

The demand for adult career guidance in England: Market sizing against a typology of needs

Executive Summary

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Executive summary

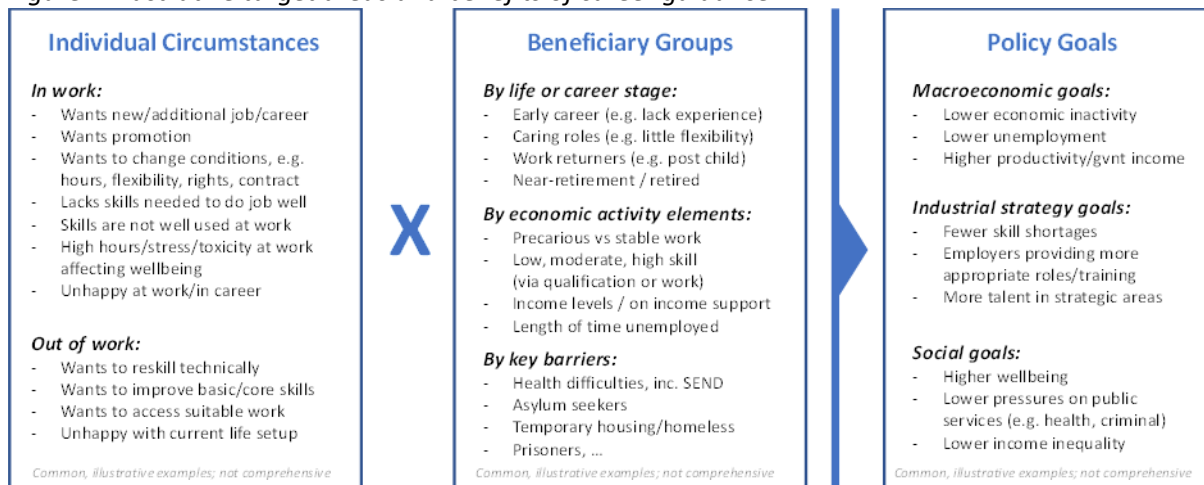
Context

Adult career guidance is provided by a range of organisations, including public sector providers like the National Careers Service and the DWP Job Centres Plus, alongside community providers, adult education providers, employers, recruitment agencies, and private consultants who are paid by individuals. Personal networks are also a significant provider of informal guidance.

The diversity of adult career guidance provision is mirrored by the diversity of the groups of adults who might benefit from career guidance – whether these groups are supported by current provision or not – and includes those who need tactical help with CVs, those who are anxious or despondent about work and do not know where to start, as well as those with specific skills gaps that would, if addressed, enable them to find better-suited roles.

The Gatsby Foundation (Gatsby) wants to ensure the availability of a high-quality career guidance system for adults in England because adult career guidance has the potential to provide positive impacts for a wide range of individuals from diverse groups, and support society-level policy goals (see Figure i).

Figure i: Illustrative target areas and benefits of career guidance



To better understand how to improve adult career guidance, it is important to understand both the demand for and the supply of guidance. This typology supports understanding of the demand side of the topic by identifying sets of adult individuals in England among whom a reasonable proportion might, in principle, benefit from career guidance interventions including guidance interviews and related support.

This typology has been commissioned as part of a wider programme of work led by Gatsby – including understanding the provision of career guidance in England and the approaches taken in other countries – to help understand adult career guidance and where improvements could be made.

The diversity inherent in the supply and demand of adult career guidance increases the risk that some groups of potential users may not be fully served by current provision. Therefore, a goal of this typology is to support future work checking that any proposed model for career guidance infrastructure and its associated provision (such as training and bursaries) covers each population group in an appropriate manner.

To support such a goal, the typology provides a list of groups that might benefit from career guidance and includes example descriptions of individuals representative of those groups (personas). The typology also includes the number of people in each group, how those numbers have evolved in recent years, and the main elements of central government-funded provision that might currently support them.

Data source selection

A pilot in late 2021 explored a range of large-scale survey datasets that might support the development of the typology. The pilot concluded that the three-year blended Annual Population Survey (3Y-APS) was the most appropriate core resource for the typology, supplemented by the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS; now called the Understanding Society Survey).

It should be noted that not all possible beneficiaries of career guidance are well identified by these surveys. To explore additional groups we suggest new primary research would be most valuable. For instance, additional analysis could include those feeling discriminated against at work or who feel stuck with a poor-quality employer with no options for career progression.

Population segmentation and personas

The first level of segmentation identifies those currently out of work (whether unemployed and seeking work or economically inactive) and those currently in work. To focus on those who would potentially benefit from career guidance, there must also be a relevant concern or at least an openness to guidance, such as those out of work but who would like work and those in work but potentially facing issues.

Population segments were developed using variables that define the career goals and barriers likely to shape a one-to-one guidance interview, the topics that would be focused on and the types of support that might follow, as identified in the 3Y-APS data. Eight segments were identified (see Table i), in addition to the short-term unemployed who may be briefly between jobs and are addressed via policy priorities elsewhere.

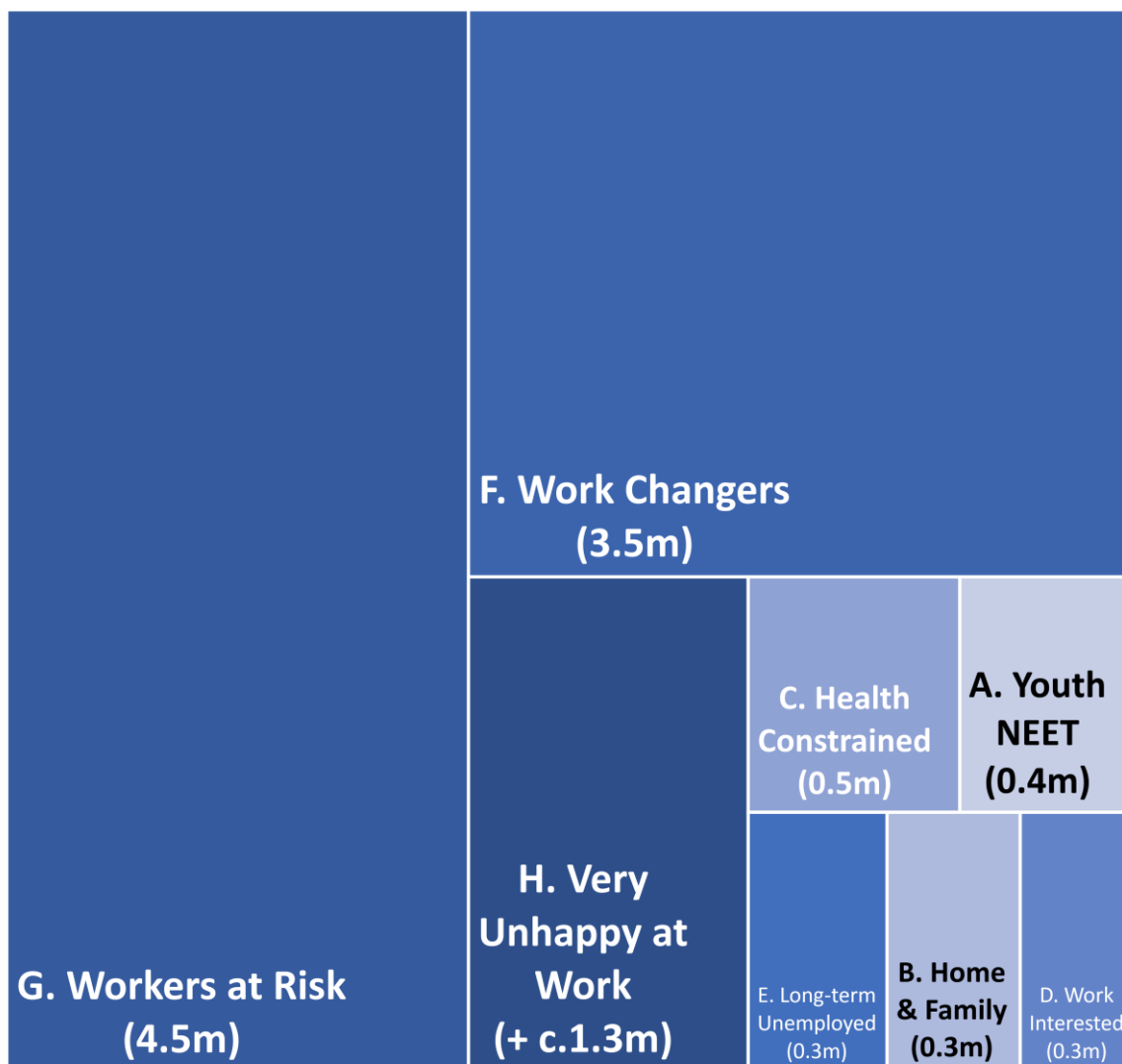
Table i: Gatsby typology segmentation

#	Short name	Description
Potential beneficiary of career guidance: out of work and would like work		
A	Youth NEET	Age 18-24 and not in education, employment, or training (NEET) but would like to work in principle
B	Home & family	Age 25+ and out of work, available and would like work but not currently actively seeking work – currently focused on responsibilities at home or with family
C	Health constrained	Age 25+ and out of work, available and would like work but not currently actively seeking work due to health constraints
D	Work interested	Age 25+ and out of work, available and would like work but not currently actively seeking work (all other non-health, non-caring reasons, incl. retired or in education)
E	Long-term unemployed	Age 25+ and out of work, has been looking for work for over six months and ready to start work within two weeks
Potential beneficiary of career guidance: in work but facing issues		
F	Work changers	Age 18+ in work, but actively seeking new/additional work or more hours (if someone is eligible for both segments F and G, then they are placed into F)
G	Workers at risk	Age 18+ in work, but work situation is precarious due to a non-permanent work contract or because their high-level occupation is at risk of automation or decline
H*	Very unhappy at work	Age 18+ in work, but very dissatisfied, anxious, or depressed at work or very worried about current finances

* Constructed using UKHLS data; others constructed using 3Y-APS data

The segments collectively cover 11m adults in England (see table ii), which is 25% of the over 18 population. Not all individuals in each segment will be in a position to engage with career guidance or necessarily be a priority for public sector support, but the segments help to identify different circumstances likely to have a meaningful proportion of such individuals.

Table ii: Population segmentation and sizing (approximately reflecting England 2018-20)



Each of the eight segments is accompanied by a one page set of descriptive statistics (see appendix 1 for an example). The descriptive statistics cover the demographic breakdown of the segment (age, sex, region, ethnicity), as well as detail like highest qualification and socio-economic classification. Segment specific information is also added as applicable, such as the length of time unemployed, main area of work, primary reasons for not seeking work or primary methods for seeking work, and the proportions on particular state financial assistance, with work-limiting health conditions, or in education.

Each segment also has one to three illustrative personas (see appendix 2 for an example). More personas are available for those segments felt to have both a high level of internal diversity in terms of career guidance and a low level of current research and policy attention when compared with the potential for career guidance to have a positive impact. There are 14 personas in total, building on existing Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and National Careers Service personas wherever possible. The personas provide a rich picture of someone’s circumstances as they might be explored in an initial career guidance interview. For instance, the personas capture the detail of a person’s current activity and recent job search activity, their skills and interests, their background situation, their career planning so far, career barriers and career mindset. Each persona also includes the likely

high-level result of an initial needs assessment that might come out of their first career guidance interview: their stage of career planning and the type of activity that might help them progress.

Potential uses of the typology and data pack

This typology and data pack have been designed to inform both the services that individuals receive, and the policy work that ensures those services are available, meet users' needs, and are appropriately resourced for the anticipated demand. There are five broad categories of potential use for the typology and data pack:

1. ensuring important segments are not missed in the design of public and private sector guidance policy and related infrastructure (e.g. training, study, mental health support);
2. informing a proportionate allocation of policy development time and funding to different segments;
3. reviewing current service usage against target segment needs;
4. informing the detail of policy delivery from a user journey perspective; and
5. enriching existing persona-informed work by such organisations as the National Careers Service and the DWP.

Current provision

A high-level picture of the core elements of central government support currently provided by DWP and the Department for Education (DfE) shows that there is more support for the out-of-work segments, especially youth NEET, those receiving out-of-work benefits, and those with disabilities. As a result, there may be high potential gains from renewed policy attention on the in-work and economically inactive segments, where career guidance services may be particularly able to play a greater role than at present.

Potential extensions for the typology and data packs

There is significant potential for working further with the data, to develop segmentations of different types for different purposes. A benefit of the database is being able to flexibly generate different segments in the future to respond to emerging policy priorities. For instance, insights from individuals' qualifications might be used to analyse those who are likely to be underemployed in terms of skill level or those who have recently arrived in the country might be analysed if there is additional support available that may be helpful (such as qualification translation, labour market culture support, or English language training).

Next Steps

This summary, along with the [data pack](#), has been shared with key stakeholders in the sector. A full report, containing the data pack, methodology, statistical code, and details of the dataset is available on request. Our work to create a typology of careers guidance needs is also part of a wider programme of research into adult careers guidance by the Gatsby Foundation. It began with an analysis of the current landscape of adult career guidance in England, a summary of which can be found on our [website](#). In addition to this, Gatsby have commissioned international research to get a better understanding of what 'good' looks like by comparing the current system in England against international best practice.

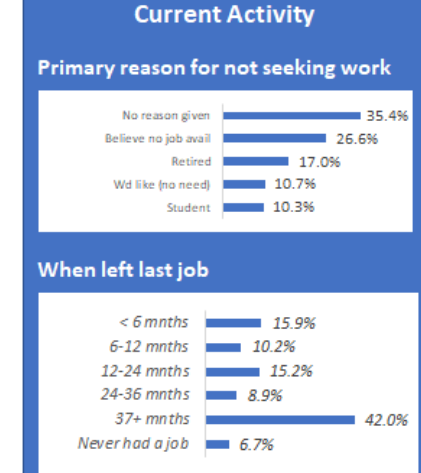
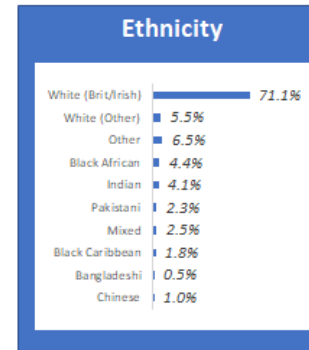
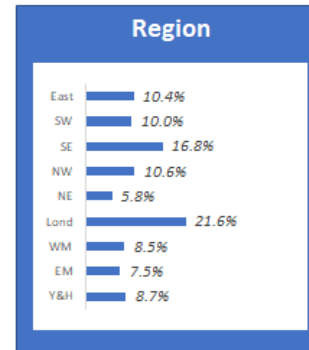
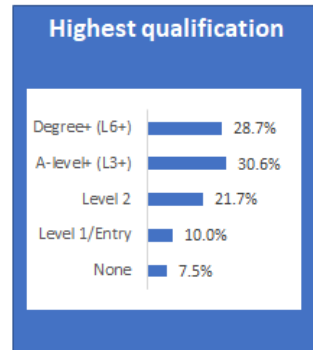
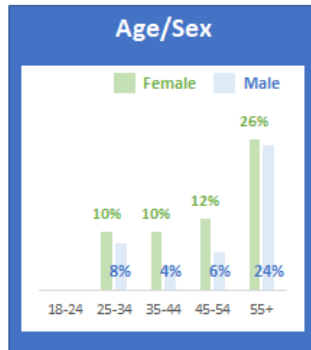
If you would like any more information on any of the above, please get in touch with us at adultcareersguidance@gatsby.org.uk.

Appendix 1: Example descriptive statistics slide from the data pack

Segment: D. Age 25+ out of work, available & would like work but not actively seeking work
(all other non-health, non-family reasons, incl. retired or in education)

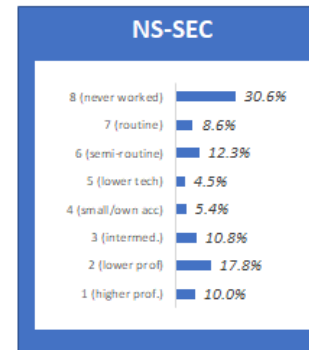
D: “Work Interested” [0.3m]
Personas: Carlos, Kathryn, Claire

- # of England residents in segment (2018-20, 95% confidence interval): 261k – 295k
- Proportion of English population age 18+: 0.6%
- Approximate average annual growth rate (from 2014-2016 to 2018-20): -4%



- ### Detailed highest qualification – Top 80%
- 17% O-level, GCSE grade A*-C or equivalent
 - 16% First degree/foundation degree
 - 11% Higher degree
 - 8% No qualifications
 - 7% A-level or equivalent
 - 6% Other qualification
 - 5% NVQ level 3
 - 4% Trade apprenticeship
 - 4% HNC/HND/BTEC higher etc

- ### Last job - Top sectors
- 14% Health
 - 11% Wholesale/retail
 - 9% Education
 - 7% Manufacturing
- ### Top occupations
- 6% caring personal serv.
 - 5% teaching/education
 - 4% sales assist./cashier



- 32% have a health problem that limits activity (18% work limiting)
- 12% on a course (7% FT university, 2% PT university)
- 22% manager/foreman in last job
- 19% on 1+ benefit from income support, UC, tax credits, or housing/council tax

See Appendix 2 for definitions. Except for italicised text, all group size %s can be multiplied by the segment population size to estimate the number of people in that situation. Percentages may not sum due to 100% due to non-responses or rounding

Appendix 2: Example persona slide from the data pack

Kathryn, 56 years old

NCS User Segment: “Career Returner” (new)

Typology Segment: “D: Work Interested”

(Age 25+ and out of work, would like work but not actively seeking work - all other non-health, non-family reasons, incl. retired or in education)

“I’m so bored at home - my life has no purpose now that my children have left home. I want something more exciting but I’m not sure where to start.”

1. Current activity

- Took voluntary redundancy and early retirement 3 years ago from her marketing management role.
- Increasingly dissatisfied out of the workplace and considering returning to work or volunteering.
- Private pension.
- Not currently searching for work. Starting to develop her network and looking at course options.

2. Skills & interests

- Degree in Business/Management (2:1) and CIM Marketing Diploma.
- Marketing experience gained mostly in higher education sector, within private and international universities. Experience in student recruitment, team management and training. Reached director level with a previous employer.
- Has lived and worked in 8 countries. Enjoys travel.

3. Background situation

- Female
- Lives London, with flexibility to work anywhere.
- Lives with husband who is in full-time employment and often works overseas. 3 adult children who have all left home and are independent.

4. Career planning so far

- Feels bored at home and not using her capabilities. Retirement isn’t what she thought it would be.
- Considering a Non-Executive Director position. Also thinking about whether to retrain in something like HR or Coaching.
- Has no specific plan, but started to work on LinkedIn profile and connect with previous colleagues.
- Has not accessed any career guidance support. May seek out support from a private coach in the future, perhaps through a recommendation from someone in her network.

5. Career barriers

- Mental health starting to suffer due to ‘empty nest’ and lack of purpose in her life. Relationship with husband becoming strained.
- Network and skills becoming ‘out of date’ the longer she is out of work and worries she will lack relevance in the workplace.

6. Career mindset

- Feels alone at home and bored.
- Declining levels of confidence and identity since retiring.

Initial needs assessment results (if were to access guidance)

