

The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
20 Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
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30th June 2020

Dear Mr Williamson,

This September, 800,000 young people will be leaving schools, colleges and universities, hoping to join the labour market. In addition, many young people that were due to head to university this year are considering withdrawing due to Covid-19. With 8.4 million people already furloughed and uncertain about their futures, it is likely that young people with little work experience behind them will face unprecedented struggles in the labour market.

The quality of career education and guidance in schools and colleges has been improving in recent years. Nonetheless, Covid-19 and the lockdown add additional barriers to delivering career education and guidance in schools and other education settings. Meanwhile those young people who are not in education have a very limited access to career guidance and career guidance services for adults are increasingly stretched.

We are therefore calling on the Government to publicly commit to a Career Guidance Guarantee so that everyone aged 16-19 in an education setting, those leaving the education system, those who are already NEET, and adults who are unemployed, will have access to quality personal career guidance to help them move them on to further education destinations, employment or to additional training and apprenticeships.

High quality career education and guidance, including the opportunity to speak one-to-one with a careers professional, is now more important than ever in preparing young people for the world of work, supporting adults to manage career transitions and better aligning careers aspirations with labour market demand.

Between July and December, the UK will be facing an unprecedented period of turnover in its labour market. Young people will be leaving education and making key decisions about their futures just as the furlough scheme is coming to an end, and redundancies start to take place, reducing opportunities. Meanwhile, widening participation places are being frozen across UK universities, meaning that the most disadvantaged young people who have been thrown off track by COVID-19, may have removed university as an option altogether. It is therefore crucial that all young people have access to personal career guidance to help them to access the opportunities available to them.

Through a Career Guidance Guarantee we are asking the government to provide a short-term fund would ensure that the relevant agencies could take on additional careers professionals to engage with young people and deliver regular, timely support where necessary.¹ This fund would allow those that need it most to access high quality personal career guidance, enabling them to make informed choices and make the most of the opportunities available to them between now and the end of 2020.

¹ A detail proposal with costings is set out in https://www.thecdi.net/write/An_emergency_career_development_plan_to_maintain_productivity_and_progression_post-Covid-19_CDPG.pdf

We need to act now to reach those most in need of support and guidance. A Career Guidance Guarantee is a critical step in a much needed joined up approach. To be impactful it should be implemented alongside an extension of the catch-up provision to include 16-19 year olds and a commitment to create employment and training opportunity as part of an Opportunity Guarantee.²

We believe in a society where all citizens are supported to find the education, employment and training opportunities that are right for them. Where individuals can fulfil their own potential and realise their career aspirations, they will also be able to contribute to our national prosperity and the reconstruction of the country after Covid-19.

Yours sincerely,

² See <https://www.communitiesthatwork.co.uk/opportunity-guarantee/> for further information.