

# WHY SCHOOLS NEED CLARITY AND MEASURABILITY IN CAREERS GUIDANCE



IN 2013, THE GATSBY FOUNDATION COMMISSIONED SIR JOHN HOLMAN, NOW THE GOVERNMENT'S INDEPENDENT STRATEGIC ADVISER ON CAREERS, TO SET OUT A FRAMEWORK FOR WORLD-CLASS CAREERS GUIDANCE IN ENGLAND. JOHN TELLS US WHY HE THINKS THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS TO CLEAR, MEASURABLE AND EFFECTIVE CAREERS PROVISION





### SHOULD THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS BE MANDATORY?

I think it should be in the control of schools and colleges; they are experts in education and they know their students. It would be a mistake to release their benchmark scores and publish them in league tables. It's possible to do all sorts of things with exam results, rankings, league tables, etc., but I wouldn't recommend that. The benchmarks' great strength is that schools and colleges embrace them, understand them and use them to provide better careers guidance. And that's the way it needs to be.

### WHERE CAN TEACHERS FIND SUPPORT FOR MEETING THE EIGHT BENCHMARKS?

A very good development has been the creation of The Careers & Enterprise Company in 2015, by the government, to support schools and colleges in meeting the benchmarks. It has been proactive in creating digital tools that schools can use to measure how they're getting on, creating strong employer links, creating Careers Hubs and in supporting schools and colleges in many other ways.

### SINCE THE LAUNCH OF THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS, HAS CAREERS GUIDANCE IMPROVED?

We now have the means to measure the outcomes from careers guidance. I'm a scientist and I believe if you can't measure something, or at least have some means of finding out whether something has changed, it makes policymaking much more difficult. Because the Gatsby Benchmarks are measurable, schools can measure what they're doing with their students and then look at the effect on outcomes in a way that I don't think we could 10 years ago.

We now know that, on average, for each benchmark a school achieves, that increases the number of students who are in employment, education or training by 1.4%. If a school achieves all eight benchmarks, you'll have, on average, over 10% more people in employment, education or training. That's a clear outcome. And the effect is twice as large as this for the most disadvantaged schools.

### HOW DID YOU DEVISE THE EIGHT GATSBY BENCHMARKS?

When you want to answer the question, "What does 'good' look like?", it pays to go overseas to see what other countries do. I got together with the University of Derby, who have specialists in this area, and we looked at six territories where careers guidance is known to be good, based on an OECD study: Germany, Netherlands, Ireland, Hong Kong China, Ontario Canada and Finland. We met with students, teachers, careers leaders, employers and ministry officials and asked them what they do to achieve a good careers balance. We also looked at all the relevant research and surveyed English schools, and from this wealth of data, we sat down and translated it into eight things schools can look at and say, right, this is what we've got to do.

The eight benchmarks are clear and measurable, which turned out to be key factors. I didn't fully realise that the critical things were clarity and measurability until afterwards.

### IS IT ENOUGH FOR SCHOOLS TO MEET THESE BENCHMARKS TO SET STUDENTS ON THE PATH TO A GOOD CAREER?

No. If students don't know any mathematics, English, science or geography, the benchmarks alone would be useless. These benchmarks need to be an integral part of education but should complement a rich, strong, knowledge-based curriculum. They will never replace it.



**YOU HAVE BEEN APPOINTED THE ENGLISH GOVERNMENT'S INDEPENDENT STRATEGIC ADVISER ON CAREERS GUIDANCE. WHAT WILL YOU BE TELLING GOVERNMENT MINISTERS?**

I'm still in the fact-finding phase, which means I'm trying to find out as much as possible about the whole system by which people – adults as well as young people – get careers guidance, particularly when it's publicly funded. So, I've visited job centres, schools and colleges; I've sat in on careers guidance interviews; I'm collecting all the data I need. I'm immersing myself so that I can speak from an evidence base. I have a few impressions, as you might expect, but I haven't formed any clear conclusions yet. By the summer of 2022, I will have provided government ministers with guidance on what we should do.

**CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF CAREERS PROVISION THAT IS WORKING WELL?**

HETA – the Humber Engineering Training Association – provides engineering apprenticeships and upskilling training in Yorkshire and the Humber region of the UK. If you'd met some of the people I met in Hull, you'd get a real sense of purpose. They know that the skills they are learning are the skills employers need. And that's the key. If someone thinks they're learning something that's not going to be of use to them, they won't be motivated to learn. But these apprentices knew that what they were doing – welding, for example – is what employers will need out on an oil rig or building a wind turbine. They were highly motivated to get it right. It's not complicated really, is it? We all need a reason for doing things, and good career guidance had led those apprentices to the right place.

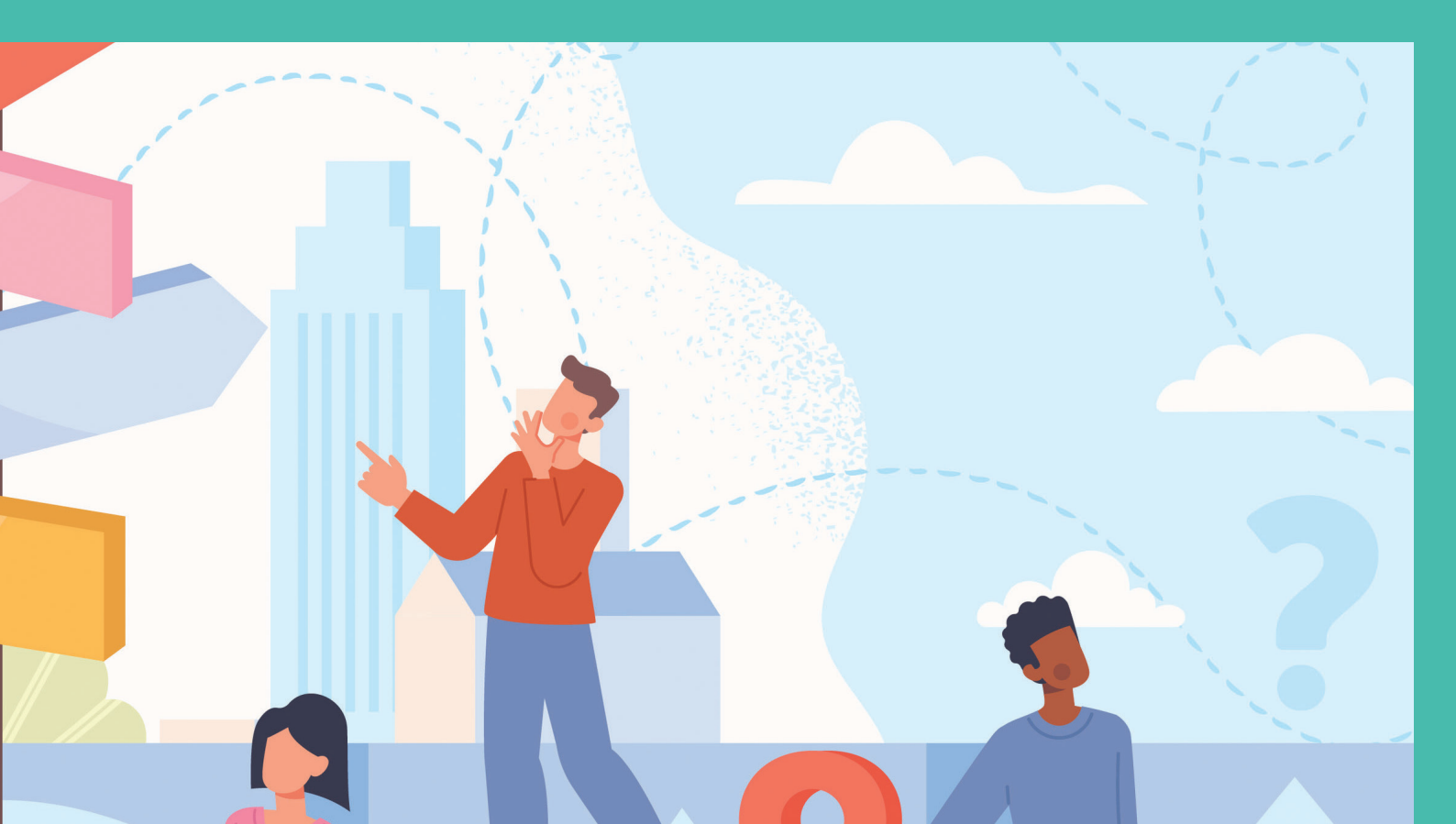
**WITH THE ONSET OF VAST TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES, THE CAREERS LANDSCAPE IS CHANGING RAPIDLY. HOW CAN WE EQUIP PEOPLE IN THIS EVER-EVOLVING WORLD?**

*“ We now know that, on average, for each benchmark a school achieves, that increases the number of students who are in employment, education or training by 1.4%. ”*

The first thing to recognise that, to students, it doesn't necessarily feel like a time of rapid change. I think it's quite easy for adults to get overexcited, particularly older people like me, about the rate of change. That said, we are in quite exceptional times.

Part of the answer is to exploit the changes that are going on. One major change is the pervasiveness and availability of data, and the ability to do things with it. I'm very interested in giving people better access to labour market information – information about where jobs are growing, declining, in demand. If you want to get into a particular job, what qualifications and skills do you need? Are there regional differences around the country?

One issue is that the changes in the data take time to feed through, particularly now, with the speed at which the economy is changing. So, I'm interested in finding a way to provide up-to-date labour market information that demonstrates both the national and the local picture. I think that making available authoritative, recent and locally nuanced labour market information in a form that people can use and understand, whether they be young students, older students, parents, teachers, employers, is a very important thing and we need to move faster on this.



# WHAT ARE THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS?

Sir John Holman was asked by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation to undertake an independent, international review of career guidance in England. Working with the University of Derby, the project visited six overseas territories, analysed good practice in English schools and reviewed existing literature. The data informed John's *Good Career Guidance* report, which defines 'good' and outlines a framework of eight benchmarks that secondary schools and colleges can use to improve their career guidance programmes.

The eight benchmarks are:

- 1. A STABLE CAREERS PROGRAMME:** Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by pupils, parents, teachers and employers.
- 2. LEARNING FROM CAREER AND LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION:** Every pupil, and their parents, should have access to good-quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.
- 3. ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EACH PUPIL:** Pupils have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each pupil. A school's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.
- 4. LINKING CURRICULUM LEARNING TO CAREERS:** All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. For example, STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths.
- 5. ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES:** Every pupil should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes.
- 6. EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES:** Every pupil should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.
- 7. ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION:** All pupils should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.
- 8. PERSONAL GUIDANCE:** Every 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. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all pupils but should be timed to meet their individual needs.