

YOUNG PEOPLE IN COLLEGES AND
INDEPENDENT TRAINING PROVIDERS

GOOD CAREER GUIDANCE

THE NEXT 10 YEARS



SUMMARY OF UPDATES TO THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS

THIS DOCUMENT

Here we share the updated Gatsby Benchmarks. Changes are highlighted, along with an explanation of what's new and what has stayed the same. We hope this helps careers leaders and others get up to speed quickly so they can plan for and implement the updated benchmarks.



GATSBY

CONTEXT

An updated version of the Gatsby Benchmarks was published in late 2024 as part of Gatsby's report *Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years*. This was the result of two years of research and consultation, drawing on international evidence and listening to young people and the educators who have been putting the benchmarks into practice. The aim was to future-proof the benchmarks as the standard for world-class careers guidance for young people.

Our priority was to reflect the latest evidence on what best supports young people's outcomes while recognising the need for stability, in light of the benchmarks' widespread adoption and impact in recent years. The eight Benchmarks remain in place, but with key refinements to the summary descriptions and measurable criteria. For full details of this work and the evidence and good practice we uncovered, see our [full report](#).

These updates have been embedded into government guidance for schools and colleges. National support for implementation is available through the [Careers & Enterprise Company \(CEC\)](#).



KEY THEMES IN THE UPDATES

As before, this set of benchmarks applies to young people up to age 18 (or 25 for those with an education, health and care plan) studying in colleges. Language has now been adjusted for inclusion of independent training providers (ITPs) and the young people who attend them.

Five prominent themes emerged from the evidence uncovered during our review.

Alongside the specific wording changes, we would encourage all practitioners to take this opportunity to reflect on their careers programme in light of these themes and consider how it can best meet the needs of all young people they support.

CAREERS AT THE
HEART OF EDUCATION
AND LEADERSHIP

INCLUSION AND
IMPACT FOR
EACH AND EVERY
YOUNG PERSON

MEANINGFUL AND
VARIED ENCOUNTERS
AND EXPERIENCES

FOCUSING ON THE
USE OF INFORMATION
AND DATA

ENGAGEMENT
OF PARENTS
AND CARERS

Careers at the heart of education and leadership

Careers guidance is both a whole-staff and a whole-school endeavour. We have emphasised linking careers to the school's vision and strategic plans, acknowledged the importance of staff development and included distinct responsibilities for leadership, governors, careers leaders and careers advisers.

Inclusion and impact for each and every young person

Woven through multiple benchmarks are updates that emphasise the importance of tailoring programmes to the needs of each young person. Particular attention is given to inclusion and any additional or different support that may be needed by vulnerable or disadvantaged young people and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Meaningful and varied encounters and experiences

We have emphasised the importance of flexible delivery and the need to focus on the impact of encounters and experiences on young people. The definitions of 'meaningful' have been expanded in Benchmarks 5 and 7 and a new definition added to Benchmark 6. These definitions highlight the need to offer a variety of encounters and experiences, ensure young people have time to prepare and reflect, and use technology to enhance – rather than replace – in-person activities.

Focusing on the use of information and data

We have ensured that all young people can explore all future pathways equitably. The focus is now on using information to inform decision-making. Data collection has been refocused to include aspirations and intended destinations, to help tailor support. Longer-term and sustained destinations data remain important as part of the evaluation process.

Engagement of parents and carers

Parents and carers are one of the biggest influences on young people's career decision-making. Updates embed parent and carer engagement into planning and specify the need to share information with parents and carers and to support them to use it with their children.



UPDATES BY BENCHMARK: BENCHMARK I

BENCHMARK	SUMMARY	CRITERIA
I A STABLE CAREERS PROGRAMME	Every college provider should have an embedded programme of careers education and guidance that is known and understood by learners, parents and carers, teachers staff, those in governance roles, employers and other agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every college provider should have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of those in governance roles, leadership and the senior management team, and has an identified and appropriately trained person careers leader responsible for it. • The careers programme should be tailored to the needs of learners, sequenced appropriately, underpinned by learning outcomes and linked to the whole-institution development plan. It should set out how parents and carers will be engaged throughout. • The careers programme should be published on the college's provider's website and communicated in a way that enable learners, parents and carers, college staff and employers to access and understand it. • The programme should be regularly evaluated with using feedback from learners, parents and carers, college subject staff and other staff who support learners, careers advisers and employers as part of the evaluation process to increase its impact.

SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES

- We explicitly recognise the crucial role of a trained careers leader who is responsible for overseeing the provider's careers programme and the important role of principals, governors and wider leadership in ensuring the careers programme is woven into the strategy for the whole institution.
- We set out that the careers programme should be tailored to the needs of young people, underpinned by learning outcomes, sequenced appropriately and linked to the wider improvement priorities in the provider's development plan.
- Careers programmes should now detail how parents and carers will be engaged throughout, as a key influencer of young people's career decisions.
- The careers programme should now be published online but also communicated effectively to key stakeholders.
- We have broadened the stakeholders required to feed into evaluating the careers programme to include careers advisers and all staff who support young people. There is greater emphasis on the purpose of evaluation – to increase the careers programme's impact on young people.

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK: BENCHMARK 2

BENCHMARK	SUMMARY	CRITERIA
2 LEARNING FROM CAREER AND LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION	<p>Every All learners, and their parents and carers, (where appropriate) subject staff and other staff who support learners; should have access to good-quality, up-to-date information about future pathways, study options and labour market opportunities. Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their parents and carers may require different or additional information. They All learners will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During their programme of study programme, all learners should access and use information about careers, pathways and the labour market to inform their own decisions on study options or next steps. Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported to access and use information about careers, pathways and the labour markets and future study options to inform their support to for the learners in their care.

SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES

- We specify that subject staff and other staff supporting young people should have access to good-quality, up-to-date information about future pathways, study options and labour market opportunities. They are key careers influencers and are now explicitly recognised alongside parents and young people.
- We clarify that young people with SEND and their parents and carers may require different or additional information.
- Young people will still need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.
- Throughout the updated benchmarks, ‘study programme’ has been changed to ‘programme of study’ to be inclusive of all young people in colleges and ITPs.
- We now refer to decisions on next steps, in addition to study options.
- We emphasise the importance of supporting parents and carers to access and use information, rather than just encouraging them to do so. This will help providers develop their two-way relationship with parents and carers and ensure young people receive more consistent support with their decision-making.

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK: BENCHMARK 3

BENCHMARK	SUMMARY	CRITERIA
3 ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EACH STUDENT YOUNG PERSON	Learners have different careers guidance needs at different stages. Careers programmes should help learners navigate their concerns about any barriers to career progression. In addition, opportunities for advice and support need to should be tailored to the needs of each learner, including any additional needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, young people with SEND and those who are absent. A college's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A college's provider's careers programme should actively seek to challenge misconceptions and stereotypical thinking, showcase a diverse range of role models and raise aspirations. • Colleges Providers should keep systematic records of the participation of learners in all aspects of their careers programme, including the individual advice given to each learner, and any subsequent agreed decisions. • The records of participation and advice given should be integrated with those given at the previous stage of the learner's education (including their secondary school), where these are made available. Records should begin to be kept from the first point of contact or from the point of transition. • All learners should have access to these records and use them ahead of key transition points to support their next steps and career development. • Colleges Providers should collect, and maintain and use accurate data for each learner on their aspirations, intended and immediate education, and training or employment destinations to inform personalised support. • Providers should use sustained and longer-term destination data as part of their evaluation process and use alumni to support their careers programme.

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK: BENCHMARK 3 *Continued*

SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES

- The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion have now been embedded across all eight benchmarks, rather than just in Benchmark 3.
- Providers should help young people navigate their concerns about any barriers to career progression they may experience.
- We have retained the requirement that staff should work together to ensure opportunities across the careers programme are tailored to the needs of each young person. We now state that this includes any additional needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people, young people with SEND and those who are absent.
- Alongside challenging stereotypical thinking as an important element of good careers guidance, we have added the need to challenge misconceptions and showcase a diverse range of role models, including alumni.
- We have added the need to track young people's participation in their entire careers programme, as well as the individual advice given to them, with records integrated with those from young people's previous institution. Young people should access and use these records to support their career development and ahead of key transition points.
- We have broadened the approach to destination data, placing greater emphasis on institutions collecting, maintaining, and using a wider range of data – including aspirations, intended destinations, and immediate destinations – to inform personalised support for each young person.
- Sustained and longer-term destination data should also be used as part of the evaluation process.

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK: BENCHMARK 4

BENCHMARK	SUMMARY	CRITERIA
4 LINKING CURRICULUM LEARNING TO CAREERS	<p>As part of the providers programme of careers education, all subject staff should link curriculum learning with careers, even on courses which are not specifically occupation led. For example, STEM Subject staff should highlight the progression routes for their subject and the relevance of STEM knowledge and skills developed in their 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 opportunities to experience how knowledge and skills developed in their subjects help people gain entry to, and be more effective workers within, a wide range of occupations. Careers should form part the provider's ongoing staff development programme for subject staff and all staff who support learners.

SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES

- We clarify that linking curriculum learning with careers should be part of the provider's overall programme of careers education, that takes place both within subjects and across the wider curriculum and timetable.
- Throughout young people's programme of study, all subjects and courses should contain opportunities to learn about links into different careers. We clarify that this should highlight progression routes, and the relevance of knowledge and skills gained for a range of future career paths.
- Careers should now form part of the provider's ongoing staff development programme for subject staff and all staff who support young people.



UPDATES BY BENCHMARK: BENCHMARK 5

BENCHMARK	SUMMARY	CRITERIA
5 ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES	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 could include learners' own part-time employment where it exists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every year, alongside their study programme of study, 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.

SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES

- Changes to the wording of Benchmark 5 are minimal, but we have expanded the definition of what constitutes a 'meaningful' encounter. For example, the definition makes it clear that encounters should focus on the skills valued in the workplace, including recruitment processes and what it takes to be successful. Encounters with employers of different sizes and specialisms (including the self-employed) are now expected, and activity should also reflect trends in the labour market regionally and nationally. There should be sufficient time for young people to understand and prepare for the encounters beforehand, and to reflect afterwards on what they have learned.
- Acknowledgement of part-time work under Benchmark 5 is now consistent for all institution types and sits in the definition of 'meaningful', as part-time work must be meaningful to be considered.

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK:
BENCHMARK 5
Continued

DEFINING 'MEANINGFUL' IN BENCHMARK 5:
ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

A meaningful encounter gives the young person the opportunity to learn about what work is like, what skills are valued in the workplace, their recruitment processes and what it takes to be successful. Throughout a careers programme, young people should encounter employers of different sizes and specialisms, including the self-employed, that reflect trends in the labour market, regionally and nationally. These encounters could be in person or a combination of in person and virtual, where appropriate. Both the young person and employers should be supported to prepare for the encounter. Additional or different support may be needed for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

A meaningful encounter will:

- have a clear purpose, which is shared with the employer and the young person
- be underpinned by learning outcomes that are appropriate to the needs of the young person
- have opportunities for two-way interactions between the young person and the employer
- be followed by time for the young person to reflect on the insights, knowledge or skills gained through the encounter

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK: BENCHMARK 6

BENCHMARK	SUMMARY	CRITERIA
6 EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES	Every learner should have first-hand experiences of the workplaces through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities and expand their networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of their study programme of study, every learner should have had at least one meaningful experience of a workplace, in in addition at to any part-time jobs they may have.

SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES

- Similarly to Benchmark 5, we have added a definition of 'meaningful' for this benchmark to ensure experiences have, for example, a clear agreed purpose, extensive two-way interaction, and suitable preparation and reflection time, similarly to encounters under Benchmark 5.
- Experiences can take many forms, including through visits to workplaces, work shadowing and/or work experience. We clarify that virtual experiences can complement but not wholly replace in-person experiences for any young person.

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK:
BENCHMARK 6
Continued

DEFINING 'MEANINGFUL' IN BENCHMARK 6:
EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES

A meaningful experience 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. This could be achieved through visits to workplaces, work shadowing and/or work experience. Throughout the careers programme these experiences could be in person or a combination of in person and virtual, where appropriate. Both the young person and employers should be supported to prepare for the experience. Additional or different support may be needed for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and for young people with SEND.

A meaningful experience will:

- have a clear purpose, which is shared with the employer and the young person
- be underpinned by learning outcomes that are appropriate to the needs of the young person
- involve extensive two-way interactions between the young person and employees
- include opportunities for young people to meet a range of different people from the workplace
- include opportunities for young people to perform a task set by the employer or to produce a piece of work relevant to that workplace
- include the employer providing feedback to the young person about their work
- be followed by opportunities for the young person to reflect on the insights, knowledge or skills gained through their experience

Schools, colleges and independent training providers (ITPs) can take into account any part-time work a young person may have, if it genuinely offers them a meaningful experience.

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK: BENCHMARK 7

BENCHMARK	SUMMARY	CRITERIA
7 ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION	All learners should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them, including This includes both academic, technical and vocational routes. This should incorporate and learning in schools, colleges, independent training providers (ITPs) , universities and in the workplace.	<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 stages of their career. This should include, as appropriate, further education colleges, higher education universities and apprenticeship and training providers ITPs. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and learners.

SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES

- Terminology has been updated to better reflect the education and training landscape, with independent training providers (ITPs) now listed as a provider type, and technical education now explicitly referenced.
- The definition of what constitutes a 'meaningful encounter' with providers of further and higher education and training has been expanded. For example, encounters can be in-person or a combination of in-person and virtual. Encounters should be sequenced throughout the careers programme so that a young person can build up a clear picture of what is available to them and explore what it is like to develop and succeed in different environments. Young people should be provided with information about recruitment and selection processes, the qualifications providers offer, and the careers these could lead to. There should be the opportunity to meet both staff and learners.

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK:
BENCHMARK 7
Continued

DEFINING 'MEANINGFUL' IN BENCHMARK 7:
ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

A meaningful encounter gives the young person the opportunity to explore what it is like to learn, develop and succeed in that environment. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and learners/trainees. Throughout a careers programme, encounters should be sequenced so that a young person can build up a clear picture of opportunities available to them. Experiences or encounters could be in person or a combination of in person and virtual and could include providers delivering sessions in a school, college or ITP, as well as young people visiting the provider. Young people and providers should be supported to prepare for the encounter. Additional or different support may be needed for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and for young people with SEND.

A meaningful encounter will:

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

UPDATES BY BENCHMARK: BENCHMARK 8

BENCHMARK	SUMMARY	CRITERIA
8 PERSONAL GUIDANCE	<p>Every learner should have opportunities for guidance interviews meetings with a careers adviser, who could be internal (a member of college provider staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level.*</p> <p>These meetings 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 scheduled to meet individual needs.</p> <p>The careers leader should work closely with the careers adviser, SEND coordinator (SENDCO) and other key staff to ensure personal guidance is effective and embedded in the careers programme.</p> <p><small>*The college should ensure that access to a level 6 adviser is available when needed</small></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every learner should have at least one such interview personal guidance meeting, with a careers adviser by the end of their programme of study. These meetings should be scheduled in the careers programme to meet the needs of learners. • Information about personal guidance support and how to access it should be communicated to learners, parents and carers, and other stakeholders, including through the provider website.

SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES

- The word 'interview' has been replaced with 'meeting' to better reflect the style of sessions with a careers adviser.
- We have specified that meetings should be scheduled in the careers programme to meet the individual needs of young people.
- Key staff (including careers leaders, careers advisers, and SENDCOs) are now encouraged to work together to ensure personal guidance is effective and embedded into the wider careers programme.
- The arrangements for personal guidance should now be published on the provider's website and communicated to young people and their parents and carers, to help them make the most of the opportunity.

The CEC is preparing further guidance on implementing the updated Gatsby Benchmarks.

For more information and to read the full report, go to gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk

