



COVID-19:

Where Do I Go for Careers Support?



Acknowledgments

The career development sector has robust theories and models, evidence-based strategies and tools, and significant experience in helping individuals to successfully navigate difficult and complex transitions in their lives. This survey was originally inspired by the work of Sareena Hopkins, Founding Executive Director, Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) who published a seminal career development discussion paper for Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) on the impacts of Covid-19 and recommendations going forward. Following on from this, Steve Stewart OBE Chief Executive and Katharine Horler, Chair of Careers England, alongside Jan Ellis, CEO, Career Development Institute (CDI) commissioned dmh associates to undertake a survey across England of careers companies and practitioners to capture their experiences and viewpoints. We are greatly indebted to all those who contributed to this research.

- Careers England Ltd is the sole trade association for organisations involved in the provision of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) products and services in England for people of all ages - <https://www.careersengland.org.uk/about-us/>
- The Career Development Institute (CDI) is the single UK-wide professional body for those working in the fields of career education, career information, advice and guidance, career coaching, career consultancy and career management - <https://www.thecdi.net/About>
- dmh associates is a research and consultancy organisation which encourages collaboration and fresh thinking in careers, education and skills' policy, research and practice - <http://dmhassociates.org/>

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1.0 Introduction

In April 2020, Careers England and the Career Development Institute (CDI) in partnership with dmh associates conducted an online survey to identify how careers companies and careers professionals were responding to the impact of Covid-19 and the social distancing lockdown measures. The main purpose was to investigate how careers companies and practitioners were responding to customer needs and to identify current trends and recommendations to inform public policy. The survey took place between 24th April 2020 to 10th May 2020. This was primarily aimed at careers companies and practitioners in England¹. The findings highlight a key question for citizens during and after the pandemic is where do I go to for careers support?

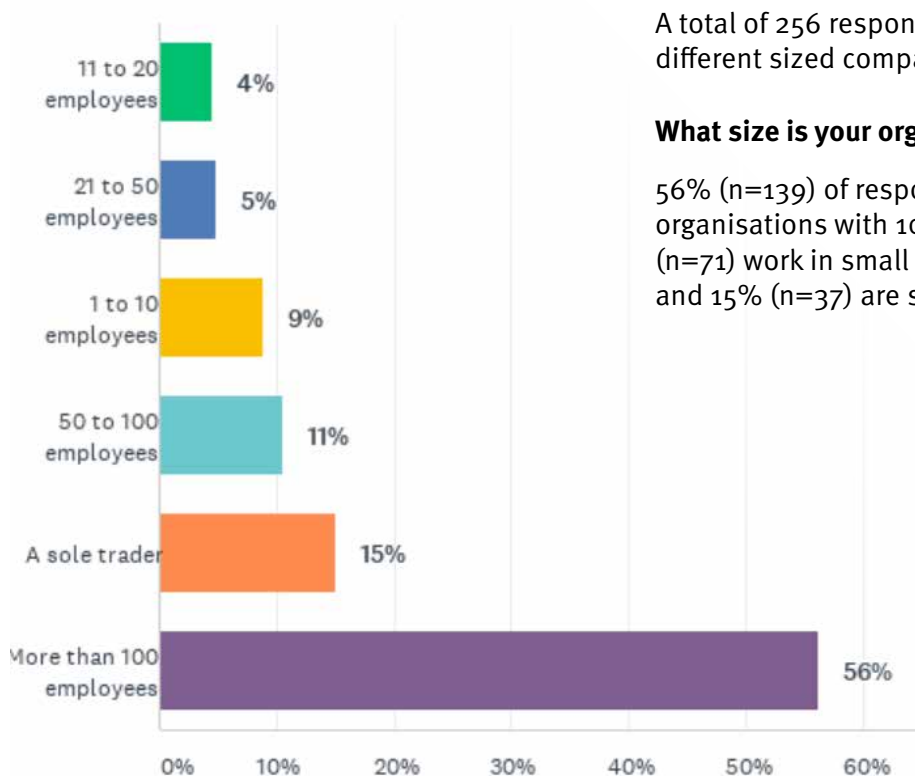
2.0 Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted to provide an opportunity for the voices of careers companies and careers professionals to be captured. The online survey questions were co-designed by the partners and circulated via Careers England and the CDI to those who provide careers support services to young people and/or adults.

¹ A small percentage of responses were also received from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – see Figure 2 below.



3.0 Findings



A total of 256 responses were received from different sized companies from across all regions.

What size is your organisation?

56% (n=139) of respondents were from organisations with 100 or more employees. 29% (n=71) work in small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and 15% (n=37) are sole traders. See Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Size of organisations in which respondents worked

Which of the following regions applies to your work?

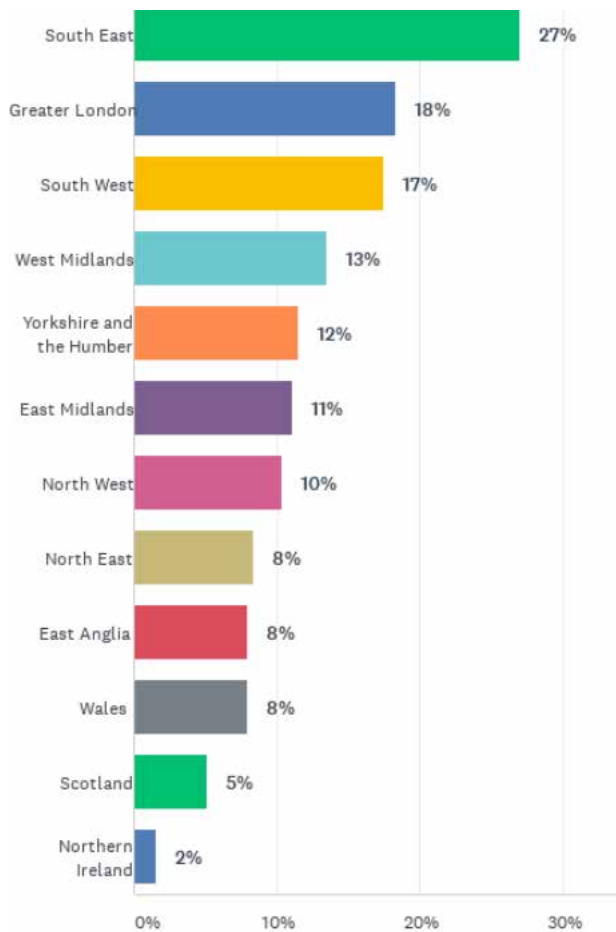


Figure 2 left, shows over a quarter 27% (n=68) of the respondents work in the South East region, with the second highest responses from Greater London 18% (n=46), closely followed by 17% (n=44) in the South West region. Outside of England, 8% (n=20) were from Wales, 5% (n=13) from Scotland and 2% (n=4) from Northern Ireland.

What is the impact of the COVID-19 situation in your geographical area?

From the total of 256 respondents, 6 did not reply to this question.

As Figure 3 below illustrates, the main impact reported is the high usage of the government's Job Retention Scheme i.e. furloughed employees in all regions 81% (n=203) responses. A total of 45% (n= 111) stated that in certain sectors there are major concerns over job insecurity such as tourism, retail, hospitality and entertainment venues. 32% (n= 80) stated that job offers were being withdrawn and a further 27% (n=68) indicated an increase in redundancies. Also, 24% (n=61) indicated there are increased job postings in certain sectors, for example, agriculture, food production, supermarkets, warehousing, health service and logistics.

Figure 2 – Regions from which respondents replied

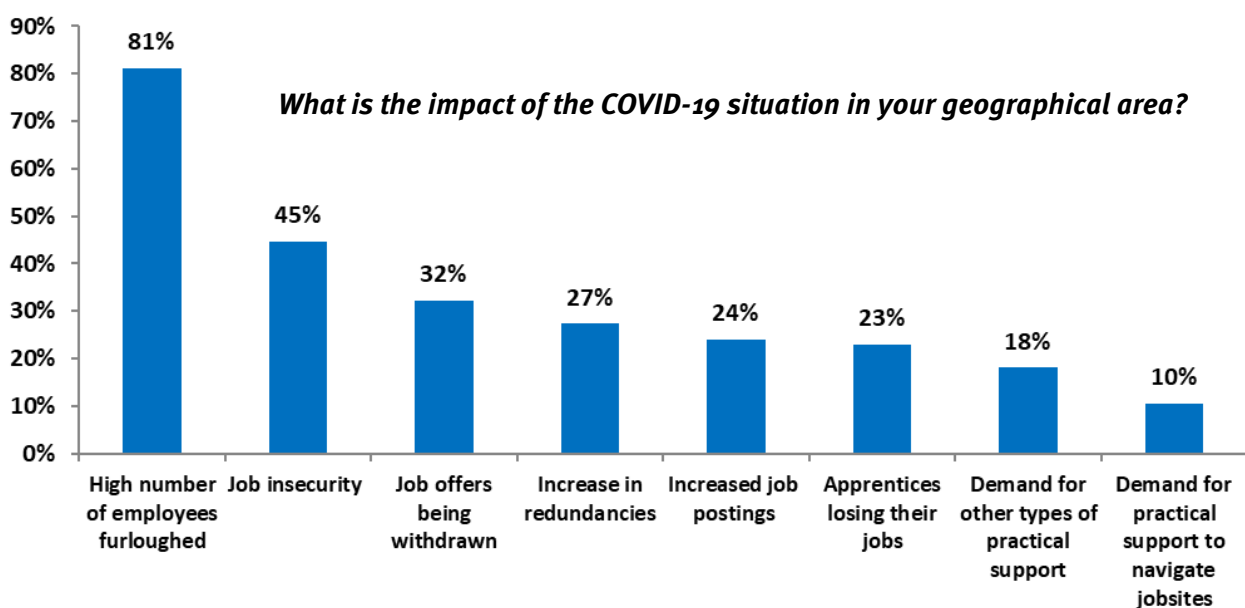


Figure 3 – Impact of Covid -19 by geographical area.

There were reported short term opportunities in some sectors such as health care, in supermarkets, agriculture and logistics. For example:

“Increased postings of NHS and care related vacancies.”

“More roles in care, delivery drivers, warehouse work, retail. Adverts for fruit pickers, farming support.”

“Health and Care and Supermarkets are recruiting more.”

“In Sheffield, we have seen a significant increase in advertised roles in Care, Supermarket work, Delivery Drivers etc. We have also seen many local Manufacturers in Yorkshire take up the challenge of manufacturing PPE for the NHS.”

“Local community initiatives have advertised for volunteers to help distribute food/ medicines to vulnerable individuals; local supermarkets are advertising for additional staff.”

Overall, respondents indicated they are mostly seeing increased enquiries from students and those currently unemployed. 128 respondents provided a wide range of examples of the current situation in their own geographical area. Of major concern was careers support for young people during the lockdown, particularly vulnerable groups, ranging from zero to minimal. Also, some respondents indicated the urgent need for every young person in years 11 and 13 to be offered a careers interview/ session with a trained and qualified careers professional. It was suggested a personalised plan for every young person should be a priority in view of school/college lockdown, the impact of exam cancellations, the lack of work experience and the uncertainties regarding university processes for awarding places. For example:

“Schools are closed so young people are not getting personal career guidance at time when they need this most, particularly this year’s school leavers.”

“Our business in schools with young people has gone to zero!”

“I work in a secondary school and it is quite scary for young people in respect of their future careers. I fear for those students in Year 11 and 13 who will be looking for work and apprenticeships. I am keen that we find a way to provide an up-to-date honest picture to our young people.”

“Young people not able to visit college/ sixth form is causing anxiety which impacts on their confidence.”

“Working in a school the issue is mainly about the impact of exam cancellations, lack of work experience and uncertainties’ about university processes for awarding places.”

“Vulnerable young people need careers support and it’s not clear who they can turn to in their local communities.”

Some examples of apprenticeships and/or work experience being withdrawn or vacancies reduced included:

“In a random sample of a 15-mile radius from one North East town, 8 out of 15 apprenticeship sectors on the national apprenticeship website had zero vacancies. This is unheard of for this time of year and will affect young people around the North Tyneside/Northumberland/Newcastle area.”

“Apprenticeship vacancies withdrawn. Some students turning to plan b to consider university instead. Some students expressing concern about what the future may hold.”

“We’ve had contact with several young people who have had apprenticeship offers withdrawn over the past few weeks.”

“Opportunities are lost for young people to gain vital work experience.”

A few respondents, mentioned parents/carers. For example:

“Parents do not know where to go for support!”

“Promote a centralised set of resources for pupils and parents.”

“Guidance and support is needed for young people AND parents with regular updates as the situation develops!”

A number of respondents raise serious concerns about the employment situation post-lockdown. Many furloughed employees may find themselves redundant as employers may not have jobs for them to return to. For example:

“People are being furloughed to save their jobs further down the line and avoid redundancies. There is a lot of job insecurity as people don’t know if they will have a job to go back to.”

“Individuals want reassurance and answers about jobs and apprenticeships availability after lockdown but there are no certain answers- it is necessary to be realistic whilst trying to remain positive.”

“Job insecurity in several sectors with furloughed workers unsure whether their job will be there after lockdown.”

“Will industries such as cafes and restaurants be able to pick up the same trade, therefore requiring the same staff as before as people have lost jobs, used savings, etc. We are a busy tourist town and holiday makers may stay away this year due to the restrictions in place.”

“Hospitality and tourism have been hit hard with many seasonal staff let go with no likelihood of employment until next year for many casual hotel and tourism staff on casual contracts.”

“The current situation has created uncertainty in the business community with no one knowing exactly how bad things will be and how many jobs are likely to be lost. The Furlough scheme gives business some breathing space but it is unclear what will happen after that and if (some) staff will have to be made redundant or put on reduced hours.”

“Number of redundancies has not seen a significant increase because a number of companies have furloughed employees...but when furlough ends a number of companies are expecting staffing levels to be lower... and this will lead to job losses A number of smaller employers have gone straight to redundancies for Apprentices.”

In summary, the government’s job retention initiative to furlough employees has been welcomed. However, post-lockdown it is anticipated that job losses will increase significantly. Besides the loss of jobs and apprenticeships there are genuine concerns for the social and economic wellbeing of young people. While there have been vacancies in some sectors such as health care, supermarkets, agriculture etc. there is still uncertainty about the scale of youth unemployment in the coming months.

How big a problem is access to careers support as a result of public offices, schools and colleges being closed?

There were 252 responses to this question of which 54% (n=134) rated this as highly problematic (rating 5) or problematic (rating 4). In contrast, 25% (n=62) gave this a low ranking (rating 1 or 2). The remainder 22% (n=56) indicated they were unsure.

What could we do to improve/enable access to careers support for young people?

This was an open-end question inviting comments and recommendations. A total of 243 responses were received. **Online and digital careers support was** identified as a key theme. For example,

“We have adapted by use of Teams and Skype or chat functions but these are usually used to supplement, no replace face to face contact.”

“Invest more in helping young people to adapt to a virtual interviews and assessment processes.”

“Provide more virtual career advice, information, interactive with Q&As.”

“Increase access to video interviews 1:1 and in groups.”

“Offer guidance using Zoom and resolve issues of security for video interviews in schools/colleges.”

“As an FE Careers Adviser, I have been offering video chat appointments to my students to keep as close to the normal 1:1

appointment as possible. So far these have been working very well and young people are happy to have these.”

“We are finding young people adapting to digital channels and even seeing an increase in some cases.”

Telephone careers support was taking place and used as a means of working effectively with young people during the lockdown. The use of social media platforms such as “facebook”, “twitter”, “Instagram”, “snapchat” and “TikTok” were also highlighted as mechanisms being used to reach young people. For example,

“There is good access at the moment in my area as Careers Advisers are telephoning young people at home - obviously there is no face to face support.”

“Engage more on the platforms young people use.”

“Make it online/virtual and use mediums they already are familiar with e.g. whatsapp and social media (that’s what we are doing successfully!) And get parents/careers involved.”

“Just letting the young people know that we (careers advisers) are still here to support them. Each school/college is approaching learning and support in very different ways. The use of social media is key reaching young people.”

The use of social media which is very familiar to young people is being actively used in most regions e.g. snapchat, facebook, Instagram, etc. While face-to-face provision is preferred by some young people and parents/carers as a means of delivering career guidance, it is widely acknowledged the current situation has accelerated delivery online. Many respondents report their company or practice has quickly adapted to ‘the new normal’.

Some respondents raised concerns over the issue of **safeguarding the identity and data of young people** when using digital and social media platforms. For example:

“The main thing for us is the use of digital tools which would allow us to continue to deliver IAG work in our schools. In pre-16 establishment, there is great resistance to allow young people to take part in a video



interview or at least offer them this option.”

“Ensure that safeguarding arrangements are clarified so that online video guidance can take place, and promote this. The DfE has a role to play in this!”

“Resolve the issue of safeguarding somehow through a nationally agreed strategy. This is clearly not an easy nut to crack. Schools are understandably very, very cautious (and we all need to be vigilant of course) however it is making supporting students very difficult.”

“Come up with a secure system that offers robust safeguarding and still allows for 1:1 support.”

Some respondents highlighted concerns about **young people’s unequal access to digital resources**, particularly those in low income families and vulnerable groups.

“They worry is those that don’t have access to online resources will inevitable miss out!”

“Some schools do not have the resources/ inclination to support setting up remote services and supporting students to access this. Therefore, it is a lottery as to whether the school you are attending actively supports your career development needs!”

“In Connexions days we would ‘track’ and actively phone students to make sure they are okay and have careers conversations. Some schools/colleges are reluctant to do this and therefore, students who are ‘hiding away’ are missed.”

There is an urgent need to **strengthen face-to-face careers support for young people in local communities**. For example:

“In addition to virtual interviews, young people need to know where they can go locally to get good face-to-face careers advice.”

“Open face-to-face confidential meeting places that are safe at a distance – get young people used to leaving the house.”

“Young people are unclear about how they can access careers guidance away from school.”

There are genuine concerns raised regarding the issue of safeguarding as many schools in particular are reluctant to permit the use of online meeting platforms such as Skype or Zoom due to reported GDPR and data protection issues. There is a call for a national strategy to resolve this issue in an effort to overcome the barriers to enable an improved careers support offer. Other ways of improving access include establishing safe meeting places locally where careers support can be delivered whilst maintaining social distancing.

What could we do to improve/enable access to careers support for adults?

The majority of respondents indicated they have significantly ramped up their use of digital and online support. The use of online services, virtual interviewing and/or video conferencing were highly prevalent. The following recommendations were made:

“More virtual interviews.”

“Consider virtual careers fair, employer fair and also open evening to showcase courses -highlight availability of careers advice at these events.”

“Set up local virtual Hubs.”

“Skills Development Scotland already had online & phone services for anyone at risk facing or recently been made redundant - these delivery channels have been ramped up enhanced - additional resources Online delivery group sessions via Skype new videos training additional staff.”

“Careers Wales is offering telephone, web chat, virtual face-to-face and email support to adults and young people.”

“Webinars or on-line video calls.”

“NCS staff are providing advice by phone and online platforms.”

“Provide links to National Careers Service etc.”

Clearly, the use of online services works for those who have access to and can use technology. However, for others there needs to be an alternative approach. For example:

“Make sure word gets out that help is available, especially important for those who are not familiar with technology.”

“Recognise that there is little ‘support’ for adults. Yes, they can visit an online site with job profiles and a skills check but unless you understand how to interpret that then this is not useful!”

“Still a lot of adults can’t use IT and/or don’t have access to it so they are unable to find out what they need to online. We still need an element of face-to-face support, not just someone to knock up a quick CV but meaningful interventions.”

“Again, more mobile friendly info. Too many don’t have a laptop but do have a mobile.”

“it is recognised that while younger people may be more at ease with technology and using Zoom, social media chat such as WhatsApp snapchat etc, many older people are less at ease and less inclined.”

“Adults prefer a telephone direct contact service.”

“Reliance on and assumptions about IT and internet availability, reliability and individuals’ skillsets to access these are excluding whole sections of communities - this applies equally to young people.”

The issue of government making **sufficient funding available for all-age careers support** was raised by some respondents. For example:

“One off calls to answer questions are useful but to actually help, adults (like any client) need hand-holding through creating self-marketing collateral, motivating when things are not working and gentle nudging to keep going.”

“Provide funding for registered careers practitioners to offer help to those made redundant or had their employment severely affected by the national situation.”

“As households face financial insecurity, paid for career services are unlikely to be opted for. Government funding which independent careers practitioners can apply for, to offer free or part funded careers IAG

and coaching services to adults may enable practitioners working in the independent sector, to reach out and impact local clients with services which are relevant and effective.”

“Make it mandatory for government funded adult services to employ independent careers practitioners to deliver CEIAG virtually/ remotely.”

“Lobby government for recognition of the need for support for funded guidance for adults in addition to what is available for those claiming benefit. Damage limitation of effects of Covid 19 on individuals and the economy will be supported by good access to guidance for all.”

Government policy on the issue of **Payment by Results (PBR)** was also highlighted as problematic in the current Covid-19 crisis. Before COVID-19 hit, many providers were highly dependent PBR model and its success was highly dependent on referrals from the public employment service (DWP). Careers companies are paid based on specific outcomes for clients and are expected to absorb the financial risks. The current arrangements were reported as unworkable during the Covid-19 crisis. For example:

“Support National Careers Service to move from a PBR service to a holistic careers counselling led service. This includes discussions about how to live and survive, not just “career” as a job or training outcome.”

“Lift the payment by results burden from the England National Careers Service contracts! Focus on rewarding (innovative) channel presence - e.g. Zoom sessions, webinars, webchat, telephone etc.”

“Government position allowing all adults to receive free careers-advice from NCS, and that service shouldn’t be designed around meeting narrow outcomes - CSO, CMO, JLO - but on meeting the adults’ broad and deep careers-advice needs.”

“Access is there through the National Careers Service but for providers to maintain their staffing the current payment by results

model has to flex to the current situation (and indeed has but this needs to continue)."

"Lots of adults are accessing government pots of money and so perhaps the government can do some signposting to careers support at the same time."

"More joined up thinking - there is the Universal Credit and National Careers Service pages on the Gov website but no links made between the two!!! The local job centres have introduced a website to help job seekers according to groupings - e.g. 40+, people furlough, people made redundant - but the main mention NCS gets is to do with the Skills Health Check, yet we cover so much more than that and I find the promotion of services very disappointing."

Some respondents highlighted the need for **better signposting to careers support and promotion of the National Careers Service (NCS)**. They proposed that the media, especially television and radio campaigns should be set up to raise awareness of the careers support available and to boost the nation's mental health and well-being. For example:

"All adults have access to the National Careers Service and can easily access qualified IAG via this route. The promotion of the number, the available service and tools needs to be more prominent and widely circulated."

"Worth considering what BBC bite-size have done for families with poor internet in terms of bringing education resources onto the Red Button – many adults have a TV, even if no internet access. Is this scope for a partnership here?"

"TV / newsfeeds/ social media promote free services available with an emphasis on helping people to navigate their career journey in the future post lockdown."

"Create a clear and well-advertised link on the DWP web pages to provide information on the available and ongoing support, advice and guidance available from The National Careers Service and available through remote channels."

"Improve National Careers Service website and promote support available more- not just through job centres."

"Greater promotion of NCS as a free resource and expansion of eligibility criteria."

How has your organisation and/or career development professionals responded?

83% (n=208) of respondents indicated that they or their organisations have been providing online careers support, with 76% (n=190) offering telephone guidance. As shown in Figure 4 below, support via webinars was reported by 42% (n=104) of respondents and 38% (n=96) are using Labour Market Intelligence gathering (LMI).



Figure 4 – How organisations/career development professionals have responded

Respondents were also invited to offer examples of good and interesting policies and practices. Many of the responses refer to the online support they deliver; whilst others are being proactive following up with students via telephone, sending out newsletters, contacting local employers for vacancy information, switching to more online provision and training staff on IT provision, telephone appointments and call centre service provision. For example:

“Gathering useful info to use once lockdown has ended and considering transferable skills of certain jobs to help when advising and offering careers advice.”

“Emailing and calling our clients to talk about their next steps and engage in conversations e.g. students going to Uni - have they heard from the Uni re starting in the Autumn? For those looking for apprenticeships, how can they keep their skills up to date or add to their CV in preparation for the job market improving. Or can they be pro-active and reach out to local employers in their chosen industry for work experience or part time work.”

“Could do with promoting the National Careers Service on national TV/radio - I’ve worked in the job centres locally for about 8 years and the amount of people that haven’t heard of NCS is disappointing.”

“I’m producing a newsletter every two weeks and making sure opportunities are posted on our website and twitter.”

“Follow up of Year 11 students to ensure they have a plan in place for next year. liaison with colleges to ensure students applications have been received and they are being contacted. Signposting students to Colleges offering virtual open events and Q and A sessions for students and parents.”

“Our staff have all been given training it working in a virtual environment. Policies and protocols have been updated to reflect the current reality. Our provision has remained fairly similar though now entirely online, including video chats, instant messaging conversations, and online newsletters to replace the face to face provision.”

“All advisers are offering telephone appointments to clients as well as many now answering queries in a call centre manner and collating information for clients of online courses and support.”

“Contacting students directly by email to offer support and give information eg virtual open days, webinar information. Only a few have responded so thinking of delivering virtual careers activities that are compulsory / participation is monitored.”

“Creating leaflets advising them how to commence careers research, promoting out continuing service to schools and advising that we are still here and offering a service. I work for a local council and we cover NEET young people and schools that buy in. During the summer term we contact all schools to advise they can refer their potential NEETs to us, this will be ongoing.”

“KS3 students have been directed to info videos and set career themed challenges. Y10s have been set personal skills quiz and challenged to look at 10 suggested careers or ones of their choice and answer a series of questions linked to each. Y11s and 13s are receiving individual phone calls to discuss current plans and support any intended changes with advice and guidance. Undertaking MOOCs where appropriate, bridging units or research into specific careers Y12s are researching P18 intentions, drafting personal statements, undertaking MOOCs and undertaking virtual tours where available.”

“Creating online communities to provide support in the skills that will help people through the pandemic and to be ready and agile enough to survive and thrive in whatever the careers world (and wider world) look like afterwards.”

“I support my case load via email, text messaging or voice chats, encouraging all to remain calm and to focus on different things. We have been engaging our caseloads by useful short videos that develops there confidence giving them the opportunity to continue learning, develop their CV cover Letters and alternately job hunt. We

encouraged practising applying for jobs, to which gaining also developing reliance on once self.”

“Ensured all classroom careers activity learning can be access online. Developed new ways of doing things to ensure students are supported and targets are met for the most vulnerable”.

“Working together with all the neighbouring local authorities to ensure a comprehensive package is being developed and offered. Liaising with all the local colleges to help promote messages to concerned students.”

Compared to this time last year, to what extent are young people engaging with/asking for advice about the following?

When asked ‘Compared to last year, to what extent are young people engaging with/asking for advice in the following...?’ The results in Figure 5

below show there have been **decreases** in:

- Finding and securing internships or work experience
- Interviews
- Apprenticeships
- Developing employability skills.

Also, searching for jobs, finding and securing part- time work and finding and securing voluntary work have decreased over recent weeks and months.

There has been **increases** in young people:

- Worrying about finance
- Engaging in digital and virtual recruitment processes
- Undertaking online job search activities.

Compared to this time last year, to what extent are young people engaging with/asking for advice about the following?

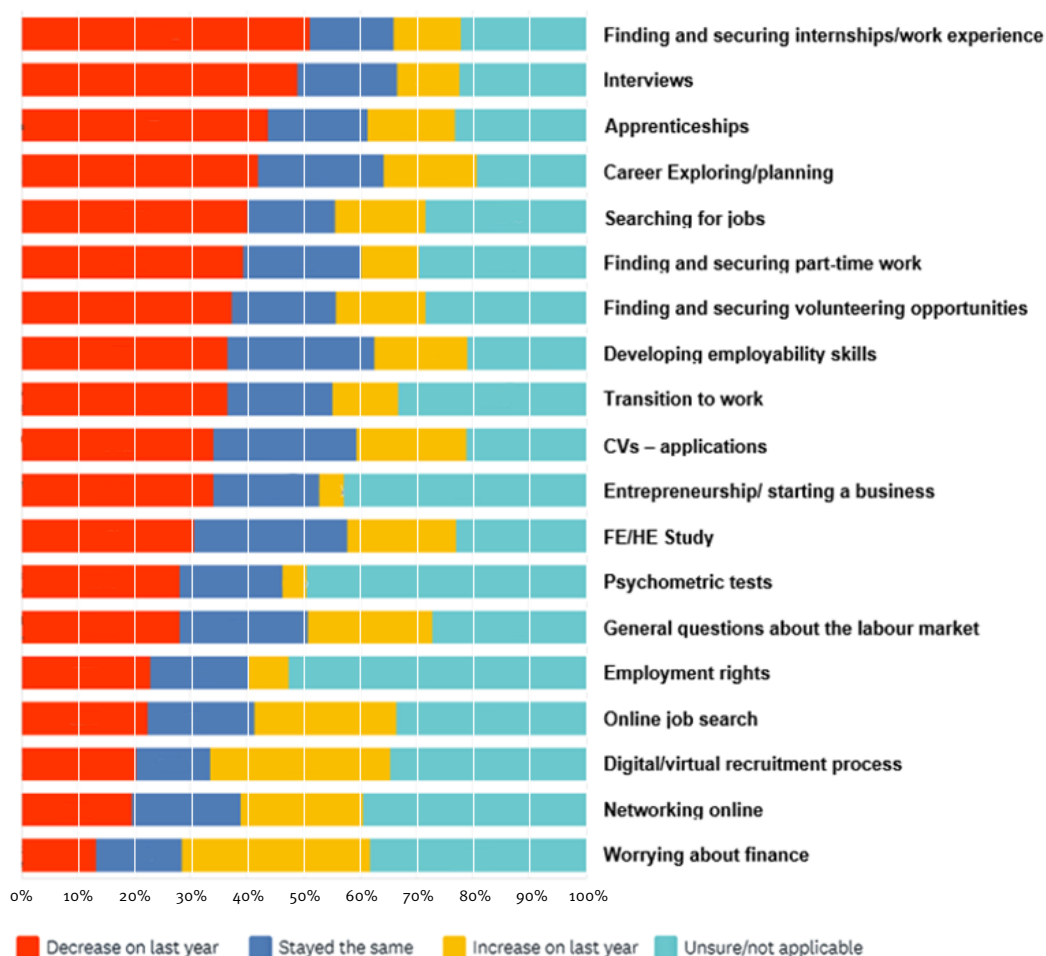


Figure 5 Young people’s engagement with Careers Advice

In summary the trends shown above are reflective of the current situation and reinforce answers to previous questions that for young people job opportunities, work experience/internships and apprenticeships are decreasing, while simultaneously concern about finances, online job searching and virtual recruitment processes are on the increase. Also, of note and concern is the indicator that there is a decrease in “Developing employability skills” in young people, probably as result of schools and colleges on lockdown.

Compared to this time last year, to what extent are adults engaging with/asking for advice about the following?

For adults, figure 6 below shows there are reported **decreases** in:

- Interviews
- Finding and securing internships/work experience

- Entrepreneurship/starting a business
- Finding and securing part-time work
- FE/HE Study
- Career exploring/planning
- Apprenticeships
- Searching for jobs.

As Figure 6 below shows adults too are:

- Worrying about finance
- Engaging in digital and virtual recruitment
- Asking general questions about the labour market.

It is not just businesses that want to return to business-as-usual as soon as possible; most people recognise the need to gain or retain employment to pay their bills.

Compared to this time last year, to what extent are adults engaging with/asking for advice about the following?

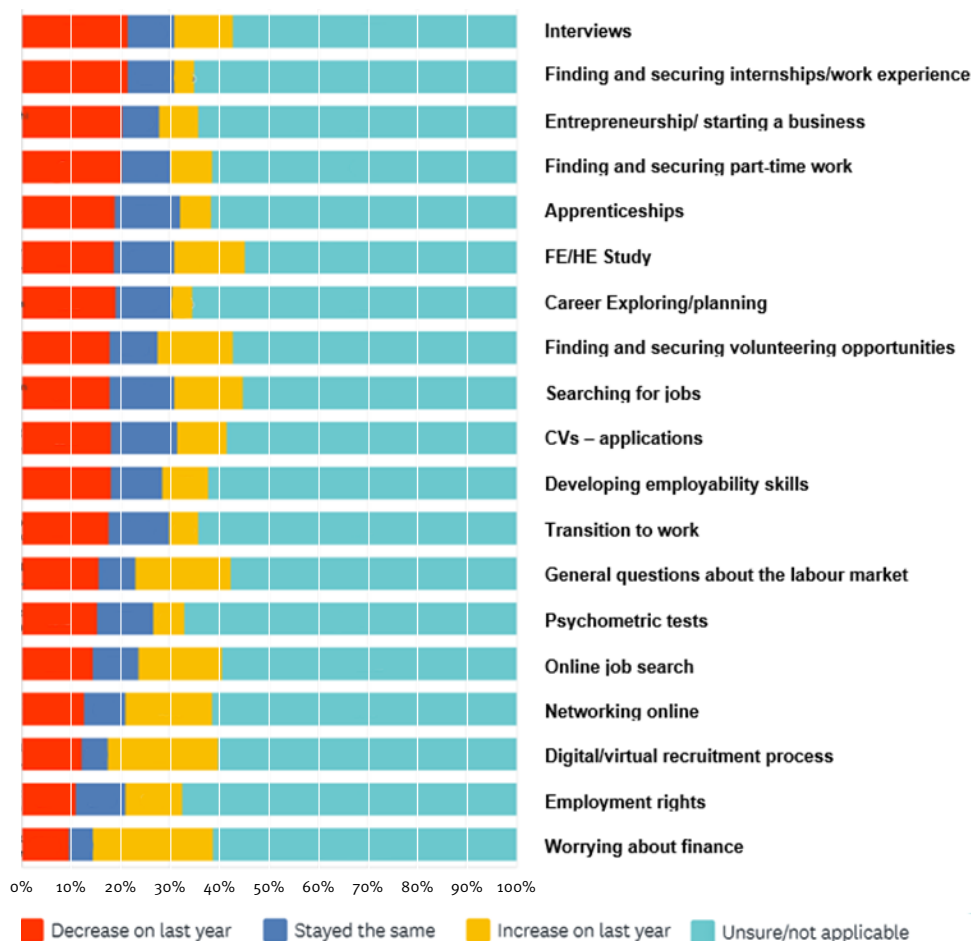


Figure 6 Adult engagement with Careers Advice

What type of labour market measures could be put in place to help the economic recovery in a post-Covid-19 crisis landscape?

Please rank in order of importance (1 = Most important - 5= Least important)

As Figure 7 below highlights the top five recommendations from a list of options presented include:

- A minimum guaranteed income for those

most vulnerable in society

- Media campaigns to promote careers support
- Widening priority groups to increase access to careers support services
- Helplines for careers support
- A new framework model for training unemployed young people.

What type of labour market measures could be put in place to help the economic recovery in a post-COVID-19 crisis landscape?

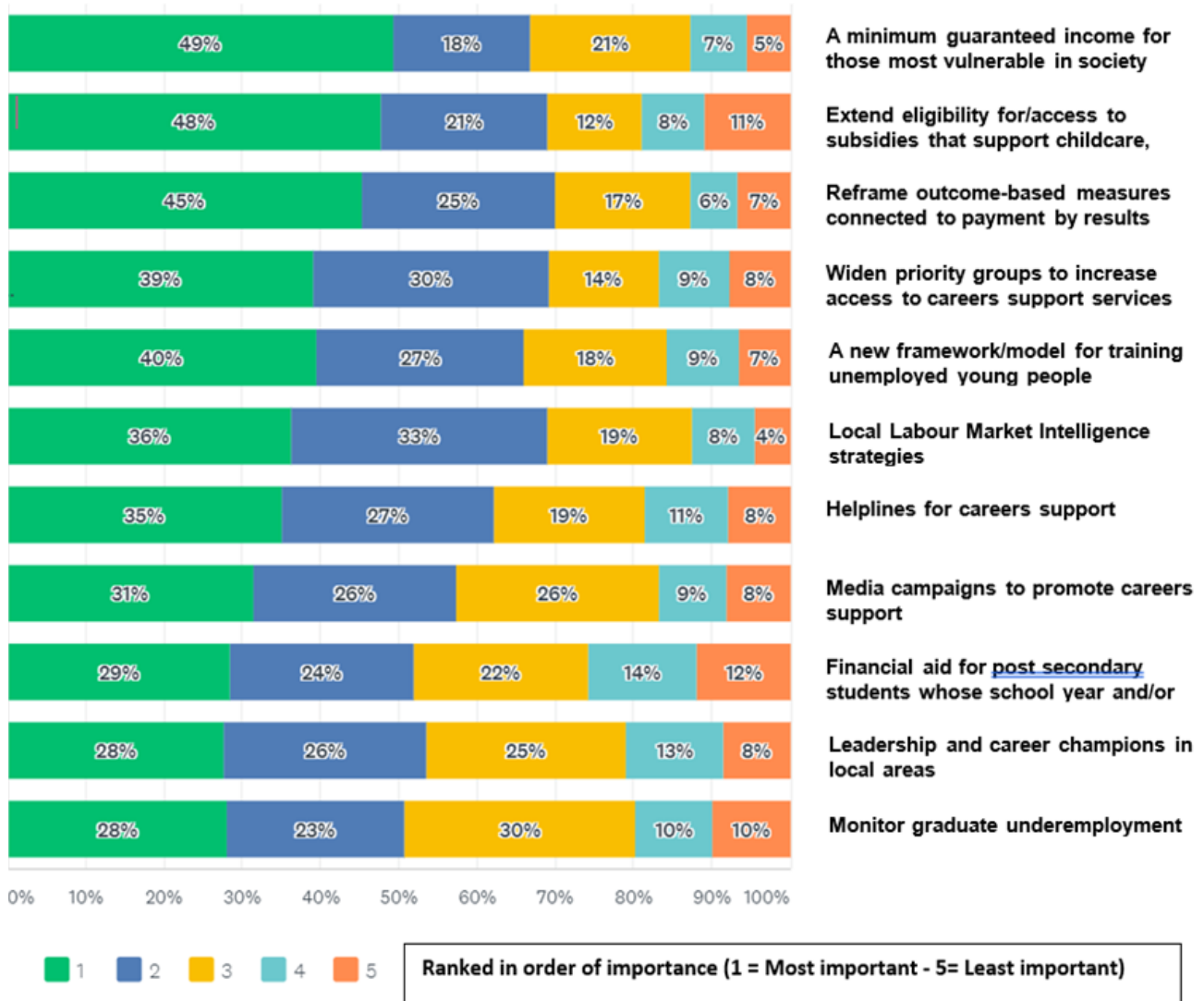


Figure 7 – Labour market measures that could be put in place to help economic recovery post Covid -19

What type of careers support services are needed in a post Covid-19 landscape?

This was an open question inviting comments and recommendations and 240 responses were received. There is a clear sense that careers support will become ever more important in the near future and that an all-age approach should be a priority. For example:

“It is likely that demand for the service will grow significantly in the coming months based on current trends. It is likely this will need to be delivered in a multi-channel approach to meet specific needs of clients.”

“More flexible and universal - with a greater perception of usefulness (i.e. not just CVs for the unemployed). This could be solved by a properly set out all-age universal careers service in England.”

There were numerous responses but some of the more frequently used terms included the use of Labour Market Intelligence (LMI), provision of 1:1 face-to-face interviews, career guidance for young people within and outside of schools and colleges, careers coaching /mentoring, retraining, upskilling and transitional skills.

In many cases, local and national labour market intelligence was identified as an urgent priority to assist individuals with their career decision making. For example:

“Greater access to local LMI, understanding of skills needs following the pandemic. Retraining to enable people to engage in a landscape where more remote working and alternative approaches may be required.”

“Better LMI in current circumstances.”

“LMI information. This is just not adequately known by most clients so they don’t know where to look for new vacancies, employers taking on not laying off, emerging markets in their local area, employers in their local areas, LEP role and self-employment advice out there.”

The issue of young people’s access to 1:1 face-to-face careers support was identified as highly problematic, compared to adults served by the National Careers Service. The following

recommendations were made:

“Flexible careers support services that are promoted by government - utilising TRAINED careers guidance advisers.”

“More face to face opportunities. National Careers Service extended to include all 16+.”

“Face to face impartial careers support for young people - this is only available via NCS on the phone/webchat and via colleges (which are not impartial and often use Admissions staff, not careers staff, for potential students which means it is not a careers interview.”

For adults, there was a concern that more needs to be done to reach out to this group beyond the narrow confines of earlier priority groups identified by the National Careers Service funding agency. There was yet another call for high profile media activities to raise awareness of careers support available. For example:

“Much more help for adults – there will be lots of clients who want to retrain or have been made redundant, who would have limited access to careers advice currently.”

“Adults are going to need more support, and guarantees that they will not be heavily disadvantaged by the situation which has been out of their control!”

“High profile offer, using media to promote universal offer of support post COVID 19 and access to impartial high quality CIAG for all initially remotely and when safe face to face!”

The careers companies and practitioners indicated they offer coaching and mentoring support to help adults with redundancy counselling. There was a call for more of these types of services below to be extended and/ or to made available to a wider population.

“Redundancy support, job search, motivational coaching, young people, youth mentors, digital support for unemployed.”

“Initially coaching to provide a listening ear and support as appropriate. Support around accepting that Plan A is no longer an

option, retraining, increased unemployment, more digital online services and learning facilities.”

Issues regarding retraining and developing skills (either upskilling and/or transitional skills) were also raised. There was a call for future investment in the:

“Provision of information, guidance on decision making based on LMI, skills development.”

“Concentration on transferable skills and experience for shortage areas.”

“Emphasis on retraining, requalifying, job searching, online interviews, and managing remote working effectively.”

“Career management to include identifying transferable skills, strategies for choosing and developing resilience.”

“Retraining people for the new job market.”

A more holistic approach to careers support services has been suggested. For example:

“Holistic, individualised careers support services that can identify and address individuals’ needs. Careers support services also need to be informed by current and future labour market trends/opportunities. Looking at past trends to predict the future is useless. LMI must be future focused.”

“All age services which are local to the immediate area. Continuing support for schools and colleges in terms of addressing their programmes and offer to students.”

“A fully funded one with qualified career professionals! A renewed sense of a centralised careers service for all age groups and a rethink of careers services in schools and college. Investing in this would surely support the rebuilding of the economy and work towards minimising the long-term impact on the economy and people’s futures.”

“Advice and guidance for all ages, and all levels of education. Support with developing/identifying existing employability skills. Support with the

application process including CVs, covering letters, personal statements, interview skills and searches for vacancies and or training/ college/uni courses. Advice and information about apprenticeships.”

In summary the replies to this question had one overarching theme and that was the passion and care that each respondent has shown for their profession and for the level of support that they believe will be needed by many individuals of all ages post Covid-19. The following quote summarises a suggested way forward.

“Universal free to access service should be made available for all ages staffed by appropriately trained and remunerated professionals. Skilled careers advisers can offer high quality and impactful support to empower people to take small steps towards recovery from whatever their personal situation is relating to education and employment. In a post Covid-19 landscape. The fragmentation of services over the last 5+ years has made it more difficult to react to crises in a coordinated manner, and has created huge variations in the quality and status of careers provision across geographical areas.”

When it comes to the provision of careers support do you think government can do more?

75% (n=189) replied “Yes” to this question. 4% (n=10) said “No” and the remaining 21% (n=52) said “Maybe”. There were some comments from 196 of the respondents. A key issue was insufficient funding raised by 33% (n=65) and a lack of recognition of the career development profession and use of highly trained careers advisers. For example:

“Government needs to appreciate and understand careers guidance processes and value careers services holistic services.”

“Provide more funding for the recruitment, training and employment of careers advisers. Provide funding for clients to retrain or go into education.”

“Promoting trained careers guidance professionals - they should get behind the CDI! Equipping JobCentres to refer



individuals in to such professional support.”

“Raise the profile of the importance of good IAG, where to access it and to fund it adequately.”

“There is little recognition from government of the power of careers support to make an impact on individuals and as a consequence on the economy.”

The scope of the National Careers Service (NCS) was also raised. For example:

“Make the National Careers Service properly an all-age service. Provide additional funding for more careers advisers to work in schools and colleges.”

“Extend remit of NCS to all students (school, college, university, apprentices, etc), broaden and deepen Outcomes beyond the Welfare2Work model for ‘long term unemployed’, to meet careers-advice needs of the whole population, free at the point of delivery, (comparable with NHS model).”

There was a call for greater investment in careers professionals’ tracking destinations and offering additional wrap around support for those most vulnerable and those not in education, employment and/or training (NEETs).

Government departments need to adopt a more joined up approach, particularly between DWP, DfE and the ESFA, including the National Retraining Service, to enable careers companies and careers professionals to clearly signpost individuals to quality assured careers support. For example:

“More joined up approach between ESFA and DWP to align strategies.”

“To ensure DWP links up with and promotes the services of the National Careers Service more effectively as this is not happening at this time.”

“DfE’s policy on careers support is fragmented and disjointed when it comes to support for young people. There’s now an opportunity to fix this in discussion with our

professional body and other government departments.”

There is also scope for more advertising and promotion of careers support available from careers companies and highly trained careers advisers. For example:

“Promote the services, encourage job seekers to access the careers service so they can have CV, interview techniques and complete online training to help them be job ready when this is over.”

“Better promotion of the National Careers Service to reach out to more people.”

Are there signs that the lockdown is beginning to have side effects such as further worsening mental health?

A total of 242 responded to this question of which 68% (n=171) answered Yes there are signs that the lockdown is beginning to have side effects such as worsening mental health and only 1% (n=3) said no while 31% (n=78) weren't sure. In a few cases, careers practitioners indicated their own mental health and wellbeing was being affected by uncertainty and the possibility of being furloughed.

What kind of resilience and wellbeing careers support should be available?

From the 232 respondents who answered this question, **career adaptability and resilience support** is a key part of the careers companies and practitioners toolkit:

“Careers practitioners have a good deal to offer in terms of their skills in coaching people through difficult times - a greater flexibility in thinking about ‘careers’ topics (e.g. such as resilience) would help. We could do more.”

“I have had contact with some who have stopped working due to anxiety related to COVID19. Help with anxiety advice, looking at alternative types of employment if individuals have lost their job or are likely to lose it.”

“Development of resilience is essential in any IAG, the ability to self-reflect and move on

setbacks has never been more important.”

“This is where our focus should be - continual learning, flexibility, adaptability, resilience, coping with change - this is what will help future workers.”

More **personalised careers support for young people and adults** should be a priority. For example:

“One to one coaching sessions, but also online group sessions (if face to face is still not possible)!”

“More staff in this area is needed and practitioners need to be accessible to all people whether that be face to face, telephone or by video. People need to know they can get help quickly to try and get them back on track.”

“Many young people and parents of teenagers are very worried about future job prospects. We are telephoning and texting to offer reassurance. This year's school leavers are feeling very anxious about the grades they might get and what happens next?!”

“We host check-in chats with groups of students who have opted in and are staying away from home during covid19. These chats cover ideas, activities and things they can get up to that increase employability but more importantly support mental health and wellbeing whilst individuals are isolated away from family and friends.”

“Free access to online/home based materials to support those with mental health issues.”

“Careers resources to support people in using this time to take stock of their employability - what they have to offer in all aspects of their skill and knowledge profile - and what they enjoy/do best, how to write and speak about their employability. This can be a positive re-set time for many people and careers support can bring this to the fore.”

Are there any other comments you wish to add?

Only 74 respondents replied to this final question. Whilst many careers companies and

careers professionals feel under-valued by government, they know for sure that in whatever scenario that lies ahead their services will be needed and they are poised and ready to respond. Comments included:

“Government needs to understand the added-value of the Careers Service.”

“Quality of CEC provision needs to be addressed huge variation across the country.”

“This is a unique opportunity to showcase what professional careers guidance can do to help move an economy forward and equip individuals to rebuild.”

“Please help promote the National Careers Service to those that need it.”

“Schools want specialists who they can rely upon rather than part trained staff who are struggling to gain qualifications whilst under pressure to fulfil contracts.”

“I would like to request Government to promote, market and publicise our careers service.”

“We need to have a co-ordinated and united approach as a profession. We need to create a national marketing campaign that highlights the value and solutions we have to help people of all ages thrive in their careers in during and post crisis.”

“If the government wants to see real change, they need to invest much more in careers support and education, and move towards a service based on quality of service not on numbers and PBR outcomes.”

“The services and support provided by the National Careers Service is still available although this is not made clear through any DWP web pages or current provision.”

The social distancing and lockdown measures introduced have prompted ‘a reboot’ in the use of innovative digital careers service design and delivery. Whilst attempts have been made to

reach out to young people, there are growing concerns that many are getting left behind, in some cases hidden at home dealing with uncertain future prospects – the forgotten teenagers of 2020. The Institute for Employment Studies (2020)² highlights over the next 18 months we may find at least 500,000 16-24 year olds and 700,000 aged 25 and over entering long-term unemployment. The potential scarring effects for the under-25 year olds is likely to be significant. Also, tens of thousands of adults will find their livelihoods adversely affected by the pandemic. In this context, career adaptability and resilience will be vital for all citizens. For citizens in local communities, they will need and want to know where do I go for careers support? Careers companies and trained and qualified career development professionals provide a vital ‘safety net’ for those in need. The recommendations below provide practical ideas and solutions for government and other key stakeholders.

² Wilson, T., Cockett, J., Papoutsaki, D., Takala, H. (2020) ‘Getting back to work: Dealing with the labour market impacts of the Covid-19 recession’ Institute for Employment Studies. Report Number: 541. Available at: <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/541.1.pdf>

4.0 Recommendations

Main recommendations include the urgent need for:

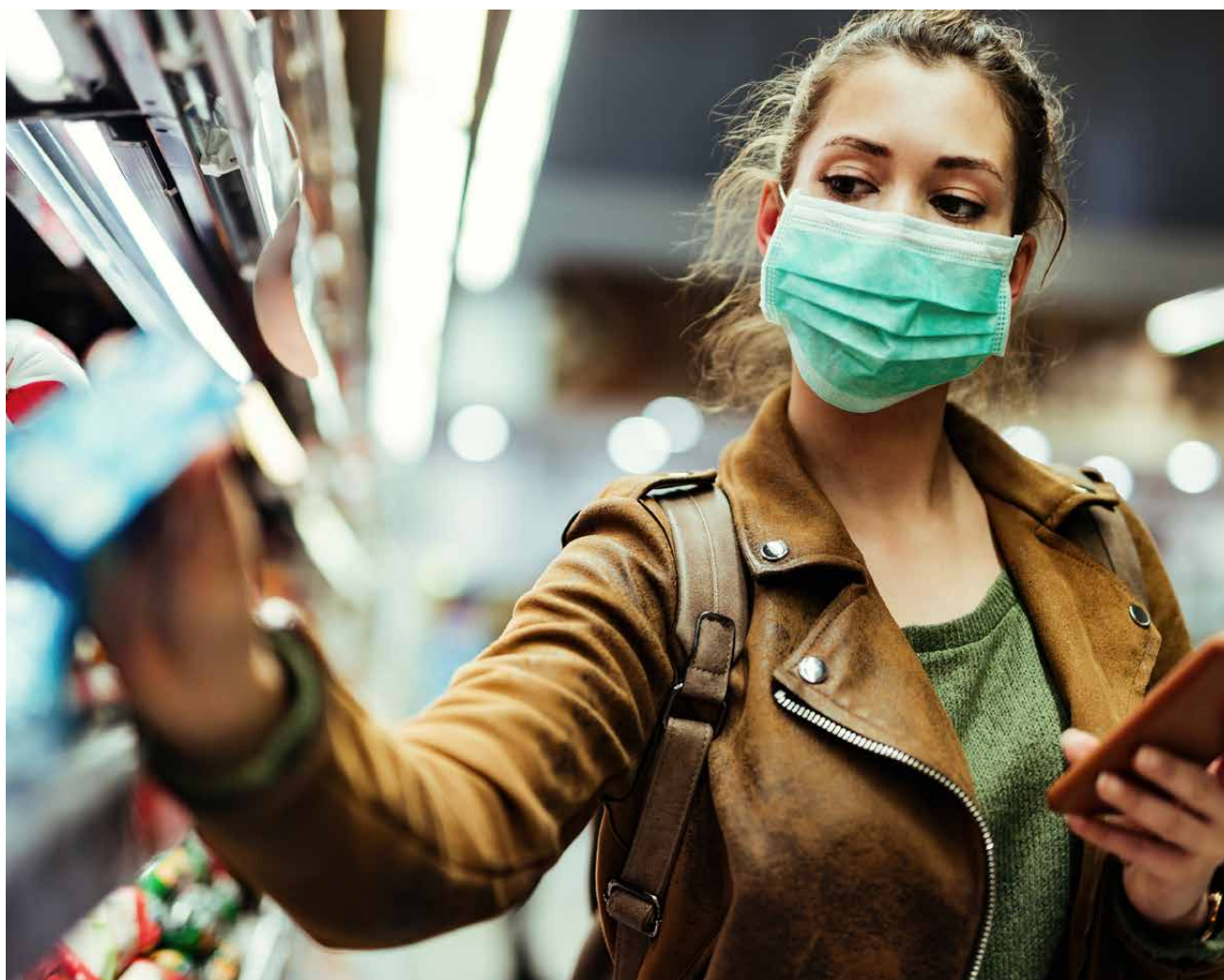
- a national Youth Employment Taskforce with cross-departmental ‘buy in’ and joint action plan. Government departments to adopt a more joined up approach, particularly between DWP and DfE, including the National Retraining Service, to clearly signpost individuals to quality-assured career development professionals’ support services.
- every young person in school or college aged 16 -19 (in Years 11-13) to be immediately guaranteed a careers interview with a trained and qualified career development professional to ameliorate the effects of exams cancelled and to ensure young people’s progress is not impeded. This would ensure young people would have as a minimum careers support contact worker and a personalised plan. The Department for Education (DfE) has a duty of care to these young people.
- an enhancement of the existing September guarantee so that all young people, particularly those facing the likelihood of unemployment including apprentices and trainees, receive careers coaching, guidance and/or mentoring support
- a highly visible national media campaign to promote careers support available to young people and adults, including telephone helpline, web resources and where to find local careers advice from trained and qualified careers advisers/ coaches.
- a broadening of the National Careers Service to include face-to-face careers support for all young people, similar to other parts of the UK i.e. a recognisable place to go for high quality careers support. The role and remit of the Careers and Enterprise Company should also be reviewed in this context and the DfE / Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) should revisit and assess the efficacy of the current Payment-By-Results arrangement.
- a local careers support framework in each local authority/local enterprise partnership (LEP) area designed to champion young people to employers with a relentless focus on opportunities, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN) at risk of being pushed further away from the labour market.
- a minimum guaranteed income for those most vulnerable to assist and support their transition to learning, training and/or work.
- a system in place for career development professionals to track destinations and offer additional wrap around support for those most vulnerable and those not in education, employment and/or training (NEETs). Whilst this is a Local Authority responsibility, it is not carried out to the standard that was provided a decade ago given Local Authorities budget cuts - greater investment is needed at the present time.

The National Careers Service in England already works with Local Authorities, Community Groups, Colleges, Housing Associations, Voluntary organisations etc., serving the needs of adults. More recently, area-based contractors have a new responsibility for providing a telephone helpline service.

Other EU countries and lifelong guidance systems and practices³ are responding to the impact of Covid-19 through national campaigns, digital webinars, job fairs, telephone helplines, home schooling resources for parents/carers, virtual careers interview guarantee and online groupwork sessions, joint strategies with public employment services, local labour market bulletins etc.

Prior to the pandemic, European and world organisations called on governments to invest

³ See: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/experts-report-impact-coronavirus-crisis-lifelong-guidance-europe>



in career guidance.⁴ Six months on, citizens in local communities throughout England need to know ‘where do I go for careers support?’ Many employment support programmes start with CV writing or providing evidence of job search; however, the first challenge for many people who experience job loss or other barriers is to build their confidence, understand their own interests and skills, and identify opportunities that might fit them well. Whilst many careers companies and careers professionals currently feel under-valued by government in England, they know for sure that in whatever scenario that lies ahead their services will be needed and they are poised and ready to respond.

Careers England

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Career Development Institute

Follow on twitter:@theCDI

Visit: www.thecdi.net/About

Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE

Email: deirdre.hughes3@btinternet.com

Visit: <http://deidrehughes.org/>

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⁴ See: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Commission, the European Training Foundation (ETF), the International Labor Organisation (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) - <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/2227>

