



Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit Colleges and ITPs



Introduction

Effective careers guidance is crucial for all young people, whatever their background, and schools, special schools, colleges and independent training providers (ITPs) play a key role in delivering it.

“The careers programme has helped me discover things and pathways I never knew were possible and had never thought about. It’s widened my idea of what I can do and has stopped me thinking so narrowly.” Year 12 student

[Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

In 2014 the Gatsby Foundation published Good Career Guidance, a report by Sir John Holman, which used international evidence to define what world-class careers guidance for young people looked like. The critical elements of good careers guidance were developed into a framework of eight benchmarks. The benchmarks provide a shared understanding of, and common language for, careers guidance. They have been enthusiastically embraced by secondary schools, special schools and colleges, who use them to shape their provision.

Following two years of research and consultation, the benchmarks have been updated to future-proof them as the standard for world-class careers guidance for young people. The eight benchmarks remain in place, but with key refinements to the summary descriptions and measurable criteria.

The Gatsby Foundation’s Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years report provides further detail of the updates. For more information and to read the full report go to www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk.



Benchmark 1
A stable careers programme



Benchmark 2
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Benchmark 3
Addressing the needs of each young person



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Updates to the Gatsby Benchmark framework

Schools, special schools, colleges, Independent Training Providers (ITPs and wider stakeholders all agreed that stability was important. They were committed to building on the strong foundations of the benchmarks and the progress they have enabled.

While the title of each benchmark has remained the same, updates have been made to each summary and set of measurable criteria.

Five prominent themes emerged from the evidence used during the review of the benchmarks:

Careers at the heart of education and leadership

Gatsby have emphasised linking careers to the institution's vision and strategic plans, acknowledged the importance of staff development, and included distinct responsibilities for leadership, governors, Careers Leaders and advisers.

Inclusion and impact for each and every young person

Woven through multiple benchmarks are updates that emphasise the importance of tailoring programmes to the needs of each young person. Particular attention is given to inclusion and any additional or different support that may be needed by vulnerable or disadvantaged young people or those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Meaningful and varied encounters and experiences

Gatsby have emphasised the focus on flexible delivery and the impact of encounters and experiences of education and work. The definitions of 'meaningful' in Benchmarks 5 and 7 have been expanded and a definition has been added to Benchmark 6. These definitions specify the importance of offering a variety of encounters and experiences that are underpinned by careers-related learning outcomes and that give young people time to prepare and reflect. They also refer to using technology alongside, but not instead of, in-person engagement.

Focusing on the use of information and data

Gatsby have ensured that all young people can explore all future pathways equitably. Rather than just sharing information with young people, the focus is now on effective analysis and use of information to inform decision-making. Data collection has been refocused to include aspirations and intended destinations, to help tailor support. Longer-term and sustained destinations data remain important as part of the evaluation process.

Engagement of parents and carers

Parents and carers are one of the biggest influences on young people's career decision-making. Updates embed parent and carer engagement into planning and specify the need to share information with parents and carers and support them to use it with their children.

Since their introduction, the benchmarks have driven improvements in careers guidance. Evidence shows that those institutions successfully implementing all eight benchmarks achieve the most positive outcomes for young people.

Foreword

Over the last ten years, careers education in England has changed significantly – and for the better. The introduction of the Gatsby Benchmarks brought clarity, consistency, and a shared language to what good careers guidance looks like. Schools, colleges and training providers have embraced the benchmarks and the improvements and impact we've seen have been real, measurable, and widely recognised.

Now, we have an opportunity to build on these strong foundations.

The refreshed Gatsby Benchmarks retain what works – the eight benchmarks themselves remain unchanged – but introduce practical refinements based on new evidence, two years of consultation, and feedback from those working on the ground. The updates strengthen key areas such as inclusion, leadership, data use, and parental engagement, while placing even more emphasis on meaningful, high-quality experiences for every young person.

To support implementation, The Careers and Enterprise Company has developed a rich set of tools and resources aligned to the updates. Whether you're just starting out or looking to enhance a mature careers programme, there is support ready to guide your next steps. The document also reflects a recognition that great careers guidance isn't delivered in isolation – it's the result of collaboration across the whole institution, supported by a wider community of employers, expert advisers, and families.

This is a moment for ambition. We have the opportunity to ensure that every young person – no matter their background – has access to the high-quality career guidance they deserve.

We hope the updated benchmarks, and the support that accompanies them, will help you continue to turn aspiration into action.

Beth Jones, Head of Career Programmes, Gatsby Foundation





Benchmark 1:

A Stable Careers Programme

Understanding the benchmarks: Benchmark and sub-benchmark detail

Every provider should have an embedded programme of careers education and guidance that is known and understood by learners, parents and carers, staff, those in governance roles, employers and other agencies.

- Every provider should have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of those in governance roles, leaders and the senior management team, and has an identified and appropriately trained Careers Leader responsible for it
- The careers programme should be tailored to the needs of learners, sequenced appropriately, underpinned by learning outcomes and linked to the whole-institution development plan. It should also set out how parents and carers will be engaged throughout
- The careers programme should be published on the provider's website and communicated in ways that enable learners, parents and carers, staff and employers to access and understand it
- The programme should be regularly evaluated using feedback from learners, parents and carers, subject staff, other staff who support learners, Careers Advisers and employers to increase its impact

Definitions

What is a 'stable and structured careers programme'?

A stable and structured careers programme has the explicit backing of those in governance and leadership roles, including the senior management team. It should have an identified and appropriately trained Careers Leader responsible for it and clearly defined staff roles and responsibilities. The programme must be designed and sequenced to meet the needs of all learners and align with the institution's priorities and development plans.

"Taking part in a stable careers programme gives young people a sense of direction and enhances their career readiness, motivation and skills." [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

What is an 'appropriately trained Careers Leader'?

An appropriately trained Careers Leader is someone who has received specific training to effectively plan, manage and deliver a college's or ITP's careers programme. More than 4,000 Careers Leaders have received nationally developed and funded training.

"The training has helped Careers Leaders become more effective in their role and achieve more benchmarks in their institutions." [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Funded Careers Leader training via The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) supports with accelerated and meaningful achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks. Find out more here: [Careers Leader training | The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)

What are 'learning outcomes'?

Learning outcomes are clear, concise statements that describe what learners are expected to know, understand or be able to do by certain stages through participation in a careers programme. These outcomes are typically measurable and observable, providing a way to assess whether the intended goals of the careers programme have been achieved.

“Ongoing support and doing things to prepare me over time is really important ... Careers shouldn't be a one-off, it should be something you do all of the time.” Year 12 student [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)



Planning for impact: How to meet Gatsby Benchmark 1

A STABLE CAREERS PROGRAMME

How to build a stable and structured careers programme

1. Secure explicit backing from key stakeholders and strengthen careers leadership

- Develop a **Strategic Careers Plan** to:
 - Ensure that the careers programme has clear backing from leadership to give it the necessary authority and resources
 - Integrate the careers programme into the organisation's broader development plan, aligning it with key goals and priorities

How to: Access the [Understanding how to create a Strategic Careers Plan](#) resource.

- Engage education leaders and key colleagues in a **Careers Impact internal leadership review** to:
 - Improve understanding of best practice in careers leadership and of meaningful and sustained achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks
 - Align the priorities of continuous improvement of careers provision to the organisation's goals and priorities
 - Explore careers as a driver for whole-organisation improvement

“Leaders have a crucial role to play. They set the direction and the values of their institution and they implement leadership structures that are effective for their setting.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

- Access relevant careers leadership CPD, including funded Careers Leader training, to understand how to embed sustainable and strategic careers. Find out more here: [Careers Leader training | The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)

How to: Explore the free and funded training offer for Careers Leaders, education leaders, those in governance roles and college staff (including teaching staff and those supporting students with SEND). Find out more here: [Careers Leader training | The Careers & Enterprise Company](#).

2. Structure the careers programme to meet learner needs

- Develop a careers programme that is responsive to learner needs, with provision sequenced progressively and underpinned by learning outcomes

How to: Access the Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision (Student Career Learning Journeys) resource.

- Plan parent and carer engagement that complements the well-sequenced and responsive careers programme for learners

How to: Access the [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Student Career Learning Journeys\)](#) resource.

Research by Gatsby and the CEC shows that, for a careers programme to be most effective, an embedded whole-institution approach to parent and carer engagement is needed.

“Parents and carers should know about the programme, what it will cover, what resources are available to them and how they can access support.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

How to: Access the CEC resource for parents and carers, which includes the [FREE Parental Engagement in Careers CPD](#), supporting parents and carers to have constructive careers and education conversations.

3. Share and communicate the careers programme

- Make the careers programme accessible online: Publish the careers programme on the organisation's website for easy access by learners, parents and carers, staff and employers. Communicate the programme clearly through multiple channels, ensuring everyone can understand the details and find relevant information

How to: Access the [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Student Career Learning Journeys\)](#) resource.

How to: Make sure everyone knows which way you're heading – ensure all stakeholders understand your careers programme by using these careers learner journey roadmap [templates](#) to present it in a visual way.

“The best examples of published careers programmes include the intended learning outcomes for the activities in each year group, Key Stage and for the programme overall. They also share the impact of the programme, which often includes leavers' sustained destinations.”
[Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

4. Evaluate your careers provision and plan for its impact

- Gather input from learners, parents and carers, teaching staff other staff, Careers Advisers and employers on how well the careers programme is working

How to: Access the Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision (Student Career Learning Journeys) resource.

- Review the feedback and other impact evaluation data (e.g. destinations data, careers readiness and stakeholder voice) to continuously improve the careers programme to ensure it is responsive to learner and context need

How to: Access the [Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision](#) resource.

Getting started: Essential steps for success

Gatsby Benchmark 1: A STABLE CAREERS PROGRAMME

1. Secure governance and leadership support

Support principals, senior management teams and those in governance roles to understand the strategic value of careers provision.

Action: Hear from education and Careers Leaders about the value and benefit of undertaking a Careers Impact internal leadership review:

- [Why do you recommend education and Careers Leaders undertake a Careers Impact internal leadership review?](#)
- [What has been the value/impact of undertaking a Careers Impact internal leadership review?](#)
- [How did you approach the Careers Impact internal leadership review?](#)

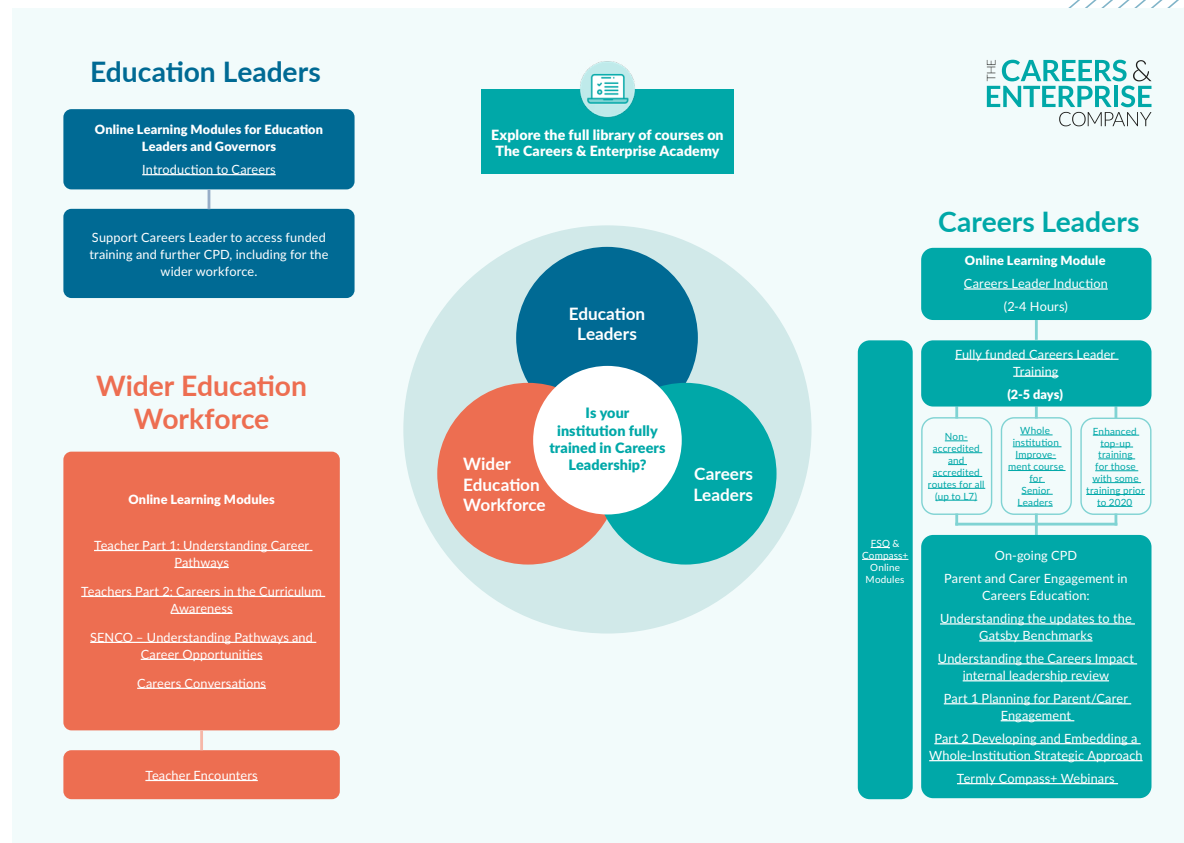
Action: Get started today with your [Careers impact internal leadership review](#).

2. Support all relevant staff to access free careers CPD

Action: Ensure that the Careers Leader and all other relevant staff, including SEND teams, access the [free training offer from the CEC](#).

“All staff who support young people, not just teachers or subject staff, should know about the careers programme and how to signpost to further information and support.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Action: Use the handy [Parental Engagement Checklist](#) as a guide to establish and maintain effective parental engagement in your organisation.





Benchmark 2:

Learning From Career And Labour Market Information

Understanding the benchmarks: Benchmark and sub-benchmark detail

All learners, parents and carers, subject staff and other staff who support learners should have access to good quality, up-to-date information about future pathways, study options and labour market opportunities. Young people with SEND and their parents and carers may require different or additional information. All learners will need the support of an informed adviser to make the best use of available information.

- During their programme of study, all learners should access and use information about careers, pathways and the labour market to inform their own decisions on study options or next steps
- Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported to access and use information about careers, pathways and the labour market to inform their support for the learners in their care

What is careers and labour market information:

Careers information	Labour market information
Education and training options	Employment sectors, employers, jobs, salaries and employment trends at local, regional and national level. Both now and forecasts for the future
Appropriate transition pathways for young people with SEND	Job availability and skills demands
Career pathways	Job demands and working life
Skills needed for different occupations	Structure of the job market and opportunities different careers can offer
Job applications and interviews	
Financial planning	

What is meant by an 'informed adviser'?

An **informed adviser**, as defined by Gatsby, is someone who supports learners, parents and carers by providing high-quality, current information about future pathways, study options and labour market opportunities. This role can be filled by a Careers Adviser or any professional capable of offering such information. Their support is essential for helping individuals make well-informed decisions about their educational and career choices.

“Employees can give talks in schools and colleges about different sectors in the labour market, skills advisers from Careers Hubs can deliver staff training on labour market trends and the needs of the local economy, and many colleges use industry advisers to support young people with labour market insights as part of their curriculum learning.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Planning for impact: How to meet Gatsby Benchmark 2

LEARNING FROM CAREER AND LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

How to support understanding of career and labour market information

- Ensure easy access for all to up-to-date careers and labour market information:

Make sure all learners, parents and carers, teaching staff and staff have access to current, reliable information about career pathways and study options, as well as labour market information. This information should be accessible through various channels, such as the organisation's website, newsletters and careers events. Tailor this information to meet the needs of learners with SEND and provide additional resources where necessary.

How to: Support stakeholders to access up-to-date career and labour market information using these key links and other regional insights/data:

- Build in reflection milestones within Careers Learning Journeys

Establish clear learning outcomes for what you want learners and parents and carers to know, understand and be able to do with careers and labour market information. Consider how it can inform aspirational and informed decision-making at identified reflection milestones in Careers Learning Journeys.

“Good quality qualitative and quantitative [labour market information] can lead to a better understanding of the implications of different choices and to more informed decision-making.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

How to: Access the [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Student Career Learning Journeys\)](#) resource.

Education and training options/ Progression routes	Your training options Skills for Careers (education.gov.uk)
Career pathways	National Careers Service (Explore careers) , Young People Skills for Careers (education.gov.uk)
Skills	Skills England , Local skills dashboard - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) , Skills for Life: it all starts with skills Skills for Careers (education.gov.uk)
Job demands and working life	Career ideas Skills for Careers (education.gov.uk)
Job applications and interviews	Find work and training Skills for Careers (education.gov.uk)
Employment sectors, employers, jobs, salaries and employment trends	ONS labour market overview , ONS local indicators
Financial planning	Financial education guidance for primary and secondary schools in England Money and Pensions Service (maps.org.uk)

Getting Started: Essential steps for success

Gatsby Benchmark 2: LEARNING FROM CAREER AND LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Access free online CPD on careers and labour market information

Action:

- Access the free online Career Leader induction module, which includes a section for Careers Leaders on Labour Market Information and Pathways, via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#) | [The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)
- Support your special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) to access the free online module SENCO: Understanding Pathways and Career Opportunities via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#) | [The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)
- Support all teaching staff to complete the free online module Understanding Career Pathways via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#) | [The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)
- Support all staff to access the free Wider Education Workforce online module, which is designed to highlight how all staff play a key role in supporting young people to make informed choices about their best next step and potential career pathways, via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#) | [The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)

Engage and support parents and carers:

Actively involve parents and carers in the career learning process by providing accessible, clear and supportive guidance on how they can use labour market information to support career decisions. Consider their context and provide targeted support to increase their confidence and aspirations.

Action: Include one of these activities in your next parent and carer communication. These activities bring families together to stimulate family conversations about skills, strengths, careers decision-making and potential pathways: [Activities for Families](#) | [CEC Resource Directory](#).

Action: Find out more by accessing the [Parental Engagement Checklist](#) | [CEC Resource Directory \(careersandenterprise.co.uk\)](#)

**Benchmark 3:**

Addressing The Needs Of Each Young Person

Understanding the benchmarks: Benchmark and sub-benchmark detail

Learners have different careers guidance needs at different stages. Careers programmes should help learners navigate their concerns about any barriers to career progression. In addition, opportunities should be tailored to the needs of each learner, including any additional needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, young people with SEND, and those who are absent.

- A provider's careers programme should actively seek to challenge misconceptions and stereotypical thinking, showcase a diverse range of role models and raise aspirations
- Providers should keep systematic records of the participation of learners in all aspects of their careers programme, including the individual advice given to each learner and any subsequent agreed decisions
- The records of participation and advice given should be integrated with those from 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 from the point of transition
- All learners should have access to these records and use them ahead of key transition points to support their next steps and career development
- Providers should collect, maintain and use accurate data for each learner on their aspirations, intended and immediate education, and training or employment destinations to inform personalised support
- Providers should use sustained and longer-term destinations data as part of their evaluation process and use alumni to support their careers programme

Definitions

How does Gatsby define 'vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils'?

Disadvantage and vulnerability will vary depending on the context of the college or training provider, but practitioners will want to consider socio-economic background, SEND and other potential barriers, such as those based on protected characteristics such as sex or race, which may hinder learners' ability to access and benefit from a fulfilling career.

The report [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#) emphasises the importance of addressing these factors to ensure that all learners, regardless of their background or circumstances, receive high-quality careers guidance that supports their aspirations and potential.

What is meant by a 'sustained destination'?

The Department for Education defines a sustained destination as 'six months of continuous activity' in a further or higher education institution, in employment or in an apprenticeship.

Planning for impact: How to meet Gatsby Benchmark 3

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EACH YOUNG PERSON

Identify and respond to learner needs

Acknowledge that learners will have unique requirements of the careers provision depending on their educational stage. Identify and underpin the careers provision with careers-related learner outcomes to support a progressive universal approach to careers.

Embed processes to identify vulnerability and those at risk of disengagement/ becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). Ensure additional support for vulnerable, disadvantaged and SEND learners through systems that support you to develop responsive and personalised careers provision.

Identify and establish a shared understanding of misconceptions and stereotypes held by learners, parents and carers and staff. Embed opportunities to broaden aspirations with planned reflection milestones for all learners and parents and carers to ensure aspirational and informed career decision-making in line with learning outcomes.

How to: Access the [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Student Career Learning Journeys\)](#) resource.

Keeping and sharing accurate career records

Maintain detailed records of every learner's involvement in the careers programme, including any one-to-one advice they have received, and decisions made. This should include insights into career options, decisions and aspirations. For learners with education, health and care plans (EHCPs), annual review information can also be included. Begin tracking each learner's career development from their first point of contact with or transition into the college or training provider, ensuring there is a comprehensive history of their career-related progress.

Make sure that learners can access and make effective use of their records of participation in the careers programme, especially ahead of key transition points.

Consider when and how you want them to access and reflect on these records to support aspirational and informed decisions. All records of participation should be in a format that ensures accessibility for all learners.

“Record-keeping helps to ensure that each young person receives the encounters, experiences and support they need.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

How to: Use your in-house management information system or an alternative careers platform to record careers activities and personal guidance interviews safely and securely.

Making effective use of information and data

Collect accurate, up-to-date data on each learner's aspirations and intended destination to inform personalised careers provision, particularly for learners at risk of disengagement. Ensure that systems include information and detail from any EHCP process or any other relevant multi-agency support.

Incorporate sustained, long-term destinations data, and how this compares with records of aspiration and intended destinations, into the evaluation of your careers programme. This data can help assess how effectively learners are making transitions and guide future improvements to the careers provision.

“Using aspirations and intended destinations data alongside academic and pastoral information helps institutions understand who could aim higher and who is at risk of not getting to their intended destination and means they can tailor timely interventions and appropriate support. This also contributes to wider strategies, often involving the local authority, preventing students becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

How to: Access the [Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision](#) resource

Getting Started: Essential steps for success

Gatsby Benchmark 3: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EACH YOUNG PERSON

Make effective use of your learners' careers readiness data to identify disadvantage or vulnerability

Action: Consider how you can embed the Post 16 Study (Years 12 and 13) [Future Skills Questionnaire](#) questions to measure the career readiness of your learners.

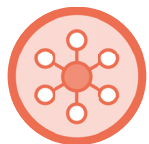
Challenge stereotypes and showcase diverse role models, including alumni

Organise activities that introduce learners to a wide range of role models and career paths from diverse industries and backgrounds.

“Many institutions draw on their alumni when setting up talks, mentoring programmes, encounters, visits and experiences of workplaces. It motivates young people to see people like them, who have sat where they are and are a few steps ahead in their journey. This is especially true when alumni and young people share similar backgrounds.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Action: Review your alumni community and consider how you can embed specific learner success stories that challenge stereotypes and misconceptions into your progressive careers provision.



**Benchmark 4:**

Linking Curriculum Learning To Careers

Understanding the benchmarks: Benchmark and sub-benchmark detail

As part of the provider's programme of careers education, all subject staff should link curriculum learning with careers, even on courses that are not specifically occupation-led. Subject staff should highlight the progression routes for their subject and the relevance of knowledge and skills developed in their subject for a wide range of future career paths.

- Throughout their programme of study (and by the end of their course) every learner should have opportunities to experience how knowledge and skills developed in their subjects help people gain entry to, and be more effective workers within, a wide range of occupations
- Careers should form part of the provider's ongoing staff development programme for subject staff and all staff who support learners

Planning for impact: How to meet Gatsby Benchmark 4

LINKING CURRICULUM LEARNING TO CAREERS

Ensure teaching staff link the curriculum to career pathways

Approaches to embedding careers in the curriculum include:

All staff highlighting the relevance of their **subject to progression routes and career pathways**

Foundation and universal practice should include supporting all curriculum staff to highlight the relevance of their subject to future careers and opportunities. This could take place during focus times at key decision-making points or during National Careers Week, etc.

All staff making links from their **curriculum to progression routes and careers pathways**

In addition to supporting learners to understand the relevance of all subjects, all staff should be supported to regularly contextualise elements of their curriculum to help learners understand how the knowledge and skills developed in that subject help people gain entry to, and be more effective workers within, a wide range of careers. For SEND settings, this should include all future careers, progression or transition pathways to support all young people in their next steps.

“Integrating careers into the curriculum can help young people see the relevance of their learning and become familiar with a wider range of career pathways.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Embedding curriculum learning in the context of the world of work

Embedding curriculum learning in the context of careers relies on strong curriculum staff engagement. In this approach, staff work with employers to engage learners and support progress by embedding curriculum teaching points in the context of the world of work.

Encourage teaching staff to show learners how their learning connects to career opportunities or progression pathways. This includes explaining potential job roles, industries and career pathways where the skills and knowledge from their subject are relevant.

Support teaching staff to reinforce the relevance of skills: In each subject, teaching staff should make clear how the skills and knowledge gained can help learners succeed in a wide range of careers.

How to: Access the [Understanding how to embed careers in the curriculum](#) resource

Integrate careers into staff development

Make careers a part of the college's ongoing staff development programme. Provide teaching staff with the tools and knowledge to effectively link their subject areas to career opportunities, helping them bring real-world relevance into their lessons.

“There are many effective approaches to building careers into staff development programmes, including whole-staff meetings, departmental CPD or bespoke training for individuals. Each institution should decide on the approach that will have maximum impact on each member of their staff.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

How to: Explore the **free and funded training offer** for staff (including teaching staff and SENCOs). Find out more here: [Careers Leader training | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)

Getting Started: Essential steps for success

Gatsby Benchmark 4: LINKING CURRICULUM LEARNING TO CAREERS

Increase staff confidence in understanding pathways

Action: Encourage all staff to complete the free online modules Understanding Career Pathways via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy | The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)

Action: Support the SEND team to complete the free online module SENCO: Understanding Pathways and Career Opportunities via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy | The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)

Support all staff to highlight the relevance of their subjects and make links from their curriculum

Action: Share this link with all staff: “Access your subject guide and subject PowerPoint deck to engage pupils in learning and highlight where your subject can take them in the future [My Learning My Future | CEC Resource Directory](#)”

Action: Share the [My Journey, My Future](#) and the [My Skills My Future](#) resources with staff supporting young people with SEND to make effective transitions.

Action: Encourage all staff to complete Teachers Part 2: Careers in the Curriculum Awareness via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy | The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)



Benchmark 5:

Encounters With Employers And Employees

Understanding the benchmarks: Benchmark and sub-benchmark detail

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 could include learners' own part-time employment where it exists.

- Every year, alongside their programme of study, learners should participate in at least two meaningful encounters with an employer. At least one encounter should be delivered through their curriculum area

Gatsby have provided a definition of what constitutes a 'meaningful encounter' with employers and employees:

A meaningful encounter is one in which the learner has an opportunity to learn about what work is like, the skills valued in the workplace, recruitment processes or what it takes to be successful.

Throughout a careers programme, learners should encounter employers of different sizes and specialisms, including the self-employed, reflecting trends in the labour market regionally and nationally.

These encounters could be in-person or a combination of in-person and virtual where appropriate.

Both learners and employers should be supported to prepare for the encounter.

Additional or different support may be needed for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, and young people with SEND.

A meaningful encounter will:

- Have a clear purpose, which is shared with the employer and the learners

- Be underpinned by learning outcomes that are appropriate to the needs of the learners
- Have opportunities for two-way interactions between the learners and the employer
- Be followed by time for learners to reflect on the insights, knowledge or skills gained through the encounter

“Employer encounters should be broad, inclusive and well-sequenced throughout the careers programme. Examples include:

- **employers giving talks or co-leading activities as part of curriculum lessons, assemblies or form time**
- **careers fairs**
- **employers leading careers events, such as careers speed networking and mock interviews**
- **employer workshops covering topics such as CV writing, recruitment processes or work simulations**
- **employer participation in enterprise competitions, events or projects**
- **employees mentoring young people**

Whatever approach is taken, the focus should be on the encounters being meaningful.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Planning for impact: How to meet Gatsby Benchmark 5

ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Provide multiple opportunities for meaningful employer encounters

Organise at least two meaningful encounters with an employer every year within a progressive careers programme. This could include employer-led workshops, mentoring, mock interviews, enterprise schemes, etc. At least one encounter should be delivered through their curriculum area.

“Having encounters with employers, employees and the self-employed gives young people real insights into the world of work, it broadens their knowledge and understanding of different career options and helps shape aspirations.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

How to: Access the [Understanding how to embed progressive employer encounters and work experiences resource](#) and checklist.

“Employer encounters should be broad, inclusive and well-sequenced throughout the careers programme.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Created by the CEC, the Employer Standards for Careers Education is a framework to help businesses self-assess and plan their work with education institutions. It supports businesses to ask the right questions upfront, cut through complexity, evaluate, improve performance and create the impact they are looking for.

Encourage employer partners you work with to complete the easy to use online tool to identify, compare and improve engagement and performance against the nine [Employer Standards](#), which include ‘Provide meaningful opportunities’.

How to: Signpost employers you work with to find out more about the [Employer Standards](#) tool.

How to: Signpost employers to [this resource](#) for support in working with young people with SEND

Getting Started: Essential steps for success

Gatsby Benchmark 5: ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Making it meaningful

“Encounters with employers can also boost academic attainment, especially for lower performing students, and have been linked to increased adult earnings” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Action: Use the checklist in the [Understanding how to embed progressive employer encounters and work experiences resource](#) when planning all employer encounters.

Employer engagement

“Building a rich picture of the world of work, and hearing first-hand about the reality of different occupations, helps limit young people’s misconceptions about the future of work.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Action: Find and contact delivery organisations to support employer encounters via the [CEC’s Provider Directory](#).

Action: To support employers to understand working with young people with SEND, use inclusion mag to support best practice: [Inclusion mag for Employers | CEC Resource Directory](#).

**Benchmark 6:**

Experiences Of Workplaces

Understanding the benchmarks: Benchmark and sub-benchmark detail

Every learner should have first-hand experiences of workplaces to help their exploration of career opportunities and expand their networks.

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

Gatsby have provided a definition of what constitutes a meaningful experience:

A meaningful experience is one in which the learner has an opportunity to explore what it is like to work in that environment, the skills valued in the workplace, recruitment processes or what it takes to be successful.

Throughout the careers programme, these experiences could be in-person or a combination of in-person and virtual where appropriate. Both learners and employers should be supported to prepare for the experience.

Additional or different support may be needed for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, and young people with SEND. This should be matched to their individual need and identified programme of study.

A meaningful experience will:

- Have a clear purpose, which is shared with the employer and the learner
- Be underpinned by learning outcomes that are appropriate to the needs of the learner
- Involve an extensive two-way interaction between learners and employees
- Include opportunities for learners to meet a range of different people from the workplace

- Include opportunities for learners to perform a task set by the employer or produce a piece of work relevant to that workplace
- Include feedback from the employer to learners on their work
- Be followed by opportunities for learners to reflect on the insights, knowledge or skills gained through their experience

Schools, colleges and independent training providers (ITPs can take into account any part-time work a young person may have, if it genuinely offers them a meaningful experience).

Definitions:

What are 'first-hand experiences of workplaces'?

There are several models for work experience that can be impacted, underpinned by specific learning outcomes and aligned to the wider curriculum. A progressive series of experiences of work may be in-person or virtual and could include

1. The college or training provider as a workplace
2. Workplace visits
3. Work shadowing
4. Work experience placements
5. Volunteering/social action
6. Opportunities for job rotations to different departments/divisions (for apprentices)

“Schools, colleges, ITPs and employers are creating effective programmes of experiences of workplaces, with multiple elements delivered at carefully planned points. They include workplace visits, shorter episodic workplace projects, work shadowing and extended work experience.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Planning for impact: How to meet Gatsby Benchmark 6

EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES

Embed experiences of workplaces within progressive careers provision

Define specific, measurable learning outcomes for learners to achieve during their experiences of the workplace. Set clear expectations and reflection milestones for both learners and employers to ensure the experience is mutually beneficial and impactful.

“Research shows that young people who have had multi-day experiences of workplaces tend to have higher wages when they are in full-time employment.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

How to: Access the [Understanding how to embed progressive employer encounters and work experiences resource](#) and checklist.

Encourage employer partners you work with to complete the easy to use online tool to identify, compare and improve engagement and performance against the [Employer Standards](#), which include 'Provide meaningful opportunities'.

How to: Signpost employers you work with to find out more about the [Employer Standards](#) tool.

Getting Started: Essential steps for success

Gatsby Benchmark 6: EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES

Consider your approach to modern work experience

By providing multiple, varied work experiences – encompassing both conventional placements and innovative, non-traditional opportunities – you can create a progressive Careers Learning Journeys that equips learners with what they need to make informed and aspirational decisions and to be careers ready. Start to consider your organisation's approach to modern work experience.

Action: See the [Modern Work Experience](#) section of the CEC website to find out more about modern work experience.

Making it meaningful

Action: Use the checklist in the [Understanding how to embed progressive work experiences](#) resource when planning all experiences of workplaces.





Benchmark 7:

Encounters With Further And Higher Education

Understanding the benchmarks: Benchmark and sub-benchmark detail

All learners should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them, including academic, technical and vocational routes. This should incorporate learning in schools, colleges, independent training providers (ITPs), 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 stages of their career. This should include as appropriate, further education colleges, universities and ITPs. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and learners

Gatsby have provided a definition of what constitutes a meaningful encounter with further and higher education:

A meaningful encounter with further and higher education is one where learners have the opportunity to explore what it is like to learn, develop and succeed in that environment. The updated Gatsby Benchmarks include guidance on embedding multiple and progressive encounters into careers provision, with learning outcomes relevant to the needs of learners at that stage of their Careers Learning Journeys. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and learners/trainees.

Throughout a careers programme, meaningful encounters should be sequenced so a learner can build up a clear picture of the opportunities available to them.

Experiences or encounters could be in-person or a combination of in-person and virtual. They may include providers delivering sessions in schools/special schools as well as learners participating in visits.

Learners and providers should be supported to prepare for the encounter.

Tailored support may be needed for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, and young people with SEND. This should be relevant to their expected progression routes and include all the options available.

A meaningful encounter will:

- Have a clear purpose, which is shared with the provider and the learner
- Be underpinned by learning outcomes that are appropriate to the needs of the learners
- Involve a two-way interaction between pupils and the provider
- Include information about the provider, their recruitment and selection processes, the qualifications they offer and the careers these could lead to
- Include a description of what learning or training with the provider is like
- Be followed by opportunities for learners to reflect on the insights, knowledge or skills gained through the encounter

“A meaningful encounter can take many forms. Encounters could include talks with guest speakers from different providers, workshops and careers fairs where young people can interact with different students and staff from providers. Institutions should determine the most appropriate approaches for each of their learners.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Planning for impact: How to meet Gatsby Benchmark 7

ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Supporting equity of understanding of all pathways

“All young people deserve to know and understand the full range of options open to them, and this knowledge can have a profound impact.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Ensure learners are supported to consider the full range of pathways with equity, including academic, technical and vocational routes. In addition to progressive encounters for learners with providers of all pathways, consider how to support staff and parents and carers to fully understand the value and benefit of all pathways and to challenge misconceptions. For those young people with an EHCP, next steps should be considered and discussed in the annual review process throughout the young person's time with you and in consultation with parents/carers and other multi-agency professionals involved in the EHCP process. This will allow you to establish all potential pathways relevant for the young person.

How to: Access the [Understanding how to embed a progressive approach to encounters with further and higher education](#) resource.

“Partnerships are crucial to the implementation of the benchmarks. As well as employers, each schools college and ITP should decide who they will work with.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Action: Find and contact delivery organisations to support encounters with further and higher education via the CEC [Provider Directory](#).

Action: For SEND learners, the local offer (specific to geographical region) can support with relevant options alongside multi-agency links through the EHCP process.

Getting Started: Essential steps for success

Gatsby Benchmark 7: ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Supporting equity of understanding of all pathways

Access resources and support to ensure that learners, staff and parents and carers are supported to understand all pathways with equity.

Action: Encourage all staff to complete the free online module Understanding Career Pathways via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy | The Careers & Enterprise Company](#).

Action: Signpost parents and carers to [CEC resources](#) and activities to enable effective careers conversations at home.

Action: Use the checklist in the [Understanding how to embed a progressive approach to encounters with further and higher education](#) resource.



Benchmark 8:

Personal Guidance

Understanding the benchmarks: Benchmark and sub-benchmark detail

Every learner should have opportunities for guidance meetings with a Careers Adviser, who could be internal (a member of provider staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These meetings 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 scheduled to meet individual needs. The Careers Leader should work closely with the Careers Adviser, SEND coordinator (SENDSCO) and other key staff to ensure personal guidance is effective and embedded in the careers programme.

- Every learner should have at least one personal guidance meeting with a Careers Adviser. Meetings should be scheduled in the careers programme to meet the needs of learners
- Information about personal guidance support and how to access it should be communicated to learners, parents and carers and other stakeholders, including through the provider website

Definitions:

What is a 'personal guidance meeting'?

Personal guidance delivered by appropriately qualified Careers Advisers is an essential part of a careers guidance programme. Personal guidance meetings should be young person-centred and tailored to their individual needs. Personal guidance meetings should be conducted by qualified careers guidance professionals in appropriate spaces*. Additionally, personal guidance meetings should be embedded within a progressive careers programme and sequenced to allow young people to prepare for, reflect on, and implement the plans they formulate. * N.B CDI guidance recommends that at least 45 minutes are allowed for every personal guidance meeting.

“My careers meeting helped to reduce my confusion and helped me make sense of everything. My Careers Adviser helped me think about practicalities for me and I really think they helped me to make an educated decision not only about my next step but my next, next step and even the step after that.” Year 12 student, [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

What does it mean for a Careers Adviser to be trained to an appropriate level?

As the relevant professional body, it is for the Careers Development Institute (CDI) to determine the appropriate level of qualification. The CDI makes a distinction in this regard between offering 'information and advice' and offering 'guidance'.

It notes:

“... as a minimum the CDI states a level 4 qualification to offer careers information and advice and a level 6 or level 7 career development qualification to offer career guidance.”

Further, the CDI advises that:

“Considered to be ‘fully qualified’, only those holding a careers development qualification of level 6 or level 7 are recognised as being qualified to offer career guidance and coaching.”

Planning for impact: How to meet Gatsby Benchmark 8

PERSONAL GUIDANCE

Tailor personal guidance to individual learner needs

“Young people particularly want to be able to access personal guidance before making key decisions and before transition points.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Work with key colleagues to identify and consider the timing and regularity of personal guidance meetings based on learner need. Robust systems should be in place to ensure that personal guidance meetings are responsive to learner need and scheduled appropriately, including whenever significant study or career choices are being made. For learners with SEND, this should involve all multi-agency professionals and an appropriately trained Careers Adviser. Consider how to effectively engage parents and carers in personal guidance.

“Careers Advisers told us they are most effective when they are known by staff, are visible to young people, parents and carers, and have access to data to inform their personal guidance meetings with young people. In some of the most impactful approaches, Careers Advisers are highly regarded, their work is integrated with different departments in the school, college or ITP, such as pastoral teams, and they contribute to the overall development and evaluation of the careers programme.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

How to: Access the [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Student Career Learning Journeys\)](#) resource.

Access to trained Careers Advisers

“Personal guidance delivered by professional Careers Advisers is an essential part of a careers guidance programme.” [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

Make sure every learner has the opportunity to meet with an adviser who is trained to an appropriate level. For SEND learners, this should be a Careers Adviser who can advise on appropriate pathways for the young person relevant to need and has experience of working with SEND learners.

How to: Use the [CDI guide](#) for best practice in commissioning independent careers guidance services, and use the [‘Find a Registered Career Development Professional’](#) tool on the CDI website.

Parent and carer engagement

Time spent with a Careers Adviser is valuable, so ensuring all involved, including parents and carers, understand its value and purpose is crucial to maximise impact.

Good practice would be to ensure:

- Parents/carers and young people know in advance when the sessions are happening and why
- Parents and carers are equipped with the tools to have meaningful and informed conversations before and after these sessions, remembering that some families may require additional support to effectively access and utilise this information
- Parents and carers can ask questions

How to: Access the CEC resources and support for parents and carers, including the FREE [Parental Engagement in Careers CPD](#), to ensure parents and carers add value to your approach to personal guidance.

Getting Started: Essential steps for success

Gatsby Benchmark 8: PERSONAL GUIDANCE

Supporting effective careers conversations

Support all staff to have effective careers conversations with learners

Action: Signpost staff to the free online module Wider Education Workforce: Careers Conversations via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#).

Action: : Support your SEND team to access the free online module SENCO: Understanding Pathways and Career Opportunities via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#) | [The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)

Action: Access the [Parental Engagement: Prompts](#) to support parents and carers to add value to personal guidance meetings by carrying on the conversation at home.

Commissioning Personal Guidance provision

The CDI provides resources and support for effective commissioning of personal guidance. See [Careers Guidance in Schools and Colleges: A Guide to Best Practice and Commissioning Independent Career Guidance Services](#).

Action: Use the [CDI guide](#) for best practice in commissioning independent careers guidance services, referencing the useful templates provided in the guide (starting on page 18).



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