

Local London Gatsby Benchmark 8 Toolkit



Gatsby Benchmark 8 - Personal Guidance

From September 2025, the updated Gatsby Benchmarks including Benchmark 8, became statutory for secondary schools, colleges and ITPs (including ITPs supporting learners up to age 25 with an EHCP). Headteachers, principals, senior leaders and governing boards are legally required to ensure personal guidance is embedded in their careers programme and to support the careers leader in delivering this.

“Every pupil 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.”

What good looks like:

Careers guidance interviews should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all pupils and should be timed to meet their individual needs. These meetings should be available for all pupils whenever significant study or career choices are being made.

The Careers Leader should work closely with the Careers Adviser, SEND coordinator (SENDCO) and other key staff to ensure personal guidance is effective and embedded in the careers programme.

Every pupil should have at least one personal guidance meeting with a Careers Adviser by the age of 16, and a further meeting by the age of 18. Meetings should be scheduled in the careers programme to meet the needs of pupils.

Information about personal guidance support and how to access it should be communicated to pupils and parents and carers, including through the school website.

The benchmark sets a high standard and states that staff giving one-to-one guidance to students should be qualified to an appropriate level. The CDI also specifies that to be on their register, advisers must be Level 6 or above.

Why this matters:

- Personal guidance is the provision of guidance interviews to young people in secondary education, and is one component of the Gatsby Benchmarks, which constitute a coherent and comprehensive approach to careers guidance.
- Providing structured personal guidance time within the school enables students to focus on their future dreams and to set goals to achieve them.
- Research shows that students benefit from conversations with familiar and trusted adults who can challenge and support them.
- Access to independent and impartial professional careers guidance is strongly valued by students and parents and is a recurring feature of good provision.
- Personal guidance helps students to consolidate and reflect upon their vocational identity, career decision making and self-efficacy. It is a focal point for making sense of the vital ingredients in the careers programme including encounters with employers and higher education, experiences of workplaces and career learning in subjects.

Careers Leaders: Getting started with BM8:

Plan:

- Work with your Enterprise Co-ordinator, Enterprise Adviser and/or Careers link governor to undertake an analysis of the guidance needs of your students and how professional Careers Advisers can support your careers and enterprise programme.
- Compare approaches with other schools in your area and identify any opportunities for collaborative arrangements.

Deliver:

- Consider how the National Careers Service [phone, email and webchat service](#) can complement your local offer.
- When planning staff CPD, ensure that up to date guidance information is covered and is understood by staff.
- With individual agreement, integrate records from careers interviews into student reporting systems so that tutors can support ongoing career planning.

Measure:

- Monitor and review the services offered, including gathering feedback from parents and students.
- Career conversations are an ongoing part of a student's experience and personal guidance is an integral part of the overall careers programme.

Value:

- Identify and explore suitable options and to consider the career implications of subject and course choice that are in their best interests.
- Challenge pre-existing assumptions about what students are capable of.
- Demystify learning and labour market systems and helping students understand progression pathways.

Timing & Access:

- By age 16, every pupil must have had at least one guidance meeting.
- By age 18, a second meeting should have taken place.
- For learners in colleges or ITPs, the meetings must also be timetabled around significant decisions (e.g. post-16 transition).

Who's Involved:

The Careers Leader plays a central role, collaborating closely with the careers adviser(s), SENCO (or SEND coordinator), pastoral support teams, and curriculum staff to identify learners needing tailored intervention and to coordinate delivery.

For students with SEND or those vulnerable to becoming NEET, this integration and proactive planning is essential.

If your school does not have a Level 6 Careers Advisor, you can source them from external organisations, your Local Authority, and sometimes other schools. You can also train up an existing or new member of staff within your school, using the Apprenticeship Levy.

Features of Effective Personal Guidance:

Best practice research highlights that personal guidance is most effective when:

- Endorsed and resourced by senior leadership
- Tailored to each young person, especially those from disadvantaged or SEND backgrounds
- Provided by qualified, ethically trained advisers with up-to-date labour market and pathway knowledge
- Embedded within a broader careers programme that includes preparation before and follow up after meetings
- Conducted in private, suitably sized spaces, allowing sufficient time and reflection
- Goal focused, building young people's self-efficacy and next-step planning

Context Within Broader Statutory Guidance:

Benchmark 8 is bolstered by the wider updates to the Gatsby Benchmarks, which emphasise career guidance as a whole-institution priority, evidence-driven and inclusive practice, meaningful experiences (see changes to Benchmarks 5 and 6), effective use of data, and parent/carer engagement.

The updated statutory guidance aligns with these themes, reinforcing the need for personalised guidance to form part of integrated, data-informed, and equity-driven careers provision.

Key Takeaways for Professionals:

- Mandatory timing by ages 16 and 18 (schools), plus key decision points in colleges/ITPs
- Staff collaboration Careers leader, adviser, SENDCO, pastoral and curriculum staff need to coordinate
- Qualified advisers internal or external, trained per professional standards
- Institutions responsible senior leadership must back and resource guidance delivery
- Equity and Inclusion especially for vulnerable learners, SEND, disadvantaged groups
- Integration & planning guidance meetings must be woven into wider careers strategy

This updated Benchmark 8 ensures that personal guidance is not optional, but a statutory, structured, and personalised component of every learner's career journey.

Providers who support this:

<https://www.callofthewild.co.uk/career-development-professional-level-6-higher-apprenticeship/>

<https://www.ixionholdings.com/qualifications/career-development-professional-level-6-apprenticeship/>

<https://www.thecdi.net/professional-qualified/qualifying-to-work-in-the-career-development-sector>

CEC resources can be found here:

[Gatsby Benchmark 8 | CEC Resource Directory](#)

[Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit - SEND](#)

Understand the Matrix standard review

<https://matrixstandard.com/>

Stay Nimble Career Coach

<https://staynimble.co.uk/>

What's your strength free resources

<https://whatsyourstrength.co.uk/free-downloads/>

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