

Connect

Bringing together the
College Careers Community

Edition 2: Driving progression
for all learners

Foreword



Nicola Hall,
Director of Education
The Careers & Enterprise Company

I am delighted to introduce this second edition of Connect, the growth of our community of practice has really gathered steam since we launched the first edition during Colleges Week, last October.

As promised, we are committed to delivering content which is developed by leaders and Careers Leaders from Further Education as well as Careers Hubs Leads who are working closely with colleges across the country.

At the time of you reading this, many of you will have attended the Association of Colleges Annual Conference. I hope you were able to participate in the workshop led by my colleague Andrew Webster, along with colleagues from Preston's College and Westminster Kingsway College. The topic of the workshop was Careers Education and Guidance: Supporting Every Learner to Progress. If you missed the opportunity to hear from those colleagues,

then I am delighted to let you know that Debbie Ireland (Head of 14-19 curriculum at Preston's College) and Jasbir Sondhi (Vice Principal at Westminster Kingsway College) will share their workshop content via a series of Connect blogs over the coming weeks.

By now, I am sure you are all steeped in conversation around the content and detail of Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth, the much-anticipated FE White Paper which was launched in January 2021. At The Careers & Enterprise Company we were pleased to see that the White Paper recognises the incredible progress that Careers Leaders have made to improve outcomes for young people. Your hard work towards the Gatsby Benchmarks, which continue to be relevant and vital to improving young people's life chances, should continue. We are particularly pleased by the inclusion of intent to roll out our Careers Hub infrastructure to national scale. Many of your colleges are represented in our existing Careers Hubs and this year we will be focussing on further developing strategic leadership partnerships with College Principals and Careers Link Governors to ensure that colleges are rooted at the heart of our model, working closely with partner schools and the wider education sector to collectively develop careers guidance to respond directly to local skills needs.

We are currently undertaking more detailed research into aspects of careers leadership in colleges and will look forward to sharing findings in our next edition of Connect.

As you move towards welcoming learners back to your sites this Spring, we wish you all well and look forward to connecting with you throughout the rest of the year.

Welcome

Connecting to a brighter future for all

Welcome to the second edition of Connect insights and resources. We can hardly believe it's been over 4 months since we launched Connect with over 220 colleges already signed up to the community. We're delighted to say that the feedback from that first edition was positive. So, as we continue to grow the community this year, we'd like to focus this edition on driving progression for all learners.

What is Connect?

Created by The Careers & Enterprise Company, in partnership with the Association of Colleges (AoC), Connect has been designed to encourage members of The College Careers Community to collaborate, innovate and share experiences as well as approaches. The aim of the publication is to provide an open platform for best practice and resources; national access to local expertise; and a place to drive innovation.

Why does it matter?

We think it's important to inspire collaboration and practice sharing within careers and enterprise activities at all levels. We want to connect existing college clusters and highlight their work. And we're passionate about providing specific support around the Gatsby Benchmarks; responding to sector needs; and shining a light on the latest research findings.

Who is it for?

Connect is for you! Our publication is for all colleges and sixth form colleges in England. It is designed to support all careers professionals in colleges, whether your role is strategic careers leadership or directly supporting young people with careers information, advice and guidance. By being part of the College Careers Community, you can gain access to exclusive Spotlight Webinars, and take the opportunity to share best practice on a national level.



The success of Connect depends on your feedback
Email us your thoughts and join us on our social channels using **#ConnectColleges**

Spotlight on industry placements and work experience



Cath Sezen,
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Industry placements and work experience – how can colleges rebuild as we emerge from the pandemic?

Colleges have long worked with local and regional employers on apprenticeships and professional training. Many courses for those aged 16 to 18 have mandatory work experience elements (early years, health and social care, land-based qualifications and all T levels for example). However, the introduction of work experience within study programmes in 2013, and subsequent capacity and delivery fund (CDF) pilots for the longer T level placements, has meant even greater college investment in employer engagement and placement design and delivery for all 16 to 18 college-based courses.

Work experience and industry placements within post 16 study programmes and T levels provide an exciting, hands on opportunity for students to experience the world of work and carry out tasks and projects in a real-life work environment. For some students, this is their first experience of work and the required behaviours and attitudes; for others it runs alongside a part time job, providing an insight into a particular occupation associated with their course. Student feedback is positive, and many young people have found longer term employment through their placement or work experience.

2020/21: The impact of COVID-19 and how to rebuild

We are now living in very different times. The pandemic has had a huge impact on placement delivery. Since the beginning of the Spring term, The Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed that CDF targets will be waived for this year (though they are still a requirement for T Levels) as long as employer engagement continues. In the short term then, the financial pressure is off. But over the rest of this year, how do colleges rebuild their plans for placements and other work experience?



Over the next few months, education and businesses, albeit slowly and in-line with public health guidelines, will start to return to 'normal'. It is likely though that placements and work experience won't be an immediate priority for many businesses that have had to change their practices, furlough staff and in some cases restructure.

Keeping up the contact with employers will help to ensure that when they are ready, they know where to turn. You can keep them updated on initiatives such as T Levels and the new flexibilities in traineeships, for example. Employers could also set projects and tasks; they could undertake guest speaker slots; and with guidance in place on appropriate boundaries, they could mentor students online even if on-site placements are not possible.

Rethinking the traditional placement or work experience is also something to consider. Over the past year, some businesses have been offering virtual placements. These of course can be used as part of the CDF and T Level taster days. At the Association of Colleges (AoC) we have been speaking to DfE about whether there could be some flexibility in the in virtual placements, especially in sectors such as digital where remote working may well be the 'new normal'.

In the slightly longer term, The Skills for Jobs White Paper puts college and local employer relationships at the centre of reforms for post-16 technical education. Colleges already have good relationships with employers, but this renewed focus should also help.

We'd love to know how your college is currently engaging with employers and what your future plans are. If you'd like to share good practice and innovation in this area, please get in touch.

**What are your experiences
of industry placements
and work experience?
Contact us and let us know**

Examples of working together with employers

North Hertfordshire College - Give a Future

North Hertfordshire College (NHC) has been running their Give a Future campaign to encourage employers to pass on their skills and knowledge to students. The campaign details ways in which an employer can get involved whilst emphasising that it doesn't have to take hours of their time.

You will find on the website a list of options for the employer to choose from with an indication of the time involved including being a guest speaker, providing an industry placement, joining the employer advisory group and many more.

Could this work for your college? Learn more by visiting the [Give a Future website](#).



The Give a Future campaign has given a focus to employers showcasing opportunities to support young people, and encouraging development and knowledge sharing, despite the ever-changing barriers. We have been delighted with the wholehearted support we have received from employers and the new opportunities to engage.

Claire Cooper, Head of Student Experience

The Manchester College - Industry Excellence Partnership scheme

The Manchester College has developed a scheme to help employers engage with their students, the workforce of tomorrow. It is divided into levels of contribution via a bronze, silver, gold and platinum award model. Each level increasing with the employer commitment required. As a reward to the employer for participating in the scheme, they receive a certificate, an invitation to an annual Employer Thank you event as well as social media assets to help them promote their participation.

There are a number of success stories shared on the website as well as a list of the employers the college are proud to be working with which include Hilton, EY foundation, Tiddlywinks and Network Rail, to name a few.

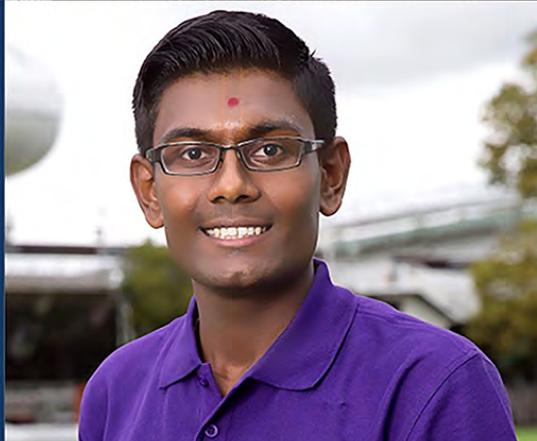
How is your college encouraging employers to get involved? Explore the Industry Excellence Partnership scheme by visiting their website [here](#).



Our Industry Excellence Partnership scheme has been very successful in recognising and rewarding the important contributions that employers make in providing meaningful experiences of the workplace.

The Manchester College

Email us how you're currently engaging with employers and what their future plans are.



Spotlight Talks
**Inspiring
careers
excellence**
24-25 March

WorldSkills UK's Spotlight Talks: Register your students now!

WorldSkills UK's Spotlight Talks: Inspiring Careers Excellence are back by popular demand, once again delivering free virtual advice and guidance to support young people to confidently take the next step on their career ladder.

Broadcast live on Wednesday 24 and Thursday 25 March, the Spotlight Talks will bring together the UK's leading employers, apprentices and careers advisors to inspire young people, from all backgrounds, to take up technical careers and apprenticeships. The content can be easily viewed on any smart device.

Over 100,000 people registered to take part in WorldSkills UK's previous virtual careers event, held in November last year, with 78% of young people saying they were inspired by the content. In addition, 79% of educators said that after watching the sessions they were better able to advise students on career options.

Speakers will deliver bitesize information on Traineeships, T Levels and apprenticeships, providing practical tips on how to apply, the benefits of these routes and busting the myths to ensure all participants leave the sessions well informed on the options available to them.

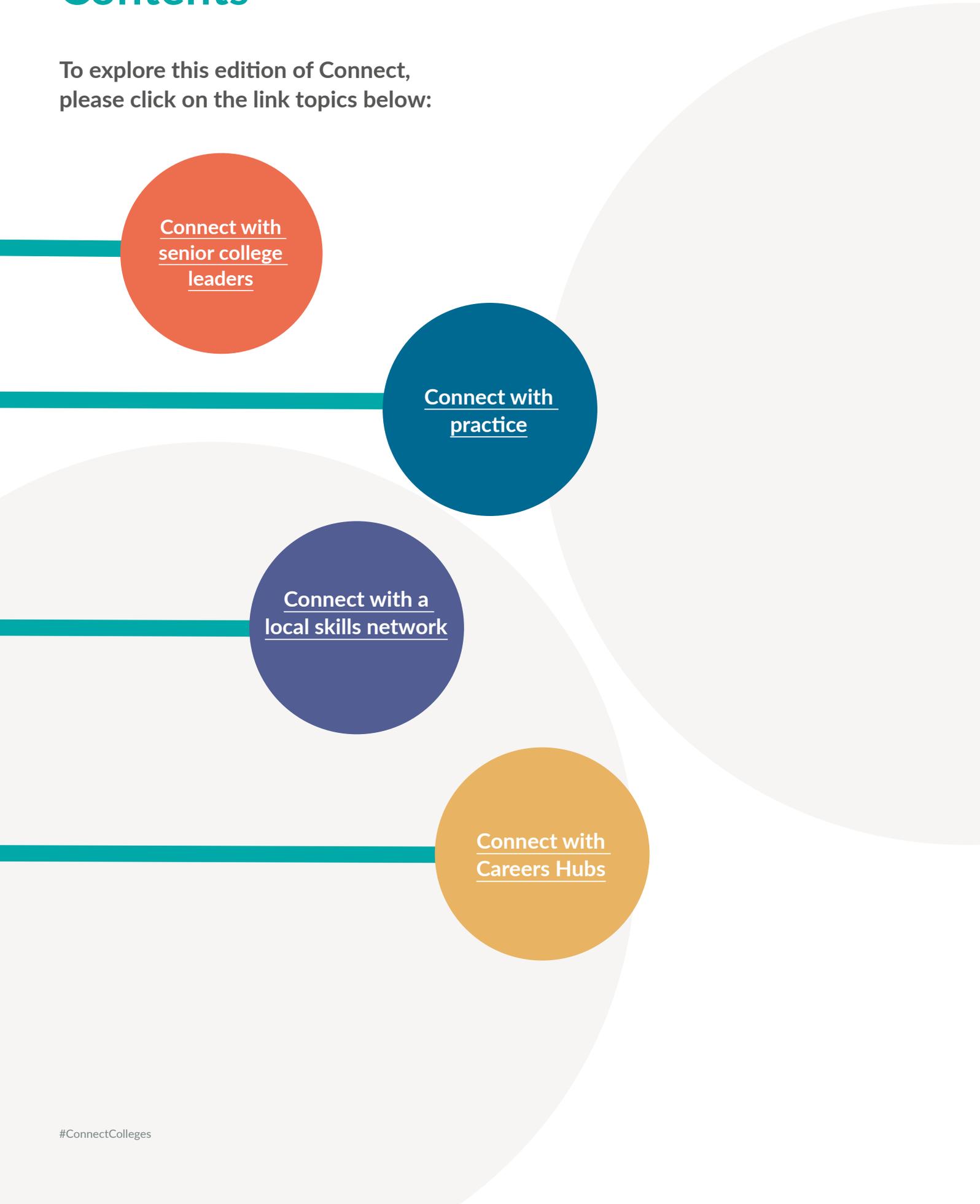
Participating in WorldSkills UK's Spotlight Talks supports schools and FE Colleges in meeting the requirements of the DfE's 2017 Careers Strategy. The virtual sessions are underpinned by the benchmarks of good careers guidance developed by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation. Educational resources will be provided to all organisations that register to take part to help educators support their learners with career planning and employability skills.

Register now at worldskillsuk.org



Contents

To explore this edition of Connect, please click on the link topics below:



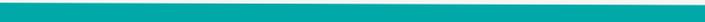
[Connect with senior college leaders](#)



[Connect with practice](#)



[Connect with a local skills network](#)



[Connect with Careers Hubs](#)



**Connect with
senior college
leaders**

Connect with senior college leaders

In this edition of Connect, we've been fortunate enough to gain the thoughts, opinions and insights from not one but two senior college leaders. Discover how they're both working hard to support learners on their journeys, adapt to change, and drive progression within their colleges.



Dr. Lis Smith,

Principal and Chief Executive,
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If we are to support learners along their journeys, we first need to help them identify where they want to get to and how they want to get there. That is why good careers advice and guidance is so critical – not only before and during their journeys with us, but also beyond. This advice and guidance must of course be relevant, up to date and tuned into the opportunities available in the local, regional and global economy. We must also utilise the same economic and labour information to furnish our curriculum design and delivery plans, which help us deliver our mission of making our learners the most employable.

We know many future jobs haven't been identified yet due to developments in artificial intelligence (AI), automation and the carbon neutral economy to name a few. Therefore, development of these 'employability' skills is essential, including resilience and adaptability. Embedding these into the curriculum delivery is as critical for the learner and their journey as the subject knowledge itself. Continuously monitoring the progress of the learner, along with timely progression meetings and a career review meeting, ensures good progression to their next stage of learning and final destination.

The game changer for us has been putting into place a central team of recruitment progression and career advisors who work within the curriculum to support and guide the offer from a careers perspective – providing the link to schools liaison, curriculum design, and employer input to ensure best fit for the learner's destination and career. As custodians of these learning journeys, careers advice is therefore a central guiding principle.

Reflecting on 10 years as Principal of Preston's College, it strikes me that a major role for the College in serving its community is acting as custodian of individuals' learning journeys. We have a diverse cohort; learners with different backgrounds, ages and experiences, with different appetites for learning and aspirations. Some learners are very clear about the career they want, what they need to study, and building up the extra-curricular activities and work experience that stands them in good stead of achieving their dreams. However, in our experience, this is a relatively small percentage of learners, and one which is diminishing under this current cloud of the pandemic.



Shireen Razey,
Executive Principal,
Christ the King Sixth Forms

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“ At Christ the King (CTK) Sixth Forms, a group of Catholic Sixth Forms in SE London and Kent, we have always placed a strong emphasis on careers guidance and support.

Our Careers Service specialises in the needs of 16–19-year-old learners and has developed over the years to meet the challenges and needs of both of our students and the local community.

Providing exceptional guidance for young people

With the impact of COVID-19 on employment and on Higher Education, exceptional careers guidance for young people has never been more important. We are therefore proud of the strong partnerships we have formed – even remotely during the past year – with employers and businesses to support our students in their holistic development, gaining the skill set needed to excel in their future ambitions.

An example of this can be seen in the CTK Annual Fast Track programme, which supports students in taking advantage of employer-led initiatives with high profile organisations such as Barclays, Capgemini, BT and others.

This training is supported by CTK alumni, and this year we had guest speakers including Pavita Cooper (founder and Director of More Difference, a talent and career insight business); and John Perry (former senior HSBC Group executive). In a normal year, we would offer the FastTrack programme to 50 year 12 students, however, with the move to holding sessions remotely via MS Teams, up to 110 Year 12 students can now reap the benefits of taking part.

The importance of role models and mentors

We believe it's crucial to recognise the importance of alumni in acting as role models to our current students and to enable us to build strong industry links – which we develop through our partnership with organisation, Think Alumni. Additionally, former CTK alumnus, Trevor Gomes, runs our highly successful employer-linked initiative, BT Elevate. The programme equips students with the skills and experiences needed to excel in both the workplace and in higher education.

At CTK, we also partner closely with charities such as Urban Synergy, who have been able to support students with virtual mentoring at this time. For example, as a result of taking part in the Urban Synergy scheme this year, CTK student Ava Tamabala was selected by a panel of senior stakeholders at Refinitiv for a paid internship with them. Ava's mentor was the Global Head of Financial Crime & Industry Affairs at Refinitiv, and as part of her internship she attended the virtual World Economic Forum at Davos and met with senior stakeholders. As a direct result of this, Ava has written a paper on green crime, which has been published by the Royal United Services Institute (the world's oldest independent think tank on international defence and security).

Partnering for success

CTK's partnership with Metric Capital results in three CTK students every year gaining a university scholarship worth £15,000 each. This partnership is able to make a real difference to the lives of those students.

Another highly successful partnership with industry is the CTK annual External Speaker Programme, which has an array of over 40 guest speakers taking part each year. Speakers have included Sir Ian Cheshire (Chairman of Barclays), David Thompson (film producer) and Gary Gibbon (Channel 4 News Political Editor).

An unexpected benefit of having moved to the virtual world is that many more high-profile people have been able to give us their time. And it has also all allowed us to increase the diversity and range of speakers taking part; for example Judge Peter Herbert O.B.E. speaking to our students from Nigeria.

We have strived to maintain diversity within our guest speaker programme, and this year our first guest speaker was Femi Bola (MBE), the first black scientist to work for the Medical Research Council in the United Kingdom.

This year, CTK are also very proud to have partnered with Eton College, in an exciting project to develop academic resilience at our A level Centre for Excellence, CTK Aquinas. Year 12 students have a daily tutorial, currently taking place remotely, which helps to build resilience, this covers areas such as self-efficacy and emotional regulation.

Opening the door to opportunity

At CTK, we believe in the development of the whole student, which is enshrined in our motto 'ut viteam habent'. With the challenges presented to us all by COVID-19, it's more important than ever that our students are able to develop the skills they need to succeed.

The strong partnerships and influential mentors we can introduce our students to, gives them unprecedented access to unlock the door to the skills, networking opportunities and the support needed to succeed in higher education or employment – and flourish in their chosen career.



We want to hear from you!
Get involved and comment by [emailing us](#) or join in on our social channels using [#ConnectColleges](#)

Careers Leadership in Colleges – research activity



To further our understanding of Careers Leadership within the FE sector, The Careers & Enterprise Company is currently undertaking a research activity during February and March 2021.

In these pivotal times for the sector, The Careers & Enterprise Company has been keen to engage with colleges to promote and support the work they do to:

- Prepare young people through employer engagement and curriculum learning about careers
- Understand labour market opportunities
- Provide personal guidance

The research activity took the form of a survey, which was targeted at Careers Leaders in Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges – and is currently being supplemented by a series of qualitative follow-up interviews.

We will keep the College Careers Community updated with the research findings in our next edition of Connect!





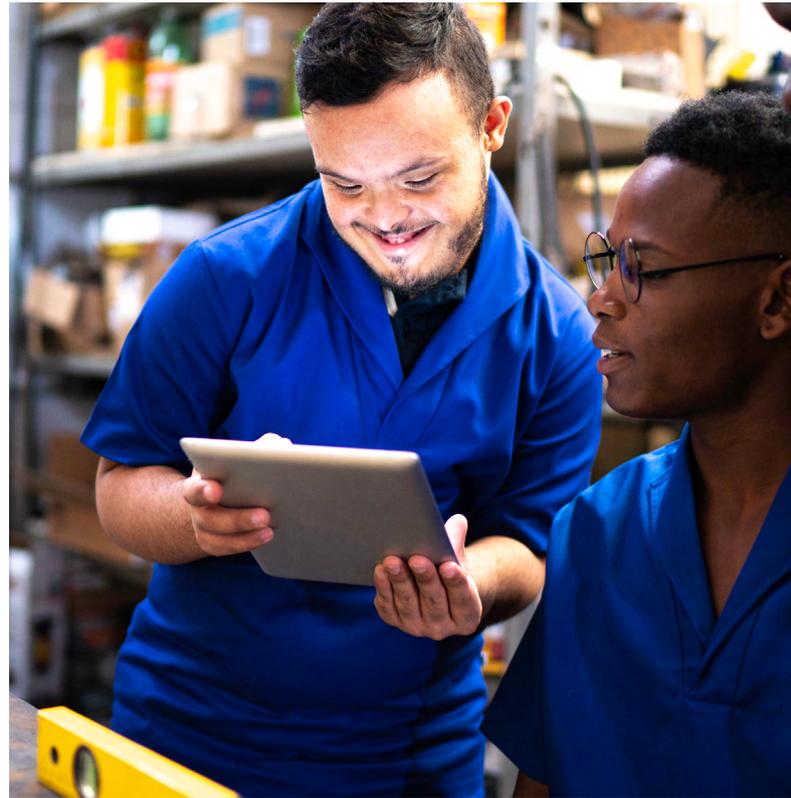
**Connect with
practice**

Connect with practice

A fully inclusive approach is vital when it comes to delivering successful SEND careers provision and progression. In fact, an inclusive practice is essential – so, keep reading on to the feature piece from Ben Knocks of Weston College to find out how best to support learners with SEND today.



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Foreword: Supporting a diverse and inclusive future workforce

When Further Education providers place inclusive practice at the heart of their organisation, everybody benefits. All staff and learners within the organisation increase their understanding of each other and can contribute in full to our modern and diverse society.

Weston College is one of the Education and Training Foundation's three national Centres for Excellence in SEND, along with City College Norwich and Derby College. All three Centres offer free support to leaders, managers and practitioners so that inclusive practice can become the norm within the Further Education (FE) system. This inspirational piece by Ben at Weston College shows why this approach makes sense!



Ben Knocks,

Director Student Services
and Learner Journey,
Weston College

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Watch the
Video



Careers – supporting learner progression

Over the last few years, we have placed a great emphasis on embedding an innovative and needs-led careers service for all 30,000 Weston College learners. This coincided with the release of the national careers strategy at the end of 2017. Since then, the Principal has ensured a significant investment in highly qualified level 6 advisors, a complete redesign of our careers programme and a huge push on exploiting technology to support service delivery – with improved outcomes.

Careers is central to all stages of the Weston College learner journey because we've adopted an inclusive 'careers not courses' ethos to our curriculum and recruitment initiatives. Additionally, all prospective learners have access to the specialist careers software, 'Career Coach' by EMSI, which is embedded into our application journey. This allows all learners to identify key traits, careers and occupations – as well education pathways – that link into the College's provision. This has created a positive impact regarding learner outcomes including:

- 97% retention for 2020/21
- NEET referrals have reduced drastically
- 90% of all FT learners felt they received the right amount of information to make an informed application



Focusing on learners with SEND

Inclusive practice has been firmly placed at the heart of the College's strategic plan by the Principal, Dr Paul Phillips CBE, and this is also reflected in our approach to careers education – particularly for learners with SEND. When it comes to careers education for these learners, the College places empowerment and personalisation at the heart of its SEND delivery.

The College's inclusive careers model has led to the development of a number of innovative pathways for learners with SEND to support them to progress toward their next steps. Each learner has an individual vocational profile built as soon as they start at the College and this evolves as they move through their learner journey. This profile is key in ensuring the learner fully understands, and is empowered to work towards, their next steps and the achievements needed to progress into employment or further study – as well as identifying the key skills required for the personalisation of their individualised programme. This focus has resulted in us becoming just one of three Centres for Excellence in SEND in the UK.

Within our SEND provision, key members of staff such as Ben McConkey and Lorna Whitford, have been able to develop a pioneering programme called 'Into Work'; a supported internship programme now in its seventh year that provides a structured programme of study for 16-24 year olds who want to move into employment and need extra specialist support to do so. The 'Into Work' team works collaboratively with a wide range of employers and supported employment agencies to match job roles to the learner's skills.

By implementing such a robust job-coaching model, it has changed the attitudes of employers, ensuring they recognise the talent of learners with SEND as valuable employees. The 'Into Work' programme has been incredibly successful with 100% success rates; 55% progressing into higher level work-based learning; and 45% securing paid employment, which dramatically exceeds the national average of 6% of people with learning disabilities in paid employment.



A real focus on staff development

The College continues to place a great emphasis on developing its specialist support model, particularly with staff expertise in SEND at degree and master's level. A few years ago, this model was expanded to provide individualised support programmes for learners studying on traineeships and apprenticeships, ensuring a high quality and consistent approach for all learners with SEND – regardless of their programme or entry point. Learners with SEND applying for apprenticeships has increased by over 500% since this was introduced.

All staff working within the 'Into Work' programmes and employment pathways hold a level 3 certificate for Supported Employment Practitioners. This provides them with the skills and knowledge to have the most impact with our learners, and it trains staff in the occupation standards set out by the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE).

The College's Careers Advice Team also holds specific training sessions with all faculties across the College, as well as developing bespoke training for SEND staff. The training gives staff access to a wide range of resources and techniques to enhance their careers education programmes. And this is key for learners with SEND, where relationships and trust are essential; bringing in external teams and individuals may sometimes prove to be a barrier.

How to deliver successful SEND careers provision

In conclusion, we feel the key ingredients to successful SEND careers provision and progression are:

- 1 | Pitch real-life experience at the right level**
Use a live brief to put learning into practice and incorporate social action projects into the curriculum.
- 2 | Embed digital skills**
However, this is not just in terms of delivery, where we have been able to build comprehensive careers environments and on-demand content for learners and staff. The best careers education will actually equip learners with the skills they need to thrive in 21st century jobs. Increasingly, many of these jobs are in the digital sector or have a strong digital element – something born out of the fact that the digital skills gap in the UK is huge and widening.
- 3 | Support employers closely**
Businesses can sometimes lack confidence to recruit learners with SEND. Our specialist practitioners support both the employer and the learner throughout the journey with us, so that employers feel the benefit of an inclusive workplace strategy. Support is long-term in its approach, with the team in contact with the employer long after the young person has finished their college programme so they can sustain an inclusive recruitment model. [This new CEC resource](#) can support you with this activity.
- 4 | Invest in highly qualified specialist staff**
For learners with SEND, it is key that their tutors are involved in delivery and receive careers training so they can support the project and drive it forward. A progressive career structure with the relevant expertise is crucial.

Weston College is currently working with The Careers & Enterprise Company, along with many other education providers across the UK, in planning the first 'My Skills, My Future' resources for SEND learners across England to be released after the Easter half term.



How inclusive is your practice?

Let us know by [emailing us](#) or join in on our social channels using [#ConnectColleges](#)

AoC Beacon Awards 2020/21

The AoC Beacon Awards celebrate the best and most innovative practice among FE colleges in the UK. It is managed by AoC and run through AoC Charitable Trust – a registered charity.

The aim of the awards programme is to demonstrate and promote the far-reaching impact of colleges on their students and the communities they serve. The commended and winning case studies will be used to increase the understanding of colleges' contribution to educational skills policy and economic and social development.

The Careers & Enterprise Company has again this year been delighted to sponsor the Beacon Award for 'Innovation in Careers & Enterprise'. And despite the many challenges facing colleges this year, there were some very strong entries for the award – so congratulations to all.

Winner:

West Suffolk College

Finalists:

Callywith College in association with Truro and Penwith College

Sheffield College

Hartpury College

Commended colleges:

Eastleigh College

Barnsley College

Kingston Maurward College

Cheshire College South & West

Birmingham Metropolitan College

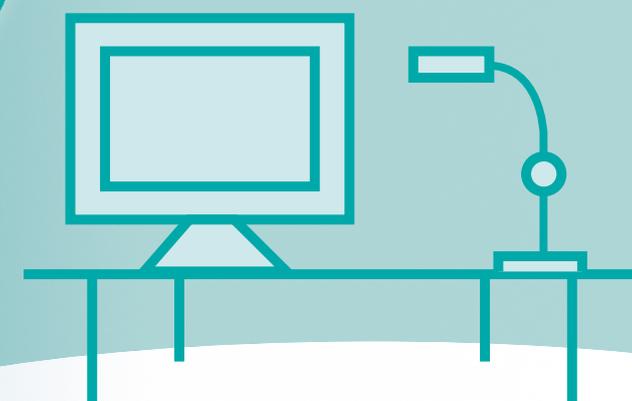
Careers Excellence in Practice webinar

29th March, 3-4pm

Register now for the opportunity to hear from this year's AoC Beacon Award-winning and shortlisted colleges.

As part of our Spotlight Webinar Series – which you get exclusive access to by being part of the College Careers Community – you'll be able to listen to College Careers Leaders as they share their whole college careers models, valuable insight, and the practical ideas that led them to becoming Beacon Award finalists.

The free interactive webinar will highlight excellent careers provision by the colleges shortlisted for the AoC Beacon Award for 'Innovation in Careers & Enterprise' and will be delivered on the: 29th March, 3-4pm.



[Register to join the webinar now >](#)



**Connect with
a local skills
network**

Connect with a local skills network

To get a sense of what's happening within the careers network at the moment, we reached out to Craig Ivison of the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (CLEP) to ask him all about colleges and careers in Cumbria – and crucially, find out how the LEP is working with the local college community during this challenging time.



Craig Ivison,
Head of Skills,
Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership
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Colleges and Careers in Cumbria

What has the CLEP been doing to engage with their local colleges?

We have built a strong, effective partnership with the skills system across the county in building strategies for economic development and recovery – which, of course, colleges play a significant role within.

The knowledge, skills and expertise of the FE sector is embedded across the LEP's strategic structures, with College Principals playing a significant role within the LEP Board, the LEP Skills Advisory Panel and the Cumbria Careers Hub Strategy Group is led by a FE College Principal.

How are colleges taking practical steps to get involved with local economic growth?

It enables colleges across the county to play an important role in developing strategies and plans for economic development and recovery – recognising that a curriculum aligned to the needs of employers in the county, and the communities they serve, is a powerful driver of productivity, innovation, enterprise and inclusive growth.

As key members of the LEP structures, colleges are also able to develop a curriculum that secures the skills that enable young people to build the careers they aspire to.

Can you tell us more about how colleges are supporting skills development across Cumbria?

Colleges, and the wider Cumbrian skills system, make a significant contribution to the local economy through addressing skills gaps and enhancing aspiration.

The education and skills sector is the 5th largest employment sector in the county, contributing almost £600m to the Cumbrian economy. The curriculum offered by colleges is closely aligned to the needs of the local economy and is clearly evidenced in the work of the Skills Advisory Panel.

Where gaps and challenges have been identified, our colleges have developed innovative solutions. This includes the development of a college-led partnership, delivering responsive skills support for the workforce programme, and playing key roles in skills support for the unemployed programmes.

How is the work you're doing benefitting the region?

Our colleges showcase the wide variety of careers available across Cumbria's unique economy – utilising high-quality labour market intelligence and providing a wide variety of traineeships, apprenticeships and routes into work-based learning.

The work we've done so far has helped to establish an apprenticeship programme in Cumbria that has three times the national average progression rate of 16–18-year-olds into apprenticeships.

This demonstrates how closely the curriculum is aligned to need, and how effectively colleges enhance aspiration and manage expectations. It also highlights how closely colleges work with employers to develop these opportunities. These relationships with employers underpin curriculum development and are enhanced through the relationship with the LEP's eight sector panels.

So, what does the future hold for the CLEP's relationship with colleges?

As the Cumbrian economy develops and changes, the LEP has shared a wide variety of labour market intelligence with the skills system across the county, to ensure that the skills offer reflects emerging needs and rapid changes in the economy. It has enabled colleges to develop their strategy, build their offering and ensure students have an up-to-date understanding of the opportunities available to them – both now and in the future.

This strategic relationship with colleges will be critical as we move into the restart, reboot and rethink phases of the economic recovery in the county. The LEP and our colleges have worked together in developing new approaches to assist with the transition from school to college that reflect the challenges brought about by COVID-19 – and has developed a revised approach to employability and work experience to support young people during this challenging time.



Ready to connect with a local skills network?

Share your thoughts and feedback by [emailing us](#) or join in on our social channels using [#ConnectColleges](#)



**Connect with
Careers Hubs**

Connect with Careers Hubs

Careers Hubs were established by The Careers & Enterprise Company to be centres of careers education excellence – with groups of secondary schools and colleges working together to deliver the Gatsby Benchmarks. Here, we're pleased to showcase how three Hubs are working with their local colleges to make a difference to the lives of the young people they are supporting.



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Heart of the South West Careers Hub

Taking several steps to success at Exeter College

The Heart of the South West Careers Hub has been working closely with Exeter College, particularly since the beginning of the pandemic, to ensure current learners and future students don't miss out on receiving the information they need to progress and make sound choices to enhance their future.

Senior Enterprise Coordinator, Jo Skeel, met with the Exeter College Apprenticeship Team to discuss ways to promote the exceptional range of apprenticeship opportunities available throughout the city. And now that the annual face-to-face expo event could no longer take place, Morven Maclean, Business Development and Employer Engagement Coordinator at Exeter College, decided to produce a programme entitled 7 Steps to Success.

This programme encourages learners in year 11, 12 and 13 to engage with the Exeter College Apprenticeship Team to gain an in-depth understanding of what apprenticeships are and how to access them; receive support through CV and job search workshops; book 1:1s with college experts; enrol onto interview practice sessions; and engage with virtual employer tours.

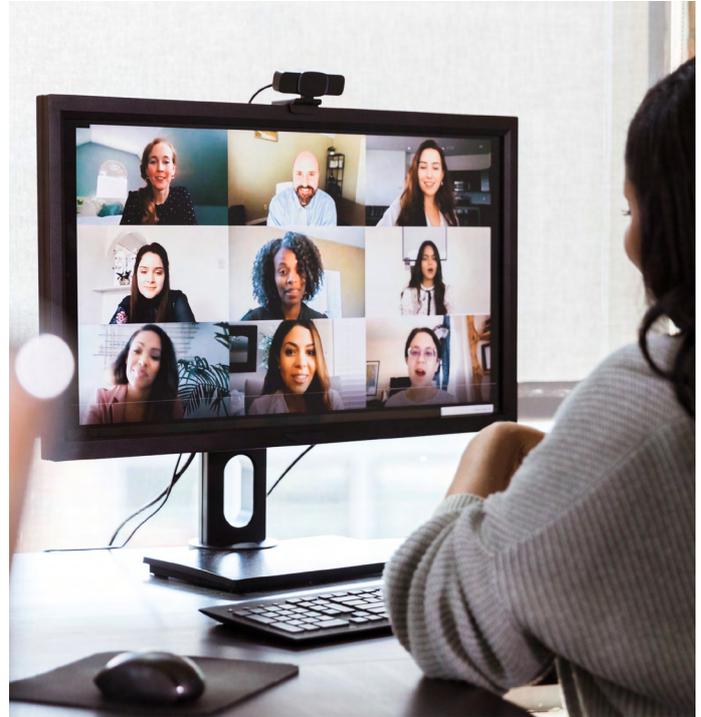
The Apprenticeship Team worked with the Careers Hub to ensure the steps were fit for purpose and would be beneficial to school students, teachers and parents. The Careers Hub also worked with local Careers Leaders within schools to gain feedback and ideas on any adjustments needed. The Hub then promoted the offer to all schools within the patch. Take-up, to date, has been good with schools from all over the Heart of the South West signing up.



Heart of the South West Apprentices Team

Morven Maclean commented: 'It has been invaluable to have the support of the Careers Hub in the promotion of our 7 Steps to Success Programme. From the outset, the Hub has really helped us understand what schools want and to deliver the all-important value to their students. Working in partnership has allowed the Apprenticeship Team at Exeter College to give guidance and support to our future apprentices.'

In addition to the 7 Steps of Success Programme, the Careers Hub and Exeter College have worked in partnership on a number of initiatives, including the delivery of a degree apprenticeship webinar that ensures young people and parents have a clear understanding of the very latest information. This has been accompanied by a multitude of virtual and interactive industry talks to encourage learners to consider a range of pathways and progression routes – and an Inspiring Girls project that encourages year 10 girls within Exeter schools to work with local female mentors to raise aspirations.



“

From the outset, the Hub has really helped us understand what schools want and to deliver the all-important value to their students.

Morven Maclean

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Meeting the needs of the community at East Sussex College

East Sussex College (ESC) is a leading provider of FE in the South East and is pleased to be a member of the East Sussex Careers Hub.

The college, which has campuses in Eastbourne, Lewes, Hastings and Newhaven, offers A levels and vocational courses alongside apprenticeships through its in-house training provider, Sussex Skills Solutions. In 2020, ESC was chosen by the government to be one of the first providers of new T-Level qualifications. Alongside this, ESC provides an excellent provision for SEN students and features an international college, which was recently voted the best in the UK by EL Gazette for a seventh consecutive year.

To help support students in their transition from year 11 to post-education, ESC works closely with local enterprises, including the East Sussex Careers Hub, to deliver services that meet the requirements of the Gatsby Benchmarks.

Kate Edwards, Learner Journey Manager at ESC, said: "We are privileged to be a part of this group, as it enables us to work with local schools to meet the needs of students. Through the Hub, ESC is allocated an Enterprise Advisor, who primarily provides ongoing support with careers strategy and development, but also challenges us to ensure we're delivering the very best services to meet the needs of the community.

'Our Enterprise Advisor provides an essential strategic steer and employer insight in the development and implementation of our Careers Education Strategy.'

Working with the Hub, the college has access to funding in order to further support enrichment, careers education and employability resources and activities for students. ESC is also given invaluable contact with local schools. This boosts engagement and attendance at forums, CPD and network meetings, resulting in an effective forum to discuss and agree initiatives relating to transition, SEND, and careers resources and activities.

The Hub is proactive in getting to know the needs of ESC as an organisation, and its students. Additionally, ESC has set up an extremely beneficial college-specific cluster group within the Hub, which meets regularly to share transition support and resources around post-16 education and support.

Find out more at:
www.escg.ac.uk



Lisa Scargill,

Enterprise Coordinator,

Inspira

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Supporting learner progression at The Blackpool Sixth Form College

The Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hub has been supporting The Blackpool Sixth Form College since September 2017 and in that time, together with expert industry support from an Enterprise Adviser, we have strategically implemented the Gatsby Benchmarks in a bespoke and meaningful way. The Sixth Form also recently won a regional and a national award for its Careers Ready programme.

The programme, which has been running for eleven years, provides students with an in-depth preparation for the world of work, including one-to-one mentoring, skills masterclasses, and high-quality internships in industry. The inclusive programme provides students with excellent aspiration-raising activities in a geographical area designated as an Opportunity Area with high levels of deprivation.

The Futures Team at the Sixth Form recently completed its Self-Assessment Report, an internal audit aligned to Ofsted judgements and verified by a panel (including an external educational professional).

The panel graded this 'outstanding' owing to all the hard

work of the Futures Team and collaboration with the Careers Hub. The Futures Team is data driven, which has proved to be a great success in moving areas of the careers programme forward.

The Careers Leader and Enterprise Coordinator have a strong working relationship, with a shared vision, driving careers engagement with learners throughout the Sixth Form.

Supporting learner progression, a recent focus in embedding Gatsby Benchmark 4 has markedly increased encounters with course-related opportunities and Head of Department meetings are used to highlight successes in individual departments. This, coupled with the team's effective collection of information and communication, positively impacts learner engagement and progression. Information disseminated to students and staff, along with the various careers related activities arranged by the Futures Team helps feed into the progression of positive destinations for learners.

Student feedback has also been positive, with students articulating how their experiences have impacted on both their confidence levels and future plans.



I have developed my communication skills. I'd like to say as I feel as though I can speak more confidently to people around me without becoming nervous.

Student A

I would recommend it because if somebody is unsure about what they would like to do in the future, a work placement can help them decide what job or route they would like to take. It will give the person new experiences that they can talk about in an interview or use as examples in assignments.

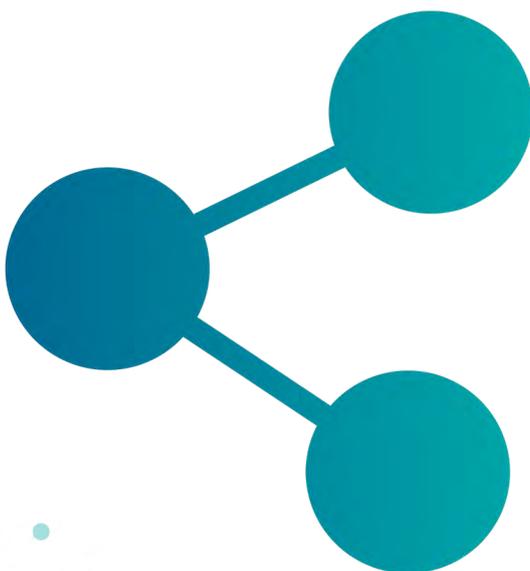
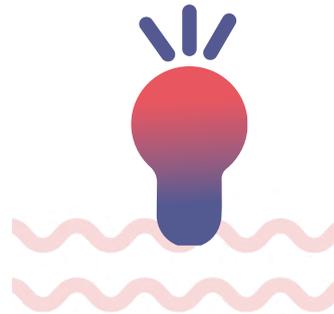
Student B

CAREERS CHAMPIONS

Careers Champions: Celebrating careers education in England

We recently teamed up with the Gatsby Foundation to launch a campaign to celebrate brilliant practitioners of careers guidance for young people, as well as inspirational young people themselves.

As part of this, we celebrated as many 'Careers Champions' as we could via our social media campaign during National Careers Week in March – shining a light on those unsung heroes who are making a real difference to the lives of young people.



Connecting with technical and vocational education

One of the key Careers Champions themes was 'Connecting with technical and vocational education'. That's because we believe it's crucial to celebrate those whose work has helped to raise awareness of opportunities like apprenticeships and FE courses to enable young people from all backgrounds to progress into great careers.

This year, the recognised careers champions for this category were Darshan Leslie, Claire Garner, Kaylie Dixon, Alan Bailey and Ania Kondera – congratulations from us all.

View all of the winners at the [Careers Champions website](#)

Next time...

We hope you enjoyed this edition of Connect and, as ever, we encourage you to share the topics that matter most to you to inform our next release. Please email us at fes@careersandenterprise.co.uk or join the conversation on our social channels using #ConnectColleges.

In the next edition of Connect, we'll be sharing more information on the response to the 'Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth' White Paper – and we're looking forward to hearing your thoughts on it.

We'll also be shining a light on the excellent transition support programmes that many colleges have developed – which will be so crucial for this year's cohorts of school leavers – so, we'll be reaching out soon to gather more information on these!

Finally, if you're not already part of our community, don't forget that you can subscribe [here](#).



Contact us

If you have any questions about any of the articles shared in this edition, please don't hesitate to contact Andrew Webster at: fes@careersandenterprise.co.uk

On the Horizon...

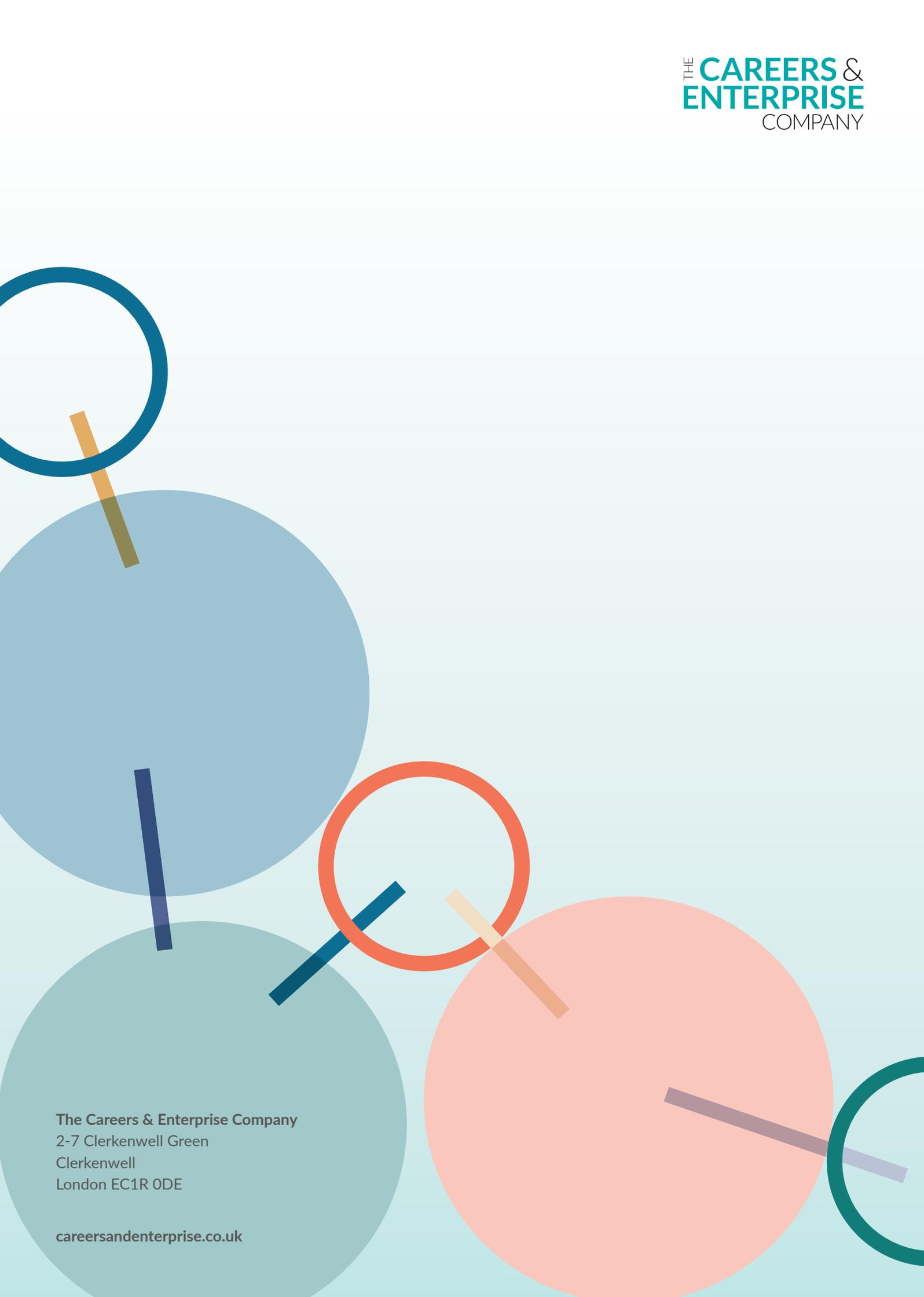
Here's a brief glimpse into our upcoming activities and events:

Ongoing webinar programme for Benchmark support

Careers Leadership in Colleges – research findings and key messages

Personal Guidance Fund Evaluation – supporting each and every learner

Resource Directory enhancements and additional content



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