

What is the impact of careers education on improving young people's outcomes?

Why this matters to us

A number of reports have highlighted that too much careers education in England is a 'postcode lottery', with quality varying considerably by school and area. Yet schools have been legally responsible since 2012 for their pupils' careers guidance.



Careers education can be crucial in developing the knowledge, confidence and skills young people need to make well-informed, relevant choices and plans for their future. This is especially true of students from poorer backgrounds, who are less likely to have family or friends with the insight and expertise to offer advice. High quality careers education can help them progress smoothly into further learning and work.

How to ensure, then, that all young people get the best possible careers education? The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BofAML), decided to start with a systematic review of the evidence.

What we wanted to find out

- 'What works' in careers education
- How reliable is the existing evidence
- What gaps exist in our understanding that need to be addressed

Answers to these questions will help us and other funders target our support where it can make the most difference.



What we did

The EEF, supported by BofAML through the Bank of America Charitable Foundation commissioned an international literature review. This was conducted by Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE (University of Warwick's Institute for Employment Research) and Dr Anthony Mann (Education and Employers Taskforce charity).

What the evidence says

This international review trawled 20 years of research on improving young people's educational, economic and social outcomes. It focused on studies of the highest quality within OECD countries, looking at interventions such as mentoring, work experience, information advice and guidance, and work-related learning.



Impact on educational outcomes

45 research studies identified.

60% of these provided largely positive findings of educational outcomes. Looking at the impact of different careers education interventions on achievement at GCSE, these suggest, on average, relatively modest attainment boosts. The other studies suggest impacts were mixed or negligible, rather than negative.



Impact on economic outcomes

27 research studies identified.

67% of these provided evidence of positive economic outcomes. The scale of the wage premiums detected is routinely considerable. The other studies suggest impacts were mixed or negligible, rather than negative.



Impact on social outcomes

25 research studies identified.

62% of these provided evidence of positive social outcomes, with improvements in students' self-efficacy, self-confidence, career maturity, decision-making skills, career competencies, or career identity. The other studies suggest impacts were mixed or negligible.

5 key insights

- 1 Existing evidence is 'weak and fragmented'. There is a need to trial new ideas to improve careers education in schools in England.
- 2 Careers education works best when it is personalised and targeted to individuals' needs from an early age. This, together with school-mediated employer engagement alongside independent and impartial career guidance, is key to supporting young people's transitions into education, training and employment.
- 3 Young people who have a good understanding of what they need to do in school to achieve their career ambitions, and who combine part-time work with full-time study, do a lot better economically later in life than their peers.
- 4 Young people from poorer homes are more likely to be uncertain about the qualifications they need to access their chosen career and get the skills they need.
- 5 Teenage part-time employment is rapidly in decline: the proportion of British 16 to 17-year-olds combining full-time education with part-time employment has fallen from 42% in 1997 to 18% in 2014. This makes it all the more important for schools, colleges and employers to help young people gain insights, exposure and experiences that traditionally they would have accessed through direct, paid experience of the labour market.

2 key questions arising for us

- How can careers education support greater boosts to the attainment, employability and wider outcomes for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds?
- What does personalised and targeted careers education for young people (and their parents) look like and how can we scale it for maximum possible benefit?



What next?

The EEF and BofAML are partnering with the Careers & Enterprise Company in a major new funding round. We will trial careers education programmes focused on improving learning and future employment outcomes for young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Open from 28 Nov 2016 to 20 Jan 2017.

Please visit <http://bit.ly/CareersEdApply> for further details.