



Making encounters meaningful: support for providers

Purpose

This resource is for providers who deliver encounters in schools, special schools and colleges to support students with learning about all pathways. In the context of the Provider Access Legislation (outlined below), a provider is an organisation that offers approved technical education qualifications or their representative, for example an FE college or training provider. However, as part of a school or college's wider careers education programme they may have other types of providers involved with delivering activities. The purpose of the resource is to enable providers to effectively engage with schools, special schools and colleges to deliver encounters that have an impact on students and are aligned with the institution's wider careers education programme.

Context

Schools, colleges and special schools are being supported to 'open their doors' to ensure that providers have the opportunity to talk to students. There is real ambition about how providers and employers can support learners to develop knowledge and understanding of all available routes at key transition points, including technical and vocational. Through meaningful encounters with providers students can understand learner experience, pathways to work, recruitment & selection, LMI and have the opportunity to develop specific knowledge, skills and experiences that will support with successful transitions.

The DfE publication '[Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#)' brings together the statutory guidance for schools and the guidance for colleges on careers guidance into a single document, with the continued focus on institutions working towards the achievement of [The Gatsby Benchmarks](#). Benchmark 7 covers encounters with further and higher education and states:

All pupils 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.

To specifically support providers in accessing schools, the [Provider Access Legislation](#) (PAL) is a statutory requirement that came into force in January 2023. It specifies schools must provide at least six encounters for all their students:

- Two encounters for pupils during the 'first key phase' (year 8 or 9) that are mandatory for all pupils to attend.
- Two encounters for pupils during the 'second key phase' (year 10 or 11) that are mandatory for all pupils to attend.
- Two encounters for pupils during the 'third key phase' (year 12 or 13) that are mandatory for the school to put on but optional for pupils to attend.

The legislation is 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. To support the legislation a clear process is available to help providers identify and raise concerns about access to schools.

While the Provider Access Legislation only applies to schools and schools that have sixth forms, DfE strongly encourage colleges to follow the guidance as good practice.



Making Benchmark 7 meaningful

We have created five principles for Careers Leaders to follow when planning their progressive careers programme for Benchmark 7. Providers may find it helpful to be aware of these principles, alongside any objectives the school has specifically set, when planning an encounter. The Understanding how to embed progressive encounters with further and higher education [resource](#) supports Careers Leaders to embed encounters with providers of all routes available to students at key transitions within a progressive and impactful careers programme.



Start early

- Implement a progressive programme that broadens horizons, and scaffolds development of the knowledge and understanding required for students to identify their best next steps, from when students join you.



Be informed by trends and success

- Use destination data and LMI to identify any gaps and implement appropriate intervention.
- Use relevant destinations data and LMI to inform continuous improvement.
- Harness employer and alumni voice through multi-Benchmark approaches where young people can be supported to understand learning opportunities through encounters and experiences of the workplace.



True advocacy

- Grow your expertise in all career pathways and opportunities for young people.
- Become an expert in the latest vocational and technical opportunities for your young people.



Challenge misconception and assumptions head on

- Consider all stakeholders and their knowledge, understanding and potential misconceptions.



Equity of access to information and understanding

- All pathways for all young people.
- Provide equality of access to information and understanding.

Planning a provider encounter

Providers may find the following prompts useful when planning a provider encounter. There is an editable template available, which could be worked on together with the school contact to ensure the session is built around shared objectives.

| |
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| Name of event |
| Date of event |
| Time of event |
| Location of event & venue/virtual platform |
| Event coordinators – key contact(s) |
| <p>Learner Outcomes</p> <p>These may include outcomes that support learners to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational • Learner experience • Pathways to work • Recruitment & selection • Labour Market Information (LMI) <p>Outcomes may also support learner to develop specific knowledge and skills or have experiences of the provider/workplace</p> |
| <p>Description of event</p> <p>Where does this fit within a progressive programme for learners and how will it cover the 4 requirements for an encounter as detailed in the provider access legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the provider and the approved technical education qualifications or apprenticeships that the provider offers • Information about the careers to which those technical education qualifications or apprenticeships might lead • A description of what learning or training with the provider is like • Responses to questions from the pupils about the provider or approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships |

Audience

The size of the group and year group

Any key contextual information about the school/college

Guidance on how to pitch the encounter/experience at the right level for students

Key contextual information about student(s) and any adaptations required to make it accessible to all

If the students are imminently moving on to their next step consider how this encounter fits within a wider package of transition support

Order of Event

Any pre work or briefings needed e.g. for learners, staff or parents

Event timings

Tasks and who is performing them, who will be speaking and when etc.

Time for student reflection/questions built in

Any follow up activities or resources provided

Any evaluation or feedback opportunity planned

Audio visual

Outline available technology

