

Written evidence submitted by The Careers & Enterprise Company

## **The Careers & Enterprise Company submission: The impact of Covid-19 on education and children's services**

### **About The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)**

Our mission is to prepare and inspire young people for the fast-changing world of work.

Our role is to link schools and colleges to employers and to help them deliver world class careers support for all young people.

We do this by Building Networks, Supporting Careers Leaders and Backing the Gatsby Benchmarks:

- **Building Networks:** Linking schools and colleges to employers and other external careers providers through the Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs.
- **Supporting Careers Leaders:** Providing training and support for Careers Leaders in schools and colleges.
- **Backing the Gatsby Benchmarks:** Supporting implementation of a best practice standard for careers support, the Gatsby Benchmarks, with tools and targeted funding.

### **1. Executive Summary**

1.1 This submission provides insight into the current impact of Covid-19 on careers education in schools and colleges, including the challenge of delivering careers education and the system's response while schools and colleges are partially closed.

1.2 This response has three main conclusions:

- a) Schools and colleges have prioritised careers education as a powerful spur within their overall efforts to support students during the lockdown, not least pupils and students on the cusp of transition choices (in particular, Year 11 and 13).
- b) The effectiveness of important short-term, agile measures that we and others have taken to support young people during lockdown have been enabled by longer term government strategy and investment. These include:
  - The strength and resilience of Careers Hubs to provide a backbone of rapid careers support to schools and colleges during the pandemic.
  - The investment in the professional development of Careers Leaders, to enable them to take a leadership role, marshalling and influencing careers provision, within their schools and colleges to ensure all students are supported.
  - The accrued goodwill amongst employers which has seen them remain active in supporting careers education, on a national scale, despite the business challenges they face.
  - The investment in digital infrastructure, in particular, the connectivity facilitated by Compass and Compass+ tools to enable schools and colleges to pinpoint and react to need at a year group and student level, quickly.
- c) Long-term strategy is important as part of the recovery. While we require an intensive focus on this summer's school leavers, we must also look to the future generations who are about to start their GCSE and A-level journey. That requires two things:
  - Coherence between national response, underlined by the government's Kickstart Scheme announcement, and coordination with front line effort. We see a key role for our Network in

collaboration with Local Enterprise Partnerships and their local economic recovery plans, and other local organisations, to enable an effective multi-agency response.

- A redoubling of strategic investment in the types of support that have produced the strongest impact to date on careers education. As stated above, these have enabled the most rapid response during the pandemic. Government resources could usefully be deployed in Careers Hubs and their ability to harness the power of local partners quickly, including through Career Leaders and their leadership role in schools and colleges.

### **An understanding of school and colleges' response to lockdown**

1.3 CEC's actions from the outset of Covid-19 lockdown were to understand and respond to the priorities for school and colleges. These quickly became known to be:

- a) the need to organise and enact home schooling efficiency, including provision for digital access and safeguarding;
- b) to react to the cancelation of exams and implications for pupils and their grades; and,
- c) to support the needs of their most vulnerable pupils.

1.4 Within those priorities, schools and colleges began to indicate a need to maintain strong focus on careers education for their students including support required from CEC and others to adapt provision during lockdown. The increased demands from Careers Leaders for help throughout this period has been a strong indicator of their important role during lockdown.

1.5 Polling by Teacher Tapp, on behalf of CEC, revealed teachers believe uncertain exam grades and insecure job prospects are the greatest threat to students' lives beyond Covid-19. Over half of respondents (58%) lack confidence in how GCSE and A level grades will be awarded. Over a quarter (27%) also fear the Covid-19 crisis will damage young people's career prospects. Three quarters of teachers (75%) think that students' ability to acquire essential employability skills will be their most important response to the crisis.<sup>1</sup>

### **Schools and colleges' identified needs on careers support**

1.6 Careers Leaders and their leadership teams have indicated these to be:

- a) Help to curate and navigate the best online careers learning resources available.
- b) Targeted support for year 11 and 13 pupils on the cusp of transition.
- c) Maintained activation of employers and providers regarding their engagement with schools, flexing approaches from face to face to online.
- d) Responding to schools' responsibility to help the most vulnerable and their pastoral needs through our Network.
- e) Enabling continued and sustained opportunities for virtual personal professional development for Careers Leaders.
- f) Support from their Enterprise Adviser to create a flexible careers plan, aligned with the school Covid-19 recovery plan.

### **CEC's response**

1.7 CEC has maintained high levels of engagement with, and amongst, schools and colleges, employers and careers support providers throughout the lockdown period. Through regular, weekly contact with 5000 school and college Careers Leaders we have listened and responded to their needs, highlighted above. Actions taken include:

---

<sup>1</sup> [The Careers & Enterprise Company: 'Workplace skills now more important than exam results in post-Covid jobs market say teachers'](#) July 2020

- a) **A national “My Week of Work” initiative** developed with Oak National Academy and Learn Live, in a week of online lessons to replace Year 10 work experience. It hosted more than 50 live broadcasts from employers including Microsoft, the NHS, BAE Systems and Rolls Royce. More than 750 schools and nearly 120,000 young people took part.
- b) **Deployment of Careers Hubs:** Areas of the country that have had the most agile and rapid mobilisation are those that are actively making use of Government funded Careers Hubs. Hubs have reported high levels of engagement and are a strong fulcrum for coordinating multi-agency responses including those offered by local authorities, Job Centre Plus and independent learning providers. Careers Leaders are utilising Hubs to share best practice and receive targeted support for their most disadvantaged pupils.
- c) **10 “Work it” career talks**, featuring young people not long into employment, and aimed at school pupils in their transition years (Y11-13). These are distributed throughout our network of schools and colleges.
- d) **Refocusing providers**, to support them to find new ways to deliver careers activity in online circumstances.

## 2. An overview of schools, colleges and the careers sector’s response during Covid-19 lockdown

2.1 Covid-19 lockdown arrested all face-to-face careers-related activities that often take place during the summer term, such as work experience, employer encounters and access to personal guidance.

### 2.2 Careers Leaders

- 2.2.1 In recent years, schools and colleges have put significant leadership support and resources, assisted by government funding, behind the development of Careers Leaders and the skills required for them to help strategically embed a careers programme within all areas of curriculum learning.
- 2.2.2 Careers Leaders have been pivotally engaged in careers education as a key response to their schools and colleges’ approach to home learning. High levels of engagement are apparent despite Careers Leaders’ status as senior/middle leaders <sup>2</sup>, with often multiple responsibilities adjoined to their remit including pastoral care. Daily safeguarding calls to the most disadvantaged students are common and, in some cases, are used to offer guided support and to encourage students to investigate transition pathways by signposting resources. Our Education Leader Advisory Group, comprising secondary heads and college principals, are reporting that their Career Leaders are amongst the busiest members of teaching staff during this period.
- 2.2.3 Careers Leaders are continuing to use Compass<sup>3</sup> to strategically manage, benchmark and report their school’s careers provision remotely – with a further 1000 onboarded to the new Compass + tool since partial school closure. Careers Leaders accessing this new tool will be enabled to support targeted and coordinated offers through links to student-level data.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Tanner, E., Percy, C. and Andrews, D. \(2019\). Careers Leaders in Secondary Schools: The first year. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.](#)

<sup>3</sup> *Compass is an online tool that helps schools and colleges to evaluate their careers activity against the eight benchmarks of best practice — known as the Gatsby Benchmarks.*

Careers Leaders continue to access bursary funded training and professional development, adapted to remote delivery.

## 2.3 Careers Hubs

- 2.3.1 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) report that areas with Government funded Careers Hubs are demonstrating greater effectiveness, in line with their previous accelerated progress.<sup>4</sup> The local partnership model utilises a community of businesses, schools and colleges to collaborate, adapt and respond to support specific needs of students. Careers Leaders within Hubs are more engaged and are requesting to be convened regularly to share best practice.
- 2.3.2 We welcome Government's June announcement to expand the Careers Hubs as a strategic investment in careers education and as key support for Covid-19 recovery. Overall, more than 2,200 schools and colleges will be covered by Careers Hubs by September 2020 – nearly half of all state sector - with 12 areas of country now having complete coverage of all schools and colleges in their geography.
- 2.3.3 Careers Hubs have become a key strategic arm of multi-agency responses, using their proximity to schools and colleges to ensure the most disadvantaged receive support. Working with local stakeholders, they are supporting tracking intended destinations of transitioning cohorts, specifically the most vulnerable, those at risk of becoming NEET and aspiring apprentices. Hubs are disseminating resources and information to schools and colleges, developed through local partnerships, which enable effective information and guidance for disadvantaged young people in transition years (Y11-13).

### **Case Study 1: Black Country Careers Hub**

With schools partially closed, the Black Country Careers Hub has focussed on delivering directly to parents and young people, as part of a coordinated local NEET prevention plan, in partnership with Local Authorities and employers. They have:

- Offered free-to-access webinars on key topics; apprenticeships, student finance, interview techniques and local priority sectors (e.g. engineering/construction).
- Established a Covid-19 webpage with targeted support for key transition years (Y11-13) including an offer of 1:1 careers advice and guidance for parents and young people.
- Mentoring and virtual interview practice for those at risk of becoming NEET, delivered by the CEC's Enterprise Advisers.

### **Case Study 2: East Sussex Careers Hub**

The East Sussex Careers Hub sits within the East Sussex County Council and has been pivotal coordinating the local approach to post-16 transition, in partnership with Council colleagues, Further Education Colleges and other employability services.

- The Hub has delivered forums for Careers Leaders on year 11-13 transitions and a "Transition Information" pack for schools to share with parents and young people.
- Enterprise Advisers have conducted virtual seminars on current and future labour market trends, and employability skills needed for transitions to employment.

## 2.4 Employer Support

- 2.4.1 Prior to lockdown, we saw a surge in employers working with schools and colleges, coordinated through the Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs. 3.3 million

<sup>4</sup> [Hutchinson, J., Morris, M., Percy, C., Tanner, E. and Williams, H. \(2019\) Careers Hubs: One Year On. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.](#)

secondary aged children were engaging with employers regularly – an increase of 70% in two years.<sup>5</sup> Existing infrastructure and increased engagement has enabled businesses to quickly adapt their offer. Cornerstone Employer<sup>6</sup> groups, set up in Careers Hubs and Opportunity Areas, continue to meet virtually to ensure their offers of encounters and workplace experiences are coordinated into schools.

- 2.4.2 Birmingham Cornerstones have produced support packages for students in transition years (Y11-13) including a personal branding activity, 'Me Plc'. Ipswich Cornerstones; BT, Ipswich Town FC, Suffolk County Council are offering virtual tours of their workplaces. Berkshire Cornerstones are providing online training to Careers Leaders on impacts to the local labour market. These are a small sample of school outreach activities which the Enterprise Adviser Network and Career Hubs are replicating across the country. The continued coordination of activity will be pivotal as employers try to maintain their outreach offers with reduced resource. We know that some employers will not be able to adapt their engagement or restore previous levels of engagement. Rebuilding after this loss will be vital.

**Case Study 3: Morgan Sindall** (Cornerstone Employer)

Morgan Sindall delivered a week of online work experience, using a Speakers for Schools platform, which was attended by 31 students from 16 schools. Delivering online allowed Morgan Sindall to triple the number of available placements and alleviated issues such as geography, transport and office space. Students learned about remote working, had access to virtual site tours and attended online meetings.

Morgan Sindall led a CPD session for other Cornerstone Employers on how to run a Virtual Work Experience, while the local network has helped ensure the offer was targeted in schools and at those most in need of support.

## 2.5 Careers Providers and Resources

- 2.5.1 Providers are a critical part of careers delivery across the country. The CEC has invested funding into over 160 providers in the last 5 years to help scale-up best practice across the country including areas where young people most need support.
- 2.5.2 We have seen a mixture of responses during lockdown including continuation, furloughing and some on the verge of closure. Innovation is coming to the fore in efforts to create new delivery arrangements and it is important to support this. The CEC has worked with providers to agree contract extensions and provided guidance on moving towards online delivery, including online encounters and personal guidance sessions. Examples of this include 'Achieving for Children', who are using Google Meets to deliver 1:1 personal guidance and have used this opportunity to involve parents in discussions. East Sussex Council have delivered a cross-school STEM competition where students submit ideas for recycling initiatives via YouTube and are given direct constructive feedback by a panel of employer judges.
- 2.5.3 CEC's Enterprise Coordinators have worked closely with providers to determine the precise needs of schools and colleges in their areas. Careers Leaders, many of whom were

<sup>5</sup> [Percy, C. and Tanner, E. \(2020\). Closing the Gap: Employer Engagement in England's Schools and Colleges in 2019. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.](#)

<sup>6</sup> *Cornerstone Employers are local and national employers, who work together with their networks and the wider business community to help ensure all young people have the opportunities they need to be prepared and inspired for the world of work.*

overwhelmed by offers in the first weeks of closure, are signposted to existing quality-assessed online resources created by partner organisations, including Youth Employment UK (Skills Careers Activities resources) and The Wow Show (interactive videos).

- 2.5.4 CEC collaborated with Oak National Academy and Learn Live to launch the new resource, “[My Week of Work](#)”, an online week of work experience targeted at Year 10 pupils missing out on their traditional placements. [Learn Live](#) offered students 43 live Q&A sessions with leading CEC Cornerstone Employers such as Balfour Beatty, NHS Trusts and the Royal Airforce secured to support – giving students an opportunity to engage with employers who struggle to provide traditional work experience.
- 2.5.5 Coordination with National Careers Service ensured Careers Advisers were available to provide personal guidance through the Learn Live chat function. Careers Leaders from Academies Enterprise Trust, and our Careers Leader Advisory Group, supported producing lesson content and the interactive guide for Careers Leaders. 35,066 users accessed the Oak platform, with 84,933 pupil registrations for Learn Live (including 758 school registrations). There were over 768,110 total views of the employer Q&A sessions. All the resources will remain available for flexible school and home learning delivery across both platforms for Careers Leaders and students to access throughout the next academic year.

## 2.6 Challenges - Digital Access, Transition Years and the next academic year

- 2.6.1 Quality online resources have become more widely available, but student access to suitable devices is a persistent challenge, disproportionately affecting the most disadvantaged. The CEC acknowledges this and as a response, our Enterprise Coordinators are sharing printable resources, including activities from My Week of Work. Where devices are unavailable, Careers Leaders are delivering resources to mitigate this while school careers advisors have been delivering personal guidance by phone.
- 2.6.2 Careers Leaders also reported provision for Year 11 and Year 13 students in crucial educational transition years as a challenge, accentuated by an uncertain exam awarding process. To complement personal guidance, we developed a ‘[Work It](#)’ series of video careers talks by young people for young people, with a focus on diversity of backgrounds and progression routes (including apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships) covering several sectors of the economy. This was distributed to all secondary schools, colleges and through non-school channels.

## 3. Recovery

- 3.1 The latest employment figures show youth unemployment has doubled in the last two months, rising from 238,100 to 517,000 – the sharpest rise since 1992. This raises fears of deepening disadvantage and long-term damage to the employment and earnings prospects of young people.
- 3.2 The priority as we emerge from lockdown is to provide immediate support to the thousands of students receiving their exam results shortly, to help them to make good transition decisions.
- 3.3 We have been working on a Covid-19 recovery initiative - My Choices - relating specifically to Years 11 & 13 transitions in response to calls from the education sector and Careers Leaders.

3.4 CEC's My Choices project will address uncertainty around exam results day and will support Careers Leaders (and through them, parents and carers) to guide young people at this critical juncture and throughout the next academic year. The initiative consists of two key components:

- a) A national 'My Choices' Careers Leader Guide will be a one-stop-shop for information and resources to support staff who are supporting students on and around results day. It will collate information on local provider offers (including the DWP's enhanced Youth Offer), resources and national Labour Market Information. Careers Leaders have been provided with advice to enable year 11 and 13 students who are digitally disadvantaged to access My Choices Transitions resources
- b) A national 'My Choices' event will allow providers to speak directly to young people about their next steps into education, employment or training on results day and throughout the year.

3.5 CEC is working with the Gatsby Foundation on a "Gatsby Benchmarks Can-Do guide" which will provide support and guidance to our key partners looking for help to navigate the uncertainty of the next academic year and to continue to deliver excellence in careers education for young people.

3.6 CEC also recognises the critical need to join forces at a national and local level to ensure coherence of provision on offer and to guarantee that help is administered to the young people that are in most need of support. We will be funding regional activities and events that support young people in transition years (Y11-13).

3.7 Priorities for CEC over weeks to come will be to ensure that the focus of our work can support, and is aligned to, LEP and wider regional economic recovery plans.

3.8 CEC will also work closely with the Department for Education, DWP and their programme managers on the ground to ensure that we are coordinated with the youth employment measures announced by Government through the Summer Statement.

#### 4. Background

4.1 The foundation to educators' approach to careers support is built on the Gatsby Benchmarks<sup>7</sup> for world-class careers guidance, adopted by over 85% of schools and colleges, which bring together the best practice elements experiential learning, information, and guidance. All eight benchmarks are equally weighted and are pivotal in preparing young people to make decisions about future courses of study, training, and employment.

4.2 Benchmarks five, six and seven extol meaningful encounters with employers and their workplaces, and further or higher education which we know is critical to young people's future employment prospects. Evidence shows that four or more encounters with the world of work can reduce a young person's chances of becoming NEET by 86%<sup>8</sup>, and improves academic attainment.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Gatsby Charitable Foundation. (2014). Good Career Guidance. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

<sup>8</sup> Mann, A., and Percy, C. (2013). [Employer engagement in British secondary education: wage earning outcomes experienced by young adults. \*Journal of Education and Work\*](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Kashefpakdel, E., Percy, C. and Rehill, J. \(2019\). Motivated to Achieve: How encounters with the world of work can change attitudes and improve academic attainment. London: Education & Employers.](#)

4.3 For young people in secondary education transition years (Y11 and Y13), access to careers support is even more important, as young people are often hardest hit by the effects of recession as they move into employment<sup>10</sup>. There remains strong goodwill to engage with schools and colleges amongst employers and their representative bodies – polling by ComRes on behalf of CEC shows 82% believe it's important to work in schools and colleges. However, we know economic uncertainty will impinge early talent recruitment and pause future intakes,<sup>11</sup> and our polling shows many employers are already reducing apprenticeships (29%) and work experience places (30%).

July 2020

---

<sup>10</sup> [K Henehan, Class of 2020: Education leavers in the current crisis, Resolution Foundation, May 2020](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Institute for Employment Studies: Covid-19: The impact of the crisis on student recruitment and development.](#)