

Written evidence submitted by The Quality in Careers Consortium

Education Select Committee: Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services

1. Our organisation: The Quality in Careers Consortium¹.

1.1 The Consortium owns and governs the Quality in Careers Standard which is the single national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance in England's schools and colleges.

1.2 As an unincorporated association, our Constitution² provides for our corporate governance. The Consortium comprises these six member organisations - Association of Colleges, the Association of School & College Leaders, the Career Development Institute, Careers England, the National Association of Head Teachers, and the Sixth Form Colleges Association.

1.3 Its Consortium Board³ is appointed by the members.

1.4 The Department for Education and the Careers & Enterprise Company attend the Board as invited participant observers. The Consortium contributes to consultations on DfE strategies and policies. We would wish the Committee to be aware that the Consortium is already in receipt of 'grant funding' from the department. This supports some of our core running costs⁴ and in 2019-20 also provided funding for three free-to-attend events⁵ for schools and colleges not yet engaged with the Standard. This support from the department is highly valued.

2. The Quality in Careers Standard:

2.1 The Department for Education's Statutory Guidance⁶ to state-funded secondary schools on their careers guidance duty **strongly recommends** all schools to achieve the national

¹ www.qualityincareers.org.uk

² <https://www.qualityincareers.org.uk/2019/06/19/revised-constitution-june-2019/>

³ <https://www.qualityincareers.org.uk/2019/06/19/members-of-the-consortium-board/>

⁴ £31,500 in 2019-20 and 2020-21

⁵ £45,000 in 2019-20. No funding yet agreed for 2020-21

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Quality in Careers Standard as part of its 'careers strategy'. The October 2018 Statutory Guidance includes the following paragraph:

*22. Schools can gain formal accreditation of their careers programme through the Quality in Careers Standard – the national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance. The Standard offers an opportunity for schools to undergo an external evaluation of their careers programme and so is distinct from the Compass self-assessment. The Standard has been aligned to the Gatsby Benchmarks and incorporates Compass into its processes, so those schools achieving the Standard meet all eight Benchmarks. **We strongly recommend that all schools work towards the updated Quality in Careers Standard, incorporating Compass, to support the development of their careers programme.***

2.2 The department also issued guidance in October 2018 to Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges concerning their duties and responsibilities for 16-18 careers guidance⁷.

2.3 The externally-assessed national Standard is fully endorsed by School & College Leaders⁸.

2.4 We have prepared a single-page introduction to the Standard for schools and colleges⁹.

2.5 The Standard is fully aligned with the *Gatsby Benchmarks for "Good Career Guidance"*¹⁰ which the DfE 'expects' all schools and colleges to adopt in order to improve their careers provision. Achieving these was 'a tough ask' before the advent of COVID-19. It is even tougher now.

2.6 There is a high correlation¹¹ between achieving the Standard and achieving the Benchmarks. Working towards the Standard uniquely involves not only implementing the

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748474/181008_schools_statutory_guidance_final.pdf

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/749151/Careers_guidance-Guide_for_colleges.pdf

⁸ <https://www.qualityincareers.org.uk/2019/11/06/leaders-of-schools-colleges-endorse-the-standard/>

⁹ <https://www.qualityincareers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Quality-in-Careers.-Information-for-schools-and-colleges-2020.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/good-career-guidance>

¹¹ <https://www.qualityincareers.org.uk/2018/11/16/quality-in-careers-makes-positive-impact-on-performance-against-the-gatsby-benchmarks-says-cec-state-of-the-nation-report-2018/>

Benchmarks but additionally demonstrating the impact of their achievement on students' career-related learning outcomes.

2.7 Careers education and guidance is a 'public good' as well as beneficial to individuals. Within the framework of the Benchmarks and the Standard's national assessment criteria, our assessors seek evidence that schools and colleges have effective arrangements in place to ensure that careers advisers, who are skilled in offering impartial and independent support, are signposting to other support agencies, ensuring that mental health support is provided where needed, as well as promoting hope and inspiration that there is a positive future for every young person.

2.8 Effective, quality-assured careers education and guidance is a tool to motivate and inspire young people. This will be especially important when considering the engagement of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic and in its aftermath.

2.9 Young people making successful transitions into further learning and then into work become **assets to the country's economy**. Arguably more than ever, our country needs a confident and skilled workforce as we move into the post-COVID-19 era. The Standard can be an important contributor to the Government's strategies in respect of education and training to secure this.

2.10 Since the Standard requires evidence of impact and outcomes for students, our assessors look at how overall pastoral support promotes students' well-being and resilience. They seek confirmation that schools and colleges work with other key agencies to provide support and advocacy for young people to promote their development of career management skills. Our assessors evaluate the impact of school/college provision on improving students' plans and positive destinations.

2.11 A recent OECD publication¹² identified three critical measures to support young people in transition at the time of COVID-19 and in its aftermath:

i. Creating strong connections between education institutions and employers

ii. Providing well-focused career guidance and information for all learners

iii. Introducing remedial interventions to help young people after they leave education

2.12 The externally-assessed Quality in Careers Standard would ensure that schools and colleges address the first two of these three critical measures in a quality-assured way.

2.13 At this troubling time, we need to ensure we help every young person in every school and college to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to take control of their learning and work 'career pathways'. This outcome is the underpinning philosophy of the Quality in Careers Standard.

¹² <https://oecdeditoday.com/school-work-during-coronavirus-2008-global-financial-crisis/>

2.14 This is why the DfE already ‘strongly recommends’ all schools to work towards and achieve the Standard. We now believe the Government could do more to help every school and college follow that ‘strong recommendation’.

3. Our Proposal – “A Careers Premium”

3.1 Working towards the national Standard is a voluntary decision of a school or college. Over 1100 institutions are already working towards or hold the Standard.

3.2 It has a cost (the price is set by each of our Awarding Bodies, but on average it is circa £1500-£1700 every three years) – for which schools and colleges receive expert consultancy, management advice, professional development opportunities, resources, culminating in rigorous external assessment. The biggest impediment to embarking upon the Standard is this cost which many schools and colleges are evidently struggling to be able to afford.

3.3 Because of the impact of COVID-19, which will undoubtedly create barriers for many young people through reduced opportunities to continue in post-16/post-18 learning through jobs and apprenticeships, quality assured careers education and guidance becomes even more important for young people and **the country’s economy**.

3.4 To ensure that every young person is guaranteed access to the best possible careers education and guidance (i.e. in schools and colleges nationally accredited through the Quality in Careers Standard), the Consortium would urge the Committee to recommend to the DfE that there is a compelling business case that it provides some dedicated additional financial support to schools and colleges predicated upon them working towards and maintaining the Standard which the department already “strongly recommends” in its statutory guidance¹³ to schools.

3.5 We need to ensure we remove the ‘lottery’ factor – by this, we mean doing everything we can to engage every school and college with the Standard, not just those who choose to do so or can afford to do so. Every student deserves access to careers education and guidance of the quality of the best.

3.6 The benefits of achieving the Standard¹⁴ are that institutions see amongst their students these positive outcomes: improved attendance, increased motivation, leading to higher educational achievement and positive progression – with reduced drop-out from continued learning.

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ <https://www.qualityincareers.org.uk/2015/02/15/prof-t-hooley-quality-in-careers-presentation-on-the-evidence-for-the-impact-of-good-quality-careers-guidance/>

3.7 Gaining the Standard will externally quality assure a school or college's careers education and guidance provision and ensure that it continues to evolve. A quality assured careers programme can lead to increased social mobility, increased aspirations, greater ability to make positive informed choices, increased understanding of the world of work and enable students to gain the range of employability/life skills and an understanding of the economic landscape required to make successful transitions through learning into productive work in our economy.

3.8 Maintaining students' motivation - during COVID-19 and in its aftermath - to engage in learning and to feel that there is a hopeful future is an ongoing challenge that universal access to quality-assured careers education and guidance can help to mitigate. Increased labour market uncertainty may well have a negative impact on the choices young people make, and transitions may be ever more challenging.

3.9 Poor access to, or provision of, quality assured careers education and guidance in years 10/11 means young people may choose wrong options in year 12, and some may drop out or fail and have to restart year 12. In such a scenario the Government needs to pay a learning provider a minimum extra £4000 per year (the base amount for a 19- year-old in "year 14").

3.10 If all circa 3000 secondary & special schools in England were offered a “**careers premium**” related to working towards and achieving the Quality in Careers Standard of £1000 p.a. that would cost the exchequer circa £3million p.a. The “premium” would support a school or college working towards the Benchmarks and progressing on to achieve the Standard. It would enable institutions to draw down dedicated additional funding for the continued development of their careers provision.

3.11 We propose that such a “premium grant” would only be accessed on the evidence from our Consortium that a school is working towards the Standard or already holds it and is preparing for reassessment (holders of the Standard are annually reviewed and reassessed after either two or three years). This offers the Treasury a meaningful accountability mechanism.

3.12 Increased engagement with the Standard, would mean more schools followed best careers education and guidance practice, leading to fewer students dropping out and restarting year 12 – thereby reducing the human misery and sadness drop-out can cause.

3.13 It would only need one student per school every 3 years not to have to restart year 12 because of better quality-assured careers education and guidance to pay for this “careers premium”.

3.14 Therefore, a Quality in Careers Standard “careers premium” would not only pay for itself but the Treasury would save money, and more young people would be assured of careers education and guidance of the quality of the best – securing the outcomes which they deserve and the country's economy requires.

3.15 Because we believe that it will take time for schools and colleges to establish a ‘new normality’ as we move into the aftermath of COVID-19, we are not advocating the launch of a “careers premium” until 2021.

3.16 We know that a significant number of schools and colleges would embark upon the Standard given financial support – therefore, because of schools and colleges needing time to adjust to this ‘new normality’, we suggest that the Government should be recommended to start offering the “careers premium” from the start of the 2021-22 financial year (i.e. April 2021).

3.16 We commend this proposal to the Committee. We are ready to work with our DfE colleagues on the fine details of how to implement this should the “premium” be established.

The Quality in Careers Consortium
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