

Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy Careers Advice Inquiry: Find a Future Response

1. Find a Future welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy's inquiry into careers advice. Find a Future is the organisation that brings together The Skills Show – the nation's largest skills and careers event – and WorldSkills UK Skills Competitions – showcasing our best apprentices and vocational learners to national and international audiences. Our extensive interaction with young people, schools and colleges and businesses places us at the centre of the debate on how to ensure careers advice is properly structured to deliver the best possible outcomes for young people.

1.1 In particular, we believe that our experiential model – built on the principle that the best way of learning is by doing – offers significant advantages for young people. Through 'have a go' activities at The Skills Show (and other local skills shows), young people can find out about the careers that best match their interests and abilities interactively. Skills competitions provide further opportunities to develop the characteristics and qualities that will be essential for a wide range of careers. Find a Future would like to see this experiential model becoming increasingly integrated into schools' and colleges' approaches to careers advice. In this response we set out that:

- Experiential careers advice can help young people achieve their potential
- Schools and colleges should strengthen partnership working with business
- A national careers strategy combined with dynamic local approaches is needed
- Successful young people acting as role models can help drive-up apprenticeship starts
- Employers and young people benefit from working together

2. Experiential careers advice can help young people achieve their potential

2.1 Find a Future believes that the single biggest improvement that could be made to the quality of careers advice is the greater adoption of experiential learning models. Through running The Skills Show, local skills shows and WorldSkills UK Skills Competitions, we have seen the difference that 'have a go' activities and skills competitions have made to young people's lives across the country. This ranges from a young person's interest in a career being sparked through attendance at a skills show, to a gold medal winning performance in the final of an international skills competition. Giving young people greater access to experiential careers advice will better prepare them for their working lives.

2.2 In general, current provision of careers advice is too passive. Most young people rely on parents and teachers for their careers advice; the importance of teachers increases during the progression through school: 50% of Year 7s approach teachers for careers advice, increasing to 67% for Year 11s¹. The way this advice is largely delivered – in the classroom, with a limited range of materials – does not give young people the exposure to the breadth of experiences that could help ensure they are making the best decisions about the future direction of their working lives.

2.3 We have significant evidence that many young people, teachers and parents have low levels of awareness and knowledge of vocational and technical options and that events and experiences, such

¹ Association of Colleges (2014). Careers Guidance: Guaranteed.

Find a Future

Floor Four | 157-197 Buckingham Palace Road | London | SW1W 9SP

T 0800 612 0742 | E getintouch@findafuture.org.uk | W www.findafuture.org.uk

as those that can be found at The Skills Show, can address this. At the most recent Skills Show (November 2015) the percentage of young people who knew a fair/great deal about vocational routes increased from 30% to 48% following attendance². There is also evidence from The Skills Show that exposure to experience and information about career options and pathways helps educators design and deliver careers advice programmes: 98% of educators planned to take follow up activity as a result of attending The Skills Show including discussing vocational training with young people, connecting with employers and changing how they provide careers advice². Parents benefited from The Skills Show too with 75% saying they were likely to take follow up action including discussing vocational careers with their children².

2.4 Young people are best served by speaking to a wide variety of people, with a range of knowledge and experience, and by having the chance to actually experience what a career might be like in practice. There isn't a monopoly of wisdom here. A range of voices should be heard including business, Jobcentre Plus Advisers, Careers & Enterprise Company Enterprise Advisers and WorldSkills UK Skills Champions (see 5.1). Being given the chance to speak to people with different backgrounds and experiences should make careers choices more informed and less constrained.

3. Schools and colleges should strengthen partnership working with business

3.1 Schools and colleges should be working more closely with local business so that they have a clear idea of local labour market needs. An important function of schools and colleges is to prepare young people for work and life – helping local businesses meet their skills needs and providing young people with fulfilling, rewarding careers. We know, however, that there is a mismatch between what schools and colleges think they know about the labour market and what the reality is¹. An important remedy to this is closer working between businesses and schools and colleges.

3.2 Find a Future believes that there should be a new understanding in the relationship between business and schools/colleges. Businesses should be seen more readily as one of the key stakeholders to engage when it comes to careers advice. They possess vital expertise and knowledge that can equip young people with the ability to make informed choices. There should be a two-way sharing of information: local skills audits compiled by business and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), which are then shared with schools, could provide the means to ensure the local economy's needs are realised. They could allow for the identification of hotspots where demand is particularly required and experiential activities could be developed to help meet this demand. For example, if it were demonstrated that the labour market required construction skills, a programme of activities ranging from hands-on, 'have a go' experiences to skills competitions could be designed to help focus young people's interest. Find a Future has extensive experience here and is uniquely placed to help facilitate this partnership approach between business and schools/colleges.

3.3 Giving young people insights into, and experience of, a broad range of career and skills areas is important to ensure they realise the wealth of opportunities and can find out where their strengths and interests lie. Events such as The Skills Show provide a forum for this to happen. Up to date, relevant and accessible labour market information is critical for young people, parents and educators.

3.4 As the careers minister has recognised, the careers ecosystem is a complex one³. To enable its effective navigation, and to ensure young people get the best possible outcomes, a range of voices should be heard. Find a Future welcomes the Careers & Enterprise Company as an important addition to the family of organisations working to help improve careers advice.

3.5 In particular, the role of Enterprise Advisers will make an important contribution in terms of bridging the gap between local schools and businesses. It is vital that LEPs and schools work together to embed this policy nationwide. The Careers & Enterprise Company should continue to pursue a broad partnership based approach with other organisations. Mutual co-operation will help achieve common goals.

² TNS BMRB (2016). Independent Evaluation of The Skills Show 2015 – initial report produced for Find a Future.

³ Speech by Sam Gyimah MP (2015). 'Where Next for Careers Education and Guidance?'

4. A national careers strategy combined with dynamic local approaches is needed

4.1 Find a Future supports the development of a national careers strategy. This is essential so that schools, colleges, businesses and other interested stakeholders have common goals to work towards regardless of differences in local labour markets or in local models of delivery. A national strategy should provide the organising focus for local partners to take forward the delivery of careers advice.

4.2 Co-ordinated, centrally procured and organised events/services that help to resource and add value to local activity should form part of any attempt to improve careers advice. This model allows professional and high quality careers advice practices to be disseminated to, and localised by, grassroots providers. It is a model that Find a Future has championed and been at the forefront of in recent years through The Skills Show and local skills shows. Large scale centralised activity needs to be backed up by high quality practices in schools, colleges and homes.

4.3 The increasing move towards greater devolution of powers and responsibilities to local and regional communities necessitates dynamic local approaches. In particular, the local labour market's needs have to be presented in a way that is engaging and attractive to young people. Find a Future believes that there is an important role for 'have a go' activities and skills competitions in this regard. There is the opportunity for schools, colleges, businesses and other local partners to work together to design activities/competitions that both meet a labour market need and engage young people in wanting to pursue a future career.

5. Successful young people acting as role models can help drive-up apprenticeship starts

5.1 Find a Future has developed and supports a network of Skills Champions – former competitors in WorldSkills UK Skills Competitions – who now act as role models for the next generation of young people looking to make the most of their talents and abilities. The majority of young people who represented the UK at the most recent international skills competition (WorldSkills Sao Paulo 2015) were apprentices, as were the majority of medal winners at the competition. We strongly believe that Skills Champions, and their experiences, should be utilised more widely as a way of demonstrating the benefits of apprenticeships. Having positive role models who have been through the apprenticeship route, and crucially, who other young people can relate to, is a key way in which more young people can be encouraged to become apprentices.

Case Study: Robyn Clarke, Team UK, WorldSkills São Paulo 2015

Robyn Clarke represented the UK in the mechatronics competition at WorldSkills São Paulo 2015. She won a Medallion for Excellence and is now a Skills Champion. Her story demonstrates the benefits apprentices get from taking part in skills competitions.

New challenge

Robyn chose an apprenticeship in maintenance engineering with car manufacturer Toyota after leaving college in 2011. While employed in a multi-skilled apprentice role on the production line, she was approached by the company about entering into skills competitions.

'Toyota suggested we take part in competitions as a lot of the training is relevant to our work,' explains Robyn. 'I hadn't heard of WorldSkills UK, but when I looked it up, it seemed like something different and exciting that would give me great experience to put on my CV. I loved the idea of representing my country.'

Expert knowledge

In 2013, Robyn entered an in-house national competition held at Toyota's manufacturing site in Burnaston, Derbyshire, which was judged by WorldSkills UK experts. Her skill, Mechatronics, brings together the disciplines of mechanics, electronics and computer technology to design and build automated equipment.

'In the national competition our tasks included building circuits for a pneumatic station,' says Robyn. 'My team came second, and we were then asked to compete in the selection competitions for Squad UK for WorldSkills São Paulo 2015.'

After successfully securing a place in Squad UK, Robyn and her team mate Andy Smith, who also works for Toyota Manufacturing UK, were selected for Team UK for WorldSkills São Paulo 2015. After competing over four days against the world's best engineers, Robyn and Andy were each awarded a Medallion for Excellence.

Wider benefits

The UK Mechatronics Training Manager, David Russell, a lecturer at Northern Regional College, Northern Ireland is keen to stress the wider impacts of taking part in WorldSkills UK skills competitions, saying 'Robyn has acquired multidisciplinary skills through her Toyota apprenticeship programme and these have been an excellent foundation for her development in the Mechatronics specialism. She has addressed all of the demanding training tasks and challenges with enthusiasm her high standards of motivation and commitment should stand her in good stead for future challenges.'

Taking part in WorldSkills UK skills competitions has also made an impact on her day-to-day work with Technical Skills Development Specialist at Toyota, Peter Spence, commenting, 'Robyn has received extra development through her WorldSkills UK journey which gives her a wider knowledge and skill base and has also broadened her outlook to the world of engineering, which can only help her in her future career at Toyota.'

Robyn is applying the WorldSkills UK training to her life and work. 'While I've learned a lot of technical skills and improved in that respect. I've also become a better apprentice – being dedicated and committed to something helps me at work.'

5.2 Currently, not enough young people are seeing an apprenticeship as a viable route both post-16 and post-18; this is compounded by the challenge posed by parents often not viewing the degree route and the apprenticeship route in the same way. Further research is needed around breaking the cycle of advice from family members and educating parents on the opportunities and prospects available to apprentices. It is unquestionably the case that better advice about apprenticeships is needed but as part of this an apprenticeship must be viewed as equally as worthwhile as a degree. We therefore strongly support the Government's moves to give apprenticeships the same legal status as degrees. Find a Future believes that the experiential model of careers advice has a big role to play in challenging and changing perceptions about what an apprenticeship can offer. Two-thirds of young people agreed that they were likely to consider a vocational route, such as an apprenticeship, after attending The Skills Show².

6. Employers and young people benefit from working together

6.1 To ensure it is delivering the best possible outcomes, both now and in the future, careers advice should move away from being seen as an information gathering exercise and place a greater emphasis on direct contact with employers. Employers are very well placed to give the insight, advice and expertise that young people need to find out what 'having a job' and 'the world of work' means in a practical sense. Find a Future's experiential model, which has so far reached thousands of young people both nationally at The Skills Show and through local skills shows, puts this concept into action and we are keen to work with all partners to ensure closer contact between young people and employers.

6.2 Employers should be part of a young person's journey through school: be that in the form of visiting young people in school, creating tailored social media content or being more open with work experience opportunities. This will ensure that when choices are being made about the future, young people won't see interaction with employers as new or daunting – in the ideal scenario they will have had regular contact from Year 7 (or earlier) onwards and understand the direct link between education

and their future employment. There has to be the willingness on both sides for this to become a reality but our experience in working with employers is that they are up for the challenge.

6.3 Through supporting skills competitions, many employers are already actively involved in helping young people become work ready. There are clear business benefits to be realised from such activity.

Case study: Toyota: Meeting skills needs and supporting manufacturing and engineering

• **Toyota see competitions as offering clear benefits to young people**

- An opportunity to get the best training the UK has to offer.
- The chance to be a role model for future apprentices.
- Development of both technical and personal skills.
- Potentially a life changing experience for those young people involved to discover their full potential.

• **Toyota see competitions as benefitting employees such as those training competitors**

- Being able to see their young people apply the skills gained during their apprenticeship in a challenging practical environment.
- Taking pride as the managers/supervisors watch young people grow as individuals both technically and personally, seeing them prove to themselves they have the capability to do well in the competitions and their career.
- It is seen as a chance to return the support others were given as apprentices and to help their young people as they rise to the various challenges in their future roles.

• **Toyota also see wider benefits from their involvement**

- It is an opportunity to promote careers in manufacturing and engineering in a way that is seen as aspirational.
- Engagement helps the company strive towards its goal of 'Premium Quality and Premium Skills' to gain future business.
- They see it as a chance to prove their skill levels against the best in the UK and the rest of the world.

• **Toyota see their engagement as part of their company mission**

- Toyota is committed to the long term future success of a dynamic and expanding manufacturing and engineering sector in the UK.
- This requires them to create an environment where manufacturing and engineering are valued and respected as part of the UK economy and society.
- WorldSkills participation (both locally and globally) is one way Toyota demonstrates its commitment to that mission.

January 2016