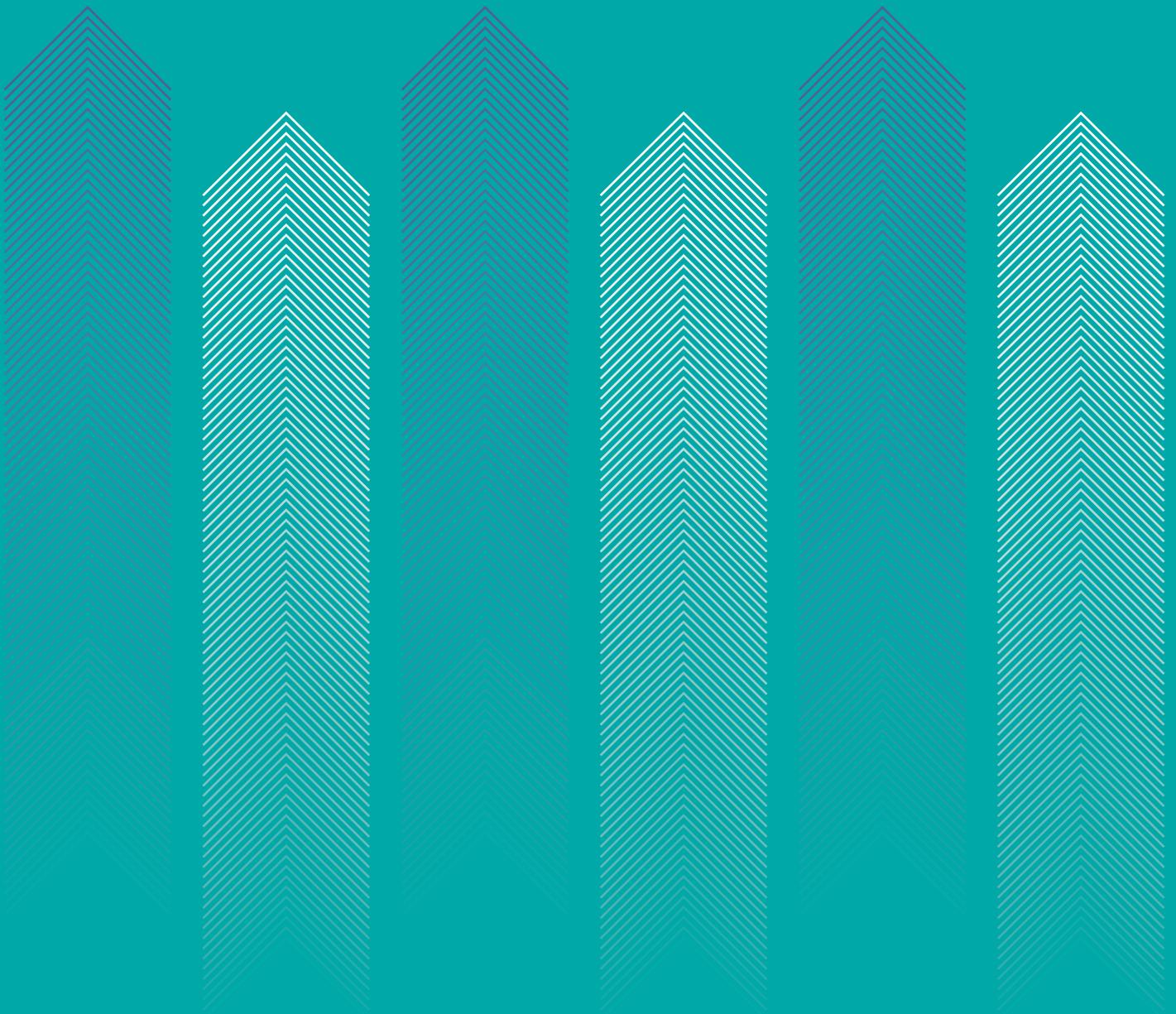


Ready for the Future:

A review of Careers Education in England 2021/22



Publication information

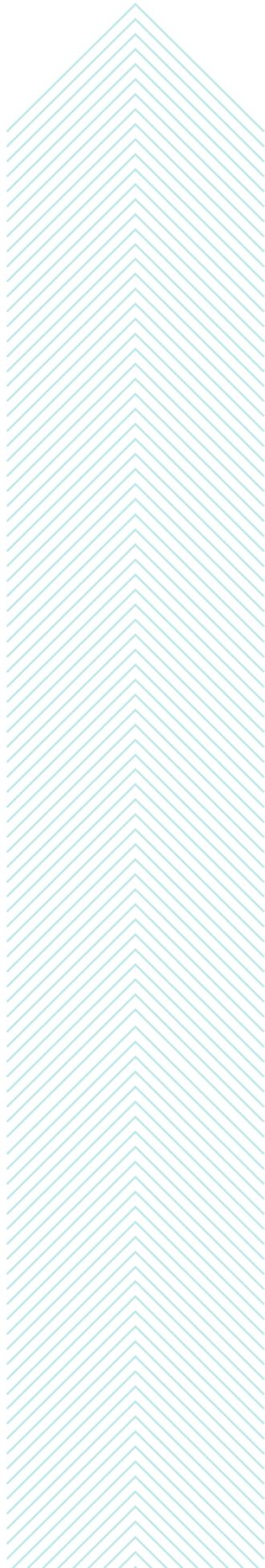
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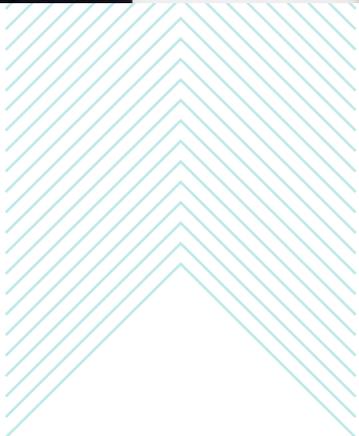


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Introduction



The Right Hon. the Baroness Morgan of Cotes

Chair of The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)

When I first became Secretary of State for Education, I was asked by a journalist to say what my priorities were. On instinct, I said character and careers. I highlighted careers because I had been involved with the brilliant 'Bridge to Work' scheme in my constituency which was bringing employers into schools, raising aspirations and boosting social mobility. Nearly 10 years on it is a great privilege to be the new Chair of the Careers & Enterprise Company and to see the progress that has been made.

For the first time in many years we now have a broad consensus about what excellence looks like (the Gatsby Benchmarks) and a national structure of support (Careers Hubs) which is connecting businesses to schools and colleges with purpose and at scale. Clear impact data is coming through from education, employers and young people, gathered through our digital tools, including Compass+. These are strong foundations on which to build.

This report - 'Ready for the Future' - sets out the clearest picture of the system to date. There are real grounds for optimism. As a result of well-structured careers programmes, young people are reporting becoming more career ready as they progress through school. They

know more about local businesses and are more aware of pathways like apprenticeships. Careers Hubs are having an impact, helping to improve provision in schools and colleges whilst building social capital for young people. The work of employers is proving invaluable as it becomes increasingly multi-faceted and sustained.

So what next? I want us to build on this progress to make sure every young person can find their best next step. This means, amongst other things, ensuring teachers have the careers awareness training they need to help the students they teach. I am particularly pleased with the 'Teacher Encounters' initiative which is getting subject teachers out into industry so they can build the learning back into their lessons. I want us also to ensure even more young people have access to high quality and regular experiences with businesses and their work places. And we must continue to amplify technical and vocational routes which can help us build the skills we need for the economy.

In short I want more young people ready for the future, through a system that is ready for the future too.

Foreword

The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett



Careers support in schools and colleges is integral to raising aspirations and enabling young people, in particular those from less affluent backgrounds, to realise their potential and explore careers in high-value occupations. Building aspiration, and therefore expectation, is a challenge for life, and not just the foundation provided in formal compulsory education.

The findings from 'Ready for the Future' are clear. Investment in careers support helps young people to aim high through well-structured programmes that put purposeful engagement with employers at their heart. This report shows that students facing the biggest barriers can and do benefit most from high quality support. Findings also illustrate that careers education works most powerfully when it takes hold right across school and college life, not just as an add on or discretionary activity.

This sort of modern careers support is important for two reasons. It is a key part of an education that helps young people get 'ready for work and ready for life.' It is also a building block to help us meet our skills and productivity challenges. Bridging the gap between education and employment brings benefits to young people and employers alike. The former access a broader educational experience, the latter strengthen their talent pipelines.

In practice, when learners receive meaningful and flexible experiences with employers, they gain insight into what comes next and the skills required. A curriculum that connects classroom content to its applicability in the world of the work, builds motivation.

As I set out in my report for the Labour Party, the next stage is to ensure careers awareness training is a part of subject teachers' professional development – broadening the support young people get. The entire education workforce has responsibility to raise aspirations and provide careers guidance. The development of subregional hubs is an excellent way of ensuring that expertise can be cascaded to where it's needed most. The role of mentors should also be explored, delivered via Careers Hubs to help young people build networks through positive role models.

More broadly, it is self-evident that restoring growth in our country and dramatically reducing inflation cannot be achieved without a transformation in the availability of a skilled workforce, with the adaptability and creativity to embrace technological change and innovative working practices. This must, surely, be seen not as a 'nice to have', but an imperative and therefore an investment in all our futures.

Young people are crucial to this vision. They are the future inventors, technicians, and scientists who will grow our economy and improve our productivity. With the right careers support, we can get more young people onto the right learning and skills pathways. That is why, at post-16 level, it is important that meaningful choices are available to enable young people to progress in whatever way is best for their particular circumstances and appropriate mode of learning. The recent [Social Mobility Commission](#) report is instructive here, reinforcing the importance of different routes to study and employment. As we help young people to exploit their talents and skills, we will also boost our economy.

Executive summary

This report seeks to reflect on the careers education system as a whole, analysing how much progress was made in the academic year 2021/22 and what gaps remain. Drawing on data and insight from young people (35,000), schools and colleges (84%) and employers (over a hundred working most closely with the system and 1000 business volunteers), the key findings against key questions are set out below:

How is careers education helping young people become more career ready?

- As students progress through secondary school their career readiness grows. This includes increasing awareness of pathways like apprenticeships and of local businesses
- The longer Careers Hubs – local networks of support – work with schools and colleges, the more breadth and depth of exposure students have to employers
- There are opportunities to increase further the volume and quality of experiences with employers, helping young people to build career readiness skills like communication and problem solving

To what extent is careers education able to tackle disadvantage?

- Those who face the most barriers benefit most from high quality careers education
- Schools with more economically-disadvantaged students engage more with careers, report higher performance and progress faster
- As the careers system matures, there are opportunities to intensify support for target groups of young people

How far is careers education embedded in the mainstream of school and college life?

- Careers is starting to impact on the curriculum and a whole school approach is emerging
- Careers Leaders are becoming more connected, able to link careers to education, employer and local growth agendas
- There are opportunities to improve consistency and quality through peer challenge, teacher training, as well as starting earlier (primary) and through parental engagement

Context



Oli de Botton

CEO of The Careers & Enterprise Company

What does a modern careers system look like?

In education there is not always consensus. We can argue about knowledge and skills, direct instruction and group work and many other things. However, when it comes to good careers provision – the important work of getting young people ready for the future - a consensus is emerging in England, backed up by a growing evidence base.

Young people need:

- Employers involved early on in their education journey, so they can learn about what comes next first hand
- Information about all the different pathways available – apprenticeships, technical routes, university, jobs
- An integrated approach full of powerful experiences. Maybe there is a talk from an employer in Year 4 about STEM careers, there is a site visit in Year 7 to a ceramics factory. There is curriculum learning in Year 9 that explains how maths concepts like ratio and proportion are used in industry. In Year 10 and Year 12 there is meaningful work experience where young people learn the skills of the workplace
- Personalised guidance from qualified careers advisors along the way.

And to make this a reality for all young people, we need a system of support that has:

- A well understood and near universally adopted framework at its heart - the Gatsby Benchmarks¹
- Careers Leaders, professionally trained who can use data and student feedback to run dynamic and impactful programmes
- Education leaders who see the importance of careers education and champion the work
- Teachers and parents who are often the first port of call for young people, included in careers conversations and equipped to help with confidence
- Targeted, intensive support for those young people who face the most barriers
- Local networks to connect schools and colleges to businesses and apprenticeship providers, offering meaningful experiences to students and teachers alike

Careers education in the mainstream of school and college life and an important part of the local skills and economic agenda.

1 See Key Terms for a list of the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#)

Charting progress

The question for this report is how much progress was made towards this vision in the academic year 2021/22 and what gaps remain.² Last year we were able to collect an unprecedented amount of data – from almost 35,000 young people, 84% of secondary schools and colleges, over 120 employers who are most involved in careers education, more than 1,000 business volunteers and - for some schools - three years' worth of data on student destinations.

For the first time, schools logged student-facing activities (about 60,000) on the Compass+ system. This is beginning to help us see the impact of specific interventions on specific students. At the same time there has been an increasing amount of policy interest in careers – a select committee inquiry, three parliamentary debates and over 20 reports from think tanks and interested parties.

Our goal is to use this evidence to reflect on critical areas in careers education. The overall findings are set out in detail in the next chapters.

Ready for the future: CEC's priorities

This report seeks to reflect on the careers system as a whole, but of course people also want to understand the impact of the Careers & Enterprise Company specifically. Here is a link to our more detailed [impact model](#) and [key information](#) on our homepage. You can also find the [data tables](#) behind much of the analysis.

Overall our findings reflect a system making progress but with more to do. As the national body for careers education in England, the CEC's priorities for the future are set out opposite:

CEC's priorities



Priority 1

Raise the quality of careers provision in schools, special schools and colleges against the Gatsby Benchmarks through training for the education workforce, targeted support and quality assurance



Priority 2

Drive more high-quality experiences with employers for students and teachers – with a focus on current areas of need



Priority 3

Amplify apprenticeships, technical and vocational routes – including by supporting the implementation of the Provider Access Legislation (PAL)



Priority 4

Focus on interventions for economically disadvantaged young people (FSM) and those who face most barriers – through identifying and addressing the needs of specific cohorts



Priority 5

Connect careers provision in schools and colleges to the needs of local economies – as articulated through Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)



Key terms

Gatsby Benchmarks

The eight aspects of high-quality careers provision based on international evidence.

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

Compass

A digital tool used by schools and colleges to track careers provision against the Gatsby Benchmarks based on approximately 50 questions. The data from Compass forms the basis of this report. Compass+ is an upgraded version which allows Careers Leaders to track individual interventions and cohorts.

Careers education

A term used in this report to encompass all aspects of careers education - underpinned by the Gatsby Benchmark framework.

Careers Hub

Groups of schools, colleges, employers and providers within a local area working together to improve practice. Hub Leads oversee the work and target support to local priorities.

Careers Leader

A leadership role overseeing a college or school's provision. Careers Leaders implement and quality assure a careers strategy, network with employers and providers and coordinate the contributions of Careers Advisers and subject teachers.

Careers Adviser

A careers professional who provides personal guidance to students and may also have other roles in relation to the delivery of careers provision.

Enterprise Adviser

A volunteer from business matched with a school or college to provide strategic support on the careers programme.

Cornerstone Employer

Provides the employer voice and leadership within a Careers Hub and works nationally, with other cornerstones, on shared careers-related priorities.

Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ)

A set of age-appropriate questionnaires for students asking questions about their career knowledge and skills (career readiness) and their essential skills for the workplace.

Special schools, SEND & AP

Special schools cater for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); Alternative provision schools (AP) settings provide education for students who can't go to a mainstream school.

How is careers education helping young people become more career ready?

Summary

- As students progress through secondary school career readiness grows. This includes increasing awareness of pathways like apprenticeships and of local businesses
- The longer Careers Hubs – local networks of support – work with schools and colleges, the more breadth and depth of exposure students have to employers
- There are opportunities to increase further the volume and quality of experiences with employers, helping young people to build career readiness skills like communication and problem solving

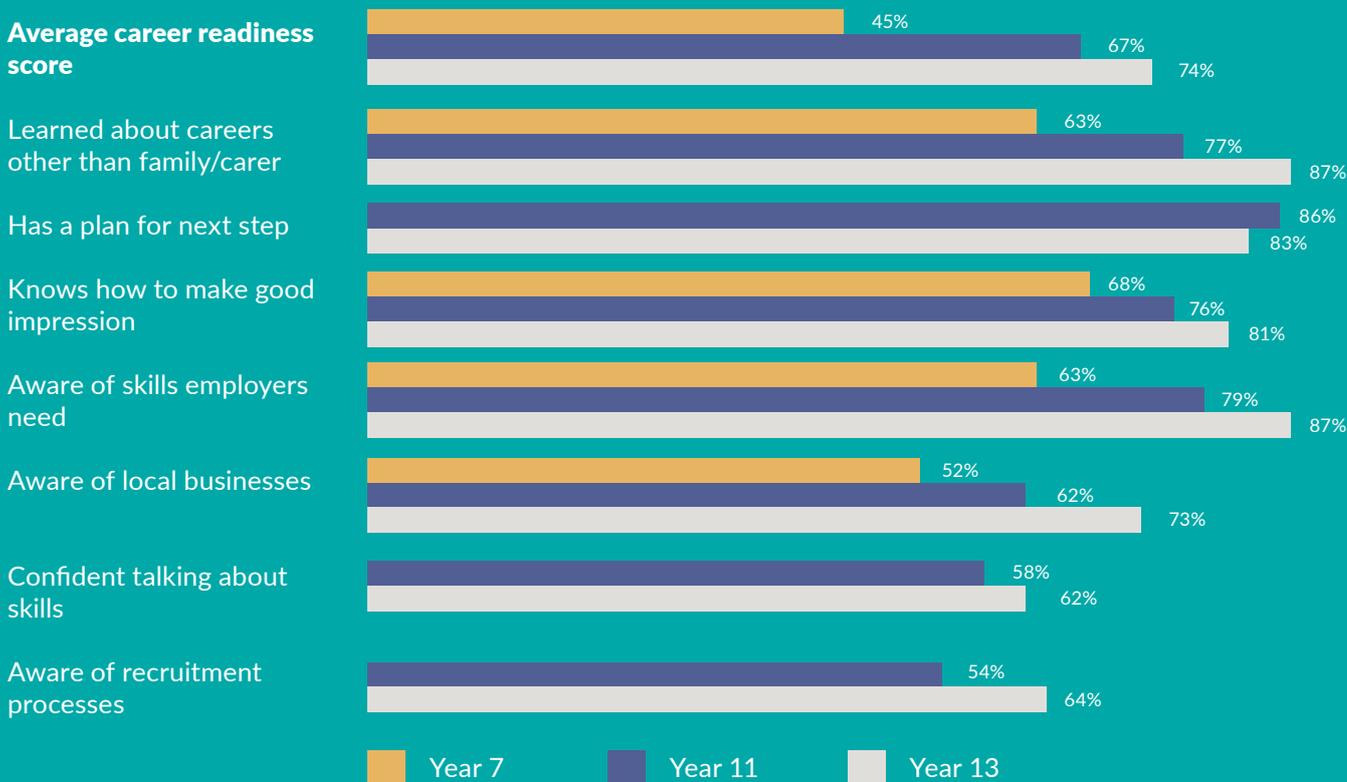
As students progress through secondary school their career readiness grows

A key outcome for careers education is how confident young people feel about their next steps. Do they understand the labour market? How do they rate their skills? Do they have a plan for the future? CEC’s Future Skills career readiness index asks students a range of questions to understand their knowledge and skills – and gives an overall score of career readiness.⁴ Last academic year approximately 35,000 students responded from a range of schools.⁵

Young people reported more career readiness as they moved through secondary school: 45% were career ready in Year 7, rising to 67% by Year 11. This pattern was observed across a range of aspects, including awareness of the skills local employers need (63% in year 7; 79% in year 11) and understanding of local businesses (52% year 7; 62% year 11) (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Students career readiness – years 7, 11 and 13

% students responding positively⁶



Source: CEC Future Skills Questionnaire, 2021-22 (34,986 responses from young people)

⁴ Career readiness score derived from students’ responses to the career knowledge and skills questions within the FSQ (see footnote 3)

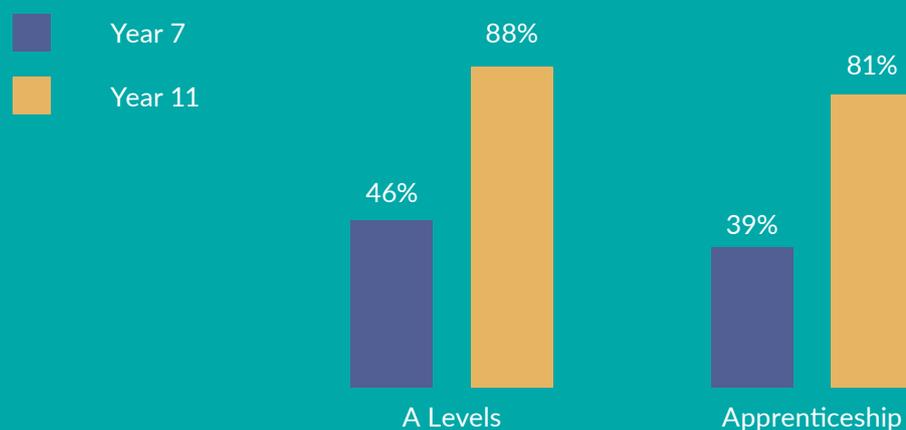
⁵ 194 schools, broadly representative of schools nationally in terms of percentage of students receiving Free School Meals, proportion of mainstream schools with a sixth form and region. For more information on FSQ findings and sample: [The Careers & Enterprise Company \(2022\). Insight briefing: Update on student career readiness in 2021/22.](#) London: The Careers & Enterprise Company

⁶ Student responses to FSQ in 2021/22 academic year (Year 7 N= 8416; Year 11 N= 3534; Year 13 N=1028). Figure for year 7 omitted where that question isn’t asked of this year group. Positive if they answered “Yes, to some extent” or “Yes, to a great extent”

Understanding the full range of pathways is another key element of career readiness and an area where student feedback was positive. Awareness of apprenticeships doubled by Year 11: 39% of young people reported awareness in Year 7 and this increased to 81% in Year 11 (Chart 2). This echoes other research published in the same period which found the overwhelming majority of young people had apprenticeships discussed with them at least once in secondary school.⁷ Where schools were in Careers Hubs – local networks of support – young people’s awareness of apprenticeships was accelerated. There was a 43% point increase in awareness of apprenticeships between Year 7 and 11 for students in these schools, compared to a rise of 38% points for students in schools not in a Careers Hub.

Chart 2: Students awareness of A levels vs Apprenticeships – years 7 and 11

% students responding positively⁸



Source: CEC Future Skills Questionnaire, 2021-22 (34,986 responses from young people)

In a sample of schools, it was possible to compare students’ awareness of apprenticeships and their intended destinations. In these schools, the vast majority (80%) of students understood apprenticeships.⁹ Those with the greatest understanding of apprenticeships were most likely to be considering apprenticeships post-16. 16% of Key Stage 4 students reporting a great understanding of apprenticeships selected it as one of their intended destinations, compared to 10% average selection for the cohort as a whole and 2.4% in sustained apprenticeships in England in 2020-21.¹⁰ This suggests building awareness is an important part of supporting transition to skills pathways, alongside other policies that may focus on opportunity, supply, employer outreach, and student support.

Young people had more encounters with providers of technical education last year, including apprenticeships. In 60% of reporting schools, young people met independent training providers¹¹ rising from 45% in 2020/21 (and 44% in 2018/19). The new Provider Access Legislation, introduced in 2023, changes the requirements on schools from offering access to providers to mandating encounters. This is likely to encourage more focus on pathway awareness.

⁷ Youth Employment UK (2022). Youth Voice Census Report 2022. Kettering: Youth Employment UK

⁸ See footnote 6. Answer positive if student answered “Yes, to some extent” or “Yes, to a great extent”

⁹ Analysis based on 888 Key Stage 4 in 23 schools students with relevant FSQ and intended destinations data from schools using Compass+ (p-value < 0.01). Students are given the option to select up to 3 destinations

¹⁰ 2.4% of students were in sustained apprenticeships post-16 in 2020/21. Department for Education (2022). Academic Year 2020/21: Key stage 4 destination measures. London: Department for Education

¹¹ Compass analysis based on 3,238 reporting schools in 2021/22 and 3,052 reporting schools in 2020/21

The longer Careers Hubs – local networks of support – work with schools and colleges, the more breadth and depth of exposure their students have to employers

When young people and employers work together with purpose there are benefits to both. Young people gain insight into the world of work, including the skills required. This helps them make future career decisions and builds motivation in the here and now.¹² Employers learn about their future workforce (and even begin the recruitment process).¹³ Economically-disadvantaged young people, who tend to have fewer connections and social networks, disproportionately benefit from high quality interactions with employers.¹⁴

In this aspect of careers education, there was progress last year. Schools and colleges reported that both employer engagement and young people's experiences of the workplaces were back to pre-Covid levels.¹⁵ As a result, young people received more employer encounters than the year before Covid. The latest analysis shows that 93% of students in reporting schools and colleges had at least one encounter last year,¹⁶ up from 82% in 2018/19.



12 Valentine, R. and Keating, S. (2021). *The value of student work experience in the graduate labour market*. Bristol: Prospects Luminate

13 Youth Select Committee (2018). *Realising the potential of work experience*. London: The British Youth Council

14 See: Creese, B. (2018). *Protected Work Experience: A way into work or education for disadvantaged young people*. Youth & Policy. Also see: Percy, C., and Kashefpakdel, E. (2018). *Social advantage, access to employers and the role of schools in modern British education*. In T. Hooley, R. Sultana, & R. Thomsen (Eds.), *Career guidance for emancipation: Reclaiming justice for the multitude* (pp. 148-165). London: Routledge

15 Achievement of Gatsby Benchmark 5 (employer encounters) was 71% (2021/22) vs 52% (2018/19). Achievement of Gatsby Benchmark 6 (experiences of the workplace) was 52% (2021/22) vs 47% (2018/19). 4,200 reporting schools and colleges in 2021/22; 3,351 in 2018/19.

16 Compass analysis based on 4,200 reporting schools and colleges. Analysis takes the approach taken in an earlier CEC report: Percy, C. and Tanner, E. (2020). *Closing the Gap: Employer Engagement in England's Schools and Colleges in 2019*. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company

17 Compass analysis based on 4,200 reporting schools and colleges in 2021/22 (678 in a Careers Hub since 2018; 122 not engaged with CEC)

18 Compass analysis based on 4,200 reporting schools and colleges in 2021/22, giving the number of relationships (not the number of employers).

Sustained engagement with Careers Hubs leads to wider and more intensive employer engagement, helping more learners have a chance to hear from a range of local sectors. 81% of schools and colleges that have been in Careers Hubs since 2018 had at least 10 businesses involved in careers activity this year compared to 48% for those not engaged.¹⁷ Nationally the data suggests there were at least 35,340 employer relationships with schools and colleges last year.¹⁸ Employers working with Careers Hubs provide support across a wide range of activities – both in person and online – including mentoring and mock assessment centres (Chart 3).

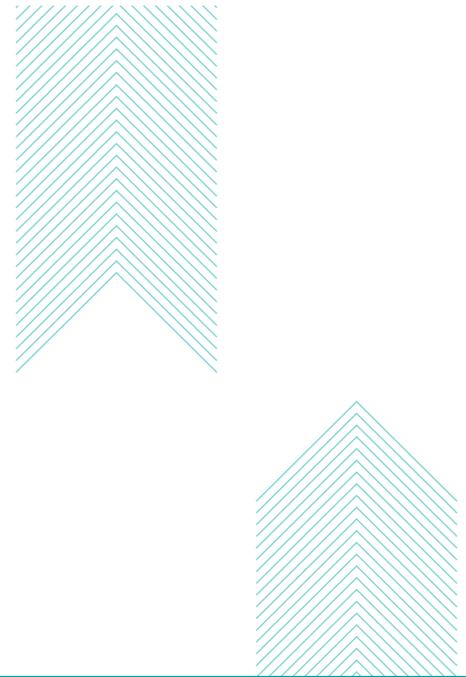
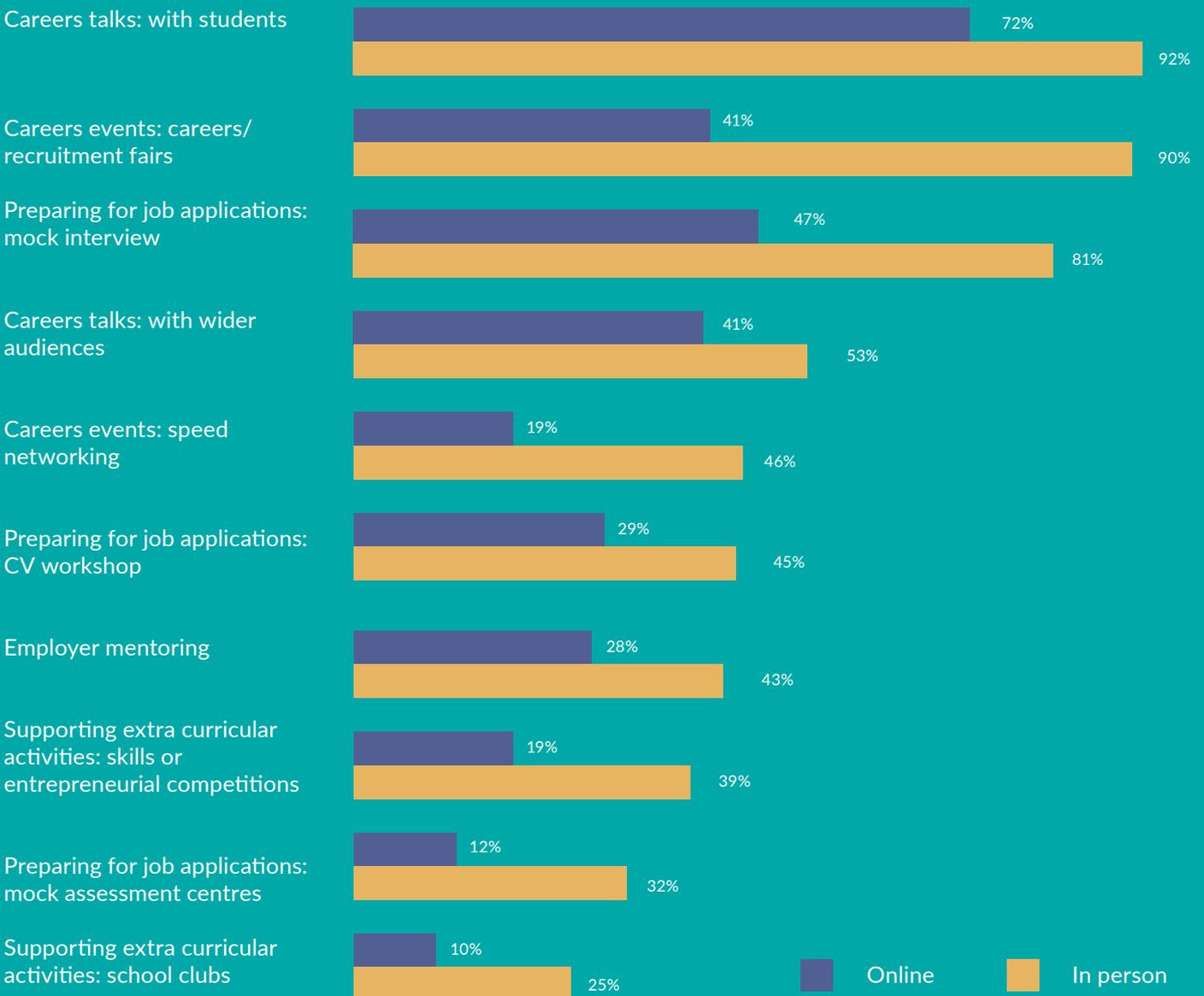


Chart 3: Careers activities reported by employers working with Careers Hubs

% reporting delivering activity in person or online

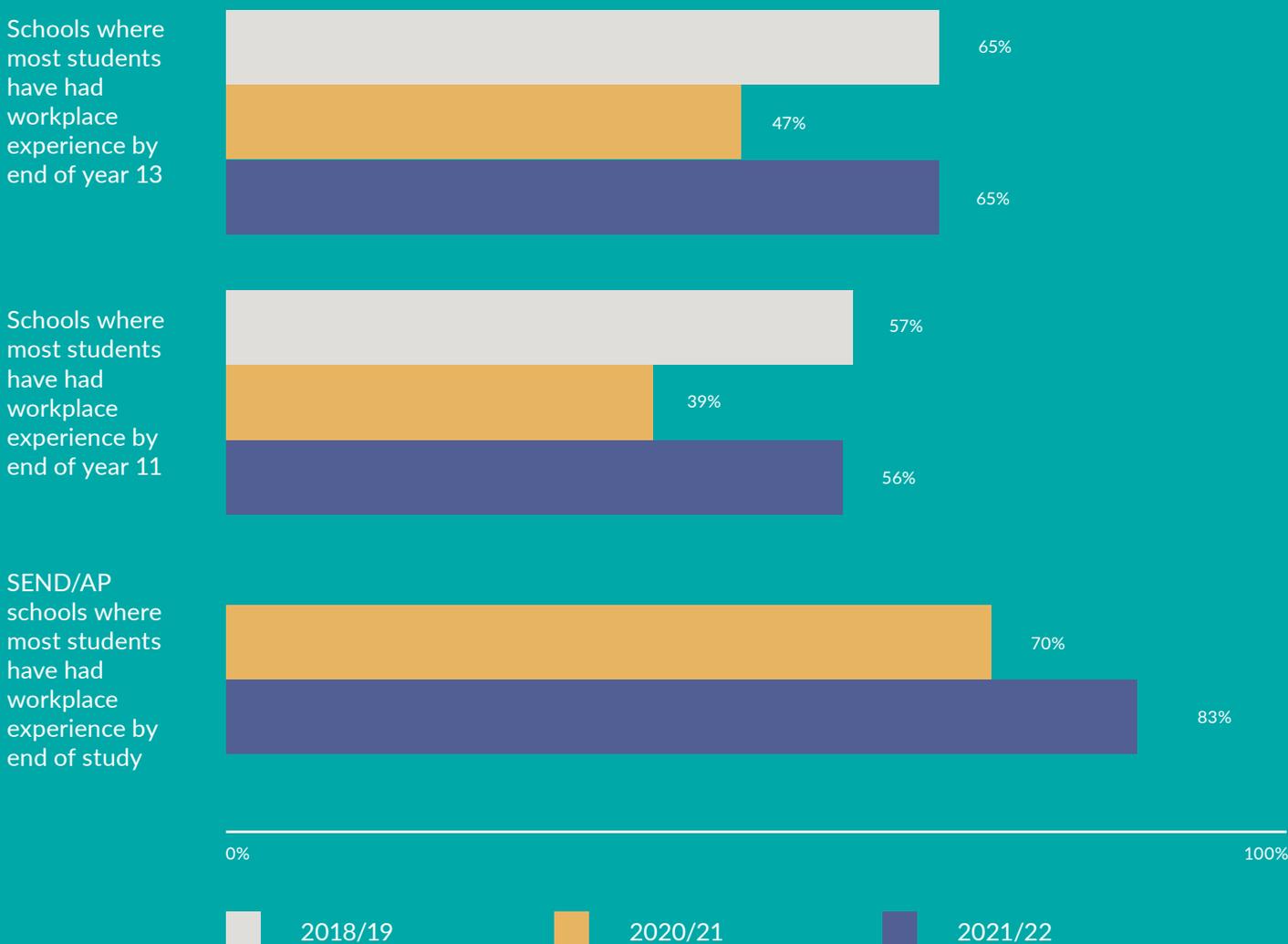


Source: CEC Employer Standards pilot responses, Sep-Oct 2022 (123 responses from employers)

Young people had more direct experiences of workplaces last year, recovering to pre-Covid levels (Chart 4). This suggests there is a strong foundation to widen inclusive access further, as suggested in other research published last year.¹⁹

Chart 4: Experiences of workplaces in mainstream, SEND and alternative provision (AP) schools

% fully meeting each sub-benchmark



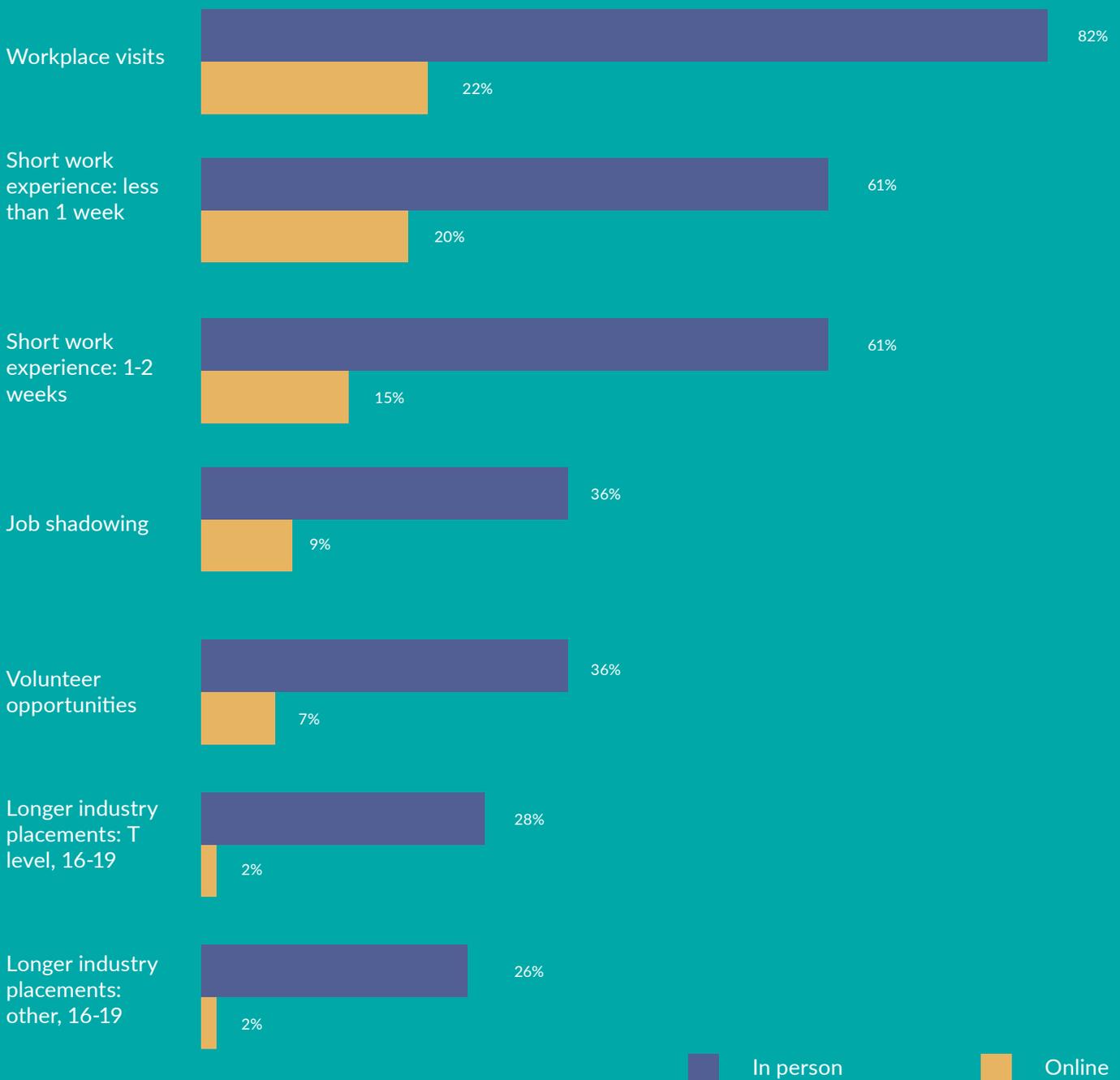
Source: CEC Compass data – N Schools: 2018/19 2,550; 2020/21 3052; 2021/22 3,238; N SEND/AP: 2020/21 550; 2021/22 669 (SEND data not available in 2018/19)

¹⁹ Key finding: 52% of the respondents recalled doing any type of work experience while in secondary school. [Kashefpakdel, E. and Percy, C. \(2022\). Work Experience for All. London: Speakers for Schools](#)

Employers working directly with Careers Hubs offered a wide range of experiences of the workplace. This included in person as well as online activities, but was weighted to in person (Chart 5).

Chart 5: Range of experience of the workplace offered by employers working with Careers Hubs

% undertaking each activity



Source: CEC Employer Standards pilot responses, Sep-Oct 2022 (123 responses from employers)

There are opportunities now to increase further the volume and quality of experiences with employers, helping young people to build career readiness skills like communication

As employers demonstrate their willingness to engage with the careers systems,²⁰ there are opportunities to offer more and varied workplace experiences, enabling young people to develop meaningful connections with the world of work.

Evidence suggests these experiences can make a key contribution to the skills young people need to thrive in the workplace.²¹ There is also a wide body of research that highlights the importance employers attach to ‘soft’ skills.²² Essential skills²³ are now even well correlated with increased wellbeing and higher earnings.²⁴

Employers can make a difference because they bring an authentic perspective on the value of skills, such as problem-solving and leadership. This is important because, whilst 71% of students in year 7 reported confidence across all eight have all eight essential skills, these skills appear to dip in secondary school, as confirmed by other research (Chart 6).²⁴

Chart 6: Student essential skills across secondary school

% students reporting confidence across the 8 essential skills²⁵



Source: CEC Future Skills Questionnaire, 2021-22 (34,986 responses from young people)

20 The CEC survey of Enterprise Advisers (2022) received 1,180 responses: [The Careers & Enterprise Company \(2022\). EA Survey Insight Briefing. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.](#) Our pilot of in-depth Employer Standards (2022) had 200 completions last year – insight briefing on the full pilot forthcoming

21 Communication and increased confidence were most often cited by young people as benefits students gained from work experience by staff: [Youth Select Committee \(2018\). Realising the potential of work experience. London: The British Youth Council.](#) For the value of and considerations with mentoring see: [SQW \(2020\). The Mentoring Fund: Evaluation of The Careers and Enterprise Company Mentoring Fund: Summary Report. London: SQW](#)

22 [Teach First \(2022\). Rethinking Careers Education: Investing in our Country’s Future. London: Teach First](#)

23 Skills Builder universal framework covers 8 essential skills: Listening, speaking, problem solving, creativity, staying positive, aiming high, leadership, teamwork

24 The Skills Builder impact report states that “progress stalls” with essential skills in secondary school. [Seymour, W. and Craig, R. \(2022\). Essential Skills Tracker. London: Skills Builder](#)

25 See footnote 6



An employer view: How can we boost the career readiness of young people?

Rita Patel-Miller, Mace Group

As a business leader in the construction sector, I've been working with young people for over 15 years now. In that time, I've seen a real transformation in the way employers work with schools and it is heartening to see this translating into increases in career readiness for young people.

Early engagement is key to start challenging perceptions and building essential workplace skills. It is crucial that employers work directly with schools to help young people see the relevance of skills like problem solving and communication to their future careers.

Covid has been really challenging for young people, but I've noticed that by having to face change, many have become more adaptable and built their personal resilience - an underestimated skill I think, and one the future workforce will need.

Years ago, working with the schools in inner city Birmingham, we encouraged them to develop their confidence and communication skills, using a project called "Me PLC". The other day I met a young person who recognised me and reflected on the experience. They are now in a responsible position in a local restaurant - proof to me of the impact employer encounters has on young people's lives and careers.

I'm particularly pleased to see the awareness and appetite for apprenticeships increasing while young people are in education. It's exciting to see young people now focusing and recognising the value in this area. Apprenticeships are such a fantastic way to enter the world of work and it's great that we're starting to change the narrative. We offer a lot of apprenticeships at Mace and they are fundamental to how we recruit and develop the next generation of talent.

The national network of Careers Hubs and Careers Leaders has been pivotal in making this happen, all working to common standards of excellence through the Gatsby Benchmarks. Careers Hubs are making a real impact, providing important support and creating consistency across the country; connecting Careers Leaders (CLs) to local job opportunities and career pathways through better labour market information. Having that employer link with CLs and Enterprise Advisers (EAs) helps to deliver consistent messaging and to keep careers front of mind for busy Careers Leaders in schools and colleges.

Where next? It really feels to me that with the current infrastructure we're moving in the right direction. It's so important we build on these gains. I see real opportunities to widen the pool of employers getting involved (SMEs, more diversity) and I'm excited to see initiatives from the sector, such as Employer Standards, coming to fruition to support this change.

To what extent is careers education able to tackle disadvantage?

Summary

- Those who face the most barriers benefit most from careers education
- Schools with more economically-disadvantaged students engage more with careers, report higher performance and progress faster
- As the careers system matures, there are opportunities to intensify support for target groups

Those young people who face most barriers benefit more from careers education

There is wide acceptance of the challenges some young people face when engaging with the education system. These can be linked to economic context, background, discrimination or educational need. Careers education is no different, with some young people facing additional, sometimes multiple barriers. Evidence suggests, however, that high quality careers support can make an important difference, particularly for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.²⁶

High impact careers support starts early to counter limiting stereotypes which become ingrained in the early years.²⁷ Employer networks, mediated through school and college, are critical too as they have the power to complement and compensate for the social networks young people have by virtue of their family background.²⁸ This is important for employers too, wishing to promote social mobility and reach a larger, more diverse pool of talent.

CEC's latest evidence shows careers education has double the impact for economically-disadvantaged young people. Last year for the first time data was available to allow the CEC to demonstrate a relationship between high quality careers education and positive post-16 destinations for young people. The effect was twice strong for schools serving the most economically disadvantaged students. This year an updated analysis, covering Year 11 leavers from three cohorts (2016/17 - 2018/19) confirms the relationship, showing that each of the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks²⁹ achieved reduces the odds of any young person being NEET or in an unknown destination by 1.1%. Again the relationship is approximately twice as strong in the quarter of schools with the most economically-disadvantaged intake, as measured by Free School Meal entitlement. Achievement of all 8 benchmarks is also associated with a 17% increase in apprenticeship uptake post-16.

Infographic: Impact of good careers provision on positive post-16 destinations



Source: CEC, Benefits of Gatsby benchmark achievement for post-16 destinations, Technical note, 2023

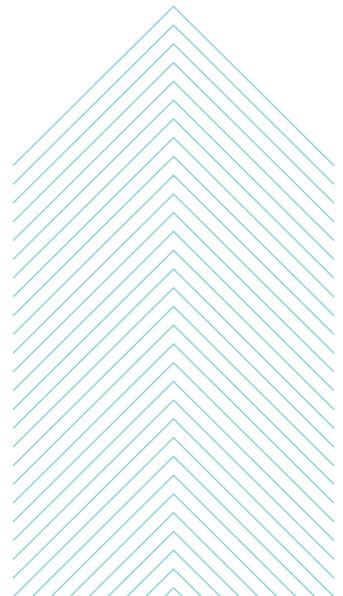
²⁶ Hunt, J. et al. (2021). *Effective Careers Interventions for Disadvantaged Young People*. London: The Behavioural Insights Team

²⁷ The Research Base (2021). *Primary Fund Evaluation: Impact Report July 2021*. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company

²⁸ Mann, A., Huddleston, P. and Kashefpakdel, E. (2018). *Essays on Employer Engagement*. London: Routledge.

²⁹ See key terms and footnote 1

Analysis of CEC’s career readiness index indicates that young people in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) typically report lower career readiness than their peers.³⁰ However, good careers provision has the potential to more than make up for this, with each benchmark achieved making a difference. Based on the modelled uplift per benchmark, students in schools with the strongest provision (as measured by meeting all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks) score 3.9% points higher on career readiness than those in schools not meeting any benchmarks. Therefore, as schools improve their provision, the increase in career readiness more than outweighs the disadvantage associated with being in receipt of FSM.

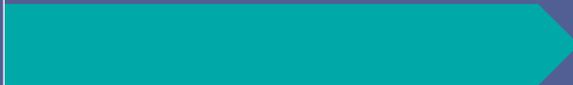


Infographic: Good careers provision has the potential to close the career readiness gap experienced by young people in receipt of Free School Meals

Disadvantage in career readiness score for students receiving free school meals

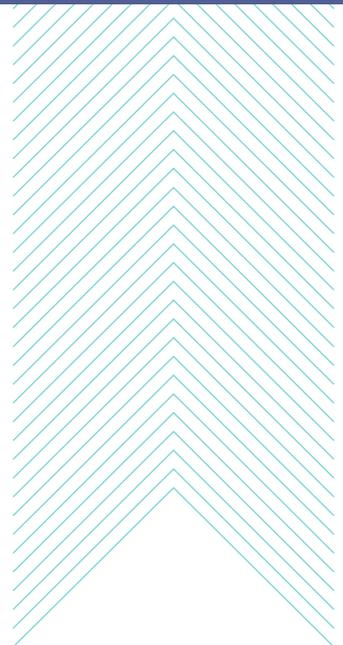


+3.9 pts



Positive impact on student career readiness score from being in a school with all 8 Gatsby benchmarks

Source: CEC analysis of Compass and Future Skills Questionnaire, 2023

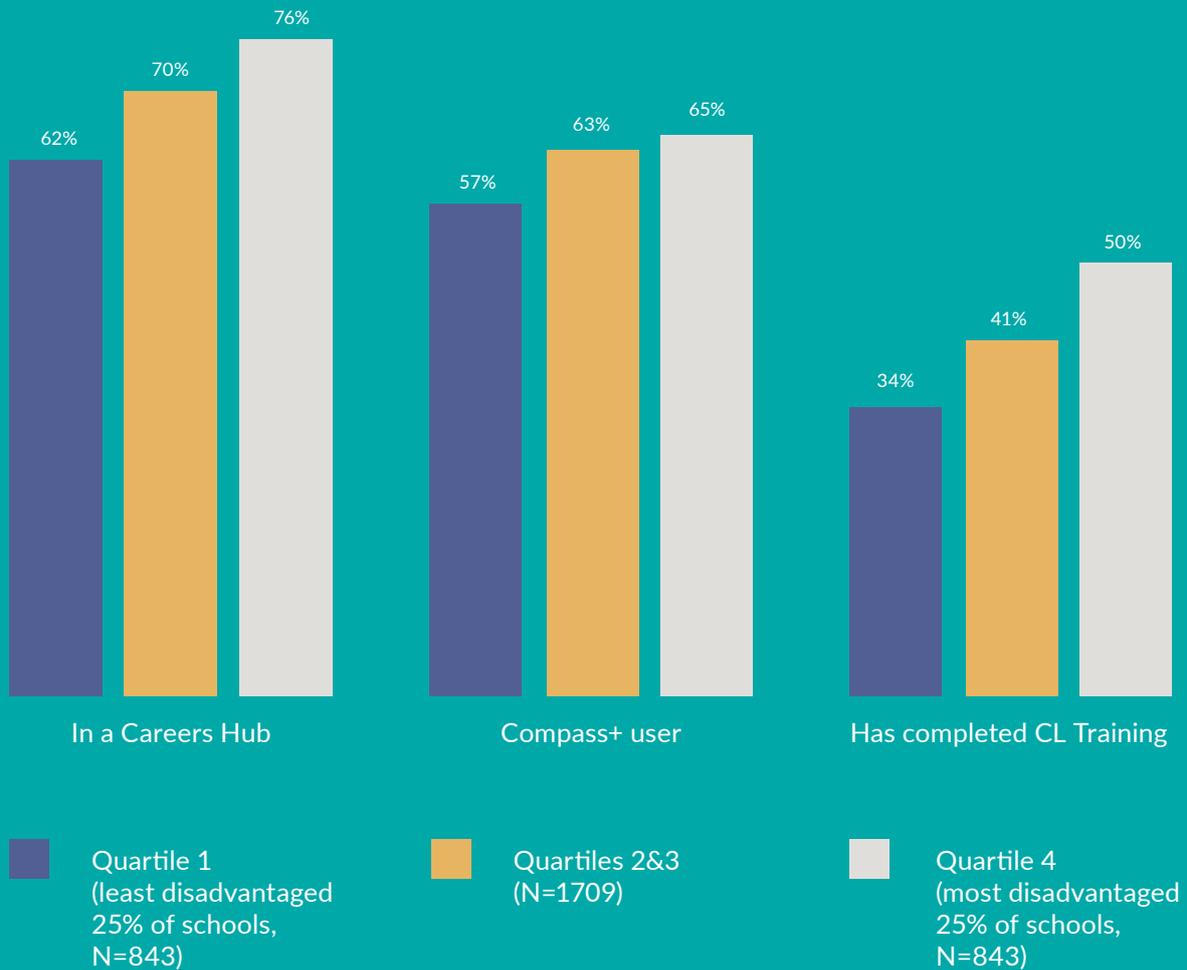


30 The relationship was observed when holding other factors constant, such as student and school-level characteristics and geography

Schools with more economically-disadvantaged students engage more with careers, report higher performance and progress faster

Schools with more economically-disadvantaged intakes engage more with the careers system. They are more likely to have a trained Careers Leader, be in a Careers Hub and be using the Compass+ digital tool (Chart 7).

Chart 7: % mainstream schools engaging in the careers system according to level of disadvantage



Source: Analysis of Compass+ and CEC management data, end July 2022 (Compass+ enables more granular reporting)

As a result of this increased challenge and support, these schools report achieving more benchmarks and making more progress than schools with less disadvantaged intakes (Chart 8).

Chart 8: Increase in average number of Gatsby Benchmarks achieved by mainstream schools 2018/19-2021/22

(Quartiles based on % pupils eligible for Free School Meals, end July 2022)



Source: Analysis of Compass+ and CEC management data, end July 2022 (Compass+ enables more granular reporting)

As more data came online last year from schools,³¹ CEC analysed some 5 million participations by individual students in specific activities. The most common activity types were information about the labour market and events and talks involving employers. Those eligible for free school meals in the last six years had on average slightly more careers activities³² than their peers in 2021/22. Larger data sets in future will enable deeper investigation and understanding of which activities have the most impact.

31 Schools shared more data through upgrading to CEC's Compass+ digital tool. This included around 60,000 student-facing activities on the Compass+ system in 2021/22, with some 5 million participations by specific students in specific activities and 20,000 records of student destination intentions.

32 0.7 more activities relative to a baseline of 14 activities over the whole year (p-value 0.02). CEC analysis conducted in schools with more comprehensive usage of Compass+, e.g. activities logged each term and students answering FSQ.

As the careers system matures, there are opportunities to intensify support for target groups

Evidence over three years demonstrates the positive impact of high-quality careers provision on the post-16 outcomes of economically-disadvantaged students. This offers confidence in the value of the Gatsby Benchmarks and points to a maturing system. Like all areas of education, there remain significant - sometimes multiple - barriers which place young people at a disadvantage when it comes to careers.

Research indicates the opportunity to intensify support for these cohorts³³ and local public and private investment in specific interventions is emerging.³⁴ These programmes are informed by sharp insight about the barriers 15-17 year olds face at points of transition (such as lack of confidence and limited networks).

Young people who attend SEND and AP (alternative provision) institutions are receiving more support, but with room to better connect them to established Careers Hubs networks. Pilot support for elective home educated young people, who sit outside the established careers system, is beginning but is an example of further work to do.

Careers Leaders are accessing more support than ever to target groups. The well-established school and college improvement cycle – identify, intervene, review – is beginning to be used in careers, enabled by better tracking systems. Examples of how they are already doing this will be explored in more detail in the next section.



33 A recent report identified differences in provision between deprived and more advantaged intakes. It found that schools in more deprived areas are less likely to have access to a specialist Careers Adviser and 21% of teachers in the most deprived areas reported non-specialists delivered personal guidance compared to 14% in more affluent areas. [Holt-White, E., Montacute, R. and Tibbs, L. \(2022\). Paving the way: Careers guidance in secondary schools. London: The Sutton Trust.](#) Another recent report found that young people from more economically-disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have participated in multiple work experience opportunities (see footnote 19)

34 For example, see the Effective Transitions Fund: [The Careers & Enterprise Company \(2021\). New £2m project to turbo-charge careers education for disadvantaged young people in England. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)

Case study

Effective Careers Programmes for students in Alternative Provision in the Black Country

In 2021/22 the Black Country Careers Hub explored whether participation in careers interventions for students in eight Alternative Provision schools (APs) was effective in improving students' self-efficacy, career readiness and engagement with education, when delivered in Key Stages 3 (KS3) and 4 (KS4).

What they did

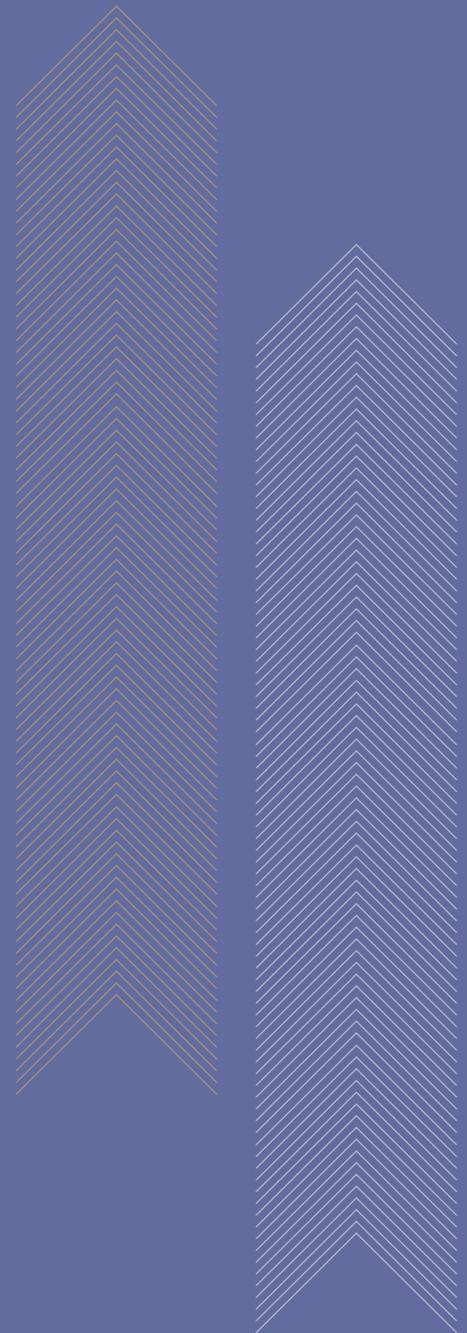
Two programmes of activity were developed in collaboration with the APs, tailored for KS3 or KS4 students. These programmes involved a wide variety of activities including visits to employers, colleges and training providers, careers talks, an enterprise challenge and work experience placements. 78 students from years 8 to 11 took part, with Careers Leaders selecting the group they thought would benefit most.

Outcomes for students and Careers Leaders

Students' self-esteem, self-awareness, self management and sense of belonging improved: the programme saw a 10pts increase in % students agreeing that they could manage their own time to meet a deadline and a 13pts increase in % students agreeing they could set goals for themselves.

Key aspects of students' career readiness also increased, including understanding of different career and education pathways and essential skills, such as creativity, talking in a group and presenting.

Careers Leaders reported improvements in student behaviour and attendance. Seeing their students engage in activities previously thought of as unsuitable changed their perceptions and led to some offering a broader range of activities.



Case study

The Leeds SEND Alumni Project

In 2021/22 specialist SEND careers programmes provider [Talentino](#), with support from West Yorkshire Combined Authority, explored whether participation in careers activities delivered by SEND Alumni (in the context of a good careers programme) supported SEND students at points of transition. It also set out to identify the approaches to recruitment, training and support that facilitate or act as barriers to successful delivery.

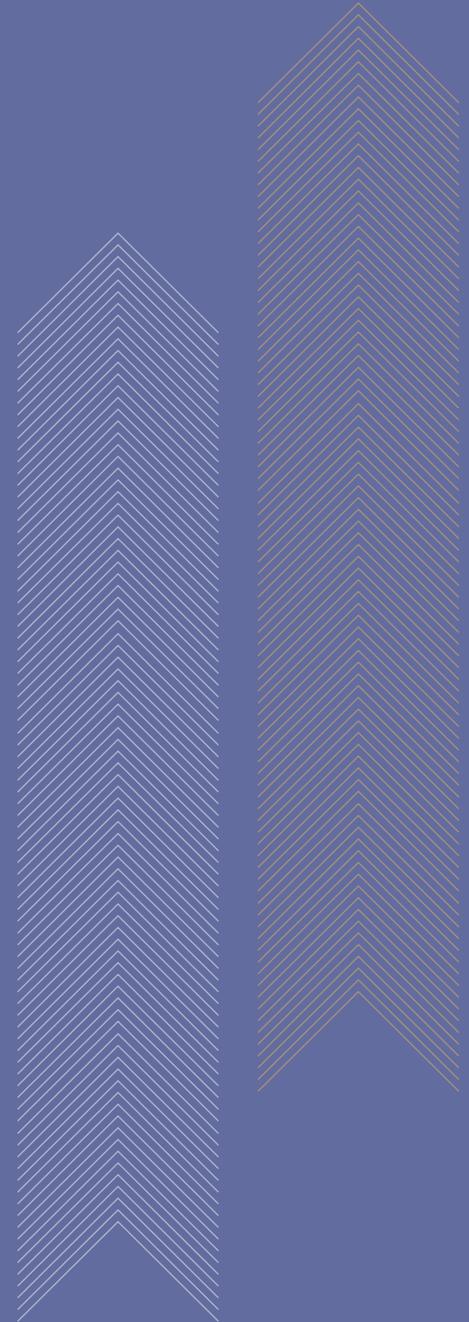
What they did

The project involved three schools and colleges with SEND Alumni and three comparison schools and colleges. In total, 19 Alumni were recruited, 17 of whom followed through to deliver careers activity to current students which included careers talks, Q and A sessions with students, support helping students with next steps and a visit to an Alumni setting. In the intervention schools, 34 current students were selected to participate in Alumni-delivered activity and in the project evaluation.

Outcomes for students and Careers Leaders

Key impacts of this alumni-delivered activity were on knowledge of careers and pathways, increased confidence in paid work, and clarity of plans for next steps. By contrast, there was less change in seeking advice and guidance and in self-report of the essential skills of staying positive and aiming high. There were also stories of students changing their plans as a result of meeting the alumni and of being more confident and less anxious about their futures.

Based on the reports of Careers Leaders, there is evidence that a well-established alumni network could be instrumental in widening SEND students' networks and social capital, and further tracking would be needed to establish the full outcomes.





The views of two young people: To what extent can careers education tackle disadvantage?

Elijah Denning and Mohammed Samir, members of the CEC's Youth Advisory Group

It is encouraging to see growing evidence of the role modern careers education can play in tackling disadvantage.

Disadvantage can be complex and multi-faceted and careers education is only one piece in the jigsaw, but it is an important piece.

What really stands out is the evidence that careers education has double the impact for economically-disadvantaged young people and how it is closing the disadvantage gap – meaning they are significantly less likely to become NEET.

Too often, young people in disadvantaged communities lack the connections and inspiration to look beyond current circumstance.

As someone from a FSM background, building an awareness of a wide range of industry roles can be eye opening. In disadvantaged communities, you often only see the people immediately around you. So careers education has a vital role in showing young people jobs and opportunities they've never before thought of.

It provides access to role models who can encourage aspiration and ambition, building networks beyond family and the local community that can provide guidance and open doors to opportunities. It shows you, if they can do it, so can I.

It also connects learning in lessons to real life, motivating study with a clear goal in mind and shining a light on the pathway to achieving that goal. Many young people find it hard to see how what they are learning applies in the real world. So it shows them that it's not just about the now – there's a bigger picture – it's a bridge to what happens next.

What we now need to do is generate greater fluidity between the world of education and employment to provide that spark of inspiration.

Through their engagement with education, employers and business professionals can reach a deeper understanding of long-standing and embedded barriers, help develop solutions and lift the communities they are part of.

Role models are particularly important as many view some professions as inaccessible for someone like them. So representation from people who come from similar backgrounds as role models is key. This also applies to Alternative Provision, where employers need to improve engagement, where meeting role models like you can prove that you too can have a great future.

Engagement from a wide diversity of employers and roles is also important, as young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may not know how their interests align with certain career paths or have the opportunity to explore the wide variety of careers out there. Often the only professional roles they will come into contact with are those met during their time in education. This particularly matters when it comes to key milestones in education (GCSE or FE options) in helping them choose the best path for them.

Teachers can have a greater influence on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, so developing relationships with business helps them bring relevance to the subjects they teach, demonstrating why it matters and is important for life beyond the school gates – that what they are learning has purpose.



How far is careers education embedded in the mainstream of school and college life?

Summary

- Careers is starting to impact on the curriculum and a whole school and college approach is emerging
- Careers Leaders are becoming more connected, able to link careers to education, employer and local growth agendas
- There is an opportunity to improve consistency and quality through peer challenge, teacher training, as well as earlier (primary) and parental engagement

Careers is starting to impact on the curriculum and a whole school approach is emerging

Careers is becoming more embedded across the curriculum, supporting teachers in schools and colleges to link lessons to life beyond education. Colleges and post-16 providers are leading the way. 91% reported most students had curriculum-related learning in maths; 93% in English, both double that of 2018/19. 79% of special and alternative provision (AP) schools reported most students had curriculum-related learning in maths; 80% in English, both up on last year. Mainstream schools reported increases too (Chart 9).

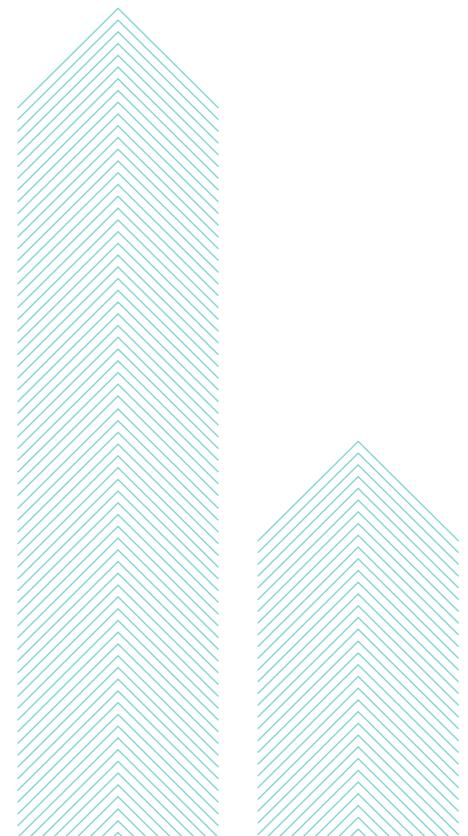
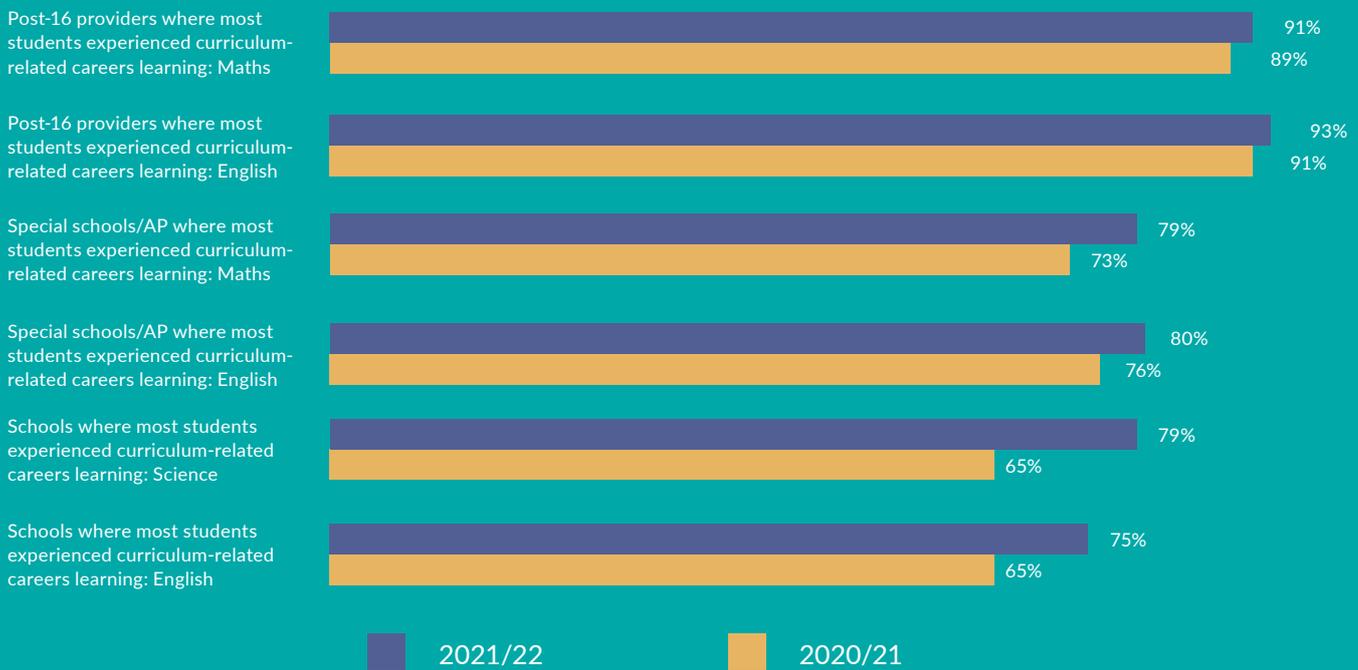


Chart 9: Curriculum learning in colleges and schools

% meeting this sub-benchmark



Source: 2020/21 and 2021/22 Compass data – Post-16 providers (colleges) N = 239(2021/22), 234 (2020/21); SEND and AP (Alternative Provision) N = 669 (2021/22), 550 (2020/21); 669Schools N= 3,238 (2021/22), 3,052 (2020/21);

Careers Leaders are a key part of the careers system and the professional focal point in schools and colleges for careers, providing leadership and direction. To enable a holistic approach for young people, modern careers education seeks to engage all teachers in a whole school approach. This is important as teachers are influencers of young people through the relationships they build and the curriculum they teach.³⁵ Evidence suggests that teachers are a well accessed source of careers support,³⁶ are keen to learn more and are particularly positive about apprenticeships.³⁷

Last year two Careers Hubs projects proved the appetite to broaden careers conversations and include the wider education workforce and employers.³⁸ Following four placement days in Berkshire businesses, participating science and maths teachers developed lesson plans that translated the curriculum into real world scenarios for Year 10 students. Over four out of five students involved said the programme had a positive impact on their understanding of jobs and careers; more than three quarters said it had influenced thoughts about future careers and three fifths said it helped them make specific plans after Year 11.

A similar project in Oxfordshire saw Year 8 teachers exposed to employers and local labour market information for three days. After this over three quarters of the Year 8 teachers said they would now draw on local labour market insights to shape the way they taught their subject. Their confidence in engaging local employers to support activities and learning increased and students reported a greater increase in motivation in the subjects covered by the programme (compared with other subjects).

“The extra knowledge has given me more confidence when speaking to students about their future careers.”
(Berkshire)



“I think the ‘Find Their Future’ programme has been a wonderful project to be part of. I have learned a lot about the local economy and it was invaluable having help to connect with employers – I didn’t have much success on my own!” (Oxford)

35 [Social Mobility Commission \(2021\). The road not taken: the drivers of course selection: The determinants and consequences of post-16 education choices. Social Mobility Commission](#)

36 [Stewart, H. \(2021\). Young people’s experiences of careers information, advice and guidance: Evidence from the second Longitudinal Study of Young People in England. London: Department for Education](#)

37 Research into teachers’ experiences of and attitudes towards universities and apprenticeships, shows that while 70% of teachers agree apprenticeships provide excellent future opportunities, only 26% feel confident advising students about how to find an apprenticeship. [Beck, T. \(2022\). New PLMR Education Report: Teachers’ experiences of and attitudes towards universities and apprenticeships. Birmingham: PLMR](#)

38 [The Careers & Enterprise Company \(2023\). Insight Briefing: The Potential of Teacher Encounters. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)

“The FSQ has been really useful to help me make changes to fill the gaps in students’ knowledge.” (Careers Leader)



If they’re quite low in their percentage [on FSQ score], I will then refer them back for a careers interview... I use it as a measure of prioritising my students.” (Careers Leader)

Careers Leaders are becoming more connected, able to link careers to education, employer and local growth agendas

Careers Leaders are increasingly using digital approaches to target, plan and evaluate their careers programmes. Last year the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) was launched, providing valuable feedback on student career readiness as explored earlier. This tool is still being rolled out and Careers Leaders are already seeing its benefit in planning and targeting careers activity.³⁹

Another example of the potential of a more data-driven approach was seen in early analysis of school activities data, suggesting that doing more careers related activities in an early term could be associated with higher career-readiness scores in later terms.⁴⁰ Next year a larger number of students completing FSQ at different times will allow for deeper investigation and greater confidence in findings. At large enough sample sizes, we will also be able to explore which activity types support which types of progress for which types of students.

Similarly, the careers system was more able to monitor student intentions and outcomes. Schools and colleges can track student interests and compare them with labour market needs and opportunities. Emerging CEC analysis of young peoples intended destinations (Chart 10) suggests that by Year 11 interests could be linked to some sectors reporting large skills gaps, with others not featuring as highly.

³⁹ See footnote 3

⁴⁰ This relationship was seen for 7,590 students with data available in 2021/22 on Compass+. Doing more activities in the autumn term was associated with slightly higher FSQ scores taken in the spring term. Relationships were stronger for FSM eligible students except for KS4 (not significant)

Chart 10: Top 4 student industry interests at Key Stage 4, compared with industry employment data

% students choosing this as a sector of interest



Healthcare

133,000 NHS vacancies in England alone - highest for 5 years (NHS Digital)

Creative

1.2 million new workers needed in creative industries over next decade - 42% of creative industry employers report skill shortages (NCFE)

Construction

Needs to recruit 53,000 new entrants a year over next 5 years to maintain output (CITB)

ONS vacancies highest since records began in 2003; Q4 2022 British Chambers of Commerce survey reveals firms facing the highest level of recruitment difficulties on record

Source: CEC Compass+ schools destination intentions data, 2021/22, N=19,021 students

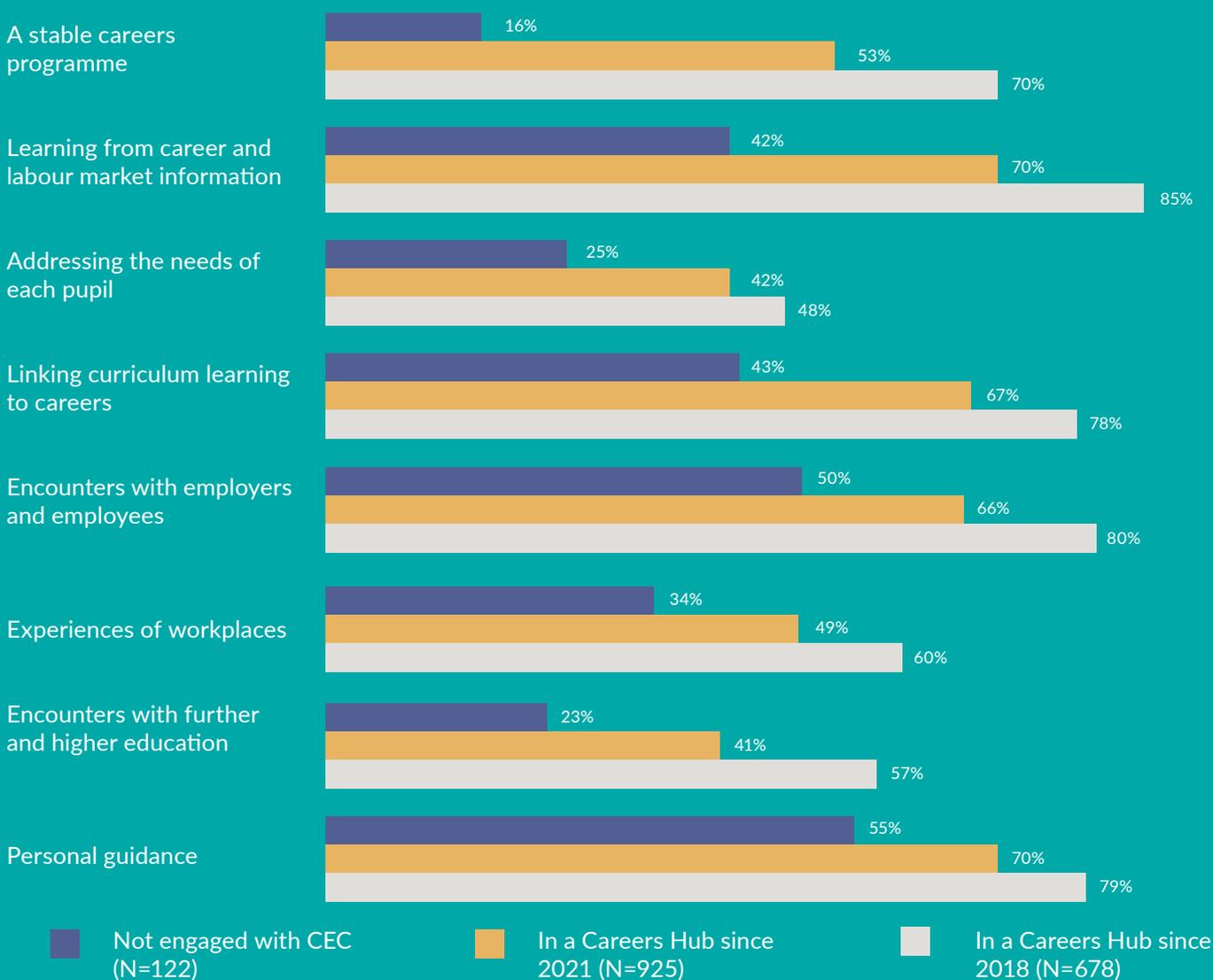
There is significant potential to use more of this kind of analysis at the local level and to work with local partners through [Local Skills Improvement Plans](#) (LSIPs). Disconnects between supply and demand can also inform careers programmes. For instance, considering linked career interests or making backup plans might lead naturally over time to more alignment, with smoother career transitions and less disappointment for young people. Likewise, an excess interest in engineering at Key Stage 4 might usefully support shortfalls in related sectors, like manufacturing.

Nationally schools are increasingly connected with their local careers systems and labour market, driving better provision. 90% of schools and colleges were members of Careers Hubs by the end of October 2022.⁴¹ The longer schools and colleges are in hubs, the better the experience for young people (Chart 11).

⁴¹ 78% of AP (N=320) and 76% of SEND (N=975) institutions were in a Careers Hub in January 2023, compared to 89% of colleges (N=305) and 95% of mainstream schools (N=3,422). In total 4,500 out of 5,022 eligible institutions equating to 90% coverage across all institutions.

Chart 11: Gatsby Benchmark achievement by level of engagement with Careers Hub

% schools and colleges fully achieving each benchmark



Source: CEC Compass and management data

Employers observed progress last year too. CEC Enterprise Adviser business volunteers who work with schools through Careers Hubs reported the longer their engagement with schools the greater the improvement in young people's career readiness. Over four fifths would recommend the role of enterprise adviser and over three quarters see it as a cost-effective way for businesses to engage.⁴²

⁴² The Careers & Enterprise Company (2022). EA Survey 2022 Insight Briefing. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company

Case study

How Oldham College has partnered with their Enterprise Adviser to enrich their careers education programme

Oldham College is a Further Education college in Oldham, Greater Manchester, with 5,500 students on roll and a diverse demographic. They have worked with their Enterprise Adviser (EA) - business volunteer - Stephen from furniture retailer Sofology through the Greater Manchester Careers Hub since 2019. The College wanted to work directly with employers to improve the relevance of their careers programme to the world of work, including giving students more opportunities to meet a range of businesses like Sofology from growth sectors across Greater Manchester, such as retail, logistics, business and professional services.

What they did

The EA supported the Senior Leadership team and two Careers Leaders, first conducting a comprehensive review of the careers programme, identifying gaps and priorities whilst considering the wider strategic direction and focus of the College. In particular they focused on increasing connections with local businesses to give pupils meaningful opportunities to engage with other local employers like Wilmott Dixon and First Choice Homes.

Sofology also took students through the potential progression and career paths that retail could offer them. They shared their own career experiences and learnings, including a variety of avenues to higher careers in the world of retail through a series of talks, question and answer sessions and supporting students with CV and interview skills.

Stephen worked to enhance specific activities offered by the careers programme, such as a bespoke weeklong programme for International Women's Day and International Men's Day (involving Sofology's CEO) and an online summer programme focused on wellbeing for students, mirroring Sofology's own corporate programme.

Outcomes for students and Careers Leaders

Through the partnership with the College, the EA was able to bring business experience and knowledge, supporting young people to widen their horizons, become life ready and giving them invaluable opportunities to interact with role models in local employers.

The College has since adopted some of the wellbeing support materials on a permanent basis and they form part of the induction for students as they commence their studies. Sofology is about to begin two-way learning opportunities with the college tutors, taking some of them into the business and inducting them as if they were new hires. This will help them understand the onboarding process so they can then take this knowledge back for the benefit of students in the classroom.





There is an opportunity to improve consistency and quality through peer challenge, earlier education and parental engagement

There is scope to improve consistency and quality in the careers system, whilst developing a more joined up experience for young people across their education journey.

The Careers Impact Review System, being piloted with 100 schools and colleges this year, aims to bring peer challenge and expert review to drive continuous improvement. This approach is in line with other successful school improvement models.⁴³

There is significant potential for teacher training, including teacher encounters with industry, to drive further awareness of career pathways, particularly non-academic routes, and professional development for the wider education workforce.

A more holistic careers education journey is possible through earlier engagement at primary level and through supporting parents.



A head teacher's view: How far is careers education embedded in the mainstream of school and college life?

Rachel Kitley, Principal of Cowes Enterprise College

In 2019, we introduced our Maritime Futures Curriculum, a comprehensive educational and careers framework which fully embraces the Isle of Wight's rich seafaring heritage. Through this, we integrate the island's maritime past – and present – into everything we do as a school. Coastal communities can be perceived as disadvantaged and in decline, but we're determined to change this stereotype, and prove to young people there are a huge number of exciting opportunities available to them. Up to 10% of our lessons in Key Stage 3 are linked to this golden thread, and we take practical steps to bring this legacy to life; arranging school trips and practical sessions to make sure we're fully engaging our students.

This process has also provided us with an excellent platform for careers advice and guidance. We frequently invite employers from across the maritime sector into the school to share their experiences, and more importantly, showcase the options which are available to our young people. By making these careers tangible, we hope to inspire the next generation, and give them the confidence to pursue jobs and opportunities across the sector.

Maritime Futures has been central to our success in recent years and resulted in better engagement and attainment for students at Key Stage 3, with improvements greatest for disadvantaged students. We are now hard at work sharing this vision with maritime schools across the country. Our 2023 Maritime Showcase will be supporting primaries and secondaries to develop and implement their own regionally specific take on the Maritime Curriculum. Already, we have worked with schools in London, Ipswich, Grimsby, Hull, Gosport and elsewhere, and it has been encouraging to see these schools embrace the ethos which underpins our approach.

What I hope our work showcases is that high-quality education and comprehensive careers advice are not mutually exclusive. The two can co-exist in schools, and even better, feed into one another and create a holistic curriculum. Not every school will have links to a maritime past, of course. Yet the process of building relationships with employers; giving students a tangible feel for the careers which may be out there; embedding practical insights into lessons; and capitalising on the industries and opportunities which surround every school, is both invaluable and achievable.



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