

Careers Impact Maturity Model

Schools and Specialist Settings

A guide for reflection, dialogue and development

About this resource

This is a digital guidance document and is not intended for printing.

A printable version of the Careers Impact Maturity Model, without additional guidance text, is available in Compass+ to support the Careers Impact internal leadership review process.

Careers Impact Maturity Model: Schools and Specialist Settings

Purpose and intent

The Careers Impact Maturity Model is designed to support reflective, non-judgemental professional dialogue about careers leadership, provision and impact within schools and specialist settings.

The Careers Impact Maturity Model provides a shared structure and common language to help leaders and colleagues explore:

- how careers leadership and provision currently operates
- how it connects with wider leadership, inclusion and improvement priorities
- how practice is developing over time
- what realistic and purposeful next steps might look like

The model supports:

- understanding current practice
- identifying strengths and development priorities
- aligning careers with wider leadership and improvement planning
- constructive dialogue within and between settings

Core concept: strategic and sustainable careers leadership

Throughout the model, progression is anchored in the idea of strategic and sustainable careers leadership.

In this context, careers is:

- intentionally aligned with the setting's vision, values and improvement priorities
- led collaboratively, with clear roles, shared responsibility and appropriate capacity
- embedded within everyday leadership, planning and review processes
- informed by insight and evidence (for example learner needs, destinations, LMI and evaluation activity)
- sustained over time, so it can adapt as contexts, cohorts and priorities change

As maturity develops, careers is increasingly positioned as a strategic contributor to addressing wider leadership challenges such as:

- aspiration and engagement
- inclusion and equity
- transitions and sustained destinations
- readiness for life and work

How the Careers Impact Maturity Model is structured

The model is organised into four columns that describe progressive and cumulative approaches to practice.

Across the model, progression follows a consistent logic:

Column focus	What changes
Column 1	Practice is occasional and may depend on individuals or isolated activity.
Column 2	Practice is regular and planned, supported by expectations and shared approaches.
Column 3	Practice is routine and consistent across the setting, under-pinned by intentional design and established systems.
Column 4	Practice is embedded and sustained through leadership, governance and whole-setting systematic planning, review and improvement.

Later columns do not replace earlier practice.

They reflect a deepening, strengthening and integration of what already exists.

How to read progression across a row

Progression is best understood as a shift in emphasis:

- from activity > to intentional leadership
- from delivery by individuals > to shared ownership
- from isolated processes > to coherent systems
- from short-term outputs > to longer-term outcomes and sustainability

For example:

- In earlier columns, careers activity may exist but rely on goodwill or personal expertise
- In later columns, careers is sustained through structures that remain in place even when people or contexts change

The role of Themes 1 and 2

Themes 1 and 2 together define how high-quality careers provision is designed, led and sustained within a school or specialist setting, bringing coherence between strategic intent (Theme 1) and implementation and impact (Theme 2).

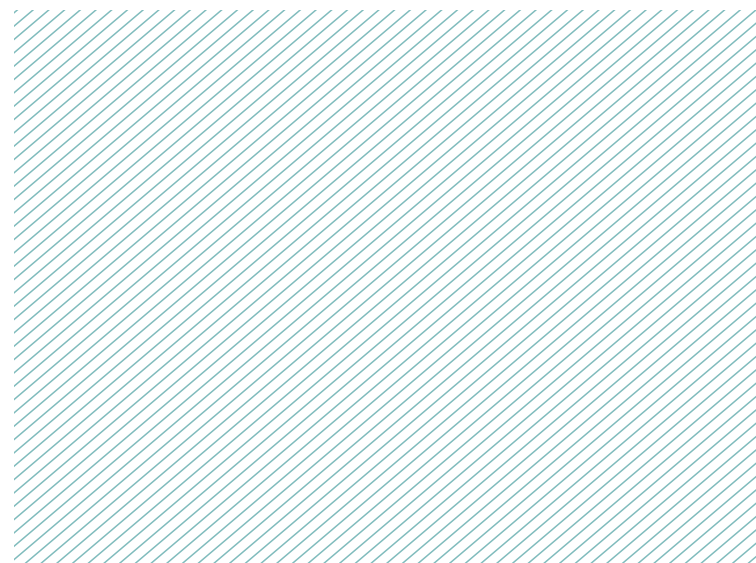
Theme 1: Careers Leadership, Vision, Intent and Planning (Benchmark 1) establishes the foundations for coherence and consistency within the setting. It sets out how careers is led through a clearly defined and appropriately distributed leadership model, including the role of the Careers Leader and wider leadership team. It ensures that a shared vision and intent for careers, focused on preparing learners for their future, is clearly understood and consistently enacted across the setting. Through strategic careers planning, leadership structures, governance, and engagement with external partners, Theme 1 creates the conditions for success for careers to be positioned as a core strategic priority, embedded within whole-setting planning, decision-making and leadership.

Theme 2: Addressing the Needs of All Learners and Impact Evaluation (Benchmarks 1 & 3) ensures that this strategic intent is translated into equitable learner experiences and measurable impact for all learners. It focuses on how careers provision is designed as progressive learning journeys, responsive to learner need, including under-served groups and those with additional needs. It establishes coherent approaches to using learner data, destinations, learner perception, stakeholder voice and quality assurance to inform planning, review and improvement. Through effective recording, tracking and evaluation, Theme 2 ensures careers provision is not only delivered consistently, but is continually refined based on evidence of impact.

Together, these themes create a coherent model in which:

- Leadership, vision and planning (Theme 1) define what the setting is trying to achieve and how it is organised
- Learner entitlement, delivery and evaluation (Theme 2) ensure that this intent leads to consistent, data-informed impact for all learners

This enables careers provision to move beyond individual practice and become fully embedded within whole-setting systems, securing sustainability, equity and a strategic approach to driving positive outcomes for all learners.



Using the model in practice: The Careers Impact internal leadership review

The Careers Impact internal leadership review is the primary way the model is used.

The Careers Impact internal leadership review uses the Maturity Model to support structured, collaborative reflection on:

- how careers leadership and provision operates
- how it supports wider priorities
- where development would strengthen sustainability and impact

What an internal leadership review involves

- Colleagues reflect on each row of the model in advance
- A group discussion agrees a best fit position for each row, based on what is typically and consistently in place
- Outcomes are recorded using the Compass+ internal leadership review feature

The review focuses on shared understanding, not individual judgement.

Who should be involved in a Careers Impact internal leadership review

An effective review brings together colleagues involved in the distributed leadership of careers, for example:

- Careers Leaders and teams
- senior and middle leaders
- governors or trustees
- curriculum, pastoral and SEND colleagues
- Careers Advisers
- others linked to careers or improvement priorities

Recording and using outcomes of a Careers Impact internal leadership review

Recording outcomes in Compass+:

- captures a shared view of current practice
- provides a visual snapshot of strengths and priority areas
- links directly to relevant support and resources
- allows comparison over time to track development

This creates a consistent reference point for planning, review and discussion.

Get started on an internal leadership review today [Careers Impact system internal leadership review](#)

Relationship to Careers Impact peer-to-peer review

The model also underpins Careers Impact peer-to-peer review.

Insights from the internal leadership review:

- provide a foundation for peer discussion.
- support shared language and expectations.
- enable constructive professional challenge.

Careers Impact peer-to-peer review conversations focus on:

- how careers is enabled through systems and leadership.
- how it contributes to wider outcomes.
- what supports or constrains sustained impact.
- highest leverage actions to drive continuous improvement.

Why the Careers Impact Maturity Model has been updated

The model has been updated to:

- strengthen careers' role in addressing engagement, inclusion, SEND and transitions
- embed careers within leadership and governance systems.
- promote purposeful, differentiated employer engagement.
- better support sustained destinations and learner readiness.

Access the Careers Impact Maturity Model Change Log [Appendix 1](#) to understand and explore the changes.

In summary

The Careers Impact Maturity Model helps Careers Leaders and education leaders to:

- understand where careers practice currently sits
- reflect on what supports or limits sustainability
- use structured review to drive meaningful improvement

It positions careers not as an add on, but as an integrated, strategic contributor to outcomes for learners and the wider setting.

Careers leadership, vision and intent, and planning for development (Benchmark 1)

1.1 Careers leadership and distributed leadership of careers	There is a named Careers Leader.	There is a named Careers Leader who has completed, or is in the process of completing, appropriate Careers Leader training. Their role is defined within the staffing structure, and allocated time is identified for carrying out responsibilities.	Leadership of careers includes a trained Careers Leader with line management at senior leadership level. There is sufficient capacity and resources to deliver a strategic careers development plan.	Careers leadership is embedded across the staffing structure, supported by specific training for the Careers Leader and wider colleagues. The strategic careers plan is systematically integrated into whole-setting development planning and is enacted through clear, well established systems and processes. Roles and responsibilities for careers are defined and distributed across the setting, describing an approach that supports coherence, consistency and sustainability in careers provision.
1.2 Leaders' vision and intent for careers	There is a school or specialist setting vision that refers to preparing learners for their future. The vision, intent and priorities for the development of the careers provision are occasionally shared with the senior leadership team, governors and/or staff.	The school or specialist setting vision includes reference to preparing learners for their future. A related careers specific vision may also be in place. The vision, intent and priorities for the development of the careers provision are regularly shared with the senior leadership team, governors and staff.	A vision for careers is developed in partnership with relevant senior leaders and informs priorities for the development of the careers provision, including relevant sections of the whole-setting development plan. Senior leaders, governors and staff understand the vision, intent and priorities for careers and routinely refer to them in leadership, planning and review discussions.	The vision for careers shapes priorities for the development of the careers provision and informs all relevant areas of the setting's development plan. Senior leaders, governors and staff systematically communicate the vision, intent and priorities for careers and are collectively accountable for their ongoing realisation, with explicit alignment to whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.
1.3 Strategic careers planning	There is a careers development plan.	There is a strategic careers development plan that sets out priorities for the development of the careers provision and outlines careers roles and responsibilities. The plan is regularly referenced within leadership discussions relating to careers provision.	There is a strategic careers development plan that positions learners as future leavers and aligns careers provision with the school or specialist setting's vision, improvement priorities and the wider employment and skills landscape. Careers planning and related activity are routinely referenced within senior leadership discussions and planning processes, including in relation to wider organisational considerations such as aspiration, learner engagement, attendance, inclusion, parental engagement and transitions, including NEET prevention. Careers features within the whole-setting development plan and is considered alongside other curriculum and pastoral planning activity.	There is a strategic careers development plan that is systematically monitored and reviewed through senior leadership and governance arrangements, aligned with whole-setting development priorities and regional and national employment and skills needs. Careers is embedded within whole-setting planning arrangements, including curriculum planning, and is positioned within formal leadership and governance processes as a tactical enabler in relation to organisational priorities such as learner engagement, inclusion, transitions and future progression. Careers provision is planned, reviewed and refined through a coherent, cross-setting approach, drawing on Labour Market Information, curriculum intent, employer engagement activity and learner-level information to support progression across pathways, including for learners who may require additional or differentiated support.

Careers leadership, vision and intent, and planning for development (Benchmark 1)

1.4 Strategic leadership of careers	Careers provision is established within the school or specialist setting and is discussed occasionally by senior leaders as part of wider conversations about learner experience and provision.	A senior leader has responsibility for careers, providing leadership direction and structured line management for the Careers Leader and other colleagues with careers responsibilities. Careers features regularly within senior leadership discussions and planning processes, with developing systems used to support visibility and alignment with wider school or specialist setting priorities.	Careers leadership is well established, with a senior leader accountable for the strategic careers development plan as part of regular senior leadership planning and reporting. Careers provision is routinely incorporated within leadership approaches, planning cycles and systems, and referenced in relation to wider priorities such as aspiration, learner engagement, attendance, inclusion, parental engagement and transitions, including NEET prevention.	Strategic leadership of careers is embedded within whole-setting development, review and reporting processes. Careers leadership informs senior level decision making, with reference to insight from careers data and learner outcomes alongside other leadership information. Careers provision is positioned as part of a whole-setting approach to improvement, with sustained alignment across whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, and consideration of longer-term learner destinations.
1.5 Support and challenge from governance	Governors receive occasional updates or reports on careers provision, for example through agenda items or written papers. Data and qualitative information may be included.	Governors regularly review the stated aims of careers provision and emerging information relating to delivery. A named Careers Link Governor may be in place. Data and qualitative insight are used regularly by governors to inform discussion in line with the strategic careers development plan.	Governors routinely consider careers provision alongside the strategic careers development plan. A consistent approach to reporting is embedded through full governing body meetings and/or a relevant sub committee. The Careers Link Governor draws on agreed data sources and evaluation activity to support reporting and discussion.	Governors, led by the Careers Link Governor, systematically review careers provision in relation to the setting's vision and strategic priorities. This takes place through planned and scheduled reviews using defined data sets, evaluation activity and wider contextual information. The Careers Leader, governors and relevant external partners (e.g. an Enterprise Adviser) contribute to agreed review processes through governing body meetings and/or a relevant sub committee.

Careers leadership, vision and intent, and planning for development (Benchmark 1)

1.6 Engagement with the national Careers Hub network and other careers networks	The named Careers Leader occasionally meets with a Careers Hub colleague(s), and the school or specialist setting is part of a Careers Hub or other relevant community of practice.	The named Careers Leader regularly meets with a relevant Careers Hub colleague to review strategic careers development planning. The school or specialist setting regularly engages with a Careers Hub or relevant community of practice and participates in peer review activity when available.	Senior leaders routinely access strategic support for careers development planning from relevant Careers Hub colleagues. The school or specialist setting demonstrates active and planned engagement with the Careers Hub or other community of practice. The school or specialist setting contributes to shared activity and participates in peer review processes as part of its ongoing engagement.	Senior leaders systematically access strategic careers development planning support from relevant Careers Hub colleagues. The school or specialist setting actively engages with and contributes to the Careers Hub or other relevant community of practice at a system-level. Leaders participate in agreed network wide activity, including peer review and shared planning processes, as part of sustained engagement across the network.
1.7 Engagement with Enterprise Advisers or business volunteers	The school or special school knows how to access Enterprise Advisers or business volunteers and can identify the types of skills, experience and business insight it is seeking to support careers provision and employer engagement activity.	The school or specialist setting has a named Enterprise Adviser, or regularly works with one or more Enterprise Advisers or business volunteers, who provide business insight and expertise to help shape and develop the careers provision. Engagement may include early consideration of employer perspectives alongside careers activity and emerging curriculum priorities.	Enterprise Advisers or business volunteers routinely work with senior leaders and the Careers Leader as part of planned and sustained careers development activity. This engagement contributes to strategic careers planning, employer engagement activity and informed discussion about curriculum relevance and alignment with workforce demand. Enterprise Adviser and business volunteer input is referenced within leadership review processes relating to learner progression and skills priorities.	Senior leaders systematically seek and use regular input from Enterprise Advisers or business volunteers. This input is embedded within agreed leadership and governance structures supporting: • strategic careers planning • employer and provider engagement activity • curriculum planning and enrichment, ensuring learning is informed by the world of work and emerging skills priorities Enterprise Adviser and business volunteer engagement is reflected within whole-setting development planning, review and reporting arrangements, supporting coherence between careers provision, curriculum intent and local, regional and national skills contexts.

Addressing the needs of all learners and impact evaluation (Benchmarks 1 and 3)

2.1 Development of progressive careers learning journeys	The careers provision includes occasional activity that supports learners to: • make aspirational and informed decisions • make effective and sustained transitions • develop career readiness	A documented careers learning journey is regularly shared with learners, staff and parents and carers. It outlines the careers provision available to learners, including activity that supports learners to: • make aspirational and informed decisions • make effective and sustained transitions • develop career readiness The careers provision is reviewed and adjusted to support learners who may require additional support. Staff consider connections between careers learning, pastoral provision and SEND provision where appropriate.	Documented and responsive careers learning journeys are in place for all learners. They include sequenced careers-related learning outcomes that set out what learners should know, understand and be able to do at identified points in their learning. Careers Leaders routinely use learner-level information (for example attendance, progress or OnTrack+ indicators) to identify learners who may require additional support, including for transition planning. Senior leaders are involved in routine review discussions about careers learning journeys, drawing on this information and emerging patterns identified by the Careers Leader. Careers provision is routinely planned in collaboration with SEND and pastoral teams. Recording systems are used across cohorts, including identified groups such as those at risk of disengagement and/or NEET.	Documented careers learning journeys are in place for all learners and are systematically adapted to reflect individual needs. They include sequenced careers-related learning outcomes identified at key transition points. These outcomes are systematically aligned with Labour Market Information, employment and skills priorities, development planning, learner needs assessment and evaluation activity. Senior leaders and staff systematically use learner information and agreed early risk indicators to identify learners who require additional careers-related input and consider implications for wider curriculum development. SEND, pastoral, curriculum and careers colleagues coordinate careers and review activity through established support structures. Progress in careers learning is tracked at learner and cohort level and is included within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.
2.2 Addressing the needs of all learners	Learner-level information, including insight relating to under-served learners (for example from OnTrack+, the Future Skills Questionnaire, and attendance, behaviour and progress data), is occasionally shared with or by the Careers Leader.	The Careers Leader regularly receives, shares and uses learner-level information to identify individuals and cohorts for targeted careers-related activity, including under-served learners and learners identified through disengagement or NEET risk indicators. Targeted interventions are put in place for identified learners and cohorts through collaboration with relevant colleagues. There is liaison with local authority contacts, external agencies and provider partners for signposting and specialist input where appropriate. Intervention activity is reviewed at defined points, using available information to agree next actions.	Relevant colleagues, including the Careers Leader, SENCo, Careers Adviser, curriculum staff, pastoral leads and senior leaders, routinely share and review multi-layered learner-level information. This information is used to identify individuals and priority cohorts requiring targeted or differentiated careers-related activity. Multi-team working is embedded across SEND, pastoral, pupil premium, curriculum and careers teams, with shared roles and responsibilities for planning and delivery. External partners, including local authority contacts, agencies and provider partners, are routinely engaged through established communication arrangements. Targeted intervention activity is monitored over time, with review points built into routine practice.	Senior leaders and relevant colleagues systematically use agreed learner information and risk indicators as part of structured identification processes. Careers provision is embedded within whole-setting planning arrangements, with curriculum, SEND, pastoral and careers systems linked through established organisational structures. Targeted and universal careers activity is jointly planned across teams and delivered, where appropriate, with external partners, agencies, providers and employers. The planning, delivery and review of targeted intervention is included within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, drawing on agreed qualitative and quantitative information over time.

Addressing the needs of all learners and impact evaluation (Benchmarks 1 and 3)

2.3 Effective use of recording systems	Recording systems (for example Compass+) are used occasionally to record careers activity. Intended and actual destinations may be captured for some learners..	Recording systems are regularly updated to record careers activities and to capture intended and actual destinations for all learners. Learner reflections on skills and experiences related to careers activity may also be recorded.	Recording systems contain up-to-date information on careers activities, learner participation and destinations. Where recorded, learner reflections are included as part of this information. This information is routinely accessed by the Careers Leader, leaders and relevant colleagues and is considered alongside other learner information, such as attendance or progress data, within planning and review activity.	Recording systems provide comprehensive and up to date information for all learners, including careers activities, destinations and recorded learner reflections. This information is systematically used by the Careers Leader, senior leaders and governors through established planning, review and reporting arrangements. Use of recording systems is embedded within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes with careers data considered alongside other agreed information sources.
2.4 Careers impact evaluation: Destinations data	Destinations data is collected on an occasional basis. This data may contribute to understanding learner progression or inform elements of careers-related decision making or reporting.	Destinations data is regularly collected and reported. This may include information relating to learner cohorts, destination types or identified disengagement or NEET risk indicators, and is used to inform aspects of provision and/or reporting.	Destinations data, including intended, actual, sustained and publicly available longer-term data, is routinely collected and analysed in line with agreed data definitions. This may include, for example, information relating to progression to Level 3, destination patterns for identified cohorts such as FSM learners, or the distribution of destination outcomes in relation to regional skills and Labour Market Information priorities. This analysis is overseen by senior leaders and is used to inform ongoing review of careers provision and to support established careers-related evaluation and reporting activity.	All relevant destinations data, including intended, actual and sustained destinations and publicly available longer-term data, is systematically collected, analysed and reviewed over time using agreed and consistent data definitions. Senior leaders lead the oversight and use of destinations data, with this analysis embedded within whole-setting reporting arrangements and considered alongside other agreed data sources. Destinations data is used to support whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes and to inform the sustained and planned development of careers provision and wider curriculum planning.
2.5 Careers impact evaluation: Learner perception	Learners have occasional opportunities to reflect on their career-related knowledge, skills and experiences, for example through structured tools such as the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ). Learner feedback is sometimes considered within careers-related review activity, with actions in response to this feedback taking place on an occasional basis.	Learners' reflections on their career knowledge, skills, experiences and career readiness are regularly captured and analysed (e.g. via FSQ). This information is used within careers-related reporting activity and informs periodic review of the careers provision.	Learners' reflections on their career knowledge, skills, experiences and career readiness are routinely captured and analysed through agreed tools and processes. Senior leaders routinely access learner perception data as part of established careers and curriculum reporting. This information is considered alongside other agreed learner datasets, such as attendance, behaviour, destinations or progress information.	Learners' reflections over time are systematically captured and analysed at both individual and cohort level through established processes. Senior leaders routinely access and use learner perception data through established leadership structures, with this insight embedded within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes and considered alongside other agreed datasets, including attendance, behaviour, destinations and progress information.

Addressing the needs of all learners and impact evaluation (Benchmarks 1 and 3)

2.6 Careers impact evaluation: Stakeholder voice	Relevant stakeholder voice, including that of learners, staff, parents and carers, Careers Advisers and employers, is collected on an occasional basis and may be referenced within careers impact evaluation processes.	Relevant stakeholder voice is regularly collected and analysed through agreed methods. This information is reported through established processes.	Relevant stakeholder voice is routinely collected and analysed through agreed processes. Senior leaders routinely access stakeholder feedback as part of established reporting arrangements.	Relevant stakeholder voice is systematically collected and analysed over time and is embedded within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes through established senior leadership structures, alongside other agreed information sources.
2.7 Careers impact evaluation: Quality assurance	The careers provision is structured with reference to relevant frameworks, policies and statutory guidance, such as the Gatsby Benchmarks, CDI Framework, Provider Access Legislation and the Education Inspection Framework. Occasional internal review supports structured consideration of careers provision in relation to frameworks, statutory expectations and wider school or specialist setting improvement priorities. It provides a reference point for leadership discussion to support sustainable and strategic careers leadership.	The careers provision is structured with reference to relevant frameworks, policies and statutory guidance. Compliance is regularly reviewed through existing internal processes, such as work scrutiny or learning walks, and through external quality assurance activity where applicable. Annual internal review supports structured consideration of careers provision in relation to frameworks, statutory expectations and wider school or specialist setting improvement priorities. The process provides a regular reference point for leadership discussion and enables careers to be considered within existing quality assurance and wider school improvement conversations.	The development and structure of the careers provision follows established internal processes to support compliance with relevant frameworks and requirements. Quality assurance activity for careers involves senior leaders and is embedded within whole-setting quality assurance cycles. Routine annual internal reviews support structured consideration of careers provision in relation to frameworks, statutory expectations and wider school or specialist setting improvement priorities. The process sits within organisational review arrangements, supporting sustained leadership discussion and coherence between careers provision and broader school or specialist setting improvement planning.	The development and structure of the careers provision follows consistently applied internal processes to support compliance across the setting. Insight from careers-related quality assurance is systematically incorporated into whole-setting planning and review arrangements. Careers quality assurance is embedded within wider organisational quality assurance processes. Systematic annual internal reviews support structured consideration of careers provision in relation to frameworks, statutory expectations and wider setting improvement priorities. The process is positioned within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, enabling careers to be considered as part of wider responses to educational challenges and longer-term improvement priorities.

Understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and future pathway options (Benchmarks 2 and 7)

3.1 Learner understanding of what LMI is and how to make effective use of it	Learners have occasional opportunities to receive Labour Market Information (LMI). There is some reflection on learner understanding of LMI.	A documented careers learning journey includes regular universal and targeted activities that support learners to access relevant LMI. Learners regularly explore LMI as part of careers education and preparation for future choices. Staff gather regular feedback or observations on how learners use LMI and use this to inform ongoing planning.	Documented and responsive careers learning journeys routinely support all learners to access, understand and evaluate relevant LMI. Careers Leaders routinely use LMI and learner engagement insights to shape planning and ensure provision is responsive to learner need. Routine evaluation includes reviewing learner engagement with LMI and identifying patterns that inform improvements to careers provision.	Learners are provided with systematic opportunities to consider and use Labour Market Information (LMI) when exploring choices, planning next steps and preparing for key transition points. Reference to LMI is embedded across careers learning journeys. Learner interaction with LMI is systematically reviewed at individual and cohort level through established organisational processes. LMI-related insight is embedded within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes and is considered alongside destination, curriculum and regional skills information.
3.2 Learner understanding of all routes available to them at key transitions	Learners have occasional opportunities to receive information about the routes available to them at key transition points. There is some reflection on how learners have engaged with information about routes available to them.	A documented careers learning journey includes regular universal and targeted activities that support learners to understand the full range of routes available at key transitions, including local pathways and specialist options. Learners are supported to regularly access accurate and timely information about local providers, apprenticeships, technical routes and post 16 and post 18 choices. Staff gather regular feedback or observations about how learners use this information and use these insights to inform ongoing planning.	Documented and responsive careers learning journeys routinely support all learners to understand and evaluate the full range of routes available to them at key transition points, including opportunities within the local offer. Careers Leaders routinely use LMI, local offer information and learner-level data to refine provision and maintain alignment with emerging pathways and priorities. Routine evaluation includes reviewing learner engagement with information on pathways and identifying patterns that inform improvements to careers provision.	Learners are provided with systematic opportunities to consider information about all available routes, including academic, technical, vocational, local and specialist options, when planning choices and next steps at key transition points. This is reflected across careers learning journeys. Understanding and use of pathway information is reviewed systematically across cohorts and over time. Insight is embedded within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes and is considered alongside Labour Market, destination and local offer information.
3.3 Supporting learners to recognise and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes	The careers provision includes occasional opportunities for learners to recognise and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes linked to pathways and opportunities available to them. There is some reflection on how learners recognise, and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes linked to pathways and opportunities available to them.	A documented careers learning journey includes regular opportunities for learners to recognise and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes linked to pathways and opportunities available to them. Staff gather regular feedback or observations on how learners recognise and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes linked to pathways and opportunities available to them.	Documented and responsive careers learning journeys support all learners to recognise and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes linked to pathways and opportunities. Parents, carers and staff routinely engage with information or activity that helps them understand and challenge misconceptions. The Careers Leader and relevant colleagues routinely use engagement insights to refine these learning opportunities. Routine evaluation includes reviewing how learners and key adults engage with this content and identifying patterns that inform improvements to careers provision.	Learners are provided with systematic opportunities to recognise and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes through transition planning, careers encounters, curriculum learning and personal guidance. This is reflected across careers learning journeys. Evidence relating to what learners, parents, carers and staff know, understand and consider in relation to challenging misconceptions is gathered and reviewed systematically. This information informs whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, including review of careers provision in response to changes in the local offer, regional skills needs, and identified themes within wider reporting processes.

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Understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and future pathway options (Benchmarks 2 and 7)

3.4 Parent and carer understanding of what LMI is and how to make effective use of it	Parents and carers occasionally receive information about regional and national Labour Market Information (LMI) through a variety of channels.	All parents and carers regularly receive information about, and are supported to understand, what LMI is and why it is important, as well as regional and national information. This information is shared through a variety of channels and may be informed by emerging parent and carer feedback on confidence and understanding, for example via Your Child's Future.	All parents and carers are routinely supported to understand, access and interpret relevant LMI through a planned and coherent approach. Support is differentiated according to parent and carer context, ensuring accessibility and relevance. Careers Leaders use engagement data and parent and carer perception insight, for example, via Your Child's Future alongside learner information to review and refine how LMI is communicated.	Support for parents and carers is systematic and differentiated according to parent, carer and learner need. Evidence relating to parent and carer understanding of LMI, including perception data captured over time, is embedded within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes. This insight is considered alongside learner perception, destinations, curriculum and regional skills information to shape parental engagement strategies.
3.5 Parent and carer understanding of all routes available to learners at key transitions	Parents and carers have occasional opportunities to access information about the routes available to learners at key transition points, including academic, technical and vocational options. Information is shared through a range of channels.	All parents and carers regularly receive information about the full range of routes available to learners at key transitions, including academic, technical and vocational pathways. Support is provided to help parents and carers understand these routes, with information shared through a variety of channels and responsive to feedback on confidence and understanding, for example via Your Child's Future.	All parents and carers are routinely supported to access, understand and compare the full range of routes available at key transition points. Information on parent and carer engagement and perception, for example via Your Child's Future is considered by leaders to review and refine how pathway information is shared, alongside learner perception data where useful comparisons can be made.	Support for parents and carers is systematic and differentiated according to parent, carer and learner need. Evidence relating to parent and carer understanding of routes, including perception data captured over time, is reviewed systematically by Careers Leaders and senior leaders. This insight is considered alongside learner perception, destinations, curriculum and regional skills information to shape parental engagement strategies.
3.6 Staff understanding of LMI and of all routes available to learners at key transitions	Teaching and pastoral staff have occasional opportunities to access information about Labour Market Information (LMI) and the range of academic, technical and vocational pathways available to learners at key transition points.	All teaching, pastoral and relevant support staff regularly access information and development activities that support understanding of LMI and the benefits of all available pathways at key transition points.	All teaching, pastoral and relevant support staff engage in routine development opportunities that support access to LMI, understanding of available pathways (including the local and regional offer), and confidence in signposting learners. Staff engagement and feedback information is considered by senior leaders when reviewing and refining staff development activity, alongside emerging pathways and Labour Market Information.	All teaching, pastoral and support staff have systematic access to learning and development related to careers as part of wider staff development arrangements. Evidence relating to staff engagement, understanding and attitudes is gathered and reviewed systematically. This information informs ongoing review of careers provision and contributes to whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.

Understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and future pathway options (Benchmarks 2 and 7)

3.7 Working in partnership: Effective provider engagement	The school or specialist setting has occasional engagement with a range of education and training providers to support the careers provision.	The school or specialist setting regularly identifies and engages with providers across all pathways available to learners at key transition points, including academic, technical and vocational routes.	Senior leaders routinely engage with a range of providers and work in partnership to enable learners to access opportunities linked to their aspirations, needs and emerging career readiness. Careers learning journeys show how provider encounters are incorporated at key transition points. Information from LMI, provider feedback and learner-level data is considered by Careers Leaders when reviewing and refining provider engagement planning.	Senior leaders systematically identify and engage with providers whose offer aligns with learner needs, broad aspirations and regional and national skills priorities. Information from LMI, destinations data, learner career readiness and evaluation of provider engagement is reviewed systematically by senior leaders. This information informs whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.
3.8 Effective use of success stories	Success stories are occasionally shared across the school or specialist setting community. Contact with former learners is limited, with occasional involvement where opportunities arise.	Success stories are regularly shared with learners, parents, carers and other stakeholders, reflecting a range of routes available at key transitions, including academic, technical and vocational options. Former learners are engaged on a regular basis to contribute to careers provision or communications, supporting awareness of post-16 and post-18 pathways.	Success stories from a range of routes are routinely included within a planned approach to communication across the school or specialist setting. Stories are selected to reflect diverse learner pathways and to highlight examples relevant to common misconceptions or perceived barriers. An alumni network supports this approach, with former learners contributing through a range of activities. Information on engagement and feedback is considered by senior leaders when reviewing and refining this approach.	Success stories that reflect diverse journeys, broad aspirations and barrier navigation are integrated systematically across the setting. A sustained alumni network is maintained to reflect a range of pathways and experiences. Evidence relating to engagement with success stories and alumni activity is gathered and reviewed systematically, alongside LMI, destinations data, learner skills information and regional priorities. This information informs whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes and contributes to longer-term partnership development with alumni, employers and external partners.

Theme 4

Linking curriculum learning to careers (Benchmark 4)

4.1 Careers education	There is occasional time in the school or specialist setting timetable for careers education. This time includes activities that support learners to: • make aspirational and informed decisions • make effective and sustained transitions • develop early career readiness skills Careers education is delivered primarily through standalone sessions, with some links made to the wider curriculum as appropriate.	There is regular, planned time for careers education across year groups. This includes structured activities that support learners to: • make increasingly aspirational and informed decisions • prepare for effective and sustained transitions • build and apply career readiness skills progressively Careers education is delivered mainly through standalone sessions, with regular links to the wider curriculum and clarity around expectations for staff and learners.	There is routine, protected and planned time for progressive careers education for all learners. Provision is structured around progressive careers-related learning outcomes that are learner-centred and responsive to need. Careers education is routinely integrated through curriculum mapping, subject planning and agreed approaches that support subjects in contributing to careers knowledge, skills and understanding.	There is systematic, protected and planned time for careers education, underpinned by progressive, learner-centred careers-related learning outcomes that are both universal and responsive to learner need. Careers education is systematically embedded across the curriculum through mapped opportunities, subject accountability and cross-department collaboration. Progress in careers education is monitored and reviewed systematically through whole-setting quality assurance processes, with insights informing curriculum design, subject development and whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.
4.2 Staff highlighting the relevance of their subjects and making links from the curriculum	Curriculum delivery across subjects provides occasional opportunities for careers-related learning.	All teaching staff are supported to regularly highlight the relevance of their subject to the world of work and careers. There is an expectation that staff regularly make links from their curriculum to careers, pathways and essential skills.	All teaching staff routinely highlight the relevance of their subject to the world of work and careers and make clear links from their curriculum to careers, pathways and essential skills. Careers-related learning is routinely evident across all subjects and all year groups.	Quality assurance processes systematically monitor how all teaching staff: • highlight the relevance of their subject to the world of work and careers • embed meaningful links to careers, pathways and essential skills within their curriculum • place curriculum learning in the context of the world of work or careers This information is used to support whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes and development of curriculum-based careers-related learning.

Theme 4

Linking curriculum learning to careers (Benchmark 4)

4.3 Staff learning and development to support understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and pathways, to inform careers in the curriculum	Staff occasionally receive information about Labour Market Information (LMI) and the routes available to learners at key transitions. There is some reflection on how staff use this information in teaching or support roles.	Staff regularly access planned learning and development to support understanding of the labour market, how to access and interpret LMI, and the full range of academic, technical and vocational pathways available to learners. There is an expectation that staff make regular links between this knowledge and their subject or support role. Staff regularly share feedback on their use of LMI and pathway information to inform ongoing planning.	All staff receive structured annual learning and development that helps them routinely apply their understanding of LMI and pathways, making clear and relevant links between their subject or role and careers. Training on LMI and pathways is routinely included in staff induction and appraisal processes, supporting sustained understanding and use over time. There is routine monitoring of how careers is embedded within the curriculum, with patterns used to inform improvements to careers provision and to refine staff development and curriculum planning.	Staff understanding of LMI and pathways is a systematic component of a planned and evaluated professional development programme. Evidence relating to staff engagement, understanding and use of this knowledge is reviewed systematically through curriculum design, internal review and quality assurance processes. Careers education is positioned as a whole-setting responsibility, embedded within professional learning, appraisal and wider organisational development arrangements.
4.4 Learner skills development	Language relating to essential skills is used occasionally across the school or specialist setting, with key skills referenced in some lessons, activities or enrichment activities.	There is an established language for essential skills across the school or specialist setting. Staff regularly refer to this shared language in lessons and wider activity to support learners' understanding of essential skills.	Documented and responsive careers learning journeys routinely reference a consistent language for essential skills. They include a planned approach to developing essential skills through the curriculum, with routine opportunities for learners to practise and reflect on these skills.	Documented, responsive and differentiated careers learning journeys demonstrate a fully embedded and shared language for essential skills across the setting. A progressive and measurable approach to essential skills development is reflected within curriculum planning. Information from staff development activity and evaluation of essential skills development is reviewed systematically and contributes to whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.

Encounters with employers/employees and experiences of the workplace (Benchmarks 5 and 6)

5.1 Working in partnership: Effective employer engagement	There is occasional engagement with a range of employers. Employer engagement reflects consideration of learner needs, learner interests, developing career readiness and local or regional context.	There is regular engagement across the school or specialist setting with a range of employers, including those aligned with learner interests and key regional sectors. Employer engagement is informed by relevant Labour Market Information (LMI) and supports careers activity, including employer encounters and experiences of the workplace.	There is routine engagement throughout the school with a broad range of employers through developing partnerships informed by LMI and consideration of regional and national skills priorities. Employer activity is planned with reference to all learners' needs, broad aspirations and career readiness. Employers contribute to curriculum activity and to the delivery of encounters and workplace experiences. Senior leaders are actively engaged in oversight of employer engagement, with partnerships referenced within careers planning, review discussions and wider considerations relating to learner engagement, inclusion and progression.	There are systematic and collaborative employer partnerships informed by Labour Market Information (LMI), local skills needs and learner context. Employer involvement is integrated within curriculum activity, governance discussion, and the delivery of employer encounters and workplace experiences. Where appropriate, partnerships are aligned with recognised employer quality frameworks, such as the CEC Employer Standards. Senior leaders and governors exercise strategic oversight of employer engagement, with clear accountability for partnership quality, sustainability and alignment to whole-setting priorities. Processes for reviewing employer engagement are systematic, and information gathered is used by senior leaders and governors to inform partnership development, curriculum planning and whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.
5.2 Meaningful encounters with employers	There are occasional meaningful encounters with employers for learners, including careers fairs, etc. Meaningful employer encounters are occasionally used to broaden aspiration, improve learner outcomes, promote inclusion, and support equity.	Learners have regular opportunities to access meaningful employer encounters. Approaches to adapting encounters to meet the needs of all learners are explored, and meaningful employer encounters are planned with consideration of aspiration, engagement, inclusion and equity.	Documented and responsive careers learning journeys routinely include multiple meaningful employer encounters for all learners. Planning considers learner context and learner needs particularly for under-served groups. Learner participation data and staff insight are reviewed through routine evaluation activity and inform planning and reporting.	Careers learning journeys systematically include multiple meaningful and progressive employer encounters for all learners, underpinned by careers-related learning outcomes identified across year groups and key transition points. Employer encounters are planned and sequenced with reference to broad aspirations, curriculum context and learner need. Planning activity draws on learner needs assessment and evaluation information to support equitable access and to determine the focus, timing and format of encounters, including for under-served groups. Employer encounters are embedded within wider curriculum, pastoral and inclusion approaches and are incorporated within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.

Encounters with employers/employees and experiences of the workplace (Benchmarks 5 and 6)

5.3 Meaningful experiences of the workplace

Learners have occasional opportunities to access meaningful workplace experiences.

There is some consideration of how meaningful workplace experiences relate to aspiration, engagement, inclusion and equity.

Learners have regular opportunities to access meaningful workplace experiences.

Approaches to adapting these experiences to meet the needs of all learners are explored, and meaningful workplace experiences are planned with consideration of aspiration, engagement, inclusion and equity.

Documented and responsive careers learning journeys routinely include multiple, meaningful and progressive workplace experiences for all learners, with explicit planning that takes account of equitable access, including consideration of under-served groups.

Learner participation information, alongside broader learner-level insight, is routinely reviewed by senior leaders and relevant staff and is used to determine the focus, sequencing and organisation of meaningful workplace experiences within the careers programme.

Meaningful workplace experiences are positioned as a deliberate and integral component of the school or specialist setting's wider approaches to aspiration, learner engagement, attendance, inclusion, parental engagement and transitions, including NEET prevention. These experiences are coordinated within whole-setting arrangements that bring together curriculum, pastoral and inclusion structures.

Careers learning journeys systematically include sequenced and progressive meaningful workplace experiences for all learners, underpinned by clearly articulated careers-related learning outcomes across year groups and key transition points.

Arrangements for meaningful workplace experiences are formalised within whole-setting systems, with agreed approaches to planning, sequencing and access that draw on learner participation information, needs assessment and evaluation activity. These arrangements support consistency and equity of access over time, including for learners from under-served groups.

Workplace experiences are embedded within the setting's curriculum, pastoral support and inclusion systems and processes. Oversight, review and reporting of workplace experiences are incorporated within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.

Theme 6

Personal guidance (Benchmark 8)

6.1 Engagement with personal guidance	Learners have the opportunity to engage in personal guidance meeting(s). Parents and carers are informed that this opportunity is available.	All learners are regularly supported to take up personal guidance meetings, with engagement tracked through established processes. Relevant information is shared in an ethical, timely and appropriate way, in line with professional standards, e.g. the CDI Code of Ethics. Parents and carers receive timely communication, including opportunities to ask questions and contribute to the guidance process.	All learners are routinely supported to access personal guidance through clear and well-managed systems. These systems support identification of learner needs, referral pathways and monitoring of engagement over time. Information sharing aligns with professional standards e.g. the CDI Code of Ethics. Staff learning and development relevant to personal guidance, alongside planned parent and carer engagement, is mapped to support learners before, during and after guidance meetings. The role of parents and carers in preparation for, and reflection following, guidance is clearly communicated.	All learners are systematically supported to engage in personal guidance through processes embedded within whole-setting systems. These systems take account of learners' diverse guidance needs and ensure information sharing and guidance delivery align fully with professional standards, e.g. the CDI Code of Ethics. Parents' and carers' roles are explicitly mapped, consistently supported and reviewed as part of the setting's wider planning, review and improvement processes.
6.2 Meaningful approach to personal guidance	Learners have the opportunity to engage in a personal guidance meeting. Relevant information is shared between careers, pastoral and SEND colleagues to support coordination. Meetings are appropriately timed, and self-referral routes are available and communicated to learners, parents and carers.	Personal guidance forms a structured element of the careers learning journey, with meetings planned around key points of preparation, reflection and decision-making. Information sharing between careers, pastoral and SEND teams is regular, supporting coordinated engagement with learners, parents and carers. Early evaluation activity begins to inform emerging patterns of need and response.	Personal guidance is a routine component of the careers learning journey for all learners, with meetings scheduled at key transition points. Clear and established systems are in place for careers, pastoral and SEND teams to share and reference relevant information internally and with learners, parents and carers. Personal guidance is positioned as a core component of the school or specialist setting's response to challenges relating to aspiration, learner engagement, attendance, inclusion, parental engagement and transitions, including NEET prevention. It sits alongside pastoral, SEND and inclusion arrangements as part of a coherent approach to understanding learner circumstances and progression needs. Evaluation activity and available evidence are reviewed to establish patterns, trends and analysis of need, including for priority and under-served groups. This information is used within leadership and professional discussions to shape the focus, timing and organisation of personal guidance provision.	Personal guidance is systematically embedded within whole-setting arrangements for careers, inclusion, engagement and transition planning, including NEET prevention. Preparation and reflection opportunities are planned coherently across year groups, pathways and key transition points. Personal guidance sits within an established organisational framework that brings together careers, pastoral, SEND and inclusion arrangements. Information sharing processes operate at whole-setting level and include learners, relevant staff, parents and carers, supporting shared understanding of learner circumstances and progression needs. Evaluation activity and evidence relating to personal guidance are considered systematically alongside other organisational information. This includes patterns, trends and identified need for different groups of learners. These considerations inform whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.

Theme 6

Personal guidance (Benchmark 8)

6.3 Personal guidance resourcing

Impartial personal guidance is provided by an appropriately qualified Careers Adviser(s).

Careers Advisers access relevant CPD to maintain and strengthen professional practice.

Impartial personal guidance is provided by an appropriately qualified Careers Adviser(s) who completes regular training and updates to ensure their practice remains current and aligned to professional standards.

Careers Advisers access relevant CPD to maintain and strengthen professional practice.

There is regular review of personal guidance provision, including consideration of learner engagement with guidance.

Impartial personal guidance is routinely provided by appropriately qualified Careers Adviser(s) who engage in ongoing CPD to maintain and extend professional practice.

Provision of personal guidance and patterns of learner engagement are reviewed on a routine basis. Personal guidance meetings are routinely quality assured using an approved framework, e.g. the CDI Framework, including observation by an appropriately qualified practitioner.

Impartial personal guidance is provided by appropriately qualified Careers Adviser(s), with professional development embedded within a planned, ongoing and evaluated approach aligned to current evidence, professional standards and specialist knowledge.

Provision of personal guidance and learner engagement patterns are reviewed systematically by senior leaders as part of whole-setting oversight arrangements, and considered within wider organisational planning, reporting and assurance processes.

All personal guidance meetings are quality assured through established and robust processes, including use of an approved framework, e.g. the CDI Framework, and regular observation by appropriately qualified practitioners. Insights from quality assurance and review activity are considered within leadership discussion related to workforce development, resourcing and the organisation of personal guidance provision.

Appendix 1

Change Log (changes to appear in tool September 2026)

Careers Impact System Maturity Model: Schools and Specialist Settings

Careers leadership, vision and intent, and planning for development (Benchmark 1)

Summary

Theme 1 has been strengthened to position careers leadership as a whole setting, strategically embedded and collectively owned function, with clear leadership accountability, distributed responsibility and structured engagement across governance, networks and external partners.

Context

Changes to Theme 1 reinforce the shift from careers leadership being centred on a single role or set of activities to being embedded within leadership, governance and organisational systems. The revised theme clarifies how careers leadership evolves from having a named Careers Leader to a senior leadership aligned, strategically planned and systematically reviewed approach, supported by clear roles, appropriate training and protected capacity.

Greater emphasis has been placed on vision, intent and strategic planning, ensuring careers priorities are explicitly aligned with whole-setting development planning, improvement priorities and the wider employment and skills landscape. Leadership and governance roles have been strengthened to support routine oversight, informed challenge and shared accountability, with careers considered alongside other strategic priorities rather than in isolation.

The theme also recognises the importance of external collaboration and system connectivity, clarifying expectations for engagement with Careers Hubs, Enterprise Advisers and business volunteers as strategic partners. These changes support coherence, sustainability and consistency in careers provision, while avoiding assumptions about delivery models or outcomes, and position careers leadership as a core element of effective organisational practice rather than a standalone compliance function.

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
1.1 Careers leadership and distributed leadership of careers	To describe how leadership of careers is structured, resourced and embedded across the school or specialist setting to support coherence, sustainability and strategic oversight.	Clarified progression from a named Careers Leader to senior-leadership-aligned and systematically embedded careers leadership. Strengthened expectations around appropriate training, defined roles and allocated time for the Careers Leader. Made explicit the integration of the strategic careers plan within whole-setting development planning. Clarified how roles and responsibilities for careers are defined and distributed across the staffing structure, supported by clear systems and processes.	To position careers leadership as a whole-setting responsibility enabled by clear structures, professional expertise and distributed accountability, supporting consistency, coherence and long-term sustainability in careers provision.

Theme 1

Careers leadership, vision and intent, and planning for development (Benchmark 1)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
1.2 Leaders' vision and intent for careers	To describe how leaders articulate, share and embed a clear vision, intent and priorities for careers within whole-setting planning, leadership and governance arrangements.	Clarified progression from a general future-focused school or specialist setting vision to a clearly articulated and shared vision for careers. Strengthened expectations around regular and routine communication of careers vision, intent and priorities to senior leaders, governors and staff. Made explicit the role of senior leaders and governors in shaping, understanding and referencing the careers vision within planning and review discussions. Clarified Column 4 as systematic alignment between the careers vision and whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, with shared accountability across leadership and staff.	To position the careers vision as a strategic and collective reference point that informs leadership decision-making, planning and review, supporting coherence, consistency and sustained focus across the whole setting.
1.3 Strategic careers planning	To describe how strategic careers planning is structured, reviewed and integrated within whole-setting leadership, planning and governance arrangements.	Clarified progression from the existence of a careers development plan to a strategic, actively referenced and systematically reviewed planning tool. Strengthened expectations around clear articulation of priorities, roles and responsibilities within the careers development plan. Made explicit the positioning of learners as future leavers, with careers planning aligned to the setting's vision, improvement priorities and the wider employment and skills landscape. Clarified how careers planning is routinely referenced within leadership discussions, including links to aspiration, engagement, inclusion, attendance, parental engagement, transitions and NEET prevention. Defined Column 4 as systematic monitoring, review and alignment through senior leadership and governance, with careers embedded within curriculum planning and whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To position strategic careers planning as a living, whole-setting planning mechanism, supporting coherence between careers provision, curriculum and pastoral priorities, and enabling sustained alignment with organisational, regional and national priorities over time.

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Careers leadership, vision and intent, and planning for development (Benchmark 1)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
1.4 Strategic leadership of careers	To describe how strategic leadership of careers is integrated and sustained within senior leadership decision-making, planning and whole-setting improvement processes.	Clarified progression from occasional discussion of careers to established senior leadership accountability for strategic careers direction. Strengthened the role of a named senior leader with responsibility for careers, including clear line management of the Careers Leader and oversight of colleagues with careers responsibilities. Made explicit the routine inclusion of careers within senior leadership discussions, planning cycles and reporting processes, aligned to wider organisational priorities. Clarified Column 4 as systematic embedding of strategic careers leadership within whole-setting development, review and reporting processes, informed by careers insight and other leadership information. Strengthened articulation of careers leadership as contributing to a whole-setting approach to improvement, including longer-term consideration of learner destinations.	To position strategic leadership of careers as a core component of senior leadership practice, supporting coherence, visibility and sustained alignment between careers provision, learner experience and whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.
1.5 Support and challenge from governance	To describe how governors/board provide informed support and challenge for careers provision through structured oversight, review and strategic alignment.	Clarified progression from occasional receipt of reports to regular, routine and systematic governance review of careers provision. Strengthened expectations around structured reporting, including the use of data and qualitative insight to support informed discussion. Made explicit the role of a named Careers Link Governor/Board Member in supporting consistency, focus and continuity of oversight. Clarified how careers is increasingly considered alongside the strategic careers development plan, the setting's wider vision and strategic priorities. Defined Column 4 as planned, scheduled and systematic governance review, drawing on agreed data sets, evaluation activity and contextual information, with contributions from the Careers Leader and relevant external partners where appropriate.	To position governance as a strategic partner in careers provision, supporting transparency, accountability and alignment with whole-setting priorities through consistent review and challenge.

Theme 1

Careers leadership, vision and intent, and planning for development (Benchmark 1)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
1.6 Engagement with the national Careers Hub network and other careers networks	To describe how engagement with the national Careers Hub network and other relevant careers networks supports strategic careers planning, collaboration and continuous development.	Clarified progression from occasional contact with Careers Hub colleagues to routine and systematic engagement with Careers Hub networks and communities of practice. Strengthened expectations around regular strategic dialogue with Careers Hub colleagues to inform careers development planning. Made explicit the increasing role of peer review, shared activity and collaborative learning within careers networks. Clarified Column 4 as system-level engagement, with leaders contributing actively to network activity, shared planning and agreed peer review processes over time.	To position engagement with Careers Hubs and wider networks as a strategic and developmental partnership, supporting shared learning, coherence and sustainability in careers provision through structured collaboration.
1.7 Engagement with Enterprise Advisers or business volunteers	To describe how Enterprise Advisers or business volunteers are accessed, engaged and embedded to provide business insight, challenge and strategic support for careers provision.	Explicitly broadened the scope of the row to include business volunteers alongside Enterprise Advisers, recognising a wider range of external business engagement models. Clarified progression from awareness of how to access Enterprise Advisers or business volunteers to planned, routine and systematic engagement with both. Clarified Column 4 as systematic integration of Enterprise Adviser and business volunteer input within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To ensure the model recognises and accommodates different approaches to engaging external business expertise, including both Enterprise Advisers and business volunteers.

Theme 2

Addressing the needs of all learners and impact evaluation (Benchmarks 1 and 3)

Summary

Theme 2 has been strengthened to embed careers provision within wider organisational systems for understanding learner need, planning provision and reviewing practice, repositioning impact evaluation as leadership insight rather than outcome attribution.

Context

Changes to Theme 2 reflect a deliberate shift away from viewing learner need and careers impact evaluation as discrete or intervention-led activities, towards understanding them as part of routine organisational planning, coordination and review processes. The revised theme clarifies how careers activity increasingly draws on learner-level information, perception data, destinations insight and stakeholder voice to support coherent planning across careers, curriculum, pastoral and SEND teams.

Across the theme, deficit-based language has been reduced and replaced with a broader, asset-based framing that recognises under-served learners and priority cohorts. Maturity is now defined more by the quality of information use, collaboration and alignment across the setting. This includes how careers learning journeys are designed and adapted, how recording systems function as shared infrastructure, and how learner, parent and stakeholder perspectives are integrated proportionately into leadership discussion.

The revised approach also reframes careers impact evaluation. Destinations data, learner perception and stakeholder voice are positioned as sources of contextual intelligence, considered alongside attendance, progress and behavioural data. Quality assurance has been strengthened by embedding careers review within existing organisational cycles, reinforcing leadership ownership and coherence with statutory and improvement frameworks.

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
2.1 Development of progressive careers learning journeys	To describe how careers learning journeys are structured, shared and adapted over time to support coherent, progressive and inclusive careers learning for all learners.	- Strengthened the role of sequenced careers-related learning outcomes, setting out what learners should know, understand and be able to do at key points, including transitions. - Made explicit the increasing use of learner-level information and early risk indicators to make careers learning journeys responsive and support appropriate additional or differentiated provision. - Strengthened expectations around collaborative planning across careers, SEND and pastoral teams to support coherence and responsiveness. - Clarified Column 4 as systematic adaptation, alignment and tracking, with careers learning progress considered alongside labour market insight, learner needs assessment and whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To position careers learning journeys as living, shared planning tools that support progression, coherence and inclusion across the learner journey, and to reinforce maturity as a function of design quality, adaptation and organisational alignment, rather than measurement of learner outcomes.

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Addressing the needs of all learners and impact evaluation (Benchmarks 1 and 3)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
2.2 Addressing the needs of all learners	To describe how learner-level information is used to shape and coordinate careers provision across teams, roles and structures.	- Reduced deficit based framing of “vulnerable learners” in favour of broader, asset based language. - Reframed intervention focused language as planning, coordination and review activity. - Clarified Column 4 as system-level embedding across the setting rather than evidence of intervention impact.	To avoid causal assumptions about careers activity improving outcomes, and to keep the focus on how learner information is used organisationally, rather than on claims of effectiveness.
2.3 Effective use of recording systems	To describe how recording systems support oversight, reflection and coordination of careers provision over time, and how careers information is integrated with wider learner information within organisational planning and review processes.	Clarified progression from occasional use of recording systems for activity capture to routine and systematic use as shared organisational infrastructure. Removed language suggesting recording systems are used to measure or prove impact, replacing this with a focus on accessing, referencing and interpreting information to support planning and review. Strengthened expectations around recording learner participation, destinations and (where appropriate) learner reflections, providing a broader evidence base for understanding experience and progression. Clarified increasing access to recording system information by Careers Leaders, senior leaders and governors, with information considered alongside other learner data (e.g. attendance, progress). Defined Column 4 as systematic integration of recording systems within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, with careers information considered alongside other agreed organisational data sources.	To position recording systems as enabling infrastructure, supporting consistency, transparency and shared understanding across leadership and governance. This avoids over-reliance on activity counts or claims of causal impact, and instead frames maturity in terms of how careers information is embedded within wider organisational planning, review and reporting processes.
2.4 Careers impact evaluation: Destinations data	To describe how destinations data is collected, analysed and considered within careers planning, leadership review and whole-setting decision-making, supporting understanding of learner progression and alignment with wider educational and skills priorities.	Clarified progression from occasional collection of destinations data to routine and systematic collection, analysis and review, using consistent frequency-based language. Clarified the scope of destinations data to include intended, actual, sustained and publicly available longer-term data, with explicit reference to agreed and consistent data definitions. Strengthened the role of senior leadership oversight, with destinations data routinely accessed and then systematically embedded within whole-setting reporting arrangements. Made explicit the increasing use of destinations data to inform both the ongoing development of careers provision and wider curriculum and development planning, including alignment with regional skills priorities and Labour Market Information.	To position destinations data as a strategic insight source. The revised row supports use of destinations information by framing maturity in terms of consistency, leadership oversight and organisational embedding. This strengthens coherence with whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, and reflects best practice in using destinations data as contextual intelligence to support informed leadership decision-making over time.

Addressing the needs of all learners and impact evaluation (Benchmarks 1 and 3)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
2.5 Careers impact evaluation: Learner perception	To describe how learners' reflections on their career knowledge, skills, experiences and readiness are gathered and used to inform careers planning, leadership review and whole-setting decision-making.	Clarified progression from occasional learner reflection opportunities to routine and systematic capture of learner perception data using agreed tools and processes (e.g. the Future Skills Questionnaire). Strengthened expectations around regular access to learner perception data by Careers Leaders and senior leaders, with information used to inform careers-related reporting and review. Made explicit that learner perception data is increasingly considered alongside other agreed learner datasets, such as attendance, behaviour, destinations and progress. Clarified Column 4 as systematic embedding of learner perception data within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, with review at both individual and cohort level through established leadership structures.	To position learner perception as a source of insight into experience and readiness. The revised row supports reflective discussion and informed planning by framing maturity in terms of consistency, appropriate use of data and leadership oversight.
2.6 Careers impact evaluation: Stakeholder voice	To describe how relevant stakeholder perspectives are gathered, considered and used to inform shared understanding, leadership discussion and the ongoing review of careers provision.	Clarified progression from ad hoc collection of stakeholder feedback to routine capture and analysis, and then to systematic embedding within leadership structures. Strengthened recognition of a broad range of stakeholder perspectives, including learners, parents and carers, staff, Careers Advisers, employers and partners. Clarified increasing involvement of senior leaders in accessing and considering stakeholder voice as part of established careers-related reporting activity. Defined Column 4 as systematic integration of stakeholder voice within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, alongside other agreed information sources.	To position stakeholder voice as a mechanism for dialogue, reflection and shared understanding. The revised row supports proportionate and consistent use of stakeholder insight within leadership processes, reinforcing maturity as a function of how feedback is integrated organisationally, not the volume or positivity of responses.
2.7 Careers impact evaluation: Quality assurance	To describe how quality assurance of careers provision is structured, undertaken and embedded within existing organisational review processes, ensuring coherence with statutory frameworks, leadership oversight and wider setting improvement priorities.	Clarified progression from occasional and stand-alone reviews to routine and systematic inclusion of careers within established quality assurance cycles. New emphasis on structured leadership review and continuous organisational learning. Clarified the increasing role of senior leaders in quality assurance activity, with careers considered alongside other curriculum and improvement priorities. Defined Column 4 as systematic embedding of careers quality assurance within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, positioning careers as part of wider responses to educational challenges and longer-term improvement priorities.	To position quality assurance as a leadership owned, proportionate and integrated process, rather than a discrete or careers specific compliance exercise. The revised row supports coherence by embedding careers review within existing organisational systems, reinforcing maturity as a function of alignment, consistency and sustained leadership oversight, and ensuring careers provision is considered alongside other strategic priorities rather than in isolation.

Theme 3

Understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and future pathway options (Benchmarks 2 and 7)

Summary

Theme 3 has been strengthened to embed Labour Market Information (LMI), pathway understanding and aspiration building within coherent learner, parent, staff and partnership systems, using insight and engagement data to support equitable, informed transition planning.

Context

Changes to Theme 3 reflect a deliberate move away from treating Labour Market Information (LMI), pathway awareness and aspiration building as discrete knowledge inputs, towards understanding them as integrated, developmental experiences shaped by curriculum, careers learning journeys, staff practice, parental engagement and partnership working. The revised theme clarifies how learners encounter and apply LMI progressively over time, with maturity defined by consistency, sequencing and leadership use of insight, rather than learners' ability to analyse information in isolation.

Across all rows, the theme strengthens the role of documented and responsive careers learning journeys, showing clearly how learners explore LMI, consider pathways and encounter providers at relevant points, particularly at key transitions. Learner engagement, perception and participation data are increasingly positioned as contextual intelligence that informs planning and review, rather than as measures of impact or effectiveness.

The theme also expands beyond the learner to explicitly recognise the roles of parents and carers, staff and external partners. Parents and carers are positioned as active partners in understanding LMI and pathways, with their confidence and perceptions treated as insight to inform communication and engagement strategies. Staff understanding of LMI and routes is reframed as key professional knowledge, embedded within learning and development systems to support consistent, informed and unbiased conversations with learners across roles.

Provider engagement and the use of success stories are strengthened through a clearer focus on partnership, intentionality and equity and a focus on the strategic value of alumni networks has been added.

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
3.1 Understanding of what LMI is and how to make effective use of it	To describe how learners are supported to access, understand and use Labour Market Information (LMI) progressively across their careers learning journey, and how insight into learner engagement with LMI informs planning, review and whole-setting decision-making.	Clarified progression from occasional access to LMI to regular, routine and systematic opportunities for learners to explore and apply LMI within careers education and transition planning. Strengthened emphasis on documented, responsive careers learning journeys, showing how LMI is accessed, understood and evaluated over time and at key transition points. Made explicit the importance of gathering feedback and observations on how learners engage with LMI, and using this insight to shape ongoing planning. Clarified Column 4 as systematic review of learner interaction with LMI at individual and cohort level, with LMI-related insight embedded within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes alongside destinations, curriculum and regional skills information.	To position LMI as a core, enabling knowledge source within careers learning. The revised row emphasises maturity as a function of coherent design, consistent access and informed leadership use of insight, ensuring that learners encounter and apply LMI meaningfully at relevant points, and that engagement with LMI informs responsive planning across the setting.

Understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and future pathway options (Benchmarks 2 and 7)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
3.2 Learner understanding of all routes available to them at key transitions	To describe how learners are supported to explore, understand and review all available routes at key transition points with equity.	- Clarified progression from information access to supported evaluation of routes. - Strengthened alignment between pathway information, learner feedback and planning. - Positioned Column 4 as systematic organisational review.	To ensure the model focuses on how pathway information is structured and used within provision.
3.3 Supporting learners to challenge misconceptions and stereotypes	To describe how careers provision enables learners to recognise and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes over time.	- Extended focus to include parents, carers and staff engagement at higher maturity levels. - Clarified evaluation as insight for planning.	To frame misconceptions work as part of a wider, reflective careers and curriculum provision.
3.4 Parent and carer understanding of what LMI is and how to make effective use of it	To describe how parents and carers are supported to understand and make meaningful use of Labour Market Information (LMI), and how insight into parent and carer confidence and understanding informs careers planning and whole-setting parental engagement approaches.	Clarified progression from ad hoc information sharing to regular, routine and systematic support for parents and carers to understand, access and interpret LMI. Strengthened emphasis on planned and differentiated approaches, recognising variation in parent, carer and learner context. Introduced clearer use of parent and carer perception insight, for example Your Child's Future. Increased emphasis on using insight to refine how LMI is communicated, alongside learner perception and engagement data. Defined Column 4 as embedding parent and carer perception insight within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, considered alongside destinations, curriculum and regional skills information.	To recognise parents and carers as active partners in careers learning and transition planning, and to position their understanding and confidence as a meaningful source of insight for leadership planning. The revised row strengthens coherence by embedding parent and carer perspectives within established review processes. This supports more inclusive, responsive parental engagement strategies aligned with wider educational and skills priorities.

Understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and future pathway options (Benchmarks 2 and 7)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
3.5 Parent and carer understanding of all routes available to learners at key transitions	To describe how parents and carers are supported to understand, compare and engage with information about all available routes at key transition points, and how parent and carer perception insight informs planning, review and parental engagement strategies.	Clarified progression from occasional access to pathway information to routine and systematic support for parents and carers to understand and compare academic, technical, vocational and local pathways. Strengthened focus on equitable and differentiated support, reflecting parent, carer and learner context. Introduced explicit reference to parent and carer perception and confidence, for example via Your Child's Future, and considered alongside learner perception data where useful comparisons can be made. Increased emphasis on structured use of engagement and perception insight by Careers Leaders and senior leaders to review and refine communication and support. Defined Column 4 as systematic review of parent and carer understanding over time, embedded within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes alongside learner voice, destinations, curriculum and regional skills information.	To strengthen the role of parents and carers in supporting informed and equitable decision-making at key transition points, and to ensure careers provision responds to how pathways information is understood and experienced, not just how it is shared. Embedding parent and carer perception insight within leadership processes supports coherent parental engagement strategies, improves alignment with learner experience.
3.6 Staff understanding of LMI and all routes available to learners at key transitions	To describe how staff across teaching, pastoral and support roles develop and apply understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and pathways, and how this understanding supports consistent, informed and unbiased careers conversations with learners.	Clarified progression from occasional access to information to regular, routine and systematic learning and development related to LMI and pathways. Strengthened emphasis on staff confidence in signposting learners, including understanding of local and regional pathways and the wider offer. Introduced clearer use of staff engagement and feedback information to review and refine staff development activity. Defined Column 4 as systematic integration of careers-related learning and development within wider staff development arrangements, with evidence reviewed to inform whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To position staff understanding of LMI and pathways as key professional knowledge, embedded within learning and development systems. The revised row supports consistency and equity in learner experience by strengthening staff confidence and capability across roles, while framing maturity in terms of how professional learning is organised and used.

Understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and future pathway options (Benchmarks 2 and 7)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
3.7 Working in partnership: Effective provider engagement	To describe how engagement with education and training providers is planned, coordinated and embedded to support learner understanding of pathways and opportunities, and how provider engagement aligns with learner needs, careers learning journeys and wider skills priorities.	Clarified progression from occasional engagement with providers to regular, routine and systematic partnership working across academic, technical and vocational routes. Strengthened emphasis on leadership-led engagement, with providers identified and engaged in relation to learner aspirations, needs and emerging career readiness. Made explicit the role of careers learning journeys in showing how provider encounters are incorporated at key transition points. Introduced clearer use of Labour Market Information (LMI), provider feedback and learner-level data to inform review and refinement of provider engagement planning. Defined Column 4 as systematic identification and engagement with providers, informed by LMI, destinations and learner readiness insight, and embedded within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes led by senior leaders.	To position provider engagement as a strategic partnership activity, rather than a series of isolated encounters. The revised row emphasises maturity as a function of coherence, alignment and informed leadership oversight, ensuring provider engagement supports learner progression, reflects local and national skills priorities, and is embedded within wider organisational planning. This approach strengthens equity, relevance and sustainability while avoiding assumptions about the direct impact of individual encounters.
3.8 Effective use of success stories	To describe how success stories and alumni engagement are used to support learners' understanding of pathways, challenge misconceptions and broaden aspirations, and how insight from this activity informs careers planning and whole-setting development.	Clarified progression from occasional sharing of success stories to regular, routine and systematic use of success stories as part of planned careers communication and learning activity. Strengthened emphasis on representing a broad range of routes and pathways, including academic, technical and vocational options, reflecting diverse learner journeys and contexts. Introduced explicit recognition of former learners and alumni engagement, progressing from occasional involvement to the development and maintenance of a sustained alumni network. Made clearer how success stories are selected deliberately to address common misconceptions, perceived barriers and aspirations. Strengthened use of engagement feedback and insight to review and refine how success stories are used. Defined Column 4 as systematic integration of success stories and alumni engagement, with evidence reviewed alongside LMI, destinations data, learner skills and regional priorities, informing whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes and supporting longer-term partnership development.	To position success stories as a strategic learning and engagement resource. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on intentional selection, sustainability and leadership-led integration, ensuring success stories contribute to equitable aspiration-building and informed understanding of pathways over time. Embedding alumni engagement and review within whole-setting planning reinforces coherence with wider careers, curriculum and partnership priorities.

Theme 4

Linking curriculum learning to careers (Benchmark 4)

Summary

Theme 4 has been strengthened to position careers from discrete activity to a curriculum embedded entitlement, supported through coherent design, shared professional practice and whole-setting quality assurance.

Context

Changes to Theme 4 reflect an emphasis on embedding careers within curriculum design, subject delivery and professional development. The revised theme clarifies how maturity develops from occasional, isolated careers activity to planned, protected and systematically integrated careers education that is aligned with curriculum structures and whole-setting improvement priorities.

Across the theme, there is a stronger emphasis on intentional design and progression. Careers education is defined by how learning outcomes are sequenced, reinforced through subjects, and connected meaningfully to learners’ developing knowledge, skills and career readiness. Subject teams are increasingly positioned as contributors to careers learning, with curriculum mapping and cross department collaboration supporting consistent learner experience across year groups.

The theme also strengthens the role of staff capability and professional learning. Understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI), pathways and essential skills is framed as key professional knowledge for teaching and support staff, embedded within induction, appraisal and ongoing development. This ensures careers-related curriculum links are informed, unbiased and sustainable, rather than dependent on individual enthusiasm or awareness.

Finally, the revised theme embeds monitoring and review of careers activity within existing quality assurance and development planning processes. Essential skills development, careers in the curriculum and careers education delivery are reviewed as part of wider curriculum and organisational oversight, reinforcing careers as a shared responsibility and a feature of high quality curriculum provision.

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
4.1 Careers education	To describe how time for careers education is planned, protected and developed over time, and how careers education is increasingly integrated within curriculum design, subject delivery and whole-setting improvement processes.	Clarified progression from occasional, standalone careers education activity to regular, routine and systematic provision across year groups. Reframed careers education from discrete timetable allocation alone to include increasing integration within curriculum mapping, subject planning and classroom practice. Strengthened emphasis on progressive, learner-centred careers-related learning outcomes. Made explicit the role of subject teams and cross-department collaboration in contributing to careers knowledge, skills and understanding. Clarified Column 4 as systematic embedding of careers education within whole-setting quality assurance, curriculum development and development planning, with monitoring and review aligned to existing organisational processes.	To position careers education as a core curriculum entitlement and a shared responsibility across the setting. The revised row strengthens the focus on intentional design, progression and integration, ensuring careers education supports learner development coherently over time. By embedding review and monitoring within established quality assurance and development planning processes, the model reinforces maturity as a function of organisational alignment and curriculum coherence.

Theme 4

Linking curriculum learning to careers (Benchmark 4)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
4.2 Staff highlighting the relevance of their subjects and making links from the curriculum	To describe how teaching staff are supported and enabled to highlight the relevance of their subject learning to careers, pathways and the world of work, and how careers in the curriculum is embedded, reviewed and strengthened across the setting.	Clarified progression from occasional careers-related moments within subjects to routine and systematic careers-related learning across all subjects and year groups. Strengthened expectations around staff confidence and consistency, with explicit links made between subject content, careers, pathways and essential skills. Clarified Column 4 as systematic quality assurance of careers-related learning in the curriculum, embedded within existing monitoring, review and development processes. Made explicit that insight from quality assurance activity is used to support curriculum development, careers-related learning design and whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To position careers-related learning as a feature of high-quality curriculum delivery. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on consistency, shared expectations and organisational oversight, ensuring learners experience coherent and meaningful links between curriculum learning and future pathways. Embedding review within established quality assurance processes reinforces sustainability.
4.3 Staff learning and development to support understanding of Labour Market Information (LMI) and pathways, to inform careers in the curriculum	To describe how staff learning and development supports sustained understanding and application of Labour Market Information (LMI) and pathways knowledge, and how this professional learning underpins consistent, informed and careers in the curriculum practice across the setting.	Clarified progression from occasional receipt of LMI and pathway information to regular, routine and systematic professional learning and development. Strengthened emphasis on planned learning opportunities that support staff to access, interpret and apply LMI and pathway knowledge within teaching and support roles. Made explicit the inclusion of LMI and pathways training within induction and appraisal, supporting sustained understanding over time. Clarified increasing use of staff feedback and engagement insight to review and refine professional development and curriculum planning. Defined Column 4 as systematic embedding of careers-related professional learning within whole-setting staff development, curriculum design and quality assurance processes, with careers positioned as a shared organisational responsibility.	To position staff understanding of LMI and pathways as key professional knowledge, supported through coherent and sustained learning and development arrangements. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on how professional learning is organised, applied and reviewed across roles, ensuring consistent careers in the curriculum practice. Embedding this learning within induction, appraisal and quality assurance reinforces careers education as part of wider organisational development.

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Theme 4

Linking curriculum learning to careers (Benchmark 4)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
4.4 Learner skills development	To describe how essential skills are developed progressively and coherently across the curriculum and careers learning journeys, and how a shared language and structured opportunities support learners to understand, practise and reflect on these skills over time.	Clarified progression from occasional reference to essential skills to the establishment of a shared and consistently used language across the setting. Strengthened emphasis on planned integration of essential skills development within documented and responsive careers learning journeys. Made explicit the role of the curriculum in providing routine opportunities for learners to practise and reflect on essential skills, supported by staff use of shared language. Shifted emphasis to essential skills development being reflected within curriculum planning and careers learning design. Defined Column 4 as systematic embedding of essential skills development within whole-setting curriculum planning, with insight from staff development and evaluation contributing to whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To position essential skills development within the curriculum. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on shared language, progression and coherence, ensuring learners encounter essential skills in consistent and meaningful ways across subjects and careers learning. Embedding review within existing planning and reporting processes reinforces sustainability and alignment with wider organisational priorities.

Encounters with employers/employees and experiences of the workplace (Benchmarks 5 and 6)

Summary

Theme 5 has been strengthened to position planned, equitable and insight-led employer engagement and workplace experiences embedded within careers learning journeys and whole-setting planning.

Context

Changes to Theme 5 reflect a clearer focus on intentional design, sequencing, equity and organisational embedding. The revised theme clarifies how engagement with employers matures from occasional contact to sustained partnership working, aligned with learner needs, aspirations and developing career readiness, and informed by Labour Market Information (LMI) and local, regional and national skills priorities.

Across the theme, employer engagement is repositioned as a strategic partnership activity. Employers are increasingly engaged as contributors to curriculum learning, encounters and workplace experiences, with senior leaders playing a more explicit role in overseeing engagement, reviewing quality and ensuring alignment with wider improvement priorities. Systematic review and refinement of partnerships, informed by feedback and insight, supports sustainability and coherence over time.

The theme also strengthens how employer encounters and workplace experiences are planned and sequenced within careers learning journeys designed to build progressively across year groups and key transition points, underpinned by clearly articulated careers-related learning outcomes.

Greater emphasis is placed on equitable access, with planning and adaptation taking account of learner context and the needs of under-served groups.

Workplace experiences, in particular, are repositioned as integral components of whole-setting approaches to aspiration, engagement, inclusion and transition planning, including NEET prevention. The revised theme clarifies how learner participation data and broader learner-level insight are used routinely by leaders to shape the focus, sequencing and organisation of experiences, ensuring consistency and responsiveness.

Finally, Theme 5 embeds employer encounters and workplace experiences within whole-setting systems for planning, oversight and review, bringing together curriculum, pastoral and inclusion structures. By incorporating these elements within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes, the theme reinforces maturity as a function of coherence, leadership oversight and sustainability.

Encounters with employers/employees and experiences of the workplace (Benchmarks 5 and 6)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
5.1 Working in partnership: Effective employer engagement	To describe how engagement with employers is planned, sustained and embedded as a strategic partnership activity that supports careers education, curriculum learning, employer encounters and workplace experiences, aligned with learner needs and skills priorities.	Clarified progression from occasional and transactional engagement with employers to regular, routine and systematic partnership working. Strengthened emphasis on employer engagement being informed by learner needs, aspirations and developing career readiness, alongside local, regional and national Labour Market Information (LMI) and skills priorities. Shifted focus to integrated partnerships that contribute to curriculum learning, employer encounters and workplace experiences. Made explicit the role of senior leaders in overseeing employer engagement. Introduced clearer expectations around systematic review of employer engagement, using feedback and insight to refine partnerships, curriculum planning and careers provision. Defined Column 4 as embedded, collaborative employer partnerships, aligned where appropriate with recognised quality frameworks (e.g. CEC Employer Standards) and incorporated within whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To position employer engagement as a strategic, collaborative and insight-led component of careers provision. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on partnership quality, coherence and leadership oversight, ensuring employer involvement supports learner experience, curriculum relevance and progression while aligning with wider skills priorities. Embedding employer engagement within whole-setting planning and review processes reinforces sustainability and consistency.
5.2 Meaningful encounters with employers	To describe how employer encounters are planned, sequenced and embedded within careers learning journeys to support learner aspiration, engagement, inclusion and preparedness for transition, and how insight from participation and evaluation informs ongoing planning.	Clarified progression from occasional, stand-alone employer encounters to regular, routine and systematic inclusion of multiple meaningful encounters within careers learning journeys. Strengthened emphasis on equity and inclusion, with explicit consideration of how encounters are adapted to meet the needs of all learners, including under-served groups. Shifted focus to planned and sequenced experiences aligned with careers-related learning outcomes across year groups and key transition points. Introduced clearer use of learner participation data and staff insight to review engagement patterns and inform future planning. Defined Column 4 as systematic embedding of employer encounters within wider curriculum, pastoral and inclusion approaches, incorporated into whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To position employer encounters as deliberately designed and sequenced to support aspiration, understanding and readiness. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on planning quality, coherence and equitable access, ensuring encounters respond to learner context and are informed by participation and evaluation insight. Embedding employer encounters within whole-setting planning and review processes reinforces consistency and sustainability.

Encounters with employers/employees and experiences of the workplace (Benchmarks 5 and 6)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
5.3 Meaningful experiences of the workplace	To describe how workplace experiences are planned, sequenced and embedded as integral components of careers learning journeys, supporting learner aspiration, engagement, inclusion and readiness for key transitions.	Clarified progression from offering workplace experiences to regular, routine and systematic access to meaningful and progressive workplace experiences for all learners. Strengthened emphasis on intentional planning for equity and inclusion, including explicit consideration of under-served groups and adaptation to learner context. Shifted focus to sequenced and progressive experiences, underpinned by clearly articulated careers-related learning outcomes across year groups and key transition points. Made explicit the routine use of learner participation information and broader learner-level insight by senior leaders and relevant staff to shape the focus, sequencing and organisation of workplace experiences. Clarified the positioning of workplace experiences as a deliberate and integral element of wider whole-setting approaches to aspiration, engagement, attendance, inclusion, parental engagement and transition planning, including NEET prevention. Defined Column 4 as formalised, whole-setting systems for planning, oversight and review of workplace experiences, embedded within curriculum, pastoral and inclusion structures and incorporated into whole-setting development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To position meaningful workplace experiences as a coherent, planned learning entitlement. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on sequencing, equity and organisational embedding, ensuring experiences are responsive to learner needs and aligned with wider support structures. Embedding oversight and review within whole-setting planning processes reinforces consistency and sustainability.

Theme 6

Personal guidance (Benchmark 8)

Summary

Theme 6 has been strengthened to position personal guidance as a system embedded component of wider learner support, closely aligned with careers learning journeys, inclusion systems and transition planning.

Context

Changes to Theme 6 reflect an emphasis on embedding personal guidance within whole-setting systems for learner support, transition planning and professional practice. The revised theme clarifies how access to personal guidance matures from opportunity and coordination to routine, planned and systematically embedded provision, underpinned by ethical standards and leadership oversight.

Across the theme, stronger emphasis is placed on coherence, timing and integration. Personal guidance is increasingly aligned with careers learning journeys and scheduled at meaningful points of preparation, reflection and decision making, particularly around key transitions. The role of careers, pastoral, SEND and inclusion teams is clarified, with guidance positioned as part of a coordinated organisational response to aspiration, engagement, attendance, inclusion and NEET prevention rather than a parallel or standalone process.

The revised theme also strengthens the role of parents and carers, moving beyond notification towards active involvement in preparation for and reflection following guidance. This reinforces shared understanding of learner circumstances and progression needs, while maintaining clear boundaries around ethical information sharing and professional responsibility.

Personal guidance resourcing is reframed as a professionally regulated function, with explicit expectations around qualification, ongoing CPD, quality assurance and use of recognised frameworks (e.g. the CDI Framework). Review of provision focuses on quality, consistency and patterns of engagement supporting continuous improvement and informed workforce planning.

Finally, Theme 6 embeds personal guidance within whole-setting planning, evaluation and reporting processes, ensuring leadership visibility, accountability and alignment with wider organisational priorities. By positioning guidance as a strategically overseen, ethically delivered and system supported process, the revised theme strengthens consistency, sustainability and credibility.

Theme 6

Personal guidance (Benchmark 8)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
6.1 Engagement with personal guidance	To describe how learners are supported to access personal guidance, how engagement is coordinated and monitored, and how personal guidance is embedded within wider systems for learner support, transitions and ethical information sharing.	Clarified progression from opportunity to engage in personal guidance to regular, routine and systematic support for learner engagement. Strengthened emphasis on clear, well-managed systems for identifying learner guidance needs, managing referral pathways and monitoring engagement over time. Made explicit the alignment of information sharing and guidance delivery with professional standards, including ethical practice (e.g. the CDI Code of Ethics). Strengthened the role of parents and carers, moving from notification to active involvement through timely communication, preparation and reflection. Introduced clearer expectations around staff learning and development related to personal guidance, mapped to support learners before, during and after guidance meetings. Defined Column 4 as systematic embedding of personal guidance within whole-setting systems, with processes reviewed through wider planning, review and improvement arrangements.	To position personal guidance as a core component of learner support, embedded within whole-setting systems rather than delivered as a standalone entitlement. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on access, coordination, professional practice and parent and carer engagement, ensuring guidance responds to learner needs and is integrated with wider approaches to inclusion, transition planning and learner wellbeing. Embedding personal guidance within planning and review processes reinforces consistency and sustainability.
6.2 Meaningful approach to personal guidance	To describe how personal guidance is planned, timed and coordinated as part of a coherent careers learning journey, and how guidance is integrated with wider pastoral, SEND and inclusion arrangements to support learner progression and transition readiness.	Clarified progression from access to individual guidance meetings to a structured and coherent approach to personal guidance embedded within careers learning journeys. Strengthened expectations around timing and sequencing, with guidance meetings planned around key points of preparation, reflection and decision-making, including transition points. Made explicit the role of information sharing and coordination between careers, pastoral and SEND teams, moving to clear, established systems. Shifted focus to impact evaluation to identify emerging patterns, trends and areas of need, including for priority and under-served groups. Clarified positioning of personal guidance as a core component of whole-setting approaches to aspiration, engagement, attendance, inclusion, parental engagement and transition planning, including NEET prevention. Defined Column 4 as systematic embedding of personal guidance within whole-setting organisational frameworks, with evaluation evidence considered alongside other learner and organisational information within development planning, evaluation and reporting processes.	To position personal guidance as a strategic, coordinated and developmentally timed process, rather than a standalone entitlement. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on coherence, integration and leadership-level use of evidence, ensuring personal guidance contributes meaningfully to understanding learner circumstances and progression needs. Embedding guidance within wider pastoral, SEND and inclusion systems reinforces consistency and sustainability.

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Theme 6

Personal guidance (Benchmark 8)

Row	Purpose of the row	Core element of change	Reason for change
6.3 Personal guidance resourcing	To describe how personal guidance is resourced, assured and sustained through qualified practice, ongoing professional development and structured leadership oversight.	Clarified progression from provision of guidance by a qualified Careers Adviser to systematic and professionally governed resourcing arrangements. Strengthened expectations around ongoing CPD, positioning professional development as an embedded and evaluated component of guidance provision. Shifted emphasis to reviewing provision quality and learner engagement patterns through proportionate and structured processes. Introduced clearer and more consistent quality assurance expectations, including routine use of approved frameworks (e.g. the CDI Framework) and observation by appropriately qualified practitioners. Clarified increasing senior leadership oversight, with guidance resourcing, quality assurance and engagement patterns considered within wider organisational planning, reporting and assurance arrangements. Defined Column 4 as systematic integration of guidance resourcing and quality assurance within whole-setting leadership discussion, workforce development and organisational planning processes.	To position personal guidance resourcing as a professionally regulated and strategically overseen function. The revised row strengthens maturity by focusing on quality, sustainability and leadership accountability, ensuring guidance provision remains aligned with professional standards, current evidence and learner need over time. Embedding review and assurance within whole-setting planning and reporting processes supports consistency and workforce development.

THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

Our Impact

Our evidence