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Careers guidance in schools, colleges and universities (England)

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Summary

Overview

State-funded schools and further education colleges in England are required to provide careers guidance to their pupils from ages 11-18. This duty has been steadily extended over recent years.

In September 2012 local authority-maintained schools became subject to a statutory duty to provide impartial careers guidance to pupils in years 9 to 11. In September 2013, this statutory duty was expanded to cover pupils in school years 8 to 13, and in September 2022, following the passage of the [Education \(Careers Guidance in Schools\) Act 2022](#), it was extended to children in year 7, and also to academy schools.

The Department for Education (DfE) has published [statutory guidance](#) for education providers on their duty to provide careers guidance (most recently updated in January 2023).

Higher education institutions are not required to provide careers advice, but nonetheless this service is offered across institutions.

DfE Careers Strategy and the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022

The DfE's [Careers Strategy](#) was published in December 2017. It set out a series of measures to be implemented between 2018 and 2020 to improve careers guidance in England, including the introduction of new benchmarks for careers education, an investment fund for disadvantaged pupils, and a named Careers Leader in every school and college.

The government's '[Skills for Jobs' white paper](#) on further education and skills, published in January 2021, included further plans to strengthen careers advice. This informed changes included in the [Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022](#).

1 Careers guidance in schools and further education colleges

1.1 Requirements on schools

State-funded schools and further education colleges in England are required to provide careers guidance to their pupils from ages 11-18. This duty has been steadily extended over recent years.

In September 2012 local authority-maintained schools became subject to a statutory duty to provide impartial careers guidance to pupils in years 9 to 11.¹ In September 2013, this statutory duty was expanded to cover pupils in school years 8 to 13,² and in September 2022, following the passage of the [Education \(Careers Guidance in Schools\) Act 2022](#) (see section 3.3), it was extended to children in year 7, and also to academy schools.

The Department for Education (DfE) has published [statutory guidance](#) for education providers on their duty to provide careers guidance (most recently updated in January 2023).³

There is no statutory requirement on primary schools to provide careers education or guidance. The citizenship framework at key stage two states that pupils should be taught about “the range of jobs carried out by people they know, and to understand how they can develop skills to make their own contribution in the future”.⁴ In January 2023, the DfE announced a new careers programme for primary schools, which would be rolled out across 55 disadvantaged areas to over 2,200 primary schools.⁵

The DfE’s [2017 Careers Strategy](#) adopted the benchmarks of good careers guidance developed by the Gatsby Foundation. Secondary schools and colleges were initially expected to adopt the benchmarks by January 2018 in order improve their careers provision.⁶ Since 2020, the government has expected schools and colleges to work toward achieving all eight

¹ [The Education Act 2011](#), Pt 4, Sect 29.

² [Careers Guidance in Schools Regulations, SI 2013/709](#), Regulation 2.

³ Department for Education, [Careers Guidance and Access for Education and Training Providers](#), January 2023.

⁴ Department for Education, [Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 1 and 2](#), February 2015

⁵ Department for Education press release, [Careers boost for young people](#), January 2023

⁶ DfE, [‘Careers Strategy: Making the Most of Everyone’s Skills and Talents’](#) (December 2017), p. 8.

benchmarks, including that all young people should have a careers interview by the age of 16, and an additional interview by age 18.⁷

Gatsby benchmarks

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.

[Good Career Guidance: Reaching the Gatsby Benchmarks](#), p. 9.

Gatsby have also published advice for the use of the benchmarks for students with Special Educational Needs or disabilities.⁸

Data from the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) shows that, on average, schools and colleges achieved 5.5 benchmarks in 2022/23. Benchmark 2 was the most commonly achieved, with 81% of schools and colleges fully achieving it, and benchmark 7 the least commonly achieved (52%).⁹

1.2

Advice about technical education and apprenticeships

Requirements of the “Baker Clause”

The “Baker Clause” was introduced as an amendment to the [Technical and Further Education Act 2017](#) by Lord Baker, and requires every state school to

⁷ PQ, ‘[Schools: Vocational Guidance](#)’, 286227, 3 September 2019.

⁸ Gatsby Trust, [Good Career Guidance: Perspectives from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Sector](#) (2019).

⁹ Careers and Enterprise Company, [Insight briefing: Gatsby Benchmark results for 2022/23](#), p3

give training providers and colleges access to pupils aged eight to 13 to discuss technical education and apprenticeships.¹⁰

The [Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022](#) built on this by increasing requirements on schools and strengthening enforcement. Since January 2023, schools are now required to provide at least six encounters with providers of technical education or apprenticeships, four of which are mandatory for pupils to attend (two in years 8 or 9 and two in years 10 or 11), followed by two in years 12 and 13 which are optional for pupils to attend.¹¹

Enforcement of the “Baker Clause”

In response to a [House of Lords Debate on Vocational Education and Training](#) in October 2019, the then Schools Minister Lord Agnew stated that the Baker Clause was being increasingly complied with:

We surveyed a number of schools recently and 76% stated that the duty is being partially complied with. A further review this summer found that compliance, although patchy, is improving. In January of this year, a report from the IPPR contained similar findings: 70% of providers found it difficult to access schools in their area, but one in three said the situation had improved. I am not complacent, and we will continue to put pressure on schools to be more open to this.¹²

The Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 strengthened enforcement. The January 2023 guidance for schools and colleges sets out a “ladder of support and intervention” for schools who do not comply, including targeted support and guidance; a review of the school’s careers provision; a letter from the Department reminding the school of the requirements of the duty; and, if a school continues not to comply, the use of formal intervention powers from the Secretary of State.¹³

¹⁰ [Technical and Further Education Act 2017](#), Pt 1, ch 2.

¹¹ Department for Education, [Careers Guidance and Access for Education and Training Providers](#), January 2023, p43

¹² HL Deb, ‘[Vocational Education and Training](#)’, 28 October 2019, cc. 858-859.

¹³ Department for Education, [Careers Guidance and Access for Education and Training Providers](#), January 2023, p53

2

Careers guidance in higher education

Higher education providers are autonomous bodies and have no statutory requirements around the provision of careers advice. However, due to a range of political, economic, and social factors, universities are increasingly expected by the government, students, and employers to produce highly skilled graduates ready for the graduate labour market. As a result, many higher education providers are investing more resources into their employability and careers services.¹⁴

Most higher education providers will offer careers advice and guidance as one of their student services. Careers services will offer trained professionals who can provide careers advice, help with writing CVs and application forms, interview skills sessions, and networking/mentoring opportunities. Careers services will often also arrange career fairs that bring employers onto campus. These opportunities will be open to a provider's students as well as their recent graduates.

Several different organisations support the provision of careers guidance in higher education, including:

- The [Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services](#) (AGCAS), which is a professional association for higher education careers practitioners, which provides advice to members and aims to develop best practice across the sector.
- [Prospects](#), which is now part of [Jisc](#), the technology solutions organisation funded by the UK higher and further education and research funding bodies and member institutions. Prospects' careers advice work includes the [UK's biggest graduate careers website](#).

Employability skills and careers advice

Many university degree courses now include employability skills in their curricula, and some include compulsory careers sessions. Providers also offer extra-curricular schemes to help students to develop the “soft skills” valued by employers, and some of these schemes may lead to awards which students can include on their CVs. Higher education careers services also provide advice on self-employment and entrepreneurship.

A November 2021 review of employability programmes and work placements at UK higher education providers found evidence of providers also offering sandwich placements, placements abroad, and work-based projects with

¹⁴ Prospects report, [How should universities teach employability?](#) March 2019

external organisations as part of their efforts to improve students' employability.¹⁵ A report from the AGCAS in January 2024 found that university careers services are increasingly using artificial intelligence (AI) with students, with 49% already using AI with students and others planning to use it in the near future.¹⁶

¹⁵ Department for Education, [Employability programmes and work placements in higher education](#), November 2021, pp9-12

¹⁶ Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services press release, [New AGCAS research reveals careers and employability service trends for 2023-24](#), January 2024

3

Careers strategies and Skills White Paper

3.1

DfE Careers Strategy 2018-2020

The government's [Careers Strategy](#) was published in December 2017. It set out a series of measures to be implemented between 2018 and 2020 aimed at improving careers guidance in England. A full timetable is set out on pages 8-9 of the strategy.¹⁷ Its objectives include, but are not limited to:

- Using the Gatsby Benchmark to improve careers provision;
- Publishing a careers programme by each school & college;
- Naming a Careers Leader for each school & college;
- Providing information about T-Levels, apprenticeships and technical information to pupils;
- Collecting & publishing data on student destinations;
- Improving the National Careers Service website;
- Ensuring every child has at least one encounter a year with an employer. These should include Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) employers.

[Statutory guidance](#) sets out how schools should meet the Gatsby Foundation benchmarks for excellence in careers education.¹⁸

In written evidence to the Education Select Committee in April 2023, the then Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, Robert Halfon, set out a detailed breakdown of progress against the objectives in the Careers Strategy and stated that “for the most part, the government’s 2017 careers strategy was achieved”.¹⁹

Since January 2018, Ofsted has been required to comment in school and college inspection reports on the careers guidance provided to young people. Ofsted inspectors assess the quality of careers provision and how well it

¹⁷ Department for Education, [Careers Strategy: Making The Most Of Everyone’s Skills And Talents](#), December 2017

¹⁸ DfE, [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#), January 2023

¹⁹ Education Committee, [Careers education, information, advice and guidance](#), ev 145

benefits pupils in choosing and deciding on their next steps. In order to achieve a ‘good’ inspection judgement, schools must use the Gatsby benchmarks and offer pupils high-quality, unbiased careers guidance.²⁰ If a school is not meeting the requirements of the provider access legislation (see section 1.2), inspectors will state this in the inspection report, and will consider what impact this has on the quality of careers guidance and the subsequent judgement for personal development.²¹

3.2

Skills for Jobs White Paper 2021 and Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022

The government’s [‘Skills for Jobs’ white paper](#) on further education and skills, published in January 2021, included proposals on careers advice.

The white paper included proposals to more strictly enforce the ‘Baker Clause’ (which requires schools to inform pupils about technical and vocational paths), as well as extending careers advice to pupils in year 7 (then required in years 8-13), and reforming the work of existing careers advice bodies.

The paper stated that “at the moment, there is no single place you can go to get government-backed, comprehensive careers information”, and that

We will address this problem by updating the [National Careers Service website](#) to become a single source of government-assured careers information for young people and adults. [...]

We will improve both local and national alignment between The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service to create a clear, all-age careers system. We have appointed Professor Sir John Holman to advise on this alignment, as Independent Strategic Adviser on Careers Guidance, working closely with The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service. We have developed four principles for increasing alignment which we will implement over the next 18 months as we work towards a longer-term review of the delivery system.²²

The paper then set out the following on providing information to pupils about technical paths and more widely, including plans to update the relevant guidance:

[...] We will introduce a three-point-plan to enforce the Baker Clause: a new minimum requirement about who is to be given access to which pupils and when; tougher formal action against non-compliance; and government-funded careers support for schools to be made conditional on Baker Clause compliance. Alongside this, we will lower the age range of the duty on schools to provide independent careers guidance, requiring schools to offer this support from year seven, bringing it in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks. We

²⁰ Ofsted, [School inspection handbook](#), April 2024

²¹ DfE, [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#), January 2023, p54

²² Department for Education, [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#), January 2021, p45

will publish updated guidance setting out what we expect for secondary schools (as statutory guidance) and colleges (as a requirement for funding). We will ask Ofsted to undertake a thematic review to provide an up-to-date assessment of careers guidance in schools and colleges and provide recommendations to improve practice.²³

The Library briefing [EE white paper: Skills for Jobs for Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth](#) provides wider information on the white paper.

The proposals in the white paper were included in the Bill that became the [Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022](#).

Section 14 of the 2022 Act strengthens requirements on schools to allow a range of education and training providers to inform pupils directly about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships (see section 1.2).

The [Library briefing on the original Skills and Post-16 Education Bill](#) provides some further background (see pages 27-29).

3.3

Education (Careers Guidance in School) Act 2022

On 16 June 2021, Mark Jenkinson MP (Con) presented the [Education \(Careers Guidance in Schools\) Bill](#), which would extend the duty to provide careers guidance in schools. In his [announcement of the Bill](#), Mr Jenkinson stated that the Bill would extend the requirements to provide careers guidance to children in year 7, and also implement the proposals in the Skills White Paper.²⁴

A [Library briefing on the Bill](#) provides information on the details of the Bill and its progress in parliament.

During the [Second Reading debate](#) held in the House of Commons on 10 September 2021, both the government and opposition indicated their support for the Bill.

The [Education \(Careers Guidance in Schools\) Act 2022](#) received Royal Assent on 31 March 2022 and came into force on 1 September 2022.²⁵

²³ Department for Education, [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#), January 2021, p47

²⁴ Mark Jenkinson MP, [Twitter post, 17 June 2021](#)

²⁵ [The Education \(Careers Guidance in Schools\) Act 2022 \(Commencement\) Regulations 2022](#)

4 Organisations providing support

4.1 Careers and Enterprise Company

In 2014, the then-Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, announced the creation of a new careers and enterprise company for schools, the [Careers and Enterprise Company](#) (CEC). The role of the company is to support collaboration between schools, colleges and employers to help pupils aged 12 to 18 access better careers advice, rather than to deliver programmes directly.²⁶ The CEC is required to support schools for free and target resources in areas most of need.²⁷

Objectives and Programmes of CEC

Under the [2017 Careers Strategy](#), the government set several goals that the CEC would be responsible in delivering. The current [Grant Funding Agreement](#) between the DfE and CEC provides further details on its objectives.

These include:

Cornerstone Employers

The CEC works with ‘cornerstone employers’ who committed to working with schools and colleges across the country. The government says there are now almost 400 cornerstone employers.²⁸

Careers Leaders

As of September 2018, all schools and colleges should have a named careers leader to lead their careers guidance programme.²⁹ The CEC says that over 3,000 careers leaders have completed relevant training.³⁰

Establishment of Careers Hubs

A Careers Hub, funded by the government but coordinated by the CEC, is a group of secondary schools and colleges in a dedicated area that work together to deliver the Gatsby Benchmarks.

²⁶ DfE, ‘[New Careers and Enterprise Company for Schools](#)’, 10 December 2014.

²⁷ [DfE to Careers and Enterprise Company](#), 24 April 2019, p. 25.

²⁸ PQ 901507 [[Science and Technology: Young People](#)], 21 February 2024

²⁹ DfE, [Careers Strategy \(2017\)](#), p. 8.

³⁰ Careers and Enterprise Company, [Careers Education 2022/23: Now & next](#), March 2024, p. 7

The CEC's grant funding agreement for 2023/24 sets the objective of full national rollout of careers hubs. The CEC says that 92% of schools and colleges are in a careers hub.³¹

Enterprise Advisors

The [2017 Careers Strategy](#) stated that all schools should be offered the support of an enterprise adviser by 2020.³² Enterprise advisors support careers leaders and headteachers to develop their careers provision. The CEC says that there are currently over 4,000 enterprise advisers.³³

Funding of the CEC

In the 2014 announcement on the CEC's creation, the then-Education Secretary Nicky Morgan stated that the new company would receive £20 million in start-up funding for 2015/16, including £5 million as investment funding to stimulate good practice across England. The Education Secretary said that "in the longer term, the company will sustain itself".³⁴

In April 2019, the government stated that it no longer intended for the CEC to sustain itself without government grants. In its statement to the CEC, the government said:

The nature of the CEC's work has expanded significantly to deliver the Government's Careers Strategy to the extent that the CEC and DfE no longer envisage replacing Government funding with alternative sources of income in the way that was originally intended when government set up the CEC.

[...]

However, the Government expects the CEC to continue to leverage additional funding to deliver its objectives, including through the sources of external match funding and support [...] whilst respecting the impartiality of careers provision in schools and colleges.³⁵

In 2023/24, £32.5 million has been provided by the government in grant to the CEC.³⁶

4.2

National Careers Service

The [National Careers Service](#) (NCS), [launched in 2012](#),³⁷ provides people over 13 years old with free and impartial information, advice and guidance on

³¹ CEC, [Careers Education 2022/23: Now & next](#), p. 7.

³² DfE, [Careers Strategy \(2017\)](#), p. 6.

³³ Careers and Enterprise Company, [Enterprise Adviser Survey: 2023 Insight Briefing](#), p. 2.

³⁴ HC Deb, 'Preparing Young People for Work', c. 843, 10 December 2014.

³⁵ [DfE to Careers and Enterprise Company](#), 24 April 2019, p. 25.

³⁶ CEC, [Grant Funding Agreement and Variation 2023/24](#), March and July 2023.

³⁷ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, [New National Careers Service Launched](#), 5 April 2012.

learning, training and work opportunities. The service is available in England and is supported by qualified careers advisers. NCS services may be provided face-to-face, via telephone or online. Face-to-face support is only available to adults aged 19 and over.³⁸

In an [evaluation](#) published in September 2023, the overall quality of the service was rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers, with over nine in ten agreeing that it was good (93%). 86% of customers were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall.³⁹

Economic Evaluation of the NCS

An [economic evaluation of the NCS](#), commissioned by the Department for Education, was published in March 2017.

The evaluation “could not identify a positive impact of the National Careers Service on employment or benefit dependency outcomes” but did “identify a relatively strong positive effect in relation to education and training.”⁴⁰

4.3 Skills for Careers

In October 2023, the DfE launched a new website, [Skills for Careers](#), which provides information on careers and sources of support available.⁴¹ The then Skills Minister Luke Hall stated that the website “provides a single digital front door to information about skills training options and careers [...] users are guided through government’s skills offer from apprenticeships to Skills Bootcamps, A levels to Multiply. The website provides an overview of each option along with information about writing job applications and CVs.”⁴²

4.4 Jobcentre plus employment advisers: 14-17-year olds

In the [2015 Summer Budget](#), the government announced the creation of a new Jobcentre plus employment advisor role, working with schools and sixth-form colleges to help improve the ability of young people to find work.

The new provision, aimed at 14-17-year olds, was initially trialled in 10 pathfinder areas in Greater Birmingham and Solihull.⁴³ Following the pilot,

³⁸ Department for Education, [National Careers Service Customer Satisfaction and Progression Annual Report](#), p9

³⁹ As above, p6

⁴⁰ DfE, [An Economic Evaluation of The National Careers Service](#), March 2017, p. 31.

⁴¹ [Skills for Careers website](#) [accessed 29 July 2024]

⁴² PQ23142 [[Business: Training](#)], 30 April 2024

⁴³ HM Treasury, [Summer Budget 2015](#) (2015), p. 80.

the scheme was to be gradually rolled out nationally in England from November 2016.⁴⁴ In 2017, around 1,000 secondary schools in England were intended to be involved (a third of the total).⁴⁵

An evaluation of the programme by the DWP and the Government Social Research Body concluded in 2018 that the programme was “well received by schools and other stakeholders” and that “students themselves typically spoke positively about the programme, particularly those who had received more targeted support”.⁴⁶ The evaluation also recommended that because demand for the programme was expected to grow, it would be necessary for the government to either increase resources or target resources to specific groups.⁴⁷

In October 2019, the DWP announced it would extend the programme with an additional £7 million, in order to employ a further 90 advisers and provide targeted support for those with special educational needs under the age of 24. To October 2019, the scheme had worked with 1,400 schools in England.⁴⁸

4.5

Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) Programme

The Education and Skills Funding Agency provides the [Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge Programme](#) (ASK) free to schools in England to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and support to enable them to promote apprenticeships. The scheme was introduced in 2016, originally for students in years 10 to 13. From September 2019, the programme has been extended to include years 7 to 9.⁴⁹ The programme also provides bespoke support through the ASK Development Schools project for students in years 10 and 11 at levels one and below, who have the potential to progress into an apprenticeship but who are facing barriers such as learning difficulties or emotional, behavioural development issues.⁵⁰

The government stated in March 2024 that ASK is supported by £3.2 million per year, and engaged over 620,000 students across 2,300 schools and further education colleges in the 2022/23 academic year.⁵¹

⁴⁴ DWP and Government Social Research, [Evaluation of Jobcentre Plus Support for Schools Programme](#) (April 2018), p. 12.

⁴⁵ Work and Pensions Committee, [Employment Opportunities for Young People](#), HC 586 (March 2017), para 25.

⁴⁶ DWP and Government Social Research, [Evaluation of Jobcentre Plus Support for Schools Programme](#) (April 2018), pp. 8, 10.

⁴⁷ [Ibid.](#), p. 10.

⁴⁸ ‘[DWP Extends Jobcentre Support for Schools Programme with £7m Funding](#)’, Schools Week, 11 October 2019.

⁴⁹ PQ 240522, [\[Students: Apprentices\]](#), 3 April 2019

⁵⁰ PQ 25235 [\[Apprentices and Training: Disadvantaged\]](#), 14 May 2024

⁵¹ PQ 18525 [\[Apprentices: Young People\]](#), 19 March 2024

4.6

Discover Uni

[Discover Uni](#) (formerly Unistats) is an official source of information on higher education that allows students to compare university courses and outcomes. It is owned and operated by the UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies:

- [The Office for Students in England](#)
- [The Scottish Funding Council](#)
- [The Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland](#)
- [The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales](#) (soon to be replaced by the [Commission for Tertiary Education and Research](#))

Discover Uni publishes information submitted by higher education providers about their undergraduate courses, as well as data from the following datasets:

- The [National Student Survey \(NSS\)](#), which is an annual survey for final-year students to provide feedback about their experience at university or college.
- The [Graduate Outcomes Survey](#), which collects information from students 15 months after they finish their course. It asks them what they are currently doing, how much they are earning, and their perceptions of work following their graduation from their course.
- The Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset combines education data from the Department for Education (DfE) with employment, earnings, and benefits data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HMRC. Using these sources, LEO provides earnings and benefits information for graduates one, three, five, and ten years after completion of their qualifications.

4.7

Calls to Streamline Organisations

When the CEC was [launched in 2014](#), it was intended to work closely with the [National Careers Service](#) (NCS), established in 2012, which provides careers advice and guidance to people through telephone and digital services in England.

The Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees in 2016 reported concerns that there was too great an overlap between the work of

the CEC and NCS.⁵² Following the launch of the Government's Careers Strategy in 2017, the then Chair of the Education Committee, Robert Halfon, said that the Government should "avoid the duplication of the National Careers Service, Careers Enterprise Company and the like, and reallocate the many millions of pounds that go to careers and create a one-stop shop of a National Skills Service."⁵³

In 2023, the Education Committee concluded that the current structure of careers provision is fragmented and creates gaps and overlaps in provision, and called for more alignment between the existing organisations.⁵⁴

The [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#) published in January 2021 stated that the government had appointed Sir John Holman to advise on the improvement of the local and national alignment of the Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service.⁵⁵

Sir John Holman [wrote to Ministers with his recommendations in June 2022](#). Sir John put forward nine 'strategic principles' for careers guidance, including that:

- Government careers guidance activities should be underpinned by a public strategic framework
- DfE should continue to delegate the delivery of careers activity to schools and colleges, with a single organisation providing support and challenge
- Government should have robust procedures to assure the quality of delivery of careers guidance
- Information about occupations and careers should be based on a single source of government-assured information and data
- There should be a balance between meeting local needs and national needs
- All those who may need or want to use government's careers guidance offer need to understand what is available and how they can access it.⁵⁶

In December 2022, the then Skills Minister, Robert Halfon, [responded to Sir John](#) and said he "will consider [the recommendations] carefully as part of

⁵² Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees, [Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance](#), HC 205 (5 July 2016), paras 37 & 38.

⁵³ [Robert Halfon: Consolidate the UK's 'Duplicated' Careers Services](#), Schools Week, 4 December 2017.

⁵⁴ Education Committee, [Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance](#), 19 June 2023, paras 43-44

⁵⁵ Department for Education, [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#), January 2021, p45

⁵⁶ Department for Education, [Careers guidance system: letters from Sir John Holman and Robert Halfon](#), 12 December 2022

ongoing work to develop the future careers guidance system in England for all ages.”⁵⁷

⁵⁷ As above

5

How well are schools and colleges discharging their duties?

There has been a considerable amount of scrutiny on the quality of careers advice available to children and young people. This section provides an overview of recent reports and reviews.

5.1

Ofsted review of careers guidance in schools and further education and skills providers (2023)

In September 2023, Ofsted published a [review of careers guidance in schools and FE and skills providers](#).

The review's findings included:

- The importance of a quality careers programme was understood by leaders and staff, and the role of careers leader well embedded
- Most schools and FE and skills providers were linking curriculum learning to careers well. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) included dedicated time for direct input on careers guidance in most schools, although in less effective examples, careers was only taught in PSHE
- Many schools found it difficult to collect and use career destinations data
- While many schools made sure pupils received unbiased guidance that included both academic and technical pathways, this was not always the case and some FE providers reported difficulties in accessing schools
- Some changes in working practices following the pandemic, such as increased home working, had led some employers to stop offering work experience, and schools and FE and skills providers were finding it difficult to find alternative placements

Ofsted made several recommendations as a result of the review, including for the Department for Education to consider ways in which it may be possible to improve how post-16 and post-18 destinations data is aggregated back to

schools or FE and skills providers, and consider how to increase the attractiveness of the careers adviser role.⁵⁸

5.2

CEC reports into careers education (2024)

The CEC regularly publishes reports assessing the state of the careers system and setting out the most recent data relevant to its work. In March 2024, the CEC published [Careers education 2022/23: Now and next](#), an analysis of careers education in England. The report found:

- A national careers system is now in place, having been scaled significantly over the past five years
- 92% of schools and colleges are part of a local Careers Hub
- More than 3,000 Careers Leaders have been trained and all of them are supported by digital tools and resources
- The eight Gatsby Benchmarks of good career guidance are well embedded. The average number of benchmarks achieved is 5.5 out of eight, an increase from 2.1 over the last five years⁵⁹

Other reports published by the CEC include:

- [From coverage to quality](#), a report published in October 2023 discussing progress in the careers system and the impact of a Careers Impact System developed by the CEC to improve careers guidance⁶⁰
- [Ready for the Future](#), a national review of careers education in England focusing on 2021/22, which found that the system was making progress but that there was more to do⁶¹
- [Trends in Careers Education](#), a report published in December 2021 which sought to assess careers education in 2020/21 compared with the situation two years previously, before the pandemic⁶²

⁵⁸ Ofsted, [Independent review of careers guidance in schools and further education and skills providers](#), 29 September 2023

⁵⁹ Careers and Enterprise Company, [Careers Education 2022/23: Now & next](#), March 2024

⁶⁰ CEC, [From coverage to quality: a careers system of continual improvement](#), October 2023

⁶¹ CEC, [Ready for the Future: A review of Careers Education in England 2021/22](#), 2023

⁶² Careers and Enterprise Company, [Trends in Careers Education 2021](#), December 2021

5.3

Sutton Trust report on careers guidance in secondary schools (2022)

In March 2022, the Sutton Trust published [Paving the Way](#), a report on careers guidance in secondary schools.

The report noted that, while progress had been made, provision of careers advice remained variable, with gaps between state schools with more and less deprived intakes, and between state and private schools.

The report also highlighted continuing gaps in the availability of advice between technical and academic routes:

Nearly half (46%) of 17- and 18-year olds (Year 13) say they have received a 'large amount' of information on university routes during their education, compared to just 10% who say the same for apprenticeships.⁶³

The report made a number of recommendations, including better enforcement of the Baker Clause, and that every young person should have access to a professional careers adviser and a set minimum number of interactions with employers, including work experience.⁶⁴

5.4

Social Market Foundation report on careers information, advice and guidance (2022)

In April 2022, the Social Market Foundation published [Fulfilling its potential?](#), a report looking at school leavers' and adult learners' experiences of careers information, advice and guidance in England.

The report concluded that the quality of careers services was patchy, with substantial variations between schools and colleges as to the type and quality of services on offer.

The report also found that support for students pursuing vocational options was weaker than for those pursuing academic options, with university presented as the "default option".⁶⁵

⁶³ Sutton Trust, [Pupils four times less likely to say they have received substantial guidance on apprenticeships than university](#), 10 March 2022

⁶⁴ As above

⁶⁵ Social Market Foundation, [Fulfilling its potential](#), April 2022, p6

5.5

DfE report into young people's experiences (2021)

The DfE published a [report](#) in September 2021 looking at young people's experiences of careers information, advice and guidance. The report found that:

- 93% of young people aged 18-19 reported that they had received careers information and advice in the last 12 months
- Young people eligible for free school meals, those who went to state schools (compared to independent schools), those with special educational needs (SEN), those who had been in care while at school, and who had a long-term disability were more likely to say they had not received any advice
- The most commonly used sources of information were friends and relatives (used by 90% of young people aged 18-19), followed by teachers (53%), and trained careers advisors (32%)⁶⁶

5.6

International comparisons

An [international evidence review](#) comparing the careers support available in other countries was published in May 2024, commissioned by the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland. The review compared a number of countries including England, Ireland, Austria, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland and focused mainly on careers provision within small advanced economies.⁶⁷

Some comparative information is also available through a 2014 report published by the Gatsby Foundation, [Good Career Guidance](#), which discussed best practice in careers guidance and included visits to six foreign states or countries – Netherlands, Germany, Hong Kong, Ontario, Finland, and Ireland. [Appendix 1](#) (pages 3-44) to the report sets out the results of these visits, and the relevant systems in place.

⁶⁶ Department for Education, [Young people's experiences of careers information, advice and guidance](#), September 2021, p. 3

⁶⁷ Department for the Economy, [An International Evidence Review: Targeted and Effective Careers Support Interventions](#), May 2024

5.7

All-Party Parliamentary Group reports

In July 2023, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs published [Empowering Youth for the Future of Work](#), a report looking at the barriers to youth employment and the impact of skills gaps. The report raised concerns about the “patchy” careers provision and the lack of an updated careers strategy, and recommended that the government establish a statutory duty to ensure all young people should be given work experience during secondary education and relevant career advice.⁶⁸

In March 2022, the [All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment](#) published a report from an inquiry into the impact of vocational qualifications on young people’s employability and labour market outcomes. The inquiry heard many concerns about the existing careers system and concluded that “the careers education system will not be ready to support young people with the choices available to them”. It recommended that the government conduct a review of the careers education system to ensure that all pathways to employment are clear to all young people.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs, [Empowering Youth for the Future of Work](#), July 2023, p. 12

⁶⁹ All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment, [Impact of vocational qualifications on young people’s employability and labour market outcomes](#), March 2022, p. 2

6 Select committee reports

6.1 Education Committee report (2023)

The Commons Education Committee launched an [inquiry into careers education, information, advice and guidance in schools](#) in January 2022.

The announcement stated that the inquiry would explore whether the careers advice currently provided was sufficient, and also whether current arrangements “could better support disadvantaged or left-behind groups to access career opportunities that may otherwise not be available to them.”⁷⁰

In June 2023, the committee published its report on [Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance](#). The report’s recommendations included that:

- The government should publish an updated careers strategy
- That, if a pilot on careers advice in primary schools is a success, it should be extended across England
- Ensuring that careers advice for younger children seeks to break down negative stereotypes
- The DfE should create a national platform for work experience opportunities, including virtual placements
- Ofsted should be tasked with upholding a strong focus on CEIAG provision
- Teaching on careers guidance should be part of teacher training, and that Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators (SENCOs) should be fully trained and working with careers leaders
- The Department should issue a one-off round of developmental funding to support schools that have the worst record on achieving the Gatsby benchmarks to improve their CEIAG provision⁷¹

⁷⁰ Education Committee, [Education Committee launches new inquiry on careers education in schools](#), 27 January 2022

⁷¹ Education Committee, [Raise aspiration and counter negative stereotypes by teaching young children about careers](#), June 2023

Government response

The government response to the report was published in September 2023. The Committee Chair, Robin Walker, welcomed that the response was “broadly positive” about the committee’s recommendations. The response included plans from the government to:

- Publish a Strategic Action Plan for Careers in 2024, to set out measurable outcomes for careers guidance and dates by which these should be achieved
- Publish a first interim evaluation of its careers programme in primary schools in 2024, and a final evaluation report in summer 2025
- Strengthen the content on work experience, setting clear expectations for schools and colleges, in annual revisions to careers guidance

The response did not accept the committee’s recommendations on funding a programme of careers advisers directly through the Careers and Enterprise Company, or making one-off developmental funding available for schools and colleges with the worst record of achieving the Gatsby benchmarks.⁷²

6.2

Lords Youth Unemployment Committee report (2021)

The House of Lords Youth Unemployment Committee published a report in November 2021, [Skills for every young person](#). The report found that progress had been made since the establishment of the CEC and the rollout of the Gatsby Benchmarks, but that provision was still patchy and more needed to be done.⁷³ It set out a number of recommendations to improve careers provision, including making careers a compulsory element of the curriculum in all schools from Key Stage 1 to 4, and more rigorous enforcement of the Baker Clause.⁷⁴

In its [response](#), the government highlighted the statutory guidance on careers and the expectation for schools to follow the Gatsby Benchmarks, and stated their intention to strengthen enforcement of the Baker Clause through the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill.⁷⁵

⁷² Education Committee, [Education Committee welcomes Government’s response to Careers Education report](#), September 2023

⁷³ Youth Unemployment Committee, [Skills for every young person](#), 26 November 2021, p. 22

⁷⁴ As above, paras 119-120

⁷⁵ Youth Unemployment Committee, [Skills for every young person: Government Response](#), 17 March 2022, pp. 34-35

6.3

Public Accounts Committee Inquiries (2018)

The House of Common's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in 2018 published a report on the [Government's strategy to address STEM skills shortages](#). The report stated the Committee's concern about the Government's 2017 Careers Strategy, and recommended that the DfE make better use of data on career destinations and salaries to incentivise young people to work towards careers in particular STEM sectors where there is higher need.⁷⁶

In response, the DfE said it has asked the CEC to focus particularly on STEM when producing toolkits for schools and colleges on what works.⁷⁷

The PAC also published a [report on the Higher Education Market](#) in 2018, which concluded that "young people are not being properly supported in making decisions on higher education, due in large part to insufficient and inconsistent careers advice", though also stated that it was too early to judge the success of the 2017 Career's Strategy.⁷⁸

In response to the inquiries, the government stated that by December 2020 all schools are expected to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks in full, and from September 2019 Ofsted would introduce new inspection arrangements, including the review (but not the separate grading of) careers advice provided by schools and colleges.⁷⁹

6.4

Earlier Committee reports (2013-16)

The Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy published a [report](#) into careers advice, information and guidance in July 2016. The Sub-Committee stated that it was "very disappointed that careers advice and guidance is still poor in so many schools"⁸⁰ and set out several recommendations for its improvement.

The Education Select Committee published [Careers Guidance For Young People: The Impact Of The New Duty On Schools](#) in January 2013. The Committee concluded that the decision to transfer the statutory duty to schools from the national Connexions model was "regrettable" and that it

⁷⁶ Public Accounts Committee, [Delivering STEM Skills for the Economy](#), HC 691 (2018), p7

⁷⁷ [As above](#), pp. 7, 13.

⁷⁸ Public Accounts Committee, [The Higher Education Market](#), HC 693 (2018), p. 5.

⁷⁹ [Treasury Minutes: Government Response to the Committee of Public Accounts](#), Cm 9702 (October 2018), p. 18.

⁸⁰ Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy, [Careers Education, Information and Guidance](#), HC 205 (2016), p. 29

had “concerns about the consistency, quality, independence and impartiality of careers guidance now being offered to young people”.⁸¹

In its [response](#), the DfE defended the decision to transfer responsibility to schools, arguing that it was “a response to mounting evidence from a range of respected sources that the national Connexions model was hugely expensive and of questionable value.”⁸²

The Education Committee [announced](#) a follow-up inquiry into careers guidance to its 2013 report in 2014. The Committee took [oral evidence](#) from the then Secretary of State, Nicky Morgan, on 7 January 2015.

⁸¹ Education Committee, [Careers Guidance For Young People: The Impact Of The New Duty On Schools](#), HC 632-I (2013), p. 3.

⁸² Education Committee, [Careers Guidance For Young People: The Impact Of The New Duty On Schools: Government Response To The Committee's Seventh Report Of Session 2012–13](#), HC 1078 (2013), p. 3.

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