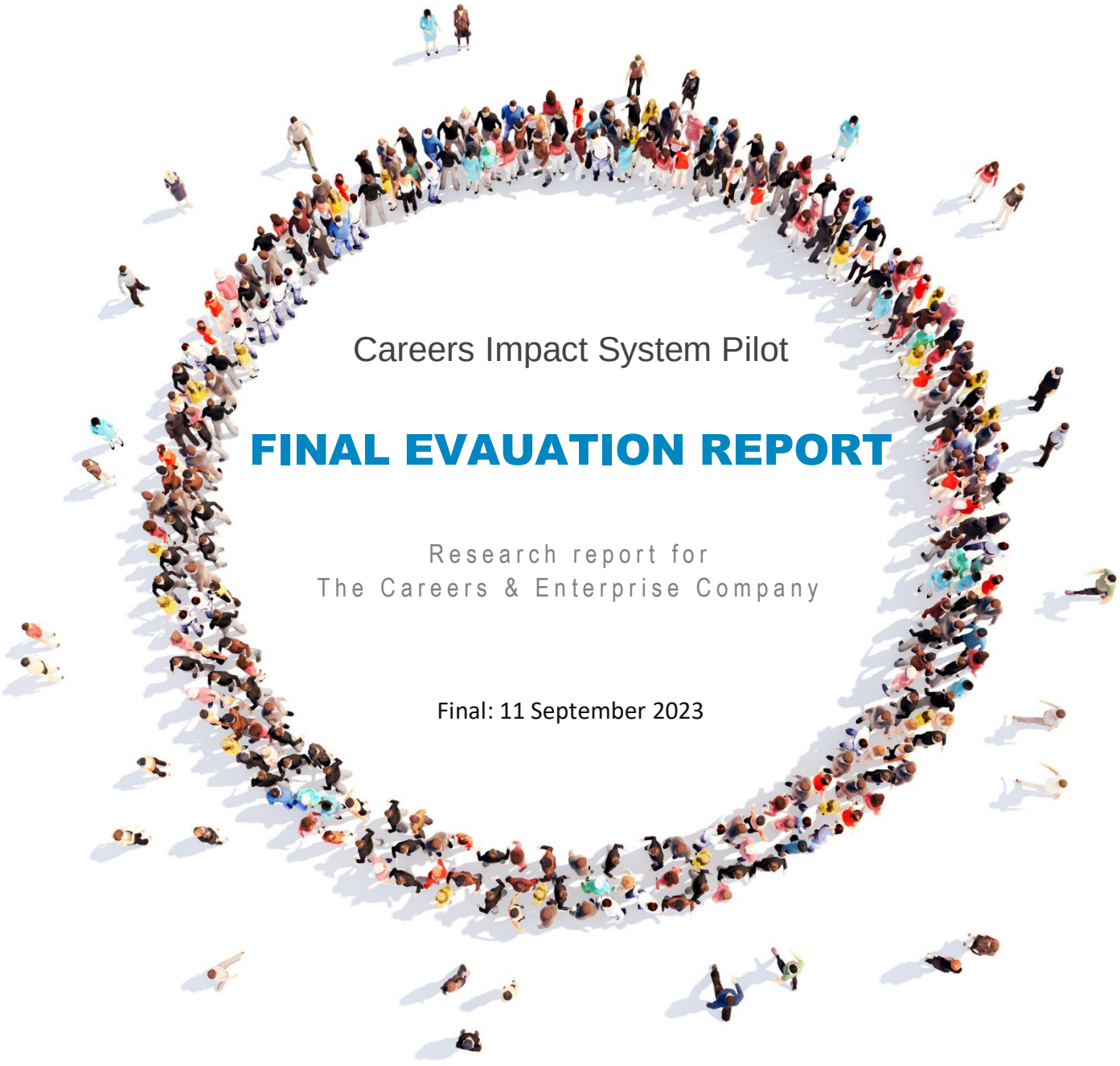

Careers Impact System Pilot

FINAL EVAUATION REPORT

Research report for
The Careers & Enterprise Company

Final: 11 September 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Careers & Enterprise Company is the national body for careers education in England and supports schools, special schools and colleges to deliver high quality careers education. The Careers & Enterprise Company describes its mission as 'to help every young person find their best next step'.

About Careers Impact System

In 2022, The Careers & Enterprise Company developed its Careers Impact System. Through it, The Careers & Enterprise Company is aiming to secure:

- Assurance of quality of careers provision
- Improved careers provision across the country
- Elevation of status of Careers Leaders and greater professionalisation of the role.

At the core of the Careers Impact System is a maturity model, rooted in Gatsby Benchmarks and other evidence about best practice in careers. The Careers Impact System Pilot tested the Careers Impact Maturity Model and both peer-to-peer and expert reviews.

The review process comprised three stages:

- Self-evaluation
- Review meeting
- Post review reflection and action planning

The pilot activities took place over the course of the 2022-23 academic year. 82 schools, special schools and colleges took part in either expert or peer-to-peer review.

Chrysalis Research was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the pilot and provide recommendations for any national roll-out of the Careers Impact System. Almost all institutions involved in the pilot, 76 out of the 82, were involved in the evaluation.

Summary of main findings

Feedback from participating institutions

- Schools, special schools and colleges involved in the pilot were overwhelmingly positive about the Careers Impact System, with 93% saying they would get involved in it again and 95% stating that they would recommend it to other schools, special schools and colleges.
- 94% of the participating schools, special schools and colleges said the Careers Impact System process was of high value to their institutions and their Careers Leaders.
- Nearly all (98%) of the survey respondents across both review types agreed that their review meeting as a positive experience and three quarters of respondents who had expert reviews strongly agreed with the statement.

Key outcomes

- 83% of participating institutions said the Careers Impact System helped improve their understanding of best practice. Their understanding improved in practical and theoretical terms, in relation to the implications of the Gatsby Benchmarks, careers practice and school/college improvement, and strengthening outcomes for learners.
- 89% of respondents highlighted the value of the Careers Impact System in helping them plan developments of their careers provision. Participants also said the Careers Impact System process helped them identify gaps in provision and the Careers Impact Maturity Model in particular acted as a valuable tool and an expert resource.
- 84% of participants stated that the Careers Impact System helped them recognise the strengths of their careers provision, 79% said that they had identified actions which would strengthen their provision and two thirds of the participating institutions (66%) said they had started implementing these changes. Using the Careers Impact System to identify strengths meant they could spend time on areas that mattered most and to identify levers and drivers for development. Importantly, it gave confidence to Careers Leaders that they were working effectively.
- Across all sources of evidence gathered, strengthening approaches to evaluating careers provision and using evidence to monitor its effectiveness and shape its development, consistently emerged as one of the key development priorities that those taking part in the pilot identified for themselves as a result of their involvement in the Careers Impact System.
- Raising the profile of careers through greater involvement of staff was an area where some quick wins were secured during and soon after the review process. The proportion of

participants reporting the teaching staff gave priority to careers rose from 20% before the review to 48% afterwards.

- The Careers Impact System process promoted greater Senior Leadership Team (SLT) involvement in careers review and planning. This in turn had the benefit of changing the dynamic from simply strengthening careers to it becoming a vehicle and driver for institutional improvement and achieving strategic priorities. Senior leaders, Headteachers or Principals in particular, tended to suggest more embedded and integrated solutions to challenges that surfaced during Careers Impact System discussions.
    - After their involvement in the Careers Impact System, 83% of respondents stated that their SLT gave high priority to careers, compared to 53% before the pilot. For governors, the figure before the pilot was 38%, compared with 60% afterwards.
- The Careers Impact System enabled participating schools, special schools and colleges to examine and develop their understanding of the Gatsby Benchmarks in much greater depth than they had been able to do previously. This led to more strategic thinking based on participants' reflection of actual practice in relation to the Benchmarks, as well as a sharper focus on learner outcomes and on disadvantaged groups in particular. There was also evidence of participating institutions gaining confidence in the accuracy of their judgements and rigour of their approach when working on their Compass submissions.
- The Careers Impact System had highly positive effects on learning, professional development and growth of the participating Careers Leaders.
    - After their involvement in the pilot, 93% of respondents rated their institution's Careers Leader's *ability* to plan and deliver careers provision as high, compared with 79% before the pilot. Similar improvements were visible for Careers Leader's *confidence* to drive improvement of careers provision, which was rated as high by 88% of survey participants after completing the Careers Impact System process, compared to 67% prior to their involvement.
    - There were examples where Careers Impact System discussions started conversations within the participating institutions about how their Careers Leader role should be developed so that it is more strategic and has better communication channels with the SLT.
- Other outcomes, that emerged as a result of the Careers Impact System pilot included:
    - Increased motivation to strengthen their careers provision – reported by 94% of participants, as a result of their Careers Impact System review meeting
    - Engagement of one or more colleagues from the participating institutions in formal Career Leader training

- ‘Team-building’ opportunity and development of a shared understanding of what they are doing and why amongst careers teams as well as colleagues working on related aspects of student support and development
- Development of connections with colleagues from other schools, special schools and colleagues, as part of peer-to-peer- review process. Half (50%) of all participants who were involved in peer-to-peer reviews said they had continued working with and learning from the institutions that were part of the Careers Impact System review after its completion.

Longer-term impact

- The participating institutions were exceptionally positive about the changes they were expecting to see in their settings in the long term, based on the evidence they already had:
  - 96% said that it was likely or highly likely that taking part in the Careers Impact System process would in the longer-term lead to improved careers provision in their school, special school or college.
  - 94% said that it would lead to more effective careers leadership.
  - 86% of participants thought that taking part in the Careers Impact System would in the longer-term lead to improved student outcomes.

System level impact

- There was also some strong early evidence of benefits and value of the Careers Impact System beyond the level of individual institutions taking part in it, most notably Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts.
  - For the participating Careers Hubs, taking part in the Careers Impact System was beneficial because it enabled them to strengthen relationships with existing member schools, special schools and colleges and attract new ones to the network of Careers Hubs.
  - Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts commented that the Careers Impact System process and its maturity model in particular offered them clarity about best practice and development trajectories for strengthening and embedding careers education, that they could use with all their member institutions.
  - Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts alike highly valued the opportunity to surface and capture insight that the Careers Impact System provided them with.
- Whilst only beginning to materialise over the course of the pilot, multi-academy trusts involved in the evaluation highlighted the Careers Impact System as a mechanism for achieving and

assuring consistency of careers provision across their member schools, special schools and colleges.

Conclusions, with insights for the careers system

The available evidence suggests that the Careers Impact System was well received by and valuable to the schools, special schools and colleges involved in the pilot and it has strong potential to lead to longer-term impact for those institutions and their students as well as to impact at system level. On this basis, we can conclude that not only has the Careers Impact System Pilot achieved its aims for the participating institutions, but it is ready to be scaled-up, to maximise its impact and value at system level.

Our analysis of all the evidence gathered for the purposes of the pilot evaluation also suggests the following conclusions about the role and potential impact of the approach at system level.

The Careers Impact System can strengthen assurance of quality of careers provision at institutional and ultimately system levels.

Pilot evidence suggests that assurance of quality of careers provision through the Careers Impact System is achieved via:

- The Careers Impact Maturity Model, which is rooted in Gatsby Benchmarks and synthesises best practice about careers. Being a standardised maturity model, it helps schools, special schools and colleges to identify their current position as well as gaps in their provision and steps towards addressing them. It establishes a shared and standardised language of improvement for careers.
- Increased hands-on involvement of multiple staff within participating institutions, in particular of education leaders and Governors, in reviewing the status and quality of their institution's careers provision and identifying improvement priorities.
- Opening participating institutions' careers provision for external scrutiny.
- Better understanding of Gatsby Benchmarks and of the support processes and resources provided by The Careers & Enterprise Company and its network of Careers Hubs that would enable schools, special schools and colleges to use Compass tools accurately and to their full potential.
- Increased focus on evaluation, evidence gathering and use of data and learner outcomes when shaping and gauging quality and impact of careers provision.

The Careers Impact System can raise the quality of careers provision at system level.

There was considerable evidence about the positive impact of the Careers Impact System on raising the quality of careers provision in participating institutions. This suggests that when delivered at scale, the Careers Impact System would lead to system level improvement.

The Careers Impact System supported participating institutions in their efforts to improve the quality of their provision through the following:

- Improving understanding of best practice related to careers.
- Focusing on learner outcomes, particularly those who are disadvantaged.
- Increasing involvement of different stakeholders in careers, including teaching staff, leaders students and in some cases parents.
- Taking a more strategic and long-term approach to careers planning, delivery and evaluation.
- Connecting careers to school, special school and college improvement. Where careers was beginning to be used as a vehicle for achieving institutional priorities it created additional leverage for strengthening careers provision and opportunities to reinforce impact related to both careers and other institutional priorities
- Forming actions which aimed to strengthen careers provision and informed by best practice being identified and implemented.
- The Careers Impact System experience being positive and motivating for staff involved in the process, inspiring them to drive improvement.
- Involvement in the Careers Impact System being supported by Hubs, trusts and peer institutions.

The Careers Impact System can be a powerful driver for elevating the status of Careers Leaders and professionalising the role.

Our pilot evidence highlighted that the Careers Impact System helped deepen Careers Leaders's understanding of best practice, it led to increases in their ability and confidence to drive improvement of careers provision. The process led to greater recognition of their role and its impact within their institutions. In multiple instances, following their institution's involvement in the Careers Impact System process, there was greater support for Careers Leaders from school, special school and college senior leaders and governors. There were also instances of redefining their role, so that it is more strategic and better connected to senior leadership.

The Careers Impact System can provide a strong mechanism for capturing, distilling and where relevant disseminating evidence at system level.

For those conducting and facilitating Careers Impact System reviews (The Careers & Enterprise Company, Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts), the process enabled identification of challenges and provided insight and learning at system level. Even during the pilot, there were already instances when this insight was piped back into the system, through the Careers Impact System and other channels. Going forward, this can and should be used to support continuous learning and improvement and shine a light on best practice at system level.

1 INTRODUCTION

Context and background

The Careers & Enterprise Company is the national body for careers education in England and supports schools, special schools and colleges to deliver high quality careers education. The Careers & Enterprise Company describes its mission as 'to help every young person find their best next step'.

In 2022, The Careers & Enterprise Company started work to develop its Careers Impact System[1]. The Careers Impact System has distinct aims for institutions and for the entire education system, i.e. for careers provision more widely. At the level of individual participating institutions, the aims of the Careers Impact System[2] are to:

- Enhance the scope and quality of careers provision towards meaningfully meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks
- Support the recognition of strengths in the school, special school, or college's careers provision with an improved understanding of best practice related to careers
- Strengthen an approach to action-planning towards a progressive and differentiated careers provision, underpinned by relevant learning outcomes, that is embedded within whole school, special school or college improvement.

At system level, through the Careers Impact System, The Careers & Enterprise Company is aiming to secure:

- Assurance of quality of careers provision
- Improved careers provision across the country
- Elevation of status of Careers Leaders and greater professionalisation of the role.

What is Careers Impact System?

There are three stages to the Careers Impact System process:

[1] Over the course of the pilot it was referred to as the Careers Impact Review System (CIRS).
[2] Source: Careers Impact Maturity Model

- Self-evaluation
- Review meeting
- Post-review reflection and action-planning

At the core of the Careers Impact System is a maturity model which is rooted in Gatsby Benchmarks and related evidence about best practice in careers. The Careers Impact Maturity Model[3] aims to enable schools, special schools and colleges to approach their careers provision strategically, by focusing on quality, intent and planning for impact and making strong connections between careers and school/college improvement.

Completing self-evaluation using the Careers Impact Maturity Model was the first stage of the Careers Impact System process for institutions that took part in the pilot. They then prepared for and took part in the review meeting.

Within the pilot, there were two types of the Careers Impact System reviews – expert and peer-to-peer.

- Expert reviews were carried out by The Careers & Enterprise Company and were very comprehensive. They systematically covered all themes of the Careers Impact Maturity Model and involved multiple stakeholders from the participating institution, including senior leaders, teaching staff and students.
- Peer-to-peer reviews involved participants from several schools, special schools and colleges, who took turns to look at and question each other's provision. Some peer-to-peer review meetings focused on one or two themes of the Careers Impact Maturity Model, others covered the entire Careers Impact Maturity Model but in a more light-touch way than expert reviews. Most peer-to-peer reviews were facilitated by Careers Hubs or multi-academy trusts who had been trained for this purpose by The Careers & Enterprise Company.

After the review meeting, institutions involved in the pilot received either a report or a summary of the review meeting findings from which institutions could determine a set of actions to address the development priorities identified. The final stages include reflection are re-evaluation. The entire process was expected to take around 15-18 weeks.

Pilot activities

The initial Careers Impact System model and instruments were developed in spring-summer 2022. The pilot activities took place over the course of the 2022-23 academic year.

[3] During the course of the pilot the Careers Impact Maturity Model was referred to as the self-evaluation framework.

During the Autumn term, The Careers & Enterprise Company recruited and onboarded schools, special schools and colleges to take part in the pilot. Most of this work was achieved through Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts, which in turn also required briefing and onboarding. Alongside that, The Careers & Enterprise Company needed to identify, engage and train facilitators for both types of reviews.

The first Careers Impact System reviews took place in early 2023 and the last review meetings were held in July 2023. Overall, 82 schools, special schools and colleges took part in the pilot, exceeding the intended minimal number of institutions that The Careers & Enterprise Company was hoping would take part. Of these:

- 27 schools, special schools and colleges were involved in expert and 55 institutions took part in peer-to-peer reviews.
- The majority of pilot institutions were mainstream secondary schools but the review also involved colleges and non-mainstream settings:
    - 53 secondary schools, of which 34 were 11-18 and 19 were 11-16
    - 14 FE colleges
    - 15 non-mainstream settings (11 special schools and four pupil referral units).
- The pilot institutions represented a good range of Gatsby Benchmark achievement and Ofsted ratings:
    - Around two-thirds of participating institutions had achieved at least five benchmarks, more than one-third (37 institutions) had achieved seven-eight benchmarks. Nearly a quarter (19 institutions) achieved four or fewer.
    - Nine pilot institutions had an Outstanding Ofsted inspection rating, 50 were Good and 11 were rated as Requires Improvement. 11 institutions had not yet been inspected (likely to be new institutions, including converter academies).
- The largest numbers of pilot institutions were located in the North West (20) and East Midlands (19), there were fewest in the West Midlands (2), Yorkshire and Humber (3) and south east England (3).

Evaluation

Chrysalis Research was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the pilot and provide recommendations for any national roll-out of the Careers Impact System. The evaluation design comprised observations of review meetings, interviews with participants and facilitators, document reviews and online surveys, which are due to be carried out on completion of the Careers Impact System review process.

Evidence for this report

This report draws on all evidence gathered by the research team in 2022-23 as part of the pilot evaluation activities. Overall, one or more research activities covered engagement of 76 out of the 82 institutions involved in the Careers Impact System during the pilot. The evidence base comprised:

- 70 survey responses, submitted by colleagues from 62 institutions involved in the pilot. Of these:
    - 40 were peer-to-peer Careers Impact System review participants and 30 respondents took part in expert Careers Impact System reviews.
    - Just under half (48%) of all respondents were in leadership positions in their institutions – headteachers/principals, deputy headteachers or vice principals and assistant headteachers/principals. The majority of the remainder held management positions (e.g. head of department or curriculum area or employer engagement lead), were non-teaching Careers Leaders or careers advisors.
    - Around three quarters (74%) of respondents stated that they were the named Careers Leader at their institution.
- Researcher observations of five Careers Impact System reviews, two expert and three peer-to-peer reviews, involving 15 institutions in total.
- In-depth interviews with 22 participating schools, special schools and colleges and further three interviews with Careers Leaders and members of the senior leadership team from the institutions whose reviews were observed by the research team.
- In-depth interviews with five Careers Hubs and four multi-academy trusts (MATs) involved in the pilot (nine interviews in total) and further four informal interviews with review facilitators (trust and hub representatives).
- Analysis of the documents related to Careers Impact System reviews for 32 institutions involved in the pilot. In all cases, the documentary evidence included self-evaluations and re-evaluations, Careers Impact System reports or summaries of the review meeting findings and actions.

Reporting notes

Throughout this report we present percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. This sometimes means that totals can appear to be one or two percentage points out. For example, the sum of 55.4% and 44.4% would appear as 55+44=100, since 99.8 rounds to 100. In charts the text for small percentages (generally less than 3%) is not shown so that the chart can be read more easily.

The evidence base for the pilot evaluation is extensive and robust, involving almost all schools, special schools and colleges taking part in the Careers Impact System. We are confident that the findings represent the views of the full range of pilot institutions. However, since the pilot involves a small proportion of all institutions, we have been cautious in making comparisons (for example between the responses of expert and peer-to-peer review institutions). We have highlighted differences of +/- 10% but consider differences below this threshold as not significant.

2 CAREERS IMPACT SYSTEM: PROCESS

This section explores evidence related to the Careers Impact System process. First, we consider how and why participating institutions got involved in the Careers Impact System pilot. Next, we present evidence about the different stages of the review process. The section concludes with a summary of the evidence related to the perceived value of different elements of the Careers Impact System to the participating institutions.

Involvement in the Careers Impact System

There were three main ways in which schools, special schools and colleges were able to find out about and get involved in the pilot, via:

- direct communications from, and by liaising with, The Careers & Enterprise Company
- a Careers Hub
- their multi-academy trust.

The first was primarily used for expert reviews and the last two for peer-to-peer reviews. When participating institutions got involved through a Careers Hub, the process of learning about the Careers Impact System and signing up was broadly similar to that where schools, special schools and colleges liaised with The Careers & Enterprise Company directly, in the sense that the decision to take part was made by the individual participating institutions. In contrast, for several of the participating trusts, the decision to get involved was made centrally, for all of its member institutions.

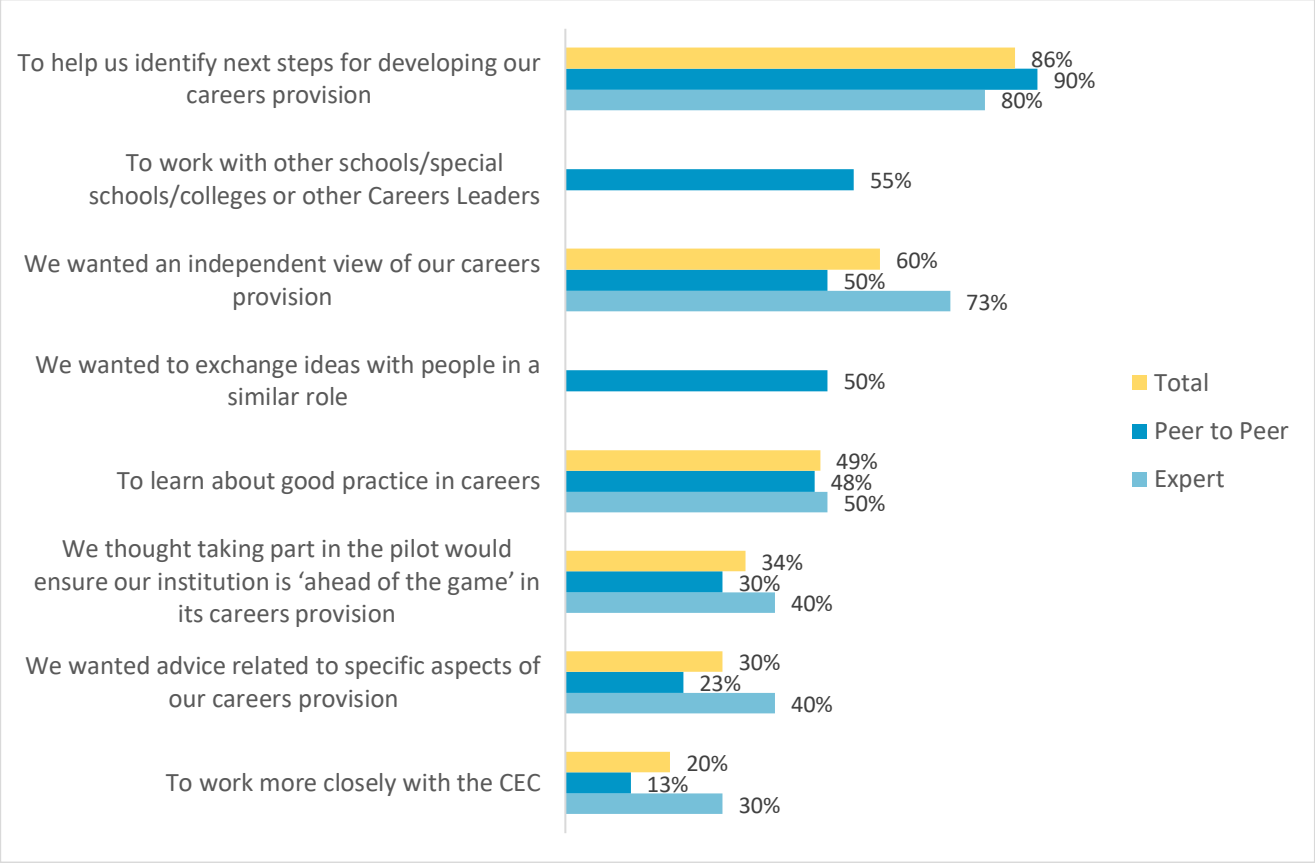
As part of the evaluation activities, we examined the reasons that prompted schools, special schools and colleges to get involved in the Careers Impact System pilot. Irrespective of the review type, identifying next steps for developing their careers provision emerged as a key reason why schools, special schools and colleges wanted to take part in the pilot, highlighted by 90% of peer-to-peer review participants and 80% of those involved in expert reviews.

> *Careers is something that is a huge area for us. [When we were contacted about the Careers Impact System] I thought, 'This is perfect because we're on a journey and we're starting from scratch,' and I thought that it would be really good for us.*
>
> **Principal, special school (expert review)**

Beyond that, there were some noticeable differences between expert and peer-to-peer reviews in their reasons for wanting to take part in the Careers Impact System pilot.

Figure 1 Participating schools, special schools and colleges' main reasons to get involved in the Careers Impact System pilot

Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: 70 (30 expert review and 40 peer-to-peer review participants)



Nearly three quarters (73%) of those who took part in *expert* reviews sought an independent view of their provision. For senior leaders in the participating institution, that independent assessment was particularly important where they were expecting an Ofsted inspection.

> *We're due Ofsted, [and we thought] a review led by CEC would be a really good indicator that we're on the right track, or we're developing in the right way, and just having that opportunity to unpick what we were doing, and more importantly, why we were doing it. I think that was our main motivation, really.*
>
> **Assistant headteacher, PRU (expert review)**

Learning about careers was the third most commonly mentioned reason for taking part amongst those involved in expert reviews. Qualitative research further highlighted that it was not simply the depth of expertise about careers which was clearly visible in the expert review teams, but also a very

different and fresh perspective on best practice in careers that attracted schools, special schools and colleges.

> *I think it was about having robust discussions with other careers specialists... I think it was around an opportunity to really sit back and evaluate what we do… [The Careers Impact Maturity Model] makes you think slightly differently in terms of, what is a progressive careers learning journey? What does that actually mean?*
>
> **Vice principal, FE College (expert review)**

For *peer-to-peer* reviews, there was a greater spread of reasons for taking part, although several emerged as of broadly equal importance in prompting schools to get involved, each of them selected by about half of respondents (see Figure 1 for detail).

A considerably lower proportion of institutions involved in peer-to-peer reviews said they were seeking an independent view of their careers provision (50%) compared to those who were involved in expert reviews (73%). While this reflects the nature of the respective reviews, it also suggests that, in rollout of the Careers Impact System, further support and development might be required to enable colleagues to understand its value as an assurance mechanism and a driver of quality improvement.

During in-depth interviews, people involved in peer-to-peer reviews further highlighted the value of the supportive, non-judgmental environment of a review that appealed to them. Several Careers Leaders emphasised that they felt this would enable them to be open about their questions and challenges and what they were working on.

> *Everyone said, 'Yes' [to being involved]. I think it's always helpful to have that time to reflect and evaluate yourself, but also have conversations with others. I think the peer-to-peer review really attracted me because you could be brutally honest and say, 'Look, actually, this isn't really up to speed. What do you do?' And you could be more honest because you weren't trying to get the careers Mark.*
>
> **Deputy headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

Finally, for a large number of participating institutions, involved in both expert and peer-to-peer reviews, taking part in the Careers Impact System was a reflection of their prioritisation of careers. Many viewed their Careers Impact System experience as part of their journey of strengthening their careers provision, where it had a clear role to play alongside other frameworks and quality assurance instruments (such as Gatsby benchmarks and Quality in Careers Standard).

> *We [thought] this would be really good to help us really be thorough with our thinking, ready for that Quality in Careers Standard.*
>
> **Assistant headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (expert review)**

I'm very, very passionate about ensuring that every child has high aspirations, and they are prepared for the future. And I think the only way we can do that is to make sure that careers is embedded throughout everything that we do here. It's not a bolt-on, it's inter-weaved with our curriculum, it's inter-weaved with our form time learning, it's inter-weaved with literally everything we do. Because careers is such an important part of what we do here, I am the first to jump at any opportunity like [the Careers Impact System pilot] because it's part of our school vision, it's part of what we do here, and we really value the careers opportunities we already have but we want to see where our next stages are. [Our Careers Leader] did an amazing job this year of ensuring that our Compass [score] is at 100%. We are also looking to get our Career Mark next year, so that'll be a next stage moving forward.

Principal, secondary school (peer-to-peer review)

The Careers Impact System being viewed as vehicle and driver for improving careers provision and either a step towards achieving formal accreditation of their careers quality or a way of achieving continuous improvement after securing such accreditation was also visible in the thinking of *multi-academy trusts* involved in the Careers Impact System during its pilot, some of which signed up all or large numbers of their institutions.

Up until this point, in terms of quality assurance, our priority has been the Quality in Careers Standard. We use Career Mark as our awarding body for the Quality in Careers Standard. We also do our own informal, ongoing compliance meetings and progress checks... On learning more about [the Careers Impact System, it felt like] that this was the best next step, in terms of, 'What's next? How do we elevate what we're doing to the next level?'. We're still absolutely bought into the external QA process of the Quality in Careers Standard, but what I believe [the Careers Impact System] gives us is that opportunity to really embed and not be reliant on just one person or one small team of people. I think the language, especially in columns 3 and 4 [of the Careers Impact Maturity Model] works really well. I just thought, 'This is what we're striving for, and actually, somebody's done all of the hard work for us.'

Trust Careers Lead and Careers Impact System peer-to-peer review facilitator

For *Careers Hubs* taking part, the pilot presented an opportunity to strengthen relationships with members of their Careers Hub or to start developing them with the schools that were not yet part of a Careers Hub. In several cases, Careers Hubs took advantage of the opportunity to elevate their work beyond individual institutions, by starting to also work at multi-academy trust level.

Careers Hubs also saw the Careers Impact System as an opportunity to address gaps and weaker areas in their schools, special schools and colleges' careers provision and to help them move their careers provision to the next level, by adopting a qualitatively different way of thinking about careers.

We're strong on our careers provision, but the schools are struggling to evaluate and understand why. They're very much fixated on activity, 'This is what I need to do. This is what I need to put in

place. If I tick all these boxes it makes me advertise and promote that we're a good schools careers provision,' and not actually look at the process of why we do things and align it to the school improvement plan and the school delivery. So we were really up for getting involved from that point of view.

Careers Hub Operational Lead and Careers Impact System peer-to-peer review facilitator

Clarity of communications about the Careers Impact System

Pilot participants being clear about what the Careers Impact System is and how its process is implemented emerged as essential in ensuring that their experience was positive and achieved the desired outcomes and impact.

In terms of the specific communication mechanisms and channels that enabled the participating institutions to find out about the Careers Impact System, the written information provided by The Careers & Enterprise Company was used most consistently across both expert and peer-to-peer reviews. It was mentioned by around three quarters of the survey respondents, with virtually no differences between the two review types. For expert reviews, speaking to somebody from The Careers & Enterprise Company was similarly widespread (reported by around three quarters of our survey respondents), whilst for peer-to-peer reviews, watching the 'Preparation for Self-evaluation' video was equally common. In contrast, the 'Context to the Careers Impact System' video was reported as a source of information by much fewer survey participants, particularly where they were from institutions involved in expert reviews. Meeting (virtually or in person) with their peer-to-peer review facilitator, to learn about the Careers Impact System process and its purpose and prepare for getting involved, was mentioned by around two thirds of people involved in that type of the Careers Impact System review.

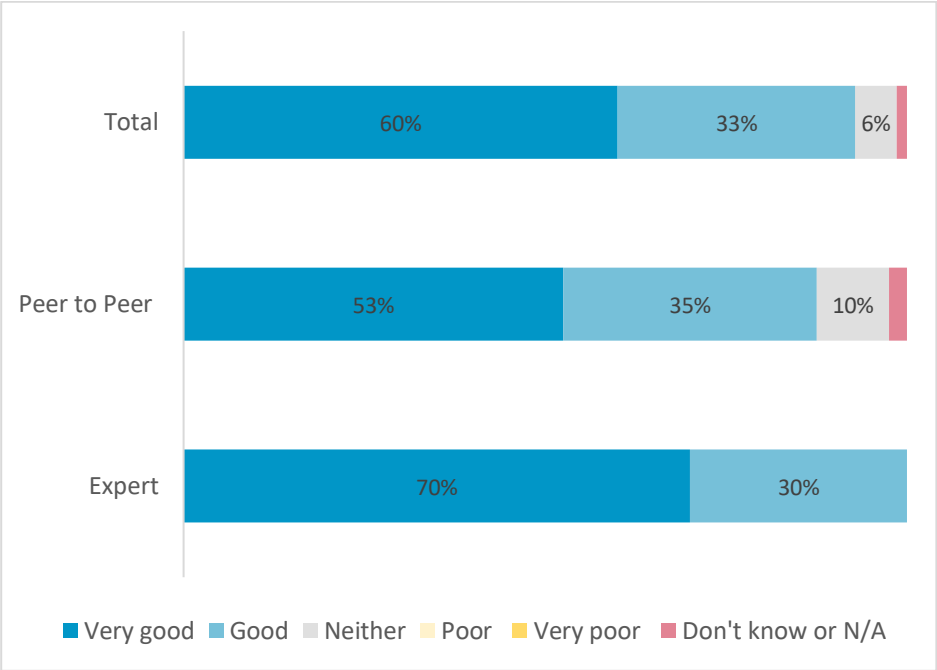
[The Careers Impact System] was really promoted to us as that, you know, 'We want the warts and all because that's how we improve.' And I certainly felt that, I felt supported.

Deputy headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)

Evidence gathered as part of evaluating the pilot suggests that overall, clarity of communications about the Careers Impact System was good, with participating institutions reporting that they understood the aims of the process, what it would entail and what they would gain from it. 93% of the survey respondents rated the clarity of communications about the Careers Impact System review aims and processes as good or very good. Positive feedback was universal amongst survey respondents involved in *expert* reviews.

Figure 2 Clarity of communications about the Careers Impact System aims and processes

Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: 70 (30 expert review and 40 peer-to-peer review participants)



Yet, there was also some evidence suggesting that further refinement of how information about the Careers Impact System is communicated would be helpful.

> *…at first we were perhaps unclear… Until we'd had all of the information in terms of what the structure was and really what the outcomes were, I think we were perhaps a little bit naïve in what it would involve.*
>
> **Headteacher, special school (expert review)**

In terms of the nature of information, where absolute clarity is needed, two aspects emerged as important:

- **The purpose of the Careers Impact System**. There were instances where there was initially some misunderstanding about the purpose of the Careers Impact System amongst the participating schools, special schools and colleges. In some cases, people expected a 'badge' at the end of the process, in others they were expecting to be interrogated about their careers provision or, conversely, were anticipating just some informal sharing of best practice and tips with their peers from other settings. There was also evidence suggesting that some Careers Leaders, particularly those new to their role, found it hard to clearly distinguish the Careers Impact System, in terms of its role and purpose, from parallel quality assurance mechanisms and other relevant frameworks (e.g. Gatsby benchmarks and Compass tools or Quality in Careers Standard) and to be clear about which one of them they should use at different stages as they progress on their journey of developing the quality of their careers provision.

- **The Careers Impact System process in its entirety.** There were also instances when both the participating institutions and the bodies involved in recruiting to the pilot and facilitating reviews (Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts) reported that they only had a vague picture of the 15-week review process, with some prompts from The Careers & Enterprise Company coming unexpected during the later stages of their Careers Impact System review process. Whilst the timely prompts from The Careers & Enterprise Company about the next step or requirement were highly appreciated, there were multiple requests to make an in-depth overview of the entire process, including all instruments, available from the outset, so that those who prefer to plan in detail their own institution's involvement or work with their schools/special schools/colleges, can do so.

In the vast majority of cases, any instances of misunderstanding or lack of clarity were addressed and resolved through further exchanges or conversations between the participating institutions and The Careers & Enterprise Company and/or their trust or Careers Hub, resulting in subsequent clarity referenced in the survey data findings presented above. There were numerous examples highlighting that the expert review teams and peer-to-peer review facilitators (Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts) went to considerable lengths to ensure clarity of understanding of the Careers Impact System and 'sell' its benefits and rationale to prospective participants as well as scaffolding the initial stages of the process. This was an important factor in ensuring that Careers Impact System review experience was positive and valuable to the respective participating institutions.

> *Time is always a huge barrier for Careers Leaders, particularly [when they are also] senior leadership, they've all got teaching commitments, plus overseeing timetabling or behaviour etc. So, initially they were on board, they were favourable to [being involved]. However… if I just sent [the Careers Impact System materials] out to them and said, 'Get on and do it,' I don't think it would have happened. I think ours happened because I specifically explained it, sold them the benefits of it and then said, 'I'm going to come in and I'm going to sit with you, and we will go through the self-evaluation together.'*
>
> **Trust Careers Lead and Careers Impact System peer-to-peer review facilitator**

When we examined how the information about the Careers Impact System was communicated during the pilot, to spot instances where breaks in the communication chain can occur, the following patterns emerged. Unsurprisingly, participants' understanding of the Careers Impact System was clearest from the very beginning of their involvement where they had an opportunity to hear about it from The Careers & Enterprise Company or its trained facilitators and also used the communication materials, such as relevant documents and videos. Initial misunderstandings occurred when people who were not involved in any initial discussions with The Careers & Enterprise Company or their Careers Hub or trust had to pick up their organisation's involvement in the Careers Impact System pilot, following the initial sign up. For example, in one of the participating institutions a decision to take part was made by the principal and then the responsibility for carrying

out the multiple steps that comprise the Careers Impact System process was passed down to other colleagues and finally reached that institution's Careers Leader. The Careers Leader looked at the information and videos that were prepared by The Careers & Enterprise Company but, on their own, without a chance to discuss or ask questions, they were insufficient to give that colleague complete clarity about the process, resulting in occasional frustrations about their Careers Impact System experience. There were also instances where lack of time became the key issue preventing colleagues from fully understanding the Careers Impact System prior to getting involved. This was the case for several Careers Leaders (all involved in peer-to-peer reviews) who were members of their institution's senior leadership team and had multiple responsibilities alongside careers. They were unable to join the relevant training or briefing session and then attempted to grasp the purpose and specifics related to the Careers Impact System process in a matter of minutes, by trying to engage with the materials and videos themselves, typically picking one of them and trying to skim it.

In future, as the number of participating institutions grows within wider roll-out of the Careers Impact System, the level of bespoke briefings for the participating institutions and exchanges with them is likely to diminish. At the same time, the number of institutions where Careers Leaders have limited time to devote to careers amongst their other responsibilities is likely to increase. It will be important to ensure that remote communication materials are sufficient to give people clarity about the Careers Impact System and do so quickly. It might be useful to offer a single resource – brief yet summarising key points, including the benefits and value of the Careers Impact System – from which people could start and then move on to others, if needed and if they have the time to do it, to gather detail about specific features or elements of the process.

The self-evaluation stage and Careers Impact Maturity Model

The Careers Impact Maturity Model is a key element of Careers Impact System, underpinning the entire process. It is also its first stage, during which participating institutions reflect on their provision by assessing it against the Careers Impact Maturity Model.

Schools, special schools and colleagues involved in the pilot were highly positive about the Careers Impact Maturity Model. The vast majority (94%) of the survey respondents agreed that it was clear and easy to understand and 41% strongly agreed.

> *I found it really helpful and useful, I liked the layout… I liked that it was colourful. The language was easy to interpret, which was really good, and on the different sections I was able to give some examples, or where I think we've started or where we could go in the future. I think whenever you*

hear about a self-evaluation form you think it's going to take you forever so I was pleasantly surprised t actually didn't take me that long to do.

Principal, special school (expert review)

There was evidence suggesting that strong and clear connections between the Careers Impact Maturity Model and Gatsby Benchmarks made it easier for schools, special schools and colleges to navigate the former, by building on and deepening their knowledge of the latter.

[When I received the framework] at first I thought, 'Oh my God, this is huge,' but it really didn't take me long. I found the tying in of the Gatsby Benchmarks at the top into the themes made it feel very manageable because it was progressive this way and each of the granular detail was also split out so I could really see where we're going.

Assistant headteacher and Careers leader, secondary school

Self-evaluating against the Careers Impact Maturity Model was consistently described in all the pilot evaluation evidence as manageable and not too burdensome or time-consuming. This was particularly encouraging, not only because of how pressed for time Careers Leaders and their colleagues are, but also because in many cases participating institutions were very thorough in how they approached this stage of the Careers Impact System process. According to our survey, irrespective of the review type, in around three quarters of the institutions involved in the pilot, multiple colleagues were involved in this stage of the Careers Impact System process, typically including the named Careers Leader and (other) members of the senior leadership team, and colleagues involved in delivery of careers in their school, special school or college. In some cases, participating institutions also involved their governors, but their number was small, particularly for peer-to-peer reviews.

In some instances, colleagues in different roles completed the Careers Impact Maturity Model on their own and then got together to discuss it and agree their institution's position against each indicator. In others, they had a meeting to go through it collectively, which for some peer-to-peer reviews also involved their facilitator. Crucially, colleagues commented on the depth of reflection that engaging with the Careers Impact Maturity Model prompted. For many, there were elements in the document that generated a debate, helping participants explore and deepen their understanding of concepts and best practice related to careers.

There was a lot of rich debate. What does a progressive careers learning journey look like? What does it feel like? What do we do? Is that progressive? You know, I think there were those sorts of elements of it.

Vice principal, FE College (expert review)

It was quite a nice reflective exercise to really have a look at, where are we on this journey? To be honest, when we self-assessed, we were quite high up the journey. We had a debate about that. Why do we think we're there, why don't we? I thought that was a valuable part of the pilot.

Curriculum careers lead, FE college (peer-to-peer review)

Participating institutions commented that they could clearly see how the Careers Impact Maturity Model linked to Gatsby Benchmarks, yet they stressed that it offered something very different (from Compass self-assessment as well as the Benchmarks themselves) in terms of enabling implementation of the Benchmarks to support improving their careers provision.

It's tied with Gatsby Benchmarks but structured differently. It picks those bits that don't come through in Gatsby benchmarks

Deputy principal, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)

Importantly, as well as reflecting on best practice related to careers and considering how to strengthen it in their school, special school or college, the Careers Impact Maturity Model prompted participating institutions to have another critical look at how they support different groups of students in their settings, focusing on special needs and socio-economic disadvantage in particular – something that continued during the review meetings.

Why would you not want the best [for your students]? We live in an area where socioeconomic challenges are significant, and if we don't champion that and don't think about how this can make such a difference then no-one else is going to, and we're just failing our communities.

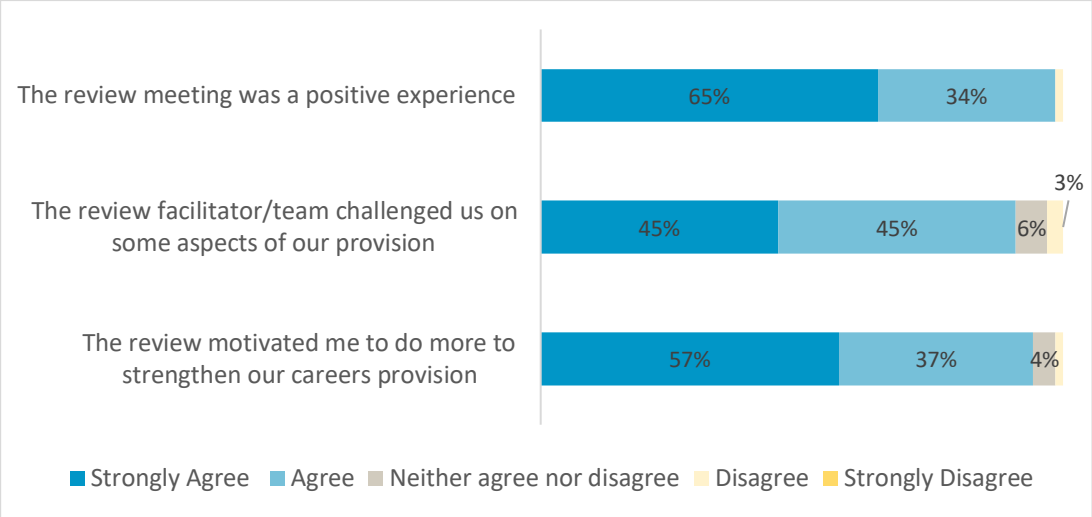
Vice principal, FE College (expert review)

The review meetings

The vast majority (98%) of the survey respondents across both review types agreed that their review meeting as a positive experience (see Figure 3). For expert reviews, three quarters of respondents strongly agreed with the statement.

Figure 3 Pilot institutions' feedback on their Careers Impact System review meetings

Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: 70 (30 expert review and 40 peer-to-peer review participants)



Participating schools, special schools and colleges were very complimentary about their review meetings.

> *I think the process [on the expert review day] was very effective, … very tight. I was there at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day, so that was quite good to hear the feedback. It was nice for [the review team] to spend time with pupils and staff so I think they really got a good holistic view.*
>
> **Headteacher, special school (expert review)**

> *To have time away from school to sit with those key staff, to listen to other people in similar positions in other schools. Yes, absolutely invaluable.*
>
> **Deputy principal, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

> *I've been teaching 27 years, I've been in and out of careers and PSHE quite a bit over that time, but I've never had that thorough a review. Somebody to actually sit down with me and have that process.*
>
> **Assistant principal and Careers Leader, Secondary school (expert review)**

> *I've never had that much time spent sat going through and being challenged in a positive way. [The review team] was brilliant, so supportive. Even when we've had Ofsted and they've asked to go through careers, I've never felt really challenged or an opportunity to really have that deep thinking.*
>
> **Assistant headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (expert review)**

Expert review meetings took a school day, during which all themes of the Careers Impact Maturity Model were explored systematically and different stakeholders got involved. Peer-to-peer reviews tended to be shorter – most commonly around an hour per institution – and there was less time to focus on the provision of each of the participating institutions. In some cases, prior to taking part in Careers Impact System review meetings some stakeholders questioned whether an hour per institution was sufficient and therefore if the length of the sessions dedicated to each institution should be increased. Having completed their review meetings, these colleagues (as well as other peer-to-peer review participants) agreed that the timings worked really well, striking a good balance between keeping the review meetings manageable and being relatively easy to fit in for busy Careers Leaders and other colleagues, whilst also ensuring good levels of depth and strategic thinking. They also commented that dedicating an hour to each institution enabled them to keep their levels of concentration high till the end, so that all participating institutions had similar inputs, as opposed to those going first getting a lot more attention and much better quality of challenge and support. Most felt that lengthening Careers Impact System meetings would simply make them less efficient. Instead, they wanted to see follow up meetings being set up, to pick up any points that had not been covered during the initial Careers Impact System discussion as well as to review activity carried out against the identified actions.

In most cases, Careers Impact System reviews were held as in-person meetings, however some were held virtually where they were geographically quite far away from each other, to minimise demands on colleagues' time. Such virtual reviews were successful, but this was quite heavily dependent on the facilitator's skill to effectively organise, structure and host long virtual meetings, as well as participants' ability to remain disciplined and focused for several hours.

There were other variations in how the peer-to-peer review model was implemented. For example, in a small number of cases participating institutions from the same peer review grouping visited each other. In such cases, the visits commenced with a tour of the setting, illustrating some of the ways in which careers was delivered there, and then there was a Careers Impact System review meeting which only focused on the hosting institution. The process was then repeated during the visit to the other institution involved in the peer-to-peer review, held on a different day. This approach allowed for a more in-depth focus on each setting, compared to the majority of Careers Impact System peer-to-peer reviews but it was also more time-consuming, particularly given that the settings involved in these peer-to-peer reviews chose to involve multiple colleagues involved in careers, at different levels, throughout the process.

Whilst the format of these reviews might have been slightly different, they displayed the key features which were common for the vast majority of Careers Impact System reviews and which have emerged as essential for their success:

- Sufficiently tight and structured to ensure effective use of time yet flexible to enable depth of reflection.
- Rooted in the Careers Impact Maturity Model.
- Offering both challenge and support to the participating institutions, for example by asking them to share their strengths but also any difficulties or areas they were trying to develop.

In the very small number of instances where these features were missing, colleagues left dissatisfied.

> *I felt stressed and pressured to fill the [self-evaluation] form out and I have no idea why because the meeting was very much a case of, 'Okay, …why don't you just tell me about your careers?'. It wasn't clearly agenda'd or linked and some people got significantly greater time to talk about their schools than the other people who were at the end. I don't think it was very well-focused, I don't think it was very well planned, nobody took any minutes… There was a little bit of something sent out afterwards but it wasn't formalised in any way… I mean, there was an opportunity to learn [during the meeting] … and it was lovely to meet people [but] … I just feel that if you want to take me out of school, I'm happy to go out of school, but I have to feel like it was really worthwhile…*
>
> **Assistant headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

Whilst still highly positive, the level of challenge was reported by a slightly lower proportion of people involved in the pilot, particularly those who took part in peer-to-peer reviews, and might be something that needs to be further foregrounded in future roll-out of the Careers Impact System.

> *It was a psychologically safe environment, so you could be really honest. And it was really supportive in the fact that you've got this feedback, and you've got these people giving you ideas, saying, 'Well, you should try this.', or, 'I'll send you this resource.', which was excellent. I think there, maybe, should have been a little bit more challenge. I think because it was so safe, people kind of took your rating largely on what you agreed. They didn't say, 'Well, how do you know that?'*
>
> **Deputy headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

Importantly, very high proportions (94% across the two review types) reported being motivated to further strengthen their careers provision as a result of their Careers Impact System review meeting. For expert reviews, 100% of the participating institutions reported being more motivated by their Careers Impact System meeting, with three quarters of respondents strongly agreeing with the statement.

There were however type-specific strengths in peer-to-peer reviews too. Participating schools, special schools and colleges were able to learn from their peers, who also helped them to critically

examine their careers provision and helped them see new ways of tackling some of the challenges they had been dealing with.

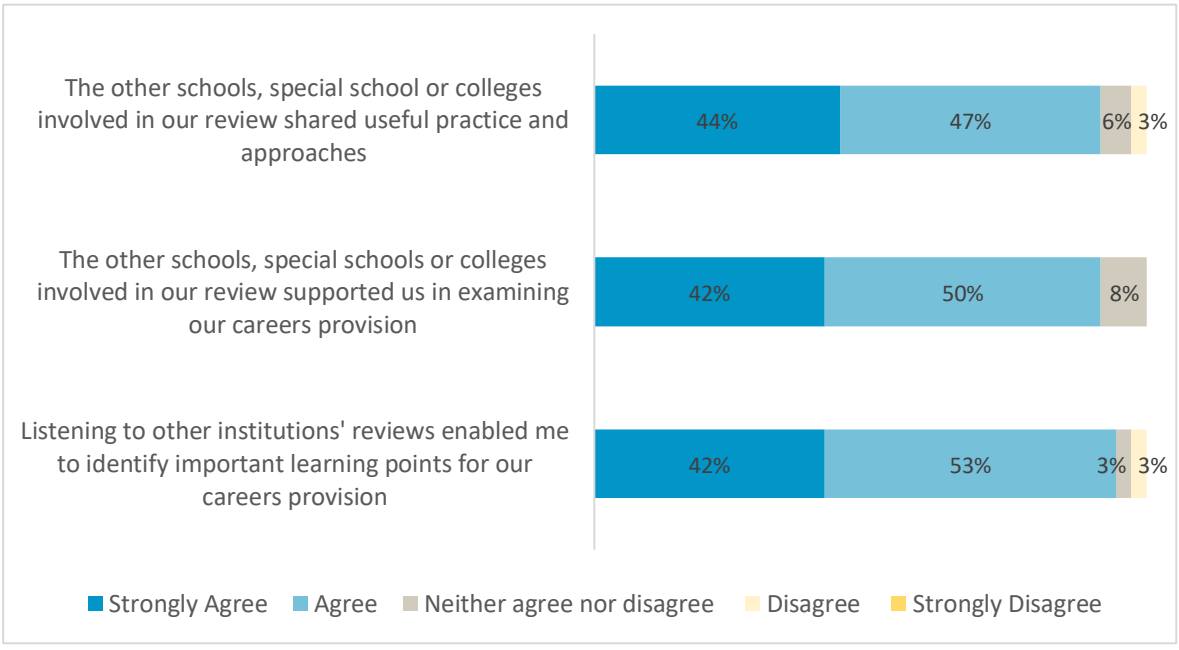
> *It was nice to sit down and actually really reflect on where we are, where we've come from, the things that we're doing really well, things that we could improve. I stole loads of ideas. I was literally scribbling as everybody else was talking, thinking, 'When I get my person in post, that's something that we can do and move things forward.'*
>
> **Assistant headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

> *Actually getting together and doing the peer review, I learned other ways of looking at problems or barriers that we've had. So that was really helpful because you'd hear another school talk through their evaluation, and actually think, 'Ah, I never thought of it like that.'*
>
> **Deputy headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

Overall, more than 90% of institutions involved in peer-to-peer reviews were positive about the value of other institutions' contributions during the review meeting (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Peer institutions' contributions during review meetings

Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: all respondents involved in peer-to-peer reviews (N=40)



Post-meeting reflection and action planning

The post-review staged comprised involved pilot institutions in considering the review findings, action planning and re-evaluation.

A lot of evidence suggested that pilot institutions found their Careers Impact System reports (expert reviews) or summaries of findings (peer-to-peer reviews) really helpful. These included recommendations on development priorities and signposting to resources and best practice.

> *The report itself was very good and it was a good reflection of the day and also lots of advice was given and lots of signposting.*
>
> **Principal, special school (expert review)**

> *I think the action plans, I found those valuable, because coming out of the day with these set actions, it helps you have a plan and come back and plan and think, 'Right, I'm going to try and action some of these actions, even if I can't do them all.'*
>
> **Deputy headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

In some cases, participating institutions viewed their Careers Impact System report or summary as a mechanism for leveraging further support for careers.

> *[The report] consolidated what we'd written down at the end of the day anyway and it's just helpful for me to go back to the acting headteacher, to go to our executive principal.*
>
> **Assistant principal and Careers Leader, Secondary school (expert review)**

> *[It enabled me] to go [to my head] and say, 'Well, to make [our careers provision] really, really high quality, … there are some things that we need to add in to it.' It almost like a baseline now [and a direction] of where we want to.*
>
> **Assistant headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

Interestingly, it was during the post-review meeting stage, specifically action-planning, that involvement of senior leadership in the institutions involved in peer-to-peer reviews, which was generally lower for that type of Careers Impact System compared to expert reviews, was the highest of the entire Careers Impact System process.

Senior leader involvement was generally lower in peer-to-peer institutions than in those having expert reviews. Yet, senior leaders from schools, special schools and colleges involved in peer-to-peer reviews became more involved during the post-review meeting stage. It was the action-planning stage of the Careers Impact System process when senior leader involvement was the highest.

In some instances, institutions involved in expert reviews in particular, participants wanted to use their Careers Impact System report to develop better understanding of careers and related institutional priorities amongst wider staff in their settings. With this in mind, they commented that

a separate summary, aimed at less specialist colleagues and ideally in a designed format, would be beneficial.

Comments about the final element of the Careers Impact System process – re-evaluation – were mixed. For some, this was a useful opportunity to adjust their judgements against the Careers Impact Maturity Model, to ensure they are more accurate and balanced, following their review meeting and subsequent internal discussions and reflections with colleagues. For others, the experience was somewhat frustrating, as they noted virtually no change since their initial self-assessment exercise. Some felt that this created a risk of undermining the ethos and value of the Careers Impact System and turn it into yet another tick-box exercise, rather than a process to genuinely show progress and improvement. Stakeholders noted that it is important to treat recording progress against the Careers Impact Maturity Model seriously, recognising that positive movement in many dimensions of the Careers Impact Maturity Model would require considerable amounts of time.

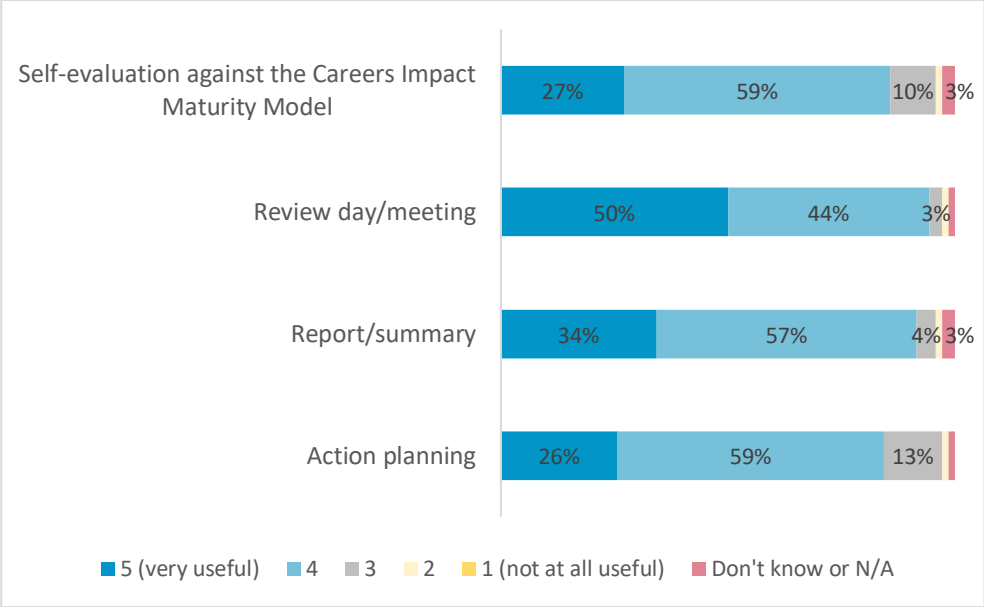
The value of different elements and of the entire Careers Impact System process

To sum up, participating institutions were highly positive about the Careers Impact System process, highlighting that each of its elements was valuable and building on the previous stage of the process.

When asked to rate the extent to which different elements of their Careers Impact System review were useful to them and their institution, more than 90% of participants chose 4 or above on a 5-point scale (where 5 is ‘very useful’ and 1 ‘not at all useful’) for each of the aspects being assessed, with the exception of Action planning where 85% of people opted for 4 and above. The average scores for the different elements ranged between 4.1 (Self-evaluation and Careers Impact System report) and 4.4 (Careers Impact System review meeting).

Figure 5 How useful were different elements of the Careers Impact System in helping you clearly determine the state of your careers provision and identify development priorities and how to tackle them?

Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: 70 (30 expert review and 40 peer-to-peer review participants)



Whilst all key elements of the Careers Impact System process were highlighted as useful by the schools, special schools and colleges involved in the pilot, many of them stressed the particular value of their review meeting/day. They felt that it made the process and the assessment of their own provision more objective and offered them important insight and new perspectives.

> *I always think when you self-evaluate, you have a tendency to either be too generous or too harsh on yourself. And I think that's where the peer-to-peer came in because then we shared everybody else's evaluations, we talked through why we put ourselves in that column on the grid. And sometimes, people say, 'Actually, we think you've been a bit too harsh there, and you should have been in this one.'*
>
> **Deputy headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

Questioning from the Careers Impact System review team or peers from other settings emerged as a powerful tool for deepening reflection and bringing criticality into the process.

> *[One of the members of the review team] was particularly skilled in her questioning technique that she was using about unpicking, not just, , what we were doing, but why we were doing it and what were our motivations. And I think that was probably one of the most beneficial aspects of it, about getting us to think about it.*
>
> **Assistant principal and Careers Leader, Secondary school (expert review)**

Finally, a strong focus on young people's outcomes, particularly those who are disadvantaged or experiencing barriers, was a prominent part of Careers Impact System review meetings, both as a

result of it being central to the Careers Impact Maturity Model and because of all participating stakeholders' attention to it. This led to reinvigorating participating colleagues' commitment to ensuring their students are well prepared for their future and entering the world of work.

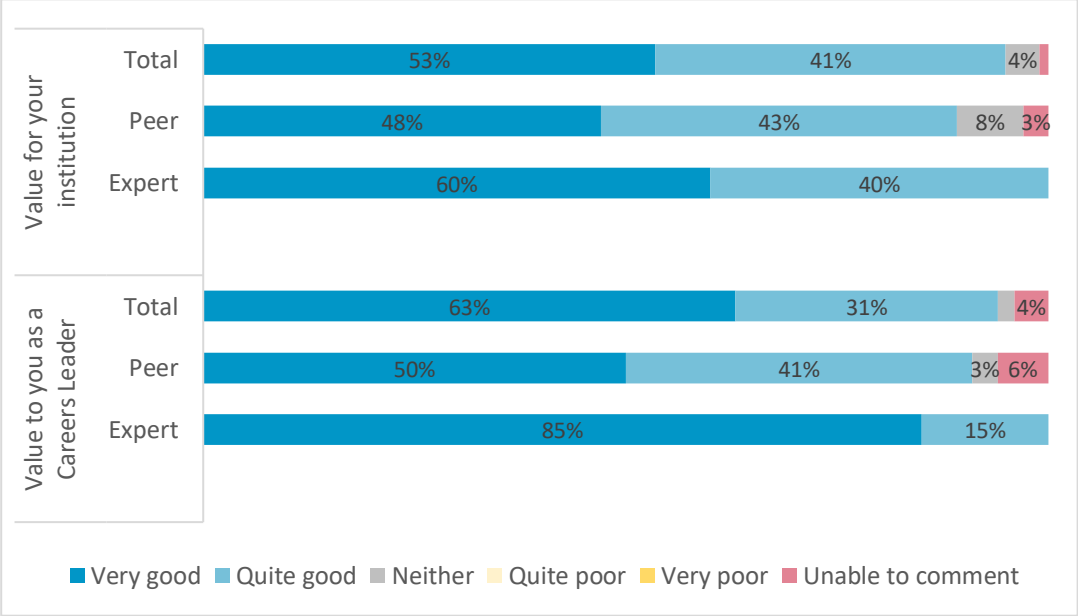
> *It makes you self-reflect, it makes sure that you know then what you need to do to move forward in terms of, for us for example we'll be going to Career Mark this year, so this was really clearly broken down to say, 'Have we got all these elements? What are we missing? What do we need to form as our action plan to make sure our students have the best opportunities and best experiences?*
>
> **Principal, secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

Summative judgements of perceived value of the Careers Impact System

As well as looking at the individual elements of the Careers Impact System, we asked participating institutions to gauge the overall value of the process to institutions and their Careers Leaders. Both were rated as high by 94% of respondents.

Figure 6 How would you rate the value of the Careers Impact System

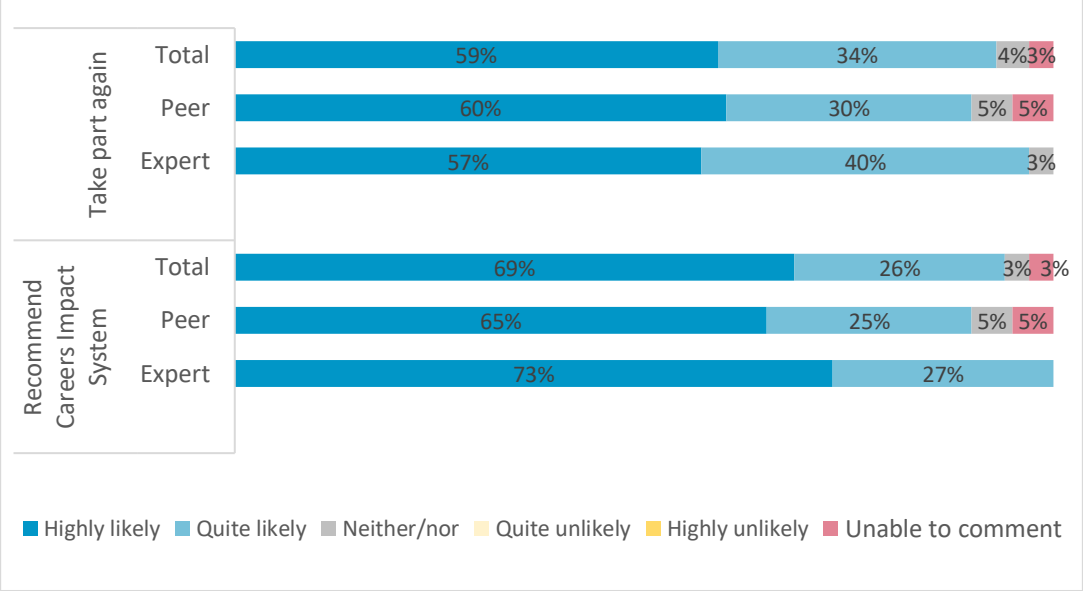
Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: 70 (30 expert review and 40 peer-to-peer review participants)



We also asked participating institutions if they would consider taking part in the process again (or continue using the Careers Impact System approach for their ongoing development) and would recommend it to others. Again, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 93% saying they would get involved in a Careers Impact System review again and 95% stating that they would recommend it to other schools, special schools and colleges.

Figure 7 Likelihood to take part again and to recommend Careers Impact System to others

Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: 70 (30 expert review and 40 peer-to-peer review participants)



3 CAREERS IMPACT SYSTEM: OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The theory of change and evaluation framework developed for the pilot identifies the following potential impacts for participating institutions' involvement in the Careers Impact System. The evaluation gathered evidence against each of these impacts:

- Improved understanding of best practice related to careers in the school, special school or college.
- Recognition of the strengths of the institution's careers provision.
- Actions planned in relation to one or more dimensions constituting best practice in careers.
- Greater SLT engagement in and understanding of careers.
- More informed, thought-through Compass judgments.
- Learning, professional development and growth of the participating Careers Leaders and (for peer-to-peer review only) stronger Careers Leader networks and sharing of best practice.

Improved understanding of careers best practice

Improved understanding of best practice – for example related to ensuring a careers programme is progressive, underpinned by evidence and aligned with school/special school or college improvement activities – emerged as one of the key outcomes for the pilot. It was particularly visible for, but not limited to, those colleagues in the participating institutions who were directly involved in the Careers Impact System process. 83% of our survey respondents stated that the Careers Impact System helped them in this area.

There were several interconnected areas where participating schools, special schools and colleges deepened their understanding and broadened their knowledge as they engaged in the Careers Impact System Pilot. These included:

- Practices related to, and rationale behind, specific Gatsby Benchmarks
- Importance of and approaches for ensuring careers provision is progressive, embedded and linked to school/special school and college improvement

- Ways of strengthening focus on learner outcomes in careers provision.

  The whole [review meeting] itself was just clarity for me from the get-go. [Not only did we learn a lot during the review meeting, the advice that was given to us means that myself and my careers lead can now go off and do some further knowledge enhancing from the careers point of view…The report has been really helpful too and we've shared that with our SLT. We're going to start unpicking the advice that we were given and add that to our school improvement plan.

  Principal, special school (expert review)

During in-depth interviews, Careers Impact System Pilot participants gave numerous examples of 'lightbulb moments' that they or others had during their review meetings. These typically resulted from looking at familiar evidence from a different point of view, or bringing multiple perspectives into consideration, all helping to achieve greater clarity of understanding and identify implications and actions.

> *It was definitely a learning process…I did consolidate a lot of what I understood anyway, but actually getting together and doing the peer review, I learned other ways of looking at problems or barriers that we've had. So that was really helpful because you'd hear another school talk through their evaluation, and actually think, 'Ah, I never thought of it like that.'*
>
> **Deputy principal and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

Importantly, participating institutions' learning during Careers Impact System reviews was not simply theoretical. It enabled them to spot where there were gaps in their provision, compared to best practice, and how to tackle those gaps. As a result, improved understanding of best practice was directly linked to actions that were identified and in some cases already implemented as part of the Careers Impact System Pilot, which we will outline later in this section of the report.

> *At the moment what happens is, it's an event here, an event there… It needs to be more of a strategic, streamlined thing that runs as a thread throughout the school that's a part of the school's fabric rather than a bolt-on. That's what needs to happen, and [the Careers Impact System] made me think of it like that. That's what we'll now be working on.*
>
> **Curriculum Careers Lead, FE college (peer-to-peer review)**

Several sources of expertise, brought to bear through the Careers Impact System approach, made these learnings and developments of knowledge and understanding possible. Of these, the Careers Impact Maturity Model was a constant and consistent source of expertise across all review types; it acted as a tool, reflecting not only best careers practice but also the Careers Impact System principles, some of which offered solutions for embedding it that had not been previously considered by schools, special schools and colleges.

Alongside that, there was expertise and passion about careers and improving learner outcomes, brought to the process by the people involved in it – participating institutions and their peers, The Careers & Enterprise Company's expert review teams and peer-to-peer review facilitators. Several participating colleagues stressed that for Careers Impact System review *meetings* to be as worthwhile as they had been during the pilot, they need to bring together people with specialist or diverse expertise. This human element of the Careers Impact System process will need to be an ongoing priority during wider roll-out of the Careers Impact System, through for example grouping participants and election and training of review teams and facilitators, as this is an area where variation in quality is highly likely and this would lead to diminishing the impact of the process.

Recognition of the strengths of the institution's careers provision

This was one of the most wide-spread and secure outcomes of the Careers Impact System Pilot. According to our survey, 84% of participants stated that the Careers Impact System was helpful in enabling them to recognise the strengths of their careers provision. There were multiple dimensions where this was important.

First of all, this enabled colleagues to see what they can focus on less in their development work, ensuring that the resource that they have is directed to the aspects of their careers provision that are less well developed. It also indicated what they can build on and use as levers and drivers in their development work. External and often public (in front of colleagues, including senior leaders) recognition of the strengths of their setting's careers provision was also important for boosting confidence of careers leaders, some of whom were very self-critical and needed reassurance.

It also created foundations for carrying out the Careers Impact System process, by ensuring reviews were framed positively and were well-balanced throughout the entire process, including when identifying gaps and development priorities.

> *[The Careers Impact System] was good because it pulled out your strengths so you're thinking, 'Yes, they've recognised all of this that we're doing.' But they also hit the nail on the head with what they were saying in there in terms of what we needed to work on.*
>
> **Assistant principal and Careers Leader, Secondary school (expert review)**

The pilot also surfaced some examples of where identification of strengths of their institution's careers programme was viewed in much broader context, for example when considering multi-academy trust provision and what individual settings can bring to the table to strengthen it, or when thinking about young people's learning journey beyond their time in one institution.

[We found that the Careers Impact System] allows you to keep thinking [about] what's the best possible way to be able to ensure that our learners are better equipped, and that continuation. They get really good stuff in high schools, but then we [as a college] can add to that because we've got the employers, we've got the guest speakers, we've got all of things that we can wrap around it. We can give them curriculum that directs them straight into the career pathway. So, it's making sure that that continuity stays with them... [We want to] oversee the learner from Year 9 and Year 10, right the way through the recruitment processes, right the way through to their time in college, the pastoral support that they're given, the careers development, the destinations, the progression.

Head of 14-19 and Careers Leader, FE college (peer-to-peer review)

Foregrounding and strengthening this further, by encouraging schools, special schools and colleges to adopt an outward-facing as well as inward-facing perspective during their review of own careers provision is an important priority for the wider roll-out of the Careers Impact System as it has the potential to positively affect the quality of careers provision and learner experiences and outcomes at system level.

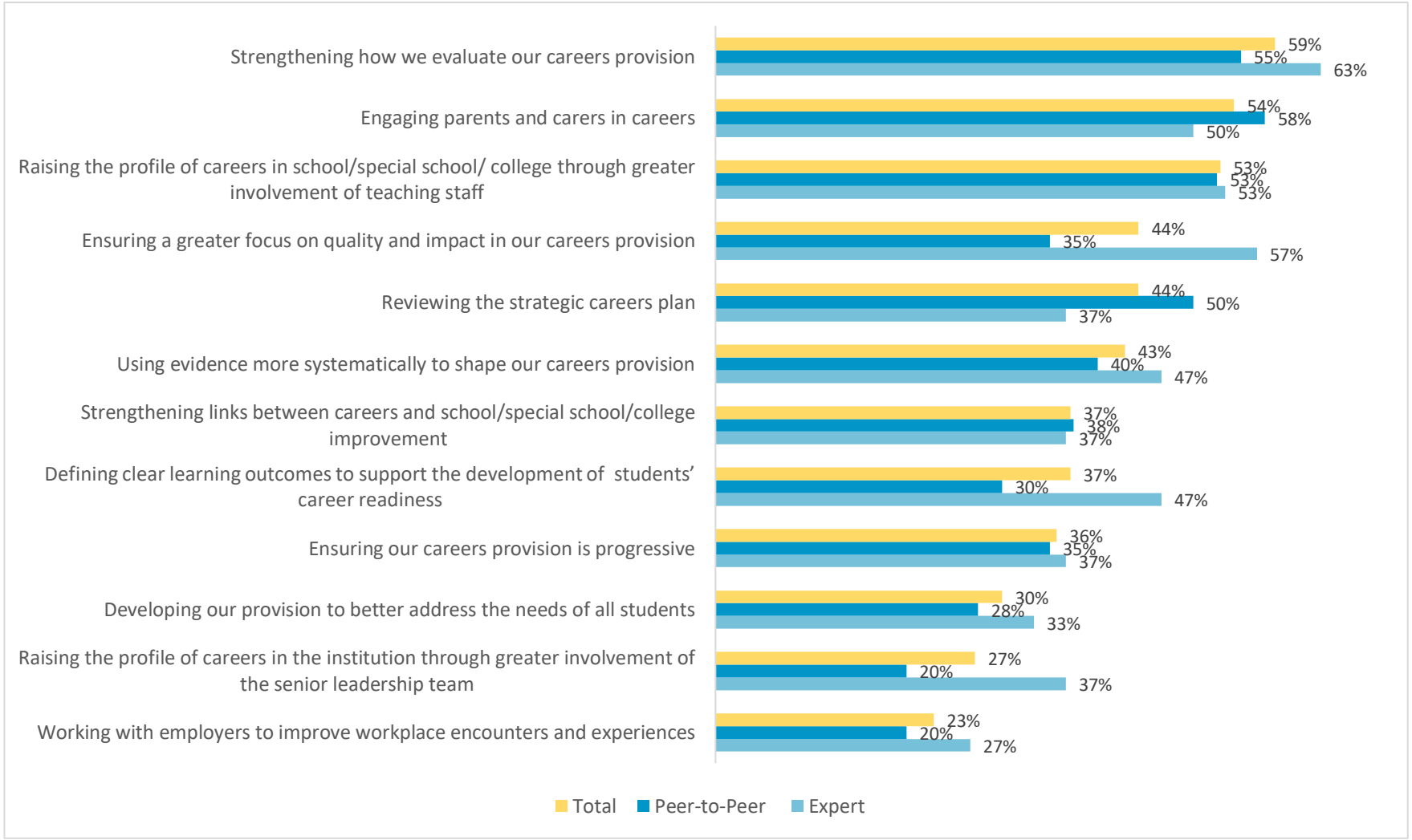
Actions planned in relation to best practice in careers

According to our survey, enabling them to plan developments of their careers provision, stemming from their improved understanding of best practice related to careers, was an area where participating institutions found the Careers Impact System most helpful. 89% of respondents highlighted the value of the Careers Impact System in helping them achieve this outcome.

This also emerged as the strongest outcome for the participating institutions: when reflecting on the *changes they implemented in the final stages or since completing their Careers Impact System review*, the majority of them (79%) said that they had identified actions which would strengthen their provision and two thirds of the participating institutions (66%) said they had started implementing these changes. The latter is highly impressive, considering the pressure that many educational institutions and their careers teams are under during the summer term, and given that some of the participating schools, special schools and colleagues were still in the final stages of their 15-week review window or just completed the process. Importantly, it indicates that for the majority of institutions their involvement in the Careers Impact System Pilot will lead to tangible changes, rather than being limited to discussions and ideas.

Figure 8 What aspects of your careers provision did you identify as your main development priorities as a result of the Careers Impact System Pilot

Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: 70 (30 expert review and 40 peer-to-peer review participants)



Across all sources of evidence we gathered, strengthening their approaches to evaluating their careers provision and using evidence to monitor its effectiveness and to shape up its development, consistently emerged as one of the key development priorities that schools, special schools and colleges taking part in the pilot, identified for themselves as a result of their involvement in the Careers Impact System.

> *We need to be much stronger on evaluating what we've done and then taking that result into improving what we do.*
>
> **Careers Leader, FE college (expert review)**

Focus on these priorities emerged particularly strongly for the institutions involved in expert reviews (see Figure 8). Institutions involved in expert reviews also were a lot more likely to focus on ensuring that in their future work they clearly define learning outcomes for careers, to use that for both provision development and evaluation purposes. A number of institutions commented that prior to their engagement with the Careers Impact System, they have not considered their students' career readiness as something that should guide their provision development and be an indicator of its success and effectiveness.

> *The review highlighted the need [for us] to link the outcomes for students to the overall career plan.*
>
> **Assistant headteacher and Careers leader, Secondary school (expert review)**

In one school, the review team asked about the leaver' profile, which the school at that point had never heard of. The team explained the purpose of the profile and the school set to work.

> *We're going to put something together so that the students can write down what they want to leave with. And we're going to do the same with parents and ask them what they want their children to leave with. That would then give us a really good indicator of we should be aiming for and also [something to measure our work against]. That's been the most powerful thing that I've taken away from the review.*
>
> **Principal, special school (expert review)**

In comparison, clearly defining learning outcomes for careers was less visible as a development priority within peer-to-peer reviews. This might be an area where further guidance from the Careers & Enterprise Company could be useful, communicating its importance and how it can be achieved.

Relatively large proportions of institutions taking part in the Careers Impact System pilot, colleges in particular, decided to focus on improving their approaches for engaging parents and carers in careers as their development priority.

We're looking at our parental engagement and how that goes across the student journey, and at what key points would be best to drop that in. Particularly when there are challenges around the different personas of parents.

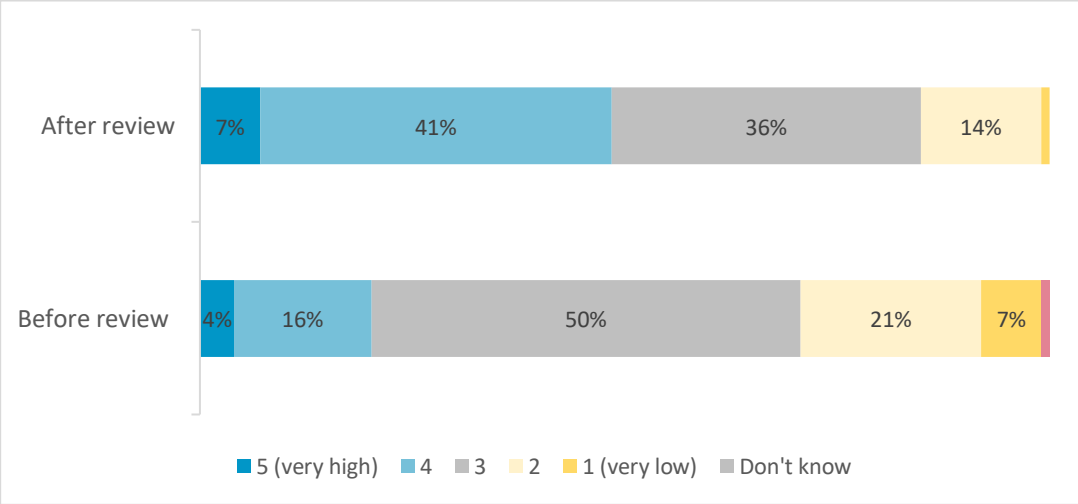
Vice principal, FE College (expert review)

Raising the profile of careers through greater involvement of staff

Increasing involvement of teaching staff in careers was another common priority identified by schools, special schools and colleges as a result their participation in the Careers Impact System pilot. Impressively, in some institutions, quick wins were secured during the review process itself and straight after it was completed. For example, before involvement in the Careers Impact System Pilot, 20% of survey respondents noted that teaching staff in their institutions gave high priority to careers, compared with 48% afterwards.

Figure 9 Priority given to careers by teaching staff

Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: 70 (30 expert review and 40 peer-to-peer review participants)



During the interviews, participating institutions, mainstream secondary schools in particular, spoke about distributing the responsibility for careers to curriculum teams, as a way of ensuring that careers provision was more embedded and sustainable in their institutions and strengthening links between curriculum learning and careers.

Each faculty has a careers champion now, a leader [for] careers. And then we have a scale of bronze, silver, gold, platinum, for their careers fit within that curriculum. So, for example, your bronze might be that you've got good displays on careers. [...] And dedicated lessons around future careers. And then it builds up and up and up, to include things like speakers to come in, trips to happen, all those things. So, that's probably been the biggest systemic change across the school.

Deputy principal, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)

The realisation that it's everybody's responsibility… So me … as careers lead isn't necessarily going to do those things for your department, but those are things that you should be doing. All careers within your department, you're leading, you're planning, you're managing, and strategically thinking about where those opportunities might fall in.

Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)

Challenges around ensuring actions get implemented

There was a lot of evidence indicating that not only were priorities for further development of careers identified as part of the Careers Impact System, with concrete actions noted, but these were being implemented pretty much straight away. Yet, there were also instances where the latter was challenging and there was a risk that any further development and impact could be stalled, as other aspects of the school, special schools and colleges' life and work needed attention.

We took the report back to the governors and presented the results… and everyone nodded and agreed. Nothing much has, then, happened since then, to be honest. Partly, possibly because … everyone got very excited for the day itself and then [that energy is hard to sustain].

Careers Leader, FE college (expert review)

Some participating Careers Leaders, particularly when they were not members of their institution's senior leadership, were concerned about losing momentum after the review meeting/day and wanted the model to change to be more long term, so that follow up involving external stakeholders (peers from other institutions, or Careers Impact System review teams or facilitators) was part of its processes, thus ensuring sustained prioritisation and attention to actions that needed to be implemented within their setting. In any future roll-out of the Careers Impact System, it will be important to ensure that the long-term nature of the model and the specific mechanisms for achieving this are clear, so that it could become a blueprint for Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts' ongoing work with their member schools, special schools and colleges on assuring and raising the quality of careers provision. The Careers & Enterprise Company should also continue working on identifying effective ways of involving senior leaders in careers where such involvement is currently minimal and sustaining and strengthening such involvement where it already exists.

Greater SLT engagement in and understanding of careers

For the purposes of the Careers Impact System Pilot evaluation, two dimensions emerged as important when considering SLT engagement in careers:

- The specifics of the Careers Leader role in each participating school, special school and college, including in relation to their senior leadership team (SLT)

- Distinguishing between involvement in the Careers Impact System activities and processes and in careers more generally.

With regards to the specifics of the Careers Leader role across the participating institutions and their interfaces or overlaps with senior leadership, there was a great diversity of practice. There were instances where the Headteacher of the school or special school was the named Careers Leader. At the other end of the spectrum there were examples where the role of the Careers Leader was held by a careers advisor, with no leadership responsibilities, and in some cases even their line manager was not a member of the senior leadership team. There were also pilot institutions with full-time Careers Leader posts, which occupied a unique place in that setting's organisational structure, typically not being part of senior leadership but often with clear and strong links to it. Most often, however, Careers Leaders were Assistant Headteachers and – less often – Deputy Headteachers (or equivalent) in their institution, and as such combined careers and senior leadership responsibilities within their role. Some of them had colleagues in their team who were responsible for operational aspects of their institution's careers provision. Others performed both strategic and operational aspects of the role.

> *In every school in our trust, what we've got is the strategic [careers] leads are all members of the senior team, and they are at least assistant principal level. So we've always got that senior team involvement.*
>
> **Multi-Academy Trust Careers Lead**

In this context, it is difficult to provide a simple measure, when trying to gauge the level of impact of the Careers Impact System on senior leaders' engagement in careers: in many instances such engagement was present prior to those institutions' involvement in the Careers Impact System Pilot. We therefore considered several aspects as part of the evaluation:

- First of all, we examined whether members of the participating institutions' SLT were involved in the Careers Impact System process at all. This included Careers Leaders themselves where they were part of the SLT
- Secondly, we looked at whether more than one member of the participating institutions' SLT was involved in the Careers Impact System activities
- Finally, we explored evidence beyond the Careers Impact System process per se, to identify whether there was any early evidence of longer term changes related to SLT involvement in careers.

Encouragingly, the number of institutions involved in the pilot where there was no SLT involvement, or it was minimal, was exceptionally small (less than five% of all schools, special schools and colleges). This should be viewed as an important achievement for the Careers Impact System,

particularly for peer-to-peer reviews where ensuring SLT participation is considerably harder. It is important to note however that in most instances, education leaders, headteachers or principals in particular, got involved only at one or two points during the Careers Impact System process, whilst in others they were involved throughout.

Perhaps even more impressively, in three quarters of peer-to-peer reviews and in all expert reviews at least two members of SLT were involved at one or multiple points of the Careers Impact System process. Most commonly, this was the Careers Leader (assistant or deputy headteacher) and the headteacher or principal.

> *It was great because it's been supported not just from the headteacher but the executive principal, the curriculum, the trust. I think it's just thrown spotlights on careers which is what we're trying to do.*
>
> **Assistant headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (expert review)**

There were some obvious reasons why SLT involvement in the Careers Impact System process was important: this helped raise the profile of careers within the institution and made implementation of any development priorities, particularly when they were at the level of the entire institution, much more achievable. But there were also other important reasons to involve education leaders in the Careers Impact System, ideally in addition to Careers Leaders, even where the latter were part of the SLT.

Firstly, from the assurance of careers point of view, involving multiple senior leaders (as well as governors), each responsible for examining their careers provision from different perspectives, makes any internal reviews (done by the setting itself, before involving others) as strong as they can be. Secondly, making connections between careers and school, special school or college improvement was much easier for education leaders, headteachers and principals in particular, compared to others on the senior leadership team. Their involvement tended to change the dynamic from simply strengthening careers to it becoming a vehicle and driver for institutional improvement and achieving their school, special school or college's strategic priorities. They also tended to suggest more embedded and integrated solutions to any challenges that surfaced during Careers Impact System review discussions.

> *I think you need to have senior leaders involved [in the Careers Impact System review activities]. I see so many things that the Careers Lead is doing and it doesn't inform school improvement. [Me being involved ensures that we do that]. I guess that's just the way that I work. Everything has to be so embedded, otherwise it's just a bolt-on and it's not sustainable. And I think in order for [the Careers Impact System] to be sustainable, the value of it has to be about driving whole-school improvement, not just this small area. I would recommend that somehow that's sold to the school leaders in these circumstances.*
>
> **Headteacher, special school (expert review)**

During the pilot, there were a number of instances where substantial positive changes were visible with regards to senior leaders' involvement in careers and their understanding of related best practice, almost all of them achieved during expert Careers Impact System reviews.

Another important dimension where involving a second member of the senior leadership team, not necessarily the headteacher, led to greater impact of the Careers Impact System, was keeping a really tight focus on disadvantaged groups of students throughout the process. To a considerable extent, this was achieved through the Careers Impact Maturity Model, but having a person whose main priority is to champion students who are disadvantaged because of their socio-economic background, special needs or other circumstances (e.g. young people in care) and not be 'distracted' by other priorities, present during strategic discussions about careers made it possible to achieve even greater impact. Whilst there were some strong examples of this during the pilot, this was by no means universal and presents a potential development opportunity for the Careers Impact System during its wider roll-out.

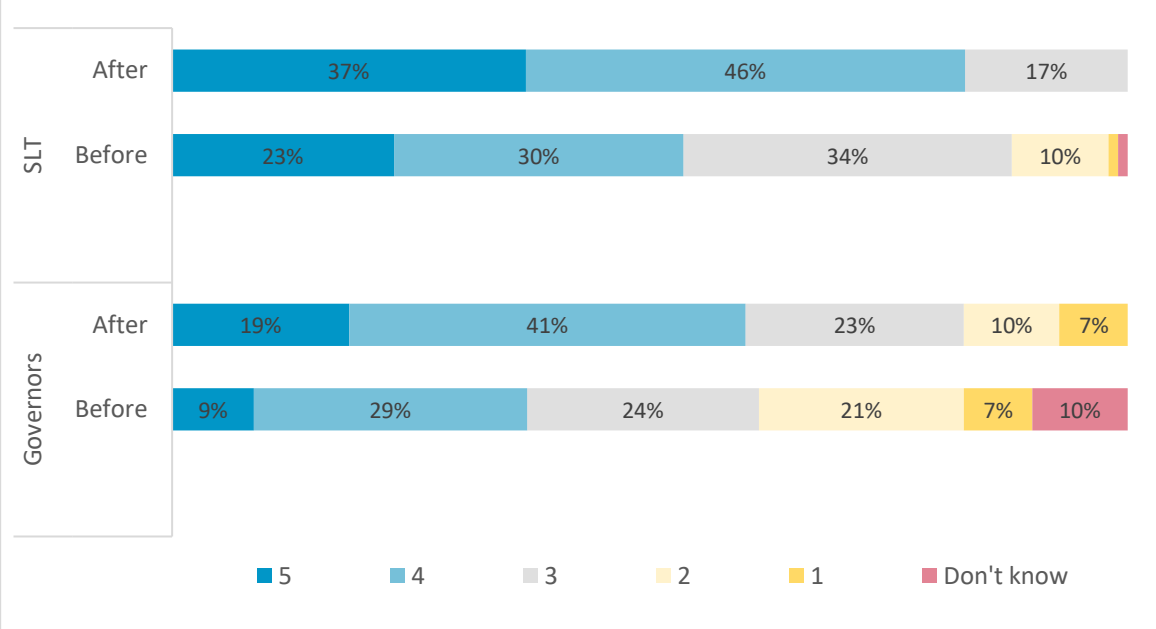
> *I asked them to try and bring in as many key players as they felt they could get together and they thought would be worthwhile. So I suggested the principals must also attend the meeting, that it would be useful to have people like the special educational needs coordinator [and their Pupil Premium lead]. That they might want to bring in a governor, or they might want to bring in their academy managers because they oversee a lot of the organisation of the schools and are very good at things like data, and transition data, and things like that… We did mostly have principals and careers leaders in the meeting. We didn't have any special educational coordinators in there which was disappointing. I think they don't yet understand that there should be a wonderful link between special educational needs and career [but this is something we can work on].*
>
> **Multi-Academy Trust Careers Lead**

As well as evidence of SLT involvement in the Careers Impact System process, there was also evidence of longer term changes as a result of the pilot.

After their involvement in the Careers Impact System Pilot, 83% of respondents stated that their SLT gave high priority to careers, compared to 53% prior to that. There was a similar positive change with regards to governors. Before involvement in the Careers Impact System Pilot, 38% of survey respondents noted that governors in their institutions gave high priority to careers, compared with 60% afterwards. Whilst still relatively low, there were multiple examples of important positive changes around making governors more involved in careers, from some pilot institutions identifying a link governor for careers as part of their post-review Careers Impact System development activities to making sure that their involvement is more hands-on and really supports the Careers Leader in their role.

Figure 10 Priority given to careers by senior leadership teams (SLT) and governors

Source: survey of participating institutions. Base: 70 (30 expert review and 40 peer-to-peer review participants)



When asked specifically about the connections between the positive changes and their involvement in the pilot, two thirds of the survey respondents (66%) explicitly stated that the Careers Impact System helped raise priority given to careers at SLT level, with one in five respondents highlighting that the Careers Impact System's influence was considerable. Just over half of respondents (52%) noticed similar impact on governor involvement in careers.

An even larger proportion of respondents (almost three quarters, 72%) felt that the Careers Impact System helped establish stronger links between careers and school improvement. This was as a result of not only involving more colleagues in senior leadership positions in careers but also a more strategic approach adopted by the Careers Leaders involved in the process.

More informed, thought-through Compass judgments

Over half of the survey respondents (54%) stated that the Careers Impact System helped them ensure their institution's Compass/Compass+ self-assessments against the Gatsby Benchmarks judgements were as accurate as possible. Around a third of all participants reported reviewing their Gatsby Benchmark judgements as part of the actions or changes they implemented in the final stages or straight after their Careers Impact System process. Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts, supporting schools, special schools and colleges with their Compass/Compass+ self-assessments against the Gatsby Benchmarks submissions, also noted positive changes.

> *I'd say the main thing that has changed has been our Compass+ usage. We've had a big push on that. I don't know about individual benchmark scores but what I will say is [the Careers Impact*

System] was a good forum in order to just challenge one another. Just to say, 'Okay. Well, why are you 100% at that? Because this is what we do and we wouldn't necessarily make ourselves at 100%.' And that was quite nice, a bit of movement either way.

Multi-Academy Trust Careers Lead

[We have done their latest Compass assessment submissions with a couple of schools from this specific peer-to-peer review grouping] and I think they started thinking more whole school, they are thinking broader.

Peer-to-peer review facilitator, Enterprise Coordinator, Careers Hub

Whilst important achievements in their own right, it would be incorrect to limit the impact of the Careers Impact System in this area to just these positive changes.

The Careers Impact System enabled participating schools, special schools and colleges to examine and develop their understanding of the Gatsby Benchmarks, which are at the core of Compass tools, in much greater depth than they had been able to do previously.

- It developed their understanding of the rationale behind and provided them with examples of best practice related to specific Benchmarks and their entire set

  [The Careers Impact System] gives you more of a rounded understanding [of the Benchmarks]… Going through the process was useful because it picks those bits that don't necessarily come through in Compass Plus. They don't come through via just looking at the Gatsby benchmarks.

  Deputy principal, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)

- It prompted them to look at the Benchmarks through a very different lens, questioning their existing practice

  I suppose for me it was looking at the Benchmarks through a different lens, because I think we could get stuck in the how does that work in the Benchmark? Well, naturally it's looking across it and seeing actually how was it mapped around those students. I found it quite useful, a different perspective... It made you really think about… those benchmarks, 'Were there other things that we needed to think about, or were we missing it completely?'

  Vice Principal, FE College (expert review)

- It enabled participating institutions to identify development priorities and ways to continue improving their provision

  [The Careers Impact System] really did feed into our action plan [related to the Gatsby Benchmarks], so when myself and [Careers Leader] have our line management meetings and we

talk about where we're moving forward, that will form part of our meeting in terms of, 'Where are we at? Here's the benchmark, how are we going to move forward? What are we going to do?'

Principal, secondary school (peer-to-peer review)

[The Careers Impact Maturity Model] helps me see a progressive journey through what I'm trying to do. So, suddenly the objectives, the minutia, the granular detail under those Gatsby Benchmarks is there. The granular detail that [the Careers Impact Maturity Model] gives me means that where normally I have an action plan which I've set up and have done that every year for the last 4 years, I suddenly now have precision about the bits that are not quite right and the foci about where I go next.

Assistant headteacher and Careers Leader, secondary school

The latter – clarity about development priorities and what to work on next – was particularly important for those institutions that had achieved all eight Benchmarks and needed something further to give them strategic direction.

When we had our sign-up and [were looking at] the Gatsby Benchmarks with our careers lead, I said, what I'm looking for now is 'What's next? What's going to come now and test us?' Not in a negative way, but in a positive way, because when you're tested and you look at things, it inspires you to move things forward. [From our Careers Impact System review], we've picked up some gaps that we now have put to the top of our priority and we're working on those already.

Head of 14-19 and Careers Leader, FE college (peer-to-peer review)

Almost unanimously, participating institutions commented that the Careers Impact System helped them be more strategic when looking at the Gatsby Benchmarks and make better use of Compass tools, be more critical on what they do and focus on improvement.

I'm used to Gatsby Benchmarks but [the Careers Impact System] was far more detailed and really got you to think about that strategic level. We know we do a lot of things, but actually it was forcing me to challenge that and think, 'Yes, we do them but is it a bit ad hoc?' And that phrase 'ad hoc' coming in there, it actually made you think, 'Yes, that's us and we need to really think about how we're going to move this up to those higher levels.' And it gave you something to work towards as well. I think with the Compass tool to measure [against] the Gatsby Benchmarks, it's very much, sort of, tick box a bit, and we can tick a lot of boxes but is that strategic? Is it really embedded absolutely everywhere? And that's the next step we just want. And I want every member of staff to realise that it's their responsibility, careers. Like safeguarding.

Assistant headteacher and Careers Leader, Secondary school (expert review)

Whilst enabling them to be more strategic, the Careers Impact System also gave participating institutions a more granular view of their provision and its assessment against the Gatsby Benchmarks (through the use of Compass tools), a view that was tightly focused on learner outcomes and on disadvantaged groups in particular.

When you do your review on Compass, it's a very overarching statement... The Careers Impact [System] takes you down to that little bit more granular level, because it's asking you specifics, about your deliverables... It's asking you things like, 'How do you manage your learners who are looked after learners, what's a careers provision looking like for them?'. So when we were going through that, that's something we did [pick up] and we since did quite a bit of work in targeting those particular learners.

Head of 14-19 and Careers Leader, FE college (peer-to-peer review)

Finally, there was also evidence of participating institutions gaining confidence in the accuracy of their judgements and rigour of their approach when working on their Compass self-assessment submissions, where this was relevant. In many instances, pilot institutions took their Compass reviews very seriously, by working with internal and external stakeholders to ensure accuracy. Examples included Headteachers and Governors (including full governing bodies) reviewing each Compass submission, peer moderations of Compass submissions within multi-academy trusts, or trust careers leads, and Enterprise Coordinators and Enterprise Advisors as well as more senior colleagues in Careers Hubs providing external critique. Where participating institutions, did not have such strong processes in place, they could learn how high their peers have set the bar and could also learn about support available from their Careers Hub.

Overall, as one Careers Leader described it, the Careers Impact System process was much broader and deeper than simply considering the accuracy of Compass judgements.

It was very much about 'Could we meet them better? Yes, definitely.'

Deputy principal and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)

Learning, professional development and growth of the participating Careers Leaders

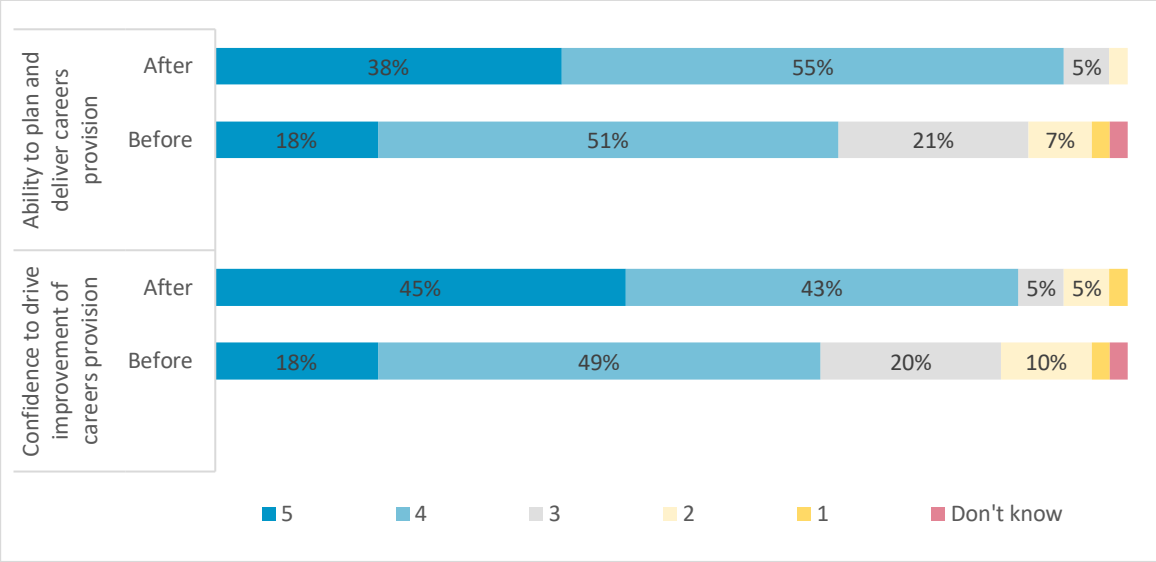
Evidence gathered for the pilot evaluation purposes was highly positive about the Careers Impact System's impact in this area.

After their involvement in the Careers Impact System Pilot, 93% of respondents rated their institution's Careers Leader's *ability* to plan and deliver careers provision as high, compared with 79% before the pilot. Similar improvements were visible for Careers Leader's *confidence* to drive improvement of careers provision, which was rated as high by 88% of survey participants after completing the Careers Impact System process, compared to 67% prior to their involvement (See Figure 11 for detail[4]).

[4] Please note that this chart pulls together careers leaders' own ratings of their ability and confidence before and after their involvement in the Careers Impact System Pilot as well as senior leaders' feedback on their institution's Careers Leader's development and growth

Figure 11 Confidence and ability of Careers Leaders to plan, deliver and drive development of careers provision, before and after their involvement in the Careers Impact System Pilot

Source: survey of participating institutions, respondents who were in a position to provide feedback. Base: 61



Deepening their understanding of best practice related to careers and identifying clear and actionable development priorities, outlined in the earlier sections of this report, were key to improving participating Careers Leaders' ability to plan, deliver and drive development of careers provision in their institution. In this respect, the Careers Impact System proved to be a highly effective CPD mechanism for Careers Leaders, ensuring their learning during the Careers Impact System process is relevant, in-depth and focused on application. It also enabled colleagues to identify gaps in their own knowledge and tackle them through further training and development.

> *[I've joined] the parental engagement CEC course and I'm doing those modules now. It was something that was highlighted [as an area for development] in the peer-to-peer review, and I've gone and found that for myself.*
>
> **Deputy principal and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)**

Improvements of the participating Careers Leaders' levels of confidence in their role were particularly noticeable where they were very self-critical and sometimes trying to do too much.

> *It was really useful for [the review team] to actually say, 'Don't overcomplicate it.' That's what we've been trying to say to [our Careers leader]. So it was really nice [for her to know], 'It's okay. We've got this. And it can be simple.'*
>
> **Headteacher, special school (expert review)**

Having the strengths of their provision recognised by external stakeholders (either The Careers & Enterprise Company or other schools, special schools and colleges) was very helpful for boosting those colleagues' view of themselves and their work. It also helped to raise the profile of careers in

their setting, becoming an important aspect in how their institution is viewed externally. This was particularly helpful in the instances where colleagues in strategic careers leadership roles lacked passion and sometimes in-depth understanding of how to approach careers, with this being one of the many responsibilities of their senior leadership role. The Careers Impact System process helped address many of those aspects, putting such colleagues into a much stronger position to drive careers as well as feeling more motivated, knowing what they and their team can achieve.

In addition to the above, there were examples where Careers Impact System discussions started conversations within the participating institutions about how their Careers Leader role should be developed so that it is more strategic and has better communication channels with the SLT.

Other outcomes

Other outcomes, that emerged as a result of the Careers Impact System Pilot included

- Engagement of one or more colleagues from the participating institutions in formal Career Leader training
- 'Team-building' opportunity and development of a shared understanding of what they are doing and why amongst careers teams as well as colleagues working on related aspects of student support and development. This was particularly important for large institutions (e.g. colleges) and those settings that have extensive careers activity in place, involving many staff
- Development of connections with colleagues from other schools, special schools and colleagues, as part of peer-to-peer review process. Some participating Careers Leaders were able to work with peers that they had never worked before. This was particularly valuable for Careers Leaders from special schools, for many of whom this was the first time that they were able to discuss careers with somebody working in a similar role, in a similar setting. Even where colleagues had established working relationships with others in their trust or area, they commented that the Careers Impact System enriched their collaboration and in some cases took it to another level.

For me, [the main outcome] was being able to network with the other careers people in the trust. We've [now] got a Teams channel, and people have carried on those conversations and sharing good practice, so I think those outcomes were really good. Sharing good practice was really good. It is also really] reassuring that you're all kind of doing the same thing, [working on the same priorities]

Deputy principal and Careers Leader, Secondary school (peer-to-peer review)

Half (50%) of all participants who were involved in peer-to-peer reviews said they had continued working with and learning from the institutions that were part of Careers Impact System review after its completion.

Early evidence related to longer-term impact for participating institutions

As well as asking participating schools, special schools and colleges to comment on the changes that have already happened in their institutions as a result of the Careers Impact System Pilot, we asked them to gauge the likelihood of long-term changes for their setting.

The participating institutions were exceptionally positive about the changes they were expecting to see in their settings in the long term, based on the evidence they already had. They stated that it was likely or highly likely that taking part in the Careers Impact System would in the longer term lead to:

- Improved careers provision in their school, special school or college – highlighted by 96% of the survey respondents
- More effective careers leadership – noted by 94%
- Improved student outcomes – highlighted by 86% of the survey respondents.

In addition, we asked senior school leaders from the participating institutions to comment on the likelihood of improvements in teacher self-efficacy, as a result of being able to make learning for students more relevant and showing its real-world application related to jobs and careers. Just over half of the relevant colleagues anticipated that the Careers Impact System would lead to those changes in the long term[5].

First indications of system level impact

Whilst this was not a priority for the pilot evaluation, there was some strong early evidence of benefits and value of the Careers Impact System beyond the level of individual institutions taking part in it, most notably Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts.

[5] NB: The number of responses to this question was smaller than others (N=34) as only colleagues in senior leadership positions were asked to provide relevant feedback. This was however consistent with other, qualitative evidence that was collected as part of the pilot

For the participating Careers Hubs, taking part in the Careers Impact System Pilot was beneficial because it enabled them to strengthen relationships with existing member schools, special schools and colleges and attract new ones to their network.

Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts commented that the Careers Impact System and its Maturity Model in particular offered them clarity about best practice and development trajectories for strengthening and embedding careers, which they could use with all their member institutions.

> *I absolutely value the [Careers Impact Maturity Model]. I think it's brilliant. Everybody has really appreciated having it so clear, in black and white, how they can actually improve and something that they can own as well.*
>
> **Multi-Academy Trust Careers Lead**

Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts alike highly valued the opportunity to surface and capture insight that the Careers Impact System Pilot provided them with. Colleagues working beyond the level of individual education settings noted that the process had enabled them to be very precise about development and support needs of each institution as well as their groupings and cohorts, to spot which approaches for implementing new practice or embedding careers would or would not get traction in the participating institutions and also gather evidence about effective practice that they could then widely share with others in their Careers Hub or multi-academy trust.

> *It was valuable to get the opportunity to sense check what's really happening in the real world on the ground. There is definitely value in terms of getting honest insight and reflection on what is happening in the network.*
>
> **Operational Lead, Careers Hub**

> *Speaking as a central coordinator of Careers Impact System activities for our Trust, what has fallen out of it has been spotting the trends. So, we've then been able to plan our network meetings around the trends [that have emerged thought the Careers Impact System Pilot]. And one of the things that came out was we wanted to be more data-driven, more impact driven. So, kind of, basing one of our meetings around destination data, one of our meeting around the student voice that's coming out of the future skills questionnaire... And just to be able to say, 'This is a training need across the trust and this is expertise or good practice that we need to share across the trust.' So, it is just very useful I think to learn from each other about the best use and the most value that we can add by all coming together.*
>
> **Multi-Academy Trust Careers Lead**

Whilst only beginning to materialise over the course of the pilot, multi-academy trusts involved in the evaluation highlighted the Careers Impact System as a mechanism for achieving and assuring consistency of careers provision across their member schools, special schools and colleges.

As trust lead [for careers], my number one aim for the next academic year is to ensure consistency across all schools within the Trust, in the careers provision that the students get. Obviously, there are different kind of nuances depending on the context of the school, but for me this is an important foundation and an important starting block to really commit to that process of getting that consistency across the trust. Having all of the trust schools working together, assessing themselves openly and honestly against the same framework, identifying strengths and weaknesses – I think it provides an opportunity that we haven't had before to work collaboratively. From this process, [we will define] a Trust-level action plan, even down to the fundamentals of securing and creating a high-quality resource bank in the schools.

Multi-Academy Trust Careers Lead

Consistency of careers provision being highly important for MATs was also picked up by Careers Hubs working with them as part of implementing the Careers Impact System during its pilot phase and considering wider roll-out.

[Careers Impact System processes and its Maturity Model proved to be really] valuable across multi-academy trusts because any trust would want to have that consistency.

Peer-to-peer review facilitator, Careers Hub

Finally, many individual participating institutions and those working at a higher level (Careers Hubs and MATs) were highly positive about the likely system-wide impact of the Careers Impact System.

I'm pleased we've been part of the pilot and I think, going forward, it would really support schools and FE colleges, having a framework, having something to work on or towards. Because, you know, we got given the Gatsby Benchmarks, we've all made progress on those but it's the, 'What next?' around the wider careers agenda.

Assistant principal and Careers Leader, FE college (peer-to-peer review)

[I think the Careers Impact System will improve careers provision in this country] because it makes you think strategically, it makes you think about the impact, it really measures it as not a tick-box exercise but it makes you think about, 'What are you getting out of it?' It is more of an impact measure than an output measure., which I think sometimes the Gatsby Benchmarks can be viewed as: 'I did this, I did this, I did this.' I think it's because the Careers Impact System measures impact it's a vehicle to really embed careers.

Peer-to-peer review facilitator, Careers Hub

There were also others, who were more cautious, highlighting the great potential they could see in the Careers Impact System, but also acknowledging that it was still 'early days' and much more sustained effort, inputs and support was needed within the networks and the wider system.

I think overall it's too early to say precisely how worthwhile [the Careers Impact System] has been. I think it's a starting point for me. To me, [the Careers Impact Maturity Model] now is going to

become a breathing, living document and we're going to keep using it now through the next academic year. Because I feel like they're almost on a starting point with a very different set of language and skills. What has it done? I think we have started to see that careers is a lens. And if we look down through that lens in our schools, then we start to think about, 'How can I use this lens to change the behaviour over here of those students? How can I use it to improve attendance? How can I use it to improve aspiration? How can I use it to get my parents onboard and be interested in finding out about that world of work, that changing landscape, feel confident talking to me about it? How can that then encourage a greater engagement across all areas of my school? How can I influence my staff's CPD?'

Multi-Academy Trust Careers Lead

CONCLUSIONS

The available evidence suggests that the Careers Impact System was well received by and valuable to the schools, special schools and colleges involved in the pilot and it has strong potential to lead to longer-term impact for those institutions and their students as well as to impact at system level. On this basis, we can conclude that not only has the Careers Impact System Pilot achieved its aims for the participating institutions, but it is ready to be scaled-up, to maximise its impact and value at system level.

Our analysis of all the evidence gathered for the purposes of the pilot evaluation also suggests the following conclusions about the role and potential impact of the approach at system level.

The Careers Impact System can strengthen assurance of quality of careers provision at institutional and ultimately system levels.

Pilot evidence suggests that assurance of quality of careers provision through the Careers Impact System is achieved via:

- The Careers Impact Maturity Model, which is rooted in Gatsby Benchmarks and synthesises best practice about careers. Being a standardised maturity model, it helps schools, special schools and colleges to identify their current position as well as gaps in their provision and steps towards addressing them. It establishes a shared and standardised language of improvement for careers.
- Increased hands-on involvement of multiple staff within participating institutions, in particular of education leaders and Governors, in reviewing the status and quality of their institution's careers provision and identifying improvement priorities.
- Opening participating institutions' careers provision for external scrutiny.
- Better understanding of Gatsby Benchmarks and of the support processes and resources provided by The Careers & Enterprise Company and its network of Careers Hubs that would enable schools, special schools and colleges to use Compass tools accurately and to their full potential.
- Increased focus on evaluation, evidence gathering and use of data and learner outcomes when shaping and gauging quality and impact of careers provision.

The Careers Impact System can raise the quality of careers provision at system level.

There was considerable evidence about the positive impact of the Careers Impact System on raising the quality of careers provision in participating institutions. This suggests that when delivered at scale, the Careers Impact System would lead to system level improvement.

The Careers Impact System supported participating institutions in their efforts to improve the quality of their provision through the following:

- Improving understanding of best practice related to careers.
- Focusing on learner outcomes, particularly those who are disadvantaged.
- Increasing involvement of different stakeholders in careers, including teaching staff, leaders students and in some cases parents.
- Taking a more strategic and long-term approach to careers planning, delivery and evaluation.
- Connecting careers to school, special school and college improvement. Where careers was beginning to be used as a vehicle for achieving institutional priorities it created additional leverage for strengthening careers provision and opportunities to reinforce impact related to both careers and other institutional priorities
- Forming actions which aimed to strengthen careers provision and informed by best practice being identified and implemented.
- The Careers Impact System experience being positive and motivating for staff involved in the process, inspiring them to drive improvement.
- Involvement in the Careers Impact System being supported by Hubs, trusts and peer institutions.

The Careers Impact System can be a powerful driver for elevating the status of Careers Leaders and professionalising the role.

Our pilot evidence highlighted that the Careers Impact System helped deepen Careers Leaders's understanding of best practice, it led to increases in their ability and confidence to drive improvement of careers provision. The process led to greater recognition of their role and its impact within their institutions. In multiple instances, following their institution's involvement in the Careers Impact System process, there was greater support for Careers Leaders from school, special school and college senior leaders and governors. There were also instances of redefining their role, so that it is more strategic and better connected to senior leadership.

The Careers Impact System can provide a strong mechanism for capturing, distilling and where relevant disseminating evidence at system level.

For those conducting and facilitating Careers Impact System reviews (The Careers & Enterprise Company, Careers Hubs and multi-academy trusts), the process enabled identification of challenges and provided insight and learning at system level. Even during the pilot, there were already instances when this insight was piped back into the system, through the Careers Impact System and other channels. Going forward, this can and should be used to support continuous learning and improvement and shine a light on best practice at system level.

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