



# Understanding how to create a strategic careers plan

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# Using this Resource

This resource is part of a comprehensive set of guidance designed to help you:

- Establish a sustainable and strategic approach to careers leadership.
- Develop a progressive and responsive careers provision that meets the needs of all learners.
- Evaluate your careers provision and plan for impact.

## Careers Impact: Full set of Guidance

Our guidance includes the following key documents:

- [Careers Leader Roadmap](#)
- Understanding How to Create a Strategic Careers Plan
- [Benchmark 1: Suggested universal career-related learning outcomes](#)
- [OnTrack+ Practice Guide](#)
- [Understanding How to Develop Progressive and Responsive Careers Provision \(Careers Learning Journeys\)](#)
- [Understanding How to Effectively Evaluate Your Careers Provision](#)
- [Understanding How to Embed Careers in the Curriculum](#)
- [Understanding How to Embed Progressive Employer Encounters](#)
- [Understanding How to Embed Progressive Work Experiences](#)
- [Understanding How to Embed Progressive Encounters with Further and Higher Education](#)

## Alignment with The Careers Impact System

All resources in this suite are aligned with Themes 1 and 2 from the Careers Impact Maturity Model, which underpins a [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#).

- Careers Impact Maturity Model ([schools and special schools](#))
- Careers Impact Maturity Model ([colleges](#))
- Careers Impact Maturity Model ([Independent Training Providers](#))

The Maturity Model provides a shared language for positioning careers as a driver for improvement in schools, special schools, colleges, and ITPs. It defines all elements of sustainable and strategic careers leadership.

A Careers Impact internal leadership review supports the quality assurance of your careers provision and encourages continuous improvement aligned to your whole institution's priorities.

The resources in this set of guidance provide practical support in developing an impact led approach to careers in your institution.

# Alignment to the Gatsby Benchmarks

## Importance of Benchmark 1

Effective leadership of careers and embedding a careers provision that meets learners' needs requires a whole-school, special school or college approach. The Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years report<sup>1</sup> highlights the importance of aligning careers with the school or college's overall vision and strategic planning.

Benchmark 1: A stable careers programme requires each school or college to have an embedded programme of careers education and guidance that is known and understood by learners (pupils), parents and carers, staff, those in governance roles (governors), employers and other agencies.

Leadership of careers and embedding a careers provision that meets the needs of learners and is aligned to institutional priorities requires a whole school or college approach. In the [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years report](#), Gatsby emphasise the link between careers provision and the whole school or college vision and approach to strategic planning and development.

This resource helps Careers Leaders create **a strategic careers plan** that ensures the careers provision:

- Has explicit backing of governors, the leadership (headteacher/principal), and the senior management teams.
- Is linked to the whole school, special school or college development plan.

**“Benchmark 1 underpins the Gatsby Benchmark framework and is often referred to as the ‘strategic benchmark’. It sets out what is needed for a stable, structured and embedded careers programme that is known and understood by young people, parents and carers, education staff and employers<sup>2</sup>”.**

## What is a strategic careers plan?

A strategic plan outlines the **vision** for the future.

It helps to prioritise goals, make resourcing decisions, and rally all stakeholders around a shared vision for an institution.

A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve long-term or overall aims.

To be a good strategy, it must:

- precisely diagnose the problem being solved.
- set strategic priorities/objectives that will address that problem.
- propose a set of coherent actions which will deliver those objectives.

<sup>1</sup> [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#), pg 39

## A strategic careers plan includes both strategic and operational elements

Strategic Planning	Action Planning
Vision/intent	Operational activity
Strategic priorities	Assigned tasks
Strategic objectives	Shorter term
Milestones	
Key performance metrics	

Key terminology	
Vision/Intent	The intended long-term intent of the careers programme e.g. impact on learners - what the school, special school or college will accomplish as a result of the actions within the strategic careers plan.
Strategic Priorities	The goals within the strategic careers plan which help to focus and guide where time and resources should be invested, and that will be achieved within a certain time frame – usually 1-3 years.
Strategic Objectives	Statements outlining focus areas within each strategic priority which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.
Action Steps	Specific tasks which are assigned to individuals to complete within a timeframe, and which contribute to achieving the strategic objectives.
Milestones	Intermediate measures to track progress towards achieving objectives and priorities as the strategic careers plan is implemented.
Key performance metrics	Measurable elements of the careers provision which can be attributed to activities, learners, colleagues e.g. number of encounters, analysis of intended/actual destinations data, CPD opportunities etc.

It is important that everyone involved shares the same understanding of what constitutes a strategic priority/objective as opposed to an action step.

A strategic priority outlines a medium to longer-term goal, and should seek to provide solutions for a problem which is being solved, whilst also considering the overall strategic aims of the organisation.

A strategic objective provides more detail and clearly identifies what success will look like once it is achieved.

An action step details the shorter-term actions required, to build towards the achievement of the longer-term strategic priority.

Let's also take a moment to review the different terminology used when considering strategic planning for careers. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably so it's important to develop a shared understanding of what is meant when different documents are referred to.

<p><b>Careers Policy</b></p>	<p>A careers policy is a set of guidelines and principles, established by an educational institution to provide a framework for the intent, implementation and evaluating impact of a careers programme. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation, guidance and evidence informing practice</li> <li>• Approach and rationale for key strategic decisions e.g. CPD, stakeholder engagement, partnership working.</li> <li>• Commitment to resourcing and acknowledgement of budget to support the implementation of plans.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Careers Plan</b></p>	<p>The Strategic Careers Plan, first conceptualised by Teach First in 2017, can be used as a 'manual' to achieve careers and whole school, special school, and college strategic objectives. The format follows the Teach First Strategic Careers Plan concept and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Current state</li> <li>• Key strategic objectives (student-centred and measurable)</li> <li>• Action plan to achieve objectives</li> </ul>
<p><b>Action Plan</b></p>	<p>An action plan for careers provides detail outlining specific steps, tasks and timelines to achieve a set goal or objective. It serves as a guide for individuals and teams to implement plans, providing clarity on what needs to be done, by whom and when.</p> <p>A careers action plan can form the operational element of a comprehensive strategic careers plan.</p>
<p><b>Careers Programme</b></p>	<p>A planned programme of universal and targeted careers activities, which includes careers learning, encounters and experiences.</p>
<p><b>Careers Learning Journeys</b></p>	<p>Careers Learning Journeys acknowledge the learning gained on a personal level from participating in careers learning, encounters and experiences, within and beyond the subject specific curriculum.</p> <p>Each person's careers learning journey has many influences and contributors. Leaders in schools, special schools and colleges have the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide meaningful encounters and experiences with opportunities for reflection and analysis.</li> <li>• equip learners with the skills to take control of their own careers learning journey, make aspirational and informed decisions, make effective and sustained transitions and develop career readiness.</li> <li>• mitigate against any false or misleading information learners may have encountered from different sources.</li> </ul> <p>Careers Leaders can further enhance the Careers Learning Journeys through staff development and embedding parent &amp; carer engagement.</p>

# How to set a vision and clear intent for careers

Setting a vision and clear intent for your careers provision is one of the conditions for success of sustainable and strategic leadership of careers:

- Clear **vision** from leaders with definition of intended impact and identification of relevant success criteria shared with SLT and governance.

The Careers Impact Maturity Model can help you reflect on current practice on **'leaders' vision and intent for careers'**:

<p><b>Colleges</b> 1.2 <b>Leaders' vision and intent for careers</b></p>	<p>There is a college vision that refers to preparing learners for their future.</p>	<p>The college vision includes specific reference to preparing learners for their future. There may be a related vision specifically for careers. The vision, intent and priorities for the development of the careers provision are shared with senior leaders, governors and staff.</p>	<p>The vision(s) informs the priorities for the development of the careers provision as well as relevant sections of the whole college development plan. Senior leaders, governors and staff understand the vision, intent and priorities for the development of the careers provision.</p>	<p>The vision(s) shapes the priorities for the development of the careers provision and informs all relevant areas of the college development plan.  It supports delivery of the college's Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) commitment statement.  Senior leaders, governors and staff understand and are accountable for achieving the vision, intent, and priorities of the careers provision, in alignment with wider college priorities.</p>
<p><b>Schools and Special Schools</b> 1.2 <b>Leaders' vision and intent for careers</b></p>	<p>There is a school or special school vision that refers to preparing learners for their future.</p>	<p>The school or special school vision includes specific reference to preparing learners for their future. There may be a related vision specifically for careers.  The vision, intent and priorities for the development of the careers provision are shared with the senior leadership team, governors and staff.</p>	<p>The vision(s) informs the priorities for the development of the careers provision as well as relevant sections of the whole school or special school development plan.  Senior leaders, governors and staff understand the vision, intent and priorities for the development of the careers provision.</p>	<p>The vision(s) shapes the priorities for the development of the careers provision and informs all relevant areas of the school or special school development plan.  Senior leaders, governors and staff understand and are accountable for achieving the vision, intent, and priorities of the careers provision, in alignment with wider school or special school priorities.</p>

**Task:** Which statement from the tables above represents 'best-fit' of current practice in your school, special school or college?

A school/college vision statement is the intent for the entire school/college. It is separate from:

- » School, special school or college values (shared principles)
- » School, special school or college strategy (priorities and associated actions)

Setting a vision includes the entire community, including learners, staff, leadership, governors and parents and carers, etc.

### Example school/college vision statements:

- To create an inclusive environment that empowers learners to be compassionate, curious, and ready to make an impact on the world.
- To foster a love of learning and prepare our students to be leaders of tomorrow.

What is your current school, special school or college vision statement?	
How does it refer to your 'learners as leavers'?	

### Setting a clear vision for careers

Establishing a vision for careers should follow the same process as setting a vision for the entire school, special school or college:

- Involve key stakeholders

Consider the following ways to engage stakeholders in the process:

- » Create a working group that involves learners, SLT, staff, governors/EA and parents and carers.
- » Complete a **SOAR analysis** (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) – [Appendix 1](#).
- » Use surveys, focus groups or mind maps with stakeholders to identify key words/phrases.
- » Share drafts with stakeholder groups for feedback and agreement of final version.

- Include key priorities

The vision should be clear on what you want to achieve within the next 3-5 years. It may also align to current school, special school or college values.

- Be concise and clear with language

Use language that can be understood and recalled by all stakeholder groups, including learners and parents and carers.

- Make it bespoke to your school, special school or college

Avoid cliches and make sure it represents the overall school, special school or college priorities.

- Share it and live it!

The vision could be presented in several ways, e.g. a statement, an acronym, bullet points, etc. Make sure it is referred to and embedded within the strategic careers plan, action planning and key updates to stakeholders.

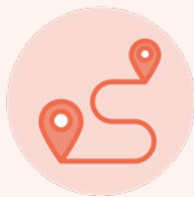
### Example visions for careers:

#### Example 1 (bullet points):

Careers provision at (name of school) will support our learners to:



Make informed and aspirational decisions



To make effective and sustained transitions



To develop career readiness

#### Example 2 (sentence):

We will embed a progressive and responsive careers provision to support all learners as leavers to maximise their potential.

#### Example 3 (acronym)

At (name of school, special school or college) we all strive to **ASPIRE**:

**A**spirational and informed decision making.

**S**upport to make effective and sustained transitions.

**P**rogressive provision underpinned by career related learning outcomes.

**I**nformed by community & regional context and skills need.

**R**esponsive to learner need.

**E**quity of access to information and understanding of all opportunities and career pathways.



**Confidence Check: could you articulate this if asked?**

**“What are the barriers some of your learners’ face, for example, young people with SEND, or those in receipt of Pupil Premium and how do you ensure they are able to access the careers curriculum and provision?”**

**How could you evidence any additional support or the personalisation of your offer?**

# How to set strategic priorities for careers

The first step to setting strategic priorities for careers is to diagnose the problem being solved. Following this process, leaders can set strategic objectives that will address the problem(s).

**It is important that everyone involved shares the same understanding of what constitutes a strategic priority as opposed to an action step.**

**A strategic priority outlines a medium to longer-term goal, and it clearly identifies what success will look like once it is achieved.**

**An action step details the shorter-term actions required, to build towards the achievement of the longer-term strategic goal.**

To diagnose the problem to be solved you can consider what destinations data, student perception of career readiness, stakeholder voice, etc. tells you.

## Putting careers at the heart of education and leadership

**To support a sustainable, strategic careers leadership approach, consider undertaking a [Careers Impact internal leadership](#) review in your school, special school or college.**

**An internal leadership review is based on the [Careers Impact Maturity Model](#), which provides a shared language of how careers can be positioned as a driver for school, special school and college improvement.**

**Undertaking an internal leadership review supports the quality assurance of your careers provision and encourages continuous improvement aligned to your whole institution's priorities.**

 [Click here](#)

**Get started with your [Careers Impact internal leadership](#) review today via [Compass/Compass+](#) or find out more [here](#)**

Strategic priorities are what you need to achieve to solve the problem(s) and realise your vision.




They should be aligned to:

- » The school, special school or college vision.
- » The vision for careers.
- » The whole school, special school or college development plan.

Aim to agree between 3-5 strategic priorities.

Consider working with key colleagues, including SLT and governors, to develop a 'learners as leavers profile' to support you in setting strategic objectives.

**Example 'learners as leavers' profile:**

End of Year 11 or Year 13 – Alex's Profile*		
 <p><b>Knowledge</b></p>	 <p><b>Skills</b></p>	 <p><b>Behaviours</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alex can identify a broad range of career opportunities and pathways, including technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial options.</li> <li>• Alex is aware of their personal strengths, skills, and preferences, and how they influence their career choices.</li> <li>• Alex understands how to prepare effectively for various recruitment and selection processes.</li> <li>• Alex can identify reliable sources of labour market information and understands local and national labour market changes.</li> <li>• Alex understands different recruitment processes and has the skills to navigate them successfully.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alex can make informed, aspirational career decisions by considering a range of opportunities, personal aspirations, and changing labour market trends.</li> <li>• Alex can proactively explore a wide range of pathways with equity.</li> <li>• Alex can reflect on past learning and experiences, and communicates them effectively to potential employers.</li> <li>• Alex works collaboratively with peers and trusted adults to identify and secure opportunities.</li> <li>• Alex confidently communicates skills and experiences to potential employers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alex proactively explores diverse career opportunities.</li> <li>• Alex reflects on strengths, experiences, and labour market information to make confident, stereotype-free decisions.</li> <li>• Alex adapts and prepares effectively for a variety of recruitment and selection processes.</li> <li>• Alex develops positive workplace behaviours.</li> <li>• Alex is supportive, thoughtful and displays empathy when considering next steps.</li> </ul>

**Task:** Work with key colleagues and use the [Learners as Leavers profile](#) (Appendix 2) to articulate the ambition for your learners as leavers

**Example Strategic Priority Statements:**

- To identify and tackle key misconceptions and stereotypes to support all learners to make informed and aspirational decisions at key transition points.
- To embed a sustainable and strategic approach to leadership of careers.
- To develop an engaging and progressive approach to Work Experience that enhances all learners' career readiness.
- To develop and implement an approach to impact evaluation that systematically measures and analyses the effectiveness of the careers provision, ensuring evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.

\*We have selected a generic learner name for this activity to bring it to life - this represents what you want EACH and EVERY learner to be able to know and do as leavers of your school, special school or college."

### What are the key strategic priorities for careers at your school, special school or college?

Strategic priority for careers 1	
Strategic priority for careers 2	
Strategic priority for careers 3	

### Setting strategic objectives that will address that problem

Once you have diagnosed the problem(s) you are trying to solve, the next step is to set strategic objectives that will provide focus and inform decision-making and resource allocation.

Strategic objectives are statements outlining focus areas within each strategic priority which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.

#### Example Strategic Objectives:

- Increase the number of encounters with alumni network contacts by organising 18 opportunities to hear from alumni who have taken different routes, by the end of the academic year.
- [Continue to invest in Careers Leader and wider staff development through engagement with the Careers & Enterprise Academy.](#)
- Improve staff awareness of the Careers Learning Journeys, including a whole school, special school or college approach to work experience, by delivering CPD to all staff by December.
- Improve understanding of learner and staff perception by surveying 40% of learners and staff by March.
- Develop a progressive approach to work experience by considering a meaningful experience in Year 9 to support learners to investigate & explore a range of workplaces.



**Confidence Check: could you articulate this if asked?**

**“What is your approach to supporting all learners to access meaningful work experience opportunities?”**

**How could you evidence the support you give to ensure work experience is equitable?**

# How to set milestones to review progress

A strategic plan outlines the vision for the future.

It helps to prioritise goals, make resourcing decisions, and rally all stakeholders around a shared vision for an institution.

Once you have diagnosed the problem to be solved and set strategic priorities/objectives that will address that problem, then actions, milestones and key metrics should be identified to deliver and measure progress towards those objectives.

## Example Strategic Careers Plan

This will highlight HOW to achieve your strategic priorities. It will include timeframes, responsibilities, and evaluation plans. You should determine the optimal length of time the strategic careers plan should be planned for (e.g. 1,3 or 5 years).

<p><b>Institution Vision Statement:</b></p> <p><b>Careers Vision Statement:</b></p> <p>e.g. Careers provision at (name of school, special school or college) will support our learners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Make informed and aspirational decisions.</li> <li>» To make effective and sustained transitions.</li> <li>» To develop career readiness.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Key Strategic Priorities</b></p>				
<p>Priority 1 “What is the problem you are trying to solve?”</p>		<p>To identify and tackle key misconceptions and stereotypes to support all learners to make informed and aspirational decisions at key transition points.</p>		
Objective “SMART statement outlining focus area”	Outcomes “What would success look like?”	Actions, including CPD/resourcing “What would solve the problem?”	Responsible “Who is responsible for each action?”	Time/Milestones “When do you aim to have this completed by?”
<p><b>Improve understanding of learner and stakeholder perception by surveying 40% of learners, parents &amp; carers and staff (by date).</b></p>	<p>SLT and Governor awareness of FSQ data analysis.</p> <p>SLT and Governor awareness of staff and parent &amp; carer survey responses.</p> <p>Data used to inform continuous improvement of provision.</p>	<p>Increase number of FSQ completions to 100 in each year group.</p> <p>Embed FSQ data reporting and action-planning into SLT and governance structures.</p> <p>Include analysis of data from staff and parents &amp; carers in reporting.</p> <p>Achieve a minimum 20% completion rate for our parent &amp; carer questionnaire and embed resulting insights into reporting and improvement actions.</p>	<p>Strategic lead for careers/ Careers Leader.</p>	<p>FSQ data collected (by date).</p> <p>Survey data collected (by date).</p> <p>Parent and carer questionnaire data collected (by date).</p> <p>Termly review and action planning from FSQ data on SLT and governance meetings.</p>

<p><b>Improve learner awareness of and confidence in, the value and benefits of all learning routes, by delivering CPD to all staff (by date).</b></p>	<p>Learner voice and improved learner career readiness (by date) as reflected in FSQ responses. Intended (by date) and Actual (by date) destination data. BM7 data improvement (by date).</p>	<p>Identify responsive learning outcomes and related careers education/encounters/experiences for each key stage to support all learners to understand value and benefits of all learning options at key transitions with equity.</p>	<p>Strategic lead for careers/ Careers Leader.</p>	<p>Careers Learning Journeys and learning outcomes signed off (by date).</p>
<p><b>Improve staff awareness of and confidence in, the value and benefits of all learning routes, by delivering CPD to all staff (by date).</b></p>	<p>Staff voice (by date) showing confidence in talking about value and benefits of all routes with equity.</p>	<p>Set a clear programme of staff CPD with learning outcomes to support all staff to understand with equity the value and benefits of all learning routes.</p>	<p>Staff CPD lead.</p>	<p>Programme and learning outcomes signed off (by date). Training delivered (by date). Staff voice (by date).</p>
	<p>Post-encounter feedback from 9 colleagues shows increased awareness of and confidence in all learning routes.</p>	<p>Engage identified staff in teacher encounter programme linked to technical and vocational pathways.</p>	<p>Careers Leader/Staff CPD Lead.</p>	<p>3 x staff engaged per term.</p>
<p><b>Improve parent &amp; carer awareness of and confidence in, the value and benefits of all learning routes, by offering resources, support and a programme of engagement to all parents &amp; carers (by date).</b></p>	<p>Parent and carer voice (by date) showing perceptions of value and benefits of all routes. COMING SOON: A new parent and carer questionnaire will be available within Compass + from July, and on Compass from September.</p>	<p>Set a clear programme of engagement with learning outcomes in each key stage to support parents &amp; carers to understand with equity the value and benefits of all learning routes.</p>	<p>Careers Leader.</p>	<p>Programme and learning outcomes signed off (by date).</p>
<p><b>Increase the number of encounters with alumni network contacts by organising 18 opportunities to hear from alumni who have taken different routes, by the end of the academic year.</b></p>	<p>Learner voice and FSQ data on career readiness. Staff feedback on impact of sharing success stories.</p>	<p>Identify success stories from all learning routes from recent alumni and share stories via social media, newsletters and school displays.</p>	<p>Careers Leader.</p>	<p>Share 3 x success stories each half term.</p>

# TEMPLATE

(School, Special School or College Name) Strategic Careers Plan

<b>Careers Vision Statement:</b> XXX	
<b>Key Strategic Priorities</b>	
<b>1</b>	
<b>2</b>	
<b>3</b>	

School, Special School or College Name:	
Date Strategic Careers Plan Created:	
Date approved by SLT:	
Date approved by Governors:	
Proposed Review Date:	
Careers Leader Name:	
Strategic Careers Plan - Academic Year:	

## Priority 1:

“What is the problem you are trying to solve?”

<b>Strategic Objectives</b> “SMART statement outlining focus area”	<b>Outcomes</b> “What would success look like?”	<b>Actions, including CPD/resourcing</b> “What would solve the problem?”	<b>Responsible</b> “Who is responsible for each action?”	<b>Time/Milestones</b> “When do you aim to have this completed by?”



## Priority 3:

“What is the problem you are trying to solve?”

<b>Strategic Objectives</b> “SMART statement outlining focus area”	<b>Outcomes</b> “What would success look like?”	<b>Actions, including CPD/resourcing</b> “What would solve the problem?”	<b>Responsible</b> “Who is responsible for each action?”	<b>Time/Milestones</b> “When do you aim to have this completed by?”

# Appendix 1

## Strength of Careers Provision SOAR

Consider:




- Time/Resource of Careers Leader, Role of EA/Link Governor, Parental Engagement, SLT Buy-in, Staff CPD, Whole Institution Responsibility for Careers.
- Benchmark progress: LMI, Tracking at Learner Level, Careers within Subject Areas, Employer Engagement, Experiences of the World of Work, Encounters with FE/HE, Personal guidance.
- Reviewing Evidence: Stakeholder Voice, Career Readiness, Education Engagement and Destinations Data (Intended and Actual).

<p><b>Strengths</b></p>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>
<p><b>Aspirations</b></p>	<p><b>Results</b></p>
<p><b>Key priority/action areas from SOAR:</b></p>	

# Appendix 2

## Learners as Leavers profile

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End of Year 11 or Year 13 Name:		
 <b>Knowledge</b>	 <b>Skills</b>	 <b>Behaviours</b>

THE CAREERS &  
ENTERPRISE  
COMPANY

