



Association of
Employment and Learning
Providers

AELP Submission: #108

**AELP submission to the Education
Select Committee Inquiry into Careers
Education – March 2022**

Introduction

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) welcomes the Education Select Committee's inquiry into careers education in schools. AELP has long advocated for high quality, impartial careers information, advice, and guidance, which is accessible for all ages, in every area of the country, offering parity of esteem between academic and vocational routes.

For too long, the national careers system has been fragmented and put far too much onus onto traditional pathways into careers- usually via college and university- when we know these are far from the only good options. Vocational learning can mean you "earn while you learn"- gaining practical on-the-job experience and contacts alongside high-quality off-the-job training. Despite there being such a wide range of options- in virtually every sector and from entry-level to masters' degree equivalent, there is still unfortunately a perception that work-based learning is somehow not as useful or prestigious as academic study.

AELP believes that the system for careers education, information, advice, and guidance for young people has improved in recent years. However, more is needed to ensure that all young people have fair and equal access to high quality and impartial support to help them navigate the right options for them.

Key recommendations

In summary, our key recommendations to the Education Select Committee Inquiry are:

- The government plans on compulsory careers interactions are not ambitious or bold enough. As a minimum, there should be two careers meetings per pupil, per year, involving a range of further education providers. The focus should also be on the quality and the outcomes, not just the minimum number of interactions required. These should be measured and monitored effectively. There should also be careful consideration of suitable delivery methods, to ensure there are no 'cold spots' where young people are left behind.
- The government should continue to raise awareness in schools by investing in better workforce development for teachers. The teacher training syllabus should include strong knowledge apprenticeships and technical education, so teaching staff are equipped with the right information to support pupils and their parents or guardians.
- More should be done to incentivise schools to promote vocational and technical education. This could be through the inclusion of vocational progression outcomes in performance league table points, to offer parity with outcomes into academic routes.
- Schools that fail to comply with the Baker Clause should be penalised through a limiting grade in inspection, based on the professional judgement made by Ofsted.
- Stronger collaboration between schools and training providers is improving through Careers Hubs. However, more needs to be done to ensure that opportunities are available in every area, so more young people can access support.

Young people need bolder and more ambitious careers interventions

Putting skills at the forefront of careers advice for young people must be a priority. The Skills and Post-16 Education Bill suggests that the government feels only one careers meeting per pupil over three key year groups is adequate. AELP believes that the government should be considerably bolder and more ambitious. Instead, there should be at least two careers meetings per pupil, per year, involving a range of further education providers. While AELP supports the Education Select Committee drive for increasing the number of minimum mandatory careers interactions that young people should get, it is important to consider the quality of these interactions too. There should be a minimum number of interactions per pupil, but the quality outcomes of interactions need effective monitoring and measurement, to ensure a positive impact on future career outcomes.

Schools should raise more awareness of technical and vocational pathways

School teachers play a crucial role in the lives of young people. When pupils start to contemplate their future career options, they are likely to see their teachers as a strong source of influence and advice. Given the importance of this role, we would expect teachers to offer as broad and impartial advice as possible. But to do this, many need to be better equipped to understand the range of options across different vocational and academic pathways, linked to the needs of the current and future labour market. The government needs to invest more in teacher training programmes to make sure that knowledge of technical education and apprenticeships is an integral part of the syllabus.

Incentivise schools to support progression into technical and vocational programmes

The current lack of parity between academic and vocational progression outcomes acts as a natural disincentive for schools to promote a wide range of career options. This needs to be addressed. The government should ensure that schools can properly recognise apprenticeships as positive destinations for year 11 leavers in performance league tables, attracting financial incentives to level the playing field between vocational and academic routes.

Take action against schools that do not comply with the Baker Clause

The fact remains that too many schools still do not either comply with the requirements in the Baker Clause or some of those that do comply still do not ensure that access is inclusive and meaningful. Even by the government's own assessment, only around 40% of schools currently comply with the Baker Clause. AELP believes that the Government should now move forward from rhetoric and crackdown on non-compliance with the Baker Clause, by instructing Ofsted to use it as a limiting grade during inspection for the school's overall outcome. This move would ensure that the government has a range of levers for rewarding positive action and taking action against inappropriate behaviour from schools around careers education, information, advice, and guidance for young people.

Facilitate more collaboration between schools and training providers

AELP recognises the work that the senior leadership team at the Careers Enterprise Company (CEC) has undertaken in shifting the focus of the organisation. The CEC recognises the need for working more collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders with established careers links for both young people and employers. Facilitating collaboration between schools and training providers is certainly improving as a result, but more needs to

be done to ensure national coverage and consistency, so that more young people can benefit. Careers Hubs¹ and the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK)² programme are both excellent initiatives. By the end of this current academic year, around 65% of schools and colleges should be in Careers Hubs. Many provider networks are involved in either delivering or supporting ASK delivery. However, it is currently too disjointed in its reach. The impact could be expanded through further targeted investment by the government which would also help on the accelerated rollout.

[Response to specific questions in the inquiry](#)

1) Is the current system of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is serving young people?

AELP believes that the system for careers education, information, advice and guidance has improved, but more needs to be done to ensure that all young people have fair and equal access to high quality and impartial support to help them navigate the best next steps for them.

AELP believes that to build on the improvements, the following principles should be addressed, to ensure the current system works more effectively for young people.

- Raise awareness in schools through investing in better workforce development for teachers, through making knowledge of apprenticeships and technical education a key component of the teacher training syllabus.
- Incentivise schools to promote vocational and technical education through the inclusion of vocational progression outcomes in performance league table points to offer parity with outcomes into academic routes.
- Where schools deliberately choose to flout the requirements of the Baker Clause, they should be penalised through a limiting grade in an inspection by Ofsted.
- Collaboration between schools and training providers is improving, but more needs to be done to ensure opportunities are available in every area so that more young people can access them.
- AELP believes that the local and regional provider networks that are inclusive of all FE provider types offer an effective and impartial vehicle to ensure a proportionate and structured bridge between schools and the FE provider community.
- The inquiry should carefully consider the methodology for effective careers information, advice, and guidance delivery. AELP believes there should be a reasonable balance, involving high-quality face-to-face and remote interventions for young people. This is particularly important when looking to drive up the minimum number of interventions for young people during their time in school. Any strategy should be inclusive across every area, to avoid potential cold spots.
- The government also needs to do more to address the barriers in the apprenticeship system that enable non-levy paying employers to access apprenticeships which in turn would encourage more employers to engage with young people about the opportunities that apprenticeships can bring as part of the drive to improve awareness and engagement in non-traditional careers routes.

¹ [Careers Hubs:](#)

² [The ASK programme \(apprenticeships.gov.uk\)](https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

- The government's recent Plan for Jobs enhanced employer apprenticeship incentives have been very effective in helping non-levy paying employers to better engage with apprenticeships. This has also led to increased participation at entry-to-level 2 apprenticeships and for young people. To date, over 171k new jobs have been supported, of which 78% have been for the under 25s³. In Quarter 1 of FY21-22, the number of apprentices under-19 increased to just under 31% of the intake of all apprentices, compared to just 20% across the full year of FY20-21. AELP believe the government should consider longer-term apprenticeship incentives, targeted at the under-25s, to help more non-levy paying employers engage with apprenticeships

2) Whether and how the Government should bring responsibility for CEIAG under one body, for example, a National Skills Service, to take overall responsibility for CEIAG for all ages, and how this might help young people navigate the CEIAG system.

AELP would be apprehensive about supporting a future move to combining careers education, information, advice and guidance services under one responsible body. AELP feels that many of the challenges that this inquiry is currently exploring stem back to the removal of Connexions-the service to support young people through specialist careers education, information, advice and guidance- back in 2012. On this basis, AELP would urge caution and believe it may have the polar opposite effect to the sought outcome of helping young people navigate the CEIAG system more effectively. AELP believes that there should be a role for local partners too who have a better understanding of specific local labour market needs.

3) Whether such a National Skills Service is best placed in the Department for Education or the Department of Work and Pensions to avoid duplication of work.

As above, AELP would be apprehensive about supporting a National Skills Service. If the decision was made to create such a service, we would be concerned if it was moved under the jurisdiction of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). This could harm young people being able to access and ultimately navigate the CEIAG system more effectively.

Historically, the DWP's focus and expertise has been on supporting adults rather than young people. More recently, the DWP Kickstart programme caused displacement due to Jobcentre Plus referring as many young people as possible to Kickstart, over more effective and appropriate schemes such as traineeships and apprenticeships. AELP believes the Education Select committee should recognise this risk in any final recommendation.

Rather than considering moving responsibility for overarching CEIAG between government departments, AELP believes that the Education Select Committee should perhaps consider if aspects of the careers system should be devolved and/or delegated to combined authorities, or local authorities (where combined authorities do not exist), to give greater autonomy and responsibility to regional stakeholders.

4) Whether organisations like the Careers Enterprise Company and National Careers Service provide value for money to the taxpayer.

³ [Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic Year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

AELP believes that the Careers Enterprise Company (CEC) and National Careers Service (NCS) both have important roles to play in helping drive up the quality and availability of impartial careers education, advice, and guidance.

Back in February 2020,⁴ AELP strongly argued that the CEC and the NCS should focus on *“delivering fewer high-quality services that are tailored for distinct groups of people, rather than trying to do everything”*. We also argued that the CEC should *“channel resources to established networks and existing organisations to act as facilitators, utilising established links”*, with the main aim of increasing awareness of apprenticeships and further education to young people.

Two years later, AELP recognises the efforts made by the CEC in refocusing how it works more effectively with stakeholders to ensure a more joined-up approach that has a positive impact on more young people.

The new CEC leadership has made a concerted effort in shifting the focus of the organisation and recognising the need for aligning and working more collaboratively with other stakeholders, such as AELP and the local/regional provider networks. This has led to a more joined-up approach and harnessed the expertise and reach of different organisations.

One example of this is the work that AELP has recently undertaken with the CEC to develop a suite of high-quality resources that will support teachers and careers leaders by promoting the wide range of technical education pathways available to young people⁵.

AELP believes that Careers Hubs- which are facilitated and funded by the CEC- also have an important role to play in driving up the reach and amplification of high-quality CEIAG for young people. AELP believes that facilitating collaboration between schools and training providers is certainly improving as a result, but more needs to be done to help to continue to develop these relationships and ensure consistent coverage in every area, so that more young people can benefit.

5) How schools could be supported to better fulfil their duties to provide careers advice and inform students of technical, as well as academic, pathways.

AELP believes that the government should adopt a better ‘carrot and stick’ approach with schools on CEIAG, balancing awareness, incentives, and penalisation to support schools to better fulfil their duties to provide careers advice and inform students of vocational and academic pathways.

Better awareness of technical and vocational pathways should be supported in schools through investing in better workforce development for teachers, through making knowledge of apprenticeships and technical education a key component of the teacher training syllabus.

⁴ [81-a-joined-up-approach-to-careers-information-advice-and-guidance.pdf \(aelp.org.uk\)](#)

⁵ [Technical Education Pathways Resource | CEC Resource Directory \(careersandenterprise.co.uk\)](#)

School teachers play a crucial role in the life of young people. When pupils start to contemplate their future career options, they are likely to see their teachers as a strong source of influence and advice. They are effectively gatekeepers to many career opportunities that young people may look at as they consider their steps into professional life. Given the importance of this role, we would expect teachers to consistently offer as broad and impartial advice as possible. There are some examples of how some schools and teachers put apprenticeships at the heart of their careers programmes, such as Penwortham Girls' High School in Lancashire⁶

However, teachers often neglect their duty to give impartial and comprehensive careers advice to their pupils, with only 11%⁷ of young people between the age of 15 and 18 are encouraged to embark on an apprenticeship.

We must also challenge negative behaviours and attitudes towards apprenticeships within the teaching community, so they may guide pupils towards a wider range of careers options, based on what works for young people, rather than what has worked for teachers.

AELP recommends that schools should recognise apprenticeships as positive destinations for year 11 leavers in performance league tables, attracting financial incentives to level the playing field between vocational and academic routes. Another factor which explains why there are so few teachers and, more generally, schools recommending apprenticeships for pupils is their impact on the performance league table. This means that – to maintain their league table ranking and remain financially viable – schools encourage students to continue towards A-Levels, regardless of whether that may be the best decision for individual pupils.

We need to remove this counterproductive logic by financially incentivising, if not rewarding, schools based on the number of pupils who embark on apprenticeships or other forms of skills training. It is time to ensure there is an equal opportunity between further education and higher education.

The apprenticeship ambassador networks are another good example of how to bring to life vocational pathways, through volunteers giving live or virtual talks to schools or, sharing their own experiences, whilst also getting involved in career events such as careers fairs, class talks, or mock interviews.

Unfortunately, too many schools still do not comply with the requirements in the Baker Clause. AELP believes that the Government should now move beyond rhetoric and crackdown on non-compliance with the Baker Clause by instructing Ofsted to make it a grade-limiting factor for schools as part of the inspection process.

6) How the Baker Clause could be more effectively enforced?

⁶ [One school putting apprenticeships at the heart of their careers programme | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)

⁷ [CET-Apprenticeship-Report-FINAL-1a.pdf \(educationandemployers.org\)](#)

Over the last decade, successive governments have dedicated a lot of time and energy to improving the technical education system and ensuring it is regarded on the same level as academic routes.

Throughout the late 1990s and the 2000s, the Labour government placed significant emphasis on university education, with the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, setting a target of 50% of young people entering higher education. Many believe that this ideological position came at the expense of technical education. This can be evidenced by decreasing numbers of apprenticeship starts, rising shortages of skilled labour in key economic sectors (e.g. social care, construction, hospitality), and increasing reliance on migrant labour.

These factors have in turn propelled apprenticeships and technical education to the forefront of the current government's priorities. The launch of industrial strategies and the apprenticeship reforms of 2017- including the introduction of the apprenticeship levy- shows just how central this issue has become for policymakers. The Baker Clause must be viewed through this lens.

Fundamentally, all young people need and deserve access to high quality, informative and impartial careers, information, advice and guidance, which gives parity of esteem to academic and vocational routes. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Policymakers must tackle this as a priority.

AELP has long championed the Baker Clause and worked closely with Lord Baker and the Department for Education with its development and implementation in schools, plus subsequent monitoring. The introduction of the Baker Clause represented a positive step forward. Since then, many schools and multi-academy trusts have embraced the need to give their young people access to impartial information on the breadth of vocational and academic progression opportunities.

Despite the good intentions of this policy, the evidence shows that schools continue to shy away from their legal duty to give training providers fair access to pupils in 66% of cases. What's more, the Department for Education has so far been reluctant to ensure that schools comply with the law. We need schools to fulfil their legal obligation in giving all pupils comprehensive and impartial careers advice and guidance. But that will not happen anytime soon unless they understand the severe implications of breaking the law.

Arguments on strengthening the Baker Clause featured prominently in the recent Skills and Post-16 Further Education Bill debates in Parliament. AELP believes that the only way to drive effective change is for lack of compliance with the Baker Clause to become a limiting grade in an inspection by Ofsted. There is precedent, as a similar approach was used in ensuring that measures in the "Every Child Matters" initiative were given due care and attention by providers, in driving up safeguarding standards.

7) Whether the proposals for CEIAG in the Government's Skills for Jobs White Paper will effectively address current challenges in the CEIAG system.

AELP believes that the government's proposals in the Skills for Jobs White Paper do not go far enough to address the current challenges in the CEIAG system.

AELP believes that compliance with the Baker Clause needs to be a statutory requirement, which is why we supported Lord Baker's proposed Skills and Post-16 Education Bill amendments on this. Furthermore, AELP believes that Ofsted should have a stronger role in identifying non-compliance and changing behaviours through a new limited grade approach in its school inspection regime.

The Skills and Post-16 Education Bill suggests that the government feels only one careers meeting per pupil over three key year groups is adequate. AELP believes that the government should be considerably bolder and more ambitious. Instead, there should be at least two careers meetings per pupil, per year, involving a range of further education providers.

While AELP supports the Education Select Committee drive for increasing the number of minimum mandatory careers interactions that young people should get, it is important to consider the quality of these interactions too. There should be a minimum number of interactions per pupil, but the quality outcomes of interactions need effective monitoring and measurement, to ensure a positive impact on future career outcomes. Interaction must be meaningful and of high value to the young person, not just simply a box-ticking exercise for purpose of Baker Clause compliance.

8) Whether greater investment to create a robust system of CEIAG is needed, and how could this be targeted to create a stronger CEIAG.

AELP believes there should be more investment or a diversion of already committed funding to facilitate better and wider-reaching collaboration between schools and training providers. AELP specifically recommends more investment be made available to support regional and local provider networks to facilitate managed cooperation between schools and training providers.

Regional and local provider networks are well-placed and have the potential- subject to adequate levels of funding- to facilitate better managed and coordinated cooperation between schools and providers concerning careers guidance. Some of this activity happens already, although it tends to be disjointed due to lack of support and funding.

AELP believes that Careers Hubs and the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme (ASK) are excellent initiatives. Though some provider networks are involved in the successful delivery of these programmes, the system is currently disjointed and lacks coverage in every area. By the end of this current academic year around 65% of schools and colleges should be in Careers Hubs, so scaling up is happening, but the further investment could help accelerate this process further.

Local provider networks can help schools provide comprehensive and inclusive careers CEIAG by processing the flow of providers' requests to access schools, exercising some degree of consistency and control. They can also advise schools on the needs of local labour markets and areas of interest. Similarly, local and regional provider networks can help training providers and local employers by giving them a channel they know they can rely on to access schools and recruit the future workforce

About AELP and our members

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The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) is a national membership body, proudly representing around 800 organisations. AELP members support thousands of businesses and millions of learners in England by delivering a wide range of training, vocational learning, and employability programmes. We support learners of all ages, in every community, and at every level of post-16 study. Formed in 1988, AELP's priority has always been advocating for the training providers that we represent and offering a wide range of competitive member benefits.

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