

Advancing ambitions:

The role of career guidance in supporting social mobility

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Contents

Foreword	3
Executive Summary	4
Summary recommendations	6
1. Introduction: career guidance and social mobility	7
2. About the study	10
3. Career guidance in England	14
4. What has happened in schools and colleges as a result of current policy decisions?	17
5. Can we quantify the impacts of career guidance?	21
6. What does good career guidance look like?	27
7. Conclusions and recommendations	32
8. References	34
Appendix: Technical issues and underpinning analysis	38

Foreword

The overall decline in good career guidance is reducing social mobility. Ensuring that young people have access to the right advice about their options and guiding them towards those that will best enable them to fulfil their potential can make a huge difference. But too often what is available in schools and colleges is not good enough.

Career guidance has had a chequered history, not least with the upheaval of recent years, as Prof Tristram Hooley and his colleagues eloquently describe in this important report. Schools are now placed under a duty to provide career guidance. Some have met this responsibility well, but too many lack the resources or expertise to provide sufficient advice of good quality.

In this report, the authors show that where schools and colleges do meet a high standard in the advice and guidance they offer, there are some dividends in improved attendance, better GCSE results and wiser university choices. But there is another more straightforward reason why we should have a high standard of career guidance in every school and college: not doing so places non-privileged young people at an even greater disadvantage in their ability to access the best opportunities.

The Sutton Trust supports 3,000 young people a year in our access programmes, helping able young people to go to our leading universities. We work with many schools and colleges, and support teachers as well as students through our summer schools, but we also know from our polling that there are some teachers with misconceptions of elite universities who would be unwilling to recommend them even to their brightest students.

Our other recent polling has shown a lack of awareness of apprenticeships among teachers, even where young people are keen to access them. We need to ensure that schools with the duty to provide good impartial guidance have the knowledge and expertise to fulfil their responsibilities.

We recognise that money is tight across the public services. So, we do not advocate a return to previous models of local authority and Connexions provision. But if schools are to fulfil the duty under which they are now placed, it is crucial that the National Career Service does more than provide web-based advice or a telephone hotline. That's why we would like to see its remit extended so that it can provide specialist advice to schools and students where they need it. We also call for stronger statutory guidance, improved accountability and access to real work experience.

Career guidance may not excite political debate as much as free schools or teacher qualifications. But getting it right is an essential part of improving social mobility, which is why we made it one of the key points in our recent Mobility Manifesto. I am grateful to Prof Hooley and his colleagues for their work on this report.

David Hall

Sutton Trust Deputy Chairman

October 2014

Executive summary

Career guidance describes activities which support individuals to learn about education and employment and plan for their future lives, learning and work. These activities contribute to social mobility, helping people to discover and access opportunities that might exist outside of their immediate networks. They also encourage individuals to challenge their pre-existing assumptions about what they are capable of and to develop practical strategies to operationalise their aspirations.

Career guidance has a long history in England going back to the start of the twentieth century. From 1948 a Youth Employment Service with a national footprint was created to work with schools. When this service became the Careers Service in the 1970s, a model of partnership working was developed between the service and schools. In 2000 Connexions replaced the Careers Service, resulting in a considerable weakening of provision. Then, in 2011, the coalition government cut Connexions and transferred responsibility for career guidance to schools. The new responsibility was imposed on schools with weak statutory guidance and little help or support. None of the funding that had previously supported Connexions was transferred to schools, which had to deliver this new responsibility out of existing school budgets. This has resulted in a decline in the quality and quantity of the career guidance available to young people in England and the emergence of a 'postcode lottery' where some young people have access to much better career guidance than others.

These changes have resulted in a major reorganisation of the delivery of career guidance in schools. Unfortunately this has not been monitored in any systematic way, and only limited attempts been made to measure the impacts of the changes. This report aims to fill some of this gap by drawing together existing research and undertaking new empirical work. It investigates how career guidance has changed as a result of recent policy, what its impacts are, what effective practice looks like, and what the effects of such effective practice are likely to be.

The study has comprised three parts. First, a review of the existing evidence on the effectiveness of career guidance has been undertaken, alongside an analysis of recent policy changes. Second, using data from multiple sources for UK schools, the study has attempted to quantify the impact that career guidance programmes have on outcomes covering student performance, attendance and destinations: this is perhaps the most innovative part of the study. Third, the study has undertaken detailed case-study work with 14 schools with the goal of defining the necessary ingredients for effective career guidance.

The findings from the review of the existing evidence suggest that there has been a major change in the availability of career guidance for young people. In general this change has been for the worse, with a decline in the quality and quantity of careers provision being observed across a range of studies. However, the ways in which these changes have impacted on practice vary across the country, resulting in a 'postcode lottery' of provision. The variation in local services is due to a range of decisions that have been made both at local authority and at school level. It is clear that some schools have maintained high-quality provision and have given high priority to preparing their students for the future; but that many have not.

For the quantitative analysis a new dataset was created which utilised Department for Education performance and destinations data, information on 820 schools and colleges that hold a formal career guidance Quality Award, and school-neighbourhood socio-economic measures. Using this novel dataset, it was possible to compare outcomes for those schools that have a Quality Award with those that do not. This is not a perfect method for measuring the impact of career guidance but, in the absence of any systematic government monitoring, it provides a way of examining impacts using existing data.

The quantitative analysis revealed that:

- At **GCSE**, Quality Awards are associated with an improvement in GCSE performance and a decrease in persistent unexplained absences.
- At **A-level**, Quality Awards are associated with a decrease in persistent unexplained absences. For state schools and sixth-form colleges, Quality Awards are also associated with an increase in A-level performance. They are further associated with improved destinations, with a higher proportion of A-level students destined for top-third higher education institutions and a lower proportion of A-level students with NEET outcomes.

These findings are consistent with previous research which has found that career guidance can impact on attainment at school, engagement, successful transition to further learning and work, and longer-term life success.

The magnitudes of the quantified relationships reported above vary across the different school types. However, the

results suggest some interesting relationships and highlight the importance of monitoring the impact of changes to career guidance policy. More systematic research should be commissioned which (1) monitors the extent of career provision in schools and (2) examines impact at pupil level as well as school level.

The detailed case-study work with 14 schools helped to clarify what effective career guidance looks like. The schools each held a Quality Award and had well-established practices. The similarities that existed between their practices demonstrated a substantial consensus about how to provide school-based career guidance effectively:

- **Infrastructure**

Effective career guidance requires a strong infrastructure. Typically this includes: strong buy-in from senior leaders and governors; close alignment with the school mission or ethos; dedicated staff to co-ordinate or deliver it; and the development of a systematic approach to record-keeping.

- **Programmes**

The case-study schools and colleges all offered a structured career education programme starting in Year 7 or 8 and continuing until students left the school.

- **Stakeholders**

The case-study schools and colleges all offered students a variety of opportunities to interact with employers and post-secondary learning providers.

- **Individual**

The case-study schools and colleges all offered students an entitlement to see a careers adviser and encouraged a range of informal career conversations.

Based on the analysis, the study draws a number of conclusions and recommendations for future policy.

What does good career guidance look like?

Career guidance is understood in this report to describe a broad range of activities including career learning in the curriculum, employer engagement and work experience as well as one-to-one advice and guidance. The existing research literature about what constitutes good career guidance aligns well with our findings and suggests that career guidance needs to be integrated into a school's activities and underpinned by the buy-in of senior leadership. There is also agreement that students should start thinking about their careers early (at least in Years 7 or 8) and be supported to develop their ideas through a progressive programme of learning and support. Ideally this should be supported by access to good-quality information and resources and delivered by trained professionals in partnership with other key stakeholders such as employers.

The evidence on effective career guidance has recently been summarised by a Gatsby study. The eight benchmarks that were developed by this study have been influential for the present report and have been endorsed by our findings.

The **Gatsby benchmarks** are:

- A stable careers programme.
- Learning from career and labour market information.
- Addressing the needs of each pupil.
- Linking curriculum learning to careers.
- Encounters with employers and employees.
- Experiences of workplaces.
- Encounters with further and higher education.
- Personal guidance.

Summary recommendations

Recommendation 1:

The government should strengthen the National Careers Service and give it a clear role to support schools in the delivery of career guidance. Ideally this would include providing schools and colleges with free access to professionally qualified careers advisers including specialist advisers with expertise in vocational options and with knowledge of entry to elite universities.

Recommendation 2:

Additional resourcing should be made available to the National Careers Service to support it in broadening its focus to include schools and colleges.

Recommendation 3:

Stronger incentives need to be developed to encourage schools and colleges to prioritise and invest in career guidance. This should include stronger statutory guidance.

Recommendation 4:

Ofsted should review the way it inspects career guidance, to give it greater prominence. Ofsted should recognise that the careers Quality Awards offer a strong indicator of good provision.

Recommendation 5:

The DfE guidance to schools and colleges is currently composed of both statutory guidance and non-statutory advice. This should be redeveloped into a single clear document, which should be much stronger in nature. The revised statutory guidance should be informed by the Gatsby benchmarks and other research on what constitutes good career guidance (including this report).

Recommendation 6:

Linked to their statutory duty, schools and colleges should be required to develop and publish a school/college plan and policy on career guidance, to show that they are meeting their legal responsibilities and to provide pupils, parents and employers with information about the school's activities in this area.

Recommendation 7:

The statutory guidance should highlight the value of Quality Awards as a mechanism for driving improvement in career guidance and a guarantor of quality provision.

Recommendation 8:

The Department for Education should continue to extend and enhance the quality of data it collects on student progression. This progression data should inform schools' provision of career guidance and be seen as a key accountability measure. The data should be made available to schools in a way that can support the development of provision, e.g. through inclusion in the government's portal for labour market information (LMI for All).

Recommendation 9:

Online technologies are important to the delivery of effective career guidance. The Government should review the websites and services it supports and should develop a strategy designed to stimulate public-sector and private-sector development of tools that meet schools' needs.

Recommendation 10:

Any innovations or experiments in career guidance should be monitored and evaluated to ensure that new policies are evidence-based. Randomised controlled trials and other robust methods should be used where possible to assess effective practice.

1. Introduction: career guidance and social mobility

What is career guidance?

The term “career guidance” is used by different people to mean different things. It is commonly used to mean a one-to-one interaction between a professional careers adviser and a client. However, this report will use a broader definition which encompasses this kind of career counselling interaction, but also includes a wide range of other interventions designed to help people to develop their careers. Within the context of English schools this broader usage is sometimes described as “career education, information, advice and guidance”, shortened to CEIAG. This broad and inclusive term relates closely to the definition of “career guidance” utilised by OECD in its 2004 international review:

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services.¹

OECD went on to describe the impacts that such activity might be expected to have. A new paper from the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network examines these impacts in more detail.² It argues that career guidance can have learning outcomes, economic outcomes and social outcomes, and that these outcomes can be seen at a range of levels, from individuals making better decisions to an overall effect on the global labour market.

The conceptual rationale for career guidance and social mobility

Social mobility is cited as a policy aspiration by all the main political parties. In a democratic society, many politicians are concerned about a situation in which accidents of birth with attendant access to financial, social and cultural capital strongly influence the life chances of individuals. Such concerns are supported by a range of research which suggests that social mobility is

declining, or at the very least failing to improve.³

The literature on social mobility is large, inter-disciplinary and includes a number of areas of disagreement.⁴ It is not within the scope of this report to review this literature in detail, but a literature review commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in 2011 offers a strong starting-point for understanding the subject.⁵ The BIS review highlights the challenge of increasing social mobility within economies that have high levels of inequality and reviews a number of strategies that may contribute to an increase in social mobility. Of particular interest, from the perspective of the current study, is the argument that improving information, advice and guidance may be able to enhance disadvantaged young people’s capacity to navigate the higher education system.

The inclusion of career guidance as a possible strategy to enhance social mobility is not uncommon in the social mobility policy literature. For example, the Hughes report⁶ which examined fair access to education included recommendations on the delivery and co-ordination of careers work in schools. Again, the Bridge Group report on social mobility and higher education⁷ focused strongly on the provision of information, advice and guidance. More recently, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission⁸ urged the government to improve the resourcing of career guidance.

The current government announced its commitment to social mobility early with the publication of *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers*.⁹ The Labour Party’s leader Ed Milliband also quickly aligned himself with the social mobility agenda in a speech to the Sutton Trust:

The foundation for my politics is a belief in the equal worth of every citizen. From that flows the idea that everyone should have equal chances to get on and make a better life for themselves.¹⁰

Such policy concerns can be influenced by a number of different motivations, most notably those based on the ideas of *fairness* and of *efficiency*.

The concept of *fairness* is important to social mobility, imagining a political economy where individuals are judged on their talents and their character rather than on their race, gender or class. Fairness is essentially about the right of the individual to pursue the good life within the framework of capitalist society. The concept is used to recognise that the current social order is not conducive to fairness and that ways should be sought to remedy and ameliorate this situation.

The concept of *efficiency* is also an important rationale for social mobility. The argument here is that a society which is able to use all of its talents is more effective than one which limits the use of talent based on access

to wealth or other sources of advantage in early life. This is essentially a socio-economic justification which seeks to reform systems in the interests of all and not just of those talented individuals who might directly benefit from them.

Both of these rationales for social mobility align well with policy justifications for career guidance. Career guidance is both an individual and a social good: it helps individuals to progress in their learning and work, but it also helps the effective functioning of the labour and learning markets and contributes to a range of social policy goals.¹¹ In addition, career guidance is conceived by many of its practitioners as an intervention that seeks to support social justice. The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance recently published a *Communiqué on Social Justice in Educational and Career Guidance and Counselling* which stated that:

*Promoting equality of opportunity regarding access to education, training and employment options is not enough. We need to strive to achieve equity and equality of outcomes... Therefore, we call on policy makers to renew their thinking about the contribution career education, guidance and counselling can make to the promotion of a just society, and to provide the material and political support to make this a reality.*¹²

Despite this close alignment, surprisingly little work has looked explicitly in detail at the relationship between career guidance and social mobility. A notable exception was a study by Deirdre Hughes commissioned by Careers England in 2010 which looked at the issue of social mobility in some depth.¹³ It argued that career guidance is a “precursor to social mobility” and that it has the capacity to lubricate “the wheels of social mobility and economic prosperity”. It also noted, based on interviews with prominent policy-shapers and policy-makers, that there is fairly widespread agreement that career guidance is part of the policy mix required to address social mobility.

The research set out in this paper builds upon this background of research and policy discussion to explore further the relationship between career guidance and social mobility. Career guidance acts on individuals’ aspirations, on their opportunity awareness, on their decision making, on their skills and on their networks. It is possible to identify a number of key contributions that career guidance can make which may support social mobility, either on its own or in concert with other interventions. Career guidance can (quotations are from participants in the research reported later in this report):

- Provide access to information and intelligence about the labour and learning markets in ways that transcend existing social networks.

“A careers programme ensures that young people are aware of all of the options that are available.” Jane Wilkinson, Inspiring IAG

- Demystify labour and learning market systems and support individuals to understand progression pathways and manage transition processes such as university or apprenticeship applications, the creation of CVs and recruitment interviews.

“It raises aspirations. It lets students know what they need to achieve in terms of qualifications or what they need to do. If we didn’t have the careers programme in place, they wouldn’t know what the requirements would be, however because we have it in place, we can say: look, if you want to go here, then this is what you need.” Katie Rutter, Associate Assistant Principal, Outwood Grange Academy

- Engage with individuals’ assumptions about themselves and the world around them, informing and challenging them.

“I think it helps to break the stereotypes. It enables all children from all backgrounds, particularly those from working-class backgrounds, to aspire for jobs other than in the practical/manual sector and to have high expectations.” Susan Jones, Assistant Head, Ellowes Hall Sports College

- Listen to individuals’ aspirations and help them to operationalise these as well as considering alternatives.

“For some of our students guidance interviews can act as a good motivator as students are given the truth based on their current performance – which seems to act as a ‘reality check.’ For others, it helps them to realise their potential and guides them into provision that is right for them. When students have that goal, it encourages them, motivates them, and generally improves attendance, behaviour and academic performance.” Jennifer Lonsdale, Careers Co-ordinator, Huntcliff School

- Build the skills that people need to make decisions and transitions and to progress in their career (career management skills).

“A lot of our students are very bright, but they don’t have the same level of support to develop their employability skills. For example many medical schools now have multiple mini-interviews. Students from a private school will have more confidence in how they present themselves and talk through the scenarios. We try and help our students to get better at presenting themselves and raise their confidence to compete on a level playing-field. We are trying to ensure that the gap between our students and those that come from a more privileged background is bridged a bit. Hopefully we will have developed more confident, more aware young people. We want them to leave college with skills as well as qualifications.” Jean McCool, Careers Adviser, Holy Cross College

- Broker access to networks beyond the ones that individuals normally have access to.

“We do some work in independent schools. Independent schools have a variety of activities such as ‘dining with an employer’. How do we translate these social capital activities that independent schools do so well, into career learning activities that state schools can accommodate? In terms of aspiration raising I think that careers can play a massive role in helping people from disadvantaged backgrounds to be successful in the world of work.” **Gary Longden, Futures Advice, Skills and Employment**

- Provide mentoring and support to encourage persistence and remaining resilient in the face of setbacks.

“I think that what we do gives the students more focus and offers them a better basis for their research about their future. We are a safety net. The students don’t know as much as you think they would, neither do many of the parents; especially the first generation going to university. Our students don’t have the same networking opportunities. For a lot of them it is the first time that they’ve ever had to make an important decision. It is probably the first time that they’ve experienced rejection. Sometimes I have my careers hat on and sometimes I have my mum’s hat on, different decisions need different help and support.” **Jean McCool, Careers Adviser, Holy Cross College**

that there is a growing gulf between state-school and independent-school provision, skewed towards the latter.

If career guidance does have the kind of impacts suggested above, and if access to it is unevenly distributed along socio-economic lines, it is more likely that it will increase social stratification by allowing the advantaged to become more skilful in maximising their advantages. The link between social mobility and career guidance therefore only operates if access is spread across the population and not concentrated alongside indicators of privilege. Because of this, one of the key issues discussed in this report will be the availability of career guidance.

Such benefits are clearly dependent on how career guidance is delivered and where young people encounter it. A twenty-minute interview administered a few weeks before leaving school is unlikely to be particularly effective. On the other hand, an extended programme of career education and work-related learning with access to individualised support at key points in a young person’s education is far more likely to deliver the necessary learning and support. What makes for effective career guidance will be considered in more depth in Section 6.

Career guidance has the potential to support a wide range of individuals. While it has sometimes been thought of by policy-makers as being primarily of value to those who are at risk of being disengaged from the mainstream education system¹⁴, it is important to affirm that it can offer benefits to young people from all backgrounds and across the attainment spectrum. If it is going to support social mobility, it is important that those from lower socio-economic backgrounds have access to at least as much career guidance as those from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Sections 2 and 4 will argue that the general quality and quantity of career guidance available in state schools and colleges has recently fallen and become more patchy in its distribution. In contrast, recent research by the Gatsby Foundation¹⁵ suggests that independent (fee-paying) schools take the area of career guidance very seriously. It accordingly seems likely

2. About the study

This study explores the relationship between career guidance and social mobility. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- What can career guidance contribute to social mobility?
- How have the policies of the coalition government impacted upon the provision of career guidance in state schools and colleges in England?
- What does quality career guidance look like?
- What evidence is there of the impact of quality career guidance?

These questions were explored through a four-stage methodology comprising: (1) policy analysis and literature review, (2) gathering the core sample, (3) data analysis, and (4) case studies and interviews. This report follows the same format.

Policy analysis and literature review

Our project began with a rapid intelligence review and policy analysis. Detailed searching was undertaken to gather all research and policy documents relevant to the provision of career guidance in English schools and colleges. In particular, recent materials were reviewed to update the authors' previous work on effective practice in school-based career guidance¹⁶ and commentaries on public policy in the area.¹⁷

We identified a wide range of academic and “grey” literature in the field using databases such as the Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), Australian Education Index, British Education Index, British Humanities Index, Business Source Premier, EBSCO, ERIC and PsycINFO. This was augmented using keyword searches of using Google and GoogleScholar to identify further “grey” literature, alongside personal knowledge of sources within the research team.

Gathering the core sample

While policy analysis is valuable, the key issue is how changes in policy influence career guidance practices in schools and colleges. This issue has been investigated recently in a number of ways, usually relying either on voluntary surveys (leading to relatively small samples of schools and colleges)¹⁸ or on detailed qualitative investigations.¹⁹

We sought to explore the picture in schools and colleges through a different methodology. The availability of school/college-level data collected by the Department for Education provided an opportunity to examine a full

national dataset. However, in order to explore this in relation to careers provision, it was necessary to build up a dataset which also provided information on schools' and colleges' levels of engagement with career guidance.

At present there are no systematic, comprehensive data on how schools and colleges are discharging their career guidance responsibilities. Indeed, we argue that this failure to monitor and evaluate the impacts of policy changes in this area is one of the major failings of the coalition government's policies. However, since the mid-1990s schools have had access to awards that validate the quality of their provision in career guidance (for a detailed account, see Section 6). Henceforth we will refer to these as “the Quality Awards” or “the awards”. These awards focus on: leadership, management and delivery; staff training, development and competence; provision of a career education and work-related learning curriculum; access to independent and impartial career guidance; work with external partners and agencies including employers and post-16 learning providers; involving families and carers; monitoring, reviewing and evaluating provision; and measuring the impact of provision.

The awards provide the most comprehensive independent assessment of quality careers provision currently available in England. Surprisingly, whilst these awards and their national validation under the Quality in Careers Standard featured in the 2012 Practical Guide²⁰, the Government did not mention them at all in its revised 2014 Statutory Guidance.²¹

In *Good Career Guidance*, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation identified a series of evidence-based benchmarks which, it argued, constituted good career guidance (these are detailed in Section 6). A Gatsby survey of schools found that those schools which have a Quality Award are significantly more likely than those without to meet a range of its benchmarks.²² This validation of the impact of the awards increased our confidence in using them as an indicator of good practice in this study.

The project began by making contact with Careers England²³ and with the Quality in Careers Consortium, the organisation responsible for managing the national validation process for the awards – the Quality in Careers Standard (QiCS).²⁴ Approval for the study was gained at QiC Consortium Board level and the research team then contacted each career guidance provider to assemble a list of schools and colleges that already held the Quality Awards. This resulted in a base national dataset of 820 schools and colleges (we excluded more than 300 institutions known to be “working towards” an award).

The results presented here are therefore a good indicator of the impacts of holding the awards. However, they have more limitation as a broader indicator of the impacts of quality careers provision, as not all schools

and colleges which take careers work seriously also seek an award – such awards are voluntary, not a requirement. But since there are no data at present which record schools’ and colleges’ engagement with careers *per se*, and since the award-holding schools and colleges seem likely to represent a substantial proportion of schools and colleges with good-quality careers provision, we believe the impacts of holding these awards are a defensible proxy for the impacts of good career guidance.

Data analysis

The creation of a national dataset of schools and colleges which hold Quality Awards enabled the use of other existing datasets to explore:

- (1) any systematic differences in school/college characteristics or underlying student composition between schools and colleges which implement a quality career guidance programme and those which do not;
- (2) the differences in a number of outcomes – including student performance, student attendance and student destinations – between schools and colleges which offer quality career guidance programmes and those which do not.

To explore these two sets of differences, the quantitative analysis consisted of two strategies. First, averages of school characteristics, student composition and student outcomes were compared across different school/college types and between schools and colleges with and without the awards. Tests were performed on the statistical significance of any existing differences. Second, regression analysis was used to look at the association between the awards and other school characteristics, and the outcomes listed above. The regression analysis allowed us to control for differences in school/college characteristics when examining the association of the awards with the outcomes.

In addition to the dataset of award holders, the analysis has used data for Key Stage 4 (GCSE) and Key Stage 5 (A-level and equivalent) schools and colleges in 2011 from three sources.²⁵ We will use the terms “GCSE” and “A-level” to describe the two stages of the education system that we have investigated.²⁶ The three sources were:

- Information on school characteristics, student performance and student attendance, taken from the Department for Education school performance tables.
- School/college-level information on student destinations, taken from the Department for Education destinations data.
- Information on neighbourhood socio-economic status (SES), taken from HEFCE’s POLAR data.²⁷

The Department for Education data files were linked using unique school identification codes. SES data were linked using school postal codes.

The Department for Education data provide a wealth of information. Outcomes have been organised into three groups:

1. Student performance: for GCSE schools, the proportion of students completing five good GCSEs (defined as 5A*-C grades including English and Maths); for sixth-form schools and colleges, the proportion of students completing at least 3 A-level qualifications with a final grade of C or better, and the average UCAS score per student at the end of A-level.
2. Proportion of students (at GCSE and A-level) with persistent unexplained absence.
3. Destinations of students who had good GCSEs and A-levels. These include further education destinations, apprenticeships, employment and NEET.

There are a number of reasons why these outcomes may differ between different schools and colleges. Accordingly, we examined a number of school/college characteristics available in the Department for Education data. These included: pupil-teacher ratio, the proportion of students who qualify for SEN or Action Plus, the proportion of students qualifying for free meals, the proportion of students who speak English as their first language, and the total number of students. For GCSE schools there was also information on the proportion of low-achieving and high-achieving students before they started their GCSE courses.

Finally, the data also contain information on the type of school and the school postal code. Postal codes are linked to the HEFCE POLAR data. This data provides a measure of neighbourhood socio-economic status, as captured by the POLAR3 score.

Characteristics of Quality Award schools and colleges

Using the Department for Education data, we summarise schools and colleges by school/college type and Quality Award status (detailed results are reported in Appendix A3 and A5, Tables A1 and A2). A number of potentially important differences were found between schools and colleges which hold the awards and those which do not.

At GCSE, maintained schools which hold an award exhibit a number of differences from other maintained schools. On average, award schools are larger (they have more students), are less likely to offer A-levels, do better in Ofsted reports, have fewer free-meal-qualifying students, and have more native English-speaking students than other schools. Qualitatively similar results are observed

for academies, special schools and independent schools (although most of these differences are not statistically significant).²⁸ GCSE maintained and special schools with awards are, on average, in poorer neighbourhoods than schools without an award, while independent schools with awards tend to be in richer neighbourhoods.

At A-level, award-holding sixth-form colleges, state schools and general further education colleges are larger and do significantly better in Ofsted reports (only statistically significant for sixth-form colleges) and tend to be in richer neighbourhoods (only statistically significant for general FE colleges) than other schools and colleges. For tertiary colleges, award-holding schools and colleges tend to do worse in Ofsted reports and to be in poorer neighbourhoods than non-award schools and colleges (these differences are not statistically significant).

These differences were controlled in the regression analyses reported in Section 5.

Case studies and interviews

The data analysis was useful in identifying and quantifying impacts. However, large-scale analysis of school-level outcomes inevitably lacks subtlety in measuring outcomes of an activity aimed at individuals. Career guidance is not primarily a school improvement technique, but rather a way of fostering individual outcomes. In addition, we recognised that quantitative analysis of this kind would provide relatively few insights into how effective career guidance was delivered and how it linked into wider processes in the school and beyond. We therefore decided to conduct a number of school case studies and a series of interviews with careers providers responsible for supporting and assessing the awards.

Schools and colleges were selected for inclusion in the case studies either because the analysis of data revealed that they had performed well in terms of progression or attainment, or because one of the award convenors identified them as an example of good practice. The sample can therefore be described as a purposive sample designed to investigate good and impactful practice. The sample was also chosen to ensure some representation of different school and college types.

In total, 14 case studies were conducted:

- Arden Academy (mixed 11-18 specialist academy in Solihull)
- Da Vinci Community College (mixed 11-16 co-operative trust school in Derby)
- Ellowes Hall Sports College (mixed 11-18 comprehensive sports college in Dudley)
- Greenhead College (mixed 16-19 sixth-form college in Huddersfield)

- Holy Cross College (mixed 16-19 Catholic sixth-form college in Bury)
- Huntcliff School (mixed 11-16 academy in Gainsborough)
- Kingswinford School (mixed 11-16 academy in Dudley)
- Outwood Grange Academy (mixed 11-18 academy in Wakefield)
- ParkHall Academy (mixed 11-18 academy in Solihull)
- Sandwell Academy (mixed 11-18 academy in West Bromwich)
- South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy (mixed 11-18 academy in Bilston)
- St Joseph's Catholic School (mixed 11-16 Catholic school in Salisbury)
- Thurstable Sports Academy (mixed 11-18 school in Tiptree, Colchester)
- Wellington School (mixed 11-18 academy in Altrincham)

Case studies were based either on a visit or on a telephone interview. In all cases the organisation's careers lead was interviewed, although the job title and position of the person varied according to the way careers work was organised in the school or college. In some cases both a careers co-ordinator and a member of the senior leadership team were interviewed together. Alongside the interview, we collected a series of documents from the organisation. These again varied depending on the organisation of careers work within the school or college, but typically included: documentation submitted to receive the award; the careers policy; description of the organisation of the careers programme; and literature given to students and their parents as part of the provision of career support. Where a visit was undertaken it was also usual to be taken on a tour of the school or college and to observe the spaces within which careers provision was delivered.

The case studies explored how careers work was organised in the schools and colleges and how this had changed since the end of Connexions. They also explored how careers work was perceived to impact on social mobility and whether there was any attempt to evaluate this impact. Finally, the case studies explored the role of the awards and any other external support that the schools and colleges had received in relation to their careers provision.

In addition to the school and college case studies, the researchers also conducted six interviews with careers providers involved in support or assessment of the awards. The organisations that participated in these interviews were:

- Careers Inc
- Careers South West /Investor in Careers
- C&K Careers
- Essex County Council
- Futures Advice Skills and Employment / Career Mark
- Inspiring IAG

All interviews with careers providers were conducted as telephone interviews. They sought to gain the provider's insights into how the school and college careers landscape had changed since the end of Connexions. They also explored providers' definitions of good practice and examined how the awards operated in practice. These interviews proved to be very useful, offering access to a middle-tier perspective on how national policy had been translated into the practices observed in schools and colleges and in the quantitative analysis.

Detailed notes were taken from all interviews and case studies and a short summary report written on each one. Where possible, interviews were recorded to provide a back-up to researcher notes from the interviews. Notes were analysed thematically to inform the key messages of the report. All participants had the opportunity to review and correct their quotes and any direct references to their organisation. They were also invited to make any broader comments on a draft report.

3. Career guidance in England

Career guidance in English schools and colleges has a long history, stretching back to the 1920s.²⁹ From the late 1940s, it was largely focused around “matching” interventions undertaken by local-authority Youth Employment Officers³⁰ who sought to support school-to-work transitions. The 1973 Employment and Training Act created the Careers Service and strongly orientated it towards provision in schools. As the organisational position of the Careers Service was strengthened, educators began to recognise the limitations of a reactive approach which only engaged learners immediately prior to the point of transition. Career guidance began increasingly to be seen as something that was constructed throughout life, rather than chosen at the point of exit from the education system. The focus accordingly shifted towards career education that prepared young people to manage their careers.³¹ This focus was strengthened following the Education Act of 1997 which made careers education statutory.

Throughout most of its history, career guidance in English schools and colleges was delivered through a partnership with an external Careers Service. Schools and colleges led on career education, drawing in the Careers Service as a resource where appropriate; the Careers Service led on the delivery of professional career counselling, the brokering of relationships with employers, and provision of a range of other specialist support. OECD³² identified this partnership model as having a number of strengths, allowing for career guidance to be embedded within the curriculum, but also for strong links with the labour market to be established and maintained, and for young people to have access to an external and impartial perspective on their future, detached from the institutional interests of the school or college.

This partnership model of delivery gradually developed through the 1970s and 1980s, and survived the “privatisation” of the Careers Service in the early 1990s. It was further strengthened by the 1997 Education Act, which mandated schools to co-operate with careers advisers, particularly in relation to interviewing pupils, and gave the Careers Service a statutory right of access to schools. The focus on career education in this period was also backed up by funding, with the Careers Service having dedicated resources to work with schools in order to enhance career education provision.

However, the creation of Connexions by the Labour government in early 2000 saw the decline of the partnership model.³³ Connexions was an attempt to create an integrated youth support service. While it is possible to mount a defence of the integrated youth support service concept in principle, its design and implementation were seriously flawed in a number of ways.³⁴ These included:

- The use of Careers Service resourcing as the sole budget for the service rather than (as originally intended) merging a range of youth-related budgets to create a larger service.
- The weakening of the careers element of the service and the erosion of its distinctive careers professionalism.
- The move away from a universal service towards a service increasingly targeted at those who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or were in danger of becoming NEET.
- The weakening of partnership working with schools and colleges.
- The frequent changes in the service’s objectives and structures.

Many in the careers sector expressed concern and disquiet with the direction of Connexions, and the publication of Alan Milburn’s report *Unleashing Aspiration* shone a harsh light on the service.³⁵ The Government’s support for the formation of the Careers Profession Task Force suggested that a change in Labour Party policy was likely following on from Milburn’s report. So, by the time of the General Election in 2010, Connexions had few friends and its future was in doubt regardless of the result.

Career guidance and the coalition government

The early signs from the coalition government were promising for the careers sector. The Conservative Party had included in its election manifesto a pledge to create an all-age careers service. John Hayes, the minister with responsibility for careers matters, addressed the Institute for Career Guidance saying that the government would develop an all-age service that would “*build on Next Step and on Connexions because we must not lose the best of either*”.³⁶ However, the government subsequently decided to pursue an alternative path, whereby responsibility for careers work was transferred, with no funding, to schools and colleges, and local authorities were allowed to withdraw from the provision of universal careers support.

The change in statutory responsibilities came at a time when local authorities were under serious financial pressure. Unsurprisingly, therefore, many authorities cut back careers provision to a core service serving only the most disadvantaged individuals. While some authorities showed creativity and commitment, most gradually pared back their provision and narrowed the definition of who was entitled to receive career support.³⁷

Councils also typically made similar cuts to education-business partnerships which, like Connexions, effectively

disappeared as a national entitlement in the early years of the coalition. Alongside these local authority cuts, the coalition discontinued its funding of the Aimhigher programme which had sought to support the widening of participation in higher education, with direct links to social mobility.

By early 2012, schools and colleges found themselves with a new responsibility to secure career guidance and a dramatically impoverished landscape of supporting organisations to help them in discharging this responsibility. The release of the government's statutory guidance³⁸ proved to be of little help. The guidance given to schools and colleges was vague and imprecise, and left considerable room for confusion.³⁹ The subsequent non-statutory *Practical Guide*⁴⁰ in 2012 was clearer and more detailed, but was purely advisory in nature and made little impact on practice.

As schools and colleges sought to respond to the new system, there was considerable political debate about the effectiveness of the new model for the delivery of career guidance. A critical report by the House of Commons education select committee⁴¹ was followed by an Ofsted report⁴² which questioned whether career guidance and the policies underpinning it were "going in the right direction". Criticism also emerged from a range of key stakeholders including the careers sector itself and the CBI, whose Director-General John Cridland described careers advice as being on "life support" and argued that it "must improve".⁴³

The government, in response to these criticisms, broadly simply reasserted its policies.⁴⁴ In particular, it produced a new version of the statutory guidance⁴⁵, this time with associated non-statutory departmental advice⁴⁶, in April 2014. The new guidance remains extremely loose as a piece of regulation. Most disturbingly, the role of careers professionals is largely bypassed in favour of stronger employer engagement. The documents also fail to offer any real framework for quality assurance or accountability, largely neglecting the Career Development Institute register of practice, and totally ignoring the Quality in Careers Standard and the now nationally validated Quality Awards⁴⁷ that might be used for this purpose.⁴⁸

Alongside this raft of changes within the schools and colleges sector, the coalition has pursued a rather different agenda in relation to career guidance for adults (under the remit of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, rather than the Department for Education). The Next Step Service has been rebranded as the National Careers Service and its funding has been largely maintained through a period of general public-sector cuts. While there has been some criticism that the National Careers Service has moved too close to Jobcentre Plus,⁴⁹ the overall integrity of the service has been sustained. However, the National Careers Service has a very limited remit with respect to schools and colleges, and this was highlighted both by the House of Commons education committee and by Ofsted as a

missed opportunity.

There has been considerable rhetoric about the role of new technologies in the delivery of careers services for both young people and adults. The ready availability of a wide range of sources of online career information and support has sometimes been counterpoised to the delivery of conventional face-to-face services – the assumption being that career guidance is primarily about the provision of information and that in the internet world this is no longer necessary, particularly for young people who arguably have higher digital literacy.⁵⁰ It is undeniable that new technologies provide a considerable boon for individuals in the development of their careers. However, most thinking in this area has stressed the varied roles that the internet can play in career support and questioned how far it can simply replace face-to-face services.⁵¹ Even with these caveats, the level of government investment in new technologies for careers has been limited and has not sought strategically to compensate for wider cuts in career guidance. This remains an area where further creative thinking and development would be valuable.

It is not entirely clear why the coalition pursued what has amounted to a radical experiment in career guidance policy. One factor was the overt personal scepticism of the then Education Secretary, Michael Gove. He told the House of Commons Education Select Committee: "What I emphatically do not believe is that we need a cadre of careers advisers."⁵² It is possible to see many of the policies as seeking to remove or at least marginalise professional careers advisers.

Putting the direct personal antipathy of the then Secretary of State aside, it is possible to identify other rationales for the coalition government's policies in this area. Perhaps most obviously, in a period of public-sector austerity, national programmes like Connexions, the education-business partnerships and Aimhigher were seen as easy places to cut. The removal or reduction of such programmes was unlikely to grab many headlines and could also be presented as a response to legitimate criticisms such as those made by Alan Milburn.

More ideologically, the government committed itself to supporting "school autonomy". The existence of partnership organisations outside schools and colleges, especially those like Connexions with their own statutory basis, could be viewed as a threat to such autonomy. Shifting the responsibility to schools and colleges, albeit with no attendant funding, could therefore be hailed as an enhancement to school autonomy. Schools and colleges were now in a position to decide, within the very loose regulations of the statutory guidance, what career guidance their students needed.

The shifting of the responsibility for career guidance to schools and colleges has been linked to the wider weakening of local-authority involvement in education. While councils have retained important responsibilities relating to the raising of the participation age (RPA) and

the management of local levels of NEET, they have lost much of the infrastructure that supports this. From the perspective of supporting social mobility, this loss of local co-ordination and capacity is a cause for concern. While many schools and colleges will in general terms continue to do what they consider to be their best for young people, the opportunity to notice and redress inequalities in provision is diminished by the loss of this middle tier between central government and schools/colleges.

Another theme that has underpinned wider coalition education policies and has been important within the careers sphere has been the unwillingness to regulate quality or qualifications. The school autonomy agenda has opened up the possibility of unqualified teachers entering England's classrooms⁵³, so it is perhaps unsurprising that the coalition government has also been unwilling to regulate on the qualifications of careers professionals. This despite the fact that it had endorsed the report of the Careers Profession Task Force⁵⁴ which called for increased professionalism in the careers sector, and indeed has implemented some of its recommendations within the National Careers Service.

The government's recent disinterest in professionalism within career guidance has become muddled with the role that employers and other representatives from the world of work can be expected to play. The revised statutory guidance confusingly extends the definition of career guidance to include any interaction with an employer.⁵⁵ The perceived primacy of employers in informing young people's ideas about their futures is a clear theme within current government rhetoric, although it has not been backed up with any clear funding or regulatory support.

While there is strong agreement across the policy sphere that employers should be engaged with the education system and part of the broad provision of career support, there is widespread recognition that this should be complementary to, not a substitute for, the roles of careers programmes and of careers professionals. The government has attempted to frame the policy debate in this area as "*either* career professionals *or* employers", when it is much more fruitful to think about "*career professionals and employers*" and to consider what the most effective form might be for that relationship to take. A briefing⁵⁶ from the Careers Sector Stakeholders Alliance arguing for the complementarity of the roles of employers and careers professionals has received over 50 endorsements from education bodies and employers.

In summary, then, the coalition's policy has moved career guidance in schools and colleges from a weakened partnership model, based around Connexions, to a weakly defined and weakly regulated school and college-based model. At the centre of this new model are the decisions of school and college leaders about what is

appropriate for the young people in their charge. Beyond this there is little clarity about what career support a young person should expect to encounter whilst at school or college. There are strong policy signals that schools and colleges should seek to build partnerships with employers, but no clear resourcing or framework for this activity to fit into. Critically, the government has also sought to sideline the role of career professionals and careers programmes, and to diminish the idea that career guidance and work-related learning programmes should be a professional activity with an attendant pedagogy and underlying knowledge base.

Section 4 will explore in more detail how schools and colleges have responded to this policy shift. It will be argued that while there has been an overall decline in provision, not all local authorities, schools or colleges have responded in the same way. In some cases, innovative models have been developed. It is also important to note, given the extent of the government's experimentation in this sphere, that there has been little or no attempt to monitor its impacts, apart from the Ofsted survey and the promise of increased attention to career guidance in Ofsted inspections (which will be difficult to deliver). Nor has any coherent or evidenced rationale for the policy been advanced. It is difficult not to conclude that career guidance policy has been seriously neglected and largely subordinated to wider policy drivers. Given the importance of this activity for social mobility, this is highly regrettable.

4. What has happened in schools and colleges as a result of current policy decisions?

"You have good schools, good careers advisers and that has carried on whether the government has paid for it or not. There are pockets of really good practice. For some schools this has meant that the service for young people has improved, because they have a greater level of accountability. They haven't had something 'done to' them. The process feels far more connected than when it was a local authority service that was foisted on them... But on the flip side there are large numbers of schools that are not engaging. They are just bringing in a few days of adviser time. There are also problems with the unregulated nature of the market."

Debra Norton, Careers Inc

As outlined in Section 2, the coalition's policies have shifted the framework within which career guidance in schools and colleges operates. This has not simply been a change at the policy level, but has resulted in some very evident consequences that schools and colleges have been unable to ignore. In particular, local authority support for career guidance has declined, resulting in the reduction or disappearance of both direct support for schools and colleges (such as the provision of one-to-one interviews) and indirect support (such as the loss of curriculum advisory services).⁵⁷ School and colleges have therefore frequently found themselves on their own in attempting to discharge their new responsibility relating to career guidance:

"Where schools are paying us for the service, they are more focused on how they use the time in one-to-one. In some cases schools have been reducing the length of the interview from 45 minutes to 30 minutes. This might mean that students finish without an action plan."

Tim Warren, Careers South West/ Investor in Careers

However, not all of the government's policies have resulted in such clear-cut changes. Thus the loss of the statutory duties for career education and work-related learning are likely to have had less evident results. Legislation is an imperfect mechanism for influencing school or college behaviour, and many schools and colleges have always ignored such statutory requirements in favour of more urgent organisational priorities. Furthermore, the coalition government's policy has in general been to place responsibility on the school or college to make decisions rather than to prescribe or proscribe particular activities, and some schools and colleges have simply continued their existing practices in relation to curricular provision.

Recent policy has therefore removed both some of the drivers to provide high-quality career support in schools and colleges and some of the resources to which schools and colleges have had access to deliver this. However, it has not prevented schools and colleges from prioritising careers work if they believe that it is important. Nor has the Government's policy done much to disrupt the tendency of schools and colleges towards continuity

of provision. So it is likely that many schools and colleges which, for example, offered a career education curriculum as part of personal, social and health education (PSHE) before 2011 will have continued to do so, at least until some other pressures on the curriculum make them seek out areas to cut:

"I think that those schools that have always done it well are going to keep doing it well. We haven't seen any difference. It isn't schools just giving up on careers. But, if it is squeezed it is because of curriculum space. If they need more space for other activities then career education might go."

Tim Warren, Careers South West, Investor in Careers

Nonetheless, it is also possible that other schools and colleges will not have done this and that some will already have cut activities that are no longer formally required. One careers provider, Debra Norton, told us that this was the case, citing some schools where careers education had become a "big black hole".

One of the main weaknesses of coalition policy has been the lack of a clear plan or rationale for the changes, with poor co-ordination between announcements of the policy direction and publication of guidance for schools and colleges on how they should respond. Furthermore, very little attention has been given to the systematic measurement of the impacts of the policy. The Ofsted review in 2012 has been the only official attempt to examine this area.⁵⁸ The fact that Ofsted found provision to be seriously wanting was important, but the lack of a baseline combined with the small scale of the survey meant that the review was only able to make a very limited evaluation of the policy itself and was largely confined to the observation of key weaknesses commonly found in schools' provision.

Outside the government there have been a number of attempts to quantify the impact of the policy on career guidance. Surveys have tended to conclude that the policy has resulted in a reduction of resourcing in the area and that this has impacted on both the quantity and quality of the career guidance that is taking place in England.⁵⁹ However, the sampling approaches taken by these studies make it difficult to quantify this decline with any precision. Further studies by the National Foundation for Educational Research and by the University of Derby have tended to emphasise the diversity of provision.⁶⁰ This has sometimes been described as a "postcode lottery", but in fact the contours of careers provision and entitlement are more complex. Research in this area suggests that if you want to access good career guidance, you need to do one or more of the following three things: live in the right local authority; go to the right school; and be defined as vulnerable.

Table 1: Number of schools and colleges holding Quality Awards by school/college type[†]

GCSE	All schools/ colleges	CEIAG Quality Award schools/ colleges	%
Academy	32	6	19%
City Technology College	3	0	0%
Community School	1,305	215	16%
Community Special School	693	59	9%
Foundation School	875	244	28%
Foundation Special School	44	3	7%
Independent School	715	12	2%
Non-Maintained Special School	66	3	5%
Sponsored Academy	253	53	21%
Voluntary Aided School	496	67	14%
Voluntary Controlled School	79	13	16%
Total	4,561	675	
A-level	All schools/ colleges	CEIAG Quality Award schools/ colleges	%
Academy	21	5	24%
Agriculture and Horticulture College	14	1	7%
Art Design and Performing Art College	3	1	33%
City Technology College	3	0	0%
Community School	687	110	16%
Community Special School	6	1	17%
Foundation School	569	162	28%
Foundation Special School	1	0	0%
Further Education Sector Institution	1	0	0%
General Further Ed. College	189	25	13%
General Further Ed. College (Special)	2	0	0%
Independent School	579	15	3%
Non-Maintained Special School	10	0	0%
Sixth Form Centre	27	0	0%
Sixth Form College	94	19	20%
Sponsored Academy	165	38	23%
Tertiary College	35	5	14%
Voluntary Aided School	323	45	14%
Voluntary Controlled School	61	9	15%
Total	2,790	436	

[†] School/college type refers to those types denoted by the Department for Education.

We were able to identify 820 schools and colleges⁶¹ which hold awards validated by providers that either meet the national standard or are working towards it. Table 1 shows how the award-holding schools and colleges were distributed by type: 381 cover both GCSE and A-level. Penetration varies in different types of institution and there is a good geographic spread.

Table 1 should not be read as a statement of the level of quality careers provision in England. However, it does provide some insights into the level of provision in the country. The data on the awards can usefully be read in tandem with the Gatsby survey of schools which – as noted in Section 3 – was conducted as part of the development of its eight benchmarks to explore schools’ provision for career guidance.⁶² While this was not a truly random sample, it is probably the most methodologically robust survey conducted in this field since 2010. The Gatsby measure of quality provision is more textured than our award measure, as it covers eight distinct areas. The survey found that 50% of schools met three of the eight benchmarks, 31% of schools met four, and 13% achieved five.⁶³ The Gatsby study is not directly comparable with ours, but the picture of good practice that it paints is broadly reconcilable with our findings. Most schools are providing some career guidance, but only a minority are providing good-quality provision that aligns with the evidence base in this field.

Decisions at the local-authority/middle-tier level

Despite the loss of the statutory duty to provide career guidance, reported in Section 2, local authorities (LAs) retain responsibilities for reducing NEET levels and for overseeing the raising of the participation age. In some cases, these wider responsibilities have been used to justify a continued interest in career guidance; in others, this interest has not been maintained.⁶⁴ The focus of interest varies:

“It is useful for LAs to have some sort of tool to enable them to quality-assure the provision in their area. They are interested in the Raising of the Participation Age agenda. So in one area I am working with the RPA co-ordinator. They see it as useful for this reason. Other issues that are important for the LAs are destinations measures and NEET.”

Jane Wilkinson, Inspiring IAG

However, even in the authorities that have retained a strong interest in the careers area, there have been substantial cuts in the level of direct provision. These cuts have been felt in schools and colleges, particularly those which had received substantial levels of resource from the Connexions Service in the past: for example, Stephen Brady, a careers adviser employed by Park Hall Academy, noted that his school had felt a major impact after the end of Connexions, as a lot of resource had been lost. There does not appear to be a clear pattern to local authority interest in career guidance. There are also questions about how long those councils which have maintained their interest in this area will be able to

continue to do so, given ongoing funding cuts.

As a consequence of the variety of positions taken by local authorities, many schools and colleges have been left to find a way through the changes with little support. However, where authorities have valued career guidance, they have in some cases been able to have a substantial impact in driving schools' and colleges' engagement with careers work and supporting the development of quality provision. Examples include Calderdale & Kirklees, Essex, Kent and the Greater Manchester local authorities. In Essex, the council has used the award as the key instrument to support and incentivise good-quality careers provision: this has resulted in 90% of local schools holding the award.

The careers providers we interviewed generally had a clear idea about the position of their local authorities. They confirmed that the role the local authority took was critical in determining provision in local schools (and to a lesser extent in colleges). It was also clear from these interviews and from case studies in schools and colleges that where the council was less interested in careers, there was an ongoing need for some kind of middle-tier structure that could support their engagement with the careers area. In some ways, indeed, the award providers have been asked to play the role of a "middle tier" themselves, advising schools and colleges on what is expected, supporting policy translation and helping them to develop their capacity. For example, Futures Advice Skills and Employment which offers the *Career Mark* award has developed a membership offer for schools and colleges working towards the award: schools and colleges become members and gain access to a range of support and resources that help them to develop their careers programmes.

The case studies also revealed some examples where academy chains and trusts are starting to manage careers provision at a level above the school. For example, Arden Academy and Park Hall Academy are linked academies which developed a joint approach to the delivery of careers provision following the closure of Connexions. On a larger scale, the Outwood Grange Trust includes 14 schools which collectively contract with Careers Inc for careers provision and support towards achieving the awards. At present such arrangements are emergent, but if the decline of LA activity in this area continues, it may be that the emergence of clusters of organisationally linked schools and colleges provides an alternative way to deliver the middle-tier structures that seem important to the delivery of quality careers provision.

Decisions at the school/college level

As with local authorities, schools' and colleges' level of interest in career guidance is highly variable. Again, there do not seem to be any very clear patterns in relation to school/college type or demographics. Gary Longden of Futures Advice, Skills and Employment felt that initially schools responded to the new policy environment by

pulling out of careers work:

"But bit by bit, people have taken stock and realised that sometimes it might not be statutory but it is important. In fact that is what secondary and tertiary education is about, preparing people to be successful adults."

The case-study schools and colleges found a variety of reasons that underpinned school engagement in careers work. In all cases, however, strong engagement with careers provision was underpinned by senior leader buy-in and a clear articulation of a link between careers work and the school's ethos:

"Our school mission is about achievement, expectation, aspiration, and all-round education for all. Careers fits in with most of it, but certainly with the aspirations. High expectations and achievement, we do feel quite strongly that it helps all of that."
Susan Jones, Assistant Head, Ellowes Hall Sports College

"The school's ethos is to look at students as a whole and to nurture high expectations and high aspirations. We believe that everyone can succeed."
Stella Mosley, Vocational Co-ordinator, Da Vinci Community School

"The overall school mission is high academic achievement. It is also about success beyond school. We see careers as an integral part of that."
Steve Brady, Careers Adviser, Arden Academy

"Our mission statement is about developing people academically, morally, socially and all of those things. I genuinely believe that if you talk to any of the staff here it's about developing the individual. The mission statement mentions careers and where people are going to go afterwards, their futures as being integral to the whole thing."
Rowena Burton, Head of Careers, Greenhead College

What is clear from these statements and other conversations with the case-study schools and colleges is that high-quality careers provision can fit into a variety of very different types of institutions. It is not the school or college type, but rather the educational ethos and the capacity of the school/college leadership to make the connection between their primary aims and careers work, that seems to be critically important.

A further key dimension which determines access to careers provision is the level of targeting that schools and colleges seek to put in place in relation to their careers provision. Learners who are defined as "vulnerable" are entitled to a greater level of support than are other learners.⁶⁵ However, the definition of vulnerability is highly variable and seems to be narrowing in many local authorities to refer mainly or exclusively to students with learning difficulties and complex personal circumstances:

"We still get support from Connexions. But this is now focused on the most vulnerable of our young people. We decide on vulnerability based on the Fisher Family Trust indicators. I work closely with the Connexions

adviser and we manage support between us.”
Stella Mosley, Vocational Co-ordinator, Da Vinci Community College

In schools like Da Vinci Community College there has been a commitment to pick up the slack left by diminishing council provision and to situate targeted resources within a broader universal service provided by the school. The awards encourage the provision of a broadly based universal service, so this kind of approach was apparent in all of the case-study schools and colleges. However, it is unlikely to be the case in all schools and colleges that have lost resource following the closure of Connexions. Given the loose framing of the statutory guidance, it is possible that many schools and colleges have based their provision on a strongly targeted approach. Jean McCool, a careers adviser in Holy Cross College, felt that this was the case and that many young people were not now getting access to career support:

“We are seeing more and more young people who have made wrong choices because they didn’t receive the support to help them make informed decisions. For example they haven’t done core and additional Science. Sometimes they don’t know that this will be a problem for their future choices. We are seeing the results of a substantial reduction in the amount of careers provision in schools. A lot of the advice received is very targeted, often intended for the potential high achievers or those at the other end of the scale and the large middle section are often missed out.”

The targeting of additional support is likely to be an important aspect of strategies to support social mobility. However, if this targeting is too tightly focused and provided at the expense of more universal forms of support, it will be unlikely to deliver on broader social policy aims like social mobility which require the engagement of a substantial percentage of the school/college population. The case-study schools and colleges generally resisted approaches based on the exclusive targeting of career support to vulnerable young people. But the general direction of government policy has done nothing to guarantee or encourage universal approaches.

Summarising the position of career guidance in England

The policy changes and funding cuts brought in by the coalition government have clearly had a tangible impact on provision in England’s schools and colleges. It is difficult to be precise about what these have been because the government has neglected to monitor the impacts of its policies. However, the research that has been undertaken suggests that across the country local authorities are providing less, schools and colleges are doing less, and what is being done is often being done at a lower frequency and quality. Furthermore, the provision of support has become more targeted in ways that are more about the social inclusion of the most

disadvantaged than about broader aspirations related to widening participation and social mobility.

However, the picture is not a straightforward one of decline. Change has also stimulated innovation, and the movement of the statutory duty to schools and colleges has encouraged some to take a greater level of interest in career, despite the loose framing of the duty. We will look in more detail at what quality careers provision looks like in Section 6, but there is reasonable evidence, particularly the fact that 820 organisations have CEIAG Quality Awards, to suggest that a sizeable minority of schools and colleges are seeking to provide a quality careers programme. An important question is therefore what the impacts of such quality provision might be. If they are positive, this will help to focus attention on how such quality provision can become the majority rather than minority experience for young people in England.

5. Can we quantify the impacts of career guidance?

“Careers education and guidance programmes make a major contribution to preparing young people for the opportunities and responsibilities in life beyond school. A planned and structured programme of careers interventions supports them in choosing 14-19 pathways that best suit their interests and abilities and helps them to effectively follow a suitable career path and sustain employability throughout their working lives.”

Arden Academy: Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Policy

There is an extensive literature that has sought to quantify the impacts of career guidance. In *Fostering College and Career Readiness*⁶⁶, Hooley, Marriott & Sampson looked at over 100 studies on careers work in schools. They concluded that across this literature, four main types of impacts were associated with careers work: where a school’s programme was well-run, studies indicated that it would be possible to identify impacts on the school’s retention rate, on the academic attainment of the students, on the ability of students to make successful transitions from school, and on their longer-term life and career success. Researchers have identified statistically significant impacts from career education and guidance programmes and have explored a range of different kinds of impact including on school attainment.⁶⁷

The analysis in this report was guided by some of these findings from the existing literature on the impacts of career guidance. As outlined in Section 3, data were drawn from four sources. Destinations data were merged with school/college performance data (both data-sets collected and made publicly available by the Department for Education) using unique school/college identification codes. These data were then linked to POLAR information with respect to the surrounding neighbourhood using the postal code for the school or college. This dataset was then linked to the list of schools and colleges holding Quality Awards.

The resulting dataset allowed analysis to be conducted at the school/college level to examine the differences that existed between those schools and colleges that hold awards and those that do not. In particular, it was possible to examine how holding an award correlated with attainment, with attendance (based on an analysis of levels of absenteeism) and with progression (based on destinations data). These findings are discussed in relation to their impacts at GCSE level and then at A-level.

GCSE

By the time that students take their GCSEs they have made a number of explicit and implicit choices. Explicit choices include their subject choices and their planned future in learning post-16. Some may have actively identified a potential occupation and understand the

choices that they are making in the context of these career aspirations.

Equally important to these explicit choices that young people are making about their education and their careers are their implicit and often unconscious choices. Students’ decisions about whether to work hard and to continue when subjects are difficult, or even just whether to get up in the morning and go to school, all have major career implications.

The explicit and implicit career decisions that students are making as they prepare for their GCSEs are individual decisions. However, our analysis of DfE data suggests that a range of contextual factors influence the ways in which these individual decisions are taken. The data indicate that students who go to school in poorer neighbourhoods are more likely to experience a range of negative outcomes at GCSE. A detailed analysis of this is presented in the appendix. Key findings include:

- There were a number of key characteristics which were significantly associated with higher attainment at GCSE. In particular, schools and colleges in high socio-economic status neighbourhoods (as captured by POLAR) have relatively good outcomes; while high proportions of children with special educational needs or qualifying for free school meals are associated with lower outcomes.
- The quantitative analysis also suggested that poor attendance was associated with the socio-economic status of the neighbourhood and with large numbers of SEN students and non-native-English-speaking students. At Key Stage 4 (GCSE) the magnitudes of these associations are modest. However, at this level there was also a positive association between persistent absences and the proportion of low-achieving students.

Such analyses reinforce this study’s focus on social mobility, suggesting that where you go to school or college, what type of school or college you attend and your socio-economic background all exert a strong influence on your success at school and your attainment.

The raising of the participation age and the absence of any clear measure of the quality of destinations following GCSE means that there is relatively little to say about student progression following GCSE and no evidence that having a Quality Award makes a difference to this. In general, most students progress to a positive destination after GCSEs with relatively few becoming NEET. However, this issue will be returned to in the context of A-levels.

Does career guidance support GCSE attainment?

The link between socio-economic background and

attainment is not new, nor was it the prime focus of this study. Any recognition of this relationship raises the question as to whether an intervention can help to level the playing field. Career guidance has been observed in the past to exert an impact on motivation and attainment.⁶⁸ Killeen *et al.* argued that the relationship of career guidance to attainment is due to its capacity to help young people to:

- understand the relationship between educational goals and access to occupational goals;
- clarify valued outcomes;
- set attainable educational goals;
- understand the relationship between current educational effort and performance to the achievement of educational and career goals.

Career guidance can therefore help people to set achievable goals and identify the practical steps that can be taken towards these goals. This in turn provides motivation, leading to academic engagement and attainment. One of the careers advisers who participated in our study identified this relationship clearly and discussed how his time was often used to help students to focus and to clarify the value of attainment and the relationship between qualifications and achieving their aspirations:

“I suspect that the impacts are on the young people’s motivation. They are very much made aware of what is happening and very clear on what they need to do. Students are referred to me when they lose motivation. I talk to them about qualifications they need for what they are interested in and try and refocus them.”

Stephen Brady, Careers Adviser, Arden Academy

There seemed to be some evidence from the quantitative analysis of this relationship between career guidance and attainment at GCSE. Two measures of student attainment were examined. In Table 2 the proportion of students attaining at least five good GCSEs (at grade C and above) and those gaining a C grade or higher in Maths and English are reported.

For all except special schools, those with a Quality Award have a higher rate of attainment. This is statistically significant for maintained schools (over 2% more achieving these outcomes in award-holding schools) and independent schools (7-8% more students doing so than in other schools).

The associations between Quality Awards and attainment, as estimated using regression analysis, are interpreted as the incremental value of the outcome for award-holding schools and colleges over non-award holders, controlling for differences in school/college types, student composition and SES of neighbourhood, full regression results are reported in the Appendix in

Table A4.

Table 2: Student attainment at GCSE by school/college type and Quality Award status

	5+ GCSE+		Maths and English+	
	No Award	Award	No Award	Award
State schools	58.7	61.0*	59.2	61.5*
Academies	76.0	80.3	76.4	80.7
Special schools	0.5	0.0	0.6	0.1
Independent schools	88.5	97.0*	89.4	97.1*
* Indicates difference by Quality Award statistically significant at 90% confidence level.				
†Percentage of students attaining.				

At GCSE schools, holding an award is associated with a statistically significant (99% confidence level) 1.83% increase in the number of students attaining at least five good GCSEs and a 1.80% increase in the number of students achieving Maths and English GCSEs.

Does career guidance support attendance at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)?

Previous studies have found that career guidance can increase engagement with education and decrease dropout rates.⁶⁹ As with observed impacts on attainment, the relationship between school or college attendance and career guidance is usually understood as relating to student motivation and the ability to connect effort in the field of school/college to potential outcomes related to life and work aspirations. Career guidance can help disengaged young people to see the value of school or college and to connect attendance with their hopes for their own lives.

Staff who participated in the research identified the role that career guidance could have in supporting engagement:

“Attendance at the school is high. Our pupils have a goal, and are therefore less likely to be disengaged with school. For our pupils school has a purpose – it’s not just about grades, but also about what those grades will lead to.”

Chris MacKay, Careers Coordinator, Wellington School

There is a relationship between holding a Quality Award and lower persistent absence. Table 3 displays the average proportion of students who have greater than 15% unauthorised absences in an academic year, by school/college type and award status. This information is only available for state schools, academies and some special schools. Based on these means, award-holding schools have fewer students with persistent unexplained absences, although only the state-school differences with non-award schools are statistically significant.

Table 3: Persistent absences in Key Stage 4 (GCSE) by school type and Quality Award status

	Unapproved absence >15%†	
	No Award	Award
State schools	9.9	9.3
Academies	6.7	5.0
Special schools	2.0	–
Independent schools	–	–

The regression results suggest that Quality Awards are associated with a statistically significant 0.48% reduction in persistent absences in the school, full regression results are reported in the Appendix in Table A5)

A-level

As with GCSE, students studying for their A-levels are making a range of explicit and implicit career choices.

The growing proximity of the end of compulsory schooling gives these choices a new context and at least in theory a greater urgency. While our analysis with respect to GCSE focused mainly on attainment and attendance, at A-level it is also possible to look at the issue of progression in more detail.

An analysis of Department for Education data related to A-level again reinforces the importance of this study’s focus on social mobility. As with GCSE, one’s school and one’s neighbourhood are important factors in determining the way in which one engages with the education system and what one gets out of it. Findings include:

- Attainment at A-level correlates with economic status of neighbourhood and school and college type.
- Poor attendance was associated with the socio-economic status of the neighbourhood, the level of free school meals, school/college type, and large numbers of SEN students and non-native-English-speaking students. These associations were stronger than at GCSE.

Does career guidance support attainment at A-level?

Although many of the arguments about the relationship between career guidance and attainment at GCSE could also be mobilised in relation to A-level, our analysis did not find a clear relationship here.

Table 4 shows the proportion of students attaining at least 3 A-levels (at grade C or above) and the average UCAS score per student reported for schools and colleges with sixth formers. For state schools, the results suggest that in award-holding schools 1.5% more students attain at least 3 A-levels than in other schools, this difference

being statistically significant.

Table 4: Student attainment at A-level by school/college type and Quality Award status

	3+ A-levels†		UCAS score††	
	No Award	Award	No Award	Award
State schools	85.9	85.9	781.5	793.0
General further education colleges	68.1	68.1	593.8	560.3*
Sixth-form colleges	87.9	87.9	792.1	844.9*
Tertiary colleges	79.3	79.3	672.1	672.9
Academies	76.9	76.9	727.3	743.1
* Indicates difference by Quality Award statistically significant at 90% confidence level.				
†Percentage of students attaining.				
††Average student score.				

For sixth-form colleges, award holders also appear to have better outcomes than other students, with the difference for UCAS scores being statistically significant. The differences for general FE colleges are statistically significant, but here negatively so, with award-holding colleges reporting 10% fewer students completing with three or more A-levels than their non-award counterparts, and students also having a lower average UCAS score.

The regression results, reported in Table A4 of Appendix A5, suggest that on average overall there is a negative relationship between attainment and Quality Awards. However, as shown above in Table 4, this negative relationship is likely to have been driven by general FE colleges. The comparison of regression results to the means shown in Table 4 suggest that the relationship between attainment and Quality Awards varies across different school/college types.

The quantitative analysis of attainment raises a number of questions. While there does seem to be a positive relationship between schools that have the awards and higher attainment at GCSE, the positive relationship is not repeated for all A-level institutions. There are a number of possible explanations for the differential impact of quality career programmes in these respects. It could be due to GCSE and A-level careers programmes being organised in different ways, perhaps with the emphasis shifting towards supporting post-school/college transition in the A-level programmes. This interpretation is supported to some extent by our findings on the impact on progression at A-level (see below). Alternatively, it may be that poorly performing institutions are seeking tools to drive quality enhancement leading to a downward bias in the sample. Finally, it is also important to recognise that the level of detail in the DfE dataset may be insufficient to draw definitive conclusions.

The negative relationship that exists between attainment and Quality Awards in some types of institution at A-level was an unanticipated finding. While it is possible to advance a variety of possible explanations for it, the data quality does not allow us to dig much deeper in this study. There would however be considerable value in exploring the relationship between career guidance and attainment in more detail using alternative and more granulated quantitative methods. In particular, it would be interesting to know the relationship between GCSE and A-level outcomes and the nature of career interventions. Drilling down further would probably require analysis at the level of student data.

Does career guidance support attendance at Key Stage 5 (A-level)?

There is a relationship between holding a Quality Award and lower persistent absence. Table 5 displays the average proportion of students who have greater than 15% unauthorised absences in an academic year, by school/college type and award status. This information is only available for state schools and academies. Based on these means, award-holding schools have fewer students with persistent unexplained absences, although only the state-school differences with non-award schools are statistically significant. Academies also report significantly fewer persistent absences than other state-funded schools.

Table 5: Persistent absences in Key Stage 5 (A-level) by school/college type and Quality Award status

	No Award	Award
State schools	8.1	7.5*
General further education colleges	–	–
Sixth-form colleges	–	–
Tertiary colleges	–	–
Academies	10.0	9.0
* Indicates difference by Quality Award statistically significant at 90% confidence level.		

Regression analysis suggests a relationship between the Quality Awards and lower persistent absences at Key Stage 5 (A-level) – award holders are 0.54% lower than non-award holders. This difference is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level, with the effect being slightly stronger than that found for GCSE.

Does career guidance support progression beyond A-level?

The first destinations of students following the completion of school or college are an important output of the education system. Supporting young people to make an effective progression to their next destination is one of the core anticipated outcomes from a career guidance programme. There have been

a range of studies which have measured the impact of career guidance on progression qualitatively.⁷⁰ However, quantitative measurement relies on the existence or collection of data about individuals’ movements after leaving the school system. The DfE’s destination data therefore offers an exciting opportunity for new types of analysis, albeit currently limited to the first post-school destination.

Although career guidance has been observed to have impacts on attendance and attainment, its core rationale is to support transitions and progression. Career education and guidance educates young people about the world of work, helps them to understand their talents and think about where these might best be used, and provides them with skills and support to facilitate the transition. Taken together, these activities are designed to enable young people to make smooth transitions into the world of work and to build successful careers over the medium to long term.

All of the schools and colleges that participated in the research were strongly focused on supporting their students to transition to their next destination. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 6, but commonly included taking students to visit potential destinations, helping them to develop skills and supporting them through application processes:

“In Year 9 the students look specifically at progression routes – in particular looking at what subjects they need to take in their options – e.g. if they want to study Medicine they need to know that they have to take the three separate sciences. In Year 10, all pupils go to taster days at the two Scunthorpe colleges. In Year 11 taster days are organised for any student who wants to find out about opportunities at Lincoln and Gainsborough Colleges and Grimsby Institute. All colleges come into school in the Autumn Term of Year 11 to present to the students. This, along with guidance interviews, ensures all students are in a strong position to make appropriate destination choices post 16.

Applications are then processed in the autumn term, guided by PSE tutors who check them and write references.”

Jennifer Lonsdale, Careers Co-ordinator, Huntcliff School

Examining the destinations of students is therefore an important indicator of the success of career guidance. However, career guidance is only one amongst many factors that determines students’ progression. There is therefore some reason to exercise caution in viewing destinations as a direct outcome of career guidance programmes. The government’s recent policy has sought to conflate the issue of the quality of career guidance with the school’s or college’s performance in destination measures.⁷¹ The data analysis suggests that this relationship is not straightforward and that any benefits associated with career guidance need to be understood in relation to the contextual factors that also influence student destinations.

Table 6: Student destinations after A-level by school/college type and Quality Award status

	Any educ.		UK higher educ.		Top-third UK HE		Russell Group		Apprentice		Employed		NEET	
	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award
State schools	72.9	73.2	58.9	59.9	18.6	19.8	12.6	12.8	5.1	4.9	9.4	9.8	10.5	9.7
General further education colleges	48.8	50.3*	30.8	28.9	3.0	3.8	1.6	2.1	5.9	6.0	10.7	9.6	16.2	15.9
Sixth-form colleges	71.8	73.7	58.0	62.4*	15.1	22.2*	10.0	15.8*	3.9	2.9*	5.8	4.6	10.1	8.6
Tertiary colleges	57.5	56.7	41.8	38.0	6.3	4.9	4.1	3.4	5.6	6.4	8.2	8.8	14.9	14.4
Academies	67.1	67.2	51.2	51.1	11.4	9.9	7.6	5.9	6.2	6.3	10.8	11.2	14.7	12.4
* Indicates difference by Quality Award statistically significant at 90% confidence level.														
Outcomes reflect percentage of students in destination.														

Table 7: Difference in student destinations after A-level between Quality Award schools/colleges and non-Quality Award schools/colleges (multivariate regression)

	Any educ.	UK higher educ.	Top-third UK HE	Russell Group	Apprenticeship	Employment	NEET
A-level	0.75	-0.50	1.01*	0.61	0.04	0.09	-0.49*
Full regression results are reported in Table A7.							
* Correspond to statistical significance at 90%, 95% and 99% confidence levels.							
Outcomes reflect percentage of students in destination.							

A summary of the progression of students following the completion of A-levels is reported in Table 6. There are relatively few places in which having an award is associated with differences in destinations. While some statistically significant differences exist between schools/colleges which hold awards and those which do not, they are small. The exception to this is for sixth-form colleges, where there is a significant increase in the number of students who attend a top-third or Russell Group university for schools and colleges which hold the awards. Qualitatively similar, though not statistically significant, differences are also observed for maintained schools with sixth forms. There are fewer NEETs from schools and colleges which hold the awards (although this difference is not statistically significant).

Controlling for other school and student characteristics (Table 7), the A-level results suggest that holding an award is associated with a 1.01% increase in progression to the top-third universities. While there is also a positive association with educational destinations and Russell Group universities, these latter results are not statistically significant. Other data suggest that the awards are positively associated with entry to apprenticeships and employment; however, these estimates are very small and not statistically distinguishable from zero. But holding an award is associated with a statistically significant decrease in NEETs.

An explanation for these findings is that students at schools or colleges with awards consider and take up a wider range of options than other institutions. They are accordingly more likely to find a destination of some kind. Moreover, when they do decide to go to higher education, they are more likely to get into a better-rated university.

It is possible to hypothesise three possible ways in which career guidance might act on individuals in ways that support these findings.

1. It acts on students' aspirations, making them more ambitious.
2. It increases students' awareness of opportunities, supporting them to consider more options and make more rational decisions.
3. It provides practical support and skills that help students to operationalise their decisions and be more effective in making transitions.

It is very likely that there is some mix of the three. Further research would be needed to more precisely tease out the ways in which the impacts of career guidance are generated.

Summary of statistical analysis

The analysis has explored what factors impact on attainment, attendance and progression in school and

college-level data. A consistent, albeit unsurprising, picture has emerged that school or college type, the nature of the student body and the socio-economic status of neighbourhoods all exert major influences on these key outcomes. Such findings reinforce other studies' concern with social mobility and also raise some issues for approaches that seek to compare schools or colleges through simple decontextualised metrics. Context is critical to a school or college's performance in relation to attainment, attendance and progression. Accordingly, assessments of quality need to account for "value added" rather than the absolute performance of schools and colleges.

The current analysis should be viewed as an experiment with a new dataset. It has produced interesting results, though it is important that these findings are understood as indicative and that further research is conducted to explore their reliability and implications. However, it has been possible to observe a number of interesting correlations related specifically to career guidance.

At GCSE we can conclude that these awards are associated with a positive impact on GCSE performance and a decrease in persistent unexplained absences.

At A-level there is a link with a decrease in persistent unexplained absences and with improved destinations – particularly with a higher proportion of A-level students destined for top-third higher education institutions. For schools and colleges with sixth forms, there is also a statistically significant negative relationship between the awards and NEET outcomes. The data further suggest that quality careers programmes encourage students to consider a wider range of possible destinations.

These represent very positive outcomes.

6. What does good career guidance look like?

Section 5 has suggested that there are good reasons to believe that there are positive impacts from quality careers guidance. However, this begs the question as to what quality career guidance looks like. This section will answer this question by drawing on the research evidence, the definition of quality provision that is provided by the CEIAG Quality Awards, and the practices that were observed in the case-study schools and colleges.

Learning from the research evidence

There is a large international literature that addresses the provision of career guidance in schools and colleges. A recent review of this evidence for the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network⁷² indicates that career guidance in schools and colleges can: increase students' engagement and success in school/college; support their transitions from school/college; and help them to establish successful lives and careers. It also suggests that such programmes are best implemented in ways that connect career learning to the curriculum, and within schools and colleges where they are supported by the school/college leadership and built into the wider school/college ethos. Studies have in addition highlighted the importance of including active experiences of workplaces and employer engagement as part of school/college programmes to support career learning.⁷³

Career guidance is typically a multi-faceted activity comprising a range of activities which can be summarised as including:

- information provision;
- career assessments and tests;
- career counselling;
- careers advice (delivered by a non-careers professional);
- curricular interventions;
- further study/work-related learning;
- other extra-curricular interventions;
- frameworks for reflection.

However, the research suggests⁷⁴ that it is not any one of these interventions in particular that is critical to the effectiveness of guidance in a school or college: rather it is how these interventions are connected together into a meaningful whole. In particular, the connection to curriculum⁷⁵ and to the mainstream activities of the school or college is highlighted as critical to the effectiveness of career guidance. Progressive and programmatic career interventions are more effective than isolated single interventions. This conclusion has

been demonstrated, for example, by a Portuguese study involving a controlled trial in which one group of school students received a single career information session while a second group received a six-week programme of career learning sessions.⁷⁶ A Danish literature study came to similar conclusions about the importance of the range of interventions being organised into a coherent whole and well-connected to the curriculum, as well as highlighting the importance of well-trained and knowledgeable career professionals.

Such conclusions have recently been reinforced by the Gatsby study which resulted in the identification of a series of eight Benchmarks that define quality careers provision:

- A stable careers programme.
- Learning from career and labour market information.
- Addressing the needs of each pupil.
- Linking curriculum learning to careers.
- Encounters with employers and employees.
- Experiences of workplaces.
- Encounters with further and higher education.
- Personal guidance.

The Gatsby Benchmarks are particularly useful in articulating the research evidence as a framework which schools and colleges can act upon. The kinds of practice indicated in the Benchmarks were clearly in evidence in many of the case-study schools and colleges.

How does the Quality in Careers Standard define "quality"

At present, schools and colleges are not working to the Gatsby Benchmarks, although many have practices that satisfy some of them. However, the awards offer a clear, well-disseminated and popular framework against which schools and colleges can develop their provision. The Gatsby survey suggested that those schools and colleges which hold a Quality Award are more likely to meet a number of the benchmarks than those that do not. The awards were developed in the early 1990s by local authorities and contracted-out careers services as a way of working with schools to develop their provision.⁷⁷ This resulted in a network of quality awards, each with a different local flavour. In 2010 the Careers Profession Task Force recommended that "an overarching national kite mark should be established to validate the different CEIAG Quality Awards for schools, colleges and work-based learning providers".⁷⁸ This task

was taken forward by Careers England which established a project team composed of key stakeholders including the organisations responsible for delivering the Quality Awards.⁷⁹

This process resulted in the establishment of the Quality in Careers Standard (QiCS) – now overseen by the Quality in Careers Consortium – which defined eight areas that any nationally validated award should specify:

- Providing effective leadership, management and promotion of CEIAG.
- Ensuring appropriate initial staff training and continuing professional development (CPD) to secure the competence required of all staff involved in the learning provider’s CEIAG provision.
- Providing a careers education and work-related learning curriculum, careers information and careers advice and guidance.
- Securing independent and impartial careers advice and guidance for young people.
- Working with employers and other external partners and agencies.
- Involving and supporting families and carers.
- Monitoring, reviewing, evaluating and developing provision.
- Measuring the impact of provision (including evidence of learning outcomes and progression).

While these eight areas are distinct from the Gatsby benchmarks, they draw on a similar set of concerns. To be effective, career guidance in schools and colleges needs to be well led and managed, to offer career education and personal guidance, and to involve employers and other key stakeholders. These areas also align well with what the academic research in this area highlights.

The case-study schools and colleges all found participation in the awards to be a useful process. For some this was primarily about the recognition and validation of their existing good practice. They felt that having a Quality Award recognised their good work and helped them to communicate this to both their internal and external stakeholders. Karen Welfare, a careers adviser from St Joseph’s Catholic School, described researching a Quality Award and concluding “do you know what, we already do this stuff”. The case-study schools and colleges were typically proud of the provision that they had built and keen to communicate it to others:

“It has to be a really good way for other people as well to see that you are providing the kind of service that is desirable and you can prove that.”

Rowena Burton, Head of Careers, Greenhead College

“It is good for them [parents and carers] to know that careers is one of our priorities at the Academy and that we are serious about it. We know the skills that students require and any student moving on will be demonstrating that they have these skills – it gives them confidence in the school.”

Katie Rutter, Associate Assistant Principal, Outwood Grange Academy

Katie Rutter also felt that the awards provide a useful provision for Ofsted inspections.

For other schools and colleges, seeking a Quality Award was more clearly linked to a process of development or continuous improvement. Stephen Brady, careers adviser at both Arden Academy and Park Hall Academy, engaged with the awards because they:

“... encourage you to look at your services and systems. Obviously the school will have the kudos of the award, but it was really about the process.”

Many of the schools and colleges talked about how the process of engagement with the awards had improved their practice:

“I also thought that it was a very good idea because it allows you to do a very intensive audit so that you can see whether there are any gaps in your provision, and I did find that a really helpful experience... It definitely improves provision. Although we were told that it was very good already, we sort of used it to fill-in the gaps and it has made a big difference.”

Susan Jones, Assistant Head, Ellowes Hall Sports College

Others saw it as a critical element of a continuous improvement cycle:

“I want a checking mechanism. Good as we are, I think that we need to keep checking. We are not perfect. It makes me stop and take stock. I see it as a critical friend. I want people to tell me what I should be doing more of. I don’t just want to be guessing.”

Sandra Caddick, Director of Careers, Guidance and Industrial Links, Sandwell Academy

The awards are a well-established part of the school and college career guidance landscape. Many of these awards have commissioned their own independent evaluations and have developed over a number of years.⁸⁰ The awards incentivise types of practice that align well with the evidence base in the field, and the schools and colleges that participated in this research value their engagement with these awards. Crucially, too, the establishment of the QiCS has brought national validation of the consistency of the various awards.

Findings from the case studies

The case studies and interviews revealed that quality career guidance is still in evidence in many English schools and colleges. Because the sample was drawn exclusively from schools and colleges that had the

awards, there were a number of similarities between the provision in all of them. While there was no attempt to formally assess the case-study schools and colleges against the Gatsby benchmarks, it was clear that all schools/colleges would have been able to evidence some practice against each of the benchmarks, even if they were not able to fully meet all the benchmarks. This provides some support for the idea that an evidence-based framework such as provided by the Gatsby benchmarks might be useful in framing practice, and would work well in concert with the Quality Awards.

The practice in the case studies will be discussed under four main headings as follows:

- Career guidance infrastructure.
- Careers programme.
- Involvement of stakeholders.
- Provision of individualised support.

Career guidance infrastructure

All of the case-study schools and colleges had put in place a strong career guidance infrastructure. At the core in each case was a senior leader (usually an assistant head or equivalent) with enthusiasm and responsibility for the careers area. There were also a number of schools and colleges which had a dedicated governor focused on careers, employer liaison and associated areas.

At the operational level a range of ways to deliver career guidance were evident. Many of the schools and all of the colleges employed dedicated staff. In some cases this took the form of a full careers department. For example, Sandwell Academy had a library and careers department which included a director, four industrial consultants, an employer engagement officer and an employment and training consultant. This amount of dedicated resources was unusual, but some other schools also had an identifiable careers leader and department. In other schools this activity was outsourced to an external provider who worked closely with the school. In addition, many schools operated a hybrid model, with some provision delivered by school staff, and other provision (usually advice and guidance and employer liaison) provided by an external provider.

All schools and colleges also delivered a career education programme of some kind. This involved teachers in range of ways depending on the curriculum and support structures in the school/college. A common model was embedding career education within personal, social and health education (PSHE) provision, although there are also other models for the delivery of career education, notably through off-timetable days or through a specific timetabled career education lesson.

Another key element of the infrastructure that was found in most case-study schools and colleges was mechanisms to track students' career aspirations through school/college and on to their destinations post-school/college. Many schools and colleges kept formal records on each student, identifying their aspirations and relating them to the choices they were making. Such records were cited as being invaluable in directing opportunities (such as work placement opportunities) to those students who would benefit from them.

Arden Academy's career guidance policy shows how these various elements of the schools infrastructure are organised within the school to deliver an effective programme:

"All staff contribute to the delivery of CEIAG through their roles as tutors and subject teachers. Specialist interventions are delivered by the school careers adviser and Solihull Specialist Careers Service as well as other relevant outside agencies. The programme is planned monitored and developed by the school careers advisor in association with the line manager with responsibility for CEIAG. Staff responsible for the development and delivery of careers across school are as follows:

- Assistant Principal (Standards)
- Head of PSHE
- Careers Co-ordinator
- School Careers Adviser."

Susan Jones, Assistant Head at Ellowes Hall Sports College, also described a robust infrastructure for careers. She was clear that the activity needs to be appropriately resourced, noting that:

"With our school because it is highly valued and important, we didn't hesitate in paying, we didn't think 'oh that's somewhere we can sort of save money', we didn't think that. If anything we spend more money than before [the loss of Connexions]."

The clear finding from the case studies is that effective careers provision is dependent on a developed infrastructure. This infrastructure requires leadership and management, clarity of organisation and dedicated resourcing. The case-study schools and colleges were not delivering careers in the margins, but were rather organising it as a key element of school/college provision.

Careers programmes

The nature of the career provision that was offered also differed across the case-study schools and colleges. There were a variety of ways to deliver activities, determined in part by the infrastructure through which provision was delivered. However, all schools offered a structured careers education programme starting in either Year 7 or 8. This was typically offered through

PSHE lessons:

“The programme is delivered in PSHE time, each year groups has two 45-minute lessons per week and each year group has one or two Careers-related modules delivered to them each academic year during this time. The programme is delivered by form tutors in PSHE time, through myself and the Vocational Studies Teaching Assistant and through external agencies such as Connexions Dudley (who provide targeted and traded support for the students in the school), other external agencies are invited in to give CEIAG support to the students, i.e. local businesses, apprenticeship providers, FE and HE providers, theatre companies and the Army.”

Leyla Palmer, Kingswinford School

There were a range of other models, including the delivery of career education through a tutorial system. In some schools and colleges there was a conscious attempt also to make connections between career learning and the subject curriculum:

“I work with subject teachers. They’ll talk to me and we’ll think about how to connect with subjects, e.g. visits. I produce staff bulletins to inform them. The staff have really got on board with careers. We also have a STEM co-ordinator who I work very closely with. We do lots of trips around subjects. These are not just about engagement, they are also about career awareness.”

Stella Mosley, Vocational Co-ordinator, Da Vinci Community College

The career education programme formed the organisational backbone around which other elements were organised. These usually included the provision of careers information in the form of online resources, physical libraries and noticeboards, as well as a range of other initiatives including various forms of work-related learning, visits, competitions and awards, and other off-timetable and extra-curricular interventions.

Involvement of stakeholders

All of the case-study schools and colleges offered students a variety of opportunities to interact with employers and post-secondary learning providers:

“Work experience is compulsory for everyone. Including those bound for university. We also take them to universities and expose them to the world of university.”

Sandra Caddick, Director of Careers, Guidance and Industrial Links, Sandwell Academy

Relatively few schools and colleges made work experience compulsory in the way described by Sandwell Academy, but it was usually strongly encouraged in Year 10, 11 or 12 (sometimes with more than one opportunity to undertake work experience). The importance of work experience was frequently stressed as a key component of careers work and of social mobility:

“Schools round us have very challenging students

from challenging socio-economic background. It is very important that they offer work experience as their families might have very limited experience of work. Getting kids into Oxford and Cambridge is one thing. But round here getting people into work or an apprenticeship is critical to social mobility. A lot of schools still organise work experience for this reason.”

Dave Wood, C & K Careers

Work experience is only one kind of engagement with employers. It was very common for schools and colleges also to organise careers fairs and employer talks and to set up visits to different employers. Case-study schools and colleges mentioned high-profile employers like Rolls Royce, Bombardier, Jaguar Land Rover, the police, the armed forces and the National Health Service. They also highlighted a range of ways in which they sought to engage with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and key local employers and apprenticeship providers. This might include developing links with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) or the local chamber of commerce, or making use of school governors.

The case-study organisations also talked about the provision of a range of opportunities and experiences designed to support understanding of and transition to post-secondary learning opportunities. All participants talked about providing information on the full range of post-secondary destinations. Most in addition organised a range of speakers and visits to help students to understand these more clearly. In some more academically focused schools and colleges such provision was usually focused around UCAS processes, but the careers lead was careful to explain provision that existed to support those who were not following the school/college’s majority routes.

There was enthusiasm in a number of schools and colleges to make use of parents and alumni to provide career learning opportunities. It was argued by some that this strategy was used by independent schools and should be adopted more in the state sector. It was also felt that using people from the school or college’s immediate network had the potential to increase the relevance of external inputs:

“We have ex-students come in to talk about where they have got to and we say look they got to where they are because they managed to get their C in Maths or a B across triple Sciences for example. It just raises aspiration and lets students know what they need to do to better their grade to get to what they want to be.” **Katie Rutter, Associate Assistant Principal, Outwood Grange Academy**

Provision of individualised support

The case-study schools and colleges all emphasised the importance of individualising support as part of the careers provision. All offered students an entitlement to see a careers adviser and encouraged a range of informal career conversations. Six of the case-study schools had a requirement or strong expectation that every student

would have a careers interview at some point in their time at the school. In the other schools and in the colleges, access to one-to-one support was framed as an entitlement rather than a requirement, allied with an approach to identifying those students who would particularly benefit from one-to-one career support.

One-to-one support was seen as being particularly important for those young people with complex lives, those who lacked motivation and those who were uncertain about their career direction. In the case of those with complex lives or who were defined as vulnerable, the provision of support was often done in close alliance with broader local-authority support services. However, many of those who needed extra support did not fall into local-authority definitions of vulnerability.

While many career conversations are focused around key decision points (subject choice, post-secondary destination), this is not always the case. One careers adviser highlighted the way in which one-to-one support is used to re-engage with academic study:

“Students are referred to me when they lose motivation. I talk to them about qualifications they need for what they are interested and try and refocus them.”

Stephen Brady, Careers Adviser, Arden Academy

The nature of the relationship that is built up in the one-to-one support is critical to its success. Many of the careers advisers who took part in the research were able to draw on extensive examples of ongoing and intensive support that they had provided to their students. It is clear that in many cases career guidance was not based around a single interview, but rather around an ongoing relationship that frequently shaded into intensive mentoring:

“I provide a lot of extra support. I can help with application forms, or take students to interviews. In some ways you are doing the mum role. You take them, you wait with them. Otherwise they might not have stepped through the door. A lot of it is about being sure that you are giving the kids the support that they need. We are trying to give the students the belief that they could do anything.”

Stella Mosley, Vocational Co-ordinator, Da Vinci Community School

Career guidance, as conceived in this study, is about a lot more than one-to-one support. The importance of a progressive career learning programme and strong links to the labour market are crucial. However, this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the opportunity to focus on their individual needs and aspirations is valuable to all students and critical for some.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This study has made the argument that career guidance is a valuable part of the public-policy tool-kit to enhance social mobility. It has critiqued recent policy in this field, demonstrating that it has led to an overall decline in the quantity and quality of provision. Yet, despite the weakness of the policy frame, good practice in career guidance has survived and even flourished in a sizeable minority of England's schools and colleges. The emergence of this "postcode lottery" of provision presents considerable challenges for any public-policy agenda related to social mobility.

We have highlighted a range of impacts from career guidance and identified interesting correlations between outcomes measured by the DfE and schools/colleges which hold a CEIAG Quality Award. At GCSE those schools which hold a Quality Award report better exam results and less unexplained absences. While at A-level there is also a correlation with less unexplained absences and a positive impact on destinations.

The identification of these positive correlations supports our conclusion that the Quality Awards can be considered as a definition of good-quality career guidance, and relate closely to other definitions such as that set out in the Gatsby benchmarks. It has been argued that it is possible to build a coherent definition of good practice that can be operationalised in England's schools and colleges. But ensuring consistent implementation is likely to require stronger incentives and resourcing.

The following ten recommendations set out a way forward for career guidance in England. They are addressed to a range of stakeholders, but ultimately need to be underpinned by government policy. It is hoped that the new Secretary of State for Education will consider these and seek to move the government's careers policy in a direction that is more supportive of social mobility.

Changing the role of the National Careers Service

Recommendation 1: The government should strengthen the National Careers Service and give it a clear role to support schools in the delivery of career guidance. Ideally this would include providing schools and colleges with free access to professionally qualified careers advisers including specialist advisers with expertise in vocational options and with knowledge of entry to elite universities.

Recommendation 2: Additional resourcing should be made available to the National Careers Service to support it in broadening its focus to include schools and colleges.

Enhancing quality and accountability in schools

There is a high degree of consensus regarding what constitutes good-quality provision in career guidance. This includes progressive career education programmes linked to the curriculum, access to individualised support, and strong links with the labour market and universities. This approach to quality has been put into practice through a number of practical tools including the Gatsby benchmarks and the Quality Awards.

A substantial minority of English schools and colleges have been assessed through the awards as delivering quality career guidance. It is important that any new initiatives in this area recognise that this good practice exists and seek to spread it more widely.

The case-study schools and colleges found the award process of reviewing practice, being assessed and communicating this practice to their stakeholders to be valuable. However, schools and colleges are not really held to account for their career guidance. There was little belief that Ofsted would be able to devote sufficient time or expertise to career guidance to provide any real accountability in this area. While Ofsted was generally viewed as providing an important underpinning to quality, there was agreement that a stronger framework for accountability was needed.

Recommendation 3: Stronger incentives need to be developed to encourage schools and colleges to prioritise and invest in career guidance. This should include stronger statutory guidance.

Recommendation 4: Ofsted should review the way it inspects career guidance, to give it greater prominence. Ofsted should recognise that the careers Quality Awards offer a strong indicator of good provision.

Recommendation 5: The DfE guidance to schools and colleges is currently composed of both statutory guidance and non-statutory advice. This should be redeveloped into a single clear document, which should be much stronger in nature. The revised statutory guidance should be informed by the Gatsby benchmarks and other research on what constitutes good career guidance (including this report).

Recommendation 6: Linked to their statutory duty, schools and colleges should be required to develop and publish a school/college plan and policy on career guidance, to show that they are meeting their legal responsibilities and to provide pupils, parents and employers with information about the school's activities in this area.

Recommendation 7: The statutory guidance should highlight the value of Quality Awards as a mechanism for driving improvement in career guidance and a guarantor

of quality provision.

Data and new technologies

An important role that government can play is to ensure that the wider infrastructure that exists to underpin career guidance is robust. The quality of career guidance is ultimately dependent on the availability of high-quality labour market information. Initiatives like the UK Commission for Employment and Skills' LMI for All⁸¹ are very valuable and also highlight the important role that online technologies can play in supporting career guidance. In the light of this, it is important to review the data that is currently collected and to consider how it can be best utilised. It is also important to review the range of government and non-government web and internet services, and to consider how this marketplace of online career support can be stimulated and quality-assured and how gaps in provision can be filled.

Recommendation 8: The Department for Education should continue to extend and enhance the quality of data it collects on student progression. This progression data should inform schools' provision of career guidance and be seen as a key accountability measure. The data should be made available to schools in a way that can support the development of provision, e.g. through inclusion in the government's portal for labour market information (LMI for All).

Recommendation 9: Online technologies are important to the delivery of effective career guidance. The Government should review the websites and services it supports and should develop a strategy designed to stimulate public-sector and private-sector development of tools that meet schools' needs.

Evidence-based policy

It is possible to view the current government's career guidance policy as an ill-founded and poorly delivered experiment. A whole system of career support was ripped out in 2011 with little thought about the consequences. There has been little official attempt to monitor or evaluate this policy, apart from the Ofsted review. However, independent research suggests that there have been major consequences resulting from these policy changes, which have not been fully understood or addressed.

The study has identified a range of relationships between career guidance and various educational outputs. However, such relationships have been shown to be intertwined with a wide range of contextual issues. The impact on each of these of career guidance is variable. There is a need to develop more sophisticated methodologies to try to quantify the full impact of career guidance interventions and to identify what the "value added" contribution is. Further studies using learner-level data, longitudinal datasets or randomised control trial methodologies would move us in this direction and allow for greater clarity about impacts and benefits.

This study, like most studies before it, has mainly come into direct contact with schools and colleges which remain committed to careers work. The qualitative work illuminates what good career guidance looks like, but little is known about the counter-factual. We have heard that many schools and colleges have sought to withdraw from careers work either actively or by default, but no studies have examined what these look like. The Ofsted study is a notable exception here, but it has been a one-off exercise.

Recommendation 10: Any innovations or experiments in career guidance should be monitored and evaluated to ensure that new policies are evidence-based. Randomised controlled trials and other robust methods should be used where possible to assess effective practice.

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Appendix: Technical issues and underpinning analysis

This Appendix sets out a series of important technical aspects that were important to the analysis and provides additional depth to the reported analysis.

A1. Data sources

School performance data

School performance data are collected by the Department for Education and available at http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/2011/download_data.html. They include information for the 2010/11 academic year on which the analysis reported here is based. The complete file is made up of 7 different sub-files:

1. Key Stage 5 Results.
2. Pupil Absence.
3. Spending per Pupil.
4. School Workforce.
5. Spine (school/college name, address and type).
6. Census (aggregate student information).
7. Ofsted Report.

Destinations data

Department for Education destinations data are publicly available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-key-stage-4-and-key-stage-5-pupils-2011-to-2012>.

Records correspond to the 2011/12 education and employment destinations of students completing their Key Stage 5 (A-level) in the 2010/11 academic year.

Suppressed variables are common in these data. Observations which reflect 1-2 students are suppressed with an "X". For the analysis, these values are replaced with a value "2". However, they will, on average, overestimate the true value (see destinations for a count of the number of each of the destinations with suppressed values).

Destinations: GCSE

1. Further education – Any education destinations, including apprenticeships.
1. College – Further college education, other further education, sixth form further education.
2. Apprentice – Apprenticeship.
3. Work-learning – Employment with training, employment other, training other.
4. Combined – Combined employment and education destination.
5. NEET – Recorded not in education, employment or training, or activity not captured.

Destinations: A-level

1. Any Education – Includes students in any type of sustained education programme including employment training and apprenticeships.
2. UK Higher Education – UK-based Higher Education
 - a. Top third
 - i. Russell Group

3. Apprentice – Apprenticeship.
4. Employed – Employment with training, employment other, combined employment and education.
5. NEET – Recorded not in education, employment or training, or activity not captured.

Neighbourhood SES data

Socio-economic status data, at the postal-code level, is available from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), at their website:

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/wp/ourresearch/polar/polar3/>

Data on schools and colleges with a CEIAG Award

There are 12 CEIAG Quality Award providers which are nationally validated by the Quality in Careers Standards (QiCS) in England. At the time of this survey, 8 of the 12 awards had successfully met the QiCS national validation criteria; the remaining 4 were working towards seeking national validation in the coming 12 months. The primary contact for each of the 12 Quality Award providers was contacted by email (and telephone when required) and asked to provide a list of the schools/colleges that currently held or were working towards their award. The Quality Award providers had the choice of whether to provide these lists, or to seek the permission of the schools/colleges first.

Overall, 10 of out the 12 Quality Award providers provided lists. Of the two that did not do so, one could not provide a list due to not having any schools or colleges on roll (this was a new service); no data were supplied by the other.

The Quality Award providers that provided lists were:

1. *Career Mark*. Covering East Midlands and other areas including parts of Southern, Central and South-East England
2. *Inspiring IAG (CEIAG Quality Award)*. Greater Manchester and Lancashire.
3. *Investing in Quality: The Cambridgeshire Information, Advice and Guidance Award*. Cambridgeshire.
4. *Investor in Careers (Careers South West)*. Nationally available in England.
5. *North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance*. North East Lincolnshire.
6. *The C&K Careers Quality Standard*. Calderdale and Kirklees and other areas.
7. *The Quality Award in Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (Prospects)*. West Midlands and other areas
8. *The Recognition of Quality Award*. Essex.
9. *The Sheffield Standard in CEIAG*. Sheffield.
10. *The Stoke on Trent CEIAG Quality Award*. Stoke-on-Trent.

A2. Sample selection and assignment of school/college types

GCSE (KS4)

Characteristics and destinations data were merged using codes for local authority numbers and school numbers.

All GCSE (KS4) schools in the destinations data were matched with performance data, with the exception of schools labelled as Alternative Provision and Pupil Referral Unit. These two school types, totalling 430 records, were excluded from the analysis. This left 5,283 institutions from the raw destinations files.

As they contained few records, schools identified as City Tech Colleges, Foundation Special Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools were excluded from the analysis (114 in total). In addition, schools with 5 or less total students in the destinations data were excluded (154 in total). These resulted in a total of 4,293 schools.

To reduce the total number of categories to be examined, Sponsored Academies, Community Schools, Foundation Schools and Voluntary Aided/Controlled Schools were all analysed under the category State Schools.

This left four categories of schools: State Schools (3,014), Academies (25), Community Special Schools (581) and Independent Schools (673).

A-level (KS5)

Of the 2,800 A-level (KS5) schools and colleges in the destinations data, 2,790 (99.6%) matched with performance data.

A number of A-level school/college types were not included in the analysis, due to low number of award schools/colleges or low numbers of schools/colleges overall. Schools/colleges identified as Agriculture and Horticultural Colleges, Art and Design Colleges, City Tech Colleges, Community Special Schools, Special General Further Education Colleges, and Independent Colleges, were excluded from the analysis (619 in total). Schools/colleges with five or less total students in the destinations data were also excluded (an additional 13 in total). This resulted in a total of 2,158 schools and colleges.

To reduce the number of categories examined, Community Schools, Foundation Schools and Voluntary Aided/Controlled Schools were all analysed under the category State Schools. Academies and Sponsored Academies were both analysed under the category Academies.

This left five categories of schools and colleges: State Schools (1,632), General Further Education Colleges (187), Sixth Form Colleges (121), Tertiary Colleges (35) and Academies (183).

A3. Missing variables

The information available for each school or college differs systematically by the type of school/college. The inclusion of each sub-file of data from the Department for Education, by school type, is summarised in Table A1.

Missing variables in regression analysis

For some schools and colleges, a number of the variables of interest are missing. If the outcome of interest is missing, the school/college is not used in the regression analysis. If the missing variable is an explanatory variable, the following procedure is implemented:

1. Replace the missing value with a value of -1.
2. Create a variable “missing” which equals 1 if, for a given school/college, any of the explanatory variables are missing, and equals 0 otherwise.

The variable missing is included in all regressions (not reported in the tables) to account for any systematic differences between schools/colleges with missing variables and schools/colleges without missing variables.

A4. Analysis: technical details

Stata software (version 13.0) was used for all statistical analyses.

For variables which reflect school/college-level student averages, mean values were calculated, weighting by the total number of students in the school/college. T-statistics were used to test the statistical significance of the difference between mean values for award and non-award schools and colleges.

Regression analysis was conducted using least squares. For outcomes reflecting student averages, regressions were weighted by the total number of students in a school/college. Heteroskedasticity-robust t-statistics were used to determine the statistical significance of the estimated coefficients.

Table A1: Data availability by school/college type[†]

	Key Stage Results	Pupil Absence	Spending per Pupil	School Workforce	Census	Ofsted Report
GCSE						
Academy	x	x		x	x	
City Technology College	x	x	x	x	x	x
Community School	x	x	x	x	x	x
Community Special School	x		x	x	x	x
Foundation School	x	x	x	x	x	x
Foundation Special School	x	x		x	x	x
Independent School	x				x	
Non-Maintained Special School	x	x			x	x
Sponsored Academy	x	x		x	x	x
Voluntary Aided School	x	x	x	x	x	x
Voluntary Controlled School	x	x	x	x	x	x
A-level						
Academy	x	x		x	x	
Agriculture and Horticulture College	x					x
Art Design and Performing Art College	x					x
City Technology College	x	x		x	x	x
Community School	x	x	x	x	x	x
Community Special School			x	x	x	x
Foundation School	x	x	x	x	x	x
Foundation Special School		x	x	x	x	x
Further Education Sector Institution	x	x				
General Further Education College	x					x
General Further Education College (Special)	x					x
Independent School	x				x	
Non-Maintained Special School					x	x
Sixth Form Centre	x					
Sixth Form College	x					x
Sponsored Academy	x	x		x	x	x
Tertiary College	x					x
Voluntary Aided School	x	x	x	x	x	x
Voluntary Controlled School	x	x	x	x	x	x

[†] “x” indicates the data are collected for the corresponding school/college type. Schools or colleges within a type may be missing some or all of the variables corresponding to the dataset.

A5. Detailed results

School characteristics are summarised by school/college type and CEIAG Quality Award status in Tables A2 and A3 below.

GCSE (KS4) school characteristics

The upper panel of Table A2 summarises school characteristics by school type and award status for GCSE (KS4) schools. There are significant differences in school characteristics across different school types, highlighting different roles played by these schools. Special Schools are small and have a large proportion of low-achieving students and students enrolled in SEN and Action Plus programmes, relative to the other school types. Relative to State Schools, Academies tend to be more likely to offer post-16 education and have fewer low-achieving and more high-achieving students (however, the small number of Academies makes it difficult to draw any strong conclusions).

For the GCSE State Schools, there are a number of statistically significant differences between schools with Quality Awards and those without. On average, award schools have more students and are less likely to offer post-16 education. Award schools do slightly better in Ofsted reports: 7.4% fewer award-holding schools score a 3 or 4 than non-award schools. Student composition also differs: a smaller proportion of students qualify for free meals and a larger proportion speak English as a first language in award-holding schools than in non-award schools. For the GCSE State Schools there is no significant difference by award status in the proportion of high-achieving and low-achieving students. Qualitatively similar results are observed for Academies, Special Schools and Independent Schools, although few of the differences across award status are statistically significant.

Table A3 summarises the socio-economic status of school neighbourhoods according to the Higher Education Fund-

ing Council for England's POLAR₃ score and HE-qualified adult classification score. Differences exist between school types: on average, Independent Schools are more likely to be found in relatively high SES neighbourhoods, and Special Schools in relatively low SES neighbourhoods.

Differences also exist between the neighbourhoods for award-holding and non-award-holding schools. GCSE State and Special Schools with awards are, on average, in lower SES neighbourhoods than their non-award counterparts, while Independent Schools with awards tend to be in higher SES neighbourhoods. To the extent that neighbourhood SES directly influences student performance, these differences suggest that neighbourhood SES needs to be considered when assessing school performance.

A-level (KS5) school characteristics

The lower panel of Table A2 summarises school/college characteristics by school/college type and school/college Quality Award status for A-level schools and colleges. As with GCSE, there are significant differences across the different A-level (KS5) school/college types. On average, State Schools and Academies are just over one-tenth the student size of the other types. General Further Education Colleges and Academies tend to do worse in Ofsted reports than State Schools and Sixth Form Colleges.

Statistically significant differences exist between award and non-award Sixth Form Colleges. Award-holding Sixth Form Colleges are larger and do significantly better in Ofsted reports than their non-award counterparts. This is also true for State Schools and General Further Colleges, though these differences are not statistically significant. Among Tertiary Colleges, award-holding schools and colleges tend to do worse in Ofsted reports than non-award schools and colleges (again, these differences are not statistically significant). Characteristics reflecting student composition are only available for State Schools, and suggest there are no significant differences in student compositions between award-holding and non-award-holding schools and colleges.

SES for A-level schools and colleges is summarised in the lower panel of Table A3. With the exception of Tertiary Colleges which tend to be in relatively low SES neighbourhoods, few differences exist across schools in terms of SES. For Academies, General Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges, award status appears to be associated with higher SES neighbourhoods. For Tertiary Colleges, award status is associated with lower SES neighbourhoods. It should be noted that these differences by award status are only statistically significant for General Further Education Colleges.

Table A2: School characteristics by school type and Quality Award status

	Average number of students†		Offering post-16 education (% of total)		Ofsted score (Avg.)††		Ofsted scores ≥ 3 (% of total)		Pupil to teacher ratio (Avg.)		Students qualifying for free meals (Avg. %)		Students with English as first language (%)		Students with low prior achievement (%)		Students with high prior achievement (%)		Students SEN & Action Plus (Avg. %)		
	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	
GCSE																					
State Schools	181	190*	0.6	0.7	2.1	2.0*	34.9	26.1*	15.1	15.2	16.1	14.2*	86.7	88.2	18.0	17.2	32.8	34.0	9.0	9.0	
Academies	197	211	0.9	0.8	2.0	-	0.0	0.0	15.4	15.7	-	-	88.4	93.3	10.9	9.0	48.5	56.2	5.9	5.2	
Special Schools	15	16	0.6	0.6	1.9	1.7	21.8	11.8	6.5	7.1	38.8	39.9	90.0	94.4	79.8	87.3	0.8	0.4	99.7	99.3	
Independent	59	104*	0.8	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
A-level																					
State Schools	232	244	-	-	2.0	1.9	29.4	22.0*	15.2	15.4	13.8	11.4*	87.4	89.1*	-	-	-	-	7.4	7.4	
General Further	2,464	2,632	-	-	2.3	2.2	40.6	36.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Sixth Form	1,552	1,925*	-	-	2.1	1.5*	32.9	10.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Tertiary	2,713	3,747*	-	-	2.0	2.2	26.7	40.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Academies	165	191*	-	-	2.3	2.4	47.0	51.4	12.9	13.8	-	-	81.3	86.8	-	-	-	-	10.4	10.1	

* Indicates difference by Quality Award statistically significant at 90% confidence level.

- Indicates values not available.

†Average number of students at end of KS4 and aged 16-18 respectively.

††Ofsted score takes values 1-4, with 1 being highest and 4 being the lowest.

Table A3: Neighbourhood SES by school/college type and Quality Award status

	POLAR†		POLAR < 3 (%)		Adult HE Index††		Adult HE Index < 3 (%)	
	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award	No Award	Award
GCSE								
State Schools	3.1	3.0	36.9	38.2	2.9	2.8*	41.5	46.5*
Academies	3.2	3.3	31.6	33.3	3.2	3.0	31.6	33.3
Special Schools	2.9	2.4*	42.3	60.8*	2.8	2.4*	46.2	54.9
Independent	4.0	4.4	14.4	9.1	4.0	4.5	15.5	0.0
A-level								
State Schools	3.4	3.4	27.0	28.4	3.2	3.1	33.0	38.3*
General Further	3.0	3.4*	41.0	20.0*	3.1	3.2	38.5	36.0
Sixth Form	3.2	3.7*	31.6	15.8*	3.1	3.6*	38.9	26.3
Tertiary	3.1	2.2	50.0	60.0	2.7	2.0	50.0	80.0
Academies	2.3	2.6	62.6	47.6*	2.4	2.4	62.6	59.5
* Indicates value for schools/colleges with a Quality Award significantly differs from schools without Quality Awards at 90% confidence level.								
†Participation of Local Areas score takes on values 1-5, with 1 lowest and 5 highest.								
†† Higher education qualified adult classification score takes on values 1-5, with 1 lowest and 5 highest.								

In Table A3, neighbourhood characteristics, as captured by the HEFCE's POLAR₃ and HE-qualified adult classification scores, are reported by school/college type and Quality Award status.

Attainment

Table A4: Determinants of attainment (multivariate regression)

	GCSE		A-level	
	5+ GCSE†	Maths and English†	3+ A-levels†	UCAS Score††
Quality Award	1.83***	1.80***	-1.97*	-1.79
Neighbourhood SES, POLAR=1 reference category				
POLAR=2	1.07*	1.12*	-0.09	10.12
POLAR=3	2.39***	2.51***	1.88	15.4
POLAR=4	2.70***	2.88***	3.00**	24.49**
POLAR=5	4.64***	4.68***	3.70***	33.26***
School type, <i>State School</i> reference category				
School type 2‡	6.29***	6.35***	-45.09***	-323.81***
School type 3‡	5.34	5.08	-20.22***	-117.58***
School type 4‡	25.61***	25.69***	-32.26***	-232.81***
School type 5‡	–	–	-10.73***	-58.33***
Pupil-teacher ratio	0.01	0.01	-0.20**	-0.77
Students SEN & Action Plus (%)	-0.09***	-0.10***	-0.53***	-4.05***
Students qualifying for free meals (%)	-0.16***	-0.16***	-0.90***	-7.34***
Students with English as first lang. (%)	-0.13***	-0.13***	-0.08***	-0.20
Low-achieving students (%)	-0.42***	-0.43***	–	–
High-achieving students (%)	0.53***	0.53***	–	–
Total number of students	0.03	-0.01	0.20***	1.37***
Constant	59.87***	61.07***	105.01***	859.47***
N	4,131	4,131	2142	2046
r ²	0.79	0.80	0.44	0.5

Statistically different than 0 at *90%, **95% and ***99% level of confidence.

‡School/college types' for KS4 (KS5) are as follows: 2 Academy (General Further Education); 3 Special School (Sixth Form); 4 Independent (Tertiary); 5 not applicable (Academies).

†Percent of students attaining.

††Average student score.

Attendance

Table A5: Determinants of persistent unexplained absences (multivariate regression)

	Unapproved absence >15% of term†	
	GCSE	A-level
Quality Award	-0.48**	-0.54***
Neighbourhood SES, <i>POLAR</i> =1 reference category		
<i>POLAR</i> =2	-0.93***	-1.09***
<i>POLAR</i> =3	-0.94***	-1.42***
<i>POLAR</i> =4	-0.85**	-1.52***
<i>POLAR</i> =5	-1.21***	-2.29***
School type, <i>State School</i> reference category		
School type 2‡	-2.03*	–
School type 3‡	-21.22***	–
School type 4‡	–	–
School type 5‡		4.00***
Pupil-teacher ratio	-0.03	0.07**
Students SEN & Action Plus (%)	0.08***	0.20***
Students qualifying for free meals (%)	-0.01*	0.24***
Students with English as first lang. (%)	0.06***	0.07***
Low-achieving students (%)	0.16***	
High-achieving students (%)	-0.06***	
Total number of students	0.79***	-0.07*
Constant	2.48*	-0.90*
N	3,022	1,800
r ²	0.49	0.41

Statistically different than 0 at *90%, **95% and ***99% level of confidence.

‡School/college types' for KS4 (KS5) are as follows: 2 Academy (General Further Education); 3 Special School (Sixth Form); 4 Independent (Tertiary); 5 not applicable (Academies).

†Percent of students with >15%.

Progression

Table A6: Determinants of GCSE (KS4) student destinations (multivariate regression)

	Further educ.	College	Apprentice	Work-learning	Combined	NEET
Quality Award	-0.06	-0.14	-0.38*	-0.04	-0.06	0.1
Neighbourhood SES, POLAR=1 reference category						
POLAR=2	1.39**	1.43**	-0.12*	-0.07*	-0.25**	-0.41*
POLAR=3	1.77***	1.92***	-0.49*	-0.05*	-0.28***	-0.23*
POLAR=4	1.97***	1.74***	-1.24***	-0.13*	-0.39***	-0.32*
POLAR=5	2.50***	1.03*	-1.69***	-0.35**	-0.56***	-0.20*
School type, <i>State School</i> reference category						
School type 2‡	2.68*	3.15**	0.41	-0.09*	-0.37*	-1.48***
School type 3‡	21.71***	-21.23***	0.46	-2.00*	-0.25*	-6.98**
School type 4‡	0.6	-60.53***	-1.62*	-0.31*	-0.31	3.09***
Pupil-teacher ratio	0.07*	0.11**	-0.03	0.01	-0.01	-0.02
Students SEN & Action Plus (%)	-0.16***	-0.11***	0.05***	0.00*	0.03***	0.06***
Students qualifying for free meals (%)	-0.05	-0.08*	-0.05***	-0.01	-0.01	0.05*
Students with English as first lang. (%)	-0.12***	-0.11***	0.07***	0.03***	0.02***	0.03***
Low-achieving students (%)	-0.12***	-0.11***	-0.06***	0.01*	0.00*	0.07***
High-achieving students (%)	0.16***	0.17***	-0.08***	-0.04***	-0.02***	-0.04***
Total number of students	0.75***	-0.37*	0.02*	-0.30***	-0.10*	-0.67***
Constant	92.58***	91.58***	3.66***	1.13***	0.53*	3.28***
N	4,230	4,230	4,230	4,230	4,230	4,230
r ²	0.37	0.73	0.35	0.26	0.22	0.17

Statistically different than 0 at *90%, **95% and ***99% level of confidence.

‡School types' for KS4 are as follows: 2 Academy; 3 Special School; 4 Independent.

Outcomes reflect percent of students in destination.

Table A7: Determinants of A-level (KS5) student destinations (multivariate regression)

	Any Educ.	UK Higher Educ.	Top-third UK HE	Russell Group	Apprentice	Employed	NEET
Quality Award	0.75	-0.50	1.01*	0.61	0.04	0.09	-0.49*
Neighbourhood SES, POLAR=1 reference category							
POLAR=2	-0.09	-0.85	-0.38	-0.49	-0.12	0.58	-1.25***
POLAR=3	1.29*	0.95	2.70***	1.46**	-0.67***	0.31	-2.14***
POLAR=4	2.28***	4.17***	3.49***	2.34***	-1.58***	0.08	-2.71***
POLAR=5	2.83***	5.30***	6.80***	4.46***	-2.04***	-1.79***	-3.30***
School type, State School reference category							
School type 2‡	-53.77***	-78.43***	-60.37***	-39.38***	9.16***	23.22***	18.12***
School type 3‡	-30.13***	-47.68***	-44.63***	-28.12***	6.95***	17.89***	11.54***
School type 4‡	-44.19***	-66.01***	-54.97***	-35.39***	8.56***	21.84***	15.92***
School type 5‡	-5.27***	-9.06***	-11.13***	-6.65***	1.64***	2.00**	3.45***
Pupil-teacher ratio	-0.14	-0.26**	-0.19*	-0.11	-0.01	0.08	0.01
Students SEN & Action Plus (%)	-0.16***	-0.41***	-0.61***	-0.39***	0.10***	0.08**	0.20***
Students qualifying for free meals (%)	-0.80***	-1.13***	-1.19***	-1.00***	0.11***	0.44***	0.24***
Students with English as first lang. (%)	-0.17***	-0.28***	-0.22***	-0.11***	0.06***	0.15***	0.08***
Total number of students	0.14***	0.21***	0.07***	0.04**	-0.02**	-0.07***	-0.03***
Constant	96.64***	100.42***	55.58***	35.08***	-1.95**	-10.09***	0.43*
N	2,142	2,142	2,142	2,142	2,142	2,142	2,142
r ²	0.57	0.61	0.55	0.47	0.21	0.18	0.38

Statistically different than 0 at *90%, **95% and ***99% level of confidence.

‡School/college types¹ for KS5 are as follows: 2 General Further Education; 3 Sixth Form; 4 Tertiary; 5 Academies.

Outcomes reflect percent of students in destination.