

23 SEPTEMBER 2012

# CAREER GUIDANCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE INQUIRY



GATSBY

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 Gatsby is a Trust set up in 1967 by David Sainsbury (now Lord Sainsbury of Turville) to realise his charitable objectives. We focus our support on the following areas:
  - Plant science research
  - Neuroscience research
  - Science and engineering education
  - Economic development in Africa
  - Public policy research and advice
  - The Arts
- 2 One of Gatsby's primary aims in education is to increase the proportion of young people with skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), especially at technician level (Level 3+). We recognise the critical importance of career guidance in helping to achieve this goal and, in 2010, commissioned a report on career guidance in STEM from Sir John Holman<sup>1</sup>. The report made a number of recommendations, most of which are relevant to career guidance in general, not just STEM<sup>2</sup>. This response draws on the evidence base for that report.
- 3 The importance of young people receiving good guidance to help them make the right choices for their futures is self-evident and we do not intend to labour the point. However, given Gatsby's interests, there are several other key points and recommendations we wish to make.

## SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS HAVE FAILED TO CREATE A SYSTEM THAT GIVES ALL YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY CAREER GUIDANCE

- 4 Career guidance is one of the most frequently reformed parts of the education system. Every incoming government over the last 20 years has denounced the career guidance system they inherited, and hastily implemented an extensive programme of reform, often at significant cost.
- 5 As yet, none of these reforms have created a system that provides consistently good career guidance to all young people. And early indications are that the current Government's policies will be no different; the quality of career guidance in schools is likely to remain highly variable under the new arrangements.

## INDEPENDENT GUIDANCE IS NECESSARY BUT NOT SUFFICIENT, AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IS CRITICAL

- 6 We understand why Government is devolving responsibility for career guidance to schools, particularly given the recent failures of government-led interventions in this area. But we firmly believe that this devolution must come with a statutory duty that is clear and robust. Schools should then be expected to either comply with the duty or give a satisfactory explanation as to why they are not. We are concerned that the new statutory duty introduced under the Education Act 2011 is too weak to enable this to happen, and does not provide for a mechanism by which parents can be assured that their children are receiving good career guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir John is Emeritus Professor at the University of York and a Senior Education Advisor for the Wellcome Trust. He was Centre Director at the National Science Learning Centre from 2004-10, and was National STEM Director for the Government from 2006-2010.

<sup>2</sup> *STEM Careers Review*, J. Holman and P. Finegold, Gatsby, November 2010

- 7 Furthermore, the new statutory duty only requires schools to secure independent guidance, and whilst this is important, it is not enough. Career guidance is best provided through a mix of provision, including advice from subject teachers and form tutors, direct contact with employers and universities, and guidance from careers specialists. The Statutory Guidance note issued to schools recognises this, but still does not require anything of schools beyond the provision of independent advice, nor does it require schools to provide pupils with face-to-face careers guidance<sup>3</sup>.
- 8 Although the Statutory Guidance note includes three ways in which schools can quality assure their provision, these are just recommendations, and schools will not be compelled to adhere to any of them<sup>4</sup>. In addition, whilst we strongly advocate the routine use of all three methods of quality assurance, it is unlikely that any of them will hold significance for, or be understood by, parents or pupils. When making decisions about where to send their children to school, we believe parents should be able to find out, in a straightforward way, whether schools are providing high-quality career guidance.
- 9 **We are concerned that the Government’s decision to devolve responsibility for career guidance to schools has not been accompanied by a strong framework of quality assurance and a statutory duty against which schools can be held to account. We recommend that Government gives Ofsted a greater and clearer remit in respect of career guidance in schools.**

### **SUBJECT TEACHERS ARE AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF CAREER GUIDANCE**

- 10 Just under a half of Key Stage 3 learners say they receive career guidance from their subject teachers<sup>5</sup>. Subject teachers are trusted by learners, and have abundant opportunities to bring careers awareness into their lessons. Yet even specialist teachers are unlikely to have knowledge of the full range of careers available to pupils with, for example, science qualifications. A teacher who progressed from school straight to university and then became a teacher in their early twenties, for example, is likely to have little or no understanding of apprenticeships or other vocational pathways. Teachers need to be empowered with access to independent information about careers to help them carry out this important part of their role effectively. Other independent bodies with specialist knowledge also have a role to play. For example, the National STEM Centre houses a collection of STEM Careers Resources that is freely available to all teachers<sup>6</sup>.
- 11 **Government should encourage subject teachers to use professional development opportunities to ensure they can provide high-quality advice to pupils about different careers and qualification routes.**

<sup>3</sup> *The duty to secure independent and impartial careers guidance for young people in schools. Statutory guidance for head teachers, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities*, DfE, March 2011

<sup>4</sup> The three are: adherence to a quality standard for schools; securing guidance services from an agency that meets the Matrix standard; and using careers professionals who are members of their professional body.

<sup>5</sup> Research showed that some 78% of Key Stage 3 pupils gain their information about jobs and careers from their family, 50% from careers teachers, 48% from subject teachers, 23% from form teachers and 20% from careers advisers. *STEM Careers Awareness Timelines: Attitudes and Ambitions Towards Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM at Key Stage 3)*, Hutchinson, J., Stagg, P. and Bentley, K. iCEeGS, University of Derby, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nationalstemcentre.org.uk/elibrary/collection/207/stem-subject-choice-and-careers>

## THERE NEEDS TO BE BETTER ACCESS TO AUTHENTIC LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

- 12 Universal access to the internet, together with the ‘open data’ agenda, have opened up the possibility of young people and their parents gaining direct access to authentic Labour Market Information (LMI). This will enable them to see for themselves the employer demand, salary levels and qualifications required for a wide range of occupations.
- 13 In 2011, Gatsby funded Sir John Holman to carry out a feasibility study into how this could be achieved in practice. We are pleased that, as a consequence, the Skills Minister John Hayes has remitted the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), with Sir John Holman as an adviser, to pilot an ‘LMI for All’ project. The ambition for this project is to create a database that can provide the public with user-friendly access to authentic, live LMI that is drawn from existing labour market surveys. An independent source of LMI of this kind has the potential to transform the way learners and their parents receive information about the earnings and opportunities in different occupations, and the qualifications required.
- 14 However, for the LMI to be as effective as possible, it is important that it is collected at a sufficient level of granular detail. The way in which occupations are currently classified, using four digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, is not always sufficient, and means that data on certain occupations is not recorded<sup>7</sup>.
- 15 **We welcome the ‘LMI for All’ pilot project set up by Government, which will test the feasibility of creating a national LMI database. We strongly recommend that, if successful, this pilot is rolled out nationally. Furthermore, to help ensure the LMI is of maximum use to the public, we recommend that Government collects LMI data at a level equivalent to 5 digit SOC codes. Sir John Holman would be happy to provide further evidence to the Select Committee about this project.**

## CAREER GUIDANCE NEEDS TO START YOUNG

- 16 There is abundant evidence of the need to start career guidance young – much younger than the National Careers Service is currently configured towards. High quality careers advice is needed right through to adulthood, but the evidence is clear that decisions about directions of travel are often made at a very early age<sup>8</sup>. In primary school, children begin to form a picture of what their future lives will be like, leading, by the age of 14, to the first of a series of formal decisions about their future subject and qualifications choices. These decisions can open or close their career options.
- 17 It is critically important that the work of building general awareness of careers options begins in primary schools and at Key Stage 3. This will help to ensure that, when learners make subject and qualifications decisions, they do so in the light of good information about their long-term value. The Department for Education is consulting on whether the statutory duty to provide career guidance should start in Year 8 (as opposed to Year 9 at present). We support this change, but suggest it should start at Year 7.

<sup>7</sup> Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes are a standardised way of listing occupations. For example, SOC code 2125 is "Chemical engineers". The more digits in the SOC code, the more specific the occupation.

<sup>8</sup> For example, *Taking a Leading Role*, Royal Society, 2004

## CONCLUSION

- 18 Like others before it, the current Government is implementing significant changes to the way career guidance is provided to young people in this country. It is critical that these changes do not lead to a further reduction in the quality of provision, and even more variable outcomes for young people.
- 19 Within the Government's over-arching strategy of handing autonomy to schools, it must find ways to ensure that all young people have access to good career guidance. Whilst we have made a number of points in our submission, we have focused our recommendations on three areas that we believe fit with the Government's vision, whilst helping to assure quality and consistency:
- A greater and clearer role for Ofsted in respect of schools' career guidance provision.
  - Encouragement for subject teachers to use professional development opportunities to ensure they can provide high-quality advice to pupils about careers and qualification routes.
  - Further support for the creation of a national LMI database.
- 20 Over the coming year, Gatsby will also be undertaking its own research to help ensure schools are equipped with the information they need to provide good career guidance. We will be funding a study of career guidance provision in other countries and in the best of independent and state schools in England. We hope this will provide a clearer picture of what good quality career guidance looks like, and help to establish a benchmark for all schools in England.
- 21 In the second half of the academic year 2012/13, Gatsby will fund a further study to assess how schools are responding to their new duties. In so doing, we expect to uncover answers to a number of the questions raised by the Select Committee, and we will be happy to share our findings with the Committee as soon as they are available.
- 22 We would also be happy to arrange for Sir John Holman to speak to the Select Committee in person about the work he is undertaking in relation to LMI, or to provide further clarification about any of the other points we have made in this submission.
- 23 Any questions regarding this submission should be directed to:

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