

# Careers Provision in Colleges: What Works?

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## About this paper

This paper provides evidence for effective career guidance within the Further Education (FE) sector. The evidence can be used by colleges of all types and providers of career and enterprise programmes when considering supporting young people with careers activities.

The primary source of evidence is a rapid evidence review, supplemented with six expert interviews, which provided support to identify additional evidence and case study colleges. The rapid evidence review included 29 research reports and six pieces of grey literature (guidance documents, frameworks and opinion pieces). The desk research was accompanied by case studies of ten colleges; seven general FE colleges, one sixth-form college, one Specialist Arts Higher Education Institution and one Careers College. Two of the general FE colleges were very large, multi-site colleges, another has recently been through a merger.

Throughout this report, a broad definition of careers guidance is used; career guidance as described in the Gatsby Benchmarks. This means that the scope of the paper is wider than the activities typically managed through colleges' careers services, and includes attending to employer engagement, employer encounters and other enrichment activities. The paper covers the impact of careers guidance and ends with lessons for practice which colleges can integrate into their current work.

“

**Employer  
engagement is a key  
aspect of college  
careers provision.**

# Executive Summary

**The Gatsby Benchmarks have become a key framework around which the government's careers strategy and guidance to colleges have been built. As colleges work towards the Benchmarks, this paper sets out to explore features of good and effective careers provision in college settings.**

Colleges have diverse structures and this is reflected in how their careers provision is organised. There are consistencies in the main resources and tasks that are delivered: career and labour market information, advice and guidance delivered by an in-house careers service; careers provision in the classroom supported through tutorials; employer engagement activities; and progression support for higher education (HE) or employment (including apprenticeships).

Careers activities tend to be organised chronologically by careers teams in colleges with provision conceptualised as being comprised of pre-course support, careers support offered during courses, and post-course support. This ensures a smooth transition into college so that students are on the right pathways, their skill development is supported while they study, activities tie in with key UCAS deadlines, and they also link in with national campaigns like National Careers Week and National Apprenticeships Week to help with progression.

Good and effective careers provision is characterised by using the expertise of appropriately qualified professionals, whether they are careers advisers or teachers with industry-specific knowledge and insight. Face-to-face interactions are valued most highly, followed by guest speakers, visits to universities and employers, and careers fairs. The quality standards that colleges have historically used such as the Matrix standard and the Quality in Careers standard have been joined by an updated version of the Gatsby Benchmarks for college settings and new guidance from the Department for Education.

Employer engagement is a key aspect of college careers provision and can include amongst other things: mentoring activities, enterprise competitions, work experience, job shadowing, workplace tasters, and employers setting briefs for project work. The Careers College model embeds these activities throughout the curriculum and includes employers in all strategic college decisions; for example, sub-committees of the governing body or a separate employer board.

## Impact of careers provision in colleges

The impacts of a careers programme can be measured quantitatively through management information, education outcomes and progression data, along with survey data from students, staff, employers and other stakeholders. It can also be measured qualitatively through feedback on effectiveness of activities, how useful students think the activities have been, along with impacts on personal effectiveness and career readiness. Key impacts identified are as follows:

### Education outcomes and progression

Quality careers provision can result in improvements in academic achievement and an increase in young people entering higher education, through tailored support during the UCAS process.

### Career and employment outcomes

An effective careers programme can increase positive destinations and reduce the number of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET). The more employer encounters that were recalled by young people, the better employment outcomes they had as young adults.

### Personal effectiveness, career readiness and decision-making

Careers guidance professionals, teachers, and alumni with up-to-date industry knowledge all play a really important role in the decision-making of 14 to 19-year-olds when they are considering their transitions into post-16 education and progression into higher education (HE), apprenticeships or employment. Teachers and careers staff can embed explicit skill development activities into the curriculum, which can help young people develop personal effectiveness skills such as confidence and resilience that employers are looking for.

### Employability skills

The evidence also shows that employability skills such as communication skills, team-working and problem-solving skills are also developed through careers provision. Responding to employer briefs enables students to gain relevant experience, skills and understanding of their chosen industry.

## Lessons for practice

Colleges are reacting to the government's new guidance on careers provision in colleges; creating steering groups and identifying careers leaders to take forward college-wide strategies. For some colleges, substantial changes will be made, and these will require transformational leadership that involves all college staff, in order to embed the types of effective practice this report has identified. Key lessons identified by the research are as follows:

### Well-resourced and visible

The research shows the importance of the visibility of careers teams – through strong branding and physical location, students should know how to access support and what support is on offer. Students need to be aware of how to access careers provision and understand how it can benefit them. Colleges need to provide the right resources to ensure that access is available across their student cohort.

### Effective careers leadership

The case for strong strategic leadership has already been made by The Careers & Enterprise Company and is supported by the evidence here from case studies and expert interviews. Strategic leadership and a holistic approach to careers and employability across the college are most effective. Shared ownership for careers activities across careers, pastoral, curriculum and enrichment teams will provide opportunities for sharing best practice approaches and important industry-specific information. Curriculum areas have



an important role to play in supporting different activities including employer involvement and industry-specific events. In addition, marketing and information teams also have a part to play in ensuring prospective students understand the full offer from the college.

### **Evaluation and review**

Careers provision needs to develop and evolve in response to student need. Evaluation and review processes need to be put in place to ensure that this is possible. Surveys provide valuable information to colleges about how to improve their services. Some colleges may find that a student group (student council or similar) provides students with a way to provide feedback and feel some ownership of the careers programme.

Quality standards (such as Matrix and Quality in Careers Standard) can provide feedback for the review of careers provision in colleges. The Quality in Careers Standard now reflects the Gatsby Benchmarks and therefore helps colleges to meet their requirements. Self-audit approaches, such as using Compass for colleges, can also be a useful part of reviewing colleges' careers programmes.

### **Utilising technology**

Colleges will need to make use of information and communications technology to facilitate interactions, to ensure accurate and up-to-date information and measure impact.

### **Tailored and targeted**

It is increasingly important to tailor careers provision to different industries and to the needs of students. Students with special educational needs or disabilities and those at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) should receive support from careers staff with the right skills.

### **Working collaboratively**

Engagement with employers helps to ensure authentic interactions that will give real insight into workplaces and industry and develop career competencies.

Local careers networks support the Enterprise Advisor Network and Careers Hubs can help to support and share good practice and facilitate employer engagement.

### **Impartial**

Students must be made aware of all their options, technical or academic. Impartiality should come from all involved in college careers provision, staff, employers and other stakeholders.

# 1 | Introduction

Research on careers guidance with young people has focused extensively on secondary schools. However, in recent years, there has been an increased focus at the policy level on career guidance in colleges. Given this, it is now poignant to explore the evidence for effective career guidance within the Further Education (FE) sector.

The Careers & Enterprise Company commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies to examine current practice in careers provision in colleges and to identify best practice. Building on the work of the previous 'What Works?' papers from the Company and the growing evidence on careers guidance in schools within the wider sector, this paper set out to answer three key research questions:

**1 | How is careers provision organised in different college settings?**

**2 | Can we identify best practice examples in careers provision?**

**3 | What are the key principles that underpin effective provision?**

## The careers landscape

Since the publication of the Careers Strategy in late 2017<sup>1</sup>, there has been a renewed interest in careers provision, and a new consensus has developed based on the Gatsby Benchmarks. However, until recently the focus has been on schools rather than colleges. The Careers & Enterprise Company have published a series of 'What works?' papers which have explored the case for different aspects of careers education, including work experience, careers events and enterprise competitions.<sup>2,3</sup>

2018 has seen the tide starting to turn towards the post-16 phase with the publication of the Gatsby Benchmarks for colleges<sup>4</sup>, guidance for colleges<sup>5</sup> and most recently the guidance for careers leaders in colleges.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to continue to explore the effectiveness and impact of careers provision. Career guidance is a valuable part of the answer to social mobility and wider policy aims around social justice and serves a public good as well as a private good.

- Career guidance can have an impact on economic and labour market policy, on education policy and on social policy, including youth transitions, skills utilisation and participation in education.<sup>7</sup>
- The career guidance profession occupies a pivotal role as a gatekeeper in forming key links between learning and work.<sup>8</sup>
- A professional guidance system can improve the efficiency of the education and training system and its relationship with the labour market.<sup>9</sup>

1. Department for Education (2017). *Careers Strategy: Making the Most of Everyone's Skills and Talents*. London: DfE.

2. <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/blog-category/what-works> [Accessed 31st August 2018]

3. The Careers & Enterprise Company (2016). *What Works in Careers and Enterprise?* London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

4. Gatsby Charitable Foundation. (2016). *Good Career Guidance: Benchmarks for Young People in Colleges*. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

5. Department for Education (2018). *Careers Guidance for Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges*. London: DfE.

6. The Careers & Enterprise Company and Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2018). *Understanding the Role of the Careers Leader: A Guide for Colleges*. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

7. Hooley, T. (2017). Moving beyond 'what works': Using the evidence base in lifelong guidance to inform policy making. In Schroder, K. and Langer, J. (Eds.) *Wirksamkeit der Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung* (The Effectiveness of Counselling in Education and Employment). Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann Verlag, pp. 25-35.

8. Allan, G., Moffett, J., and Robertson, P. (2013). Updating qualifications for the career guidance profession in Scotland: Navigating the maze. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 1, 66-68.

9. Long, R. and Hubble, S. (2018). *Careers Guidance in Schools, Colleges and Universities*. Briefing Paper Number 07236, House of Commons Library.

- Quality career guidance can increase employment outcomes, including improving the match between supply and demand.<sup>9</sup>

The evidence base for career guidance in general demonstrates impact in different settings: schools, further education, higher education and adult education.

International evidence also supports the case for career guidance; with one international evidence review finding that two-thirds of the 27 studies reviewed (67%) provided evidence of positive economic outcomes.<sup>10</sup>

## Policy Background

The post-16 sector in England has faced a period of substantial policy reform. In recent years, the national Productivity Plan<sup>11</sup>, the Sainsbury Review<sup>12</sup> and the Post-16 Skills Plan<sup>13</sup> all emphasised the need for high-level technical education. This led to the creation of 15 new technical education routes and T-level qualifications, which colleges and other post-16 providers are preparing to deliver from 2020. New technical education routes will include an extended work experience component and are designed to support entry into skilled occupations where there is a substantial requirement for technical knowledge and practical skills.

The programme of Area Reviews has also changed the composition of the FE sector across England. They aimed for 'fewer, often larger, more resilient and efficient providers'<sup>14</sup> resulting in college mergers that are still in their infancy.

Operating in this landscape are several different types of institutions; schools with sixth-forms, sixth form colleges, general Further Education (FE) colleges, University Technical Colleges (UTCs), land-based colleges, arts colleges, and Special Educational Needs (SEN) colleges and dual sector institutions that offer both further and higher education. In addition, Careers Colleges<sup>15</sup> available for 14 to 19-year-olds, began in 2013, drawing on existing national standards and aiming to improve levels of employer engagement and give young people practical skills and employer experiences. Lord Baker is the Founder of the Careers College Trust and the trust is supported through charitable donations from founding trustees (the Edge Foundation and Helping Hands), City & Guilds, OCR and Pearson.<sup>16</sup> Employers help to design the curriculum, support delivery and are on the Board for each Career College. Careers Colleges operate within other colleges and can be a department or a separate campus.

In recent years, changes to careers guidance policy has resulted in a school and college careers system that has received criticism. To tackle this, the Gatsby Foundation developed a set of eight benchmarks of good career guidance rooted in evidence from the sector<sup>17</sup>; these were originally focussed on school career guidance but have since been adapted to meet the needs of colleges<sup>4</sup>.

10. Hughes, D., Mann, A., Barnes, S-A., Baldauf, B. and McKeown, R. (2016). *Careers Education: International Literature Review*. London: Education Endowment Foundation

11. HM Treasury (2015). *Fixing the Foundations: Creating a More Prosperous Nation*. London: HM Treasury.

12. Department for Business Innovation and Skills and Department for Education (2016a). *Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education – The Sainsbury Panel*. London: DBIS & DfE.

13. Department for Business Innovation and Skills and Department for Education (2016b). *Post-16 Skills Plan, Cm 9280*. London: DBIS & DfE.

14. Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2015). *Reviewing Post-16 Education and Training Institutions*. London: DBIS.

15. See <http://careercolleges.org.uk> for further information.

16. The Career Colleges Trust (2018). *Our Strategic Plan: Careers – Not Just Courses 2018–2020*. London: The Career Colleges Trust

17. Gatsby Charitable Foundation. (2014). *Good Career Guidance*. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

## The Gatsby Benchmarks<sup>4</sup>

<b>1.</b>	<b>A stable careers programme</b>	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.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Learning from career and labour market information</b>	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.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Addressing the needs of each student</b>	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.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Linking curriculum learning to careers</b>	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 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.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Encounters with employers and employees</b>	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.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Experiences of workplaces</b>	Every learner should have first-hand experience of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities and expand their networks.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Encounters with further and higher education</b>	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.
<b>8.</b>	<b>Personal guidance</b>	Every learner should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a careers 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.

\* The college should ensure that access to a level 6 adviser is available when needed.

Following this, there have been a number of education reforms that have increased the requirements on schools and colleges with regard to careers guidance. In 2017, the Department for Education's (DfE) careers strategy<sup>1</sup> made use of these Benchmarks as a foundation. Subsequently, the DfE has published guidance for careers guidance in schools<sup>18</sup> and colleges<sup>5</sup> that set out the recommendations for institutions to follow. The guidance states that colleges should follow the Gatsby Benchmarks and meet them in full by the end of 2020. 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.

Reforms to the Education Act 2011<sup>19</sup> also set out how Further Education (FE) colleges and sixth form colleges are now required to secure access to independent careers guidance as part of funding agreements<sup>9</sup> and colleges and providers will also be allowed access to schools to promote their technical education provision (the so-called Baker Clause).<sup>20</sup> In addition, Ofsted is now required to comment in college inspection reports on the careers guidance provided to young people.<sup>9</sup> Linked to this is the requirement that 16 to 19 study programmes should include work experience and non-qualification activities – so elements of careers provision are already built in to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding requirements.<sup>21</sup>

In a context of rapid changes within the policy landscape outlined above, greater freedoms and autonomy have been devolved to education leaders responsible for careers guidance. Guidance for schools and colleges necessitate that organisations engage with employers in a range of ways including providing encounters with employers for learners. While responsibility lies with schools and colleges, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) help to support the relationship with education and employers, by providing information to schools with the assistance of Enterprise Advisors (senior business volunteers). The Careers & Enterprise Company's Enterprise Adviser Network serves to link these advisors with head teachers and leadership teams in schools and colleges (2,485) have been recruited to date).<sup>22</sup>

The Enterprise Advisors are supported by Enterprise Coordinators, a role that supports local networks of schools, colleges and employers. Further support will flow through The Careers & Enterprise Company and the LEPs as the careers strategy is implemented. For example, the Company is funding 20 new careers hubs which will be providing enhanced support to more than 60 FE colleges. The hubs will also have access to funds to support colleges, train careers leaders and help fund employer encounters.<sup>23</sup>

18. Department for Education (2018). *Careers Guidance and Access for Education and Training Providers: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies, School Leaders and School Staff*. London: DfE.

19. Education Act (2011). <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/part/4/crossheading/careers-education-and-guidance> [Accessed 6th August 2018]

20. 'An amendment was tabled to the Technical and Further Education Bill in the House of Lords in February 2017 by Lord Baker, to require schools to admit providers of technical education and apprenticeships to contact pupils to promote their courses. The provisions came into force in January 2018.' Long, R. and Hubble, S. (2018). *Careers guidance in schools, colleges and universities*. Briefing Paper Number 07236. House of Commons Library.

21. Department for Education (2018). *16 to 19 Study Programmes: Departmental Advice for Education Providers on the Planning and Delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes*. London: DfE.

22. The Careers Enterprise Company (2018). *Enterprise Advisors*. Available from <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/enterprise-advisers> [Accessed 6th August 2018].

23. Offord, P. (2018) Names of over 60 colleges involved in new careers hubs revealed. Available from <https://fewweek.co.uk/2018/07/11/names-of-over-60-colleges-involved-in-new-careers-hubs-revealed/> [Accessed 31st August 2018]

# 2 | How is careers guidance delivered in colleges?

## Organisation of careers guidance

The way in which careers provision is structured and organised in college settings is hugely varied:

*'there are as many different models of career guidance delivery as there are Colleges'*<sup>24</sup> (p.21)

This is owing to the fact that colleges operate as independent business units. The nature of this provision and its means of delivery are therefore specific to the needs of a particular college's vocational curriculum, the student population and the local labour market.<sup>24</sup> In general FE settings, the large size and complex structure of these organisations also contribute to the lack of consistency across the sector in how career guidance is structured.

In spite of these differences, a recent report by The Careers & Enterprise Company highlighted a number of key internal roles that typically contribute towards the delivery of a college's careers guidance programme.<sup>6</sup> These include:

### Admissions, marketing and outreach staff

Building links with schools to recruit new students and provide them with advice and guidance on the right course to take.

### Careers adviser

Providing information, advice and guidance to students. This includes online as well as face-to-face provision delivered either one-to-one or in groups.

### Teaching and lecturing staff

Responsible for delivering curriculum content. In many colleges, they may also have a range of links with industry connected to their curriculum area. This enables staff to facilitate various types of encounters with employers.

### Personal tutors

Assist students with all aspects of their personal development throughout their course. This can include support with their career planning.

### Employer liaison staff

Working with employers to inform the development of programmes and find placements. These can include a dedicated work experience, apprenticeship and/or business development team.

Colleges may have a different operational leader overseeing the work of each team, or fewer individuals with responsibilities in more than one area.

However, they frequently lack an individual with strategic oversight over the careers programme as a whole. Establishing a senior role in the college with overall responsibility for careers guidance provision was highlighted in the expert interviews and case studies as being critical to coordinating the work of the operational leads and working towards the achievement of all eight of the Gatsby Benchmarks. Expert and case study interviewees commented that the Careers Leader needs the authority to direct well and the ability to get the various operational leaders working together; making clear what aspects of provision each operational team are primarily responsible for and who they need to work with to ensure complementarity.

24. Association of Colleges (2012), *Career Guidance in Colleges: Increasing National Careers Service co-location with colleges and the role of Colleges in providing a service to schools*. A feasibility study. Available from [https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/Careers\\_Guidance\\_in\\_Colleges\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/Careers_Guidance_in_Colleges_full_report.pdf) [Accessed 25th October 2018]

## Careers guidance activities

Careers guidance activities are typically organised chronologically in colleges with a focus on pre-entry support, support during courses and support at the point of exiting the course. This follows the individual student journey through the college.<sup>25 26</sup>

- The purpose of **pre-entry support** is two-fold: to attract students to the college, and to ensure they are matched to the most appropriate course in order to minimise the risk of drop-out.
- Careers provision that is delivered **during the period of study** aims to assist students with their career and learning planning. This includes support in identifying future work and learning opportunities, building an understanding of what they require in terms of qualifications, skills and experience, and developing and implementing plans to pursue these goals. Part of this process is intended to help students develop the competencies to become more self-efficient in managing their career development in future.
- The purpose of careers provision delivered when students are **nearing the end** of their course is to support successful transitions into work, training or further study. This stage is primarily focused on helping students to identify specific vacancies or study options that they want to pursue and supporting them through the application process.

Career guidance which takes place at each of these points typically includes a range of different activities. The combination of a range of different careers provision activities helps students to make informed decisions.<sup>10</sup> Different aspects of provision are also reported as being valued differently, with survey

research suggesting that individual face-to-face discussions were reported to be the most valuable aspect of careers provision for students. Visits from guest speakers, visits to universities and employers and careers fairs were also valued. Least popular in the survey were specialist websites and information leaflets/booklets, despite how common it is for colleges to provide such printed materials.<sup>27</sup>

The main activities undertaken by each of the operational teams that contribute towards the implementation of a college's careers guidance programme are set out below. The findings from the expert interviews and case studies showed that while different staff members will largely focus on delivering discrete elements of this programme, its successful implementation is dependent on coordination, cross-referral and support between each team.

## Supporting entry and admissions to the college

This involves marketing the college's curriculum offer and other services to attract potential students and support their successful entry into the college. As noted, these activities will primarily be undertaken by a college's admissions, marketing and outreach staff.

In attracting students to the college, both online and hard-copy marketing materials (i.e. an annual prospectus) will be developed, which detail the college's curriculum offer and the types of careers each course can lead to (Gatsby benchmark 4). This may include case studies of former students and the career trajectories they followed after completing their course. These activities will be completed by a college's marketing department, usually in collaboration with teaching and lecturing staff across the college.

25. Wooley, A. and Hooley, T. (2015). Further education learners' prior experience of career education and guidance: A case study of Chesterfield College. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 35(1), 50-56.

26. Mulvey, R. (2010). Career guidance in England: retrospect and prospect. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34(1), 13-30.

27. Gibson, S., Oliver, L., and Dennison-Cooper, M. (2015). Mapping Careers Provision in Schools and Colleges in England. DfE Research report.

Open events will also be held at the college to further promote the curriculum offer and exhibit the facilities and services the college can provide. Some colleges mentioned that members of the careers service would be on hand during these events to support this work, while others provided access to online tools, such as Kudos, to help students explore potential course options and see how they link to future careers.

Colleges will seek to directly engage local schools as part of their outreach activities to prospective students. This can include the provision of 'taster days' for students in Year 10 to help inform their education and training decisions after Year 11. Over the course of the day, students will have the opportunity to preview one or several courses that interest them by meeting current staff and students, sitting in on short 'taster' workshops or sessions where they may have the opportunity to undertake practical activities. Colleges will also present their course offer or particular aspects of it, externally to local schools during student/parent careers events. Again, these activities will usually be completed by the outreach team with support from teaching and lecturing staff in each subject area.

Once students have applied to study at the college, staff will work to match students to the most appropriate course based on their aspirations and prior achievement record (Gatsby benchmark 3). This can involve individual interviews with students during enrolment/registration days. However, some colleges with a very high annual intake of students will only prioritise those with high-needs (i.e. individuals with care plans) for face-to-face support. Whichever students are prioritised for support, the process can involve collaboration between various teams across the college, including but not limited to admissions, teaching and lecturing staff, the careers and other student services.

Students that successfully enrol at the college will then undertake a short induction programme at the beginning of their course. This may include an opportunity for members of the careers service to introduce themselves to students and promote what they do.

### An embedded careers service

In college settings, career and labour market information, advice and guidance services are primarily provided by an in-house careers team. This team will typically be located within a college's student services and will be comprised of a few qualified careers professionals and other support staff. Career services usually are available to students via weekly drop-in sessions or by prearranged appointments following a student or tutor referral. They will typically comprise a one-to-one meeting between a student and careers guidance professional.

Careers teams are responsible for disseminating information on learning and work opportunities to students, and the pathways to them (Gatsby benchmark 2). This can be done through a variety of methods including use of online and printed materials, signposting students to external institutions and information sources, and arranging discrete events during the academic year for students such as careers fairs.

Depending on the size of the college and/or its areas of specialism, these events may be specific to careers in certain vocational areas, or more generalist. Some colleges may also choose to hold events or specific talks that are focussed on skill shortage areas (i.e. STEM) to encourage students into these careers. Careers fairs can comprise of an exhibition space with various stalls where students can go to gather more information on different options, as well as short careers talks by employers followed by a Q&A. These types of employer encounters help colleges achieve Gatsby benchmark 5.



## How it works in practice

### Gateshead College – Careers Week

Institutions and individuals other than employers are also generally invited to speak at careers fairs or provide discrete talks throughout the year. This can include fairs that are focused entirely on Higher Education options, for instance, or talks by university faculty staff to encourage applications in particular subject areas (Gatsby benchmark 7). Gap year companies and apprenticeship training providers can also have opportunities to present their offer as part of these events, and former students may be asked to return to the college to discuss their experiences and career trajectories after graduating.

Events, talks and general promotion of the careers service may be arranged to coincide with national week-long campaigns on particular topics, such as National Careers Week<sup>28</sup> or National Apprenticeship Week.<sup>29</sup>

In terms of the advice and guidance they provide, the careers service is involved in helping individual students identify the most suitable routes into their preferred career and planning their next steps after their current course comes to an end. Some colleges will use online tools to assist with this process such as Careers Coach, Fast Tomato and Kudos. These tools consist of online questionnaires that ascertain a student's interests, attitudes and strengths. Using local labour market information, apprenticeship and university and college course data, potential career options are then matched to these profiles, with further information and links for students to explore (e.g. rates of pay, number of local vacancies, educational requirements and course options). Where careers services undertake personal guidance interviews with students to support this process, this supports the achievement of Gatsby benchmark 8. The careers service will also advertise

Every year, the careers team host a week-long careers programme in March, which is available for students across the college. Gateshead College has several campuses dedicated to particular vocational areas (e.g. construction, sport, automotive, manufacturing, engineering and logistics). The careers team liaises with staff at each campus to curate a tailored programme at each site, which is relevant to the curriculum areas they cover.

As part of this programme, external guest speakers (employers) are invited to discuss the different vacancies available in particular vocations, how to apply for these opportunities, when they are available, what qualifications students' need to apply, and the rates of pay the roles attract. The careers team also facilitate additional workshops for students that focus on CV development, interview skills, and confidence building, for example.

Previously the college held a single week-long careers programme at its main campus building. However, the college team revised its approach following an internal evaluation of student feedback, which expressed a preference for more tailored provision at the campus sites they are used to attending.

28. <https://nationalcareersweek.com/>

29. <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/national-apprenticeship-week-2018-naw-2018>

short-term work and voluntary opportunities that students may undertake in order to develop their workplace experience and improve their CV, as well as support themselves financially.

The careers service will be heavily involved in supporting student's transition to further education and training or employment. This will involve the delivery of workshops, providing individual support on CV writing, support with apprenticeship application forms, interview skills and making UCAS applications. The timing of the latter is driven by the UCAS application calendar.

For those students pursuing academic routes after college, local universities may be invited to hold talks on how to choose between different course options and offer advice on writing effective personal statements (Gatsby benchmark 7). Events for parents may also be held at the college in order to provide information on the UCAS application process to encourage their engagement and support.

### Careers provision in the classroom

In college settings, career education can be integrated into the delivery of a student's subject teaching.<sup>27</sup> While these activities are largely facilitated by teaching and lecturing staff in each curriculum area, they can overlap, complement and are supported by the work of the in-house careers team.

In class, this can involve the presentation of careers information to help students develop a better understanding of different occupations in a vocational area, and what they need to do in order to pursue these opportunities (Gatsby Benchmarks 2 and 4). It can include when and how to apply for entry-level

vacancies, and the qualifications, skills and attributes needed to succeed. These presentations will usually be done via careers talks with local or national employers. Students may also have opportunities to learn about further study options, with teaching and lecturing staff arranging and facilitating talks by local universities and apprenticeship providers.

As well as the presentation of careers information, students will also be encouraged to actively develop their employability and technical skills over their course of study, and gain experience relevant to their chosen career by undertaking work-related learning activities. This is a requirement of both academic and vocational study programmes, although generally learners undertaking vocational programmes will spend a greater amount of hours on these activities.<sup>21</sup>

In the classroom, this can include undertaking live briefs set by employers or setting up a student enterprise. Employers may also visit the college to deliver workshops on how to work with specialist pieces of equipment or software that they use in their industry. All these activities will support the achievement of Gatsby benchmark 5.

### Personal tutorials

Outside of the classroom, students may receive support with their career planning and any issues they face as part of their personal development tutorials. These will be delivered by a nominated personal tutor, and take place on a one-to-one or group basis, or a combination of the two.

These tutorials will generally touch on a student's careers aspirations and support them in making informed choices about what options they want to pursue next. This will support the achievement of Gatsby benchmark 3. Some colleges may again make use of online careers guidance tools to assist with this process. Students will be encouraged to make the best use of the careers information they have received so far, and engage in planning and managing these next steps. A student's progress against these plans will generally be reviewed on a regular basis to encourage their commitment and check whether they need any additional support.

Personal tutors can be a member of faculty involved in the delivery of a student's learning programme, or a member of a pastoral team. Depending on their background, they may receive support from the careers service in this role. For instance, they can receive training in how to facilitate careers conversations, or signpost to the careers service where they feel a student needs further specialist information, advice or guidance that they are unable to provide. In addition, in several case study colleges (Aquinas College, Stockport; BMet; and The Manchester College) the in-house careers service writes modules and activities for tutors to deliver and these can be differentiated by students' needs. This type of tailored delivery again supports the achievement of Gatsby benchmark 3.

## Employer liaison and engagement

As noted above, employers can be engaged in various facets of the careers provision that students receive when attending college; attending careers fairs facilitated by the careers service, working with teaching and lecturing staff to deliver career talks, enterprise competitions, or workshops/ demonstrations in class.

Another important aspect of careers provision in colleges that engages employers is the delivery of work experience. This can take various forms, from workplace visits, to both short and long-term work placement opportunities, and supports the achievement of Gatsby benchmark 6. The form of work experience students engage in will be dependent on their level of readiness and the requirements and nature of their qualification (i.e. whether it is an academic or vocational programme).

Some colleges, particularly those with a large vocational course offering, may have a dedicated work experience team that is responsible for identifying and sourcing these opportunities, conducting health and safety and insurance checks with employers, and working with teaching and lecturing staff and/or the careers service to match learners to appropriate placements and help prepare them for entry into the workplace. Other colleges, however, may engage external agencies to provide these services, or these responsibilities will form part of the work of the careers service.

## How it works in practice

### Careers Colleges

The Career College in Professional Services and Career College in Digital and Creative (both based at the Matthew Boulton Campus) are examples of where the Careers College concept is well-developed. The Careers College has an employer board that meets every six weeks to review and set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), facilitate employer engagement, drive professional awareness, and set the strategy for the Careers College. The employers' board members represent relevant sectors, there are also senior college representatives including Head of Faculty, Head of College, subject directors and the Employer Engagement Manager.

Employers help to shape the curriculum and deliver activities. Employers set projects and live briefs, they can support extended work experience and internships, they provide coaching and mentoring, they deliver talks during voluntary lunchtime sessions, and they support enterprise competitions. At the Career College in Digital and Creative, there has been almost one employer engagement activity per academic week; 26 times over a 26-week year.

Students gain from close interaction with employers. They understand what qualifications and qualities employers are looking for and they have opportunities to ask insightful questions directly to employers in their preferred industry. This in turn means they understand the value of the skills they are gaining.

Careers education in a Careers College is an integral part of the student experience and threads through every activity from the project-based learning to enrichment activities.

Another way in which employers are engaged in college careers provision is at a more strategic level. For instance, local employers may be engaged in curriculum design to ensure that this is relevant to their business and industry's future skills needs. The facilitation and coordination of this activity can involve faculty directors, curriculum managers and the senior leadership team within the college, as well as the college's Enterprise Adviser. Other examples of employer strategic involvement include membership of a college's governing body or sitting on their business advisory board.

Some colleges contract their employer engagement to external organisations. This was the case for one case study; Sunderland College. They have been working with a partner to secure employers and get the necessary structures and relationships in place, which they intend to take forward internally once the contract ends.

Other examples of working with employers emerged from the research literature. For example, an employer sponsored a college to support mainly Year 12 students to go on a week-long Outward Bound course. The course developed personal effectiveness and employability skills, including leadership skills, resilience and confidence. It also provided the students with activities they could reference in their personal statements for university or application forms for jobs and apprenticeships.

Employer engagement can also be beneficial to colleges. If employers are involved in design and delivery of post-16 learning, their skills needs will be better met. Career Colleges are set-up with this specific intention.

## How it works in practice

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### Sunderland College – Engaging Parents

#### Parental engagement

Some colleges may choose to host events throughout the academic year targeted towards the parents of students. The focus of these events can be to inform parents of the coverage of their child's programme of study and show how it is linked to potential careers. Where this is done, it can be to encourage parental engagement and support for their child's education after the age of 16. These events may be facilitated by teaching and lecturing staff, the careers and/or other student services.

Sunderland College has tried to create more engagement opportunities with parents via open evenings. These include events at the start of the academic year to welcome students/parents into the college; meet the teacher events and parent focused UCAS events. In each instance, the college makes certain that staff presentations include information on potential careers and highlight the importance of key elements of students' study programmes, where they are thinking about and supporting their career development.

# 3 | The impact of careers provision in colleges

**High quality, effective careers provision is key to supporting the transition of young people through college and onto their next steps. The effectiveness of a careers programme can be measured qualitatively and quantitatively. We might gauge how ‘useful’ guidance has been in the eyes of practitioners and users, or measure how many users have accessed a service and how many have progressed to higher education or apprenticeships.<sup>30</sup> Other features that are indicators of effective practice are for the provision to allow time for reflection, exploring different options through different opportunities, networks and environments, and result in the taking of action.<sup>10 30</sup>**

Looking more specifically at school and college career activities, The Careers & Enterprise Company segments impacts into different categories including personal effectiveness, career readiness, employability skills, social capital, education outcomes, and career outcomes.

Furthermore, the desk research and the case studies highlight the different ways in which the impact of college careers provision is measured. A survey of school and college staff for the Department of Education (DfE) found that careers provision was evaluated to be effective based on a number of measures:

*review of destination and progression data, NEET figures, outcome data, student feedback, identifying good practice in other schools and colleges, behaviour and performance in lessons and by tailoring the programme to labour market information and local skills gaps.<sup>27</sup> (p.29)*

As well as the quantitative measures of education and career outcomes, qualitative student feedback and internal evaluations form a key part of how a college judges its provision to be effective or successful.<sup>30</sup> The case study colleges use a mix of short online surveys using tools like SurveyMonkey after events, or paper-based ‘happy sheets’ or face-to-face informal ‘stop and ask’ feedback in passing with students. These most often ask students to report how well an activity helped develop personal effectiveness skills or increased their knowledge.

The research gives some indication of effectiveness of interventions at post-secondary level; however, as Hughes and colleagues caution, the literature is too sparse to provide definitive information on which intervention might be most effective.<sup>10</sup> They do suggest that:

30. Bimrose, J., Barnes, S., Hughes, D., and Orton, M. (2004). What is Effective Guidance? Evidence from Longitudinal case studies in England. Available from [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/ngrf/euskills/module1/careers\\_information\\_energy\\_utilities\\_introduction/longitudinal\\_study\\_on\\_effective\\_guidance2004.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/ngrf/euskills/module1/careers_information_energy_utilities_introduction/longitudinal_study_on_effective_guidance2004.pdf) [Accessed 24th September 2018].

*careers education is optimally facilitated when interventions are personalised and targeted to individuals' needs from an early age.<sup>10</sup> (p.3)*

The report now discusses the evidence for impact of college careers provision using the domains already identified in previous 'What Works' research from The Careers & Enterprise Company.

### Education outcomes and increased progression

A successful careers programme can help to increase pupil motivation and application and therefore increase attainment.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the guidance produced by DfE in 2018 sets out that the government expects that a successful careers guidance programme will be characterised by:

*higher numbers of learners progressing to positive destinations such as apprenticeships, technical routes, higher education or employment.<sup>18</sup> (p.6)*

Much of the published research evidence to do with education outcomes and progression combines evidence from schools and colleges. The research literature shows that quality careers provision in schools and colleges can result in improvements in academic achievement. There are different ways that these academic outcomes can be measured: positive progression to education rates, qualifications achieved, and retention rates.<sup>10</sup> Many of these are based on the premise that progression measures can provide 'clear and comparable' information.

Research evidence that combines data from schools and colleges has found an increase in young people entering higher education following increased investment in career.<sup>31</sup> Quantitative analysis of career activities in six countries found evidence of a relationship, 'in some circumstances', between school careers guidance activity and modestly higher assessment performances.<sup>32</sup>

The case for college careers provision can be made more clearly when researchers have looked at outcomes related to one qualification and one age range i.e. A- levels at 18, although pupil characteristics and delivery mode can still affect comparability.<sup>10</sup> At the most robust, monitoring information can provide a baseline measure, to establish a reference point for what the situation was prior to, or at the start of, the intervention.<sup>31</sup>

31. Hughes, D., Adamson, J., Peck, L., Rog. A. (2014). *Greater London Authority: Championing Careers Guidance in Schools*. CFE Research.

32. Musset, P. and Mytina Kurekova, L. (2018). *Working it out: Career Guidance and Employer Engagement*. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 175, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/51c9z#d18d-en> [Accessed 10th August 2018]

## How it works in practice

### BMet College, HE bursaries and scholarships

Since tuition fees were raised, the college has seen an increase in the number of students staying at home during university. There are seven HEIs within commuting distance of the college. As a large college, it has around 1,500-1,600 students each year progressing to university. The college wants to support students that want to go to local HEIs but also gets them to think further afield. Many HEIs offer scholarships or bursaries to high attaining students, but with 54% of BMet students meeting widening participation criteria, these high attainment scholarships will not always be accessible.

The Head of Careers and Employment led negotiations with HEIs to create a range of scholarships, bursaries and grants that would be aimed specifically at BMet students. The college started with one local university where most students progressed to and initially negotiated a progression scholarship of £2,000 for 20 students who had travelled furthest academically, as recommended by their tutor. The scheme has now extended to more students but for a lower amount (£1,000). In recent years, the college has secured bursaries and scholarships with other universities including reduction in fees for halls of residence, gym memberships, and money for travel home.

*Innovation can really support students. Not all of the bursaries that we have achieved are for widening participation students; it can be across the piece and it's all to the good'*

#### Head of Careers and Employment

The college has higher than average destinations to Higher Education, in part due to these successful bursaries and scholarships.

### Career and employment outcomes

Progression data are not the only measure of a successful college careers provision programme. A survey of young people looked at the quantitative impact of employer engagement activities that they undertook while at school and college.<sup>33</sup> The activities included work experience, job shadowing, enterprise competitions, mentoring, career advice from employers, and part-time employment. Their survey found that the more employer encounters that were recalled by young people, the better employment outcomes they had as young adults.

Young adults that had received careers talks with employers between the ages of 16-19 (college age) were 78 per cent less likely to be not in education, employment and training (NEET) than peers who did not do the activity. A similar figure was found for those who had taken part in enterprise competitions with employers (80 per cent less likely to be NEET), and young adults were 44 per cent less likely to be NEET than peers that did not undertake work experience at ages 16-19.

The survey also found that young adults who described their school-mediated employer engagement activities as 'helpful in getting a job', earned up to 16.4 per cent more than peers who did not take part in any activities.

Case studies in the research literature found that in addition to increased positive destinations and a reduction in NEET, other benefits of an effective programme were: improved partnership working between schools, colleges and employers, student-reported improvements in the quality of careers guidance, greater awareness of employability skills and progression routes, and subsequent impact on their confidence in subject and career decision making.<sup>31</sup>

33. Mann, A., Kashefpakdel, E. T., Rehill, J., Huddleston, P. (2016). *Contemporary Transitions: Young people reflect on life after secondary school and college*. Published by Education and Employers. London.



## Personal effectiveness, career readiness and decision making

A recent review of evidence found that careers provision activities can result in improvements to self-efficacy, self-confidence, career maturity and decision-making skills.<sup>10</sup> The main activities that showed these results were the general careers provision, mentoring, enterprise and work-related learning.

Researchers describe students as risk averse; in order to minimise their risk of 'failing' they want to rely on trustworthy information when making decisions.<sup>34</sup> They want to be able to weigh up the choices available and evaluate their options by using reliable information.<sup>35</sup> This information can come from careers guidance professionals, teachers and alumni. Advice from school staff can be more influential than that from family and friends as they have 'hot' knowledge that is relevant and current to their industry and therefore valued by students.<sup>25 35</sup>

The case study research shows that colleges support their staff to maintain their industry knowledge. At the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London (CONEL), teachers are allocated five days of continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain their industry skills, as well as the usual five days of CPD.

College careers staff can also support students with setting goals for themselves. Aquinas College, Stockport, based its careers and pastoral systems around the VESPA model (Vision-Effort-Systems-Practice-Attitude).<sup>36</sup> This sixth-form college focuses on the 'vision' element of the model, making sure that all

students have a vision of where they are going, with their future goals providing the motivation to do well at college. For students that are unsure of their goals, they can take part in a six-week tutorial programme at the start of Year 13, with software tools, action plans, group sessions and one-to-ones to support them with their next-step decision making.

For Plymouth College of Art, the development of personal effectiveness is embedded into the delivery of the curriculum, where it explicitly develops skills such as confidence and resilience, which are needed in the creative industry. The college supports students to set up LinkedIn profiles and create blogs to develop a professional online presence.

## Employability skills

The evidence also shows that employability skills such as communication skills, team working and problem-solving skills are also developed through college careers provision activities. The case studies of the Careers College and Plymouth College of Art in particular, made use of employer or employer-style briefs to develop these skills.

The project briefs for students at Plymouth College of Art are required to be set within a contemporary industry setting, to give students the experience and skills of responding to such briefs and for them to understand how the creative industry tends to operate.

34. Archer, L., and M. Hutchings. (2000). 'Bettering yourself?' Discourses of risk, cost and benefit in ethnically diverse, young working-class non-participants' constructions of higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 21(4), 555-74. Referenced in Shaw, J. (2012). A Case Study Exploring Student Choice Making Behaviour and Progression Agreements. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 17, 115-23.

35. Shaw, J. (2012). A Case Study Exploring Student Choice Making Behaviour and Progression Agreements. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 17: 115-23.

36. Oakes, S., and Griffin, M. (n.d.). The A Level Mindset. Available from <https://www.alevelmindset.com/projects> [Accessed 6th August 2018].

# 4 | Lessons for practice

As discussed throughout this report, good careers provision in colleges supports skill development, decision-making and transitions for young people from school, to college, and progression to apprenticeships, employment and higher education.<sup>25</sup>

Recent research in this area from across Europe shows that:

*accessible, independent and impartial, proactive career guidance is needed, backed by solid career information.*<sup>32</sup> (p.46)

These themes guide the lessons for future careers provision and activities in colleges.

## Well-resourced and visible

Students want a bigger presence from the careers team<sup>31</sup> and students need to be aware of all activities and aspects of careers programmes that are on offer<sup>27</sup>.

Working towards greater resourcing and visibility will help colleges work towards Gatsby benchmark 1 – a stable careers programme – and benchmark 3 addressing the needs of each student.

Some of the case study colleges had strong branding for their careers provision, and all talked about the importance of physical location on site – open to drop-ins, preferably near other student support services, and open year-round, if possible, to be available for students over summer.

Careers provision should include personal guidance. This might be through different access routes; face-to-face is preferred by students and most effective<sup>37</sup>, but it could also be facilitated online or by phone<sup>38</sup>. Gatsby benchmark 8 requires colleges to provide all learners with opportunities for guidance interviews.

Colleges will need to build capacity to ensure that staff have the time to coordinate, manage and deliver careers provision<sup>27</sup>.

This will continue to be a challenge for colleges as the volume of learners per institution is higher than for schools. Some colleges currently have only one careers adviser per thousand students, or in multi-campus colleges, have one per site. The Manchester College, with 5,500 16-18 students (plus several thousand more adult learners) has a team of 22 careers advisers that are qualified to Level 6+, with additional staff currently qualified to Level 3. The Warwickshire College group is currently able to guarantee one-to-ones for every Year 13 student (final year). BMet is working towards a situation where all staff that give guidance are trained to support the careers strategy and become qualified to Level 6. It will explore making use of the apprenticeship levy to fund more careers staff.

## Effective careers leadership

Gatsby benchmark 1 calls for a stable careers programme that has the explicit backing of the senior management team. The research has shown that strategic leadership and a holistic approach to careers and employability are most effective. Coordination across the different strands of careers provision (careers service, career education, employer engagement and transitions into college) should be coordinated. Recent Careers & Enterprise Company and Gatsby Foundation research found that a Careers Leader should be involved in the strategic leadership of the careers programme to ensure that the whole college has a vision and strategy working towards the Gatsby Benchmarks. The approach must be college-wide and embedded<sup>16 32</sup>.

37. NUS (2014). When IAG grow up...A collection of opinions on the state of careers information, advice and guidance in the UK.

38. Carl Gilleard OBE in NUS (2014). When IAG grow up...A collection of opinions on the state of careers information, advice and guidance in the UK.

As a way to encourage engagement with curriculum areas, two of the case study colleges (The Manchester College and Chichester College Group) talked about how the information about careers provision activities goes to the Heads of Curriculum, so that they are included in their end of year self-assessment reports and they are held accountable for the reach and engagement of their department and with the careers teams.

The DfE guidance is having an impact on strategic planning – the case study colleges were using the careers strategy to plan their work and making use of the Gatsby Benchmarks. Some had a steering group for careers, or similar, that contributed to a college-wide strategy for progression. Most colleges also surveyed and gathered feedback from college staff about the careers events and activities that had been delivered.

For some colleges, they will need to go through substantial changes to the way that careers programmes are run and managed in order to meet the guidance and meet the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks. The new Compass Tool for colleges will help to identify what changes need to be made. A change in the culture of a college will require a transformational leadership style and re-culturing involving collective learning<sup>39</sup>. The case studies told us that all college staff will have a part to play: from marketing, graphic design and information teams who input into how the careers programme is presented online and to prospective students, to reception staff who often deal with front-line queries, as well as teaching staff, tutors and pastoral staff and careers professionals.

## Evaluation and review

Careers provision needs to develop and evolve in response to student need. Evaluation and review processes need to be put in place to ensure that this is possible. There are a range of strategies that can be deployed by colleges to do this. For example, students can be encouraged to take ownership of the careers programme by creating a student career advisory council. This approach was identified in the rapid evidence review<sup>40</sup> as well as from the case studies where participants described student councils inputting into college improvements in the careers programme.

In addition, student surveys can provide valuable feedback to improve services and activities, for example creating more tailored careers fairs or improving the logistics of such events so that students have time to access as many workshops as possible. Student feedback can also influence the type of activities that are provided; for example, more career education and guidance and work experience<sup>25</sup>. Gatsby benchmark 1 states that a college careers programme should be regularly evaluated.

Employers can be included in internal evaluations. It is common to ask employers to complete feedback forms after events such as careers fairs or employer workshops. College staff, in particular tutors, are also asked for their feedback to ensure that the careers team have a good understanding of the needs of the curriculum. Working in this way will help colleges to achieve Gatsby benchmark 1.

39. Draaisma, A., Meijers, F., Kuijpers, M. (2018). The development of strong career learning environments: the project 'Career Orientation and Guidance' in Dutch vocational education, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 70:1, 27-46, DOI: 10.1080/13636820.2017.1392995

40. Schaub, M. (2012). The Profession of College Career Services Delivery: What College Counselors Should Know About Career Centers. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 26: 201-15.

A way to ensure that colleges are delivering best practice careers provision is by working towards quality standards and benchmarks. Quantitative analysis of school performance and destinations data combined with information on schools and colleges that held Quality Awards, found a positive relationship between schools that have awards and higher attainment at GCSE.<sup>41</sup> A range of quality standards and frameworks for practice currently exist which guide colleges in their approach to careers. These include:

**The Matrix Standard.** Many colleges hold or are working towards the Matrix standard. Some have the Matrix<sup>42</sup> accreditation just for their careers adviser teams, while others, more unusually, have the accreditation for the whole college. The Matrix standard examines the processes through which advice and guidance is delivered and how impacts are identified and measured<sup>43</sup>.

**DfE guidance.** The guidance from DfE refers to the Gatsby Benchmarks as a framework that colleges should use to make sure they are complying with careers guidance requirements. Colleges' funding is likely to be secure if they adopt the Gatsby Benchmarks and if they are making reasonable steps to comply with guidance.

**Quality in Careers Standard.** The DfE guidance also recommends that colleges work towards the Quality in Careers Standard, a national quality award for careers guidance that also takes into account the eight Gatsby Benchmarks, although this is not a legal requirement.

**CDI framework.** In addition, the Careers Development Institute (CDI) framework of learning outcomes supports the planning, delivery and evaluation of high quality careers work<sup>44</sup>.

**Other standards and frameworks.** Other local quality awards have been developed by colleges to recognise careers projects. For example, an 'Investors in Young People Award' was developed in one county to recognise and raise the profile of employers that actively supported young people through activities including careers talks, enterprise activities and mock interviews<sup>45</sup>.

The new Compass Tool for colleges will allow careers teams to evaluate their provision and identify what changes need to be made.

41. Hooley, T., Matheson, J., Watts, A.G. (2014). *Advancing Ambitions*. London: Sutton Trust

42. <http://matrixstandard.com> [Accessed 6th August 2018].

43. Matrix (2017). *Guidance for Organisations*. <http://matrixstandard.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/The-matrix-Standard-20pp-Guidance-Brochure-2017.pdf> [Accessed 6th August 2018].

44. Career Development Institute (2015). *Framework for Careers, Employability and Enterprise Education*. [http://www.thecdi.net/write/Framework/BP385-CDI\\_Framework-v7.pdf](http://www.thecdi.net/write/Framework/BP385-CDI_Framework-v7.pdf)

45. National Foundation for Educational Research, Councils London, Panel London Enterprise, and Leaders South East Strategic (2015). *Improving Employability Skills, Enriching Our Economy, Case Study Report*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.

## How it works in practice

### Chichester College Group — using data to track reach and impact

#### Utilising technology

Colleges need to make use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to facilitate interactions between providers, students and employers.<sup>32</sup> For example, the Chichester College Group uses Skype for some of its one-to-ones with students when they are on a different campus. College careers teams often use digital tools like Careers Coach, UniFrog and Kudos to support their work.

Data can also support colleges to deliver a quality careers service. Data 'provides actionable information' that can be used to improve provision.<sup>46</sup> As discussed earlier, this use of data should include establishing a baseline so that change can be measured.

Case study colleges are using data on activities undertaken to measure the impact of their provision to feed into rigorous and thorough annual self-assessments.

Some case study colleges are exploring how they can better track their students, and the Warwickshire College Group already commissions an annual external destination survey to look at the impacts of its programmes of study and careers advice.

As well as measuring impact, Gateshead College also uses management information and progression data in combination with labour market information (LMI) to feed into the annual business plan.

Trustworthy and accurate<sup>37</sup>, LMI is required for colleges to help tailor activities to local employment paths that are of strategic economic importance, for example to address skills shortages<sup>30 32 47</sup>. Learning from career and labour market information is Gatsby benchmark 2, and access to quality information for staff and students will

The Chichester College Group developed its own in-house monitoring system five years ago that records all student support activities, including enrichment activities. This reports attendance, how many hours the activity was, the skills targeted by the activities and student survey feedback. The careers team can interrogate the data at course or department level to see the engagement with careers activities. Careers staff use the information to identify where individual students have not participated in activities, but also see where trends across subject areas appear. By linking it to students and their curriculum area, they can also see how it can relate to progression and which activities have the most impact.

46. Carnevale, A. P., García, T. I., Gulish, A. (2017). *Career pathways: Five ways to connect college and careers*.

47. Watts, A.G. (2009). *The relationship of career guidance to VET*. National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling. Cambridge: OECD.

help colleges to meet this standard. During the Aquinas College, Stockport 'Careers Day', employers are invited to attend based on local LMI about large employers, skills shortages, plus other employers of interest. In addition, students must register at each session they attend so that the college has information on the 'reach' of these sessions.

### Tailored and targeted

It is increasingly important to tailor careers provision<sup>48</sup>. 'Addressing the needs of each student' is Gatsby benchmark 3. Case study colleges (Gateshead College and Aquinas College, Stockport) are doing this by working with teaching staff to deliver content that is tailored to different industries. This includes providing specific advice about entry into an industry through apprenticeships or graduate schemes and the qualifications needed, along with information about what it is like to work in those industries and rates of pay. Working on this aspect of a careers programme will support the achievement of Gatsby benchmark 4.

Those who have the least parental/carer support need a personalised service to ensure that decisions and outcomes are not driven by socioeconomic background<sup>32 37 48</sup>. A quality college careers programme will address asymmetries in information about specific careers or challenge stereotypes.

Many of the case study colleges worked specifically to identify and work with students who were at risk of becoming NEET. They were identified through their lack of attendance, lack of engagement or through referrals. These students received one-to-one guidance sessions and support to identify goals to help re-motivate them. Furthermore, Aquinas College, Stockport

invites motivational speakers to talk to its widening participation students. The college invites high profile speakers, including industry leaders and MPs, through alumni contacts and use of social media.

### Working collaboratively

In order to deliver careers provision that is effective, colleges will need to work collaboratively and in partnership with others<sup>49</sup>.

### Working with employers

Engagement with employers helps to ensure authentic<sup>32</sup> interactions that will give real insight into workplaces and industry, and develop career competencies<sup>39</sup>. Gatsby benchmark 5 – encounters with employers and employees, and benchmark 6 – experiences of workplaces – embed these as part of quality careers provision. Employer engagement could be through employer talks, careers fairs, mentoring or enterprise activities. This ensures that careers education is not just based on information transfer in the classroom or through one-to-one personal guidance, but drawn from real-life, and based on dialogue and concrete experiences gathered first-hand.<sup>32 39</sup>

Authentic experiences also come from the people that are chosen to represent employers; making use of alumni is valued by students.<sup>25</sup> The colleges we spoke to also did this:

- Aquinas College, Stockport and BMet asked employers to bring along alumni for their careers talks.
- BMet created visual maps of where alumni had progressed to, based on UCAS data that they paid for, and others based on apprenticeship destinations.

48. Unison in NUS (2014). *When IAG grow up...A collection of opinions on the state of careers information, advice and guidance in the UK.*

49. University and College Union in NUS (2014). *When IAG grow up...A collection of opinions on the state of careers information, advice and guidance in the UK.*

- Plymouth College of Art developed an alumni network to highlight progression destinations other than the creative industries in London.
- As part of 'National Careers Week', the Chichester College Group got staff to describe their skill development over their career through all of their different jobs, including going back to paper rounds. They found it was motivating for students to see where their teachers had come from.

College careers teams should call upon specialists where necessary. These could include members of the careers team that are attached to different curriculum areas to build specialist knowledge, or using the industry knowledge of teachers or specialist employment advisers that can help students prepare for a job search in a specific industry<sup>40</sup>. The Manchester College has a team of employability advisers that support specific curriculum areas.

Learners with high needs have not been well served generally until now by college careers provision<sup>50</sup>. As with the recommendation for industry specialists, guidance professionals with expertise in this field should be deployed. Some of the case study colleges work closely with their Local Authority to bring in tailored advice and support for students with SEND.

The case studies illustrated that apprenticeship providers can help facilitate route-based information sessions, for example running talks for finance and accounting students that includes a sector talk, group sessions and a mock interview. When employers meet students, their messages about the importance of good attendance and punctuality, attentiveness and body language can have much more impact.

### Working with local networks

The evidence from the case studies and the research literature also show that other collaborative working can come through local careers networks, borough or county-wide networks. Some colleges are involved in several networks with schools and local universities to share good practice<sup>27</sup>. Some existing networks will become Careers Hubs that will be supported by The Careers & Enterprise Company. These Careers Hubs are being rolled out in 20 areas<sup>51</sup>. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) can help broker relationships through the Enterprise Coordinator role.<sup>52</sup>

The devolved education policy in Greater Manchester has enabled local colleges to work more closely with the local Chambers of Commerce and the Greater Manchester Higher project that aims to improve progression to higher education. In London, CONEL is committed to meeting the 'London Ambitions'<sup>53</sup>, a London Enterprise Panel-led programme focussed on providing high quality career opportunities.

The pre-entry work by college careers teams helps to ensure successful sustainable transitions for young people from school to college. Gatsby benchmark 3 calls for records of advice to be kept by different phases of education. As the Gatsby Benchmarks become embedded across the education phases, there will need to be greater collaboration between schools and colleges to share information about the activities that young people have experienced, as well as potentially working collaboratively with local employers. Local Authorities are working with schools and colleges to support the Baker Clause. Colleges need to be aware of the mixed experience of careers provision that young people will have when they get to college.

50. Ofsted (2016) *Moving Forward? How well the further education and skills sector is preparing young people with high needs for adult life*.

51. <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/news/twenty-new-careers-hubs-launched> [Accessed 6th August 2018].

52. The Careers & Enterprise Company (n.d.). Our network. Available from <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/about-us/our-network> [Accessed 6th August 2018].

53. The Mayor of London's Office. (n.d.). London Ambitions. Available from <https://londonambitionsportal.london.gov.uk/> [Accessed 6th August 2018].

## How it works in practice

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### Aquinas College, Stockport and the Gander Project

The Gander Project was set up two years ago by the local Chamber of Commerce to encourage businesses to work with local education providers in a way that would be of benefit to businesses, colleges and students. Employers register their interest in activities that include work experience, mentoring, employer talks, employer visits, interview support and CV support. The Gander Project acts as a brokerage between employers and colleges. The project employs one person part-time to co-ordinate, project manage and monitor the KPIs. It has supported nearly 3,000 students either in groups or one-to-one. Colleges pay to be involved in the project.

Aquinas College, Stockport has been involved from the beginning as it had collaborated with the Chamber of Commerce in the past. The college can contact the Gander Project to find a suitable employer for its needs. For example, at a recent event for media students, the Gander Project supplied three employers from the finance sector to present. It has also supported the college to find employer mentors. The college can then go on to continue those employer relationships directly.

### Impartial

Gatsby benchmark 7 calls for students to have a meaningful encounter with a range of providers of training and learning. Impartiality has been a common theme throughout the evidence and case studies<sup>10 32 37</sup>. College careers provision should discuss the range of options open to students, so that they are well-understood. This will include keeping higher education open as an option for vocational and technical students and, conversely, talking about technical routes, such as degree apprenticeships to A level students, and using every opportunity to discuss the next steps<sup>35</sup>.

Impartiality is also important from stakeholders and partners involved in delivering aspects of careers provision. Stakeholders that are invited to talk to college students should ensure that they talk about the range of options available for students, for example different ways to access apprenticeships, talks on finance and budgeting for all students, not just those destined for HE.

For example, Aquinas College, Stockport holds an 'After Aquinas' event each March for lower sixth form students and their parents and carers, offering universities, employers, training providers and charities to have stands at the event. The universities and providers that hold workshops during the event are asked to speak impartially. Subjects have included how to choose a university, the university application process, or support available for apprenticeships. The college has also asked a local HEI to talk to all students about the issue of unconditional offers – not just those that have an unconditional offer with their institution.



# 5 | Developing the evidence base

**In 2015, there were calls for more specific research into careers provision in further education<sup>25</sup> and in 2016 Hughes and colleagues<sup>10</sup> highlighted the ‘weak and fragmented’ nature of the literature due to different elements of focus and inconsistent terminology.**

**This report has shown from the research literature that has been reviewed, the expert interviews and the case studies, that quality careers provision can support young people to transition well to post-16 provision, develop their skills and support progression into employment and further learning, and increase earnings.**

The case studies presented here have been able to highlight common and good practice and show how the sector is rising to the challenge presented by the Gatsby Benchmarks and the careers strategy.

## Priorities for research

While the evidence shows that high quality, independent and impartial careers provision can support transitions through education and into work, the specific case for careers provision in post-16 education is less well-made. Many studies focus on secondary education (rather than upper secondary) or combine research on schools and colleges. There is much material on undergraduates, graduates and adults. Few studies specially focus on colleges or the 14-19 age group only. In addition, few disaggregate findings by different college types. As the post-16 policy landscape moves at pace, those studies that do focus on this age range become dated.

Quantitative data can show the benefits of certain aspects of careers provision (employer encounters)<sup>25 32</sup>. The Gatsby Benchmarks (Benchmark 3) call for better tracking and longitudinal monitoring of students. This will help researchers and evaluators to not have to rely on events recalled by students some years after.

Hughes and colleagues<sup>10</sup> called for more randomised control trials, or at least counterfactual groups. They also highlighted the importance of establishing baseline data with consistent reporting measures to be able to link inputs to outcomes and the importance of the sector sharing findings, to learn from best practice and challenges in order to build quality over time.

## Next steps for colleges

In addition to a need for colleges and researchers to develop the evidence to support the case for careers provision in colleges, there are steps that colleges can take to ensure that 'what works' as found in this paper is translated to activity.

Colleges should complete the Compass tools so that they know where to focus their resources, considering structures and mechanisms as well as the effectiveness of interventions<sup>50</sup>. Personal guidance is a key aspect of effective careers provision and should be resourced accordingly.

Colleges are already carrying out surveys of students, employers and parents to gather and act on feedback to improve their activities; this could go wider to include reasons for not using services, perceptions and perceived benefits<sup>27</sup>. Colleges should raise awareness of their programme through marketing and information teams, consider the location of careers teams on the college campus, and aim to be embedded throughout tutorials and lessons.

There is some evidence of targeting activities by student preferences and by subject area, and pastoral support being targeted by student characteristics. There was also some evidence of targeting careers provision to specifically address the socio-economic barriers and stereotypes: widening participation activities related to HE in the main. Colleges should target students at risk of becoming NEET with interventions from qualified careers advisers. By implementing tracking and monitoring information, colleges will be able to quantify the impact of these interventions. A robust monitoring system should start with establishing a baseline against which colleges can compare results.

The use of ICT will not be a magic bullet, but the use of ICT combined with labour market information could provide some innovative solutions. The DfE guidance<sup>18</sup> mandated that colleges must secure information on the full range of education and employment options. The Labour Market Information (LMI) for All project aimed to provide

*'a single access point for multiple, high quality sources of LMI, which is openly accessible, shared in a way that would allow it to be used by a number of career related interfaces and is viable in the longer term.'*<sup>54</sup>

Some colleges have embedded the LMI for All 'Careerometer' widget on their websites and one of the case study colleges, BMet, makes use of the information as well. Labour market information can be used to promote careers and routes into industry, not just courses at college.

As the launch of T Levels<sup>55</sup> approaches and brings an even more increased focus on employability and employer engagement, it will be a challenge for colleges to develop their relationships with industry. To not only deliver the industry placements at the scale required, but to also continue to develop employer engagement in enterprise competitions, employer briefs, mentoring, employer encounters and workplace visits, that the evidence shows works so well to support young people.<sup>56</sup>

By collecting and using more robust and reliable data, colleges can allocate resource in areas that will have the impacts that they are looking for; increased career readiness, increased progression and increased employability.

54. Bimrose, J., Barnes, S-A., Owen, D., Hughes, D., Wilson, R., Attwell, G., Rustemeier, P. (2018). *Labour market information (LMI) for all: Stakeholder Engagement and Usage, Data and Technical Developments*. Research report, Department for Education.

55. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/t-levels-next-steps-for-providers> [Accessed 6th August 2018]

56. <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/research/publications> [Accessed 6th August 2018]



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