

# Employability Services in Hounslow

A report commissioned by Spark!

Written by MyKindaFuture

## Contents

About the project.....	2
A closer look at the responses received .....	2
Students .....	2
Teachers .....	3
Findings – the student's voice.....	3
The frequency of careers advice, insight and guidance.....	3
Who is the person they receive careers advice from most often?.....	4
When do they receive careers advice and take part in related activities?.....	4
How often do people from business come into school to speak?.....	5
How often do students have the chance to visit a place of work?.....	5
The students' experience of careers-related activities in their schools .....	6
A closer look at the students with special educational needs and disabilities.....	7
Summary .....	8
Findings – the staff voice .....	9
The current provision in schools.....	10
Challenges around provision.....	11
Gaps in provision.....	13
Summary and recommendations.....	14
Discussion.....	15
Conclusion and recommendations for improvement.....	17

## About the project

The aim of this project was to assess the gaps in employability services in Hounslow.

Specifically, this project heard from teachers and young people in Hounslow, to identify:

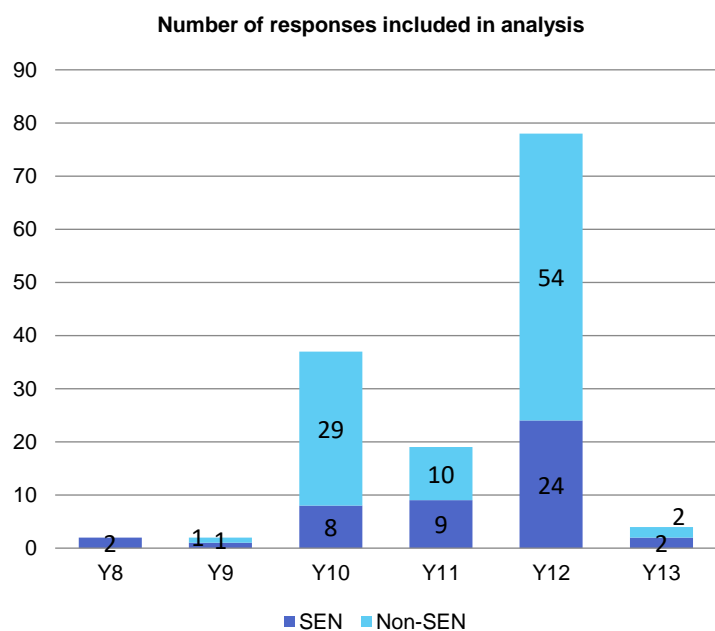
- 1) The demand for employability-related activities locally
- 2) The gaps in provision, including for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- 3) Recommendations for the future.

This project engaged with **21 teachers** and **195 students** from **11 schools**.

Participants predominantly engaged through a survey and interview, and a specially selected school participated in focus groups. The sample schools were selected to form a mix of:

- Geographical spread
- Ofsted results
- School type, such as academies, free schools and SEND schools.

MyKindaFuture approached students, teachers and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) from some schools that already had a relationship with Spark!, as well as some that do not work with Spark!. This was done to ensure that the data collected was broad and unbiased.



Feedback from schools that didn't participate suggests that the predominant reasons were:

- Difficulty in getting senior leadership buy-in
- Internal structural changes that meant the staff required were no longer available to participate
- Data protection concerns
- Not enough time to organise either staff or students.

## A closer look at the responses received

### Students

MyKindaFuture received **173 responses to the online survey** and facilitated a **focus group with a further 22 students**, engaging with **195 students overall**. We collected quantitative data via online surveys and qualitative data through teacher interviews and student focus groups.

To ensure that the most accurate findings are presented, participants who did not answer more than 25% of the survey questions (34 students) were excluded from analysis. Incomplete responses, in this case, indicate a lack of engagement with the survey and inclusion of this data may skew results. Consequently, a total of 142 students’ survey responses will be analysed, of which 32% are responses from those with special educational needs and disability (SEND)<sup>1</sup>.

The research was conducted from March to May 2018, and most of the complete responses received came from year 12 students (55%) and year 10 students (26%). Year 13 students were least likely to engage.

## Teachers

MyKindaFuture heard from **21 teachers** through a mixture of **interviews** and a **survey**, meaning that the sample fairly represents multiple teacher perceptions.

For the teacher sample, MyKindaFuture selected a mixture of participants who were careers leads and SENCOs. Where a careers lead or SENCO wasn’t available, the deputy leads and coordinators were selected. Seven careers-related teachers gave an interview and seven careers-related teachers completed the survey. Responses from SEND-related teachers suggest that they felt more comfortable participating in an interview than via a survey, as five agreed to be interviewed, whereas only two completed surveys.

Representation of SENCOs was low in comparison to careers leads. Feedback from schools indicates that this was due to the departments’ traditional lack of direct involvement in careers-related activities. SENCOs, therefore, did not feel that this piece of research was relevant to them.

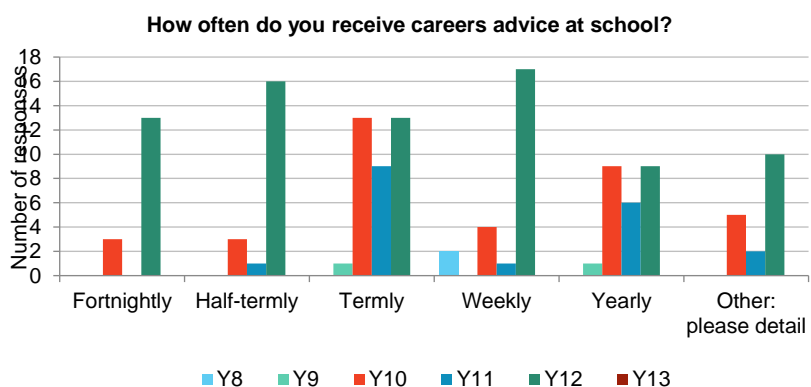
In terms of the evaluation approach:

- i) Gatsby’s eight benchmarks on good career guidance were used to ascertain need among schools according to teachers and students
- ii) Four ‘hygiene’ statements were used to measure impact against other areas
- iii) The questionnaires and research were aligned with recent educational policy and findings.

## Findings – the student's voice

### The frequency of careers advice, insight and guidance

Most students receive careers advice at school on a termly basis. Students in year 12 receive careers advice more frequently at school than other year groups, with many receiving advice weekly or fortnightly according to results from the student survey.

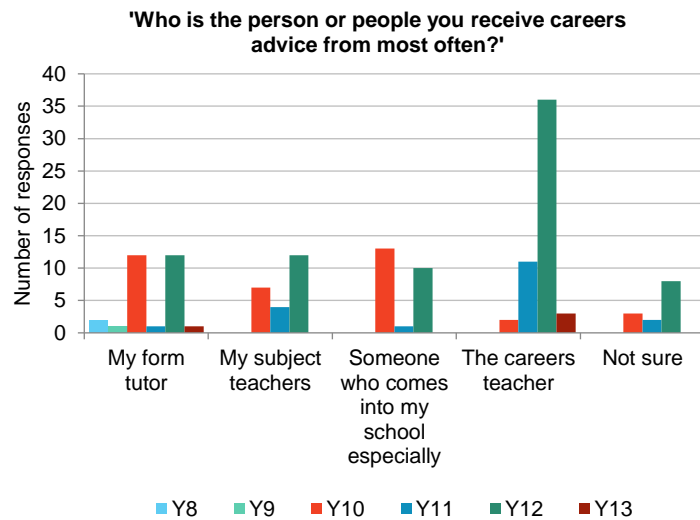


<sup>1</sup> Denoted by students saying they were allocated extra time in exams and/or additional lesson support (an LSA).

When questioned within the focus groups, students described a range of activities and advice: attending workshops, university days, lectures, careers days and so on. Some students used Google Classroom, where teachers supported different groups of students, sharing information and advice. Examples of these groups were the 'Med Soc' group (a medical group) and the Russell Group. These groups were described positively by the students who valued their relevant, informative and tailored content. Returning to the survey, both younger students and those in year 13 receive careers advice less frequently; usually on a termly or annual basis.

### Who is the person they receive careers advice from most often?

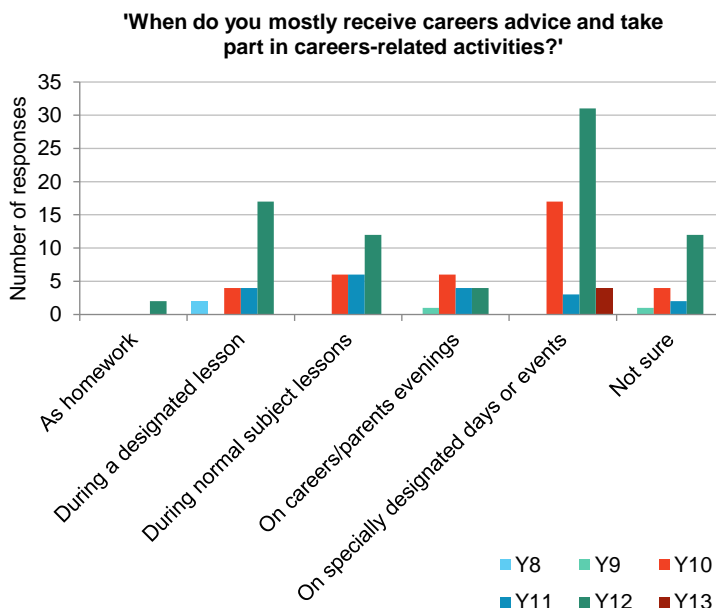
As students progress through school, the person they receive the most specialist support from is their careers teacher (37% overall). When they are in years 8 and 9, they receive careers advice most often from their form tutor. Year 10-13s most often receive advice from their careers teacher.



Within the focus groups, **students reported valuing input that was relevant and impartial, usually from teachers or external individuals who offered a range of information and opportunities.** While some focus group attendees appreciated the experience and connections their family could give them, others were wary of hearing only one, potentially biased, perspective. Students wanted to make their own decisions and appreciated hearing a range of information to help them to make a good decision. Sometimes learning what they did not want to do was also beneficial.

### When do they receive careers advice and take part in related activities?

Year 8 students mostly receive careers advice during a designated lesson; year 9s during careers/parents evenings; year 10s, 12s and 13s during specially designated days or events; and year 11s during normal subject lessons.



**Years 10, 12 and 13 generally receive careers advice during specially designated days or events.**

When examining these findings, it’s important to consider the context of the year groups. In year 8, students are most likely to be choosing their GCSE options, and it can be assumed that teachers will be talking about their subjects in relation to careers to inform students’ GCSE choices. Similarly, it can be inferred that year 11 students are receiving careers advice during subject lessons because it’s a crucial time in their education and because less time is set aside for careers-related activities.

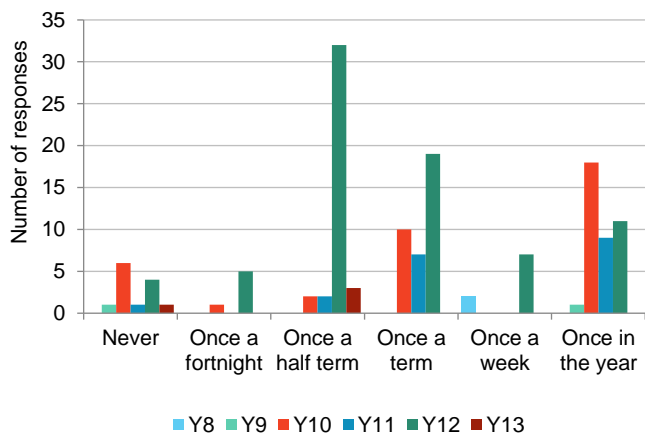
How often do people from business come into school to speak?

**People from business come into all the surveyed schools to speak half-termly, termly or annually.**

Looking at the largest categories we see that year 10s and 11s usually hear from people in business annually and year 12s hear from people on a half-termly basis.

Students appreciate these opportunities, as long as the person is engaging and doesn’t ‘lecture’ them. Interactive activities are preferred by some as a way of remaining engaged in the session – particularly if the session is after a day sitting in school. Students also particularly appreciate a ‘careers day’, where numerous businesses come to the school and are available to answer questions.

'So far, this academic year, how often have people from business come into school to speak?'



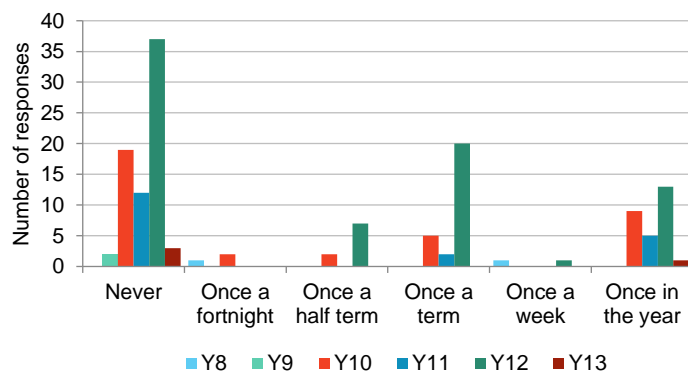
How often do students have the chance to visit a place of work?

Two teachers told us they arranged for their students to visit a place of work once a term, but most of the students in each of the schools said this ‘never’ happened.

**Over half of the students in years 10-12 said they had never had the chance to visit a place of work** (organised by their school).

One focus group attendee described emailing ten different doctors over the past five months but only hearing back from two of them. Others in the focus groups described the difficulties in trying to apply for work placements as well as keeping on top of studies. Occasionally one area needed to be prioritised over the other.

'So far, this academic year, how often have you had chance to visit a place of work?'



### The students’ experience of careers-related activities in their schools

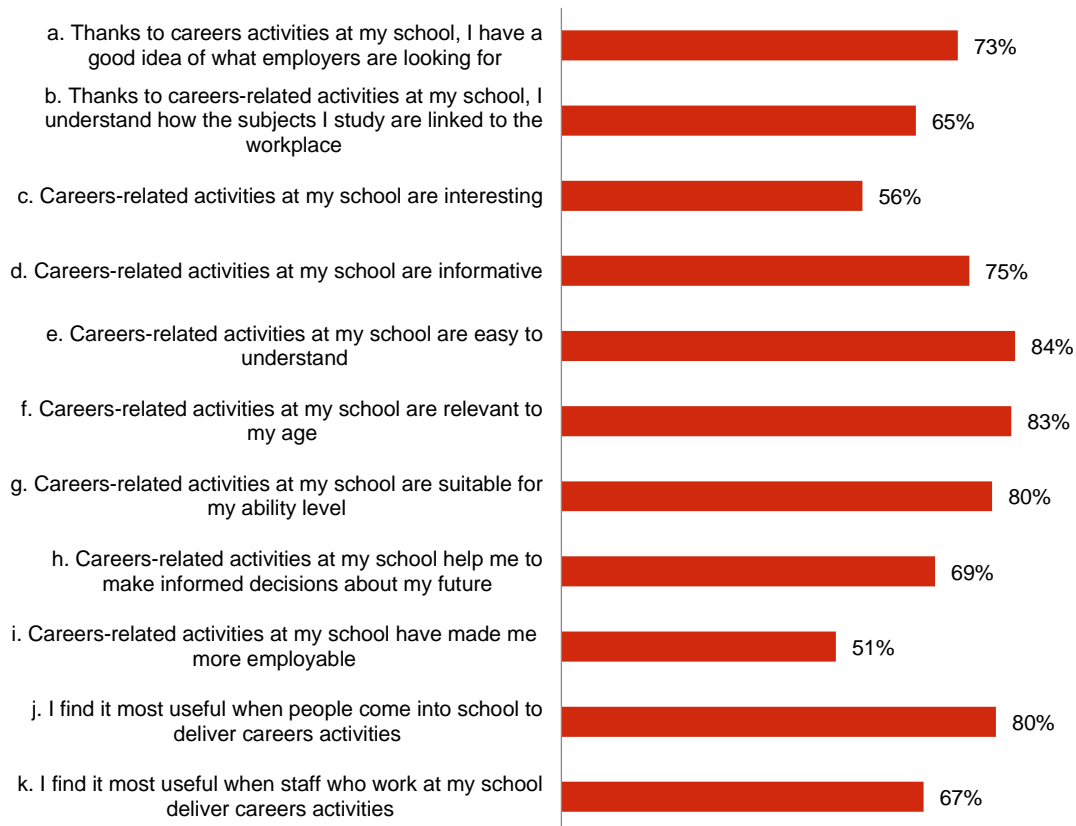
When asked about the careers-related activities they’ve been involved in at school, over 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed that careers-related activities at their school are easy to understand and that they are relevant to their age. Only 56%, however, thought they are interesting and only 51% of respondents thought these activities make them more employable.

Students find it most useful when people come into their school to deliver careers activities (80%) as opposed to staff who work at their schools delivering the sessions (67%).

Focus group respondents stated they want more trips to see other places of work. They also want information on the working hours and salaries of different jobs, as that information could affect their choices.

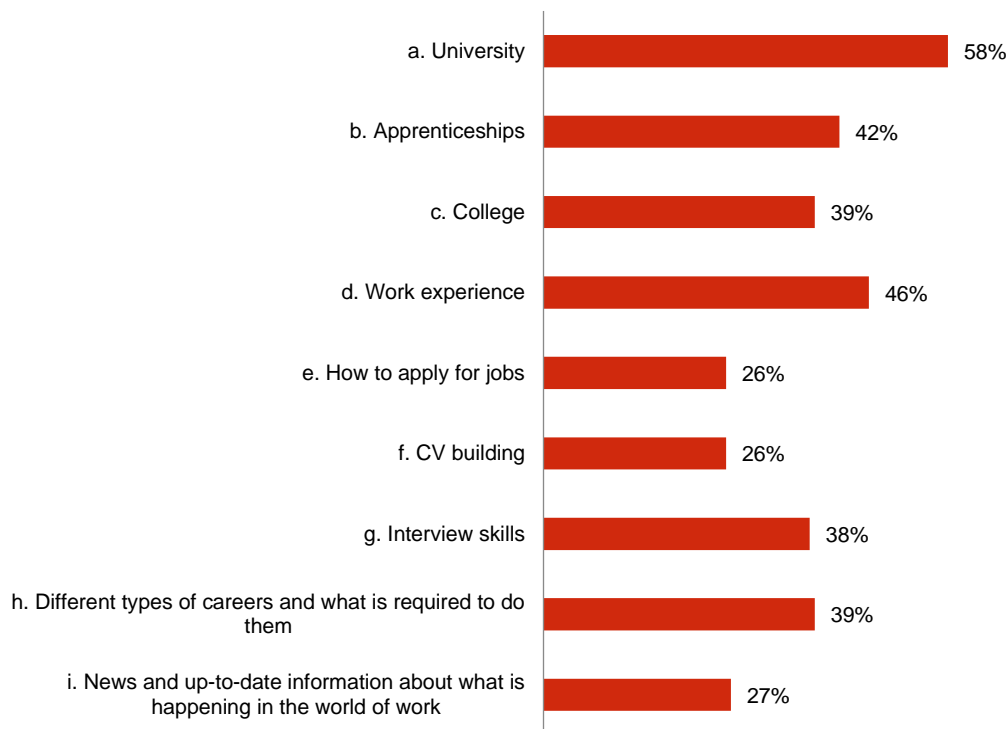
Looking into how different year groups responded when asked about their experiences of careers-related activities in their schools, in general, a higher proportion of year 11 and 12 students find the careers-related activities helpful (they agreed or strongly agreed with the statements). This might reflect an increased focus for students on careers as they become older.

**Proportion of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with the following statements. All year groups.**



When asked about the quality of the information they receive, information about university was the highest rated, with 58% of students viewing it as good or excellent. This was followed by work experience (46%) and apprenticeships (42%). **The lowest scoring areas were 'how to apply for jobs' and 'CV building' (26%) and 'news and up-to-date information about what is happening in the world of work' (27%).**

**Proportion of students rating the quality of information provided on the following as 'good' or 'excellent'**



### A closer look at the students with special educational needs and disabilities

There were **43 students** who responded to the student survey who said they needed extra time in exams (a proxy for having special educational needs and disabilities) and who answered more than 25% of the survey questions. Because the numbers were occasionally low when looking at specific answers for questions, not all questions could be analysed and so the general trends have been highlighted below.

When compared with non-SEND students, students with SEND:

1. Are more likely to receive careers advice on a half-termly as opposed to a termly basis
2. Are more likely to receive careers advice and guidance from their subject teachers during normal subject lessons as opposed to from their careers teacher or during specially designated days or events.

**Looking at SEND students' experiences of careers-related activities in their schools, when asked about the content of the careers-related sessions, generally students with SEND and without SEND responded very similarly.** The analysis calculated the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements, and there was usually less than a five-percentage-point difference between students with and without SEND.

The exception to this was the statement 'Careers-related activities at my school are informative'. Only 65% of students with SEND agreed or strongly agreed with this, compared with 82% of non-SEND students; a 17-percentage-point difference.

When asked to rate the quality of the content of particular sessions, students with SEND responded more positively to the CV-building session, with 40% saying it is 'good' or 'excellent', compared with 19% for non-SEND students (a 21-percentage-point difference). However, the scores for CV building were lower than those for most other sessions, so it would be beneficial to improve these sessions for all students.

## Summary

As students progress through school, they receive more specialist support from their careers teacher, with the exception of SEND students who were more likely to receive careers advice and guidance from their subject teachers during normal subject lessons.

Most students receive careers advice at school on a termly basis. Students in year 12 receive careers advice more frequently at school than those in other year groups. Students in year 13 receive careers advice less often; we hypothesise that this is because they are focused on their final examinations, and/or have already made their decisions about their next steps. Younger students in years 8 to 9 receive careers advice least often and when they do it's mostly from a subject teacher. We'll explore this in more detail in the findings from the staff.

Students find it more useful when people come into their school to deliver careers activities as opposed to staff who work at their schools delivering the sessions. Year 12 students are most likely to receive careers insights from an external party and/or business; this could suggest that businesses are targeting year 12 students or that teachers often select this year group when approaching or being approached by a business. Students also spoke about their desire for more workplace visits, with over half of the students in years 10 to 12 reporting that their school had never offered them this opportunity.

Students appreciate the careers insights, advice and guidance they received from external providers as long as the person delivering them is engaging and doesn't 'lecture' them.

Interactive activities are preferred, and students reported valuing content that is relevant and impartial. In terms of the quality of information provided, the areas with biggest room for improvement are information on how to apply for jobs, CV building and making activities more 'interesting'.



## Findings – the staff voice

Staff gave detailed descriptions of what good careers provision meant to them during their interviews. Common themes included:

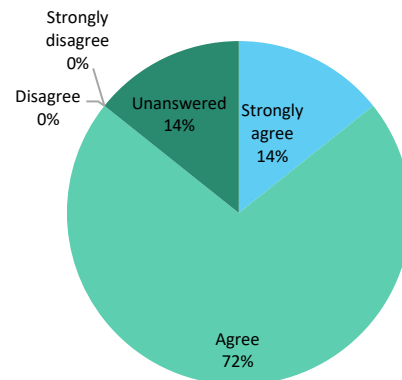
- Good quality, impartial and/or independent information
- Well organised, well led and well resourced
- Starting early:
  - Building on the information as students progress through their school life
  - Highlighting a range of options early on so students have a goal or next step to aim for.
- Giving students the time to think things through themselves:
  - Asking more relevant and/or tailored questions
  - Organising their own work experience (which can be more successful than others organising it for them, because the student chooses what they want to do).
- Hearing from or linking up with a range of individuals or organisations about a range of opportunities and pathways:
  - Providing opportunities to learn about options in a practical setting, as well as in the school.
- Tailoring the support for students to make sure they make decisions which are right for them – this was particularly emphasised for students with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Providing a range of one-to-one and group support.
- Enabling students to take opportunities, for example by involving the family for children with SEND.

### The current provision in schools

Staff were asked about the quality of overall careers provision at their school in the staff survey. The majority of career leaders agreed (72%) or strongly agreed (14%) that it is indeed excellent.

Responses to other questions in the staff survey also indicated that staff think highly of the careers provision at their schools. This may be, at least partially, because all respondents stated their schools either currently work with Spark! or have worked with them in the past. The support from Spark! may improve the quality of overall careers provision at schools. There may also be a certain element of social desirability; respondents may answer according to what they believe is the most socially desirable option.

'The quality of overall careers provision at my school is excellent'



The current provision was explored in more depth in the staff interviews, during which staff were asked whether they knew about the Gatsby benchmarks in relation to career provision. The results from the interviews were more mixed than those of the staff survey.

Generally, the careers teachers who responded to the interviewers said they do know about the benchmarks, whereas SENCOs said they do not. This is unsurprising as it is the careers teachers/leads who engage with the Gatsby benchmarks on a more regular basis.

The following Gatsby benchmarks were commonly reported during interviews as being achieved:

- Provision of a stable careers programme
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance.

Achievement of the following benchmarks was more mixed from school to school, with some schools reporting them as being achieved and others reporting room for improvement in these areas:

- Learning from career and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each pupil
- Linking curriculum learning to careers (some schools mentioned using the ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness for the weaker students)
- Encounters with employers and employees.

**Six staff members (29%) reported room for improvement regarding the following benchmark:**

- Experiences of workplaces.

Both careers teachers and SENCO staff had approximately the same knowledge of the opportunities available for students, although the careers teachers gave slightly more detail of those opportunities than SENCO staff (presumably because it is their area of expertise). SENCO staff were more likely to describe the specific needs and requirements of students with SEND than careers teachers were.

Staff reported that their schools often struggle to find the time, money or knowledge to link up with local organisations or businesses to help with careers advice and guidance for students. However, when it does happen, they said, it can be very beneficial for students. The challenges are discussed in more detail below.

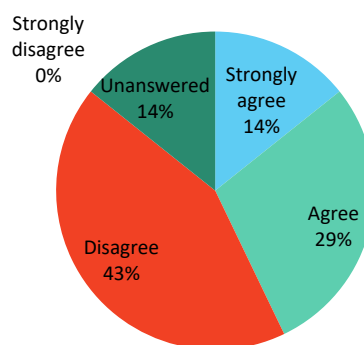
### Challenges around provision

Staff reported the following challenges around provision and achievement of the Gatsby benchmarks:

#### Tailoring the advice, guidance and opportunities for each student

Career leaders who were surveyed were split as to whether or not they thought external careers providers effectively differentiate workshops and resources with specific student needs in mind (43% disagreed and 43% agreed or strongly agreed).

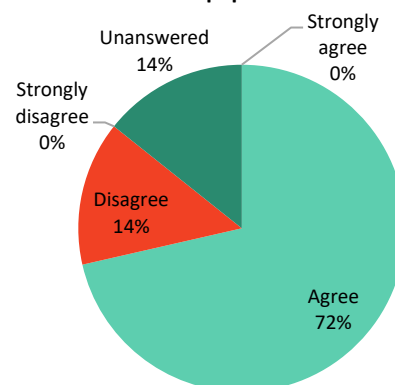
**'External careers providers effectively differentiate workshops and resources with specific student needs in mind.'**



Three out of the seven schools that responded to the school survey said they use an external provider; another three schools use their own staff, or a mix of external providers/advisors and their own staff.

When asked if careers activities and resources are differentiated to the educational needs of all pupils, nearly three-quarters of career leaders agreed. The survey responses showed that half of the respondents often tailor career activities and resources by year group. Other schools tailor activities and resources depending on the activity being provided, or do so for students with SEND.

**'Careers activities and resources at my school are differentiated to the educational needs of all pupils.'**



All respondents to the staff survey said careers provision starts in years 7-9 at their school, but that generally years 10 and 11 receive the most information.

Despite the tailoring mentioned, during the staff interviews, there was a feeling that more tailoring could be done if there was more resource (including time) available.

When asked if they address the need of each student in their CIAG provision, one teacher explained that:

*"We're working towards addressing this, we're about 85% of the way, but it's really hard because we're talking about the needs of all students!" (Careers teacher interview)*

*"We rely on external individuals for this, but we're not achieving this because we don't have enough budget to bring someone in to give independent advice." (Careers teacher interview)*

This was particularly true for external individuals, organisations and businesses, who do not always tailor their information or experience sufficiently for students (particularly for those with SEND). For example, external speakers are not taking sufficient account of those students with literacy needs (those who have English as an additional language (EAL) and so on).

*"I did Teach First and did a summer project in the HR department to help them plan a training session for a line manager who may go on to manage an apprentice who has just left school. I was surprised at how little they knew about the profile of that kind of young person, especially in terms of how much support and pastoral care they would require. It's not just teachers that need to be aware and equipped to offer this, it's also future employers. Someone who's leaving school at 16 or 18 might not be ready for the world of work and they may need more support from both sides." (Careers teacher interview)*

Sometimes staff tailored advice and guidance to specific groups, but this depended on resource and logistics.

*"We are getting better at meeting the needs of all students, especially in terms of academic achievement, but we still tend to lump them all together for CIAG. Sometimes that's good; for example, an all-year-10 apprenticeship talk is essential, so everyone finds out about alternative routes early on, but there are times when more specific targeting is necessary. **We're lucky that we have achievement groups that come in and work with specific groups, for example, C/D borderline and those disaffected with school, but we might not necessarily target different ethnic profiles within this. I think if we worked together as a borough, with the help of providers such as Spark!, we could create more bespoke events, but this is very difficult to do as an individual school.**" (Careers teacher interview)*

#### Having the time or knowledge to make the links with businesses and organisations

Building networks often relies on staff for making the links.

*"I don't think we have secure relationships with employers yet, we just don't have the time. However, we are looking at how we can work on this." (Careers teacher interview)*

*"At the moment, a lot of staff rely on their network, on people they know; it's hard." (SENCO staff member interview)*

Schools are not rigorously assessed on careers advice, which can lead to careers advice and guidance being deprioritised.

*“There’s a lot of pressure on exams and performance tables as these are the things we are measured by. We’re not measured on careers. It’s part of being a good school but it’s not a measure to report on like exams. It costs us money to do all these different things [like catering to different needs] but we’ve got less money. The curriculum gets squeezed to provide students with more subject choices, but they still need careers guidance. It’s important to be smart – you have to let something else go occasionally. They’ve brought all this [careers reform] in but there’s no extra funding.” (Careers teacher interview)*

### Gaps in provision

Staff members at the schools were asked to identify areas of careers provision in schools that require more support. The key areas were:

#### 1. Connections with businesses and organisations

*“Students need more different experiences, in different roles, outside of school.” (SENCO staff member interview)*

*“Students need more actual encounters with employers and employees; we’re better at that now due to partnerships with MyKindaFuture and others but I’m not sure if that’s the case for all schools.” (Careers teacher interview)*

#### 2. Access to work-based learning

*“I would love some support to help these girls find work experience opportunities. These kinds of opportunities are so valuable and there should be more of them. Visits do happen, but it tends to be for select groups such as STEM students, very high ability or very low ability, but the girls in the middle don’t get much employer engagement at all.” (SENCO staff member interview)*

#### 3. Starting careers information, guidance and related activities early enough

*“There needs to be consultation between careers and SENCO to understand if we are meeting the needs of all of the year group. It needs to be done in the planning stage and not left as an afterthought. Especially when we have students who see things that have been planned and then students look at what’s on offer and then they get demotivated by the lack of options.” (SENCO staff member interview)*

*“It’s something that needs to happen much earlier. The other day my Head of Year 8 asked, ‘What is there for them [referring to years 7 and 8]?’ Companies prefer to come and talk to year 9 and 10 but there needs to be more for younger students as they work on project-based learning.” (Careers teacher interview)*

#### 4. Access to labour market information

*“This is a huge gap. In fact, one of the biggest gaps. We’ve got sixth formers wanting to go into careers like forensics – where’s the labour market information about that?” (Careers teacher interview)*

#### 5. Helping students to understand how their skills transfer to the workplace

*“I don’t think students who do workshops understand how to link the curriculum to the career.” (Careers teacher interview)*

#### 6. Funding/resourcing the activities

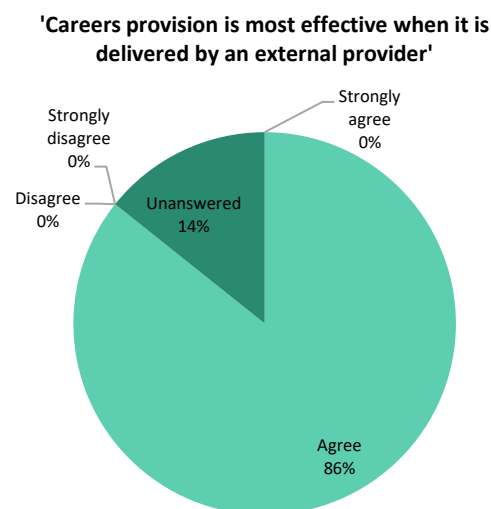
*“In an ideal world, we’d sign up for all these activities but at the end of the day it comes down to funding. If there was any way that activities were cheaper or could be done in a different way, that would be amazing.” (Careers teacher interview)*

### Summary and recommendations

Career leaders who responded to the staff survey agreed that careers provision is most effective when it is delivered by an external provider (86% agreed). This was followed up in the interviews, where staff were asked about recommendations for external careers providers.

The staff members interviewed stated that they would recommend external careers providers:

- 1) Provide a central hub
  - a. To see what is available (and up to date)
  - b. For booking activities
- 2) Provide more resource
- 3) Tailor advice and guidance to students, particularly for:
  - a. Students with SEND, specifically those with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH)
  - b. Students with autism
  - c. Students at risk of becoming ‘NEET’ (not in education, employment or training)
- 4) Provide information and guidance earlier, to inspire and motivate students in their studies.
- 5) Offer a range of information, so students get a balanced view of opportunities



- 6) Provide careers activities/speakers:
  - a. That are affordable
  - b. That are local (and therefore not as expensive)
  - c. That are more accessible for students
- 7) Provide CPD for teachers to use (externally made) short and helpful sessions for students – because teachers know their students and their students' needs
- 8) Make links with local businesses to then support students, particularly those with SEND, to make connections (such as apprenticeships).

## Discussion

Hearing from a range of voices in schools that both work with and do not work with Spark! was crucial to understanding the current provision of careers services and the gaps within it. It was also important in identifying recommendations moving forward. Using different research methods to capture information has led to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding than would otherwise be possible.

Students from years 10 and 11 receive careers advice less frequently (termly or yearly) compared with those in year 12, who receive such information most frequently (weekly, fortnightly or half-termly). Fewer students from year 13 than from other years responded to the survey, possibly due to the demands on their time during their final year of school. The handful that did respond stated that they receive careers advice frequently.

Schools that responded to the survey said that they use external providers, and/or a mixture of external providers and internal staff, to provide careers advice to their students. However, a large proportion agreed that using external providers is more effective than using internal staff. This poses an interesting challenge; that of resource. Interestingly, students value input from both teachers and from external individuals (when the external individuals were informative and engaging). Teachers know their students and are able to be more impartial in their advice than other figures in students' lives (such as family members).

There were differing answers in terms of the resource issue: some schools had paid for certain activities and others had not. Pressure on resources (time, money, capacity) was a common theme among nearly all staff. Some staff suggested that external providers could train teachers to deliver provider-produced, short and engaging sessions for students. Others suggested using local networks – or forming networks – to enable schools to pool resources for numerous schools to access. These networks might also support the linking up of schools and local organisations or businesses; something that many schools found difficult to do.

Teachers and staff at schools do not often have the time (or knowledge) to make connections with local businesses and organisations, yet can often be asked to do so for their students. Understandably, this can put additional pressure on staff. Potential solutions discussed were to utilise networks effectively, and for an external careers provider to find a way (possibly using technology to minimise the cost burden) to bring businesses, organisations and schools together, along with good quality and relevant information.

It appears that different schools may have different amounts of money available for careers advice and guidance, so if providers were able to provide a range of services effectively with a range of prices, this might benefit more people. For example, as a lower cost option, careers providers could provide up-to-date, high-quality information about the labour market, different job opportunities and different training routes. A slightly pricier option might be to link up with local businesses, organisations or training providers, and/or to provide the chance to visit a workplace or to gain work experience.

Students reported the following as being areas in which improvement is necessary (with low proportions agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements):

- Careers-related activities at my school have made me more employable
- Careers-related activities at my school are interesting.

External careers providers could look at specifically tailoring their content to explicitly link careers-related activities to transferable skills, helping students to understand if and how they have become more employable by taking part in the activities. External careers providers could also experiment with different ways of making careers-related activities interesting, particularly for the students in year 10, who reported slightly lower levels of interest than those of other years..

Additionally, a low proportion of students said that the following areas were 'good' or 'excellent' in the survey:

- News and up-to-date information about what is happening in the world of work (less so for year 12 students)
- CV building
- How to apply for jobs
- Work experience (for year 11s).

Again, external career providers may want to look at these particular areas to see whether the quality of information they provide can be improved.

Schools commonly reported tailoring careers advice and guidance to students, but the level of tailoring differs. It is common to tailor by year group, but less so for smaller groups of students, such as those with English as an additional language.

Students appreciate the tailored support that some teachers give to groups of them who are interested in particular areas, such as applying to a Russell Group university or wanting to become a medical doctor. These groups, reported students, are informative and relevant.

Students with SEND appear to be quite well catered for when it comes to careers provision in schools, perhaps as a result of the support given to them due to their SEND status. External businesses and organisations are not necessarily as well equipped or as knowledgeable as they need to be in order to provide an appropriate careers learning experience for students who have additional needs or who struggle with literacy, language and so on. This is something that external careers providers could consider providing support for.



## Conclusion and recommendations for improvement

This research project has heard from a range of teachers, SENCO staff, careers leads and students about the provision of, and gaps in, careers advice and guidance in schools. Using different research methods, this project has synthesised the key themes to draft up robust recommendations.

The main areas for improvement are: engaging with the labour market and local businesses/organisations; tailoring content and activities to students' needs; making good use of limited resources; starting work on careers early enough; and providing high-quality information. There have been examples of some outstanding work from the schools interviewed and also some very helpful suggestions and recommendations for careers providers to consider in the future.

Every school surveyed uses an external careers provider for (part of) their provision. External careers providers are in a privileged position in that they can use their expertise and economies of scale to support more schools and to deliver outstanding careers information, advice and guidance.

Using the information from both the schools themselves and the research more generally, our recommendations for improvement for the external career providers are to:

### 1) Provide a central hub or network for schools and businesses

- a. To see what careers advice and guidance support is available (and up to date) in their area
- b. To connect schools with businesses and/or each other
- c. To provide high-quality, unbiased and engaging information, particularly about:
  - i. The range of different options available to students, such as apprenticeships
  - ii. The current state of the world of work
  - iii. CV building
  - iv. How to apply for jobs
  - v. Understanding how careers-related activities translate into skills that make students more employable
- d. For providing short, ten-minute sessions that teachers could be trained to run for their student, combining high-quality resources with teachers' knowledge of individual students and their needs
- e. For booking activities
- f. To support businesses to ensure that if they offer work experience opportunities, or similar activities, they are able to provide a high-quality placement which is tailored to the needs of, and engaging for, the individual student.

- 2) **Provide more resource.** External careers providers could use technology and economies of scale to bring the areas discussed in recommendation 1 to a larger number of schools at a lower price. The more intensive opportunities could be charged at a higher rate.

3) **Tailor advice and guidance for students (and support businesses to do so)**, particularly for:

- a. Students with SEND
- b. Students with SEMH
- c. Students with autism
- d. Students at risk of becoming NEET
- e. Students interested in particular areas, such as applying for a medical degree or to a Russell Group university.

4) **Provide information and guidance earlier to inspire and motivate students in their studies.**

Schools have mentioned through this research that involving younger students (from year 7 or even earlier) is beneficial: it gives students a goal to work towards with their current studies and enables them to increase their knowledge and understanding over time, leading to more relevant paths later on.

If external careers providers did provide a central hub, this could be used for different age groups with different information, activities and approaches according to their age and needs.

5) If offering **careers activities**, ensure they are:

- a. Affordable
- b. Local (and therefore not as expensive)
- c. Accessible for students.