



Understanding how to embed progressive encounters with further and higher education

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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](#)
- [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 7

Learners should be made aware of the full range of education and training options available to them and what next steps they can take. Benchmark 7 complements the careers and labour market information (LMI) accessed and used in Benchmark 2, focusing on first-hand encounters with the providers of learning or training that may be a young person's next step. Many young people will not have trusted contacts who have pursued every pathway: study at college or university, progression into training, completion of an apprenticeship or supported internship, or going straight into work. A young person's encounters with secondary and further education should provide them with rich opportunities to explore all their options.

This resource supports Careers Leaders to embed encounters with providers of all routes available to students at key transitions within a progressive and impactful careers programme.

The guidance will support meaningful achievement of relevant Gatsby Benchmarks and will support schools to understand the requirements of Provider Access Legislation.

Gatsby Benchmark 7: Summary

Secondary Schools: All pupils should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them, including academic, technical and vocational routes. This should incorporate learning in schools, colleges, independent training providers (ITPs), universities and in the workplace.

Colleges & Training Providers: All learners should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them, including academic, technical and vocational routes. This should incorporate learning in schools, colleges, independent training providers (ITPs), universities and in the workplace.



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?

How to embed meaningful encounters with providers of all routes within a progressive and impactful careers provision

To support a meaningful approach to Benchmark 7 this resource is underpinned by the following guiding principles:

- Start early to develop a progressive approach that allows for multiple experiences across all key stages.
- Be intent and outcome led.
- Be responsive to learner need, evaluation data and regional/labour market context.
- Commit to true advocacy and ensure equity of access to information and understanding.
- Challenge misconceptions, stereotypes and assumptions head on.

1. Start early to develop a progressive approach that allows for multiple encounters across all key stages

Implement a progressive and impactful careers provision that broadens horizons, and scaffolds development of the knowledge and understanding required for learners to identify their best next steps, from when learners join you.

Starting early supports learners to incrementally build the relevant knowledge, understanding and ability to make informed and aspirational decisions at key transition points.

There is a wide range of learning and understanding to be broken down and scaffolded in supporting learners (and supporting stakeholders) to understand and truly consider all available routes, including technical and vocational.

Colleagues in maintained schools and academies can access Appendix 1 Example Provider Access Provision inspiration to support understanding of Provider Access Legislation and access a worked example of a progressive approach to PAL activity.

2. Be intent and outcome led

Encounters with further and higher education can be vehicles for you to support your vision of what you want your learners as leavers to know, understand and be able to do. Ensuring that encounters with further and higher education are underpinned by progressive careers-related learning outcomes that build on prior learning will support you in preparing your learners to:

- Make informed and aspirational decisions.
- Make effective and sustained transitions.
- Be careers ready.

Clarity of intent supports with impact.

Learning Outcome:

Learning outcomes for your careers provision are clear, concise statements describing what learners are expected to know, understand, or be able to do as a result of engaging with your full careers provision. They are typically measurable and observable, allowing you to assess whether learners have achieved the desired skills, knowledge, or competencies over-time.

Example: Students have a broad knowledge of a range of pathways, including technical and vocational, which enables informed decision making.

Learning Objective:

Setting learning objectives for encounters provides a specific, detailed statement about what learners should achieve by the end of the encounter. It supports the journey towards learners meeting the intended learning outcomes that underpin the careers provision and provides a clear direction for both teaching and measuring the success of individual encounters.

Example: By the end of the encounter, learners will be able to compare and contrast at least two pathways to identify key benefits and challenges associated with each and articulate how these pathways align with their personal career goals and decision-making process.”

Reflection:

- » How do you set learning outcomes for your provision? How do these help you to identify learning objectives for individual encounters with further and higher education?
- » How are these shared with learners, providers and parents and carers?
- » How is time planned in to allow learners to effectively prepare and reflect upon encounters with further and higher education providers?
- » How can the learning outcomes for your provision and the objectives for specific encounters with further and higher education be used to inform your work to engage and support parents and carers?

3. Be responsive to learner need, evaluation data and regional/labour market context

Consider how LMI, destinations data and measuring students' current careers knowledge and skills can support you to make sure that all learners have equal access to understanding the value of all available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational. Effective use of information and data will ensure that your provision is responsive to the needs of learners and that provision can be personalised to react to emerging learner need (e.g. those at risk of disengagement and/or NEET, etc.)

OnTrack+ is an early insight feature within Compass+, which helps educators to identify emerging support needs for learners in Years 7-11, highlighting who may need a more personalised approach to careers provision. The [OnTrack+ Practice Guide](#) provides practical guidance to embed a clear, consistent process for identifying learners who may require responsive, target or personalised support.

Step 1: Knowledge of all available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational

It is important to build your own knowledge of the options before planning a progressive careers provision for your learners.

Visit the Resource Directory page on '[Supporting students and key stakeholders to understand all pathways](#)' to access useful resources and support that can be used by you to upskill and be shared with key stakeholders covering all available routes at including technical and vocational.

Step 2: LMI

Access relevant regional and national LMI to shape key encounters to meet the needs of your learners in the context of your school, special school or college.

Careful and targeted use of LMI provides key information about sectors, jobs forecasts and the skills and qualities employers look for in their workforce.

Example sources of LMI:

- Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
- Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)

Work with your Enterprise Co-ordinator and/or Enterprise Adviser to understand key regional LMI and to explore opportunities to connect with employers offering the full range of pathways into employment.

Step 3: Destinations Data

Analysis of intended, actual and sustained destinations data can provide evidence that learners are considering all routes with equity or may inform continuous improvement to the provision and a need for more specific focus on particular routes/for particular cohorts.

Destinations Data includes intended, actual and sustained destinations of learners, providing valuable insights into their career planning and outcomes.

Here's how you can use destinations data to enhance your approach to encounters with further and higher education:

- 1. Identify Trends and Gaps:** Analyse destinations data to identify trends in the pathways chosen by your learners. Look for any gaps in the types of further and higher education institutions that are underrepresented. This can help you design and implement encounters within your provision that highlight the value and benefit of all pathways. Analysis of intended destinations may prompt shorter term planning to support specific groups to better understand the value and benefit of specific pathways. This targeted approach can lead to more relevant and impactful encounters.
- 2. Evaluate and Improve:** Regularly review destinations data to evaluate the effectiveness of your approach to encounters with further and higher education and the wider careers provision. Use this information to make continuous improvement, ensuring that the provision remains aligned with the evolving needs and aspirations of your learners.
- 3. Engage Stakeholders:** Share insights from destinations data with staff, parents, and carers. This can help adults around learners to understand the importance of encounters with further and higher education and their intent, supporting effective careers conversations to help learners make informed decisions about their next steps.

Step 4: Measuring learners' current career knowledge and skills

The collection and analysis of learners' career readiness can be used to inform your approach to progressive encounters with further and higher education.

Here's how you can use analysis of learner's career readiness to enhance your approach to encounters with further and higher education:

- 1. Identify gaps in knowledge & understanding of pathways:** By assessing learners' current career knowledge and understanding of all pathways, you can identify areas where they may need additional support. This insight allows you to see if there are pathways not being considered by learners, which may indicate misconceptions or low knowledge of value and benefits of pathways. This allows you to design and plan encounters that specifically address these gaps, helping learners develop the knowledge and understanding they need to make informed and aspirational decisions.
- 2. Support at-risk learners:** Career readiness insights can help identify learners who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). By tracking responses to tools like the Future Skills Questionnaire, you can provide targeted support and interventions, including encounters with further and higher education that help these learners stay engaged and motivated. [OnTrack+](#) can also help identify emerging support needs for learners in Years 7-11, strengthening sustained learner engagement and post-16 transition.
- 3. Monitor progress:** Regularly review career readiness data to monitor learners' progress. This helps you evaluate the effectiveness of your approach to encounters with further and higher education and to the wider careers provision and make necessary adjustments to ensure it continues to meet the evolving needs of your learners.

Access the "[Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision](#)" resource to support approaches to the collection and analysis of destinations data.

Compass+ users can review responses to [The Future Skills Questionnaire](#) (FSQ) to help identify learners who may be at risk of NEET, track learners who are consistently selecting negative responses to FSQ questions and use responses to tailor support and intervention, including encounters with further and higher education tailored to meet learners needs.

We recognise that the Future Skills Questionnaire may not be appropriate for all learners with SEND.

While the SEND version of the FSQ was designed for learners in SEND Group 1 (those who typically will not take Level 2 Qualifications / GCSEs), we understand that this group encompasses a diverse range of learners with varied learning needs. FSQ may not be appropriate for all learners in this group, and we therefore encourage practitioners to use their professional judgement when deciding on which learners would benefit from completing the FSQ. liaise with fellow colleagues to help make this decision, Heads of Department, the SENCo, Pastoral staff, the Careers Adviser for example.

Find out more about Future Skills Questionnaire for learners with SEND [here](#)

“An effective careers programme is tailored to the audience.

With the FSQ we can amend the careers programme based on the students’ previous experiences and aspirations. I want to use it to identify the gaps and to celebrate the positives.”

Careers Leader

4. Commit to true advocacy and ensure equity of access to information and understanding

This builds on ensuring that all stakeholders have knowledge of options, including regional provision. True advocacy is about ensuring that trusted adults around learners understand the value and benefit of all routes, including technical and vocational.

Consider also how staff and parents and carers can be supported to fully understand and truly consider all available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational.

Encourage all staff to complete the free online modules Teachers Part 1: Understanding Career Pathways via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#).

Parents and carers should be supported to evaluate all routes with equity and be supported to access and understand all routes.

[The Parental Engagement Toolkit](#) from the CEC features a range of tools and activities including:

- Parent and carer-facing activities for events such as parents' evenings and tailored family learning sessions.
- Student-facing activities to reinforce parents' role in decision-making.
- Support for Careers Leaders to identify activities that will complement existing provision.
- Practical tips and guidance on how to deliver each type of activity.
- A range of preparation activities to help you and parents get the most out of each session.

COMING SOON: A parent and carer questionnaire to help you monitor and understand the extent to which families are receiving appropriately tailored information that meets their needs.

True advocacy can be achieved by embedding careers learning journeys that are planned, progressive and responsive and that are underpinned by relevant careers-related learning outcomes to support learners at each key stage to evaluate all routes available at key transitions **with equity**. All learners should also be provided with equitable support to apply for different routes.



- **Consider how cohorts and groups are supported to access encounters with providers of all routes available to them at key transitions.**
- **Challenge any unconscious bias in the processes for identification of learners/cohorts accessing an encounter.**
- **Refer to learner career readiness and destinations data analysis, etc. to inform identification and selection of learners.**

5. Challenge misconceptions and assumptions head on

Careers learning journeys should be underpinned by relevant careers related learning outcomes that measurably challenge misconceptions and stereotypes linked to pathways and opportunities available to learners. Use learner careers readiness insight and stakeholder voice (learners, staff and parents and carers) to gauge equitable understanding of and advocacy for all pathways.

Example learning outcome:

Learners have a broad knowledge of a range of pathways which enables informed decision making.

Staff CPD and parent and carer engagement should also support trusted adults around learners to recognise and address any misconceptions and stereotypes.

COMING SOON: A new parent and carer questionnaire will be available from September, which will support you to understand parents' knowledge, confidence and awareness.

Access the [“Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision”](#) resource to explore how stakeholder voice, destinations data and learner perception of career readiness data can be analysed to evaluate impact of work to challenge misconceptions and stereotypes.

Planning for a meaningful encounter with further and higher education

Gatsby have provided a definition of meaningful to support in planning for impact within encounters with further and higher education. This supports you in maximising the value of the encounter for all stakeholders including learners, employer and parents and carers.

BENCHMARK 7: ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

SUMMARY FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS All pupils should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them, including academic, technical and vocational routes. This should incorporate learning in schools, colleges, independent training providers (ITPs), universities and in the workplace.

SUMMARY FOR COLLEGE AND INDEPENDENT TRAINING PROVIDERS All learners should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them, including academic, technical and vocational routes. This should incorporate learning in schools, colleges, independent training providers (ITPs), universities and in the workplace.

Definition of Meaningful

A meaningful encounter gives the young person the opportunity to explore what it is like to learn, develop and succeed in that environment. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and learners/trainees. Throughout a careers programme, encounters should be sequenced so that a young person can build up a clear picture of opportunities available to them.

Experiences or encounters could be in person or a combination of in person and virtual and could include providers delivering sessions in a school, college or ITP, as well as young people visiting the provider.

Young people and providers should be supported to prepare for the encounter. Additional or different support may be needed for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and for young people with SEND.

A meaningful encounter will:

- have a clear purpose, which is shared with the provider and the young person.
- be underpinned by learning outcomes that are appropriate to the needs of the young person.
- involve a two-way interaction between the young person and the provider.
- include information about the provider, such as their recruitment and selection processes, the qualifications that provider offers and the careers these could lead to.
- describe what learning or training with the provider is like.
- be followed by opportunities for the young person to reflect on the insights, knowledge or skills gained through the encounter.

Benchmark 7 Making it Meaningful: Checklist

Preparing for an encounter			
Equity of understanding of all routes	Selection of learners/ cohort	Has the learner/cohort selection been checked for unconscious bias?	
Logistics	Consider learner outcomes, availability of providers and time/space/ tech capacity available for the encounter	Which format suits this encounter and the cohort best: virtual in person or blended?	
Progressive and responsive approach	Relevant aim and learning objectives for the encounter	Is this encounter embedded within a progressive/ responsive career learning journey with relevant aims and learning objectives? Are the learning objectives responsive to intended destinations or learner perception of careers readiness?	
Briefing and preparation	Relevant learning aim, outcome sand objectives for the encounter	Do learners, providers, staff and parents and carers understand the aims and learning objectives of the encounter?	
	Consider learner needs and how these can be shared, as appropriate	Have all learners' needs been identified and shared and has relevant contextual information about learner(s) been shared with providers as appropriate? <small>*Consider use of Vocational Profiles to support with this*</small>	
	Provider preparation	Are providers clear on the ask to include information such as their recruitment and selection processes, the qualifications that provider offers and the careers these could lead to and to describe what learning or training with the provider is like?	
	Learner understanding of value and purpose of encounter	Have learners set their own objectives for the encounter? Has a pre-encounter task been set? This this may be particularly beneficial when preparing young people with SEND for an encounter to allow them to ask questions in advance and manage expectations Have learners been made aware of what the encounter will look like? Is there any pre encounter information that can be shared to enable them to be prepared for what will happen throughout the encounter?	
	Parent and carer engagement	Have aims and learning objectives of the encounter been shared with parents and carers along with the logistics? Have parents and carers been supported to understand where the encounter sits within the progressive careers learning journey? Are there opportunities to engage parents and carers within the encounter or via a pre or post encounter task?	

Delivery			
Meaningful engagement	Two-way interaction	Has the encounter been designed to support each and every learner to have meaningful interaction with the provider?	
	Access to information	Has the encounter been designed to support each and every learner to understand the recruitment and selection processes, the qualifications that provider offers and the careers these could lead to?	
		Has the encounter been designed to support each and every learner to develop an understanding of what learning or training with the provider is like?	
	Reflection and learning	Is there dedicated time for learners to reflect on the insights, knowledge or skills gained through the encounter?	
Evaluation			
Impact	Learner progress	Does impact evaluation of the encounter include stakeholder voice/analysis of intended destinations data or any other measure to measure progress against learning aims, outcomes and objectives?	

Provider Directory

Use our Provider Directory tool to find organisations in your area that can deliver careers activities to your learners.

It’s free for secondary schools, special schools, sixth forms, colleges and PRUs in England.

You can search for providers by postcode and refine the results by applying a range of filters including Key Stage, Gatsby Benchmark and delivery method.

[Visit the Provider Directory](#) now to start searching for activity providers.



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?

Appendix 1

Example Provider Access Provision inspiration

What is the provider access legislation?

The provider access legislation (PAL) introduced in January 2018 requires all maintained schools and academies to publish a policy statement setting out opportunities for providers of technical education and apprenticeships to access Year 8-13 pupils, and to make sure the statement is followed. What are the new requirements of the provider access legislation? The updated provider access legislation specifies schools must provide at least six encounters for all their students, during school Years 8-13.

- Two encounters for pupils during the 'first key phase' (Year 8 or 9) that are mandatory for all pupils to attend, to take place any time during Year 8 or between 1 September and 28 February during Year 9.
- Two encounters for pupils during the 'second key phase' (Year 10 or 11) that are mandatory for all pupils to attend, to take place any time during Year 10 or between 1 September and 28 February during Year 11.
- Two encounters for pupils during the 'third key phase' (Year 12 or 13) that are mandatory for the school to put on but optional for pupils to attend, to take place any time during Year 12 or between 1 September and 28 February during Year 13.

To promote the quality and consistency of provider encounters, the legislation includes a new set of minimum information that the school must ask the provider to give pupils during each encounter.

Find out more [here](#).

Additional support

If you use Compass+ : When you add an activity to Compass+, you can flag this as an activity that complies with PAL, then use [Activities Reporting](#) to filter and view all the activities you have recorded that meet PAL requirements.

When [adding a PAL compliant activity directly into Compass+](#), consider pre-fixing the activity with 'PAL', so that when you download Your Activities, you can see at-a-glance how many have met PAL requirements, and easily apply a filter to the 'Activity Name' column in Your Activities download.

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.

Whilst Provider Access Legislation is not a statutory requirement for Further Education institutions and Independent Training Providers, it is considered as best practice to follow the guidance and principles within the legislation.

<p>KS3</p> <p>Learning Outcome</p> <p>Learners have a broad knowledge of a range of pathways which enables informed decision making.</p>		<p>KS4</p> <p>Learning Outcome</p> <p>Learners can reflect on equitable knowledge and understanding of all pathways and can use and articulate this knowledge and understanding to make informed career decisions.</p>	
<p>Introduce & inspire</p>		<p>Investigate & explore</p>	
<p>KS3 Learning Objectives</p>		<p>KS4 Learning Objectives</p>	
<p>Encounter inspiration</p>		<p>Encounter inspiration</p>	
<p>To identify and describe all available routes Post 16 & Post 18, including technical and vocational.</p>	<p>‘Provider Speed Networking’ encounter with questions focused on myth busting.</p>	<p>To explain how all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational, can support their future career aspirations and reflect on which option(s) may be best for them.</p>	<p>Interactive pathway encounter with structured opportunities for learners to engage with providers of available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational with time to reflect on the encounter (aligned to tracking aspiration destinations data and approach to personal guidance).</p>
<p>To identify and challenge misconceptions relating to the available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational.</p>		<p>To identify and challenge misconceptions relating to the available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational.</p>	
<p>To articulate what it is like to learn in the available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational Consider how available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational, could support their career aspirations.</p>	<p>Provider alumni engagement experience with alumni from all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational.</p>		<p>Immersive provider visits to allow learners to experience what it is like to learn in in all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational.</p>
<p>To describe the application processes relating to available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational Consider the importance of representing themselves well for selection.</p>	<p>Mock Assessment Centre experience with introduction to aptitude testing.</p>	<p>To identify where and how they apply for all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational Explain what skills will be required for different selection processes.</p>	<p>CV/Interview feedback workshops supported by a range of providers and employers with Mock interview element.</p>
<p>To feel informed and inspired about regional and national growth sectors and opportunities in the labour market relating to all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational Identify and access reliable and accessible sources of LMI including the National Careers Service website.</p>	<p>Interactive Careers Fair with LMI workshop/quiz focus.</p>	<p>To explore and understand regional and national growth sectors and opportunities in the labour market relating to all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational Research labour market and options via reliable and accessible sources of LMI, including the National Careers Service website.</p>	<p>Experience of the workplace visits and associated task to explore regional growth sector and labour market opportunities.</p>
<p>To identify key knowledge, skills and experiences and be aware of how these relate to positive transitions and career development relating to available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational. Reflect on their own knowledge, skills and experiences and how they will support positive transitions and career development.</p>	<p>Employer/provider Q&A with a focus on key knowledge, skills and experiences that support positive transitions and career development.</p>	<p>To develop key knowledge, skills and experiences and be aware of how these relate to positive transitions and career development relating to available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational.</p>	<p>Experience of the workplace designed to support learners to develop key knowledge, skills and experience that will support with positive transitions to all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational.</p>

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