

The Annual Careers Plan

A guide to writing your school's annual careers plan

This guide briefly reviews the policy debate about whether schools should have an annual careers plan and offers a rationale for why having one is a good idea. Schools are encouraged to consider what further benefits they can derive from having an annual careers plan. The guide provides a number of sheets that could be used when formulating a plan. Schools that have not already settled on a format for their plan are free to use and/or adapt any of these sheets in constructing their plan. Notes are provided to help with completing the sheets.

The policy debate

Before 2011, planning was driven by the partnership between the school and their local Connexions provider. Most maintained schools negotiated an annual agreement with their local service which set out the respective contributions of both partners to the careers education, information, advice and guidance of young people in the school. Progress in implementing the partnership agreement was reviewed throughout the year.

The withdrawal of policy support and funding for Connexions combined with the new duty on schools to secure independent and impartial careers guidance for students in Years 8 to 13 from existing budgets has fundamentally changed the model. Now that the planning process is led by the school there is a positive opportunity to bring together the strategic objectives of the school with the management of internal and external careers guidance resources. Schools may find that now they have multiple contracts with different providers of careers and other education-business services. The challenge is how to link this contract management with the strategic management of the careers programme. Achieving this is one of the principal objectives of the annual careers plan.

In January 2013, the Education Select Committee in its report on the impact of the new duty on schools recommended that all schools should be required to publish an annual careers plan. They proposed that the National Careers Service should be given a role in designing it and that it should set out what schools planned to do and the resources (internal and external) that would be allocated to it. The plan could be reviewed with feedback from students, parents, employers and other learning providers.

Initially, the government agreed to consider making it a requirement but in their response to the Education Select Committee Report in April 2013, they rejected the recommendation on the grounds that it would:

- re-introduce unwanted bureaucracy
- be unclear how it would improve quality
- be difficult to resolve issues around responsibility for producing the plan, use of content and monitoring arrangements
- encroach on headteachers' ability to plan their provision in a way that works best for them.

However, NFER, an independent research charity with a long track record of evaluating careers provision in schools, published a think piece in which it made a strong case for annual career plans:

NFER is therefore calling for all parties (the Government, careers professionals, employers, further education providers, governors and schools) to come together to formulate a clear understanding of what good careers guidance in schools looks like; how it can be achieved and maintained; and how information about provision can be shared in an accessible and informative manner that is open to scrutiny. We need all parties to debate, design and implement a solution that provides transparent, accountable and consistent provision to all young people. (*Careers guidance: If not an annual careers plan – then what?* NFER, September 2013).

They continued to advocate that schools should have an annual careers plan when they launched the 'careers-engaged school' initiative with the support of ASCL, ATL and the 157 Group of colleges (*Careers engagement: a good practice brief for leaders of schools and colleges*, April 2014)

Not surprisingly, the DfE did not mention annual career plans in the revised statutory guidance (*Careers guidance and inspiration in schools: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff*, April 2014). However, it made a strong case for them implicitly when it told governing bodies that “Schools should have a strategy for the advice and guidance they provide to young people. The strategy should be embedded within a clear framework linked to outcomes for pupils rather than an ad-hoc set of activities” (p.7). The non-statutory departmental advice published at the same time went further in encouraging schools to publish information on their websites about the support provided to help pupils to progress into further education, training or work (para 13). The information that schools publish could be a summary of what is in the annual careers plan. A report by the Gatsby Foundation (*Good Career Guidance*, April 2014) back the idea that every school should be required to have a Careers Plan published on the school’s website.

We are still some way from finding a workable solution to the problems of achieving quality, consistency, transparency and accountability in the career guidance system which means for the foreseeable future we need schools to make a voluntary commitment to annual careers planning.

This guide takes as its starting point the idea that the more experience we have of annual careers plans, the better position we will be in to design a national system that will enable schools to benchmark their standards (as proposed by the Gatsby report) and share good practice.

Rationale and benefits

Although schools do not receive additional funding to pay for careers guidance, they are expected to fund it from their core budgets and where any significant expenditure is involved it should be scrutinised. The annual careers plan is a tool for planning the deployment of resources and reviewing the return on investment. It is also a way of ensuring that students, parents and other stakeholders feel confident that the school is fulfilling its statutory duty.

The annual careers plan will help schools to:

- design and implement their vision and strategy for careers guidance
- understand and manage the connections between inputs, processes and outcomes
- monitor and review their performance
- meet statutory requirements and expectations
- prepare for an Ofsted inspection
- compare their performance against similar schools.

The annual careers plan process

It works well when a small team led by the senior leader with overall responsibility for the school's careers provision does the detailed work on the plan but consults widely with relevant parties on it.

The timetable for developing the plan needs to dovetail with arrangements for negotiating services from external and independent providers of services. It is usual to start thinking about the development priorities in the following year's annual careers plan in the second half of the preceding autumn term. If necessary, the process can begin with an audit or health check (See Sheet 1).

Feedback on the current plan can be incorporated into the process on an ongoing basis.

A draft plan with provisional costings needs to be ready by February so that it can be considered when decisions are being taken about the overall school budget and priorities in the school development plan. (*Good Career Guidance* from the Gatsby Foundation has a useful section on costing career guidance).

The final version of the plan needs to be ready so that preparatory work can begin on it in the second half of the summer term.

It is important to arrange for the dissemination of relevant parts of the plan to different audiences through the school's website and other channels, e.g. to staff, parents/carers, students, employers and other learning providers.

Structuring the annual careers plan

Some or all of the following sheets may be useful when putting together the annual careers plan:

Sheet 1	Development priorities
Sheet 2	Summary of provision
Sheet 3	Calendar of main activities and events
Sheet 4	Agreements with providers
Sheet 5	Allocation and deployment of resources
Sheet 6	Framework for evaluation
Sheet 7	Staff development
Sheet 8	Roles and responsibilities
Sheet 9	Leadership and management
Sheet 10	Engagement with partners

These sheets are available in Word on the Cegnet website.

Sheet 1 – Development priorities

Development priorities				Date:
GOALS (What your main goals are)	LED BY? (Who will lead on each goal?)	RESOURCES (What resources will you need?)	BY WHEN? (When do you aim to achieve this goal?)	SUCCESS CRITERIA (How will you know that you have been successful?)
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
Review				

Notes on completion

- Aim to have a manageable number of challenging but achievable goals
- Consider the career development needs of your students as a starting point
- Check the goals in the school development/improvement plan and consider how the annual plan can contribute towards achieving them
- Scan the local, regional and national scene for inspiration about key issues to target.

Establishing priorities for the coming year is a process of deciding:

- What we must or should do, e.g. meet statutory requirements, support the priorities in the school development plan
- What we ought or would like to do and can afford, e.g. implement innovative approaches, meet the needs of particular groups.

NFER (2013) identified possible triggers for deciding priorities. They suggested that schools need to be looking at the way they are:

- working with local partners to coordinate provision and inform young people and parents;
- engaging with employers;
- taking into account the views of young people and their parents;
- supporting teachers to embed careers information into lessons and subjects;
- providing careers education and guidance from year 7. Young people should be supported to learn about their strengths, weaknesses, and how to develop realistic careers aspirations and decision-making skills, as well as being provided with information about career pathways;
- actively encouraging young people to consider all options at 14 and 16 so that they select the best options for their interest, motivation, learning style, ability and aspirations;
- allocating resources to the provision of careers guidance;
- providing all young people with face-to-face, impartial and independent guidance;
- working towards quality awards nationally validated by the Quality in Careers Standard (QICS);
- utilising advisers trained and qualified in delivering careers education and guidance;
- using online technology where possible for the collection, interactive analysis and reporting of careers data in order to reduce 'bureaucracy' and enable schools to carry out analysis instantly.

Various organisations including individual CEIAG Quality Awards have produced audit or health check tools. The NFER careers-engaged school audit and the Essex self-assessment audit can be downloaded from the Cegnet website. The eight QiCS validation criteria (see below) which relate to careers guidance in schools also provides a good framework.

Audit based on QiCS validation criteria				
		What works well?	What could we stop doing?	What else needs to be done?
1.1	Providing effective leadership, management and promotion of CEIAG			
1.2	Ensuring appropriate initial staff training and continuing professional development (CPD) to secure the competence required of all staff involved in the learning provider's CEIAG provision			
1.3	Providing a careers education and work-related learning curriculum, careers information and careers advice and guidance			
1.4	Securing independent and impartial careers advice and guidance for young people			
1.5	Working with external partners and agencies			
1.6	Involving and supporting families and carers			
1.7	Monitoring, reviewing, evaluating and developing provision			
1.8	Measuring the impact of provision (including evidence of learning outcomes and progression)			

Sheet 2 - Summary of provision

Summary of provision		
Target group	Careers and work-related education activities including financial capability, enterprise and employability	Careers information, advice and guidance
Year 7		
Year 8		
Year 9		
Year 10		
Year 11		
Year 12 (one year)		
Year 12 (two year)		
Year 13 (two year)		

Notes on completion

- As well as showing the provision for each year group, it is important to show the specific provision for students with different needs (e.g. SEND, Gifted and Talented, Pupil Premium) or on particular courses (e.g. hair and beauty, engineering)
- Curriculum-based activities could include lessons, tutor periods, assemblies, events, enrichment/extra-curricular activities
- Careers IAG could include information-giving, one-to-one and small group help, tutoring, mentoring, coaching

Sheet 3 - Calendar of main activities and events

Calendar of main activities and events			
Time of Year	KS3	KS4	P16
Ongoing			
September			
October			
November			
December			
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			

Notes on completion

- This sheet is also the data source for different calendars that you might need to create, e.g. to go on the school website or to be incorporated in student planners
- Circulate a draft to relevant staff for comments and approval. This is essential to ensure that staff involved in resourcing and delivering the programme know what their roles are going to be.
- Ongoing: List here activities that occur throughout the year, e.g. Weekly lunch-time drop-in sessions in the library
- KS3, KS4, P16: List here activities for all students and for targeted groups such as recipients of the Pupil Premium, Gifted and Talented, alternative curriculum, etc.
- Here is an aide-memoire for the range of student activities that could be included in a careers calendar:
 - Assembly presentations
 - Whole-school national awareness events, e.g. Apprenticeships Week, National Science and Engineering Week
 - Careers and skills fairs
 - Y6 and Y12 Induction Days
 - Work experience/shadowing
 - Enterprise days
 - Careers talks (e.g. outside speakers)
 - 'Mock' interviews
 - Y8/9 options evenings including date for return of options forms
 - Y10/11 careers interviews
 - Post-16 options evenings
 - Brief details and timings of careers education modules for different groups
 - 'Taster' courses
 - Open days (own and local)
 - Key deadlines and activities for HE applicants
 - UCAS information evening for parents
 - Results days
 - Careers assessments (e.g. interest and aptitude questionnaires)
 - Presentation of quality award for careers work
 - Information about competitions (e.g. Young Enterprise)
 - Alumni network meetings
 - University and industry visits

Sheet 4 - Agreements with providers

Agreements with providers				
Name of provider	Contact information	Services to be provided	Financial agreement	Notes

Notes on completion

- Use this sheet to record agreements with careers guidance providers, education-business link organisations, etc.
- Contact information: record names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, etc.
- Provide a summary of services to be provided, e.g. interview caseloads, groupwork, drop-in sessions, participation in parents' evenings, targeted support for vulnerable students
- Keep a record of financial costs and benefits to the school
- Use the notes column as an aide-memoire, e.g. when contracts need to be reviewed, information about the status of the provider (e.g. adviser has joined the professional register of the CDI, DBS check has been made, professional indemnity insurance is in place)

Sheet 5 – Allocation and deployment of resources

Self-help information provision	
Type of provision	Details
Careers resources area of library/learning resources centre	
Careers pages on website/VLE	
Digital media (texts, tweets, display screens)	
Noticeboards and displays	

Learning provision (in minutes per year of curriculum time)			
	Careers and work-related education activities (in minutes)	Of which involving direct contact with 'inspirational employers and others'	Notes
Y7			
Y8			
Y9			
Y10			
Y11			
Y12			
Y13			

Independent guidance provision (in minutes per student per year, averaged out)						
Year group	No. in year group	Minutes of basic provision for all students in year group (per student per year)	No. in year group to benefit from additional provision	Minutes of additional provision for identified students (per student per year)	No. in year group to benefit from extra additional provision	Minutes of intensive provision for identified students (per student per year)
Y7						
Y8						
Y9						
Y10						
Y11						
Y12						
Y13						

In-school guidance provision (in minutes per student per year, averaged out)						
Year group	No. in year group	Minutes of basic provision for all students in year group (per student per year)	No. in year group to benefit from additional provision	Minutes of additional provision for identified students (per student per year)	No. in year group to benefit from extra additional provision	Minutes of intensive provision for identified students (per student per year)
Y7						
Y8						
Y9						
Y10						
Y11						
Y12						
Y13						

Staffing		
Member of staff	Hours or days per week	Indicative costs

Budgeting: Spending on resources, supplies, services and activities			
	£	Details	Review
Capital equipment (computer equipment, furniture, etc.)			
Licences (software)			
Printed information (directories, books, etc.)			
Photocopying			
Postage and stationery			
Staff development			
Quality Award registration fee			
Work experience administration			
Psychometric testing materials/services			

Notes on completion

Self-help information provision

- This refers to information provided by the school that students can choose to access
- Change labels and add further rows as required
- Under details include information about access, level of provision, cost.

Learning provision (in minutes per year of curriculum time)

- Year groups are already shown on the chart. Additional rows may be needed for particular cohorts, e.g. Y10 alternative curriculum group
- The allocation of learning time will vary from year to year depending on whether decisions and transitions have to be made
- Use the notes column to explain the data, e.g. direct contact with employers and others could involve visits, visitors, work experience, mentoring
- 'Careers and work-related education activities' refers to timetabled provision, e.g. stand-alone careers lessons, careers lessons within PSHE, careers days, careers and work-related education activities in subjects (including financial capability in Citizenship at KS3&4), immersive experiences (such as visits, work experience, volunteering)
- 'Inspirational others' could include parents of the school, other learning providers, careers advisers.

Independent guidance provision (in minutes per student per year, averaged out)

- **Basic** provision refers to inputs for all students in the year group, e.g. assemblies taken by external careers advisers
- **Additional** provision refers to the next level up of inputs that are for some but not all students, e.g. a one-to-one careers interview or a group discussion with an external adviser
- **Intensive** provision refers to external careers adviser inputs for disadvantaged and vulnerable students such as those in receipt of Pupil Premium, students with special educational needs and disabilities

In-school guidance provision in timetabled time(in minutes per student per year, averaged out)

- **Basic** provision refers to the same level of inputs for all students, e.g. year group assemblies made by staff, on-going support from tutors, 20-minute options interviews with a member of SLT
- **Additional** provision refers to the next level up of inputs for some but not all students, e.g. one-to-one meetings with a learning mentor
- **Intensive** provision refers to staff inputs for disadvantaged and vulnerable students such as those in receipt of Pupil Premium, students with special educational needs and disabilities

Staffing (allocation of hours/days per week with indicative costs)

- It is useful to differentiate between the contact and non-contact time allocated to staff to carry out their roles
- Indicative costs could include the award of points of responsibility for carrying out their roles
- Use the school's software for calculating salary and on costs to compare the cost of providing the service in-house or buying it in from an external provider.
- Include staff with substantial involvement in careers work, e.g. senior leader with overall responsibility for careers, Head of Sixth, SENCO, the curriculum leader for careers education, the careers adviser, work experience and careers administrative staff, resources centre/library staff.

Budgeting: Spending on resources, supplies, services and activities

- Add additional categories of expenditure as required
- Use the review column to make notes that will assist with the following year's budgeting process, e.g. assessment of value for money, identification of future priorities

Sheet 6 – Evaluation schedule

Evaluation schedule		
Evaluation focus	Evaluation methods	When?
Review		

Notes on completion

- Evaluation focus refers to the purpose of the evaluation, e.g. Are the lunchtime drop-in sessions working?
- Evaluation methods refer to the approaches/techniques that you are going to use, e.g. sampling survey questionnaire of students who have used the drop-in facility.
- 'When?' refers to the timing of the evaluation, e.g. arranging two sampling periods - one week before Autumn half term and a second week just before Spring half term
- The evaluation schedule should be linked to other sections of the annual plan, e.g. to find out if your development goals have been achieved, to find out if you are making the best use of the resources for careers guidance.

Sheet 7 - Staff development

Staff development			
Identified staff (individuals and groups)	Professional learning and development needs to be met	How those needs will be met	When?
Review			

Notes on completion

- The staff development section of the plan should be developed in consultation with the school's INSET co-ordinator
- Take into account any external requirements, e.g. the quality criteria of the CEIAG quality award, the requirement on those who have joined the CDI professional register to undertake 25 hours CPD per year
- Under 'identified staff' include specialist careers staff with specific training needs as well as non-specialists who have particular needs, e.g. updates on developments in apprenticeships and HE for Y12 tutors
- The 'professional learning and development needs to be met' should relate to other sections of the annual plan, e.g. development priorities
- Needs can be met in creative ways, e.g. team teaching, action research, webinars, consortium/network breakfast meetings

Sheet 8 – Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities	
Roles	Responsibilities
Governors and SLT	
Senior leader with overall responsibility for careers provision	
Head of Sixth	
SENCO	
Curriculum leader for careers education (careers co-ordinator)	
Careers adviser	
Careers information staff	
Administrative and support staff	
Teachers and teaching support staff	
Pastoral and pastoral support staff	

Notes on completion

- Enter key duties and responsibilities on the sheet
- Remember to identify who will be responsible for tracking the status of young people and submitting the data to the local authority. There are 3 main statutory data collections through the year: Intended Destinations (September - March final return to DfE in May); September Guarantee May - September (extension for report until end October); Activity Survey July - December (final return to DfE mid-January). This role also covers making the data available for review meetings in the school.

Sheet 9 - Leadership and management – schedule of meetings and tasks

Leadership and management			
	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Governors' meetings			
Careers lead team			
Meetings with contractors			
Other meetings			
Tasks			

Notes on completion

- Report to governors' committees on key issues and new developments, e.g. employability, enterprise, financial capability, STEM, disadvantaged and vulnerable students, Pupil Premium spending, equality
- Identify planning and review topics in advance for each term, e.g.:
 - Autumn
 - Review of September Guarantee data before LA reports to DfE in October
 - Review of Activity Survey data before return to DfE in January
 - Review of Y11 options planning and intended destinations plus follow-up action as required
 - Planning of Y9 options process
 - Spring
 - Review of Destinations data before submitted to DfE in May
 - Summer
 - Review of Y9 options process plus follow-up action as required
 - Planning of Y11 options process
- The tasks column can be used to record key administrative activities and dates, e.g.:
 - Deadlines for submitting student tracking data to Local Authority
 - Updating the careers pages on the school VLE and website
 - Schedule for student interviews

Sheet 10 – Engagement with partners

Engagement with partners					
Type of engagement	With students	With parents/carers	With employers	With other learning providers	Review
Communications with partners to promote the school's careers provision					
Involving partners in design, delivery and evaluation of the school's careers provision					

Notes on completion

- Add additional columns for other partners as required
- Add additional rows for other types of engagement as required
- Provide headline information about specific activities with each partner in each of the boxes
- Use the review column to make notes about the effectiveness of different engagement activities

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May 2014