

Consultation on the Demerger of Careers Scotland from Scottish Enterprise

YouthLink Scotland's response:

Q1 What do you think Careers Scotland's priorities should be?

The focus of Careers Scotland should be primarily but not exclusively on young people. At present of the 35,000 16-19 year old Scots not currently in education, employment or training, 20,000 are likely to be so for a long period of time. This experience can often lead to a lifetime characterised by long spells of worklessness and economic activity and in many cases the most access Careers Scotland will have to these people is before they become disengaged from school.

Ironically those most at risk of becoming NEET will often be disengaged with school to the point where they will also miss the benefit of in school careers provision. With this in mind, Careers Scotland should consider and prioritise ways in which it might engage with young people who do not attend school. This could be achieved through closer partnerships with voluntary sector organisations.

Careers Scotland must also increase its level of engagement with 'at risk' young people within schools. To this end it must increase its profile both amongst pupils and teaching staff to the point where, short of embedding time with careers advisors in the curriculum, the careers advisor should have a visible presence in every school. This role should be supported with effective marketing to pupils both in and out of school with provision targeted effectively at those most 'at risk'.

At the same time it must be recognised that there are currently generations of economically inactive people who have 'missed the boat' in so far as careers intervention at school age is concerned.

Q2 What should Careers Scotland do differently to better realise its full potential?

Careers Scotland should increase the focus of its provision on young people who are not currently engaged with School as it is these young people that are most at risk of unemployment in later life. Current key worker provision should be enhanced and replicated in partnership with a greater number of voluntary organisations and Careers Scotland should act as a conduit for the dissemination of best practice in engaging with these young people.

Q3 Which of these options would you favour? Why?

[five options for the demerger of Careers Scotland from Scottish Enterprise. In no particular order these are:

- (i) establish as an Executive Agency
- (ii) merge with another public body
- (iii) Scottish University for Industry
- (iv) Another public body (please specify)
- (v) Subsume into Local Authorities (on a regional basis)
- (vi) Establish as a stand-alone non-departmental public body]

YouthLink Scotland favour the establishment of Careers Scotland as an Executive Agency: the focus by the Executive on unemployment and economic inactivity has rightly never been greater and as such Careers Scotland must be an entity in its own right, neither subsumed into local authorities where practice could diverge on a regional basis, nor merges with another body where priorities and focus may become confused.

Tackling worklessness and economic inactivity is not connected to the rights of citizens or an issue of minority representation as such there is no need for a Careers Scotland to be independent from the Executive. Indeed operating as an Executive agency will enable the work of Careers Scotland to dovetail in with policy developments and new initiatives.

Q4 How would your preferred option for Careers Scotland achieve these stronger links to our schools? Should Careers Scotland staff become part of the complement of school; staff?

The priority for careers service staff should be to focus on those young people who have disengaged with school or for whom school is no longer an option. Embedding staff within schools presupposes that the focus of careers support for young people should be solely within schools. Whilst it is essential for school pupils to build relationships with a careers advisor, that advisor should also have a role and point of access in the community, with the assistance of local voluntary organisations where they can seek to engage with young people who are not attending school.

Current numbers of Careers staff make the duality of this role difficult and as such we would suggest that to make this work, Careers Scotland should increase its complement of advisors.

Q5 How would your preferred option for Careers Scotland best achieve an all-age national guidance service?

The establishment of a national all age guidance service should be developed in partnership with voluntary and statutory bodies perhaps via existing CLP arrangements who are currently engaging with those young people most at risk of unemployment. A huge amount of expertise and experience in engaging with hard to reach young people currently exists within the voluntary sector and as such should be utilised in the creation of such a service.

By keeping Careers Scotland as an individual entity it will have more latitude to meet the needs that an all-age national guidance service will create.

Q6 How would your preferred option for Careers Scotland assist Careers Scotland to balance better these stronger links to schools and the delivery of an all-age guidance service?

Stronger links with schools are certainly important as careers services should be more available and have a higher profile within schools, thereby allowing young people to establish a proper relationship with their careers advisor. However, careers advice for young people should be developed beyond the school campus. As an executive agency Careers Scotland must also establish stronger links with organisations who currently provide careers focused interventions for hard to reach young people who are currently outside of mainstream education.

Q7 Given your preferred option, how would the links with Careers Scotland in the Highlands and Islands area be maintained?

Careers Scotland in the Highlands and Islands has proven to be very successful in engaging with young people in particular. It is therefore imperative that good collegiate links be established in order to disseminate best practice and communication. To this end, a close working relationship, crucially based on parity, must be established and CSHI must be treated as equal partners in that relationship.

Q8 How should we ensure that, in moving Careers Scotland out of Scottish Enterprise, we maintain focus and momentum for Careers Scotland and continue to build on its good practice?

By establishing Careers Scotland as a separate entity in the form of an Executive Agency we can assure that focus will be maintained, as this will be its reason for being. This will also help to demonstrate the Executive's commitment to the careers agenda. Regular reviews could also determine the efficacy of the new structure. To ensure that momentum and good practice are continued we would suggest that resources for Careers be significantly enhanced and that this be reflected in a substantial increase in the recruitment of careers advisors.

Q9 Do you have additional comments on the demerger of Careers Scotland from Scottish Enterprise?

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the demerger of Careers Scotland from Scottish Enterprise as it attaches a clear premium to the importance of Careers Scotland and the careers agenda. It is crucial however that the demerger results in a dedicated separate entity that is Careers Scotland and that this new body focus as much effort on assisting young people outside of mainstream education as it will in ensuring that careers advice is effectively embedded within life at school.