

House of Commons Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy – CIOB submission

The Chartered Institute of Building submission to the House of Commons Sub-Committee on the Call for Evidence on careers advice, information and guidance

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Executive Summary

- Given the range of opportunities presented by our country's construction programme, we are clear that schools, colleges and employers all have a vital role to play in terms of ensuring young people leave school prepared for the world of work and with the skills they need to access employment.
- Whilst the number of NEETS has fallen in recent months, their total remains stubbornly high. As an industry, we are clear that more needs to be done to improve the understanding in schools of the exciting and varied opportunities within construction; both on-site and off-site.
- Improving the quality of careers advice is paramount if the industry is to overcome some of the skills issues that exist and realise its potential.

1. About the CIOB

- 1.1 The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) is at the heart of a management career in construction. We are the world's largest and most influential professional body for construction management and leadership. We have a Royal Charter to promote the science and practice of building and construction for the benefit of society, which we have been doing since 1834. Our members work worldwide in the development, conservation and improvement of the built environment. We accredit university degrees, educational courses and training. Our professional and vocational qualifications are a mark of the highest levels of competence and professionalism, providing assurance to clients and other professionals procuring built assets.
- 1.2 Professionalism at all levels and stages within the construction industry is at the core of our work. We play a leading role in the development and continued improvement of standards in the industry at a national and international level. We recognise the challenges facing the built environment, such as the unprecedented skills shortage in the professions, the ageing workforce and the complexity of developing policy that improves coordination, design and the overall decision-making process, and we work with government and industry to outline and implement solutions.

2. The quality and impartiality of current provision

- 2.1 Establishing proper careers education, advice and guidance is essential to widen access to the professions and ensure young people are equipped with the knowledge and expertise they need to access meaningful employment.
- 2.2 Changes to government legislation now require secondary schools across the UK to ensure the delivery of careers advice that is both independent and impartial. The abolishment of the national Connexions service in 2012 led to many young people losing centres of expertise where they could obtain face-to-face guidance and support on careers choices. The onus is now firmly placed on schools and teaching staff to deliver independent and impartial advice with little or no extra funding or training. One of the key issues for industry is the extent to which schools are fulfilling this obligation and others specified in the Education Act 2011.
- 2.3 As a professional body, the CIOB believes that the cost of poor careers information, advice and guidance can be severe. According to the House of Commons Library, there were a total of 922,000 people between the ages of 16-24 classified as not in employment, education or training (NEET) in the second quarter of 2015¹. Although this represents a decline from the 1 million quoted in the co-supported CIOB and CITB *'No More Lost Generations'*² report, this figure remains stubbornly high. To add to this, a BBC report found that each NEET costs the taxpayer, on average, £97,000³.
- 2.4 The CIOB considers that we need to make better use of the massive opportunities presented by our country's very substantial construction programme (worth £100bn-plus a year) to secure training and work for the unacceptably large number of young people in Britain who are currently NEETs.
- 2.5 Given that the professions account for the largest single share of UK output and are expected to provide an additional 1.5 million jobs by 2020⁴, it is clear that more needs to be done to help young people into work and alleviate some of the skills shortages that exist. To this effect, the case for improving the quality and availability of careers information is both moral and economic.
- 2.6 Any assessment of quality will need to draw on the measures used to determine performance. Whilst the National Careers Service (NCS) has received predominantly positive feedback from customers for its role in delivering careers advice and guidance, its remit does not, by definition, cover the provision of face-to-face careers appointments in secondary schools⁵. Other criticisms of the service have drawn on the relative simplicity of the information provided.
- 2.7 Although the CIOB acknowledges the contribution the NCS has made for adults seeking careers advice, it remains cautious of efforts to expand services which do

¹ House of Commons, [NEET: Young People not in Education, Employment or Training, Briefing Paper 06705](#), 19 November 2015

² CIOB & CITB, [No more lost generations: Creating construction jobs for young people](#), February 2014

³ BBC News, [Anti-Neet scheme claims GCSE success](#), 27 August 2013

⁴ Spada, [Social Mobility Toolkit for the Professions](#), March 2012

⁵ BIS, [National Careers Service Satisfaction and Progression Surveys: Annual Report \(April 2013-March 2014 Fieldwork\)](#), *BIS Research Paper Number 192*, December 2014

not guarantee face-to-face interaction for young adults. Although it may be reasonable for staff to refer students to online resources for further information, careers advice should, for young people in particular, include a degree of face-to-face interaction and contact.

- 2.8 One of the key issues for industry and policymakers to consider is how we measure quality. Whilst Ofsted has agreed to take careers guidance and the destination of students into consideration when judging each school's leadership and management, it is not obvious how the quality of this guidance will be measured in practise, especially given the relatively short duration of each inspection. The CIOB therefore welcomes greater clarity on this issue.
- 2.9 Previous studies of careers advice have helped shine a light on the bias that is present within secondary schools with sixth forms. In fact, a significant proportion of schools with sixth forms have been found to focus on A-Levels and university preparation; instead of promoting apprenticeships or vocational courses as viable career options.
- 2.10 In 2013, a survey of 2,000 young people revealed that 93% reported that they were not getting the vital careers advice they needed to find a job or make life changing decisions about their future. Only a quarter of these had received information about apprenticeships, while a mere 17% were told what vocational qualifications might be available to them. In contrast, 62% were given information on A-levels and 65% on going to university⁶.
- 2.11 Given widespread concerns that schools are failing to deliver careers advice that is independent and impartial, the CIOB recommends that schools be stripped of their obligation to deliver this, particularly as the shift in responsibility has not been coupled with an increase in either funding, or resources.
- 2.12 In light of such assessment, we recommend school in-service days be transformed to career days with a series of tutorials and workshops from industry representatives and independent career professionals.
- 2.13 Careers advice must also go beyond schools. In a separate survey of over 2,000 young people by the Association of Colleges (AoC), some 70% said they trusted their parents for job advice⁷. Given this statistic, the CIOB believes that initiatives designed to improve the availability of high quality careers advice and guidance must include parents. It is not enough to educate young people about the availability of careers, yet offer no practical workshops in which to garner important life skills - such as the ability to manage a budget - which would undoubtedly become a vital skill in later life. Whilst we consider schools to be failing in their duty to deliver impartial careers advice and guidance, we are also clear that there is a need for schools to equip young people with life skills which will in turn prepare them for the world of work.

3. How can careers advice in schools and colleges help to match skills with labour market needs?

- 3.1 Due to the costs of poor careers advice and guidance, the CIOB believes that careers advice should be provided at key transition points to enable students to

⁶ Barclays' Life Skills, [93% of young people are not getting the careers information they need – CBI](#), November 2013

⁷ AoC, [Careers Guidance: Guaranteed](#), May 2014

make informed decisions. As most University Technical Colleges (UTC's) accept students between the ages of 14-19 it is imperative that good quality advice reaches students beforehand. CIOB therefore welcomes the commitment expressed by the previous Coalition government to lower the age at which careers advice is to be given to individuals aged 12 in order to provide students with sufficient time to make informed decisions.

- 3.2 Where applicable, schools and colleges should be encouraged to partner with local businesses and employers in order to maximise employment opportunities. A series of case study successes also point to the positive impact local careers fairs can make in the community where there is genuine buy-in from employers⁸. Where applicable, schools and other educational establishments should be encouraged to consider hosting careers fairs which involve a range of local employers. In doing so, local businesses have the potential to not only fill a number of existing vacancies, but contribute towards their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.
- 3.3 Work experience also presents a valuable opportunity for secondary school students to gain a greater insight into the world of work. For these reasons, each placement should offer high quality experience that not only reflects the strengths, but the interests of each pupil. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that each work placement offers meaningful experience for students.

4. The balance between national and local approaches to careers advice

- 4.1 The CIOB recognises the need to ensure adequate provision of local labour market information and remains broadly supportive of greater collaboration between employers and local educational establishments. We share the view that there ought to be better dissemination of local employment opportunities and labour market information. However, we remain cautious of creating a fragmented approach to careers and guidance.
- 4.2 Research from the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) entitled: '*Over qualification & skills mismatch in the graduate labour market*' found that almost 59% of graduates were in non-graduate employment⁹. According to the report, over-qualification can result in a loss of motivation amongst staff and can also form an ineffective allocation of skills. In this respect professional bodies, which accredit apprenticeships and vocational qualifications, provide an alternative to the university route without the cumbersome debt. Professional bodies also have the ability to help boost levels of productivity in a way that does not exacerbate the ineffective allocation of labour and skills. For these reasons, professional bodies have a role to play in the provision of careers advice. This is even more poignant as professional bodies are likely to see an individual through the entirety of their career, as opposed to a single employer who may only see an individual for a limited period of employment.
- 4.3 The provision of online careers services is well documented. Although it is undoubtedly important to have a national web portal for careers advice where individuals can go for further information, a strong case remains for face-to-face appointments with a local and qualified careers adviser.

⁸ DfE, [Careers Guidance and Inspiration in Schools: Departmental advice for governing bodies, school leavers and school staff](#), April 2014.

⁹ CIPD, [Over qualification & skills mismatch in the graduate labour market](#), August 2015

5. Careers advice and apprenticeships

- 5.1 The cyclical nature of the construction industry can make it more difficult to plan ahead and assess the future demand for skills. Despite this volatility, we remain optimistic that the decision to form a National Infrastructure Commission will go some way to improve the way in which the industry manages skills expectations in the future.
- 5.2 The industry's business model of subcontracting pushes the responsibility for training and recruitment further down the supply chain, creating a fragmented approach to skills and training. We hope the government's apprenticeship levy, which puts industry in the driving seat, will improve the situation within the sector.
- 5.3 Apprentice uptake has slumped in recent years and has been coupled with funding cuts. It appears that awareness of apprenticeships and vocational qualifications is low in schools when we strike a comparison with what has been described as the 'golden' university route¹⁰.
- 5.4 Whilst the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) publishes information of university courses and enables the user to rank performance, there is not, as of yet, a similar system in place for apprenticeships. This presents a problem for young people studying for an apprentice and for employers who are largely unable to gauge performance or the quality of each course. Given this assessment, the CIOB therefore recommends that a service similar to UCAS be established for apprenticeships.
- 5.5 The CIOB also supports the introduction of Trailblazers which comprise standards for apprenticeships which are devised by employers. As a result of their introduction, Trailblazers help place employers in the driving seat and add greater transparency and rigour to apprenticeships. Crucially, the new Trailblazers also help to define the work apprentices will be required to undertake, and the skills required. The CIOB considers Trailblazers to be an essential benchmark in the assessment of quality.

6. The potential for employers to play a greater role in careers advice

- 6.1 The CIOB welcomes the potential for employers to contribute towards careers advice and education.
- 6.2 In construction, the perceived lack of leadership in the industry and long term investment in skills and training is of great concern, especially as the sector recovers from the recession and is required, according to the CITB, to fill 224,000 vacancies over the next four years. To this effect, we need to see greater 'buy-in' from industry leaders and the public sector to offer meaningful employment. The CIOB believes that employers will only have a positive effect on the quality of careers advice if, and only if, the employment opportunities available are of a similarly high quality.
- 6.3 We do however have reservations as to how much time and resources employers will have at their disposal to enable participation in the provision of careers advice. Although the sector appears to be on a road of recovery, monthly regional

¹⁰ Ofsted, [Careers Guidance in Schools: Going in the right direction?](#), September 2013

variances remain in the GDP figures. And, whilst the recovery inevitably means greater levels of work, it is also likely to mean tighter profit margins. Given this assessment, it may be the case that while employers would like greater involvement in the provision of careers advice, they possess neither the time nor resources to do so. Here there may be a role for the CITB to use its levy to fund careers advice.