

The Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit for Colleges

Practical information and guidance for colleges

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Foreword

The fast-changing world of work puts an ever-greater demand on all of us to support young people in making a successful transition from education to employment, helping them to identify and choose career opportunities that are right for them.

The government's Careers Strategy, published in 2017, and statutory guidance for school leaders and school staff, published in 2018, set out the plan for building a high-quality careers system that will help young people to achieve.

Thanks to Sir John Holman and The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, we have a clear blueprint of what good careers provision looks like. The eight Gatsby Benchmarks are based on best national and international research and define all the elements of an excellent careers programme.

The Gatsby Benchmarks have now been put at the heart of the Careers Strategy, with an expectation that all schools will begin working toward the Benchmarks.

This practical toolkit from The Careers & Enterprise Company focuses on the Gatsby Benchmarks. It is designed to help schools identify what 'good' looks like across all eight benchmarks. It includes case studies of best practice as well as tips and practical suggestions for putting the benchmarks into practice. I hope that the toolkit will assist teachers and Career Leaders in understanding how the benchmarks can help all young people to reach their full potential.

Oli De Botton, CEO,

The Careers & Enterprise Company

The Careers & Enterprise Company

Set up by government in 2015, our mission is to help every young person to find their best next step. We are the national body for careers education in England, delivering support to schools and colleges to deliver modern, 21st century careers education.

What we do:

1. Support schools and colleges to deliver excellence – through information, resources, tools, training, our network of Careers Hubs and communities of best practice.
2. Support employers to engage with purpose – by making it easy for them to connect into schools and colleges as one of our 4000 senior business volunteers working with Careers Leaders on their careers programmes, or as part of our 300 strong ‘Cornerstone Employer’ community working to transform careers education across multiple schools and colleges in their local areas.
3. Include all young people in careers education – through our digital tools for Careers Leaders enabling them to target and tailor their careers interventions across years and cohorts, our specialist networks and resources to support young people with SEND, those in Alternative Provision settings and those in Independent Training Providers.

Introduction

Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Careers Guidance

In 2014, Lord Sainsbury's Gatsby Charitable Foundation published a report by Professor Sir John Holman, Adviser in Education at the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, titled "Good Career Guidance."

The report identified eight benchmarks that are the core dimensions of good careers and enterprise provision in schools.

The eight benchmarks are:



Benchmark 1 – A stable careers programme



Benchmark 2 – Learning from career and labour market information



Benchmark 3 – Addressing the needs of each pupil



Benchmark 4 – Linking curriculum learning to careers



Benchmark 5 – Encounters with employers and employees



Benchmark 6 – Experiences of workplaces



Benchmark 7 – Encounters with further and higher education



Benchmark 8 – Personal guidance

You can find more information about the Gatsby Benchmarks and download the original report from the Gatsby Website [here](#).

Who this toolkit is for

There are 257 colleges in England (174 FE colleges, 57 Sixth Form colleges, two art colleges, 14 land-based colleges and 10 specialist designated colleges) preparing 2.2 million learners for a wide range of career opportunities.¹ Colleges are developing outstanding practice in developing strategies to achieve all Gatsby Benchmarks. Many colleges have developed areas of outstanding practice which we showcase in this toolkit. While the focus of the toolkit is on helping colleges to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks for their 16 to 19-year-old learners (and up to 25-year-olds for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan), it is important to bear in mind that 14 to 16-year-old learners and the significant numbers of learners who are over 18 also need careers support. We hope that many of the tips and suggestions in this toolkit will be helpful to colleges developing services for these learners too.

The Further Education (FE) and Skills sector is experiencing considerable structural change and financial constraint while continuing to raise standards, implement changes to the qualifications system, promote apprenticeships, improve social mobility and address local labour market productivity and skills gaps.

The good practice captured in this toolkit shows that at the same time many colleges are making a real difference to young people's lives by providing them with a rich career learning environment and compelling experiences. Good career guidance not only ensures that young people enjoy their college experience more, but it ensures that they are better prepared for the next steps in their education, training or employment and their longer-term career success and wellbeing.

The Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Career Guidance were developed by Sir John Holman for the Gatsby Foundation after an extensive international comparison and England-wide study. In early 2018, Gatsby published 'Benchmarks for Young People in Colleges', a framework that can be used by colleges to improve their careers provision.

The Department for Education (DfE) issued guidance for colleges on how they can play their part in implementing the Careers Strategy for England.

The provider access legislation is new guidance that comes into force from January 2023, which adds new specific requirements for schools and schools that have sixth forms. DfE strongly encourages colleges to also follow the legislation as good practice. The legislation will become a key mechanism to further help learners understand and take-up, not just apprenticeships, but wider technical education options such as T-Levels and Higher Technical Qualifications. Colleges also have a role as providers of encounters for school students - for more support on the legislation visit our dedicated provider access legislation page

Careers Leaders are responsible and accountable for the delivery of their school or college's programme of careers advice and guidance. There are multiple resources for Careers Leaders which can be found on our website.

Colleges should follow the Gatsby Benchmarks and meet them in full by the end of 2020. The benchmarks are not a statutory framework but by adopting them, colleges can be confident that they are complying with the careers guidance requirements set out in their funding agreement. No provider would have funding withdrawn if it was taking reasonable steps to comply with the guidance.

1. [aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/College%20Key%20Facts%202018-19.pdf](https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/College%20Key%20Facts%202018-19.pdf)

Careers Leader Training

Working in partnership with TeachFirst we have developed a free online training course 'Introduction to Careers Leadership in schools and colleges'. The modules are designed to support Careers Leaders in their role and to offer insight to those supporting the role, including SLT, Headteachers, Governors, Enterprise Coordinators and Enterprise Advisers, to use this free resource.

Through completing the modules, you will understand what good careers leadership looks like, understand each of the Gatsby Benchmarks in detail, understand what a careers programme and strategic careers plan for your school could look like and you will have identified the next steps in your development as a Careers Leader.

The free online modules prepare Careers Leaders to access the bursary funded face to face Careers Leadership training at Level six and seven.

We are offering funded training bursaries to 1,300 Careers Leaders in schools and colleges across England. We have selected 14 high-quality Careers Leader training providers to deliver the training and there are a range of different study options available.

To apply for a funded training place please go [here](#).

Using the toolkit

The toolkit provides ideas and practical suggestions on how to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks and associated performance indicators. It is a resource that can be referred to and returned to over time as you develop your programme. For each benchmark, the toolkit covers:

- A description of the benchmark and its accompanying performance indicator(s).
- What good looks like – evaluation criteria for assessing whether the benchmark has been met.
- What this means in practice – recommended/required inputs and activities.
- Why this matters – facts and figures about the need for the benchmark with information about the impact that meeting the benchmark has made on young people.
- Top tips for colleges – practical suggestions on how to reach or maintain the benchmark indicators.
- Top tips for employers – practical suggestions on how to get involved with colleges and what to expect.
- Case studies – examples of current practice in FE and Sixth Form Colleges around the country.
- Useful resources – organisations, professional documents (e.g. reports, professional development materials) and resources to use directly with learners/apprentices.

Gatsby Benchmark 1

A stable careers programme

Every college should have an embedded programme of careers education and guidance that is known and understood by learners, parents, teachers, employers and other agencies. This programme should be informed by clearly defined career learning outcomes and should be supported by a strategic careers plan.

- Every college should have a stable, structured careers programme and a strategic careers plan that has the explicit backing of the senior management team, and has an identified and appropriately trained person responsible for it.
- The careers programme should be published on the college's website in a way that enables learners, parents, college staff and employers to access and understand it.
- The careers programme and related strategic careers plan should be regularly evaluated, with feedback from learners, parents, college staff and employers.

What good looks like

The college has a written policy on careers guidance designed to meet all eight Gatsby Benchmarks, in line with the expectations of the DfE, Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Ofsted.

The careers programme is an integral part of the college mission and commitment to learners, and in many cases will have been so for decades.

The programme is well regarded by learners, parents, staff, employers and other agencies including link schools and community partners.

The careers programme is supported by a strategic careers plan, which has the support of governors and senior leaders.

Governors and senior leaders are committed to careers for all. They promote a culture of high expectations and rigorously monitor achievements and destinations of learners on all courses to ensure that they make good progress from their starting points. They are proactive in identifying and taking steps to overcome shortcomings in the careers programme.

A nominated Careers Leader from the executive team is responsible for effective leadership and management processes.

The nominated Careers Leader should be supported in accessing funded training to develop them in their role. The programme is underpinned by strategic planning, staff accountability, systemic embedding of careers delivery and effective evaluation of the impact on learners including whether they reach positive, personally valued destinations. Feedback is sought from learners and parents as well as from other partners and stakeholders.

The college has an end-to-end approach to careers guidance encompassing pre-entry and admissions guidance; on-course career learning; practical experience and support; tutorial support; student services; work placement and job-hunting provision; and exit and post-exit guidance. To facilitate this, the college promotes cohesion between the teams that provide support, e.g. reception, admissions, student services, careers guidance, work placements.

The benefits of the careers programme are monitored for consistency across courses, campuses for multi-site colleges and different colleges for college groups.

Teaching and support staff are accountable for their roles in careers and how they relate to the roles of cross-college careers staff.

College initiatives and communications with parents, carers and guardians are informative, supportive and enabling.

Employers and other agencies such as universities and charitable organisations encourage and support the college's work in careers in a spirit of critical friendship.

What this means in practice

The college has appointed a Careers Leader and published their contact details on its website.

The college has an explicit strategy to move from achieving some benchmarks well to achieving all of them by the end of 2020. This may involve scaling up provision, working out how to cope with peak demand, delivering the programme consistently and meeting the needs of different groups equitably, e.g. between students on academic and vocational courses at all levels, full-time and part-time, and across split sites.

The careers policy is reviewed every two years.

The college has strongly connected central services (e.g. reception, admissions, student finance, student support, guidance, work placement, marketing) to coordinate all stages of the learner journey.

The college ensures that all groups of students benefit from having a programme relevant to their needs and not just general provision which is less targeted.

The careers programme evolves through repeated negotiations between the careers team, course/ personal tutors and students with additional input from parents and employers. The process is designed to promote challenge and support, breadth and balance, continuity and coherence, sequencing and progression (particularly avoiding repetition and recognising prior learning), equality and diversity, and consistency and high quality in the careers programme.

A range of good-quality teaching and information resources are provided centrally by the careers team which subject staff are free to enhance (i.e. to capitalise on the opportunities for informal and incidental learning).

The college has a parents' portal with information about pathways, opportunities and practical matters such as application procedures, timelines and student finance. The college respects the rights of over-18s in managing home-college links.

The college uses a combination of face-to-face contact (e.g. open evenings), physical resources (e.g. posters, letters) and online channels (e.g. website, VLE, social media, email, parents' portal) to engage and support learners, parents and employers.

The induction and subsequent in-service training for all staff includes a focus on the careers programme and the strategic careers plan for the college.

Why this matters

FE colleges have a key role in delivering the government's [Post-16 Skills Plan](#), which includes the reform of technical education and the introduction of T-levels, for which high-quality careers programmes will be essential.

Young people need more help than a generation ago to enter the adult labour market. This is mainly related to the squeeze on low and medium-skilled jobs in the economy.

High-quality careers provision contributes to raising aspirations and improving motivation. Recruiting and enrolling learners on to the right courses improves retention and enables them to progress and achieve more from their given starting points.

Having an identified and appropriately trained Careers Leader is important for tackling the big issues that impact on the stability and reach of the careers programme such as identifying need, curriculum and timetable negotiation, timing, managing scale and scaling up, multi-site working, budgeting and access to spaces.

By adopting the Gatsby Benchmarks, colleges can be confident that they are complying with the careers guidance requirements set out in their funding agreement.

Top tips for colleges

Plan

- The named Careers Leader and all staff/governors who support in development and delivery of careers provision should access free online training from The Careers & Enterprise Company. This training supports development of an effective career programme supported by a strategic career plan.
- Careers Leader to register for funded face to face Careers Leader training at Level six and seven. This funded training is supported by a £1,000 bursary.
- Ensure that the careers programme is rooted in the priorities and vision of the college and not just dependent on the goodwill of college managers.
- Keep up to date with developments in careers theory, policy and practice by subscribing to:

News Feeds, e.g.

- FE Week.
- TES.

Awarding bodies, e.g.

- Policy Watch (Steve Besley).
- OCR Policy Briefing.

Blogs, e.g.

- Adventures in Career Development (Tristram Hooley).

Organisation updates, e.g.

- The Careers & Enterprise Company.
- The Gatsby Foundation.
- Education and Employers.

- International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS).
- The Career Development Institute.
- The Ofsted FE and Skills Inspection Handbook.
- University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC).
- Education and Training Foundation.
- The Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Deliver

- Check the accessibility of the published careers programme on the college website, e.g. is it easy to find and does it meet website accessibility guidelines?

Measure

- Within the strategic career plan, undertake regular evaluation of the career programme with a clear intended purpose, for example, feedback from senior leaders team and the Governing Body should be used to inform future decisions about the career programme.
- Carry out value-for-money and cost-benefit assessments regularly to ensure that expenditure on services and resources is efficient and effective.
- Make full use of the Student Council and student representatives on the Board of Governors to develop and evaluate the careers programme.

Top tips for employers

- Consider becoming a college governor if you have a special interest in careers. [Inspiring FE Governance](#) is a free service dedicated to putting individuals with the right skills in touch with FE providers.
- Ensure that as a college governor with employer perspective that you are empowered to challenge and inform the careers programme and related strategic careers plan.
- If you are a leader of a business, be it a micro-business or a large company, engage with the nominated Careers Leader from your local college about your organisation's skills needs and assist it in developing, designing and resourcing courses and the careers programme to meet the needs of the local area.
- Provide the college with feedback on activities in which you are involved with a focus on how well you were briefed, how well students were prepared, practical arrangements, how well students responded, how the activity could be improved and what you and your organisation gained from taking part.



Examples of a stable careers programme

The Bedford College Group

One of the largest further and higher education providers in the South East Midlands offering vocational post-16 courses, apprenticeships, A-levels, higher education and part-time courses for adults.

The group's student services directorate includes a team of four Careers Advisers and a dedicated resource assistant. All of the Careers Advisers are Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) qualified to Level six or above. They report to the Director of Student Services and the college group's Careers Lead. Having a Careers Lead at a director level allows for strategic oversight of the careers provision across the college group and for a strong channel to the Senior Leadership Team. The Careers Lead also manages all the student support areas including enrichment, learner finance support, learning resource centres and health & wellbeing, which includes all personal tutors.

There are personal tutors in each vocational area. They refer learners to the careers team for one-to-one interviews and work closely with the team to plan tutorials and group work sessions for the academic year. They also help to link the careers team to curriculum staff so that collaborative provision can be offered for learners, such as sessions to prepare for work experience as part of the vocational scheme of work for the year.

These arrangements allow the college group to offer coherent and stable careers provision. The team endeavours to make the service as accessible as possible using technology such as webchat guidance

and outreach. This includes drop-in sessions for learners, for example on the Foundation Skills Programme, to promote the service. The team also promotes the service through tutorials, at departmental careers events and learner inductions, and through internal branding and on yourspaceonline.net/jobs-and-careers. This online presence is useful in connecting with the wider community.

Monthly reports and an annual self-assessment for the careers service helps to shape the focus points for the academic year. The main objectives of the team are to improve the destinations of leavers, engage with the learner population through methods which they find relevant and accessible, and provide a service that improves the learner experience. Progress towards these objectives is measured through learner usage statistics, feedback and surveys, and student destinations. The careers plan is published on the group websites and updated annually.

Meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks is a journey with challenges. The team would like to collect feedback from parents more systematically. Feedback is obtained at parents' events but at present these are focused on a small sample of learners. The opportunities for interacting with and informing the parents of 16-19 year old learners are growing with more vocational areas offering events, but this is developing and dependent on the priorities of the vocational teaching team.

City of Wolverhampton College

WolvColl is a general further education college based on three main campuses in Wolverhampton. Wolverhampton and the Black Country have high levels of social and economic deprivation and high rates of unemployment. The sectors with highest employment include manufacturing, health and business services. About 35% of Wolverhampton's residents are from minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of students who leave school with five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C (or grades 9 to 4), including English and mathematics, is below the national rate.

WolvColl is a matrix-accredited college and the winner of the Association of Colleges' 2017 Beacon Award for Careers Education and Guidance (sponsored by The Careers & Enterprise Company). This award is given for innovative approaches, effective support and partnership working that enables young people to overcome barriers, make choices and progress to further study or employment. In June 2018 the college achieved the Quality in Careers Standard.

The Head of Student Entitlement and Student Services seeks to ensure the college meets the needs of all students along their journey from application to progression into education, training or employment. The role involves managing the centralised services for

admissions, attendance monitoring, enrolment, financial advice, student counselling, careers guidance, student projects and the Student Union while working closely with all academic and cross-college areas and teams.

The college has a well-publicised policy, statement of student entitlement and annual programme. The programme is regularly evaluated with feedback from learners, parents (who have their own portal), college staff and employers. Students are actively involved in the selection, delivery and evaluation of key activities through the Learner Voice Strategy. The quality audit team and the Head of Students Services/Entitlement monitor the delivery of the tutorials scheme of work.

Feedback is sought after large-scale events such as the Career Skills Show, group work and community campus events and activities. This feeds into a Plan-Do-Review improvement cycle. Students answer questions relating to guidance services as part of college surveys and at the end of one-to-one guidance. Student destinations are tracked annually and reports analysed by level and subject sector area (SSA). The college uses a proprietary product (ProMonitor) for recording students' attendance, targets, ILPs, interview notes, exam results and destinations, which is particularly helpful for cross-college monitoring.

St. Dominic's Sixth Form College

A mixed Roman Catholic sixth form college in Harrow-on-the-Hill. The college has approximately 1,200 students aged between 16 and 18 taking mainly A-levels and some BTECs. Catholic observance and ethos is important but the college welcomes students from other faith backgrounds, who make up half the student population. The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of students speaking English as an additional language is above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free college meals. In 2017 the college was named *The Sunday Times* Sixth Form College of the Year. The college is preparing for reassessment of the Quality in Careers Standard, and feedback from learners, parents and other stakeholders is part of this process.

The college has a well-established careers programme led by a qualified HE and Careers Coordinator which offers students:

- Access to a qualified, impartial and independent Careers Adviser (externally commissioned).
- Self-assessment through the Year 12 Career Development Programme (CDP).
- Information about the world of work, business operations and ethics, and how the labour market is changing.
- Information about HE, training, apprenticeships and employment.
- Activities to challenge stereotyping and raise aspirations.
- Activities to develop skills and qualities for employability.
- Transition support and preparation for the world of work.

- Help to develop personal budgeting skills and knowledge of financial matters affecting everyday living, further study, HE, training and work.
- Help to strengthen personal presentation skills for selection processes.
- Signposting to relevant, up-to-date and impartial sources of careers information and advice.
- Weekly access to a personal tutor (the college has a dedicated team of non-teaching tutors led by senior tutors who are teachers).
- Insights into how the world of work is changing and the implications for their own career planning.
- Opportunities to investigate career pathways and university requirements.

This entitlement statement is included in study planners and displayed in subject areas and communal areas such as the library and reception. It is also incorporated in the college's careers policy approved by the Principal and governors and published on the college website.

Students are informed of what they can expect from the careers programme on the two enrolment days. The induction handbook asks them to complete a questionnaire on their plans and to rate their employability skills.

All pastoral and academic information is available online to students and parents. Parents can access careers information and resources from the website and from the SharePoint platform via their child's login. 'Catch them before they fall' is a special parents' evening in October of the first year to check that students are on the right courses for them. Parents are also invited to the careers event in the spring organised through the charity [Future First](#), when alumni talk about their work and the importance of networking.

The Sixth Form College, Colchester

The sixth form college has approximately 3,000 16-19-year-old full-time students mostly studying at A-level. Students are able to choose programmes from more than 50 A-level subjects and other courses leading to GCSE and other qualifications. A one-year GCSE 'improvement' (Advanced Foundation) programme is also offered. Some students follow the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma programme. A key feature of the local economy is that 80% of companies are small businesses.

The college is recording evidence of what it is doing to meet all the Gatsby Benchmarks and maintains the Quality in Careers Standard. It reviews the programme annually. After each event, the careers team uses force field analysis to review the event and plan changes incorporating feedback from external providers, staff members and students. The programme is also reviewed by personal tutors and via the senior management team gathering informal feedback from speakers and students.

The Careers Leader and Head of Business is a member of the Senior Management Team and is well supported by an Assistant Principal (the former Head of Careers). The Assistant Principal's brief includes curriculum and quality assurance and student guidance and progression. The Principal also takes an active interest, interviewing potential Oxbridge students at enrolment days and promoting the employability skills agenda across the college. The careers programme is

embedded in college systems but enhanced by the proactive involvement of individual leaders.

The college's priority is to encourage students to think about their progression possibilities early on in their college careers. The college's careers programme is well publicised in tutorials, in the student handbook, on the website and at the parents' meetings for first-year students in March and July. This helps to make students aware of the college's commitment to them as well as the college's expectation that they will take responsibility for getting the most out of the careers programme.

Students are informed of events via many sources: student handbook, college calendar, tutorial programme, student bulletins, personal tutors, talks from the Principal, newsletters, college website, virtual learning environment and posters. Parents find out about key dates and activities via newsletters, the college calendar, parents handbook and the college website. External agencies either find out from emails or by a phone call for new contacts, but some external agencies hear about events and phone the college to be included. Staff are informed by the college calendar, SharePoint notices and staff shouts, staff meetings and in-house training. The Senior Management Team are kept informed by the Careers Leader, who attends their meetings with their line manager, the Assistant Principal.

Weymouth College

The college delivers further education and training, higher education, apprenticeships, and commercial, community and leisure courses on six campuses in rural West Dorset. It is the third most isolated college in the country with high levels of social deprivation and low social mobility. It has a seasonal economy and few large employers (mainly in the public sector). Some 90% of firms in Dorset are micro firms with less than ten employees. The college has approximately 1,430 full-time students (16-18) and 127 HE students, as well as training more than 500 apprentices. It supports more than 60 learners with high needs and offers educational and welfare support to more than 600 students, including 31 who are Looked After Children.

The Careers Leader for the college reports to the Vice-Principal (VP) for Performance and Delivery, whose areas of responsibility include quality, teaching, learning and assessment, apprenticeships, student support, student welfare, marketing and international. The Careers Leader and VP have fortnightly meetings to plan and review careers and guidance (external and internal) and have daily contact to discuss delivery. The Careers Leader has operational links with the three Work Placement Officers, who work with curriculum areas to deliver work placements as a mandatory part of courses including childcare, healthcare and sports.

The careers programme has a strong focus on building students' sense of ownership of their career planning. Topics include career identification with Adult Directions, labour market information linked to subjects, options after college, making applications and self-presentation skills. Students can join the JobShop and receive weekly emails on jobs available locally. It offers taught lessons or self-taught options using

the student VLE. The programme is delivered during tutorials by the careers team or learning facilitators and, in some cases, tutors. Training is available to help tutors deliver the sessions as well as a progressive programme of feedback and evaluation. The college works on the content of the programme with the county and district councils' economic development teams and is linked into the local Enterprise Coordinator and Enterprise Adviser Network.

The Board of Governors has a link staff governor for careers and the VP makes an annual report to governors based on an annual assessment with students and staff, including the two student governors. The college also maintains the Quality in Careers Standard. The most recent Ofsted Inspection (2015) states that "careers advice and guidance are very effective in enabling learners to make the right choices and move on to further learning, training or employment".

The college has a strong commitment to increasing employer engagement despite the limitations of the rural location and seasonal businesses. Involvement of employers is arranged by each faculty or department within the college, so it is linked to what the students are learning at that time. The college invites employers to upload their current vacancies on to the college JobShop, give their feedback on the programme and get more involved.

Parents are also invited to give their feedback. Students and parents can view activities through the college's bespoke progress tracking system, Weytrack, which enables tutors to log activities and interventions and allows students to develop a comprehensive individual learning plan.

Useful resources

The Careers & Enterprise Company

- Compass for colleges to audit your provision.
- [The company has set up 40 Careers Hubs across England.](#)
- Free [online training](#) is available to all college staff and governors with an interest in Careers Leadership.
- Nominated Careers Leaders from colleges can [register](#) for a funded Level 6/7 Careers Leader training course with £1,000 bursary.

Policy and practice documents

- [Gatsby Good Career Guidance report \(2014\).](#)
- [Gatsby's Benchmarks for Young People in Colleges \(2018\).](#)
- [DfE Careers guidance for further education colleges and sixth-form colleges \(February 2018\).](#) As a condition of their funding further education colleges and sixth-form colleges are required to comply with the published guidance. They must secure access to independent careers guidance and provide learners with guidance materials and a wide range of up-to-date reference materials relating to careers education and career opportunities.
- [House of Commons Library Careers guidance in schools, colleges and universities: Briefing Paper \(January 2018\).](#)
- [Understanding the role of the Careers Leader – A guide for colleges.](#)
- [Career Development Institute Framework for Careers, Employability and Enterprise Education \(March 2018\).](#)

Organisations bringing colleges together

- Association of Colleges. Read the college profiles of [Beacon Award winners](#) for best practice and innovation in sponsored categories, e.g. for engagement with employers; for widening participation in learning, increasing vocational progression and employability; for the promotion and delivery of successful apprenticeships; for careers education and guidance.
- [Sixth Form Colleges Association.](#)
- [Collab Group Colleges.](#)
- [The Maple Group.](#)

Professional bodies

- [The Career Development Institute.](#)
- [National Association for Managers of Student Services NAMSS](#) provides support and professional development for student services managers and their teams.

Quality standards

- [Quality in Careers Standard.](#)
- [Matrix Standard.](#)

Self-evaluation

- LSIS *Effective practice in the FE sector* (2009) suggests strategies for preventing early leaving and a framework for evaluating a careers programme.
- Many organisations involved in careers activities now map their offering against the Gatsby Benchmarks, e.g. ASK – the Apprenticeship, Support and Knowledge project from Amazing Apprenticeships.

Promoting the careers programme

- Raise the profile of the careers programme by celebrating national and local careers awareness events, e.g.:
 - National Careers Week.
 - National Apprenticeships Week.
 - British Science Week.
 - Open Doors events such as Get into Construction.

Reports by employer organisations

- CBI *In perfect harmony: Improving skills delivery in England* (2018).



Gatsby Benchmark 2

Learning from career and labour market information

Every learner, and their parents (where appropriate), should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.

- During their study programme, all learners should access and use information about career paths and the labour market to inform their own decisions on study options.
- Parents should be encouraged to access and use information about labour markets and study options to inform their support of the learners in their care.

What good looks like

All 16-19 study programmes should focus on progression to learning at the next level or to employment. In order to support this, learners need access to high-quality information.

Good information is an important foundation of any programme of careers and enterprise learning and includes details about local and national labour markets, skills shortages, predicted growth areas and what employers are looking for from applicants. Although there is a large proportion of information online, the best colleges also maintain learning resource centres with careers books, posters and prospectuses.

Where Benchmark 2 is well met, learners are introduced to appropriate sources and encouraged to take responsibility for researching opportunities and managing transitions. Students are supported in developing skills to manage their own career development, learning how to be a discerning user of formal and informal information and advice to help them with their decision making.

Colleges use events and encounters with employers to bring labour market information to life and encourage learners to use the college online learning environment to access career and labour market information.

Parents are encouraged to use good sources of careers and labour market information.

Colleges work closely with schools in their local areas to ensure that young people are aware of the full range of career pathways open to them.

What this means in practice

Learners have skills and support to make well-informed decisions. In the best provision learners are signposted to the most useful online resources through dedicated careers areas of college websites.

In the best examples care is taken to challenge traditional thinking about career choice and that information, posters and employer encounters help to overcome stereotypes.

Career and labour market Information is adapted to the needs of different learners. Colleges can make good use of Makaton signs and symbols to support understanding of careers and employability for students who have learning and communication difficulties. Makaton is a language programme to help people communicate. It is designed to support spoken language and the signs and symbols are used with speech to give visual clues.

Career and labour market information includes help to explore the financial aspects of progression choice, and young people have access to personal advice and guidance to help them explore the aspects most relevant to their circumstances. Employer mentors, tutors and Careers Advisers can help students to see the personal relevance of careers information.

In the best examples, colleges link up the different strands of provision, e.g. after an employer engagement activity about STEM careers, learners are encouraged to research relevant STEM sites and resources.

Colleges are increasingly using social media to support students' career exploration and learning. This is important because social media plays an increasingly important part in recruitment and selection processes. Many college careers departments have Facebook and Twitter accounts that they use to promote activities and events. They also encourage students to manage their personal brand, to use resources such as LinkedIn for online CVs, and to connect to people and companies who can help them build their knowledge and networks. Some colleges are also encouraging their students to access Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to strengthen future applications.

Why this matters

Awareness of labour market demand can help learners to make realistic adjustments and compromises when firming up their choices.

2018/19 data reflects the following:

“The FE Choices Survey 2018/2019 reflects the continuing trend of the lowest students satisfaction rate being around how the college prepared them for the next stage.”

Access to up-to-date career and labour market information is important for social mobility. Hard information about pay and numbers of vacancies, and examples of alumni’s successful transitions, helps to connect students to a different future.

Evidence suggests that although aspirations are often high, learners may lack the knowledge to put their plans into action. Encouraging clear career pathways and building access to detailed information about progression routes, relevant courses and employers strengthens learners’ capacity to make effective transitions.

Routes and pathways are developing, and it is important that learners can access the most up-to-date information about employment trends and emerging apprenticeships including those at Higher and Degree Level.

Students need strong digital skills to make good use of online resources for career exploration and to present themselves effectively.

By adopting the Gatsby Benchmarks, colleges can be confident they are complying with the careers guidance requirements set out in their funding agreement now that recruitment and selection has largely migrated to the internet.

Top tips for colleges

Plan

- Review your website and any learning resource centres to ensure they cover all routes and engage the interests of students and parents.
- Make good use of resources available through your Local Enterprise Partnership, via the Enterprise Adviser Network.
- Investigate how the National Collaborative Outreach Programme supports work in colleges on HE progression.
- Explore the use of online careers guidance tools that generate personalised career information based on information supplied by the students.
- Ensure that students and parents have ready access to advice and guidance to explore the personal implications of the general career and labour market information.
- Explore collaboration with other colleges to bring together strands of careers information, enterprise education and work placements to ensure a joined up, cross college approach.
- Network with employers and employer-led organisations to understand local labour market shortages, skills needs and recruitment opportunities.
- Take part in local careers network meetings, helping to ensure that college careers provision is a progression from school-based delivery.

Deliver

- Use a range of technology and social media, e.g. emails, texts, Twitter, Skype or webinars, to reach more students about job, education, training and apprenticeship opportunities. Make this a dedicated responsibility of a member of the careers team. Use the different media strategically, e.g. improve targeting by asking learners to sign up to receive information and opportunities linked to their career interests.
- Develop a system to track and maintain alumni contacts and make use of alumni destination data to inspire and inform current students.
- Add the [Careerometer 2 widget](#) to your website to allow students and parents to access LMI information quickly and easily.
- Make use of a wide range of media to encourage students in their career exploration including social media, posters, websites and physical resources.
- Take part in local careers network meetings, helping to ensure that college careers provision is a progression from school-based delivery.

Measure

- Collect students and parent voice to measure confidence in accessing and understanding labour market information. Use this data to inform future planning and delivery.
- Regularly review the currency, objectivity and value of the careers resources that you promote to young people. Get feedback from staff, governors, students and parents on this to inform future planning and provision.

Top tips for employers

- If you are acting as an Enterprise Adviser or as a Link Governor for careers/employability, prepare feedback on the sources of information the college promotes to its students and parents as part of your support for the college.
- Build in references to good sources of information as part of employer engagement events.
- Encourage students to do follow-up research from any events you support at so they can start to put plans into action.
- Bring talks alive with concrete case studies showing diverse pathways and job opportunities in your organisation, and show your organisation's websites with details of entry requirements as part of your talks.
- Help to train tutors and Careers Advisers about changes in the labour market to ensure those working directly with students every day are up to date.
- Listen to what young people say about careers information and share these insights with schools and the Enterprise Adviser Network to support continual improvement in careers messaging.

Examples of good learning from career and labour market information

Cirencester College

The college is one of the first selected to teach the new T-levels. It has 2,200 full-time students with about half the 16-19 students from south east Gloucestershire and west Oxfordshire, and half from Swindon and north Wiltshire. A broad range of A-levels and vocational programmes are on offer, alongside apprenticeships in financial services, marketing, IT, customer service and supporting teaching and learning in schools. The college has completed an action plan identifying priorities for development in meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks and is confident about strengths in career and labour market information. A careers microsite is available on the parent zone and weekly bulletins highlight opportunities. LMI is provided through tutorials and mentoring sessions with employers from different sectors, as well as through online careers resources including careerpilot.org.uk, a resource developed by HE/FE and training providers in the south west that has recently added a reporting facility. The college is monitoring use by students to improve impact and is training staff to use the resource.

Students joining Cirencester College can select from a range of additional opportunities through the Succeed programme. These include extra qualifications, subject related enrichment and programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Career Ready. Three Career Ready programmes in business and finance, technology and communications, and sport and health strengthen access to and use of careers information. The programme includes employability masterclasses covering themes such as networking, interview techniques and personal branding, alongside employer talks and visits, work placements and personal mentoring. A Career Ready board of employers, college staff and students support the relevance of the programme. The E4 cluster with local schools and the Royal Agricultural University aims to foster enterprise and build Career Ready as a programme of support for students from Years 7-13.

Leeds City College

Uses different trusted data sources to ensure information for students is up to date, accessible, interesting and relevant including Careers Yorkshire and Humber, the National Careers Service, Prospects and the Sector Skills Councils. Leeds City College is a Google College and the careers team are curating content for 22 Google careers rooms to provide a digital forum for staff and students to access labour market information. The college encourages students to become active users of careers information rather than simply pushing it out to them. Part of the strategy is to train coaching tutors and curriculum careers leads to find and use good quality LMI and make effective use of the resources selected and developed by the careers team.

St John Rigby College, Wigan

Careers support is run in partnership with Winstanley College and other organisations including the local NCOP, Unifrog and Employ Solutions, which offers a work experience portal. Ofsted found that leaders have nurtured “particularly effective partnerships with a diverse range of external organisations to support students’ high aspirations. They work closely with the Greater Manchester LEP to align the curriculum to regional skills priorities and to provide students

with regular updates regarding employment and apprenticeships in the area”. Both colleges in the partnership have a well-stocked careers library with resources to help with university, apprenticeship and employment choice. They also run events to help parents and students explore options including an annual apprenticeship fair with more than 30 apprenticeship providers and higher education events with representatives from a wide range of universities. For students with SEND and EHC plans there is a statutory review process, which incorporates provision of careers information and advice.

Students value access to Unifrog, which has careers information on all routes as well as vacancies. It encourages students to consider progression from different degrees with the section: What can I do with a degree in...? Good use is also made of the government’s apprenticeship site and other resources including Not Going to Uni.

There is a parents’ portal on the Winstanley site with access to presentations from relevant events and comprehensive information about HE, apprenticeships, work experience and volunteering. This will shortly be replicated on the St John Rigby College site. The Careers Adviser uses a Facebook feed to update students about emerging vacancies.

Peter Symonds College (PSC)

PSC is a sixth form college in Winchester with about 4,000 students, 85-90% of whom progress on to HE.

Debbie Mahoney, the Careers Leader, and her colleagues have been looking at how practice measures up to the Gatsby Benchmarks. The careers department has significant input into the tutorial system including preparation of tutor materials, PowerPoint presentations and supporting notes on topics including career and labour market information, how to navigate the careers intranet site and options after 18. To make sure information is kept up to date, the team run supplementary training for tutors on subjects such as UCAS applications and apprenticeships.

The college recently discontinued its general studies programme and instituted a fortnightly lecture series for the upper and lower sixth. Topics include future careers, what next, writing a winning personal statement, higher education, apprenticeships and how to impress at interviews. The presentations are shared on the careers portal and can be accessed by parents and students. The college has a subscription to KUDOS and is pleased that the resource now includes information about the local labour market. The team are monitoring student take up.

The college produces fortnightly job bulletins and the job vacancy service offers students access to full and part-time vacancies, apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities. The Careers Team investigates new sources of information and is on a substantial number of mailing lists to identify opportunities for learners including Investment 2020, which includes lots of finance-related jobs, and Success for Schools.

The college produces a careers calendar with annual events including a Progression Fair with nearly 100 exhibitors representing higher education, employers and student finance. Tutors often attend events with their tutor groups to explore opportunities together and local schools are also invited. The college also organises a careers week, a gap year fair and a compact fair attended by local universities to improve student access to HE. A programme of lunchtime speakers from local employers is also on offer.

The college regularly reviews the value of careers support with students including their perception of tutorials. This helps to inform the range of topics and the way they are delivered. The college has funding through the Southern Universities Network (the local NCOP) for a careers administrator to promote access to higher education including summer schools.

Weymouth College

The college has a long-term strategy for supporting learning from career and labour market information with significant investment from the local community to support young people. It has run a Careers College since 2009 in collaboration with 15 schools, Kingston Maurward College (land-based), aspireBU in Bournemouth, the local authority economic development offices, local employers and the LEP. Careers College won the prestigious UCAS Progress AoC [Beacon Award](#). It provides opportunities for Year 9 and Year 10 students to attend hands-on and taster sessions from 63 career areas. "Careers College was excellent. Next year I will get the whole lot out for the day in Year 10 at least and make it compulsory. Students are still talking about it which is what I wanted from it - opening eyes and expectations." Mark Fisher, Deputy Headteacher, The Compass.

In 2017 the college launched a Heads Up Day programme focusing on degrees and higher apprenticeships in Dorset and beyond. Learners have the opportunity to take part in up to four taster sessions in areas as diverse as 3D modelling and animation, agricultural studies, theoretical physics and music production.

Once students enrol on courses at the college, they and their parents have access to impartial careers information and advice through the college Moodle VLE platform, tutor sessions, one-to-one support and small groups. Students have an opportunity to join the Weymouth College JobShop and receive weekly emails on jobs available locally.

The careers section of the college's website has been improved with feedback from students. It provides a link for adult students to the [Careers advice and guidance at Weymouth college](#).

The most recent Ofsted report states that "careers advice and guidance is very effective in ensuring that learners are placed on the right programme with clear goals for progression when they complete their course. Prior to joining the college they receive high-quality impartial advice and guidance from a range of sources including employers, universities and current learners through the Careers College initiative. Learners studying arts subjects benefit from guest speakers with professional expertise in these areas."

Useful resources

- [CIPD/ADECCO quarterly labour market trends](#).
- The LMI for all [Careerometer widget](#) can be installed on your VLE to demonstrate different salary levels and the value of investment in further study.
- Check out the [evidence base for careers websites](#).
- The [National Careers Service](#) site gives information including pay, career progression and day-to-day tasks for more than 800 jobs. It also offers e-guidance for young people.
- Explore how the [labour market summaries](#) for your LEP area can provide useful background on major employers and sectors and developing trends.
- [NOMIS](#) is your one-stop shop for labour market information. The summary pages provide key data about a local area and you can download trend data from the site.
- LMI and personal career stories help young people explore different career routes and pathways through 1,000 video clips on [icould.com](#). First-hand employer encounters are also immensely valuable.
- The [Office for National Statistics](#) is the official source of labour market data. Regular bulletins contain the latest estimates including employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for the United Kingdom.
- The [UK Commission for Employment and Skills \(UKCES\)](#) was a publicly funded, industry led organisation providing strategic leadership on skills and employment issues in the four nations of the UK. Key LMI publications include: Employer Skills Survey, Employer Perspectives Survey and Working Futures. Funding for UKCES was discontinued in 2016 but some of its work has been taken on by the Department for Education.
- [Unistats](#) includes official data on the satisfaction scores of undergraduate courses from each university and college in the National Student Survey, jobs and salaries after study and other key information for prospective students. Information about graduate outcomes is taken from two sources: the Destination of Leavers from higher education (DLHE) survey six months after they graduate and the Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) dataset on how much graduates were earning three years after graduating.
- The [Prospects website](#) provides general information on labour market statistics by sector, shortage occupations, salaries and diversity, as well as a range of job profiles.
- The government portal for information about apprenticeships, [getingofar.gov.uk](#), has a linked website to find live vacancies.
- Join the regular mailing lists of organisations to keep your career and labour market information up to date. Peter Symonds College's list of recommended sources includes Inspiring the Future, Trotman, Purepotential, Targetcareers and the BigChoice.
- The careers team at the college has also drawn on materials from the LMI coordinator in the Education Development Trust delivering the National Careers Service in their area. Check your local provider.
- [National Careers Week](#) provides posters, inspirational quotes and links to the Royal Bank of Scotland Kickstart resources.
- The [National Collaborative Outreach Programme](#) aims to increase the number of young people from underrepresented groups in higher education.

- The [Office for Students](#) provides links to authoritative sources of information about higher education including Unistats, UCAS, the Teaching Excellence Awards, the Student Room, Which University? and the newspaper and magazine publishers' league tables.
- Keep up to date on new and popular careers resources, posters and software through prospectseducationresources.co.uk.
- [Career Companion](#) is an independent and impartial guide to online careers information.
- See what free sector-specific careers information is available for young people through the network of [Sector Skills Councils](#).
- The [Education & Training Foundation \(ETF\)](#) provide expert resources to support the education and training sectors, covering a broad range of topics and including guidance, effective practice, teaching materials, research and CPD materials.



Gatsby Benchmark 3

Addressing the needs of each learner

Learners have different careers guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each learner. A college's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.

- A college's careers programme should seek to challenge stereotypical thinking and raise aspirations.
- Colleges should keep records of the individual advice given to each learner and subsequent agreed decisions.
- The records of advice given should be integrated with those given at the previous stage of the learner's education (including their secondary school) where these are made available.
- Records should begin to be kept from the first point of contact or the point of transition.
- All learners should have access to these records to support their career development. Colleges should collect and maintain accurate data for each learner on their education, training or employment destinations.

What good looks like

The college tailors its careers provision to challenge and support learners with diverse needs including:

- Students aged 16 to 19 who may be undertaking high-quality academic education, apprenticeships or high-quality technical and professional education.
- Students up to the age of 25 when they have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- 14 to 16-year-olds who are directly enrolled into eligible FE institutions.
- Home-educated students of compulsory school age at any FE college.
- Adults.

In the best examples, the study programme offers learners an individualised pathway with clear study and/or employment goals. For some learners the route will be a traineeship, or for young people aged 16 to 24 with an education health and care plan it could be a supported internship. For other learners, routes could include an apprenticeship or progression to higher education. Learners make good progress from their individual starting points. From the outset of their college careers, achieving their qualifications at the end of their courses is linked to making progress on a personally valued pathway.

The college provides enhanced careers input for those with low levels of prior attainment with the aim of developing their career thinking and work readiness-skills to enable them to make informed decisions about their next steps.

The college refines teaching, learning and assessment methods to overcome barriers to learning and to meet the needs of employers and learners.

The implementation of the college's safeguarding policy inhibits sexism, racism, radicalisation and the threats caused by other people's unacceptable views and behaviour to the progress and wellbeing of all learners and apprentices.

Teachers and tutors make effective use of specialist support services in the college such as careers advice and guidance, recruitment, financial support, work placements, learner support and counselling.

What this means in practice

All ESFA-funded education for 16 to 19-year-olds (20 to 25-year-olds with an education, health and care plan) should be delivered as a study programme which combines qualifications and enrichment activities tailored to each student's prior attainment and career goals.

Where the need has been identified and it is the college's role, the college offers short, part-time, foundation-type programmes to help learners to develop specific career interests through taster courses and to become more employable and gain work-readiness skills.

The college's claim to acting impartially in the best interests of learners can be substantiated by evidence from liaison activities in local schools.

The college monitors equality of access to the careers programme for learners on different courses to ensure all students benefit from careers guidance and that:

- Good provision considers the context of the regional and national labour market and differences in progression and destinations patterns. Where Benchmark 3 is well delivered these underlying inequalities are addressed strategically through your careers and enterprise programme.

- Where Benchmark 3 is well met, there is targeted provision for young people with particular needs. For instance, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) receive tailored support including mentoring and supported work experience to help them develop employment capability. There is recognition of the need for employers and other local partners to improve these students' chances to develop an independent life and take their first steps into jobs and courses.

Where good provision is in place, well-kept records enable staff and partners to track the consistency and impact of the careers and enterprise programme. Staff know what students' career education and guidance needs are and where they are in terms of their career planning.

In the best examples, colleges engage learners and encourage them to access and take ownership of career development records through tracking systems such as [ProMonitor](#).

Colleges that do Benchmark 3 well collect and maintain accurate data for each student on their education, training and employment destination and share this information with students, using it to evaluate the careers and enterprise programme.

Why this matters

Beginning career discussions with learners from the initial contact and maintaining a dialogue improves students' motivation to achieve by ensuring they see the purpose behind gaining their qualifications.

About 17% of students on FE and skills provision have a learning difficulty or disability. Some 17% of students aged 16-18 in colleges qualified for free school meals at 15, whereas the figure for maintained schools is much lower at 9%².

There are profound inequalities across courses and jobs sectors. These affect national productivity and individual wellbeing. Women represent the majority of participants in the three lowest-paid apprenticeships (hairdressing, health and social care, and early childcare and early years education), while men dominate the highest paid, creating a significant gender pay gap. A Young Women's Trust report from 2016 found that in sectors such as engineering, women make up a lower proportion of apprentices than a decade ago – for every female engineering apprentice there were 25 male apprentices. There is also underrepresentation of ethnic minority groups and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in apprenticeships.

The government's Social Mobility Barometer Poll shows that half of people believe where you end up in society is mainly determined by your background. Four in five believe that there is a large gap between the social classes in Britain, with poorer people held back at every stage. Some 71% say there are significant differences in opportunity depending on where you live in the country. The poll uncovers deep social pessimism among young people and calls for a coalition of businesses, communities, councils, schools and universities to champion the level playing field of opportunity young people want.

There are wide gaps in access to higher education across the country. Young people from some areas are more than twice as likely to progress to HE as those from lower participation neighbourhoods. This divergence is a focus for the National Collaborative Outreach Programme. Solutions rely on more effective careers and enterprise programmes.

By adopting the Gatsby Benchmarks, colleges can be confident that they are complying with the careers guidance requirements set out in their funding agreement.

Available data suggests that 8.5% of 16 to 17-year-olds are failing to comply with the duty that Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) legislation places on them to participate in learning and/or training up to age 18. Colleges have a key role to play in helping to re-engage these young people.

Top tips for colleges

Plan

- Review the learning goals, mindsets and skills your students need for progression. Build a progressive career programme that allows students to develop these and to measure their progress.
- Consult students about what they see as the most important barriers to progression from college and address these barriers within the career programme and related strategic career plan.
- Audit how well provision is meeting the needs of all students using the Compass for colleges audit tool.
- Ensure that your careers and enterprise programme contains specific plans for groups of young people who need tailored support to make effective career transitions.
- Identify providers who will be able to support the enhancement of your programme in collaboration with your Careers Adviser, feeder schools and Enterprise Adviser.
- Establish links with key charities and organisations such as the Helena Kennedy Foundation and Barnardo's to support students with specific needs.
- Work across the college to raise awareness of stereotyping and to ensure that resources, publications and displays challenge stereotypes.

Deliver

- Help students to be proactive career managers maintaining their own records of career development.
- Share information in a timely way and ensure all staff update tracking systems to provide a complete picture of the transition support offered.
- Be intentional in challenging stereotypes through tutorials and careers lessons.

Measure

- Develop and maintain systems for recording advice and careers interventions given to each student. Use this to inform the planning for students' transition after they finish their course.
- Record student destination data to inform planning for students' transition after their courses and to increase access to college alumni.

Top tips for employers

- Talk to other employers in your area who have had positive experiences working with SEND young people from local colleges and review how far your support is reaching all students.
- Consider how you can offer mentoring support to more vulnerable students and to high-achieving ones through existing mentoring programmes.
- Draw on advice about how to accommodate and support young people with SEND from their tutors and from specialist agencies such as [The National Autistic Society](#).
- Work with colleges to embed equality and diversity into your programme of support through use of positive role models and other approaches.
- Support colleges in the design and delivery of projects and activities which challenge high-attaining students, such as the electives programme outlined in the case study from St John Rigby College.
- Encourage staff working with colleges, where appropriate, to share personal stories about overcoming barriers and accessing support.
- Support colleges with recording careers events and activities through systematic evaluation.



Examples of colleges addressing the needs of each pupil

Leeds City College (LCC)

ProMonitor is used to track students' attendance at work experience, enrichment events, tutorials, talks by guest speakers, HE visits, careers interviews, career plans, etc. Students discuss their career pathway (sector and job) with tutor/coach and record it with related actions on their Personal Progress Plan. They can access these records through their own ProPortal.

LCC ensures that all students are guided through their college journey before entry, on their course and as they leave. This includes higher achieving students as well as those with high support needs, including those with EHCPs. The Level six Careers Advisers support students with EHCP plans and work with curriculum staff and the transitions team to provide information about careers options.

The college tutorial programme is tailored to the needs of different groups. There is a strong drive throughout LCC to address equality of opportunity. Efforts are made to address gender segregation in courses and the college is delighted to have recently appointed a female head of the Engineering Department.

Halesowen College, West Midlands

The college offers a careers fair for students to attend with their parents attended by a range of local providers of supported internships and traineeships, including the NHS access into employment programme. The college is disappointed that Remploy is no longer available locally but there are strong links with the local volunteering scheme and the Barnardo's 16-18 support programme, with tailored mentoring and support programmes for young people who are struggling mid-year and need additional support to overcome anxiety and other barriers to progression.

With students on foundation level courses, the Careers Department strives to offer a One Learner Link support model and it provides a photo of the link adviser, trying to channel the range of support available through this link. The gentle, reassuring approach to this group of students works well and provides consistency in careers interventions.

St John Rigby College, Wigan

The college uses ProPortal for tracking students. Its Ofsted report comments that “leaders and managers use data exceptionally well to track and monitor the progress of students to ensure that they make at least the progress expected of them. Frequent and detailed analyses of a range of data sets enable leaders and managers to identify and close gaps in achievement by different groups of students, including those who are eligible for the college’s bursary scheme, children looked after and care leavers. Students who receive additional learning support make excellent progress and achieve as well as their peers. Students who have previously been entitled to free school meals, in receipt of the college bursary or are looked after or care leavers achieve as well as, and often better than, their peers.”

Most students on A-level programmes and a high proportion on Level three vocational programmes progress to HE, with a very large majority securing places on their first choice of university. The college has comprehensive elective programmes to support gifted students in reaching their career goals. Strands include Aspiring Artists, Future Lawyers, Music Maestros and Future Engineers and offer bespoke support including extended project qualifications, a fourth A-level or other experiences to nurture talent and equip students for entry to prestigious universities or competitive higher-level apprenticeships.

The robust approach to data analysis has led to a review of strategies to improve second year retention for BTEC students. The careers partnership is focusing on targeted support to ensure students have a clear career pathway and plan on completion.

Sunderland College

One of the largest providers of post-16 education in the north-east of England. The college has approximately 14,300 students of which 4,000 are full-time 16 to 18-year-olds and more than 1,000 are apprentices. Sixty per cent of students aged 16-18 are from disadvantaged backgrounds, with 36% accessing financial support. The college supports more than 90 students with high needs, 27 looked after children, 80 young carers and 17 young parents. Fostering inclusivity and removing barriers to learning is central to the college's identity. It delivers bespoke activities and events for underrepresented groups such as the BME community, young carers, care leavers and those at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET).

An example of this is an event designed for school-age young carers, run in partnership with the Carers Centre. The aim was to enable young carers from schools across the city to participate in activities to inspire and raise their personal aspirations, enabling them to think of opportunities for their self-development. The young carers were able to sample curriculum areas including:

- Hairdressing – styling hair on a mannequin head.
- Beauty – nail demonstration on the young person and the opportunity to try out skills on others.

- Welding – a practical demonstration of high-powered welding.
- Hospitality and catering – preparing chicken for sauté.
- Carpentry and joinery – practical activity working with wood, with lots of hammering involved!
- Motor vehicle – stencil spray painting.
- Enrichment – pool, table tennis and a bit of mindfulness.

A young carer who studies at Sunderland College volunteered to support the event as an ambassador and to act as a familiar face for the young people attending. The event ended with all groups coming back together with parents for tea, coffee, water and a small buffet.

Before the event the young people were asked if they had ever thought about college. The majority responded negatively as they had not thought beyond their caring responsibilities. After the event all indicated that they would now consider further education after school. They also really enjoyed the diverse curriculum tasters and demonstrations.

Useful resources

- [Sutton Trust Summer Schools](#) offer access to one-week residential courses at university to help students experience undergraduate life. Applicants need to meet specific criteria such as being first in their family to attend university, be on free school meals or be from a neighbourhood with low progression to higher education.
- [The Access Project](#) works with high-attaining students from disadvantaged backgrounds, providing in-school support and volunteer tuition, to help them gain access to top universities.
- [Inspiring Women](#).
- [Employable Me](#) is a three-part Australian TV series, available in the UK, focusing on disability and employment.
- Search online for 'career assessments' to find online questionnaires that learners can use to assess their interests and skills.
- [Vocopher](#) offers a multimedia library of careers resources from a collaboration involving academic professionals, career counsellors and professional web developers. Resources include career maturity inventories and video clips illustrating career theories.
- When using matching services to find people from the world of work to come into college, request role-model volunteers to raise aspirations and challenge stereotyping, e.g. women in STEM, men in social care. Book early to avoid disappointment.
- Evaluate digital tools for tracking learners' progress and generating reports to see if they meet your needs, e.g. [MyCareerSpringboard](#) (free) and [Grofar](#).
- Look at the [What Works](#) research from The Careers & Enterprise Company.
- Check out funding available through the government's [Access to Work Grant](#), which can cover the job coach elements of traineeships or supported internships.
- The [SEND Code of Practice](#) sets out responsibilities for learners with or without EHC plans.
- [DfE guidance](#) on providing supported internships for young people with special educational needs and an EHC Plan.
- Look at the [percentage of students in sustained education, employment or training](#) broken down to include gender, ethnicity, special need and level of disadvantage from your college and consider the implications for your provision.
- [FE Week annual performance league tables](#) set out positive progression on to education, employment and training destinations.
- The [Office for Students' participation of local areas \(POLAR\)](#) looks at how likely young people are to participate in HE across the UK and shows how this varies by area.
- [NATSPEC](#), an association for organisations which offer specialist further education and training for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is leading inclusive skills competitions with the charity WorldSkillsUK. Investigate how students with additional needs can benefit from the programme of national skills competitions.

- Investigate the lessons from the Aspires project, which looked at family influence on 'science capital'. The second phase at University College London has identified that careers education is not just patchy, but patterned in terms of social inequalities.
- HSE offers guidance including the responsibility on providers of work placements to take account of students' physical and psychological capacities.
- The commission has also outlined duties on providers of work placement opportunities, including making reasonable adjustments.
- The Institute for Employment Studies has published guidelines on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in further education.
- Good Career Guidance: Perspectives from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities sector gathers together the views of leading practitioners and national experts on the importance of careers guidance for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Each describes how they, or those they support, have successfully used the benchmarks to deliver better careers guidance for students with a wide range of needs and disabilities.
- The Education & Training Foundation (ETF) provide expert resources to support the education and training sectors, covering a broad range of topics and including guidance, effective practice, teaching materials, research and CPD materials.



Gatsby Benchmark 4

Linking curriculum learning to careers

All subject staff should link curriculum learning with careers, even on courses which are not specifically occupation-led. For example, STEM subject staff should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths. Study programmes should also reflect the importance of maths and English as a key expectation from employers.

Throughout their programme of study (and by the end of their course) every learner should have had the opportunity to experience how their subjects help people gain entry to, and be more effective workers within, a wide range of occupations.

The three main ways of delivering careers in the curriculum are:

- Providing career learning as a subject in its own right - in this approach careers content is delivered as a discrete curriculum, e.g. via tutorial programme or life skills, etc.
- Incorporating career learning within curriculum areas - in this approach careers learning outcomes are delivered through subjects. Ideally this approach both provides career learning and enhances the subject learning e.g. by showing how a mathematical technique is used in the real world and bring employers into lessons.
- Offering career learning through extra-curriculum activities - in this approach careers content is delivered through informal and voluntary learning activities e.g. STEM initiatives, entrepreneurial activities, social action, etc.

What good looks like

From their earliest contact with the college, learners understand that they are taking their course to progress their careers and not just to pass exams.

The college has a centrally coordinated curriculum framework for careers which details how learners on different courses can access and progress through the programme. It explains how different modes of provision will be combined and integrated, including:

- Careers inputs that are integral to a course, e.g. the college's tutorial programme, courses with dedicated career planning modules.
- Careers inputs that can be worked into courses, e.g.:
 - Skills teaching, e.g. creativity, STEM, enterprise and employability, within subjects and courses. Students should be given planned and intentional opportunities to develop these skills within the curriculum.
 - Course experiences, e.g. encounters with employers and employees, encounters with further and higher education providers, experience of work.
- Careers enrichment activities, often organised on a voluntary basis, including those that are scheduled in students' own time and those that are more closely tied to study programmes, e.g.:
 - Competitions, challenges, performances, national awareness events.
 - Digital and online learning, e.g. online courses (MOOCS), college careers VLEs.

The Careers Leader works closely with departments to enable subject staff to take ownership of their role in the careers programme. This includes carrying out audits to inform staff's CPD support needs. Departments identify a careers champion to collate and disseminate subject and sector-specific information. Departmental meetings include a standing agenda item for careers updates, sector news, etc.

Subject staff make good use of their employer, third sector and HE contacts to input into their curriculum.

A focus on outcomes gives departments flexibility over the choice of inputs and processes to achieve the desired impact, while coordination enables the Careers Leader to deal with gaps and overlaps.

Insights into how to create a rich learning environment for careers have been shared with college staff focused on four main approaches: dialogic teaching, enquiry-based learning, experiential learning and reflective learning. Learners on vocational courses have opportunities to use these approaches to complete tasks that are relevant to their chosen careers.

The college is resourceful in helping students to achieve a GCSE grade four or better and in encouraging learners to take qualifications in maths and English at a higher level that will open doors for them with universities, apprenticeship providers and employers.

The college has developed highly effective partnerships with local and regional stakeholders. As a result, courses meet local, regional and national skills priorities well.

College facilities and commercial facilities (e.g. restaurants, salons, gyms) operate as close to industrial standards as possible.

Staff on vocational courses have good industrial skills that they share with learners.

All staff link curriculum learning with careers, even on courses which are not specifically occupation-led.

What this means in practice

The Careers Leader identifies needs and opportunities through analysis of the results of curriculum audits, student evaluation surveys, labour market surveys, etc. and negotiates with departments on how the careers team can support them.

Colleges develop short courses for at-risk young people to re-engage them in learning. Career exploration and planning are an integral part of such courses alongside work on motivation, employability skills, adaptability, resilience and preparation for full-time courses in the college, in-house and external apprenticeships, or employment.

College staff are strongly aware of the benefits of humanising and contextualising course content, i.e:

- Highlighting the practical applications of what learners are doing for their future careers and everyday life.
- Bringing learners into direct contact with people who followed the same or a similar pathway that they are on (see also Gatsby Benchmark 5: Encounters with employers and employees).
- Making careers learning relevant and fun.
- Focusing on diversity when showcasing individuals who have made a significant contribution in a particular academic or occupational field.

The college recruits specialist teachers of English and maths and trains course tutors to develop students' functional skills in English and maths in relevant contexts.

Course information sheets explain the subject's employability skills, progression opportunities and an overview of destinations of previous learners.

Why this matters

Students who do two or more employer engagement activities at school or college feel more confident about achieving their long-term career goals, are less likely to be NEET and are more likely to earn more, according to research from [Education and Employers](#).

A report from the CBI highlights a widening gap between low and high-performing employers and the urgency of developing an effective national system for growing the skills needed for innovation and increased productivity. Government, companies, providers and individual learners must all play their part. [CBI: In perfect harmony – Improving skills delivery in England](#)

It can be challenging for colleges to maintain a rich career learning environment for students. A 2016 survey by the [Sixth Form Colleges Association](#) showed that two-thirds of colleges had cut courses in strategically important subjects such as STEM and modern languages and over half had cut enrichment activities including visits as a result of budgetary pressures.

It is important to contextualise learning in English and maths for students. A 2018 government report found a shortage of specialist teachers of English and maths, and vocational teachers who lacked expertise in contextualising learning of these subjects for their vocational areas. [DfE: Teaching, leadership and governance in further education](#) (February 2018).

Top tips for colleges

Plan

- Design a progressive, discrete careers programme to be delivered with clear learning outcomes and outputs (use [CDI Framework](#) as a starting point).
- Ask staff to audit where they are already delivering against your career learning outcomes and to help identify opportunities to champion and make careers explicit through their curriculum.
- Engage with curriculum leaders to identify opportunities to develop resources and delivery, which connects learning to the world of work and that could involve meaningful employer engagement.
- Sign up to The Careers & Enterprise Company's Enterprise Adviser Network and match an Enterprise Adviser with a particular department or faculty to help build industry/sector-specific employer engagement plans.
- Encourage staff to sign up to become apprenticeship champions and gain access to the Apprentice Champions Network.
- Contact subject associations, sector skills councils and professional bodies for relevant resources to link curriculum learning to careers.

Deliver

- Use readily available video clips (e.g. on iCould, CareersBox, YouTube) and other media to contextualise learning for careers.
- Sessional inputs can take different forms, e.g. a high impact starter activity lasting a few minutes at the beginning of a session, the main activity in a session or a plenary activity to assess the learning that has taken place at the end of a session.
- Contextualise courses by incorporating career focused modules/units of work at the beginning or at an appropriate point in the course.
- Recognise that online resources (websites, Virtual Learning Environments) are not a substitute for a careers programme – they are most effective when they are part of supported independent study or integrated within a careers programme.
- Create a working group of ‘career champions’ from across the curriculum to raise profile of careers programme and to support development of careers related activity within the curriculum.

Measure

- Record all career activity delivered through the careers programme and get feedback from all stakeholders to inform future planning.

Top tips for employers

- Contact your HR department, professional body, sector skills council or local employers organisation for information and advice about contributing to the careers programme in colleges.
- Communicate any sector updates, etc. to college Careers Leaders to help them update and inform their careers programme.
- Joint planning, delivery and evaluation can make a considerable difference to the impact of your contribution.
- Offer staff placements so college staff can learn more about the business you are in and pass this on to their students.
- Consider doing a [free six-hour online course on planning inspiring STEM activities or getting feedback to help you improve your volunteering and STEM activities](#) with young people.

Examples of colleges linking curriculum learning to careers

City of Wolverhampton College

The college offers specific courses to re-engage and motivate students who are not ready for a full-time programme or are at risk of dropping out (relevant to Benchmark 3). The Prince's Trust Certificate in Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills has careers learning embedded within it with a particular focus on teamwork and enterprise. The 12-week Get Ahead Programme (GAP) for students who have previously been excluded from school, home-schooled, bullied or have English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) needs, acting as a bridge for them to get on to mainstream courses. It fosters independence, literacy and numeracy skills and includes vocational tasters. Students who need more time can move on to the Laser programme (Learn, Achieve, Succeed, Engage and Reward) for 24 weeks, four days a week.

For each A-level and vocational subject, the college's online course finder has details of employment in the 12 employment regions of Great Britain and a graph of predicted employment trends for the next four to five years. Course descriptions highlight the skills students can acquire and their usefulness to employers. During their courses, staff organise many opportunities to link curriculum learning to careers:

- Music technology students work at a venue and support live gigs, giving them the experience of the pressure involved in supporting live performances.
- Construction students have worked on real-life projects in the city directly linked to their units and assessment, giving them experience of being employed on a construction project while gaining their qualifications. They work with employers such as Speller Metcalfe, which regularly holds competitions where students are able to demonstrate their abilities and employers can talk to them about skills required for the workplace.
- Students on the motor vehicle course have worked with Halfords Auto Centre, which has shown them the process of MOT on a vehicle and outlined the skills required to work in the car servicing and repair industry.

Careers also features strongly in the weekly tutorial programme. After a recent review the college started using subject tutors as personal tutors for students who they teach. The programme is devised centrally and tutors are provided with the guidance, resources and training (three days a year plus a conference) to deliver the programme. They are encouraged to adapt the materials as long as they still meet students' needs.

St. Dominic's Sixth Form College, Harrow-on-the-Hill

The college has recently undertaken a curriculum audit, with the HE and careers coordinator having briefed subject staff on how to complete the section on careers in the curriculum at a staff training day. Several departments responded well before the deadline and additional support was given to departments that needed more time.

The curriculum audit is divided into subject departments and other areas such as careers, chaplaincy and personal tutors. Each department recorded its activity against the 17 outcomes for careers, employability and enterprise education in the CDI Framework. The audit also includes reference to the Gatsby Benchmarks under each outcome. This exercise has revealed the cross-college commitment to linking curriculum learning with careers through a vast range of activities, events, visits from professional speakers, trips and the PSHE college programme.

Various STEM activities take place during the year such as volunteering sessions from outside organisations as well as a networking session for Year 12 students to learn more about professions in science and maths and to engage with employers.

Students who did not achieve at least Level four (C grade) in maths or English at GCSE are timetabled for lessons and resit exams in Year 12 or 13. Study programmes reflect the importance of English and maths through workshops across all subject areas and assistance from the Study Plus (SEND) area, where students with particular needs are given help with curriculum work, homework or revision. There are also subject workshops during the year for help with UCAS personal statements.

South Thames College, South-West London

The South Thames Colleges Group formed in 2017 and is made up of Carshalton, Kingston, Merton and South Thames colleges. The group has appointed a Careers Leader on the senior executive team to manage the careers programme and the team of five Careers Advisers. This will promote the sharing of good practice, cost-effective staff development and the application of consistent standards.

The colleges link curriculum learning to careers in four main ways:

- Careers content delivered through the tutorial programme, e.g. self-assessment, career exploration, making choices and decisions, planning, application and selection procedures and self-presentation.
 - Generic employability and career management skills delivered as part of preparatory and general education courses.
 - Specific employability and career management skills delivered through vocational and occupational courses. An example of this is the one-year Bridge into Construction programme piloted by South Thames and Sheffield College. It has been co-designed by Build UK, which represents British construction companies, and the COLLAB Group, which represents FE colleges, to ensure that it meets the needs of the construction industry and equips young people with the knowledge, skills and experience required for an apprenticeship. The course is practice and project-based. Work experience is provided by the housebuilder the Berkeley Group, which also gives students the opportunity to gain a health and safety qualification. Students learn about the lifecycle of a construction project from the tendering stage, through to design, construction and post-construction.
- Enrichment activities strongly connected to learners' study programmes. These voluntary participation activities can develop learners' understanding of and skills for the industries they wish to enter and give them an advantage when making applications. Recent examples include:
 - Level two and three hairdressing students, based at the Merton Campus, worked on their community project with Merton Women's Refuge to offer free haircuts.
 - Level two and Level three student chefs took part in a challenge organised by the college's hospitality and catering academy in conjunction with Jockey Club Catering to test students' abilities to work unsupervised under pressure, form teams and design, pitch, cost and prepare menus to a specified client brief within a short timescale. As well as a cash prize, each member of the winning team was offered further work experience opportunities.
 - Art students exhibited their work at a local gallery, giving them the chance to develop their skills and learn about business matters such as insurance and personal liability.
 - Music students competed in the heats for WorldSkills UK competition held at the college.

Wilberforce Sixth Form College, Hull

The college is the 2017 SFC Awards winner for employability and enrichment. It has 1,600 mainly full-time 16 to 18-year-olds studying vocational and academic courses from entry level to level three. Students principally come from east Hull and Holderness, areas with high levels of urban and rural deprivation and white working-class underachievement. The progression students make from their starting points is high.

Ofsted reported in March 2018 that “managers have designed a curriculum that responds well to local and national priorities. It provides excellent opportunities for students to develop the skills and knowledge that they require to be successful when they take their next steps.” The college also holds the Quality in Careers Standard, which requires that students benefit from an embedded careers education programme.

The college Careers Guidance & CEIAG Manager leads the day-to-day management of the careers programme and reports to a member of the Executive Team. As well as offering one-to-one interviews, the manager gives class talks and workshops on topics including career pathways and choosing and applying for university courses through UCAS. Resources are uploaded on to the Moodle VLE platform which gives students 24/7 access to key careers, higher education and labour market websites.

The careers education programme runs within the tutorial programme as well as in subjects. Each department provides information for the prospectus

and website about what students can do after their courses.

All courses provide scope for linking curriculum learning to careers. Students on the BTEC Level three Extended Diploma in Art and Design, for example, get to work with visiting artists and sculptors. Students taking A-level Film Studies or Media Studies get the chance to publish their work through the college’s partnership with Cineworld and the Hull Daily Mail. Students on the BTEC Level three Extended Diploma in Public Services join sessions run by police counterterrorism teams and the Ministry of Defence. They take part in voluntary work and visit public service organisations, hear from guest speakers and study criminology and research on away days to university.

The college runs free networking lunches where students can chat to professionals including accountants, solicitors, journalists and university admissions staff. It also offers two enrichment courses for students planning to teach (includes a 13-week work placement) or to go into business.

Working Options, a charitable organisation supported by some of the biggest food and drink companies, runs seminars in the college on the skills and personal qualities employers are looking for.

Students can also be put in touch with the team of ten Curriculum Support Mentors, all former Wilberforce students, now studying at the University of Hull.

Useful resources

- The [CDI Framework for Careers, Employability and Enterprise Education](#) (March 2018) provides a useful structure for auditing, planning and evaluating the careers programme.
- The career management skills framework developed by the [LEADER project](#) is grouped around five main areas: personal effectiveness, managing relationships, finding and accessing work, managing life and career, and understanding the world.
- A [guide to the Learning and Skills Improvement Service \(LSIS\)](#) blueprint for careers and its implementation, published in 2012, provides a framework of career competencies for England derived from earlier versions in North America and Australia.
- The [career adaptabilities scale](#) (Savickas and Porfeli, 2012) focuses on the four significant psychological resources (concern, control, confidence and curiosity) that students need when managing career choices, transitions and events in their lives.

The Careers & Enterprise Company's What Works research comprises literature reviews focusing on impact and building on what is effective, e.g:

- [Careers in the Curriculum. What works?](#)
- [The evidence base for careers websites. What works?](#)
- [WorldSkills UK competitions.](#)
- MOOCS, e.g. the [Open University's Open Learn](#), and [Future Learn](#).

STEM resources include:

- [STEM Learning.](#)
- [Prospects Educational Resources - online catalogue.](#)
- [The Tertiary College Group: Delivering Excellence in Tutorial Support \(2010\).](#)
- The [Education & Training Foundation \(ETF\)](#) provide expert resources to support the education and training sectors, covering a broad range of topics and including guidance, effective practice, teaching materials, research and CPD materials.

Gatsby Benchmark 5

Encounters with employers and employees

Every learner should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities, including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes, and should include learners' own part-time employment where it exists.

- Every year, alongside their study programme, learners should participate in at least two meaningful encounters* with an employer. At least one encounter should be delivered through their curriculum area.
- Colleges should record and take account of learners' part-time employment and the influence this has had on their development.

What good looks like

The college has a track record of sustaining and improving employer engagement with demonstrable benefits for all groups of learners. Students seeking to enter employment upon completion receive support that is as well-rounded as that given to students considering university.

Students benefit from a wide range of well-planned employer encounters linked to their study programme, helping them make informed choices about future careers and develop employability skills. The college has extensive partnerships with employers and other organisations that enable all students to understand the opportunities open to them and to progress.

What this means in practice

'Meaningful' means that the encounter does more than meet a 'tick-box' requirement. The underlying test of meaningfulness is that the encounter has a personally valued impact on the learner. The guidelines for this benchmark refer to having "an opportunity to learn about what work is like or what it takes to be successful in the workplace". As well as asking learners to reflect on these impacts in debriefing sessions, it is worth asking them what else the encounter has meant for them. This will help colleges to detect other potential gains such as raised aspirations, greater self-confidence and higher determination.

* A 'meaningful encounter' is one in which the learner has an opportunity to learn about what work is like or what it takes to be successful in the workplace

Encounters with employers and employees can be face-to-face, online or a combination of the two, e.g.:

- An apprentice from the Young Apprenticeship Ambassadors network speaks at an event such as an applications workshop.
- Learners sign up to a LearnLive online broadcast organised by Amazing Apprenticeships, at which they can meet and ask questions of employers and apprentices. The broadcasts can also be viewed later on catch-up.

The post-16 study programme should include structured work experience, volunteering and personal development.

Where colleges meet Benchmark 5 well, there are strong and lasting links with local businesses. By 2020 all colleges will have access to an Enterprise Adviser – a senior volunteer from business who helps unlock relationships with other local employers. In the best examples, colleges and employers draw on evidence of what works including The Careers & Enterprise Company's What Works research. They take account of:

- The effects of different kinds of activities.
- The sequencing of these activities.
- The importance of effective implementation including proper briefing and debriefing.
- They also ensure that there is a strategic and structured approach to the learning and a shared sense of purpose. Best use needs to be made of the complementary skills of tutors and employers to deliver inspirational and compelling activities that:
 - Expand young people's understanding of the possibilities open to them.
 - Help them to develop required skills and behaviours.
 - Inspire and motivate them to set career goals.

Why this matters

Access to employers can vary considerably depending on the course followed, often with those who have the most to gain having least access to it.

Research in schools and colleges by Education and Employers indicates that:

- Students who undertake two or more engagement activities are 20% less likely to be NEET (2014).
- Young people need more support than a generation ago to enter the youth labour market (2016). Over the past decade there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of young people with part-time employment.
- Young people who expressed greater volume of mediated employer engagement feel better prepared for the adult world of work (2016).

Those young people who have most to gain from employer engagement have least access to it (2017). Only 6% of adults with a learning disability known to a local authority in England are in paid work, according to a Mencap study from 2018. Enabling learners to develop and demonstrate their skills through well-planned employer engagement activities is of vital importance to addressing this statistic.

Partnership between colleges and employers is central to the success of skills reforms. Josh Hardie, CBI deputy director-general, said the tenth CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey found that "across the country there are brilliant schools and colleges helping young people succeed, both academically and in terms of the attitudes and behaviours they need to succeed in later life. Business can and must do more to ensure that someone's postcode or background does not define their life chances".

The UK needs to improve its productivity performance if it is to maintain its position among the leading economies, and education and skills are crucial to getting this right. The CBI's Unlocking Regional Growth report showed that education is the biggest driver of variations in regional productivity across the country.

Research carried out by The Careers & Enterprise Company with WorldSkillsUK shows a gulf of expectations between businesses and young people about preparedness for work. A survey of 2,000 young people showed that the majority (62%) believe they are ready for the workplace. The CBI/Pearson Education and Skills survey found that schools, colleges and universities are increasingly looking to develop young people more broadly in addition to their academic attainment. Businesses are positive about young people's teamwork (71% satisfied) and attitudes to work (67%), but remain concerned on skills of analysis (51% dissatisfied) and behaviours such as resilience and self-regulation (48%).

It is expected that by the end of 2020 every college will ensure that each learner has at least two meaningful encounters with an employer every year. The 2016 Education and Skills Survey reported "a gap between education and the preparation people need for their future, as well as the gap between the skills needed and those people have". Employer encounters help to address the skills and knowledge gap.

Social background has a profound effect on progression in learning and work. Employer encounters broaden young people's horizons for action and foster community cohesion. The Aspires project from Kings College London found that young people with low social capital stand to benefit most from improved education/employer links and careers education.

New jobs are emerging, many in growing sectors such as digital technology. First-hand encounters expand young people's understanding of areas of growth.

The Bank of England estimates that up to 15 million jobs in the UK are under threat of automation over the next two decades. It is vital that young people have first-hand contact with employers to help their understanding of the skills needed for their futures.

There are significant weaknesses in the STEM talent-base, including underrepresentation of women and minority groups. Well-planned employer encounters can help address this imbalance.

Top tips for colleges

Plan

- Include Employer Engagement within strategic careers plan. Enlist support of an Enterprise Adviser and other key partners to do this.
- Refer to [Skills Builder Framework](#) when developing content and resource for employer engagement.
- Invest in a team to coordinate and develop a comprehensive programme of employer engagement linked to the curriculum and tailored to the individual needs of students.
- Audit the existing range of employer contacts. How far does this meet the learning needs of students in every group and does it address the particular needs of disadvantaged students? Audit what type of employer encounters are available to your learners using the Compass tool and identify gaps and objectives for improvement.
- Investigate practice in other colleges and how their careers programme providers and registered careers practitioners can support development.
- Link employer encounters to specific events in the calendar including International Women's Day, Black History and LGBT History Month.
- Create a network of employers and speakers who can support with delivery of careers programme. Consider staff networks, local business networks and charities e.g. Inspiring the Future and Speakers for Schools.

Deliver

- Use LEP employer engagement toolkits to support development of new approaches.
- There are differences between sectors and employers, so be prepared to be adaptable and flexible in your approach.
- Book volunteers well in advance, especially if you want them at busy times in the year (e.g. National Careers Week) or in areas where there is a shortage of volunteers (e.g. modern languages).
- Make sure that there is a named member of staff with clearly defined role and responsibility when organising and running employer encounters.
- Ensure there is structured preparation, induction and support of students throughout all employer encounters.
- Explore ways in which learners can be involved in planning and delivering employer engagement to develop their own skills.

Measure

- Use systems such as ProMonitor to help students record and reflect on the skills they develop through employer encounters.
- Gather feedback from students about employer contacts to improve the programme and ensure it responds to their range of interests.
- Use [Skills Builder Framework](#) to develop a process to measure progress and impact of employer encounters.

Top tips for employers

- Register with The Careers & Enterprise Company's #Giveanhour campaign to connect in with local schools/colleges to support their careers activity delivery.
- Offer to go into colleges. All the colleges contributing to this toolkit said they wanted to attract more employers to work with them. Register with one of the organisations that facilitate links (see key resources). Be specific about what you can offer so college staff can match you with their students' needs.
- Consider taking on a more strategic role by applying to become an industry champion. This may involve representing your industry or sector, working with a group of schools and colleges and helping to recruit more volunteers.
- Clarify your motivation and expectations from engagement with the college, which might range from representing the needs of employers in a general sense to meeting your own organisation's training and employment needs.
- Provide feedback to the college on how well learners responded.
- See links as an exciting new staff development opportunity and a way of aiding retention, increasing motivation and attracting new recruits.
- The CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey found that 63% of businesses have links with colleges but there is scope for building engagement. Being rooted in local communities helps enhance your business's reputation.
- Ensure the role models and staff you deploy are well briefed and encourage interest from the broadest range of students.
- Consideration what the students want to learn and the teaching activities that will best meet this.
- Work with the college to plan and judge the effectiveness of the encounters.
- Explore ways in which both the teachers and students can benefit from the encounters.
- Offer a range of activities that recognise the diverse abilities of students. Bringing along artefacts and providing hands-on opportunities can engage learners better than a formal presentation.
- See this as a long-term investment. Building relationships with local colleges will help to deliver sustainable, high-impact programmes.
- Share approaches and celebrate success within your sector and business networks.
- Accept that success will not look the same to everyone and that different routes and technical and academic pathways may be valid.

Examples of encounters with employers and employees

Derwen College, Shropshire

Derwen College, based in Oswestry, provides residential further education for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. College leaders develop a range of strategic partnerships to improve students' opportunities including pioneering the Inclusive Skills competitions. These are designed to stretch young people with SEND and improve their self-esteem and confidence. The competitions enable students to demonstrate their work skills, showing employers how they can perform under pressure to industry-standard criteria.

Prior to the development of Inclusive Skills there was not a competition available for learners working at Level one and below. The competitions are now a standard feature of the WorldSkills UK programme. Derwen leads Inclusive Skills for the West Midlands and is the national lead for Catering and Restaurant Service. Industry partners work alongside the college to develop the competitions and embed industry standards.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of each student. The college develops close employer links as part of running the competitions, leading to high-quality and meaningful employer encounters for most students. For example, the college manages the local railway station café, which provides

students with the opportunity to develop vocational and employability skills in the heart of the community. They learn to work as a team and communicate with customers. Managers have developed close links with employers, particularly in retail and hospitality. 'Industry champions' work closely with college staff to enhance college vocational programmes. They ensure that staff and students are fully aware of the standards and skills required in the workplace. These companies have invested in industry-standard learning resources at the college. For example, one national hotel company has opened a training suite at the college consisting of a reception, linen room and bedrooms kitted out to the latest industry standard design. Students gain invaluable work experience in this centre leading on to external work experience placements and permanent work in the industry after leaving college. As a result of the partnership, ten students transferred from education to employment in 2018, and of the 36 students who have so far participated 16 have joined the working world. With an employment rate of 44 per cent this course beats the national average by 38 per cent, showing the value of the initiative, which is helping to increase the number of working age adults with learning difficulties who are in employment in the UK – currently just six per cent.

Lambeth College

Alongside its work experience programmes, Lambeth College runs a variety of initiatives designed to boost learners' employability skills and networks, including:

- Pop-up shop to give young entrepreneurs a space where they can market and sell their products and ideas.
- Visiting speakers from employers representing a range of occupational areas in response to learners' interest.
- A defined employer engagement structure incorporating work experience.

Lambeth College has been an active partner in one of the twelve London Careers Clusters. In partnership with Lambeth council and London South Bank University, it has led three key employer engagement projects:

1. **Lambeth Ambassador Programme:** the college has trained more than 50 apprentices in how to prepare and deliver powerful presentations, personal branding, determining personal and professional goals and conference planning. The sessions aimed to promote apprenticeships as a credible post-16 pathway to peers from the 17 schools in the cluster, while encouraging the apprentices to reflect on their own apprenticeship pathways.
2. **Lambeth Apprenticeship Ambitions Conference:** gave more than 200 Lambeth school and college students, employers and training providers the opportunity to hear about the benefits of apprenticeships. Fifteen apprentice ambassadors gave presentations.
3. **The Big Careers Day and Big Apprenticeship Day:** an event led by the Lambeth ambassadors in 2017 and 2018, attracting more than 50 employers and 500 school and college students. The event offers access to live opportunities and workshops with a wide range of employers including Battersea Power Station Development Company, Compass Group, Guys and St Thomas NHS Foundation Trust, Merlin Entertainment, Mencap, the Royal Navy, Tideway and Westminster Homecare.

Leicester College

Leicester College is experimenting with a range of approaches to broaden employer encounters. Last year it started to use the Industrial Cadet programme for students on Level two STEM courses who were not yet ready for independent work experience.

The Industrial Cadet programme, developed by the Engineering Development Trust (EDT), offers a new framework for the college that has proved more supportive to the learners and employers. EDT believes the programme helps employers to create a talent pipeline and a future skilled workforce, while helping young people to develop the skills they need to enter industry with confidence.

Students tour employer premises and are briefed about taking part in a range of industry-based projects on the first day. Projects are wide ranging and have included designing a competition gaming studio, developing a start-up company for fibre and cable installation, and other engineering design projects. Students work from a professionally developed project brief.

Between Tuesday and Thursday students work in teams on the project brief with the support of college tutors and staff from the companies. On the Friday

they take part in a Dragon's Den-type experience and present their project to a panel. The programme offers accreditation at five levels: Challenger, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. The programme includes at least five hours' experience of industry. After the programme students are ready to progress on to work experience. At the end of the week there is a formal graduation to celebrate their achievements.

The college also offers a World of Work (WoW) programme in a range of course areas to students who lack the skills and confidence for work experience. On day one they take part in team-building activities and are offered insights into different employment areas. They are then supported to take part in community-based activities including gardening, river maintenance and other social action projects. WoW encourages students to see the skills they develop as a stepping stone to the next level.

Leicester College has a Get Connected service for alumni and encourages them to volunteer to support the career development of the current student cohort.

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College

NWSLC is a large general further education college, operating from campuses in South Wigston, Nuneaton, Hinckley town centre and a further specialist construction centre in Hinckley. The college is also building an automotive engineering campus at the Horiba MIRA Technology Park, Nuneaton, scheduled for completion in late 2018. The college offers a diverse range of curriculums from entry level to level six across all 15 subject sector areas, meeting the needs of students, employers and local communities with about 17,000 enrolments on all qualifications.

The college has a specific strategy around competitions as part of its employer engagement programme and promotes the competitive spirit. It believes that competition work encourages students to strive for excellence in technical skills and to develop greater confidence and employability. Competitions are integrated in the teaching, learning and assessment strategy and learners are encouraged to question and extend their learning through projects and peer assessment. Every learner who competed achieved positive destinations, i.e. progress on to HE, another FE course or employment. Taking part in competitions also has a proven impact on attendance and attainment. Three examples from different curriculum areas show the power and impact of this model:

- Salon Culinaire, a competition run by the Hospitality and Catering Department of the college, has secured the sponsorship and involvement of a wide range

of employers from the sector. Students take part in live salon classes and are judged on their skills in areas such as gateau making, hot street food and fish filleting. Participation gives learners a challenge, boosts their career development and promotes their understanding of a vibrant and growing industry. The well-known judges include Brian Turner (TV chef), Nathan Eades (Simpsons, Birmingham) and Sam Moody (Bath Priory), who help to inspire the students.

- Johnstone's Trade Young Painter of the Year Competition – students took part in a challenging six-hour drawing and painting competition. One of the judges, James Surtees, technical applications consultant at Johnstone's, a paint retailer, said: "The competition is a great way to showcase the talent of painters and decorators. It gives us the opportunity to invest in the next generation".
- Students studying Level three make-up artistry entered awards at a prestigious beauty trade show. Students had to create a simulated injury using the theme of Dunkirk. The award, sponsored by the National Association of Screen Make-up Artists and Hairdressers, gives participants valuable insights into the latest trends in the sector. According to the college tutor, participation "helps to develop confidence and ability to work under pressure in a fast-paced and competitive industry".

Sunderland College

The college places significant focus on being a city-wide strategic partner. One of the key partners is Sunderland city council, which struggles to recruit and retain social workers, while many of the college's health and care students plan to work in the adult care sector. Through a close link between the council and its adult social care team, the college was able to co-design the role of a 'intergenerational advocate' who would work alongside older people in care homes offering social engagement and support. A role descriptor was produced and mapped to the Health & Social Care qualification.

Students can apply to be part of the initiative and demonstrate their skills and work-readiness. In preparation, they attend workshops delivered by social workers and undergo a two-week induction before embarking on a two-day-a-week placement for a minimum of 21 weeks to gain understanding of the sector. On placement, students are introduced to a broad range of entertainment and activities including biscuit decorating, organising musicals, playing board games, reading books and poetry, and helping residents to create memory boxes.

As part of the initiative, students are allocated a named social worker as a mentor. This provides them with a meaningful employer encounter as well as their work with care home staff. The college identifies a

member of staff to coordinate the initiative and visit the advocates at work. Initially 30 students and three care homes took part, but due to the project's success this increased to five care homes, with two having approached the college asking to be involved. There have been measurable gains from the programme:

- Improvements in students' employability, literacy and digital skills, and self-efficacy.
- Improved student understanding of the sector.
- Increased social engagement for care home residents including support for those with cognitive impairments such as dementia.
- Excellent feedback from residents, students and placement hosts.

Christine Scott, manager of Belle Vue House, said: "The experience has been a great success and the vibe in the home has been upbeat and very rewarding. This is a great scheme and is one that every care setting should embrace with open arms – we would certainly recommend it."

Carla Raine, health and social care lecturer, said: "It's fantastic to see younger members of our society helping to combat the effects of social isolation by working with health and care providers."

Weymouth College

The college won an [AoC Beacon award](#) for excellent employment and community links within the Sport and Public Services Department. It has forged strong partnerships with local schools, employers, community clubs, national sport governing bodies, county sport partnerships and the local authority to help students understand the leisure industry and take part in planning local sporting events through work placements

and volunteering. The Sport and Public Services Department uses outstanding sports facilities including the Weymouth and Portland National Sailing Academy to boost students' confidence and employability skills. Students gain authentic coaching and leadership opportunities through this range of links. This enhances their overall learning experience and helps to prepare them for their future careers in sport or public services.



Wilberforce Sixth Form College, Hull

A rich blend of activities takes place through the curriculum and enrichment schemes to encourage students to develop their employability skills from day one. Through promoting the seven CBI employability skills, learners are helped to see the impact of their part-time and voluntary work and other extracurricular activities.

Wilberforce has organised successful 'speed interviewing' sessions for students. Professionals from a cross-section of businesses undertake 'mini interviews' with students or hold a panel interview. This has taken place on a larger scale for all Year 12, Level three students as part of an off-timetable careers and progression day and through smaller activities in individual departments.

Students develop interview experience and obtain constructive feedback. Learners always comment on the value of the experience and appreciate the importance of timekeeping, planning ahead, researching the job role and preparing for questions. They learn to build resilience, use verbal communication skills and draw out information from professionals while taking on board constructive feedback to hone their interview skills further.

Following on from these activities, students record their experience in the form of a blog on a professional

social media platform, and tag the skills they have developed through working towards an Employability Skills Passport. This allows them to reflect on what they have learnt and how they might apply this in real-life scenarios.

During the 2018/19 academic year every Wilberforce student will have at least two meaningful encounters with an employer, one of which will be led through their curriculum area. A new initiative is being led by the college's careers department. A Careers Lead will be appointed for each curriculum area to act as a point of contact, disseminate information to teaching staff and generate opportunities for students at every level, across every department.

Sarah Didsbury, Careers Manager, said: "Every student should benefit from a rich variety of opportunities to link with employers and industry professionals. Only through this variety will they learn of the real-life pathways and exciting choices they could make, while discovering that it is fine to keep your options open. Employers reassure them that not every route is black and white, and that hard work and opportunities that spark informed decision-making are key to making sound career choices."

Useful resources

- [GOV.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-study-programmes-guide-for-providers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-study-programmes-guide-for-providers) – sets out advice about planning and delivering the study programme.
- [Careers and Enterprise Company Meaningful Toolkit](#).
- [Skills Builder Framework](#).
- [Inspiring the Future](#).
- [How to run a careers speed networking event](#).
- LearnLive provides free access to live interactive broadcasts and video on demand with live chat to support careers and health education (learnliveuk.com). Read the [Bolton Sixth Form College case study](#).
- Some LEPs have produced [guides on employer engagement to support colleges](#).
- [Free webinars](#) are a great way to bring employers into the classroom in general.
- The STEM Exchange acts as a matching service, providing teachers and young people (aged 14 and over) with the opportunity to access face-to-face science, technology, engineering and maths experiences with employers. Originally commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation.
- The [Engineering Development Trust](#) provides useful models for employer engagement in the STEM area.
- [Inclusive Skills Competitions](#) are open to people working up to Level one and are designed to showcase the skills of students with learning difficulties. The competitions also build links between further education colleges (specialist and mainstream), work-based learning providers and employers across the country. They take place in nine vocational areas: catering, media, restaurant service, fitness instruction, health life sciences, hairdressing, ICT, woodworking and horticulture.
- WorldSkills UK and The Careers & Enterprise Company have come together to share stories of the [WorldSkills UK Skills Champions](#) and to inspire more young people to consider the full range of opportunities. The videos can help colleges to engage their learners in careers planning.
- The Careers & Enterprise Company is working to deepen understanding of what works. There is strong evidence that employer mentoring, enterprise competitions and work-related learning provided in cooperation with employers show positive impact:
 - [Business games and enterprise competitions. What works?](#)
 - [The evidence on careers events. What works?](#)
 - [Work experience, job shadowing and workplace visits. What works?](#)

- Explore practical ways to work with employers to address youth unemployment via the CIPD's [Learning to Work](#).
- The [Lifeskills campaign from Barclays](#) offers comprehensive teaching resources to boost employability and digital skills and to support effective employer engagement.
- The [STEM Ambassador Programme](#) provides inspiring role models to engage young people with science and maths careers.
- Volunteers from the world of work including inspiring women can be sourced through [InspiringtheFuture.org](#).
- A UK-wide charity, [Career Ready](#), runs one of 39 funded mentoring programmes linking employers with schools and colleges to open up the world of work to young people.



Gatsby Benchmark 6

Experiences of workplaces

Every learner should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities and expand their networks.

By the end of their study programme, every learner should have had at least one experience of a workplace, in addition to any part-time jobs they may have.

What good looks like

Activities and placements are an integral part of students' study programmes and, where appropriate, are linked to their current careers plans.

A-level students are not disadvantaged in comparison with students on technical/vocational courses in having access to meaningful workplace experiences.

The college has a placement team that works closely with teachers and lecturers to match learners to opportunities and liaise closely with employers. It also supports students in finding their own placements.

Activities are chosen according to their fitness for purpose, e.g. work shadowing enables a learner to find out about a job when there are practical reasons why they would not be allowed to do this through work experience.

Experiences provide learners with insights into employability skills, technical skill needs and contemporary labour market issues such as skills mismatches, low productivity and flexibilisation of labour.

Course and personal tutors talk to learners about their experiences of workplaces (such as school and privately arranged work experience, part-time jobs, volunteering) to facilitate reflection and ensure progression in learning. College staff also facilitate group planning and debriefing so that individuals can learn from each other's thinking and experiences.

The college gives students advice on how to learn from their part-time jobs and how to combine part-time work with their studies in a way that does not damage their college success.

What this means in practice

Colleges can meet the expectations of this benchmark by offering a range of provision linked to learners' study programmes, e.g.:

- Work visits, e.g. open doors events where employers invite in groups of students during specific dates in the year.
- Individual work experience placements (one day a week or in blocks), e.g. placements in nurseries for students on early years courses. It may be possible to arrange for some students to do work experience in Europe, e.g. for modern languages students.
- Supported internships for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Team work experience placements.
- Work shadowing placements.
- Volunteering and community activities.

The timing and duration of work placements is enough to yield real benefits – every T Level will include an industry placement with an employer focused on developing the practical and technical skills required for the occupation. These will last a minimum of 315 hours (approximately 45 days) but can last longer. Employers can offer industry placements as a block, day release or a mix of these, and can discuss sharing part of the placement with another employer if necessary.

Volunteering projects and Social Action can be an effective way of gaining work experience related to a study programme, e.g. helping a local community centre with painting and decorating, marketing, helping in the café or playgroup.

Why this matters

Learners with limited experience of workplaces are less well prepared to make informed choices and build their own networks of contacts.

Workplace experience enables learners to enhance their social capital, i.e. to function effectively as adults in a work environment, build their network of contacts and develop other employability skills.

The Careers & Enterprise Company's Enterprise Adviser Network is supporting schools and colleges in building relationships with local businesses. The network is operating in over half of schools and colleges, and all colleges will have access to an Enterprise Adviser by 2020. We recognise that this can be particularly challenging in rural areas and the network continues to identify and share good practice across the country so that everyone can benefit.

Non-statutory guidance from the DfE states that "all study programmes should include work experience and non-qualification activities, which complement the other elements of the programme and support the student to progress to further or higher education or to employment".

This can benefit students on academic as well as technical and applied pathways. Experience of workplaces can help all students to firm up their career choices and strengthen the personal statements they write when applying for opportunities. Work experience can take many different forms, and we recognise that there are circumstances in which a formal work placement in an external setting may not be appropriate.

Experiences of work that are linked to students' study programmes are more likely to have a positive impact on their educational engagement and work orientation than general work experience or part-time work, which can have neutral or negative impacts.

The wider purpose of giving young people experiences of workplaces is to prepare them for adult and community roles and responsibilities.

Top tips for colleges

Plan

- Refer to resources such as [CDI Framework Skills Builder](#) and consider career intentions of students to be clear about aims of any experience of work and how impact will be measured.
- Establish firm contacts with an organisation rather than with just one individual to protect longevity of engagement.
- Highlight to organisations that providing experience of work can help them meet their social responsibilities and develop their talent pipeline.
- Invite employers and alumni to a meal prepared and served by college catering and hospitality students and make a pitch to them about the benefits of offering apprenticeships and work experience. Co-design work placements with employers to maximise the benefits for all parties.
- Be clear with students from the time that they enrol about what the expectations are of them in terms of securing any placements/experiences of work.
- Use examples of student experiences of work as individual and shared learning resources within lessons.
- Consider how experiences of work can be tied to the curriculum through project briefs set by employers, which are strongly linked to curriculum learning outcomes. This allows extensions for potential guest speakers or for group workplace visits.
- Consider hosting SME and Start Up employers in college as a 'Business Clinic' as a way of providing experience of work to students. SME and Start Up employers can set real briefs/projects to students while the college acts as the 'place of work' and allows students to meet the brief and feed back to their client at the end of the experience.

Deliver

- Maximise opportunities across campus to engage students in experience of work. E.g. planning and running events.
 - Raise awareness within staff and students about key employability skills you are championing through the careers programme. Establish systems and resources to support students to articulate and celebrate when they are developing and using these key skills.
 - Identify a dedicated team to secure placements and to oversee administration and safeguarding. Ensure that employers and students are clear with who to contact in case of any issues.
- ### Measure
- Establish sound and embedded practices for students to record and reflect on any experiences of work. Help students to identify which key skills they developed and ensure they keep a record of examples of how they demonstrated and developed these key skills.
 - Ensure that students, employers, staff and parents provide feedback about experiences of work to inform future planning and delivery.

Top tips for employers

- Re-conceptualise the work placements you offer so that they become a benefit and not a cost. A team of students on a placement could work together on a project that is useful to the business.
- Find out more about the difficulties young people with complex learning needs face in finding employers who are willing to offer them work experience. Films about work experience from the charity Fixers are a good place to start – go to Fixers and search for ‘work experience’.
- Study programmes are made up of courses leading to qualifications and enrichment activities. Find out how the college helps students to construct their study programmes and the contribution that work experience is expected to make.
- Help students to have realistic expectations of what they will be allowed to do on work experience. Medical work experience, for example, will mainly involve watching, listening and completing repetitive tasks. Explain to students that they will stand out if they show enthusiasm, ask meaningful questions and reflect on what they are observing.
- Colleges report difficulties in getting offers of work experience from micro-businesses. Work out how you can offer placements that do not interfere with the running of your business.



Examples of workplace experiences

Lakes College, West Cumbria

The college set up a central team of work placement coordinators when study programmes were introduced in 2014/15. This has expanded into a team of five with a Lead Coordinator and four coordinators, one for each vocational cluster, who liaise with nearly 600 employers. The college has made a conscious effort to align the work of the coordinators with the three business account managers in the sales team to generate additional placements. The college uses eTracker to centrally record work experience and facilitate student logging and reflection. Security and age restrictions prevent students from doing work experience at nearby Sellafield, the nuclear waste treatment plant, but dedicated trainers from the plant help run the Big Rig Challenge where teams build a five-metre high platform (relevant to Benchmark 5). Work experience opportunities are also possible in several supply chain and satellite organisations.

Most learners on study programmes participate in high-quality external work experience and work-related activities which support their progress to further study or employment. This started about five years ago when the college's analysis showed better outcomes for learners who had had at least 36 hours' dedicated work experience.

At the most recent inspection (December 2017), Ofsted inspectors said: "Teachers plan and organise suitable work experience to match learners' future career plans.

Learners talk confidently about the skills they have learnt. For example, electrical learners work with a local housing organisation to complete first and second-fit electrical works on new builds. As a result of their on-site placement, a significant minority of learners receive and accept offers of apprenticeships by their work experience employers."

Inspectors also commented that students "develop the skills and behaviours they need for work and progression to further or higher education. A significant minority of learners in motor vehicle, engineering and construction, for example, have gained apprenticeships following successful on-site placements. Staff have secured prominent hospital placements for nurse cadets. These include in departments such as midwifery, radiography, chemotherapy, and accident and emergency. A high proportion of learners go on to university, further study, apprenticeships or employment on completion of their courses."

The college is aware of the pitfalls of trying to impose a model of work experience on an employer and prefers to co-design placements with employers as they have done with the nurse cadet programme. The college believes that work experience is more meaningful for the learner when staff work creatively and flexibly to accommodate employers' needs and requirements while identifying the specific skills development to which they can contribute.

St. Dominic's Sixth Form College, Harrow on the Hill

The college is strongly committed to giving students workplace experiences in the charities and aid sector, in keeping with its ethos of contribution, service and social justice. The recent inspection report from the Westminster Diocese praised the college for allowing time and space for students to pursue leadership opportunities. "These include peer support, peer RE teaching, student mentoring and faith leadership as well as the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. There is a well organised tutorial programme that includes themed sessions linked to prayer and reflection, as well as community visits and speakers. This provision allows students to come to understand the theological context for responding to a call to service and become involved locally with schools and residential centres.

"Charitable events include students' support of St Joseph's Pastoral Centre, the Catholic Workers Farm, the Cardinal Hume Centre and the Jack Petchey charity. They are given opportunities to reflect on ethical and moral issues linked to wealth and poverty, notably through activities that support Work Aid, CAFOD and Fairtrade. This includes a well-supported annual international volunteer placement scheme. Students speak of the spiritual development that takes place because of involvement in the yearly diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes."

Students are encouraged to undertake work experience during college breaks and the summer holidays. This is often arranged by the student through family contacts or through the college via a network of employers, organisations, volunteering agencies or HE summer schools, taster days and free university lectures.

The HE and Careers Coordinator has developed a database with support from the college IT staff to create email groups of students with the same interest in particular occupational sectors. Students who have not registered any interests are followed up. The coordinator can email groups when relevant opportunities for visits and work experience become available.

While recognising that well-managed part-time jobs can benefit students, especially those linked to their study programmes, the college publishes advice to students on how to ensure that their part-time work commitments do not adversely affect their college work.

City of Wolverhampton College

Achieving this benchmark is a challenge with potentially 2,000 students seeking placements. The college has used Erasmus funding for the past nine years to arrange European work experience for 250 students. Three years ago the college decided to harness the natural synergies that come from putting groups of students together. Mixing Hair and Beauty students with those on the Business course, for example, works well as many of the former go on to start up their own beauty companies. Matching Travel and Tourism students with Early Years and Health and Social Care students enhances learning as they share similar concerns for the wellbeing of their customers or clients.

Wilberforce Sixth Form College

In March 2018 Ofsted reported that “managers ensure that work experience and work-related learning are integrated very effectively into study programmes. Teachers identify students’ career goals during induction and plan work experience that effectively matches students’ aspirations. Staff organise frequent visits to, or from, employers to promote the link between the courses that students follow and the career opportunities available to them. Students benefit greatly from an online resource (Kloodle) which enables them to record their good progress in developing the skills that they need for their future careers”.

The Employer Engagement Manager has negotiated hundreds of links with local employers for the careers programme. This includes work placements, volunteering, speakers in college, the annual careers fair, speed interviewing and enrichment activities which all help students to network with employers and ensure their applications stand out from the rest. The Employer Engagement Manager works closely with the Director of Liaison and Communication, the Careers Guidance & CEIAG Manager and the managers for Student Services and Student Support.

The college helps students on the Excellence Programme for higher achievers to organise placements for medicine, dentistry, veterinary science or any other courses where it is advantageous to have relevant work experience.

The college has good links with Humber LEP and The Careers & Enterprise Company’s coordinator network, and has built strong relationships with local businesses. This enables students to benefit from links with companies such as Siemens, PwC, the NHS, Hull Kingston Rovers, Associated British Ports, Reckitt Benckiser, Arco, Asda, BAE Systems, IT@Spectrum and Pepperells Solicitors. This includes opportunities to network and learn face-to-face from people who do the job through work visits, placements and volunteering, talks about specific jobs and employer-led activities like KCOM’s Internet Inventor for IT students and a masterclass from For Entrepreneurs Only.

Work placements are a guaranteed feature of some courses. BTEC Level three Extended Diploma Business students, for example, have two-weeks’ work experience alongside visits, guest speakers and a dedicated course unit on preparing for employment.

Students on the City & Guilds VRQ Level two Diploma in Women’s and Men’s Hairdressing get to work with paying customers in the college’s salon ReStyle on which they are assessed. Students on health, caring and early years programmes undertake assessed first-hand experience. Subject staff and tutors ensure that students have structured opportunities to reflect on their experiences.

Useful resources

- The AoC website has a [collection of resources](#) developed with funding from the DfE to assist colleges and employers in organising industry placements.
- Websites that advertise opportunities, e.g.:
 - [MyKinda Future](#)
 - [Careermap](#)
 - [Class Careers](#)
- [UKCES: Precarious futures? Youth employment in an international context \(2014\)](#). Focuses on the benefits of work experience and part-time work for tackling youth unemployment.
- [Prince's Trust Certificate in Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills](#) (12-week programme including two weeks' work experience).
- Jobcentre plus & CIPD: [Work experience placements that work: A guide for employers](#) (updated April 2012).
- David Sims et al. (2013). Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials: Research report. (DfE). Findings and recommendations from a National Foundation for Educational Research evaluation of five work experience models for 16 to 19-year-olds over a two-year trial in 25 colleges nfer.ac.uk/evaluation-of-the-work-experience-placement-trials.
- [UKCES: Not just making tea - reinventing work experience \(2014\)](#). Case studies of employers who work with schools and colleges to provide valuable encounters and experiences for young people.
- Kloodle is a social media networking and mentoring and career coaching service, where students can create profiles and record their employability skills and enrichment activities including work experience. They can engage with their teachers and registered local employers as well as gain [Kloodle](#) badges and receive job alerts.
- [NCVO](#) provides research tips for students looking to volunteer.
- The Careers & Enterprise Company has published a suite of literature reviews focusing on impact and building on what works, e.g.:
 - [Involving young people in volunteering. What works?](#)
 - [Work experience, job shadowing and workplace visits. What works?](#)

Gatsby Benchmark 7

Encounters with further and higher education

All learners should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes, and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace

By the end of their programme of study, every learner should have had a meaningful encounter* with a range of providers of learning and training that may form the next stage of their career. This should include, as appropriate, further education colleges, higher education and apprenticeship and training providers. This should include the opportunity to meet staff and learners.

What good looks like

The college promotes the full range of 'next step' learning opportunities for its students including:

- Apprenticeships and training.
- Higher level technical education, e.g. foundation degrees, HNCs, HNDs.
- Bachelor's degrees.

This happens in a variety of ways including visits, careers and higher education fairs and events, visiting speakers, taster sessions and summer schools.

The college helps students to access a wide range of mentoring opportunities including with student and apprenticeship ambassadors and alumni.

Students have provided feedback showing that encounters have facilitated their exploration of what it is like to learn in that selected environment.

The college is demanding about what constitutes a meaningful encounter.

The college identifies able but socioeconomically disadvantaged students who would benefit from extra support so they can choose and make progress on a learning pathway that is commensurate with their abilities.

Learners have informed discussions on the pros and cons of different higher education options, e.g. study in an FE college compared with a university, full-time university degree or a foundation degree combining academic study with workplace learning.

* A 'meaningful encounter' is one in which the learner has an opportunity to learn about what work is like or what it takes to be successful in the workplace

What this means in practice

The college uses a combination of tried-and-tested approaches and innovative practices, e.g.:

- Advice evenings/open days.
- Alumni events.
- Careers workshops.
- Course information sheet.
- Frontline learner services teams.
- Roadshows.
- Tasters.
- Tutors and faculty staff.
- Virtual open days.
- Visits to local universities.
- Website.

Students from a local university visit the college to mentor learners in their subject, helping them find out more about life at university and plan what to do after finishing college. As well as mentoring the learners, the volunteers run taster sessions on topics such as self-esteem, special effects, forensic science, finance and first aid.

The provider access legislation is new guidance that comes into force from January 2023, which builds on Benchmark 7 and adds new specific requirements for schools and schools that have sixth forms. DfE strongly encourages colleges to also follow the legislation as good practice. You can find out more about the guidance and support with promoting all pathways [here](#)

Why this matters

The higher education landscape is changing dramatically with redesigned courses, an increase in unconditional offers, the high cost of gaining a degree and different rates of return on the investment, opportunities to study abroad, the introduction of university offered apprenticeships and two-year degree programmes. It is important that all staff know about the most recent developments.

Office for National Statistics data shows that in 2016 almost half (49%) of young people between the ages of 18 and 30 were either attending, or had attended, university. But disparities persist, e.g. where you live affects whether you gain access to and succeed in higher education, and some ethnic groups are less likely to progress on to higher education than others and less likely to succeed once there. The [Higher Education Policy Institute](#) predicts that 300,000 more HE places will be needed in England by 2030 to keep up with demand. The demand for skills, as measured by the numbers employed in higher level occupations and the numbers employed holding higher level qualifications, is also projected to continue rising.

The financial and psychological impact of making a poor choice of Higher Education can be considerable. Some 6.4% of students drop out at the end of their first year (Higher Education Statistics Agency figures for 2015/16). The average student debt is about £50,000 from a three-year course and the earnings of graduates can vary widely.

Research shows that individuals with higher level skills are more likely to stay in work and earn more. The person educated to Level four or above will earn on average £5,000 more a year than someone qualified to Level three (A-level or equivalent).

The 2014 CBI report [A Better Off Britain](#) emphasises that we are failing to make the most of talent from all backgrounds.

The chief executive of the [University Vocational Awards Council](#) has predicted that over the next three years about 10% of all university degrees will be awarded via apprenticeships. Staff in colleges will have a key role in developing this pathway.

Students need to be aware that the return on investment in learning varies by subject and place of study. Government data shows that:

- Graduates from universities are only 1% more likely to be in sustained employment ten years after graduation than those who graduated from FE colleges.
- FE college graduates receive a median initial salary of £14,600 compared with an initial median salary of £19,000 for those graduating from universities.
- [Engineering graduates from FE colleges](#) had a slightly higher median salary of £29,900 compared with £29,500 for those who studied the subject at university. However, in subject areas such as psychology and law, those who studied the subject at university were found to earn significantly more than those in FE colleges.

Top tips for colleges

Plan

- Work with university and degree apprenticeship providers to plan events and initiatives together to be clear about expected outcomes linked to your careers programme.
- Engage with [National Collaborative Outreach Programme](#) for support with your careers programme.
- Encourage staff to sign up as [Apprenticeship Champions](#) to help inform and update students, staff and parents about apprenticeships.

Deliver

- Ensure that the careers programme covers the reality of studying and life at university, undergraduate careers advice and graduate opportunities and not just the applications process.
- Cover all routes available to students (e.g. university, degree apprenticeships) within staff CPD and parent events to ensure that any stereotypes are challenged and that students receive consistent messages about their options.
- Allow students opportunity to engage with and consider all routes available to them. Build in reflection and evaluation time within career programme to allow them to make an informed decision.
- Develop resources to support students at careers/ HE fairs to allow them to be intentional and reflective about information they receive. Build in time in careers programme to reflect on any careers/ HE fair.
- Showcase alumni destinations in displays and publications and seek opportunities for alumni to engage with current students and parents about their chosen routes and decision making process.

Measure

- Monitor the numbers of students going on to study at a higher level or their current level to check the aspirations of students and the challenge they are setting themselves.
- Use Destination Data to inform careers programme and related strategic careers plan.
- If holding an apprenticeship or HE event over a day or several days, keep records of attendance and offer catch-up events.
- Get feedback from university staff about how engaged students were in events and use this information to inform future planning and delivery.

Top tips for employers

- Agree opportunities to engage with staff, students and parents about your organisations recruitment policies. Consider apprenticeships and graduate recruitment, etc.
- Work with the local LEP to secure up to date LMI specific to graduate recruitment and apprenticeships to include in any presentation to college, students, staff about opportunities in your organisation/sector.
- Avoid making judgements about the prestige and status of different pathways and providers in case you unwittingly influence students inappropriately when engaging with them support the college's careers fair, mock interviews and other activities designed to help learners succeed on their chosen pathways.
- Inspire young people by bringing along recent recruits (alumni where possible) when visiting the college.

Examples of encounters with Further and Higher Education

Birmingham Metropolitan, College

BMet is a large further education college with 20,000 learners on four main campuses. Some 8,000 of these learners are 16-18-year-olds, 85% of whom are studying BTEC courses at Level three. Nearly 600 young people are doing intermediate or advanced level apprenticeships. Many learners come from the most deprived areas of the West Midlands and their GCSE qualifications on joining the college are below the national average. About 50% of learners are from minority ethnic groups.

Meeting and continuing to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks presents considerable challenges in terms of satisfying the demand for placements, supporting the professional development of staff and achieving consistency of provision. BMet works hard at this and has gained the Quality in Careers Standard, with Ofsted having recently judged careers advice and guidance as good. The college continually seeks to innovate. An example is the virtual open day run by Matthew Boulton College on Twitter and Instagram to give students an insight into college life before attending an actual open day a few weeks later. Innovation is especially evident in the strategic partnerships the college has built with regional bodies, employers, higher education providers and training providers. Examples include setting up the Professional Services Academy in partnership with leading financial, legal, accounting and business firms, and the Career College for the Digital and Creative Media Sector with support from

the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (relevant to Benchmarks 5 and 6). This provision includes visits to workplaces.

The college is proactive in improving access to higher education. BMet is able to offer students from the college and outside access to a wide range of university-level courses (in partnership with local universities), higher technical qualifications (HNDs, HNCs and Foundation Degrees) and higher-level apprenticeships.

Each year the college handles 1,700 applications for university. Just over half the applicants are targeted for support from the National Collaborative Outreach Programme. In 2016 the college received a Neon Award commendation in the category for outstanding access school or college. The college monitors its success rate in getting students into university, including Russell Group universities. BMet has been innovative in working with local universities, including Wrexham Glyndwr University in north-east Wales, to negotiate financial incentives for its students. The University of Wolverhampton, for example, supports the participation of financially disadvantaged and middle-achieving students, offering 20 progression scholarships of £2,000 to students nominated by the college in addition to its other bursary and sponsorship schemes.

The Sixth Form College, Colchester

The college promotes encounters with higher education and employers through its annual careers and higher education fair in January, supported by more than 80 universities and 20 employers, and through its Careers Progression Event in June.

The Careers Progression Event is the college's 'big hit' to get all first-year students to firm up their progression plans. Students can mostly decide which sessions they want to attend. The event is well-publicised with posters along the drive and in study areas as well as reminders in the student bulletin and parents' newsletter. The careers team handles referrals from staff and provides a back-up service for students who, for whatever reason, have unmet needs after the event.

The programme is organised by the careers team. Students are issued with a 40-page handbook listing all the sessions they can attend. Talks relate to more than 20 subject areas as well as general talks on university, student finance, gap years, apprenticeships and employment. Alumni are heavily involved in giving talks on topics as diverse as sustainable textiles and fighting robots. Students can also participate in department activities including talks by former students who have chosen university or apprenticeship pathways.

All colleges will be familiar with the challenges of organising meaningful encounters when large numbers of students are involved. Talks are rarely satisfactory if groups are too big (which can also be daunting for speakers who are not used to it) so sessions are repeated to keep sizes down. Students also create their own timetable so they can attend sessions relevant to their needs and aspirations.

The college is fully involved in Make Happen, the National Collaborative Outreach Programme for Essex, to ensure that more than 420 first and second-year students are able to benefit from its activities. The programme, for example, refunds the cost of travel to open days up to £250. The Careers Leader emails eligible students about new opportunities.

Personal tutors are the lynchpin of the careers programme and deliver careers and higher education information and support including all aspects of the UCAS admissions process. The Careers Leader provides tutors with the resources they need and training sessions on how to use them.

St. Dominic's Sixth Form College

The college has considerable expertise in supporting students through different application processes. Applying for HE is well regulated nationally. Approximately 90% of St. Dominic's students' progress to university and about 50% attend Russell Group institutions. Helping students apply for apprenticeships is more challenging as the competition to work for prestigious companies is intense and the application and selection process is more complex.

All students register with UCAS, which enables the college to check the progress of their applications and provides a back-up check, so the college can help students who have decided not to go on to higher education.

The college holds an HE & Careers Day in January of Year 12 when students choose talks delivered by university lecturers and where more than 30 universities, employers and apprenticeships providers have stands. The college facilitates student visits to universities and other providers.

The college has an Oxbridge programme and a medicine and other healthcare programme which includes visiting speakers, admissions tutors and other experts, together with help on compiling a high-quality personal statement, and preparation for admissions tests including UKCAT and BMAT.

The careers programme is delivered to all students in the college from January to June in Year 12 and includes the preparation and application to higher education through UCAS (with direct applications to some art, music and drama colleges). Online resources complement the face-to-face provision including two subscription-based careers and HE information programs, which students find easy to use.

All students are provided with a careers development programme booklet detailing key dates and deadlines for application to university through UCAS, as well as details of specific activities and workshops for choices that require extra support and guidance. The booklet includes advice and guidance on how to write a personal statement and to prepare a draft that can be reviewed by members of staff to assist the students in presenting themselves well.

During college breaks and the summer holidays, students are encouraged to continue their research into HE by taking the opportunity to visit university open days, attend taster courses, workshops and summer schools, and undertake any work experience that may be relevant to their chosen subject, profession or career path.

Wilberforce Sixth Form College, Hull

The annual careers fair welcomes almost 80 exhibitors and combines a programme of talks delivered by universities on topics such as how to research degree courses, how to choose the right subject and how to create a strong portfolio for art and design courses. All local FE colleges are invited to have a stand at the event, promoting their courses from foundation level and traineeships up to degree level. Several apprenticeship providers and employers market their apprenticeship opportunities including the rising number of degree-level apprenticeships. Large-scale employers such as Nestlé, the BBC and British Steel inform students about their school-leaver programmes and degree apprenticeship schemes, and smaller local firms promote the benefits of intermediate and advanced level study through an apprenticeship scheme.

Wilberforce invites former students to speak to current ones and assist them in career decision-making by sharing their own journeys. One of the former students at the 2018 careers fair was Emily, a first-year medical student at Hull York Medical School who advised students on widening participation and studying medicine.

Large-scale careers fairs enable the college to showcase the huge range of educational choice open to all learners, some of whom require additional support. SEND students, for example, need to know about the options available to them on the next stage of their education, and there is always a selection of exhibitors available to talk to including autism, mental health and blindness charities.

Teaching staff do not always have opportunities to learn about the range of educational progression opportunities for their students and careers fairs allow them to clarify information with different providers under one roof. This knowledge is taken back to the classroom through university talks, workshops and tutorial sessions linked to career planning, and is discussed with parents and carers at appropriate times.

Careers fairs act as a solid platform to initiate meaningful encounters with further and higher education, not only for students, but also staff. They create lasting partnerships between curriculum staff and learning providers and generate a legacy of impartial working.

Useful resources

HE organisations

- [UCAS](#).
- [Which? University](#) provides comprehensive information, advice and interactive tools to help learners decide what and where to study and how to apply. Includes sections on choices at 16+, choosing HE (including the admissions process), apprenticeships, employment and foundation degrees, with additional resources for teachers and parents.
- [The Russell Group of Universities](#).
- The [Russell Group Informed Choices](#) booklet gives advice about choosing facilitating subjects for A-level study.
- The Office for Students has news and information about the [National Collaborative Outreach Programme](#) in each of the 29 local partnerships.
- [Discover Uni](#).

Organisations that support the employment of young people

- [Amazing Apprenticeships](#).
- The [Institute for Apprenticeships](#) ensures high-quality apprenticeship standards and advises government on funding for each standard.
- The [Institute of Student Employers](#) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that supports its members in recruiting school and college leavers, apprentices and graduates.
- The [Association of Employment and Learning Providers](#).

Sources of further information

- [Cegnet: Guide to HE websites](#) (March 2018).
- [Not going to Uni](#).
- Find an [apprenticeship service](#).
- [Sutton Trust UK summer schools](#), for students who meet the trust's social mobility criteria, e.g. in the first generation of their family to attend university, have been eligible for free school meals.

Gatsby Benchmark 8

Personal guidance

Every learner should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a Careers Adviser, who could be internal (a member of college staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level*. These should be available for all learners whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all learners but should be timed to meet individual needs.

Every learner should have at least one such interview by the end of their study programme.

What good looks like

Colleges see real challenges in ensuring that all students have access to personal guidance. Personalised support tailored to individual abilities and needs is a wrap-around provision related to and building on a stable careers programme. In the best college, personal guidance complements programme support and helps students to build a positive concept of themselves, to develop realistically high aspirations and to take ownership for the skills and knowledge they need to manage their own careers and transitions. It enables learners to personalise and contextualise the range of information, advice and employer encounters they receive. Personal guidance enables students to review their thinking in relation to career ideas and pathways, to consider their transferable skills and to develop the curiosity to explore alternatives. These skills, in conjunction with the ability to use labour market information confidently, equip young people with the knowledge to manage not only their immediate career plans but also any future changes in direction.

In the best examples career development professionals work closely with a range of staff in colleges including personal coaches, tutors and teachers to ensure there is a comprehensive network of support available to students.

Where good provision is in place, colleges support schools and prospective learners in their local communities and the careers team contributes to open days and student induction. College teams will identify students at application and enrolment who will need personal guidance and support to develop their confidence and social capital.

*The college should ensure that access to a level 6 adviser is available when needed

What this means in practice

Some colleges employ careers professionals as part of the internal team while others commission external support from a specialist careers guidance provider or sole trader. In both arrangements, best practice involves the Careers Advisers maintaining their continuing professional development and signing up every year to the Career Development Institute's professional code of ethics covering 12 ethical principles including competence, confidentiality, impartiality and equality.

Where Benchmark 8 is well delivered, students have access to trained Careers Advisers to help them with decisions about education, training and future jobs and careers. Careers Advisers are usually graduates with a recognised postgraduate qualification, although it is possible to attain a qualification equivalent to graduate level through work-based training. They are qualified in careers guidance practice and theory.

Qualified career development practitioners help their clients to achieve their full potential. This process includes:

- Listening to students' initial ideas, qualifications, skills, experiences, circumstances and life aims.
 - Helping students to identify and explore suitable options and to consider the career implications of subject and course choice, remembering that decisions should be made in their best interests not those of any particular provider.
 - Challenging pre-existing assumptions about what students are capable of.
 - Demystifying learning and labour market systems and helping students to understand progression pathways.
- Developing practical strategies on how students can achieve their goals including pointing them to relevant sources of information.
 - Building students' persistence, motivation and confidence and helping them to see how they could overcome any barriers that prevent them from moving forwards.
 - Referring students to other agencies that can support them.

In the best examples there is close alignment with the college's systems for personal tutoring and academic monitoring. Records of interviews are logged within student reporting systems so tutors and other staff are aware of students' career plans and can provide support. Career conversations are an ongoing part of the learner journey and personal guidance is integrated into the programme of support.

Strong and effective systems ensure that students and parents are clear on how to access personal guidance and can refer themselves at appropriate times for individual advice and support. Ongoing personal guidance is particularly important for students with complex lives who lack career direction. In schools that do Benchmark 8 well this is recognised and resourced with more intensive, wrap-around support including mentoring.

Why this matters

Providing structured personal guidance within the college from trained and independent experts enables students to focus on future dreams and set goals to achieve them. It stretches individuals to aspire high and provides skilled support to help students achieve their fullest potential.

Access to independent professional careers guidance is valued by students and parents and is a recurring feature of good provision on an international basis.

Personal guidance helps students to reflect on vocational identity, career decision-making and their belief in themselves. It is a vital ingredient in careers guidance provision that is sometimes overlooked in the rush to offer employer encounters.

Research has shown the impact of personal guidance on young people's careers and progression.

Every college is expected to ensure that 16 to 18-year-olds and 19 to 25-year-olds with an EHC Plan are provided with independent careers guidance. By adopting the Gatsby Benchmarks, colleges can be confident that they are complying with the careers guidance requirements set out in their funding agreement.

Top tips for colleges

Plan

- Ensure that your plans meet the DfE statutory requirement that students have access to independent and impartial careers guidance.
- Establish a sustainable approach to funding this support and clear accountability for the management and review.
- Undertake a clear analysis of the guidance needs of your students and how professional Careers Advisers can support your careers programme.
- Compare approaches with other colleges.
- Appoint Careers Advisers who hold a Level six careers qualification (e.g. the Qualification in Careers Guidance or the work-based Diploma in Career Guidance and Development), subscribe to the 12 ethical principles in the CDI Code of Ethics and have a valid DBS check.
- Build the commitment to ensuring that high-quality careers advice is on offer to students. Quality assurance frameworks such as the Quality in Careers Standard can support ongoing review and development.
- Access support online from the National Careers Service (nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk).

Deliver

- Identify opportunities for the careers team to contribute to college open days so prospective students and parents are introduced early to the careers advice on offer through the college.
- Train coaching tutors and pastoral staff so they can have one-to-one careers conversations with their students and understand when, how and whom to refer for specialist guidance.

- With individual agreement, integrate records from careers interviews into student reporting systems so that tutors can support career planning.
- Build intensive, wrap-around support for your more vulnerable students using mentoring and other programmes.
- Join the Career Development Institute as an Affiliate Organisation. This demonstrates commitment to the professional codes of ethics and provides access to fortnightly bulletins and journals.
- Follow the CDI code of ethics and regularly review the effectiveness of career services by using feedback gathered from learners, employers, parents and college staff.
- Maximise opportunity from career events by including focused resources for students and staff to investigate opportunities together.
- Ensure career practitioners maintain reflective practice as 'the capacity to reflect on action to engage in a process of continuous learning' (Schon *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. Basic Books, New York. p.102).
- Ensure that career programme involves upskilling and keeping all 'influencers' up to date and informed. Identify opportunities to communicate key messages to parents and community through events, website and social media.

Measure

- Monitor and review the services offered, gathering feedback from students.

Top tips for employers

- When working with a college, work with Careers Adviser to understand personal guidance in the college and how you can add capacity.
- Try to establish links with the Careers Adviser to build coherence between the employer encounters and personal guidance.
- Draw on the expertise of the Careers Adviser to get to grips with the complex educational choices facing students and the destination norms from the college.
- Ask the adviser for case studies and examples of students' aspirations to illustrate your talks or activities.
- Work with the Careers Adviser to ensure students are effectively prepared for employer encounters.
- Link with the Careers Adviser to ensure students reflect on what they have learnt from employer encounters and how it relates to their career planning.
- Support the continuing professional development of the Careers Adviser by sharing information about your sector and relevant labour market trends.
- Encourage students to make best use of the personal guidance on offer.
- If you receive feedback from students about access to or delivery of personal guidance, share it with the Careers Leader at the college.
- Work with the college and the Careers Adviser to help ensure that personal guidance connects to other careers interventions.

Examples of personal guidance

Halesowen College, West Midlands

The college employs personal coaches to provide advice to students. Weekly tutorials allow personal coaches to explore students' aspirations and progress. Throughout the year the careers team provides input to tutorial groups with personal coaches in attendance. This builds mutual trust and knowledge between the teams.

Four Careers Advisers qualified at Level six complement the personal coach network. Personal coaches and students refer to the careers team. Direct contact between existing and prospective parents and the careers department raises the profile of the team, which also attends open days and progression evenings.

The careers team tailors support to meet the needs of particular student groups. There is a strong focus for foundation/entry level students on raising aspirations and a defined programme of activities. For example, foundation students are informed of course progression, traineeships and apprenticeship opportunities and attend their own tailored careers fair.

All students follow a planned programme of careers activities through the academic year. For Level three students, all aspects of progression are explored. In year one these comprise presentations on 'why HE?'

alternatives to HE, progression pathways, writing statements for university and UCAS sessions.

This is built on in the second year. Students can opt into additional workshops in CV writing, apprenticeships and application and job opportunities.

The college subscribes to KUDOS and is confident that it complements and extends personal guidance. The team liaises closely with Cascaid, the company behind KUDOS, on new ideas for development.

The careers department builds links with students early on to avoid last-minute panics. Staff give presentations on options to each tutor group and hand out forms asking students to identify their plans and intended destinations. Students who need support to work on their plans and future pathways are encouraged to access personal guidance. The screening forms provide talking points and encourage students to think broadly. There is a strong focus on raising students' aspiration and encouraging them to take responsibility for decision-making. The careers department maintains comprehensive information about students' intended destinations and the college tracks intended and actual destinations.

Peter Symonds College, Winchester

The college has a team of five advisers, all qualified at Level six or seven, which is led by Debbie Mahoney, the Careers Leader. Having a well-resourced team avoids the isolation that can be a feature of careers provision and ensures that students have ready access to staff. Students have front-line advice and guidance from their personal tutor alongside regular one-to-one sessions with their tutors. Contact with the careers service is through phone calls, email, drop in sessions, 20-minute interviews and more substantial guidance interviews of between 30-50 minutes which they can book online. About 3,000 students take up the offer of a guidance interview during their time at college. These are formally recorded for students into an agreed action plan. The careers advisers also record key actions on the college student record (with agreement of the student) so that tutors are aware of decisions and support required.

The careers team attends the open evenings for prospective students and their parents (two in the summer and two in the autumn). This is a good opportunity to raise awareness of careers support. They also attend the parents' evenings for existing students and parents are welcomed at careers interviews.

St John Rigby College, Wigan

Students are informed of the range of support available to them during the induction process. This includes an outline of careers IAG. All teaching staff are personal tutors for a small group of students and are allocated to a specific senior tutor. The personal tutor's role includes providing front-line information, advice and guidance on matters including careers information to allow students to make appropriate decisions. They also support applications and prepare references. Personal tutors have two hours a week with students and hold at least one review with individual students every term. Students are exceptionally well supported. The college offers a robust tutorial programme and students who need additional guidance and one-to-one support are referred to the Careers Adviser. The college charter for students includes access to high-quality and impartial advice and guidance from a Careers Adviser.

The Ofsted report comments that teachers provide outstanding IAG for students before they start college, and the exceptional impartial careers guidance students receive during their time at college raises their aspirations for the future.

Lakes College, Cumbria

The college has 854 apprentices on apprenticeship frameworks. Of these, most are in health, public services and care, and business administration and law. Smaller numbers are in engineering and manufacturing technologies, retail and commercial enterprise, construction, planning and the built environment, and information and communication technology. Additionally, 14 apprentices follow standards-based apprenticeships in engineering and manufacturing technologies, and business administration and law. Learners and apprentices receive effective advice and guidance before they start. They consequently enrol on the most suitable apprenticeship programme at the correct level. Training advisers check apprentices' progress regularly and take appropriate action to help them catch up if they fall behind. Apprentices understand what they need to do during their course.

As a result, the proportion of learners and apprentices who successfully complete their courses has increased. Managers closely check the performance of learners, staff and courses. Teachers and training advisers know their learners and apprentices well and help them to improve their confidence and self-esteem. Apprentices take part in a Big Rig Challenge and work with national and international companies on the project. Teachers and mentors work with learners to determine their career plans. Managers have nurtured effective relationships with a national careers service provider, which ensures that learners receive comprehensive and impartial guidance on their career plans. Consequently, most of the learners progress into positive destinations aligned to their course.

Lambeth College, South London

Personal guidance at the college is informed by theories in careers guidance, motivation and change management. It aims to shift away from the idea of practitioners as experts to one that enables students. It is based on the work of Savickas and seeks to give students 'a space where those involved can speak and act for themselves'. Students can access a range of personal guidance support including:

- Weekly tutorials.
- One-to-one and group CEIAG interventions, from Monday to Friday and including a weekly drop-in session.
- Employability and progression programmes including the Career Ready UK internship programme, Ernst & Young Our Future Programme, College Ambassadors programme and Aim Higher Look to the Future programme.
- National Career Service website.



Weymouth College

Many colleges work with the National Careers Service to strengthen access to personal guidance provision. At Weymouth College, the Education Development Trust delivers National Careers Service interviews to all 19+ Access-to-HE applicants/enquirers and prepares them for the start of their Access to HE course.

The college is pleased with the difference this has made to its success rate in supporting progression and getting students into higher education. The experienced and qualified teams of Careers Advisers delivering high-quality personal guidance through one-to-one interviews, group work and employability skills workshops.



Useful resources

Career Development Institute

- [Advice and Good Practice on Commissioning Career Guidance Services](#)
- [CDI Institute Register](#)
- [CDI Career Development Interventions](#)
- [National Careers Service](#)



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