

Encounters with further and higher education:

Practical ideas from schools and
colleges for achieving Gatsby
Benchmark 7

Publication information

Dominguez-Reig, G. (2021). *Encounters with further and higher education: Practical ideas from schools and colleges for achieving Gatsby Benchmark 7*. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all the Careers Leaders, FE and HE representatives, and CEC colleagues who took part in this research for sharing their insights on how to provide meaningful encounters with further and higher education for students.

Contents

<u>About this report</u>	<u>I</u>
<u>Top tips for achieving Benchmark 7</u>	<u>II</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>1. Approaches to delivering encounters with further and higher education</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>2. Ensuring encounters are meaningful</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>3. Enabling encounters with further and higher education</u>	<u>16</u>

About this paper

This report provides practical insights from Careers Leaders about how to deliver encounters with further and higher education for young people in secondary schools, colleges and special schools.

Schools and colleges have made significant progress over recent years and, by March 2020, 37% of them fully achieved Gatsby Benchmark 7 (up from 21% in July 2019), with an additional 61% partially achieving it, and only 1% not achieving the benchmark. This means that, in a growing number of schools and colleges, more young people have exposure to further and higher education providers than in previous years.

We carried out focus groups with Careers Leaders from 16 mainstream schools, colleges and special schools. The focus groups explored the delivery models implemented by Careers Leaders in different settings to identify and share best practice, including how to make encounters meaningful. This report is aimed at Careers Leaders who want to access practical tips on how to deliver meaningful encounters with further and higher education.

Top tips for achieving Benchmark 7

Top tips: approaches to delivering encounters with further and higher education

- 1** | **Consider the whole package** of information young people need to make informed decisions. This can be made by ensuring that students do not just learn about courses and providers, but that they also know about accommodation options, finances, travel, what it means to study in a different setting, and what the university/college/ITP environment is like.
- 2** | **Build an age-specific** calendar of activities. Younger year groups can benefit from lighter-touch approaches that provide them with broad information so that they can start thinking about careers, while older students may benefit from attending more specific events, often involving visits to and from learning providers.
- 3** | **Consider all possible activities**, depending on the desired learning outcomes. These include:
 - Careers fairs.
 - Open evenings.
 - Lunch-time events.
 - Visits from learning providers.
 - Visits to learning providers.
 - Taster sessions.
- 4** | **Consider multi-benchmark delivery.** Sometimes, delivering more than one benchmark at a time can be more cost-effective and improve learning outcomes. For example, bringing employers and education providers together to careers fairs (Benchmark 7 + Benchmark 5), or inviting learning providers to deliver part of the curriculum (Benchmark 7 + Benchmark 4), can help put pathways in context.

Top tips: ensuring encounters with further and higher education are meaningful

1 | **Prepare young people** ahead of the encounters. This can be done in different ways:

- Helping them set objectives for the event.
- Providing them with information about the provider(s) they will meet and the pathways that they might find out about.
- Holding topic-specific events about qualifications or other relevant matters.

2 | **Consider the needs of all students.** Young people with special educational needs and disabilities may need specific approaches to ensure that encounters are meaningful. This can involve organising or attending SEND-specific events, working closely with parents/carers, and involving the SENCO.

3 | **Involve parents and carers.**

- Bring learning providers to parents' evenings, so that they become familiar with the full range of pathways available to their children.
- Make parents and carers aware of encounters for their children so that they can help them prepare and digest learnings.

4 | **Consider enablers of meaningful online encounters.** Online provision following the closure of schools and colleges as a result of Covid-19 showed that virtual encounters work better when they are live and interactive rather than pre-recorded. Some young people feel more comfortable in the virtual environment, and more providers beyond the local area can be met when virtual provision is in place. While online provision cannot fully replace face to face encounters, Careers Leaders can draw on good online delivery practice while face to face provision is not an option.

Top tips: enabling encounters with further and higher education

- 1 | Establish in-school/college coordination.** Careers Leaders often can obtain support from other staff including:
 - The SENCO, to support delivery of encounters for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
 - Subject teachers, to go with students to provider visits or invite providers to a lesson.
- 2 | Explore funding available.** Visits to learning providers can be resource-intensive, especially in schools and colleges in rural and coastal areas. Potential funding sources are:
 - Uni Connect
 - Local Authorities
 - Careers Hubs (which can also support schools and colleges bid/look for funding sources)
- 3 | Consider the needs of learning providers.** While most colleges, universities, and ITPs will be keen to engage, they also have specific needs and face barriers that need consideration, including capacity and flexibility as to when and how they can engage.
- 4 | Build local trust.** By strengthening relationships with other schools, colleges and learning providers in the local area, encounters can become easier to deliver.
- 5 | Make the most of the support from Careers Hubs,** including careers fairs, opportunities to meet and engage with local providers, and other forms of support offered by The Careers & Enterprise Company including the [Resource Directory](#).

Introduction

Encounters with further and higher education in the Gatsby Benchmarks

Encounters with learning providers are central to the delivery of careers education for young people. Gatsby Benchmark 7 – encounters with further and higher education, requires schools and colleges to provide all students with encounters with the full range of providers.

The criteria to achieve Gatsby Benchmark 7 vary across types of establishment and year groups:

	Schools without sixth form	Schools with sixth form	Colleges
Encounters with sixth form colleges	✓	✓	
Information about the full range of apprenticeships	✓	✓	
Encounters with FE colleges/providers	✓	✓	✓
Encounters with Independent Training Providers / apprenticeship providers	✓	✓	✓
Encounters with HE providers/ universities	✓	✓	✓
At least 2 visits to HE providers		✓	

The Careers & Enterprise Company developed Compass – a self-assessment tool which allows schools and colleges to compare their provision to both the Gatsby Benchmarks and to other providers. By March 2020, before schools and colleges closed as a result of Covid-19, 37% of schools and colleges completing Compass had fully achieved Benchmark 7, up from 21% in 2019. This indicates that all (or the overwhelming majority of) students in 37% of schools and colleges had had encounters with the full range of providers. Nearly all remaining schools and colleges had partially completed the Benchmark, meaning that a majority of their students were having encounters with some, but yet not all, types of providers.

Evidence on successful strategies

The Careers & Enterprise Company has published a variety of resources to help Careers Leaders deliver encounters for young people. The Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit for Schools provides the following tips for schools to consider:¹

1. Plan

- Consider career learning outcomes for any FE/HE visits.
- Start young and ensure that planning accommodates for students' needs.
- Work with staff and visit hosts to agree a focus for the visit and to identify and secure relevant volunteer/alumni support.
- Complete risk assessments and planning paperwork and ensure all parties are fully briefed.

2. Deliver

- Share key Labour Market Information throughout the event and build in opportunities for reflection and to check understanding.
- Ensure that resources for the visit captures intended learning outcomes.
- Allow students and staff to set themselves targets/ action plans from the visit.

3. Measure

- Track and record interventions using The Careers & Enterprise Company's digital tools (Compass, Tracker, Compass+).
- Collect event feedback to inform future planning and delivery of the event.

The Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit for colleges focuses on encounters with post-18 education providers, while the SEND Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit provides additional tips for preparing young people with special needs and disabilities for encounters, and activating their wider support network including parents and carers.^{2 3}

The Careers & Enterprise Company launched the Resource Directory in September 2020, a one-stop shop for careers education delivery ideas.⁴ As of 1 February 2021, there were 60 resources relative to Gatsby Benchmark 7.

Aims of the research

The aim of the research was to identify best practice in schools and colleges on how to deliver encounters with further and higher education, and synthesise learnings to produce top tips that Careers Leaders can use to provide encounters for their young people. The report amplifies the existing Gatsby Benchmark Toolkits with additional examples and ideas for improving provision.

1. The Careers & Enterprise Company, *The Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit for Schools. Practical Information and Guidance for Schools.*

2. The Careers & Enterprise Company, *The Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit for Colleges. Practical Information and Guidance for Colleges.*

3. The Careers & Enterprise Company, *The SEND Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit Practical Information and Guidance for Schools, Special Schools and Colleges.*

4. <https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/>

Research methods

Focus groups were carried out with 16 Careers Leaders from schools and colleges. We intended to build a diverse sample that would reflect the range of experiences of Gatsby Benchmark 7 delivery across all settings.

The Careers Leader sample characteristics were:

Criteria	Categories	N
Fully Achieving BM7	Yes	8
	No	8
Establishment type	AP	1
	College	2
	Mainstream	10
	SEND	3
Has a Sixth Form	Yes (inc colleges)	9
	No	7
Region	North East	3
	North West	4
	South East	3
	South West	3
	West Midlands	2
	Yorkshire & Humber	1
In the Enterprise Adviser Network	Yes	14
	No	2
Urban/rural	Urban	13
	Rural	3

Interviews and focus groups with representatives from further and higher education and with members of The Careers & Enterprise Company's Network and Education teams were conducted to understand complementary aspects of encounters with learning providers.

This report is structured as follows. Chapter 1 sets out different delivery models for encounters with further and higher education. Chapter 2 discusses approaches to making encounters 'meaningful'. Chapter 3 provides tips on how to ensure the delivery of sufficient number of encounters with the full range of providers.

1 | Approaches to delivering encounters with further and higher education

There are many ways that encounters with learning providers can take place. Schools and colleges achieving Benchmark 7 have a clear calendar of activities that, taken together, offer young people the **'whole package'** of information they need. By **'whole package'**, Careers Leaders meant that young people need to know about careers and subjects, but also understand what studying at a university or a college means, what the environment is like, what the facilities look like, the career outcomes of different study choices, information about student finance, accommodation options, entry requirements (including qualifications and skills).



It's important that the learner has the right level of information; the whole package. Too many young people make the decision to just go to a university and don't necessarily understand what the career output is from those courses. Good encounters with learning providers will give young people information about their courses and employment prospects but also things like student finance and accommodation.

Careers Leader, college

Age-specific Benchmark 7 activities

Careers Leaders agreed that encounters with further and higher education should **take a progressive approach**. There was broad consensus that career guidance works best when it starts at a young age, although approaches across age groups should differ. When it comes to Benchmark 7, it was mentioned that younger year groups may benefit from lighter touch interventions that introduce them to concepts, careers or pathways in a broad way, so that they become familiar with a range of options and that transitions and career choices are perceived as natural. These would include careers fairs or talks covering broad topics, and can largely be done at school.

The approach for older year groups, Careers Leaders said, should be more specific, as transition points approach. It is then when more intensive activities, such as visits to learning providers, are best suited. Participants seemed to agree that these visits should be seen as the "cherry on the cake" of careers provision, building on all the work done in previous years.



Benchmark 7 activities

- 1. Careers fairs.** Events where young people can meet a large number of learning providers together and talk to as many of them as they wish. In these events, young people can discuss pathways, courses, and career opportunities with learning providers themselves, with little guidance. Some mentioned that there can also be topic-based fringe events. Fairs can be organised by one single school or college inviting a range of providers, or it can be organised by a group of schools/colleges or by a local/regional body (including Careers Hubs) to take advantage of economies of scale.
- 2. Open evenings.** Many schools and colleges use parents evenings occasionally to introduce them to pathways and careers, so that they can support their children. Some Careers Leaders invite learning providers and employers to these events, which can also be open to young people to enable careers conversations between young people and their parents/carers.
- 3. Lunch-time events.** Some Careers Leaders have been organising short events during lunch time, usually topic-specific and bite-sized for young people interested in particular pathways, providers, or careers, or just open to discovering opportunities they had not considered before. Learning providers are sometimes invited to discuss specific topics, including post-16 pathways such as A levels or BTECs.
- 4. Visits from learning providers to a school or college.** All Careers Leaders thought visits from providers constitute a unique opportunity for one or more learning providers to speak to a large audience of young people about the courses they offer, how these link to real-world jobs, and any other relevant topic. There tends to be a Q&A session for young people to ask any questions they may have about the provider or pathways in general. These can be delivered by (and most likely a combination of): teaching staff, engagement/outreach staff, and student ambassadors/alumni.

We start introducing students in Year 7 to the college and universities, just through a series of fun activities. In Year 8, we work with the university on a project called Steps to Success and it gives them different pathways and routes that they could take - qualifications, apprenticeships, degrees. In Year 9, the whole year group goes to university where they are introduced to, not just the subjects they could study, but also university life: finance, student accommodation, everything like that.

Year 10 is really when we ramp up the careers programme for FE and HE. All the students in the year group go to taster sessions at the colleges, and some universities if they want to. The universities are in constantly, the colleges are in constantly, we have pop-up stands at break and lunchtimes so students can access those and in their free time to ask any questions. And in Year 12 and 13 again, we do trips to different universities, taster sessions, and different courses.

Careers Leader, school



I invite one college every Wednesday, and the students who want to come and talk to them do so. It's not overwhelming and we cover a different topic each week. The colleges become familiar with students as they're in school quite often; they know their names.

Careers Leader, school

It's that opportunity to see university. They get to go and look around and see the campus and where they would be living. It's helpful to be able to visualise themselves there.

Careers Leader, school

We get offered subject taster sessions, and that's important because they're starting to think about subjects that they might take or subjects that they've never heard of or have never been exposed to at school.

Careers Leader, school

- 5. Visits from schools or colleges to a learning provider.** All Careers Leaders who engaged in discussions around provider visits emphasised that visits to learning providers are unique opportunities to improve students' understanding of the environment, the facilities, transport options, etc. It tends to be a more practical induction into university/college life than when learning providers visit young people. Many Careers Leaders pointed out that the cost of these visits to learning providers is a limitation for some schools and colleges. Virtual encounters can help remove some of the cost barriers attached to these visits, as discussed in chapter 2.
- 6. Taster sessions.** These engagements help young people understand what learning in a different environment looks like, and also explore whether one particular subject suits their interests or not. This can be delivered both at the learning provider when the school/college visit, or at school/college ran by a visiting learning provider.

Multi-benchmark delivery

Individual Gatsby Benchmarks do not need to be delivered in isolation. Often, **multi-benchmark delivery** can be most effective. Some Careers Leaders explained that in their establishments, subject teachers often invite providers to talk about specific qualifications or pathways linked to their subject (Benchmark 4 + Benchmark 7). Similarly, in order to highlight the connection between pathways and careers, some schools invite both employers and learning providers to careers fairs, so that young people can understand what pathways lead to what career outcomes (Benchmark 5 + Benchmark 7). Considering the potential costs of involving employers and learning providers separately, many agreed that this option is particularly appealing.



If you think from a learner's perspective, they often don't know the connection between what they're studying and the employment sector. There is a big jump from doing a course and being able to turn that into a pathway to a job. So bringing employers helps make the transition feel more real and accessible.

Careers Leader, college

Top tips: approaches to delivering encounters with further and higher education

- 1** | **Consider the whole package** of information young people need to make informed decisions. This can be made by ensuring that students do not just learn about courses and providers, but that they also know about accommodation options, finances, travel, what it means to study in a different setting, and what the university/college/ITP environment is like.
- 2** | **Build an age-specific** calendar of activities. Younger year groups can benefit from lighter-touch approaches that provide them with broad information so that they can start thinking about careers, while older students may benefit from attending more specific events, often involving visits to and from learning providers.
- 3** | **Consider all possible activities**, depending on the desired learning outcomes. These include:
 - Careers fairs.
 - Open evenings.
 - Lunch-time events.
 - Visits from learning providers.
 - Visits to learning providers.
 - Taster sessions.
- 4** | **Consider multi-benchmark delivery.** Sometimes, delivering more than one benchmark at a time can be more cost-effective and improve learning outcomes. For example, bringing employers and education providers together to careers fairs, or inviting learning providers to deliver part of the curriculum, can help put pathways in context.

2 | Ensuring encounters are meaningful

For encounters to be meaningful, young people need the information and the skills to help them to make informed decisions about their careers and their futures.

This section covers a number of aspects that can help Careers Leaders ensure that encounters with learning providers are impactful for young people.



Preparing young people for encounters

Encounters are most effective when they are preceded by some degree of preparation, so that young people can make the most of the experience and do not feel intimidated by the prospect of meeting university, college, or Independent Training Provider representatives.

Careers Leaders discussed a number of ways in which young people can be supported to prepare:

- By asking students to think about their **plan, purpose, and objectives** before talking to learning providers, so that they fully understand what they want to get out of encounters.
- By **involving parents and carers in careers education** so that they can support their children, including thinking about what to expect from encounters with providers.
- By producing a short **booklet or brief information** so that young people know about the provider(s) they will meet, what they may learn, profiles of the people they will talk to, advice on how to engage with them, guidelines on how to behave, and also space for notes.
- By organising **events** to provide young people with useful background knowledge. Topics can include pathways (A levels, BTECs, apprenticeships, degrees, etc) and subjects.



I produced a booklet for students with information about which provider was coming in, what kind of things they may learn, and where they could note down what they learned; they had a page for each person they would encounter that day. It prepared them to make decisions for their future.

Careers Leader, school

Some Careers Leaders mentioned that either they or the Careers Advisers enable 'careers zones', i.e. permanent spaces in the school or college, where information is available and where regular or occasional meetings with the Careers Leader or a Careers Adviser take place. These can be topic-specific or not, so that the conversations can focus on the interests or needs of the students. Even if these are not strictly encounters with a learning provider, Careers Leaders referred to these as useful to prepare young people, as they can help students identify learning providers they want to meet.



Considering the needs of all students

Young people with special needs and disabilities may need additional support to access careers provision. Careers Leaders mentioned plenty of ways in which they attempted to support young people with different levels of needs, including:

- Involving parents/carers, the SENCO, and other relevant staff, so that the young person has the support they need.
- Focusing on practical and interactive approaches, rather than a one-way flow of information.
- Preparing young people for the encounter by explaining exactly what the event will be like, what they can expect, who they will meet, what the facilities are like.
- Providing the **full range of options while supporting realistic expectations**. Often, supported apprenticeships, or colleges with integrated qualification pathways from L1 upwards, are available for young people with specific needs or disabilities.
- Ensuring that there is **SEND expertise in the network**: Careers Leaders, Enterprise Coordinators, Careers Advisers... all of them can support the young person if they have the right skills.
- Some more resource-intensive solutions were mentioned, although not all schools or colleges may be able to provide these:
 - Considering SEND-only careers events. A Careers Leader in a mainstream school with a small SEND student population suggested partnering with other schools to deliver joint events.
 - Offering multiple visits to the same learning providers so that they become more familiar with the environment.
 - Offer industry ambassadors for each young person with special educational needs. Industry ambassadors act as a link between the young person and the learning provider/employer. This model has been tested with small cohorts as it is resource intensive.
- Considering the needs of **students without an EHCP**, as borderline students may be the most likely to miss out as they can easily be overlooked. Some Careers Leaders also thought that it was important to consider the needs of young people from specific backgrounds who may have low social capital and may benefit from more intensive interventions, regardless of their level of ability.



When we prepare our students with SEND for an FE visit, it involves a member of staff going ahead to the venue, taking photographs to give them a sense of what it will look like walking into the building. Students need this level of preparation before we start talking about what they might study there.

Careers Leader, school



Involving parents and carers

Parents and carers play a crucial role in supporting young people to make decisions about their futures. For that reason, Careers Leaders in the focus groups said that they try to ensure that parents and carers also have access to information about pathways and careers so that they can advise their children in an informed way, free from prejudices and biases. They mentioned different ways that parents and carers can be involved:

Parents evenings. Some Careers Leaders mentioned taking advantage of parents evenings to introduce parents/carers to learning providers. These events can be open to their children too. Participants suggested this type of event helps parents/carers access information about pathways, careers, courses, and providers.

Offering comprehensive and neutral information. Parents/carers do not just need to learn about pathways and potential careers. They can also benefit from understanding the whole support package available for their children, and what different learning environments involve.

Making them aware of student events. If parents/carers know about events where their children will meet further and higher education providers, then they can support them with conversations before and after these events. This provides an additional opportunity to prepare young people to meet providers and reflect on what they have learned and what more they would like to know.

“

I had a student who really wanted to go to a particular college and her parents were refusing to let her go to it. If parents have the opportunity to speak to the colleges, they can have their concerns addressed fully. When the information comes directly from the colleges it sometimes puts parents' fears to rest, it makes them more comfortable.

Careers Leader, school

“

For students with special needs, parental involvement is absolutely critical for us. When it comes to moving on at 18 or 19 from a very secure environment, parents have an awful lot of anxiety about making that next step. So, it's quite an anxious time for parents. They worry about how they're going to get there, using the bus or the train independently. The students can do all of those things but it's important that the parents believe it is possible.

Careers Leader, school

“

We've put on a progression evening in conjunction with our parents evening. We had our universities, some employers and a careers team there. It was an opportunity for parents to start to help their son or daughter with what are going to be their next steps.

Careers Leader, college

Enablers of meaningful online encounters

Most careers provision was moved online when schools and colleges closed as a result of Covid-19. During that period, Careers Leaders and learning providers adapted as much as they could to the online environment. This means that schools and colleges did not have to start from scratch when they had to close their doors again in January 2021. Some interesting learnings emerged from that experience, which schools, colleges, and learning providers can incorporate to their practice going forward:

- Some young people who feel **less comfortable engaging in face to face activities**, or who do not want to do so in front of their peers, were reported to benefit from virtual interaction, including live chats and one-to-one Zoom style calls (with the camera disabled if preferred).
 - **Interactive** virtual encounters were found to be much more effective than pre-recorded or uploaded materials, with which young people tend to disengage. Virtual tours were also found to be engaging, particularly when they are live streamed.
 - With fewer face to face opportunities available, Careers Leaders highlighted the importance of understanding how young people can be supported by their school or college to understand their options, and then they can **meet providers to fill any gaps** or get a real-life insight to add to previous knowledge.
 - **Parents/carers were said to be more easily engaged** online than face to face, as it is less time-consuming.
 - As online encounters may not be as effective as face to face, Careers Leaders thought that **young people could be encouraged to focus with the development of personal objectives** (e.g. attend a number of online talks/events), and by asking them to discuss what they have learned in the classroom or with their adviser.
- Careers Leaders thought that the fact that young people **can now meet a larger pool of providers** through online visits is a positive development. Providers now also have the opportunity to reach more young people through increased online offer. However, quality was noted to vary across providers, who need to be more aware of what works online.



I've developed a brand-new package that covers pastoral support, student support, research, and all the academic areas. It has been received quite well and is something that we can offer to students who just need that extra support.

Careers Leader, college

Top tips: ensuring encounters with further and higher education are meaningful

- 1 | Prepare young people** ahead of the encounters. This can be done in different ways:
 - Helping them set objectives for the event.
 - Providing them with information about the provider(s) they will meet and the pathways that they might find out about.
 - Holding topic-specific events about qualifications or other relevant matters.
- 2 | Consider the needs of all students.** Young people with special educational needs and disabilities may need specific approaches to ensure that encounters are meaningful. This can involve organising or attending SEND-specific events, working closely with parents/carers, and involving the SENCO.
- 3 | Involve parents and carers.**
 - Bring learning providers to parents' evenings, so that they become familiar with the full range of pathways available to their children.
 - Make parents and carers aware of encounters for their children so that they can help them prepare and digest learnings.
- 4 | Consider enablers of meaningful online encounters.** Online provision following the closure of schools and colleges as a result of Covid-19 showed that sometimes virtual encounters work better when they are live and interactive rather than pre-recorded. Some young people feel more comfortable in the virtual environment, and more providers beyond the local area can be met when virtual provision is in place, meaning that meaningful encounters are possible in the virtual environment. While online provision cannot fully replace face to face encounters, Careers Leaders can draw on good online delivery practice while face to face provision is not an option.

3 | Enabling encounters with further and higher education

Most Careers Leaders have other jobs on top of their careers role, meaning that the time they have to plan and deliver encounters with further and higher education is often limited. This section sets out strategies for ensuring the delivery of encounters with learning providers.



Establishing in-school/college coordination

Careers is not a one-person job. In a school or college, everyone can be a careers champion. Aspects to consider when engaging other school or college staff are:

Coordinating with other members of staff to deliver careers. Careers Leaders in the focus groups were concerned that, sometimes, they compete with other staff for young people's time or school/college facilities.

- All agreed that activities need to be planned in advance and that other members of staff need to be engaged early to avoid conflicts around schedules and shared facilities. The Compass + tool, enabled by The Careers & Enterprise Company, can help Careers Leaders plan for the year ahead.
- Many raised that when a Careers Leader is a teacher or has additional jobs, then other members of staff may need to attend planned activities or go with young people to further and higher education visits.
- When young people with special educational needs and disabilities are involved, the SENCO may need to offer additional support in specific events.
- Some encounters may be arranged by subject teachers, and the Careers Leader may not always be aware that that encounter is happening. Careers Leaders thought that coordination can help improve the flow of information, improving in turn the reliability of Compass.

Exploring all funding sources available

Funding can be a barrier to delivering encounters with further and higher education, especially for schools and colleges in rural and coastal areas. For these schools and colleges, there may not be many post-16/18 providers within travelling distance, and often they need to reach out to providers in different parts of the country. However, for all schools and colleges encounters - and especially visits to learning providers - can be costly. As a result, understanding what financial support is available can help Careers Leaders deliver encounters with further and higher education.

1 | Uni Connect funding. The Office for Students provides £60m a year to deliver targeted higher education outreach for young people in years 9 to 13 living in areas with low levels of young participation.⁵ Funding is channelled through 29 local partnerships of schools, colleges, and higher education institutions, and can be spent on outreach activities for young people delivered by or with higher education providers (including colleges).



We access Uni Connect funding. That does remove a huge barrier, which is funding the trip. But even just a small amount of funding for us means that we can provide the transport for the students to attend.

Careers Leader, school

5. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/uni-connect/how-uni-connect-works/>

- 2 | **Careers Hubs support.** Careers Leaders can build on local relationships built through Careers Hubs to provide joint encounters with other schools and colleges, bid together for funding, or take advantage of economies of scale.
- 3 | **Local funding sources.** In some cases, there is funding available in the local area, including provided by the Local Authority or employers, which school and colleges can use to deliver encounters with learning providers.



With our Careers Hub, we sometimes get the opportunity to bid for funding, outlining what we're going to use it for and the outcomes that we want to achieve.

Careers Leader, school



We also have, in the area, some pots of funding, which we've accessed to provide transport to take students on trips, to FE and HE providers.

Careers Leader, school

Our area has a bursary system, so if one of our students wants to go to a college that is more than three miles away from where they live, they can apply for a bursary and they're likely to be successful.

Careers Leader, school

Some areas that are very proactive have really strong links and have employers that will come in and support, or we can take our learners on trips and visits.

Careers Leader, school

Consider the needs of learning providers

While most learning providers are keen to engage with schools and colleges, further and higher education institutions also have needs and face barriers that Careers Leaders need to consider when planning encounters. These include:

- **Flexibility.** While large providers may have the ability to accommodate specific dates and times, not all will be able to do so. Smaller providers, or providers that need to travel long distance, may need some flexibility as to when the encounters happen.
- **Actual time devoted to an encounter.** Providers delivering a one-hour event at a school or a college may actually be devoting half or a full day to that event, especially if they need to travel.
- **Capacity.** Some providers have less capacity than others to engage. This affects smaller providers in particular. Sometimes large providers may want to bring large outreach teams to a school or college, which means that they also face capacity limitations despite their size.



Building local trust

Local collaboration is a key enabler of encounters with learning providers, and there are good examples of local coordination that have worked well, bringing together schools, sixth forms, FE providers and HE, hence reaching more collaborative approaches.



There is a pilot happening where schools are using the yellow buses between drop-off and pick-ups. They've managed to get a concession with the Local Authority that owns those, so the cost is significantly less.

Regional Lead, The Careers & Enterprise Company



I work with a number of schools with sixth forms that collaborate locally. They have a regular meeting with the Local Authority, the two high schools, who both have sixth forms, FE and training providers. They do big events together.

Regional Lead, The Careers & Enterprise Company

Colleges have massive links, we're on different partnership boards and things like that on networking groups. We have industry experts delivering qualifications and modules. So, they themselves bring a raft of experts and links into the industry with them and that is what we all utilise to great effect.

Careers Leader, college

Support from Careers Hubs

Some Careers Hubs support the delivery of encounters with further and higher education in many ways, including:

Organising careers events. Some Careers Leaders reported that their Careers Hubs organise careers fairs for the schools and colleges in their areas, involving employers and learning providers.

Relationship building. Many Careers Leaders praised Careers Hubs for generating relationships to expand schools and colleges' networks, and to build positive relationships between providers at the local/regional level that have facilitated encounters. While often, when an organisation's lead leaves, relationships need to be built from scratch, the existence of Hubs can help ensure that these relationships remain intact as they outlive post holders.

Other forms of support offered by The Careers & Enterprise Company, including the [Resource Directory](#).



In our Careers Hub we've got an Enterprise Coordinator whose specialism is SEND, and she support SEND provision across the whole county. She has put on a really accessible careers fair.

Careers Leader, school



We often have events where a lot of providers get together and have careers fairs so they're more central. It's helpful that each school doesn't have to organise a careers fairs and that each college doesn't have to go to ten fairs in a week.

Careers Leader, school

I've had the experience through our Careers Hub with a few independent training providers, which has been really helpful. They come along to our post-16 provision evening; they meet the parents. One of them has helped us set up this supported apprenticeship for a child in our school and we're going to be working with them together to provide her with training in her apprenticeship.

Careers Leader, school

Top tips: enabling encounters with further and higher education

- 1 | Establish in-school/college coordination.** There are many occasions where Careers Leaders need the support and backing from other staff, including:
 - The SENCO, to support delivery of encounters for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
 - Subject teachers, to go with students to provider visits or invite providers to a lesson.
- 2 | Explore funding available.** Visits to learning providers can be resource-intensive, especially in schools and colleges in rural and coastal areas. Potential funding sources are:
 - Uni Connect
 - Local Authorities
 - Careers Hubs (which can also support schools and colleges bid/look for funding sources)
- 3 | Consider the needs of learning providers.** While most colleges, universities, and ITPs will be keen to engage, they also have specific needs and face barriers that need consideration, including capacity and flexibility as to when and how they can engage.
- 4 | Build local trust.** By strengthening relationships with other schools, colleges and learning providers in the local area and beyond, encounters can become easier to deliver.
- 5 | Make the most of the support from Careers Hubs,** including careers fairs, opportunities to meet and engage with local providers, and other forms of support offered by The Careers & Enterprise Company including the [Resource Directory](#).

The Careers & Enterprise Company
2-7 Clerkenwell Green
Clerkenwell
London EC1R 0DE

careersandenterprise.co.uk