



Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy

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

Monday 21 March 2016

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 21 March 2016.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- Ofsted ([CAD0031](#))
- Careers and Enterprise Company ([CAD0099](#))

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Members present: Neil Carmichael (Chair), Mr Iain Wright, Suella Fernandes, Catherine McKinnell, Ian Mearns, Amanda Milling, Amanda Solloway, Stephen Timms, Michelle Thomson, Chris White.

Questions 120 – 187

Witnesses: **Joe Billington**, Director, National Careers Service, **Sean Harford**, National Director, Education, Ofsted, and **Claudia Harris**, Chief Executive, Careers and Enterprise Company, gave evidence.

Q120 Chair: I have an announcement to make before we do anything else. One of the Ministers, Sam Gyimah, cannot be with us today due to ill health, so we are not going to hold the ministerial part of this inquiry until a later date, most likely 18 April. We send our best wishes to Sam Gyimah and hope that he makes a full and rapid recovery. Welcome, all three of you, to this part of the inquiry. Would you like to say who you are and what you do, for the purposes of the record?

Sean Harford: I am Sean Harford. I am National Director for Education for Ofsted.

Claudia Harris: Hello. I am Claudia Harris. I am the Chief Executive of the Careers and Enterprise Company.

Joe Billington: I am Joe Billington. I am the Director of the National Careers Service.

Q121 Chair: Thank you very much and welcome again to our Committee. This is a joint Committee between Education and Business, Innovation and Skills, and our theme is productivity and our inquiry, for the purpose of today, is on careers. Claudia and Joe, why do we need both a Careers and Enterprise Company and a National Careers Service? Which one of you would like to go first?

Joe Billington: I am happy to start with that one. The National Careers Service is very much focused on the delivery of careers advice and guidance. It provides a range of services, both face-to-face, online and telephone, that are intended to work around the duty that is on schools to deliver careers advice and guidance to young people. The National Careers Service delivers careers advice and guidance through all of those channels to adults, but then provides the telephone and helpline to help schools provide their duty to young people and keep delivering advice and guidance to them. The Careers and Enterprise Company is helping to co-ordinate a range of services that are available to schools, particularly around the Inspiration Agenda, but also around a range of other tools that are available out there to help schools deliver on that duty. The Careers and Enterprise Company co-ordinates that.

Q122 Chair: Claudia, would you like to add to that?

Claudia Harris: I agree with what Joe has said. Our focus is on age 12 to 18, and the National Careers Service is an adult service in addition to that. Exactly as Joe has described, our role as an umbrella organisation is to help schools to navigate the range of services available to schools. One example of those services for schools is the telephone helpline that the NCS provides, and we will also talk about some of the Inspiration Agenda later in the inquiry.

Q123 Chair: How often do you interface and have meetings, or discuss your activities?

Joe Billington: My staff meet Claudia's staff about six-weekly, and I can recite most of Claudia's regular speech off by heart.

Claudia Harris: We see each other very regularly. We attend the same events and we were just talking about when we should sit down again and talk about the plan for the next year.

Q124 Chair: According to evidence we have had, the National Careers Service's Inspiration Agenda is pretty similar to the work of the Careers and Enterprise Company. How do you differentiate that? What are the key points of difference?

Joe Billington: The difference, again, just to reiterate, is that the Careers and Enterprise Company is very much about co-ordinating a range of services, whereas the National Careers Service provides a very specific service. The National Careers Service joins schools and companies together through intermediaries to help offer opportunities to young people, and the Careers and Enterprise Company is offering advice to schools about using that service, among others, to make sure there is a full programme of activity for young people.

Q125 Chair: Claudia, have you got anything to add?

Claudia Harris: In the Careers and Enterprise Company we have set up a network, working with the Local Enterprise Partnerships, in which we are co-funding, with the Local Enterprise Partnerships, a network of enterprise co-ordinators—200 to serve about 4,000 secondary schools, so each co-ordinator is working with about 20 secondary schools. They are working with the leadership of the schools to then understand all of the different services and employers available to them in that area, and to engage with different employers large and small, and the different careers and enterprise services, to build an engagement plan. As Joe says, the Inspiration Agenda is part of that.

Q126 Chair: Of considerable interest to this Committee, given our range of interests in terms of age, is how you think schools and colleges are navigating the two services, understanding what they are for, having the appropriate access points and so on.

Claudia Harris: It might just be helpful to give a little bit of the history of the Careers and Enterprise Company, because it is helpful just to frame where we are in the journey. The company was announced in December 2014. I have been in role since June of last year. In June we wrote to all the Local Enterprise Partnerships to see who would like to be part of this service. We were not sure what the response rate would be. We had 38 out of 39 of the Local Enterprise Partnerships join us, and we launched that in September. In September we launched the enterprise co-ordinator and the enterprise adviser network. I am happy to give a little more detail on what that means if that would be helpful, now or at some point.

Chair: Perhaps in written form. That would be really helpful. Would that be all right?

Claudia Harris: I am happy to do that. In brief, the way that the network works is that you have paid-for co-ordinators—one per 20 schools—and we are putting a business volunteer with the Local Enterprise Partnerships in schools across the country. We launched that network in September and at the end of December we had 60 enterprise co-ordinators in role, which is ahead of our plan. They are now recruiting one business volunteer to work with each school or college in the country.

From the school and college perspective, this service is now being made available to them over this term and over next term. The enterprise co-ordinators are recruiting the volunteers to work with the colleges and schools. The example from the pilots that we ran earlier this year is that it is very beneficial to schools. To give an example, we ran a pilot in Northamptonshire. In the first instance about half of the secondary schools signed up to participate. Northamptonshire then went back out and asked the schools which other ones would like to join in. They are now at 85% of schools in Northamptonshire. The results from the pilot are very positive. In terms of the national roll-out, we are early because it launched in September, so schools are being approached this term to form partnerships with business volunteers.

Q127 Chair: Thank you, Claudia. Joe, have you got anything to add?

Joe Billington: Just that in terms of the way in which the schools tend to access National Careers Service services, it is primarily through the helpline and the website. It is individuals who contact the helpline, so we do not particularly see schools there. We know that we have schools from half of local authority areas making use of the website.

We can see the peaks of traffic on our website in utilising that. We also know that both the National Careers Service and the Careers and Enterprise Company are in the statutory guidance from the Department for Education to schools about how to deliver on the statutory duty.

Q128 Ian Mearns: In terms of the roll-out of that profile nationally, Claudia, do you anticipate any difficulties because the profile of business around the country is very different? For instance, in the north-east of England there are only about 1,000 registered companies with over 50 employees in the whole of the region. Therefore, from that perspective, where will you get the volunteers to fulfil that aspect of your work in that scenario?

Claudia Harris: It is a great question, and one of the things behind the logic of our model is the fact that so much of the country has SME provision and what we have found in our diagnostic is that there are very patchy connections between employers and schools across the country. You heard it in your earlier evidence. One of the key reasons for this is because many areas in the country, exactly as you say, are not served by large businesses, which typically have the muscle strength in terms of going into schools. The reason we are working with the Local Enterprise Partnerships is that they are very well placed to co-ordinate local businesses and smaller businesses to be volunteers.

To give some example profiles, in Northamptonshire many of the enterprise advisers run local small businesses. They might run a 50 or 100-person business, be a local MD who has talked a lot about the skills gap, and now we are giving them the opportunity to go to volunteer with a local school. We anticipate a lot of our volunteers will run local small businesses. There is also a profile of people who work for larger businesses. They are often the head of HR for larger businesses. A lot of the volunteers will be exactly those SMEs that today do not have a very natural way to engage with schools.

Q129 Stephen Timms: There is now another Government initiative in this area with the Jobcentre Plus support for schools. What are you both doing to align what you are doing with that new initiative?

Joe Billington: The National Careers Service has a very close relationship with Jobcentre Plus. We are co-located in 96% of jobcentres around the country. The initiative to go into schools has been very closely aligned with what the National Careers Service offers in this territory as well. It is mostly about making sure that we are linked up in terms of the services that we are able to offer, and our Inspiration teams in each of our prime contractors are linked into Jobcentre Plus locally to ensure that the advice and guidance that is being offered by Jobcentre Plus is being reflected in the Inspiration guidance we offer as well.

Claudia Harris: We have worked very closely with the Jobcentre Plus team as well. The way that we think about the structure of this initiative is that every school has a business volunteer working with the leadership of that school or college to build an employer and careers enterprise plan. There are then a set of different programmes that can go into those schools, co-ordinated through those enterprise advisers, and then Jobcentre Plus is an example of one of those programmes. It is a fantastic source of resources for schools. We are working very closely with Jobcentre Plus to make sure that our enterprise advisers

understand it and then help to co-ordinate it into schools so that it is not coming in a confused way but in a much more structured way.

Q130 Stephen Timms: It sounds as though you are regarding the Jobcentre Plus initiative as just one of many that there might be in the area, depending on what is provided locally. I have seen the list of the areas where Jobcentre Plus is going to be trying this idea out early on. One of them is east London, where my constituency is. Can you explain to me how the activity of the Careers and Enterprise Company is going to be different in east London from elsewhere because Jobcentre Plus is involved, or is it just that there might occasionally be somebody from the jobcentre coming in at the behest, from what you are saying, of the business volunteer? Is that right?

Claudia Harris: The difference that it will make is that, from a governance perspective, we will be working very closely with Jobcentre Plus. One of our core principles is to make sure that the leading providers in the areas in which we are working are really part of the governance of what we are doing. We will need to understand properly and in detail how Jobcentre Plus is working and which schools they want to work with.

Q131 Stephen Timms: Is that not yet clear?

Claudia Harris: In fact, it is just happening. Team London is the delivery partner for us in London. We work with the Local Enterprise Partnerships, and in London it is Team London. We are right now putting together a plan to make sure that that is really well co-ordinated so that schools are not getting two different knocks on the door. Certainly in our discussions—we have discussed this with the Minister in DWP, Priti Patel—we want to make sure that we are absolutely aligned at the national level in how we implement it. As you say, the devil is always in the detail, so we must make sure that, school by school, we are aligned and we are working together. We are just working through that right now with Team London and with Jobcentre Plus.

Q132 Stephen Timms: You are saying that Jobcentre Plus will come into schools only with the say so of the Careers and Enterprise Company business volunteer? Is that right?

Claudia Harris: Our business volunteers are to help guide and advise the headteacher. They have no formal commission to decide who comes in and out. Their role is to provide advice. The support that we can offer is that, because we will have these 200 co-ordinators, who all meet quarterly, we have national reach together quarterly and we will be able to arm them with a toolkit of the services that are available, which they can then inform the 4,000 volunteers about.

Q133 Stephen Timms: I am wondering whether Jobcentre Plus will be contacting the business volunteer, not the headteacher. Is that what you are saying?

Claudia Harris: The way that we would like to see it work is that the conversations will be through our co-ordinators and then with the business volunteer and with the headteacher. The intent is absolutely to explain how this fits into the wider set of services available, and that is exactly what we are working to do now.

Q134 Stephen Timms: Will head teachers be hearing directly from Jobcentre Plus?

Claudia Harris: I cannot answer that question.

Q135 Ian Mearns: Claudia, we have been told that the work of the Careers and Enterprise Company has so far concentrated more on enterprise rather than on careers. How much of a role will your company play in supporting professional careers information, education, advice and guidance?

Claudia Harris: We take as our evidence base the John Holman Gatsby benchmarks, which are very helpful in explaining what “good” looks like, in a sector where that has not been a very good or consistent view of what best practice might look like that everybody can get behind. Our view is that the Gatsby benchmarks provide that and that many people in the sector support it. We summarise it into encounters, information and a plan, which is approximately what the benchmarks say: encounters with education and employers, information and an individual plan. Personal guidance is a part of that plan element.

We are about to roll out, with Sir John and the Gatsby Foundation, benchmarking tools for schools so that they can benchmark their own activities against the Holman benchmarks and see where they need to improve or how they compare against the national average. As part of that, they will be able to see in the personal guidance element as well what the opportunity would be to improve their capacity versus the national average.

Q136 Ian Mearns: I am now thinking back—and I know that we have already heard in evidence from a number of people that there never was a golden age of careers advice and guidance in this country. I certainly remember, going back before Connexions was invented, that if, for instance, a school wanted to have a particularly focused event on careers, it would call on the local careers company to put in some resources with a number of professional careers advisers and guiders. The fragmentation of the system seems to have depleted that capacity now, so how are you going to replace that initiative? As I say, there never was a golden age, but initiatives like that used to take place.

Claudia Harris: One of the things that we observe in the diagnostic report is that the challenge in this sector at the moment is that it is very difficult for schools to navigate. One of the things, listening to your evidence from previous sittings, is that there are now a lot of different people offering schools different sorts of services. Many of them are absolutely brilliant. One of the things that we really believe in is building on what works.

One of the difficulties is how schools should navigate that. What we want to be able to help with is to provide that navigation. The two key mechanisms for us to do that are, on the one hand, through the enterprise co-ordinators and enterprise advisers and, on the other hand, through the Gatsby tool, which will allow schools to benchmark their performance against the national average and then see where there is an opportunity to bring in more support where it is required.

To underpin all of that, one of the things that we are also building is an evidence base around what works. If you take the Holman benchmarks as the framing for that, you will see that more detail is still needed. For example, what exact activities make the difference in terms of supporting a young person transitioning into work? We tend to help build the

evidence base. We have done an initial review and will build that over time. We want to provide the framing so that schools can feel more confident about making those decisions.

Q137 Ian Mearns: One of the things that strikes me is that there is an awful lot of advice and guidance out there but much of it lacks impartiality and independence, so from your perspective, Sean, what balance should schools be striking between encounters with employers and impartial careers advice and guidance?

Sean Harford: It has to be just that: a balance. Where the leadership is giving a good steer for careers and involving employers but also embedding education for careers within their curriculum, that is where we see good things going on. The impartiality bit is really important because some schools have a vested interest to keep youngsters in their school to go into their sixth form, even though it could be more advantageous for them to go to their local sixth-form college or the UTC or the GFE college. We have specifically looked to see how those options are put in front of youngsters so they can make those really informed choices. If you can couple that with employer engagement, so the youngsters' eyes are opened up to the wider horizon, then we see good things going on. Often that is not done.

Q138 Ian Mearns: We absolutely need to prevent youngsters getting advice that is based on the needs of the institution, rather than the needs of the individual youngster.

Sean Harford: And wider than that, the needs of the local economy potentially. Where labour market information is available, some schools are doing that very well. Many do not. That is where we would see bringing together all those things to give that balance. It is important.

Q139 Chair: Before I bring in Michelle, where do you think that data comes from in local areas: the Local Enterprise Partnership or other structures?

Sean Harford: It is a mixture of all those things. The LEPs have a part to play and they work closely with the company, I believe. Often it is left to schools with their governors and people they know to work that out in a local area. That is fine as well, so long as those schools are well served by governors who have a good business background and a wide knowledge. The problem comes when you have not got those kinds of governors or those links with the school and that is too often in disadvantaged areas. Therefore, they need the more national aspect of things that the companies can bring, but also for the LEPs to come in. It needs to be strengthened to help those youngsters.

Joe Billington: There are lots of impartial services out there. Quite a lot of schools do contract with the National Careers Service providers. It is not delivered as part of the National Careers Service because that is funded for adults and through the channels I have talked about, but quite a lot of schools, when looking for exactly the provision you are talking about, are looking for an impartial provider and many of them do come to our prime contractors that carry that stamp of approval because they deliver the National Careers Service.

The other thing I was going to add, in terms of local labour market information, is that the National Careers Service website carries information on 130 different industrial areas and 800 different job profiles, which contain national data about specific jobs that are drawn

from the LMI For All database developed by the UKCES. That is also contextualised. Frequently you can get swamped by information, so this interprets and describes jobs in a way that you can understand, with earnings data, vacancy data and that kind of stuff. That is then also allied with local information. There is also a local page for each LEP area.

Q140 Ian Mearns: What you are describing sounds to me like there is an awful lot of information out there, but sometimes you can be blinded by too much information. Therefore, on the locality basis what we need is some kind of matrix of good labour market information about the travel-to-work area that the school is situated in and how we are going to deliver that. That is the question, because that is what our inquiry is trying to come to at the end—how do we improve things to make sure that that occurs?

Claudia Harris: We are doing a little piece of work right now looking exactly at what data is available to young people and how they make use of it. The early findings from that work are two things. One is that lots of young people do not look at data because they are not motivated to look at it, and that is one of the reasons that these Inspiration encounters with employers are very important to have young people take control at an earlier enough age when they need to.

The other thing, exactly as you describe, is that there is a lot of different information. A lot of it is very, very good. People are already using the LMI For All as a data source, turning it into apps, making that available to young people and teachers. Exactly as you say, there is so much of it that that sometimes can preclude effective use. We are putting a paper together, which we are handing to Government, on our recommendations on that. The Local Enterprise Partnerships are a really big part of the solution there because they can help to frame what the local data is. We hope that our enterprise co-ordinators and enterprise advisers can also then really guide and signpost people, as we will have done once we have done this piece of work, as to where young people should go.

Ian Mearns: In my area the Local Enterprise Partnership covers an area from south of Barnard Castle to Berwick on the Scottish border. It includes probably half a dozen different travel-to-work areas. That is quite difficult. The LEPs don't have an awful lot of resources, from that perspective.

Q141 Mr Wright: We have been told in previous sessions that the abolition, for want of a better word, of UKCES is a backward step in the provision of LMI. Is that a fair assessment?

Joe Billington: The primary use that the National Careers Service makes of the services that UKCES provides is through the LMI For All database and the variety of tools that are brought together in LMI For All, and that is still being managed and maintained through the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Our primary utilisation of UKCES will be maintained.

Q142 Mr Wright: You don't think that there will be any change in the quality of information provided because UKCES is no longer doing it?

Joe Billington: As I understand it, the plans to maintain the LMI For All database should facilitate us making similar use of it as we have done in the past.

Q143 Mr Wright: My second brief point follows what Ian was saying about local work areas and having a good local strategic assessment, presumably with the local authority or the LEP providing that strategic co-ordination. Is the Government's policy of every school becoming an academy—academisation—going to cause problems in terms of having that strategic co-ordination, possible led by a LEP or a local authority?

Claudia Harris: Can I respond to the question about the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, because we are big consumers of its research? There are three sources of data that we have used extensively: LMI For All, the employer perspective survey and the employer skills survey. They are big surveys, and UKCES runs each of them every other year. We have used that to plot what we have called our cold-spot analysis, which basically looks, by Local Enterprise Partnership area, which areas of the country we think are most in need of careers support. As an example, it tells you in which areas employers think young people are not well prepared for work and in which areas employers are working more or less with schools.

Q144 Mr Wright: Is that published?

Claudia Harris: Yes. In fact, I have brought my own research with me. This just uses the UKCES research. These surveys are incredibly valuable and we have them organised by LEP, and we have shared them.

Q145 Chair: Can we have a copy of that please, Claudia?

Claudia Harris: I can hand it to you now.

Chair: That is really efficient. Thank you.

Claudia Harris: These are brilliant resources and we have made it very clear that they need to continue. Our understanding is that they will. We use it at a national level but what you will find is that many of the LEPs also use it locally. The data is literally, at a LEP level, what the skills gaps are that employers are reporting, and that is incredibly valuable. We understand that it will continue.

Q146 Mr Wright: On the Government's policy on academies—every school becoming an academy—will that help or hinder strategic co-ordination of the local area? Is that going to improve careers advice? Will there be a correlation?

Sean Harford: On the fact that schools have been linked hitherto with local authorities, you only have to look at the history. There never has been a golden era and they have been linked with local authorities the whole time, so that is not particularly effective anyway. Whether it is atomised into academies, and whether that makes a difference or not, it is more about the co-ordination that the national service can bring to it. There could be an advantage to a multi-academy trust if they had a concerted and co-ordinated approach to careers across the trust that might not have been seen hitherto when schools were part of a local authority. We remain to see that.

Q147 Ian Mearns: That begs a really interesting question, because the influence of academy chains in what happens in terms of impartial advice and guidance could be strategically important, because it is in the interests of the academy chain, among themselves,

to keep more pupils in their establishment, rather than them going to an FE college or anywhere else.

Sean Harford: That could be the case. As we go round, we would need to look again. That is why it is important to ask those questions at an individual institution level to see whether that impartial advice is being put in front of youngsters and those horizons are being widened. The Chief Inspector has spoken to you in the past about his potential vision for where you have UTCs and that could again be a widening of that.

Chair: We are going to be doing an inquiry on precisely that issue: what a good multi-academy trust looks like. Any evidence you want to present to us in the context of the discussion we have just had would be useful.

Q148 Michelle Thomson: I feel as though we could have carried on talking about that for quite a while. Claudia, given that there are already quite a number of organisations and charities working to build links between business employment, how does the Careers and Enterprise Company differentiate itself? What makes you different?

Claudia Harris: Our core principle is to build on what works. In the diagnostic that we have conducted, what we have found is that there is lots of good work going on but there are basically three problems. One is that it is incredibly inconsistent. London areas are very well-served, both by social enterprises—many of them based in London—and by larger businesses that find it easier to connect. There are large parts of the country where that is not happening, and in fact that is what our research on the areas of need highlights.

The second problem is that it is still not very easy for businesses and schools to work together. Different languages and so on mean that lots of good work can get dissipated. The third is that schools do not know how to navigate all the different people who are coming and knocking on their door, because it is not really clear which one works and there is not necessarily quality control. We see it as our role to address that. In areas where there is fantastic work going on, we want to build on and promote that. In areas where there is less we need to make sure that more organisations come in.

As an example, just to explain what that means in terms of our activity, we are getting a business volunteer in every school in the country—that is the goal—supported by an enterprise co-ordinator, co-ordinated through the LEPs. In areas where Business in the Community is already working, we then work incredibly closely with it. It is part of the governance. We make sure that if Business in the Community is serving a school, we only do things that are incremental to what it is doing. There are large numbers of schools that have very little support and brokerage. It is the same with the EBPs and other organisations that also work between schools and employers. They are generally becoming part of the governance of this network. It is a way of filling in the gaps.

The second thing we are doing is trying to funnel support to those areas where there are very few services operating locally, and there are very many such areas. In fact, tomorrow we announce the results of a £5 million fund, which we offered to well proven programmes to take them into areas that need more support.

Q149 Michelle Thomson: Again, what you are saying is still not clear, though, as to whether you operate in essence as a competitor or a complementary service, because you have basically described both.

Claudia Harris: It absolutely is a complementary service. We are an umbrella organisation that has been set up to help co-ordinate the activities of the many other organisations that are working in this era in different parts of the country at a more local level. Many of the organisations that you are talking about are service providers, so they offer specific things to schools. What our enterprise advisers are doing is helping the schools to build a plan, and the plan needs to include all sorts of different services. The service could be bringing employers in to help teach a particular part of the curriculum, or it could be helping sort out work experience. These are all different elements of a whole-school plan. The role of our network is to help the school or the college build that plan, bringing in these different providers as and when makes sense. We work very closely with those providers.

Q150 Michelle Thomson: Just to finish off on this theme then, how do you see yourself growing your business, if you like, in the nature of these complementary services? Do they equally represent opportunities for you to layer additional offerings in your business?

Claudia Harris: We are strictly not a provider, so it is very different in that respect. It is incredibly important that we do not become a provider. That is the differentiation in what we are doing. We are the umbrella, and that is the critical difference. We are able to provide that guidance to schools and colleges that face a miasma of different organisations that want to work with them and we can provide the guidance. We will never change from that. That is our core strategic position. We are very clear about that with the providers in the space. They know that we are never going to compete with them in that respect.

Q151 Michelle Thomson: Sorry, gentlemen, but I have one more question for Claudia. We had evidence from a further education college that it had received very little information about your company's work. Can I ask about how you communicate with key stakeholders and how you know it is successful?

Claudia Harris: That is a great question. As I said, in terms of where we are with the roll-out of the national network, we are ahead of our plan. We had expected to have about 50 of these co-ordinators in place, but we now have 60 in place. If you think about the stages of roll-out, bringing all the Local Enterprise Partnerships on-board in June, kicking off in September, starting to recruit the enterprise co-ordinators, now that we are in March there will be a huge outreach to schools and colleges to say, "We now have the co-ordinators and we now want to bring you on board and match you with business volunteers." Through each of the Local Enterprise Partnerships—all 33 that we are now working with—there will now be a lot of outreach to the local education community.

We attend maybe two kick-offs every week. We were in Leeds a couple of weeks ago with the chair of the LEP, 100 businesses, lots of local schools and colleges, kicking it off in the local areas. Through the LEPs we are now kicking this off in each of the local areas. There are two other ways in which we are working with schools and colleges. We are working through the big networks of schools and colleges, such as ASCL. We attended a meeting of the tertiary colleges a couple of weeks ago. They mentioned to us,

exactly as you are describing, that they have not had as much information about the company as they would have liked.

We are now going back to the Local Enterprise Partnerships and saying, “You need to make sure that you are engaging with colleges.” One of the requirements for the Local Enterprise Partnerships to work with us is that there is a college and a school leader in the governance of this. We will also bring those school and college leaders together quarterly. We will then be able to see, at a LEP level, how the governance of this is going on at a school and college level, and whether the local schools and colleges are being engaged in an appropriate way.

Q152 Amanda Solloway: I have a quick question on the enterprise advisers. Presumably they are volunteers that you take from the businesses. How do you ensure the standard that they operate to?

Claudia Harris: The enterprise co-ordinator role is the paid-for role. It is the role where they have all the professional training and we bring them together quarterly. The volunteer role is one in which they are spending one day a month with the school leadership and we are doing lots of satisfaction feedback and research with the schools and colleges on how that is going, as a way of making sure that they are delivering at the level that you would expect. They are all DBS-checked.

In addition, we are ensuring that the feedback from the schools and colleges about the impact is very high. There is also training for those enterprise advisers that is rolled out through the Local Enterprise Partnerships. We train the co-ordinators. The Local Enterprise Partnerships are training the volunteers. We have a very detailed toolkit, which is available online, which lays out all the things that we would expect to be going on with the schools and colleges. It is a combination of detailed training and lots and lots of performance management.

Q153 Amanda Solloway: You are saying that on the recruitment side they are taken with an existing standard, or they are developed from wherever they come from to start with?

Claudia Harris: Happily, we are very oversubscribed, so the Local Enterprise Partnerships can interview them and pick the people at the right level. We have a very detailed brief of what an enterprise adviser needs to be like; the enterprise adviser has to pass that brief. We have very senior people in post. The sorts of people who are being recruited are, as I said, people who run local businesses or heads of HR for large companies, and we will, as we go on, learn what the perfect profile is for an enterprise adviser. We suspect that there will be a few different sorts of profiles, but we will learn that as we go.

Q154 Chris White: I have a quick question for Claudia. You have mentioned Local Enterprise Partnerships on a number of occasions. I just wondered what you thought about their variability. Are there good ones and less good ones? Is it patchy? What would you say would be a good example of a LEP working to help young people get the right career?

Claudia Harris: We were very pleased that there has been such a level of sign-up among the Local Enterprise Partnerships. They have no obligation to work with us. When we wrote to them in June we did not know what the level of take-up would be. We are very

pleased that so many of them are back and that we are now working with 33 of them. This is a very natural area for the Local Enterprise Partnerships to occupy, because it is between business and schools and colleges. That seems to be the response we are getting from the LEPs themselves.

There are many examples of LEPs that we are working very effectively with, but the pilot might be a good place to illustrate from. Northamptonshire, as we have just described, is now working with 85% of secondary schools. In Leeds, where we have just kicked off, they had already run a pilot. They are now expecting to roll out across the whole Leeds city region, very much led by Roger Marsh, who is the chair of Leeds City Region LEP and is taking a very active leadership role. We are working across LEPs with Sheffield and Manchester and with 33 of the LEPs. You can imagine that is a long list. This is a very natural space for them to occupy.

Q155 Catherine McKinnell: You describe it very well in terms of the theory and the practice in some areas that you reference. It is not entirely clear whether it is up and running in all areas, and it would good if you could give a bit more colour to the picture nationally, rather than talking only about the success elements. Where is it patchy? I assume it is in some areas.

Claudia Harris: We are now live in 33 of the Local Enterprise Partnerships—

Catherine McKinnell: When you say “live” what do you mean?

Claudia Harris: That means that they have essentially signed a contract with us to do two things. One is that we are supporting the kick-off of the network and we are providing them with a small amount of up-front funding to support the kick-off of the network, particularly the recruitment, because, as Amanda has highlighted, the thing that will make all the difference is the quality of the advisers and co-ordinators. We have put some resource into doing that correctly. We are then co-funding enterprise co-ordinators. We are putting £25,000 towards each enterprise co-ordinator, and the LEP has to put in the other £25,000, and 33 of those LEPs have now undertaken those contracts with us, essentially. They are employing enterprise co-ordinators co-funded with us.

Q156 Catherine McKinnell: Which LEPs are not engaged and are there reasons for that?

Claudia Harris: We expect the majority to come online by the end of the year. As we said, nearly every single one of them wrote to us in June. Honestly, we were a little bit surprised—we did not expect it to be at that scale—so we have sequenced it because we have needed to test and learn what is working as we go. We would expect to be in nearly all of them by the end of this year.

Q157 Catherine McKinnell: It would be helpful for members of the public to be able to see what is happening and be able to measure its success in some way. What does success look like and how will you be able to measure that and demonstrate that for the public?

Claudia Harris: We will be measuring three things. We will be measuring penetration, which is the question you are asking about how many LEPs, how many enterprise co-

ordinators and how many schools. We will be measuring satisfaction. We will be asking schools, “Is this helping you, or is it not helping you?”—very simple feedback. If it is not working, we will report on that. The third thing we will be measuring is impact. We are baselining in every school how much engagement they currently have with employers by year group, starting at year 7. We have all heard how important it is to start early. We are asking them by age group how much engagement there is today, and every year we will be measuring that and we will be expecting to see that increase. We will also expect to see an increase in the degree of whole-school plans around careers and enterprise programmes. We will be measuring all of that over time and we will be reporting on it publicly.

Q158 Catherine McKinnell: Is there not a risk that there could be a focus on quantity over quality? How can you measure the quality of those relationships?

Claudia Harris: I omitted to mention another form of measurement that we are doing. We discuss this a lot. What is the best way of thinking about quality control? The basis of the Anthony Mann research—it says that young people who have four or more encounters with the world of work are five times less likely to be NEET and earn, on average, 16% more—is that all interactions are helpful because they essentially spark curiosity, but we have the same view, which is that you want these to be as high quality as possible. We did an initial literature review on which interventions are the highest impact. Deloitte did it for free for us. It suggested that enterprise activities and mentoring were the most high impact of the different things that employers can do in schools. We made that toolkit available to try to prioritise things that have the best evidence base. The evidence right now is light, so we will be deepening that over time.

One thing is that we will deepen the evidence base on which activities we recommend. The second is that we will be doing deep-dive activities and focus groups, and working with schools to ask young people, “What has the impact of this activity been on you? Has it helped you? Have you got a job as a result of it? Has it sparked your curiosity?” That is the best way of measuring quality. You could do it through surveys, but in fact the best way is to send people into schools and get feedback from young people. That is another part of our measurement that I omitted to mention.

Q159 Catherine McKinnell: You mentioned at the very beginning, in your reply to me—this is not a criticism; just an observation—that the reason why all LEPs are not on board yet is a capacity issue at your end, potentially, rather than a lack of interest at their end. I know you currently have 18 full-time equivalent staff. I am interested in whether you have sufficient resource to make the impact that you hope to make, and in the time in which you hope to make it.

Claudia Harris: We are confident. It is very—

Catherine McKinnell: It is very volunteer-focused.

Claudia Harris: The logic of sequencing does make sense because you want to learn as you go. “Test, learn, adapt” is our core principle. We were very pleased that there are five pilots that took place before the June reach-out, so we had learned a lot about what worked and what did not work and what the best profiles were for enterprise advisers. That sort of thing we have started to learn already. We are very confident.

The way the model works is that most of the resource is in the LEPs. We are co-funding these enterprise co-ordinator roles, and there will be 200 of them. A lot of the work on the toolkit and a lot of the work to improve the guidance to enterprise advisers will come from the enterprise co-ordinators, rather than from our central team. Our view—this is the point that Stephen Timms was making—is that the devil is all in the detail with this. We spend most of our time out and about in schools. You do not know what is going on unless you are really working with the school. We want those enterprise co-ordinators to provide a lot of the thinking back to us, rather than building a large central team. We absolutely are resourced and we are confident.

Chair: Claudia, thank you very much for some very full answers. You will be happy to know that we are going to put the spotlight now on to Joe, and Iain is going to do that.

Q160 Mr Wright: Joe, you have alluded several times to the idea that the National Careers Service is based upon services for post-19-year-olds. It is essentially an adult service. Is that fair?

Joe Billington: Not entirely. It is intended to be a service that provides services for all ages, but it works around the duty that is on schools. Our website and our telephone service are universal. The phone can ring and the same careers adviser will answer the phone to a 13-year-old as will answer the phone to a 65-year-old. Similarly, the website is intended to give information and customer journeys that will suit anybody. There is information on there that is specifically designed for young people who are taking exams to help them think about that, but there is also information there for people returning to work after a period of unemployment.

Q161 Mr Wright: What proportion of your resources is devoted to careers information, advice and guidance for 13 to 18-year-olds?

Joe Billington: It is not really possible to distinguish it in that way, because we have a single contract that operates our website and a single contract that operates our telephone support. In terms of the number of telephone calls, it is fairly small from young people.

Q162 Mr Wright: Do you know the number? Do you know the proportion of 13 to 18-year-olds who would access both the telephone service and the website?

Joe Billington: I certainly cannot provide it for the website because we do not necessarily capture somebody's age unless they choose to register themselves with an account, which some people do but we do not have that for everybody.

Q163 Mr Wright: Your website does have a specific section on 13 to 18-year-olds. Presumably you monitor traffic to that. It might be reasonable to surmise that that is accessed by 13 to 18-year-olds, and parents and teachers. Are you able to monitor that?

Joe Billington: We can monitor the access of those pages, so that would give us a figure, but I am also very conscious of the most popular pages on our website; our home page is not the most popular page. Most people come directly to our job profiles because they go to use the search engine to search for information about plumbing. People are coming on

to the website from all sorts of directions, and the 13 to 18-year-olds are probably using as much of the website that is not designed specifically for them as people who are.

Q164 Mr Wright: In 2013 Ofsted said, “The National Careers Service does not focus sufficiently on supporting young people up to the age of 18”. Was that a fair criticism in 2013, and what have you done since?

Joe Billington: We have done a lot since then. That was the report that stimulated the “Inspiration Vision” that Matthew Hancock published, which is where quite a lot of this work has come from, to try to ensure there are additional services for 13 to 18-year-olds. We have created sections of our website that are specifically designed for 13 to 18-year-olds. Since then we have established the Inspiration work that our Inspiration teams are doing, who work very closely with the enterprise advisers.

Q165 Mr Wright: You do not monitor whether that is successful by capturing people’s ages and seeing whether they are drawn to your particular parts of the website?

Joe Billington: We do have the information about which pages are being visited, but we do not necessarily capture the age of every visitor to the website, because that would require them to give us that data, which we do not require them to do.

Q166 Mr Wright: Is it a fair criticism that the website is poorly promoted and little used by young people?

Joe Billington: We have 25 million uses of the website every year—over 2 million visits a month. There are peaks in that, which tend to co-ordinate with significant times of the year for schools. The most usage is in September and in January. We know how many come from domain names that have schools in them. We have a significant number of those. There is a good deal of use of the website by schools. Whether there are young people using it outside of the school environment, we do not know. We know that there is a good deal of usage of the website.

Q167 Mr Wright: I have a 13-year-old daughter. She is thinking about options and thinking about careers that she might want to do. How does she know about the National Careers Service? How do you promote it to people like my daughter?

Joe Billington: The National Careers Service is primarily promoted by our prime contractors. Their primary interest is about reaching the adult market, but we also work very extensively in low and no-cost ways on social media. You will find a lot of stuff on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, which is facing young people. We are also working very closely with DfE to extend that. The National Careers Service website, and indeed the telephone number, are mentioned in the statutory guidance to encourage schools to mention them to young people, and we are going to be extending that going forward after the publication of the careers strategy.

Chair: Surely your daughter is watching this, is she not?

Mr Wright: No, she is at school. Actually, she might not be at school, because it is
Five o’clock.

Q168 Chris White: Following on from those questions, do you think that you could improve your website and make it more accessible if you knew who was using it?

Joe Billington: We can improve our website. We do have a fair degree of knowledge about who is using it to an extent. I know what I have just been saying to Iain, but we do know about the number of people who are registering for a lifelong learning account, so we understand that. We also know the client base to whom we are guiding the website and we want to make sure that there are clearer customer journeys through our website. Where we fall down at the moment is that it is a very rich experience, right from the front page, with an awful lot of options that people can go down. We want to be able to lead people and give people a clearer direction through the site to access the information that meets their needs.

Q169 Chris White: Do you not think that somebody who is 13 to 18, who has not probably had employment or been into other training or whatever, has very different needs from somebody who already has had those opportunities?

Joe Billington: Yes. The technology on which the website is built—the original version was built in 2011—needs to be upgraded. At the moment we have built those sections so that on the very front page there is a section that is very clearly labelled “13 to 18”, to encourage people to go into it if that is what suits them.

Chris White: On the front page you just go click and that will show you which—

Joe Billington: There is a button on the front page.

Chris White: That will be for 13 to 18?

Joe Billington: Yes.

Q170 Chris White: Just going back to Iain’s question, that must be a really easy thing to capture data from.

Joe Billington: Yes, it is. That is why I was explaining to Iain that we can do that but the vast majority of our visitors do not come through that front page, because they do not search for “National Careers Service”. What they search for is, “I would like some information about how to become a teaching assistant”, and they go to our page on the teaching assistant, or, “I want to find out about courses in my local area”, and they come to the course directory pages of our website. You can access that and we can measure that, as I was saying to Iain, and we could measure how many people are going to our “13 to 18” pages, but people are accessing information in all sorts of different ways.

Q171 Chris White: What do you think about Ofsted’s suggestion that the website is too complex?

Joe Billington: I entirely agree. I would love to be able to improve the quality of the website, and we have ideas about how we can do that to be able to gear it much more specifically to answer specific questions and guide people through an advice and guidance experience.

Q172 Chris White: Do you think that there is too much of a proliferation of websites for young people, like Plotr, which the Government have spent £2 million on recently?

Joe Billington: Quite a lot of the tools that are out there in the marketplace are very useful, and one of the things I want to be able to consider as we redesign the National Careers Service website is how we can draw on those tools rather than duplicate them. Some of that is very valuable. We might be able to take people through an experience and then when they want to create a CV, for example, they can go and use a tool that is the best in brand but may well be off our platform, and they will be able to draw that information back into their experience inside the National Careers Service journey. The proliferation, to use your term, of those websites is not necessarily a bad thing, in as much as it encourages or enables better services for the customer.

Q173 Chris White: Do you ask young people what they want out of your website?

Joe Billington: Yes. What we are conducting at the moment is a lot of user research with a number of personas that we create to consider the types of people who we are expecting to use our website, and we are then gathering groups of people—young people are clearly part of that—to help them experience prototypes of how we might like to run, to enable them to go through a customer journey and make sure that it meets their needs.

Q174 Chair: Could you supply us with some of the data you are referring to about 13 to 18-year-olds?

Joe Billington: Yes. In terms of the access to those pages that we were talking about?

Chair: Yes. It would be really interesting.

Q175 Mr Wright: Joe, you mentioned—I think I am quoting you directly—that the proliferation of website provides a better service for young people. I would question that. Why in this space, which is really important, has something not emerged that is like the TripAdvisor of careers information, advice and guidance?

Joe Billington: It depends what you mean by the TripAdvisor of careers advice and guidance. There are a number of different tools out there that serve different purposes, and what I was getting at is that, as in any market, the competition can devise a better service. In terms of TripAdvisor, it comes down to some of the things that I was just discussing with Chris about trying to determine exactly what question people are trying to ask.

One of the things that the National Careers Service will provide is a course directory that accesses all courses that are publicly funded in England, and underneath each of those courses it will tell you about employer satisfaction, the learner satisfaction, and the success rate for that course. That provides you with the sort of information that people need in a TripAdvisor sense. That is about a course, whereas when people are asking questions about careers they are quite complex questions: “How am I going to achieve this from where I am now?” The comparisons that you can make with other people’s experience are very different and very difficult.

Q176 Amanda Milling: Joe, you also mentioned that in the usability testing you were in essence using personas, which I interpreted as people who are trying to imagine that

they were a 13 to 18-year-old, which is very different from a 13 to 18-year-old testing the site. I was wondering whether you can give some clarification about what is going on.

Joe Billington: Sorry, that was probably my confusion there. We are doing both those things. We have created a number of personas. There are 11 personas that we are using to create the National Careers Service website, and we are user-testing with real people, to take prototypes to them and say, “This is what you told us last time. This is what we have now built to address the questions you asked last time. How does it work? How does it feel for you? Is this answering the questions you want? How should we develop it next?” We are doing both those things.

Q177 Amanda Milling: Those real people are young people?

Joe Billington: Young people, yes. They are across all those different categories of people we are trying to reach.

Q178 Amanda Milling: Sean, I have a few questions from an Ofsted perspective. One of the key frustrations when I talk to businesses is that they talk about young people and the extent to which they are prepared for work and have clarity about what they are looking for in a career. Sir Michael Wilshaw told the Education Committee that schools are not giving enough priority to careers advice. How can that be addressed and what is being done to address it?

Sean Harford: From an inspection point of view?

Amanda Milling: Are there incentives in schools for them to take careers advice more seriously?

Sean Harford: We have been quite critical of it in the past and we have sharpened the focus on careers in our inspections. It is a balancing act because it is unlikely to be an area that is going to downgrade a school. We need to be quite clear on that; it would have to be quite bad and outweigh a lot of other good work for this to downgrade a school. We tend to see inspectors highlight this when it is quite good because that is when the school’s leadership show great interest in this. They really lead on it and emphasise it with the youngsters.

Clearly there is a baseline of those things we talked about earlier, in terms of putting the options in front of young people, making sure they know what those options are. Where the quality—which is the next level up at which we see lots of employers engaged, businesses engaged, business governance, etc.—is highlighted when we look at our report would be where that is done well. In other words we do not go and look for things. We look at what a school is doing. There is a nuance of difference there.

What would incentivise them? We now have better destinations data. When we look at the destinations of young people in schools, if we see that they were weak, we would start asking questions about that; why those youngsters are not going on to places that we would expect them to go, given their attainment and given their interests when we speak with them.

This is an area that needs encouragement. I do not know that it needs hugely big sticks waved over it. Where we see things are going well, and as the Careers and Enterprise

Company comes on stream and hopefully we see the impact of that, hopefully we will be able to identify that and comment positively on those areas. Above all what we want to see, as I mentioned earlier, is that for youngsters in disadvantaged areas their schools are doing that bit extra in those areas to mitigate the circumstances they are in. Certainly our focus is on not only the attainment and progress of those youngsters, but what the school is doing for them. That is an important part of the work, and that is where I personally, and through our inspectors, want us to focus.

Q179 Amanda Milling: I take your point about looking at where it is good. Is there not a danger that it is being seen to be added value and an extra, rather than addressing where careers advice is poor? It is in those schools where it is poor that it really needs to be addressed. Otherwise, it still feels like an add-on, rather than a core part.

Sean Harford: Let us re-phrase then. Where it is poor—for example, Ian talked earlier about schools not putting all the options in front of youngsters—we will absolutely identify and criticise that. That is a base level, that idea of making sure that schools are not keeping youngsters in their sixth form just to keep their funding up and not giving impartial advice. That would absolutely be identified. This middle bit really is the bit that probably goes unreported at the moment. Between that base level and then the next level up is when it is really good, when the leadership is really locked on to it and when they are really engaged with the business community, and we would absolutely report on that. It is probably that middle ground where we need to focus our attention if we are to try to lever up.

Q180 Amanda Milling: How do you unpick this point about the extent to which it is the school that is not engaging and the extent to which it is that businesses are not engaging, because there are barriers on both, from a schools and business perspective?

Sean Harford: A school and the leadership of the school have to be interested in this, to make sure they are going out to try to engage with people. Clearly the work of external agencies can try to reach into schools to encourage engagement. The main catalyst for this is, and will be going forward, the leadership's interest in this, the governors' interest in this and making sure that they are giving this the emphasis that it needs. In that way they will go out and find those people to engage with.

We have some really good examples. There are some great companies in the country that will require their staff to be governors in schools. That is one way of going out to those schools. Rolls-Royce is a good example of that, but we have not got Rolls-Royce companies across the country and that is the issue. The work that part of the national system can do to reach in, and the work that the mentors and advisers can do, can be good because it can encourage that. Lots of schools do not have people with experience of wider careers—business and so on—so they do not necessarily know where to go or who to engage with. It is a two-way thing, so the school has to be interested in making that engagement happen.

Q181 Amanda Milling: On that point, I am still concerned that it is up to the leadership's interest. I think you used it three times. Is there not a need to ensure that they

are interested? Is there an argument that they should be judged and rated on the careers advice?

Sean Harford: It is one bullet point, or one or two bullet points, within a balance of judgments. You have to be balanced in this judgment. If a school is providing a good academic and vocational education, and it is fulfilling its duties in terms of careers advice and guidance, the fact that it is not fantastic would not mean it was right to downgrade the school. We need to be a little bit more encouraging over this. Where the duties are not being met—for example, careers advice not being put early enough in a young person’s life in secondary school, and in terms of work placements, although they are not compulsory—and where they are not talking to youngsters about what the wider world of work is like, through PSHE and other parts of the curriculum, that is where we can make a difference.

Q182 Amanda Solloway: Just to be really clear, a school could be good or outstanding without offering any careers advice whatsoever?

Sean Harford: No, I am not saying that.

Q183 Amanda Solloway: Okay, so how do you measure what careers advice is being offered?

Sean Harford: Through discussion with the school, with the governors and with the young people, and by looking at the curriculum, looking at PSHE, and looking at development of the youngsters. One of the main criticisms made by industry to schools is about the skills that youngsters do not develop as part of their curriculum. It is about looking at the kinds of things that are in the curriculum that can develop those skills, even if they are not told, “You will need this for a career.” It is those skills of discussion and presentation. There is a whole raft of things that build into personal development where young people can build up those skills anyway.

Q184 Amanda Solloway: Is it implicit or explicit?

Sean Harford: Is what implicit or explicit?

Amanda Solloway: The careers advice is just implied throughout.

Sean Harford: Clearly the careers advice should be an explicit part of a good curriculum.

Amanda Solloway: Sorry, I was talking about the inspection.

Sean Harford: It is an explicit part of the inspection. It is one of the things we will discuss with the school, absolutely. I am just trying to get across the point that there needs to be a balance of approach here, rather than being all stick. In the balance of all the other things that are provided for the youngsters, it is part of a balanced judgment.

Q185 Ian Mearns: There is a real danger, Sean, that we could be being pennies-wise and pounds-foolish, not just in terms of money, but in terms of the actual resource of the young person—their enthusiasm and application. If they get inappropriate advice and guidance and they end up in a course that is okay but they then might drop out, that is

expensive from the system's perspective. To prevent that happening down the line, we have to make sure that the information, advice and guidance that they are getting is absolutely appropriate to their needs. Otherwise, we might see a situation in which youngsters go on courses that are not the best for them, for their future career prospects or for harnessing their potential. We need to give more weight to this, because otherwise there is the danger of significant wastage down the line if we get it wrong.

Sean Harford: Maybe I have not explained it very well. All those things you just said, Ian, about the right kinds of courses and the look forward, are the kinds of things we absolutely will discuss. It goes back to Amanda's point about the added-value piece and the wider engagement with business. It is perhaps the development of enterprise skills and things like that that I am talking about, which do not always get reported on. The discussion of those baseline things you just described are absolutely what we look at.

Q186 Ian Mearns: Just quickly, we therefore need to find a way to make schools accountable for the destinations of their young people and how successful they are in those destinations, because they have been guided towards them, one way or another.

Sean Harford: I can assure you that they absolutely are through the inspection process. That will be something we will report on because it is part of the framework.

Q187 Chris White: I agree with everything Ian says, but I see a little bit of a difference between the answers you gave to Amanda Solloway and to Ian. I just get the impression that Ofsted's process in this particular area is more subjective than objective. I would also ask, on a one-day or two-day visit, when you are seeing everything that is happening in the school, how you can talk about all these extra issues and still come to a decision on whether you mark the school down, as you responded to Amanda, in the time allowed to you without causing a degree of chaos as you leave.

Sean Harford: There are objective elements to it, and they are the things such as the destinations data. You are right that there is a judgment around the kinds of things that youngsters are provided for through the engagement with business and things like that, which is the point I was making. If the leadership are really focused on this and it is really important to them, they really put those things forward to us as inspectors, and then you often see those things coming through in school reports.

Chair: Sean, thank you very much indeed. I think everybody has asked all the questions they wanted to ask. I want to thank the three witnesses for all that they have contributed. We are going to get some statistics from Joe. We have a report received from Claudia. I think Sean is going away without making a pledge to give us any further information, but we always know where to look. Thank you all very much indeed.