



Department
for Education

Careers guidance

**Guidance for further education colleges
and sixth form colleges**

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Summary

About this guidance

All further education (FE) colleges and sixth form colleges in England are subject to a requirement to secure access to independent¹ careers guidance.² This forms part of FE college and sixth form college funding agreements. Colleges also have a legal requirement to provide all college learners with guidance materials and a wide range of up-to-date reference materials relating to careers education and career opportunities.³

The DfE has also published [statutory guidance](#) for schools on careers guidance, which can be used by colleges to review support for 14- to 16-year-old learners. The use of the word 'college' in this guidance refers to both further education and sixth form colleges.

Expiry or review date

This guidance replaces the version issued in March 2015. The guidance will be reviewed annually and updated if necessary.

Who is this advice for?

This guidance is for all FE colleges and sixth form colleges in England and applies to:

- All learners in colleges up to and including the age of 18;
- 19- to 25-year-olds with a current Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan in place under section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

We encourage other providers⁴ of post-16 education and training, including independent training providers, to follow this guidance as a statement of good practice.

¹ Independent is defined as external to the college. External sources of careers support could include employer visits, mentoring, website, telephone and helpline access and personal guidance provided externally to the college. Taken together, the external sources must include information on the range of education and training options, including apprenticeships. Personal guidance does not have to be external – it can be delivered by college staff, if trained. Where this advice or any other element of the careers programme is internal, it must be supplemented by external sources of support to ensure compliance with the requirement in funding agreements.

² Careers guidance is understood in this document to be the full range of activity delivered under the eight Gatsby Benchmarks

³ Section 45 of the Education Act 1997

⁴ Other providers should check their grant funding agreements for any requirements which relate to the provision of careers guidance.

Main points

- Government's reforms set out in the Post 16-Skills Plan⁵ will help meet the needs of our growing and rapidly changing economy by raising the prestige of technical education. FE colleges will have a key role in delivering these reforms. There will be 15 high-quality routes to skilled employment which group together occupations where there are shared training requirements. New T level programmes will sit within each route. Alongside apprenticeships as our high quality work-based option, T levels will form the basis of our new technical education offer.
- All 16 to 19 study programmes⁶ should be focussed on progression to learning at the next level or to employment. In order to support this, learners will need access to high-quality support to make decisions about the next step that is right for them and to aspire to achieve their full potential. It is a requirement for 16- to 18-year-olds (and 19- to 25-year-olds with a current EHC Plan) in college to have access to independent careers guidance.
- Colleges are committed to improving the life chances of their learners and many already offer high quality careers programmes to meet their requirement. Evidence points to the need to go further. Too many learners leave learning as soon as they complete their first post-16 qualification. The FE Choices Survey, asking learners about satisfaction with their course, found that the element which has consistently received the lowest satisfaction rating over the last three years was "advice learners had been given about what they could do after their course had finished" (33% in 2015, 33% in 2016 and 30% in 2017 of learners gave a rating of 7 or lower out of 10).
- The Government's careers strategy⁷, published on 4 December 2017, sets out a long-term plan to build a world-class careers system that will help young people and adults choose the career that is right for them. This guidance has been updated to expand on the measures set out in the strategy: to make sure that all young people get a programme of advice and guidance that is stable, structured and delivered by individuals with the right skills and experience.
- To achieve this aim, the careers strategy sets out that every college should use the Gatsby Charitable Foundation's Benchmarks⁸ to develop and improve their careers

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

⁶ All ESFA funded education for 16 to 19 year olds should be delivered as a study programme which combines qualifications and other activities, and which is tailored to each student's prior attainment and career goals. 16 to 19 study programmes are also relevant to 20 to 25 year olds with an education, health and care plan

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents>

⁸ <http://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/good-career-guidance>

provision. This guidance has been restructured around the Benchmarks with information on what colleges need to do to meet each one. Gatsby's original study was focussed on careers guidance in secondary schools but the report was clear that the principles set out in the Benchmarks apply to colleges too. Gatsby has worked with colleges to review the applicability of the Benchmarks for learners following post-16 programmes, and a small number of revisions have been made to the criteria to ensure they are appropriate.⁹

- The Gatsby Benchmarks are not a statutory framework but by adopting them, colleges can be confident that they are complying with the careers guidance requirements set out in their funding agreement.
- The Benchmarks go further by defining all of the elements of an excellent careers programme, based on the best national and international research. Government recognises that the work needed to meet all eight Benchmarks will vary for each college. Government's expectation is that colleges begin to work towards the Benchmarks now and meet them by the end of 2020. An online self-evaluation tool, Compass, will be available in September 2018 for colleges to assess how their careers support compares against the Gatsby Benchmarks and the national average.
- The careers strategy explains that both co-ordinated external support and appropriately skilled and experienced careers leadership in the college are important to meet the Benchmarks. This guidance explains what support will be made available to colleges between now and 2020.
- The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) will provide external support to colleges. In 2014, the Government established the CEC to provide the strategic co-ordination for employers, schools, colleges, funders and careers programme providers to create high impact careers and enterprise support to young people (aged 12-18). The CEC's initial focus has been on employer engagement, based on evidence of giving young people more opportunities to connect with employers of all sizes, and from all sectors. These encounters will inspire learners and allow them to learn about what work is like, or what it takes to be successful in the workforce. The careers strategy confirmed that the CEC will take on a more ambitious role, building on their progress to date by coordinating support for colleges across all of the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- The careers strategy sets out that every college needs a Careers Leader who has the energy and commitment, and backing from their senior leadership team, to deliver the careers programme across all eight Gatsby Benchmarks. In larger colleges this might be a Careers Leadership team. Government will make more information and support available in 2018 to support colleges to develop and train Careers Leaders.

⁹ www.gatsby.org.uk/goodcareerguidance

- The way in which careers guidance will continue to be considered during Ofsted inspection is set out in Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework¹⁰ and the Ofsted FE and Skills Inspection Handbook.¹¹ Ofsted is legally required to comment, in an inspection report, on the careers guidance provided to learners at colleges. This will apply to all 16- to-18-year-olds, and learners up to the age of 25 with an EHC Plan.¹² While the statutory duty applies only to the inspection of colleges, inspectors will inspect and comment in similar fashion on careers advice on short and full inspections of all further education and skills providers as appropriate.
- A successful careers guidance programme will also be reflected in higher numbers of learners progressing to positive destinations such as apprenticeships, technical routes, higher education or employment. Destination measures provide clear and comparable information on the success of colleges in helping all of their learners follow a curriculum that offer them the best opportunity to continue in education or training. We publish 16-18 (KS5) education destinations in performance tables on gov.uk¹³, meaning that they are becoming an established part of the accountability system.

Compliance with the guidance

- Colleges are expected to comply with this guidance and this forms part of the conditions of grant funding. In the event of non-compliance it is open to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to take action in accordance with the provisions of its Grant agreement.
- We encourage the resolution of issues locally but it is open to individuals to complain about providers the ESFA fund if they have exhausted the college's own complaints process.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015>

¹¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667720/Further_education_and_skills_inspection_handbook_for_use_from_January_2018.pdf

¹² Section 125 of the Education and Inspections Act 2016 as amended by section 41 of the Technical and Further Education Act 2017

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables>

The Gatsby Benchmarks¹⁴

1. A stable careers programme	<p>Every college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by learners, parents, teachers, employers and other agencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every college should have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of the senior management team, and has an identified and appropriately trained person responsible for it. • The careers programme should be published on the college’s website in a way that enables learners, parents, college staff and employers to access and understand it. • The programme should be regularly evaluated with feedback from learners, parents, college staff and employers as part of the evaluation process.
2. Learning from career and labour market information	<p>Every learner, and their parents (where appropriate), should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During their study programme all learners should access and use information about career paths and the labour market to inform their own decisions on study options. • Parents should be encouraged to access and use information about labour markets and future study options to inform their support to the learners in their care.
3. Addressing the needs of each student	<p>Learners have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each learner. A college’s careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A college’s careers programme should actively seek to challenge stereotypical thinking and raise aspirations. • Colleges should keep systematic records of the individual advice given to each learner, and subsequent agreed decisions. • The records of advice given should be integrated with those given at the previous stage of the learner’s education (including their secondary school) where these are made available. Records should begin to be kept from the first point of contact or from the point of transition. • All learners should have access to these records to support their career development. Colleges should collect and maintain accurate data for each learner on their education, training or employment destinations.

¹⁴ Holman, J. (2014) Good Career Guidance. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation. These Benchmarks have subsequently been adapted for use by colleges.

4. Linking curriculum learning to careers	<p>All subject staff should link curriculum learning with careers, even on courses that are not specifically occupation-led. For example, STEM subject staff should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths. Study programmes should also reflect the importance of maths and English as a key expectation from employers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout their programme of study (and by the end of their course) every learner should have had the opportunity to experience how their subjects help people gain entry to (and be more effective workers within) a wide range of occupations.
5. Encounters with employers and employees	<p>Every learner should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes, and should include learners' own part time employment where it exists.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every year, alongside their study programme, learners should participate in at least two meaningful encounters* with an employer. At least one encounter should be delivered through their curriculum area. • Colleges should record and take account of learners' own part-time employment and the influence this has had on their development. <p>*A 'meaningful encounter' is one in which the learner has an opportunity to learn about what work is like or what it takes to be successful in the workplace.</p>
6. Experiences of workplaces	<p>Every learner should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the end of their study programme, every learner should have had at least one experience of a workplace, additional to any part-time jobs they may have.

<p>7.Encounters with further and higher education</p>	<p>All learners should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the end of their programme of study, every learner should have had a meaningful encounter* with a range of providers of learning and training that may form the next stage of their career. This should include, as appropriate, further education colleges, higher education and apprenticeship and training providers. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and learners. <p>*A 'meaningful encounter' is one in which the learner has an opportunity to explore what it is like to learn in that environment.</p>
<p>8.Personal guidance</p>	<p>Every learner should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a career adviser, who could be internal (a member of college staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level*. These should be available for all learners whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all learners but should be timed to meet individual needs.</p> <p>* The college should ensure that access to a level 6 adviser is available when needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every learner should have at least one such interview by the end of their study programme.

Requirements and expectations of colleges

Timing	Action
Ongoing (requirement was introduced in September 2013 through FE college and sixth form college grant funding agreements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every college must ensure that 16- to- 18-year-olds and 19- to- 25-year-olds with an EHC Plan are provided with independent careers guidance
From January 2018 to end 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every college should begin using the Gatsby Benchmarks to improve careers provision now, and meet them by the end of 2020. For the employer encounters Benchmark, every college should begin to offer every learner at least two meaningful encounters with an employer each year and should meet this in full by the end of 2020. At least one encounter should be related to the learners' field of study.
From September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every college should appoint a named person to the role of Careers Leader to lead the careers programme Every college should publish the careers programme on the college's website in a way that enables learners, parents, college staff and employers to access and understand it.

Support for colleges

Timing	Action
From September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) will take on a broader role across all the Gatsby Benchmarks
During 2018 and 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEC will provide tools to help colleges meet the Gatsby Benchmarks
During 2018 and 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Leaders training funded for 500 schools and colleges
By end 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All colleges will have access to an Enterprise Adviser.

Meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks

Benchmark 1: A stable careers programme

1. Every college should have their own structured careers and enterprise programme in place that meets the requirements of the other seven Benchmarks, showing how they come together into a coherent strategy that is embedded in college structures.
2. The presence of a named individual in each college with appropriate skills and experience (a Careers Leader) is important to ensure the leadership and coordination of a high quality careers programme. This role is distinct from the careers adviser, who provides careers guidance to pupils. The Careers Leader may be a teaching or non-teaching member of staff but should have influence across the college and buy-in from the Governors and Senior Leadership team. From September 2018, every college should appoint a named person to this role. A programme of engagement with colleges will be carried out to set out the benefits of the role and ensure appropriate training and support is developed. Further details will be made available by September 2018, including a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of a Careers Leader. Colleges should publish the name and contact details of their Careers Leader on their website.
3. From September 2018, we will expect colleges to publish details of their careers programme so that it is known and understood by learners, parents/carers, college staff, governors and employers. The college should invite feedback from these groups as part of a regular evaluation of the careers programme. The plan should demonstrate how the college is responding to meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks.
4. The CEC has built a national network of Enterprise Coordinators co-funded with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). Enterprise Coordinators are trained people who work with college leadership teams to build careers and employer engagement plans. In addition, each college is supported by an Enterprise Adviser – a senior volunteer from business – who helps unlock relationships with other local businesses¹⁵. The network is now operating in over half of schools and colleges and all colleges will have access to an Enterprise Adviser by 2020.
5. The Government expects all FE colleges to have the Matrix Standard as a requirement of their grant funding agreement. The Matrix Standard is a national standard which externally evaluates an organisation's effective delivery of information, advice and guidance. The Standard looks at management and accountability, how the college provides the service, the quality of delivery and how the college evaluates and continuously develops the service.

¹⁵ Information about how to sign up to the Enterprise Adviser Network is available at <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/schools-colleges/sign-your-school>.

6. Colleges can gain formal accreditation of their careers programme for 16- to-18-year olds and 19- to- 25-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan through the Quality in Careers Standard¹⁶ - the national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance. Work is continuing to align the Standard more fully to the Benchmarks and to incorporate Compass into its processes, so those colleges achieving the Standard meet all eight Benchmarks. We strongly recommend that all colleges work towards the updated Quality in Careers Standard, incorporating Compass, to support the development of their careers programme

Benchmark 2: Learning from career and labour market information

7. Every learner, their parents/carers (where appropriate), and advisers should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. The National Careers Service offers information and professional advice about education, training and work to adults and young people aged 13 years and over. Learners and their parents/carers can access support via a website¹⁷, helpline¹⁸ and web chat.
8. There is a significant mismatch between the careers that young people want to pursue and the opportunities available. Labour market information (LMI) can help young people and their parents/carers to understand the salaries and promotion opportunities for different jobs, and the volume and location of vacancies across different sectors. Colleges should make sure that, during their study, all learners have accessed and used information about career paths and the labour market to inform their decisions on study options. Colleges should explain the value of finding out about the labour market and support learners and their parents/carers (where appropriate) to access and understand this information.
9. LMI can be accessed from a range of sources. Government funds a high quality LMI service called LMI for All which is used by a number of providers, including the National Careers Service¹⁹. In many areas, Local Enterprise Partnerships²⁰ are drawing together labour market information and colleges may find it helpful to make use of this.
10. Good career and labour market information can also support social mobility by raising aspirations and tackling stereotypical assumptions that certain jobs are 'not for people like me'. Career choices for girls, particularly around STEM, are affected in a range of ways. Colleges may use a number of interventions to tackle gender stereotypes, for example by arranging for learners to talk to men and women who work in non-

¹⁶ <http://www.qualityincareers.org.uk>

¹⁷ <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

¹⁸ 0800 100 900

¹⁹ <http://www.lmiforall.org.uk/>

²⁰ Schools can identify their Local Enterprise Partnership at <https://www.lepnetwork.net/find-your-nearest-lep/>

stereotypical jobs and raising awareness of the range of careers that STEM qualifications offer.

Benchmark 3: Addressing the needs of each student

11. The college careers programme should raise the aspirations of all learners but also be tailored to individual need. Colleges should consciously work to prevent all forms of stereotyping in the advice and guidance they provide, to ensure that young people from all backgrounds, gender and diversity groups, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, consider the widest possible range of careers.
12. Colleges should keep systematic, comprehensive and accurate records of individual guidance given to each learner to support their career and enterprise development. The records should be kept from the first point of contact with the learner or from the point of transition. All learners should have access to these records. They are an effective means of maintaining consistent advice and helping learners and advisers to keep track of agreed actions and next steps.
13. Colleges should assess their success in supporting their learners to progress to education at a higher level, or to sustainable employment. One way of doing this is through the use of destination data. Colleges are encouraged to make more use of their destination data and to aspire to collect and maintain this data on their learners. Collection and analysis of this data can help colleges to see how well they are doing in countering stereotypes and raising aspirations (benchmark 3). It can also help colleges build and maintain alumni networks which will be valuable for giving learners encounters with employers and employees (benchmark 5) and encounters with further and higher education (benchmark 7).
14. The Government publishes 16-18 (key stage 5) education destinations on the performance tables website. These [destination measures](#) are produced and published by the Department for Education using existing data collections and are based on sustained participation²¹. They show the percentage of a college's former learners who continued their education or training (including through an apprenticeship), went into employment, and those who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Government also publishes [further education outcome-based success measures](#) for apprenticeships and traineeships for all ages, and for adults aged 19 and over. Colleges can use the data to consider the destinations into which former learners progressed and how successful their transition into those options were.
15. Colleges should aspire to collect and maintain destination data on their learners. They can then use this data to inform their internal practices and build alumni networks. The Government publishes 16-18 (key stage 5) education destinations on the

²¹ The destination measures are based on activity in all of the first two terms (defined as October to March) of the year after the young person left KS4 or took A level or other level 3 qualifications.

performance tables website. The Government will provide more detail on destination data, including good practice examples of how they can be used, in the next update of this guidance.

Targeted support for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people

16. Local authorities have a range of duties to support young people to participate in education or training which are set out in statutory guidance on the participation of young people. Local authorities should have arrangements in place to ensure that 16 and 17-year-olds have agreed post-16 plans and have received an offer of a suitable place in post-16 education or training under the 'September Guarantee', and that they are assisted to take up a place.
17. Colleges should work with local authorities, particularly children's social care, to identify young people who are in need of targeted support. This includes young people with particular vulnerabilities or who are receiving support to safeguard them and promote their welfare, such as children in need (including those who are on child protection plans or who are looked after). It also includes young people with additional needs, such as special educational needs and disabilities, or those who may leave care between the ages of 16 and 18. Colleges will need to agree how these young people can be referred for support drawn from a range of education and training support services available locally. This may require multi-agency working with other professionals involved in supporting the young person, such as social workers.
18. Learners who have transferred to college from Alternative Provision are some of the most vulnerable in the education sector who may require targeted support to help them achieve their full potential. Colleges should have high aspirations for these learners. They should work in partnership with their alternative provision providers and local authorities to provide support and advice on transitional pathways into further education or training. In doing so, they should consider the particular needs of the young person coming from Alternative Provision and what different or additional support they may need to succeed.
19. Colleges should ensure that young people understand the programmes available to support them with the costs associated with staying in further education. The [16 to 19 Bursary Fund](#) is available to support young people in defined vulnerable groups, who may receive yearly bursaries of up to £1,200 and/or discretionary payments to help those in financial hardship.
20. Looked after children and previously looked after children, and care leavers may need particularly strong support to ensure high levels of ambition and successful transition to post 16 education or training. The college Careers Leader should engage with a school's designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children to 1) ensure they know which learners are in care or care leavers; 2) understand their

additional support needs and 3) ensure that, for looked after children, their personal education plan can help inform careers advice.

Information sharing

21. Local authorities are required to collect and record information about young people up to and including academic age 17 – and up to age 25 for those with an EHC Plan. To help them to do this, all colleges must provide relevant information about all learners to local authority support services²². This includes:

- basic information such as the learner's name, address and date of birth.
- other information that the local authority needs in order to support the young person to participate in education or training and to track their progress. This includes for example: young people's contact details including phone numbers, information to help identify those at risk of becoming NEET post-16, young people's post-16 and post-18 plans and the offers they receive of places in post-16 or higher education. However, colleges must only provide the basic information, and not this additional information, if a learner aged 16 or over, or the parent of a learner aged under 16, has instructed them not to share information of this kind with the local authority. The college's privacy notice is the normal means of offering young learners and their parents/carers (where appropriate) the opportunity to ask for personal information not to be shared.

22. Colleges must also notify their local authority/service provider whenever a 16 or 17-year-old leaves an education or training programme before completion²³. This notification must be made at the earliest possible opportunity to enable the local authority to support the young person to find an alternative place. It is for colleges and local authorities to agree local arrangements for ensuring these duties are met.

Careers guidance for learners with special educational needs or disabilities

23. Colleges should ensure that careers guidance for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is differentiated, where appropriate, and based on high aspirations and a personalised approach²⁴. Colleges should ensure every learner, whatever their level or type of need, is supported to fulfil their potential. The overwhelming majority of young people with SEND, including those with high levels of need, are capable of sustainable paid employment, with the right preparation and support. All college staff working with them should share that presumption, and should help them to develop the skills and experience, and achieve the qualifications they need to succeed in their careers. Colleges should also work with families of

²² Section 72 of the Education and Skills Act 2008

²³ Section 13 of the Education and Skills Act 2008

²⁴ It is worth noting that a high proportion of looked after children have SEND, therefore guidance on careers advice for learners with SEND *may* also be relevant to this group.

learners with SEND to help them understand what career options are possible, with the right support, for their son/daughter.

24. Careers guidance for learners with SEND should be based on the learner's own aspirations, abilities and needs. Research by the CEC highlights the need to put the individual with SEND at the centre, working with the family (where appropriate), to start transition planning early, and the value of supported encounters with the workplace and work experience²⁵.
25. Careers guidance for learners with SEND should take account of the full range of relevant education, training and employment opportunities, such as traineeships and apprenticeships, supported internships (for young people with EHC Plans) or routes into higher education. It should be well informed about ways in which adults with SEN or disabilities can be supported in the workplace (e.g. supported employment, ways in which jobs can be "carved" to fit a person's abilities, job coaching, reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the workplace and Access to Work (DWP support)). Advice on self-employment (e.g. micro-enterprise) may also be relevant.
26. Colleges should build partnerships with businesses and other employers, employment services, and disability and other voluntary organisations, to broaden their horizons. Encounters with employers and exposure to workplaces can be transformational for learners with SEND, particularly hands on experience in the workplace, and colleges should facilitate this. The opportunity to experience different workplaces can be particularly helpful. Colleges should prepare learners well for these experiences, match them carefully to each employer and provide any special support the learner may need to benefit fully from the experience.
27. Colleges should ensure that careers guidance for each learner does not simply focus on finding a post-18 destination to meet their immediate needs. Support should focus on the learner's career aspirations, and the post-18 options which are most likely to give the young person a pathway into employment, or higher education, and give them the support they need to progress and succeed.
28. Adults with SEND (aged 19+) are priority group customers and will be eligible for face to face support from the National Careers Service
29. Colleges should make use of the SEND local offer published by the local authority. Where learners have EHC Plans, their annual reviews must include a focus on adulthood, including employment. Colleges should ensure these reviews are informed by good careers guidance. Colleges should co-operate with local authorities, who have an important role to play through their responsibilities for SEN support services, EHC Plans and also the promotion of participation in education and training. Statutory guidance on the SEND duties is provided in the [0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice](#).

²⁵ <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/research/transition-programmes-young-adults-send-what-works>

Benchmark 4: Linking curriculum learning to careers

30. Subject teachers should also support the college's approach to careers education and guidance and should link the content of study programmes with careers, even on courses which are not specifically occupation led. The study programme model offers excellent opportunities for developing the broader skills that employers need, such as team working and problem solving. Subject specialist staff can be powerful role models to attract learners towards their field and the careers that flow from it. Colleges should ensure that all subject specialist teachers are competent to support the career development of learners through their subject teaching.
31. As part of their study programme, colleges are expected to ensure that every learner is exposed to the workplace or other work-related activity. This activity should be tailored to the needs of the learner and their longer-term aims and should include emphasis on how their subjects can help to gain entry to occupations and be successful within these occupations.

Benchmark 5: Encounters with employers and employees

32. There is strong research evidence about the impact of employer engagement on learners' future prospects and earnings in adult life. A study conducted by the Education and Employers Taskforce²⁶ found that where there were higher levels of employer contacts, in the form of careers talks with outside speakers, this was linked to higher returns in the labour market.
33. A clear focus on the enterprise, employability skills, experience and qualifications that employers value can support preparation for work. Colleges should help learners gain the confidence to compete in the labour market by providing opportunities to gain the practical know-how and attributes that are relevant for employment. This should include opportunities for learners to develop entrepreneurial skills for self-employment. Colleges should engage fully with local employers, businesses and professional networks (CEC) to ensure real-world connections with employers lie at the heart of the careers strategy. Visiting speakers can include quite junior employers, or apprentices, particularly alumni, with whom learners can readily identify.
34. Colleges should work with The Careers & Enterprise Company to identify an Enterprise Adviser appropriate for the college.²⁷ An Enterprise Adviser is an experienced business volunteer who can support the college to connect to the labour market.
35. 16-19 study programmes of 150 hours or more must include work experience or work-related training. As part of this, colleges should aim to offer learners the opportunity

²⁶ Mann, A. et al. (2017) Contemporary Transitions: Young people reflect on life after secondary school and college

²⁷ Connect via The Careers & Enterprise Company website at <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/schools-colleges/sign-your-school>

to participate in at least two employer encounters per year whilst they are on their study programme with at least one encounter being delivered through their curriculum area. This is in addition to the experiences of the workplace described in Benchmark 6. Different encounters will work for different colleges and learners, but it could mean in practice:

- careers events such as careers talks, careers carousels and careers fairs;²⁸
- transitions skills workshops such as CV workshops and mock interviews;²⁹
- mentoring and e-mentoring;³⁰
- employer delivered employability workshops;
- business games and enterprise competitions.³¹

36. Colleges should take account of learners' own part time work and its influence on their development.

Benchmark 6: Experiences of workplaces

37. There is strong evidence that experience of workplaces gives learners a more realistic idea of the expectations and realities of the workplace. It shows the link between further education and employability/progression into work. This is particularly valuable for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds where experience of work in the family or local community may be limited to low-skilled occupations.

38. Experience of workplaces can take many forms. Colleges are expected to offer every learner on a study programme, where possible, at least one period of work experience with an external employer. This could be a short work experience or an extended work placement. This enables learners to experience the real demands of the working environment, independent from their peers and their tutors, and put into practice the transferable skills they have learned. This has the greatest impact on learners' employability. Contact with people from the world of work who are enthusiastic about their own careers and career pathways can open eyes to choices and opportunities young people may not yet have thought of. This can broaden horizons, challenge stereotypes and raise aspirations. In addition, learners can often get employer references for their performance which provides evidence for their CV,

²⁸ Rehill, J., Kashefpakdel, E. and Mann, A. (2017). Careers Events. What Works. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company. <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/research/transition-skills-mock-interviews-and-cv-workshops-what-works>

²⁹ Rehill, J., Kashefpakdel, E. and Mann, A. (2017). Transition Skills (Mock Interviews and CV Workshops). What Works? London: The Careers & Enterprise Company. <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/research/publications/effective-employer-mentoring>

³⁰ Hooley, T. (2016). Effective Employer Mentoring. Lessons from the Evidence. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company. <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/research/business-games-and-enterprise-competitions-what-works>

³¹ Hanson, J., Hooley, T. and Cox, A. (2017). Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works? London: The Careers & Enterprise Company <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/research/work-experience-job-shadowing-and-workplace-visits-what-works>

or the offer of a job on completion of their course. The Department's [guidance on 16 to 19 study programmes](#) gives more information about planning and delivering experiences of work.

39. Colleges should pay particular attention to work experience for learners with SEND. Some learners with SEND may find work placements particularly helpful, especially where learners find it difficult to imagine a work context, or to counter low aspirations. Colleges should consider whether learners with SEND need additional support in the work placement to ensure it is a valuable and positive experience.

Benchmark 7: Encounters with further and higher education

40. It is important that learners understand the full range of learning and progression opportunities available to them including both academic and technical options. Learners should receive a range of information and opportunities to learn about education, training and career paths throughout their time at college. This should include, by the end of their study programme, a meaningful encounter (an opportunity to explore what it is like to learn in that environment) with a range of providers of learning and training that may form the next stage of their career. This should include, as appropriate, other further education providers, universities, apprenticeship and training providers and the opportunity to meet both staff and learners at these institutions.
41. Colleges should encourage learners to use information tools such as websites and apps which display information about opportunities. The Government has made available information on the full range of post-16 education and training opportunities via a national course directory on the National Careers Service website which can be presented on websites and apps to help young people make choices effectively. In consultation with a careers professional, colleges may recommend good quality websites and apps, whether national or local in scope, that present the full range of opportunities in an objective way, that will help learners make good choices about post-16 options.

Benchmark 8: Personal guidance

42. Every learner should have the opportunity for guidance interviews with a qualified careers adviser whenever significant study or career choices are being made. Careers advisers can help learners to locate ambitious education and career options, by identifying opportunities and assessing learner's abilities, interests and achievements. Government's expectation is that every learner should have had at least one such interview by the age of 18 (in addition to one by the age of 16). The college should integrate this guidance within the pastoral system so that personal careers interviews can be followed up by form tutors or their equivalent. The personal guidance should be clearly connected with the wider careers programme.

43. Careers advisers working with learners with special educational needs or disabilities should use the outcome and aspirations in the EHC Plan, where learners have one, to focus the discussion. It is good practice for these learners to have a named adviser who can build a relationship with them and better understand their individual needs.
44. The college should use qualified careers professionals, who could be appropriately trained members of careers services staff, to offer advice and guidance to learners. Government recognises that colleges with larger cohorts sometimes use an adviser qualified to level 4 to provide careers advice, but a level 6 qualified adviser to provide a personal guidance interview. Government recommends that all guidance interviews should be delivered by a careers professional qualified to level 6³². The Career Development Institute (CDI) has developed a set of professional standards for careers advisers which include a Professional Register of advisers holding Level 6 or higher qualifications and guidelines on how advisers can develop their own skills and gain higher qualifications. Registration shows that a careers adviser is professionally qualified, abides by the CDI Code of Ethics, which includes impartiality and updates their skills and knowledge by undertaking 25 hours CPD each year. Adherence to these criteria is monitored by the CDI. We encourage colleges to view the Professional Register³³ to search for a career development professional who can deliver a particular service or activity.
45. Organisations that meet the matrix Standard, including many colleges and all contractors engaged in delivering the National Careers Service, have undergone an assessment of their delivery of advice and support services on careers, training and work. Colleges that want to commission face-to-face support from an organisation which holds the matrix Standard can access an online register of accredited organisations³⁴

³² The main qualifications for careers professionals are the Qualification in Career Development (QCD) (which replaces the earlier Qualification in Career Guidance (QCG) and Diploma in Career Guidance) and the Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development.

³³ <http://www.thecdi.net/Professional-Register>

³⁴ <http://matrixstandard.com/>

Working with The National Careers Service to deliver a high quality careers programme

46. The National Careers Service offers impartial information and professional careers advice on education, training and work to adults and young people aged 13 years and over. Individuals can access support via a [website, helpline and web chat service](#). Those aged 19 or over can book a face to face appointment with a National Careers Service adviser in their local area through the National Contact Centre 0800 100 900 .
47. The National Careers Service is currently co-located on more than 125 college sites, while more than 35 colleges provide the National Careers Service face-to-face service as subcontractors. If required, FE colleges can negotiate additional support from their local National Careers Service contractor.
48. The Government is keen to see more extensive partnership working between FE and the National Careers Service, including extending this to working with Jobcentres, employers and LEPs to provide a more integrated local careers guidance infrastructure underpinned by informed labour market intelligence.
49. The National Careers Service works closely with the CEC's network of Enterprise Adviser volunteers to make sure both organisations provide colleges with complementary activity. While the CEC is focused on school and college-based activity, the National Careers Service will ensure that its digital focus on 13-18 year olds aligns with CEC activities.
50. Colleges can contact the National Careers Service on 0800 100 900 for information and support on engaging with employers or for accessing local, impartial careers information and advice for their learners.

Further information

Useful resources and external organisations

- [Gatsby Good Career Guidance](#). A report on improving career guidance which includes the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- [Benchmarks for Colleges](#). Outline the important elements of a career guidance programme. They have been developed from the Gatsby Benchmarks for good career guidance, following consultation with a range of colleges across England to align them with the needs of the sector.
- [Gatsby Good Practice](#). A website which shares good practice from the North East pilot of the Gatsby Benchmarks, and other information and support.
- [Careers & Enterprise Company](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company brokers links between employers, schools and colleges in order to ensure that young people aged 12-18 get the inspiration and guidance they need for success in working life.
- [Careers & Enterprise Company: Schools and Colleges](#). Connects colleges to businesses volunteers and careers activity programmes.
- [National Careers Service](#). The National Careers Service provides information, advice and guidance to help people make decisions on learning, training and work opportunities. The service offers confidential and impartial advice. This is supported by qualified careers advisers.
- [Amazing Apprenticeships](#). A website to make it easy for college staff and careers advisers to access the latest information about apprenticeships.
- [Association of Colleges \(AoC\)](#) Exists to represent and promote the interests of colleges.
- [Career Development Institute](#). The Career Development Institute is the single UK-wide professional body for everyone working in the fields of careers education, career information, advice and guidance, career coaching, career consultancy and career management. It offers affiliate and individual membership to colleges which includes free CPD webinars, regular digital newsletters, a quarterly magazine, online networking groups and training at a preferential rate.
- [Career Development Institute Framework for careers, employability and enterprise education](#). A framework of learning outcomes to support the planning, delivery and evaluation of careers, employability and enterprise education for children and young people.
- [UK Register of Career Development Professionals](#). The single national point of reference for ensuring and promoting the professional status of career practitioners.

- [Collab Group](#) A membership organisation that represents large and regionally influential further education colleges in England.
- [Find an Apprenticeship](#). Search and apply for an apprenticeship in England.
- [LMI for All](#). An online data portal, which connects and standardises existing sources of high quality, reliable labour market information (LMI) with the aim of informing careers decisions. This data is made freely available via an Application Programming Interface (API) for use in websites and applications.
- [Quality in Careers Standard](#). The Quality in Careers Standard in the national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance.
- [Sixth Form Colleges' Association \(SFCA\)](#) Represents the interests of the sixth form colleges sector.
- [STEM Ambassadors](#). A nationwide network of over 30,000 volunteers from a wide range of employers, who engage with young people to provide stimulating and inspirational informal learning activities.
- [Unistats](#). The official website for comparing UK higher education undergraduate course data. The site includes information on university and college courses, Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) ratings, student satisfaction scores from the National Student Survey, employment outcomes and salaries after study and other key information for prospective students.
- [Your Daughter's Future](#). A careers toolkit for parents/carers.

Other relevant departmental advice and statutory guidance

- [16 to 19 Study Programmes: guide for providers.](#) Guidance on the planning and delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes, including traineeships for those aged 16 to 19 and supported internships.
- [College governance: a guide.](#) Guidance outlining the roles and duties of college governors and academy trusts.
- [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years.](#) A statutory code which explains the duties of local authorities, health bodies, schools and colleges to provide for those with special educational needs under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014.
- [Participation of young people in education, employment or training. Statutory guidance for local authorities.](#) Statutory guidance for local authorities on their duties relating to the participation of young people in education, employment or training.

Other departmental resources

- [Careers strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents.](#) The Government's plan for raising the quality of careers provision in England.
- [Post-16 technical education reforms: T level action plan.](#) Government's progress on the reforms to technical education set out in 'Post-16 skills plan', confirms next steps and opportunities for engagement by interested parties.



Department
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