

Unleashing Aspiration

Summary and
recommendations
of the full report

The Panel on
Fair Access to
the Professions

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Foreword from the Chair



The UK's professions are world leaders. Abroad they enjoy an unrivalled reputation for excellence and integrity. At home they command high levels of public support and make an enormous contribution both to our economy and society. And our country's professions provide opportunities for millions of people to pursue careers that are rewarding and fulfilling.

It is their role as a creator of opportunities that has made the professions so important to the UK's past and that makes them so central to our country's future. The huge growth in professional employment that took place after the Second World War was the engine that made Britain such a mobile society. By opening their doors to people from a rich variety of backgrounds, the professions created unheard of opportunities for millions of men and women. In the decades since then, of course, social mobility has slowed down in our country. Birth, not worth, has become more and more a determinant of people's life chances. But that may be changing. There is now evidence that the long-running decline in social mobility has bottomed out. And a big growth in professional jobs is creating the conditions for a second great wave of social mobility in the near future.

The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions was established by the Prime Minister to advise on how we can make a professional career genuinely open to as wide a pool of talent as possible. I would like to record my thanks to the Prime Minister for asking me to chair the Panel. It comprises leaders in the professions and experts in social mobility. It is independent of government and cross-party in its make-up. I owe each of its members an enormous debt of gratitude for their insight and energy. They have been a pleasure to work alongside, as has the Panel's excellent secretariat drawn from the Cabinet Office and the Strategy Unit.

In our Report we look beyond the confines of the current economic recession. Our horizon is deliberately long term. We make detailed recommendations on how we can realise the social and economic benefits of the forthcoming expansion in professional employment in our country. In large part this Report is based on evidence from employers, trade unions, universities, schools, voluntary and professional bodies and, most importantly of all, young people themselves. Since our establishment in January 2009 we have received 13,000 pages of evidence from a broad range of people and organisations. The issue seems to have touched a nerve. I think it has done so because people have come to recognise a number of things.

First, the growing importance of the professions – one in three jobs today is professional and millions more professionals may be needed by 2020 as our economy becomes ever more service-orientated and professionalised. Of course there will be growth in other parts of the economy. The UK will continue to need a strong manufacturing sector for example but we have been told that up to nine in ten new jobs in future will be professional jobs. Some experts believe that once retirements are taken into account we will need up to seven million new professionals in employment by 2020. At a time when the country is suffering from a deep and painful global recession it is easy to forget that Britain's professions are well placed to take advantage of a huge global growth in middle class employment over the next few decades.

Second, as demand for unskilled labour falls still more dramatically in the years to come, those without skills will be left stranded economically and divorced from the mainstream socially – unless we can get mobility to take hold. Already today in London over half the workforce are in professional or managerial jobs. In the North East it is only one third. The risk is that without appropriate action employment segregation will widen rather than narrow in the years to come.

Third, there is a great opportunity here as well as a great challenge. The generation of the late 1950s of which I am part were the beneficiaries of a mobility in society that came about because of a change in the economy – the advent of a service economy and the professionalisation of jobs – so creating more room at the top. I grew up on a council estate and I was lucky enough to end up in the Cabinet. But a more fluid society did not just emerge by chance. It also came about because of a big policy choice. Government action after the Second World War was crucial to help people realise the new opportunities that economic and social change were producing. Together, full employment, universal education and a new welfare state brought new opportunities to millions of people, me included. Likewise, provided we make the right policy choices today the UK can look forward to a second great wave of social mobility from which the present and future generations will benefit.

But fourth, for all the progress that has taken place in recent years by government tackling poverty and disadvantage and all the efforts that have been made by the professions to expand the pool of talent from which they recruit, Britain remains too much a closed shop society. The glass ceiling has been raised but not yet broken. Despite the narrowing of the gender pay gap, the top professional jobs still tend to go to men not women. Despite increasing numbers of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds in professional jobs, many professions are still unrepresentative of the modern society they serve. And most alarmingly of all there is strong evidence, given to the Panel, that the UK's professions have become more, not less, socially exclusive over time.

This weight of evidence suggests there is a chasm between where we are and where we need to be if Britain is to realise the social benefits of a huge potential growth in professional employment in future decades. This is more than an issue for those at the very bottom of society. It is an issue for the majority, not the minority in our country. It matters to what President Clinton famously called the 'forgotten middle class'.

The data we have seen suggests that tomorrow's professional is today growing up in a family richer than seven in ten of all families in the UK. If the growth in social exclusivity, that our report details, is not checked it will be more and more middle class children, not just working class ones, who will miss out. Take internships: they tend to go to the few who have the right connections not the many who have talent. Or careers advice in schools: the Connexions service seems to have focussed on the disadvantaged minority to the detriment of the aspirational majority. Across the board too many able children from average income and middle class families are losing out in the race for professional jobs. If the aspirations that most hard-working families have for themselves, their children and their communities are thwarted, then social responsibility and individual endeavour are both undermined.

Ultimately, it is the aspirations people have to better themselves that drives social progress. It has long been recognised that the UK is a highly unequal society in which class background still too often determines life chances. Hence the welcome focus in recent years on tackling poverty and disadvantage. But we need to recognise too that a closed shop mentality in our country means

too many people, from middle income as well as low income families, encounter doors that are shut to their talents. It is time for a new focus – to end the closed shop society and create in its place an aspirational society. Doing so means unleashing aspiration, not just beating poverty.

This Report is about unleashing aspiration. The stories I have heard during the Panel's work have made me realise just how far we as a country have to go. The young woman from inner-city London, now training to be a doctor, who told me she almost missed out on a career in medicine because no-one at her school had told her she needed an A-Level in chemistry. The young hairdresser who had not realised she would be working for the minimum wage, when what she really wanted to do was go to university. Teaching assistants who aspired to become teachers being faced with giving up their jobs in order to undertake further training. It is barriers such as these that must be dismantled if we are to unleash aspiration in our society. Otherwise social resentment will fester and grow.

What has struck me so forcibly during the course of our work particularly when meeting young people from a whole variety of backgrounds is the emergence of a “not for the likes of me” syndrome. One in two children with parents who are professionals want to pursue a professional career. Only one in six children from average family income backgrounds want to do the same. Of course not everyone can be a doctor or a lawyer – and not everyone will want to be – but those with ability and aptitude need a fair crack of the whip to realise their aspirations. And in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country we need to go further still. We have to enter what is new territory for public policy and find new ways of systematically raising the aspirations of those youngsters and families who simply do not believe that they will ever progress.

It is not that many young people do not have aspirations. It is that they are blocked. It is not that they do not have talent. To coin a phrase, Britain's got talent – lots of it. It is not ability that is unevenly distributed in our society. It is opportunity. Of course there is no single lever that on its own can prise open the professions. No single organisation can make it happen either. It is far too complex an issue for that. It is as much about family networks as it is careers advice, individual aspiration as school standards, university admission procedures as well as career development opportunities.

The Panel has examined all these areas and more during its work. In recognition of the fiscal position that future governments will face, our recommendations are cost neutral overall as far as government is concerned. Many of our recommendations will be for the professions to act on and we have seen a lot of willingness on their part to do so. We have been deeply impressed by the myriad of initiatives and schemes to mentor children and reach out to schools. The most progressive parts of the professions are already throwing open their doors to a wider cohort of talent. I hope our Report goes with the grain of their efforts.

Equally, initiatives to broaden access seem more marginal than mainstream. The default setting in too many professions, particularly at the top, is still to recruit from too narrow a part of the social spectrum. In this sense the professions simply reflect a wider problem in British society: a governing assumption that is still present in too many of our institutions that progress can be achieved on the basis of a limited pool of talent having access to a limited set of opportunities. All too often the professions have exemplified this out dated notion. With some honourable exceptions, over time they have narrowed entry routes – not widened them. They have become more socially exclusive, not less. It is not just that such elitism is unjust socially. It can no longer work economically.

The UK's future success in a globally competitive economy will rely on using all of our country's talent, not just some of it. In a fast moving world the old notion of a single track, single chance in life has to give way to a new notion where opportunities are more widely available throughout life to people regardless of their backgrounds. Any vestiges of a closed shop mentality – either in the professions or in our society – need to be banished once and for all. It is not just in the country's interest for all the professions to fish in a wider pool of talent. It is in the professions' own interest too. If they are to properly serve a Britain that is characterised by its rich diversity, they need themselves to embrace the notion of becoming more diverse.

This Report makes recommendations on how the professions, the Government and others can unleash the pent-up aspiration that exists in the young people of our country. Social mobility is not something that can be given to people. It has to be won through their effort and endeavour. Governments can equalise opportunities throughout life but in the end social mobility relies on individual drive and ambition. Put another way, if the job of the Government is to create more chances for people to get on, it is the job of the citizen to grab those chances.

Of course, the professions can and should do more to put their house in order and our Report suggests many ways in which they can do so. But they cannot instil in children an aspiration to pursue a professional career. That has got to come from individuals themselves and from their families and communities. Nor can the professions create the framework within which there are many more opportunities for individuals to realise their aspirations to progress. That is properly a job for government and the institutions of civil society. So while this Report examines some issues in detail it has also attempted to paint a broader picture of what is required to make Britain once again a mobile society.

Our approach seeks to open up new opportunities for everyone in society, while recognising that without more targeted action some will never have the chance to seize such opportunities.

Many of our recommendations are universal: aimed at expanding opportunities and widening the winners circle so that more people can fulfil their aspirations. We reject the notion that there is a fixed pool of talent or a limited set of opportunities in our society. Professional employment will grow rapidly in the decades to come so many more people will have the chance of a good career. So we propose how the silos between further and higher education can be broken down and how the professions can be opened to those without a university degree. We recommend ways in which internships, good careers services, schools' extra-curricular programmes and university degrees can all be made more widely available.

Other of our recommendations are more targeted, being aimed at giving the most disadvantaged the opportunity of an equal chance in life. We recognise that while prosperity has grown for most in our country, poverty remains an entrenched way of life for too many. Poor people are unfairly handicapped in the race for success. We reject the notion of positive discrimination which we believe will create new injustices. But we do advocate targeted help so that the most disadvantaged – children especially – get a fair chance to compete to succeed. We will not create a mobile society unless we can create a level playing field of opportunities. So we look at how new schools could be opened in poorer areas, how apprentices could get more help to progress and how mentoring programmes can be extended to raise the aspirations of disadvantaged children.

And because we believe that social mobility will not advance if we think it is only wealth that is unevenly distributed in our society we make proposals that are about redistributing power. If Britain is to get moving again socially, people need to be able not just to get a job or training or childcare but also to enjoy greater control and to have a bigger say in how they lead their lives. Unlocking our country so that it is open to aspiration and effort requires a new drive to fundamentally change how power is distributed in our society. So in our Report we make proposals to empower people to determine how their training needs can best be met through a state-funded budget they control. And we examine how parents, especially in the poorest areas, could be empowered with a new right to choose a better school for their children. It is this notion of a State that empowers citizens to realise their own aspirations to progress that underpins much of the thinking in this Report.

This is not a job for any one department of government. It is a job for the whole of government. And a modern form of government. One that empowers not controls. And one that puts at the top of its agenda a national drive to make Britain a fair, open and mobile society.

One thing is certain – modern Britain will not work if it harbours a closed shop mentality. Our economy will not prosper unless we harness the talent of all those who are able and aspire to make a contribution. And our society will not flourish unless people feel that effort and endeavour are rewarded. How we make a professional career genuinely open to as wide a pool of talent as possible goes to the heart of what a modern Britain should look like. I hope the work of the Panel helps create a shared determination in our country to systematically unblock every obstacle that stands in the way of individuals being able to realise their own aspirations to progress. And I hope that is something this and future governments will lead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Milburn'.

Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP

The Panel and its Report



The creation of the Panel

The Government's *New Opportunities* White Paper, published in January 2009, announced the establishment of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions:

'As well as general barriers to opportunity – such as low skills levels – there can be other obstacles to careers in certain high-status professions. To help ensure that everyone, including those on moderate and middle incomes as well as the wealthiest, has a fair chance to access careers in high-status professions, we will establish a panel to work with the professions themselves to identify obstacles including cultural barriers to access and how they can be removed.'

The Prime Minister asked the Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP to chair the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions. As an independent cross-party panel it was invited to make recommendations to the Government and the professions. A small secretariat, drawn from the Cabinet Office, was set up to support the Panel's work.

The Panel comprises 18 representatives from a range of professions. They are all influential and high-profile members of their professions. The Panel also has two independent experts on social mobility issues. The full list of Panel members is attached at **Annex A**.

The Panel's work programme

The Panel took evidence from a wide range of sources, including from a National Call for Evidence which we issued in February 2009. It received over 140 submissions in response, amounting to over 13,000 pages of evidence. It held three National Youth Fora in order to hear the views of young people themselves, and it commissioned a survey of 1,525 young people. The Panel held five Evidence Hearings, in which key organisations were invited to present evidence. The Chair of the Panel held meetings with a group of junior ministers in each government department with responsibility for fair access issues. The Secretariat held parallel meetings with senior departmental officials. Six stakeholder events were held, covering a wide range of professional groups. A debate on social mobility and fair access to the professions was held in the House of Commons on Thursday 11 June.

Upon completion of the evidence-gathering and analysis the Panel formed subgroups to develop recommendations on each of the barriers identified during the analysis and evidence-gathering stage. The Panel published five documents, all of which can be found at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/accessprofessions.

This executive summary and the full final report were published on 21 July 2009. They contain recommendations for action by the professions, government and others. A list of the recommendations is attached at **Annex B** in our full Report. Primarily, our recommendations are about forming new partnerships for action. A minority would involve costs to the Government for implementation. For these we identify appropriate programmes for reprioritisation. Given the fiscal context we have sought to ensure that, overall, our recommendations involve no additional spending. A table setting out the costs and savings associated with each of the Panel's recommendations is attached at **Annex C** of the full report.

The Panel Chair and the Secretariat each held a series of bilateral meetings with important organisations and actors in the fields of social mobility and access to the professions.

A full list of all organisations consulted in the course of the Panel's work is attached at **Annex D** of the full Report.

We recognise that some of the recommendations in this report relate to reserved matters and some to devolved. However, we do not believe that this should be a barrier to implementation. Where a recommendation relates to devolved matters we expect the Government and relevant Devolved Administrations to implement the recommendation, in order to make access fairer across the whole UK.

We hope our Report will make the professions more representative of modern Britain.

Above all else we hope that more young people get the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations.

Chapter 1

The professions: the key to new opportunities



There are over 130 professional sectors in the UK. 11 million people work in professional occupations. The UK's professions are world leaders. Professionals such as doctors, teachers, nurses and police officers are at the heart of UK society. The public hold such professionals in very high esteem.

The professions are central to the UK's future

The UK's professions are central to our country's future. The UK's comparative economic advantage will lie increasingly in knowledge-based services, the very sectors in which professionals are most concentrated. In addition to the important role the professions play in the economic and civic life of our nation, they have also been the key that has unlocked social mobility in the UK.

A huge post-war growth in new professional opportunities brought about the first great wave of social mobility

At the start of the twentieth century there were few professional or managerial jobs. In 1911 only one in 14 jobs was professional. By 1951 this had risen to one in eight jobs, and by 2001 to over one in three. This huge growth in professional employment coincided with an unprecedented period of social mobility in which many more people from less well-off backgrounds were able to progress up the social ladder.

But this first wave of social mobility has since slowed, with professions becoming more socially exclusive

For the most recent generation surveyed (born in 1970) the rate of social mobility is very similar to that of the previous generation (born in 1958). Although there is some recent evidence that the UK may have reached the bottom of a long-running decline in social mobility, access to society's top jobs and professions has become less, not more, socially representative over time. Although only 7% of the population attend independent schools, well over half of many professionals have done so. For example, 75% of judges, 70% of finance directors, 45% of top civil servants, and 32% of MPs were independently schooled.

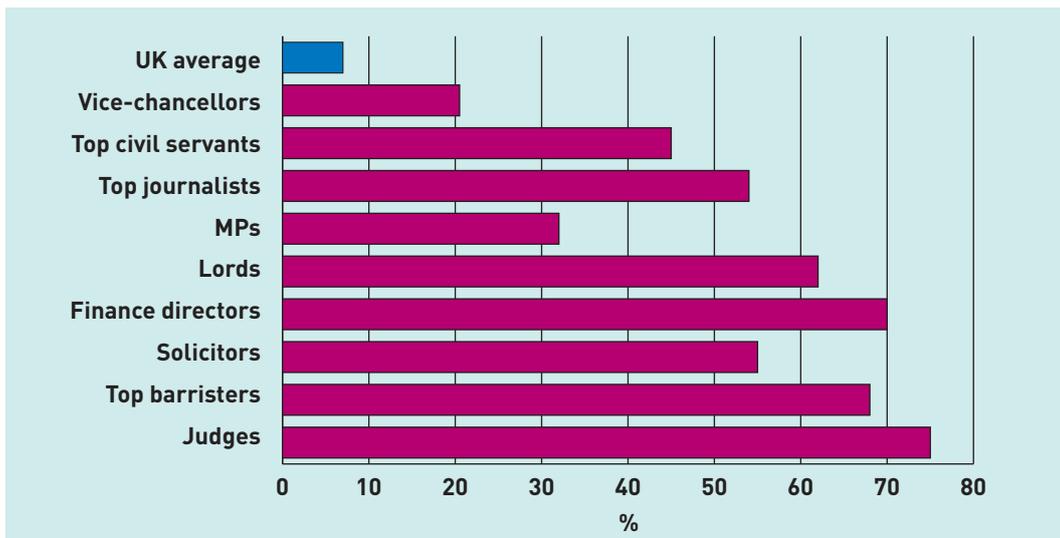


Figure 1a: Percentage independently schooled by professional group¹

Some evidence suggests that this situation is improving slightly: some professions are becoming less dominated by independent schools while others, like medicine, remain largely unchanged.

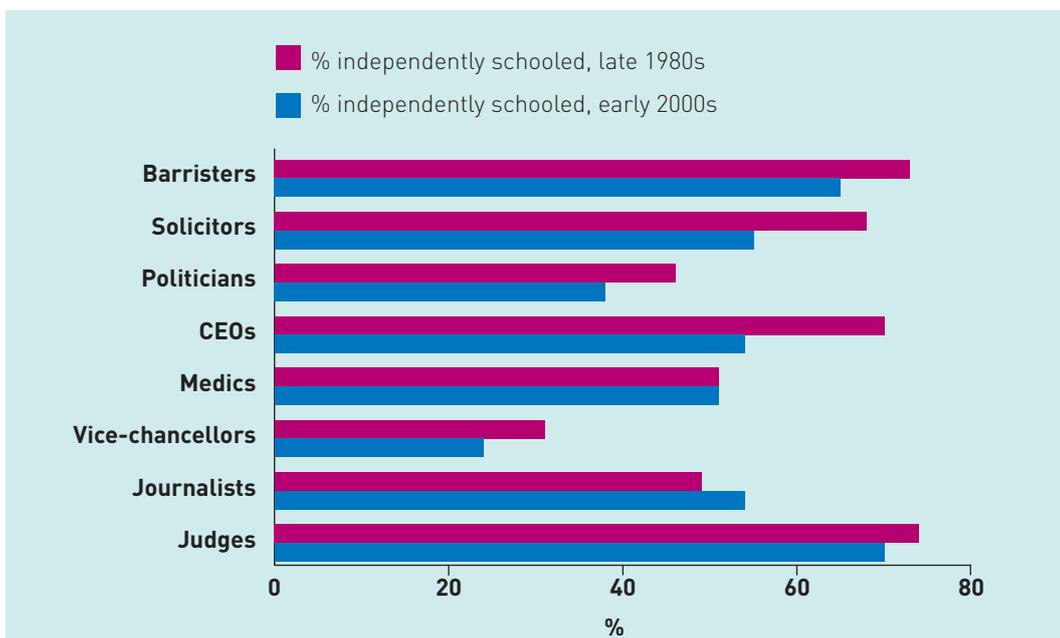


Figure 1b: Percentage independently schooled by profession, 1980s and 2000s²

Evidence we have received on the family background that professionals grew up in (measured by their family's income when they were growing up), confirms that senior professionals have increasingly come from wealthier-than-average backgrounds. Professionals born in 1970 typically grew up in a family with an income 27% above that of the average family, compared with a figure of 17% for professionals born in 1958.

Doctors born in 1970 typically grew up in families with incomes 63% higher than the average family's income, and lawyers in families with incomes 64% above the average family's income. Between the 1958 and 1970 cohorts the biggest decline in social mobility occurred in the journalism and accountancy professions.

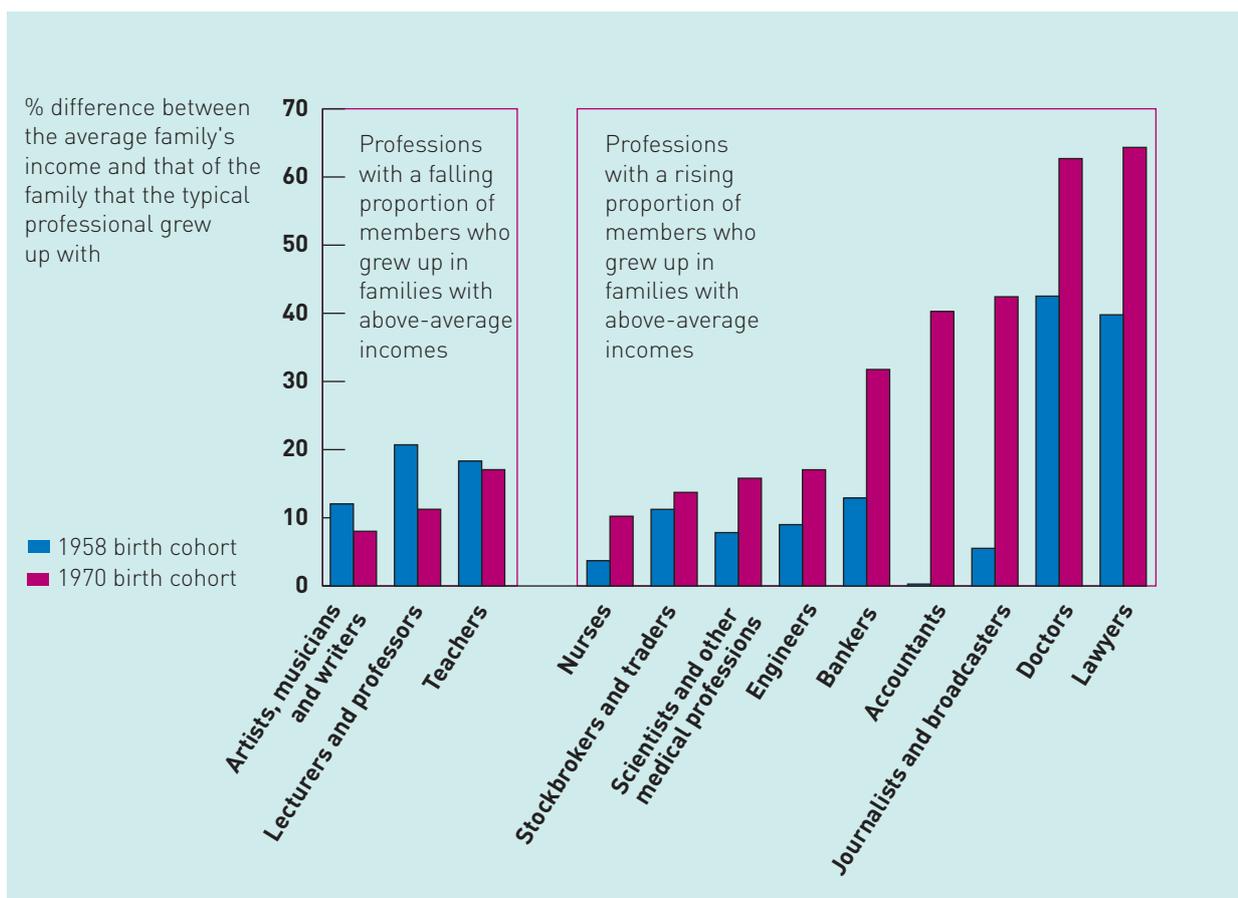


Figure 1c: Comparing the family income that typical professionals grew up in with the average family's income³

Of course there will be many individual exceptions to this pattern, but the overall trend is clear: the professions have become more, not less, socially exclusive over time. Despite a sharp growth in professional employment opportunities over recent decades, access to the professions is becoming the preserve of those from a smaller and smaller part of the social spectrum.

It is particularly important to stress that the greater social exclusivity exhibited by the professions has closed doors not only to people from disadvantaged backgrounds; it has done the same to people from average or middle-class family backgrounds too. This is an issue for the majority, not a minority. If action is not taken to reverse the historical trend, the typical professional of the future will be growing up in a family better off than **seven in ten** of all families in the UK. This

growing social exclusivity is not only a matter of serious concern for the professions, but has profound implications for our society.

Professions will lose from growing social exclusivity

We believe it is in the direct interest of every profession to tackle this increase in social exclusivity. The professions will need to recruit many more professionals in future. Some studies suggest that up to nine in 10 new jobs created over the next decade will be in professional sectors. Once retirements are taken into account around seven million new professionals may be needed.⁴ Filling these future professional roles with suitably high-potential employees will mean recruiting far more widely than from the narrow pool of talent on which the professions currently focus. The wider the base of recruitment, the better able the professions will be to serve a more diverse society.

What is behind these trends in access to professional career opportunities?

First, some researchers⁵ point to a rise in ‘opportunity-hoarding’ – the construction of barriers that restrict entry to some jobs, such as an increased emphasis on extra-curricular activity and softer skills. There is also evidence that selection and entry procedures – underpinned by cultural and attitudinal barriers – reinforce the existing social make-up of the professions.

Second, the employment structure of professions has changed. Over time, more and more professions have become graduate-only. This was not always the case in the past. During the UK’s first great wave of social mobility, for example, journalists might have worked their way up by starting out as a messenger on the local newspaper, lawyers through the article route, or accountants by starting out as book-keepers. Such opportunities have diminished in recent decades. Rising regulatory and accountability demands have probably exacerbated this problem.

Third, although vocational training routes have been expanded, progression rates into the professions are low. Only 0.2% of Apprenticeship learners progressed to further or higher education in 2007/08, and few directly into the professions, suggesting that there is a major silo problem in our education and training system.⁶

Fourth, patterns of structural change that have affected the UK economy have resulted in more professional and managerial jobs being concentrated in London and the South East. This has reduced the opportunities for young people from outside these regions to get a first foot on the professional career ladder.

Many professions have already taken steps, but many have not gone far enough

Many professions have submitted evidence to us about their efforts to broaden the social mix from which they recruit. Many of them have delivered results and in recent decades good progress has been made. In the last decade the gender pay gap has fallen over 16%,⁷ the black and minority ethnic population in professional employment has risen faster than the corresponding proportion of the white population⁸ and the number of disabled employees in the public sector has risen.⁹

The sheer scale of the future recruitment challenge faced by the professions as they expand has prompted a number of professions to develop innovative and exciting initiatives to improve access to career opportunities. Many excellent programmes were highlighted in the submissions provided by the professions in response to our Call for Evidence. The Panel warmly welcomes this commitment on the part of the professions, but we believe that there is a very long way to go before fair access becomes universal.

Conclusion

We welcome the progress that many professions have made to widen access and believe they deserve praise for their efforts. We feel nevertheless that a step change has not been achieved. Initiatives and programmes to widen access remain on the margins, not in the mainstream. They are piecemeal rather than universal. The default setting in too many professions is still to recruit from too narrow a part of the social spectrum. All this has to change. We believe that if the professions are to keep pace with change in society and successfully expand they need to do much more to recruit from a wider pool of talent and to banish any vestiges of a closed-shop mentality.

Chapter 2

What drives social mobility?



Social mobility is about each new generation benefiting from more and better opportunities to get on in life. At its simplest, social mobility means **better jobs** for each generation so that our children can do better than us, and **fair chances** so that everyone has an opportunity to access those jobs and realise their potential.

In a modern economy the professions are at the heart of this new opportunity story: social mobility will rise if there are more professional opportunities, or if the relative chance of getting into a professional career increases. The most important resource of a company or a country is no longer its raw materials, or its geographical location, but the skills of its whole workforce. A knowledge economy needs a mobile society.

It is no coincidence that countries such as Australia, Japan, Sweden and the Netherlands, which are the most socially fluid in the world, are also among the most equal. The fact that the UK remains such a persistently unequal society is in large part the reason why social mobility is lower than in other less equal nations. Greater equality and more mobility are two sides of the same coin.

We believe that a socially mobile society is not just a laudable objective. It is a necessity if the UK is to flourish – economically as well as socially. We believe that all children should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Individual success should reflect innate talent and ability, not background or birth. We also believe that what is right on ethical grounds in the 21st century is also right on economic grounds. In a globally competitive economy the key to success depends on unlocking the talents of all our people. During the course of its work the Panel has heard directly from leading experts about what drives social mobility. The evidence we have been given has helped us develop our specific policy recommendations.

Maternal health and child poverty

It is an unfortunate fact that the life chances of a child born in 2009 are still determined by the circumstances of their birth. Indeed differences in life chances start well before birth. Children who grow up in disadvantaged families and poor communities suffering bad housing, with high

levels of crime and low levels of school performance, face an uphill struggle to get on in life. They have to climb not just one hill, but many, to succeed. Getting social mobility moving relies on action being taken on many fronts. Too often this has not been the case.

We believe that unless child poverty is tackled social mobility will be thwarted. Eradicating child poverty should be a policy priority and requires a new, more holistic approach to tackle the many forms that disadvantage can take.

Early-years

There is strong – and growing – evidence about the importance of high-quality early-years care in giving every child a good start in life. Provision of high-quality early years care is good for all children but seems to have a disproportionate impact on children from poorer backgrounds.

We believe that early-years care is beneficial for all children, the most disadvantaged especially. Continued investment here is important for social mobility.

Family, parenting and community

What parents and families do, and the social circumstances they do it in, have perhaps the greatest influence on a child's fortunes in life. Parents' expectations and aspirations for their children are important predictors of educational attainment. There is good evidence, for example, that access to moderate amounts of financial capital at an early age can have major impacts on later life outcomes. Spreading asset ownership – by encouraging more home or employee shared ownership – has an important role to play in tackling inequality and increasing social mobility.

We believe that good parenting is the foundation for a mobile society and that parents and families should be better valued and supported. We also believe that asset-holding should be more widely encouraged.

Education

Education is becoming an increasingly significant driver of social mobility. Success in school up to the age of 16 has long been regarded as a key factor in explaining rates of social mobility. Studies¹⁰ show that around 38% of inter-generational social mobility can be explained by observable educational factors. Moreover, softer skills such as communication and team working have become more important to employers, driven in part by the growth in service sector employment.

We believe that the quality of education is vital for a mobile society and that it is becoming ever more important as the economy becomes increasingly knowledge-based. We believe that every child deserves a good well-rounded education to improve their employability prospects and that continuing investment and reform are key to that happening.

Post-school qualifications and transitions to work

Post-school qualifications are crucial to provide people with the skills and capabilities to progress. Indeed, some estimates suggest that around one-fifth of all inter-generational social mobility can be explained by post-16 qualifications.¹¹ Higher education is particularly important.

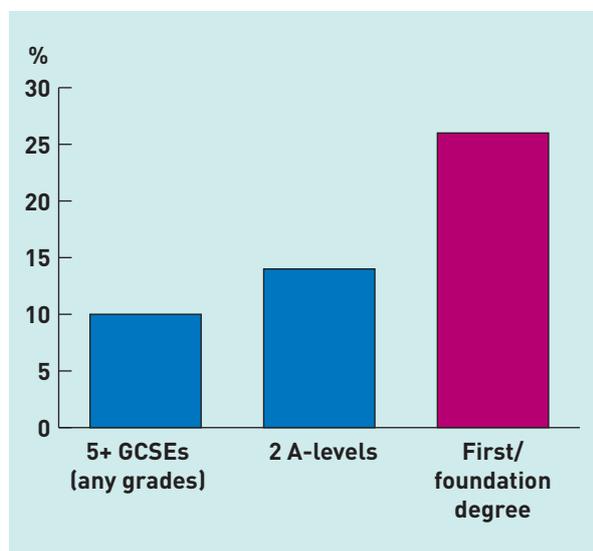


Figure 2a: Average percentage wage return on qualifications, compared with individuals with no qualifications, 1997–2006¹²

Participation rates in further and higher education remain strongly correlated to parental income. The evidence also shows that those who choose vocational routes into work tend to be from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Such vocational routes have lower rates of return than higher education and also receive less support from the Government.

We believe that post-16 education and training – including the important work of further education colleges – are becoming more important for people’s employability and need greater recognition as a driver of social mobility.

Opportunities to work and progress

Social mobility can often stall when unemployment rises and opportunities decline. The UK has the eighth-highest rate of employment out of 30 countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), but one in six children today grows up in a workless household and too many people remain trapped in an endless cycle of low-waged work and spells of unemployment.¹³ Improving people’s employment prospects is vital, but equal attention needs to be paid to their opportunities to progress once in work and to develop further skills. The pace of technological change means that employees need to develop and update their skills continually.

We believe that the notion of a one-off chance in education and training can no longer deliver a mobile society. More focus needs to be placed on learning throughout life, with a flexible training system that empowers individuals and that is personalised to their needs.

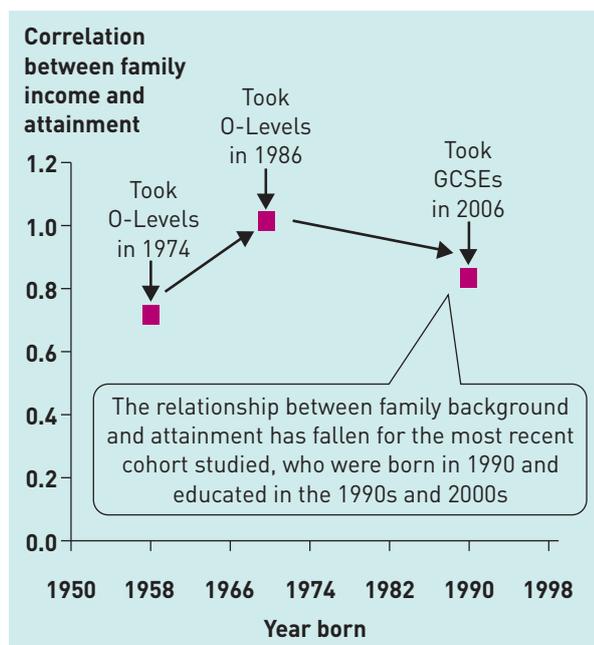
How is the UK performing on social mobility and how do we compare with other countries?

Social mobility has historically been lower in the UK than in many other countries. Of six European countries the UK had the lowest levels of social mobility for women and the second-lowest for men.¹⁴ Since the 1970s social mobility has been relatively flat in the UK, although it has been higher for women compared with men.

The Panel believes that the balance of evidence suggests that social mobility has neither risen nor fallen in recent decades but social mobility in the UK is generally lower than in many other countries.

There are clear opportunities in the years ahead to improve rates of social mobility into the top jobs

Although social mobility has historically been low in the UK, there are opportunities for a second wave of social mobility if the following opportunities are grasped now:



- Economic change, with continued growth in professional and managerial opportunities expected in the years ahead
- Progress in schools and education, which suggests a reduction in the link between household income and pupil attainment (see Figure 2b opposite);
- Trends in poverty and inequality, with poverty rates having fallen in recent years
- A strong and growing evidence base on what makes for a socially mobile society, which is now being used by policy-makers in countries across the world.

Figure 2b: Relationship between family income and GCSE/O-level attainment¹⁵

Conclusion

We want to see a meritocracy where individuals are able to advance on the basis of their talent and effort. The UK has not achieved as much in terms of social mobility as comparable countries. Generating greater social mobility relies on an overall policy framework which seeks greater equality and wider opportunity, rewarding aspiration and endeavour while demanding responsibility and respect. Our approach is one where we want to see new opportunities opened up for everyone in society, while recognising that without more targeted action some will never have the chance to seize such opportunities. Many of the recommendations in this Report are universal, being aimed at breaking open the closed-shop society. Others are more targeted, being aimed at giving the most disadvantaged an equal chance in life. It is beyond our reach to make recommendations across every aspect of public policy that bears on social mobility. But we believe that the issue of social mobility is so central to the future of the UK that the Government should find new ways of driving this agenda forward.

Recommendation 1: Social mobility should explicitly be the top overarching social policy priority for this and future governments. The Government should develop new ways of embedding this priority across all government departments. It should develop new partnerships with civic institutions, professional bodies, community organisations and individual citizens to help deliver this priority.

Recommendation 2: Building on the *New Opportunities* White Paper, the Government should establish an expert social mobility commission. The Commission should have at its core three key roles:

- **Research:** providing evidence on trends and policy on social mobility in the UK and internationally
- **Technical advice:** providing advice to government, other public bodies, and employers on policy measures to raise social mobility including by disseminating best practice from the UK and internationally
- **Transparency and accountability:** monitoring and reporting on the actions that government, the professions, employers and others take to improve social mobility and on their impact.

It should be comprised of a small number of independently appointed experts, meeting as an advisory board and supported by a handful of staff.

Chapter 3

New opportunities for a professional career



We believe that there is no single ‘silver bullet’ that can deliver social mobility. We also believe that it is important to address some of the popular myths that we have heard during the course of the Panel’s work. We believe that such myths are just that – excuses for a status quo that is not sustainable as the professions expand and need to embrace more fully the notion of diversity and fairer access.

Diversity and ‘dumbing down’

Increasing fair access to professional careers is not about ‘dumbing down’ any more than it is about allowing young people who would otherwise not be bright enough to become doctors or lawyers. It is about making current access routes fairer and ensuring that those young people who succeed in gaining a top job do so on the basis of talent and merit alone.

We know that progress made on some aspects of diversity, such as gender equality, has not led to a ‘dumbing down’ of the professions. We believe that this approach needs to be built on. Some have suggested that the way to achieve this is through various forms of positive discrimination to reverse the inequalities in access to professional careers. We reject this. We believe it would not work and indeed could create new kinds of unfairness. Instead we set out the case for positive action and new partnerships to level up opportunities for all.

Nature versus nurture

Some assume that the social disparity in progression to a senior professional career is just a product of inherited differences in intelligence. We have looked closely at the latest research as part of the contested ‘nature versus nurture’ debate. We reject the notion that the observed disparities in who gets into top careers are a product purely of inherited intelligence. Recent work suggests that genetics and environment interact in quite complex ways to determine intelligence and capability. Once we control for intelligence we discover that many other factors play a role in determining life chances.

Qualifications – the best guide to aptitude?

We have listened to many experts and professions on the value and predictive power of qualifications. It is true that qualifications are an important guide to aptitude, and so are highly valued by employers. But employers nowadays also want a broader set of skills and capabilities. They recognise that aptitude and ability to perform on the job cannot be measured by qualifications alone. One survey showed that soft skills such as adaptability were more valuable to employers than education or qualifications.¹⁶

There is good evidence that young people can develop these skills by various routes, including from a richer school experience, extra-curricular activity and participation in clubs and societies. Our evidence also suggests there are fewer chances for those who are from less privileged backgrounds to benefit from such opportunities.

Bright people lose out

Some worry that fairer access would mean bright people losing out to less bright people when it comes to professional careers or even university places. We believe that fair access means exactly the opposite: namely that the brightest and most talented people get a fairer chance to progress. That is exactly why we reject artificially discriminating in favour of certain groups, but instead recommend policies to ensure that all get the fair chances and support they require. There is no fixed set of high-quality jobs, as the evidence points to a rapidly rising number of professional opportunities in the years ahead. So we do not believe that the debate should be about how to redivide the existing pie of professional opportunities. Rather it is about how we slice an expanding pie.

Professional self-regulation

We make no comment on the regulation of the professions, since the subject is beyond our remit. We do, however, recommend that professions go further and faster in opening their doors to a wider pool of talent. We believe there is a compelling business case for doing so. This business case is further strengthened by the fact that simple and affordable measures can make a big difference, and throughout the full Report we provide detailed case studies on what can be done.

New opportunities throughout life

A central part of the Panel's task was to identify barriers to fair access. From the evidence we have seen and studied, we have identified six pivotal points in an individual's life which can have a significant impact on their ability to access a professional career:

- their aspirations – based on their initial exposure to and impressions of the professions
- their education – in particular, their school years and the support that young people get to make decisions about their career
- their opportunities to get into university – not least because the funnel of professional opportunities has narrowed and access to more and more professions is now predominantly through a degree
- their ability to find out and get hold of internships – which have become a new rung on the professional ladder

- their success in recruitment and selection – where evidence suggests that those from backgrounds different to the professional norm are disadvantaged
- their opportunities to progress within a career – in the past, it was possible to work one's way up in a profession, gaining additional qualifications alongside work experience. These opportunities now rarely exist.

These six points are discussed in more detail in the remaining chapters, and we set out why we have identified these barriers and our recommendations. Each of these points is also the subject of a chapter in our full Report. But no single lever can prise open opportunities in the professions. Rather, our starting point is the need to change the governing notion in society from one that has been about opportunities being available to some to one where they are available to all, and from one that has been about people having set opportunities at ages 11, 16 or 18 to one that makes opportunities available throughout life.

Conclusion

We believe there is every chance of a second great wave of social mobility in our country. But we do not believe it will just happen. It requires a change of attitudes to broaden opportunities across society and at different stages of life. The professions need to take a lead in rejecting the old elitist notion that the UK can progress on the basis of opportunities being available only to some people some of the time. Instead we advocate an approach that will see opportunities becoming available to more people more of the time. We reject the myth that this will entail either 'dumbing down' or social engineering. Instead, we believe it will benefit the professions and help both our society and our economy to flourish.

We also argue that it will require action from more than one organisation or one part of society. It is certainly not simply just a job for government or the professions. It is a job for all.

Chapter 4

Raising aspiration: new opportunities for young people to learn about the professions



Social mobility is founded above all else on the aspiration that people have to succeed in life. This is often set at an early age. For some aspiration comes naturally, while for others it needs nurturing. Without support, information, and access to social networks even those with the greatest talents may miss out.

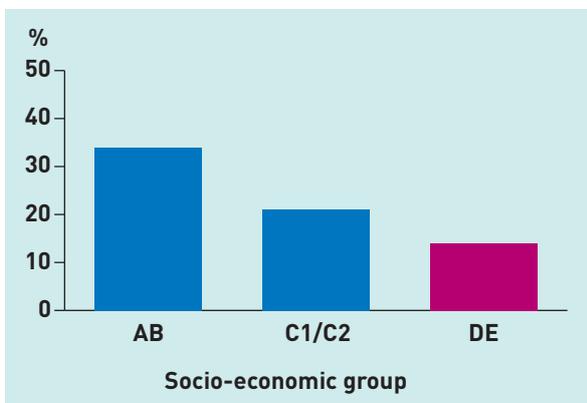


Figure 4a: Percentage of parents who think their children will go to university¹⁸

There are two key points in life where young people most need support. First, in developing early aspirations and goals. Second, in translating aspirations into decisions about specific careers. At both points the biggest influence on young people is their parents. So making sure that parents have the right support is critical in helping young people make informed choices that are right for them. We have been given clear evidence by the Sutton Trust that the aspirations of parents are key to educational and occupational outcomes for their children.¹⁷ It is telling that only 13% of children whose parents are in semi-skilled occupations would contemplate a professional career. This aspiration gap needs to be closed if social mobility is to take hold.

4.1 Reforming the Gifted and Talented programme

The Gifted and Talented programme focuses mainly on 14–19-year-old ‘gifted’ children who are academically bright, and ‘talented’ children who excel at sport or other activities. The Panel believes that a programme of this sort could potentially be important in giving children from a wide variety of backgrounds the opportunity to realise their aspirations and aptitudes. Currently, however, the programme is not as effective as it could be. We believe that the Government should seize this moment to radically reform and rebrand the programme. We believe that it should become the umbrella programme that delivers a number of our recommendations, particularly around mentoring, ‘work tasters’ and soft skills.

Recommendation 3: The Government should reform and rebrand the Gifted and Talented programme to provide more opportunities to pupils in primary and secondary schools, including mentoring, work tasters and training in soft skills.

4.2 A national network of career mentors

The Panel’s work has unearthed a number of excellent initiatives that provide inspirational mentors for young people. Mentoring is an effective way to inspire, change perceptions and raise aspirations. Many people already act as mentors. Given the active involvement of universities and employers, we believe hundreds of thousands more could do so. Many of these mentors could undertake e-mentoring, with mentor and mentee being linked through online messaging services.

The Panel has investigated how a national scheme for mentoring by young professionals might work, by linking up young professionals (or students studying for degrees enabling entry to a profession) with young people, particularly those from less advantaged backgrounds. Such a national scheme could initially focus on around 3,000 less privileged young people from across the country, based on an investment of around £1 million over three years.¹⁹ In time it could be extended to include all secondary schools, drawing on the involvement of all our country’s universities and professions.

Recommendation 4: The professions and the Government should together introduce a national scheme for career mentoring by young professionals and university students of school pupils in Years 9 to 13. The national mentoring scheme should involve partnerships with employers, voluntary organisations, universities and schools.

Recommendation 5: The professions and the Government should organise a ‘Yes you can’ campaign, headed by inspirational role models, to encourage more young people to aspire to a professional career.

4.3 School alumni

Responses to our Call for Evidence highlighted the important role that former pupils who come from a particular school or community can have in raising aspirations among young people from that school or community. They can be very effective role models and help to raise pupils' aspirations. But at present such schemes rely on the initiative of individuals to drive and support them. The Panel has looked at how a national website could be developed to match up volunteer alumni – university students or working professionals – with their former schools.

Recommendation 6: The Government, working with the professions and universities, should develop a national database of people willing to act as role models or mentors for young people in their former schools.

4.4 Opportunities to gain insights into professional life

Gaining practical insights into professional life can widen horizons and open up a world of new opportunities for young people. Short work placements, for instance, are important for improving young people's understanding of the professions. But the Panel echoes concerns it has heard about the quality and effectiveness of schools' current work experience programmes.

Recommendation 7: The Government should undertake a radical overhaul of work experience programmes in schools – in conjunction with reforms to information, advice and guidance services and the Gifted and Talented programme – to ensure that they are professionally organised and better aligned with pupils' careers decision-making.

The Panel received evidence about the effectiveness of a range of alternative work experience schemes which offer short, targeted 'work taster' experiences. Such schemes seem to be very effective in helping young people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, to raise their aspirations, make inspired career choices and understand career paths better. There is merit in creating a national scheme targeted to an initial 3,000 young people from disadvantaged backgrounds a year, on the basis of a funding package of around £1.1 million over three years,²⁰ and then extended over time to include all secondary schools.

Recommendation 8: The Government should establish a national work taster scheme for older school pupils, starting with those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. The professions should identify employers willing to take part. Together the Government and the professions should provide financial support for the project, which should be linked to the proposed national scheme for mentoring by young professionals and university students.

4.5 Professional outreach

Hearing directly from a professional what a career means in practice often helps young people make the right choices about their futures. The Panel was impressed by the breadth and depth of school outreach programmes currently being run by the professions and third sector organisations. The Panel was also impressed by the way some professions use young professionals as ambassadors in schools.

Recommendation 9: Each profession should recruit and support a network of young professional ambassadors who would work with schools to raise awareness of career opportunities for young people. Professional bodies should recognise as continuous professional development the contribution of young professionals who volunteer their time.

Recommendation 10: All schools should work with businesses and professions to promote and support professionally led outreach at late primary and early secondary age.

4.6 Harnessing technology to inform and inspire young people

Technology has an important role to play in inspiring and informing young people about a career in the professions.

Recommendation 11: The Government should work with a professional group to establish a 'youth technology and innovation challenge' award as a means of identifying and showcasing creative ways to inspire young people.

There is currently no shortage of information available to young people about careers in the professions, but because none of it is coordinated it can sometimes be hard to find the best sources. For example, our national youth survey found that two in three young people wanted more support, with one in six highlighting the need for clearer sources of information.²¹

Recommendation 12: The professions and the Government should create a 'professions.com' website to link young people to existing online information about professional careers and schemes, such as internship and mentoring programmes. The professions should provide relevant content and material to develop this website.

4.7 Financing these programmes through new partnerships

The Panel believes that government financial support is critical, but also recognises that government cannot do everything alone – professions and employers also have an important role to play. One way of achieving partnership working is via pooling of financial resources, bringing together government, employers and professional bodies.

Recommendation 13: The Government should bring forward seed-corn funding, in the region of £2.5 million to £3 million, to fund the recommended proposals on mentoring, work tasters and an online portal. Projects should be co-funded by a partnership comprising government, professional bodies and employers.

The Panel also believes that there is a range of innovative financial instruments which could be harnessed to drive forward the social mobility agenda. For example, Social Impact Bonds work by investors putting money into charities or social enterprises, with the Government agreeing to pay the investors interest on the invested amount over a designated period, with full repayment of the principal, conditional upon the demonstrable success of the initiative. The private investor bears the risk of non-performance with clear rewards for success. The Panel believes that such Social Impact Bonds could be a useful instrument for securing partnership investment in social mobility projects.

Recommendation 14: The Government should use the model of Social Impact Bonds as a means of leveraging state and private investment into the delivery of social mobility interventions.

Conclusion

Having an aspiration to succeed is the foundation for a professional career. Without individual aspiration, social mobility simply flounders. Supporting and raising young people's aspirations is primarily a job for parents and families. But schools, universities and careers services also have a role to play. So too do properly organised programmes of mentoring and professional outreach. At present there are a plethora of such schemes, many of them truly inspiring. However, they are poorly coordinated and conceived on an ad hoc basis. We believe that there needs to be a new national drive to raise aspirations. We propose a national 'Yes you can' campaign, fronted by inspirational role models and underpinned by a reformed Gifted and Talented programme in schools. The new programme would include national projects for career mentoring and 'work tasters' with better information services to give young people a far clearer insight into career choices. It would draw on the commitment of a national army of volunteers, including school alumni, drawn from among university students and young professionals.

Chapter 5

Schools: new opportunities to learn and choose careers



In a knowledge-based economy, education is the motor that drives social mobility. In the UK, our education system is characterised by world-beating centres of excellence at every level, from primary schools to higher education institutions. But we also have a long tail of educational under-achievement. It is no longer sustainable for our education system to produce a cohort of youngsters who lack the skills to compete in the modern labour market. The changing nature of our economy demands that every child must be given better opportunities to learn and to choose careers.

In the last decade, there has been a substantial effort on the part of government to raise educational attainment across the board. The priority given to education is most welcome and, in many regards, is paying dividends in improved results, modern schools and higher standards. It is heartening that the Government has invested so heavily in early years education and, in so doing, has learned the lesson from the Scandinavian countries where universal childcare has enhanced mobility and narrowed inequality. We hope that early years will continue to be a priority for investment in the future.

In general, higher levels of education spending are associated with higher levels of mobility and we would be concerned if the recession and pressures on government spending led to reductions in education budgets. We agree with the Sutton Trust, however, that more could be done to target resources on policies and programmes that work towards enabling children from all backgrounds to fulfil their academic potential.

Rising educational attainment

Educational attainment has risen. Considerable progress has been made recently in reducing the number of schools that are deemed to be failing. There is also evidence of progress in narrowing educational inequality. Despite this progress, the attainment gap by social position is still substantial, and it starts very early in life.

Attainment at age 16 is key to children's future life chances. Without it, the likelihood of progression to university or a professional career diminishes. Increasing the pass rate for five GCSEs (including maths and English) for lower socio-economic groups is the most important factor when it comes to widening participation in higher education. According to

the Government's own figures, nine out of 10 students who get two or more A-Levels go on to university whatever their class or background. The problem is that currently about 360,000 of the 660,000 16-year-old students a year do not achieve the minimum standards to stay on to study for A-Levels.²²

This pattern reflects the fact that only 37% of the lower socio-economic groups gain two or more A-Levels, compared with 59% of the higher socio-economic groups. This in turn reflects performance at age 16; only about 34% of children from the lower socio-economic groups get five GCSEs at A–C grades, compared with about 65% from the higher socio-economic groups. For those eligible for free school meals, this figure falls to 22%.²³

The Panel believes that there is more that schools and the Government need to do in order to close this attainment gap. Otherwise the huge expansion that we are likely to see in professional career opportunities will be blocked off for a whole cohort of young people.

5.1 Closing the attainment gap

Increased investment in recent years has modernised schools and increased staff numbers. But reforms have been the key to raising standards. There is much to welcome here but this progress needs to be built on. There remains a clear correlation between poor areas and poor schools. Over half of secondary schools in the 10% most deprived parts of England do not achieve 30% of children getting five good GCSEs (including English and maths), which is the Government's official benchmark for a failing school. In the 10% least deprived areas it is just 3% of schools that are failing.²⁴ Better-off parents are often able to circumvent such problems by taking their child out of a state school and sending them to a private school, by buying extra private tuition or by moving near to a good school. However, these choices are not available to poorer parents.

The problem is not a shortage of parental aspiration. It is a shortage of good schools. The growing numbers of parental appeals – across the whole country – indicates that despite recent progress in raising standards there is a fundamental gap between the demand for and the supply of good schools. This is the case in many different sorts of communities, but it is especially so in the most disadvantaged. Further reform is needed. Several options have been proposed:

- City Academies could be extended both in the primary and secondary sectors, extending out from the most deprived areas to become, over time, universal across the whole country²⁵
- The supply of education places could be opened up to greater competition particularly in areas of school under-performance. Existing government legislation allows this to happen, and new schools are now being set up. Nineteen have already opened, with a further 37 due over the next four years. New impetus could be injected by new partners, such as chains of state schools or schools sponsored by groups of parents, being invited to take over or work with underperforming schools
- In areas of disadvantage schools could receive additional funding, or each pupil from a disadvantaged background could attract a premium payment to recognise their particular needs.²⁶ There are already higher levels of funding for deprivation, but money allocated nationally is not always allocated to schools with the most deprived pupils locally. As the recent 21st Century Schools White Paper set out, in order to ensure that additional funding for each

pupil from a disadvantaged background is passed on, the Government could aim to ensure that 100% of deprivation funding is passed on to schools

- Individual parents in areas where schools are consistently under-performing could be given a new right of redress to choose a better school for their child. They could be given an education credit worth 150% of the cost of the child's schooling to take him/her to a state school of their choice. The extra funding would incentivise good schools to expand their pupil numbers and broaden their social intakes.

These proposals are controversial and contested. For example, the TUC and education unions argue that an educational credit system would exacerbate the divide between popular schools in better-off areas and those left behind in struggling schools, in more disadvantaged communities. Opponents of the Academy programme argue that expansion across the school system, at an accelerated rate, would fail the test of an evidence-based policy approach. Others have suggested to us that the policy focus should be on how all schools in disadvantaged areas can be supported to deliver a high-quality education for all local children.

Recommendation 15: The Government should examine these and other educational reforms as part of a sustained new drive to close the educational attainment gap.

5.2 A richer school experience

Educational attainment unlocks social progress. That is why a focus on the educational basics, especially English and maths, remains vital and we would be concerned if this was in any way diminished. Schools need to be judged on their success in delivering good academic results, particularly at GCSE and A-Level, because these open the door to a university degree and a professional career.

Equally, it is welcome that the Government has recognised that the earlier in a child's life that they start to develop softer skills, the better it will be for them in later life. A sharper more consistent focus on soft skill development could help open up more opportunities for more young people to access a professional career. Our Call for Evidence heard about several outstanding examples of good practice that successfully help young people, from Year 9 to beyond graduation, to develop a range of soft skills. We believe that these initiatives can and should be replicated on a far wider scale so that pupils from all backgrounds can benefit.

Recommendation 16: The Government should scale up its support to third sector organisations providing soft skill development programmes for young people. It should ensure that cost-effective and well-evidenced programmes are available in all parts of the country. Soft skills that could be prioritised include team working, leadership and presentation skills.

The Panel believes that all state schools also need to do more to help build up their pupils' softer skills by ensuring that they are given the chance to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities – and that schools are assessed on how well they do this.

Recommendation 17: Schools should place new emphasis on providing a range of expanded extra-curricular activities. The Government, working with Ofsted, should ensure that school inspections assess how well schools are providing good-quality extra-curricular activities.

We also believe that more could be done to foster partnerships between private and state schools to share the extra-curricular activities that independent schools so successfully prioritise, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas of the country. We welcome the steps that have already been taken through the Independent and State Schools Partnership to harness this expertise. We believe that partnerships can be strengthened by applying the new public benefit test that all independent schools that are charities must meet.

Recommendation 18: The Charity Commission’s assessment of independent schools for public benefit should include how they are sharing their expertise in extra-curricular activity and soft skill acquisition with state schools.

Extra-curricular activities, of course, vary from school to school. Cadet Forces are one example of a well-liked activity. Cadet Forces (the Combined Cadet Force, Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps) promote the personal and social development of young people. Only 60 of the 250 Cadet schools in the country are in state schools, which means that children from middle and low-income families are missing out.

Recommendation 19: The Government should provide resources to ensure that every state school – starting with those in the most deprived areas – that wishes to participate in Cadet Force activities is able to do so.

A similar approach could be taken to other extra-curricular activities. The arts and cultural industries are a case in point. Middle and low-income parents wishing to engage their children in a range of cultural activities often find that there is no structure to support them to do so.

Recommendation 20: The Government should work with the arts and cultural industries to deliver cultural programmes to a network of ‘Arts Explorers’ aged 5 to 11 years. They would receive an annual programme of visits and training in arts and cultural activities, including music, dance, theatre, software and video making.

There is currently no systematic way of recording the accrual of soft skills through extra-curricular activities at either primary or secondary school level.

Recommendation 21: All schools should ensure that pupils from Year 6 upwards have a record of achievement that brings together all their extra-curricular and soft skill activity.

5.3 Reforming careers advice

Professional careers services have a particularly critical brokerage role: linking young people and their parents to employers and different sources of information. The current system of information, advice and guidance (IAG) is a 'one-stop shop' and is most commonly provided through the Connexions service. But satisfaction levels among young people with regard to provision are low. In response to an icould survey on how useful careers advice is, around 45% described it as being poor or worse.

In a complex labour market, good careers guidance is essential. The Panel has learned that much careers advice is provided by staff who are full-time teachers, not professional advisers. It is not acceptable that the futures of young people rely on teachers having to provide advice and support above and beyond their normal teaching duties. Although teachers are well meaning and dedicated to helping young people get on in life, careers advice is a professional and specialist service and should be operated on that basis. Throughout our work we have barely heard a good word about the careers work of the current Connexions service. We can only conclude that its focus on

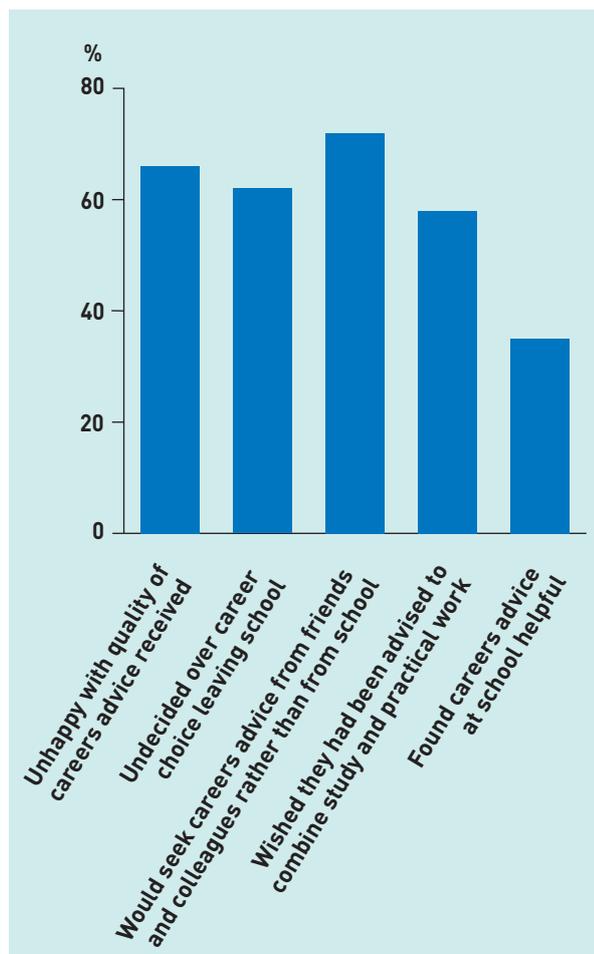


Figure 5a: Dissatisfaction levels with careers advice²⁷

the minority of vulnerable young people is distracting it from offering proper careers advice and guidance to the majority of young people. The service is simply not good enough and requires a radical rethink.

We believe that schools and colleges need to be given direct responsibility, working with local authorities, for making their own decisions about IAG. In practical terms, this would mean schools having the budgets and powers to commission careers brokerage and advice. If they so choose, individual schools and further education colleges could forge partnerships and, for example, share careers officers. Schools should be free to commission services from local authorities but sources of IAG can be provided in diverse ways, and a range of providers already supply high-quality, accessible and impartial advice.

The implication of all of this is that the current Connexions service should be broken up, leaving a residual specialist service free to focus on young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Recommendation 22: Schools and colleges should have direct responsibility for providing information, advice and guidance, with a professional careers service located in every school and college – starting from primary age.

Recommendation 23: The Government should remove careers responsibility from the Connexions service. It should reallocate an estimated £200 million to schools and colleges in order to give them the freedom to tender for careers services from a range of providers.

Good IAG has to engage more fully with parents. It is important, for example, to ensure that children and their parents are given the right support when applying to university.

Recommendation 24: Schools should broker information and advice for children, and parents who have not attended university themselves. The package of advice should include support in completing UCAS forms, preparing for admissions interviews and arranging for parents to visit local universities.

Recommendation 25: Schools, colleges and professions should work in partnership to produce career prospectuses and online information sources aimed at parents. Information could include routes into different professions and the remuneration and costs involved.

Recommendation 26: Ofsted should be given new powers to inspect schools on the quality and performance of their information, advice and guidance provision as part of the Ofsted inspection framework.

5.4 Schools focusing on pupils' outcomes

The Panel strongly supports the focus that schools have been given to raise standards. The Panel believes that although academic performance is important, qualifications alone do not necessarily equip young people with the broader skills that will help them go on to succeed in accessing a professional job. We know that there has been much debate about whether schools are too narrowly focused at present on simply delivering good exam results or whether they should be focusing instead on citizen development. The Panel believes that it is not a question of either/or. It is both.

We welcome the new School Report Card that is to be introduced in 2011 as part of the 21st Century Schools agenda. However, although this is an encouraging direction of travel, the Panel believes that the Report Card could go further still. It is important, in particular, that incentives are put in place so that schools also focus on the later outcomes of their students.

Recommendation 27: The Government should use the School Report Card to provide greater transparency and accountability in regard to schools' performance on improving pupils' outcomes. The Government should develop and introduce appropriate destination indicators and data to assess the progress that pupils make between starting school, leaving school and their destinations after school.

Recommendation 28: The Government should consider how schools could be better incentivised – including financially – to improve pupils' overall outcomes.

Conclusion

We want every school to have a culture of aspiration in which every child is helped and encouraged to fulfil their potential – whether they go to university or pursue a professional career. Despite rises in investment and in standards, some schools are still not providing children with the opportunities they need. We propose reforms that are universal and will help to give every child good careers advice, more extra-curricular activities and the opportunity to acquire the soft skills that employers value so highly. We also propose targeted reforms that are aimed at giving parents who do not currently have access to a good school the power to do so. We believe that these reforms will deliver a better and fairer education system – with positive implications for social mobility – and will enable many more young people to pursue a professional career.

Chapter 6

Universities: new opportunities to pursue higher education



For many who were part of the post-war wave of social mobility, a university place was often a first for the family. It changed lives. By the 1960s there were 200,000 university students. Today there are more than 2.5 million.²⁸ And as student numbers have grown, so the traditional concept of university education has changed:

- The university as the preserve of the 18–21-year-old, full-time undergraduate is now a thing of the past: such students currently represent only one-third of the total student population
- At some universities, part-time students are already in the majority
- The number of mature students has grown: there are now 1.2 million mature students, almost half of the total 2.5 million student population²⁹
- The 'local' university is becoming increasingly important as student numbers grow, resources diminish and many more students with family responsibilities aspire to a university degree.

This changing shape of higher education provides many opportunities for a second wave of social mobility.

6.1 Accelerating flexible higher education

Almost three-quarters of a million university students now learn part-time.³⁰ Studying can be combined with the opportunities that are provided by new learning centres, through the internet or by digital television, none of which are campus- or time-dependent. Accelerating part-time and remote learning means dismantling a number of barriers.

First, the traditional academic calendar does not allow part-time and remote learners to enrol on and undertake university courses in a flexible manner that fits around their lives or careers. Second, while some universities have arrangements in place to accredit individual modules of learning, this is not commonplace: students are typically required to complete full programmes in order to have achievements accredited, and modules are typically not eligible for Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding. Third, part-time learners in higher education do not receive support on an equitable basis to full-time learners: for example part-time students are not eligible for student loan support. This divide in funding, regulatory and student support is now increasingly indefensible and cannot be sustained.

Recommendation 29: Universities and the Government should actively promote a range of entry points through an all-year academic calendar in order to allow learners to enrol on, and undertake, courses at more flexible times throughout the year.

Recommendation 30: Universities and the Government should develop a transferable credit-based learning system to recognise student achievement in discrete modules or mini-courses, building on the findings of the Burgess Report.

Recommendation 31: The Government, working with the Higher Education Funding Council for England, should prioritise investment in e-learning infrastructure to extend the possibilities of remote and online learning.

Recommendation 32: The Government, working with the Higher Education Funding Council for England, should examine how to remove the artificial and increasingly indefensible division between part-time and full-time higher education in relation to funding, regulatory and student support frameworks.

6.2 Vocational routes into higher education

We believe that the silos that divide vocational and higher education are an impediment to social mobility and must be swept away. The evidence is clear that, once at university, those who progress through vocational qualifications perform at similar levels to those who enter through traditional A-Level qualifications. In recent years, there has been good progress made in providing more vocational routes into higher education. For instance, Foundation Degrees were introduced in 2001 as a vocational higher education qualification. More recently, more than 30 Lifelong Learning Networks have been established. We believe that both innovations are to be welcomed.

To truly accelerate progress in vocational learning we advocate building a new bridge between vocational and higher education. It should have three foundations. First, it should ensure that Apprenticeships are appropriately recognised in the UCAS points framework so that people who qualify as an apprentice are able automatically to start on the university degree ladder.

Recommendation 33: The Government should ensure that it delivers on its commitment to incorporate apprenticeship frameworks into the UCAS points system by 2010.

Second, it should establish targeted, fully funded packages for the most talented apprentices to continue their studies at university. Apprentices would receive full support to continue their study while working part-time. It is estimated that this would cost in the region of £50 million per year for 3,000 Apprenticeship Scholarships at university per year. It could be funded from the existing £925 million per year Train to Gain budget.

Recommendation 34: The Government should fully fund an initial 3,000 Apprenticeship Scholarships to higher education, rising over time to 10,000 every year, to give the most talented apprentices the chance of a university education. Funding should come from existing Train to Gain budgets.

Third, it should make the concept of 'HE within FE' a more universal part of university provision. Across the country, many universities have developed new partnerships with further education colleges in particular to deliver foundation degree courses.

Recommendation 35: Universities and colleges, working with the Government, should make the concept of 'HE within FE' one that is universal across the country so that many more mature students, in particular, are able to study for a degree.

6.3 Widening participation further

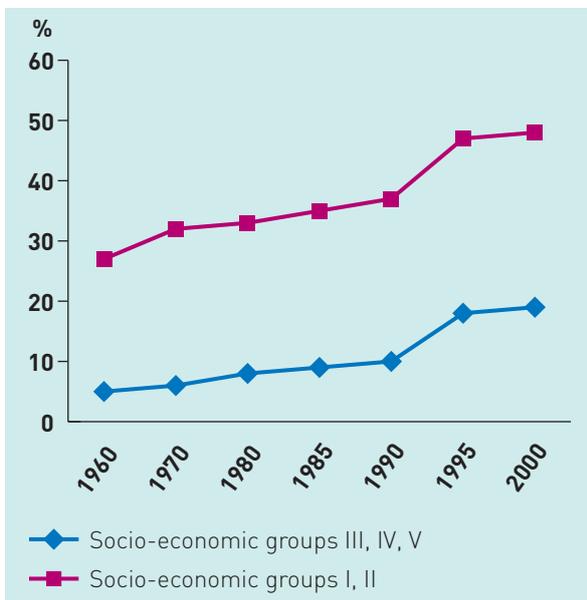


Figure 6a: Higher education participation rates by socio-economic group³¹

Social class has been, and remains, a strong determinant of higher education participation and this gap, although narrowing in recent years, has not substantially closed in the last half century (see figure 6a).

In recent years, universities as a whole have warmly embraced the concepts of wider participation and fair access. The Panel has been struck by the enthusiasm with which so many universities have developed innovative and radical policies and programmes to reach out to under-represented individuals and communities, and those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The Panel believes that the university sector deserves praise for its efforts. We have received clear evidence that, over the last decade, there has been a steady increase in the number of traditionally under-represented groups going into higher education.

Uneven participation rates persist

Despite the progress made, participation rates still vary by parental background. Almost **three times** as many young people with parents in professional positions attend university compared with young people whose parents have routine occupations.

... and the social gap is most acute at selective universities

The UK is very fortunate to have a group of universities that are among the finest in the world. They are world centres of research excellence and they compete on a global scale. Of the universities ranked in the top 10 in the world, four are in the UK.³²

The focus of these more selective, research-intensive, universities is on the very highest academic standards. In recent years they have sought to maintain this focus on excellence and at the same time broaden the social base of their student intake. Nonetheless, despite considerable efforts being made, the participation rate at more selective universities varies considerably. Only 16% of students at the Russell Group universities are from lower socio-economic backgrounds.³³ The Sutton Trust estimates that about 3,000 state school students each year are 'missing' from what it defines as the 13 leading universities in the UK. Their places are taken by independent school students with equal A-Level grades.³⁴

Although the Panel welcomes the progress in widening participation, we believe that the continued social gap in university participation must be addressed. We also believe that the growth in the numbers of young people entering university from average and less well-off backgrounds needs to be set against the volume of expenditure on widening participation activity. We are not convinced that current widening participation funding (£392 million in the last five years) is necessarily delivering value for money. The cost per additional entrant amounts to almost £10,000.

The Panel believes that this is compelling evidence for taking stock of progress made on widening participation in the past in order to refocus efforts for the future.

During our evidence hearings, we heard about the many excellent partnerships that now exist between local universities, schools, colleges and the professions in this country. Many of these initiatives seem to have paid – affordable – dividends in widening university participation. The Panel believes that such partnerships provide an innovative means to widen access to professional careers and should become universal in the next phase of universities' widening participation efforts.

Recommendation 36: Sustainable, concrete links should be established between individual schools, particularly those with low progression rates, and local universities, including specialist help to increase the number of pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A*-C (including English and mathematics). All universities should offer a representative to join the governing bodies of such schools. And, as we propose in recommendation 4, all universities should enlist students to act as role models and mentors for pupils in local schools.

Recommendation 37: All universities should work with schools to ensure that higher education related information, advice and guidance, and outreach and mentoring programmes are provided from primary school level onwards.

Recommendation 38: The Government should redirect an element of widening participation resources into supporting these local partnerships.

Recommendation 39: Each profession should develop partnership compact arrangements with university faculties. These arrangements might include linking up recent professional entrants as personal mentors with young people in schools, and issuing guidance about the profession and how to get into it. (See recommendations 4, 9 and 12)

Judging whether such widening participation efforts have been successful will depend, of course, on good data being available. The Panel believes that more needs to be done here. We believe that transparency and openness are key to ensuring the effectiveness of widening participation expenditure. It will be particularly important to demonstrate results and value for money given the fiscal context in the years ahead.

Recommendation 40: The Higher Education Statistics Agency should publish information on student admissions at university, college and course level, with more detail on pupils' backgrounds. This should be published annually, with year-on-year progress tracked. It should be provided in a format that enables a transparent assessment of the effectiveness of widening participation expenditure at the individual university level.

The Panel has received compelling evidence that supports measures that can ensure higher education opportunities are genuinely open to the widest possible social spectrum. Evidence from the Higher Education Funding Council for England shows that once at university a typical state-educated pupil will perform at the equivalent level to an independently schooled pupil with A-Levels between one and two grades higher (see figure 6b). In other words, the state-educated pupil typically outperforms the independently schooled pupil with the same grades.

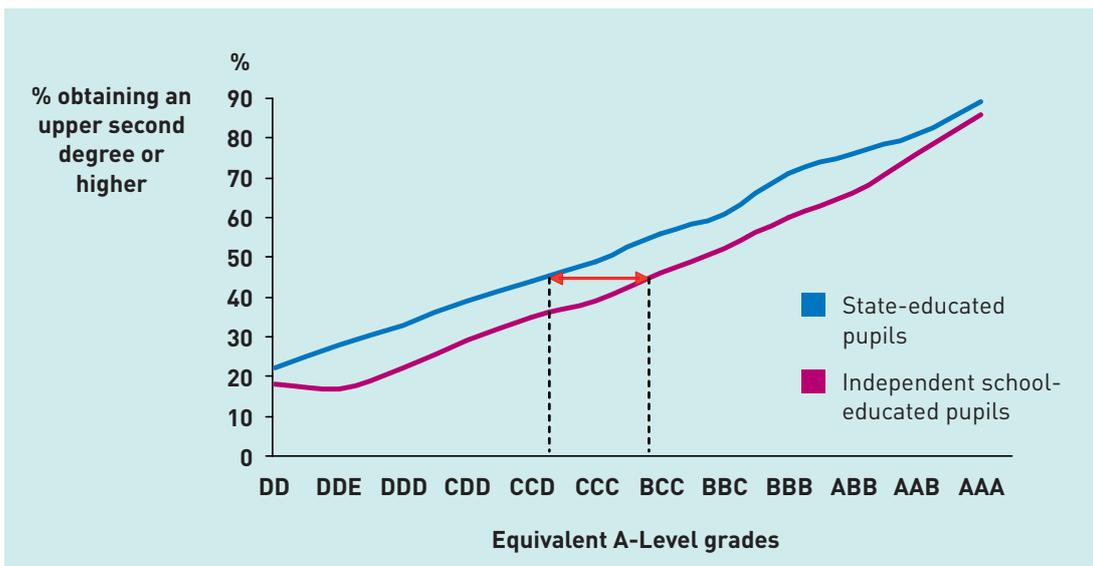


Figure 6b: The 'schooling effect' – university achievement by A-Level grades, by type of school attended³⁵

Admissions procedures determine who gets into university. It is right that academic attainment remains the key to a university place. We have seen compelling evidence, however, that predicted A-Level grades are not a wholly accurate guide: as a report from Ofsted demonstrated, only 42% of those who get three A grades at A-Level were actually predicted to get these grades.³⁶

It is welcome that, in future, pupils will be able to trade up once their results are known, but even then there are wider factors that universities will want to take into account in determining admissions, particularly for students wishing to undertake vocational degrees. Here successful professional careers rely increasingly on aptitude as well as ability. Some universities are already using alternative aptitude testing. Other universities are taking wider educational and social factors into account in assessing pupils' academic achievements.

We have looked at various quota systems from around the world and do not believe they are appropriate. But we do believe that there is a strong case for universities using data that takes account of the educational and social context of pupils' achievement. Many are already doing so. The evidence from these is that this approach improves rather than lowers standards. At Exeter University, for example, average UCAS tariff scores have increased (from 387 in 2006–07 to 411 in 2008–09) as entrants from lower socio-economic groups have increased (from 16.7% to 20.2%). Completion rates are high, and the percentage of first and upper second degrees is one of the highest in the sector.

Recommendation 41: By law it is for universities to determine their admissions procedures but we hope that all universities will take into account the educational and social context of pupils' achievement in their admissions process.

6.4 Addressing financial fears

In the course of its work, the Panel has received evidence from many professions that concerns about the cost of a university education may put off some aspirant professionals from undertaking higher education courses. We have looked closely at the evidence on tuition fees and believe that there remains an overwhelmingly strong financial case for people to enter higher education: for example, the wages of graduates are typically 60% higher than those with no qualifications³⁷ and graduates typically earn over £160,000 more during their lifetime than non-graduates.³⁸ We do, however, believe that more could be done to ensure that the fear of debt does not dissuade talented young people from applying to university. Information can help address these concerns.

Recommendation 42: In order to overcome financial fears, universities should help schools to inform children before they reach the age of 16 – together with their parents – about the grants and financial support to which they would be entitled if they progressed to university.

We also believe that the Government should use the opportunity presented by its commitment to commission a review of the impact of variable tuition fees to consider the case for more targeted financial support for students. In the years ahead, particularly in the context of constraints on public spending, clear trade-offs will have to be made between university fee income, student numbers and student support. We believe that the Government should open a national debate

about the relationship between the level of fees that universities are able to charge and their ability to expand student numbers. We understand that higher fees are anathema to many. Equally, higher fees could generate extra income which could both increase student places and provide higher levels of financial support for students who need it most.

This debate will need to include the issue of postgraduate degrees. They have increasingly become an important route into many professional careers. But these courses are substantially more expensive than undergraduate degrees, often up to £12,000 per year, and there is no equivalent student support framework as there is for undergraduates. If fair access is to be possible, this issue will need to be addressed. New proposals need to be formulated to establish a clear, transparent and fair system of student financial support for postgraduate learners.

Decisions about fee levels and student numbers also open up options for new packages of targeted student financial support. And as local universities in cities and towns across the country become more important – particularly for the growing number of mature students – more innovative student financial support systems could be developed for non-residential local learners. One model for this could be to extend the Education Maintenance Allowance principle – which has been successful at raising school participation to age 18 – to local learners at university. We also believe that there is a strong case for local students who are living at home and studying locally to have the opportunity of ‘fee-free’ higher education. It will be important that this model does not impact on the quality of teaching and academic support, or lead to a two-tier system of higher education.

Recommendation 43: The Government should use the opportunity of its review of the impact of variable tuition fees to consider a radical reshaping of the student support system. It should initiate a national debate on the trade-offs between higher fees, growing student places and increasing financial support for students. It should consider fairer financial support for those undertaking postgraduate and part-time courses, more targeted packages of financial support for students from average and less well-off families, and new support for students living and learning at their local university, including ‘fee-free’ higher education.

6.5 Integrating professional experience into academic courses

We have heard good evidence that other countries are moving towards a more integrated higher education experience which combines traditional academic skills with an emphasis on practical professional experience.

Recommendation 44: The Government should work with universities to develop proposals to integrate a flexible element of professional experience into all higher education courses.

6.6 A new focus on student outcomes

Just as we believe that schools should focus better on the outcomes of their pupils, so should universities. Currently, two surveys into the destination of university leavers are conducted every year. But outcomes are not currently linked to university funding. Introducing an incentive that is tied to future employment outcomes would focus universities on readying students for careers, especially in the professions.

Recommendation 45: The Government should support universities to collect and publish a rounded picture on student destinations, building on the existing leaver surveys. The Government should reflect on the merits of linking data to financial incentives and may wish to redirect some of the Widening Participation funding to this end.

Conclusion

The expansion in university education has provided new opportunities for tens of thousands of people. Universities are the gateway to the professions now and will be in the future. The UK is blessed with some of the greatest universities in the world and we must do everything we can to preserve and improve their global standing. Equally, universities need to adapt, not just to keep pace with economic and fiscal change, but even more fundamentally to respond to changes in the nature of the student population. Students in the future will be more mature, more part-time and more vocational in their outlook. This all bodes well for social mobility – providing that the right reforms are made in relation to how universities operate. We believe that our proposals will allow universities to play a central role in delivering a second great wave of social mobility in our country.

Chapter 7

Internships: new opportunities to get onto the professional career ladder



Internships are today an essential part of the career ladder in many professions. They are part and parcel of a modern, flexible economy and are useful both for interns and for employers. Indeed, many professional employers put a great deal of time and effort into their internships. Where once they were an informal means of gaining practical insight into a particular career, today internships are a rung on the ladder to success. Yet, by and large, they operate as part of an informal economy in which securing an internship all too often depends on who you know not what you know. Opportunities to undertake internships are not fairly distributed.

Cost of undertaking an internship

The cost of undertaking an internship can put off many people. Internships are often low-paid or not paid at all. Those with the least financial resources are less likely to be in a position to forgo the opportunity to earn more in order to undertake an internship. We have been shown research demonstrating that the less advantaged are most put off by the costs of undertaking an internship.

Geographical difficulties in undertaking an internship

Geography plays its part in getting access to an internship. Many internships that are linked to the professions are in London or the South East. If a prospective intern does not live within a commutable distance from London or does not have friends or relatives with whom they can stay, then the cost of the internship can be prohibitively high.

Informational barriers to undertaking an internship

Those who are from a background in which internships are commonplace are not only more likely to know of their existence but are also, through contact with relatives or friends who employ interns, more likely to know what qualities internship schemes are looking for.

Variable quality of internships

Internships are also of variable quality. Some are very poorly run; others are run to a very high standard. The Panel has heard evidence that some companies use interns as a low-cost way to cover positions that would otherwise be filled by a permanent full-time member of staff. Such a situation is unlikely to lead to a highly developmental internship experience.

The Panel believes that the opportunity to undertake an internship should be open to all. The best and most talented should be able to compete for internship places based solely on intellect, talent and potential. Background and social network should not be the critical factors in determining or allocating internship opportunities.

We believe that, in the first instance, a voluntary approach based on partnership between the Government, professions, employers and others is the best way to ensure fair opportunities for internships. We also believe that the Government should review, in due course, whether this voluntary approach has been successful and at that point consider stronger measures for compliance, including through new legislation.

Recommendation 46: The Government should review how effective the Panel's voluntary approach on internships has been by the end of 2012, with a view to enacting stronger means to ensure compliance if satisfactory progress has not been made at that point, including through new legislation.

7.1 Establishing a fair and transparent system for internships

Many of the submissions put to the Panel as part of the Call for Evidence asked for a greater degree of guidance around internships and work experience placements. The Panel has looked into the issue of remuneration for interns. Many interns are not paid or are poorly paid. We recognise that there are many different sorts of internship. It is important that employers continue to create internships, and many already put huge effort into making them a successful experience both for the intern and for the business. We want to see many more high-quality internships being offered. A high-quality internship involves the intern undertaking meaningful and valuable work for the organisation. In this way the intern learns and benefits most from the internship and the company gets most business value from the intern. The Panel believes that there should, in general, be fair recognition of the value an intern brings to the organisation in remuneration levels.

A best practice code for running high-quality internships would provide a set of minimum standards against which internship programmes could be modelled. Such a code would provide those employers who wish to run a high-quality scheme with the information and advice that they need. This would present those who wish to continue informal systems with a challenge to change their approach.

Recommendation 47: The professions, the Government, trade unions and the third sector should together produce a common best practice code for high-quality internships.

Recommendation 48: Each profession should make employers in its field aware of the best practice code and encourage them to adopt it for all relevant internship and work experience placements (including university 'sandwich' courses).

Advertising internship opportunities in a well-known and easily accessible space would increase the visibility of such positions and, through greater competition (both among recruiters and potential interns, drive up the quality of internship placements.

It is welcome that the Government has recently launched the Talent Pool Internship Portal. The Panel considers this to be an ideal vehicle for advertising internships.

Recommendation 49: The Government should develop the Talent Pool Internship Portal to become a single website for all pre- and postgraduate internships.

Recommendation 50: The Government should ensure that the Talent Pool Internship Portal has an advertising budget that is sufficient to ensure that it has a high-profile launch. It should target students who would otherwise not be aware of these opportunities, pre-university students who might not know that financial help towards a professional career is available, and schools with a high proportion of children on free school meals.

7.2 Recognising best practice: a national Kitemark for employers

In order for potential interns to better understand which schemes are well run and which are not, an external and independent quality assurance process would be useful.

Recommendation 51: The professions, the Government, trade unions and the third sector should agree an Internship Quality Kitemark scheme for high-quality internship programmes. The Kitemark should set out the criteria that a high-quality internship placement should meet (based on the common best practice code for high-quality internships proposed in recommendation 47).

Recommendation 52: Each professional association should make the acceptance and use of the best practice code and Kitemark a condition of being a member of the professional association, and accept responsibility for making employers in their field aware of both.

Recommendation 53: Universities should take responsibility for ensuring that their 'sandwich' courses are in line with the common best practice code for high-quality internships and meet the Kitemark standards.

Recommendation 54: The National Union of Students, Trades Union Congress and the Government should work together to take forward an outreach programme to ensure that students from all backgrounds give due consideration to undertaking an internship.

Recommendation 55: The Talent Pool Internship Portal should go further in developing and promoting its forum where ex-interns can post reviews of the internships that they have undertaken.

7.3 Affordability: removing financial constraints

Addressing affordability issues is important if internship opportunities are to be more evenly available.

Recommendation 56: The Government should allow students to draw down their existing Student Loan entitlement in four parts, rather than the current three, so enabling students to be able to cover the additional costs of undertaking a short summer internship. The Government should review how to appropriately target additional loan support to such students through this window.

Using a mechanism similar to the current Student Loans to support interns could be another highly effective way of helping people to meet the costs of an internship. Micro-loans could be made available that are sufficient to cover, as a minimum, a short internship of one or two months' duration.

Recommendation 57: The Government should explore ways of providing means-tested micro-loans to interns to cover the cost of living and commuting for a short internship period.

Recommendation 58: Companies offering internships should be given the option to pay a small part of their tax contribution directly to the Student Loans Company to cover the cost of the internship loans and associated administrative costs.

Recommendation 59: The Government should work with banks and other lending institutions to provide internship support loans to be used to cover the costs associated with undertaking an internship. Such loans could be made along similar lines to Professional and Career Development Loans.

Recommendation 60: Provision of all government-brokered or -supported financial assistance for interns should be dependent upon the internship placement in question having received the Internship Quality Kitemark. Professions should stipulate a similar restriction upon any financial assistance provided or brokered by them for similar purposes. Universities should support the Kitemark scheme by advertising it to students who are looking for internships.

Recommendation 61: The professions should provide more support for interns from lower socio-economic backgrounds through grants and loans. The Government should recognise the efforts of those employers that provide such support for interns by granting tax relief on money that is provided for grants and loans.

Recommendation 62: Professions should work directly with banks and other lending institutions to provide privately brokered financing for those studying for relevant professional qualifications.

Recommendation 63: The professions should create an online resource that sets out the range of profession-specific financial support that is available for prospective interns and students of professional qualifications. The online resource should set out what support is available, where it can be accessed, the criteria used to disburse it and the various application methods and deadlines. Such information should be advertised on professional websites, as well as on the Government's Talent Pool Internship Portal.

Recommendation 64: Universities should provide low-cost or free accommodation for young people undertaking internships during university vacations. Universities should work with the Government to set up a matching service for prospective interns.

Conclusion

Internships are accessible only to some, whereas they should be open to all who have aptitude. Currently employers are missing out on talented people – and talented people are missing opportunities to progress. There are negative consequences for social mobility and for fair access to the professions. A radical change is needed. We propose ways of making internships more accessible, more transparent and more available to many more people. We do so in a way that is fair to employers as well as to interns. We welcome the good work that some professions are doing already and want to support others to follow – making the prospect of an internship a possibility for all.

Chapter 8

Recruitment and selection: new opportunities for talent to shine



Fair selection is essential to improving access to the professions. Improved efforts at school, college and university may help to equip young people with the right skills and ambition to become professionals but without the proper recruitment practices and commitment from the professions they will not have the opportunity to compete fairly for professional employment.

We have received strong evidence that supports the need for fairer recruitment and selection:

- Around 70% of graduate recruiters target fewer than 20 university campuses, even though there are currently 109 UK universities and 169 higher education institutions³⁹
- Our Call for Evidence found weaknesses in both assessment centres and interviews when recruiting to professional jobs
- Top employers often sift as far back as school in order to distinguish between candidates⁴⁰
- The process of sifting applicants rarely recognises attributes and experiences beyond academic achievement.

Just as progress on gender and race has involved a culture change, so here the professions need to lead a major change in how they are seen and how they see themselves. Submissions to our National Call for Evidence cited the frequent practice of professions recruiting from existing cultural circles and thus exclude many potential candidates who are regarded as being from 'outside' the circle.

Some employers are already starting to buck the trend and to improve actively their recruitment and selection processes. For example, the Civil Service has been widening the number of universities that it targets for graduates to its Fast Stream programme. The Panel also received feedback from the professions seeking clear guidance on how to improve their selection processes and open their doors to a more diverse and talented workforce. Here the Government could help by providing guidance, support and encouragement to the professions on how they could improve access.

8.1 Collecting data on socio-economic background

The evidence gathered by the Panel suggests that there is no systematic collection of data on the social background of those who are applying to and entering the professions. Collection and publication of data on gender, race and disability have opened minds and changed behaviours. The Panel believes that the publication of similar data by socio-economic background could have a powerful influence on public sector bodies, but we are anxious to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. We have therefore concluded that although there is merit in collecting and publishing data on socio-economic background (in a similar way to how data on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability is currently collected), such a change widespread across the public sector should not be made unless there is careful evaluation of its benefits and its costs. We have, however, identified the Senior Civil Service as an organisation that has traditionally been socially exclusive in its make-up but that has been making big efforts to broaden its intake. We believe that it should be the focus for a pilot programme that can then be appropriately evaluated.

Recommendation 65: The Government should collect and publish data on the socio-economic background of applicants and entrants to the Senior Civil Service, drawing on the lessons that have been learned from collecting and publishing data on gender, race and disability.

8.2 Professions planning for fair access

Evidence submitted to the Panel suggests that professions are beginning to take a lead in reviewing and reforming their recruitment and selection processes. We believe it is vital that the professions take the initiative and develop solutions themselves. It is certainly preferable for the professions to reform themselves rather than having to respond to a mandate from the Government. We recognise that a 'one size fits all' solution will not be the most effective means to improve access. So, we look to the professions to take a lead. Here we believe that the legal profession has paved the way through the Neuberger Report. The result was a report recommending a set of proposals that were designed to increase significantly the number of able people from disadvantaged backgrounds at the Bar.

Recommendation 66: Each profession should carry out a review of current practice on fair access to its profession, with a view to developing practical ideas for improvement. The professions should report publicly on these by the end of 2010, with a clear set of recommendations and an action plan for implementation.

8.3 Promoting fair standards: a guide for employers

A fair selection process is essential for ensuring that the best candidate is chosen for the job. Respondents to our Call for Evidence had mixed views about current selection processes. Many thought that current processes were sufficiently structured to ensure relative fairness, but a number of respondents suggested that, despite objective bureaucratic processes, the selection criteria often favoured groups from high socio-economic backgrounds. We want the professions to develop the best recruitment and selection processes in order to identify the candidates with the most potential. Our evidence suggests that current practices do not always result in the best candidates getting through.

Earlier this year, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Professional Association Research Network launched the Professional Recruitment Guide.⁴¹ The guide provides advice and examples to help firms to look beyond their usual recruitment processes to access a wider pool of talent. We believe that the guide is a useful tool, but it needs to be amended to ensure the inclusion of socio-economic background as an issue of diversity in recruitment. It also needs to take account of broader recruitment techniques such as mentoring, school outreach schemes and internships. It should then be actively promoted by the Government and the professions.

Recommendation 67: The Government's online Professional Recruitment Guide should be amended and should be jointly and actively promoted by the professions and the Government to help employers to develop recruitment practices that can ensure fairer access.

Conclusion

We believe that it is for employers to decide how they recruit employees, but we have heard that they want help in doing so. We also believe that information is power. Without it, bad practice goes unheeded and problems remain undetected. We have seen how the collection and publication of data on gender, race and disability have shone a light on discrimination and changed behaviour. We believe that a similar approach is needed in relation to data on socio-economic background and that, in particular, taxpayers have a right to know how well public bodies are doing in improving fair access. We want to help private sector employers to do the same. And we want to see the professions themselves taking the lead on this agenda.

Chapter 9

Flexible professions: new opportunities for career progression



During the first great wave of social mobility, access to professional jobs was open to people from a wide variety of backgrounds, possessing a broad range of qualifications. Many people who entered at the bottom had the opportunity to work their way up to the top of the professions. The professions not only contributed to the country's social mobility, they themselves were also extremely socially mobile. Following this first wave, access to the professions, with some notable exceptions such as the police and armed services, has become increasingly the preserve of those with a university degree and a more socially exclusive group of people.

It is vital that the professions are staffed by people with appropriate qualifications. None of us would want to be treated by an under-qualified doctor any more than we would want to employ the services of an amateur architect. But during the course of our work we have heard a growing chorus of concern about the professions inadvertently closing their doors to a raft of talent. There are fewer chances for people to work their way up from the bottom to the top of the professional career ladder because of the aggregate impact of a series of incremental changes:

- Increased labour specialisation leading to job silos that block career paths
- Technological change stripping away routine entry-level jobs
- Qualification inflation with the advent of a near-universal minimum graduate entry requirement
- Increased regulatory and accountability demands leading to a more risk-averse culture.

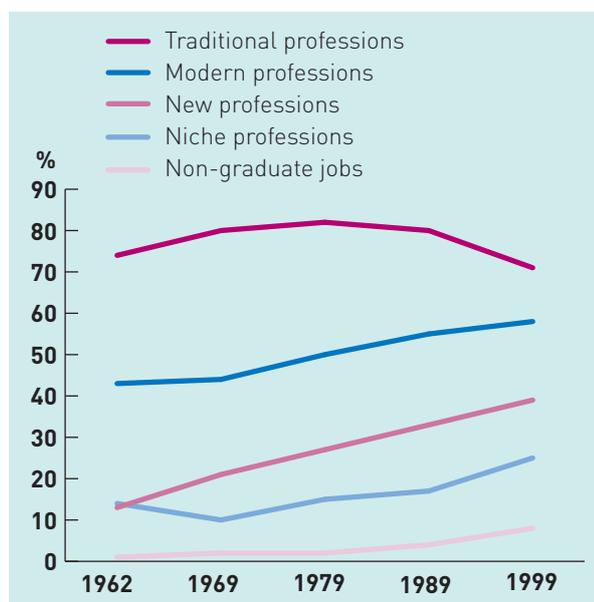
The effect of these changes is that those with an inherent capability to perform in professional careers, but perhaps lacking qualifications, are now less likely to become professional entrants. When combined with the growing inflexibility in how people can progress up the career ladder, this has had serious consequences for social mobility. Just as importantly, if it is not addressed, it will have serious consequences for the ability of the professions to recruit the many millions of extra staff that they will need to take on in the decades ahead.

To address this, a new definition of the professions is needed. The current default assumption, that the professions can only be formed from those possessing one set of qualifications at the point of entry, is elitist and out of date. A modern definition of the professions should instead take as wide a view as possible of the roles that can be classified as professional, and positively encourage entry through a broad set of routes. In their policies, practices and literature, the professions should make clear that non-graduate jobs are equally as professional, and equally as valued, as graduate jobs and that in most sectors there will be many discrete professional occupations.

It is vital that the professions, while retaining the highest standards, find ways of opening up opportunities for people at different stages of their life through more flexible entry and progression routes. We are clear that opening up such opportunities is a core component of the overall social mobility picture.

9.1 Extending the ladder of entry points into the professions

New vocational routes into the professions



In recent years, many professions have adopted a graduate-only entry policy: nursing and social care are two recent examples.

Many professions have become increasingly concerned about these developments and have taken the lead in developing innovative new levers to prise open the professions. For example, the major accountancy institutes all offer non-graduate routes to entry. From the evidence that we have received, it is clear that vocational routes will not be appropriate for all professions. However, we believe that they can form part of a diverse set of routes into professional careers.

Figure 9a: Percentage of jobs requiring a degree by professional type⁴²

Recommendation 68: Each profession should work with the National Apprenticeship Service and the relevant Sector Skills Councils to establish clear progression routes from vocational training into the professions, and ensure that learners are aware of these routes.

Recommendation 69: The Government and the professions should provide a repository of best practice setting out practical ways in which vocational routes can be expanded into the professions.

For many people growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, the apprenticeship was a route to a career in a profession such as engineering or journalism. In the 1960s, there were around 240,000 people undertaking an apprenticeship every year. By 1990, only 53,000 people got a place on an apprenticeship.⁴³ Apprenticeship numbers have now grown back to 180,000 per year. We welcome this and believe that more can be done to make the apprenticeship a new route into the professions.

In the *New Opportunities* White Paper, the Government committed to 21,000 new apprenticeship places in the public services. We believe that public service professions have an opportunity to lead the way in demonstrating how these vocational routes can provide a stepping stone to professional career positions. We also believe that there may be opportunities to extend the apprenticeship model for the civil service and local government.

Recommendation 70: The Government should extend apprenticeships in professional areas of employment in government departments. Where applicable, these should be explicitly linked to existing management development programmes such as the Civil Service Fast Stream.

Recommendation 71: The professions should consider how to introduce apprenticeship schemes as part of their reviews of fair access processes in recommendation 66.

Paraprofessional entry routes to the professions

In recent years, many professions have taken a long, hard look at the range of functions that they discharge, with a view to devolving some to new classes of paraprofessionals. In education, for example, classroom assistants now help to relieve the workload of teachers. We believe that these developments are welcome. In examples such as these, it is recognised that not every professional function has to be discharged by the highest qualified professional. Instead many functions can be devolved.

Recommendation 72: Each profession should examine the potential to devolve functions to paraprofessionals. The Government should ensure that, across all of the public services, reform programmes are being introduced to do the same.

The creation of new entry points, however, brings its own problems. We heard evidence from professions, such as teaching, that there are currently low rates of progression from paraprofessional to more senior roles. This is clearly an issue of concern. It would be tragic if, having created a new rung on the professional career ladder, people were then unable to progress onwards.

Recommendation 73: The professions should work with the Government and others to set out clear progression maps from paraprofessional roles, and ensure that training systems support these routes.

9.2 Opening up mid-career opportunities

Many aspirant professionals may wish to enter a career at a later stage in their lives, whereas others will wish to move careers or re-enter a profession after taking a period of time out. In a modern and flexible economy, it is right that professional opportunities are open to them. As retirement age increases and as more people want a diverse and varied career, the likelihood of people changing careers may well also increase. The professions will need to adapt. We heard evidence from the accountancy profession about the benefits that mid-career entrants can bring to employers. At present relatively few professions recognise qualifications and accreditations gained in other sectors.

Recommendation 74: Professional bodies and professional regulators should encourage businesses in their sector to ensure that they meet best practice in mid-career changes and career interchange routes. Regulators should publish information on how successful professional employers are being in providing more flexible entry and progression routes.

The re-entry of professional women to the workplace will make a significant contribution to gross domestic product: increased women's participation in the labour market could be worth between £15 billion and £23 billion or 1.3% to 2.0% of GDP.⁴⁴

Recommendation 75: The Government should review how best to support return-to-work programmes for mid-career changes and professional re-entrants, for example through incentives for employers who adopt such schemes early.

9.3 Encouraging more flexible working patterns

We have received evidence highlighting the importance of flexible working patterns for social mobility. We believe that the lack of good quality part-time roles is frustrating for the individual and a personal financial cost. It is also not using the full potential of the workforce and represents an under-use of experience and skills for the economy.

In April 2009, the right to request flexible working was extended to parents and carers with children up to the age of 16 (from the previous right covering parents and carers with children up to the age of 6). This right needs to be balanced with its potential impact on businesses and employers – although in time it could be extended to other employees.

Recommendation 76: Once economic circumstances allow, the right to request flexible working should be extended to all employees.

9.4 A new demand-led training system that empowers learners

We heard compelling evidence that people who are looking to progress up the career ladder are faced with a training system that is increasingly complex and inflexible. At the simplest of levels, the current training system means that a classroom assistant who is aspiring to become a teacher could have to give up work, find childcare and sacrifice income in order to retrain and then progress. Of course professionals – and would-be professionals – often need to make

such sacrifices in order to get on. But the way our training system is structured makes it very difficult – sometimes impossible – for many people to do so. There are different funding systems for different courses. There is no common standard against which to recognise the value of different qualifications. And current training regimes tend to be inflexible as funding is directed to institutions, rather than individuals, to match to their own requirements.

We believe that there is a good case for developing a more demand-led system for training and development. This would enable people to develop their own individual training and learning plans and pursue a specific career at a time that is right for them rather than at a time that is dictated by the education system. Some countries such as Scotland and Australia have a greater element of demand-led funding. We believe that we should learn from this.

The Government is currently piloting a model of Skill Accounts in England. These are based on a portal providing information about opportunities and funding entitlements. By 2015 it is anticipated that £1.5 billion of public finance will go through Skill Accounts. However, this money will not be truly demand led: individual ‘entitlements’, in reality, will operate through existing supply-driven training schemes such as the Government’s Train to Gain model. Skill Accounts will provide some choice but will not, for example, enable learners to take their entitlement to the provider or course of their choice. We believe that there is merit in moving to a more demand-driven model of training.

Lifelong Skill Accounts could give learners an individual budget that they could redeem for different courses and different providers, and combine more flexibly with their own or their employer’s contribution. It could be tied to the individual learner number so that people could carry the learning entitlement throughout their life. This would enable people to learn in different ways and at different stages of their career.

Recognising the lessons learned from the previous experience of Individual Learning Accounts in England, clear safeguards and design features would need to be in place to guarantee high-quality, efficient and effective training programmes. There would be a ‘preferred provider’ list of training suppliers, with individuals and employers able to co-fund training packages. Some courses would not be eligible for public funding purchase through the Lifelong Skill Accounts, but others would be eligible for different levels of public co-funding depending on their relevance to national economic and social priorities. Resources would be redeployed by redirecting existing skill and training budgets, which currently go to providers, into the hands of individual purchasers. We believe that this would induce sharper competition among providers and better align training provision with local labour market needs.

Recommendation 77: The Government should reconfigure the existing Skills Account programme to establish a truly demand-driven system of Lifelong Skill Accounts. They could comprise a voucher up to the value of £5,000 that could be topped up through contributions from individuals and employers with a wide range of entitlements, including to apprenticeships, professional qualifications and to part-time further and higher education programmes, for example.

Recommendation 78: As part of a shift to a more demand-led model of training the Government should review how to redirect support for employers through tax or other direct incentive schemes.

9.5 Recognising the contribution of further education as a driver of social mobility

We believe that there would be major benefits for further education in such a fundamental shift in the training system. We believe that the important work of further education colleges needs greater recognition as a driver of social mobility. Some 56% of 17-year-olds in full-time education in further education colleges come from the bottom three socio-economic groups, compared with 31% in sixth form colleges and 22% in maintained school sixth forms.⁴⁵ In many other countries with high rates of social mobility, the further education system has a more prominent role.

A shift to the more demand-driven model of training, characterised by our idea of Lifelong Skill Accounts, could help to free up wider aspects of the further education system by reducing bureaucracy and freeing colleges from more than 17 oversight bodies.

Recommendation 79: As part of a shift to more demand-led training, the Government should review how it can free up the oversight and control of further education.

Recommendation 80: The Government should ensure that future increases in spending are better aligned between further and higher education, recognising the important contribution of further education colleges for social mobility, particularly as providers of diverse training routes into the professions.

Conclusion

Access to a professional career has become more and more inflexible over time. Graduate-only entry has become a mindset across the professions, with profound implications for social mobility. The professions will not flourish unless they extend, rather than limiting, the rungs on the professional career ladder. Some are already doing this; others need to follow their lead. Our proposals are aimed at helping them to do so. By widening the funnel through which the professions recruit, our proposals will help to reverse growing social exclusivity. In the process, we believe that they will help to lay the foundations for a second great wave of social mobility in our country.

Chapter 10

Delivering the recommendations



Publishing this Report will not in itself make access to the professions fairer. But we hope that it will spark the professions, government and others to initiate change that will last. The good practice that we have highlighted in this Report – led by the professions and others – needs to be far more widely spread. A culture change is needed. Attitude and practices both need to change too. Some changes can happen quickly; others will take time. Change cannot be a one-off; sustained effort is required. And real change will entail mechanisms being put in place to deliver and monitor progress.

10.1 The Panel

The Panel's Report contains a total of 88 recommendations. The Panel expects the Government to respond to this Report in the autumn, with a similar expectation for the professions. Some of our recommendations, including our proposed national projects on career mentors, role models, work tasters and a new code for internships, can and should be implemented in the near term, and we would expect both the Government and the professions to take early action. Other recommendations, including how new routes to the professions can be opened up and how we can ensure a more demand-led approach to the training system, will require more planning before implementation.

Recommendation 81: The Panel on Fair Access should meet annually to carry out a stock-take of progress that the Government and the professions have made in implementing its recommendations. After each meeting it should publish its findings, with any additional recommendations it sees fit to make. The Government should support the Panel to carry out these tasks.

10.2 A UK Professional Forum

Many of the recommendations in this Report will require close cooperation between the Government and the professions. We believe that a mechanism for continued dialogue between the Government and the professions is needed to ensure implementation.

The former Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills ran the Gateways to the Professions Collaborative Forum, which aimed to encourage more effective joint working between professional bodies, Sector Skills Councils and higher education. The Forum would benefit from including representatives from a wider range of professions, including the arts, media, creative industries and the Armed Forces.

Recommendation 82: The Government and the professions should agree to continue the Gateways to the Professions Collaborative Forum in the form of a UK Professional Forum. The new Forum should be chaired at ministerial level and should comprise senior representatives from a diverse range of professions.

10.3 Professional regulators

Many professions have regulators who oversee and scrutinise professional standards, qualifications and accredited membership. With the backing and encouragement of the main representative organisations of the professions, we would hope that the professions' regulations could embed the fair access agenda as a mainstream element of the professions' business culture.

Recommendation 83: The statutory and approved regulators of individual professions should embed the social mobility and fair access agenda into strategic plans.

Recommendation 84: Regulators should consider how to embed more widely the fair access agenda permanently into the work and strategic planning of their professions and take the appropriate regulatory action to do so.

10.4 Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is an umbrella term for self-regulated ethical and public interest activity that businesses undertake. Participation in mentoring programmes, outreach activity, fair internships and work experience programmes are examples of activities that professional bodies and employers could undertake that would benefit the local community and their own employees.

Recommendation 85: The professions should routinely report on activities that are aimed at making access fairer as part of their established corporate social responsibility reporting arrangements.

Recommendation 86: The Government, through Business Link services, should provide comprehensive guidance on what type of activity could be taken to make access fairer and that would meet corporate social responsibility objectives.

Recommendation 87: The Government should explore the case for targeted support, such as tax incentives, to leverage additional measures from employers to open up access.

10.5 A fair access charter mark

In the course of its work, the Panel has seen a great deal of excellent work by professional bodies and individual employers on making access fairer. Much of this excellent work currently goes unrecognised. Yet elsewhere awards such as Investors in People have acted as an incentive to employers to improve their practices and have become highly sought after. We believe that there are lessons to be learned here for fair access to the professions.

Recommendation 88: The Government should introduce a fair access charter mark to recognise and reward those professional bodies and employers that take direct, effective and meaningful steps towards making access to their profession fairer.

Conclusion

This Report is the beginning, not the end. We hope that it kick-starts a fundamental process of change – in communities, schools, colleges, universities, employers and professions, and local and national government. We hope that it puts fair access, equal opportunities and social mobility at the top of all of their agendas.

We believe in our country, and its future success, economically as well as socially, relies on this change happening. From all that we have seen during our work – the inspiring projects that the professions have helped to initiate, the efforts that the Government is making – we are optimistic. This is an issue whose time has come. But we know that change does not just happen: it has got to be made. So we propose ways to embed change – in government, in the professions, among employers – and we plan to continue our own work as an independent Panel to report on the progress that we hope to see.

Annex A

Membership of the Panel

The Panel comprises 18 representatives from a range of professions. They are all influential and high-profile members of their professions. The Panel provides expertise from the perspective of particular professions but additionally looks at issues of fair access to professions as a whole. On the Panel are two independent experts on social mobility and fair access issues.

The Panel:

- Chair: Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP
- Academia: Professor Madeleine Atkins, Vice-Chancellor, Coventry University
- Accountancy and Business Advice: Neil Sherlock, Partner, KPMG
- Architecture: Sunand Prasad, President, Royal Institute of British Architects
- Armed Forces: Major General David McDowall MBE
- Arts: Jude Kelly OBE, Artistic Director, Southbank Centre
- Civil Service: Gill Rider, Director General, Civil Service Capability Group
- Engineering: Philip Greenish CBE, Chief Executive, Royal Academy of Engineering
- Expert: Trevor Phillips OBE, Chair, Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Expert: Geoffrey Vos QC, Chairman, Social Mobility Foundation
- Finance: Azeem Ibrahim, founder, European Commerce and Mercantile Bank
- Journalism: Elinor Goodman, freelance journalist and former political editor of Channel 4 News
- Law: Lord David Neuberger PC QC
- Local Government: Katherine Kerswell, Chief Executive, Northamptonshire County Council
- Media: Michael Grade CBE, Executive Chairman, ITV
- Medicine and Dentistry: Professor Sir John Tooke, Dean, Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry
- Police: Sara Thornton, Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police
- Politics: Baroness Gillian Shephard, Conservative peer
- Publishing: Dame Gail Rebuck CBE, Chair and Chief Executive, Random House Group Ltd
- Science: Lord Martin Rees of Ludlow, President of the Royal Society and Astronomer Royal
- Trades Unions: Frances O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary, TUC

Endnotes

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The Panel is independent of HM Government. This report is therefore not a statement of HM Government policy.

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