



Department
for Education

Opportunity Areas Insight Guide

Careers

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Opportunity in careers

Opportunity Areas

The long-term objective of the Opportunity Areas (OA) programme is to transform the life chances of children and young people in 12 areas of the country with low social mobility, while learning more about what works in improving education outcomes in coastal, rural and urban areas. The programme seeks to tackle regional inequality by convening resources and using evidence-based approaches, as well as testing new ones, to unlock the barriers that hold young people back in geographic areas where the educational challenges are greatest.

The programme is being evaluated and reports will be available during the course of 2022. In the meantime, with this series of Insight Guides, we are sharing the lived experience and felt impact from those working hard to make a difference in the Opportunity Areas.

Further information about the programme can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Careers education, information, advice and guidance in the Opportunity Areas


Too often, where you start in life dictates where you end up – with factors such as geography, socio-economic background, ethnicity and gender all playing a part in determining access to rewarding careers and lifetime earnings. We know, for example, that pay gaps between the richest and poorest are two and a half times larger in the least mobile areas.¹

Levelling up these disparities is at the heart of the Opportunity Areas programme and a key part of the Government's work to support the most vulnerable as we chart our recovery from the pandemic and build back better. The careers projects in Opportunity Areas also support the Government's Plan for Jobs, which is helping to protect and create new jobs, as well as providing tailored support to help people find work in the face of economic and employment challenges.

Front cover: West Somerset College and Somerset Education Business Partnership

¹ Social Mobility Commission (2020), The Long Shadow of Deprivation, page 5.





One way the Opportunity Area programme has been making a difference is by bringing national and local partners together from businesses, education, civil society and community organisations to unlock the potential of young people and meet the needs of the economy. The approach in each area has been led by local partnership boards and driven by data, evidence and a shared determination to help young people find and follow their career paths.

There is now a clear definition of what good careers guidance looks like, in the form of the **eight Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Careers Guidance**:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) and National Careers Service have played an influential role supporting the delivery of high-quality careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in Opportunity Areas.

Who is this guide for?

- Practitioners (e.g. **Careers Leaders**) and system leaders with an interest in careers education, recognising the crucial role that both play in addressing challenges.
- Anyone working in a social mobility ‘cold spot’ who wants to learn from peers who face similar challenges in careers education.²

Each guide that we publish will be followed by a webinar and online workshop to connect interested parties with those with experience in the featured projects. If you would like to find out more or attend a webinar, contact: **Opportunity.Areas@education.gov.uk**

² Cold spots are areas where young people from poorer backgrounds have fewer opportunities to succeed than their peers elsewhere. See www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-commission for further details.

What this guide covers

This guide, the first in a series, covers a selection of Opportunity Area place-based careers projects that have tackled complex and multi-faceted obstacles to social mobility and regional inequality. Some of the best examples of local solutions to local problems are listed here, covering a number of themes in careers education, from best practice sharing networks through to post-16 NEET (not in education, employment or training) reduction. Our aim is to cover tried and tested projects that vary in cost, showing where match-funding has been secured.

We hope that these insights will support work to overcome similar challenges for young people elsewhere.

The following case studies are included:

Norwich Careers Facilitator Network:

establishing a network for secondary schools to share best practice and deliver large-scale events with employers so that young people are prepared for working life.

Blackpool Careers Journey: bringing together national and local partners to create a joined-up approach with an online platform to help young people connect with local careers.

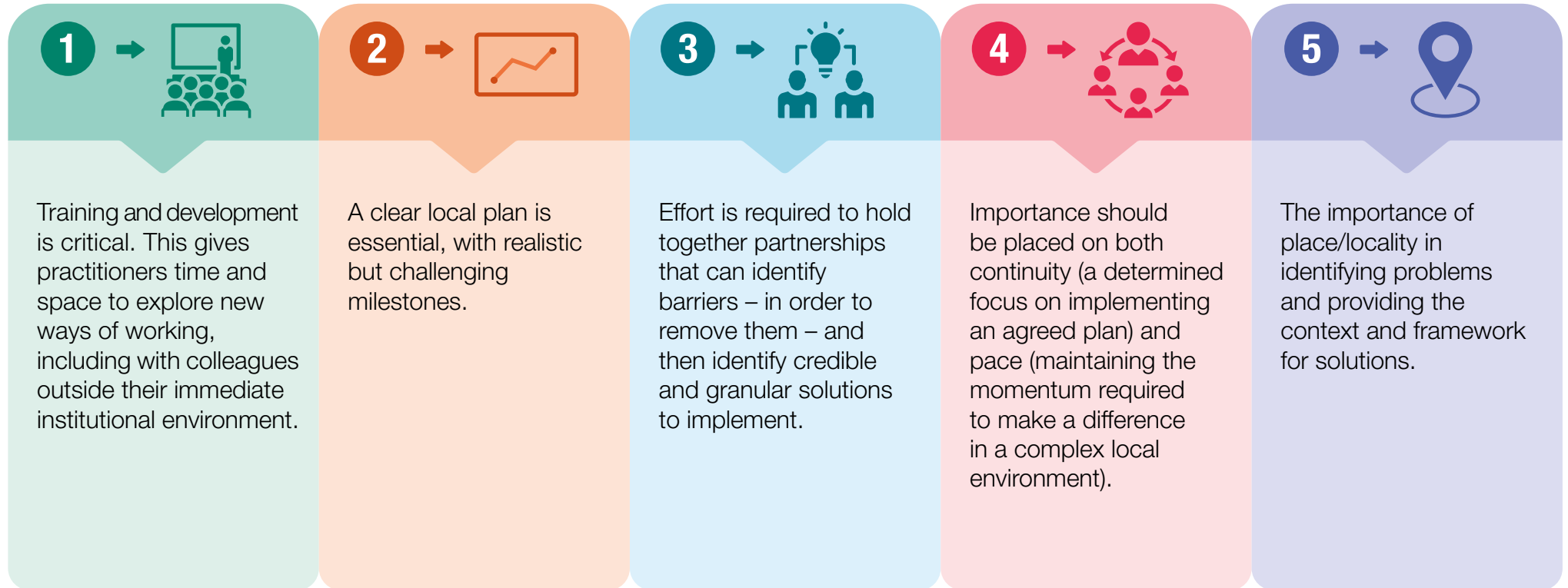
West Somerset Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance:

tackling rural isolation by creating a network of Cornerstone Employers to provide expertise, strategic support and events for schools and make it easier for more employers and the self-employed to engage with schools.³

Doncaster Careers Hub: adapting a successful pilot to meet local needs involving every school and college, including Alternative Provision and special schools, to help young people find a post-16 option that suits them.

³ <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/employers-volunteers/cornerstone-employers>

Key insights



Observations from a Partnership Board Chair

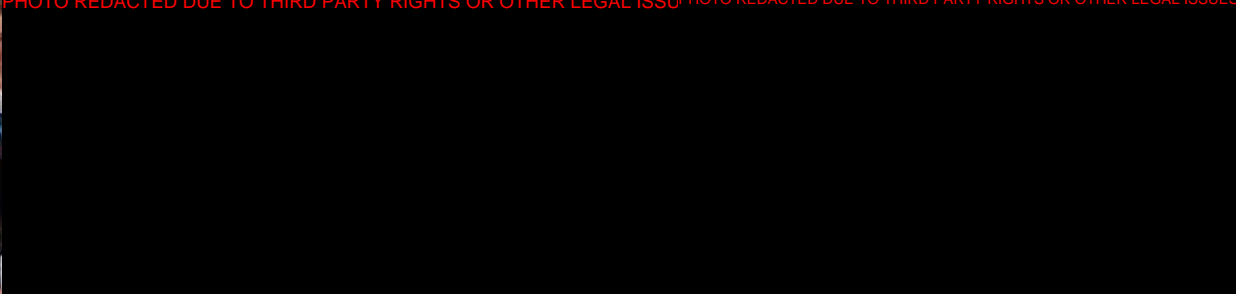
Each OA has a local partnership board, headed by an independent chair and supported by a Department for Education Head of Delivery. This board comprises local stakeholders from schools, further education, businesses and beyond to ensure a tailored and localised approach to delivering priorities and robust challenge.



Professor Sir Chris Husbands

Almost everyone's career trajectory – perhaps like our love lives – is obvious in retrospect but utterly unpredictable in advance. When we're young, we have no idea how things are going to turn out, and it's a major source of anxiety and concern. This is the root challenge for careers education: every one of us makes choices with far-reaching implications that depend on a complicated equation where the elements include ourselves, and how well we know ourselves, the choices and information available to us and – the unknown factor in every career choice equation – our sense of what the future holds.





We've known for many years that careers education, and the information, advice and guidance that underpins it, is an area where greater focus and ambition is needed. Young people need access to careers education that stretches ambition. Too often, young people do not understand the full range of choices available to them. The ideas they have about employment and work are often out of date and stereotyped. And all this is made more difficult by the pace of change in the labour market.

Rapid technological change, rapidly evolving work practices, changing markets and now the unpredictability of the nation's recovery from a devastating pandemic all make careers education an enormous challenge. There's no perfect solution to the challenge, but we owe it to our young people to give them the best tools we can offer to help them navigate the choices before them.

Addressing this problem demands some powerful tools. The case studies in this insight guide set out some of them. The use of national frameworks via the Gatsby Benchmarks frames local decision-making, but then what is required is a combination of forensic analysis of grounded local data, determined planning, inter-institutional

collaboration and, perhaps the most important, being ambitious and imaginative.

Each of the four featured Opportunity Areas is different, and the local needs analysis highlighted quite different patterns and priorities. But there are some common themes. The intense relationship between lack of opportunity, disadvantage and place is apparent, with stark data laying bare the disconnect between local young people and opportunities, which begins very young and only deepens with disadvantage.

Equally clear is the sense of dissatisfaction with conventional arrangements that is shared by employers – who are often very enthusiastic about supporting young people but find it hard to know how best to help – and teachers. The accounts here demonstrate the critical importance of local analysis and engagement.

But local initiative needs a structure, and a striking feature of the accounts is the importance of the structure provided by the Gatsby Benchmarks for good careers guidance. In almost all the areas, the Gatsby Benchmarks provided a clear sense of what 'good' looks like, offered with clarity and structure to focus local initiative.

Image of Doncaster Campsmount Academy

Even so, the gap between analysis and national structure is where the hard work lies. Here, the case studies provide powerful evidence of the importance of perhaps five key features. First, training and development is critical, giving practitioners time and space to explore new ways of working, including with colleagues outside their immediate institutional environment. Second, a clear local plan is essential, with realistic but challenging milestones, and all the more important in an arena with overlapping and disparate interest groups. Above all, the plan provides a mechanism for the allocation of resource. Third, effort is required to hold together partnerships, putting together what one of the case studies calls a 'trusted and active network' that can identify barriers in order to remove them, and then identify credible and granular solutions to implement. Collaborative working is not a soft option. It involves what one of the case studies calls 'being relentless' about checking who has something to offer, bringing them to the table, and showing them where they fit, even, or especially, when things become difficult. Fourth, there is the importance in all this of both continuity (a determined focus on implementing an agreed plan) and pace (maintaining the momentum required to make a difference in a complex

local environment). Fifth, and implied in all this, is the importance of place: the case studies here demonstrate the importance of locality in identifying problems, but also in providing the context and framework for solutions. Young people live their lives in places with quite specific characteristics; grasping the power of place and the importance of context is a powerful tool.

The case studies here are defiantly optimistic: good progress can be made in understanding the changing landscape of challenges, opportunities and initiatives. We can make a difference. All of the case studies raise the question of sustainability and legacy. This is a more difficult question. They all demonstrate that good foundations can be laid with determination, commitment and imagination. Ensuring that the gains made are not lost is the next big challenge.

Professor Sir Chris Husbands

Chair of the Doncaster Opportunity Areas Partnership Board

...good foundations can be laid with determination, commitment and imagination.





Norwich case study

Norwich Careers

Improving careers support and raising aspirations are, together, one of four priorities for the Norwich Opportunity Area. Too few disadvantaged students in the city go on to education, employment or training after Year 11 or Year 13, and very small numbers of young people from certain wards go on to Higher Education.⁴ The Careers Facilitator Network was designed to tackle these issues.

The network brought every secondary school together to improve **Compass** scores against all eight Gatsby Benchmarks, share best practice and deliver large-scale employer engagement activities. The project has supported Norwich pupils to access a meaningful, engaging and high-quality careers programme that has helped them to make informed decisions about their futures.

Image of Norwich Careers Facilitators

4 The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Norwich who went on to education or employment after Year 13 (KS5) in 2014/15 was 75%, compared to 84% nationally. In the 2017/18 academic year, this rose to 85% and was above the national rate of 84%. In the 2018/19 academic year this figure rose again to 86% to above the national average of 85%.

What was the problem?

- Head teachers told us the wide range of careers offers and providers for schools was overwhelming, and the capacity for them to engage was limited.
- Norwich schools were not meeting the expectation, set out in the 2017 careers strategy, for schools to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks by 2020.
- Schools were not delivering enough employer encounters and it was not clear which ones were the most effective.

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The network continues to be a source of inspiration and support.

- Employers in Norwich told us they were enthusiastic about supporting young people but found it hard to know how best to help.
- Young people in Norwich told us they wanted a curriculum that prepared them for working life, provided effective careers advice (particularly from young, local role models) and delivered more encounters with employers.

Implementation activities and successes

The Norwich Opportunity Area established the Aspirations Working Group to focus on these issues. It prioritised supporting and strengthening the careers education infrastructure and co-ordinating the best use of available support and opportunities. Alongside this, provider Form the Future was commissioned to deliver a two-year programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), facilitate regular meetings to develop a peer network and encourage all secondary schools in Norwich to participate.

- 12 members of staff, including teachers and support staff, were trained as Careers Facilitators to deliver the Gatsby Benchmarks across participating secondary schools in Norwich through a series of monthly CPD workshops. This provided additional expertise and capacity for existing Careers Leaders in schools to deliver improved careers programmes to support students.
- CPD workshops included updates from school careers and enterprise providers so schools could know more about the support available and incorporate it into high-quality cohesive programmes for their students.
- Careers Facilitators developed a collaborative network to support each other and share, review and improve their individual school careers strategies. This improved confidence significantly:

“The network continues to be a source of inspiration and support. It provides up to date and timely advice, great contacts, inspiring discussion and ideas about resources which I might otherwise have been unaware of.”

Careers Facilitator – Open Academy

“I find the Careers Facilitators network really useful and when others share useful insights and tips it gives me confidence with what I’m doing.”

**Careers Facilitator –
Jane Austen College**

- Action plans were created to address areas of local need leading to:
 - Workshops to challenge career stereotypes for students in Years 7 and 8.
 - Improved information for students and teachers about local growth sectors.
 - Resources for the delivery of CPD sessions that championed the value of careers across all year groups and curriculum areas and provided strategies for conversations about careers to be included in all lessons and linked to pupils’ classroom learning.

- The delivery of two large-scale employer engagement events attended by over 1,200 students from across Norwich. This helped to improve the quality and breadth of local careers events and saved time and resources for both schools and employers. The events were positively received by students, parents and teachers, with 88% of participating students saying they had learnt about new post-16 options and felt more informed about next steps and more confident about their future.

“As a school we would never be able to do something like this ourselves, or give our students this much information about options, so it was a real success.”

Participant who attended employer engagement events

- Schools agreed a co-ordinated calendar of employer-linked activities, which was widely promoted to companies who were keen to support, and shared active industry contacts.

A terrific event and very useful, we met providers we didn’t even know existed.



Output measures

- At the end of the 2019/20 academic year, participating schools had consolidated their progress towards meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks, outperforming the national average for its scores against seven of the benchmarks.
- The Opportunity Area's target was to create 36,837 meaningful encounters between pupils and employers by July 2020, which is equivalent to four per pupil. It exceeded this by 185% with 68,218 employer encounters achieved by July 2020.

In Autumn 2018, just four schools had achieved Gatsby Benchmark 5 (encounters with employers and employees). By the end of the 2019/20 academic year, in spite of the disruption of the pandemic, 11 out of 15 schools had fully achieved Benchmark 5, with the remaining four having partially achieved it.

Project costs

£149,390 over the 2018/19 and 2019/20 academic years:

- £88,680 in grants to schools to add capacity, for example paying for cover teachers or overtime, for 12 Careers Facilitators to be released from timetables one afternoon per week to access CPD and network support, and to focus on developing their careers strategies.
- £49,750 to commission support, training and expert advice to upskill schools and to co-ordinate citywide careers events.
- £10,960 to support schools to build employer networks and provide additional employer engagements.

Sustainability

Funding for the Careers Facilitator programme came to a planned end in July 2020, but the network continues for 2020/21. Schools say the Careers Facilitator role has simplified the communication of careers offers, streamlined engagement with employers and reduced burdens on schools. They have valued the positive impact this has had on pupils and the guidance they receive.

As a result, eight out of the 12 participating schools have committed to the ongoing provision of a named Careers Facilitator, using their own resources to continue their participation in the network meetings and ensure dedicated additional time is focused on careers. Secondary head teachers have committed to continuing with two annual citywide careers events, with agreement from local stakeholders, businesses and venues to support them.

Regular network meetings were well attended throughout the 2020 autumn term, now chaired by the Enterprise Co-ordinator for Norwich, part of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership **Careers Hub**. The programme includes a series of guest speakers, updates from local providers and schools sharing their own best practice and learning. Two additional schools outside the OA boundary have also requested to join the network and participate regularly.

“Involvement in the Careers Facilitator Network really helped us to develop our careers strategy and to value the importance of careers across the school, leading to the appointment of an additional full time Careers Lead.”

**Assistant Head Teacher –
City of Norwich School**



Key ingredients for success

- **Continuity and pace** – regular monthly meetings with a consistent framework made the network cohesive. New members were incorporated well and could draw on the strength of the community.
- **Building a trusted and active network** – the time for schools' careers staff to share, support and discuss barriers and solutions with each other was invaluable to improve the offer for pupils and to find creative ways to continue with careers provision during the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Finding a solution for the continuation of school career support** – regular and ongoing support through wider partners is needed to ensure all schools continue to make good progress and to understand the changing landscape of new opportunities and initiatives.



Blackpool case study

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Blackpool Careers Journey – preparing young people for work

The Blackpool Careers Journey is a co-ordinated offer of careers support for all children and young people to help them prepare for work. The most vulnerable young people, who are at risk of becoming NEET or who are NEET, are also targeted with additional help.


Young people leaving secondary schools and starting college now have a much clearer view of their future career choices. As a result, Blackpool has been identified as an area of good practice in the **2020 Careers and Enterprise Company report**.

The Blackpool Opportunity Area programme set up a working group including the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership, National Citizenship Service Trust, and voluntary sector and training providers, alongside stakeholders from the Pupil Referral Unit and post-16 colleges. Collectively, they reviewed the current careers offer in the town to decide what was required.

It was identified that a range of careers interventions were in place, but not within a coherent and aligned model. They also identified gaps that required investment and were not fully measured.

To address this, the Blackpool Careers Journey was established to provide interventions for all children and young people to help them prepare for work.

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Lancashire Careers Hub resources and Opportunity Area investment were combined to: customise a new digital careers resource (Start), engage schools through the Enterprise Co-ordinator, and engage employers through the local Responsible Business Network and Cornerstone Employers while providing wrap-around support for young people who are NEET and at risk of NEET. This case study particularly focuses on Start and the wrap-around support (NEET projects).

What was the problem?

- The Opportunity Area programme identified a disconnect in Blackpool between local young people and local careers. Young people had limited knowledge of local career opportunities and in some cases felt they would have to leave Blackpool to find a worthwhile career. At the same time, the LEP Local Labour Market Information indicated a skills shortage over the next 10 years.
- Vulnerable young people who may apply for post-16 education or training risk not starting the course or dropping out in the early stages, potentially setting a ‘NEET churn’ pattern of being in and out of education and training. The proportion

of disadvantaged pupils in Blackpool who went on to education, employment or training after Year 11 (KS4) in the 2014/15 academic year was 82%, compared to 88% nationally. In the 2018/19 academic year, this figure increased to 85% but was still below the national average of 89%.

- In some cases, vulnerable young people and those that are NEET are more motivated to get ‘a real job’ than to continue with education, however, they lack employability skills. As a result, they require targeted support to prepare them for post-16 education, training or work.

Implementation activities and successes

A Blackpool Opportunity Area working group, which oversaw the Blackpool Careers Journey, developed the following projects to address careers opportunities for young people in the town.

- **Start Blackpool** – a digital platform to connect local young people with local careers and help them prepare for work. This was developed alongside U-Explore,

a national EdTech company that specialises in careers guidance for young people in schools and colleges. The national careers website, **Start**, was customised. The website provides information and advice on local career opportunities, post-16 education and training pathways. A digital learning platform, **Thinkific**, was added to help create online learning activities, including virtual work experiences.

Skills competency frameworks were then added to specifically help young people develop and accredit the skills needed in the workplace. Schools were also able to use the platform's data analytical functions to track pupils' progress as they prepare for their next steps when they leave education to explore their future career.


The project group ensured that Start Blackpool was developed in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks for good careers guidance and to monitor performance. 965 young people have engaged with the two most popular modules, 'interests and work ideas' and 'opening your eyes'. According to a survey on the platform, the local employer video content has proved to be particularly popular with young people at risk of becoming NEET.

To date, 3,300 young people have actively used Start Blackpool. The vision is for every young person in secondary school and every young person in their first two years of college to actively use the site. As of December 2020, 24% of the school and college cohort are doing so.

Pathways For All – a project that supports vulnerable young people at risk of becoming NEET over the post-16 transition. It has built an evidence-based approach to ensure there is a legacy of what works and what does not. This was jointly led by two organisations: Right to Succeed, who champion a place-based approach to bringing the community together to transform outcomes for children, and Educational Diversity, who provide education and support for children and young people not educated in mainstream school.

A key intervention was support from engagement coaches to help young people in Year 11 at risk of becoming NEET over the summer transition period and in the crucial early months of post-16 education and training. As of December 2020, the project has supported 245 young people in total. This has been working with a very small number of schools with a view to





applying lessons learned to scale locally in order to support those at risk of becoming NEET in all schools. In March 2020, the Educational Diversity project cohort had a NEET rate of 9.75%, which is half the usual total NEET rate for the Education Diversity leavers.

- **Targeting young people who are NEET** – this project has adapted an evidence-based employability model using **Individual Placement and Support**, which helps adults with severe mental health problems get into work. This adapted model has been piloted to work with young people in Blackpool who are NEET. It was made possible by Blackpool Council Employment Services' Positive Steps into Work, who were appointed to work alongside Blackpool Council Children's Services.

The project involved a workforce development aspect, with staff working alongside each other to assure model fidelity. This gained momentum as staff became more accustomed to the model and started to see success stories in the support of young people. Support includes: short development courses; support to move into further education,

work placements and paid internships; and support into work. These interventions are building skills where needed and encouraging employers to give vulnerable young people an opportunity.

Initially, support and work experience placements took place face-to-face. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, support has been tailored to individual young people and redirected to phone and online, successfully adapting to the individual young person's preferences and circumstances. Providing work placements virtually has been a challenge, but despite this, the adapted online support has been sufficient to successfully place some young people in work.

As of January 2021, 126 young people have been supported since the start of the project, all receiving one-to-one support to develop skills. 21 have participated in work placements, four have been placed in paid internships and 15 have been placed in jobs. These successes are accelerating as the project takes hold.

An independent evaluation of the collective impact of projects is planned for 2020/21 and will be available on the **Blackpool Opportunity Area website**.

Costs

- £143,000 – Start Blackpool (contract from December 2018 - August 2021)
 - Free licences for all secondary schools and colleges.
 - It is anticipated that the platform will have low maintenance costs in future years.
- £411,000 – Pathways for All – NEET Prevention (contract from June 2019 - August 2021)
 - Of this total, £262,000 was match-funded through partners.
- £297,500 – Targeted NEET (contract from June 2019 - August 2021)
 - There is optimism among project partners that sustainability funding will see the continuation of this work.

“Early investment in careers programmes to scale up activities in disadvantaged cold spots has meant that areas like Blackpool and Burnley in Lancashire and Darlington and Stockton in Tees Valley now rank amongst the highest performing areas in the country.”

Careers and Enterprise Company report, ‘Careers Education in England’s schools and colleges 2020’

Key ingredients for success

- Take time to assess existing activity, identify gaps and then invest in interventions to address them.
- A collaborative approach with stakeholders fosters ownership and increases the chances of sustaining what works.
- Be relentless – checking who is out there who has something to offer, bringing them to the table, and showing them where they fit within a coherent offer, in this case the Blackpool Careers Journey.

Early investment in careers programmes has meant that areas like Blackpool now rank amongst the highest performing areas in the country.



West Somerset case study

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West Somerset – Delivering high-quality Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

West Somerset is rural and coastal, covering three areas of natural beauty. The small population is scattered across a significant geographical footprint, with only 18 schools delivering education for five to 18 year olds, in a mainly three-tier system. Three schools deliver in the secondary phase, one of which has a sixth form.

The predominant employment sectors are hospitality and food services, agriculture, health and care services, retail, and leisure. There are, however, hi-tech businesses that are providing new opportunities.

Research by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) has demonstrated that employer engagement as part of the school curriculum has an impact on post-16 outcomes.

What was the problem?

The combination of rurality, isolation and the economic profile can make it a challenge for young people to fully appreciate the wealth of opportunities after full-time education and how they can achieve them. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in West Somerset who went on to a UK higher education institution after Year 13 (KS5) in 2015/16 was 26%, compared to 47% nationally. In the 2018/19 academic year, this figure rose to 35%, but was below the national average of 49%.

Previous page: Heart of the South West Careers Hub

This page: SCC Somerset TalentED Talent Academies



Implementation activities and successes

The West Somerset Opportunity Area collaborated with schools, employers and other partners to deliver imaginative and high-quality careers education and guidance. This network of cornerstone employers included EDF, Butlins, Santander and the NHS, who provided their own expertise, strategic support and events for schools to make it easier for other employers and the self-employed to engage with schools. This work supports schools in meeting the standard of the national careers' strategy, including **achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks**.

- Working with schools, the programme has aligned Careers Education, Advice, Information and Guidance (CEAIG) programmes with the national careers' strategy. Using the Gatsby Benchmarks to evaluate, it has introduced **Careers Leader Training** and networking opportunities to ensure more rigour and expertise. It has also embedded careers opportunities across the curriculum.
- In conjunction with the CEC, an enterprise co-ordinator was deployed to help schools work with local employers to improve careers activities that were measured against the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- Young people engaged with a range of school-based activities connected to the workplace, such as the Young Enterprise Company programme that provided a vehicle for both their needs and the growing needs of businesses for adaptability and employability skills.
- Somerset County Council provided expertise, strategic input and boosted employer engagement activity through the **TalentEd Academies**, sharing workplace experience and insights, and supporting the programme using the Somerset employer database and managing employer checks.

Output measures

- 100% in the employer encounter benchmarks 5 and 6 for 2019.
- West Somerset College has **embedded CEIAG into the curriculum**.
- 15,974 employer engagement encounters have been delivered by the partnership over three years up to 2020.
- 156 Year 10 students at West Somerset College undertook work experience with 60 employers to develop their understanding of the workplace and the possibilities available to them.

“As a Cornerstone employer we are looking to target West Somerset to increase aspirations of students in this area and help them to recognise the NHS as a potential employer.

Through working in partnership with West Somerset College we were able to give local young people the opportunity to see the internal workings of Minehead Community Hospital and how in their future careers they can also play a major part in helping their community. A rotational programme offered students

a breadth of knowledge and insight, allowing students to break free of the notion that a hospital is only made up of doctors and nurses. We found this format worked well as students were given smaller activities and jobs to do whilst meeting various staff members.


We have had feedback from our ward volunteers commenting on how refreshing it was to have the students with them and how helpful they were. We feel this programme has a real positive impact on students, staff and patients.”

Emily Glover, Apprenticeships and Work Experience Officer at NHS Foundation Trust

- 1,000 students visited different employers to undertake workshop activities, and meet apprentices and senior management to learn more about jobs and career routes.
- In November 2020, over 2,900 students took part in a digital careers fair, making over 25,000 visits to 60 exhibitors.

“I really liked the college stands, I was able to download their prospectuses and can now look at them anytime at home with mum.”

We feel this programme has a real positive impact on students, staff and patients.



“The EDF stand was great, was able to ask questions and now feel that I can see a path for me in years to come.”

- Careers inspiration and employability skills developed in a home learning environment through the ‘My Futures’ careers challenge, involving workplace insight, self-reflection and onward planning. Employers provided **workplace insight videos**, created interactive student worksheets and hosted the event resources online.
- Pupils gained an understanding of the apprenticeship route promoted in schools, with employers engaged to promote the benefits.
- The Brilliant Club: PhD students promoted the value of a higher education, and delivered tutorials for school pupils to help build their skills, knowledge and confidence.
- Residential events, team-working activities and social action projects delivered by the National Citizen Service and the Duke of Edinburgh award programme helped build pupils’ life skills, including confidence, problem solving and resilience.

Project costs

Somerset County Council and Somerset Education Business Partnership contributed time and their resources at no additional cost. The CEC activity was provided as part of the national Department for Education contract. The Opportunity Area provided funding over three years for some activities, as follows:

- Careers fairs – £6,875
- The Brilliant Club – £1,050
- Implementing Grofar careers education software – £2,970
- Digital careers fair – £15,000

Key ingredients for success

- Having clear goals, with schools having planned their programmes systematically and using the Gatsby Benchmarks to assess progress.
- Partners with different responsibilities working together to share skills and other resources.
- Tailor the careers education offer to suit the specific rural needs of the area, the small numbers of schools and the particular age groups, to avoid initiative fatigue.
- Maintain a consistent, co-ordinated, and varied programme spanning a range of opportunities.
- Keep a careful balance of offers to ensure schools maintain control of long-term vision for CEIAG.

“Working with all partners, West Somerset College has been able to develop a dynamic careers programme that has been able to engage learners by providing a wide variety of opportunities.

This has included, (although not limited to), talent academies in partnership with Hinkley Point C, mock interview days with local businesses, work experience for students across the country for our Year 10 and Year 12. These activities have been developed working in close partnership with CEC, EBP (Education Business Partnership), Next Steps South West and has led to students gaining employment or training opportunities as a result of these experiences.

These opportunities have led to students having greater aspirations for themselves and having a direct impact on their work effort and commitment at school by giving them a tangible goal to achieve.”

**Gregg Mockridge, Head Teacher,
West Somerset College**



Doncaster case study

Doncaster Careers Hub

The Doncaster Careers Hub is helping to improve the quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance delivered by Doncaster schools and colleges to the benefit of all the town's young people in mainstream, special, and Alternative Provision (AP) settings.

This has been achieved by bringing Careers Leaders together to share best practice and by providing access to funding to raise standards. It builds on support provided by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), that includes an additional member of staff to help schools develop their careers strategies and practices and link them with volunteers from business, as well as access to a range of activities to engage with employers.

What was the problem?

- In the 2014 to 2015 academic year:
 - 8% of the area's young people were not in sustained employment, training, or education in the first six months following the end of Key Stage 4. This increased to 15% for disadvantaged young people.
 - Of 995 disadvantaged young people, 150 of them did not find an option which they continued with during the first six months of post-16 education or training.
 - At age 19, a similar picture existed, where 15% of disadvantaged young people in the Key Stage 5 cohort did not reach a sustained destination.


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- We consulted with young people who told us they wanted to see improved access to careers advice and have a better understanding of the opportunities available in Doncaster and beyond.

Implementation activities and successes

The programme started by engaging with local and national stakeholders to consider what interventions to employ, taking into account existing CEC and Doncaster Council provision, as well as considering plans for sustainability beyond the OA programme.

The Doncaster Careers Hub is informed by the CEC model, which has been rolled out across the country. Inspiration has also been taken from work in two other projects: North East Ambition (supporting schools to adopt and achieve the Good Career Guidance benchmarks), and a project run by the Greater London Authority to drive up standards in careers education.

The Hub brings together Careers Leaders, employers, universities, and Careers Guidance Experts to develop and share best practice across Doncaster. A dedicated Careers Hub lead brings additional capacity, liaising with head teachers and taking a holistic view to ensure the Hub's activity is aligned with wider local initiatives.

The CEC has also provided an additional member of staff to support schools in developing their careers strategies and practices. The CEC links schools to dedicated volunteers from the world of business, and it funds activity designed to give young people meaningful encounters with employers through tours of businesses, mock interviews and employability skills sessions delivered by local employers, which have been shown to have a positive impact on their future destinations.⁵

⁵ **Research by Education and Employers** has shown young people who have experienced four or more meaningful encounters with the world of work are 25% less likely to become NEET.

Doncaster OA involved every school and college, including APs and special schools. The Hub team reviewed performance against the Gatsby Benchmarks to identify where Doncaster schools needed to improve. The team worked with Careers Leaders to find solutions and commission innovative resources to bring careers to life for younger pupils, for example by funding access to Steam School, which is a virtual academy for future inventors and tech entrepreneurs aged nine to 14. It brings international science, technology, engineering and mathematics role models into schools.

Ongoing performance monitoring identified a gap in provision for pupils in special and AP schools, so a separate Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Hub was created, with SEND and AP Careers Leaders providing bespoke support, guidance and opportunities.

Schools were encouraged to share best practice across the network, and a mainstream and a SEND lead school were identified to share their knowledge and learning with Careers Leader colleagues.

Steering groups were also established, enabling Careers Leaders to decide how to invest Hub funds to meet identified needs. This puts the decision-making in the hands of schools, ensuring engagement and encouraging schools to take ownership of all aspects of their continuous improvement.

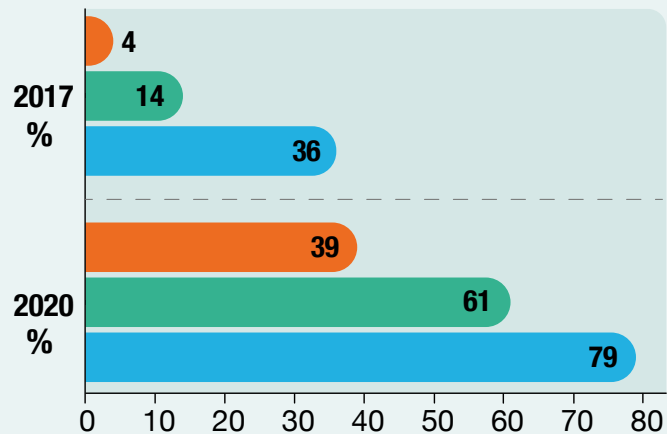
Project costs

- £100,000 plus £5,000 per school (28 schools) for the first year:
 - £50,000 Careers Hub Lead salary.
 - £50,000 resources to help schools meet the Gatsby Benchmarks, including Steam School.
- The Doncaster Careers Hub has now become a CEC-funded Hub, thanks to a successful joint Sheffield City Region bid that brings around £80,000 per year into Doncaster. This funds a Hub Lead and a Central Hub Fund of £1,000 per school. An OA contribution increased funding from £1,000 to £5,000 per school.

Monitoring

We have seen a significant increase in performance of the Gatsby Benchmarks. Some highlights in terms of progress include:

Gatsby Benchmarks: Doncaster



- Stable careers programme
- Learning from career and market information
- Encounters with employers and employees

When the programme was expanded to include all schools in November 2018, each school met two benchmarks on average. This had increased to 4.2 benchmarks on average (+2.2 benchmarks) by July 2020, which exceeds the performance of Hubs on average (+1.8 benchmarks) over the same period.

The reception by schools has also been positive, with one head teacher describing the programme as “the best and most impactful thing the OA has done”.

Key ingredients for success

- Finding a blueprint that has worked elsewhere makes a big difference, and it is also important to shape that to local circumstances.
- The blend of national and local partners has enabled us to benefit from best practice from across the country and adapt it to local circumstances.
- The development of support networks is hugely impactful. Teachers especially welcome support from their peers.



Further information



The Careers and Enterprise Company

plays a vital role increasing young people's exposure to the world of work, by supporting schools and colleges to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks.

The National Careers Service continues to offer in-depth information, advice and guidance for everyone aged 13 years and over by telephone, web chat or the National Careers Service website. The telephone and webchat services are delivered by careers advisers based in the local community.

Careers guidance and tools

CEC education tools

www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/education/tools

CEC – The Gatsby Benchmarks Toolkit for Schools

www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/gatsby_benchmark_toolkit.pdf

Gatsby Benchmarks career guidance

www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/

Gatsby education homepage

www.gatsby.org.uk/education





Opportunity Areas

Opportunity Areas selection methodology
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650036/Opportunity_areas_selection_methodology.pdf

Social mobility and Opportunity Areas:
Delivery plans for the 12 Opportunity Areas
www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-and-opportunity-areas

An independent process evaluation of the
set-up phase of the programme
www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-area-programme-research-and-analysis

Transparency data: Education statistics by
local authority district and pupil disadvantage
www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-statistics-by-la-district-and-pupil-disadvantage

Blackpool Opportunity Area:
Blackpool Careers Journey
<https://blackpoolopportunityarea.co.uk/careers-hub/>

Doncaster Opportunity Area:
Careers and post-16
<https://doncasteropportunityarea.co.uk/careers-and-post-16/>

Norwich Opportunity Area:
Supporting Young People Into Work
<https://norwichopportunityarea.co.uk/collaboration/>

West Somerset Opportunity Area:
Workplace Skills
<https://westsomersestopportunityarea.co.uk/priority-4/>

Research

CEC research homepage

www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/research

DfE (2021), Skills for Jobs:

Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957856/Skills_for_jobs_lifelong_learning_for_opportunity_and_growth__web_version_.pdf

Education Endowment Foundation (2016),

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