

Careers Action Plan

Justin Kerr



“Career guidance describes the services which help people of any age to manage their careers and to make the educational, training and occupational choices that are right for them. It helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications, skills and talents – and to relate this knowledge about who they are to who they might become within the labour market” (OECD et al, 2019 and 2020)

“Even if only a relatively small proportion of individuals improve their career decision-making skills, the education, social, wellbeing and economic gains are likely to far outweigh the costs”

Independent Review of Careers

(Careers Service in NI)responds to education and labour market concerns and is there to deliver its services across a population of 1.9m in Northern Ireland. The service supports education, training providers and employers, young people aged 14+ in schools and colleges, and adults regardless of their work status.

Independent Review of Careers

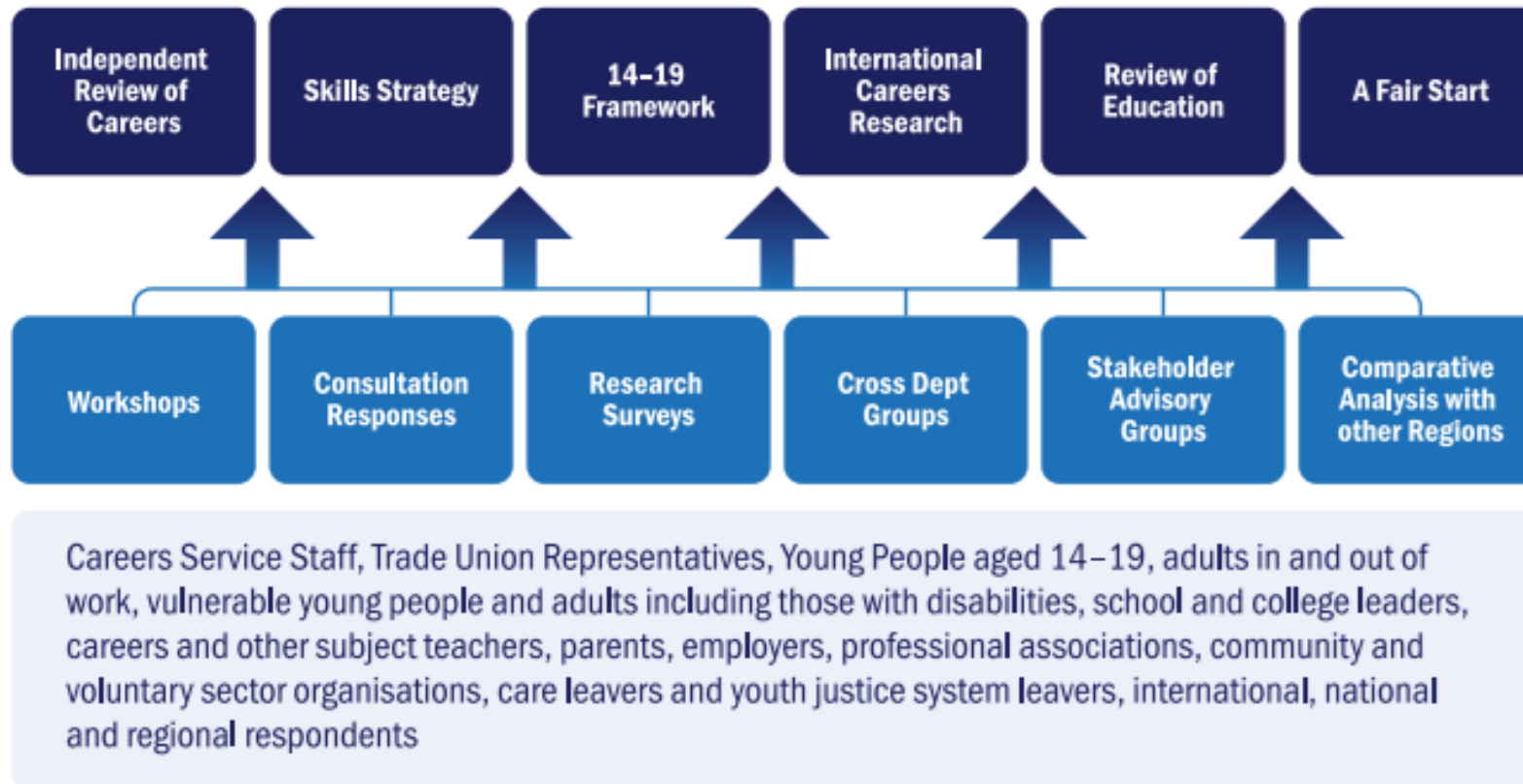
Ministerial Ambition for the Careers Action Plan - 2024

...Officials from both Departments to work to define and develop a collaborative programme of work to drive forward improvements in our careers system. This programme of work will be informed by a strong evidence base and extensive engagement with stakeholders and the wider careers ecosystem.

This will result in a three-year timebound Careers Action Plan, which will outline how both Departments intend to take forward our strategic and operational commitments.

Consider how we can strengthen the careers ecosystem, embrace innovation, build required partnerships and enhance engagement.

A Comprehensive and Compelling Evidence Base



Evidence Base – Over 4,500 individuals

The Independent Review of Careers Guidance (2022)

- The most in-depth Review focused specifically on careers since Preparing for Success 2015-2020
- Carried out by Assoc Professor Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE and Published in 2022
- 15 Recommendations
- Covered how our changing society demands reformed measures to meet the needs of all ages and backgrounds
- With the Executive not sitting, consideration of this work could not be fully progressed due to careers being cross-cutting
- The Independent Review has been a key evidence base for work to develop the Actions now included within the Joint Careers Action Plan.
- Followed up by International careers research commissioned in 2023

Associate Professor Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE – Endorsement of the Joint Action Plan

“Over recent years, I have had the privilege of conducting research in Northern Ireland, listening to and capturing the voices of young people, adults, businesses, sector and professional bodies, and community organisations. This research has directly informed the development of this new Careers Action Plan, which is backed by two major government Departments committed to working more closely with partners to strengthen all-age careers provision in Northern Ireland. This commitment goes beyond being all-age - it is about ensuring that people of all abilities, including those most vulnerable and disadvantaged, have the support they need to build a brighter future.”



Creating a globally competitive economy that works for everyone

The Need for Reform

- Careers Education and services equips our citizens with the knowledge and skills to **access opportunities** and **make good decisions** in respect of career choices and progression pathways.
- More choice is available than ever before and a growing range of pathways is now available - **access to high quality careers education and guidance** is crucial.
- The current careers system is an integral part of our schools' curriculum - the speed of change in our economy, labour market and wider education system demands a change in how we target and organise delivery.
- **Working together** across the many stakeholders involved in careers guidance is central to shaping the future of our economy and society.
- The joint action plan outlines the steps needed to create a **new careers system** that benefits both young people in skills and education as well as adults and those furthest from the labour market.



**Joint Action Plan – Published
on Wednesday 18th June 2025**

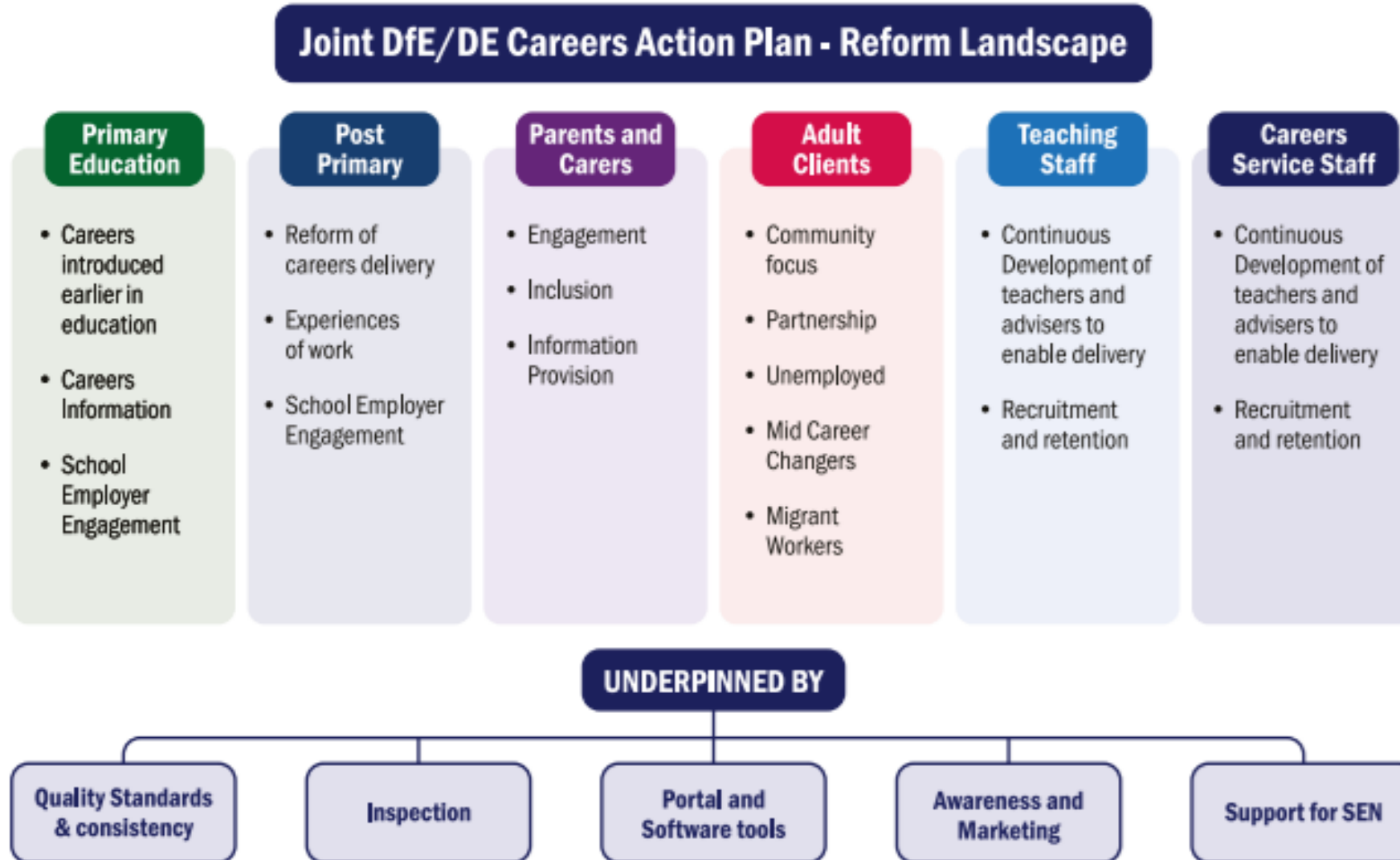
Our vision for Careers Development

“We will establish a universally accessible, high quality service that supports people across all stages of life”



Creating a globally competitive economy that works for everyone

Reforming the Careers Landscape



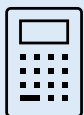
Our Vision for Careers Development

We will establish a universally accessible, high quality service that supports people across all stages of life.

Our Key Initiatives over the next 3 Years



We will Establish a wider inclusive Careers Ecosystem that connects people of all ages to learning and employment opportunities throughout their lives



We will Introduce careers education in primary schools with impactful initiatives and programmes, supported by information resources at each stage.



We will Establish quality standards and developing the capacity of all partners within the careers system to deliver high quality and consistent support



We will reform the delivery of careers, including the provision offered in schools and with adults and better identify and target those most in need



We will strengthen support for SEN individuals and those who experience barriers at all ages. We will use new technologies and ensure practitioners have up to date and appropriate training



We will develop a new Careers Portal providing resources for people of ages which will bridge the gap between education, skills and the economy



We will work to meet the needs of parents, carers and partners as key influencers of the users of our services including resources and enhanced communication

Strategic Outcome 1

***Establishing a wider
inclusive careers
Ecosystem that
connects people of all
ages to learning and
employment
opportunities
throughout their lives***

Main approaches:

- Developing the joint vision and offer
- Developing structures and collaboration
- Developing partnerships across jurisdictions

Strategic Outcome 2

Introduce careers education in Primary Schools with impactful initiatives and programmes, supported by information resources at each stage

Main Approaches:

- Expanding “Drawing the Future” programme in primary schools
- Industry/ employer engagement
- Tailored resources

Strategic Outcome 3

Establishing quality standards and developing the capacity of all partners within the careers system to deliver high quality and consistent support

Main Approaches:

- Careers Service, Community and Voluntary, FE and HE collaboration on quality standards
- Development of a Careers Education Delivery Framework with NISCA
- Dissemination across Area Learning Communities
- Strengthening careers related teacher training
- Supply/ Workforce development in Careers Service
- ETI inspection services

Strategic Outcome 4

Reform the delivery of careers, including the provision offered in schools and with adults and better identify and target those most in need

Main Approaches:

- Careers Service “test and learn pilots” across young people and adults
- Prioritisation methodologies
- Develop agile delivery model
- Work with DfC on adult provision measures
- Develop Work Experience and employer engagement in schools
- Targeted awareness raising

Strategic Outcome 5

We will strengthen support for SEN individuals and those who experience barriers at all ages. We will ensure all our practitioners have continual up to date training and that we have appropriate plans in place to fully meet the needs of this group

Main approaches:

- Review and improve careers support for SEN for all ages of client
- Develop innovative tools for autistic clients
- SEN Specific Careers resources/bulletins.

Strategic Outcome 6

***We will develop a
Careers Portal
providing resources for
people of all ages which
will bridge the gap
between education,
skills and the economy***

Main Approaches:

- Co-design approach including required research and discovery
- Stakeholder engagement
- Development and design of the Portal
- Appoint specialists to develop build capacity

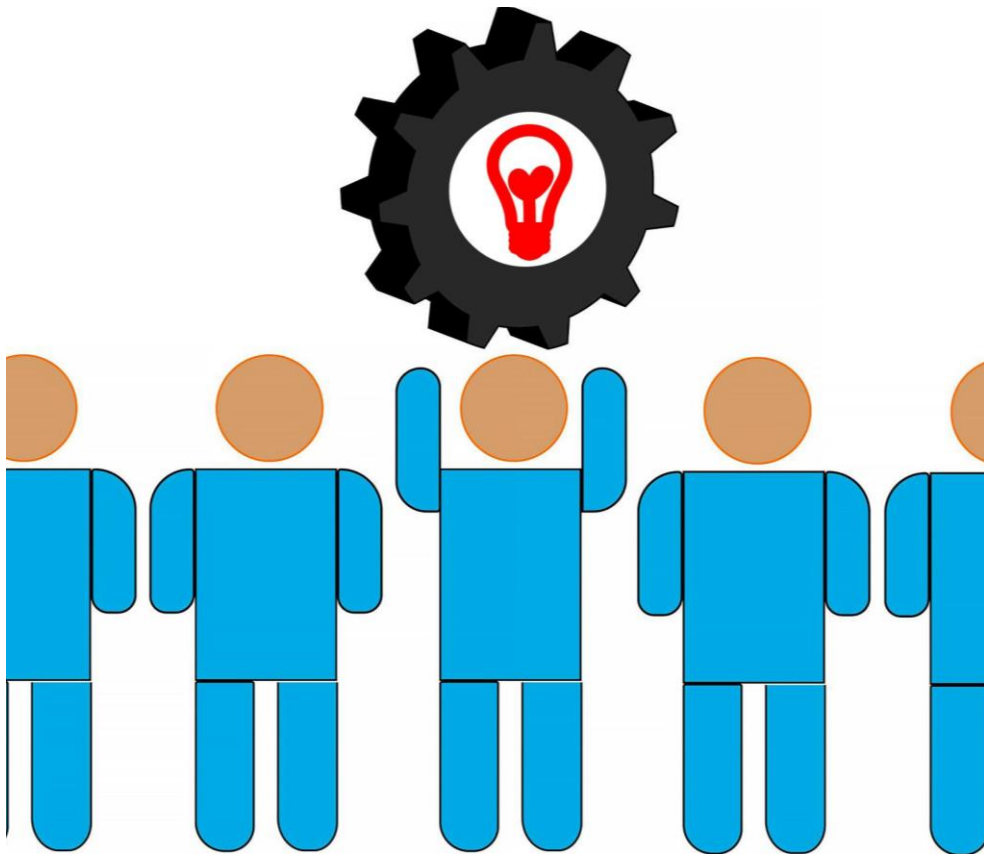
Strategic Outcome 7

Work to Meet the Needs of Parents, Carers and other Community partners as key influencers of the users of our services including resources and enhanced communication

Main Approaches:

- Strengthening parental engagement from earliest decision-making stages
- Targeted webinars and other communication methods
- Tailored/themed resources
- Provision of dedicated area within the developing careers portal

Bridging Education and Employment



Aligning Education and Employment

Education is aligned with employment to better prepare youth and adults for modern workplace demands.

Employer Role in Career Pathways

Employers shape career pathways through work experience, mentoring, and sector-specific insights.

Strategic Workforce Development

Collaboration between education and business builds a workforce addressing present and future economic needs.

Building a Connected Careers Network



Comprehensive Careers Ecosystem

Establish a well-structured careers ecosystem with defined roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders.

Cross-Sector Collaboration

Encourage collaboration across sectors through groups like the Joint Ministerial Group and Careers Advisory Forum.

Alignment with Labour Market Intelligence

Align career guidance with labour market data to ensure responsiveness to economic needs and user demand.

Business Participation

Businesses play a key role in shaping future-ready talent by actively participating in the careers ecosystem.

Inspiring Aspirations Early



Early Careers Education

Introducing careers education in primary schools helps broaden children's career aspirations from a young age.

Role of Industry Volunteers

Industry volunteers deliver age-appropriate careers information, connecting children to real-world professions.

High-Quality Educational Resources

Developing tailored, engaging resources supports embedding career awareness in everyday school life.

Boosting Academic Achievement

Early exposure to work-related concepts significantly improves academic performance, especially in disadvantaged children.

Raising Standards Across the System



Quality Standards Adoption

Shared quality standards are adopted across schools, colleges, and community organizations to enhance careers education.

Professional Development

Continuous professional development is provided to careers professionals to build capacity and improve guidance quality.

Labour Market Insights

Labour market data is disseminated via the Careers Occupational Information Unit to inform career guidance.

Employer Participation

Employers engage in roadshows and resource development to align career guidance with economic needs.

Agile, Inclusive Careers Services



Targeted Career Support

Shift from general interviews to focused assistance prioritizing individuals with greatest career needs.

Innovative Service Delivery

Pilot new methods to expand adult career guidance and integrate community initiatives.

Work Experience and Employer Engagement

Emphasize hands-on work experience and stronger employer partnerships for career readiness.

Flexible, Inclusive System

Create a responsive careers system that serves users of all ages and backgrounds effectively.

Inclusive Careers for All



Addressing Disability Employment Gap

Strategic efforts focus on closing the disability employment gap through tailored career support and opportunities for all.

Specialist Training for Advisers

Training equips advisers to provide expert guidance tailored to the needs of individuals with special educational needs.

Innovative Digital Tools

Development of digital tools supports autistic users and enhances accessibility to career resources.

Enhanced Transition Planning

Improved transition planning and SEN-specific career bulletins support smoother career pathways for individuals.

Empowering Users Through Technology & Relationships

Digital Careers Portal

The new Careers Portal acts as a central hub providing career resources to users of all ages and backgrounds.

Support for Influencers

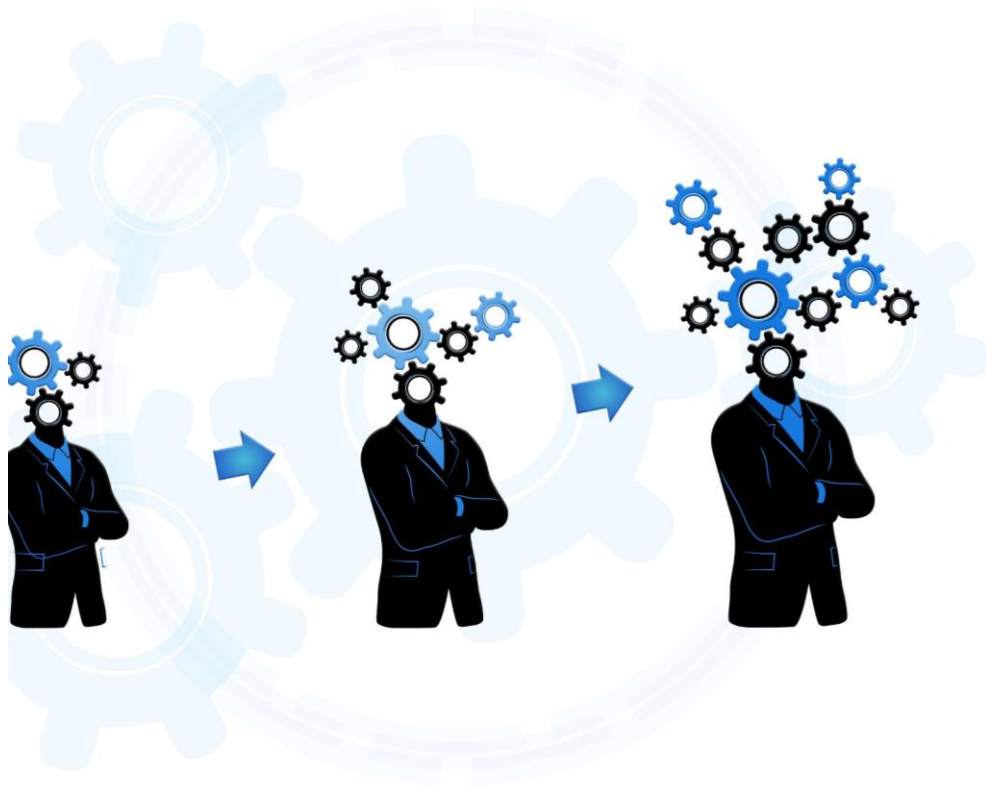
Parents and carers are recognized as key influencers, supported with webinars and themed resources for effective guidance.

Community Engagement

Initiatives foster stronger relationships between the careers system and the community through enhanced user experience.



Partnering for Progress



Collaborative Career Action Plan

The success of the Careers Action Plan relies on active collaboration among business leaders and stakeholders.

Opportunities for Engagement

Businesses are encouraged to join groups, offer work experience, mentor, and contribute to career resources.

Shaping Future Workforce

Partnering employers help build a skilled, inclusive, and future-ready workforce through career system involvement.

Inspiration and Visibility

Visibility and inspiration are key to career development, captured by the quote, 'You can't be what you can't see.'

Questions?

Please get in touch :

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