



Effective approaches to careers guidance for apprentices

A guide for colleges and training providers

Contents

3	Foreword
6	Applying the Benchmarks for Apprentices
22	Further support and guidance
23	CEC Resources
24	Compass for Training Providers

Foreword

Effective approaches to Careers Education for Employed Apprentices

At its best, careers education is an essential part of a young person's secondary and further education, beginning early and continuing until a learner leaves compulsory education or training. This should be no exception for apprentices. Careers education for apprentices is about preparing them for the lifelong careers journey, how to work as an effective employee and develop skills, knowledge and behaviours to help them develop and progress through a career in their chosen occupational pathway. The employer's role in this is crucial to ensure that career's education is appropriate and proportionate for their occupation.

The Gatsby Benchmark framework (see page 5) is at the heart of statutory guidance for schools and colleges and independent training providers and working towards the Benchmarks helps institutions meet the requirements for good careers provision. This requirement does not only cover study programmes and technical education but also apprenticeships for 16–18-year-olds, and up to 24 years with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). Since May 2025, statutory guidance now extends to independent training providers, and a summary of the updated requirements can be found [here](#). Ofsted use the Gatsby Benchmarks and statutory guidance as their basis for inspecting careers provision in training providers and look for evidence of highly effective careers advice and guidance systems. It is also recommended as best practice by the Department for Education.

As we develop our work with training providers and continue to support colleges, the need to ensure consistency and quality in careers education delivery for apprentices alongside other types of learners is a priority. We know significant good practice already exists, but we want to help providers to consolidate this, build their provision further and raise the standard of delivery across the sector for apprentices. With a focus on high-quality provision, embedded in everyday delivery and quality processes, careers education can also contribute to whole institution quality improvement.



Who is this guide for?

This guide sets out to show how the Gatsby Benchmarks can be an excellent framework for colleges and training providers to create modern, 21st century careers education for apprentices. It is not a manual for implementing all Gatsby benchmarks, but it presents a holistic look at them and offers suggestions and innovative approaches for making them work for apprenticeship provision, alongside some inspiring examples of practice from the sector.

This guide is designed to support any senior staff within colleges and training providers who have responsibility for careers for apprentices. It is particularly aimed at those supporting 16–19-year-old learners as well as those with an EHCP up to 24

years old. Providing a progressive careers programme driven by a Senior Leader with oversight of the careers approach across the organisation, can help to boost retention and progression into sustained destinations. No matter where you are on your career's education journey for apprentices, this resource will help provide practical information, guidance and help to review and plan your approach.

Why careers? Why now?

Following the Skills Act (2021), and the Skills for Jobs White paper, colleges are required by the Department for Education (DfE) to produce an accountability statement to set out the focus of curriculum as to how the college will support local, regional and national skills need priorities. Training providers are expected to demonstrate this through their strategic and business plans. The development of skills, knowledge and behaviours through apprenticeships and technical education is a key focus of these plans. Ensuring high-quality careers education for apprentices is essential to enabling them to be work ready and fulfil skills needs.

Our research conducted with the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) shows that independent training providers are already undertaking a range of careers education activities however the providers across the sector are at various stages of their journey, with maturity of provision varying widely. At its absolute best, a high-quality careers strategy plans for and delivers a broad careers curriculum, in partnership with businesses and other key stakeholders, preparing apprentices with careers education that will last a lifetime. This guide supports providers to design and deliver high quality careers education, ensuring it is not fragmented, not given high importance and embedded in apprenticeship delivery. Apprenticeship providers commonly express caution in delivering careers education for fear of 'upsetting' employer relationships therefore the guide also explores how to build a careers programme, involving the employer to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties.

We recognise that further work is required to support colleges and independent training providers adopt the Benchmarks for apprentices therefore alongside this guide we also offer:

- [FES Connect](#) A Community of Practice for Independent Training Providers to focus on best practice and overcome national challenges using a collaborative approach.
- [Careers Leader induction training](#) to include apprentices.
- Training for Careers Leaders working with apprentices
- Provide additional resources on our [Resource Directory](#)



The scope of careers guidance

The Gatsby Benchmarks framework for good careers provision was developed on behalf of the Gatsby Foundation by Sir John Holman and aimed to highlight what 'good career guidance' looked like for young people. Careers guidance is the full range of activity delivered under the eight Gatsby Benchmarks. We refer to this whole programme of activities as careers guidance, but it may also be referred to in some organisations as CEIAG/IAG (Careers Guidance Information Advice and Guidance).

A full review of these benchmarks was published in January 2025, including more detailed guidance relating to Independent Training Providers. Statutory Guidance published in May 2025 states "Independent training providers (ITPs) and other post-16 providers that provide careers guidance but don't have a specific careers requirement should follow this guidance as a statement of good practice."¹. Further guidance relating to implementation of the statutory guidance can be found on The Careers & Enterprise Company Resource Directory^{2&3}.

Careers education extends much further than advice and guidance interviews preparing for transition. A full career education programme should be developed around the Gatsby Benchmarks. Careers education is key to developing the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to thrive in the workplace. It supports awareness and aspiration raising and enables young people to understand where the jobs of the future might be, alongside benefits to the employer of ensuring that apprentices stay, thrive, and grow in their workplace. It supports future pipeline planning and longevity of training and investment in the future workforce.

All careers education activities should prepare the apprentice for a lifelong careers journey. When working with apprentices we should consider careers education in its widest sense, with a focus on the careers learning journey and equipping the young person to be career ready, with the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to make informed decisions about each and every best next step throughout their working life.



Benchmark 1

A stable careers programme



Benchmark 2

Learning from career and labour market information



Benchmark 3

Addressing the needs of each learner



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

1. [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers - GOV.UK](#)
2. [Statutory Guidance summary for independent training provider leaders.pdf](#)
3. [Statutory Guidance Summary for college leaders.pdf](#)

Applying the Benchmarks for apprentices

Benchmark 1 - A stable careers programme

This benchmark provides the foundation for careers provision across your organisation and supports the link between careers education to wider priorities, whole organisation improvement and meeting of local, regional, and national skills needs. It gives a direction of travel and aspiration for apprenticeship providers to create a stable careers programme.

- Intentions should be defined in a published Careers Guidance Strategy, aligned to the organisation's strategic plan, and establishes performance measures that are subsequently included in whole organisation impact evaluation, reporting and development planning.
- Every provider should have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of those in governance roles, leadership, 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 and other staff who support learners, careers advisers and employers to increase its impact.



What does best practice look like for apprenticeship provision?

Provider role	Employer role	Learner role
A published strategy and programme of activity to support the strategy. Linked to local, regional and national skills priorities, the plan is robust with SMART objectives, clear accountabilities and methods of measuring impact and is part of a continuous improvement cycle of planning and development of careers education.	Engaged in the development, implementation & evaluation and improvement of careers strategy and programme. Providing support and intelligence relating to skills needs / LMI.	Learners access the programme in the most appropriate and convenient way e.g. online, face to face etc.
Development of careers learning outcomes, linked to knowledge, skills, and behaviours of occupational standards. Access suggested universal career learning outcomes	Demonstrates commitment to development of the individual during and beyond the apprenticeship.	
Careers education provision is evaluated and regularly updated and built into continuous improvement processes. Register for a Compass account to access evaluation and the careers impact maturity model to support your self-evaluation and action planning.	Commits time to careers events / activities to support apprenticeship development.	

Case study - Kaplan

The careers strategy at Kaplan is to help individuals achieve their educational and career goals: we are here to make a difference to every learner and inspire them to succeed. We do this by providing an accessible and stable Careers, Information, Advice, and Guidance (CIAG) program, ensuring this meets learners' needs at every touch-point with us.

Here are some examples of the way we do this:

- Utilising sector and labour-market information, to provide our learners with the relevant knowledge, skills, and behaviours training to ensure they stay inspired and competitive.
- Linking the curriculum learning to career progression through skills and personal development, occupational expert teaching, employer engagement and End-Point Assessment preparation.
- Listening to and engaging with the needs of our employers, designing training programmes that are relevant to industry and meet business strategies and goals.
- Ensuring a tailored approach, addressing the career needs of individual learners.
- Sharing different viewpoints and experiences of workplaces by listening to our learners, particularly the Kaplan Apprenticeship Advisory Panel.
- Promoting Careers Information, Advice and Guidance for the benefit of all.
- Providing CIAG training for colleagues across Kaplan.



Benchmark 2 - Learning from Career and Labour Market Information.



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 special educational needs and disabilities (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/carers should be encouraged and supported to access and use information about labour markets and study options to inform their support of the learners in their care.

Detailed labour market 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, potential earnings and what employers are looking for from applicants.

Provider role	Employer role	Learner role
Effective IAG / onboarding including skills scan on prior careers learning & knowledge including labour market information, e.g. prospects, earnings etc.	Provide information about career prospects, salary information, sector, and pathways in business in collaboration with provider at onboarding stage, and at regular relevant intervals throughout the apprenticeship.	Conduct own research on role(s) and career prospects, matched with information provided by provider and employer.
A 'careers learning journey' for learners includes universal and targeted activities and careers learning that supports them to access, understand and evaluate relevant labour market information relevant for their level of learning, age, and stage of apprenticeship.	Exposure to information or experience of range of roles in the sector, linked to labour market information.	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.
<u>Parents and carers are regularly supported universally through a variety of channels</u> to understand what the labour market is and how to access and interpret labour market information. Targeted support is differentiated according to parent and carer context and/or subject sector areas. Engagement is measured through stakeholder voice.	Supports and contributes to parental engagement strategy outlined by provider.	

Awareness of labour market demand can help learners to make realistic adjustments and compromises when firming up their pathway choices. Access to up-to-date career and labour market information is important for social mobility. Hard information about pay, number of vacancies, and examples of alumni's successful transitions, helps to connect learners to a different future.

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



Case study:

Barnsley College

Learners on apprenticeships with Barnsley College, have their own bespoke programme for careers and employability, designed to meet the need of each level and stage of learner.

The careers journey starts long before the apprenticeship begins. Multiple forums are held between employers and departments each academic year, collaborating to influence the curriculum design and pinpoint the skills desired from apprentices and students progressing into work.

Working with the local council to review units offered on both Childcare and Health courses, has ensured effective sequencing of the curriculum, and supported the development of knowledge, behaviour and skills to prepare learners for industry whether apprentice, on placement or into employment.

A professional development programme has been created, delivered by three members of the council's children's social care services providing learners with a detailed insight into what to expect in industry. This supports employability, and progression into apprenticeships as they work towards developing the in-depth knowledge required for interview and progression. Barnsley learners are now guaranteed interview for social care apprenticeships at the council.

Apprentices receive careers guidance with parity to other learners. 20% of apprentices are on fixed term contracts and need to consider their best next step, whilst others expect to stay with their employer longer term and the focus will be on lifelong careers and skills development.

When apprentices first begin their apprenticeship, they undergo meetings with their trainer where they discuss the skills set by both the employer and the college. Apprentices assess their skills using the APTM (Apprenticeship, Training, Employment, and Management) 'Skills Radar' framework, identifying and discussing their areas of strength and areas for improvement.

Review sessions occur every twelve weeks during the academic year, attended by the employer, apprentice, and trainer. These sessions assess the apprentice's perception of their progress regarding the necessary skills and competencies, as well as their career aspirations. This collaborative approach with the employer ensures that they stay informed about the apprentice's goals and areas for improvement, facilitating joint input from the college and employer during CIAG discussions and dialog about advancement opportunities.

The central careers team also works closely with apprentice trainers, ensuring they are confident in supporting learners themselves and informed about the career support available for apprentices. This is included in tutorial sessions.

The offer includes a series of webinars and workshops that they can join. These sessions were created with Gatsby Benchmark 2 (Learning from career and labour market information) in mind, to provide apprentices with knowledge and prepare them for progression into a sustained destination on completion of their current qualification. These conversations involve the current employer but also focus on longer term career goals.

For those looking for a next step, the programme includes a CV and cover letter masterclass, where apprentices are supported in creating their CV. Emphasis is placed on using the CV effectively in modern recruitment, customising it for specific job openings, and crafting a cover letter for speculative applications. A webinar on unlocking opportunities and the hidden jobs market encourages apprentices to consider the unadvertised opportunities, and how to position themselves optimally for future progression.

Apprentices are also invited to attend face to face workshops. The sessions focus on matching their skills to job vacancies with an emphasis on completing job applications to a high standard. Additionally, apprentices are motivated to transform interview preparation into success with a focus on increasing confidence, conducting themselves professionally and becoming familiar with a variety of recruitment processes.

During these sessions, apprentices are encouraged to book in with the central careers team for additional assistance if needed (Gatsby Benchmark 3 Addressing the needs of each learner). This support includes one-on-one practice interviews, help with applying for job openings or work experience opportunities, or scheduling a careers guidance appointment with a careers adviser to map out future steps (Gatsby Benchmark 8 Personal Guidance). If a contract is coming to an end a learner will get automatic referral as they approach end point assessment.

These sessions are conducted at various intervals throughout the academic year and are also converted into self-study materials for apprentices who may not be able to attend the scheduled webinars or workshops. This guarantees that the information is available to all apprentices.

A recent meeting with Barnsley Talking Therapies delved into the support that they will now be offering to apprentices who are seeking treatment via the organisation. This includes a prolonged provision of meeting with the students to overcome barriers related to their mental health and employment – this could include struggles with the work side of their apprenticeship. Clients will be seen every two weeks for an initial period of ten sessions.



Benchmark 3 - Addressing the needs of each student.

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. An apprentice's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout. It should support development of knowledge, skills and behaviours associated with their chosen occupation but also for development of a lifetime career journey beyond the apprenticeship.

- A provider's careers programme should actively seek to challenge stereotypical thinking and raise aspirations, highlight 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 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 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 destination data as part of their evaluation process and use alumni to support their careers programme.

What does best practice look like for apprenticeship provision?

Provider role	Employer role	Learner role
Develop a careers curriculum with progressive, embedded, careers learning outcomes. These are differentiated / supported to meet the needs of each student. See our suggested universal career-related learning outcomes	Mentor or buddy system – with a focus on personal / career development.	Encouraged to reflect, keep development plan up to date and seek additional training opportunities.
Each learner is supported with a personal careers development plan.	Provides opportunities for further mandatory or additional training.	
Learners are provided with a coach or professional as a first point of contact for careers discussions.	Support membership of sector/ trade bodies.	

Stereotypes are challenged and the programme provides new experiences and raises aspirations.	Provides opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that extend beyond the apprenticeship role.	
Ensuring the use of staff expertise is maximised to meet the needs of learners with different aspirations through creating a staff directory of sector experience and pathways to employment, so learners can be matched with someone relatable and relevant for support.		
Including careers education as part of holistic personalised support offered to learners with specific needs such as SEND, behavioural issues and those at risk of becoming NEET, via learning mentors, personal advisors, support assistants and personal development coaches. Visit our resource directory for a range of resources designed to support working with SEND learners.		
Using the first contact session to explore learning styles, preferences and additional support requirements and applying this to the career's education offered, not just programme delivery.		



Benchmark 4 - Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers



As part of the providers programme of careers education, all subject staff should link curriculum learning with careers, even on courses which are not specifically occupation led. Subject delivery staff should highlight the progression routes for the apprenticeship and the relevance of knowledge and skills being developed for a wide range of future career paths.

All vocational staff should be supported to link curriculum learning with careers. Staff can draw on their own experiences as sector specialists and collaborate with colleagues to ensure that apprentices receive a breadth of learning about roles within their chosen sector. Throughout their programme of study (and by the end of their apprenticeship) every learner should have had the opportunity to experience how their pathway helps people gain entry to, and be more effective workers within, a wide range of roles within their chosen occupation. Curriculum staff should highlight the progression routes from the apprenticeship and the relevance of knowledge, skills and behaviours for a wide range of future career paths.

What does best practice look like for apprenticeship provision?

Provider role	Employer role	Learner role
Progressive, embedded, careers learning outcomes are planned to be linked to occupational standards, appropriate for the level and stage of the apprenticeship. This learning should form part of regular reviews, tutorials or lessons. These are evaluated for impact and as a result, learners develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that builds career readiness within their chosen pathway.	Engagement in regular reviews and ensuring careers learning outcomes are relevant to role, pipeline and progression planning. These could be jointly planned with the provider to ensure they are appropriate, proportionate and relevant for the level and stage of the apprenticeship.	Ensure curriculum learning up to date and opportunities grasped for career development on offer. Be proactive in engaging with personal career development opportunities.
Staff are supported through CPD, industry and commercial updating to understand how to apply their knowledge and understanding of LMI and pathways to make regular links from the curriculum to careers and the world of work. Staff should be provided with appropriate resources and training to give them confidence in this role.	Employability skills are developed in the apprentice, linked to values and behaviours of business or sector. These should align to the skills and behaviours outlined in occupational standards. Definition of skills may also be supported by using frameworks such as the Skills Builder Universal Framework.	Undertake skills assessments, self-reflection on areas for development and become an active participant in all on offer. Develop an action plan for skills development.
Examples of best practice activities include masterclasses, enterprise activities, competitions, enrichment opportunities, digital learning etc.	Provide feedback to learner and provider to tailor the careers programme aligned to the needs of the business. Engage in activities to support careers education e.g. employer masterclasses, competitions, providing enrichment opportunities, digital learning etc.	

Learners feel more engaged in their learning when they perceive the relevance of what they are studying to their own and other people's lives. Learners become more aspirational, understanding that perceived barriers can be overcome and that there are numerous pathways to success. Providing high-quality careers education to apprentices allows learners to explore pathways for their future careers within their chosen occupational specialism e.g. from a junior position such as finance assistant to professional accountant and progressing to internal auditor or tax professional. Staff highlighting the relevance of their subject to future careers and opportunities creates social capital for young people with more limited networks. Seeing how the skills learnt in one job role or on their apprenticeship can be applicable to range of future pathways can be beneficial. [My Learning My Future Resources to support this can be found on our Resource Directory](#), covering occupations such as Hair & Beauty, Engineering, Health & Social Care, Computer Science and Business, plus English and maths.

Case study

An example of a careers curriculum from an apprentice provider:

- A structured apprenticeship program with clear learning outcomes
- Information on the profession and different career pathways
- Ongoing support from talent coaches to explore career goals and progression
- Independent study skills
- Recruitment guidance and skills development on CV writing and interview preparation
- Careers insight talks with former apprentices and professionals in a range of roles and sectors
- Enrichment activities covering further study progression
- Bespoke careers microsite with short videos by careers experts, coaches, and progression information for every standard
- Career success courses
- Directory of tutors from a wide range of industries for specialist careers queries

Case study:

Stubbing court training

Stubbing court training – Embedding careers guidance

Since 1982, Stubbing Court Training (SCT) have been providing apprenticeships with horses, working with some of the most successful professionals in the world; many determined and talented young people; and a variety of key organisations involved in promoting training and achievement in the equine industry. SCT has established itself as one of the leading providers in the UK, confirmed by the Ofsted report on the provision to be of 'outstanding' quality, providing learners with a high level practical and work-related skills with riders up to Olympic level. All this achieved in the context of a wide range of learner backgrounds, many with very low or no GCSE attainment, and 41% of whom have a declared disability / health problem.

SCT pride themselves on their unique understanding of the industry: the individual needs and requirements of young people and employers to achieve their personal and business success; the demand for the highest standards and exceptional quality of service; and the opportunities that will inspire, motivate, and encourage excellence.

Quality careers guidance is at the heart of their success, preparing young people not only for their personal future careers but also to become effective contributors to the equine industry overall. They achieve this through the following approaches:

Pre application & recruitment stages

SCT encourage early applications to provide the opportunity to start working with learners to ensure they are aware of industry expectations and the reality of the job role. Contact is ongoing from application and early initial assessment allows individualised planning for each apprentice. Before and during this time, the company conduct school visits, host taster events for applicants, parents and teachers and share inspirational apprentices' stories on Facebook, Instagram and other social media. They also run a work experience programme. Career development work truly starts before they even become learners.

A comprehensive induction programme;

Work readiness, industry and careers awareness are at the heart of SCT induction which includes:

- A specific careers guidance section re: employer expectations and progression
- Raising awareness of SCT opportunities and the wider industry careers
- Videos from current and past apprentices on the qualities required for the horse industry
- Videos from employers re how to get the most out of the Apprenticeship,
- Videos on the SCT Online Learning platform – delivered using world class professionals in equine industry

On Programme

Throughout their programme, apprentices engage in the following careers guidance;

- Key questions at every progress review relevant to level and stage of their apprenticeship
- Work experience in international-level competition yards

- Masterclass Series – talks and engagement with industry experts from International Showjumpers to nutritionists and Olympic riders, course designers and builders and veterinary surgeons, many of which are current employers or previous apprentices.
- The opportunity to help with organisation of Chatsworth International Horse Trials
- Visits to The King's Troop and Household Cavalry
- Enterprise Award
- 'Winning Ways' seminars

Alumni stories create a culture of high aspirations and ambition amongst apprentices.

All this work is built in close partnership with employers. 10%+ of current apprentices are employed by former apprentices, encouraging a learning culture, commitment to training, improvement in standards and taking of opportunities.

The training provider continues to innovate and develop their careers strategy over time, contributing to national debate and developments, and ensuring added value to its learners, employers and the industry as a whole.



Benchmark 5 - Encounters with employers and employees



Every year, alongside their programme of study (apprenticeship) learners should participate in at least two meaningful¹ encounters with an employer. One encounter should be delivered through their apprenticeship however every learner should have multiple opportunities to engage with and learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. Whilst apprentices have this opportunity with their current employer it is important that their experience of employers and employees is wider than their current role and team as this supports them as part of the preparation for their lifelong career and enhances their understanding of the wider employment landscape. Wherever possible, employers and providers should work collaboratively to provide these wider opportunities that also enrich their apprenticeship. Further encounters can be through a range of enrichment activities, including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes, online learning, and film clips, master classes and competitions as well as opportunities to network or collaborate with different staff, both internally and with stakeholders around the employer. This could also include learners' own part-time employment or additional job where it exists.

A specific focus in the definition of 'meaningful' for Benchmark 5 is that young people experience employers of varied sizes and specialisms throughout the careers programme. This should include the self-employed and reflect trends in the labour market, regionally and nationally. It is also important that each encounter builds on previous encounters.

¹ For a definition of meaningful please see [Gatsby Benchmarks Explained](#)

What does best practice look like for apprenticeship provision?

Provider role	Employer role	Learner role
Providing encounters with trade associations / industry bodies that expand learners' awareness of career pathways within chosen vocational field and develop career readiness.	Facilitate meeting with suppliers, support businesses and customer encounters.	Grasp opportunity to explore progression routes, job roles, future opportunities within chosen industry through current employer and provider.
Supporting tutors or coaches to be confident in providing advice based on prior experience. This should include CPD opportunities.	Organise different site visits or allow apprentices to attend trade fairs, conferences, and events.	
Providing opportunities to share experiences of workplace practice etc with other learners.	Offer time and service to present to apprentices, host live briefs or run competitions.	
Utilising support businesses such as banks, the Chamber of Commerce, networking organisations, the LSIP to provide opportunities for wider awareness of career pathways within the learners' chosen vocational industry.		
Arrange guest speakers, masterclasses, competitions, enterprise and skills building activities involving employers.		

Experiences provided by trainers should equip learners with insights into employability skills, technical skill needs and contemporary labour market issues such as skills mismatches, low productivity and changing demands of labour needs. Talking to learners about their experiences of workplaces will facilitate reflection and ensure progression in learning. Training provider staff can also facilitate group planning and debriefing so that individuals can learn from each other's thinking and evaluate and reflect on their own experience.

Providers should record and take account of learners' wider learning from contact with employers and the influence this has had on their development.

Case study: Learning curve

A voice from the sector – Learning Curve Group Learning Curve Group (LCG) is one of the country's largest Independent Training Providers, supporting over 200,000 learners, 4,500 employers and 240 FE providers each year. LCG supports learners across the country, providing over 50 Level 2 courses, apprenticeships, sector-based work programmes and a large academy provision. When looking at the Gatsby Benchmarks, BM5 was an area which Nicole Bewley, Director of Apprenticeships and Skills, identified as a strength for the Learning Curve Group depending on the subject. 'For example, at our Military Academies, learners have experiences with each of the different armed forces engaging in such programmes as 'look at life'. Students on our Beauty courses not only get hands on experience in our commercial salons attached to the academies, they also work with a wide range of businesses in the sector,' Nicole says. 'We also run community projects which form part of learners' workplace experiences.' Offering a wide range of different types of encounters with the workplace enriches the learner's experience and can open their eyes to future pathways they may have not considered previously.

Case study - Employer Engagement

We build strong working relationships with employers through account management. As part of those conversations and our engagement with apprentices' line managers in progress reviews, we discuss the importance of providing career progression information.

We talk with employers about what opportunities exist within their organisation, how to get a secondment, and how to get more senior roles. As part of our partnership with them, we invite employers to talk at our careers insight events so it feels like a collaboration.

Whilst we understand that some employers in the country might be apprehensive about apprentices leaving their business, our role is to provide independent advice and guidance to the apprentice to suit a learner's circumstances: that might helping them get more exposure to leadership or mentoring opportunities or providing them with information about niche roles or facilitating a discussion at work about a secondment.

We also involve employers with our Curriculum Board so we listen to and address skills gaps they identify, which benefits existing and future apprentices. And we work closely with employers' own careers teams where relevant.

Poppy Laila, Personal Development and Inclusion Manager

Benchmark 6 - Experiences of Workplaces

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

For experiences of workplaces to be meaningful they should be varied, include a task or piece of work set by or relevant to the employer, and recognise the importance of employer feedback. This is likely to be a regular occurrence in the apprentice's main role. However, experiences can include visits to other workplaces, work shadowing and/or work experience. The definition should encourage a flexible approach to experiences of workplaces, prioritising their impact on young people.

There are a variety of ways that this benchmark can be addressed in a positive way with the support of the apprentice's current employer.



Provider role	Employer role	Learner role
Collaborating with the employer to explore how an apprentice can experience different workplace settings. Planning this with the employer and the learner's skills knowledge and behaviour development and progression.	Large employers could provide opportunities for apprentices to move around departments / functions and learn about different roles and experience a variety of working environments and people / roles.	Grasp opportunity to explore progression routes, job roles, future opportunities within chosen industry through current employer and provider.
Supporting tutors or coaches to be confident in providing advice based on prior experience. This should include CPD opportunities.	Small employers can consider day release or swap with another employer to help develop learners' skills and expand horizons e.g. a marketing apprentice from a small digital company spends time in the marketing department in a larger organisation or with a different specialism.	
Providing opportunities to share experiences of workplace practice etc with other learners through peer-to-peer sessions or alumni working.	Support shadowing of different job roles / employees within the current business.	
Providing experience with suppliers, customers, different sites and departments of a business to broaden horizons of diverse ways of working, cultures and employees.	Facilitate meeting with suppliers, support businesses and customer encounters.	
	Organise different site visits or allow apprentices to attend trade fairs, conferences, and events.	

Benchmark 7 - Encounters with further and higher education



All learners should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them beyond their apprenticeship. This includes both academic and vocational routes, including further apprenticeships and opportunities for lifelong learning in colleges, higher education institutions and in the workplace.

When this information is planned and delivered in collaboration with the employer, this can support increased staff retention and commitment and support employer pipeline planning.

By the end of their apprenticeship, 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, apprenticeship and independent training providers, and professional bodies. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and learners.

What does best practice look like for apprenticeship provision?

Provider role	Employer role	Learner role
To provide access to information about progression opportunities and include this discussion in regular reviews to ensure positive progression.	Engage in next step conversations with provider and learner. Provide internal CPD opportunities for apprentices and plan steps post apprenticeship.	Seek opportunities to further learning throughout career.
Signposting to other education and training for unsuccessful apprenticeship applicants.	Encourage and facilitate lifelong learning for apprentices – including beyond their apprenticeship to support development and promotion opportunities.	
Provide support and guidance for early leavers to ensure positive transition to next opportunity and prevent NEET.	Providing career mentors.	

Supporting a learner with encounters in this way can help achieve positive progression including onto the next level of apprenticeship. It introduces learners to the concept of lifelong learning, personal growth and development and supports employers to recruit and retain employees committed to this mindset. This benchmark is also important to raising aspirations in young people and encouraging them to think beyond their future role and have ambition for the rest of their career.

Benchmark 8 - Personal Guidance



Every learner should have opportunities for guidance meetings with a career's 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 career's adviser, any special educational needs lead 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 career's 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.

A personal guidance session can support the wider careers programme. Personal guidance helps learners to build a positive concept of themselves, to develop high and realistic 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 learners 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 learners with the knowledge to manage not only their immediate career plans but also any future changes in direction.

Provider role	Employer role	Learner role
Review Careers Development Plan on a regular basis and embed discussions about careers in learning, contacts and reviews. Identify key transition points where guidance meeting is needed and plan and facilitate this accordingly. This should be designed to meet individual needs, signposting to external agencies as required.	Through regular communications with learner and provider, identify and refer apprentice to guidance meetings as appropriate.	Every apprentice should have a Careers Development Plan, a working document that can be added to throughout the learner's apprenticeship and beyond. This helps identify need for a personal guidance meeting.
If there is risk of withdrawal from the apprenticeship, a guidance interview should be provided to prevent NEET, and support with best next step.		

In the best examples colleges and independent training providers employ career development professionals who are CDI registered and have completed level 6 careers qualifications (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. These careers development professionals work closely with a range of staff across the training provider, including personal coaches and trainers, to ensure there is a comprehensive network of support available to learners. Alternatively, learners can be referred to the [National Careers Service](#).

Training provider teams can work with learners at application and enrolment to create a plan for personal guidance and support to develop their confidence and social capital.

Case study: Kaplan

It's been a 'hearts and minds' approach to bring people on board with CIAG at Kaplan: and they are. The way we've done this is by involving everyone: from the CEO, to our external board, to all senior leaders and all colleagues. Careers is high on the agenda and has prominence as it's on our quality improvement plan.

We involve all teams in Careers CPD training sessions and have representatives from across the business in our CIAG champions group. This is led by our CIAG apprenticeship lead, and involves individuals from Recruitment, Student Experience, Delivery Team, Quality & Business Development teams. Rather than making it seem like a daunting topic, we involve everyone by asking them about their own career stories and encourage a career conversation approach. We can all relate to this, so it takes perhaps some of the reticence away.

Examples of how we've created a strong culture of careers guidance and prominence is by:

- Sharing good news stories with talent coaches which encourages them and boosts their confidence.
- Providing continuous professional development opportunities, conducting regular check-ins with new talent coaches, and gathering feedback from them.
- Creating our own CIAG microsite, tailored to specific standards which offers valuable insights into further study options, various roles, salary information, volunteer opportunities, and labour market details. This equips talent coaches with a comprehensive understanding of sectors, enabling them to better support and guide apprentices in their career journeys.
- Our qualified tutors, possessing extensive knowledge and industry expertise, assist talent coaches in addressing specific career-related queries from apprentices.

The fact that we can demonstrate impact also boosts confidence. We track information on the destination of our apprentices and monitor their feedback on our careers provision. For example, we know that 99% of our achievers are in positive destinations, 94.7% say their time spent learning helps them to perform their current job better and 85.1% say their time spent learning helped them to get a pay rise or promotion.

Confidence measures following the careers enrichment talks show us that confidence in knowledge of career and study options increased from 5.1/10 before to 8.1/10 after the session.

And here's what our learners have said:

The 'Boost Your Future' sessions were enlightening. They have been instrumental and significantly contributed to my personal and professional development. The knowledge acquired will help me prepare for the future and approach my career with a strategic mindset. The practical skills acquired during these sessions have not only enriched my knowledge base but have also empowered me to navigate the ever-changing professional landscape with confidence and adapt accordingly."

"I felt that the webinar was really helpful. It was good to have the speakers discuss how their own careers progressed over time and I also felt reassured that I had plenty of options regarding my career progression.

Further support and guidance

Careers Community for Independent Training Providers



What is the Careers Community for Independent Training Providers?

If you would like to be connected to other providers and stakeholders supporting careers education in the sector, why not join our virtual careers community for Independent Training Providers and apprenticeship providers in England. The community, delivered in collaboration with AELP, is a place for Independent Training Providers to engage with and respond to the differing needs of the sector when it comes to supporting the progression of young people. It is a forum to share best practice and resources. And it is a place to drive innovation. We host webinars, a community of best practice to showcase great work and overcome challenges together and a forum for all your careers questions.

Why does it matter?

We think it is important to drive innovation and best practice sharing between Independent Training Providers at a national level. We are keen to connect providers, highlight their work and enable collaboration. Our aim is to promote locally developed best practice. We want to provide specific support around the Gatsby Benchmarks, feature innovative approaches, respond to sector demands, and shine a light on the latest research findings.

Who is it for? It is for you!

The community that we want to establish is for all key figures within Independent Training Providers in England. It is designed to support Careers Leaders and senior leaders within these organisations to improve their careers offering for young people. By being part of the Independent Training Providers Careers Community, you will receive a regular newsletter, gain access to hot topic webinars, and have the opportunity to share best practice on a national level. Sign-up today! You can register to be part of Connect for Independent Training Providers via [this link](#).

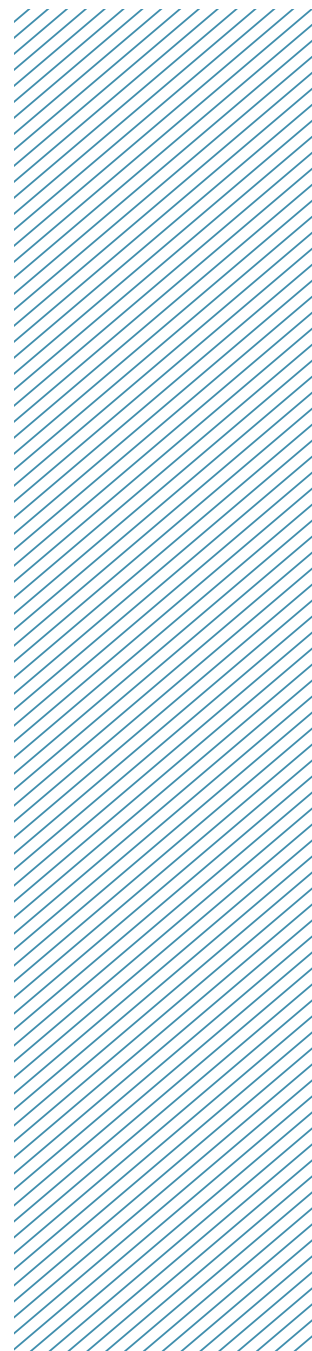


CEC resources

The following resources provided by CEC may be useful to Senior Leaders in independent training providers and those responsible for careers education. Some have been written primarily for school and college audiences but there are insights that will also be applicable in the training provider context.

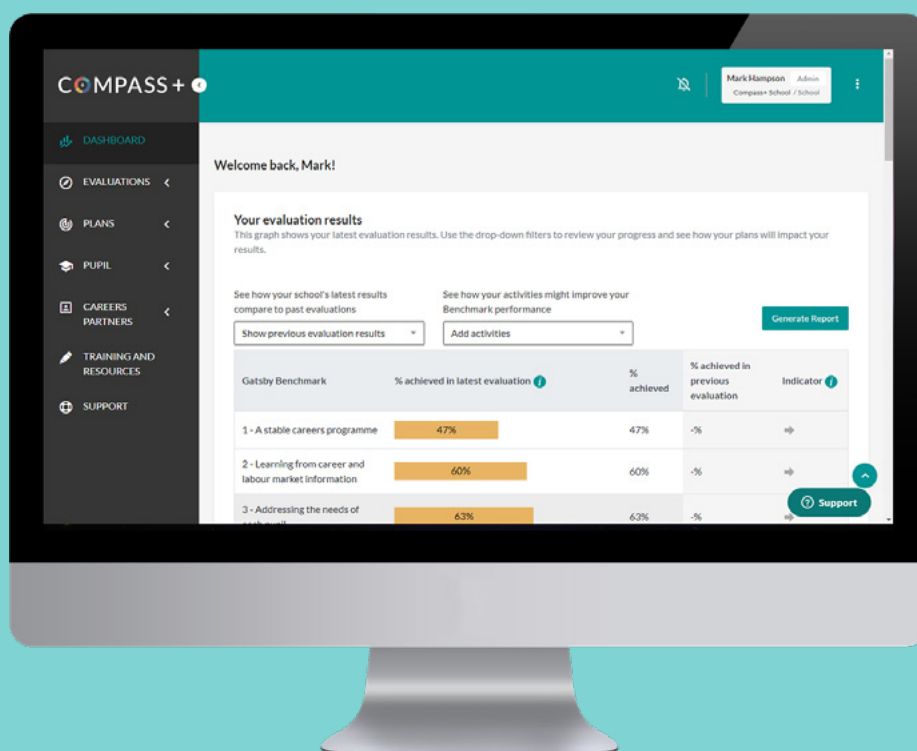
Our Resource Directory displays quality assured resources to help you meet the Gatsby Benchmarks and deliver high-quality careers provision for young people. Some resources on there you might find useful:

- [All the resources, all in one place for training providers](#)
- [Introduction to Careers Leadership for Training Providers](#)– This module has been designed as an induction for Careers Leaders but is suitable as an introduction to any staff working with learners and supporting with careers education.
- [Gatsby Benchmark 1: Understanding how to create a strategic careers plan](#) – A planning document to support creation of a strategic careers plan.
- [Annual review checklist](#) You can use this checklist as an annual review of provision to support your planning for the following year.
- [Website guidance document](#) – Where do you start when designing the careers element of your website? Follow this step-by-step guide to make sure you cover all the necessary elements.
- [Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision](#) This is a resource to help careers teams to evaluate the impact of career programmes.
- [Parental Engagement in Careers Education](#) provides a suite of resources, activities and practical guidance to help you engage parents in supporting their children to decide upon their next best step.
- [Technical Education Pathways Resource](#) (created in partnership with AELP) is designed for careers colleagues to use to explain these pathways to young people, as well as promoting the wider work of the training provider sector.
- [Employer Standards: Shaping your workforce of tomorrow](#) Our new framework and tool will help businesses understand what good looks like in careers education, help them inspire young people and prepare them for the world of work. Learn more about the framework below, or to access the self-assessment tool. [Visit the Portal](#)





Compass for Independent Training Providers



Compass is a free tool for education providers in England, that quickly and easily helps you to evaluate your careers activity against the eight Gatsby Benchmarks of best practice.

The tool was built in partnership with the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, to help you easily discover your strengths and find areas for improvement. Once completed, the tool will provide you with a confidential report and resources to help you achieve each benchmark.

[You can register for a Compass account here](#) to access the evaluation tool, supporting webinar and guidance documents to help you to complete it.

Included in Compass is our NEW Careers Impact Maturity model. The maturity model supports a deeper evaluation of careers provision, breaking down elements of careers leadership and helping focus on continuous quality improvement. Written in self-evaluation and quality improvement language, completing a careers internal leadership review using the model is a fantastic way to establish your current position and set out plans for further development. Explore this further on your Compass account!

