

Too many offers!!!



- Are you receiving e-mails and flyers offering you all sorts of help with Careers Education and Guidance in your school?
- Confused about the range of products and services on offer?
- Working within a limited budget?
- Need guidance on how to find and secure services from bona fide providers?

Remember...

- Bought in services should add value to the CEG that is already provided by your own staff, other partners or the external youth support services available to vulnerable young people via LA or voluntary and third sector or other organisations.

What do you really need?

Before purchasing any products or services for CEG, consider:

- What your students really need in terms of careers experiences, careers information, access to individual guidance, careers education lessons etc
- What you already have that works fine?
- What your learners or parents want and value?
- What you could get for free, or economically from websites or professional organisations, or by working in partnership with others e.g. other schools, to share costs.

As a minimum, students will need:

- **Access to individual careers guidance.** When asked, students say they want face to face guidance. Free careers guidance, via web and phone will be available from National Careers Service. Invest in your own staff so they can support quality guidance but also secure independent careers guidance from external providers. This can be a cost effective way to ensure high quality, impartial careers guidance for students
- **Up to date, comprehensive and impartial careers information.** Free national websites and local online prospectus/careers websites provide impartial careers information. There are many other web based and licensed software packages, resources or posters, books and magazines to choose from
- **Modern Careers Education activities.** There are many excellent careers materials available via websites as well as, perhaps, through your local careers organisation. For the commercial packs, take a good look at materials before you buy. Many organisations now provide careers events, mentoring or work experience activities. These can be excellent but make sure you ask the right questions about costs, flexibility of delivery, and quality!

PTO for checklist

Quality criteria to use when considering commercial products or services

1. Trust your instincts. If it seems to be **lacking in careers credibility** or too good to be true, maybe it is.
2. Is the organisation experienced in CEG delivery? Providers, whether sole traders or organisations, **should be able to provide you with evidence of the quality of their work in Careers Education and/or Guidance**. Ask around, who else knows of their work? Are there testimonials from credible sources? Have you **worked with the organisation before**, and had a good service? If so, it may be a good idea to work with them again, but renegotiate what you want to get out of the contract.
3. Who will be your **main contact** with this provider? How will you communicate with this person and who else provides back up?
4. Look very closely at the costs involved. What are the **real costs** including your staff's time? How will they maximise the budget to deliver the agreed outcomes? Are there any hidden extras? What do you expect to get for your money? For careers guidance, is it a daily rate, a rate per contact or event, a termly payment, a lump sum, a staged payment, a salary?
5. For Careers Education or information resources, **find reviews** and ask to speak to other users before buying.
6. Be really specific about what it is you want the provider to do and achieve, including timescales. Have a **contract** or **service level agreement**.
7. What **quality measures** will you use to know that (a) the service/product is having impact, (b) activities, information, advice and guidance are up to date and accurate, (c) this is meeting young people's needs?
8. What process is in place **if things go wrong?** Is there a complaints procedure. Who is liable for breaches of confidentiality, loss of or corruption of data? Ask about **Enhanced CRB** and **Professional Indemnity Insurance**, if appropriate.
9. Ask questions about **data protection** and what systems the organisation uses. This is important for any new CEG software packages.
10. **Be prepared to interview** prospective providers. Are staff suitably qualified? Any quality awards/accreditation? Are they members of a recognised professional body such as ACEG or ICG? How do they keep up to date and access appropriate CPD?