



# Making it Meaningful in Practice: Benchmark 7

## Context, Planning, Implementation and Reflection on Benchmark 7 Activity

This resource supports Careers Leaders to embed encounters with providers of all routes available to students at key transitions within a progressive careers programme. The following guiding principles will support an approach to Benchmark 7 and to Provider Access Legislation, whilst being aligned to Benchmarks 1 and 3 including setting aims, planning meaningful delivery and impact evaluation of activity.

From January 2023 the updated provider access legislation (PAL) specifies schools must provide at least six encounters for all their students:

- Two encounters for pupils during the 'first key phase' (year 8 or 9) that are mandatory for all pupils to attend
- Two encounters for pupils during the 'second key phase' (year 10 or 11) that are mandatory for all pupils to attend
- Two encounters for pupils during the 'third key phase' (year 12 or 13) that are mandatory for the school to put on but optional for pupils to attend

To promote the quality and consistency of provider encounters, the legislation includes a new set of minimum information that the school must ask the provider to give pupils during each encounter - details are provided [here](#).

# Benchmark 7: Guiding principles

To support a meaningful approach to Benchmark 7, this resource is underpinned by the following guiding principles:



## Start early

- Implement a progressive programme that broadens horizons, and scaffolds development of the knowledge and understanding required for students to identify their best next steps, from when students join you



## Be informed by trends and success

- Use destination data and LMI to identify any gaps and implement appropriate intervention
- Use relevant destinations data and LMI to inform continuous improvement
- Harness employer and alumni voice through multi-Benchmark approaches where young people can be supported to understand learning opportunities through encounters and experiences of the workplace



## True advocacy

- Grow your expertise in all career pathways and opportunities for young people
- Become an expert in the latest vocational and technical opportunities for your young people



## Challenge misconception and assumptions head on

- Consider all stakeholders and their knowledge, understanding and potential misconceptions



## Equity of access to information and understanding

- All pathways for all young people
- Provide equality of access to information and understanding



# Context and Strategy

## Guiding Principles: Start early and Be informed by trends and success



Embedding activity within a progressive programme that **starts early** supports learners to incrementally build the relevant knowledge, understanding and ability to make informed and aspirational decisions at key transition points.

There is a wide range of learning and understanding to be broken down and scaffolded in supporting learners to understand and truly consider all available routes, including technical and vocational.

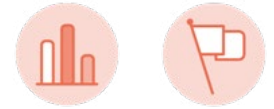
When focusing on Benchmark 7, we can create frameworks with specific pupil outcomes to support learners to make more informed and aspirational decisions, based on a confident knowledge and understanding of all available routes at key transition points\*.

An example set of pupil outcomes to scaffold knowledge and understanding of available routes is shown here (not all activities listed for inspiration are PAL compliant but at least 2 per key stage could be if they are delivered in a way that meets the PAL criteria):

	KS3: Activities should enable pupils to:	KS4: Activities should enable pupils to:
<b>Information</b>	<p>Name the available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational</p> <p>Find and use the National Careers Service website</p> <p>Identify and challenge misconceptions relating to the available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational</p>	<p>Explain how all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational, can support their future career aspirations and reflect on which option(s) may be best for them</p> <p>Confidently navigate the National Career Service website</p> <p>Identify and challenge misconceptions relating to the available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational</p>
<b>Activity inspiration</b>	<p>'Provider Speed Dating' experience with focus on myth busting</p>	<p>Provider Speed Dating/Pathways event with structured opportunities for pupils to engage with providers of available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational</p>
<b>Learner Experience</b>	<p>Articulate what it is like to learn in the available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational</p> <p>Consider how available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational, could support their career aspirations</p>	<p>Identify which of the available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational, would best suit them, their learning style and their future career aspirations</p>

	<b>KS3: Activities should enable pupils to:</b>	<b>KS4: Activities should enable pupils to:</b>
<b>Activity inspiration</b>	Provider alumni engagement experience with alumni from all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational	Immersive provider visits to allow pupils to experience what it is like to learn in in all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational
<b>Pathways to Work</b>	Identify and recall a range of roles and sectors where technical education qualifications or apprenticeships might lead	Compare a range of roles and sectors where available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational might lead
<b>Activity inspiration</b>	'Business Safari'/Local employer experience of the workplace visit with a focus on employee pathways into roles and sector	Career Speed Dating with a specific focus on roles, learning pathways and what working life is like
<b>Recruitment &amp; Selection</b>	Describe the application processes relating to available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational  Consider the importance of representing themselves well for selection	Identify where and how they apply for all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational  Explain what skills will be required for different selection processes
<b>Activity inspiration</b>	Mock Assessment Centre experience with introduction to aptitude testing	CV/Interview feedback workshops supported by a range of providers and employers
<b>Labour Market Information</b>	Feel informed and inspired about regional and national growth sectors and opportunities in the labour market relating to all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational  Identify and access reliable and accessible sources of LMI including the National Careers Service website	Explore and understand regional and national growth sectors and opportunities in the labour market relating to all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational  Research labour market and options via reliable and accessible sources of LMI, including the National Careers Service website
<b>Activity inspiration</b>	Interactive Careers Fair with LMI workshop/quiz focus	Experience of the workplace visits to explore growth sector and labour market opportunities
<b>Learner Skills, Knowledge &amp; Experience</b>	Identify key knowledge, skills and experiences and be aware of how these relate to positive transitions and career development relating to available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational  Reflect on their own knowledge, skills and experiences and how they will support positive transitions and career development	Develop key knowledge, skills and experiences and be aware of how these relate to positive transitions and career development relating to available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational
<b>Activity inspiration</b>	Employer/provider Q&A with a focus on key knowledge, skills and experiences that support positive transitions and career development	Experience of the workplace designed to support pupils to develop key knowledge, skills and experience that will support with positive transitions to all available routes post 16 and post 18, including technical and vocational

## Guiding Principles: Be informed by trends and success and True advocacy



Consider how LMI, Destinations Data and measuring students' current careers knowledge and skills can support you to make sure that **all** students have equal access to understanding the value of **all** available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational.

### Step 1: Knowledge of all available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational

It is important to build your own knowledge of the options before planning a programme of opportunities for your students. Visit the Resource Directory page on '[Supporting students and key stakeholders to understand all pathways](#)' to access useful resources and support that can be used by you to upskill, and be shared with key stakeholders covering **all** available routes at including technical and vocational.

### Step 2: LMI

Access relevant regional and national LMI to shape key encounters to meet the needs of your students in the context of your school, special school or college.

Careful and targeted use of LMI provides key information about sectors, jobs forecasts and the skills and qualities employers look for in their workforce.

Example sources of LMI:

- Office for National Statistics ([ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk))
- Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics ([nomisweb.co.uk](https://nomisweb.co.uk))
- Work with your Enterprise Co-ordinator and/or Enterprise Adviser to understand key regional LMI



### Step 3: Destinations Data

Access the '[Collecting and Reviewing Evidence Guidance Document](#)' for support with how to review Destinations Data to shape key encounters to meet the needs of your students.

Careers Leaders can also access this recorded webinar on effective use of Destinations Data [here](#)

### Step 4: Measuring students' current career knowledge and skills

The [Future Skills Questionnaire](#) gives students the opportunity to reflect on their career-related knowledge and skills. The tool can inform continuous improvement and impact evaluation.

The tool can also be used to help identify students who may be at risk of NEET, track students who are responding consistently negatively to the FSQ questions and use responses to tailor support and intervention.

"An effective careers programme is tailored to the audience. With the FSQ we can amend the careers programme based on the students' previous experiences and aspirations. I want to use it to identify the gaps and to celebrate the positives."

Careers Leader



# Planning

## Guiding Principles: True advocacy, Challenge misconceptions and assumptions and Equity of access to information and understanding



What	Why	How	Completed
<b>Consider your audience</b>	To support all students to have equity of understanding of the value of all available routes available to them at key transitions, including technical and vocational	<p>Consider how cohorts and groups are supported to access encounters with providers of all routes available to them at key transitions</p> <p>Challenge any unconscious bias in the processes for identification of students/cohorts accessing an encounter and ensure that all students attend at least the minimum number of PAL compliant encounters</p> <p>Refer to <a href="#">Future Skills Questionnaire</a> and Destination Data analysis, etc to inform identification and selection of students</p>	
<b>Select relevant learning aims, outcomes and objectives based on the needs of students</b>	To support the encounter to contribute to a progressive careers programme building on what has gone before and preparing students for what is to come	Refer to the Context and strategy section above for inspiration and for more insight refer to the CDI's <a href="#">Career Development Framework</a>	
<b>Decide if the encounter would be better delivered as a virtual, blended or physical encounter</b>	To maximise the value of encounter	Consider learner outcomes, availability of providers and time/space/tech capacity available for the encounter	
<b>Provider/employer provider briefing and preparation</b>	To maximise value of provider/ employer/employee expertise and time by ensuring activity is aligned to wider aims of Benchmark 7 and to the specific learner needs and outcomes of the activity	To ensure that the encounter is accessible and differentiated to engage all participants liaise with the SENCO and other colleagues to ensure that all students' needs are met and that key contextual information about student(s) is shared with providers as appropriate	

What	Why	How	Completed
<p><b>Learner briefing and preparation</b></p>	<p>To ensure learners are clear on the value of the encounter and how it fits within a progressive careers programme</p>	<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students setting their own objectives for the event</li> <li>• Pre event research tasks on relevant pathways/LMI – this may be particularly beneficial when preparing young people with SEND for an encounter to allow them to ask questions in advance and manage expectations</li> </ul> <p>Consider how pre-event tasks may also engage parents/carers through homework research or crafting questions for providers ahead of the event</p>	
<p><b>Staff briefing and preparation</b></p>	<p>To support staff knowledge of all available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational, and to maximise the value of the encounter</p>	<p>Share specific learner outcomes and key LMI and pathways for the session, and consider how <a href="#">My Learning My Future Guides</a> can support staff with LMI, pathway and sector exploration</p> <p><a href="#">My Skills My Future</a> can be used by staff to explore pathways for young people with SEND</p> <p>Consider inviting link governor or share a briefing for SLT/governors ahead of the encounter to raise awareness of the value and scope of the encounter</p>	
<p><b>Parent/carer briefing and preparation</b></p>	<p>To support parent/carer knowledge of all available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational, and to aid well-informed and balanced careers conversations at home</p>	<p>Share specific learner outcomes and key LMI and pathway information for the session, and consider how the <a href="#">Talking Futures</a> resources can best support parents/carers to have relevant careers conversations at home</p> <p>Allow parents to submit questions prior to the event so that you can tailor content to their needs and evaluate the effectiveness of the session for future improvements using this <a href="#">evaluation pack</a>. You can also direct parents to <a href="#">Gatsby's parent website</a> so that they can continue to learn about pathways from home</p>	





# Implementation

What	Why	How	Completed
<b>Ensure the encounter involves two-way interaction between students and appropriate provider staff</b>	To ensure students understand and see the value of all available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational	Consider all possible activities, depending on the desired learner outcomes  Consider if the encounter can support students to develop relevant skills, knowledge and experience to make successful transitions to all available routes, including technical and vocational	
<b>Support students to actively participate in the encounter</b>	To ensure students understand and see the value of all available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational	Consider providing students with something to capture their learning and understanding during the experience, ensuring that it is an appropriate format for their needs	
<b>Provide students with reflection time and tools</b>	To evidence that the student has reflected on the experience and that it has shaped their thinking about future choices	Consider student access to online applications/learning logs, which are appropriate to their individual needs	
<b>Record each activity on Compass+ (not applicable at FE colleges)</b>	To build an overview of encounters with providers available to students at key transitions within your progressive careers programme	Find out more about Compass+ <a href="#">here</a>	





# Reflection & Progression

What	Why	How	Completed
<b>Support learners to continue to reflect and learn from the encounter/experience</b>	<p>To support learners in incrementally building their knowledge and understanding of all available routes, including technical and vocational, and to support them to make informed decisions at key transition points</p> <p>To ensure that career activities are followed up and supported, not a 'one off' experience</p>	<p>Ensure that the encounter/experience sits within a progressive careers programme</p> <p>Provide students with access to tools and sources of <a href="#">information</a> to find out more about the learning opportunities to which they have been introduced</p>	
<b>Gather feedback from all stakeholders about encounters with providers of all available routes at key transitions, including technical and vocational</b>	To inform continuous improvement and impact evaluation of your careers provision	<p>To ensure that next steps planned within your programme meet student needs</p> <p>Consider approaches to feedback highlighted in the <a href="#">Impact Evaluation Toolkit</a> and <a href="#">Collecting and Reviewing Impact Evidence Guidance</a></p>	
<b>Use Compass+ to record key feedback themes (not applicable at FE colleges)</b>	To support with evaluation of your careers provision	Find out more about Compass+ <a href="#">here</a>	
<b>Share key successes and scope of encounter with key stakeholders</b>	To raise profile of value of careers provision	<p>Consider press releases alongside key employer partners and how to share value and impact of encounter on social media/website, etc.</p> <p>Include key messaging and successes from the encounter within reports/ updates to SLT and governors</p>	
<b>Share best practice</b>	To inform practice and to support professional development in your school and within Enterprise Adviser Network/Careers Hub	Work with your Enterprise Co-ordinator/Careers Hub Lead to develop a case study highlighting impact of encounter	



## Further CPD and resource

- [Encounters with Higher and Further education - Practical ideas for achieving Gatsby Benchmark 7](#): This report provides practical insights from Careers Leaders about how to deliver meaningful encounters with further and higher education for young people in secondary schools, colleges and special schools. It is targeted at schools and colleges seeking ideas for how to improve their provision
- [Technical Education Pathways Resource](#): These resources (created in partnership with the Association of Employment and Learning Providers - AELP) which will support you in promoting the wide range of technical education pathways which are available for young people. The resources are designed for careers colleagues to use to explain these pathways to young people as well as promoting the wider work of the Training Provider (ITP) sector
- Our training courses help Careers Leaders understand their role and develop the skills required to strategically embed a careers programme in their school or college. All Careers Leaders working in state-funded secondary schools and colleges, including SEN and AP, are eligible to apply for a fully funded training place. Visit [our website](#) which includes all the information you need to choose the right course for you
- For a deeper reflection on 'Making it Meaningful', refer to the [Making it Meaningful toolkit](#) for further resource and support



Where does Parental Engagement fit in your setting? Get thinking about how to amplify parental engagement in careers with these three starters:

1. Does parental engagement feature in your development plan? Consider how careers could be a positive vehicle for parental engagement by mapping a parent learning journey against a pupil learning journey using [this parental engagement roadmap](#)
2. When planning for parental engagement in careers, consider the principles of good parental engagement and Parent Kind's Blueprint for Parental Engagement. Guidance on these can be found on page 6 onwards of the [Talking Futures Toolkit](#)
3. Remember you're not alone in engaging parents in careers. Gain buy-in from SLT by using this flexible [PowerPoint presentation and handout](#) and equip other members of staff to engage parents in careers using this [whole-staff CPD session](#)

