

Evaluation of Post-19 Careers Benchmarks



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Executive summary

Hartlepool Learning and Skills Service (HLSS) identified a need to support organisations that provide careers advice and guidance to adults to help them to better understand their provision, to identify gaps and improve the quality of their offer. To address this, they adapted the Gatsby Benchmarks for schools and colleges (Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014), utilising the original format of the eight benchmarks but amended to better reflect the specific needs of adult learners. The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks include additions which focus on employability skills and digital skills. Implementation of the Benchmarks was supported by a hard copy Post-19 Careers Self-Evaluation Toolkit. This was completed by pilot organisations and required various staff to provide input.

The methodology adopted for the project drew predominantly from feedback provided by organisations that had piloted the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks and from key stakeholders representing national organisations with an interest in adult guidance. Both groups broadly welcomed the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks and recognised the potential they offered, particularly in supporting organisations whose primary work was not career guidance.

All respondents perceived that the Gatsby Benchmarks had worked well in schools and colleges and with some adaption could offer a useful resource for post-19 learners. The pilot organisations using the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks valued the focus on the needs of their clients, adults who often have complex lives and a broader range of life experiences that need greater consideration such as previous work experience, financial and family responsibilities. A key benefit was the Post-19 Careers Self-Evaluation Toolkit, which was created as a self-assessment tool, and helped organisations to benchmark the quality of their existing careers provision. The self-evaluation process empowered organisations to raise awareness of their information, advice and guidance provision amongst a wider group of staff, as well as to assess their areas of strength and what needed addressing. Challenges were identified and these often related to resourcing, as some of the organisations did not have dedicated funding for advice and guidance or qualified practitioners, and lacked the resources required to progress people to the appropriate qualifications.

All stakeholders interviewed were positive about the opportunities that the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks could offer. They were perceived as a mechanism for establishing minimum standards and measurement for adult careers guidance services. It was felt the diversity and range of organisations that provide adult careers support was broad and variously funded, which presented key challenges in the standardisation of provision.

Both the organisations who piloted the Benchmarks and the stakeholders whose views were canvassed, all saw benefits in using the Benchmarks. The challenges are less about the tools which could be adapted and refined, and more about the complexity of the adult guidance system in England, as it lacks regulation, structure and systemic measurement of outcomes. Allied with this was a concern about the differentiation between careers guidance delivered as part of a 'comprehensive careers service' and employability support embedded within other support services.

Recommendations

Focus and leadership

- The adult guidance sector is both wieldy and unstructured. Work would need to be undertaken to define which organisations would most benefit from engaging with the Benchmarks. It is suggested that those who would benefit most would be organisations whose primary focus is not careers guidance i.e. local authorities, colleges, civil society. The adoption of the Benchmarks would provide standardised quality and opportunities to systemically measure outcomes and impact. They would also offer consistency and entitlement for all adult learners.
- An organisation with national reach would need to take the lead and be accountable for the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks. This would require funding and there was a lack of clarity as to where this might come from. The Government was considered the obvious choice, but this would require a policy commitment to progress this. The potential the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks offer could inform the work on adult guidance currently being conducted by the Gatsby Foundation or linked to the Department for Education's (DfE) current exploration of an all-age careers system.
- The devolution agenda would offer a useful vehicle to connect the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks with Local Skills Improvement Plans, especially as all-age careers is becoming a regional focus in many Combined Authority areas. This could potentially offer a regional delivery mechanism which could align with the Careers Hubs and the National Careers Service.
- A system of referral could be coordinated where clients who need expert careers guidance can be signposted to organisations who have the expertise and qualified staff to deliver careers guidance. This would ensure that everyone's expertise is valued, utilised, and maximised, which would provide greater benefit to clients, rather than everyone trying to deliver everything. However, it is important to consider how to build capacity within the area, so that organisations are supported to offer careers guidance from qualified practitioners. It is also ill advised to rely solely on a small number of providers.

Refining the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks and tools

- The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks have been adapted from the original Gatsby Benchmarks for school and colleges. The adaptations work for adult clients and reflect the complexity that many face in their lives. The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks would benefit from greater clarity and definition, particularly in terms that are used i.e., careers service, stable careers programme. It would be helpful to provide a list of activities that a careers service would offer and what a stable careers programme might look like within an adult context. Allied with this would be a differentiation between activities that are careers guidance and those that might be defined as employability. Other areas which could also be considered would be career management skills and teaching people about career decision making. The focus on digital skills (Benchmark 8) although useful, could be integrated into essential employment skills rather than having it as a separate Benchmark.
- There are many subjective terms used i.e. Benchmark 7, Bespoke Guidance which assesses the effectiveness of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) observation process. The challenge is to ensure that organisations are interpreting the activities they provide in a similar way to ensure consistency and moderation.
- It could be considered that not all organisations deliver all the Benchmarks. For example, if organisations do not have professional qualified careers advisers or access to appropriate labour market information (LMI) they might refer to other organisations who have more expertise in these areas.
- The Post-19 Careers Self-Evaluation Toolkit was welcomed, as it provided a structure for organisations to review their activities. This would need considerable enhancements to become universally applicable.
- The Self-Evaluation Toolkit should become an online tool similar to The Careers & Enterprise Company's Compass tool developed for schools and colleges. The resource would need to be portable and easily accessible to adult providers.
- The Self-Evaluation Toolkit would also benefit from a less binary approach i.e., yes/no, allowing for a greater sense of nuance and the development of careers provision in organisations. This would also support organisations to be able to map progress over time.
- Regional events such as a community of practice would help to share learning, expand networks and encourage more organisations to get involved. This would enable organisations to keep up to date with local providers, resources and to be better informed when signposting and referring clients to other services.
- There should be an annual celebratory event, to demonstrate the impact of the Benchmarks, showcase best practice and recognise the enhancements to the provision of community-based adult careers guidance.

1. Introduction

The International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby agreed to undertake a brief evaluation of the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks, developed by Hartlepool Learning and Skills Service (HLSS) to support post-19 providers in their area to deliver quality careers guidance for adults. The original Gatsby Benchmarks were created by Sir John Holman and iCeGS as the main output of a research project undertaken to identify what good career guidance looks like for young people in schools and colleges (Holman, 2014). The Gatsby Benchmarks have become embedded in careers policy for schools and colleges in England over the last decade.

HLSS identified a need to support organisations that provide careers guidance to adults to help them to better understand their provision, identify gaps and improve the quality of what they offer. To address this, they adapted the Gatsby Benchmarks, utilising the original format of the eight Benchmarks but amended them to better reflect the specific needs of adult learners. A key driver in the construction of the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks was to help organisations to better meet the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework which specifically focuses on,

how effectively staff work with learners, employers and other partners such as Jobcentre Plus, to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment enable learners to develop personal, social and employability skills that prepare them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals (Ofsted, 225:2023).

The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks have been piloted with nine organisations including, local authorities, charitable organisations, training providers and careers organisations. The pilot aimed to assess the extent to which the Benchmarks support organisations to assess and improve their provision and if they are useful to organisations. To support organisations to use the Benchmarks, a self-assessment tool was developed which provided a summary of each Benchmark and the criteria which needed to be addressed.

This report presents an evaluation of the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks pilot activity and builds on data originally collected by HLSS. It provides a discussion of the strengths of the model, opportunities for future development and a discussion of the challenges inherent in establishing tools such as this, in a complex and fragmented adult education environment.

Adult careers guidance

The need for adults to have access to lifelong careers guidance and support has been championed extensively in recent years (Career Development Policy Group, 2022; Policy Connect, 2021). As a result of evolving economic challenges, including

Brexit, the post-pandemic realignment of the workforce, and the fourth industrial revolution, the working landscape in which both adults and young people are trying to navigate a future has become increasingly opaque. The Institute for Employment Studies (IES, 2022) reported a key set of challenges impacting the work environment, namely low unemployment and recruitment and participation crises. Although there has been some normalisation of the labour market since the pandemic, and the number of vacancies has reduced, there are still more people out of work than pre-pandemic (IES, 2023).

There are many contributory factors that impact individuals' ability to work. Those most challenged include disabled people, those with low qualifications, minority ethnic groups, lone parents and older workers. In addition, there has been a significant reduction in employer investment in training at work and a proliferation of low paid work which contributes to record levels of poverty (Wilson et al., 2022). This suggests a complex environment in which individuals may not have agency to challenge the barriers that exist and potentially need to have access to career development support and labour market information (LMI) which can aid both individual transition into work and progression to decent work.

An important challenge for many adults is a lack of knowledge and understanding of when, where, and how to access careers guidance (Policy Connect, 2021). This is specifically the case in England, where careers guidance provision is fragmented across multiple funders and providers. Young people in education continue to have an entitlement to careers guidance, which is delivered through their learning provider; but once they complete statutory education and training, there is limited access to ongoing careers support. This lack of access has led to confusion for adults wanting or needing help with their career development (Policy Connect, 2021). Indeed, while there is overlap and duplication of services for some customer/client groups (such as the long-term unemployed) there are gaps in provision for others (including workers in employment but wanting a career change) which can be argued to be of primary importance within current labour market challenges. Work by the Gatsby Foundation (Percy, 2022) outlines the diversity of provision and the potential beneficiaries of careers guidance, through establishing a typology of potential recipients which include youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), those with caring responsibilities, those who are health constrained, those in education/retired, the long-term unemployed, work changers, workers at risk and those unhappy in work. This typology helps to identify core groups and their specific needs.

The OECD (2021) noted that adult guidance needs to respond to the point at which adults are in their career, their employment status, and their ambitions. The OECD (2021) also highlighted that while many adults may look for support with job search, career change, career progression, and information about training and education,

others are simply uncertain about how they fit into the labour market. Previous research by The Institute for Employment Studies for the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS, 2013) found that adult career decision-making was highly contextual, influenced by a range of factors including family, aspirations, career values, health, psychological orientation, and education and experiences of learning. Functional factors also influenced adult career decision-making, including access to finances, availability of opportunities and existing constraints. All combine to create a complex individual set of circumstances (now with the growing need to consider levels of digital literacy) requiring bespoke consideration and exploration.

Individuals seeking such bespoke support might struggle to locate where to access the help they require to progress their careers. Jobcentre Plus, the public employment service in the UK, is predominantly focused on supporting working age benefit claimants, but their vacancy matching service is free to employers and job seekers (Finn, 2018). Work Coaches operate as a single point of contact for claimants, providing frontline support and helping them to find work as soon as possible, to prevent benefit dependency. Research by Buzzeo et al. (2023) for Ipsos and IES suggests that Work Coaches provide personalised discussions which consider customers skills and career aspirations, but these work best with customers closest to the labour market. However, the research also identified that customers often felt they were being pushed into any available job, regardless of their interests.

The National Careers Service has a centralised website and provides a universal service digitally and by phone, but there has been much criticism of a lack of visibility and promotion of careers guidance as well as limitations in accessing this guidance due to the National Careers Service's focus on defined priority groups rather than universal access (Policy Connect, 2021). Essentially, there is an expectation that most people who need help with their career will self-serve, either through using digital resources or by drawing on their own social network.

This focus on national delivery tends to ignore the role and impact of local delivery structures. Many adults will seek help locally from organisations they recognise and trust. These organisations may be further education (FE) colleges, local authorities, and the voluntary and community sector. Traditionally, the focus for these providers is not careers guidance, but progression and transition support which is often embedded within their core activities (Pye Tait, 2022).

In recent years, adult careers guidance has often received little attention in careers guidance policy. Within the DfE's Careers Strategy (DfE, 2017) the majority of the focus was on young people, with short sections addressing the re-procurement of the National Careers Service and the Career Learning Pilots. More recently, the white paper *Skills for jobs: Lifelong learning for opportunity and growth* (DfE, 2021) aimed to focus more on adult careers support through addressing labour market information through the National Careers Service website. To establish better

alignment between the various components within the careers guidance sector in England, the DfE commissioned Professor Sir John Holman to make recommendations. In his report, Holman (2022) outlined a series of principles which included: the production of a strategic framework; that careers guidance be better communicated; careers guidance should be delivered by the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) for those not in work or in low paid jobs; and the DfE should provide support for people in work to gain access to better education, training and skills. He also focused on ensuring robust quality procedures, a single source of government assured careers and labour market information, and a balance between meeting local and national need.

Going forward, the importance of levelling up, devolution and local skills needs (HM Government, 2022) may be central to the future delivery model for adult guidance. The opportunities presented by the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, the commitment to more NHS staff, migrant workers and the Shared Prosperity Fund for example, all require support from professional careers advice and guidance. It is also necessary to consider various segments of the adult population and their needs, such as older workers who are more likely to be unemployed if made redundant in their 50's and 60's (Centre for Ageing Better, 2023). Conversely, many older workers may have left the workforce but need to return due the cost-of-living crisis (Centre for Ageing Better, 2023).

While there have been numerous government and other initiatives to encourage employers to recruit, retrain and retain older workers, this has not always been accompanied by comparable careers guidance support for those in this age group. The pilot Midlife Career Review (NIACE, 2015) in which individuals aged 45 and above had access to guidance contextualised to their specific needs, demonstrated the value of such guidance provision. This initiative has now become the Midlife MOT and has most recently been adopted by the DWP (JobHelp, n.d.) to support workers to explore work, health and their finances. It does not however signpost to careers information, advice and guidance. Work commissioned by the Gatsby Foundation (Percy, 2022) estimates that over 11 million adults could benefit from careers guidance as elements of the workforce become increasingly unstable. This all leads to the importance of accessible, high-quality, and professional careers information, advice and guidance, so that the current workforce can be supported to effectively transition into new work.

The Gatsby Benchmarks

In 2014, The Gatsby Foundation commissioned Sir John Holman and iCeGS to undertake research to identify what defined good career guidance. The research included international case study visits to the Netherlands, Germany, Hong Kong, Finland, Canada and Ireland, an extensive literature review and visits with schools in

the UK. The evidence collected was used to synthesise eight Benchmarks that define good career guidance. The Benchmarks focused on the following.

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

The Benchmarks were trialled and evaluated in the Northeast of England from 2015 to 2017 in schools, colleges and a pupil referral unit. Evidence suggested that the implementation of the Benchmarks contributed to increased career readiness, better GCSE attainment and learning outcomes, a decrease in NEETs and employers suggested young people were better able to articulate their career ideas (Hanson et al., 2021). The Benchmarks became a core part of government policy and were featured significantly within the DfE's Careers Strategy (DfE, 2017). They have since become the primary mechanism for delivery of careers information advice and guidance in England. Percy and Tanner (2021) suggest that the adoption of the Gatsby Benchmarks within schools and colleges has led to improved outcomes post-16 for young people.

The Benchmarks have since been adapted for primary education within the Northeast of England (North East Ambition, 2023). They have also been adopted internationally and have been integrated in secondary education Hong Kong and in areas of Catalonia in Spain and in Norway. They are very much perceived as a useful structure for the organisation and delivery of careers education and guidance for young people.

In 2019, HLSS used the Gatsby Benchmarks as a basis from which to develop a set of Benchmarks that would be appropriate for use with adult learners in the post-19 sector. They established the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks which are the focus of this evaluation.

2. Evaluation approach

The original pilot of the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks started pre-Covid-19 and was conducted with nine organisations which included four local authorities, two charities, two independent training providers and a community interest company within the region. Hartlepool Learning and Skills Service (HLSS) then conducted a survey with participants to assess the effectiveness of the tool. Overall responses were positive, as pilot organisations identified that the Post-19 Career Benchmarks and Post-19 Careers Self-Evaluation Toolkit were effective in enabling organisations to review, analyse and benchmark their careers provision. Most agreed that the Benchmarks reflected the needs of learners, and all agreed that they were fit for purpose in evaluating their careers provision. Most agreed that they had helped them to enhance their guidance provision (S. Campbell, Private Correspondence, 2022).

To explore in more depth the use and potential for the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks, the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) obtained some funding to undertake an evaluation that extended and built on the data captured by HLSS.

This current evaluation builds on the pilot review by undertaking a qualitative study, which aimed to capture a broader set of views reflecting both organisations involved in the original pilot and key stakeholders who have an interest in the developments of adult guidance in England. The evaluation objectives were:

- to understand Benchmark implementation and the challenges and barriers for use;
- to identify the type and range of improvements adopted resulting from the Benchmarks, and;
- to identify any outcomes for the organisations and their clients as a result of using the Benchmarks.

To achieve this, a two-stage methodology was adopted which included in-depth qualitative interviews with 10 organisations, five who had piloted the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks and five stakeholder organisations. In addition, we undertook an online survey of clients who had used the services; unfortunately, the response rate was insufficiently high enough to be able to inform our findings, although the small number that did respond (3) were positive about their experience of accessing guidance.

The interviews with pilot organisations and stakeholders took place online and the organisations interviewed represented a range of adult learning providers within the region. The interviews were recorded using transcription through MS Teams to help facilitate analysis. The topic areas included questions exploring the following:

- the organisation's provision of careers information, advice and guidance and their client group;
- the process adopted to apply and implement the self-assessment tool;
- how careers activities have been integrated within the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks curriculum;
- any improvements that have already been identified;
- how the tool will be embedded within the organisation;
- recommendations on how the tool can be further developed; and
- any evidence of impacts for customers identified as a result of using the Benchmarks.

Direct quotations were not attributed due to the small sample size within the evaluation.

3. The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks

The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks were developed in 2019 and were adapted from the original Gatsby Benchmarks (Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014).

The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks were set out as follows:

1. Access to a comprehensive careers service, which includes a stable career programme
2. Essential employment skills
3. Learning from career and labour market information to meet business needs and identify skills gaps
4. Addressing the needs of each learner
5. Embedding careers in Post-19 curriculum
6. Meaningful encounters with employers, training providers and links to educational establishments
7. Bespoke guidance
8. Essential digital skills (The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks can be found in Appendix 1).

The Benchmarks were adapted to focus on areas not in the original Gatsby Benchmarks. The adaptations focused on retaining the eight Benchmarks but changing the emphasis to be more appropriate to adult clients. Therefore, Benchmark 1 for Post-19 focused on providing a dedicated careers service and an embedded programme of careers education for adults. Essential Employment Skills, (Benchmark 2), considers that these skills should be part of the careers programme and should include: communication, problem-solving, planning, organising, initiative and enterprise, teamwork, self-management, willingness to learn and information technology. Benchmark 3 focuses on access to LMI and access to a suitably qualified advisor to support them to make informed choices. Access to an advisor is also the focus of Benchmark 4 which additionally addresses perceived barriers to learning and careers. Benchmark 5 aims to integrate all curriculum learning with careers and 6 focuses on progression routes and access to employers and workplaces. Benchmark 7 promotes access to multiple guidance interviews with an appropriately trained advisor. Finally, Essential Digital Skills (Benchmark 8) was introduced as a new Benchmark as the need for digital competency became a focus, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The inclusion of a dedicated benchmark with a focus on digital was felt to be important. Supporting people to develop IT literacy increasingly appears to be a part of the role of career guidance services, as job search, application processes and LMI are now predominantly online. This is a support service which is not always

acknowledged or funded. Therefore, having this as an explicit part of the criteria was helpful providing a structured approach for providers.

The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks were reordered to better suit the needs of an adult client group. Wellbeing has been highlighted as a key focus in many of the Benchmarks. All Benchmarks have a summary and a set of criteria that have been specifically developed.

Some of the initial implementation period was during the Covid-19 pandemic which influenced how services were delivered (this, however, is not the focus of our review).

The Post-19 Careers Self-Evaluation Toolkit

To support the implementation of the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks, a Self-Evaluation Toolkit was created. This was envisaged as an organisational activity requiring staff at all levels throughout the organisation to contribute, hence encouraging a review of organisational knowledge and shared responsibility. The Toolkit was a hard copy resource that provided context to the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks and guidance for undertaking the evaluation. The self-evaluation activity (see Appendix 2) focused on each of the Benchmarks and predominantly used binary yes/no responses, some Likert responses (1-4), frequencies, and space for qualitative comments. It offers a comprehensive review of each of the Benchmarks, allowing organisations to consider how they would grade their services based on their responses and then complete an action plan to address any identified deficiencies.

4. Findings

This section sets out the main findings from the study. It begins by looking at the experience of implementation from the perspective of the organisations involved in the pilot, before going on to look at stakeholder perspectives.

Pilot organisation implementation

The organisations that piloted the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks consisted of a range of organisation types including local authorities, training providers, charities, and community interest companies. Only one organisation's primary purpose was the delivery of careers guidance. The providers delivered a range of support services to both young people and adults with multiple needs including homelessness, mental health, addiction, and behavioural issues; all experienced multiple barriers to engaging in learning and work. The focus of much of the provision was supporting the transition into learning and work. This may be through the development of literacy and numeracy skills, job search support, work experience opportunities as well as activities designed to build confidence and self-esteem and promote aspiration.

Organisations had a variety of staff delivering careers guidance, with some having Level 4 and Level 6 careers guidance qualifications. Pilot organisations worked with Jobcentre Plus and were dependent on winning external funding from sources such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and The National Lottery to provide services to their client group. For many, they did not see a divide between their provision for young people and adults as their services support young people throughout their 20's.

All the organisations welcomed the Benchmarks, and many were familiar with the Gatsby Benchmarks and had used them to assess their current provision, with one organisation stating, *'It is a world class standard, simple as that'*. There was recognition that whilst the original Gatsby Benchmarks were a useful starting point for adults, they were not fully applicable for the context in which they were to be used and required revision to better meet the needs of the organisations that provide services to adults with complex needs.

When we first measured our careers service against the Gatsby Benchmarks, whilst they were extremely useful...they needed to be adapted slightly to suit the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks learner or our typical client that we deal with.

The organisations perceived the Gatsby Benchmarks as working well in schools and colleges and that with some adaption would offer a useful resource for Post-19 learners. They understood the original Benchmarks as being based on international

best practice, and because they were developed based on clear evidence, this had given organisations greater confidence in using them.

The focus on digital skills was particularly welcomed as respondents felt assumptions were often made, particularly about younger people, having good IT skills. In reality, this was often a skills gap that needed to be addressed as many of the organisations worked with both young people and adults. One organisation has since focused on developing their learners' IT skills and their use of social media and has attracted funding enabling them to do this. This was a direct result of working with the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks.

As a result of looking at these Benchmarks, we've looked at things [social media presence, IT] like that.

The incorporation of these skills was important to the providers, with one organisation explaining how it is about giving clients '*confidence to access opportunities...to build self-esteem...for some it's a real achievement to even leave the house*'. A requirement within the Benchmarks is that all providers have a digital inclusion strategy and that careers programmes address the use of digital skills for communicating, handling information and content, transacting, problem solving and being safe and legal online. This therefore places particular focus on both organisations and clients to develop their digital capabilities.

Implementing the Benchmarks

Participants valued the Benchmarks focus on the specific needs of their clients, adults who often have complex lives and a broader range of life experiences that need consideration such as previous work experience, finances, and family responsibilities. The focus on local provision was also welcomed as this was perceived as an area of weakness generally.

With just a couple of additions makes them more relevant to the nature of our adult learners.

A key benefit suggested was the Post-19 Careers Self-Evaluation Toolkit which acted as a self-assessment tool. This helped organisations to explore the quality of the careers provision and to have something to measure it against.

The self-assessment tool needed to be completed by a range of people across the organisation, and it helped to both identify a lack of knowledge about careers provision and shine a light on what they offered. Additionally, the tool helped to increase knowledge and awareness of other local providers, their offer, and to enhance networking throughout the area. Therefore, the tool helped organisations to raise awareness of their information, advice, and guidance provision amongst a wider group of staff, as well as to assess their area of strengths and what needed addressing.

The approach adopted in testing the Benchmarks also brought some challenges for organisations. One of the strengths of the evaluation activity was the in-depth engagement required, though this was also a challenge as it was felt to be time-consuming. There was recognition that evaluation was important and needed to be done properly and respondents needed to be open and honest. Some critiqued the use of a binary scale of yes/no within the Self-Evaluation Toolkit as this did not support organisations to recognise the nuance of the provision. The opportunity to evidence the incremental nature of developing provision would be more helpful.

The recognition of an external quality award was supported and welcomed by the organisations. Many felt this separated them out as being committed to careers guidance. It may be that the Benchmarks could be a stepping-stone for Matrix (the recognised quality standard for the delivery of information, advice and guidance) for organisations who are starting to think seriously about the quality of the advice and guidance they provide for adults.

One organisation who had used the Benchmarks, captured annual feedback from the clients. From the 75% of clients who responded to their survey, 98% felt they had received good or outstanding careers guidance in terms of their future aspirations. The organisation suggested that the Benchmarks had helped them to establish a baseline for their practice, deliver an action plan, and build on their practice year on year.

Although the Post-19 Career Benchmarks were well received there were some challenges identified. These were often related to resourcing, both in terms of the time required to complete the self-evaluation, but also the lack of resources available to dedicate to careers guidance. A lack of qualified staff was identified as an issue; some of the organisations did not have qualified practitioners and lacked the financial resources to progress people to the required qualifications. Other challenges focused on the employer requirements, which were felt to be something that would take some time to develop and embed sufficiently.

Although the opportunity to contribute to the pilot was welcomed, there were some concerns as to how organisations might feel exposed and scrutinised for being involved. There was some anxiety about presenting themselves as careers guidance experts, especially if they lacked qualified staff and suitable resources. Organisations indicated their staff had lower level (2/3) information and advice qualifications that were not specific to careers. This speaks to some anxiety about the definitions around being perceived as a 'career guidance expert'. It was suggested that the network could consider how to recognise and acknowledge the various levels of expertise within careers guidance that is available.

Embedding

As a result of engaging in the pilot activities, organisations have now adopted a range of strategies to address some of the gaps they identified. These included:

- enhancing staff understanding of the careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) offer, through awareness raising; being more familiar with local further education (FE) offers, job search skills,
- redesigned documents so tutors can help learners by discussing their next steps with them, focusing more on aspirations and goals,
- formalising processes such as documenting what they do with learners,
- provided continuous professional development (CPD) sessions for staff such as focusing on raising aspirations,
- introducing one point of contact for each learner,
- including the provision of careers support as part of relevant staff job descriptions, and integrated sessions about careers guidance as part of induction processes for new staff,
- CPD master practitioner sessions focusing on hot topics to build knowledge,
- developing case studies which demonstrated good practice examples of how to support clients with careers related issues,
- developing a greater focus on digital skills for all learners,
- increased local networks with other providers and Jobcentre Plus; and
- developing action plans, particularly focusing on quality improvement for this part of the service. This will be supported by an annual event to share learning and future developments.

These activities have resulted in the increase of staff knowledge, particularly about other local sources of support such as Jobcentre Plus and other networks and referral points.

I think one of the things that came to light from the staff survey was some of the staff in our wider team, their awareness of exactly what the careers service offered wasn't where it needed to be.

It allows everyone to contribute, and the understanding of the service is based on everyone, it's not just management level saying this is what we do.

For many organisations, careers guidance is one part of what they do, and they do not have resources to employ professionally qualified staff for the role. However, this is the only Benchmark that requires specialist staff. Organisations could deliver the other Benchmarks and explore other partnerships and cooperative arrangements for providing clients with qualified careers guidance. There were concerns generally about the lack of funding to support professional careers guidance for adults. However, organisations demonstrated commitment to continually improve their services and to offer the best they could for their clients.

We are constantly trying to develop to improve it. That's the challenge trying to keep it fresh, to keep everybody involved and to ensure that every learner is offered the ability to access that service as well.

But the benefits outweigh this,

It has become normalised; staff are talking about it [careers]. There are constant reinforcements.

It's like an operational tool to enable us to look at regular activities to make sure that they are happening and planning ahead and actually taking our service forward.

Overall, the Benchmarks were well received by the pilot organisations who used them. All benefited from increased staff knowledge, understanding, and skills in delivering careers support. Many organisations felt that they had formalised what they were already doing but did not have the appropriate systems in place to deliver across the organisation, or to monitor and improve year on year. Additionally, there were examples of clients having a positive experience and enhanced aspirations. The limitations focus on challenges with resources and a lack of qualified staff able to deliver a full careers service.

Stakeholder views

There is a growing focus on adult guidance within England, and The Gatsby Foundation has commissioned work to explore what good career guidance for adults might look like (Gatsby, 2022). It was therefore timely to canvass views from stakeholders about their opinions on the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks. A small sample of stakeholders were interviewed for this project, which included representatives from professional bodies, careers guidance policy experts and Gatsby Benchmark experts. This was obviously a small sample and as such the findings here can only be perceived as indicative of potentially wider views.

This section of the report considers their interests in the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks, what they perceive the benefits to potentially be, how they could complement existing frameworks, the tools and resources required, and what would need to be in place for the Benchmarks to be successful.

Potential benefits of the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks

All stakeholders interviewed were positive about the opportunities that the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks could offer. There was recognition of the benefits and the impact that the Gatsby Benchmarks have had on schools, colleges and government policy, as well as their role in raising awareness of careers guidance services. This view also reflected that of the pilot organisations who suggested the profile of

careers guidance had risen within their own organisations because of the Post-19 Careers Benchmark pilot.

The range of careers support available for adults is diffused and ranges from formal publicly funded provision through, for example, Jobcentre Plus, the National Careers Service, Adult Community Learning, further education (FE) etc. However, much support is provided by civil society, defined as non-governmental, not-for-profit organisations who have shared interests and work in the space between government and the market (Cooper, 2018), and is often funded through various short-term initiatives. This diversity was perceived by respondents to bring challenges with a lack of homogeneity and a deficiency of regulation in the sector, although many providers would be subject to Ofsted and the Matrix Standard for Information, Advice, and Guidance.

Stakeholders felt that the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks could offer a mechanism for establishing minimum standards and measurement for adult careers guidance services. This level of information would help to provide a stronger evidence base for adult guidance as well as potentially informing and contributing to policy.

We would be interested to see the introduction of benchmarks to bring in a minimum standard of delivery of measurements and outcomes for adults seeking advice and guidance.

There were perceived to be many organisations who could benefit from the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks, including colleges (non-Gatsby Benchmarks provision), independent training providers, adult community education, Workers Education Association, members of the Institute of Employability Professionals, employers and those delivering apprenticeship frameworks. Generally, it was felt that they would be of particular use to colleges and organisations whose primary focus was not careers guidance but offered careers support within their wider role. It was suggested the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks could support local communities through building a careers advice infrastructure where complementary services could be provided. This would offer a more coherent approach to careers guidance as organisations could play to their strengths by utilising their expertise without delivering all the elements of a full careers service.

Implementing the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks

For some stakeholders, there was a need to have a clearer differentiation between employability support and careers guidance.

I think the biggest thing that all organisations should take away is whether they actually deliver employability or they deliver career guidance.

Within the views of stakeholder respondents, employability was seen either as opening 'doors' such as CV writing, interview skills, and helping people to do this.

Employability was defined by some as a set of input activities, while others saw it as the output of careers guidance i.e. clients being able to apply these skills themselves.

This lack of clarity regarding definitions of activities raised some concerns that organisations may be claiming to deliver careers guidance services when they are actually providing employability support. There was agreement that these elements should be presented holistically as supporting adults' career development but that more work needed to be done on setting a required level of standards, to present greater clarity between the various activities and how they help adults to progress. A requirement for more definition around terms such as 'careers service' and 'a stable careers programme' for example was requested, as it was unclear as to the parameters of these terms within the various contexts in which the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks are being used.

The discussions acknowledged that the target audience for the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks needed to be clearly defined so that the various activities reflecting employability and careers guidance can be articulated appropriately. It was generally perceived that those who would benefit the most from the Benchmarks were those organisations whose **primary role was not careers guidance**. The rationale for this was that the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks were seen as developmental and providers whose primary role was delivering careers guidance were already likely to have most of the elements already in place and embedded. This differentiation would also support recognition of expertise allowing informed and effective signposting and referrals to be made within the local community.

The Post-19 Careers Benchmark Self-Evaluation Toolkit was felt to be a useful resource and one that would help organisations to better understand the nature and the quality of their provision. Many of the questions used a binary approach requiring yes/no responses, while a small number of questions used a four-point Likert scale reflecting the Ofsted gradings. The stakeholders saw this tool as useful for organisations to self-assess and for organisations to understand what needed to be in place to successfully deliver adult careers guidance services. Again, stakeholders felt that the language of the Self-Evaluation Toolkit strongly reflected an employability perspective. The terminology needed to be clearer, as it was felt to be open to interpretation in places. Examples queried included '*Does your organisation have an extensive careers service*' and '*Does your organisation's careers service include a stable careers programme*'. Both were felt to need clearer defining, particularly about what a '*comprehensive careers service*' is.

The construction of the self-evaluation would benefit from fewer questions and more scaling questions to help organisations identify distance travelled. This would be useful if organisations built the self-evaluation into regular continuous quality improvement processes. The Self-Evaluation Toolkit was felt to be a useful starting

point which offered lots of opportunities for future developments to help organisations to establish the baseline for their provision. To increase access to the tool and encourage greater take-up, the respondents felt a move to online resources was required. This would increase accessibility, functionality, and portability through use of online applications which could be used on a laptop/tablet/smartphone etc. A Compass style resource would be highly welcomed. It was recognised that this would require significant investment and the establishment of the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks more broadly within adult services. Additionally, networks of organisations could be established, which could support a community of practice and provide moderation of results. This would help with embedding the Benchmarks, sharing knowledge, and receiving support in realistic and reasonable assessment within the Self-Evaluation Toolkit.

5. Discussion

The development of the 'Post-19 Careers Benchmarks' has contributed to an interesting and important discussion about the quality of careers support available outside of statutory education. It also draws attention to the complexity, fragmentation and systemic challenges with the adult guidance sector in England. This issue was continually raised as a potential barrier to the implementation and regulation of a framework within adult guidance. The views generally supported that educational/training contexts such as further education (FE) colleges and independent training providers may be easier to work with because of their funding structures from the Department for Education (DfE). However, key beneficiaries from the pilot were those organisations whose primary role is not careers guidance such as local authorities and charities, and often provide careers support as part of a menu of activities with individuals who often have multiple and complex needs and may be the furthest from the labour market.

Alignment with existing frameworks

The Gatsby Benchmarks for schools have unquestioningly been successful, but this has been due to the regulation that is available to government and the clear parameters that exist in relation to schools and colleges. A question to consider is whether the Gatsby Benchmarks are the most appropriate basis for developing quality assurance processes for those providing adult guidance services. A criticism often raised about the Gatsby Benchmarks is that it is an input focused model, defining what should to be in place, but not articulating what the outcomes should be for young people (Andrews, 2019). The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) had previously developed and trailed The Blueprint for Careers (2012) which was specifically developed for the adult education and skills sector. This blueprint was developed in England based on international practice within this area (Hooley, et al., 2013) and was tested in a range of educational settings. A question for consideration is whether an input focused, or outcome focused model is more beneficial in helping adult clients to develop their careers. The input model focuses on what organisations need to have in place to deliver a quality service, while the outcomes model focuses on what the benefits to adults will be as a result of engaging in a programme of career learning.

It was perceived that the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks need to complement existing frameworks such as the Career Development Institute (CDI) framework (CDI, 2023), the Matrix Quality Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance (Matrix, n.d.) and the Quality in Careers award (QIC, 2024). It was felt generally that the Benchmarks align well with the CDI framework and the Matrix Standard and could complement the Matrix standard as it does not directly cover careers.

The Matrix Quality Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance (Matrix, n.d.) is well established and already owned by the DfE. Several organisations within the pilot already hold Matrix, which is a requirement for organisations funded to provide careers education, information, advice and guidance (CIAG) funded by the DfE. Matrix has been in existence for over twenty years and was revised in 2023. Matrix has a generic information, advice and guidance (IAG) focus and supports a range of organisations who provide IAG, including training providers, homeless charities, apprenticeship providers, FE, and the National Careers Service, however, it does not specifically focus on CIAG. The standard consists of seven elements which address: Purpose, Resource, Offer, Delivery, Outcomes for individuals, Impacts for organisations and Continuous improvement. Each element is supported by several criteria which articulate what needs to be in place to achieve the element. Matrix is underpinned by an external assessment process which is usually on a three-year cycle. The Post-19 Career Benchmarks generally address the Delivery elements of the Matrix Standard which focuses on the IAG activities that facilitate client progress and transition. Several of the stakeholders perceived synergy between the two frameworks, with the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks offering a more in-depth and granular set of activities providing a careers development programme for adults. There was a view that the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks could be included as part of a pre-matrix assessment. This would obviously require further consideration.

Meeting the needs of adults

The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks have been constructed to incorporate key elements of the Gatsby Benchmarks but have additional elements which have tried to be more inclusive of the skills that adults need to function in life. As such two new Benchmarks were developed which focus on essential employment skills and essential digital skills. Both aim to offer a more functional approach in ensuring that clients develop a range of functional and soft skills such as teamwork, problem solving and self-management which they define as transferable skills that support successful engagement in employment and society. The essential digital skills Benchmark encourages providers to include access to technology and to improve learners' digital skills as part of their careers programme.

There are many strengths to the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks, particularly that they have been constructed by adult guidance providers to focus on the broad needs of adults within their sector. The structured nature of the learning that many are engaged in provides a vehicle to deliver a career development programme, the components of which are outlined within the Benchmarks. The Benchmarks also focus on building functional life skills that will support clients once they have transitioned to their next step.

The pilot organisations all used it to take a self-assessment which generally resulted in greater awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of existing provision,

opportunities to showcase and promote careers activities and identification of training needs and continuous professional development (CPD) for staff. The evaluation also discerned that a greater clarity around the professional elements of careers guidance would strengthen the framework. Not all organisations felt confident with their existing staffing to deliver Benchmark 7 (Bespoke Guidance). The term guidance is used very broadly here, which may be intentional, but may benefit from refinement and definition. This Benchmark focuses totally on what learners should expect, with an advisor trained to an appropriate level. This exemplifies that at times the Benchmarks represent an entitlement statement for what clients can expect, while at others it provides a set of guidelines for what organisations should provide. As such if the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks are going to be promoted more widely, work needs to be done to have greater clarity as to their primary focus. It is also worth further consideration as to future implementation. They have been used as an organisational tool, with most staff involved in the self-assessment.

There is an option where they can be considered as a network tool, whereby not all organisations meet all of the Benchmarks. Instead, they would identify their strengths and focus on providing those elements for networking. This would offer a range of benefits for organisations such as a reduction in duplication of provision, specialist practice would be recognised, and clients could be referred locally for dedicated support. This might be particularly useful in relation to Benchmark 7 (Bespoke Guidance) and might encourage more organisations to contribute to the network.

Next steps for the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks

The work undertaken by the team in Hartlepool to create the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks was highly valued by the stakeholders. It was agreed that they had created a useful tool, but equally importantly, they had initiated a pertinent conversation about the visibility, accessibility, and quality of adult guidance provision. The Benchmarks have been adopted across the Northeast and there is increasing interest in using them in other areas of England. The team at Hartlepool Borough Council feel they have taken them as far as they can. To move them to the next level would require a strategic and national approach. This was discussed with the stakeholders who agreed that several activities were required to further develop the Benchmarks: this would include refinement of the Benchmarks, strategic leadership and funding.

Refinement

The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks have provided a useful tool and resource to raise awareness and promote what needs to be in place to deliver a quality adult guidance service. As previously discussed, work needs to be done to clarify the language and terminology, identify the primary market and the activities of information, advice and guidance (IAG) for adults to be included, a review of the Post-19 Careers Self-

Evaluation Toolkit and the formulation of the questions and the responses, and an exploration into how the Toolkit could be made accessible online. It was also suggested that an entitlement statement for service users would be helpful to make them more user focused. Although the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks have many benefits, all eight Benchmarks may not be relevant to all organisations that provide IAG to adults and service providers could select the ones appropriate to what they deliver.

Strategic leadership

Positioning the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks for a national market requires an organisation that has national reach, can access funding, and has credibility within the sector to lead this initiative. The Gatsby Benchmarks for schools have become successful and impactful because they were initiated by a highly credible organisation, they were adopted into policy, they have an infrastructure which supports them and have The Careers & Enterprise Company who have responsibility for supporting schools and colleges to deliver careers education. A similar model would be required to embed adult guidance in the same way. Several organisations were mentioned who might be appropriate to take on this role and included, The Career Development Institute (CDI), The Gatsby Foundation, Careers England and Matrix (this report does not make recommendations about this). What was felt to be important was that whoever led the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks would need to be funded to do this. This would likely be part of a broader review of adult guidance, and requires the leading organisation to have ownership, sector support and be able to influence government policy.

There has to date been no resource or funding to support the creation and establishment of the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks. Hartlepool Borough Council and the team need to be congratulated on their achievement to date. They have created a strong basis for a set of resources to support adult guidance, but investment is required for further work. This would be used to establish a lead body for them, refine the Benchmarks, create resources including an online platform similar to Compass, pilot and test them and promote them to the sector. This is a simplified version of what would need to be in place to create them as a mainstream resource.

6. Conclusions

It can be agreed that the introduction of the Gatsby Benchmarks for schools and colleges in England has had a significant impact. Impact has included raising the profile of career guidance with senior leaders in schools and colleges, creating an infrastructure for the delivery of integrated careers education and influencing policy (Gatsby, 2023). The Benchmarks have since been adopted internationally in Hong Kong, Spain and Norway and redefined for primary education in the Northeast of England. They have been a success. It therefore makes sense to consider how the Benchmarks can have applicability for the delivery of adult guidance with the potential to connect primary and statutory education with adult provision. Many of the organisations in the pilot deliver programmes that do not recognise the binary division between young people and adults. Many of their clients were in their 20's and could be considered either young people or adults. This exemplifies the artificial barriers that exist between young people and adults. It also fails to acknowledge that need rather than age is what should be the primary consideration.

The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks were generally well received and were perceived to fill a gap for services to adults that provide careers guidance and support employability activities. They were developed to support organisations in meeting their Ofsted commitment and within the Northeast pilot, the Benchmarks have helped to raise the awareness of careers guidance provision within a range of community-based services for adults with staff and to focus on the progression needs of adult learners. This has helped to both increase their profile, develop staff knowledge and skills and place careers guidance as a central component of learning services for adults who experience multiple and complex life challenges. This is to be applauded.

Both the organisations who piloted the Benchmarks and the stakeholders whose views were canvassed all saw great benefits in using the Benchmarks. The challenges are less about the tools which could be adapted and refined, and more about the complexity of the adult guidance system in England. As identified it lacks regulation, structure, and systemic measurement of outcomes. Allied with this was a concern about the differentiation between careers guidance delivered as part of a 'comprehensive careers service' and employability support embedded within other support services. None of these issues are unsurmountable, but a considerable amount of work would be required to define who the user group was and how the application of the Benchmarks could be measured, monitored, and moderated. There was an appetite to explore further how the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks could support colleges in their careers delivery and complement the work already being undertaken with young people.

The alternative is that they continue to be used voluntarily at grassroots level, and there is much evidence that this is already happening. The challenge with this option

is that there is no leadership, coordination or organisation of the tools and resources. Essentially the status of the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks would be in question as there is no policy imperative or accountability to encourage and support application.

This has been a small piece of research which aimed to better understand how the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks were being used and whether there was an appetite to extend them more widely in England. In summary, whilst the Benchmarks are highly regarded, much more work needs to be done before the question can be answered about how they could be rolled out across England. Initially, more in-depth research is required, views need to be taken from employers, Jobcentre Plus, the Association of Colleges (AOC), Ofsted, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Combined Authorities, local authorities and other key stakeholders to establish wider consensus and a more informed opinion. Based on this research project, a set of recommendations are included to help consider the next steps for the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks.

7. Recommendations

The Benchmarks represent one approach that can help to professionalise and develop adult careers guidance provision for organisations whose primary purpose is not careers guidance. If the Benchmarks were to become a more universally available tool there are several recommendations that would help to enhance their quality and use. This list is only indicative, as our evaluation was small scale and a much broader exploration is required to examine the feasibility of adopting and progressing the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks.

Focus and leadership

- The adult guidance sector is both wieldy and unstructured. Work would need to be undertaken to define which organisations would most benefit from engaging with the Benchmarks. It is suggested that those who would benefit most would be organisations whose primary focus is not careers guidance i.e. local authorities, colleges, civil society. The adoption of the Benchmarks would provide standardised quality and opportunities to systemically measure outcomes and impact. They would also offer consistency and entitlement for all adult learners.
- An organisation with national reach would need to take the lead and be accountable for the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks. This would require funding and there was a lack of clarity as to where this might come from. The government was considered the obvious choice, but this would require a policy commitment to progress this. The potential the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks offer could inform the work on adult guidance currently being conducted by The Gatsby Foundation or linked to the Department for Education's (DfE) current exploration of an all-age careers system.
- The devolution agenda would offer a useful vehicle to connect the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks with Local Skills Improvement Plans, especially as all-age careers is becoming a regional focus in many Combined Authority areas. This could potentially offer a regional delivery mechanism which could align with the Careers Hubs and the National Careers Service.
- A system of referral could be coordinated where clients who need expert careers guidance can be signposted to organisations who have the expertise and qualified staff to deliver careers guidance. This would ensure that everyone's expertise is valued, utilised, and maximised, which would provide greater benefit to clients, rather than everyone trying to deliver everything. However, it is important to consider how to build capacity within the area, so that organisations are supported to offer careers guidance from qualified practitioners. It is also ill advised to rely solely on a small number of providers.

Refining the Post-19 Careers Benchmarks and tools

- The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks have been adapted from the original Gatsby Benchmarks for school and colleges. The adaptations work for adult clients and reflect the complexity that many face in their lives. The Post-19 Careers Benchmarks would benefit from greater clarity and definition, particularly in terms that are used i.e., careers service, stable careers programme. It would be helpful to provide a list of activities that a careers service would offer and what a stable careers programme might look like within an adult context. Allied with this would be a differentiation between activities that are careers guidance and those that might be defined as employability. Other areas which could also be considered would be career management skills and teaching people about career decision making. The focus on digital skills (Benchmark 8) although useful could be integrated into essential employment skills rather than having it as a separate Benchmark.
- There are many subjective terms used i.e. Benchmark 7's Bespoke Guidance, which assesses the effectiveness of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) observation process. The challenge is to ensure that organisations are interpreting the activities they provide in a similar way to ensure consistency and moderation.
- It could be considered that not all organisations deliver all the Benchmarks, for example, if organisations do not have professional qualified careers advisers or access to appropriate labour market information (LMI) they might refer to other organisations who are more expert in these areas.
- The Post-19 Careers Self-Evaluation Toolkit was welcomed as providing a structure for organisations to review their activities. This would need considerable enhancements to be universally applicable.
- The Self-Evaluation Toolkit should become an online tool similar to the Compass tool developed for schools and colleges. The resource would need to be portable and easily accessible to adult providers.
- The Self-Evaluation Toolkit would also benefit from a less binary approach i.e., yes/no, allowing for a greater sense of nuance and the development of careers provision in organisations. This would also support organisations to be able to map progress over time.
- Regional events such as a community of practice would help to share learning, expand networks, and encourage more organisations to get involved. This would enable organisations to keep up to date with local providers, resources and to be better informed when signposting and referring clients to other services.
- There should be an annual celebratory event, to demonstrate the impact of the Benchmarks, showcase best practice and recognise the enhancements to the provision of community-based adult careers guidance.

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