

Announcement of first all-age careers service for England welcomed by Institute of Career Guidance

The announcement today of the Government's vision for the first all-age careers service in England by Skills minister John Hayes, MP, was welcomed enthusiastically by delegates at the annual conference of the Institute of Career Guidance. Both young people aged 13-19 and adults will be able to begin accessing the new arrangements from September 2011 which will be fully operational by April 2012.

Speaking at the conference, John Hayes said:

"I have long argued for the creation of an all-age careers service. A unified, consistent service that offers seamless support to young people as they make the transition to adulthood and have a true focus on lifelong learning." He added that:

"Careers guidance is the engine room of social mobility and social justice."

Dr Deidre Hughes, President of the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG) welcomed the new proposals and that the Minister chose the ICG Annual Conference to make the announcement.

She said: "The Institute has worked hard to influence national thinking and we are delighted to see that high quality, independent careers advice is now seen at the centre of the governance social and economic agenda. Our membership have long campaigned for a strong all-age guidance careers strategy."

The Minister explained that the new service will build on the best of Next Step and Connexions and provide a fully joined up service for all age groups for the first time.

The new service will be founded on two key principles.

- Impartial careers advice independent of organisations with a 'vested interest'
- Ensuring professional expertise and leadership of careers guidance services are underpinned by clear national standards.

Schools will be under a legal duty to secure independent impartial careers guidance for their students and will be required to work in close partnership with expert independent advisers. Universities will continue to provide their own careers services but also to encourage use of the new all age careers service and will be encouraged to apply the same standards.

Local Authorities will continue to have a requirement to ensure support is provided for the most vulnerable groups and to support them into education employment or training. They will also be responsible for maintaining accurate data on young people that will ensure services can be targeted at those in most need.

In response to member's questions, the Minister stated that professional status and underpinning professional development of practitioners will be key and the recommendations of the Careers Profession Taskforce will be implemented. The Government will move towards the level 6 (honours degree) qualification level being the practice standard. They wish to "raise the professional standard bar" that could be easily recognised and easily inspected. The Minister ended with a commitment that the word "careers" would be incorporated into the brand name for the new service.

Incoming president Steve Higginbotham commented:

"The Minister has thrown down a challenge to the sector to raise the bar for the standard of careers guidance in England. The ICG is pleased that we have already anticipated these demands, for example, developing a professional register. We look forward to working with the Careers Profession Alliance to drive forward the ambitious agenda for change."

We are pleased that the new service will build on the best of Next Step and Connexions and provide a fully joined up service for all age groups for the first time. This is a seminal moment for the career guidance profession and the Institute of Career Guidance.

There are 5 steps to be implemented

1. The schools inspectorate will carry out a thematic review of careers education and guidance in schools. There will be an initial report in March 2011 with a final report in March 2012
2. National bodies will be asked to work with schools and colleges and training providers support improved careers guidance
3. The Government will publish the good practice for schools and colleges to learn from.
4. Awards will be made for excellent guidance practitioners and to receivers of excellent guidance services that helped improve their lives and achieve their dreams
5. The Government will consult on the development of 'a licence to practice'