

Speech: Robert Halfon: careers speech at Westminster Academy

I am delighted to have the opportunity today to talk to you about lifelong careers, which will play a significant part in this government's industrial strategy.

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper sets out the government's proposals for delivering a high-skilled, competitive economy that benefits people throughout the country. Developing people's skills is one of the 10 pillars of the strategy, and high-quality careers advice will play a key part in realising this ambition.

I see careers advice as the first rung on a ladder of opportunity, a ladder that people will continue to climb throughout their lifetime. However, we know that this ladder does not come to us pre-assembled. It is something that needs to be built, grafted over and shaped to reflect our modern requirements. Government's job is to be there to hold the ladder and help people to climb up.

I strongly believe that the conditions are right to not only transform the nature of careers guidance, but of technical education and apprenticeships, to give everyone the necessary skills and training to open up opportunities and jobs for their futures.

I am excited to have oversight of all of these areas and the chance to bring a greater coherence to them. In particular, locating in one department responsibility for both young people and adults is an exciting opportunity that can bring about a coherent approach to lifelong careers. It allows us to look across the age range – from primary schools right through to retirement.

I also want to root our approach to careers provision firmly at the heart of the government's focus on social justice, and our desire to make sure that everyone, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to progress in life.

Our starting point in creating a careers system that works for everyone is to build on what works. I have seen some excellent examples around the country, including the fantastic work here at Westminster Academy. I was also lucky enough to visit Gateshead College last week, where careers learning is weaved into all aspects of students' learning.

But these are isolated examples and we need to spread good practice more widely. We have begun to do this by adopting a clear, evidence-based approach to what works, and to ensure support is getting to where it is most needed. The Careers & Enterprise Company has been at the forefront of this approach. £90 million is being invested in careers over this Parliament, which includes further funding to the company. And their work is beginning to have an impact. There are now 80 enterprise coordinators and over 1,300 enterprise

advisers working with a third of all secondary schools and colleges across the country. Our goal is for 25,000 young people a year to be benefiting from business mentoring by 2020.

As its network of enterprise advisers and coordinators grows, so will its ability to support schools and colleges in delivering real and lasting change in high-quality careers and enterprise strategies, influenced by strong relationships with employers.

For adults too, the National Careers Service continues to offer free and impartial information, advice and guidance on careers, skills and the labour market, with high rates of satisfaction.

So taking this as our starting point, where do I think we need to go next on careers?

1. Improving the prestige of careers

It is clear to me that, although there is good work underway, more needs to be done.

We will consider the perception of careers provision, which for too long has not been seen as a vital part of our education system. For many schools, colleges or employers, high quality careers provision is a priority, but not for all. Tracey Brabin set this out clearly in her powerful speech in Parliament earlier this month, where she highlighted a college that had asked its unqualified receptionist to provide careers guidance to students.

The first step in this journey will be for us to set out our ambitions and plans for careers provision, and, as announced in the Industrial Strategy Green Paper last week, I am delighted to confirm that we will publish a comprehensive careers strategy for all ages later this year.

2. Expand the quantity and quality of careers provision

I believe that there is a need to address the quality and consistency of careers provision across the country, ensuring that we can have confidence that, whatever stage of your life you are at, and wherever you live, the advice and support you are receiving is of the highest calibre. It is for many, but for many, it is not.

But why is that? Why can some schools and colleges provide high-quality advice and support, and others not? What are the drivers for doing so? These are the questions I will be considering. I do not believe that this is just a question of funding, but how a school chooses to spend its funding: schools that provide high-quality careers advice, like Westminster Academy, do not do so because they have a greater share of the pot, but because they see providing high-quality careers advice as being vitally important to the future of their pupils.

Destination measures are emerging as a compelling way of encouraging schools to focus on their role in preparing young people for the next stage of their

education, training or employment. The inclusion of destination data in school performance tables is an important step. We will look at ways of making this information as clear and as comparable as possible.

Let me be clear: I want to reach a position where all schools and colleges are offering exceptional careers advice and guidance, through their own comprehensive and tailored strategy.

But if we are to make this a reality, we must have a shared understanding of what good careers provision looks like. The Gatsby Foundation has published its series of benchmarks, which describe the components of excellent careers provision, and I will consider how schools can be encouraged to meet these benchmarks. For now, I encourage all schools to use the excellent Compass tool that allows them to review their progress against the benchmarks.

The Careers & Enterprise Company is a vital part of the support that we provide for schools, boosting the quality of schools' interactions with employers and the experience of different workplaces they are providing for young people. Indeed, a report published today by Education and Employers highlights the importance of employer engagement in schools in helping young people feel prepared for adult life, and that those from disadvantaged backgrounds recall having fewer employer engagement than their peers. This is something I am keen to address.

3. Meeting the needs of a skills economy

It is clear to me that if we are truly to meet the needs that our economy has for the full range of skilled workers, we need to drive improvements in productivity, and this relies heavily on a stronger and better system of careers advice and guidance.

The challenge facing us is clear: there is a very real gap between what employers are seeking and the skills that people currently have.

To address this challenge and ensure people of all ages are trained in the skills our country needs, we may need to change the way different career paths are viewed. Apprenticeships are delivering fantastic opportunities for many people, and I am incredibly proud of what the government has achieved in this area already. But we need to level the playing field between technical and academic education, so that more and more young people are aware of the benefits of technical education.

We need people of all ages, and those who advise them, to really understand what opportunities are on offer. I want those undertaking apprenticeships or courses in further education to get the same level of information and support to make confident and informed choices when selecting and applying for courses.

We want to ensure that those applying for further education have clear information and support through the process of searching for, choosing and then applying for a particular opportunity. In particular, we want to ensure that they are supported in the same way that higher education applicants are

supported through the straightforward and well-understood UCAS system.

In addition, for young people to demonstrate their enterprise and employability skills, The Careers & Enterprise Company are developing a 'careers passport' led by Lord Young, which will be a 'Passport for Life': a digital record for young people of their enterprise learning and work experience throughout their education to aid transition to employment.

To achieve this we will need to look again at the information that government provides, making sure we are providing resources in the clearest and simplest way, so it is easily accessible to everyone. We will review the linkages between the different organisations and services that are helping to get people into jobs, including the National Careers Service, The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Apprenticeships Service. I want to encourage co-creation between these organisations that focus on delivering the right outcomes for students, adults and employers. I want greater clarity and coherence, and an increase in grassroots activity, expanding The Careers & Enterprise Company's fine work in this area already delivered through their enterprise advisor network.

4. Support for the most disadvantaged

We know just how important careers advice and guidance is for those young people who are from more disadvantaged backgrounds or have special educational needs: those who face different challenges or bigger hurdles to overcome when making choices about their future.

We need a careers system that nurtures the aspirations of those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs, providing them with the additional and targeted support that they need to make those aspirations become a reality. This will mean different things for different people.

And this isn't just about our young people. This is about tailored support for people most in need, at whatever stage of life.

I will consider what more we can do to help organisations try out different approaches, and find new and innovative ways to make sure we reach those who need our help most. High quality careers advice and support must be for everyone.

5. Job security

In taking action in all of these areas, we mustn't lose sight of our primary aim and purpose, which is for careers advice and guidance to ultimately lead to meaningful employment. Careers advice is not there as a standalone thing in its own right – it's the engine room of our plans to drive improved productivity and social justice. The Education and Employers report I mentioned earlier supports this, showing school-mediated employer engagement can:

- reduce the incidence of young people not in education, employment or training by up to 86%

- result in earnings of up to 16.4% more than peers who did not take part in such activity.

So in conclusion, it is clear to me that careers is a vitally important part of my brief, which can make a fundamental contribution to this government's industrial strategy. To support this, we will publish a strategy that will do the following:

- consider the prestige attached to careers information, advice and guidance
- seek to raise the quality of careers provision for people of all ages
- ensure we are truly addressing the skills needs of our country
- support those who are most disadvantaged and use careers to improve social justice
- focus our efforts on securing the end goal of meaningful skilled employment, ensuring a country that works for everyone

I want to ensure that great careers guidance provides the first rung on the ladder of opportunity, helping everyone to achieve their full potential.

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement following increased fighting in eastern Ukraine](#)

From:

First published:

31 January 2017

Part of:

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has urged restraint following the recent escalation of fighting in eastern Ukraine, and expressed concern about the worsening humanitarian situation.

Recent days have seen a significant increase in fighting in the Donbas, particularly focused around the town of Avdiivka where the Ukrainians have declared a state of emergency.

The Foreign Secretary said:

Over the past few days we have seen a high number of casualties and the humanitarian situation has deteriorated drastically in Adviiivka. Many civilians are without water, electricity and heating

while outside temperatures are as low as -20 degrees.

The immediate priority must be security and a full sustained ceasefire, in line with the provisions of the Minsk agreements. I urge all parties to demonstrate restraint, and help facilitate crucial repairs to restore vital utilities and assist the vulnerable. Sanctions against Russia cannot be lifted until the Minsk commitments are fulfilled.

The UK continues to stand by Ukraine in full support of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Further information

News story: CMA reviews FirstGroup bus undertakings in Bristol

From:

First published:

31 January 2017

The CMA is to review long-standing undertakings covering FirstGroup and local authority tendered bus services in the Greater Bristol area.

The undertakings followed the 1989 merger of local bus companies Badgerline and Midland Red West which was investigated by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC). The MMC ruled that the merger would remove competition for bus services contracted by the former Avon County Council. Local authorities tender for – and subsidise – unprofitable bus services in order to maintain important transport links for residents.

The merged company was therefore required to sign up to a number of restrictions, including a cap on the amount they could receive from the local authority for running a tendered service – and a requirement to return any excess profit from such services.

These undertakings were amended in 1996 following a subsequent bus merger where both operators became part of FirstGroup.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has now decided to review the undertakings to see if there has been a change in circumstances which justifies their removal or variation.

The CMA is seeking views in particular from local authorities, bus operators and bodies representing bus passengers in the Greater Bristol area. It wants to hear about whether the ability of local authorities to attract competitive bids has changed in the intervening years, whether the growth of other operators has increased competition for tendered bus services and the practical impact of the undertakings.

Responses are invited via the review [case page](#).

The CMA has also today published its [final advice](#) to the secretary of state recommending the removal of remedies in 2 merger cases that followed investigations carried out under the Fair Trading Act.

Today's actions result from the CMA's ongoing programme of work on remedy reviews, initially set out in the CMA's [2015/16 annual plan](#), with the aim of reducing burdens on business by assessing whether past merger and market remedies should be removed or varied when they are no longer necessary. Since its creation in 2014, the CMA has launched 96 remedy reviews, around two-thirds of which have resulted in the removal of the remedy.

For more information see the [remedies review case page](#).

Press release: Thousands officially pardoned under 'Turing's Law'

From:

First published:

31 January 2017

Thousands of gay and bisexual men convicted of now abolished sexual offences have today been posthumously pardoned.

The historic moment comes after the Policing and Crime Bill today (31 January 2017) received Royal Assent – enshrining, in law, pardons for those convicted of consensual same-sex relationships.

The new law, made possible following government intervention, will also see statutory pardons granted to the living. However, this will only apply in cases where offenders have successfully applied through the Home Office's disregard process to have historic convictions removed.

Justice Minister Sam Gyimah said:

This is a truly momentous day. We can never undo the hurt caused, but we have apologised and taken action to right these wrongs.

I am immensely proud that 'Turing's Law' has become a reality under this government.

'Turing's law' has been a longstanding government commitment, in order to build on the case of World War II hero and Enigma codebreaker Alan Turing.

Turing, who committed suicide in 1954 following his conviction for gross indecency, was posthumously pardoned by Her Majesty the Queen in 2013.

Notes to editors

- The new law was made possible through amendments to the Policing and Crime Bill which received Royal Assent today.
- The amendments were first tabled by Lord Sharkey, Lord Cashman and Lord Lexden with government support.
- As well as posthumously pardoning gay and bisexual men, this law will also provide pardons for the living in cases where convictions have been deleted through the disregard process. This will ensure that due diligence is carried out and prevent people from claiming to be cleared of offences that are still crimes – including sex with a minor and non-consensual sexual activity.
- For example, under the disregard process, the Home Office has rejected several applications where the activity was non-consensual and others where the other party was under 16-years-old.
- An applicant is only eligible for a 'disregard' if the Secretary of State decides that it appears that the other person involved in the conduct which constituted the offence consented to it and was aged 16 or over at the time, and that the conduct would not now constitute the offence of sexual activity in a public lavatory. In other words, the Secretary of State must be satisfied that the conduct is no longer criminal.
- The new law mirrors both the existing disregard process and the new pardon arrangements in Northern Ireland.
- For more information call the MOJ press office on 020 3334 3503 or 020 3334 3529

[News story: Policing and Crime Bill receives Royal Assent](#)

The government marked a major milestone in its police reform agenda today (Tuesday, 31 January) as the Policing and Crime Bill received Royal Assent.

The [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#) will enhance the democratic accountability of police forces and fire and rescue services, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency services through closer collaboration, and build public confidence in policing.

It will strengthen the protections for persons under investigation by, or who come into contact with, the police; ensure that the police and other law enforcement agencies have the powers they need to prevent, detect and investigate crime; and further safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

This act is another major milestone in our far-reaching police reforms over recent years.

The measures in the act give greater protections for the vulnerable, ensure the police have the necessary powers to keep our communities safe, and overhaul the police complaints and disciplinary systems to increase accountability and improve police integrity.

We have also sought to ensure forces have the right people and skills to cope with the changing nature of crime, improve efficiency and effectiveness of our emergency services through greater collaboration and end the injustice of individuals spending extended periods on pre-charge bail.

I look forward to continuing to work with the police and stakeholders as the measures in the act are implemented.

The act includes provisions which will:

- reform pre-charge bail to put a stop to people remaining on bail for lengthy periods with no independent judicial scrutiny of its continued necessity
- better enable chief officers to make the most efficient and effective use of their workforce by giving them the flexibility to confer a wider range of powers on police staff and volunteers (whilst for the first time specifying a core list of powers that may only be exercised by warranted police officers) and conferring a power on the Home Secretary to specify police ranks in regulations, thereby affording the flexibility to introduce a flatter rank structure
- place a new duty on police, fire and rescue and emergency ambulance services to collaborate where it is in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness and enable police and crime commissioners (PCCs) to take on responsibility for the governance of fire and rescue services, where a local case is made
- improve the response to those in mental health crisis – including stopping those under 18 from being detained in a police station – and restricting such detention for adults – by reforming police powers under

sections 135 and 136 of the [Mental Health Act 1983](#)

- reform the police disciplinary and complaints systems to ensure that the public have confidence in their ability to hold the police to account, and that police officers will uphold the highest standards of integrity
- increase in the maximum sentence for stalking involving fear of violence from five to ten years' imprisonment
- amend the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\)](#), including to ensure that 17-year-olds who are detained in police custody are treated as children for all purposes, and to facilitate the increased use of video link technology
- amend the firearms acts to better protect the public by closing loopholes that can be exploited by criminals and terrorists, and by issuing statutory guidance to ensure that the robust processes we have in place for assessing suitability to hold a firearms certificate are applied consistently
- confer pardons, subject to conditions, for individuals living or deceased who were convicted of now abolished gay sex offences
- improve protection for victims of forced marriage and give them more confidence to come forward by providing them with lifelong anonymity

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Brandon Lewis, said:

Police reform is working and crimes traditionally measured by the survey have fallen by a third since 2010 to a record low.

I am delighted this act has now received Royal Assent and, in close collaboration with police and fire stakeholders, we will work hard to implement the act's provisions to further improve the effectiveness and accountability of our emergency services.

Read [more information on the Policing and Crime Act](#).