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# GOOD CAREER GUIDANCE

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL  
NEEDS AND DISABILITIES SECTOR



GATSBY

THE CAREERS &  
ENTERPRISE  
COMPANY



[www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk](http://www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk)

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# FOREWORD

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It is my ambition that **every** young person should experience world-class career guidance, framed by the Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Career Guidance. As I saw when I was a headteacher, career guidance is vital for social mobility. It is about showing young people – whatever their circumstances – the options open to them, and helping them to make the best choices for their future.

When we piloted the Benchmarks in schools and colleges in North East England, between 2015 and 2017, we began to build up an understanding of how the Benchmarks can be implemented in special schools and for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

We consulted with experts from special schools and colleges, together with SEND specialists from mainstream schools, who work with young people with a very wide range of SEND. The clear message we received was that the Benchmarks make a difference and that same framework of high expectations should be available to **all students**.

But we recognise that some of the Benchmarks may be implemented in a different way in special schools and colleges, alternative provision, and for some students with SEND in the mainstream. We recognise that the professionals who work with these young people every day are the experts and are best placed to adapt their career

guidance activity to the different needs of their students.

We have collected together a set of expert perspectives, from leading practitioners across the sector and from national SEND organisations. I hope these will help you on your journey to embed the Benchmarks in your setting, and put in place a career guidance programme that supports each and every student.

The Gatsby Foundation and The Careers & Enterprise Company are grateful to Disability Rights UK and the many other specialist partners in the sector who have helped us with this work. There is so much good practice already going on around the country, and we hope this publication is both a celebration of great practice and a source from which you can learn.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Holman". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sir John Holman,  
Senior Advisor to the Gatsby Foundation  
Author of *Good Career Guidance*



I have been hugely impressed by the range of different types of provision, including special schools and specialist colleges, that are confidently using the Benchmarks to improve career guidance for their students.



Helping schools and colleges prepare and inspire young people for the fast-changing world of work is at the heart of what we do at The Careers & Enterprise Company.

We believe the Gatsby Benchmarks provide a robust and high-quality framework for career guidance. They help to deliver a system of high aspirations for **all** students in **all** types of settings.

We have been working closely with the Gatsby Foundation and other partners to make sure we understand how the Benchmarks can be implemented for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

We have already published practical information and guidance for schools and colleges in our *SEND Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit*, developed in partnership with sector experts Talentino and the Career Development Institute. We also work with more than a third of special schools through our Enterprise Adviser Network – something we hope to build upon over the coming years. The Network provides each school with a dedicated senior business volunteer to help provide strategic careers support and strengthen links to local employers.

And we have also launched two Careers Hubs focused specifically on SEND, to provide strategic, joined-up support to young people with SEND.

We therefore see and hear about the excellent work taking place in all types

of schools and colleges throughout the country.

I have been hugely impressed by the range of different types of provision, including special schools and specialist colleges, that are confidently using the Benchmarks to improve career guidance for their students, and in many cases they are well on the way to meeting all eight Benchmarks.

It is clear to us that professional judgement is critical when designing and delivering an excellent careers programme which meets the needs of young people with SEND, including high-quality employer encounters.

I hope that reading through this publication, and seeing the reflections of experienced teachers and other experts, will help practitioners envision how the Benchmarks can be put into practice for young people with a wide range of needs.

The Careers & Enterprise Company is pleased to have worked on this publication with the Gatsby Foundation. We hope it will be a source of inspiration as you work to ensure all students with SEND get the very best careers and enterprise education.

Claudia Harris,  
Chief Executive of The Careers  
& Enterprise Company



Disability Rights UK is a national charity. We are ‘disabled people leading change’, working for equal participation for all. We support disabled people to take up education and employment opportunities and develop their careers through innovative projects, guides and leadership programmes.

Young disabled people aged 16–24 are more likely than other groups to end up Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). Supporting this group requires a stronger focus on their guidance needs, starting with independent careers advice in schools. The Gatsby Benchmarks provide an important framework for ensuring that young disabled people’s aspirations are fully considered, supporting them to reach their potential.

All of the Benchmarks are important, but we particularly value the focus on gaining experiences of the workplace and employer encounters, which historically have always presented additional barriers for young disabled people.



Rabia Lemahieu,  
Disability and Skills Manager, Disability Rights UK



Students from Catcote Academy discussing careers with Sir John Holman  
Photo credit: Hartlepool Mail

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## ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

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THIS PUBLICATION AIMS TO INSPIRE CAREERS LEADERS, TEACHERS AND ALL THOSE WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES TO USE THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS TO CREATE A STRONG CAREER GUIDANCE PROGRAMME FOR EACH AND EVERY YOUNG PERSON.

Through this collection we have gathered together the views of leading practitioners and national experts on the importance of career guidance for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Each describes how they, or those they support, have successfully used the Benchmarks to deliver better career guidance for students with a wide range of needs and disabilities. The articles are drawn from many different types of provision, from residential schools and specialist colleges to mainstream schools.

We hope the stories and messages within this publication give you confidence when shaping your careers programme for students with SEND.

### FURTHER SUPPORT

This publication sits alongside The Careers & Enterprise Company's *SEND Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit*, developed with sector experts Talentino and the Career Development Institute. The toolkit provides detailed advice and ideas to help you meet each Benchmark.

There are numerous organisations available to support you as you develop your careers programme, and many have contributed to this publication. Some of them are listed in the *Further Support* section, and on our website.

Our website address is [www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk](http://www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk)



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# THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD CAREER GUIDANCE FOR ALL STUDENTS

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THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS FOR GOOD CAREER GUIDANCE HELP SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES TO GIVE THEIR STUDENTS THE INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE THEY NEED TO MAKE INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.

Good career guidance can have a profound impact on social mobility, as it ensures that each and every young person, whatever their needs, background or ambitions, knows the options open to them to fulfil their potential.

This is particularly important for the more than one million young people in England recognised as having SEND. Far too often these young people can be held back by negative stereotypes and assumptions about their limitations.

Only through schools and colleges can we be sure that every young person gets the advice they need, and that this advice is in their best interest, and theirs alone.





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During my time at National Grid, we made a commitment to help inspire and prepare young people with special educational needs and disabilities for the world of work.

We did this because we were passionate about helping all young people to realise their full potential, whatever their background or circumstances. But it was also of huge benefit to us as an employer to unlock the potential of these students. We believe all employers should be open to working with schools and colleges in this way.

I welcome this publication which I hope can encourage many more employers to get involved, so that all young people can receive the careers support that they deserve.

”

Steve Holliday,  
Vice Chairman of The Careers & Enterprise Company Board  
and former Chief Executive of National Grid

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## THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS

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THE BENCHMARKS WERE FIRST PUBLISHED IN GATSBY'S GOOD CAREER GUIDANCE REPORT IN 2014. DEVELOPED BY PROFESSOR SIR JOHN HOLMAN, WORKING WITH EXPERTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF DERBY, THEY PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR WORLD-CLASS CAREER GUIDANCE IN SCHOOLS, BASED ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE.

On publication of the report, Gatsby funded a two-year pilot of the Benchmarks which spanned schools and colleges of varying sizes, locations and Ofsted ratings, including a Pupil Referral Unit. The pilot was a great success, with dramatic improvements being made across the wide variety of settings. At the start of the pilot, in 2015, 50 per cent of the participating institutions were achieving none of the Benchmarks, and no institution was achieving more than three. Just two years later, 85 per cent were achieving six or more Benchmarks, with three institutions achieving all eight. We have seen improvements in the career readiness of students, a reduction in the number of students Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and indications of positive changes in academic performance.



By implementing all eight Benchmarks, the school has seen a dramatic fall in the number of NEET students from 60 per cent to 9 per cent in two years.



Ron Cruikshanks,  
The Link School, Sunderland



We would encourage any school starting out on their journey with the Benchmarks to use their knowledge and experience of SEND to develop a programme that meets the needs of their students. There is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach.



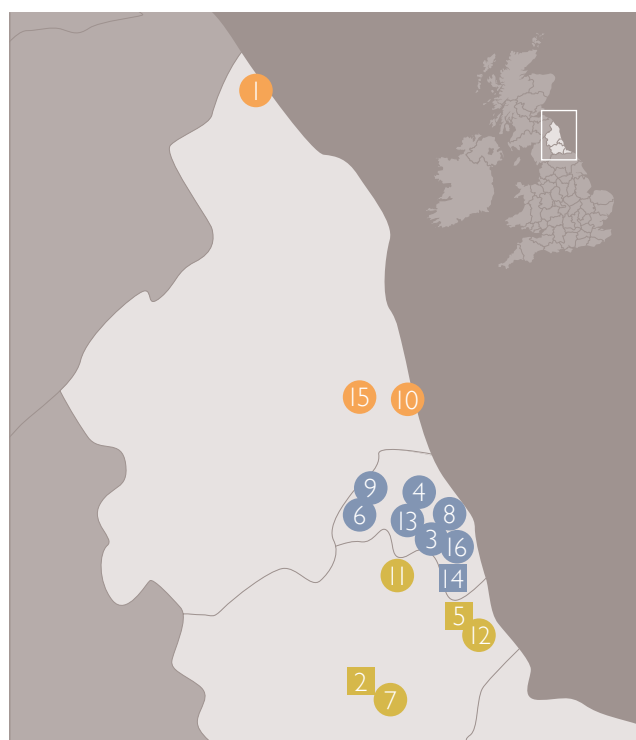
Emma Steele,  
Cleaswell Hill School, Northumberland

Following the success of the Benchmarks pilot in the North East of England, the wording of the Benchmarks was refined, in consultation with a number of colleges, to produce a version specifically aligned with colleges. The Benchmarks for both schools and colleges were adopted into the Government’s statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England from 2018.

#### EXPERTISE FROM THE SEND SECTOR

As part of the pilot, experienced SEND practitioners from across the North East, along with national advocates, formed a SEND working group. Drawing on their expertise from across special and mainstream schools, and developing careers programmes in different settings, they gave us the clear message that the Benchmarks provide an aspirational framework that works for each and every student.

The North East continues to refine its approach to providing career guidance to students with SEND, and now runs one of the first Careers Hubs to have a specific focus on SEND.



The schools and colleges that took part in the North East Career Benchmark Pilot:

- 1 Berwick Academy
- 2 Bishop Auckland College
- 3 Castle View Enterprise Academy
- 4 Churchill Community College
- 5 East Durham College
- 6 Excelsior Academy
- 7 Greenfield Community College
- 8 Harton Academy
- 9 Kenton School
- 10 Duke’s Secondary School
- 11 Park View School
- 12 The Academy at Shotton Hall
- 13 St Joseph’s Catholic Academy
- 14 Sunderland College
- 15 The King Edward VI School
- 16 The Link School

#### KEY

- ● ● Secondary School
- Further Education College

## GATSBY CAREER BENCHMARKS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Benchmark	Summary
1 A stable careers programme	Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by students, parents, teachers, governors and employers.
2 Learning from career and labour market information	Every student, and their parents, should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make the best use of available information.
3 Addressing the needs of each student	Students have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each student. A school's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.
4 Linking curriculum learning to careers	All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths.
5 Encounters with employers and employees	Every student should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes.
6 Experience of workplaces	Every student should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.
7 Encounters with further and higher education	All students should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.
8 Personal guidance	Every student should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a careers adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all students but should be timed to meet their individual needs.

## GATSBY CAREER BENCHMARKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN COLLEGES

Benchmark	Summary
1 A stable careers programme	Every college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by learners, parents, teachers, employers and other agencies.
2 Learning from career and labour market information	Every learner, and their parents (where appropriate), should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make the best use of available information.
3 Addressing the needs of each student	Learners have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each learner. A college's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.
4 Linking curriculum learning to careers	All subject staff should link curriculum learning with careers, even on courses which are not specifically occupation-led. For example, STEM subject staff should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths. Study programmes should also reflect the importance of maths and English as a key expectation from employers.
5 Encounters with employers and employees	Every learner should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities, including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes, and should include learners' own part-time employment where it exists.
6 Experience of workplaces	Every learner should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.
7 Encounters with further and higher education	All learners should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes, and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.
8 Personal guidance	Every learner should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a careers adviser, who could be internal (a member of college staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available for all learners whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all learners, but should be timed to meet individual needs.

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# PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES SECTOR

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## CONTRIBUTORS



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Careers Leader, and Chair of the North East  
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## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# COUNCIL FOR DISABLED CHILDREN



Dame Christine Lenehan, Director

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) is the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector, bringing together professionals, practitioners and policy-makers. It works collaboratively, from policy to practice, to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people.

The CDC has a clear vision that disabled children's needs are met, their aspirations supported and their rights respected.

We work with government, local agencies and public bodies to challenge and champion policy and practice, using the knowledge we gain from working closely with sector leaders and front-line practitioners. Our aims include helping all parties to understand current legislation and to put it into practice, through resource sharing and training. We believe that by sharing what we learn, collaborating with others and building people's skills and knowledge, we can make a difference to the lives of children, young people and their families.



Good careers advice and guidance can make a huge difference to the lives of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Our young people want to fulfil their ambitions and be contributing members of their community. The Gatsby Benchmarks help deliver the information and encounters that will allow this to take place, and I welcome their adoption by government.



### RAISING ASPIRATIONS STARTS WITH LEADERSHIP

For many students, it is the poverty of aspiration rather than their impairments which hold them back, including the aspirations adults hold for young people as well as those the young people hold themselves. We know that good leadership in all settings sets the tone for what's possible, and I was pleased to see that the Benchmarks have leadership at their heart, as demonstrated by Benchmark 1: *A Stable Careers Programme*. This Benchmark calls for an identified and appropriately trained Careers Leader, with the explicit backing of the senior leadership team, to drive the programme forward in each school or college.



The Benchmarks can only develop young people's aspirations if the school leadership team are completely behind the programme. I have been fortunate to see this happen already in a number of schools and colleges, who cater to young people with a range of severe and profound impairments, where career guidance has been made a priority and all students have had the 'meaningful encounters' outlined in the Benchmarks.

### PREPARING FOR TRANSITIONS

For students with SEND, the year 9 transition review provides a key opportunity to discuss career aspirations. The development of both the Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan and SEN Support approaches, described under the Children and Families Act 2014, provides a framework for these discussions with young people. CDC has produced [resources](#) to help practitioners with this process, including advice around higher education and employment – one of the Preparing for Adulthood outcomes in the Government's SEND Code of Practice 2015. Evidence of long-term planning for employment as part of an EHC plan can include skills development, vocational profiles and support to identify opportunities such as work experience, supported internships, apprenticeships and volunteering. We believe that Benchmark 2: *Learning from Career and Labour Market Information* can help young people with SEND develop aspirations which take into account the opportunities in their local area. This is particularly important from year 9 onwards, as the journey into adulthood builds momentum and career aspirations often become more fully formed.

### IDENTIFYING WHAT MATTERS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

When applying the Benchmarks for students with SEND, it is important to take into account the voices of the students themselves. As part of a national programme of work with the disabled children's charity [KIDS](#), focussed on young people's participation, CDC has produced a series of worksheets with young people from around the country on the issues that matter to them. The first explores different methods and levels of participation, which may be of

interest to practitioners who are not sure where to start with this process. The second concerns work experience, and details many considerations that will help young people with SEND have a successful set of encounters in line with Benchmark 6: *Experiences of Workplaces*. This includes giving the young person space to discuss what support they may need before they begin work experience, giving the employer notice around what reasonable adjustments may be required and ensuring the young person has an approachable mentor who can listen and respond to any difficulties.



Dame Christine Lenehan, Director of CDC

### ENGAGING WITH EMPLOYERS

CDC also manages the [Transition Information Network](#), which brings together policy and practice from around the country on issues which impact young people from age 14–25. Over the last few years we have watched the very promising growth and progress of a number of initiatives on supported employment, internships and training, and I would encourage schools and colleges to make use of them. These initiatives can help implement Benchmark 5: *Encounters with Employers and Employees*, by clarifying the range of help and support that is available, and the range of employers who are ready to engage.

At the core of all the work of CDC is the desire to create a better world for young people with SEND, and making sure everyone can access career guidance is a key part of that work. We will continue to support SEND practitioners as they begin to think about how the Gatsby Benchmarks could work best in their setting, and I look forward to seeing the impact they have on the lives of our young people.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# CLEASWELL HILL SCHOOL



Emma Steele, Head of sixth form and Careers Leader, and Chair of the North East SEND careers working group

- Maintained special school
- 181 students aged 4–18
- Operates under 6 phases, through a 'stage not age' approach

Cleaswell Hill School is based in South East Northumberland. Our students have a variety of complex needs and disabilities and are grouped in classes according to their social and academic ability, as well as their level of need and future pathway. We also support children to overcome the barriers that have affected their progress in the past. Our goal is for each student to aim for the highest levels of independence. Students are given life chances through a variety of pathways incorporating functional development, life skills and vocational learning.

Within our school context a 'career' is defined as a pathway through life. Career guidance for us includes independent living skills, community inclusion and students' understanding of post-school options, with support and advice through creative careers education and work-related learning. Students have the option to choose a number of pathways through and out of school.

Our school adopted the Gatsby Benchmarks following a Northumberland careers meeting.

They have given us a robust way to structure a well-balanced and personalised careers programme, enabling us to increase opportunities and allowing us to monitor its quality and effectiveness. Since they were first introduced to us we have come a long way. It has taken us three years to achieve the Benchmarks in full, but this is an ongoing process that requires flexibility, especially as careers programmes need to adapt to the changing cohort of students every year.

### UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL CONTEXT

In the county of Northumberland, the most densely populated and economically active area is the South East, but it also has the greatest levels of unemployment, poverty and deprivation. We are therefore very aware of the importance of creating a culture of high aspirations. All young people deserve to be encouraged to aim high, and students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are no different. We concentrate on what our students can do, and the experiences they can access, in order to build their skills so they can reach their future goals.

Communicating the Benchmarks to all staff, so everyone understood the framework, was undoubtedly the most important part of planning our careers programme. Auditing our existing activity was also a great starting point. It helped us realise that we did more than we initially thought, but also highlighted opportunities for us to improve in key areas.

To reach Benchmark 2: *Learning from Career and Labour Market Information* we needed to understand our local area and all the opportunities it affords for our students. We therefore sought information from external sources, including the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NE LEP), which helped us to identify industries with high volumes of employment in the area. We could then use this information to shape our curriculum offer – for example, we now offer taster courses in subjects such as Health and Social Care, which are relevant to major local industries.



We have found that learners are a lot more inclined to explore alternative career options if they know there are job opportunities available locally.



Building a network of local employers has also supported us in all aspects of the Benchmarks, but has taken a long time to establish. The key to developing these relationships was communication – don't be scared to just ask! It is important to establish what employers can offer the school and students, but also what the school and students can offer the employer. To create a long-lasting partnership, it needs to be mutually beneficial.

### EMBEDDING CAREERS IN THE CURRICULUM

The Benchmarks emphasise the importance of embedding career guidance throughout a student's time at school. Each of our students is therefore given a range of career-related opportunities throughout the curriculum that are tailored to their needs and ambitions.

Careers are linked into the curriculum across all subjects through many different activities, including industry visits, role-play and research. As students progress through the school, and move closer to the world of work, their curriculum changes, for example the emphasis on functional skills in maths and English lessons increases.

We have also spent time focussing on specific activities relating to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers. We have found the STEM Learning online resource library particularly useful. Exploring these resources with students has helped them develop their basic science skills, such as understanding 'cause and effect', as well as highlighting progression opportunities, for instance Level 3 engineering courses. Our focus on STEM has also led us to develop university partners – this has increased opportunities for the students, including taking part in engineering workshops with Newcastle University.

To achieve Benchmark 4: *Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers*, all our teaching staff take part in training which promotes success stories from previous years. Making sure that every teacher shares their work with the wider teaching team helps us coordinate activity and fully meet this Benchmark.

### MEETING CHALLENGES CREATIVELY

We would encourage any school starting out on their journey with the Benchmarks to use their knowledge and experience of SEND to develop a programme that meets the needs of *their* students. There is not a 'one size fits all' approach. For us this meant thinking broadly about Benchmark 7: *Encounters with Further and Higher Education*. All of our students now visit educational facilities which are appropriate to their chosen future pathways such as day centres, volunteer organisations, further education colleges or universities.

Our next step is to look towards the younger phases within school and how we can ensure that we are preparing students, parents and all other stakeholders in the best possible way for their future.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# DERWENTSIDE COLLEGE



Mary Stokoe, Careers and Progression Adviser

- Large further education college in County Durham
- Specialises in vocational courses and apprenticeships
- 20 per cent of full-time learners have SEN Support and 10 per cent have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans

Derwentside College offers a range of vocational courses and is one of the largest apprenticeship providers in the region. We are located in a deprived area with relatively high unemployment and difficult transport links. This impacts on both aspirations to work and availability of work. Around 20 per cent of our full-time learners receive SEN support, with over 10 per cent having Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans – a high percentage have also been identified as having mental health concerns and as such our College Wellbeing Practitioners have a very varied caseload.

### DRAWING ON AN EXPERIENCED TEAM

Crucial to running a careers programme that can support this variety of learners is having a team of expert staff working together. We have several teams of experienced staff to support different elements of our programmes, including our Careers, Employability and Learning Support teams.

Our Careers Team focusses on career guidance and comprises two Level 6 qualified Careers Advisers who have worked in colleges and careers services for many years. Our Employability Team delivers standardised careers input throughout the college to full-time learners in all curriculum areas, with all members being experienced in delivering to learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). One member of this team has over 20 years' experience supporting learners with SEND and ensures that employability is delivered with appropriate adaptations to ensure access to information.

### AUDITING EXISTING CAREERS MATERIAL

When we adopted the Gatsby Benchmarks as our guiding framework for careers provision, I reviewed the careers material that students could access on our intranet. I was struck by the fact that a lot of these resources were only suited to very capable Level 2 and 3 learners. This material would be difficult for some learners with SEND to access, navigate and use meaningfully. This prompted me to carry out a full audit of our careers provision across the college.

Given that the majority of our learners are apprentices who spend a large proportion of their time off site, I felt that there needed to be something accessible both in and out of college, which could be worked through either with or without teacher support, and that this should be available for 'each and every' learner – including those with SEND.



A catering course at Derwentside College

### ADAPTING MATERIAL TO EACH LEARNER

The college intranet can be accessed both on and off site so this seemed the best place to host the materials. Differentiation of existing material and some creative thinking was the key. I created a Careers Workbook for each level of learner, with materials specifically for learners with SEND, and different activities available dependent on need. The workbook acts as both a careers lesson resource and also a permanent record of activities and discussions. This can be accessed by the student whenever they need to, helping us reach Benchmark 3: *Addressing the Needs of Each Student*, among others.

### OFFERING TAILORED CAREERS SUPPORT

We recognise that learners with SEND often need more input from us in order to make careers decisions and follow through on action plans. Therefore, we offer as many appointments with our Careers Advisers as necessary to ensure we provide personal guidance for all learners, as outlined in Benchmark 8: *Personal Guidance*. These meetings also include parents or caregivers if our learners want this. This extra one-on-one support has been particularly useful to break down barriers to higher education and ensure that, with the right support, this option is achievable for our learners with SEND. These barriers can range from a lack of confidence through to constraints around securing student finance. We therefore also work with internal and external support agencies to ensure these do not impact on the aspirations of our learners.

### SUPPORTING LEARNERS IN THE WORKPLACE

Our Learning Support team consists of Wellbeing Practitioners who provide emotional and mental health support, as well as a qualified Job Coach who provides appropriate support to learners in the workplace during both work placements and supported internships. A Learning Support Co-ordinator is also based in the apprenticeship team to enhance support and delivery of frameworks and standards for any apprentice with SEND. Members of the team also attend regular forums to promote employability and employment options within the Durham Local Authority area. The forums focus on Preparing for Adulthood and supported internship development, both of which we are highly involved in as a college.

In summary, as a college we have found that the combination of extra time spent with learners with SEND, investing in staff with extensive SEND experience and adapting and creating careers resources specifically for learners with SEND has helped us to meet the needs of all of our learners in the college as they progress into the world of work.



An employability lesson at Derwentside College

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# TALENTINO

Jenny Connick, Founder



Talentino is a career development company for special schools and the strategic partner for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for The Careers & Enterprise Company. Talentino works across England, training school staff to run effective careers programmes. It also runs early career development programmes for young people with learning difficulties and hosts a range of professional development activities including an annual conference.

### SEND: WHO ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

There are currently over 1.2 million young people in England (15 per cent) with Special Educational Needs (SEN), with approximately 250,000 having a statement of SEN or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. Students with SEND are educated in a range of different settings, including special schools, virtual schools and Pupil Referral Units, but the majority will be found in mainstream schools. These young people are often described as a homogenous group, but each person with SEND is very different from the next. It follows that their early career development and potential career outcomes may look different too, but this does

not mean we should have lower levels of aspiration on their behalf.

For those who work regularly with young people with SEND, it can be useful to consider how to best articulate the key information about the students you work with to colleagues and external stakeholders. This is particularly important within the context of career guidance, as partnerships are critical. For example, you will need to build the knowledge and confidence of employers to ensure the best experience for your students as part of Gatsby Benchmark 5: *Encounters with Employers and Employees* and Benchmark 6: *Experiences of Workplaces*.

The Government's SEND Code of Practice can be a useful tool for these discussions. The Code of Practice identifies four broad areas of need and support:

- *Communication and interaction*, such as speech, language and communication needs or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- *Cognition and learning*, such as a specific learning difficulty, moderate or severe learning difficulties or profound and multiple learning difficulties
- *Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH)*
- *Sensory and/or physical*, such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, multi-sensory impairment and physical disability

It is very common for a young person with SEND to have a combination of needs from across these four areas, or other additional needs. It can be a complex picture for the individual, their families and carers.

When planning and communicating your careers programme it is, of course, also important to think about the full spectrum of students who are in the most vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. For example, there are 800,000 young carers in England and 1.5 million children that suffer abuse or neglect. Extensive support will be needed for these young people to ensure positive career and life outcomes.

### THE BENCHMARKS

The application of the Gatsby Benchmarks has huge relevance for all young people, including young people with SEND. Working in education, you will be used to adapting and shaping things for your students. Designing and delivering a careers programme using the Benchmarks is no different. For example, from our work with special schools we have heard that Benchmark 2: *Learning from Career and Labour Market Information*, and Benchmark 8: *Personal Guidance*, need careful consideration and can be challenging, but with sensitive interpretation they are achievable.

### PLANNING FOR DIFFERENT PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

Level 2 qualifications, particularly in English and maths, tend to be expected for entry to many careers. Therefore, an early stage of the career development process for students with SEND can involve considering, together with the student and their parents and carers, the likelihood of the student being able to take GCSEs or equivalent Level 2 qualifications. If this is very likely, students will be able to follow the same progression pathways as their peers without SEND, such as further and higher education, and employment.

If progressing through a Level 2 qualification is less likely, students can still have a positive career outcome, but their progression pathway is likely to be different. For example, students with EHC plans can access supported internships, inclusive internships and supported employment.

Many students with SEND may face significant barriers along their career journey. However, through good preparation and building trust and support with employers, families and carers, these barriers can be minimised.

To ensure students access a positive career outcome focussed on their strengths, some aspects of their career development will be the same as for other students, some aspects will need to be delivered differently, and some will only be relevant for students with SEND. This idea of 'same and different' is something Talentino has developed extensively through our work in special and mainstream schools.

You can encourage all stakeholders, including non-experts, to contribute to the early career development of young people with SEND. Through the framework of the Gatsby Benchmarks, you can work together with each young person and their parents and carers to set objectives, minimise barriers and support them effectively towards a positive career outcome.



Students from Brookfields School engaged in classroom-based career coaching sessions

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# NATSPEC

Clare Howard, CEO



Natspec is the membership association for organisations which offer specialist further education and training for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Over 90 per cent of specialist colleges in England and Wales are Natspec members.

Natspec represents and supports specialist colleges and provides training for the wider further education sector. Specialist colleges have a wide set of specialisms, including those associated with a condition (such as epilepsy, autism or sensory impairment), a particular level of support need (such as profound and multiple learning difficulties) or a particular vocational focus (such as performing arts or hospitality and catering). Although specialist colleges provide for a minority (around 9 per cent) of the students who attract high needs funding, they can be an appropriate post-school option for young people with more complex needs.

### ADOPTING THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS

The Benchmarks form a careers framework that truly represents best practice, and we are pleased to have seen over the last two years so many of our members adopting and working towards them in a way that is tailored to the needs of their students. Many of our members have also realised, through auditing their current provision against the Benchmarks, that they were already well on their way towards meeting them. Here, we have collected together some examples of how our members have approached delivering good career guidance in their setting.

The Orpheus Centre in Surrey has developed a comprehensive transitions programme as part of meeting Benchmark 1: *A Stable Careers Programme*. All students, staff, families and employers understand the initiatives in place to support students. The transition programme includes specific housing advice, multiple periods of work experience, and training in shopping, budgeting, healthy living and travel. They also deliver disability awareness training to local employers.

### EMPHASISING STUDENT VOICE

Derwen College in Oswestry saw that Benchmark 3: *Addressing the Needs of Each Student* needed a personalised approach. It has put great emphasis on student voice, and its work in this area has attracted national recognition through National Union of Students (NUS) democracy awards. Each student is encouraged to articulate their aspirations and as a result, the college has responded to student requests, and engaged in community activities such as the Oswestry Disability group and the Oswestry Connectors network.



## HOSTING TRANSITION EVENTS

When considering how to meet Benchmark 5: *Encounters with Employers*, National Star College in Cheltenham built on the strength of its transitions event, which last year featured 47 exhibitors from across the country, providing information, advice and personal support. It also created *FestABLE*, the first festival dedicated to specialist learning and work opportunities in the UK. Hundreds of parents, professionals and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) came together to listen to speakers, attend workshops and have a go at different activities they might do in college or in work.

## IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Finally, Foxes Academy in Minehead has become a *Disability Confident* leader, as part of a Government-backed scheme to support more employers to make the most of the talents of disabled people. They have created links to scores of local employers in line with Benchmark 5: *Encounters with Employers* and Benchmark 6: *Experiences of Workplaces*.

The work done by Foxes Academy has had a dramatic effect on student outcomes: 81 per cent of leavers from 2017 gained employment and are still employed a year later, far higher than the national employment rate for people with learning difficulties of less than 6 per cent.

## PROGRESSING FROM SPECIALIST COLLEGES

The primary purpose of specialist colleges is to offer appropriate learning that enables each student to make a positive progression, including to employment and appropriate living arrangements. Alongside education, they offer care, therapies and learning support. This equips their students with the skills they need to be full members of society, enabling their learners to lead as healthy and independent lives as possible.

We know that for young people with SEND, transition points between life settings are especially difficult, so we welcome the focus of the Gatsby Benchmarks on ensuring each student receives comprehensive information about the options available to them. Colleges

working towards the Benchmarks will be able to feel more confident that the young people they provide for, and their families, can make informed decisions, in line with the *Children and Families Act 2014* and the Government's *SEND Code of Practice*.

## CLARIFYING THE OFFER

Specialist colleges need to make clear to mainstream and specialist schools the nature of their role and their offer, including what they cannot provide as well as what they can. An open, transparent, trusting and honest relationship between providers is essential to help students with SEND get a true picture of when provision would be right for them and when it would not.

South and City College Birmingham, for example, hosts meetings for surrounding schools (both specialist and mainstream) to discuss the types of opportunities available, not only at their own college, but also to make clear when it would not be suitable to direct students there.



Where the provision on offer by specialist colleges is well understood, they can play a vital role in supporting students with SEND to make the successful transition to adulthood.



School-college partnerships are crucial to making sure this advice is consistent, so I would encourage specialist colleges to reach out to schools in their region and build links with them, and for schools to look for the specialist college provision available to them.

Doing this will not only help schools address Benchmark 7: *Encounters with Further and Higher Education* in a successful, appropriate way for all their students, but most importantly, it also ensures that young people can progress to the most appropriate environment and succeed.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# BROOKFIELDS SCHOOL

Maurice George, Assistant  
Headteacher and Careers Leader



- Specialist Special Educational Needs (SEN) school located in Reading, Berkshire
- 220 students aged 3–19
- All students have a learning difficulty, including those with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)

We recognise that all students have ambitions, so at Brookfields our careers programme is core to our curriculum and bespoke to our students' varying needs.

Therefore, our careers programme comprises several strands: Work Related Learning, Business Enterprise, Career Coaching & Curriculum, and Work Experience & Supported Internships. Flexibility is key, as we need to respond to the needs of the young people as they develop knowledge and skills in each strand.

### DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR LIFE

We want our young people to gain skills for life – not just to get a job, but to sustain employment and thrive in the community. To do this, we develop young people's communication skills, self-regulation, financial literacy and home management, as well as travel and other skills to access their community.

We have been actively engaged in developing a unique careers programme for the last eight years. As assistant headteacher and Careers Leader, I have been overseeing our *Pathway to Employment* programme and view my role as both strategic, shaping the careers programme, and personal, providing timely coaching to students to enable them to make the best possible autonomous choices.

The programme has the buy-in of all stakeholders including the senior leadership team, support staff, young people and their families. We start by asking: 'what skills do we want our young people to have, and what destinations do we want to see them reach when they leave us, and 5 and 10 years after that?'

### ENCOURAGING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

We know that family engagement and support is key. At Brookfields, all students have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. We meet once a year with the young person and their family to agree targets for the year and to review their longer term aims, including employment aspirations. In addition to this, our Job Coaches speak regularly to families as their children go out on work experience or apply for supported internships.



Our students have the same aspirations as neuro-typical students, but the way in which we approach achieving these is different.



### USING THE BENCHMARKS

The Gatsby Benchmarks are incredibly useful for giving us a framework around which to evaluate our own careers offer, identifying strengths and areas for development. However, we don't use them as the eight commandments!

We were delighted that the Benchmarks were so fundamentally taken into consideration when drawing up the Government's Careers Strategy, *Making the Most of Everyone's Skills and Talents*.

As a special school we, and many others, had already been thinking deeply about the framework. Schools and colleges that offer specialist education for students with SEN tend to be naturally outward-facing settings, already working with numerous organisations and working in a timely manner to consider next steps and transitions.

It's true that some of the wording of certain Benchmarks at first glance appears incompatible for some young people with significant learning needs, such as engagement with universities. We therefore apply a flexible approach, taking a step back to consider what is being asked. In the case of Benchmark 7: *Encounters with Further and Higher Education*, this means engaging with the full breadth of organisations that have a role in securing positive life outcomes for young people when they leave school.

Once we audited our provision against the Benchmarks, we were able to identify our biggest barriers that may prevent our young people from progressing. This helped us to prioritise – focussing our efforts on the most critical actions to overcome these barriers.

### MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE

We work with a network of over 70 local employers. Many offer work experience, as well as interview support, careers talks and workshops. They also support our annual careers week and run workshops in their workplace or in school. In line with Benchmark 6: *Experiences of Workplaces*, nothing beats the first-hand experience of being in an actual workplace environment, seeing the different roles available and understanding how to behave appropriately in a variety of settings.

Businesses want skilled, motivated and passionate young people. When approaching businesses we teach our young people to see themselves as part of a solution to a recruitment problem, not as a charity case. This is the foundation for a sustainable working partnership. Students are also more likely to be motivated and work to a high standard when they are fulfilling a genuine need.

### OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

One of the biggest challenges to delivering a rich and impactful careers programme is time. We are fortunate not to be constrained by external curriculum compliance, especially post-16 when study programmes for those with an EHC plan come into play.

My advice for any Careers Leader would be to start small and build from successes. Your school will already be doing lots of good things that will contribute to your careers programme, it may just not carry the label. For example, a maths lesson might be focussed on reading the bus timetable and getting into town on time, an essential skill for working life, or a science lesson might be making bath bombs – that's enterprise, but it's just not called that. Try to make links to careers in classroom learning and bring attention to it.

Connecting with other SEN education providers in our local area has been really valuable in understanding how we can develop our careers work. We share ideas, difficulties and local labour market information. I'd encourage you to reach out to your community too.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# CATCOTE ACADEMY

Jackie McGarry, Careers & Employment Coordinator



- Special school based in Hartlepool
- 156 students aged 11–19
- Part of the Hartlepool Aspire Multi-Academy Trust which also includes Catcote Futures, a specialist post-16 institution and centre for life-long learning with 79 students on roll
- Community-based retail and catering outlets



We critically evaluate our current practice against the eight Gatsby Benchmarks to ensure that we are equipping our students with the knowledge, inspiration and ability to take ownership of their own career action plans and succeed in their future careers.



In my role as Careers Leader, I work in partnership with directors and senior leaders to plan, implement and evaluate all careers activities across both Catcote Academy and Catcote Futures. The Gatsby Benchmarks and The Careers & Enterprise Company's *SEND Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit* have enabled us to develop a structured plan to provide an effective careers programme.

### BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Giving young people the opportunity to experience a variety of workplaces opens their eyes to roles they might never have otherwise considered or thought they could succeed in. At Hartlepool Aspire Multi-Academy Trust, we believe that this is particularly important for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), who are so often defined by what they can't do, rather than what they can. Having high aspirations for each and every student is at the heart of the Benchmarks, which has made it easier for us to whole-heartedly take them on board.

One of the Trust's strengths is our network of over 60 employers who can offer our students external work experience opportunities to put the skills they have learnt at school into practice in a range of sectors. This network has taken time to build up but has proven to be invaluable, helping us to reach many of the Benchmarks.

We also run our own café, *The Vestry*, within Hartlepool Art Gallery. This enables us to deliver training in customer service and catering. We also operate *Catcote Metro*, our retail outlet in Hartlepool town centre selling an eclectic mix of ethically sourced goods from around the world and our own products created in enterprise and catering classes. Our students gain invaluable work experience in both of these areas as part of their key stage 4, sixth form and post-19 study programmes. Working in the community with members of the public, it is a real-life workplace with ‘nowhere to hide’ but they are still in a very supported environment with highly-skilled job coaches who are trained in task specific instruction.

In addition, we offer a range of in-house opportunities to boost our students’ confidence in the workplace and to develop their employability skills within the following areas: reception duties, horticulture, grounds maintenance, ICT, admin, hair and beauty, enterprise, reprographics, hospitality and catering and classroom support.



A careers lesson at Catcote Academy



We can see that the range of initiatives we have in place has had a huge impact on our students. They have gained confidence and employability skills, and progressed onto supported internships, supported apprenticeships and paid work.



#### SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS TO WORK

We have seen a growing trend in the number of young people who have the desire and ability to pursue paid work, but are not as engaged within the traditional classroom environment. We therefore developed the Steps programme for 16–24 year olds, to help our students gain the relevant skills and experience needed for the world of work. Students are based in the training room above *Catcote Metro* in the town centre. This offers students increased independence within a safe environment, allowing them to feel that they have transitioned from school and progressed to college-style training and work.

The students are then offered up to three days of work experience in a variety of chosen sectors, to help and encourage them to make clear and informed choices when participating in a particular career pathway.

We have embedded literacy and numeracy within the programme, which has greatly reduced the pressure and associated stress on students, and has allowed them to develop their work skills at a pace that they are comfortable with.



Students from Catcote Academy working at The Vestry café

Within the Steps programme, we are working in partnership with the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) and Hartfields Retirement Village, based in Hartlepool, to develop our students' soft skills and help them gain further knowledge of the labour market. Students attend Hartfields one day a week to access three different work areas per academic year. Departments involved include maintenance, domestic support, horticulture, retail, catering and administration.

### DEVELOPING OUR WHOLE SCHOOL STRATEGY

All of our efforts to introduce students to the workplace are because we believe that offering a real insight into what a specific job entails, rather than having just a perception of what it might be, is a better way to help our young people make decisions about their futures. We believe that without a strong careers programme it is impossible to fully prepare our young people for their next steps.

We have regular meetings with our [Enterprise Adviser](#) (organised through The Careers & Enterprise Company) and carry out regular audits using the [Compass tool](#) to identify our strengths and to close any gaps in our careers provision. This process has been extremely useful and has meant that we are consistently able to meet Benchmark I: *A Stable Careers Programme*.

I am confident that the future for careers within our school and college looks increasingly bright, and I look forward to learning from other special schools as they continue their journey towards meeting and embedding the Gatsby Benchmarks.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

### SEASHELL TRUST

Bernie White, Director  
of Education



A national charity dedicated to supporting children and young adults with complex learning disabilities and additional communication needs from across the UK.

Provision includes:

- Non-maintained day and residential special school Royal School Manchester, for students up to 19 years
- Independent specialist residential and day college Royal College Manchester, for students aged 19–25

I am the Director of Education for the Seashell Trust, where we are dedicated to supporting children and young adults with complex learning disabilities and additional communication needs from across the UK. In our provision, a significant number of learners have autistic spectrum conditions and multisensory impairment; all of our students have communication needs, most are non-verbal communicators and many present with challenging behaviour. Seashell Trust has long recognised the importance of high-quality interdisciplinary support to help students develop active communication skills. Indeed, Ofsted recognised the approach in the inspection of our college in 2013, when the promotion of decision-making became the focus of a good practice case study.

#### LEARNING TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

One of the distinct features of the careers work we undertake at Seashell Trust is the integration of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education. We define careers education as learning to make informed decisions. Our students face decisions about their futures that include work, but also how they would like to be supported, services they need to access and living options.

The interconnection of careers and PSHE enables our students to learn social rules, emotional awareness and management, establishing and managing relationships with others, recognising and expressing preferences, and building skills and confidence at self-advocacy. Whereas young people without Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can be assumed to develop

these aspects throughout their daily lives, with limited structured teaching, this is not the case for students with severe and complex learning difficulties.



The Gatsby Benchmarks are as relevant to students with profound and multiple learning difficulties as they are to any student. They offer organisations a clear framework to plan and deliver individually tailored learning opportunities in lessons.



Student from Royal School Manchester learning about horticulture

## USING THE BENCHMARKS

A well-structured careers programme, framed by the Benchmarks, that provides encounters and experiences of work, enables students to make decisions, or participate in decision-making, and base these decisions on first-hand experience.

By assessing ourselves against the Benchmarks, we have identified opportunities to strengthen our careers programme; we are working in partnership with another specialist college to enhance the independent support and advice to young people about their options and we are working to improve information for families and young people about supported employment, voluntary work and supported living.

To help strengthen impartial and independent careers advice, we now put our staff through career guidance qualifications, to make sure we give the best support possible in line with Benchmark 8: *Personal Guidance*. We have appointed a Careers Leader for the Trust who is working to shape careers education, find work experience and support families. Finally, we completed the Compass tool to assess our progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks, which showed us the need to build links externally – we are now working with a specialist college to pool resources and anticipate securing an Enterprise Adviser for the school and college from The Careers & Enterprise Company.

## LISTENING TO STUDENT VIEWS

We put great emphasis on the right to make decisions in line with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Children and Families Act 2014. If young people lack the capacity to make decisions, then their participation in decisions is secured by gathering pertinent information through first-hand experience and logging reactions systematically, so that their views are not overlooked. This ensures decisions are made in their best interest.

Young people at the Trust learn to use their voices. Often arriving with limited functional communication and no established communication method, they are supported by a multidisciplinary team to develop their individual communication system.





Student from the Royal College Manchester taking part in work experience

#### TAKING AN INDIVIDUAL APPROACH TO PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

We take a holistic approach to planning and delivering education and support; personal development is often the key to successful outcomes. Each of our settings approaches career guidance and the curriculum differently.

For example, our college students can be with us for a relatively short time. This drives a sense of purpose that shapes the identification of learning priorities and our curriculum offer until the time comes for them to leave. For residential students, they learn to carry out daily living skills in the home setting, live alongside others and extend their social interests, and prepare for progress to supported living settings.

#### SUPPORTING STUDENTS INTO EMPLOYMENT

In order to help young people achieve their aspiration to progress to supported work, the Trust has developed a supported internship programme that caters for students with severe and complex needs and helps them achieve voluntary or paid employment.

There needs to be a high level of transition planning for all our students. Seashell has a team of Transition Coordinators and an Employment Officer to work with the young people, their families and their home social services to align plans for living, community support and work. We established the role of Employment Officer in 2011 and find it a valuable role in the Trust, as it extends support to students in their first stages of being in work. We have started tracking the destinations of our leavers and this has shown us that positive outcomes are sustained, helping us to continue with this model of extended support.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



Dr Adam Boddison, Chief Executive

The National Association of Special Educational Needs (nasen) is a charity organisation which has been operating since 1992. nasen has long been a champion, friend and protector of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) community, with more than 14,000 members, including both individual members and organisations. nasen provides professional development opportunities and resources to support practitioners in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people across both mainstream and specialist settings.

I am Chief Executive of nasen and Chair of the Whole School SEND consortium. The consortium brings together schools, organisations and individuals who are committed to ensuring that every child and young person with SEND can achieve their potential at school.

A central theme of the Government's SEND Code of Practice 2015 is *Preparation for Adulthood*. Wherever possible, we want to ensure that young people have the skills and experiences to live independently and to contribute to society. This is not only a moral obligation, but it makes good economic sense too. Good career guidance as set out in the Gatsby Benchmarks has an important role to play as part of effective preparation for adulthood, and I was particularly pleased to see the Benchmarks highlight the importance of addressing the needs of each individual learner. A strategic approach to career guidance that assumes a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to work for everybody and, worse still, it may disproportionately impact on learners with SEND.

### MAINTAINING HIGH ASPIRATIONS

The Benchmarks also emphasise the need for meaningful encounters with employers, employees and workplaces. For encounters to be meaningful, care must be taken to maintain high aspirations. The consideration of individual need should not result in less aspirational career guidance, but rather it

should focus on aligning guidance to the areas in which the young person can excel. For example, we know from nasen members that a learner who has difficulty with reading or writing can excel in graphic design, or that a learner who struggles with social interaction can have superb analytical skills.

### FOCUSSING ON LEARNERS' STRENGTHS

One particular aspect of SEND to be mindful of is Dual and Multiple Exceptionality (DME), when a learner has both high learning potential and SEND simultaneously. While at school, DME can be difficult to identify since a learner's needs can mask their abilities and vice-versa. Being aware of DME in the context of career guidance can be beneficial because our members tell us that learners who appear to achieve well in school, where their needs are being met, may struggle in certain work environments, where there is less structure and support. I have visited excellent schools where learners with DME are identified and their needs are met. The feedback from learners is that their anxiety is reduced and their potential contribution to the workplace is validated. The point here is that high achieving does not necessarily mean a young person does not also have SEND. School leaders, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and Careers Leaders need to take this into account when identifying the workplace experiences which best complement a young person's strengths.

There are an increasing number of schemes that have a good track record of securing employment for young people with SEND, such as [Project Search](#). Increasingly, employers are also opening up to the value candidates with SEND can bring to their business. Both mainstream and special schools should investigate what is available in their local area and capitalise on it.

### INVOLVING EXPERTS

For those in mainstream schools, I would urge you to ensure that the SENCO has a role in strategically reviewing the inclusiveness of the school's career guidance programme, remembering that what works well for learners with SEND will likely work well for all learners.

This can ensure that you are doing all you can to address the needs of each student, in line with Benchmark 3: *Addressing the Needs of Each Student*. Going further than this, I find that, especially when working with young people with SEND, it's important to co-produce career guidance programmes with learners and their families, so it becomes a 'done-with' rather than a 'done-to' process.

### ALIGNING WITH OFSTED

A final observation in relation to the Gatsby Benchmarks is regarding Benchmark 4: *Linking curriculum learning to careers*. This ties in with Ofsted's increasing focus on the intent and impact of the curriculum and means that there has never been a better time to develop your careers programme. With increasing alignment between the inspection framework and the Benchmarks, it really is a win-win situation.

nasen is well placed to support schools in working towards the Benchmarks through our [professional development programmes](#) and our [guidance materials](#). We want to ensure that no learner with SEND is held back in education or in life. By working towards the Gatsby Benchmarks, schools will ensure that learners with SEND can lead fulfilled, independent lives and make a long-term contribution to our economy.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# THE LINK SCHOOL

Ron Cruikshanks, Director  
of Safeguarding and Strategic  
Careers Leader



- Pupil Referral Unit providing alternative education across two sites
- 48 students in key stage 2 and 3
- 78 students in key stage 4

Our school is in Sunderland, a city that suffers from high levels of unemployment and deprivation. We are not a special school, but a lot of our students access Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support for mild learning difficulties. Some have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) or other diagnoses that affect their ability to function in a mainstream setting. Almost all have some form of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulty. Academic ability varies greatly. While we have a degree of stability at key stage 4, key stages 2 and 3 are transient, with some students returning to mainstream education.

### RAISING ASPIRATIONS

When Gatsby's North East Career Benchmark Pilot launched in 2015, we were one of the first schools to be selected. Prior to this, our approach to career guidance centred mainly around an annual visit by the Connexions Tyne and Wear service, some ad hoc careers work

with key stage 4 students and a fairly disjointed approach to post-16 destinations. We welcomed the challenge, but it was quite daunting given the breadth of the Benchmarks, some of which at that time seemed very aspirational.

Some four years later, we have achieved all eight Gatsby Benchmarks.



Careers is no longer something that we 'add on' to lessons; it is a thread that runs throughout the school. Staff recognise it as everybody's responsibility.



We now hold the Quality in Careers Standard, and are part of both the North East Ambition Careers Leader Network and our local Careers Hub. Careers provision is an integral part of the school improvement plan and the Strategic Careers Lead is part of our Senior Leadership Team (SLT). We also have excellent relationships with local businesses and training providers, work closely with [The Prince's Trust](#) and have just secured funding to work with [Business in the Community](#). Most importantly, all this activity is having an impact on our young people.

The proportion of our students Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has dropped from 60 per cent in 2015 to 9 per cent in 2017.

### IDENTIFYING ENABLERS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

In order to get to where we are, there were some key challenges to address: a culture of despair and lack of ambition regarding post-16 options, particularly among less able students; an inability to deliver meaningful independent careers advice within school; a lack of parental buy-in and poor careers network; a lack of strategic direction and ownership across the school; a lack of understanding of careers and the impact good careers provision can have; and the need to support our transient school population at an earlier age. These challenges were reflected right across the Benchmarks and it was clear that if we didn't address them, any work we did would be unlikely to be sustainable and worthwhile.

One of our key enablers to addressing these issues was to deliver careers advice in a truthful and realistic way. If our lowest ability student wanted to be a doctor, we would support them while offering realistic alternatives to allow entry into that field from a different direction. We question any suggestion that opportunities don't exist and demonstrate this to students by linking opportunities to lessons, visits and careers activities.

### A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVEMENT

As part of our continued development in careers delivery, we use the online [Compass tool](#) to assess our progress. When we change our delivery approach and open up opportunities to different year groups, we use this tool to record our activity. Understandably our Benchmarks rating fluctuates but we are not put off by this. It takes time to bed in new elements of a programme and we see the Benchmarks as a framework for improvement.

There are lots of resources, mostly free, that represent 'easy wins' to link careers to the curriculum. For example, this could be something as simple as a single PowerPoint slide at the start of a lesson, demonstrating how the lesson links

to occupations. There are lots of [resources](#) out there to support the Gatsby Benchmarks, and I recommend you find out which are available in your area and use them.

To bring together all of our careers activity, and prevent fragmentation, a member of the SLT has strategic oversight – sitting above the day-to-day delivery. With the careers programme being an integral part of the school's improvement plan, the Strategic Careers Lead is in a position to influence school direction and secure resources to make improvements.

For example, we recognised that our school did not have the ability to deliver independent careers advice that complied with both Benchmark 8: *Personal Guidance*, and our legal obligations. We were able to articulate to the SLT the importance of this activity and secure funding for external support while our Careers Leader gained the necessary qualifications. Although expensive, it has been a worthwhile long-term investment.

### WORKING WITH OTHERS

It's important to point out that we do not work in isolation. We use every opportunity to talk to parents, including in all the multi-agency meetings our staff attend, and also through the school text service. This ensures messages get directly to parents that might otherwise be lost. We also carry out a lot of external networking – as a result we now know who and where to go to when we need advice, support or funding.

Building on the firm foundations we have established, I hope to see us continuing our journey towards consistently meeting all of the Benchmarks, reducing our NEET levels and supporting more young people to progress and achieve positive outcomes.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# NORTHUMBRIAN WATER

Sophie Carvin, Manager  
of the Northumbrian Water  
Group Academy



Northumbrian Water provides water and waste water services. It operates across the North East of England and trades as Essex and Suffolk Water in the East of England. Sophie Carvin has worked at Northumbrian Water for 11 years, and in July 2018 she took on the role of Northumbrian Water Group Academy Manager. Sophie is also an Enterprise Adviser for The Careers & Enterprise Company at a special school in County Durham.

### AN EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE: SUPPORTING SCHOOLS IN WORKING TOWARDS THE BENCHMARKS

Our leadership recognises that diversity is good for our business. We need to innovate to keep the business efficient and effective and we need a diversity of thought to achieve that.

We talk about diversity as being 'different like me'. Our customers are diverse – we provide a service to everyone who lives in our operating area, whatever their background or personal characteristics. So it's logical that we should build on our previous work to encourage people from many different backgrounds to apply to work with us, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

We are a business with low turnover and long service. As an organisation, we are used to working with people who are broadly similar to us. How we go about our business is very important – we have a strong set of values and behaviours. However, it has the potential to make us less inclusive, which is something I was keen to address.

### GIVING CAREERS INSIGHTS TO STUDENTS WITH SEND

As part of the outreach element of my role, I requested to become an [Enterprise Adviser](#) working with a special school. It was an opportunity to learn more about what special



Northumbrian Water employee at work

schools need from an employer, what works and what doesn't. I also wanted to learn how to achieve better long-term outcomes when we welcome those with different needs into our workplace.

I was paired with a community special school in County Durham, with over 250 students aged 11–19. I worked with the creative and enthusiastic assistant headteacher to see how we could incorporate Benchmark 5: *Encounters with Employers and Employees*, and Benchmark 6: *Experiences of Workplaces*, into the fabric of the school. A highlight of the partnership was their Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) week. The assistant headteacher came up with the idea of using a 'crime scene investigation' activity as a vehicle for developing STEM skills. The manager of one of Northumbrian Water's sewage treatment works hosted the event, and their team shared what their jobs entailed as they were interviewed by the students as part of the investigation.

Other activities included mock interview sessions for students; an interactive session introducing the students to what Northumbrian Water does; putting interested students in touch with technical teams; and sharing relevant press releases and materials.

## COLLABORATING TO ACHIEVE OPTIMUM OUTCOMES FOR ALL

As part of our engagement with the school, we recently took on a student who was disengaged with school for a period of work experience. Despite having discussions about the student's capabilities, he unfortunately came into a role that wasn't appropriate, and therefore we were unable to provide the day-to-day support that he needed. Through this experience we learnt that, despite best intentions, it can sometimes feel like schools and employers are talking a different language, even though we are using the same words.

It was the first time we had run a period of work experience with a special school, and the company and I learnt a lot from this experience – we are always learning and striving to improve our business activities, and our work with schools is no different. It has given me a strong incentive to improve our communication and planning, ensuring that we ask the right questions at the outset. This will help us to provide the best conditions for learning and make sure we are boosting the young person's pride and self-esteem. It will also help us internally to make sure everyone across the business is able to carve out time within their busy day jobs to support the students.



We, along with many other businesses, have a social responsibility to help our communities. But on top of that we have strong ethical values and want to actively engage with schools. We're therefore always open to different initiatives that can help us make a positive difference to young people and the wider community.



## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEND SECTOR

# ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Helen Hall, Special Educational  
Needs Coordinator



- Maintained secondary school in South Tyneside
- Participated in the North East Career Benchmark Pilot
- 1,139 students aged 11–18
- 12 per cent of students have extra Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disability support

I have been working at St Joseph's Catholic Academy within the SEN department for 19 years and have been Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) for 12 years. Through this, I have gained a lot of experience of working with external agencies, providers and parents to develop a multi-agency approach to our activity.

We have a careers programme that, as described in Gatsby Benchmark 1: *A Stable Careers Programme*, impacts our whole academy, from year 6 onwards, and this is particularly true for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).



Our students are encouraged to think about careers from an early age. This starts with our transition programme from primary school and continues through learning schemes in each subject.



All of our students with SEND have ambition but their goals can be very different. Some students have the ambition to go to university and they have a clear path. For others the route is very different, and all options are explored.

Subject teachers look at a wide range of careers and how they link with the curriculum – in line with Benchmark 4: *Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers*.

### PROVIDING GUIDANCE ON DIFFERENT PROVISION AND NEXT STEPS

We recognise that our provision cannot always meet the varied needs of our learners. We have therefore improved our links with local colleges rapidly in the past few years. Working together with others we can secure the best possible outcomes for all students.



We are sharing this partnership approach with others. In addition, we are compiling a directory of all the providers and services within the Local Authority so that schools can find and use alternative provision where needed. Parents have access to this guidance through open evenings. These open evenings also provide us with an opportunity to showcase local employers and disseminate labour market information, helping us to work towards several of the Benchmarks.

### WORKING TOGETHER TO PROVIDE THE BEST SUPPORT

Each half term I work with all the secondary school SENCOs in the borough to evaluate the provision and resources available for the students who need extra support. We have also worked closely with colleges and student services to ensure students have a range of pathways on offer, at different levels, to enable progression. It is important that all courses can be linked clearly to career progression. This is still a work in progress, but we are optimistic that improving the progression offer for our students with SEND will have a big impact on their careers.

Benchmark 3: *Addressing the Needs of Each Student* means that all schools and colleges should be working to provide the best experience possible to their students. I believe that this is especially important for students with SEND, and one story at St Joseph's highlights to me the possibilities that are open to schools that take a proactive approach to career guidance with students with SEND.

### SUPPORTING EACH AND EVERY STUDENT

In our sixth form we have a student whose goal has always been to go to university. Due to her physical disability she uses a wheelchair, and is unable to write or carry out many tasks other students take for granted. She had always attended specialist provision but during her GCSE years she was proactive in getting in touch with local schools that could offer A-levels. However, although she had no learning difficulties, there was a clear gap in provision in our local area for students with these types of physical disability. I felt that we could meet the needs of this student,



External speaker working with students from St Joseph's Catholic Academy

as her education was also the key to her health. She loved to learn, had a clear goal and she was focussed on achieving the top grades. After a year of planning she was ready to start in our mainstream school with a team around her.

A room was created, a hoist was brought in, and respiratory and feeding training was given to staff. I felt we had a huge amount of support from the wide range of other professionals we were working with. After nearly three years, this student has offers from several universities, and as one offer is unconditional we know her goal has been achieved.

This process has not been without its challenges – it took her an extra year to complete her A-levels due to reoccurring medical issues – and it would have been easy to say we could not meet her needs. We have learned what can be achieved by supporting all young people. She is an ambassador for proving to schools, and the wider community, that anything is possible.

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## FURTHER SUPPORT ON YOUR JOURNEY TO GOOD CAREER GUIDANCE

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THERE ARE MANY ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP YOU AND YOUR SCHOOL OR COLLEGE DEVELOP AND DELIVER YOUR CAREERS PROGRAMME, AND WE RECOGNISE THAT SOMETIMES IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO FIND THE RIGHT ONE.

The following pages highlight national organisations that could be important sources of support as you work towards implementing the Gatsby Benchmarks for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Some of the organisations listed offer specific careers activities and can help you plan and work towards the Gatsby Benchmarks; others have expertise, information or good practice relating to SEND.

We would also encourage you to consider how assistive technology can help students with SEND to access careers, and also how any written material you use could also be produced in an accessible communication format.

### THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

The [Careers & Enterprise Company](#) was established in 2015 in order to prepare and inspire young people for the fast-changing world of work, by focussing on the creation of meaningful career opportunities and connections to employers. To do this, the Company has established a national network, connecting schools and colleges with employers and career programme providers. It is free to schools and colleges to join this network and receive a range of benefits, including support from an Enterprise Coordinator, match with a local Enterprise Adviser and access to a community of employer and careers activity programmes. Signing up to the network also enables full access to career planning tools.



Using Compass, schools can evaluate their activity with a confidential self-audit web tool created in partnership with Gatsby. With Tracker, you can build and manage your careers plan.

The Careers & Enterprise Company's *SEND Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit*, produced in collaboration with their SEND strategic partner, Talentino, and the Career Development Institute, contains practical tips, advice and suggested resources for practitioners to use as they work towards the Gatsby Benchmarks for students with SEND.

### NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE

The [National Careers Service](#) provides information and advice to adults and young people to support decisions on learning, training and work. The website contains job profiles, a 'skills health check', a course finder tool and access to independent careers advisers via a phone service and web chat, to support young people and adults to make informed choices about their career. The Government is committed to continued support of the National Careers Service and has committed to ensuring comprehensive careers information is hosted on its website.

## JOBCENTRE PLUS

Jobcentre Plus schools advisers work directly with schools to advise on work experience opportunities, routes into traineeships and apprenticeships and the local labour market, for the whole range of students. You can contact your local Jobcentre to find out how they can help students in your school.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The Career Development Institute (CDI) is the UK-wide professional body for the career development sector, including careers advisers and Careers Leaders working in schools and colleges. Their website contains lots of useful information and resources, including the popular ‘framework for careers, employability and enterprise education’, which provides learning outcomes from key stage 2 through to 16–19. They also run a wide range of training, including on ‘optimising career outcomes for young people with SEND’.

The CDI is the custodian of the UK Register of Career Development Professionals, which you can use to help find and select a qualified career adviser for your school or college. They also run the annual UK Career Development Awards every March, which include a best practice award for ‘Careers programme in a SEND school or college’.

## COUNCIL FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) is the umbrella body for the disabled children’s sector, bringing together professionals, practitioners and policy-makers spanning education, health and social care. Their membership of over 300 organisations represents the full breadth of the disability sector. CDC supports professionals by delivering practical training, sharing knowledge and information and hosting online guidance and toolkits. This is in addition to supporting young people and their parents on a range of issues, including young people’s participation, to transition into adulthood. CDC works directly with the Government to shape policy outcomes affecting young people with SEND.



## DISABILITY RIGHTS UK

Disability Rights UK (DR UK) is a national charity. They are ‘disabled people leading change’, the largest pan-disability organisation of its kind in the UK. DR UK supports disabled people to take up education and employment opportunities and develop their careers through innovative projects and leadership programmes. It publishes its flagship *Into HE* and *Into Apprenticeships* guides each year, offers disability confidence training and consultancy and runs free professional development events for careers advisers. It also runs the unique Disabled Student Helpline as part of its strategic partnership with the Department for Education.

## EDUCATION & TRAINING FOUNDATION

The Education and Training Foundation has a range of resources and training programmes to support you to ensure that learners with SEND achieve their aspirations. The specialist SEND site on the Excellence Gateway, their resources portal, hosts a range of free downloadable resources for practitioners, managers and leaders, including supporting learners with their careers in the employers and employability area.

## NASEN

nasen is a membership charity organisation supporting education professionals by providing resources and training to help meet and identify the needs of individuals with SEND. Their website resource library is designed to support both SENCOs, as well as teachers, other practitioners and support staff, to work effectively at a strategic level and practically in the classroom.

## NATSPEC

Natspec is the membership association for organisations which offer specialist further education and training for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their website hosts information for professionals, ranging from leadership and management study programmes (including SEND workforce development) to working with employers.

## PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

The Preparing for Adulthood programme provides expertise and support to local authorities and their partners to embed preparing for adulthood from the earliest years. The Preparing for Adulthood outcomes are based on what disabled young people say is important to them. Ultimately, young people want to have full lives with choices about their future and control of their support.

## TALENTINO

Talentino is a career development company working across England in special and mainstream schools, and the strategic partner for SEND for The Careers & Enterprise Company. They train staff in schools to run effective careers programmes, including for young people with learning difficulties, and host professional development activities including an annual conference. Their approach has been summed up in the paper *The Same and Different: Putting Forward the case for Early Career Development for Young People with Learning Difficulties in Special Schools*, which can be read on their website.

## STEM LEARNING CAREERS RESOURCES

STEM Learning is the largest provider of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) education support to schools across the UK. The National STEM Learning Centre provides professional development opportunities for teachers and others working with young people, an online community and curated resources, including information about careers education relating to STEM occupations. They also run the STEM Ambassadors and STEM Clubs programmes. STEM Ambassadors are a network of thousands of employees from STEM industries that can volunteer with your school and share their experiences of work with your students. Any school can set up a STEM Club to give students an opportunity to explore STEM outside the curriculum; this could be working with an ambassador, carrying out a project or thinking about science in the workplace.

## LOCAL SUPPORT

In each locality the specific programmes and support available will be different. Try contacting the following organisations in your area to find out what is on offer:

- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Local Authorities, particularly the learning disability team
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local charities who offer additional services for disabled young people

To help you find even more support, we have put together an online list of organisations recommended to us by those who have already been working towards the Benchmarks. We hope it can act as a starting point for your journey. Many of these organisations also act as a gateway to multiple schemes and regional activity.

You can find a full list of organisations that can help at:  
[www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/support](http://www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/support)

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# GLOSSARY

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ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	ODD	Oppositional Defiant Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder	PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
CEIAG	Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance	PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
DME	Dual and Multiple Exceptionality	PSHE education	Personal, Social, Health and Economic education
EHC plan	Education, Health and Care plan	SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
FE	Further Education	SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
HE	Higher Education	SEN	Special Educational Needs
LD	Learning Difficulties	SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
LDD	Learning Difficulties and Disabilities	SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership	SLT	Senior Leadership Team
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training		

GATSBY IS A FOUNDATION SET UP  
BY DAVID SAINSBURY  
TO REALISE HIS CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES.  
WE FOCUS OUR SUPPORT ON A LIMITED  
NUMBER OF AREAS:

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PLANT SCIENCE RESEARCH  
NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH  
SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING EDUCATION  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA  
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH AND ADVICE  
THE ARTS

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WE ARE PROACTIVE IN DEVISING PROJECTS  
TO ACHIEVE OUR AIMS. WE ARE ENTHUSIASTIC  
ABOUT SUPPORTING INNOVATION. WE ARE  
ANALYTICAL AS WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT  
TO UNDERSTAND THE OPPORTUNITIES  
AND PROBLEMS WE TACKLE. WE TAKE A  
LONG-TERM VIEW AS WE DO NOT THINK MUCH  
CAN BE ACHIEVED BY SHORT, ONE-OFF  
PROJECTS. WE ARE ALWAYS EAGER TO FORM  
PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANISATIONS WHO  
SHARE OUR GOALS.

The Gatsby Charitable Foundation  
The Peak, 5 Wilton Road, London SW1V 1AP  
T +44 (0)20 7410 0330 F +44 (0)20 7410 0332 [www.gatsby.org.uk](http://www.gatsby.org.uk)  
Registered Charity number 251988