



Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision

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Alignment to the Gatsby Benchmarks

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 report¹ highlights the importance of aligning careers with the whole school or college's overall vision and strategic planning.

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.

Throughout the benchmarks the updates emphasise the importance of tailoring provision to the needs of all learners, particularly the most vulnerable. The use of information and data to inform responsive provision and impact evaluation is explored in the updates. Leadership of careers and evaluating the careers provision should focus on "...impact informed by evidence". Responding to impact evaluation of careers provision requires a whole school, special school or college approach.

"We have refined the criteria to emphasise that the focus of evaluation should be less on data collection and more on using data effectively to increase the impact of the programme"²

This resource helps Careers Leaders **effectively evaluate their careers provision** using feedback from learners, parents and carers, subject staff and other staff who support learners (including Careers Advisers) to increase its impact³. This resource also supports Careers Leaders to:

- Collect, maintain and use accurate data for each learner on their aspiration, intended and immediate education, and training or employment destinations to inform personalised support (Benchmark 3).
- Use longer-term data (including destinations data) as part of their evaluation process (Benchmark 3).

¹ [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

² [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years](#)

³ [Gatsby Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years Benchmark 1](#)

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](#)
- [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.

What is impact evaluation and why do it

The vast majority of schools, special schools and colleges are now evaluating their careers provision using Compass+.

This process helps to identify progress and gaps in careers provision, which is valuable for engaging colleagues and making improvements to ensure every young person is able to identify their best next step.

Schools, special schools and colleges are also using the Careers Impact internal leadership review to think about sustainable and strategic leadership of careers.

Undertaking a Careers Impact internal leadership review

An internal leadership review based on the Careers Impact Maturity Model helps position careers as a key driver for school, special school, and college improvement.

It supports quality assurance, promotes continuous improvement, and aligns with institutional priorities.

The review engages leadership teams, encourages distributed leadership, and enhances understanding of best practices in careers leadership.

It helps achieve meaningful progress on the updated Gatsby Benchmarks, recognises strengths in careers provision, and ensures sustainability through ongoing evaluation and impact evaluation.

Watch a short animation about the [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#)

Get started today in [Compass+](#)

Impact evaluation is a critical part of the Careers Impact internal leadership review and supports schools, special schools and college to identify, articulate and celebrate what difference the careers provision makes to young people.

Understanding the link between careers learning, encounters & experiences and actual outcomes for young people will help to ensure that careers provision is high quality, effective and responsive.

Often what makes a difference is not just what the learning, encounter or experience is, but how it is delivered.

Why do it?

- Progress measurement and celebrating success against intent, aims and outcomes.
- Continuous improvement to ensure that universal careers provision is responsive to insight and trends.
- Personalisation and proactive interventions to respond to supporting learners at risk of disengagement or NEET.

How to approach impact evaluation



In this resource we support Careers Leaders to set a vision and strategic priorities for careers to develop a robust theory of change.

A theory of change brief definition

A theory of change is a process of reflecting on our aims and plans. The output from a theory of change process describes how we believe our activities will lead to the outcomes and impacts we want to achieve. The output should give you a clear plan that will help you evaluate and communicate your work, both internally and externally.

A theory of change helps you to plan, share and have confidence in how your careers provision will be effective.

It will allow you to show how change happens in the short, medium and long term to achieve the planned intent at learner and at school, special school or college level.

You can share this with stakeholders as a diagram or as a narrative.

You can choose where to start this process and which resources to consider first.

You may wish to develop a theory of change to kick start a strategic careers plan or to share progress and evaluate existing careers provision.

It is helpful to involve a variety of stakeholders when you develop a **theory of change** – you could include learners, staff, SLT, Governors and parents/carers.

The development process, and the thinking involved, is often as important as the final product.

This resource will take you through the following steps to develop a theory of change and planned intent and will support you to evaluate the impact of your careers provision.

- **Plan**
- **Collect**
- **Review and Act**



Confidence Check: could you articulate this if asked?

“What is the impact of your student careers learner journey?”

Could you evidence how well all learners make progress towards the learning outcomes?

Plan

Set a vision and clear intent for careers, set strategic priorities for careers with clear milestones, identify and plan progressive and responsive learning outcomes and plan an evaluation approach.

The starting point for maximising impact is to 'plan with intent'. This means deciding on the outcomes you want young people to achieve through a progressive and responsive careers provision.

Consider your learners: What do you want them to know, understand and be able to do by key transition points and as leavers of your institution?

You can use progressive learning outcomes to help you identify and plan what is appropriate for each age and stage and how to help students to progress over time.

To support with developing a theory of change in the longer term, setting a vision and clear intent for careers will outline the impact and the change you want to see for your learners.

Setting a VISION allows you to:

- be explicit about what you want to achieve.
- scaffold your strategic priorities for careers.

Establish the learning aims and outcomes that underpin your careers provision to deliver on what you want to achieve.

- align your work to the strategic priorities of your school, special school or college.
- plan to meet the needs of learners, parents and carers.
- establish a baseline for evaluation.

For example, in this school's vision, education and Careers Leaders can align their work to their aim:

- » To create an **inclusive** environment that empowers students to be **compassionate, curious, and ready to make an impact** on the world.

Refer to [How to create a strategic careers plan for resource and support in setting a vision statement and strategic priorities for your careers provision.](#)

To support with developing a theory of change in the shorter term, setting learning outcomes can outline the impact and the change you want to see for your learners.

For example:

Strategic priority: To identify and tackle key misconceptions and stereotypes to support all learners to make informed and aspirational decisions at key transition points.

Related Learning Outcome: Learners have a broad knowledge of a range of pathways, including technical and vocational, which enables informed decision making.

Think: How do you support all learners, parents and carers to consider all options with equity at key transition points?

Refer to [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Careers Learning Journeys\)](#) for resource and support in setting progressive learning outcomes that support progress towards your vision and ambition for learners.

Benchmark 1: Suggested universal career-related learning outcomes could also be used to inspire and underpin your universal careers provision.

Collect

There is a range of data that you could potentially collect to inform impact evaluation of your provision.

The following table explore key types of impact evidence, when to collect and use it and what it can tell us about provision:

Type of impact evidence	When to collect and use it	What it tells us	Tools and signposting
<p>Sustained and longer-term destination data</p>	<p>Access available published national, shared regional or collected institution level data annually to inform a responsive universal careers provision.</p>	<p>Trends year on year in relation to the careers provision and wider education including the suitability of pathways for groups of learners.</p> <p>Impact of intent, learning aims and outcomes of careers provision (including impact of intent to challenge misconceptions and stereotypical thinking about pathways and careers) and how curriculum and strategic planning can be enhanced.</p>	<p>Longer term destinations Gov.uk</p> <p>Get Information about Schools - GOV.UK</p>
<p>Learner perception of their career readiness</p>	<p>At targeted points and infrequently as these indicators improve slowly as a result of many experiences.</p> <p>At transition points to inform choices and targeted support.</p> <p>Annually to inform a responsive universal careers provision.</p>	<p>Progress towards learning outcomes.</p> <p>Gaps in knowledge and skills that can be addressed through further support or through responsive adaptations of the universal careers provision.</p> <p>Impact of intent, learning aims and outcomes of careers provision (including impact of intent to challenge misconceptions and stereotypical thinking about pathways and careers) and how curriculum and strategic planning can be enhanced.</p> <p>Preparedness for next steps.</p>	<p>Future Skills Questionnaire</p>

<p>Aspirations, intended and immediate education, training or employment destinations</p>	<p>At transition points to inform choices and targeted support.</p> <p>Collection each academic year or at each key stage ensures tailored support at cohort and individual level and contributes to wider strategies, often involving the local authority, preventing students becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).</p>	<p>Impact of intent to challenge misconceptions and stereotypical thinking about pathways.</p> <p>Alongside academic and pastoral information this helps institutions understand who could aim higher and who is at risk of not getting to their intended destination so that timely tailored interventions and appropriate support can be put in place.</p> <p>Intended and immediate actual pathways for students according to cohort, vulnerable groups, attainment, etc.</p>	<p>Compass+ recording intended and actual destinations</p>
<p>Stakeholder voice</p>	<p>Reflections from stakeholders (including learners, parents and carers, teachers, employers, governors etc.) can be gathered proportionately annually via focus groups/surveys etc. to inform curriculum and/or strategic careers planning to inform a responsive universal careers provision.</p>	<p>Impact of intent, learning aims and outcomes of careers provision (including impact of intent to challenge misconceptions and stereotypical thinking about pathways and careers) and how curriculum and strategic planning can be enhanced.</p>	<p>Via focus groups/surveys with specific questions aligned to vision, intent and aims of provision COMING SOON: A new parent and carer questionnaire will be available within Compass+ from July and Compass from September , which will provide insights into parents' careers knowledge, confidence and awareness.</p>
<p>Education engagement</p>	<p>As needed to check how careers provision informs learner engagement.</p> <p>More frequently for students at risk of disengagement or poor academic outcomes.</p>	<p>Progress in engaging learners at risk of poor outcomes.</p> <p>Impact of career provision and targeted activities on learner engagement.</p>	<p>Attendance data. Behaviour data. End of unit/year tests . Termly/annual effort grades Teacher reports. Public exam results. Bespoke survey using established questions.</p>
<p>Feedback on specific elements of provision</p>	<p>Soon after the end of career activities from learners, parents and carers, teachers, employers, activity providers.</p> <p>When activity is new, substantial or significant in cost/resource (as overuse can undermine engagement).</p> <p>Incorporate relevant questions into annual school, special school or college learner and parent surveys.</p>	<p>Initial reactions of participants about satisfaction, usefulness, enjoyment, perceived impact on next steps.</p> <p>Different perspectives.</p>	<p>How to write survey questions.</p> <p>Example questionnaires.</p>
<p>Quality Assurance</p>	<p>Consider how delivery of careers provision is factored into regular internal quality assurance processes (e.g. learning walks, books scrutinies etc.).</p> <p>Annual internal review of leadership of careers.</p> <p>Consider external quality assurance of careers programme (every 3 years).</p>	<p>Engage senior leaders in quality assurance to inform action planning and continuous improvement of the careers provision.</p>	<p>Careers Impact internal leadership reviews (annual).</p> <p>Quality in Careers Standard.</p>

Future Skills Questionnaire Value & Purpose:

Careers Leaders can use learners' responses to the Future Skills Questionnaire to:

- Identify gaps in careers provision.
- Tailor careers provision and activities to individual needs.
- Measure progress of their careers provision over time.

The Future Skills Questionnaire is a tool embedded into our free digital product Compass+; it allows Careers Leaders to effectively measure learners' career-readiness.

Simple data insight can support Careers Leaders to make targeted interventions, evaluate their careers programme and identify the impact of careers education in their setting.

To find out more click [here](#)

Gathering data that measures the intended vision, aims and outcomes and steps towards that is a core part of the evaluation process and can sometimes feel overwhelming.

Here are some suggestions on how to get the best value from your efforts:

- Make use of existing data. This includes published destinations data, school or college attendance data, attainment data.
- Keep data collection proportionate and save surveys to gather feedback for new, untested, high cost, large-scale activities, and use creative and informal methods for others.

COMING SOON: A new parent and carer questionnaire.

Value & Purpose: Careers Leaders can use parents' responses to the questionnaire to:

- Identify gaps in information or support for parents.
- Tailor support and information dependent on need Measure progress of their careers support for parents over time.

Additional Support

Learner Perception

If you use Compass+: Deliver the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) to help you measure learners career-readiness. Use data and reporting to review learner responses, identify learners who may require targeted support, plan activities to meet the needs of learners and capture learners interests and intended next steps. FSQ is also an effective tool for impact evaluation, as you can track learners' understanding of careers knowledge and essential skills over time. Find out more [here](#).

If you don't use Compass+: We recommend implementing an effective method that captures learner feedback and measures learners' career-readiness. This might be via a partner platform, learner survey or utilising tutor time/tutorial sessions to discuss learners' aspirations and plans for the future.

If you don't have an approach to capturing learner feedback, you may find the following resources helpful:

[Future Skills Questionnaire questions](#) are available on the CEC Resource Directory for institutions who do not have access to Compass+.

Parent and Carer perception

COMING SOON: A parent and carer questionnaire for Compass+ and Compass users to help you measure parents' knowledge, confidence and awareness. This enables reflection on whether the right information is being shared at the right time and in the right way to meet the needs of your parental cohort.

Destination Data

If you use Compass+: You can enter interests and destinations information directly into a learner's individual Learner Profile. You can record learner intended destinations and actual destinations too. Use relevant filters in the Learner Reporting feature to create and download destinations data to share with relevant stakeholders i.e. Local Authorities, support personal guidance appointments and help learners to have meaningful discussions about their best next step with others i.e. parents, carers, teachers or other appropriate individuals. Find out more [here](#).

Find out how to use more Compass+ features and functionality effectively in your setting by completing our Compass+ self-paced training on [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#). Go to the course Library and just search for Compass+ or FSQ.

You can also visit the [Compass+ Help Centre](#) for further guidance and resources.

If you don't use Compass+: Utilise procedures and processes that you already have in place to effectively capture interests and destinations data from your learners. We recommend reviewing current ways of working to ensure that they align with this guidance.



Confidence Check: could you articulate this if asked?

“Describe how you map the range of destinations your learners go to.”

Could you evidence how you support learners to access the right destination for them?

Review & Act

There are a range of reasons to undertake and consider impact evaluation data of your provision:

- » Progress measurement and celebrating success against intent, aims and outcomes.
- » Continuous improvement to ensure that universal provision is responsive to insight and trends.
- » Personalisation and pro-active interventions to respond to supporting learners at risk of disengagement or NEET.

Sharing the success of your provision:

Identify a reflection milestone for you to collate the evidence, analyse the results, pull out the key messages and organise the information for sharing with key groups (SLT, governors, parents & carers, staff and learners).

Organise the results for different audiences, which might include; senior leaders and governors, the wider staff body, Ofsted, quality accreditation providers such as Quality in Careers Standard or Matrix, the school/college website page on careers provision and providers of careers activities including employers.

Quantitative data can tell you about prevalence and trends; qualitative/text data is more helpful for understanding experiences in more detail – answering the why? and how? questions.

Key data: Long-term and sustained destinations data, analysis of FSQ over time, stakeholder voice.

Continuous improvement:

Plan ahead by selecting the data and insights that will guide the continuous improvement of your careers provision. Reflect on what you've learned throughout the year, and set a point to gather evidence, analyse results, and determine the necessary changes to ensure the universal careers provision is responsive to learning.

Update your strategic careers plan and universal careers provision based on the analysis and learning from impact evaluation.

Key data: Long-term and sustained destinations data, analysis of FSQ over time, stakeholder voice.

[Click here to access the Understanding how to create a strategic careers plan resource](#)

[Click here to access the Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Careers Learning Journeys\)](#)

Personalisation:

Work with key colleagues across the school, special school or college to set reflection milestones for learners in good time ahead of key transitions to consider progress data and put in place relevant personalisation of careers provision to support those at risk of disengagement/NEET.

Continuously improve provision by using evidence to consider how you know provision is working and which elements of provision to retain, remove or enhance, including consideration if relevant resource is in place to be effective.

Key data: Aspirations data, intended destinations, FSQ by cohort/learner, education engagement data, individual encounter/experience feedback.

Additional Support:

If you use Compass+: Once you have delivered the Future Skills Questionnaire, you can create custom groups based on learner responses directly from your Detailed Report. This allows you to drill down on responses to specific questions so that you can effectively target learners who may require additional support. Find out more [here](#).

Within Compass+ is a feature called [OnTrack+](#) which enables early identification and tracking of learners at risk of becoming NEET and who may benefit from additional support.

Find out how to use more Compass+ features and functionality effectively in your setting by completing our Compass+ self-paced training on [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#). Go to the course Library and just search for Compass+ or FSQ.

You can also visit the [Compass+ Help Centre](#) for further guidance and resources.

If you don't use Compass+: We recommend implementing an effective method that allows you to identify learners who may require targeted support to strengthen and develop their careers knowledge and skills.



Confidence Check: could you articulate this if asked?

“How do leaders support learners to engage with careers education if they are at risk of becoming NEET?”

Could you demonstrate the impact of a strategic approach to NEET prevention, where careers aligns with wider school priorities?

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