



‘They’ve got their backs to the sea’: Careers work in Kent’s coastal schools

A report for Kent County Council

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Executive summary

Kent's coastal schools are a highly diverse group of institutions which serve a range of different communities. In a literal sense the young people of Kent have got their backs to the sea. Despite their relative proximity to the economic heartland of England, they remain separated by distance and geography. Many of the challenging issues that have been identified for young people in coastal towns are strongly related to their careers. Career describes the individual's progression through life, learning and work. Individual's careers are profoundly influenced by the context within which they pursue them. But, context does not wholly define your career. With the right information, support and education people can make the most out of their circumstances, seize the opportunities around them and change, improve or leave their immediate environment. Career guidance describes a range of educational interventions that are designed to help people to realise their potential and make the most of their career.

A 'coastal school' is defined in this report as any school that serves a coastal town, remote community close to the coast or any school that is less than three miles from the sea's edge. A survey of schools was developed to identify key information about schools with a particular focus on current practices in career education and guidance. Of particular interest was how far the location of the school impacted on the school's careers programme. The Gatsby Benchmarks, which set out a framework for good career guidance, were used to help structure the questions around careers provision. These benchmarks comprise: a stable careers programme; learning from careers and labour market information; addressing the needs of each pupil; linking curriculum learning to careers; encounters with employers and employees; experience of workplaces; encounters with further education and higher education; and personal guidance (Gatsby, 2014).

All secondary schools in Kent that met the definition of a coastal school were invited to complete the survey, and several additional schools that KCC have earmarked as 'Youth Employment Zones' were also invited to complete the survey. In total 18 schools, of the possible 34, completed the survey and their responses are referred to in this report.

A case study visit to Thanet took place in November which included visits to four schools and interviews with external stakeholders. Thanet was identified because it exemplifies many of the issues that are pervasive in coastal communities in Kent and beyond. All secondary schools in Thanet (excluding independent schools) which met the coastal school definition above were approached about a visit to their school and were invited to participate in the case study. The school visits involved interviews with career leaders, careers advisors and teachers; focus groups with young people and interviews with key stakeholders and providers in the local area.

Emerging from the school visits and interviews with stakeholders it was clear that there were some different ways of thinking about career in evidence. Law (2015) has argued that one of the main dynamics in career building is making decisions about what you want to hold on to and what you want to let go of. Many of the participants in this research were trying to balance these different perspectives. For young people this was about choosing between attachment to home, family and community and adventure and opportunity. For adults this was about either encouraging young people to see the opportunities locally and contribute to the growth of the area or about supporting young people to move on, transcend their upbringing and realise their potential.

At the heart of this support is a series of educational interventions and experiences which are designed to help young people to consider their future options and make purposeful steps towards these futures. In this report we have described this kind of support as 'career guidance' and have drawn on the Gatsby Benchmarks (Gatsby, 2014) to explore what this looks like. The eight Gatsby benchmarks provide a strong framework which schools can adopt and are increasingly influential in both policy and practice as an agreed description of what school-based careers work consists of and sets some standards that schools should aspire to. In the report we discuss each of the eight benchmarks and how far the practices in 18 coastal schools meet each benchmark. Examples of good practice that were evidenced in the school visits in Thanet are used to highlight how the benchmarks can be met and 'next step' recommendations are also provided to explain how the coastal schools could improve their provision reflecting on each benchmark.

Most of the schools that participated in this study were willing to provide good quality career guidance to their students. Most believed that it was important and could see the link with their coastal location. However, not all knew how best to deliver on this aspiration given the constraints that they faced. The findings of the report hopefully highlight why schools should prioritise the resources that they have for career guidance and provide some insights as to how other schools are delivering good career guidance.

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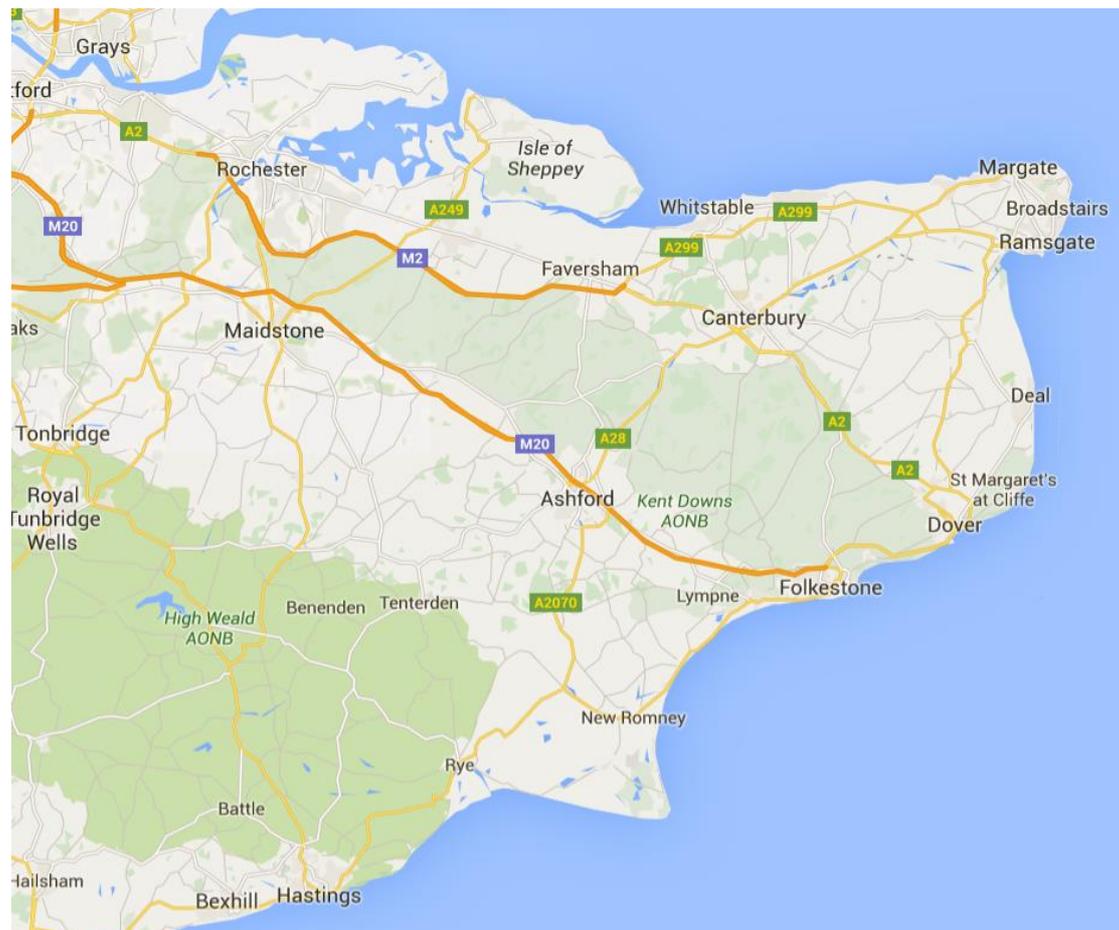
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1. Introduction

Kent boasts one of the country's most beautiful coastlines with a variety of sandy beaches, bays and the famous white cliffs framing views to France, with the coast stretching for 350 miles around the county. Along its course are numerous towns and villages with a wide range of social and economic compositions. For many young people in Kent, this is where they are born and raised. Crucially it is also where they begin careers which may take them far beyond Kent's coast.

Many of the young people that we spoke to while writing this report told us that the coast was a wonderful place to grow up. Adults were also keen to stress the wide range of opportunities that exist around Kent's coastal towns. However, alongside the positive aspects of growing up in a coastal town there was a more challenging side. In a memorable phrase, one member of staff in a school that we visited talked about how young people in coastal towns have '*got their backs to the sea*', suggesting that they have to fight harder to find opportunities than young people growing up in the cities. We encountered this concern a number of times in a variety of forms including the challenges of finding work experience, the limited range of post-secondary options and the preponderance of low skilled work in many coastal areas. Not everyone agreed with the idea that young people have their '*backs to the sea*' but everyone had heard this idea expressed and had an opinion on it.

Figure 1: Kent's coast



Many of Kent's coastal towns have features that are typical of coastal towns elsewhere in England including: aging populations, high levels of migrant workers, high unemployment, seasonal work, low earnings and high levels of deprivation (Agarwal and Brunt, 2006; Beatty, Fothergill and Wilson, 2008). Many coastal areas have been in decline since the expansion of the foreign holiday market in the 1970's and whilst some, such as Brighton, have developed a healthy economy and status coastal communities along Kent's coast have generally not been so successful, (Rickey, 2009; Reid and Westergaard, submitted 2015).

Deprivation is a pervasive issue for many declining coastal communities and in Kent the level of deprivation in 8 out of 12 local authority districts has increased since 2010 relative to other areas in England. Thanet continues to rank as the most deprived local authority in Kent (KCC, 2015) with Cliftonville West and Margate Central wards in the Thanet District ranking as the two most deprived wards within Kent. Cliftonville West is reported as the fourth most deprived ward in the country (KCC, 2015).

There are related concerns about economic under-development in coastal towns. For example, the Centre for Social Justice explored employment patterns in five coastal towns, including Margate, and found that of the working age population those receiving out of work benefits ranged between 19% and 25% compared to 11.5% nationally (Centre for Social Justice, 2013).

Alongside issues of unemployment there is considerable concern about both educational attainment, progression to higher education and youth unemployment (Barker, 2013; Rudd, 2015). Many young people in coastal towns are growing up in

contexts where there are few visible opportunities and in families where there is substantial deprivation. Key stage 4 results from 2015 reveal that coastal schools have on average 3% lower levels of attainment than their inland counterparts and similarly there are on average 3% higher levels of pupils eligible for free school meals in coastal schools than non-coastal schools (Coughlan, 2015; SchoolDash, 2015).

An added complication in Kent's coastal towns is the existence of the grammar school system. The experience of the coastal community appeared to be strongly textured by issues of social class and relative educational advantage. There was also some evidence that the grammar schools organised their career guidance provision differently to the high schools for example focusing far more strongly on university and geographical mobility. This report is not the place to debate Kent's grammar school system, but many of the participants believed that Kent's school system had a role to play in defining how young people responded to the challenges of growing up in a coastal town. Some participants were positive about the opportunities offered by grammar schools, but most were not. As one Community Support Worker put it '*we have the grammar school system around here and that narrative ignores what happens to those that don't get in and are left behind.*'

In this report we have sought to explore how some of these issues are experienced in Kent. In particular, we were interested in examining how schools perceived and responded to these issues. It is hoped that our findings will contribute to a greater understanding of the issues which are faced by young people in coastal areas and help to draw together a range of strategies that schools can use to respond to these issues.

The role of career guidance

Many of the challenging issues that have been identified for young people in coastal towns are strongly related to their careers. Career describes the individual's progression through life, learning and work. Individual's careers are profoundly influenced by the context within which they pursue them. But, context does not wholly define your career. With the right information, support and education people can make the most out of their circumstances, seize the opportunities around them and change, improve or leave their immediate environment.

Career guidance describes a range of educational interventions that are designed to help people to realise their potential and make the most of their career. Career guidance has often been viewed as a tool which can support social justice and contribute to social mobility (Hooley, 2015a; Hooley, Matheson, and Watts, 2014). Career guidance is important because it can:

- provide access to information and intelligence about the labour and learning markets in ways that transcend existing social networks;
- demystify labour and learning market systems and support individuals to understand progression pathways and manage transition processes such as university or apprenticeship applications, the creation of CVs and recruitment interviews;
- engage with individuals' assumptions about themselves and the world around them, informing and challenging them;
- listen to individuals' aspirations and help them to operationalise these as well as considering alternatives;
- build the skills that people need to make decisions and transitions and to progress in their career (career management skills);
- broker access to networks beyond the ones that individuals normally have access to; and

- provide mentoring and support to encourage persistence and remaining resilient in the face of setbacks.

Nationally, the field of career guidance is in a period of rapid transition. The closure of Connexions as a national brand in 2010/2011 led to a period of challenging readjustment. Many schools struggled to take on their new responsibilities, but five or six years later, those schools that have prioritised careers provision have started to develop a new approach. In addition, careers has once more moved back into the policy spotlight. 2016 has already seen both Nicki Morgan and David Cameron give speeches about career guidance, mentoring and education employer engagement (DfE and Morgan, 2016; PMO and Cameron, 2016).

In Kent, the local authority has invested in supporting the development of careers provision in the county's schools (Hooley, 2012; Hooley, 2015b). Within the local authority the motivation for this investment has been to ensure that the county has the skills that it needs and to support young people to successfully move from school into a successful career.

We believe that by working together schools, the local authority, employers and learning providers can ensure that all young people in Kent can successfully make the transition from school and realise their potential.

Patrick Leeson, Kent Country Council (in Hooley 2015b).

We have found that schools in Kent's coastal areas are just as passionate about the careers and progression of their students. This report will look at how the schools have approached this task and how they have sought to use career guidance as part of their approach to ensuring that young people in coastal communities have the best start in life that the schools can provide.

What we did

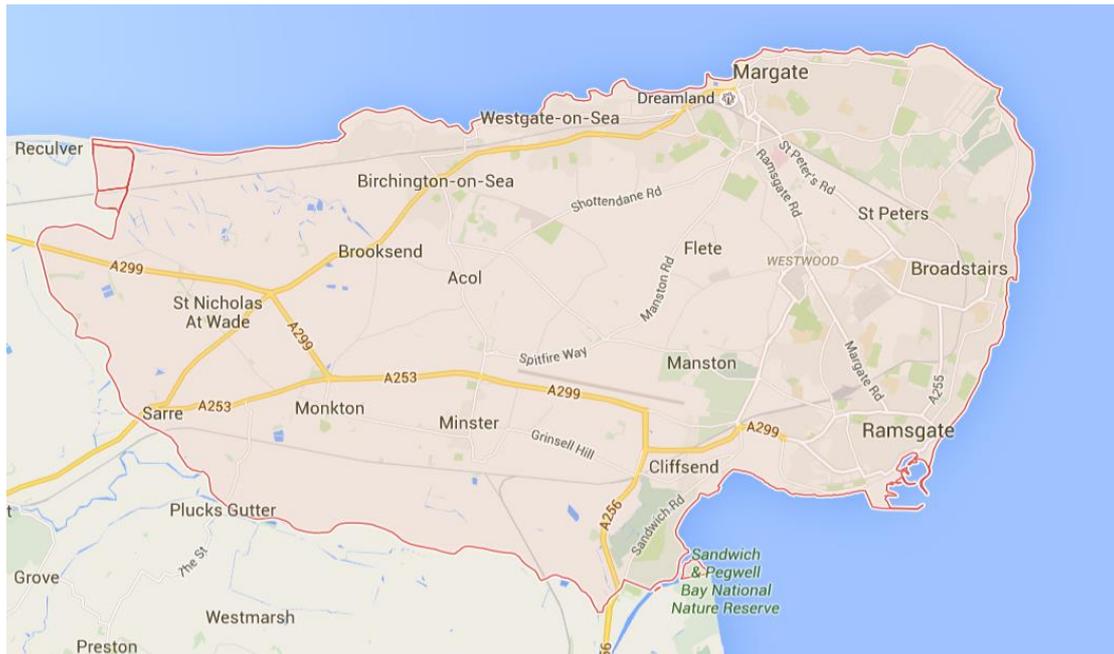
We began by defining what a 'coastal school' was. In this research we refer to any school that serves a coastal town, remote community close to the coast or any school that is less than three miles from the sea's edge as a 'coastal school'. This aligns with the 2011 census coastal communities' data which includes 274 coastal communities across England and Wales and covers the locations of the schools included in this report (ONS, 2014).

Following an inception meeting with Kent County Council we developed a school survey to identify key information about schools with a particular focus on current practices in career education and guidance. We were particularly interested in whether and how the location of the school impacted on the school's careers programme. We used the Gatsby Benchmarks, which set out a framework for good career guidance, to help structure the questions around careers provision. These benchmarks comprise: a stable careers programme; learning from careers and labour market information; addressing the needs of each pupil; linking curriculum learning to careers; encounters with employers and employees; experience of workplaces; encounters with further education and higher education; and personal guidance (Gatsby, 2014).

All schools in Kent that met the definition of a coastal school were invited to complete the survey, and several additional schools that KCC have earmarked as 'Youth Employment Zones' were also invited to complete the survey. In total 18 schools, of the possible 34, completed the survey and are reported on in this research.

Alongside this we also carried out a case study visit to Thanet where we visited four schools and spoke to some key stakeholders. Thanet was identified because it exemplifies many of the issues that are pervasive in coastal communities in Kent and beyond. All secondary schools in Thanet (excluding independent schools) which met the coastal school definition above were approached about a visit to their school and were invited to participate in the case study. Four schools agreed to participate and these are: Chatham and Clarendon Grammar, St. Georges Church of England, Royal Harbour Academy and Charles Dickens. The school visits involved interviews with career leaders, careers advisors and teachers; focus groups with young people and interviews with key stakeholders and providers in the local area.

Figure 2: Thanet



2. Starting your career from a coastal town

We carried out eight focus groups with young people in key stage 4 and key stage 5 across four schools in Thanet. We started off by asking the young people what it was like to grow up in a coastal town and about their experiences of living near the sea. There were some positive comments made about the local area and in particular several students highlighted the benefits of being near the seaside and having access to the local beaches.

It is quite nice being on the coast, it's nice in the summer being so close to the sea.

Female year 11 pupil.

Easy access to the beach is really good as I do a lot of surfing and work at a surf school during the holidays.

Male year 10 pupil.

I think it's nice, it's much nicer than Lewisham where I come from. And you can go to the beach whenever you want.

Male year 11 pupil.

However, many other young people were more negative. For example, several discussed the lack of engaging youth activities for them to get involved with.

There is just nothing to do here, nothing for young people to do here.

Female year 11 pupil.

Can be bit boring, we've not got really many big cities we've only got Canterbury that's about it and that's not really even that big so there's definitely not enough going on for young people.

Male year 12 pupil.

Even those young people who had enjoyed growing up in the area, did not necessarily see their future in the area. One pupil who is very focused on the future who said:

I cannot wait to move away, but it wasn't really a bad place to grow up.

Male year 13 pupil).

Conversely others who voiced quite negative opinions of the local area planned to continue to live in the area. The main reasons cited for staying locally were about wanting to retain ties with family and friends and feeling comfortable in this area.

I know this area and don't think I'd want to move anywhere new, and it's where all my family are and I always want to be close to family.

Female year 11 pupil.

I'm a home bird, I just like this area I've grown up with it and I don't feel like moving.

Female year 13 pupil.

It just doesn't really interest me to go elsewhere and all my family and friends are here.

Female year 12 pupil.

Next steps

Many of the young people that we spoke to did not feel ready for their post school life and stated that they would like their school to do more to help them to prepare for life 'out there'. Two groups from different schools discussed how they had some support and career learning through PSHE lessons but that they wanted more practical advice in this area. For example:

We've been told all about bullying and sexual health but I'd rather learn about more practical skills for the future like how to manage my money, pay bills and set up an account that sort of thing.

Female year 11 pupil.

These ideas were echoed in another group who discussed similar frustration with a lack of knowledge about financial management and day to day life skills:

We need to know about life skills not what they do now, I don't mean the life skills programme I mean like real life skills I remember we have had it from the very start like how to put on a condom, it's like I don't need to know that I need to learn how to pay my bills.

Male year 13 pupil.

However, a lot of the young people did voice their confidence about the next steps in terms of applications to college, sixth form, apprenticeships or university, suggesting that the four schools are implementing good support for young people's future transitions. For example, one pupil describes how having a back-up plan in place has helped her feel more prepared for the future.

I am getting excited because now I have applied for college I know I've got a back-up in place if I don't manage to get an apprenticeship doing what I want.

Female year 11 pupil.

In general, the young people we spoke to saw their families, careers advisors and staff at the school as the best places to go to for advice about decision making and advice about future destinations.

I'd say the careers advisor would be who I would go to as the school can often make it seem like uni is the only option but having spoken to the careers advisor he's made it clear that there are way more options.

Female year 13 pupil.

The sixth form staff will always help you out. Like say you came here and started year 12 but decided you didn't like the options you'd picked. They would help you if you wanted to go to college instead or an apprenticeship.

Male year 13 pupil.

I'd go to my mum and talk things though but I've also spoken a lot with the Assistant Head as he has talked to me a lot about

apprenticeships and that's what I want to do get an apprenticeship working with old people and I think that I could do that around here.
Female year 11 pupil.

Opportunities in a coastal town

We talked to young people about the jobs that they were aware of in Thanet. We also asked them about the jobs their family and friends do. They mentioned a lot of trades and talked about jobs in the care, retail and catering sectors. Several mentions were made of the large number of convenience take-away food outlets in the area, which were not considered as offering attractive employment options for the young people.

The young people also discussed how successful they perceived their parents' careers to be. This was often framed by them considering whether they would aspire to their parent's specific role or industry but was also referred to in a more general sense.

I think what my parents do pays the bills but it's not good enough and I can do better than that.
Female year 11 pupil.

Being self-employed is a bit harder around here, some of my family are self-employed and it's not like they don't earn money but it's hard as it is often seasonal, so not sure about that.
Male year 13 pupil.

Whilst there is some affection for home and family a lot of the young people did not foresee their careers as a continuation of their parents'. Many aspired to greater career success than their parents and several pupils suggested that they did not think that this would be possible if they stayed in the local area. Two pupils described a fear of being trapped if they were to get a job in the local area.

I feel like there aren't really many great jobs round here so why should I stay around here, once you've got a job it would be harder to leave in a way.
Female year 11 pupil.

It's like you need to escape before you get a job and get tied down here.
Male year 13 pupil.

Through these discussions it became clear that many of the young people have quite limited conceptions of what is available in the local area in terms of attractive career opportunities. Teachers and careers workers that we spoke to felt that young people's understanding about their futures was often framed by their family background and by parental influence.

Sometimes there is slight mismatch between academic potential of students and their background, background can hold them back, potential often doesn't square with family. The family may be resentful or apprehensive, not wanting to lose their child.
Careers co-ordinator

One survey respondent echoed this saying that there could often be a 'mismatch between students' ideas and parents' reticence to lose children.'

Other adults that we spoke to in schools focused on the way that that area itself served to limit young people's thinking about their careers. The idea that '*they have their backs to the sea*', was used a way of summarising the limited labour market of coastal communities. In several interviews with school staff there was further discussion around the mismatch between education provision and labour market opportunities in that area. For example:

A couple of years ago there was a lot of interest in hair and beauty courses from a lot of the girls at our school and there were around 400 places in different providers across the county but there were only around 40 job vacancies within this area which is why I encourage apprenticeships for those interested in hair and beauty as there is more likelihood of a job at the end of it.

Careers co-ordinator

It was also highlighted by one community support worker that the range of jobs available are not only limited by sector but also hours and contract types which are often not desirable, particularly to young people.

It is not as simple as saying there are no jobs in the area because if you look on jobs websites they'll probably be around 200 vacancies within the local area but the vast majority will be minimum wage, zero hour contracts, and possibly unsocial hours and likely to only be in the care sector, catering or retail. If you want to establish a career there are very little opportunities.

Community support worker

One careers worker at a grammar school also discussed their school's approach to information provision, referring specifically to apprenticeships, and why the local labour market does not offer the suitable opportunities for all of their pupils.

In terms of apprenticeships we do provide information on them but in the local area these tend to only be level 2, sometimes level 3 – often in catering or retail, and no higher apprenticeships on offer. Students would have to go to much further afield such as London. If opportunities were available round here then perhaps more pupils would be interested, but the current lower level apprenticeships are not really an option for the students here.

Careers assistant.

However, we also heard from a number of stakeholders about the positive opportunities in Thanet.

There are about 3000 businesses around Thanet. This includes big corporates like the NHS, Pfizer Ltd., Cummins Power Generation. Beyond that there are not many with more than 200 employees. But the SME's are not all fish and chip shops. Some are very sophisticated.

Representative of the Educational Business Partnership Kent (EBP Kent).

Other stakeholders also emphasised the real opportunities that existed in the area. They noted that people often talked the area down, which encouraged young people to feel that they could only succeed if they left the areas. However, for the right students with the right attitude, they felt that there are lots of opportunities.

There is a real sense of community in Thanet and there are good opportunities in the local area if you are willing to work hard.
University outreach officer.

Moving away from a coastal town

For some of the young people the idea of moving away, especially to the city is quite appealing. But, as has already been discussed this was not every young person's aspiration. Many were more focused on their attachment to the area than on moving to gain career success. This led some adults to highlight the insularity of the area. The term '*planet Thanet*' was used more than once to describe the self-contained nature of the area.

Some adults felt that they needed to advocate for the idea of moving away from the coastal community. This was often viewed as part of a project to raise young people's aspirations.

I'm always aware of the need to be impartial but at the same time we want to encourage them to get out of here.
Careers co-ordinator.

In the focus group conversations with young people it also became clear that they perceived some limitations to staying in the area and sometimes felt that the lack of local opportunities was pushing them out.

I want to leave, I've lived in Thanet all my life and I want to be independent live on my own away from here where there's more opportunities for work and other things to do.
Male year 13 pupil.

It was also clear that the attitude to mobility was influenced by family background.

I think I've just always wanted to go to university all my family have gone, I've got older siblings and cousins and they've all been to university so it's the thing that we've been brought up to do.
Female year 11 pupil.

Holding on and letting go

It was clear from the interviews that there were some different ways of thinking about career in evidence across the people that we spoke to. Bill Law (2015) has argued that one of the main dynamics in career building is making decisions about what you want to hold on to and what you want to let go of. Many of the participants in this research were trying to balance these different perspectives. For young people this was about choosing between attachment to home, family and community and adventure and opportunity. For adults this was about either encouraging young people to see the opportunities locally and contribute to the growth of the area or about supporting young people to move on, transcend their upbringing and realise their potential.

Figure 1 summarises some of the ideas that we encountered.

Figure 1: Holding on and letting go

	Holding on	Letting go
Young people	<p>Homebodies</p> <p>Committed to home, family and friends. Imagine their futures within the coastal community.</p>	<p>Adventurers</p> <p>Believe that their future lies outside of the coastal community. Excited to move on and seize new opportunities.</p>
Adults	<p>Community activists</p> <p>Strong attachment to the local community. Keen to find opportunities to promote the opportunities that are available locally and develop the local economy.</p>	<p>Mobilisers</p> <p>Strong commitment to the individuals that they are working with. Encourage them to make the most of their potential and to move out of the coastal community where this would offer opportunities.</p>

3. Good careers guidance?

In the previous section we set out some of the issues that young people growing up in coastal towns experience. We also set out how the adults that are supporting them talk about these issues and try to support them. At the heart of this support is a series of educational interventions and experiences which are designed to help young people to consider their future options and make purposeful steps towards these futures. In this report we have described this kind of support as 'career guidance' and have drawn on the Gatsby Benchmarks (Gatsby, 2014) to explore what this looks like.

The Gatsby Benchmarks define good practice in career guidance and were developed through six international visits and an analysis of good practice in English schools as well as a review of the literature on careers guidance in schools. Since their publication the Gatsby Benchmarks have become increasingly influential in both policy and practice as an agreed description of what school-based careers work consists of and setting some standards that schools should aspire to.

This section uses these benchmarks to discuss practice in 18 of Kent's coastal schools which responded to our survey. Each section will conclude by suggesting some 'next steps for coastal schools' which draw on the best of what has been seen.

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, governors and employers.
Gatsby (2014).

This benchmark highlights the importance of building programmes which encourage young people to develop their skills, knowledge and attitudes about careers progressively. It highlights the fact that career education is not a one off event, but rather something which has to take place throughout the school.

Just over 80% of the 18 schools surveyed state that they have a structured careers programme or policy in place. From the more in depth conversations at the four schools in Thanet it emerged that while this kind of programme has often been established it is not always evaluated and updated regularly.

A careers co-ordinator at one of the schools talked about the importance of continuing to improve the school's careers provision and to make it more visible for all staff, pupils and parents.

We want to improve this programme further and get more information in the student planners, with dedicated pages for them to complete at career interviews, this will then also be accessible to the parents.
Careers co-ordinator.

Some schools reported that they were constrained in their attempt to deliver a high quality and consistent career guidance programme. Respondents to the survey variously mentioned time, resources, money and a lack of buy in from staff and senior leaders in the school. It was clear that the development of a careers programme was often a matter of making tough choices over resources. In some coastal schools careers was prioritised, in others this was not the case.

In general the coastal schools in Kent understand the importance of having a careers programme but were at different points of development in building strong programmes.

Next steps for coastal schools

- Ensure you have a career guidance programme in place. This needs to start early (ideally in year seven) and seek to develop students' capacity to manage their own career.
- Evaluate your careers programme drawing on input from all stakeholders (parents, young people and local employers) and review it regularly.
- Make sure that information about your programme is available to all stakeholders.

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.

Gatsby (2014).

This benchmark is designed to ensure that all young people have access to the information that they need to make decisions about learning and work. The findings of this study suggest that this is of critical importance in coastal towns where young people are often unaware of the full range of opportunities locally and have limited experience of the world beyond their community. The challenges of holding on and letting go that we have described highlight the importance of providing both local and national information and encouraging young people to consider both.

All schools surveyed report that most students have access to information on further studies. Whilst 60% of schools stated that most students routinely access information on work and employment options. But only 30% of schools that completed the survey report that most students routinely access local labour market information.

From the focus group discussions, it emerged that some pupils felt very aware of the different options available to them and the different routes to get to where they want to be. One pupil praised the information and advice he was given from an external careers advisor.

The careers advisor takes you through all the different options like apprenticeships and HNDs and you say what areas you're interested in and then he reduces it down and then looks at the geographical location of options so I said that I wanted to stay more local so he looked at apprenticeships I could do and has been really helpful.

Male year 13 pupil.

This illustrates the importance of the mediation of career and labour market information. It is not just a question of providing information, but also of supporting the young person to interpret this information in relation to their own career aspirations.

The Education Business Partnership Kent (EBP Kent) works with a number of coastal schools to carry out labour market research each year and tailor this for each

school that they work in and their local area. One representative from the EBP Kent who works closely with a coastal school explained.

We have a continuous research process of matching and referring student's choices to local labour market information to ensure our advice is up to date and relevant.

EBP Kent representative

While the coastal schools that responded to our survey were generally good at providing information about educational options, they were weaker in providing information about the labour market and particularly the local labour market. This is clearly an area for further development in some coastal schools.

Next steps for coastal schools

- You should be able to provide information to your students about the full range of options that are available to them. Critically this should include information about opportunities on the coast and those inland.
- You should think carefully about how students can best be supported to encounter information in a way that makes it meaningful and relevant to them.
- Doing some research on the local labour market is invaluable. Working with an external partner who has good labour market links is a good way to achieve this.

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.
Gatsby (2014).

This benchmark encourages schools to attend to the diverse needs of their students and to encourage all students to consider all options. In addition to the other equality and diversity issues faced by students, in a coastal community it is also important for all young people to be encouraged to consider the possibilities that exist for their career locally and nationally. This benchmark also encourages schools to keep systematic records of their provision of career guidance and to track students once they have left the school.

The overwhelming majority of schools in our survey (95%) reported that they kept systematic records of the individual advice given to each student and subsequent agreed actions. All of the schools that we visited also described a wide range of individualised pastoral support which was designed to address the diversity of students and to respond to any specific problems like teen pregnancy, or substance abuse. It is perhaps particularly important that issues of diversity and stereotyping are addressed in Kent's coastal schools due to the overall lack of diversity within the area. One pupil highlighted the lack of acceptance of difference in the area.

Don't be a minority here it's such a close community in Thanet, so people think that everyone is the same in Thanet, so if there is a

different type of person they think they're too different,
Male year 11 pupil.

The individual nature of support was a key component of several schools' delivery. One school in a deprived area described how critical a strong focus on individualised support was.

The deprived area means that the school not only has to deal with academic achievements but also the social and emotional issues which are usually in the remit of social workers and the police.
Community support worker.

The school saw a clear link between this kind of pastoral support and the career progression of their students. The school works closely with each student who experiences difficulty to support them into a positive destination and then maintains contact with them. This is important as many young people do not have anywhere else that they can access support once they have left school.

Another school that we visited also described how they keep in touch with their students after they leave the school and continue to provide support where necessary.

We have a policy of in the first two weeks of September and we will ring every single one of our previous year 11 school leavers to see where they are and if they have a secured place and we do this specifically in September not the summer so that they have already started so we check every single student, and if they have fallen off then we invite them in and help support them into something else.
Careers co-ordinator

This benchmark covers a wide range of areas. In some, such as the keeping of systematic records on students, the provision of personalised support and the tracking of students' post-school destinations, Kent's coastal schools appeared to be doing a very good job. There was less evidence that the schools were actively seeking to tackle stereotyping and consider career options that may have challenged their assumptions about what they were capable of.

Next steps for coastal schools

- Good record keeping on current and former students is an essential part of a good career guidance programme.
- It is important to recognise that all pastoral work with your students has a career component. Actively linking support around personal issues to a discussion of progression can be valuable.
- Keeping in touch with students after they leave your school can be critical in ensuring positive progression and also provides you with valuable intelligence about the local labour market.
- Your careers provision should challenge stereotypes and assumptions that students have about what they and people like them can and should do.

Linking curriculum learning to careers

All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths.
Gatsby (2014).

This benchmark encouraged schools to embed career education into the teaching of subjects. For example, the teaching of science might draw on examples of how particularly scientific processes are used in the world of work and discuss the jobs that are associated with them.

Most of the schools (70%) that responded to the survey dealt with careers as part of PSHE. However, a minority (35%) taught careers as a cross-curricular theme. A smaller minority (30%) reported that students experienced careers learning embedded in other subjects.

A comment from one of the teachers that completed the survey highlights the difficulties that many schools face to integrate careers learning into the curriculum:

With a packed timetable it is often difficult to find space for non-core subjects, and also to train staff to deliver something that is not their specialty.

Survey respondent.

A number of other respondents to the survey made similar comments. Careers is often difficult to fit into the curriculum in a sustained and meaningful way. The delivery of career learning within the curriculum is a clear area of development for most coastal schools.

Next steps for coastal schools

- It is important to find space for a career programme within the curriculum.
- Your teachers should be aware of the career options related to their subjects and able to discuss this as part of their subject teaching. This may require some staff development.

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.

Gatsby (2014).

This benchmark focuses on giving young people meaningful encounters with employers and employees with experience of the work of work. The idea is to give young people an opportunity to learn 'straight from the horses' mouth'. For coastal schools engaging with employers offers some particular challenges and opportunities. The coastal economy is dominated by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who often find it more difficult to respond to requests to work with schools. NOMIS data from 2015 reports that 87.7% of business enterprises in Thanet (the case study locality) were described as 'micro' with 0-9 members of staff, which support schools' experiences (NOMIS, 2015). However, where these relationships can be made to work they can lead to opportunities for young people to gain a more sophisticated understand of the local economy. Employer encounters can also offer an opportunity for schools to branch out and bring people in from beyond the local economy.

Only 25% of the coastal schools that responded to our survey reported that most students routinely take-up access to employer talks. A further 45% say some students routinely take-up access to employer talks. Given the strong positive

evidence that exists on student engagement with employers, these figures are disappointing (see Mann, 2012).

Some schools were very committed to employer engagement and felt that they were central to supporting student aspirations and social mobility.

We want young people to have high aspirations regardless of where you were born. Central to this is giving people encounters with employers.

Survey respondent.

However, it was clear that there were a range of internal and external barriers that stood in the way of this kind of education/employer partnership in some schools.

There is a systematic issue with matching the education system to employment. We are trying to alert young people when the opportunities are available. The national exam system means that young people aren't free to go to work when employers need them. Employers don't understand the life cycle of the education system. We need to educate them and to create pipelines.

Representative of the EBP Kent.

The fact that both schools and employers can find it difficult to focus on creating meaningful encounters highlights the importance of brokerage agencies. While some schools do have the internal capability to work with employers, most do not. Similarly, while some employers are motivated to work with the education system, many find it difficult to penetrate. Where there is a brokerage agency that sits in between these two it can help to smooth the interaction and make it more productive for all parties.

One school that we visited was working with the EBP Kent and Inspiring the Future to organise a 'speed dating' style event with 14 employers from a range of sectors.

We're going to set up each employer at a different table in our theatre then teams of about six students are going to speed network with a Q and A then I ring a bell and they move to the next one. I have given them a starting point with questions but obviously encourage them to come up with their own. Only just over an hour so not too much of a commitment for employers and you can't do that type of event for too long it gets too much for the kids to take in... This is the first networking event of this kind that we have done.

Careers co-ordinator.

This kind of event provides a good example of how brokerage organisations can help schools to organise high impact events that are relatively easy for both employers and schools to participate in.

The level of employer engagement in Kent's coastal schools could be increased. There are potential benefits for schools, young people and employers if this can be achieved. In the coastal context it offers particular opportunities to support young people to gain a more in depth understanding of the local labour market.

Next steps for coastal schools

- Your school should be offering all students the opportunity for direct contact with employers.
- It is important to build kinds of engagement which both fit in with the school day and which do not make excessive demands on employers.
- Finding a good local broker to help build relationship between your school and employers is likely to be very helpful.

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.

Gatsby (2014).

This benchmark focuses on the importance of giving young people actual experiences of workplaces. It can often be difficult for young people at school to imagine what the world of work is actually like. There are a range of different approaches that can be used to provide such insights.

Students that we talked to often gave mixed reports about how useful their work experiences were. Some felt frustrated that despite having a job or area of a particular sector in mind this could not always be accommodated. There was the perception from some pupils and school staff that there was a lack of employers willing to provide placements in the local area.

I ended up at a retail placement so I wasn't that happy, you could go out and try and find somewhere yourself but it's quite bad as that is quite daunting for someone in year 10 having to go into somewhere and ask about doing work experience. So I ticked my preferences and let the school sort it, I put animal care, childcare and something else that was not retail so it was not what I wanted.

Male year 13 pupil.

However, a representative from EBP Kent suggests that the reality is actually that there is a lack of employers in general but that many are very active in collaborating with schools.

There are a lack of employers in the area, but the employers that are here are remarkably generous in the amount of time and effort they make giving opportunities to young people, a much higher ratio of offer than in many other parts of Kent.

Representative of the EBP Kent.

While it is possible to draw useful learning from work experience placements that aren't strongly related to your interests, this needs to be carefully managed. Where this is not done, students can sometimes be unsure as to what the purpose of work experience is.

There is a strong rationale for encouraging young people to help to shape their own work experience in line with their interests. Several schools organised work

experience in this way, with one consequence being that students make use of their family connections to set up work experience.

I did it with my cousin as he's a quantity surveyor and that's what I want to get into too, I sometimes work with him in the holidays so it was easy to just do that and makes sense as that's what I plan on doing later.

Male year 11.

The above example highlights the advantage of having strong kin and friendship networks to access wider opportunities. However, the danger of this approach is that it can lead to social reproduction, with richer, professional families passing on higher status experiences to their children. At the other end of the spectrum it creates concerns about what is available for children from families with limited networks and without the ability to provide work experience.

An un-networked child faces not only the barrier of poverty, but also of not having a network. Work experience is much more complex if you are un-networked. If we are going to have an impact we need to tackle this head on.

Representative of the EBP Kent

It is therefore important that schools take care to balance the use of parents and family networks with the provision of other ways to access work experience.

Giving students access to good quality work experience is particularly important because we also heard several students talk about how their work experience had helped them to shape their career aspirations. Sometimes this was by inspiring them through experience of something that they were interested in. For example one student's work experience with a tattooist had provided him with a road map towards a career ambition that linked strongly with his interests. However, more often work experience seems to serve as a reality check on something that students had previously romanticised.

As clichéd as it sounds I knew it just wasn't something for me I worked in a primary school as I thought that's what I wanted to do but now I know that I don't so I guess it was useful as it showed me that isn't what I want.

Female year 12 pupil.

In the survey 60% of schools reported that most students have the opportunity to attend work experience. However, many schools highlighted the challenges of finding appropriate placements in the local area. Work experience is quite demanding and quite challenging for some schools. Again this was an area where external brokerage could often be useful. In our interviews with school staff and stakeholders it emerged that there were other barriers to successful work experience placements beyond a lack of appropriate placements. It was noted that many young people were not able to travel, even a short distance from the school, for a variety of reasons including the cost of travel and caring responsibilities.

Looking at the figures of work experience half of students at this school were unprepared or couldn't travel outside of the local area. Finance for families in this area, like a train fare, is an issue that has an impact on that for sure.

Representative of the EBP Kent.

Reid and Westergaard (submitted, 2015) in their qualitative study of young people living in coastal towns in the South East also found barriers to work experience opportunities centred on access to placements and the high cost of public transport inhibiting travel to businesses outside the local area.

Work experience proved to be one of the more challenging benchmarks for coastal schools to deliver on. As with the encounters with employers, the nature of the coastal economy presents some challenges. It was also clear that schools needed to be careful to avoid approaches to work experiences which compounded the impact of social background rather than challenged it. However, where it was available and well managed students often got something useful out of it.

Next steps for coastal schools

- You should try and offer work experience to all of your students.
- Matching work experience placements to students' interests is valuable.
- You should prepare students for work experience and give them an opportunity to debrief in order to help them to draw out what they have learnt from the experience.
- Young people's family and friends offer a valuable resource for work experience, but be careful not to allow advantaged students to hoard all of the best opportunities.
- You may find it useful to work with a brokerage organisation to help your school to source and manage work experience.

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.

Gatsby (2014).

This benchmark is designed to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to experience a wide range of post-school learning providers. As with many of the other benchmarks it is designed to support social mobility and ensure that young people find the right opportunity irrespective of the background they come from. Because of this the aspiration is that all young people should have had some direct experience of all post-school routes.

Most of the schools that responded to the survey were some way away from meeting the Gatsby Benchmark. The majority (60%) of the schools reported that most students have the opportunity to attend learning provider talks, but only a minority (20%) reported that most students have the opportunity to visit universities or other HE providers and only 10% reported that most students have the opportunity to attend visits to other 16-19 learning providers.

Students generally welcomed any information and opportunities that they were provided with to find out about post-16 and post-18 opportunities.

The school has given us a lot of information about applying for sixth form and other options, we had two assemblies on how to apply for sixth form and we're also getting more assemblies on specific subjects we can take for A levels which is good as there are A level

subjects that we can't take at GCSE so they're given us choices and tasters of what they are.

Female year 11 pupil.

I feel like here they promote different options as they have had people come in and talk to us about different options so we've had career days and stuff where people have talked about apprenticeships, uni, and going straight into work and tell us the different options.

Male year 12 pupil.

However, teachers and careers workers also talked about the challenges of discussing post-16 options in schools where the majority of students are bound for one option. For example, in the grammar schools most pupils (and their parents) anticipate that they will progress to higher education. In this situation it can be difficult to raise other opportunities and to provide the same level of support for all options.

Staff also talked about the challenges of accessing a range of providers from coastal locations. In some cases this meant that young people viewed the choice as between the local providers and London. Some staff made an effort to take students to a wider range of providers and encourage them to broaden their geographical horizons.

The coastal schools in this study all recognised the value of providing information and experiences about a wide range of post-school options. However, a variety of factors mitigated against this including: geographical access; parental expectations; the relative balance of academic and vocational subjects in the school as well as the knowledge base and networks of the careers staff. Because of this many fell short of fully achieving the Gatsby Benchmark, suggesting that there is further work to be done in this area in the future.

Next steps for coastal schools

- Your students should have had some experience of all post-16 and post-18 educational routes.
- Try to avoid making assumptions about what educational route is right for a particular student and encourage wide exploration.
- Try to provide students with experiences of both local and less local providers.

Personal guidance

Every pupil should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a career 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.

Gatsby (2014).

This Benchmark focuses on the importance of students having access to personal guidance from a careers professional. This is seen as critical because an individual's career development is a personal journey. Because of this there may be particular things that a student wants to talk through on their own. This could include seeking specialist advice about educational options or discussing a difficult issue like whether to pursue a career interest that their parents oppose.

75% of schools surveyed report that most students have access to professional career guidance. Where this was available students were often very positive about the personalised support that they had received.

I would say the school and especially the careers advisors have been really helpful as I didn't know what I wanted to do for a long time and then the careers advisor asked what I was interested in, what jobs my family do, and what sorts of jobs or trades I might like. He sort of condensed it down and got it down to construction type jobs or something in sport and that's where it started for me and then that's when I went to do work experience with my cousin and decided what I wanted to do. So he has been a really big help in helping me decide what I want to do.

Male year 13 pupil.

However, schools did not always find it easy to provide access to personal guidance to all students. Several respondents to the survey highlighted that the cost of providing personal guidance is often a barrier. One responded that *'the cost of external providers has got too much'* while another commented that gaining access to the necessary *'specialist knowledge, time and relevant professionals are significant challenges.'*

Some schools chose to provide personal guidance in-house by employing a careers professional. Other brought in external providers and sometimes built very close working relationships with these providers. There was not any evidence that one model worked better than the other, although ensuring that personal advisers were strongly integrated into wider careers provision was critical.

One creative approach to guidance which we encountered in a school that we visited was the use of 'Lego therapy' as a way to help young people who are struggling to communicate their ideas for the future. This approach uses Lego as a prop to discuss a young person's career choices in the third person and to represent abstract concepts such as moving away or exploring aspirations and barriers to these.

In general this Benchmark seems to be one of the stronger areas in many coastal schools. Several of the schools that we visited or which responded to our survey were putting substantial resources into this benchmark to ensure that most of their students could have access to professional guidance. The nature of the guidance provided varied across the schools, but most were doing their best to ensure that the majority or all of the students had access to individualised support with their careers.

Next steps for coastal schools

- Ensure that all of your students have access to personal guidance.
- Careers professionals should be qualified to at least level six (degree level).

4. Conclusions

Kent's coastal schools are a highly diverse group of institutions which serve a range of different communities. There are dangers in generalising about any group of schools and even more dangers in generalising about groups of young people. The towns and villages of Kent's coast are likely to produce young people who travel the world, who stay where they are born, who leave and return and who take up and excel in almost every occupation whether related to the coast or not.

Despite the dangers of generalisation, it is difficult to deny that place matters. In a literal sense the young people of Kent have got their backs to the sea. Despite their relative proximity to the economic heartland of England, they remain separated by distance and geography. The relative cost and access to transport are evident barriers for some young people meaning opportunities are further from reach and experienced as more distant than they are in reality. As transport links improve some of this may change, but there is also something to be said about the cultures of coastal towns. Some people have moved to them looking for something other than what is on offer in the city. Some young people, we called them the homebodies, recognise and value this while others, we called them the adventurers, kick against it and aspire for something different.

Our case study focused on Thanet. It is very likely that if we had focused on another area in Kent the story would have been different. For example, the links between Thanet and Europe are not as strong as those that might be found in Dover or Folkestone. With the exception of repeated references to the growing East European community in Margate, there was very little reference to the European mainland in any of our conversations with adults or young people in Thanet. People talked about pursuing their careers in Margate or London, but not in Calais, Paris or Antwerp. It is possible that more needs to be done to encourage young people to recognise that they have their backs to more than just the sea.

Young peoples' experiences of coastal communities are textured by their social class and family background as well as by their schooling and their aspirations. However, it is clear that there are a number of features that impact to some extent on all young people. The preponderance of SMEs in the local economy, the limited number of easily accessible learning providers, the aging population and relatively high levels of local deprivation all serve to frame the experience of growing up in a coastal town.

Most of the adults recognised the particularity of coastal towns and felt that schools needed to do something active to respond to this context. Some adults, we called them the community activists, felt that there was a need to celebrate and develop the locality and to encourage young people to stay. Others, who we called the mobilisers, sought to propel young people beyond the community of their birth, arguing that their potential could best be fulfilled elsewhere.

Whatever position young people and the adults who seek to support them take, it is important that they have a space within which to consider these issues. The question of what to hold on to and what to let go of is a critical one for young people in coastal communities. This report has argued that the provision of high quality career guidance by schools provide an educational space within which young people can develop their futures. The eight Gatsby benchmarks provide a strong framework which schools can adopt to achieve this.

Most of the schools that participated in this study were willing to provide good quality career guidance to their students. Most believed that it was important and could see the link with their coastal location. However, not all knew how best to deliver on this aspiration given the constraints that they faced. A report like this cannot deliver

schools new resources, but it can hopefully provide a rationale as to why they should prioritise the resources that they have for career guidance and provide some insights as to how other schools are delivering good career guidance.

It is hoped that this has helped schools to help their students to see the full range of opportunities that await them both within and beyond the coastal communities.

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