



Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy

Oral evidence: [Careers advice, information and guidance](#), HC 670

Monday 8 February 2016

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- Professor Louise Archer ([CAD0013](#))
- Gatsby Foundation ([CAD0008](#))
- University of Warwick ([CAD0126](#))
- Association of Teachers and Lecturers ([CAD0119](#))
- Association of School and College Leaders ([CAD0034](#))
- Association of Colleges ([CAD0049](#))
- British Chambers of Commerce ([CAD0080](#))

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Members present: Mr Iain Wright (Chair), Paul Blomfield, Neil Carmichael, Michelle Donelan, Lucy Frazer, Ian Mearns, Amanda Milling, Amanda Solloway, Stephen Timms, Chris White.

Questions 1 – 70

Witnesses: **Professor Louise Archer**, Director, ASPIRES 2 Project, King's College London, **Professor Ann Hodgson**, Co-Director, Centre for Post-14 Education and Work, University College, London, **Professor Sir John Holman**, Gatsby Foundation, and **Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE**, Principal Research Fellow, University of Warwick, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Good afternoon. Welcome to our Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy. We are grateful to you for giving us evidence when it comes to the provision of career advice, information and guidance. For the purposes of the record, would you mind telling us who you are and where you come from? Deirdre, can I start with you?

Dr Hughes: My name is Dr Deirdre Hughes; I am Principal Research Fellow at the University of Warwick Institute for Employment Research. I am also the former Chair of the National Careers Council, reporting to three skills Ministers from April 2012 to September 2014. I am currently Chair of the DfE Core Maths Support Programme, which is managed by the Education Development Trust, so I have a particular interest in maths and young people continuing with their maths, as well as careers. I am Chair of the matrix quality standard independent governance board.

Professor Sir John Holman: I am John Holman; I am Professor of Chemistry at the University of York. I am a former head teacher and former Director of the National Science Learning Centre. The reason that I am interested in this area particularly is that the Gatsby Foundation asked me to write a report on career guidance based on international study. That was published last year.

Professor Hodgson: My name is Ann Hodgson; I am a Professor of Post-Compulsory Education at UCL Institute of Education. My area of expertise is, as my title says, in post-compulsory education, but that includes from 14-plus, and I have done a lot of work in the 14-to-19 area.

Professor Archer: I am Louise Archer; I am a Professor of Sociology of Education at King's College London. I direct the ASPIRES study, which is a 10-year study of children's science and career aspirations, and I have done lots of work in the area of educational aspirations and identities and inequalities.

Q2 Chair: Can I ask a question to you all, which is a general question? How good or bad is the provision of careers advice in this country? Deirdre, if I may start with you.

Dr Hughes: Bad.

Professor Sir John Holman: Patchy.

Professor Hodgson: Yes, I would say patchy to bad; I would go between the two.

Professor Archer: Patchy to bad.

Q3 Chair: In terms of where we are and we were, say, five or 10 years ago, is it getting better or worse, or is there a steady state?

Dr Hughes: Based on findings from an international symposium held in Japan last year, we looked at provision including the UK, and the evidence was that England was beginning to slip behind other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Japan, Switzerland and many others.

Professor Sir John Holman: There never was a golden age. It is getting better, just, with the potential to get a lot better.

Professor Hodgson: This has been an issue for a very long time. I can remember in the 1980s working on the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, if people can remember that time. An awful lot of work was done in this area, and we seem to have gone round and round in circles and very much come back to the same point. It is constantly recycling and I am afraid not necessarily improving, in my view.

Professor Archer: Yes, things are pretty much the same.

Q4 Chair: Sir John, you have carried out a report, which is a very useful report, and you did international comparisons in terms of Finland, and I think you went to the Netherlands, Germany and Hong Kong. Of those international comparators, where do we fit and which country would you single out as being the most effective?

Professor Sir John Holman: It is complicated, of course, by the fact that countries that I was very impressed with, such as the Netherlands and Germany, do not have comparable education systems to ours, because they have, essentially, selective education in which children are put into technical and vocational streams or general academic streams at quite an early age. I saw a lot of things that we can certainly learn from in those countries—the Netherlands and Germany—but you have to be careful to think about how you would transfer them to the English system, which is substantially a comprehensive system. In Finland I saw things that I thought could be translated and transferred very directly into the English comprehensive school system. Therefore, if I had to pick one country, which, of course, everyone does, it would be Finland, which does it very successfully and would be quite transferable.

Q5 Chair: Your report suggests eight benchmarks and you carried out a study in terms of 10% of secondary schools in England, and the results were quite damning. No schools achieved more than five of the eight benchmarks; 69% achieved only one. Why was that? Why are we so bad at this?

Professor Sir John Holman: First of all, these benchmarks are the gold standard; they are world class. That was the whole point of doing what I did, so you would not expect schools to be instantly getting eight out of eight. The other thing is that if you unpack the benchmarks, they are not single-category achievements; you have to do several things to reach, for example, the benchmark of encounters with employers. You have to be doing several things. It was quite common for schools within that particular benchmark to reach the necessary criteria for three out of five but not get it because they were missing by the other two. It was quite a demanding thing, and when we dug into it we found that for many of the schools, possibly even a majority, if they had just done one or two more things they would have got the benchmark. Therefore, it is not quite as bad as it looks but there is a long way to go. By the way, that instrument that we used we are now making available for all the schools to use in collaboration with the Careers & Enterprise Company.

Q6 Chair: Deirdre, Neil's predecessor as Chair of the Education Select Committee, Graham Stuart, has given us evidence, and he said, in respect of the Quality In Careers Standard, run by Careers England, that it is the single most important change that could be introduced to improve careers advice for young people in this country—making it a requirement rather than a recommendation. Would you agree? Should we be pushing towards quality standards in this way?

Dr Hughes: I feel that we should be pushing towards quality and the achievement of quality standards. When you look at the international evidence or indeed evidence closer to home, many leaders who are involved in high-performing careers activities in many cases are working towards a kitemark and a standard, so it is one kitemark and one

standard that exists. There are many standards in the field, which does create an element of complexity, so what I would say is that the Government owns the matrix quality standard for information, advice and guidance, and that it sets out key principles for information, advice and guidance, which complement these other standards. I would agree with Graham that we need a narrative to push schools towards using quality kitemarks in their everyday work, because that will be a really good lever to drive up performance.

Q7 Ian Mearns: Sir John, you said that there was never a golden age, but certainly things were better than they are now. I think back to the time before Connexions was invented and we had the career services national association and careers companies being established, and organisations like the one I was Chair of, Tyneside Careers, ploughed surpluses back into other things for the client group that we were dealing with. There was no surplus—there was no profit—from our company anyway. It all went back into providing other services or additional services. While there was never a golden age, when was it best?

Professor Sir John Holman: There was a time, possibly prior to Connexions, when there was a good combination of both career advice and guidance, because that is only part of it, and good industrial context. You talk about a career standard, and that is a standard for those who give advice. As the eight benchmarks show, advice is only one of them. How would you know if you were living in a golden age? You would have to apply some pretty wide-ranging and complex tests. The problem with Connexions was that they became more and more an organisation that focused on those that were at risk of being unemployed or out of the education system—the so-called NEETs.

Q8 Ian Mearns: It was established with a different aim in mind. Anne Weinstock was the Chief Executive, and the idea behind Connexions was that it was going to be a fully comprehensive, all-encompassing service for young people, but they tried to do it by using the careers service budget plus about 10%, and that was never going to be achievable with that sort of parameter.

Professor Sir John Holman: It ended up focusing on quite a small section—a very important one but quite a small section—which meant that the mainstream, through-the-middle students did not get to benefit as much as they should have done.

Q9 Chris White: A question for Dr Hughes: your opening remarks, you said that in this international symposium we were slipping behind Saudi Arabia. What are they doing that is allowing them to leapfrog over our provision?

Dr Hughes: One of the key privileges that Saudi Arabia had was that it was able to cast its net across the globe and to look at best practice globally, and it created its own national standards. Scotland have been looking at the standards that Saudi Arabia have now developed. I would encourage the Committee to have a look at those standards to give you some insight as to what other best practice looks like internationally. They started from a greenfield site. The problem that we have now is we have systematically over recent years, if I may say, been dabbling in careers, adding bits to it and spinoffs to it, in terms of the infrastructure, and so we do have a very confused and congested marketplace.

Q10 Chris White: This is probably totally unfair to ask, but do you know what the level of unemployment is in Saudi Arabia?

Dr Hughes: Off the top of my head, for the point of accuracy, I would not want to say a figure; there will be region variations. However, Saudi Arabia has a real issue around developing its indigenous population to aspire to work and careers. They have a very different economy, but the fundamental point for the Committee is that it is quite interesting to look at their standards. I am not suggesting that we would just import them and use them here, but it will give you something to look at alongside the Gatsby benchmarks, and perhaps the work on London Ambitions, where it sets out seven key principles that would, it is hoped, make provision more effective in London.

Q11 Stephen Timms: I saw that the CBI produced a report a couple of years ago called “Future Possible”, which said, “The transfer of responsibility for careers guidance to schools has been a failure”, and I wonder whether that is still the conclusion that one would draw about the effects of that change.

Professor Hodgson: It is difficult for schools in the current climate to offer impartial advice and guidance. The benchmarks that they are judged against by Ofsted and in performance tables are all to do with acquiring examinations, and their funding is based on getting young people into their sixth forms. Under those circumstances, their desires may not be in the best interests of young people, and there is certainly a lot of evidence from Ofsted and elsewhere that schools are not necessarily putting their students ahead of their own institutional benefits. It is a very difficult thing for them to do. It does need an outside voice, and it would be the same if you put any other provider, like colleges, in charge of it. It is just that once you have got an institutional base in charge of it then clearly they have their own particular interests that are not necessarily in the interests of young people. That is where it becomes a problem. That is relatively well known and a lot of the evidence points to that.

Q12 Neil Carmichael: Professor Archer’s ASPIRES 2 study basically concludes with that theme—that it is patchy—but she points out that the ones that need it most get it least, and I was wondering if any of you had any comments as to why that might be.

Professor Archer: I can comment from some of our data, if that is helpful. We have been looking more into our qualitative data; our survey gives an overview of the broad level, but if you look at the reasons that the students and their parents give in interviews, one of the aspects is that disadvantaged kids tend to get less good provision, in the sense that they tend to be in more economically deprived areas, but then also one of the main reasons a lot of the students give for not accessing it is, “Well, it is just too little, too late.” There is the notion, as one child said, “I had already made my choices. What was the point?” It was coming too late. They feel that the self-referral model does not work, particularly for disadvantaged groups. We know that they have many more barriers to using a self-referral model. Kids say, “If I am not pushed to do it, I will not necessarily know it is good for me and worthwhile doing.”

There is also, as Ann was saying, the concern, which is very much picked up among young people and parents, of whether they are getting impartial advice; most of them do not feel that they do. They know their school or their local college wants, as they put it, bums on seats. To an extent, even employers are coming in, often selling, with a view—so

I think they are questioning what they are getting, when they are getting and how much they are getting.

Q13 Neil Carmichael: Following on from that, what do you think schools should do to improve the situation?

Professor Hodgson: One thing that they could do is to ensure that colleges and apprenticeship providers are allowed access, and that is not just at Key Stage 4—that is for 15 to 16 year-olds, but also in the sixth form. Interestingly, we are doing some work on future apprenticeships at the moment at the centre where I work, and talking with providers there about why young people are not necessarily coming forward for apprenticeships. This is an anecdote but I think it shows up what is actually happening. It is not just that people are not allowed to come in at 15 and 16 and, therefore, people do not know about the routes at that point. However, even at the later stage of between 16 and 19, many of the schools want their young people to go into higher education, and they don't want apprenticeship providers coming in, because that suggests a whole other route.

It was one example that was given in one of the focus groups we were doing, where people said apprenticeship providers had been allowed access, but when they got there they were given five people to see, so it was only those people who made a real effort to say, "I definitely want to have an apprenticeship" that were then seen by the apprenticeship providers. It was not a whole-cohort approach, so getting people in to talk to the whole cohort is extremely beneficial for young people, so that they do not feel they are given the wrong advice, and they can discuss it amongst themselves in a more realistic way.

Dr Hughes: I just say that I do not think that it is an unreasonable expectation in today's modern age that every school would have an explicit careers policy that parents could see on their website. The other aspect is that, of course, we are putting a lot of burden on teachers to develop careers education, and teachers that I have met across the country have said, "We need help around what the learning outcomes are for a good careers education programme, and what the sorts of activities are that we could do in order to achieve the learning outcomes." Where we are seeing some progress is that, in different parts of the country, we are beginning to see more of the local enterprise partnerships and the local authorities, with partners, coming together to say, "Can we do more in this regard?"

The third key aspect—which again I would hope would not be too difficult to achieve, and certainly in London this is its goal, and I guess if it is good enough for London it should be good enough for the rest of the country—is a governor with insight to ensure that the organisation is supporting all students, because we have a situation where it is indeed encouraging to find that there is some investment that is going to go into helping more vulnerable young people. The Prime Minister announced that there will be another £70 million in the system, and that has to be welcomed. The critical issue here is that that money has to be spent wisely on top of the £20 million that has already gone to a new Careers & Enterprise Company. The Gatsby Foundation sets out some really important principles. With the work that has been going on in London with the London LEP—and indeed in Bradford, in Hull, in Cornwall, in Oxfordshire and other places—we are beginning to see more people want a good careers offer, but we need some clarity as to

what “good” looks like beyond the principles that Sir John and the Gatsby Foundation have very helpfully laid for us.

Q14 Neil Carmichael: Sir John, would you like to comment?

Professor Sir John Holman: I was going to make the point that it is important for all young people—the whole cohort—to get some exposure to what it is like to take an apprenticeship, but that does not necessarily have to be some older person from the college or from the company coming in. It can be people who are themselves apprentices; in Germany I saw some really good examples of apprentices coming into their schools, blue overalls on, saying, “This is what I do on a Tuesday. I came out this morning to see you. I was doing this this morning. I am going to be doing this this afternoon. This is what it is like.” When you put alumni in front of young people, they are far more convincing than some old bloke like me. We should do more of that, because in a sense they will believe that apprentice in a way that they will not believe others. As Louise and Ann were saying, they have this scepticism. They are very canny about whether someone is trying to tell them a line, but if they get it from someone who was in the same position as them just a few years ago they will believe it.

Q15 Neil Carmichael: That is really putting the professional into the school, is it not?

Professor Sir John Holman: It is the young person.

Chair: I just want to bring Louise in, because she wanted to comment about this.

Professor Archer: I wanted to pick up on what Deirdre is saying. There is a real important need to focus on what it is that we want the young people to be able to do after this. A competencies approach, like they are doing in Scotland, is very interesting in that way. They are looking at an approach where it is threaded through from primary to secondary. It is not something that you do right before you choose; it is not just about making decisions; it is about the whole notion of choice. That competencies-based approach—where it really spells out that in primary school, “I will be able to...” and a whole list of things, and then in secondary, “What experiences and skills and knowledge would we expect them to have?”—gives a level of clarity to people with the delivery, and also helps us think about what sort of system we would need to design and deliver to deliver that.

Q16 Neil Carmichael: Also in your report you talk about STEM subjects and the issues around reluctance to get involved, both in the subjects and later on, and you talk about the lack of cultural capital. For the purposes for those who are watching this, could you define cultural capital, and then explain what you think needs to be done to overcome that particular barrier?

Professor Archer: Cultural capital is the knowledge, skills and understanding. It is an understanding of the way the world works and cultural knowledge. Often in the context of making choices or making educational decisions, some people have a better understanding of the system: they can play the system better than others; they can mobilise their economic and social resources to help them get on. Again, it comes back to a vision of what careers education is for, and different people have different views of that, but, from an equity perspective, careers education would be trying to help, support and build cultural

capital among groups who do not necessarily have it. A lot of young people will not necessarily know the way the labour market works. They will not know about the jobs that will be in demand in the future, for example.

Q17 Chris White: At a national level there seems to be a fairly crowded market, with the National Careers Service, Careers & Enterprise Company and Jobcentre Plus all having a role. Do you think this is helpful or do you think it is confusing to have so many players in the field?

Professor Sir John Holman: It is extremely confusing. It is great that this Committee spans two Government Departments, but there are actually three involved in this game, because the DWP is involved as well. Co-ordinating policy across one Department is a challenge; across three it is really a very significant challenge, and I would very much like to know where the co-ordination ministerially is going to come from. The risk is that if this is not well co-ordinated, down at the school level, the level of head teachers and career co-ordinators, they will just look at this as a forest of, “Oh, it is another initiative.” It does not fit together for them and they cannot see how they can deliver a particular benchmark through a particular initiative; it just looks like another initiative.

Q18 Chris White: Where do you think they should sit? Which Department do you think should have this responsibility?

Professor Sir John Holman: I think the Department for Education should lead on it because they are closest to schools.

Q19 Chris White: I am sorry. I do not want to start a dialogue, but when you are thinking of one of the things that we may want to achieve and having more businesses involved in delivering the advice, which side is going to win in that particular tug-of-war?

Professor Sir John Holman: When the Career & Enterprise Company first appeared, I thought, “Oh, here we go again. Here is another organisation.” However, the way it is mobilised and the clarity of its objectives seem very good, and we should look to them to deliver the whole of the employer side of the bargain, because essentially it works on two sides: the school and the employer side. The Career & Enterprise Company seems to me to be well placed to deliver all the things that we need in terms of employer engagement. It reports to DfE, which is encouraging, and that then begins to give you the seeds of how you could co-ordinate this very complex landscape.

But the most important thing for me is stability. It has been changed and changed and changed. It is very confusing for schools. The building blocks are now in place. It may not be perfect but it has to be given a good crack to make it work and make it get bedded in, so that schools being to understand it, because in the really successful countries I visited, everyone understood how career guidance works. The parents understood it. They knew what was going to happen, when it was going to happen. The employers did, the teachers did and the pupils did. It is that kind of stability that we just do not have in this country, and we need it.

Dr Hughes: May I just add that there is another player, which is the Cabinet Office, which funds a number of careers initiatives, as well as DWP and BIS and DfE? My one

recommendation would be that it is time to take stock of the value of all the spinout projects that seem to be emerging in the current landscape, because, as Sir John has said, it is incredibly confusing. It is early days yet to be able to say, with a high degree of confidence, that the Careers & Enterprise Company will help transform the landscape. It is part of the solution but it is not the only solution. I can give you one very practical example about the new Careers & Enterprise Company. I am not quite sure of its legal status as a company—whether it is a charity or a company—but it is very much a case for this new company around it competing with some of the charities that have been in the business for quite some time, so it too needs to ensure its sustainability in the long term and be independent of Government.

It is a market player, along with many other market players, in a very congested area. At grassroots level so far it had not achieved national coverage. It is not prevalent in every LEP area in the country, and I know it will take time for it to be, but while it is doing that we are seeing a number of other initiatives at local level that are running parallel. If you speak to teachers—I met with a group of practitioners and managers in Solihull last week in preparation for coming here—the one message that they have is that there is such a proliferation of initiatives that schools are beginning to close their doors in some cases, because they don't know who to trust, and they just have too many people wanting to add something to their agenda.

Q20 Chris White: Perhaps the others could answer. We recognise that there is more than one Department, and there now appear to be four Departments and 240 different providers in London. It is recognised that there are quite a lot of people involved in this, but how on earth do our young people know where to go? Where do they start? What advice would you give? How do they navigate this?

Professor Archer: In our data they are finding it very difficult to navigate; many of them are confused. Obviously there is a variation in provision, so some who are in schools that have a more embedded, secure and well-resourced service find it easier, but on the whole they are telling us, “I do not know the difference between these things”, and the parents are having trouble. Again, it is that variation, particularly with a fragmented service, that reproduces inequalities, because you will always find that the people with the most resource and who are best able to navigate it will do the best out of it. It is that need for some centralised coherence that means that you are not dependent. If I am in a school up in a deprived area with not many local businesses that are on board with this, offering me stuff, I have nothing.

Q21 Chris White: In terms of NEETs, do you think a more professional, coherent, structured careers advice programme would reduce the number of NEETS we had, or would be of benefit to the young people who become NEETs because of the lack of options or the lack of awareness of options?

Professor Archer: We have done research previously on urban kids who drop out of school, and for them the thing that makes the real difference is having a long-term trusting relationship. Having a one-off meeting with a careers officer is usually neither here nor there. They talk about putting the paper in their pocket and ignoring it. It is about having long-term trusting relationships, and for those groups there is no quick, easy fix. It has got to be over time; they have got to build up those relationships and feel that the person has

their interests at heart and can work with them. Sometimes they have quite multiple, complex needs; it is not just the careers information that is the main issue. It is addressing stuff around that and giving them the cultural capital to understand how to navigate these pathways of what the options are.

Professor Hodgson: Could I just add that I think that was something that was done well in Connexions in many parts of the country? They did do some very good work with those particularly vulnerable young people. The criticism was always that they didn't have a universal service.

We should be careful not just to talk about schools here, because a lot of young people go into colleges, and actually careers advice needs to go on throughout the 14-to-19 phase. It is not just a one-off. Very often young people make the wrong choice at 16, and then at 17 find themselves in a really difficult situation, because they feel if they are not doing well they are one year behind and they really don't know who to turn to at that point. We need to think about what colleges and independent training providers do, as well as schools. That is where this idea of having a progressive programme that starts early and carries on is very important, so that there is some continuity, and so that records are passed on from one type of provider to another, in order to make those leaps.

Q22 Chris White: You have just raised the issue of colleges. How do you think the provision in colleges compares? I know it is very difficult to answer, but how do you think, in very general and very broad terms, colleges compare with schools?

Professor Hodgson: I cannot answer that question. I do not know enough about it, but I think it honestly depends on the type of college as well. General FE colleges would be very good at having links with employers and on the vocational side. Sixth-form colleges would be very good at having links with higher education providers, and they might be not so good the other way round, so it would depend on the type of college. However, we need to be aware that young people are supposed to be in some form of education or training up to the age of 18 and a lot of them will be in colleges by that age, so we need to think about a service that fits for them as well as for the schools. That was my only point.

Professor Sir John Holman: I would go a little bit further than Ann and say that I have seen colleges do it better than schools do, for the reason that Ann says—they are closer to employers and their students are closer to the point at which they have to go into employment—but often the teachers and lecturers who are doing the teaching are themselves people from business backgrounds. They are able to make those links through the curriculum day by day between employment and what the youngsters are learning, and that is very powerful.

Dr Hughes: May I just briefly add that what is quite distinctive in colleges and indeed our universities is that colleges often will employ, as will universities, career development professionals. Those are people who have postgraduate training, who are familiar with labour market issues, and who have the skills and techniques around positive mindsets and career counselling. What we are seeing recently is that that particular sector has been overlooked. If we just look, for example, at the Careers & Enterprise Company, as yet there is no evidence that career development professionals are firmly embedded in that policy discourse, and yet if we look at university and we look at FE, you will see that they are prevalent. We are seeing the impact of that in the university provision for career

development professionals in this country. If we take London, for example, London South Bank has closed its provision to train careers advisers. Because of this fragmentation, we are seeing trained careers advisers seeking to go into the higher education sector rather than in schools, which is not good for young people in schools. We do need to find some solutions around the debate. It should not be about employers and schools. There are a number of intermediaries in there. Some are alumni, some are young people themselves, but if you look to Switzerland you will see that Switzerland, in its vocational education training system, says that one of the main strengths in that system is that career guidance is systematic and evidence is used to inform policy. I would encourage you to look at that when you think about colleges, universities and schools.

Q23 Michelle Donelan: I just wanted to further explore briefly the link between employment and education. Now, there are various organisations out there doing it, as well as the new scheme, and in addition we have already touched on the disparity between areas. Why do you think that the link still remains so poor? Is it because the new scheme of the network has not been embedded enough, or do you think it is a bigger problem than that?

Professor Hodgson: It is a big problem. Employers have a very different culture than perhaps exists in education. It is also because—it goes back to an answer that I made earlier, which is perhaps not helpful but is important to know—schools are focused on examination and results. That is what they are interested in, and while of course they want their young people to go on to be successful in life—no good school would not want that—they tend to think about higher education rather than employment.

As has been said earlier by Deirdre, they really don't know an awful lot, very often, about the type of employment that is out there and the workplace outside the education system. It is not surprising that those two cultures find it difficult to talk to one another, and often schools—and I will say schools rather than colleges here—don't find the time to make those links. It is not seen as a top priority, certainly not now that they do not have to offer work experience as part of the curriculum for 14 to 16-year-olds, even though I know they do as part of study programmes.

Q24 Michelle Donelan: Bearing in mind that it is not in the schools' best interests in terms of the academic figures, etc, to promote these things, how can we support the enterprise company to ensure that there is a link between their advisers and the schools, and that the schools fully utilise this, if there is this inherent problem with the system of what is in the best interests of the schools?

Professor Sir John Holman: You need to incentivise schools to take it seriously. Head teachers have a pile of priorities and they have to juggle between them all the time, and career guidance does not necessarily get to the top of their list of priorities very quickly, particularly for the reasons that Ann said. However, if you could help them to prioritise it more highly, then that would have an effect, and one way would be through the use of destination measures that showed clearly how that school was performing in helping young people to get into valuable and highly rewarding jobs.

This goes to something much more subtle than just, "How many NEETs have you got?" It has got to be, "How many youngsters are you sending in to apprenticeships, higher level apprenticeships, universities and all of that stuff?" At the moment, the ways of measuring

and collecting destination measures are very fragmented, and some of them are not statistically sufficiently robust, so they are not published in performance tables. It feels like a work in progress, and the key would be if you could get schools playing a part in the collection of destination measures, because there are all sorts of payoffs for them if they know where their pupils have ended up. You could get schools playing a part, so that it begins to be something that is not just done to the schools—"Here are your destination figures; publish them; here they come"—but that the schools play an active part in it, so that they begin to understand what is happening to their youngsters, and they begin to shape and use that data. At the same time, it incentivises them because it makes them show up how good they are at the thing that matters most of all to parents, which is "Will my child get a job?"

Q25 Michelle Donelan: Which is the purpose of the pathway of what education is. Would you all agree that that is essential in order to change things dramatically?

Professor Archer: It also depends whether we think this is important. Is it part of what an education should include and be about? At the moment there is no requirement; we do not ask schools to show, "Have you developed these competencies in these young people at different levels?" At the moment, it is treated as an add-on because that is the way that it is framed, so if we want to have a radical shift it is about recognising this is an important part of education.

Professor Hodgson: If you look at the Ofsted framework, clearly they are expected to look at careers education and information, advice and guidance. However, it is not highlighted, and although I don't know this, I suspect there is not a school that has got a failing grade as a result of careers education. There are other things that are looked at much more highly.

Dr Hughes: There are some interesting developments around portals that are being developed, based on a matching system and TripAdvisor. For example, the London Ambitions portal is looking at how it can connect London schools to employers and other opportunities. The complication that we have is that around the country a number of LEPS are developing their own portals, while we have a Careers & Enterprise Company that is also developing its work with employers. We also have Business in the Community, which is a longstanding player in helping schools to connect better with business. We have Young Enterprise.

I give those to you as examples of the complexity in the system, because as a taxpayer one would hope that we would not be double-funding initiatives that are already receiving government funds. I am not suggesting that we are, but it comes down to looking at what the accountability framework is if we have organisations that are set up primarily to link employers to schools and to bring volunteers, etc, into schools. We have to be clear on what the accountability framework is, first to ensure that we are getting good value for money in tough times, and secondly to ensure that we have got the rigour that one would expect around provision.

[NEIL CARMICHAEL *in the Chair*]

Chair: That latter point, of course, is akin to the chambers for trade in Germany, where there is statutory responsibility attached to those chambers to do exactly what you have just suggested.

While you were talking we have had a palace coup, and I am now Chair. It is just that my army is now bigger than his—*[Laughter.]* It is just a question of quorum and so on.

Q26 Stephen Timms: On Sir John's point about destination measures, the obvious difficulty here is that you are looking at how the school was doing several years previously. Is there a way around that, or does that not really matter?

Professor Sir John Holman: It is quite right that there is a lag. There is a very long lag at the moment, longer than would be optimal, and in fact because the published destination data has to go through a ratification and checking process, it takes an extraordinarily long time.

Q27 Stephen Timms: How long is it at the moment?

Professor Sir John Holman: I think it might be something like four years, but I am not quite sure. That can be speeded up. However, in the steady state it does not matter so much, because the thing about published performance data about schools is that parents look at it and over time they build up a picture. At some point we have to enter the cycle that gets us towards that steady state, and we should be doing it as quickly as we can, but, as with so much of this, don't expect results within two or three years. A young person starts at the age of five and you won't know whether the process has worked until they are 25. We must not say, "Oh, that isn't working. We have got to do something new." You have to stick with it and give it time to work, and destination measures are a very good example of that.

Q28 Michelle Donelan: I have one more question on work experience. There is a double problem now. The regional variety shows that in the north of England there is a lot less participation in work experience, so I wondered why you think that is—in particular, why a whole region is not exploring that opportunity for young people. In addition, now it is not mandatory for schools, how are we going to achieve the targets that you think are necessary?

Professor Sir John Holman: There are several points there. Certainly one of our benchmarks is that there should be work experience, and the best work experience I have seen anywhere is in Finland, where they do it twice: two very high quality work experiences, one before 16 and one before school-leaving age. The pupils play a very large role in fixing up their own work experience. In this country we worry about that, because of the problems of the disadvantaged young people who cannot fix up that work experience. In Finland they are much more relaxed about it, and we need to try to exploit much more the opportunities that come through families and friends to fix up work experience. I would draw the line at making it a statutory requirement, because I don't think that is the world that we occupy here.

The thrust of what I am saying in my report is that it should be led by schools. There need to be some external things but it should be led by schools, so it does have to be schools that are fixing up their own work experience.

One last point, and perhaps one that we have not touched on much in this discussion, is around gender. I must say I will be very worried about learning too many lessons from Saudi Arabia, because a very important part of this whole agenda of career guidance is around diversity and equality. It is the way you get equality for people that don't get it in other ways, so let us park that point.

One thing about work experience is that the Wellcome Trust carry out a monitor of young people and their attitudes to science, and they found, very interestingly, that 35% of young men did work experience that was in some way STEM-related—related to science and technology—whereas only 21% of young women did it in those areas. There is quite a serious gender mismatch there, and there is something around making opportunities available to people and pointing out to them, “You don't do this work experience just because it is the thing that people like you have always done in the past. Think about what it might offer you in the future.”

[MR IAIN WRIGHT *in the Chair*]

Q29 Chair: Normal service has been resumed. My army is just as big Neil's now, so we can get back to normal. Louise, you wanted to come in and respond quickly.

Professor Archer: Yes, so it was our data that showed that and there are two things that I would take from it. One is that there was a relationship with social class, so low and very low cultural capital, so basically there are more disadvantaged students in those regions in our survey, and they were doing less work experience. One of the main factors in that is because so many young people have to find their own work experience, and they have got less strong networks to draw on. For our other young people in more affluent areas, their parents have a lovely range of social contacts that they can use to get them into it.

Dr Hughes: There is a danger of us just relying on family and friends. I don't think I would be sitting in front of this Committee if in Northern Ireland, when I was much younger, I had to rely on family and friends. The key thing here is that we need to capture the imagination of young people, parents and employers. We need to look at how we can capture soft skills that many young people have, and talents that they have. One of the things that has been happening here in London at the moment—and indeed I am seeing it in other places as well—is this idea of moving away from having a two-week block of work experience and your mum and dad helping you find it. We have to ask ourselves: is it correct that at the age of 16, some young people will have had no experience of work? That could be insights—people coming in to talk to them and give them motivation.

Here in London, there is a movement looking at this: surely we should be able to get to a place where young people can capture their soft skills in an additional portfolio that they could create themselves, such as LinkedIn? Many of them are doing this already. Perhaps this could relate to Lord Young's initiative around an enterprise passport, if it does not become too focused on enterprise but is about helping young people to record their experience of work.

You may not like this, but if you look to Scotland, you will see that Scotland has 120 hours of experience of the world of work that is accredited, which is there to motivate young people to want to get experience of work and to educate their parents on the value of that.

Chair: I am very conscious of time and I want to bring Paul in when it comes to apprenticeships.

Q30 Paul Blomfield: I will try to be quick. Sir John, Professor Hodgson earlier talked about the incentives that 11-to-18 schools have in keeping people on into the sixth form. Was that your experience in the work that you did for your report? I wonder if you could tell us a little more about that.

Professor Sir John Holman: It was both my experience in writing the report and my experience when I was a head teacher of an 11-to-18 school, and it is not a problem that is easily solved. You might say that if we bring in external careers advisers they will be completely objective and they will not give biased advice—problem solved. However, of course, when they are not there, every minute of every day the youngsters are being taught by teachers who may well say, “You want to stay on here and do A-level History. You don’t want to go off to the college.” In a sense, the school has an almost infinite number of opportunities to influence youngsters towards staying on in the school, if that is what they are trying to do, so this is one area where you do need to be interventionist. You do need to require the school to show youngsters what the opportunities are in college and in apprenticeships, preferably using alumni in the way that I described earlier. I would not intervene very much but I would on that one, because I think it is critical.

Q31 Paul Blomfield: Do you think the intervention that the Government are planning in changing the law to require schools to involve apprenticeship providers in careers advice will go any way towards overcoming those barriers?

Professor Sir John Holman: Was this the thing that was announced very recently by the Prime Minister?

Paul Blomfield: Yes.

Professor Sir John Holman: I don’t know what an apprenticeship provider is. I don’t know what they would look like and how they would do it. I can’t get a picture of what would happen in an ordinary school under that scheme; I have not seen enough detail on it.

Dr Hughes: It is quite interesting that Sir Michael Wilshaw said that if he was in charge of the system, he would hope and expect that by Key Stage 3 young people were aware of their options. I am not sure about the practicalities of how one would decide which apprenticeship providers should come into schools and which should not. Therefore, I do think there is a strong case for making sure that the infrastructure that we have is understood by schools. Part and parcel of that is to ensure that there are independent, impartial individuals who are part of the mix; there is not an either/or. The bit that seems to be missing at the moment is careers professionals who can support and build capacity in schools, to ensure that young people are fully aware of their options. That seems to be a piece that is missing at the present time.

Q32 Paul Blomfield: I wonder if I could also ask a completely different question. Much of the debate around the failure of careers guidance focuses on those who do not go to university. There was a Higher Education Policy Institute/Higher Education Academy report last year in which 31% of those who chose to go to university, after the first year, said that

they were on the wrong course. I wonder if you have any reflections on how the system is failing those people who are going to university as well.

Professor Archer: I suppose one question is: is it a failure if you change course? They are not all dropping out.

Q33 Paul Blomfield: I guess the implication is that they had made the wrong choice in the context of where they saw their lives going. I would have thought that we could assume that it would be better for them, for the debt they were going to face and the waste of time, that they made the right choice first time, inasmuch as they could.

Professor Archer: Yes, there are lots of things around dropout, but also we have to recognise that in England we have a peculiar system that is very much geared up to early specialisation. Not every country has the same approach. It is a question for the sort of workforce we want in the future, the sorts of skills and portfolio working and so on. We are having to support young people to make these decisions, rather than choices, at quite early ages about particular routes, and so the issues of being on the wrong route can be quite important in that way. In the context of science, from year 8 and 9 we are getting kids on to either double science or triple science, and it is very hard, once you are on double science, which is about 75% of them, to get off that and to come back over if you change your mind. That is the wider context of why we make kids make such loaded choices so soon.

Q34 Lucy Frazer: Should careers guidance be locally led by the local market, or should it be nationally led?

Professor Hodgson: There is a lot of virtue in having a local approach, because regions are so very different. You need to be clear about what might be national and what might be local. In terms of labour market information and progression routes and so on, that is definitely a local issue, particularly for 14 to 19-year-olds. When you are talking about standards of careers education and other things, that is a national benchmark. It is not an either/or. There needs to be a mix of both, and it depends which part of it you are talking about.

I would also disagree with Sir John about it being to do with parents giving their children advice about work experience. Somebody at the local level who is brokering that is really helpful. Education Business Partnerships were in the picture in the past and they were extremely helpful, not only for schools and colleges but also for employers, because they only had one contact to make rather than being asked to talk to perhaps five or six different institutions. When we have done work in localities about careers education, employers simply cannot understand why they cannot have some kind of central place that they can go to, so that they are not constantly being asked to do things by different organisations and often in competition with one another. They cannot understand why providers are in competition with one another.

Local co-ordination, local labour market intelligence and progression routes have to be at the local level, but benchmarks and so on are national issues.

Professor Sir John Holman: What I saw in Finland was a system where everyone did high-quality work experience twice during their school career. The only way they could deliver that quantity of high-quality work experience was by involving parents and

families. I am not saying that that is the only source. Of course you need a safety net, of course you need an EBP, but if you want to get it at scale, you have to allow that families and friends help in the process.

Q35 Lucy Frazer: Thank you for clarifying. I want to move on to what Michelle asked you about—destination data—in this context. Sir John, you have said that good-quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities is critical as one of your benchmarks. We have a lot of destination data out there. We have the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, the Higher Education Statistics Agency data, we have ONS figures and LMI, so there is this data out there. Is it enough, and how should we be channelling it to ensure that students get—

Professor Sir John Holman: It depends on the level at which it is aggregated. I would say that schools should know at the individual pupil level where pupils have gone, because they can use that data to shape their policies and measure up and see how well they are doing.

Q36 Lucy Frazer: I am interested in the sense of students making a career choice, so if I study science I know that I can be a doctor and I know that people who have gone to study medicine at Sussex got jobs in X.

Professor Sir John Holman: Okay. I would call that labour market information rather than destination data. For me, destination data is something that says something about the school, and it is aggregated up together for the school and this is how these kids in that school got on. What you are talking about is very important, labour market information, which young people can use to make judgments about which job to go into, how much they will get paid, what is the chance of getting employed and that sort of thing.

Q37 Lucy Frazer: What is the best source that we have of that information at the moment?

Professor Sir John Holman: There is a very good source of it, which is called LMI for All. BIS funded it and the United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills has provided this data channel that provides live data drawn off the Labour Force Survey and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. It is available for any third party or first party to use. The problem is that under the Autumn Statement we heard that this kind of activity of the UKCES is likely to be wound up. I would like to make the point that this service, which we have at present—and it is free—is a very important service because it is live, dynamic labour market information. I hope that we can find some way, between the three Departments that are involved in this enterprise, to keep that data source going.

Q38 Lucy Frazer: Is the LMI enough? If it continues in operation, is it enough?

Professor Sir John Holman: The data source on its own is not enough.

Q39 Lucy Frazer: Is the data enough? Do you want any other data in that survey?

Professor Sir John Holman: We can probably get more nuances and extra categories, but the data on its own is not sufficient. You need someone to help interpret it from the local

point of view, and that is where guidance specialists are important. They are part of the solution. They are not the only part, but they are an important part.

Dr Hughes: Very briefly, LMI for All is an application program interface developed by Warwick University, on behalf of UKCES, with a number of partners. It is possible today to plug in LMI for All and for every school to stream labour market information into their school. In fact, we are working in the north-east with the Gatsby Foundation initiative there and, indeed, in many other places.

The very quick answer to this is that I would encourage you to look at what the jobcentres are doing around LMI and how they are using this, because we have BIS, we have DfE and we have the jobcentre. Each of them are looking at and doing different things with these large datasets and the application programme interface and we must not lose it, I really cannot stress enough. We are the only country; when you go internationally and you present it, even in Canada and other places—not Saudi Arabia—people are blown away by this because it is so innovative in terms of the technology. I really hope that we don't lose it, and certainly at the University of Warwick we will be doing all we can to look at how it can be sustained.

Chair: Thank you very much for your time. I am afraid we have to move on. We could have gone on substantially longer given the interest and the importance of this, but thank you for your time; we really appreciate it.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Dr Mary Bousted**, General Secretary, Association of Teachers and Lecturers, **Sian Carr**, Vice President, Association of School and College Leaders, **Martin Doel CBE**, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges, and **Marcus Mason**, Head of Business, Education and Skills, British Chambers of Commerce, gave evidence.

[NEIL CARMICHAEL *in the Chair*]

Q40 Chair: Hello. You have already witnessed three changes of Chair and it looks as though I am in for a while, because I am the one with three Members here. One of the fascinating things about the rules in the House of Commons is just how archaic some of them are, and I am pleased that is on record. As I have just been explaining to our two Clerks, we will be pressing the case for relaxation of the quorum rules, which have bedevilled this session so far. Would you mind just saying who you are and what you do, please?

Martin Doel: Martin Doel, Chief Executive, the Association of Colleges. The association represents the 330 further education and sixth-form colleges in England. Those colleges deliver approximately 50% of education to 16 to 18-year-olds; upwards of 35% of the apprenticeships delivered, so they are the apprenticeship providers for 35%; 10% of higher

education. The predominance of the education within further education is what we would call “professional and technical routes” rather than the better known “academic route”.

Sian Carr: Sian Carr, Vice President of the Association of School and College Leaders. I do have a day job, though: I am Executive Principal at Skinners’ Kent Academy and Skinners’ Kent Primary School in Tunbridge Wells.

Marcus Mason: Marcus Mason, Head of Business Education and Skills at the British Chambers of Commerce. We represent 52 accredited chambers from across the UK, which collectively have a membership of around 80,000, which includes businesses as well as education providers. We have just over 2,000 education providers in the membership as well.

Dr Boustead: Mary Boustead. I am General Secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, so I represent teachers and lecturers working in schools at primary and secondary and in FE as well.

Q41 Chair: Let us kick off with the observation that Sir Michael Wilshaw made last month: “Careers guidance in schools and colleges is uniformly weak”. First, you might want to say whether that is something you agree with or not, and then tell us why it is so poor.

Dr Boustead: It is patchy. I agree with the previous witnesses to the Committee that it is far from what we would want it to be. There have been lots of things the previous witnesses have said that I agree with. One of the things that has not been said is, in schools, we are giving careers advice and guidance to children and young people who are going into a labour market that is much more fragmented and much more difficult to navigate than it was even 10 years ago; where the transitions between school and work are much less well worn; and where you have a lot more self-employment, zero-hours contracts, globalisation, and proliferation of job types and careers. It has always been a tall order for schools to do careers education well, even in a more stable labour market. With the fragmentation of the labour market and the proliferation of skills you need in order to navigate it, it becomes more difficult. When that is added to, as the previous witnesses have said, the proliferation of careers advice providers, the proliferation of websites and no really clear, stable place where schools can go and get good advice about how to do this, it becomes a very difficult thing for schools to do.

I will just say one more thing. The previous witnesses have talked about the jobs that schools have to do. If you look at the rate of change in schools in terms of curriculum change, qualification change, structural change, performance-related pay, etc, there is a veritable tsunami of policy initiatives on schools, and careers advice and guidance is struggling like a drowning man, trying to find some oxygen to breathe into what we can give young people.

Q42 Chair: Does anybody have anything to add to that?

Sian Carr: I ought to add something to that. I have been in the business rather a long time and so I would agree with Mary that it is patchy. One of the reasons why it is patchy is because we have been through so many different systems, so many variations on a theme. Sometimes we are supposed to be driving it, sometimes we are not to have anything to do with it, and sometimes we are meant to be doing something in between both of those

things. That has not helped schools and school leaders to provide the quality in the guidance that is needed for our young people. That does not mean that we do not care about it and that we do not think it is important; we do. From my own experience, I have invested in a person who provides this whole area of leadership within my school, because I think it is so important that that happens.

Marcus Mason: It is not uniformly bad. We are having this discussion in the context of schools now being responsible for the provision of careers advice within their own institutions and, from what we can see in our membership, some schools have absolutely risen to the challenge and done a really good job at that.

I would agree with this panel and the previous panel that it is patchy, and it has probably become patchier, from the information that we are receiving from businesses and schools across our membership. Ultimately, schools have, in some cases, struggled to connect with their local labour market whilst previously intermediary brokers were better placed, perhaps, to do that. It has, in some cases, been de-prioritised because of lack of funding and also per-pupil funding incentives, which drive a particular type of activity and not the provision of good, impartial careers advice.

Martin Doel: I agree with the previous speakers that the careers education information, advice and guidance—and I will come back to education information, just not talk about advice and guidance, later, if we have the opportunity—is broken.

In terms of Sir Michael Wilshaw's comments, like many things in that particular speech, I have no understanding at all where he had the evidence to make an assertion that careers advice in colleges was poor. There may be better and worse advocates of provision of careers advice within colleges but, as we heard from the previous speakers, being much closer to the labour market and seeing it as their core business and the requirement that all staff within colleges are required to be matrix standard accredited for careers advice, I just do not know where he found the evidence to make that assertion in relation to colleges.

Q43 Chair: So “patchy” is really what you are going to conclude with, particularly in schools.

The British Chambers of Commerce also suggest that careers guidance is not being given sufficient priority in schools. We tested earlier, through one of the witnesses, the idea of Chambers being more robust, statutory or whatever in their relationship with schools. Does anybody have any comments on that thought?

Marcus Mason: This is a reference to international comparisons, for example, in Germany. There is a very different chamber of commerce system in Germany, where, essentially, all businesses are members. We have a voluntary system here, so it is a whole different territory. It would be very difficult to mandate chambers, which operate voluntarily in this country, to do anything, frankly. However, we are seeing chambers being more and more involved in voluntarily brokering and providing that support for their local schools and colleges. Due to their links to their local business community and to businesses that tend to be civic-minded, have a strong sense of attachment to their local community, chambers are very well placed to act as a broker between those businesses and schools. That is something that we are aiming to encourage through a new type of membership that is on offer to schools and colleges, which is to become members of

chambers and, as a result, get a range of services that help them connect to their local business community.

Q44 Chair: Martin, you suggested it should be mandatory for schools to work towards the Quality in Careers Standard. Do you think that would really make a difference?

Martin Doel: As discussed in the previous session, we need some clearer benchmarks on what “good” looks like within a school and, therefore, an ability for Ofsted and others to establish if they are fulfilling their remit most effectively there. I would also say, in the context of the recent announcement from the Secretary of State about providing access to young people to see apprenticeship providers as colleges and others and be aware of the wider routes is valuable as one part of that. I also think that the requirement for school sixth forms to be graded in the same manner or separately from the rest of the school will drive right behaviours here, as will destinations measures begin to drive some right behaviours. Investment in the Careers & Enterprise Company is valuable. What is perhaps missing from all of those individual elements is an overarching strategy. If you move back to the position within Germany—comparisons with Germany are always difficult to make because the economic model is so very different—what strikes me is that people in Germany have a clearer idea of their role within the system at any point, and there is more of a strategic design existing. We have almost a torrent of actions now in response to the fact that the careers education information, advice and guidance system is broken, rather than have a clear strategy to knit those all together in a pattern that is going to come up with something that will endure.

Q45 Chair: Obviously, the one point about Germany is it does have a strategy and there is that framework to provide that strategy and we, as a Committee, might want to look into that possibility here.

Dr Boustead: It is more than a strategy. Germany has a very clear idea of what an apprenticeship is and of apprenticeship standards. There has been a lot of talk about schools not recommending apprenticeships. There are a lot of apprenticeships at the moment that schools would not want to recommend. Ofsted has written very clearly about this—about apprenticeships that young people did not know they were on, sweeping the floor. I have a bit of local information for this session. I have been walking past a school every day for a year and there has been a young Afro-Caribbean man outside that school, in a high vis hat and so on, just sitting there. This morning, I said to him, “Can you tell me more about what you are doing?” He said, “I am on an apprenticeship.” I said, “What have you learnt?” He said, “Well, I have learnt how to sit out here very well.” It is funny, but it is not. That is a one-person thing this morning, but there is an issue here. Schools may well be reluctant to recommend apprenticeships in hospitality, catering and other areas until they can get an idea that the value and the worth of those apprenticeships will enable young people to get a job. Also, in our evidence, we have shown that it is not the case that young people of 16 and 17 don’t apply; it is that employers don’t put them on apprenticeships. You are far more likely to get an apprenticeship if you are already working for the company.

Q46 Chair: It is 5.30, so we have to keep our questions and answers short, but I am going to tempt fate by asking all of you what you think of the current measures in the Enterprise Bill in connection with apprenticeships, and particularly the idea of an institution.

Sian Carr: It is going to be very difficult for schools and it is linked with what Mary has just said: it is what kind of apprenticeships we are talking about. I was talking to a colleague from Manchester Metropolitan University at the weekend who was talking about degree apprenticeships, and that we could put members of our staff on those—teaching assistants and so on. I then began to think that that is a possibility. That is about growth and development of one's staff, but creating jobs for apprenticeships and, if we don't, being taxed on it in a very difficult financial situation is going to be problematic.

Martin Doel: Some welcome news is that every four years you can encapsulate those in a pattern of action, which reinforces each.

I might pick up a point from Mary's comments and the comment about types of apprenticeships. We experiment with things about every four years. The German apprenticeship system has changed twice since 1946. It is, therefore, a relatively easy one to navigate for young people and to understand. If we have some greater constancy of purpose for our apprenticeships, we are more likely to see high-quality apprenticeships and move forward in a measured way.

In terms of 16 to 18-year-old choices, we sometimes present young people with a plethora of choices, which is confusing to me, let alone parents and the young people. Bringing this down to some clearer routes, ones that have a chance of staying around for more than five years, is more likely to result in a counterweight in the technical professional system to the academic system, which has been relatively unchanged for the last 20 years.

Chair: We will certainly look into the German system in some detail after that.

Marcus Mason: When it comes to current apprenticeship policy, when you combine the 3 million target with the apprenticeship levy, we are going to see a huge increase in businesses and employers offering apprenticeships. The challenge is going to be in the signposting of apprenticeships within schools. Schools, as we heard earlier with the sixth forms, have very little incentive to signpost directly to apprenticeships. We are going to have to crack that in order to make sure that we fill those apprenticeships.

Chair: That is a perfect signpost for Ian to get started on the careers guidance market.

Q47 Ian Mearns: Before I do, the whole range of answers have sparked a number of questions running in my mind. Marcus, you said that the system is not uniformly bad, yet you said it has become more patchy. "Patchy" is a mixture of good, bad, indifferent and somewhere in between. Does "more patchy" mean more bad or more just indifferent? We need to drill down into this. That is one thing. The other thing is about apprenticeships. Apprenticeships have to be quality-assured. They have to have a quality outcome for a young person, not just a rebadged or rebranded existing training regime, which might lead nowhere in terms of career development for a young person. How are we going to ensure that?

Marcus Mason: When it comes to the issue of patchy and bad, ultimately what we have seen is, because previously you had a uniform provider through the Connexions system, there was more consistency across the board. In some cases, of course, that was not very

high quality, but at least there was some sort of provision pretty much delivered across the board. What we are finding, speaking to local schools and business now, is that in some cases schools are doing very little. In other cases, in schools where often the leadership is heavily invested in this agenda, we see exceptional provision delivered by the school and also in partnership with local providers. The provision is much more variable and that was my point about it being patchy.

Q48 Ian Mearns: You are highlighting there one of the dilemmas, I believe, of bums-on-seats funding regimes in whatever level of education. Due to the incentives that youngsters bring with them in financial package terms, be it pupil unit or whatever, sometimes you get the perverse incentive on behalf of an institution to say to a youngster, “We need you” for the good of the institution rather than for what potentially would happen in terms of improving that youngster. We have to get around that, because we are getting back to the situation that Malcolm Wicks described in the mid 1990s of some careers advice and guidance being dispensed in schools being akin to pensions mis-selling. That was the analogy that he used.

Martin Doel: Some of the actions that are being put in place now should be allowed to mature. One I am particularly taken with is a wider range of performance measures for schools post-16. One of the key ones is retention to complete the course commenced. There is a near-national scandal, probably, if you can have a national scandal just in London, where there is a 20% churn of young people at age 17 who start one course and then move on to another institution in order to complete another course in that wasted year. Having some penalties in the system for poor advice or for placing young people on the wrong course is one incentive. Destinations will be another, and having separate grades for school sixth forms from the rest of the school again will drive behaviour here. We need to see how those measures grip and what consequences they have; otherwise, we will be trying to change the machine even before those have had a chance to take effect.

Q49 Ian Mearns: ATL’s evidence is that outside agencies providing careers guidance can be hit and miss, and we have got a flavour of that from yourselves already. What more can be done to help schools and students navigate this complex market? What more can we do? Are there any quick wins or easy hits we can get?

Dr Boustead: In our view, we need more centralised guidance and more quality assurance of the careers advice that is available from the plethora of providers. We think the National Careers Service should have a specialist schools function, so that schools can get advice, guidance and some quality assurance on providers. The previous witnesses were saying that schools are closing their doors because there is a plethora of providers and they were talking about schools having a quality mark of careers providers. You cannot put the genie back in the box of just having one any more, but we do now have some agencies that go across the piece and someone or some agency needs to take responsibility for a kitemark of quality assurance of careers advice and guidance. That cannot just rely on a plethora of providers.

One of the things I did at the weekend in preparation for this Committee was go on some careers guidance websites, and a lot of them are awful. They also require you to know what you want to do and to be able to know the name of what you want to do. If you don’t have that cultural capital, it is difficult to get past that initial thing. What young people tell

us is, “We want face-to-face careers advice and guidance.” The more disadvantaged you are and the less social capital you have in terms of friends and family who can get you into law and into medicine and all those places, the more you need that individual advice and guidance. You need it, as the previous witness said, from a trusted, but I would also say informed, professional.

Q50 Ian Mearns: What you are really saying is that there should be a minimum entitlement across the piece.

Dr Bousted: Yes.

Sian Carr: I would agree with that. That is why we invested in a person, because they are a trusted, known person. We can continue those relationships and we continue them even after they have left us, wherever they have gone.

Dr Bousted: Some of our members say that the person who gets lumbered with careers advice and guidance is the person who has got periods to make up on their timetable. That is what we are being told, so we cannot ignore the patchiness of this.

Martin Doel: In relation to the need to improve advice and guidance, I would agree it does need to be increased, but not at the expense of careers education. It seems to me the answer to the previous question was to have those young people asking better questions of the website and being more able to self-determine in relation to seeking the advice and the information they require. That is a product of education throughout the curriculum, at particular times and different stages of their primary school career, their secondary school career, but in a systematic way that builds their understanding of the world of work and the options that might be before them.

Q51 Ian Mearns: Is there not a problem, though, that if youngsters get access to careers education advice and guidance at all it tends to be towards the end of Key Stage 4 and the trouble is that they are already down an academic path, because they are doing their options for the GCSE courses they are going on to in Key Stage 3?

Martin Doel: Can I give an example? I don’t know the international examples as well as some of the previous panellists, but I am reasonably aware of the Swiss one. Careers education information at particular stages of a child’s development through the school is mandated upon the school to provide. That information comes from industry against an agreed format and is updated every year by industry in order to present the pathways into their industry at an age-appropriate level for the young people throughout. You get a greater pattern of provision here rather than just depending on how good the individual careers adviser is at one school and how up-to-date they might be.

Q52 Ian Mearns: Sian, you recommended the introduction of a national framework to overcome variations in cost and quality. What would a framework look like from your perspective?

Sian Carr: It is about setting out those benchmarks and ingredients that have already been spoken about when one is looking for that impartial advice and guidance. I absolutely agree with Martin. Careers education is absolutely vital from 4 to 19, from my perspective,

but when you are looking to tap into that impartial advice and guidance, because there is such a plethora, you have to understand there is a quality about it and a national framework would provide that. That is why we are suggesting it.

Q53 Ian Mearns: The careers industry used to have the matrix standard. I do not know whether it still exists.

Sian Carr: We are not suggesting maybe producing something new, but—

Q54 Ian Mearns: It was never meant for individual schools, though. It was meant to be for broader careers education and advice and guidance providers, so how could that work for schools?

Sian Carr: I am not sure whether it could work for schools. We are looking at it from the perspective of those services that we might want to purchase or to buy in; we need to have that quality assurance. Whether there is something that can be a bridge between that and what we might need to benchmark for ourselves in schools in order that our provision is equal and provides equity for students is worth considering as well.

Q55 Ian Mearns: Should the National Careers Service be giving schools and colleges more support in the delivery of careers guidance?

Dr Boustead: Yes.

Martin Doel: Anything more is helpful, so yes. I would also, though, say that the information from the labour market intelligence should be fused with the National Careers Service and I share the concern of the previous speakers about the loss of the UK commission as a source of information. You asked a question earlier about the Institute for Apprenticeships; I would be interested to see how that particular aspect of their work transfers into the Institute for Apprenticeships or elsewhere.

Marcus Mason: We also need to make sure that the National Careers Service does not overlap too much with the Careers & Enterprise Company.

Chair: A very good point; thank you. We are going to move up a gear. Stephen is going to show us how fast we can go by tackling both vocational routes and career education in a curriculum.

Q56 Stephen Timms: First, to Martin, from a college's perspective, what do you think should be done to raise the awareness of vocational opportunities?

Martin Doel: Without concentrating too much on the lexicon, I would stop using the term "vocation", which has, I am afraid, become a damaged word, and start using the words "technical and professional", which have a degree of greater aspiration and direction around them. Also, it is important, as we have been discussing, to simplify to some degree, if not the content, the routes to build them. Particularly for 16 to 18-year-olds, not to require them to specialise too soon, but give them a broad experience and move them towards an industry rather than prepare them precisely for one industry. Think in terms of age 19 being the stepping off point normally for an apprenticeship, so you begin to fashion

a set of routes that are clearer to navigate but still don't tie down a young person's options unduly. You are then moving closer to greater awareness here.

Sometimes, particularly for parents who are guiding their children, it looks confusing and you have to sit down with somebody to take you through it. Once you have to have somebody who is going to sit you down and take you through it, for a 16-to-18, you have lost them and you default to the A-levels route, which they might drop out from at 17, rather than going for the alternative route. We have to make it simpler, clearer and we have to have a constancy of purpose and not mess around with it every five years. We then have a chance of having greater awareness.

Q57 Stephen Timms: It is not just a communications problem.

Martin Doel: No, there is a substance issue about how you group together these groups of activities and how you build an educative programme between 16 and 18. It is both this Government and the previous Government; it is not a party matter because it went in this direction with diplomas, then through to, now, programmes of study. We need to build on that direction of travel, particularly for young people.

Q58 Stephen Timms: Marcus, could I put a point to you? There is a suggestion that employers are choosing older people as apprentices because it is cheaper and easier for them. Do you think that is right—older rather than 16 or 17 year olds?

Marcus Mason: Certainly the growth in apprenticeships in recent years has been older people undertaking those apprenticeships. It is not necessarily cheaper. Traditionally, the training for younger apprentices has been much better, with a subsidised apprenticeship wage. Most businesses do not pay as low as the apprenticeship wage, but for younger people that is much lower as well. Businesses are quite open and receptive to hiring younger apprentices. In fact, for the average businessperson, particularly the SMEs that we speak to every day, their intuitive idea of what it means to be an apprentice they associate with being younger. However, it is finding the right people at that age, and it comes back to the point about schools not appropriately signposting these types of opportunities. Sometimes you have businesses going out and advertising apprenticeships in the 16-to-18 or up-to-24 age groups and really struggling to get enough applicants for those types of opportunities.

Dr Boustead: Although the figures do not map that out. At ATL, we did some work on this in preparation for this Committee. 50% of registrants on Apprenticeship Vacancies' online system were under 19 years of age, but only 6% of 16 to 17-year-olds were on apprenticeships. This narrative that schools are not talking about them and are not telling people, if there are 16 and 17-year-olds and they have that percentage on the system applying and only 6% being appointed, there is an issue there. I am afraid, to be blunt, there is an issue with employers taking apprenticeship training money and training people in jobs they are already doing and double-counting for that. There is also the issue that 47% of employers in 2014 did not provide any training at all. We should not just load all this on to schools and not get employers to take their responsibilities. There is an issue about employers being willing to give young people a start in the labour market. The figures are undeniable; we spent quite a lot of time finding them out.

Q59 Stephen Timms: Can I just pick that point up with Sian, because there is an obvious financial incentive for schools to keep young people in to the sixth form and that may be one of the things that is going on? Do you think we would find evidence of bias in careers advice for that reason?

Sian Carr: I find this quite difficult, because I don't take that stance as a head teacher. I want the best route for a young person and, in Kent, if one of my students wants to go to a grammar school, for example, to do sixth form, that is where they go. If they want to go to college, that is where they go. We definitely support apprenticeships, and have done. I would back Mary up on what she has just said. Their experience has not been all positive; I will put it as simply as that. I understand that if you have a large sixth form, particularly with the way in which it is now funded, which has been alluded to, there are significant issues potentially with bias in that advice. I suppose I would like to be optimistic about school leaders and the way in which they might manage that. Talking from a personal perspective, I certainly would not do it.

Martin Doel: I have three points on apprenticeships and recruitment for 16-year-olds. I am not arguing with Mary's point entirely, but sometimes schools are most likely to promote the apprenticeship route to some of the least able students at that stage—those who are the most unlikely to be attractive to an employer at age 16 for a high-quality apprenticeship, so there is a little bit of cause and effect in that regard.

Secondly, as a proposition, most of the employers I talk to are more likely to take a 19-year-old as a more fully formed adult and, therefore, somebody who is less risk in the workplace than a 16-year-old, who has still to be formed over the period of an apprenticeship. I am also concerned to see that, for a 16 to 18-year-old, the apprenticeship is sufficiently broad to fit that young person for a whole life of work rather than just the apprenticeship that they are training within. I am generally much more comfortable in acknowledging that 19 is a better stepping-off point for most young people for an apprenticeship. I know that some colleges do very well at recruiting 16-year-olds to apprenticeships, but that tends to be in particular sectors rather than in the full range of apprenticeships.

Marcus Mason: Just to come back on a couple of those points, I think, Mary, you are right that in some areas businesses can do more. For example, one of the most obvious areas is when it comes to providing work experience. We ask businesses, "What do you think young people are lacking? What is the most important thing for them to have before going into a job to prepare them?" and they say, "Work experience," but most of them do not offer work experience. That is an obvious example where businesses can do more.

I have to disagree on the apprenticeship point, though. Of course there are huge numbers of young people signing up to the apprenticeship website. That is partly driven by more and more schools and, in particular, colleges having a blanket policy, more so in colleges than schools, of signing up all of their pupils to that. I am not surprised that a high number of people have signed up. Whether they are actively applying for things is a different matter.

Chambers of commerce are currently delivering 250 "Your Future Careers" events across the country and receiving a lot of feedback from that delivery. In a minority of cases, you have schools that, as soon as they find out that apprenticeships are being promoted at a

careers event, decide not to turn up. They decide not to send their pupils or decide to send a very small minority of their pupils and, similar to what Martin was saying, perhaps they are the less able ones. The responsibility, of course, lies on both sides.

Q60 Stephen Timms: On the question of how careers advice and education ought to be provided, there is some suggestion it should be embedded in the curriculum. Do you think that is right? Is it realistic that that could happen?

Sian Carr: It is entirely realistic. We are all in the throes of rethinking our curriculum from 4 to 19 as a result of the curriculum reforms and the qualifications, so it is an opportune time to consider the ways in which one threads a number of required themes: the emphasis on the education of careers and an understanding of the world of work and what the range of opportunities are. I would absolutely agree with Martin about that sense of a pathway or set of pathways, which are really clear, that you could set out. From a very early age you are engaging. I have just opened a primary school where we had the police in and it was part of a topic, but that would have computed with them. They would have thought about it. They would have thought about that as an opportunity. It is never too young an age to thread that through, so that when they are beginning to make some choices and thinking about what they might want to do, they keep all their options open, they choose their curriculum to meet an array of those options, and they don't close down doors. They keep all those doors open.

Q61 Stephen Timms: Could I just ask you a question about Tunbridge Wells? In your area, how many different institutions are involved in careers advice and education at the moment?

Sian Carr: Off the top of my head I would not like to say, but it is varied and a significant number, I would say, and it is difficult to work with them all. We work very closely, interestingly, with our chamber of commerce and we find that very useful, as we do with local employers, as a way of tapping into the variety and they are very good. When you create a relationship with a local employer, as we have with AXA PPP, it is fantastic. They can offer you an array of not just work experience but they come in and do “Dragons’ Den”—all of those kinds of things that are possibilities.

Q62 Stephen Timms: Can I ask the others: is embedding in the curriculum the right way forward on this?

Dr Boustead: It is really interesting. There has been a lot of work on this and I was reading some research at the weekend. Andreas Schleicher from the OECD said that schools need to stop preparing young people for the jobs that were created a generation ago and start preparing them for the jobs that do not exist. He was talking about, for example, if you are doing maths, good maths education will look at probability; it will look at chance; it will look at how to read a spreadsheet effectively. Good English will look at how you present a case, how you speak effectively and clearly, and why that is important. How do you present yourself for an interview? How do you make an argument? The concrete outcomes of what you study in school should be made explicit to children and young people, and too often they are not. We are moving into a system in schools, particularly with the qualification reform and the changes in the curriculum, where schools are being too often encouraged to see knowledge as an end in itself. That would be okay for a minority of

young people, but lots of young people need to see the practical application of knowledge and how it will serve them in their adult life. That is beyond careers advice and guidance; that is careers education and the OECD says very clearly that it should be embedded in the curriculum.

Martin Doel: I do absolutely believe it should be woven in and we need to get a lot more sophisticated. I speak of an area in which I am not an expert, because I am not a schoolteacher, but more sophisticated in how we put the curriculum together to weave various elements together. For me, this touches on the character agenda as well as the agenda around careers education. It fits young people best for their future lives beyond the education system. Ministers and agencies all like to have individual initiatives to try to change things, but I go back to my first point: those individual initiatives need to be put in with an overall pattern so that they reinforce one another rather than working against one another; otherwise, we have a stop-go type system that never gets a grip and moves it forward. I absolutely think it needs to be embedded in the curriculum. We must have a much more sophisticated approach to building that curriculum. At the same time, trying to measure particular outputs through it as well. We just need to get a bit more joined up about this rather than reacting and saying, “The careers system is broken. Now we will do this, this and this and that will put it right.” It will not. We just need to take a much broader view and embed it.

Q63 Chair: Those last few exchanges are relevant also to our inquiry on the purpose of education, which picks up the points that Martin, Mary and Sian have made, so thank you. What we are going to talk about now is the engagement between schools and employers. I just want to tease out some of the additional barriers that you see. You have mentioned one or two already, but what do you think are the main barriers that prevent effective engagement between schools and employers?

Sian Carr: My experience has always been that there is not a lack of willingness on either side and it would be wrong to say that; it is probably time. People lead busy lives in both sectors. I do understand that. I have invested in somebody to provide the time on our side and it is working very effectively, because that person has the time to go out and meet with those people and to begin to build those relationships. Where an employer has done the same and those two people can meet, you get a great deal of richness out of it. There are ways to do it. If there was a sense of that greater clarity and consistency of pathways and connecting pieces and there was an understanding that it was to be woven through the curriculum and not just about jobs and the workplace and so on, it would be really helpful.

Martin Doel: I am not speaking about schools so much here, but am just reflecting on the fact that we have the same problem in colleges when we talk about the skills system and it being employer-led, employer-owned and employer-involved. We need to think much better about what is the right time and the right way to involve employers and what reasonably we can expect of employers, rather than asking them at certain points to do it all. Sometimes, from policy documents, you would think the only thing an employer exists to do is service the education system. It is not their *raison d’être*, so think about at what point and in what way they can add to the business of colleges and they can add to the business of schools and build a system that is sustainable.

Again, I link back to the Institute for Apprenticeships. We need to think about what is reasonable to ask the employers to contribute to the Institute for Apprenticeships and what uniquely they bring to it. They do not exist to run the apprenticeship system. They might oversee it and advise it, so we need to think about how to involve employers to make it sustainable. I do like the idea of careers hubs, as in your own constituency. The college holds the ring there, between the employers and the schools, and I would obviously say it is a useful thing to have that intermediary in place. The Careers & Enterprise Company talking about having some local hubs where someone takes the lead to integrate and bring people together is a valuable way to do it. Sometimes it will be the chamber, sometimes a college, sometimes a LEP, but to have that local leadership will enhance the interaction.

Q64 Chair: ASCL are talking about the concerns that a lot of people have in connection with the sheer number of SMEs, small businesses in particular, and the complexity of working with those small businesses. Of course, we know the profile of business size in this country leans towards small rather than large. Does anybody have any thoughts on how that might be overcome other than, obviously, making small firms bigger?

Marcus Mason: We asked our members what the main barriers are. Our members are primarily SMEs, and it was staff time, cost and admin. When we asked the schools in membership as well, there was a similar response. Perhaps where businesses can do more is they mentioned that in some businesses there was a perceived lack of interest, so there might be a PR job to do there. Ultimately, a lot of businesses need hand-holding, but SMEs in particular need that broker to help make sure that their interaction with the school is as productive as possible. What we find is that often when SMEs try to engage directly with schools, they come up against so many different administrative burdens and they run on different timetables and they work in very different ways, so having that high-quality broker is absolutely crucial to that.

In terms of how education providers come together, the more clustering you can have of education providers that bring different elements—colleges, training providers, schools—if they can come together and then, as a cluster, as it were, engage with business, you can get a lot more out of that, because a business can then engage with whichever relevant institution is right for them.

Q65 Chair: Thank you. Alison Wolf does not agree with you when you are talking about a blanket requirement to give Key Stage 4 pupils work experience. She thinks that has, as she puts it, served its time. You want to reintroduce it or see it happen. Is that the best use of resources if they are scarce, as they are?

Marcus Mason: I agree with a lot of what Alison Wolf thinks, but on that point, we have seen that work experience has fallen by the wayside at pre-16. Within the context of young people thinking about their careers, what better way than to experience work for a week or so and see it in practice? That is absolutely crucial and can also help break down certain preconceptions about particular careers.

Q66 Chair: You would like to see more businesses provide those opportunities and other organisations as well.

Marcus Mason: Yes, more schools and businesses, of course, providing that.

Q67 Chair: Martin, I am going to ask you a specific question that I know you want to talk about. We would like to know about your thoughts that employers should be carefully prepared before working with young people. What should that preparation look like?

Martin Doel: I don't know that employers should be carefully prepared to work with colleges or schools. I think colleges and schools should be carefully prepared to work with employers and provide the advice necessary in order to equip employers to offer the best experience and one that adds. It connects back to the work experience point, if you are going to have work experience at earlier ages. Alison is challenging what was. We need to think about what that work experience, if it occurs between 14 and 16, is for, and I think it is different from what work experience between 16 and 18 is for. Therefore, employers need to be briefed differently, prepared differently, supported differently if they are going to do work experience at earlier ages rather than later ages. In terms of the nature of work experience, you need to think how, and then the institutions need to think about how they support the young person and the employer to have the best experience.

Q68 Ian Mearns: How far should careers advice be given to young people based on local job markets, because around the country it is very different? The job market in Tyneside is very different from what it is even in Sunderland, never mind Teesside or Durham or Northumberland, so how far should we go in terms of basing our advice to young people on the local job situation?

Dr Bousted: You do need to be aware of the local job situation, but it should not constrain the advice you give to young people. They have to know what is available beyond their local labour market, particularly because the local labour market can change. If you look at apprenticeships in London and the south-east and apprenticeships in the north, London and the south-east are in communications, they are in technical areas, whereas in the north it is much more in manufacturing. It is already the case that in certain areas the advice is more locally based, but you have to have a national perspective on that, because young people will be mobile and they cannot always just be constrained by what is available to them in their local area.

Martin Doel: That is right, but you can also see it as a narrowing triangle. For the younger ages it needs to be pretty wide; there should be some consciousness of the local labour market, but it is not the driving factor. When you get to 21, if somebody is staying on at college for the next two years, it needs to be much more narrowly focused on what the job opportunities are locally. It narrows with age and the relevance becomes more person-orientated.

Q69 Ian Mearns: The way I am trying to pick it up from the evidence we have heard from you this afternoon is that it should be part of the careers education aspect rather than the advice and guidance aspect.

Dr Bousted: Yes.

Q70 Chair: Last but not least, does each one of you have a really bright idea to help this cause?

Martin Doel: Knit together everything you are currently doing and keep it simple, stupid, and you will get some direction.

Sian Carr: Sustainable. Don't keep changing it.

Marcus Mason: Set some sharp incentives for schools by holding them to account on the destination outcomes of their pupils.

Dr Bousted: Don't give Ofsted the responsibility to inspect it, because they will do it badly.

Chair: On that note, thank you all very much for a pacey exchange. Thank you.