

Strategic careers leadership in a trust

Guidance for trustees

in association with the Confederation of School Trusts

Foreword

The Curriculum and Assessment Review sets out an ambitious vision of education as a purposeful national endeavour, enabling young people to “flourish as informed and fulfilled individuals, as contributors to our democratic society, and as members of a better-qualified workforce that builds economic prosperity”.¹

This vision extends beyond academic success alone. It reflects what Professor Zongyi Deng describes as education’s central concern with the cultivation of human powers, including “understanding, capabilities, [and] dispositions”, and the “formation of autonomous and responsible individuals who can thrive and flourish in the present and future world”.²

What a profound expression of our shared task in education. We are not simply preparing young people to pass through school successfully. We are helping them make sense of who they are, take forward what they have learned, recognise the possibilities open to them, and contribute with confidence to society, community, and working life.

This is why careers education matters so much. It is not a bolt-on or a narrow programme of advice given towards the end of secondary education. Done well, it is part of the educational promise we make to every child: to connect their learning to the world beyond school, broaden their horizons, strengthen their aspirations, and give them the knowledge, confidence, relationships, and experience they need to make informed, ambitious choices about their futures.

In 2026, nearly one million young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK are not in education, employment, or training. The government’s Young people and work: interim report highlights the profound consequences when young people are not equipped to navigate the transition from education into employment. It points to “deeply unequal” access to high-quality careers guidance and identifies lack of work experience as a significant barrier to work.³ At the same time, it recognises the significant progress made through the Careers & Enterprise Company and the Gatsby Benchmarks, highlighting evidence that stronger careers provision is associated with a lower likelihood of young people becoming NEET.

Positive post-schooling destinations are not a peripheral outcome. They are one of the clearest expressions of whether a trust’s educational mission is being realised. They speak to social justice, economic participation, social cohesion, and human dignity. They ask us whether young people are leaving our schools not only with qualifications, but with the confidence, insight, and practical capability to build meaningful lives.

For trustees, this is a matter of governance, not simply compliance. Our responsibility to children and young people cannot stop at the school gate, or at the point when public examination results are published. If we believe that school trusts are civic institutions, rooted in their communities and accountable for the public good, then we must also care about where young people go next, how well prepared they are, and whether all groups of learners have equitable access to the opportunities, guidance, and experiences that help them flourish.

This guidance is intended to support trustees in that work. It sets out the national context, statutory expectations, and strategic questions boards can use to support and challenge leaders. But at its heart is a simple proposition: careers leadership is part of trust leadership. It belongs in the boardroom because it belongs at the centre of our educational purpose.

In co-publishing this guidance with The Careers & Enterprise Company, we hope to support trustees to ask better questions, strengthen strategic oversight, and keep the focus where it belongs: on the young people whose futures are entrusted to us.

Samira Sadeghi

Director of Trust Governance, CST



1 Department for Education (2025), [Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report: Building a world-class curriculum for all](#).

2 Deng, Z. (2022) ‘Powerful knowledge, educational potential and knowledge-rich curriculum: pushing the boundaries’, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 54(5), pp. 599–617.

3 Department of Work & Pensions (2026) [Young people and work: interim report](#).

Introduction

This guidance supports trustees with specific strategic oversight of careers provision. It summarises the national context, statutory expectations, and the key assurance questions trustees can use to support and challenge executive leaders and the [Central Strategic Careers Leader](#) (CSCL).⁴

The guidance is structured into four sections:

- 1| The careers landscape: Gatsby Benchmarks and what 'good' looks like.
- 2| Statutory duties and inspection expectations (DfE, provider access, and Ofsted).
- 3| Careers as a lever for trust improvement (strategy, inclusion, and impact).
- 4| Trustee oversight in practice: role clarity and key strategic questions.

The careers landscape: Gatsby Benchmarks and what 'good' looks like

What is careers education?

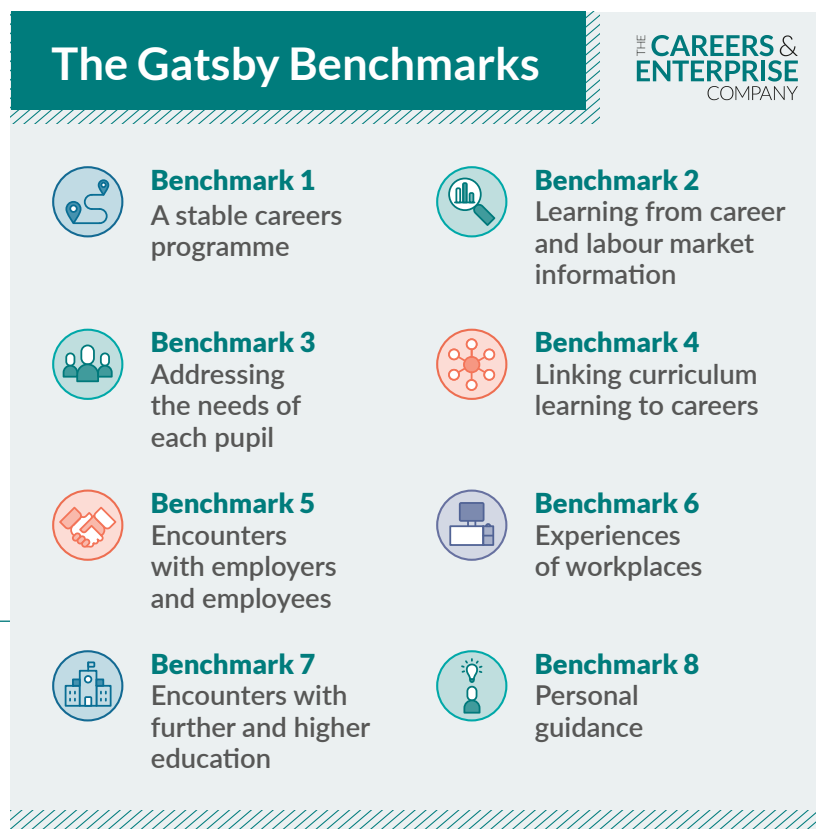
Careers education can be defined as everything learners need to know, understand and be able to do in order to:

- Make aspirational and informed decisions.
- Develop career readiness / prepare for adulthood.
- Make effective and sustained transitions.

Evidence shows that high-quality careers education and guidance drives learner outcomes, reduces the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and increases young people's skills, knowledge, and behaviours to inform their next steps.

Schools and trusts are expected to take a strategic approach to the development of their careers provision, appointing a named Careers Leader and using the updated Gatsby Benchmark framework.⁵ The Gatsby Benchmarks were first established by Sir John Holman in 2014 and are based on extensive national and international evidence. Gatsby released a report, '[Good Career Guidance – The Next 10 Years](#)' in 2024. From September 2025, DfE expects all settings to use the updated Gatsby Benchmarks.

The eight Gatsby Benchmarks are:



⁴ The CSCL is the senior leader responsible for careers across the trust. Their role is to develop and coordinate a trust-wide approach to careers education, ensuring that careers provision is aligned with the trust's vision, improvement priorities, and ambitions for learners. The CSCL works with school leaders, Careers Leaders, executive leaders, and trustees to drive quality, consistency, and impact across all schools.

⁵ Gatsby Charitable Foundation. (2025) [Good career guidance: The Gatsby Benchmarks](#).

As a trustee, your role is not to focus on the operational detail of each Gatsby Benchmark, but to be a champion for careers education and have a clear line of sight on:

The extent to which the Gatsby Benchmarks are meaningfully embedded within everyday practice, rather than approached purely as a compliance exercise.

How the organisation is evaluating impact in a meaningful way, looking beyond activity levels to understand outcomes for young people.

How careers provision is being delivered equitably and inclusively, ensuring all learners benefit.

Where there are emerging risks or areas for development, and how these are being identified and addressed.

Watch this [short video](#) on understanding the updates to the Gatsby Benchmarks.

For a complete understanding of the 2026 updates to the Gatsby Benchmarks and what good looks like within individual Gatsby Benchmarks at school level, please refer to Page 3 of The Careers & Enterprise Company's [Governor Guide](#).

Confidence check:

- What evidence do we have that our careers programme is improving outcomes, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners?
- Are we confident this is true across the trust?

Statutory duties and inspection expectations

The Academy trusts: governance guide states that all boards in trusts that contain a secondary school should appoint a trustee to take on specific strategic oversight of its careers education.

Trustees have a key role in ensuring schools within the trust not only meet their legal requirements but are also equipping their all learners with the tools and knowledge to make informed choices about their futures. They can do this by offering strategic support to school leaders and the CSCL, and by holding the trust CEO or executive leaders to account for the quality of the careers provision.

The CSCL is a strategic leader within a trust, responsible for positioning careers as a lever for improvement and a solution to leadership challenges. This role goes beyond compliance it drives system-wide impact, aligning careers provision with the trust's vision, priorities, and improvement plans.

Trustees should seek assurance that the CSCL has developed and is implementing a strategic careers plan that meets the legal and contractual requirements of each school or special school. The plan should be developed in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks, be informed by the requirements and expectations set out in [DfE statutory guidance](#). This plan should show how the careers provision will be delivered across the trust, championed by the trust board, and how its impact will be measured in each setting as well as trust-wide.

Trustees should ensure that each school within the trust complies with its statutory responsibilities. The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) has produced Careers Statutory Guidance: At a glance guides for school, college and ITP leaders, emphasising the key legislation, leader and trustee duties to ensure compliance with legal and statutory requirements.

The explicit role of governance

Updated statutory guidance reinforces the explicit role of governance in oversight, compliance and strategic alignment. Trustees are responsible for ensuring that:

- Statutory careers guidance requirements are met.
- The Gatsby Benchmarks are understood, adopted and monitored.
- Provider Access Legislation (PAL) is implemented effectively.
- Careers provision supports all pathways, including technical and vocational.
- Leadership has the capacity, authority and capability to deliver.

For a complete understanding of the statutory guidance and Ofsted requirements, please refer to Page 6 of CEC's [Governor Guide](#).

Work experience

Updated statutory guidance places renewed emphasis on work experience as a core component of careers provision. In support of the government's ambition to provide every young person with the equivalent of two weeks' work experience by the end of Key Stage 4, schools are expected to review, strengthen and reform their work experience programmes.

The government's intention for high-quality work experience is that it is in-person and immersive, where learners undertake real tasks and benefit from two-way employer to learner interaction.

Experiences should:

- Be aspirational and inspirational.
- Give learners access to a wide range of career opportunities, aligned to their interests and local skills needs.
- Open opportunities beyond the horizons of their immediate friends and family.

The delivery of two weeks' worth of work experience should be based on the following set of principles, building on the Gatsby Benchmark six's definition of 'meaningful': one that "gives the young person the opportunity to explore what it is like to work in that environment, what skills are valued in the workplace, their recruitment processes and what it takes to be successful."

Two weeks' worth of work experience should be broken down into:

- One weeks' worth of work experience activities in years 7 to 9.
- One weeks' worth of work experience placement(s) in years 10 to 11.

The two weeks' worth of work experience should be additional to any volunteering or part-time paid employment a learner undertakes.

There is a greater emphasis on leadership and strategic planning which will require the support and challenge of trustees. The updated guidance references "aligning progress towards the work experience guarantee to the school's priorities."

The wider guidance now repeatedly positions careers and work experience as part of:

- Whole-school improvement.
- Attendance.
- Behaviour.
- Wellbeing.
- Inclusion.
- Attainment.

The effect is that work experience is less of a standalone programme and more clearly framed as a leadership responsibility, requiring joined up delivery and distributed leadership.

Confidence check:

- How is the trust ensuring that progress towards the work experience guarantee is aligned with school improvement priorities?
- How could you evidence that leaders across the trust are using work experience to support attendance, behaviour, wellbeing, inclusion and attainment and that responsibility for delivery is shared appropriately across senior and middle leaders?

Why careers education matters to trustees

High-quality careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) plays a vital role in improving learners' life chances. It supports informed decision making, broadens aspirations, strengthens engagement in education, and helps young people make successful transitions into further study, training and employment.

For trustees, oversight of careers provision is therefore not simply a compliance responsibility. It is a key part of ensuring that all learners, particularly those who face barriers to learning, can access the opportunities, information and support they need to achieve positive futures.

Trustees should seek assurance that careers provision:

- Helps learners make informed decisions about their future pathways.
- Raises aspirations and improves readiness for adulthood.
- Supports successful transitions into education, employment or training.
- Reduces barriers faced by disadvantaged and vulnerable learners.
- Contributes to wider school improvement and personal development outcomes.
- Is implemented consistently and equitably across all schools within the trust.

Trustee questions

Trustees should be able to articulate the following:

- How do we know our careers provision is improving outcomes for learners?
- What evidence demonstrates that disadvantaged and vulnerable learners are benefiting?
- Are learners progressing to positive and sustained destinations?
- Where do outcomes vary across the trust, and what is being done to address this?
- How does careers provision support the trust's wider educational vision and priorities?

Ofsted and statutory expectations

The quality and impact of careers provision are considered through inspection, alongside schools' statutory responsibilities.

Ofsted's school inspection toolkit considers the quality and impact of careers education, information, advice and guidance, including how schools meet relevant statutory duties. Where the requirements of the provider access legislation are not met, inspectors will report this.

Trustees therefore need assurance that:

- All schools comply with provider access legislation and statutory careers requirements.
- Learners receive impartial information about academic, technical and vocational pathways.
- Careers provision contributes positively to personal development and learner outcomes.
- Leaders can demonstrate the impact of careers provision through evidence, learner voice, destination data and continuous improvement activity.

For a complete understanding of Ofsted requirements, please refer to CEC's [Ofsted Education Inspection Framework Guide](#).

Evidence trustees should seek

Rather than asking 'Are we Ofsted ready?', trustees should seek evidence that:

- Destination data is monitored, analysed, and used to inform improvement.
- Vulnerable, disadvantaged and SEND learners receive effective and targeted support where required.
- Careers provision narrows gaps in participation, aspiration, and outcomes.
- Learners understand the full range of progression pathways available to them.
- Meaningful encounters with employers, workplaces, and education providers are having a positive impact on learners' decisions and aspirations.
- Leaders can clearly articulate the difference careers provision is making to young people's futures.

Confidence check:

- Describe how the trust captures, tracks and uses destination data to understand the post-16 and post-18 pathways learners take across all schools.
- How could you demonstrate that learners are well prepared to make informed progression decisions and successfully access their chosen post-16 and post-18 pathways?

Careers as a lever for trust improvement (strategy, inclusion and impact)

[Statutory guidance](#) and the [Gatsby Next 10 report](#) reference the importance of a whole organisation approach to careers by aligning the strategic careers plan to school priorities.

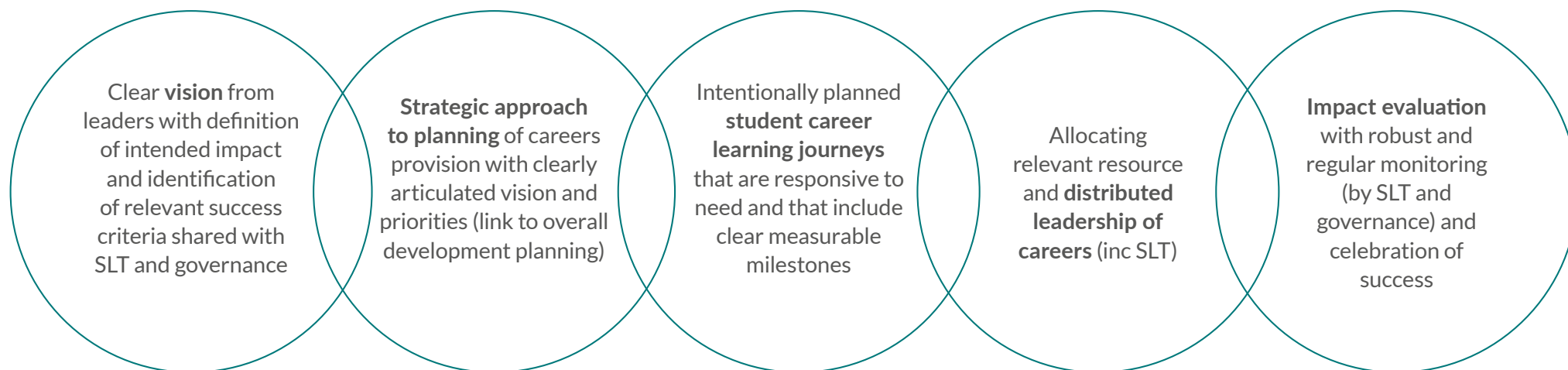
The careers provision should be aligned with the setting's vision, priorities, and development plans. This helps to establish a whole-organisation approach where the careers provision can play an important part in addressing wider improvement priorities, including attendance, behaviour, wellbeing, inclusion and attainment.

Executive leaders, the CSCL and the trustee with strategic oversight of careers should all be actively engaged in setting the direction for a trust-wide approach to careers and give explicit backing to school leaders, ensuring structures support effective delivery and that staff are adequately resourced and well deployed.

These are the five conditions for success that drive sustainable and strategic careers leadership, and when present, can act as a driver for improvement and measurably contribute to improved student learner outcomes.

- **Ambitious and comprehensive vision** from leaders that is clearly articulated, measurable and widely shared and understood.
- **A strategic approach to planning** for careers with articulated priorities and clear and distributed lines of accountability with robust monitoring of progress by executive leaders, the Central Strategic Careers Leader and trustees.

- **Definition of intended impact** for learners, with intentional careers learning journeys that are responsive to need and underpinned by learning outcomes, enabled by progressive and meaningful learning experiences and encounters.
- **Distributed leadership of careers** with leaders at all levels across supported and empowered to support a trust-wide approach to careers, whilst balancing consistency with flexibility for individual academy contexts.
- **Robust monitoring of success and impact** towards the trust vision and intent for learners as leavers, supported by a clear articulation of vision, specific priorities and related learning outcomes.



Careers as a lever for trust improvement (strategy, inclusion and impact)

The Careers Impact System Maturity Model articulates how maturity in each of these areas can lead to stability and sustainability within careers leadership and how this can lead to school improvement.

The Careers Impact System aims to continue to drive positive learner outcomes by:

- Providing assurance of quality of careers leadership and careers provision as a driver for school and special school improvement.
- Improving careers leadership and careers provision across the country.
- Elevating the status of Careers Leadership within wider school development priorities.

The Careers Impact System is rooted in the Gatsby Benchmarks and other evidence about best practice in careers and careers leadership. School leaders can undertake a [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#) via Compass+.

For trusts, there is an additional opportunity: to consider the maturity of strategic careers planning at trust level. The CEC has developed a version of an internal leadership review to be undertaken at trust level through our [Community of Improvement](#). This model is closely aligned with the added value and a quality approach to central strategic leadership of careers.

This trust-level reflective approach to support continuous improvement in central strategic careers leadership enables trusts to position careers not as a standalone function, but as a key lever for improvement supporting equity, engagement, and outcomes across all settings.

Confidence check:

- How do you know there is a consistent, high-quality approach to careers provision across all schools that is making a meaningful difference to learner outcomes?
- Is there quality and consistency of entitlement for all learners across all schools?
- To what extent can you demonstrate, through robust and comparable evidence across schools, that careers is delivered to a high standard and that it is improving learner readiness for next steps, particularly for under-served cohorts?

Trustee oversight in practice: role clarity and key strategic questions

Trustees do not need to manage careers provision operationally. But they do need to champion it, understand it, and seek assurance that it is high quality, inclusive, and making a meaningful difference to young people's lives. That means looking beyond activity to impact, beyond compliance to entitlement, and beyond school outcomes to the futures our young people are able to imagine and achieve.

Careers trustee role description

The careers trustee:

- Understands current statutory guidance and relevant legislation for careers and stays informed about recommended practice across phases.
- Champions a clear trust-wide vision for careers, maintaining strategic focus and horizon scanning for risks and opportunities.
- Understands how careers leadership and careers provision works across the trust, ensuring structures support delivery and that staff are resourced and deployed effectively.
- Builds an effective relationship with the trust careers lead/ CSCL and confidently challenges executive leaders by seeking robust assurance of impact and performance.

Working with your executive careers lead

Trustees must take specific strategic oversight responsibility for careers education. The lead careers trustee can select an appropriate number of questions from the list below to open a conversation with the trust careers executive lead that explores the effectiveness of the trust careers provision and provides trustees with robust, evidence-based assurance.

Effective oversight is built through regular, constructive dialogue. The purpose of meetings between the careers trustee and executive careers lead is not to inspect operational activity, but to build understanding, seek assurance, and support continuous improvement.

Trustees should carefully plan which questions to ask and when. They should ensure that they do not ask too many questions at one time as it is important to build positive, open, trusting relationships that align with the [Academy Trust Governance Code](#).

Vision, strategy, and values

- How confident are we that careers provision reflects the trust's vision, values, and strategic priorities, and is helping to prepare learners for successful futures?
- How do you keep yourself informed of national and regional careers policy changes and their possible impact?
- How are trustees assured that careers strategy is kept current and informed by data, outcomes, and labour market trends?
- How confident are you that the trust careers strategy is current, shared across the trust and known by our stakeholders? How do you know?
- What are the current strategic careers priorities?
 - › What is going well?
 - › How do you know that improvement has been achieved?
 - › How is careers provision regularly reviewed and aligned to trust priorities and improvement planning?
- What role do our local committees play in the oversight of our careers provision?
- How does the culture across the trust support our careers programme?
- What assurance do you receive of this (stakeholder surveys, pupil voice etc)?

Leadership capacity and culture

What assurance do we have that careers leadership has the capacity, capability, and support needed to deliver the trust's ambitions for learners?

- Does the trust have an identified Central Strategic Careers Leader (CSCL)?
- How is the CSCL supported to fulfil the responsibilities of the role?
- What are the greatest challenges facing careers leadership across the trust?
- How is professional development provided to careers leaders?
- Where are the strongest examples of careers leadership across the trust and how are these strengths being shared?
- What additional support or capacity would most strengthen careers leadership?

Quality and consistency

How confident are we that careers provision is delivered consistently to a high standard across all schools for all learners and what evidence do we see to support this?

- How do you gather data from across our trust to show that careers provision is high quality, consistent, and sustainable?
 - › What quality assurance processes (e.g. data review, visits, benchmarking) are used to drive improvement?
 - › Are systems aligned and benchmarked against each other?
 - › How could we improve our intelligence gathering?
 - › Where inconsistency or areas of development are identified, what action is taken?

- How does the trust define and assure compliance with a minimum careers entitlement for all learners across schools in line with statutory responsibilities and provider access legislation?
 - › What assurance do we receive of this?
 - › Is this triangulated from multiple sources?
 - › How are you challenging areas of underperformance?
- How do we triangulate with pupil and parent voice, QA visits, and complaints data, so we are not relying on numbers alone?
- How do leaders ensure careers is embedded across curriculum areas?
 - › How do we assure ourselves of the quality of the curriculum?
 - › When was the careers curriculum last updated and what was the update?
- How is the quality of personal guidance, employer encounters, work experience, and curriculum integration assured across all schools?
- How are Careers Leaders trained, supported and held to account to deliver consistent and effective provision?
- How does the trust benchmark quality between academies and against external standards (e.g. Gatsby Benchmarks, national data)?

Impact on learners

To what extent can we demonstrate that careers provision is improving learners' readiness for next steps (e.g. destinations, skills, aspirations)?

- What data and evidence do we use to understand the impact of careers provision (beyond activity and compliance)?
- How does the trust evaluate learner readiness for transition (e.g. destinations, skills, confidence)?
- How does the trust ensure that learners requiring additional support receive it, and what evidence is used to demonstrate the impact of that support?
- How is destinations data analysed and used to inform strategic decisions across the trust?
- How do we know that employer encounters, work experience and personal guidance are making a measurable difference?
- What evidence do we gather from learner, parent, and employer voice to triangulate impact?
- How is labour market information being used in practice to inform learner choices and outcomes?

Equity and inclusion

How confident are we that all groups of learners, particularly those from under-served cohorts, are benefiting equally from high-quality careers provision?

- How do we know that disadvantaged learners, SEND learners and under-served cohorts are receiving equitable support?
- How does the trust track the intersection between NEETs and other characteristics –gender, ethnicity, FSM, and EAL – at trust, phase, and school level, to get a more nuanced understanding of pupil challenges?
- What does the data tell us about gaps in access, participation and outcomes, and how are these addressed?
- How does the trust ensure equitable access to employer encounters, work experience and personal guidance?
- What systems are in place to ensure no learners or groups consistently miss out on careers provision?
- How is careers provision adapted to meet different learners' needs across academies?
- How do we ensure impartiality in guidance, particularly where the trust has its own post-16 provision?

Oversight and risk

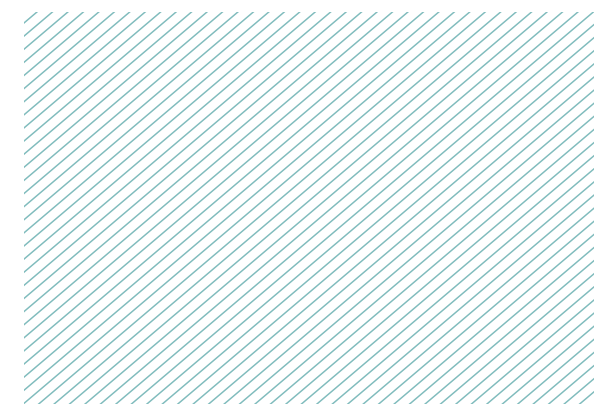
What assurance do we have that leaders are identifying areas for development and taking effective action to improve it?

- What are the key risks to careers provision across the trust, and how are they monitored and mitigated?
 - › How are you monitoring the risk level?
 - › What assurance are you receiving about the effectiveness of the controls we have in place?
- What emerging risks should we be aware of?
 - › What steps are we taking to control the impact?
- What areas have been identified in internal and external audits that require improvement?
 - › How are you holding leaders to account for this improvement?

Civic and system leadership

How effectively is the trust connecting learners to employers, communities, and wider opportunities beyond the school gate?

- How do you keep yourself informed of the challenges faced by each school and the community they are anchored in?
- How do you work with other civic actors to support our children and their families/ communities?
- How do you engage with other trust leaders to act as a system leaders and benefit from a collaborative system?
- How does the trust ensure schools are working closely and collaboratively with the local authority around their statutory responsibilities to ensure a joined-up approach to careers?



Conclusion

Careers education is ultimately about helping young people to see a future for themselves and develop the knowledge, skills, confidence, and relationships needed to pursue it.

For trustees, oversight of careers provision is therefore about more than compliance. It is about ensuring that every learner, regardless of background or circumstance, has access to the opportunities, guidance, and experiences that help them flourish.

The role of the careers trustee is to champion ambition, equity, and opportunity. Through thoughtful support and challenge, trustees help ensure that careers education remains connected to the trust's wider purpose. Because, ultimately, success is measured not only by the qualifications young people achieve, but by the lives they are able to go on and lead.

The Careers & Enterprise Company and available support

The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) is the national body for careers education in England, supporting schools and special schools to deliver modern, 21st century careers education.

Our mission is to help every young person find their best next step. We do this by working with both primary and secondary schools, colleges and employers to improve careers education and secure better outcomes for young people.

Our work is at a national scale and delivered through our network of Careers Hubs that bring together schools, colleges, employers and apprenticeship providers in local areas across England, working in partnership with Mayoral, Combined and Local Authorities and, Local Enterprise Partnerships to connect with local skills needs.

The CEC produces annual insight briefings showing how careers guidance is developing in England. To view the latest reports and evidence, click [here](#).

We have a range of training and support available, including a dedicated [Governor Page](#) on our Resource Directory with training and resources.

There is a free online training module on the [Careers & Enterprise Academy](#), designed to support you in your role as trustee.

Register [here](#) to receive latest policy updates and support via our Governor Digest.

The CEC also convene a [Trust Community of Improvement](#), which is a national network that empowers Central Strategic Careers Leaders (CSCLs) and trust executive teams to position both central strategic careers leadership and academy level careers leadership as core drivers of school and trust improvement.

Through expert-led CPD, tailored resources, and strategic support, the Trust Community of Improvement helps trusts:

- Embed careers within solutions to education leadership challenges.
- Align provision with national policy priorities and trust-wide goals.

Apply robust, tested methodologies for strategic planning and impact evaluation, including the Careers Impact System, Gatsby Benchmarks, modern work experience models, and learner career readiness tools.

Membership provides access to comprehensive data dashboards, leadership development, peer networking and support and collaborative models that enable continuous improvement aligned to trust priorities, strengthen accountability, and improve learner outcomes.

Other sources of support for trustees

Further support for trustees can also be found at:

- [Confederation of School Trusts](#)
- [Boards for Education](#)
- [The Career Development Institute](#) website has a range of support including webinars for trustees and governors.

Help meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks:

[Gatsby Benchmark toolkits](#) and guides to support the [meaningful achievement](#) of all eight benchmarks are available through The CEC Resource Directory, a curated one-stop-shop of high quality, trusted careers tools, guidance and information.

Self-paced online courses designed to support understanding of the updated Gatsby Benchmarks and help educators prepare for their meaningful achievement are available through the [Careers & Enterprise Academy](#).

Compass+

The Compass+ digital tool help settings to benchmark, manage, track and report on their careers provision. Compass evaluations enable settings to quickly and easily evaluate their careers activity against the eight Gatsby Benchmarks. Compass+ offers the facility to collect data at individual learner level, using a range of Compass+ reporting to track career learning journeys and target personalised support appropriately.

Future Skills Questionnaire

In the statutory guidance, the DfE strongly recommends that schools use the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), as an evaluation tool for their careers provision. FSQ is a learner self-completion questionnaire, measures career readiness at points of transition across settings. Insights enable Careers Leaders to make targeted interventions, evaluate the careers provision and identify the impact of careers guidance in their setting.

Careers Impact System

The DfE strongly recommend the use of the Careers Impact System in the statutory guidance 2025. The Careers Impact internal leadership review is based on the Careers Impact maturity model, which provides a shared language of how careers can be positioned as a driver for school, special school and college improvement. The digital feature allows for responses agreed in your internal leadership review discussion to be centrally recorded in Compass+. Settings also have instant access to a summary of responses, including a visualisation showing a snapshot of indicated areas of strength and priority action areas.

Work experience

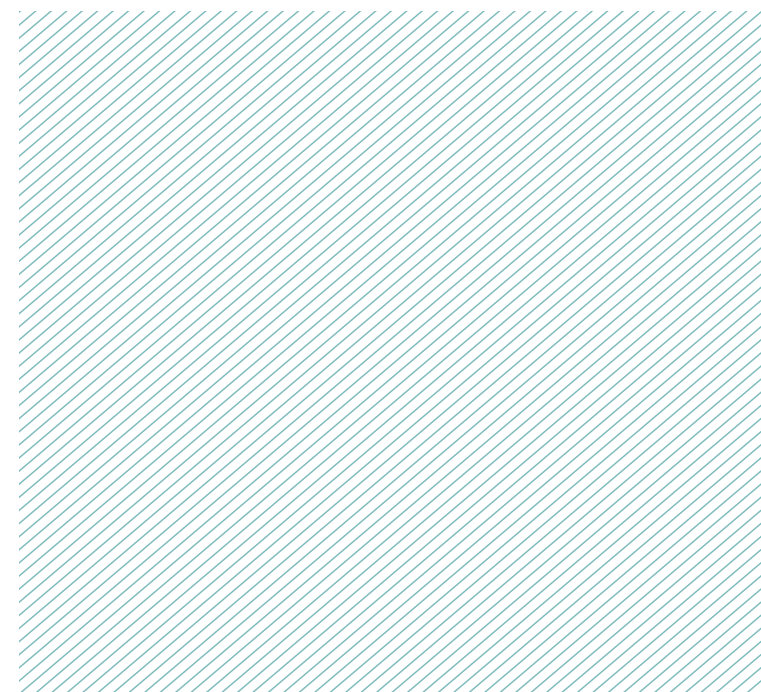
For support in reforming work experience provision, visit the CEC website [here](#).

Your Child's Future

The Careers & Enterprise Company, supported by the Gatsby Foundation, designed Your Child's Future (YCF) to help education settings understand parents' and carers' knowledge, confidence and awareness of careers. The questionnaire provides insights to strengthen parental engagement and shape more informed, responsive and effective careers programmes that better support young people.

OnTrack+

OnTrack+ helps educators identify emerging support needs among learners in Years 7–11, sustain learner engagement and support the transition to post-16 education or training. Embedded in Compass+, this feature can be used as an early-insight diagnostic tool to inform timely intervention planning, strengthen progression pathways and highlight learners who may be at increased risk of becoming NEET.



Appendices & glossary

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

Careers policy

A careers policy is a set of guidelines and principles, established by an educational setting to provide a framework for the intent, implementation and evaluating impact of a careers programme. This could include:

- Legislation, guidance and evidence informing practice.
- Approach and rationale for key strategic decisions e.g. CPD, stakeholder engagement, partnership working.
- Commitment to resourcing and acknowledgement of budget to support the implementation of plans.

Strategic Careers Plan

The Strategic Careers Plan, first conceptualised by Teach First in 2017, can be used as a 'manual' to achieve careers and whole school, special school, and college strategic objectives. The format follows the Teach First Strategic Careers Plan concept and includes:

- Vision.
- Current state.
- Key strategic objectives (student-centred and measurable).
- Action plan to achieve objectives.

Careers Programme

A planned programme of universal and targeted careers activities, which includes careers learning, encounters and experiences.

Careers Learning Journeys

Careers Learning Journeys document and map out intended learning from participating in careers learning, encounters and experiences, within and beyond the subject specific curriculum. Each person's careers learning journey has many influences and contributors. Leaders in schools, special schools and colleges have the opportunity to:

- Provide meaningful encounters and experiences with opportunities for reflection and analysis.
- Equip learners with the skills to take control of their own careers learning journey, make aspirational and informed decisions, make effective and sustained transitions and develop career readiness.
- Mitigate against any false or misleading information learners may have encountered from different sources.

Careers Leaders can further enhance the Careers Learning Journeys through staff development and embedding parent & carer engagement.

Careers leader and Careers adviser

These are two distinct roles, although in some instances, once person may hold both roles.

- A Careers Adviser offers advice and guidance to individuals or groups of young people to help them make informed decisions about their futures.
- A Careers Leader is responsible and accountable for the delivery of their setting's programme of career education. It is a senior role that requires the person doing it to have a clear overview of the setting's careers provision and to make sure that the setting meaningfully meets the Gatsby Benchmarks through the development of a progressive careers learning journey.
- A Central Strategic Careers Leader is a critical strategic leader within the trust, responsible for positioning careers as a lever for improvement and a solution to leadership challenges. This role goes beyond compliance it drives system-wide impact, aligning careers provision with the trust's vision, priorities, and improvement plans.

Careers guidance

Careers guidance is a comprehensive support system designed to help learners make informed decisions about their education, training, and career paths. It encompasses a range of activities and support aimed at providing learners with the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to navigate their future careers effectively.

THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

Our Impact

Our evidence