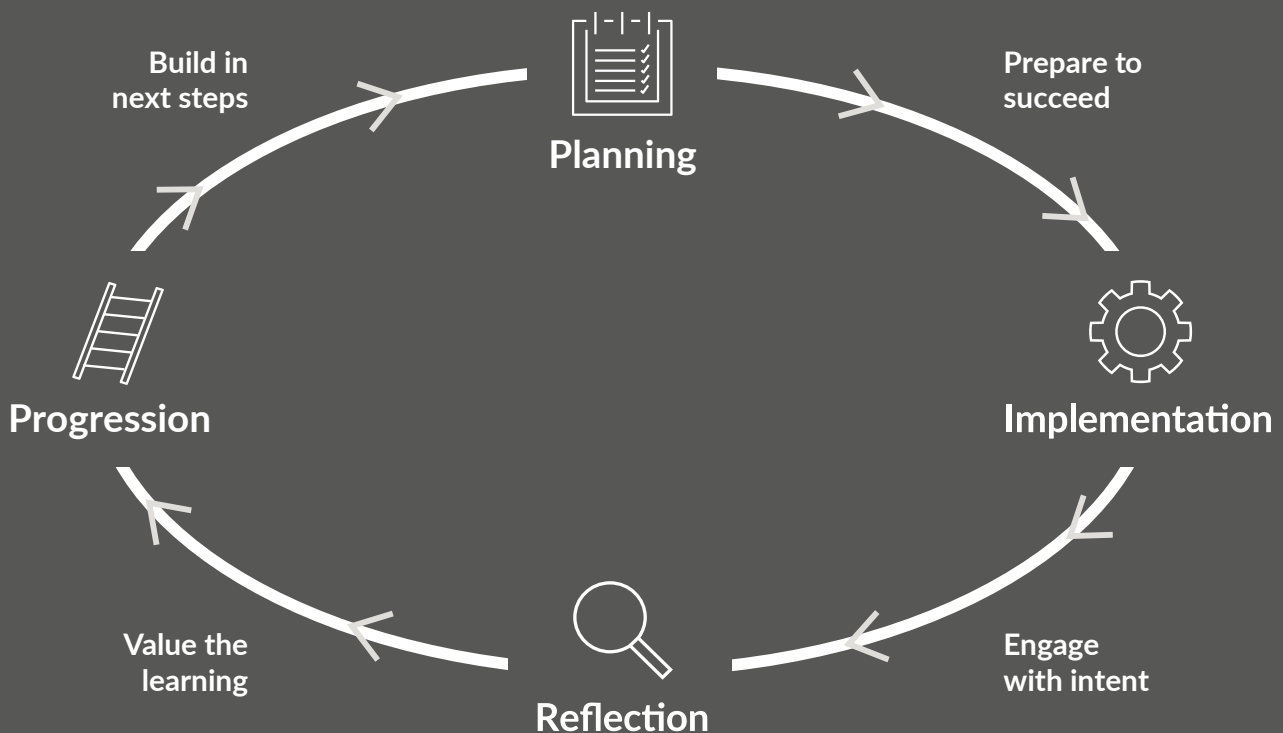


# A guide to making encounters meaningful



# Making it meaningful

Schools and colleges are experts in making learning meaningful for students. Making a careers encounter, through meeting employers or higher and further education providers, meaningful draws on the same principals as any other part of school or college life. To create meaningful careers encounters, the encounters should be planned, relevant to students, reflected upon and improved.

## This toolkit:



Provides advice and guidance on implementing each step in this process in the context of your careers programme.



Outlines a consistent approach to follow which helps to ensure careers encounters are meaningful.



Offers help for practitioners working in all education settings and business to deliver meaningful encounters that supports achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks, aligns with the Ofsted Inspection Framework and ultimately helps achieve improved outcomes for young people.

This guide focuses on individual encounters; however, the principles are equally applicable for evaluating your whole career programme and testing how 'meaningful' it is. The framework provides a cyclical process of continuous improvement both for individual careers encounters and a whole careers programme.





## What's included in this guide

Guidance is offered on how to make the best use of the 'Making it meaningful' resources which includes:

- **The Framework**

An introduction and explanation of the four stages of the 'Making it meaningful' framework. A slide deck accompanies the guidance. It is a simple tool for sharing the framework with colleagues in your school or college, your organisation and across wider careers networks.

- **The Checklist**

A step-by-step guide that follows the framework and helps practitioners when designing and delivering encounters to ensure each career encounter is 'meaningful' and adds value for young people.

### Who is this guide designed to support?

The guide is designed to support practitioners when designing and delivering careers related encounters with young people. It is relevant for Careers Leaders, Higher Education and Further Education providers, Careers Providers, employers supporting as volunteers or delivering their own education programmes, parents and carers, Enterprise Coordinators and Enterprise Advisers.





## Supporting Careers Leaders

The **checklist** has been designed to give Careers Leaders an easy step-by-step guide to implementing the stages of the framework when delivering careers encounters. It will help in having robust conversations with employers, Further or Higher Education and careers providers about planning and delivering encounters. The checklist walks you through each step to help you ensure that each encounter is as meaningful as possible for all of the participants. The checklist should be used for each encounter and will support you to highlight areas of strength and areas for development; it will help you drive quality and consistency when working towards achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks.

The **framework** helps ensure the consistency and quality of encounters for your students and can help you to:

- **Communicate with your Senior Leaders** to raise awareness of how a whole school or college approach ensures all careers provision and encounters within their school/college's programme are meaningful and can align to the strategic priorities for the school or college.
- **Communicate to Ofsted** and support an inspection to demonstrate and evidence a process of continuous improvement.
- **Communicate to the whole school or college** as the basis of for CPD. The slide deck and checklist can raise awareness of how all colleagues in your school or college have a role in ensuring encounters are meaningful and can form the content of this CPD.
- **Communicating with partners.** The framework and checklist provide a consistent standard and approach that will be helpful across a range of circumstances:
  1. When commissioning new providers to check they can meet the requirements of the framework.
  2. To explore with existing providers and employers how existing encounters can be developed or enhanced.
  3. To inform decisions when buying new resources to support the delivery of encounters and when designing new encounters.

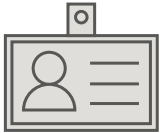
All of these are important opportunities to use the framework to help test quality or demonstrate value for money.

Together the **framework and checklist** support Careers Leaders when working with employers, careers providers and Further and Higher Education providers outlining questions they can use to test if encounters are meaningful and offer constructive feedback to enhance encounters.



## Supporting Employers and Enterprise Advisers

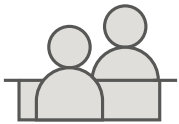
This guide has been developed to support employers as well as schools and colleges to deliver meaningful employer encounters.



**For employers**, the framework outlines four steps to follow in designing and delivering meaningful encounters. Using the framework when designing your organisation's school engagement strategy will help to ensure that activity is targeted, high quality and impactful.

It provides a common language and structure for when you work with young people and helps to engage them in a meaningful way. The framework helps to foster a process of continuous improvement and ensures that your encounters are recognised as meaningful by your partners and networks.

The Checklist provides a step-by-step guide to implement the four stages of the framework. As an **employer**, it may be helpful to consider which of these elements you are able to support with, and how you can incorporate these steps into your school engagement activities.



As an **Enterprise Adviser** the framework supports you to fulfil your role as a critical friend. It provides the basis to stimulate more in-depth discussions with senior leaders and specifically your Careers Leader around how they are ensuring that careers encounters are meaningful for their students. It will help you to reflect on the encounters within the school/college's careers programme and provides a basis for constructive challenge about how the school or college is meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks. The framework importantly helps to identify where the gaps are so encounters can be enhanced for better outcomes.

As an **Enterprise Adviser** you could use the checklist to support your Careers Leader to identify areas of strength, and areas for further development when considering meaningful encounters.



## Supporting Enterprise Coordinators

Enterprise Coordinators can use this toolkit to give guidance to Career Leaders and provide clarity about what constitutes a 'meaningful encounter'.

The **framework** provides the content to deliver CPD sessions for Career Leaders, careers providers, Enterprise Advisers and employers to highlight the key factors which contribute towards an encounter being meaningful. It helps to promote a common understanding and expectation about what is required to deliver meaningful encounters and contributes to achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks.

Following the framework will help to offer constructive challenge when supporting schools to complete Compass evaluations and provides a stimulus to discuss the quality of encounters.

The **checklist** has been designed for Career Leaders as a step-by-step guide to implementing the four stages of the framework. Careers Leaders can use it to identify areas of strength and areas for further development and this will provide the evidence base for Enterprise Coordinators to target support.

### Supporting Careers, Higher Education and Further Education Providers

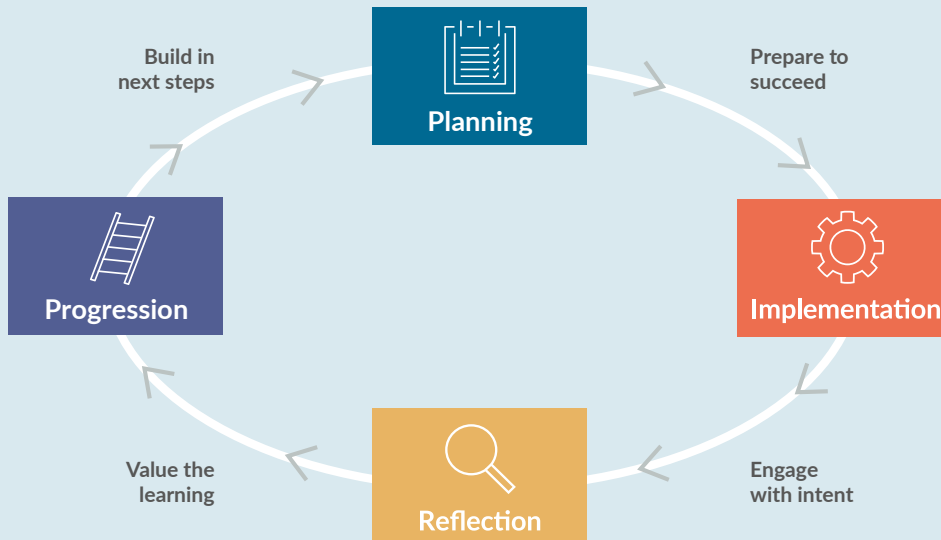
The **framework** can be used by providers to support the design of engagement programmes with schools and colleges and gives a consistent framework to ensure the quality of encounters delivered with young people. The checklist will help with checking that individual encounters offered are meaningful and support achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks.

The **framework and checklist** can help all providers highlight the quality and consistency of their programmes as well as individual encounters to partners and networks.





## The Framework



The guidance is aligned to each of the four stages of the framework and is accompanied by [a slide deck](#) which can be used to support working with all the stakeholders already highlighted in the previous section.

### Planning – Prepare to Succeed

Building ‘meaningful’ into careers encounters during the planning phase is critical if the resulting encounters are to have the desired outcomes for pupils, the providers and employers that are supporting those encounters. Careful planning significantly enhances the likelihood of encounters and indeed your whole careers programme being meaningful and adding value for students. Building evaluation and tracking of participation into the design of your encounters and not adding this in as an afterthought will help to ensure you have the evidence to demonstrate how your careers provision meets both the Gatsby Benchmarks and the Ofsted Inspection Framework.

Meaningful encounters are those which are planned and embedded within the school’s careers strategy. This means that:

- All careers activities and encounters are integrated as part of a broader strategic careers plan and annual careers programme which outlines how your school will achieve the outcomes identified in its strategic careers plan. In this way, all careers activities and encounters will be aligned to the school priorities as identified in the School Development Plan and the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- All encounters are targeted, build on prior learning and are progressive.
- All encounters meet the differing needs of the students, are timed to be delivered when they are most relevant to the abilities, age and circumstances of all students.

A framework such as the [CDI Careers Framework](#) offers helpful guidance on developing the detail of your careers programme.

## How to prepare to succeed

Planning involves you thinking about what your students need, what you want them to learn and why they need to learn and experience it at a given point in their career journey.

A helpful place to start your planning is your Compass evaluation. Use your Compass results to highlight areas of need and gaps in current provision before developing an encounter and your programme. This helps highlight where to target encounters. It's also useful to reflect on feedback from students and providers of previous encounters about what has worked well, why it has worked well and what can be done differently to improve the outcomes in the future.

Think about what prior learning students will already have taken from previous encounters and how will the encounter build on careers learning that students have already experienced. Consider the timing of an encounter in relation to how students can make use of their learning at a given point in their career journey and when is the most relevant time to deliver the encounter.

Build the factors outlined below into your plans both for each encounter and your whole school programme:



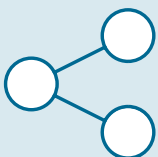
### **Encounters are based on the needs of your students.**

- Use your Compass results to highlight areas of need and gaps in current provision. Consider how the encounter will build on careers learning that students have already experienced.
- Explore how to enhance impact by aligning careers activities to reflect your student interests in relation to future careers.



### **Encounters are informed by, and aligned with, the landscape of opportunity offered within the local, regional and national labour market.**

- Encounters include learning about the key industries and priority growth sectors and highlight the skill gaps.
- Encounters reflect the local, regional and national labour market trends and insights.



### **Make links between careers and the curriculum and use careers to enhance curriculum learning and attainment.**

- Embed and integrate careers encounters as a regular feature within all subject learning.



- Use authentic role models and their career journeys within a given subject area to illustrate the link between subjects and jobs.
- Use real-life contexts and examples from the world of work and Further & Higher Education to enhance specific topics within subjects and help students apply their subject learning in the context of work-related challenges.



**Clearly define what students will learn as a result of the encounter or your programme.**

- Identify what the learner will be able to do by the end of the careers programme or activity.
- Set learning outcomes that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound).



**Build evaluation into the encounter from the offset and identify how you will measure success.**

- Design an evaluation process based on your learning objectives.
- Plan to allow sufficient time for students to reflect on their learning.



**Ensure careers encounters are accessible and engaging for all students.** Activities are targeted to the needs of each student; specific cohorts receive targeted activity at the right time in their career journey, at an encounter and programme level.

- Ensure that encounters are suitable for ALL students' needs e.g. for students with SEND.
- Consider how to build in appropriate stretch for students, raise aspirations, and challenge stereotypes. Ask yourself if what you are planning will deliver these for the target audience.
- Check that activities are age, stage and ability appropriate.





## Implementation – Engage with Intent

There are many logistical factors to build into planning encounters - a timeline of key milestones to follow during the implementation will be helpful in managing logistics and stakeholders.

Briefing stakeholders and beneficiaries is vital so they are well prepared, they understand what to expect, what the objectives and outcomes for the encounter will be, what their role and responsibilities are and the practical details about the encounter - where to be and when. Ensuring that beneficiaries can **engage with intent** is central to the encounter being meaningful.

Raising the profile of career encounters across the wider school and college community with parents, carers, governors and other school and college staff is pivotal to creating a greater sense of ownership for careers provision across the whole school and enabling the wider community to engage. Parents can continue conversations about encounters at home, teachers can highlight how a subject interfaces with their subject area and recognise that employer encounters are an opportunity to enhance their professional development and build their networks.

### How to engage with intent

**Brief all participants involved in the encounter - careful preparation fosters engagement and empowers the participants.**



#### **Prepare students for the encounter.**

- Clarify the learning objectives, what they will learn and be able to do following the encounter.
- Explain why they are taking part and how it's relevant at this time in their career journey – give students a clear sense of purpose for how they can apply their learning.
- Set expectations about students and teacher engagement and standards of behaviour.

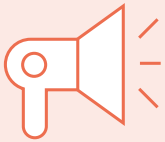


#### **Prepare employers and providers.**

Ensure that employers, careers providers and Higher Education and Further Education providers are briefed and have the resources they need to engage in the encounter.

- Clarify the learning outcomes, what students will learn and why its relevant for students at this point in their careers journey.

- Be clear about their role and responsibilities and those of the supporting teacher or other colleagues.
- Explain about the needs and expectations of students, what career learning they have had already and where this encounter fits.
- Provide clear instructions about where to be and when, and the relevant practical information they need to know about taking part.



#### **Communicate with the wider school community.**

Promote the learning opportunity to the wider school and college community including engaging colleagues, parents and carers.

- Inform parents what careers activity is happening and how it helps their young person.
- Encourage parents to continue conversations about careers at home.
- Inform teachers and highlight how careers activities support their professional development.
- Encourage teachers to link careers learning in their lessons



#### **Build independent career management skills for students.**

Irrespective of the system that you have in place, it's essential that students can record and review their career learning and you ensure that students have ownership of their Career Development records.

- Provide time and support for students to record their learning for future reference which is essential to aid reflection after the encounter.
- Support students to articulate their careers experiences and employer encounters into clear and compelling evidence for applications and interviews.



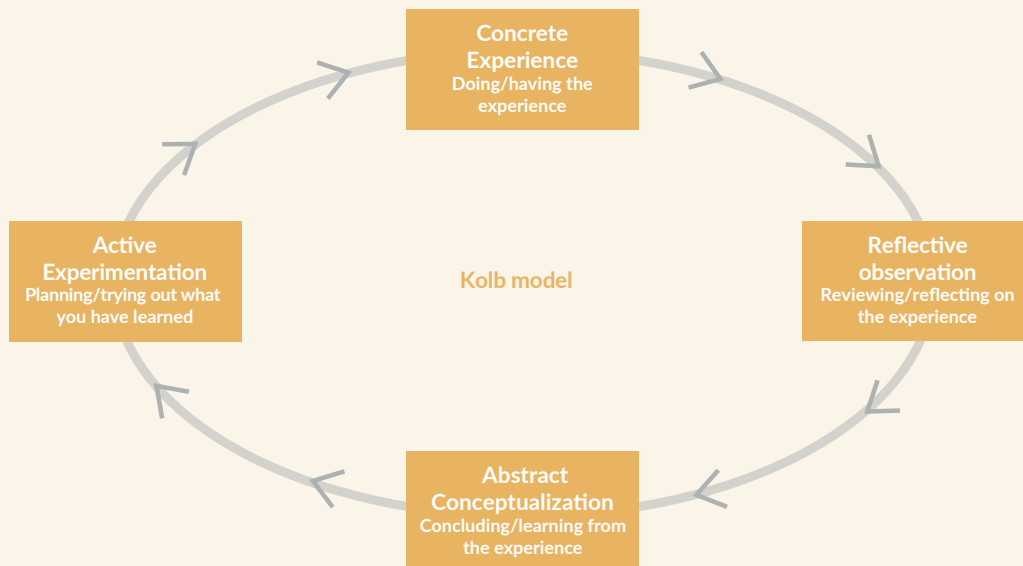
#### **Gather evidence to inform the evaluation.**

- Collect feedback on the day from all the participants, students, teachers, business volunteers or providers to inform the evaluation.





## Reflection – value the learning



Meaningful encounters are progressive and build on prior learning. It's essential that students have time to review their experiences and learning from each encounter, explore how these interrelate and take ownership for their career learning and development. Reflection is essential to allow students to articulate their feedback and forms part of the evidence base to help inform future planning of encounters.

The Kolb cycle (above) offers a model for reflective practice which can be used as a guide. Reflection from the wider stakeholder community involved with the encounter is also helpful in shaping future encounters.



### How to support reflection and value the learning

**Provide support and encourage students to reflect on their experiences.**

- Reflection allows students to form new ideas and ways of thinking about their future.
- Reflection allows students to understand their skills, interest and preferences and be able to align these with future careers.
- Reflection helps to build the evidence base to inform future planning of encounters and your careers programme, it helps you to understand what's working and why.

Supporting reflective practice can be achieved through:

- The use of reflective logs, follow-up presentations or online platforms are helpful tools to support the reflection process.

- Tutor time is a useful opportunity to build in follow-on activity to aid reflection.



### **Record activity.**

- Keep a record of activities in Tracker to build up an evidence base of encounters and students experiences. Compass + enables you to track encounters at an individual pupil level.



### **Review and record feedback.**

- Analysis of tracked activity and feedback provides the evidence base to review and plan your future programme. This analysis can be used to show you are adopting a process of continuous improvement to help you deliver high-quality careers encounters for all your students. It can support as evidence for showing how you are identifying the value of encounters aligned to the Ofsted Inspection Framework.



### **Reflect on each encounter.**

- Consider what has worked well, what didn't work and what might be done differently to enhance careers learning and use this reflection to inform future practice.
- Use a framework for reflective practice which works for you, such as Kolb's Cycle.



### **Reflect on wider careers programme.**

- Longer term reflection allows you to feed learning into your wider careers programme and future programme planning. Reflecting on your programme as a whole also enables you to map careers encounters against destinations and outcomes for pupils better to understand what encounters have the greater impact.





## Progression – build in next steps

Meaningful encounters offer students opportunities to build on prior learning but also to find out more beyond being involved in the encounter at the time. Progression involves you thinking about what comes after the encounter and how you help students make the most of what they have learnt. Progression supports students to apply the learning as part of their careers development choices. Think about what happens following the encounter to help students to progress their careers learning. Highlight best practice to raise awareness of what works and support the development of a culture of ownership for delivering meaningful encounters within your school or college community and wider careers networks.

### How to build in next steps

#### 1 | What comes next?

- Career activities are followed up and supported, not a 'one off' experience.
- Students should have access to the tools and sources of information to find out more about an industry, job role or pathway to which they have been introduced.

#### 3 | Creating a community of best practice

- Share best practice and learning with your Senior Leadership Team, other Career Leaders and employers, thereby helping them to inform and improve their practice.
- Learn from others in your careers network when developing your strategic career plan or programme to save time and generate new ideas.

#### 2 | Progress career learning

- Careers programmes follow a considered sequence which builds upon previous learning and experiences and supports students' career development at the relevant points in their career decision making process.

#### 4 | Celebrate success and create a culture of ownership for delivering meaningful careers encounters

- Share your success stories to inspire and inform staff, students, parents, careers providers and employers to create a culture of responsibility for careers in the wider community.
- Use Twitter, school newsletters or your school/college website to raise awareness of the programme and specific encounters.
- Contact your local press to cover special careers events to attract additional support.

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