

Careers guidance: At a glance checklist and guide for independent training provider leaders

This document provides an overview of the roles, responsibilities and best practice recommendations for independent training providers (ITPs) that provide secondary education and post-16 education or training, as outlined in the publication [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers: Statutory guidance for schools and guidance for further education colleges, sixth form colleges and independent training providers \(June 2026\)](#). ITPs are expected to adopt the Gatsby Benchmarks and **should** follow the guidance as a statement of good practice.

ELEMENT OF CAREERS LEADERSHIP	✓	GUIDANCE	SUPPORT SIGNPOSTING
Careers leadership		<p>Our ITP has a trained Careers Leader.</p> <p>We are a member of the CEC's Community of Improvement for ITPs.</p>	<p>Careers Leader training</p> <p>Join here</p>
Careers programme		<p>We have a written careers programme that is structured around the eight Gatsby Benchmarks and underpinned by progressive learning outcomes.</p> <p>Our careers programme is published on the ITP's website.</p> <p>Careers is featured in the staff CPD programme.</p> <p>Our Careers Advisers are qualified to an appropriate level.</p>	<p>Benchmark 1 suggested universal career related learning outcomes</p> <p>Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision (Careers Learning Journeys)</p> <p>Careers Leaders can also use the CEC's Provider Directory to identify local and national organisations that can support the delivery of encounters with employers and employees across the Gatsby Benchmarks.</p> <p>The Careers & Enterprise Academy</p>
Strategic planning		<p>We have a current strategic careers plan that is aligned to ITP priorities and regularly monitored by leaders.</p>	<p>Understanding how to create a strategic careers plan</p>

Quality assurance		<p>We have undertaken a Careers Impact internal leadership review.</p> <p>The progress and impact of careers provision are regularly reported to the SLT or governing body.</p>	<p>Careers Impact internal leadership review</p> <p>Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision</p>
Destinations data		<p>Learner destinations data (including learner aspirations, intended destinations, sustained and longer-term destinations) is regularly analysed by leaders.</p>	<p>Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision</p>
Addressing the needs of all learners and careers guidance for learners with SEND		<p>Careers is embedded in our work to tackle disadvantage.</p> <p>Careers guidance for pupils with SEND is delivered through a person-centred, graduated approach, with EHC plan reviews focused on preparing for adulthood.</p>	<p>Driving equity and tackling disadvantage through your careers provision: Educator Guide</p> <p>New signpost: Vocational profiles</p>
Parent and carer engagement		<p>Parent and carer engagement is embedded throughout our careers programme.</p>	<p>Resources and support from The Careers & Enterprise Company, including Parental Engagement in Careers CPD</p> <p>Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision (Careers Learning Journeys)</p>

Careers guidance and access for education and training providers: Guidance for independent training providers

Careers Leader training and support

Every institution **should** appoint an appropriately trained Careers Leader to develop and direct the careers programme, in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks. The Careers Leader **should** have the skills and commitment for the role, as well as support from their Senior Leadership Team (SLT), including protected time and sufficient budget to carry out the role effectively.

The Department for Education (DfE) strongly recommends that ITPs engage with the [DfE's funded, flexible training offer, which](#) is designed to support the growth of Careers Leaders at all levels. This includes training for new Careers Leaders, top-up training for experienced Careers Leaders, and senior leadership training focused on high-quality careers provision as a vehicle for wider ITP improvement.

Reflection:

Does your ITP have a trained Careers Leader?

Are you a member of The Careers & Enterprise Company's (CEC's) Community of Improvement for ITPs?

Signpost:

Access [fully funded flexible Careers Leader Training](#).

Join the CEC's Careers Community for ITPs [here](#).

Careers programme (Careers Learning Journeys)

Every ITP **should** have an embedded programme of careers education and guidance, structured around the eight Gatsby Benchmarks, that is known and understood by learners, parents and carers, staff, those in governance roles, employers and other agencies.

- Every ITP **should** have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of those in governance roles (where relevant), 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 institution'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, teachers/subject staff, and other staff.

who support learners, Careers Advisers and employers, to increase its impact.

DfE expects leaders and governing bodies to support their careers team, especially their Careers Leader, and to invest in personal guidance provided by a qualified Careers Adviser. This will allow the continued delivery of high-quality, progressive careers programmes that support all learners to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve and thrive.

- Every learner **should** have at least one personal guidance meeting with a Careers 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.

Reflection:

Do you have a written-down careers programme that is structured around the eight Gatsby Benchmarks and underpinned by progressive learning outcomes?

Is the personal guidance offer delivered by Careers Advisers 'trained to the appropriate level'?

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Signpost:

Access the resource [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Careers Learning Journeys\)](#).

Access the resource [Benchmark 1 suggested universal career related learning outcomes](#).

Signpost all staff to the free training offer (including modules for Careers Leaders at all levels, special educational needs coordinators and teaching staff) via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#).

Access the [UK Register of Career Development Professionals](#), held by the Career Development Institute, to search for an appropriately trained Careers Adviser who can deliver a particular service or activity, such as personal guidance.

Strategic careers plan

Leaders can support the Careers Leader by actively engaging in setting the direction for a whole-institution approach to careers guidance and **should** give explicit backing to the institution's careers programme.

An effective Careers Leader **should** work with senior leaders to ensure the careers programme is informed by a strategic careers plan aligned to ITP priorities.

The careers programme **should** be aligned with the institution's vision, priorities and development plans. This helps to establish a whole-institution approach where the careers programme can play an important part in addressing wider improvement priorities.

Reflection:

Is there a current strategic careers plan that is aligned to ITP priorities and regularly monitored by leaders?

Signpost:

Access the resource [Understanding how to create a strategic careers plan](#).

Quality assurance, continuous improvement and impact evaluation

DfE expects all institutions to use the [updated Gatsby Benchmarks](#).

Institutions **should** ensure the quality assurance and continuous improvement of their careers programmes. DfE strongly recommends the use of the Careers Impact System, which supports a quality assured, sustainable and strategic approach to careers leadership and establishes a shared and standardised language of quality improvement for careers aligned to wider improvement. ITPs will soon be able to undertake a free Careers Impact internal leadership review. DfE also encourages ITPs to hold the matrix Standard.

From November 2025 Ofsted:

- began inspecting under the revised Education Inspection Framework for school and further education and skills settings.
- report cards provide greater transparency, granularity and insight, giving parents, carers and education professionals the information they need to drive improvement across the education system.

- renewed the inspection framework to clearly identify areas of strength and where a setting needs to improve.

For full details, refer to Ofsted's [Education inspection framework](#) and the handbook for [further education and skills providers](#). [Ofsted is legally required](#) to comment, in an inspection report, on the careers guidance provided at colleges to 16 to 18-year-olds and students aged up to 25 with an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

Ofsted inspectors will also inspect and comment on careers guidance on short and full inspections of all further education and skills providers as appropriate.

Reflection:

Have you undertaken a Careers Impact internal leadership review?

Have the progress and impact of your careers provision been recently reported to ITP leaders?

Signpost:

Get started with your [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#).

Access the resource [Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision](#).

Systematic record-keeping

ITPs **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 from the point of transition.

Reflection:

Are you keeping records at an individual learner level of involvement in your careers programme?

Destinations data

In the updated statutory guidance (May 2025) DfE has removed the expectation to track the destinations of young people who left education up to three years before, to allow resources to be focused on helping current learners to secure and sustain a destination. Sustained and longer-term destinations data continues to be valuable and **should** inform the evaluation of careers programmes and to help ITPs to build and maintain alumni networks.

- 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 destinations data as part of their evaluation process, and use alumni to support their careers programme.

Reflection:

Has learner destinations data (including learner aspirations, intended destinations, sustained and longer-term destinations) been recently analysed by leaders?

Signpost:

Access the resource [Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision](#).

Meeting the needs of all learners and careers guidance for learners with SEND

Institutions **should** tailor careers activities and educational goals to the needs of each learner, including any additional needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and those who are absent.

Institutions **should** provide any additional support that may be needed to help young people navigate these barriers to career progress.

Careers guidance for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) should be delivered through a person-centred and graduated approach in line with the SEND Code of Practice (2015).

Chapter 8 of the SEND Code of Practice sets out that careers guidance is a core part of preparing children and young people with SEND for adulthood.

For young people with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans, local authorities must ensure that the EHC plan review at Year 9, and every review thereafter, includes a focus on preparing for adulthood. For those without EHC plans, transition support is provided through SEN support and impartial careers guidance. In all cases, appropriate advice is sought and information shared to ensure continuity of support and smooth transition into post-16 pathways and employment.

Reflection:

Is careers embedded in your work to tackle disadvantage?

Signpost:

Access the resource [Driving equity and tackling disadvantage through your careers provision: Educator Guide](#).

Work experience

From September 2025, all institutions **should** adopt the strengthened benchmark.

All institutions should have adopted the strengthened benchmark and ensure that every pupil has multiple first-hand experiences of workplaces by the age of 16 and at least one further such experience by age 18.

Colleges and ITPs should ensure that every learner has had at least one experience of a workplace during their programme of study. High quality and meaningful experiences of workplaces are a funded component of 16 to 19 study programmes.

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Reflection:

Are work experiences **meaningful** according to the updated Gatsby definition of 'meaningful' for Benchmark 6?

Signpost:

Access the resource and checklist [Understanding how to embed progressive work experiences](#).

Undertake a [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#) with a particular focus on Theme 5.

Parent and carer engagement

Every institution **should** have a clear approach to engaging parents and carers embedded throughout the careers programme. There **should** be a focus not only on sharing information, but on supporting parents and carers to make the best use of it and to get involved in opportunities offered.

Reflection:

Is parent and carer engagement embedded throughout your careers programme?

Signpost:

Access [resources](#) and support from the CEC, including [Parental Engagement in Careers CPD \[continuing professional development\]](#).

Access the resource [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Careers Learning Journeys\)](#).