Across the two large events and focus groups there were a number of common themes that emerged relating to how work experience could be better designed and organised. These include:

- pupils should be able to access multiple work experience placements with employers;
- employer visits, talks from guest speakers and taster days from industry in schools are also useful;
- pupils should get more exposure to employers at an earlier age;
- a central service should be established to support work experience; and
- more structure is needed before, during and after work experience to ensure pupils benefit from it.

It was unanimously agreed that pupils in schools should have more contact with industry / employers from an earlier age. Within this, the view was that work experience should include the traditional work experience placement but also other methods to broaden pupils' awareness of various job sectors and the world of work. For example, more visits to employer's premises, taster days with employers, and regular information sessions in schools with guest speakers from industry were common suggestions put forward by different stakeholders. .

A number of careers teachers raised as an issue the difficulty they experience in getting insurance for pupils under the age of 16 to go an employer for work experience. Employers echoed this difficulty and also explained the constraints health and safety legislation has on what young people can do whilst on placement. Some pupils from the focus groups suggested a minimum of two

weeks on placement with an employer each year, either in one block with one employer or split into two one-week placements with two employers from different job sectors.

An important issue raised by all stakeholders was the difficulty faced in organising work experience. There was a strong view that many schools currently do not have the resources available to deliver work experience as they would like to. It was also clearly evident that many employers, especially SMEs, view hosting a young person on work experience as an additional burden they are unable to take on. There was a strong consensus amongst pupils that they would have liked additional support in securing their placement with an employer.

A solution proposed by a number of stakeholders to ease these difficulties was the need for a central agency to take responsibility for all work experience placements. This central agency would ease the burden of work experience on careers teachers and employers. Various groups also suggested a central online database to advertise work experience opportunities available for all young people. Employers also highlighted the need to develop better links with one another to share best practice and encourage / support SMEs to be involved in work experience.

It was felt by many that the work experience process needs to be better structured. This included appropriate preparation before pupils go on their work experience placement, a well-organised and meaningful experience for pupils while on placement, and greater emphasis placed on the evaluation and reflection process for pupils on returning to school on completion of work experience.

4. Making a record of experience

Across the two large events and focus groups there were a number of common themes that emerged relating to the e-portfolio. These include:

- an e-portfolio could facilitate the transfer of information;

- it would be beneficial to have all career development information in one easily accessible place;
- the e-portfolio would be a duplication of other systems; and
- the e-portfolio may not be used or valued by individuals or employers.

When asked about the content of an e-portfolio, stakeholders agreed that it would be useful to record:

- career guidance or advice received
- CVs
- applications forms
- qualifications
- extra-curricular activities
- employability skills
- work experiences

Across both the stakeholder events and the focus groups the majority felt that if it were to be introduced, the e-portfolio would be beneficial to young people from an early age, possibly in primary school but perhaps more useful from year 10 onwards.

Professionals working with disadvantaged or disengaged young people saw a value in the e-portfolio as a means to facilitate the transfer of important information about a young person – specifically, barriers, education history/qualifications, disabilities and previous provision undertaken, respecting the privacy of the individual at all times.

Several stakeholders also saw the e-portfolio as a good way of facilitating the transition to post-16 provision and tracking career progression. It was suggested by a number of stakeholders that the e-portfolio could be linked to the Unique Learner Number.

A small number of stakeholders suggested the e-portfolio could be used to identify gaps in an individual's career development and help focus advice and support.

Some stakeholders suggested recording information that was not just centred on qualifications but also put a focus on other transferable skills, particularly those additional skills and attitudes that make an individual attractive to an employer, would be beneficial.

There was a recurring theme that an e-portfolio should be attractive to young people and easy to access, via an app for example, to encourage them to use and value it.

Opinions were divided across the focus groups as to the benefit of the e-portfolio; many young people stated the idea of retaining career development information in one easily accessible place was sound however some questioned their motivation to use it.

Several stakeholders such as employers and professionals involved in further and higher education did not recognise a benefit to them; some employers attending stakeholder events suggested that they would not use it in their recruitment processes and that without this recognition individuals would not see the value.

Several stakeholders suggested that such a tool would not be suitable for all and may need to be adapted for those with poorer literacy or IT skills.

The majority of stakeholders suggested that the e-portfolio would simply be a duplication of other online systems such as Record of Achievement, e-progress files, UCAS, etc.

Several customers and stakeholders raised concerns about the security of information held in this way and data protection concerns.

5. Assisting in making career decisions

Across the two large events and focus groups there were a number of common themes that emerged relating to assisting in making career decisions. These include:

- 'careers' needs to be a regular timetabled class for pupils in school;
- the single career guidance interview many pupils receive in year 12 is not enough; and
- career guidance and advice is required for pupils at critical decision points.

It was evident that the majority of participants did not distinguish career guidance from careers education, and participants discussed both in offering their views. Many stakeholders at the two large events and some of the participants from the focus groups believed careers education should be introduced to pupils from primary school or year 8. Many highlighted the need for careers to be a more regular, timetabled class in schools with more structure to include talks from guest speakers and employer visits.

The critical decision stages in school were identified by the large majority as points when pupils require more focused career guidance and careers education. This includes year 10 when deciding what subjects to select for GCSEs; year 12 when deciding on post-16 options; and year 13 / year 14 when looking at options on leaving school.

There was a wide consensus that the single career guidance interview many pupils receive from a careers adviser in year 12 is not enough and more one-to-one intervention is needed during year 12, but also in year 13 and year 14. It was felt that this needs to be carried out by someone who has expertise and a professional qualification in career guidance. Many advocated the need for both a careers teacher within school and also a careers adviser who is external to the school. Employers stressed the importance of the ability of the people in both of these roles to be able to inspire young people.

Although there was wide agreement that support is needed in year 10, opinions varied as to whether this requires a one-to-one careers intervention or if it could be met through class talks or group work. There were also differing views on whether a careers adviser is needed at this stage or if a careers teacher and school staff can fulfil this role.

Many of the pupils from the focus groups proposed more working in smaller groups to learn from each other as part of careers education and career guidance. Many also promoted the idea of being able to access a careers adviser via modern technology such as 'live chat' to get information in addition to their career guidance interview.

Several stakeholders who work with people with disabilities or young people who are NEET / or at risk of becoming NEET, stressed the need for more intense and focused support for their clients. A number promoted the idea of having specialised careers advisers to work with their clients.

Conclusion

The stakeholder engagement process has resulted in a wide range of views and ideas from those directly involved in and affected by the careers system in Northern Ireland.

It is clear from the feedback that individuals recognise the importance of work experience and value the benefits it can provide. It was agreed that work experience placements should be better organised and structured to ensure maximum benefit is gained. The benefits of forging links between education and industry were also highlighted. The importance of careers education and guidance was emphasised by all participants with particular focus on key career decision points. The responses all advocated a modern, engaging website providing access to up-to-date Labour Market Information with easy access to careers advice and meaningful information to support this. Stakeholders agreed that a standard method of maintaining and sharing career related information would be beneficial if it were fit for purpose and valued by individuals and employers.

Overall, feedback gathered across the stakeholder events and focus groups supports the panel's thinking on the five recommendations however it is recognised that further consultation by both Departments will be necessary at the implementation stage.

Organisations represented at the two stakeholder events (Cookstown and Belfast)

Construction Industry Training Board NI

Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association

Colleges NI

Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders

Sentinus

Ulster Supported Employment Limited

Northern Regional College

Derry2020

The Careers Man

South Eastern Regional College

Young Enterprise

Shankill Job Assist Centre

Belfast Education and Library Board

Northern Ireland Electricity

Sector Skill Council

Stemnet W5

Volunteer Now

MENCAP

Queen's University Belfast

Barnardos

Transport Training Services

Institute of Civil Engineers

Action on Hearing Loss

Open University

Orchardville

Disability Action

Henry Group

Southern Education and Library Board

Southern Regional College

Bryson Future Skills

Workforce Training

Business in the Community NI

Bombardier

Stepping Stones

Corpus Christi

Springvale Learning

Public Achievement / WIMPS

Include Youth

North West Regional College

College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise

Wade Training

Seven Towers Training

Coalisland Training Services Ltd

Parkanaur College

Wrightbus

Acheson and Glover

School Employer Connections

Seagate Technology

Chartered Institute of Marketing

Moyola

Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment

People 1st (LEMIS)

Health and Social Care Trust

Derry Job Assist Centre

Foyle Learning Community Manager

Cookstown High School

22 Focus Groups took place with:

Dominican College (year 12 and year 14 pupils)

Portadown College (year 12 and year 14 pupils)

St Colm's High School, Draperstown (year 10 and year 12 pupils)

Omagh High School (year 12 and year 14 pupils)

Newbridge Integrated College (year 12 and year 14 pupils)

Colaiste Feirste (year 10 and year 12 pupils)

Careers teachers and career advisers

Unemployed adults

Northern Ireland Electricity (employees and apprentices)

Young people from Youth Action

Young people from Include Youth

University of Ulster students

Belfast Metropolitan College students

Trainees from South West College

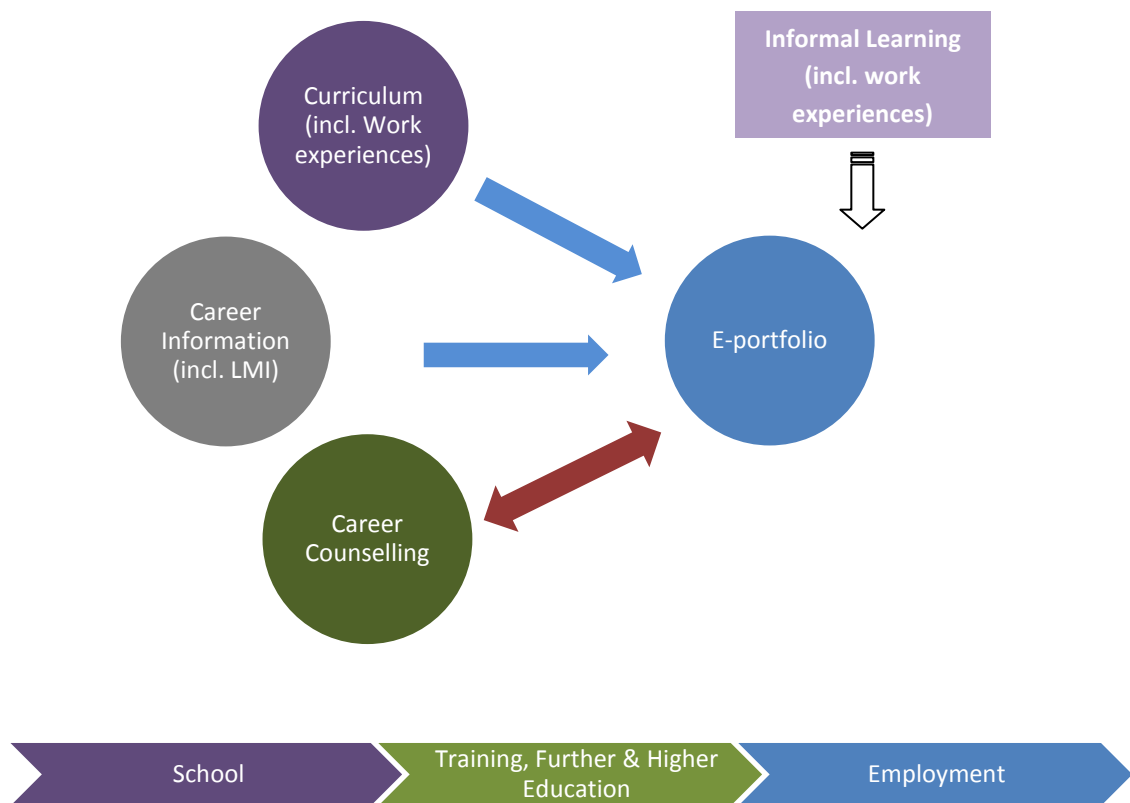
Clients from Ulster Supported Employment Ltd

Career Development Model

1. Career Model

Individual Career Planning

Individual career planning is supported by 4 key areas:



Curriculum

See Section 2 below.

Career Information

Career information, provided in various on-line and other formats, covers information on courses, occupations and career paths, including labour market information.

Career Counselling

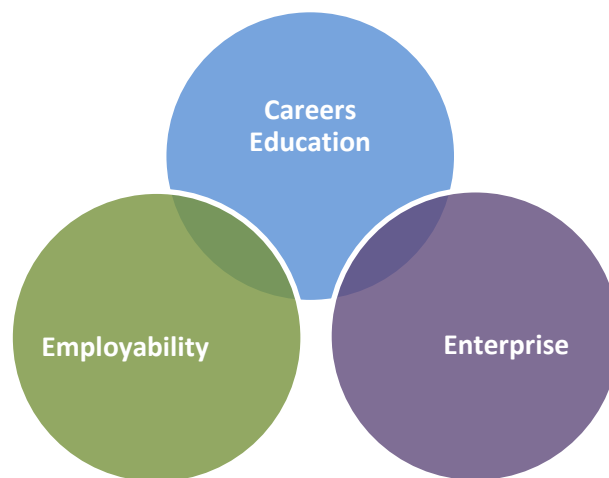
Career counselling is conducted on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, focusing attention on the distinctive career issues faced by individuals.

E-portfolio

A personal, comprehensive and mandatory e-portfolio records career-related learning, experiences and exploration (including informal learning). It can be used by the individual to support their decision-making and by the Careers Service and others to monitor and support progress and to determine the nature of support needed by the individual at given times, in school and beyond.

2. Curriculum

Careers Education, Employability and Enterprise make overlapping and complementary contributions to the curriculum, particularly in secondary school but also in primary school and in further and higher education:



Careers Education

Careers education is concerned with helping people to acquire the skills, attitudes and abilities they will need to chart their path through life with confidence and to be effective in a variety of adult roles and spheres of life. Objectives include:

- Personal knowledge and development.
- Knowledge of opportunities.
- Skills and personal qualities in relation to career development.

Employability

Employability includes the development personal qualities, attitudes and inter-personal skills either through programmes of study or through learning and teaching methods. It also includes exploring work in the local and global economy, giving people opportunities to investigate the impact of the global market on Northern Ireland and to reflect on implications for their personal career planning.

Enterprise

Exploring Enterprise and Entrepreneurship provides opportunities for people to investigate the need for creativity and enterprise, and to identify and practise some of the skills and develop the attributes associated with being enterprising.

3. Quality

There are 3 complementary components that ensure the quality of careers delivery.



Learning Framework

Within schools, initial guidance provided by the department on the Entitlement Framework outlines the aims and objectives and five core components of an effective careers education and guidance programme. The Department of Education specifies Minimum Content for each Area of Learning (AOL) and each key stage, which all schools have to provide in their teaching. There is also a requirement for young people to develop cross-curricular skills (Communication, Using Mathematics, Using ICT) and other skills (Thinking Skills, Personal Capabilities) to better equip them for life and work.

Accountability/Inspection

All parts of the careers system, like the wider public sector, needs to be accountable to stakeholders like employers and parents, and young people and job-seeking or career-changing adults. A whole-system quality assurance framework will ensure efficiency in service provision, provide financial accountability and create transparency for the citizen.

This will be supported by a clear, timely and standardised accountability process for all parts of the careers system. The system will:

- be independently and frequently assessed;
- have high visibility;

- be easy to understand;
- highlight best practice; and
- have local accountability mechanisms.

Professional Support and CPD

All careers practitioners throughout the system should be professionally qualified and obliged to maintain their professional competence through continuing professional development (CPD) and adherence to professional standards.

Glossary

ALCs	Area Learning Communities
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
ELB	Education and Library Board
ELGPN	European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Record
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LLW	Learning for Life and Work
LMI	Labour Market Information
NEET	Not in Education Employment or Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDP	Personal Development Planning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UK	United Kingdom
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills

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