



Department  
for Education

# Careers Unit

## A “Single Source” of Government-Assured Careers Information

September 2022

# Careers advice for citizens

## The Identified Challenge

**There is no single place to get government-backed, comprehensive careers information in England.** There are several actors across government providing careers information and these activities are not well joined-up and lead to a confusing customer journey.

In addition, **the language and terminology describing skills and occupations is inconsistent.** The provision of labour market information has gaps (such as local granularity) and can also be out-of-date.

**These challenges make the careers landscape confusing, fragmented, and unclear.** Young people and adults do not have the requisite information to make the right decisions for their career and education. It also negatively impacts the economy which operates below its potential output.

## The Policy Background

It is important to ensure that people of all ages and backgrounds can access clear, consistent, and relevant careers guidance, underpinned by relevant and up-to-date labour market information.

Expanding on our *Skills for Jobs* White Paper commitment (para 97) and tied to the wider work of Sir John Holman, former Independent Strategic Advisor on Careers, we are progressing work at pace to develop a **single source of government-assured careers information.**

# The White Paper 2021 (Skills for Jobs)



Department  
for Education

## Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth

January 2021

96. At the moment, there is no single place you can go to get government-backed, comprehensive careers information. This can make the careers landscape confusing, fragmented, and unclear.<sup>50</sup> Young people tend to get advice from their family and friends, which is often outdated and varies greatly according to their socio-economic background.<sup>51</sup> Parents and carers are less confident in advising their children about non-academic qualifications, such as apprenticeships (28%) and other technical education choices (21%), compared to A Level subject choice (50%).<sup>52</sup>

97. We will address this problem by updating the National Careers Service website to become a single source of government-assured careers information for young people and adults. The revamped website will bring together all the learning and careers routes available to people, along with improved content on work experience, applying for roles, and updated labour market information. It will offer personalisation, with content recommendations for individual users, access to local and regional careers information and advice for specific groups like parents, students and the unemployed. The Careers & Enterprise Company will encourage use of the site as part of careers education in schools and colleges. We will introduce interactive careers maps, which will show the occupations and career options that technical or higher technical education can open the door to.

98. We will improve both local and national alignment between The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service to create a clear, all-age careers system. We have appointed Professor Sir John Holman to advise on this alignment, as Independent Strategic Adviser on Careers Guidance, working closely with The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service. We have developed four principles for increasing alignment which we will implement over the next 18 months as we work towards a longer-term review of the delivery system.

99. Data is vital in careers information and guidance. We will improve the data available for people when considering different routes. We will start by making wage returns data available for apprenticeships, as recommended by the Augar Report.<sup>53</sup> This will mean that people are informed of the value of their apprenticeship.

<sup>50</sup> Moments of choice: how education outcomes data can support better informed career decisions. (The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2016), p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Omnibus survey of pupils and their parents/carers: research report wave 4 (Department for Education, 2016), pp. 173-177, 184 & 212.

<sup>52</sup> Omnibus survey of pupils and their parents/carers: research report wave 4 (Department for Education, 2016), p. 178.

<sup>53</sup> Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding (2016), recommendation 5.2, p. 149.

- The careers infrastructure is fragmented and can be confusing for customers.
- The Government is committed to ‘updating the National Careers Service website to become a single source of government-assured careers information for young people and adults’.
- This commitment feeds into the broader goal of creating an ‘all-age careers system’.

# Initial research has shown inconsistencies in language used by different key stakeholders when describing careers

Issue	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)	The National Careers Service	The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE)
Terms to describe careers	<b>11 ‘Careers’ categories</b> broken down into ‘unit groups’ or ‘occupations’	Explore Careers includes <b>25 Job categories</b> broken down into ‘linked role profiles’	<b>15 occupational ‘routes’</b> , further divided into pathways which group together different ‘roles’/‘occupations’
Example of inconsistent terminology of a career category	Agriculture, horticulture, and animal care	Animal Care	Agriculture, Land Management and Production Pathway; Animal Care and Management Pathway
Information provided about a career/job profile	Tasks, Hard Skills, Soft Skills	Knowledge, Skills and Tasks, includes ways in, career paths and progression	Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

# A user example

The current confusion can be seen if a citizen wished to research for the role of a welder – using government careers sources.

## National Careers Service

We provide careers information, advice and guidance. We can help you to make decisions on learning, training and work at all stages in your career.

This service is available to people who live in England.



I look on the National Careers Service Website

I wonder how many jobs there are as welders?

I am interested, so I look at how to be an apprentice

The National Careers website give details of what to do to be a welder, but the apprentice link doesn't seem to work today, so I visit IfATE

But now I am confused, the skills needed on IfATE's website to be a welder are different to those on the National Careers service one, and there are all sorts of different types of welder!

Where do I even start, who has the best data, LMI?



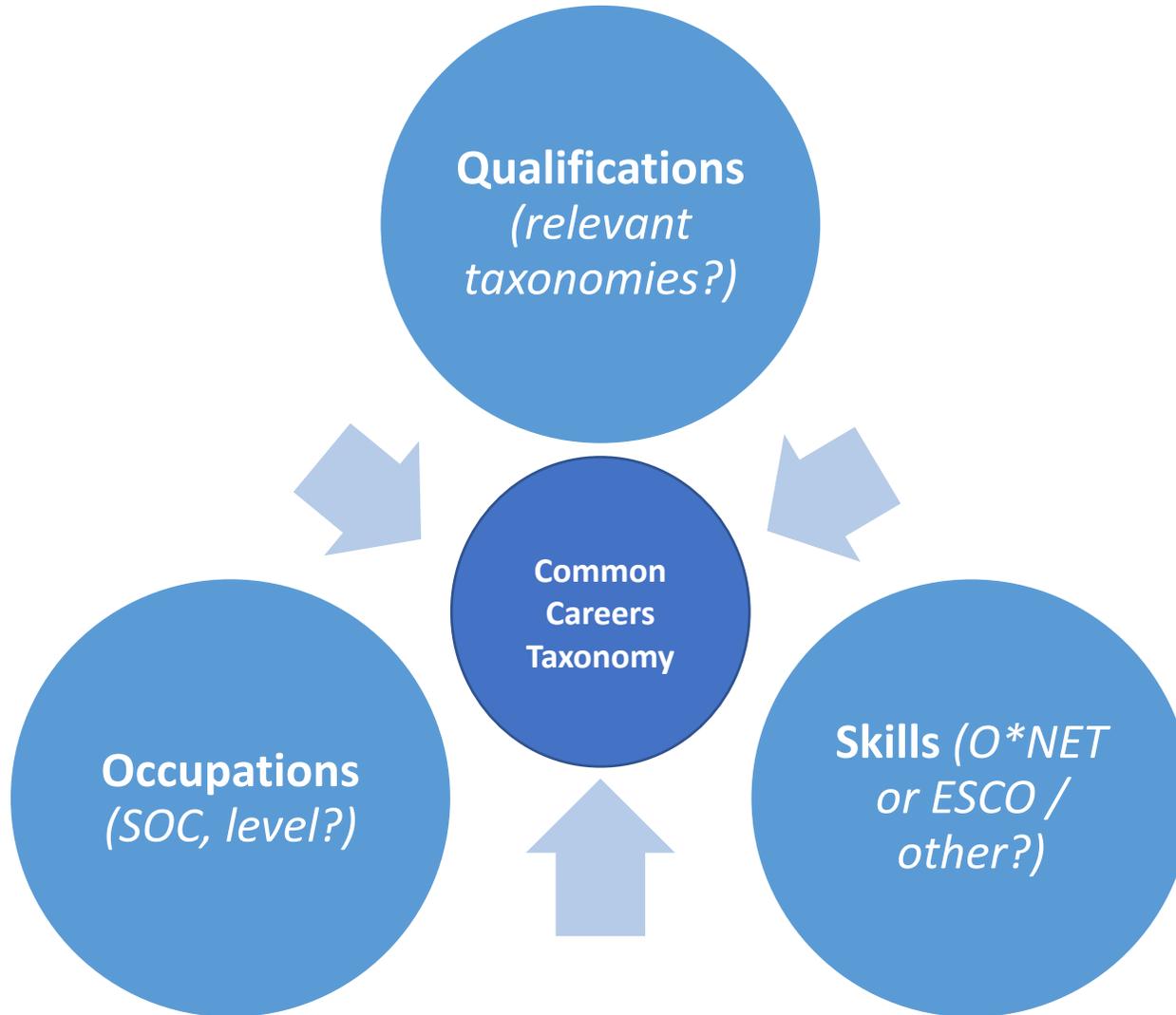
**There is confusion between taxonomies where each may provide different names for a role or different skills requirements.**

<b>Base Taxonomy</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Nearest Equivalent</b>	<b>Comparison Taxonomy</b>
<a href="#"><u>ONS SOC 2020 Extension</u></a>	Plate welders	<a href="#"><u>ONS SOC 2020</u></a>	Welding trades
<a href="#"><u>ONS SOC 2020 Extension</u></a>	Plate welders	<a href="#"><u>O*NET/US SOC 2018</u></a>	Welders, Cutters, and Welder Fitters
<a href="#"><u>ONS SOC 2020 Extension</u></a>	Plate welders	<a href="#"><u>ESCO</u></a>	Welder
<a href="#"><u>ONS SOC 2020 Extension</u></a>	Plate welders	<a href="#"><u>National Careers Service</u></a>	Welder
<a href="#"><u>ONS SOC 2020 Extension</u></a>	Plate welders	<a href="#"><u>IFATE Occupational Standards</u></a>	Plate welders

# The current challenges - Summary

Sharing cross-walks (data/code translations)	Inconsistent terminology	Limited links between taxonomies and careers pathways	Data on skills demand	Cost of procurement	Career pathways confusion across websites
<p>Currently there is <b>no ownership for any potential issues of how Sector Subject Areas (SSA) map over to Standard Occupational Codes (SOC)</b></p> <p>There is also <b>no ownership of how technical qualifications map over to SSA and SOC codes.</b></p> <p><b>Organisations work independently</b>, therefore work can be duplicated with little communication.</p>	<p>For example, <b>IfATE will describe skills in a different way to skills bootcamps.</b></p> <p>Occupations and pathways can be called different things: UCAS has Agriculture, horticulture and animal care, The National Careers Service will call this Animal Care and IfATE has Agriculture, Land Management and Production Pathway; Animal Care and Management Pathway</p> <p>Independent work on <b>skills mapping is completed regularly by the private sector</b> which confuses the descriptions of skills further.</p>	<p><b>Qualifications and skills:</b> Limited details of what skills can be attained by completing an academic qualification.</p> <p><b>Occupations and Skills:</b> For example, a Universal Credit claimant will tell a work coach their previous 3 jobs, but the work coach cannot neatly see the next available job they could be offered with their skillset.</p> <p><b>Qualifications and Occupations:</b> For Higher Education qualifications, careers 'outcomes' data is difficult to collect and any outcomes that are provided are superficially collated or omitted because of lack of data availability.</p>	<p>There <b>isn't enough data currently available on skills demand or supply</b> for employers.</p> <p>The <b>granularity of the data available isn't sufficient</b> to work with, and there is no agreement of what the granularity should be.</p> <p>As there is <b>no governance on data for skills</b>, there is no agreed framework for what 'good' looks like.</p> <p>The limited data can be <b>out of date quickly.</b></p> <p>There is <b>no facility to offer tools to link data</b> together.</p>	<p>Due to a lack of alignment or availability of data in a central repository, organisations have <b>set aside funding to pay third parties to complete work for them.</b> For example both UCAS and Department for Work and Pensions tender work out to Adzuna.</p>	<p>UCAS use 11 'Careers' categories broken down into 'unit groups' or 'occupations'.</p> <p>The National Careers Service have, Explore Careers, which includes 25 Job categories broken down into 'linked role profiles'.</p> <p>IfATE has 15 occupational 'routes', further divided into pathways which group together different 'roles'/'occupations'.</p>

# A Common Careers Taxonomy – vision



The **vision** of the back-end taxonomy and data architecture is to have a taxonomy that aligns skills, occupations and qualifications, drawing on up-to-date labour market information.

There are a wide-range of interested stakeholders in this space and several user groups who would benefit from consistent, up-to-date, government-assured data.

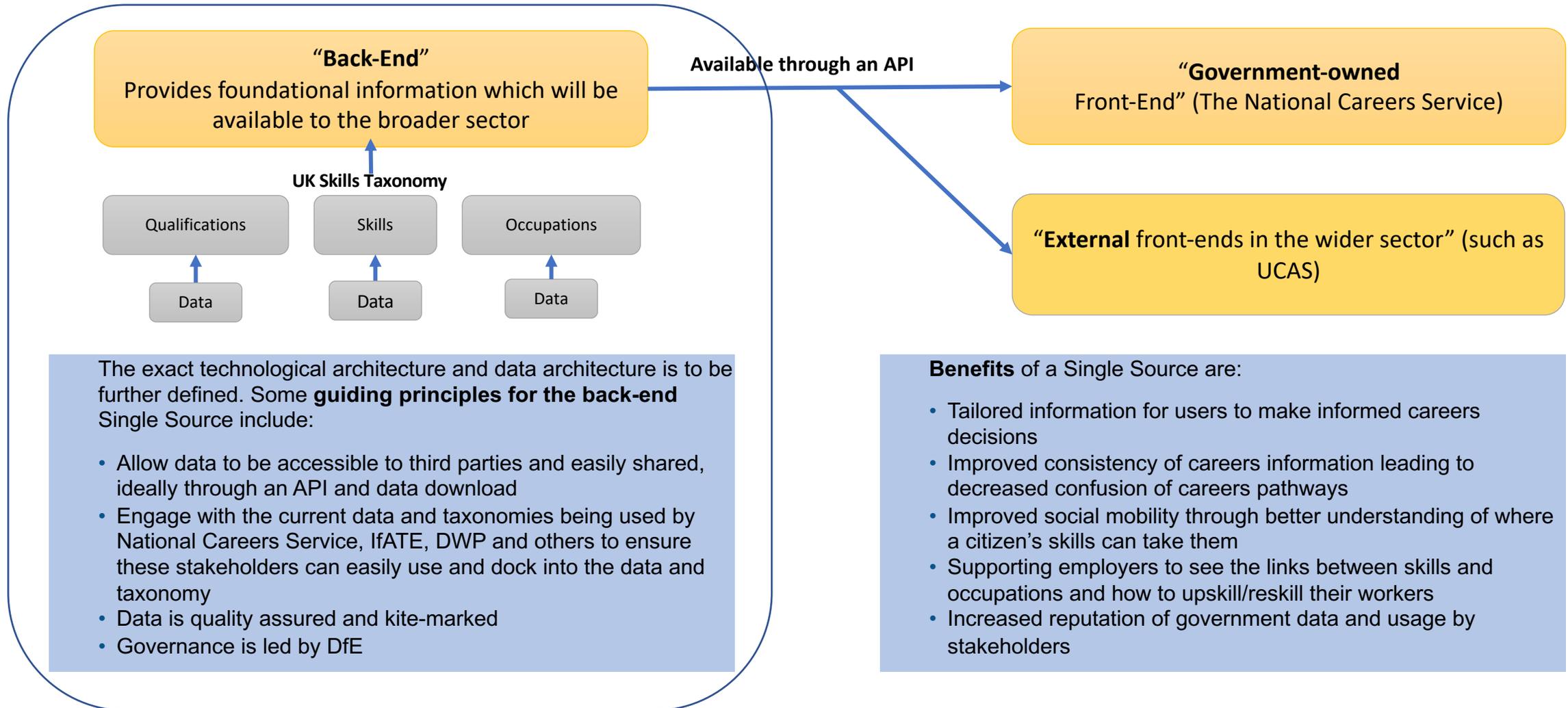
However, to achieve this, several problems need to be addressed. The overarching problem can be summarised as:

***"There are currently gaps in the data across the careers landscape. Furthermore, there is not a common framework that describes, and links labour market information (LMI) related to skills, qualifications, and occupations across English government and the wider sector.***

***As a result, we cannot source and present the most relevant LMI linked to careers for our users to make the most informed careers decisions."***

# The Single Source

The Single Source is composed of the ‘front-end’ digital facing interface and a ‘back-end’ data architecture and taxonomy on skills, qualifications and occupations.



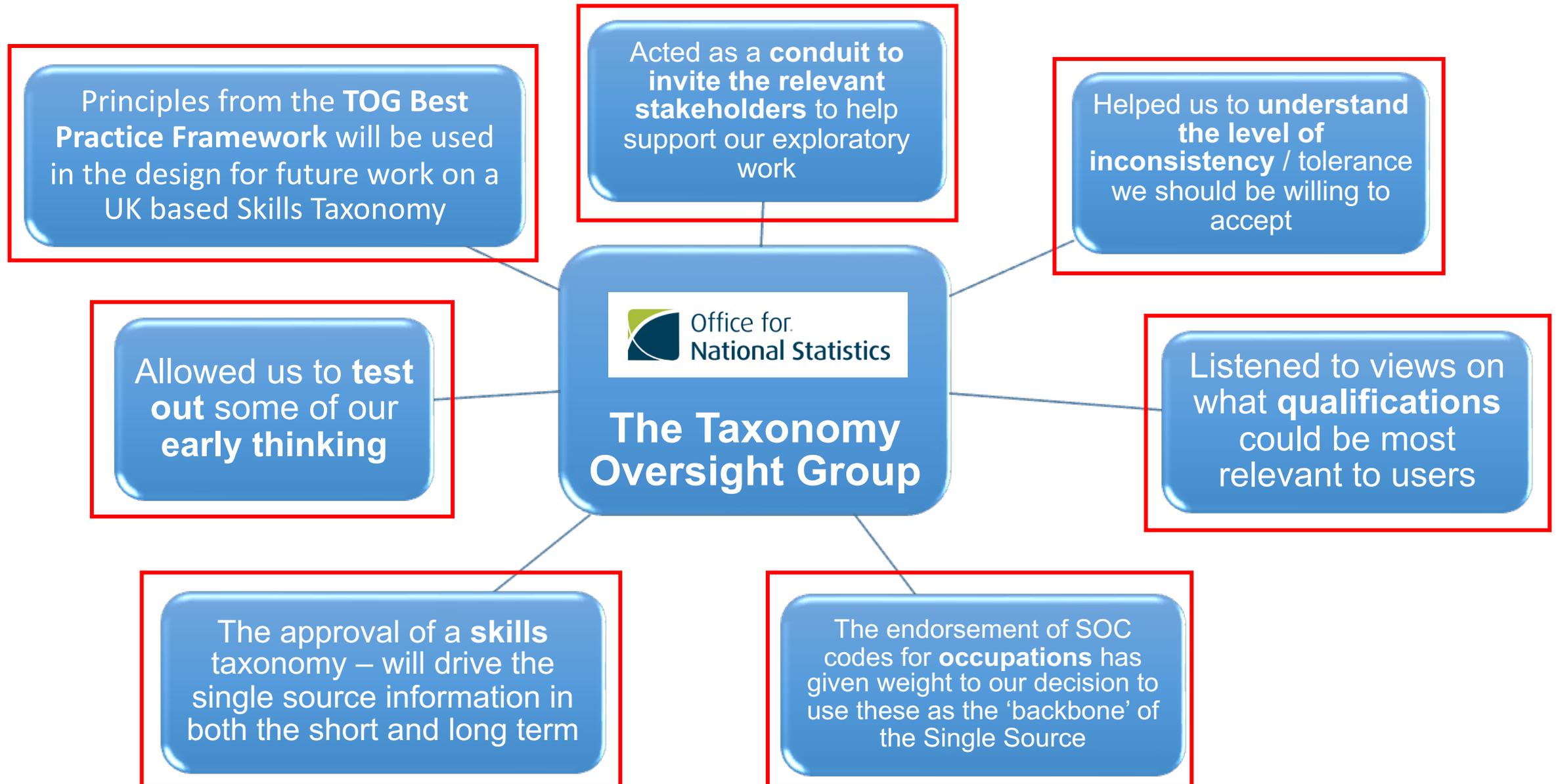
The exact technological architecture and data architecture is to be further defined. Some **guiding principles for the back-end** Single Source include:

- Allow data to be accessible to third parties and easily shared, ideally through an API and data download
- Engage with the current data and taxonomies being used by National Careers Service, IfATE, DWP and others to ensure these stakeholders can easily use and dock into the data and taxonomy
- Data is quality assured and kite-marked
- Governance is led by DfE

**Benefits** of a Single Source are:

- Tailored information for users to make informed careers decisions
- Improved consistency of careers information leading to decreased confusion of careers pathways
- Improved social mobility through better understanding of where a citizen's skills can take them
- Supporting employers to see the links between skills and occupations and how to upskill/reskill their workers
- Increased reputation of government data and usage by stakeholders

# Practical application of the work of the Taxonomy Oversight Group (TOG)



# The Design Sprint – and Recommendations

A three-day event, bringing together stakeholders from across government and careers landscape.

## Day 1

### Understanding and defining

Day one of the design sprint was held in a neutral office. It was about getting to know each other's area of work.

It was also about challenging our assumptions, identifying the problems and how they affect each organization.

The end of the day focused on defining a problem statement.

## Day 2

### User Cases and Objectives

Day two was a virtual event, where we spoke to each organization separately and then brought everyone together at the end of the day.

This was to get 'uncensored' concrete examples of taxonomy and data challenges from different users.

We also wanted to suggest potential objectives which could align work to address the problems faced.

## Day 3

### Agree the goal, objectives and recommendations

As with day 1, this was a face-to-face event, again in a neutral office.

Following the ranking exercise, we had 4 clear objectives that would support the goal of the Single Source.

Day 3 focused on identifying actions to meet these objectives, with specific questions on who could achieve them, when it could be achieved, how it could be achieved, and what it might cost.

# Outcomes...Work done so far... And work to be commenced

## Outcomes / Actions

-  Agree to use SOC extensions as the foundational 'spine' of the taxonomy.
-  Examine how to map other taxonomies such as IfATE's occupational codes and National Careers Service's job profiles to SOC extensions. Mapping completed by summer 2023.
-  Examine how to improve current data collection methods to a more granular level.
-  Scope and identify digital hosting requirements for a single source.
-  Understand resource requirements for the upkeep and governance of a single source.
-  Link up with the ONS' Taxonomy Oversight Group to potentially quality assure cross-walks.
-  The creation of a UK based skills taxonomy, encompassing occupations, skills and qualifications

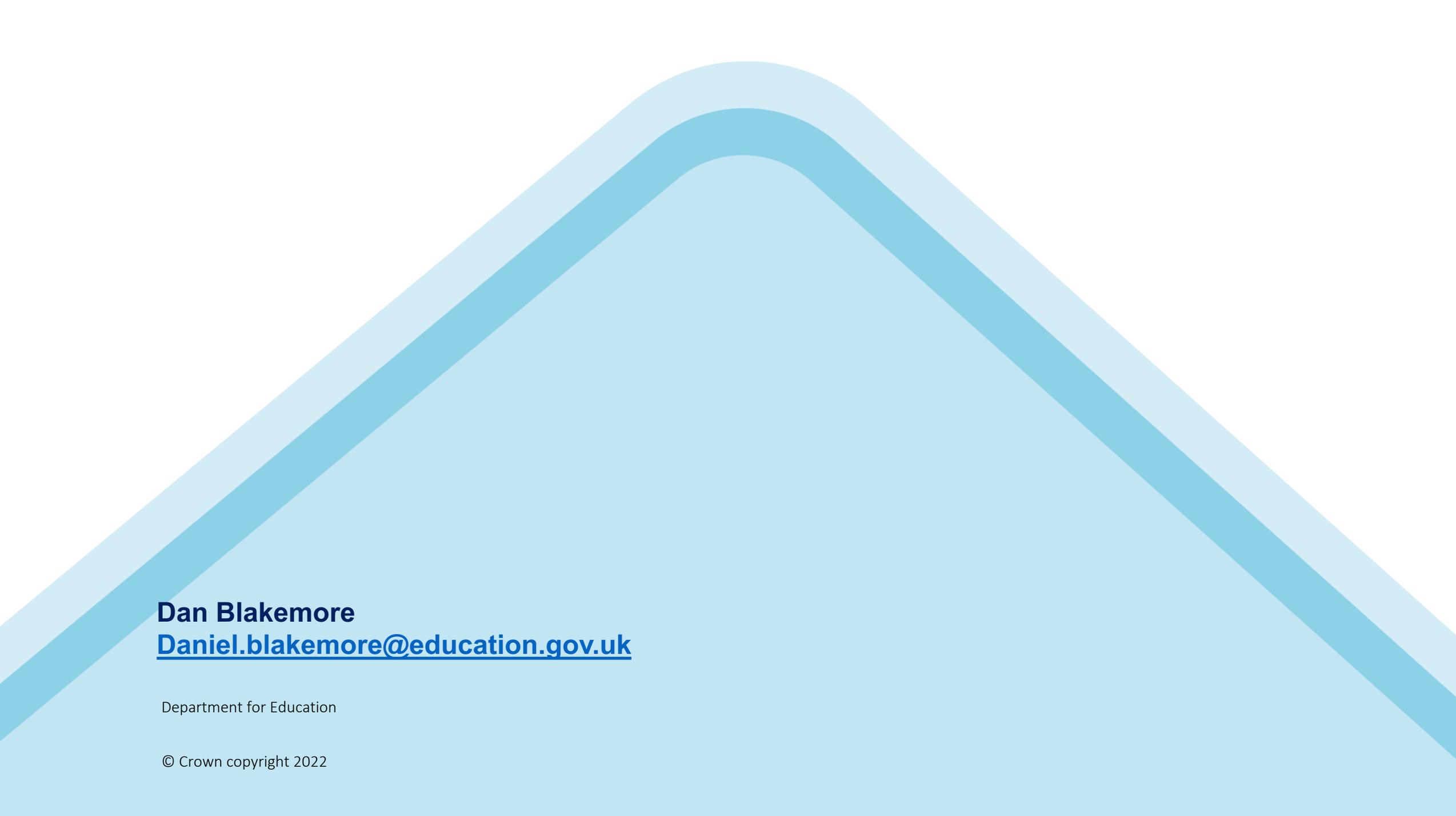
## Recommendations

Mapping IfATE's occupation maps and SOC2020 extensions. Work is already in draft form and would quickly benefit alignment.

National Careers Service to align its job profile codes to SOC2020 extensions.

Develop a prototype for linking non-technical qualifications to occupations. This includes mappings between higher education courses or academic qualifications (such as A Levels) to occupations.

Create a working group to continue facilitation of collaboration across stakeholders to share best practice, mapping of data and align cross-government work in this area.

A decorative graphic consisting of a thick, light blue wave shape that peaks in the center and tapers towards the left and right edges. The wave is set against a white background.

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