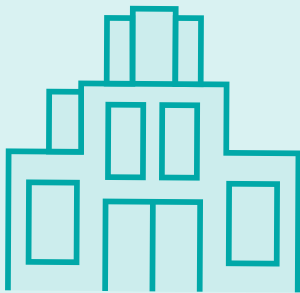


Jonathan Buzzeo, Chiara Manzoni, Georgie

D-J and Patel, R. (2022) Evaluation of the Careers &

Institute for Employment Studies

IES is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in public employment policy and HR management. It works closely with employers in all sectors, government departments, agencies, professional bodies and associations. IES is a



providers sought to identify a trusted adult in the young person's life to mediate on their behalf, help introduce the project and broker their involvement.

- Maintaining young peoples' engagement with the project throughout delivery was also crucial to successful implementation. For all the target groups, providers emphasised the need to be flexible and adaptable in their support model to ensure it was responsive to participant needs.
- Common adaptations cited included altering the timing and intensity of activities if participants struggled to absorb the content of career information sessions, for instance. Where projects were less practically orientated and focused more on information delivery, interactive elements were also utilised to help maintain participants' attention. This included team building exercises, quizzes, answering mock interview questions and role play.

Effective approaches to support

- In relation to recruiting employers to offer encounters for young people and workplace experiences, focussing on businesses who are 'disability confident' or have a strong CSR ethos was seen to work well.
- Employers vary in the time and resources they can commit and so offering a menu of options around how they can contribute to careers provision is likely to be more effective than requiring a minimum input or being highly prescriptive.
- Employers could be hesitant to support delivery despite recognising its social value, due to a lack of confidence and experience in engaging with young people with SEND. Where providers were able to offer free disability awareness training to employers, this was seen to be an effective means of overcoming this initial hesitancy and building confidence.
- Support for employers was also required from providers once they began to engage with young people with SEND to set expectations and provide reassurance about their approach. Where employers were engaged in mentorship, for instance, providers gave examples of what successful interactions would look like and what would represent progress for young people with varying levels of need.

The Fund evaluation identified a range of perceived outcomes that the project activities were successful in achieving. The emphasis on these outcomes differed by target group, reflecting their different starting points and needs.

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- The development of employability skills was another commonly reported outcome, particularly for projects supporting young people with SEND, which generally had a stronger employment related focus. Providers found that many young people could be unfamiliar with these concepts and terminology (e.g. 'skill', 'quality', 'strength', 'task', 'job-ready'). They noted that these ideas were better introduced and made explicit through practical activities and events, such as the group-based projects described previously, which gave young people a chance to apply these concepts to real world situations and make them more memorable.
- The projects delivered through the Fund were also seen to be successful in raising the career aspirations of the young people involved. Again, these outcomes were more commonly reported among projects supporting young people with SEND, due to their greater focus on planning later transitions. This outcome could be achieved through various activities: through myth busting exercises around roles available to young people with SEND; the presentation of role models with similar needs; via personal guidance interviews where providers highlighted how a young person's existing skills and interests could be pursued as a career; and workplace visits where the range of roles available in large organisations was highlighted.
- For projects focused on young people from GRT communities, these outcomes could be achieved via the group-based, practical activities they were undertaking with completing. Where projects involved elements of construction, for instance, some participants subsequently expressed an interest in working outdoors and using tools in their future employment.
- For projects supporting LAC, as noted, their focus was developing participants' self-confidence and encouraging them to express their views and opinions. The development of career aspirations as part of these projects was therefore not always explicit, but was seen as a secondary, later outcome of this foundational work. In one instance, however, it was observed that groups sessions facilitated by a care leaver who had progressed into further education and then employment was an effective means of highlighting to participants that these options were open to them.
- Finally, several projects were also seen to increase participants knowledge of potential careers, pathways to employment (such as education and training courses) and sources of information, advice and guidance (IAG). These reported outcomes were most often facilitated through personal guidance interviews and the development of a careers plan, which encouraged young people to research potential options. Providers also sought to provide reassurances as part of this process, such as explaining the differences in attending college compared to school for those with negative experiences of mainstream education.
- For GRT focused projects, delivering this information via pop-up events hosted within these communities was identified as a successful approach. Where providers attempted to arrange visits to local FE colleges or host a presentation at their own premises, they could have low levels of attendance. However, delivery within the community was seen as an effective means of overcoming these logistical difficulties and ensuring attendance.

- Both providers and employers spoke extensively about how their exposure to young people with SEND had positively challenged their presumptions regarding participants' skills, capabilities and behaviours.
- Several employers commented that they had now learned the importance of looking past a 'label' and treating each young person as an individual with their own set of needs and abilities.
- Some organisations stated that they hoped their increased confidence and knowledge in working with these groups would enable them to look at their recruitment processes and ensure they are inclusive in future.



The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) appointed the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) to evaluate the Careers & Enterprise Fund 2018 (CEF18) Part B. The Fund supports the delivery of the Government's careers strategy, launched in 2017. It was designed to test effective practice in delivering career guidance activities with disadvantaged groups. The career guidance activities that were tested were aligned with the Gatsby Foundation's 8 Good Career Guidance benchmarks.

The evaluation was designed to capture lessons about the implementation of the programme for the CEC as fund managers, and wider partners, stakeholders and grant recipients. It also aimed to assess the 'evidence of promise' of funded projects in raising aspirations for young people, increasing their awareness of different routes and developing career plans. Finally, the evaluation sought to understand which models of delivering career guidance were effective in contributing towards the achievement of these outcomes. This report summarises the key findings from the evaluation, how to engage young people and provide

The Fund aimed to test innovative approaches to understand how to most effectively support young people from disadvantaged groups. This included young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Looked After Children (LAC) / Care Leavers and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities.³ The funding was targeted at 11-18 year olds across the three identified disadvantaged groups. This included all Year 13 students or 19-25 year olds with a current education, health and care plan in place.

A total of £1.7 million was made available to fund new activity to support young people in these groups. The funding was targeted at projects that would:

- Develop innovative ways to reach and provide career guidance to disadvantaged young people
- Link with organisations that support these communities to provide tailored support, where appropriate, and increase the engagement of these communities

Link the that

Link the that

As part of the Fund, £200,000 was available specifically for activity that increased employer engagement and support for young people with SEND. This funding aimed to improve employer confidence in working with these groups and create more employer encounters and workplace experiences.⁴

The Fund was initially due to run from January 2019 to September 2020. However, this was later extended to March 2021 due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 20 providers were awarded funding to deliver innovative careers and enterprise programmes over this period. They encompassed a

variety of careers and workplace enterprise initiatives and 100+ young people were supported.

from these interviews were used to refine and finalise the Theory of Change, in collaboration with CEC and providers.

The second set of interviews focussed on experiences of deA vrv

1.2.1 Evaluation of careers programmes

In addition to these main evaluation activities, several semi-structured interviews were also completed from February-March 2021 with stakeholders involved in the delivery of the additional projects targeted at young people outside of the mainstream education system. In total, 12 interviews were completed with a mix of delivery staff, teachers and parents. Where possible, feedback was also sought from young people in receipt of support. Interviews were completed with 5 young people engaged in two of the four funded projects.

1.3 Limitations

The challenges of conducting fieldwork over the period March-September 2020 meant that fewer project stakeholders participated in the case study research than intended. Consequently, the evaluation drew mostly on information and evidence provided by project delivery staff themselves, with relatively limited triangulation of experiences and views from employers, teachers, young people, parents and carers.

Similar challenges were encountered when completing fieldwork as part of a

work-based learning programme for young people in the care system.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 discusses the intended activities and outcomes of the projects

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the number of young people that took part in the funded activities and their main demographic characteristics.

Chapter 4 summarises findings about initial set-up of the projects

Chapter 5 assesses providers' experiences of project delivery

Chapter 6 examines the recorded and perceived outcomes of the projects for young people and parents/carers

Chapter 7 presents points of learning from the evaluation for providing effective careers support for disadvantaged young people.

This chapter provides an overview of the funded projects in terms of: the delivery models and main

project activities provided to the intended to complete and the delivery of the said providers funded projects and providers to

2.1 Activities

The main activities delivered as part of the Fund, identified through the review of programme applications and first wave of provider interviews, are categorised below.

These activities were always delivered as part of a package, in combination with one another, and were not always mutually exclusive. For instance, employability skills could be learnt through the completion of enterprise activities, while careers information could be delivered via career talks by employers. Further, some providers ordered their activities in such a way to support a young person's linear development and progression through the project. For instance, work with an employer mentor could precede work-related activities. In another example, work-related activities could precede work with an employer mentor.

For instance, work-related activities could precede work with an employer mentor. In another example, work-related activities could precede work with an employer mentor.

The main short to medium term outcomes that providers hoped their project activities would contribute towards are outlined below. Short to medium term outcomes were loosely defined as the outcomes providers expected to achieve during and in the months immediately following young people’s engagement in the project. These are presented separately for each of the groups of stakeholders targeted by the Fund.

Table 2.2: Overview of funded projects

Provider organisation	Project description
Clifton Learning Partnership	Provides transition/employability skills development through outdoor learning to Roma young people
	Supported work experience for young people with SEND with personal job coach support
	Varied programme including careers fairs, pop up events, and networking events supporting GRT young people
	A borough wide joined up approach delivered in Ealing to support young people with SEND into work experience
	Employability skills and raising aspirations for 200 Roma young people and young people with SEND in Sheffield
	Working with LAC in the evenings/weekends/holidays to undertake leadership/social action projects
	Aims to target learners with communication difficulties through ‘Talk about Talk Secondary’ programme. The interventions help students to develop the skills they need to co-deliver a workshop about communication to an audience of local employers
	Bespoke mentoring programme for young people with SEND. Provides individual guidance, transition planning and support and close liaison with family and other relevant services

		'Journey to Work' programme which combines provides supported internships alongside a volunteering programme to boost life and work-related skills to young people with SEND
		2 x 12 week pathway programmes for young people aged 16-18 from Irish traveller and Roma communities
National Deaf Children's		Careers information workshops and guidance interviews for deaf young people alongside a training programme for local authorities to better support deaf young people
		Raising aspirations, 1-2-1 and peer support for LAC/Care Leavers in North Somerset
		5 part programme which includes training staff, an employability passport for young people with SEND in Years 9 - 11, a programme of work related learning and experience in hospitality for young people with SEND, careers fairs for students and families and a programme of work experience in the construction industry for young people with SEND
Pure Innovations Ltd		Sessions designed for small groups of young people with SEND, which will involve preparing a portfolio of learning, meeting with stakeholders like agencies, employers and previous SEND learners to share their experiences
		10 day programme across two terms to provide young people with SEND with employment routes into the Creative and Digital Industries workforce
		Providing career guidance to young people with SEND and LAC / Care Leavers via 1-2-1 and group sessions
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Table 2.3: Anticipated programme outcomes

Outcomes for young people and parents/carers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising career aspirations (exposure to workplaces/settings/vocations not previously considered) • Confidence building/developing self-efficacy • Better knowledge of potential careers, pathways to employment and sources of IAG • Motivation to do well in education/see value to career path • Individual career plan / clear idea of next steps after programme has ended • Developing agency/empowered to make decisions around learning and employment (identifying best career option)

The first set of outcomes for young people and their parents/carers are presented together. Many providers noted that for the groups of young people targeted by the Fund, parents/carers are key figures in deciding what activities their child/foster child will engage in and shaping and influencing their potential career path. They could be very protective of their child/foster child and uncomfortable with the idea of them engaging in an activity they are not familiar with or which takes them out of their local community. As a result, several of the funded projects recognised that a key part of their work was to simultaneously raise the career aspirations of parents/carers for their child/foster child and improve their knowledge of potential pathways to employment so that they could enable and support positive transitions into further education or training, for instance.

This first set of outcomes presented in Table 3 was also seen to be achieved in combination rather than in isolation from one another, with one outcome supporting the achievement of others. For instance, developing better knowledge of potential careers and pathways to employment was seen to support young people's motivation to do well in education by highlighting its role in gaining labour market entry and supporting the achievement of their career ambitions. Reflecting the aims of the Fund, many providers also specified that they wanted participants to leave their project **1 bD on**

2.3 Key features of project design

Within the first wave of interviews, providers were asked to specify how the packages of activities they were delivering had been designed in such a way as to produce the intended outcomes. When discussing how the target outcomes would be achieved for young people as well as their parents/carers, providers commonly spoke about how the project activities would attract a young person's engagement and interest. From this initial wave of conversations with providers, a provisional list of common principles for effective engagement across all of the target groups was developed. These were presented to providers at a workshop event in November 2019 where they were further refined following their feedback. The finalised list is presented and discussed in greater detail below. They specified that their projects would:

- Providers were intending to deliver a set of experiences or support that are currently missing or absent from a young person's life. For instance, in the case of the projects focused on LAC, some providers specified that they were attempting to provide careers advice that young people not in care may receive from parental figures. For young people with SEND, the providers were intending to give these groups early exposure to employers, workplaces and workplace experiences, which is typically absent at this point in their lives. Finally, for young people from GRT communities, the activity was viewed as giving these groups an insight and information into post-16 options, which they may not normally receive due to disrupted educational experiences.

- Be tailored to young people's circumstances, : Providers spoke about tailoring in different respects. At a practical level, this was to do with ensuring that young people had the means of engaging in the proposed activities. This involved considerations about their geographical spread and the need to travel to events where these were not facilitated by their school/college, and whether they had the necessary IT equipment if activities were partly delivered online. Some providers also discussed ensuring their projects brought in technologies or topics that participants also wanted to explore and where they also wanted to explore.

- Be responsive to young people's and other
: Providers

In terms of the gender of participants, as shown in Figure 5.2,



With regards to ethnicity, Figure 5.4 shows that just over half of participants identified as White British.⁷ The second and third largest ethnic minority groups that participated in projects were those from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller (17 per cent) or Asian (12 per cent) backgrounds.

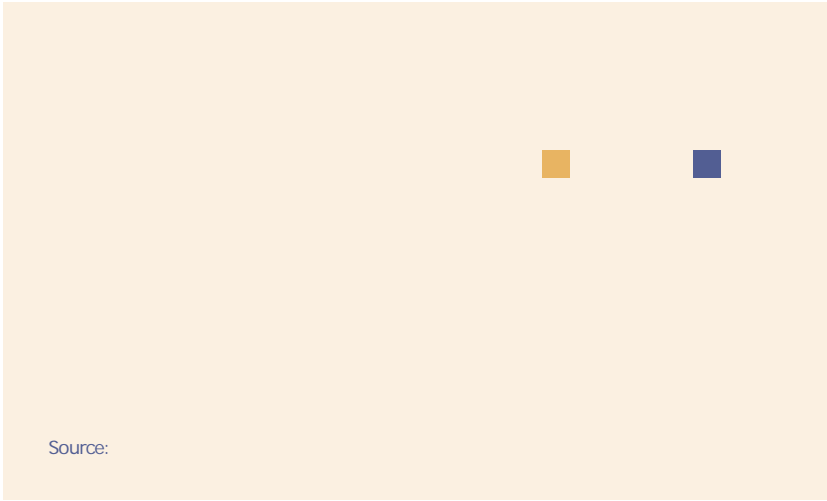
Figure 5.5 provides a breakdown of ethnicity by main target group. It shows that projects targeted at young people with SEND worked with slightly more ethnically diverse populations than those projects focused on LAC. Overall, 38 per cent of participants in SEND projects were from minority ethnic groups, compared with 23 per cent in LAC projects. It is also worth noting that some participants in projects targeted at GRT communities described their ethnic identity in a variety of ways, which did not always match this initial broad categorisation. Details with

10-15 were of a ver of e

In terms of age, the majority of project participants were between the ages of 10-15 years (63 per cent), while two-thirds were aged between 16-20 years.⁸ Only 5 per cent of participants were in the oldest age bracket of 21-25 years. Across the whole sample, participants' aver

age was 16.1 years.





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4.3 Resources and facilities

Many providers relied on their own venues, facilities and equipment to deliver their project. Resources developed by providers included information and marketing material like videos, slide presentations, music as well as tools for activities, which providers either adapted or created for the purpose of the project.

Many providers explained that they did not encounter any difficulties with this process. This was attributed to their prior experience of delivering similar projects and because they could work flexibly to adapt resources and delivery structures to make them suitable for the target group.

Others reported that the process of developing resources took longer than anticipated. This was the case, for example, for providers delivering in a new area for the first time. Providers reported challenges in developing their knowledge of what local provision was available to support the career guidance they would deliver to young people and their parents/carers. They explained that often information about the local support offer is inconsistent and collating information took longer than expected.

Where grant holders planned to use public facilities but had not secured an agreement with the local authority in advance, the process was reported to be lengthy. Clifton Learning Partnership for example explained that they had originally intended to improve the green space within their community and had planned to deliver the project in a public space. However, because they could not reach agreement with the local authority on which green spaces they could use, they had to adapt and change to deliver the project on their own premises instead.

4.4 Contracts and administration

While many grant holders were on track with delivery at the time of the first wave of interviews, some experienced delays during this initial set-up phase.

As well as the issues discussed above, additional challenges that were highlighted including delays in receiving a contract from CEC, which set out their funding allocation and agreed milestones. In a few cases, providers also reported that the terms also terms that agreed to receive the contract. Some agreed that the terms agreed to receive the contract. Some agreed that the terms agreed to receive the contract.

local GRT community

treat them as a distinct group as they do not want to be considered different. Additionally, in cases where young people are living in a children's home, they can lack support and encouragement that LAC with foster parents may receive to sign up to the project, which providers reported can help in highlighting the potential benefits.

Providers reported that LAC experienced anxiety and apprehension about participating in project activities, which could affect attendance even after they had agreed to take part. However, once they had established a trusting relationship with the staff, young people became more engaged. In some cases, engagement and commitment of foster carers was reported as an issue. This was associated with the timing of the activities which were often run during school holidays, which meant that foster parents had to balance family holidays and facilitate their child's attendance, which was not always practical or convenient.

Providers working with young people with SEND noted that in some cases there was a perception among young people that the project was not suitable for them or that they did not need the support. High levels of anxiety and the specificity of the young person's needs or disabilities were also reported as barriers to engagement. Anxiety could be a particular issue in settings where support was delivered 1-2-1 or in a group where participants did not know one another. Parents/carers accompanying young people to these activities was identified as one way of

encouraging young people to attend these activities. These young people may not see the value of these activities and may not be able to attend these activities. These young people may not see the value of these activities and may not be able to attend these activities.

and a handful of pupils who continued to attend school in person due to their home circumstances.

When asked specifically about recruitment strategies used to encourage employers to participate, many providers explained that they prepared an information pack to be shared with employers. The pack contained information on what the project involves, or in the case of young people with SEND, more detailed information about their specific needs as well as case studies and success stories. In some cases, providers working with GRT communities offered free cultural awareness training, using the occasion to present the project and gain employers' buy-in.

Regular communication with employers appeared to be a successful engagement practice. A provider working with young people with SEND explained that they called employers and explained the project exploring employers' interests and availability. The discussion allowed them to explain the different needs the young people had and discuss how these could be accommodated in the workplace.

The recruitment of employers was driven and to some extent constrained by the local delivery context. One provider working with LAC explained that because participants were widely spread across London, they worked with national employers to support participants locally as they have a presence in most parts of the city.

When asked about messages used to encourage employers' participation, many interviewees explained that they used a flexible approach. Key messages included supporting the wider community, supporting the needs of young people and also reaching out to new groups of people for the industry. Providers working with young people with SEND also mentioned reassuring employers that they do not necessarily have to have experience of working with these groups.

Motivations to take part

When asked about employers' motivations for taking part in the project, providers explained that many were driven by their social mission and by the willingness to give disadvantaged young people a chance to succeed.

Employers wanting to increase the diversity of their workforce diversity to enhance chances of success 1 n their to

Barriers to participation

Reasons given by providers for employers not engaging or withdrawing from the project later on were:

- Lack of time and capacity due to being a small business
- Concerns around health and safety, particularly when asked to work with younger children
- A view that they did not have suitable premises to enable participation
- Rigid recruitment processes that prohibited recruiting people without certain qualifications where providers were seeking apprenticeship or traineeship opportunities

In a few cases, providers noted that while many employers could not provide the adequate resources to offer a workplace experience, they were keen to contribute in some other way, such as visiting a school or college to give a talk.

4.5.3 Recruiting and engaging with schools/

While many providers had well-established links with schools and colleges and a history of working with them on various projects, others had to build new links by approaching schools and explaining the offer and exploring interests.

The criteria used to select schools varied between providers. Some selected schools in more deprived areas that were more in need of support with their work experience provision. In other cases priority was given to: the schools' capacity to deliver the tasks (where some contribution from educators was required); flexibility in the timetable which enabled them to take students out of lessons for the purpose of the project; willingness to accommodate researchers coming in to deliver testing where providers had their own evaluation processes in place and having existing links with employers.

To promote their projects to educational settings, providers attended different events organised by schools and colleges. In one case a provider explained that they approached special schools and put forward a targeted, bespoke programme, which would best meet the needs of their pupils.

When asked about the motivations of schools to take part in the project, providers explained that because schools all have a statutory duty to provide careers advice and guidance to pupils, the offer of additional funded provision with innovative elements, was recognised as beneficial by all schools. Providers reported that schools saw the bD saw and elements, the

some cases, due to health and wellbeing issues, some students struggled to engage for a full working day and extra support was provided.

- A few providers realised that due to the high needs of participants, extra support was needed on a 1-2-1 basis, especially when conducting safety-critical tasks. Providers reported that activities have become more inclusive as a result and participants benefitted more from the sessions by being able to effectively engage with them.
- Changes were made to the types of activities on offer to avoid duplication. One provider working with GRT youè on o on thethe (0101111111 theableGRoao o theable able able

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1-2-1 interactions. Similarly, other providers were able to adapt in situations in which young people felt unable to engage in group activities due to high levels of social anxiety, instead of offering them more hours of 1-2-1 support, ensuring they received the same amount of support as those participating in group activities.

For young people with SEND, some providers also

which young people related to and which were relevant to their specific needs. This included, for example, finding opportunities relevant to the young person's interests and within organisations that had experience of working with young people with similar needs. In relation to work experience placements, providers placed significant emphasis on pre-placement work with young people, and it was considered key to developing young people's understanding of aspects such as time management and employer expectations.

Some providers noted the success of the learning itself, based on approaches and strategies used. One provider focused on the use of experiential, strength-based learning in the delivery of a series of enterprise activities. They considered this to be crucial in motivating young people to participate, by highlighting and building on their latent skills.

Many providers noted the success of various aspects of employer support they were able to offer, namely of support and

employer toolkits

Providers of erected

managed mentors

The young people said '... enjoyed activities' that were a bit different to what they would do in '... classroom as opposed to just listening to a presentation, such as having '... opportunities to respond to mock '... exercises. Educators said '... recommend to facilitators not to stand and talk for too long but to keep it short, visual and interactive. Also suggest role play as '... young people always respond well to that. Another thing that works is humour and '... of employers was interviewed and '... in part in '... of the event '... said '... more interactive elements to '... second event after '... well '... young people responded to it in '... presentations from '... employers.

highlighted the importance of communicating clearly the nature of the activity, its purpose as well as the potential outcomes from taking part to support effective engagement. One example was provided of explaining to the young people that some activities were designed so they could be part of a celebration event at the end of the programme, where skills would be demonstrated to friends and family. Other providers noted the importance of identifying opportunities

Providers were asked to identify the elements of their approach that had been most successful over the course of project delivery. Across all projects, a common theme that arose was providers' ability to offer flexible, responsive and personalised packages of support to project participants.

Feedback from providers indicated that, in line with the Theory of Change, a key success factor in the delivery of projects for young people with SEND had been their ability to be flexible and provide individualised support. This enabled them to modify aspects of delivery and adapt to participants' support needs. Some providers responded to behavioural issues which emerged during delivery – for instance, in the delivery of careers talks – by ensuring activities were interactive and held participants' attention.

One provider was proactive in using interactive resources and also had alternatives planned in case activities did not go as planned. Where activities were delivered by school staff rather than provider staff, schools were encouraged to offer flexibility in the structure and content of sessions to ensure sufficient adaptation to meet young people's needs. For example, in one instance, Teaching Assistants who delivered group workshops were encouraged to cut content if a young person was feeling overwhelmed with the amount of information being provided.

Regularity of sessions and activities was also flexible. Providers personalised the delivery model to every individual, ensuring the length and frequency of sessions was manageable from participants' perspective. Providers also adapted the mode of delivery where appropriate. A few noted the success of delivering group sessions rather than 1-2-1 sessions. It was felt that group sessions could help reduce the anxiety of some participants who felt pressured in

Across all projects the recruitment and engagement of key stakeholders were often highlighted as the main challenges providers faced during delivery. In the case of the SEND projects, engaging employers and making sure they met their agreed commitments was a consistent challenge. For GRT and LAC projects, maintaining the engagement of young people themselves was more of a difficulty. In general, SEND projects struggled less with this aspect as they often recruited participants via intermediaries such as schools and colleges.

School and parent/carer engagement

Issues surrounding the continued engagement of schools and parents/carers have also occurred. Some providers, for instance, had experiences of schools dropping out of employer-facing activities at short notice, which in turn damaged relationships with employers as they had committed time and resources to the activities. These incidences highlighted the difficulties faced by schools in organising external activities within a busy school schedule, particularly when Ofsted inspections are upcoming. Several providers also commented on staff turnover within partner schools, which could delay the start of project activities while the transfer of responsibilities to colleagues was arranged.

Providers also noted delays in gaining consent forms from parents/carers of young people and in communicating the purpose and importance of these documents. These difficulties were accentuated where providers were not in direct contact with parents/carers and were in contact via schools.

Where providers experienced few issues with school/college engagement, this was again attributed to the

extensiveness of their network and the strength of their pre-existing relationships with these institutions having worked with them to deliver careers education provision in the past. This enabled providers to gain buy-in for the project more easily from educational institutions, and quickly replace schools and participants where they had to withdraw unexpectedly from the project.

Providers delivering projects to young people with SEND identified several challenges over the course of their projects. These mainly centred on how to ensure that the project was accessible to all participants and how best to engage employers in project delivery.

In line with the Theory of Change, providers reported that they were responsive to requirements of individual participants and quick to adapt delivery to ensure the project was accessible to their needs. For example, one provider made changes in response to baseline data and participant self-assessments which indicated that they did not feel they were building teamwork skills as a result of the project, despite it including team-based exercises and group work. After speaking with participants, the provider realised students were not always aware of what teamwork constituted and so felt unable to pinpoint when they were learning particular skills. As a result, the project was altered to include activities overtly teaching the concept of teamwork and encouraging its practice.

Similarly, another case study provider (Dynamic Training) found it challenging to gather feedback from participants. Many of the young people engaged struggled with literacy and so it was difficult to obtain written feedback. Instead, the project manager captured verbal feedback through videoing participants and asking for feedback from participants through

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environment when assigning an individual requiring wheelchair access for work experience there. They adapted the physical environment, moving furniture and re-arranging the shop floor, ensuring the kitchen was accessible and facilities could be used by the participant.

However, providers could find it particularly challenging to be adaptive to young people's needs and careers

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Another issue encountered in terms

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r also was provided for employers to be able to see the content of the videos and to be able to provide feedback on the content of the videos.

awareness training for employers. For example, one provider was planning to offer short videos made by employees in the workplace. The provider also intended to provide 1-2-1 personal guidance interviews for young people. Young people would be provided with a worksheet to complete after watching the video, encouraging them to reflect on what they had learnt. It was hoped that this would help to still provide a degree of personalisation. The provider noted they were still developing ideas about how they could make participants' experience of watching these videos more interactive, such as setting them challenges to complete. They also intended to provide virtual tours of workplaces, 1-2-1 personal guidance interviews for participants.

Providers delivering programmes aimed at young people from GRT communities also encountered significant issues with engaging participants as a result of Covid-19. Initially, activities and events planned by providers were cancelled due to the nationwide lockdown. Some providers decided to stop or delay delivery at that point, while others sought to move provision online.

Providers continuing with online delivery noted that they experienced a significant decline in levels of engagement from the community. This was partly attributed to a lack of access to IT equipment in their home environments, which was particularly acute during the school closures. However, some young people continued to engage, and providers reported that they were able to achieve some of the initial outputs planned as part of the project. This was achieved by offering alternatives to the work experience, such as virtual employer talks explaining the workplace and the roles within the organisation.

Providers who stopped delivery completely, highlighted issues with participant recruitment and engagement. They stated that local GRT communities had become more apprehensive about their children engaging with any external providers or services due to Covid-19 risks. Some providers also noted that sections of these communities had moved out of the area in search of better employment opportunities as their income levels had been adversely affected by the pandemic.

Providers delivering projects for LAC, which were continuing with delivery at the time of the nationwide lockdown, needed to translate the programme into an online format. Initially, some providers encountered resistance from carers to online engagement which delayed the delivery of the project. Over time however, it was reported that more carers had become accustomed to online delivery and their reluctance to participate had diminished.

The additional funded projects aimed at young people outside of mainstream provision were designed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing social distancing restrictions. As a result, providers either designed the entire project to be delivered online, or in most cases were delivering the project through local intermediaries who would be able to have face-to-face engagement with participants. However, with the onset of the third wave of Covid-19 infections and subsequent national lockdown in January 2021, many providers' original plans were disrupted with some having to temporarily change their mode of delivery to accommodate the stay at home order.

In most cases, providers looked to deliver sessions that were originally designed to take place face-to-face over video conferencing software. The activities that were due to take place included 1-2-1 careers guidance interviews as well as group discussions of work produced following online tutorials (e.g. in digital skills). As noted, this had mixed success, and some young people did not want to join and contribute to an online meeting, particularly if they had this type of young people in their role to deliver it.

in st II being engaging for participants while giving them the opportunity to practice the same skills as previously.

A few providers were unable to adapt their delivery model to an online mode. This was attributed to some pupils not having the necessary equipment to engage in online, interactive sessions (i.e. a working camera and a microphone for online sessions).

The following chapter presents quantitative data on outcomes achieved by the Fund. It draws on the analysis of management information compiled by providers, and sets out rates of completion for the main target groups and whether they left the project with a career plan or goal in mind.

It also presents qualitative findings on the perceived outcomes of project activity on young people, parents/carers and employers, from the perspective of providers as well as the stakeholders themselves. The full range of expected outcomes for each of these groups is set out in Table 3.

This chapter also considers the contextual factors that providers and other stakeholders feel have affected the outcomes their projects were able to achieve; any additional delivery costs their projects incurred to support the achievement of the target outcomes; providers' reflections on what adaptations would be needed for future delivery to enhance their project's effectiveness; as well as their plans for sustaining the project and its associated outcomes beyond the Careers & Enterprise funding period.

6.1.1 Rates of completion and outcomes

The MI data included some indication of rates of completion as well as how many young people indicated

6.2 Perceived outcomes for young people and parents/carers

6.2.1 SEND

According to providers, the projects targeted at young people with SEND achieved the full range of intended outcomes set out in the Theory of Change. However, individual projects had different areas of emphasis depending on the level of need among the target population and the nature of the activities undertaken with them.

Greater agency/independence

A few projects where young people were supported more extensively on a 1-2-1 basis spoke about how they had encouraged participants, over the course of the project, to take on a greater degree of agency with regards to their search for further education options or employment. Some providers spoke of how this was achieved by setting clear limits of what work they were prepared to do in terms of researching potential options and making applications. They would discuss with the young person, for instance, what

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According to providers, these two approaches in combination encouraged young people to engage, speak up and gain confidence in their peer interactions as their contributions were positively received. In this sense, young people's experiences on the project were distinct from their normal day-to-day experiences in so far as they felt that they were listened to and that their views were valued. In one case a provider noted that a participant with ASD who had been selectively mute while in school started communicating with others again as a result of these experiences.

A caveat to the use of this approach was that it was less successful with young people who had significant behavioural problems. One provider noted that one of the groups they engaged in the project were pupils from a Pupil Referral Unit. In this instance, participants found collaboration challenging and could not agree on a shared focus for the enterprise project.

Several SEND 2 projects also reported improvements in participants' confidence (evidenced through improvements in their communication skills) via direct positive encounters with employers and exposure to workplaces. Providers attributed these changes to young people being taken out of their 'sheltered' everyday schedule, which provided a greater sense of independence, and being spoken to and valued as an adult in their interactions with employers.

One provider noted that young people in their group were used to being discriminated against in the workplace.

labour market gained more from these experiences.

This was linked to levels of maturity as well as the t theTf to 1 minq

In terms of work placements, providers noted similar effects with young people learning more about particular occupations and the types of roles that businesses support. These were seen to be most beneficial when they were tailored to a young person's pre-existing interests. Providers were able to more easily facilitate this where they had developed extensive networks with a broad range of employers across different sectors. In the case of these projects, work placements were seen to help extend and refine

young person's pre-existing aspirations by providing a more comprehensive view of what certain occupations entail and helping to clarify what aspects of the role they do and do not enjoy.

Better knowledge of potential careers, pathways to

Building on the above work, providers described delivering personal guidance interviews or mentoring

National Deaf Children's Society

The careers advisers would contact participant's Sensory Support Worker (SSW) prior to the interview to check whether there were any communication needs they should be aware of. The interviews themselves would last between 45-50 minutes. They would begin by contextualising the discussion: explaining to the young person that it was part of the same support package as the workshop and asking whether they recalled being part of this session.

The individual interviews would cover where the participant is now (predicted grades for GCSEs, what subjects they enjoy, what work experience they are planning to get). They would then look forward to the participant's future education and consider what options would be appropriate, what they should consider in making these choices, and where they should go for further information on funding and what these courses/placements would entail. These choices would be tied to participant's career aspirations. The advisers noted that all of

the young people could volunteer ideas on these, but in some cases they needed to do a bit more research on what they needed to do to get a job in this area and develop a better understanding of what this pathway would entail.

They would finish the interview by drawing up a short careers action plan of what they agreed the participant and adviser would do following the meeting and moving forward in helping to consider post-16 options. The adviser would generally email this to the participant following the meeting with supporting information to assist with their research of further education and careers options. So they did not overwhelm the participant with information, they also have a general signposting section at the bottom of the action plan that refers participants to further support and resources that will support them to think about their further choices when they are ready.

The adviser would also include their contact details and encourage the participant to get in touch if they had any further questions or required more ad-hoc advice around what was discussed.

sessions to help develop participants' aspirations into an agreed careers plan. This typically set out next steps in terms of researching the entry criteria for specific roles and considering potential post-16 options, which would help in fulfilling these requirements.

Some providers were able to point to the direct impacts of this work, such as college enrolments or securing apprenticeship placements for participants. An example of the structure of these personal guidance interviews was provided by the NDCS case study.

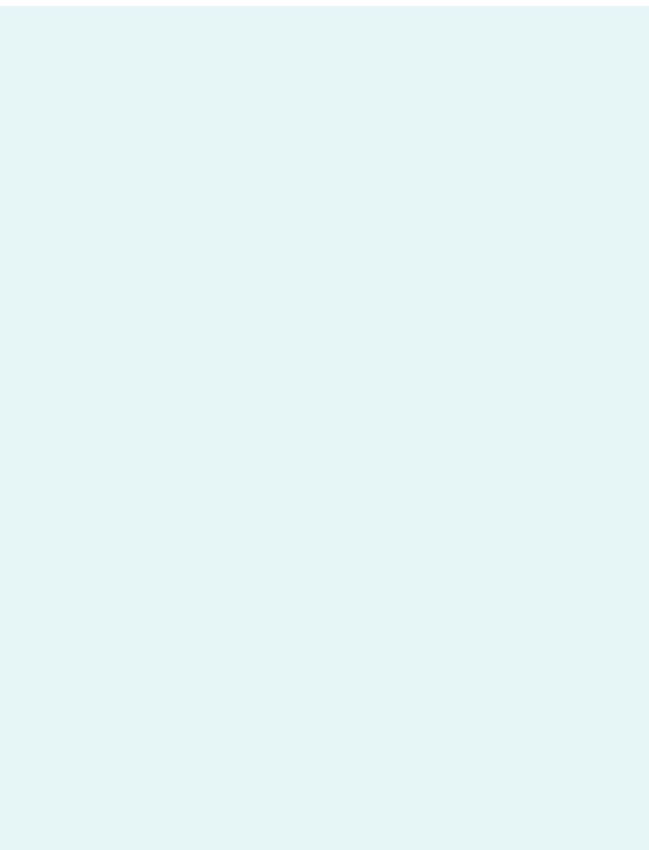
These interviews were typically delivered 4-6 weeks after the careers information workshops:

Some young people who had negative experiences of mainstream education fed back that in their approach careers advisers also tried to reassure participants about what it would be like to undertake further education and training. For instance, one young person stated that their adviser made clear the differences between attending a Further Education College and school: they would need to attend for fewer days, were able to wear their own clothes and there would be a more relaxed relationship with staff.

6.2.2 GRT

Providers and other stakeholders involved in the projects targeting GRT communities described achieving a similarA similar

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Better knowledge of potential careers, pathways to

A few providers reported that they were able to broaden participants awareness of potential careers and pathways to employment through their projects. In the case of one provider, they arranged pop-up events at an Irish traveller site, which included talks by local colleges and Universities as well as employers.

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One example of this was

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Changes in how parents/carers communicate with

One outcome noted as part of the Amaze case study that did not explicitly feature as part of the Theory of Change was changes in how parents broached the subject of careers with their child. One parent who was interviewed stated that as their child had ASD and high-levels of anxiety, they also attended all of the 1-2-1 personal guidance sessions Amaze had arranged for them. They observed how Amaze staff spoke with and engaged with their child, which they tried to replicate so that they could have constructive conversations about their next steps in terms of education and training.

The parent noted how Amaze staff spoke with their child 'on a level'; they have tried to model that style of interaction when discussing similar topics with them. They commented that they noted that they usually spoke to their child as a mother/parent rather than as a professional.

6.3 Perceived outcomes for

Several outcomes were observed for employers where these groups were engaged in project delivery. They were most prominent among the SEND 2 projects that overall had achieved a greater level of employer engagement. The outcomes centred on two main areas: changes in perceptions of the target groups and changes in practices.

Change in perceptions of target group

Both providers and employers spoke extensively about how their exposure to young people with SEND had significantly challenged their assumptions regarding participants' skills, capabilities and behaviours as well as levels of need in a positive way. This was particularly evident for the SEND 2 projects, where employers admitted that they had preconceptions about how certain disabilities would manifest in their encounters with young people.

Several providers and employers noted that after having met project participants, they were now aware that these assumptions were incorrect and that all disabilities encompass a broad spectrum of conditions. As a result, several employers commented that they learned the importance of looking past a 'label' and treating each young person as an individual with their own set of needs and abilities.

Feedback from employers involved in Dynamic Training's SEND 2 project, which involved disability awareness training, summarised these points well.



employers could meet these needs in the workplace were reportedly very positive about their experience. They fed back that they intended to make some of the suggested accommodations, such as giving young people more time to provide a response. Employers involved in other projects that included SEND awareness training and the provision of work placements for young people reported similar gains based on their experience:

Other employers who had been involved in the delivery of careers talks, for instance, also stated that the experience of

Other people for the
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Changes in practices of AE the for

In several cases, providers and employers highlighted how the outcomes achieved above had contributed towards changes in employer practices. These were mainly focused on how employers communicate with young people with SEND.

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Employers who had attended workshops delivered by young people with speech, language and communication needs, which were focused on how

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6.4 Facilitators and inhibitors of

Providers were asked to identify and discuss the broader contextual factors that had affected the outcomes their projects were able to achieve. In their answers, providers focused in many cases on the local labour market in which they were operating as well as their experiences of working with employers as part of these projects. Employers interviewed as part of the case studies also fed back on where they felt the outcomes they were able to achieve were inhibited or

6.5 Additional delivery costs

Providers were asked to consider whether there had been any additional delivery costs that they had not initially budgeted for as part of their funding allocations. This question was asked to better understand the true costs of delivery in relation to each project. Providers' responses were varied. Some of the additional costs cited stemmed from issues encountered over the course of delivery, while others were put down to oversights when putting together the original budget. The range of provider responses is detailed below:

- Some providers, particularly those engaged in GRT and LAC projects, noted that they spent more time than anticipated in generating referrals and/or securing agreement from families for

their child to participate. In the case of GRT projects, a few providers noted that parents had safeguarding concerns around their child engaging in any external activity. As a result, a lot of staff time went into building relationships of trust with parents and providing assurances that their child would be looked after.

- Several providers noted that they did not budget for staff travel time and expenses associated with project delivery. These costs were particularly acute where delivery is conducted in rural areas.



personal guidance interviews to participants and their parents.

- [redacted] : A few providers commented that the staff time required to conduct risks assessments for workplace visits and its associated costs were higher than they initially anticipated.
- [redacted] A few providers noted that they did not budget for the quarterly reporting requirements that have been required as a condition of receiving funding. They stated that these requirements have changed over the course of the project, with additional data/information being requested. Providers commented that had they been aware of the extent of these requirements prior to submitting their proposal, they would have increased the size of their budget to take account of these costs. [redacted] commented had size r [redacted] ts

as some had already moved into employment. Targeting younger Roma participants who are still in mainstream education was therefore suggested as a more effective means of providing support at a point where there is an apparent need: for instance, to help support their academic achievement.

- Several providers noted that some of the young people they were working with required more intensive models of support to produce the expected outcomes. Providers delivering projects for LAC discussed extending the length of any future intervention to enable more progress for this group. In the first instance, many LAC need support with their social and emotional development before they are ready to consider possible transitions. In this way, some providers said it would be helpful to introduce a more therapeutic element of support for LAC to support their overall wellbeing, which in the long-term could lead to more positive outcomes. Other providers delivering 1-2-1 support sessions as part SEND projects commented that their funded delivery model was not sufficient to support those with more complex needs. They noted that these young people needed a more intensive, 5-day model of support structured, for instance, around outdoor learning activities, which can help build their self-confidence as well as other latent skills.
- recall in online delivery: Providers that moved to online delivery noted that participants' recollection of what was covered in previous sessions could be poor. This made them question whether all the information participants received would be available to them when they needed it in future. To help address this issue, one provider noted that if they were to run these sessions again, they intended to host an additional workshop 4 weeks after the main intervention was complete. This 'work readiness' workshop would give participants a chance put into

practice what they have learnt by working through practical scenarios (such as mock interviews) and help reinforce their learning.

- **Extend support beyond young people's transitions:** Some providers noted that they were not able to sustain all of the outcomes they were able to achieve as they had no funding to continue to support participants when they moved into further education, training or employment. The case study with Amaze highlighted this issue in the context of their project:



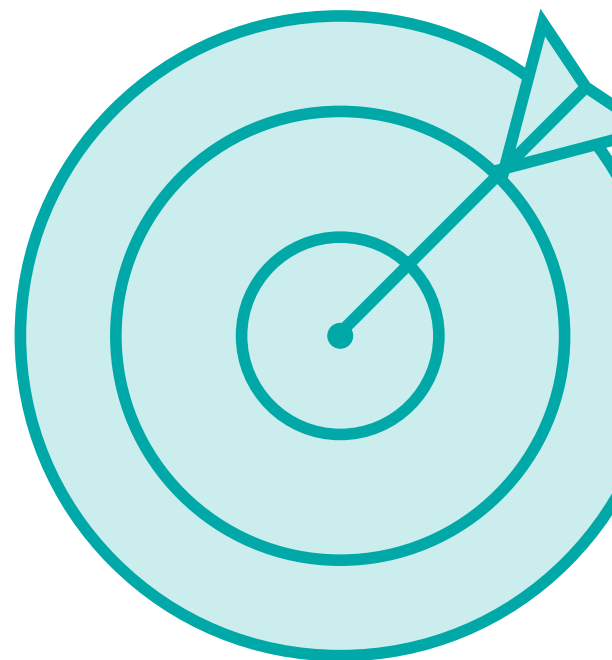
Other SEND providers who had secured additional funding to provide personalised guidance interviews commented that they expected their work from September onwards to initially be quite reactive. They anticipated that there would be some young people for whom they had secured a positive outcome (such as enrolling at a local college) who they would need to support to find an alternative option. Due to Covid-19, the learning or work environment they expected to be entering may need to change significantly. At the time of the research, the provider commented that information was also not initially forthcoming on what changes would need to be implemented in these settings due to general uncertainty about how spread of the virus would develop and what measures it was feasible to put in place to support students/employees returning. For young people with conditions such as ASD, who the provider noted generally needed a sense of routine and did not deal well with uncertainty, this experience could be enormously disruptive and cause them to drop-out of college or leave their place of work.

A few providers meanwhile had incorporated sustainability into their project delivery by developing resources and toolkits that could be used by local stakeholders to deliver future iterations of the project. In the case of NDCS, the provider had developed a toolkit that could be used by Sensory Support Workers in local authorities. While the provider had the resource required to promote this toolkit beyond the Careers & Enterprise funding period, they commented however that the ability of local authority staff to engage with this material and deliver the project locally was potentially challenging given the limited finances of local government.

Several providers working directly with schools noted that they hoped these institutions would continue to deliver the project to future cohorts of students. Some providers had trained local specialists, such as speech and language therapists, to facilitate future project delivery with the schools they work with. This would

mean that schools did not have to buy-in any additional services. Other projects had trained teachers to deliver the project to pupils, with support and assistance from the provider team. They hoped this would provide schools with the skills and confidence to deliver the project again under their own volition, again without needing to secure the services of an external provider.

Where providers had actively brokered relationships between schools/colleges and employers as part of the project - for instance, via careers talks and events as well as employer mentoring - they hoped these relationships would be sustained, and educational institutions could invite the same employers to repeat these activities in subsequent years.



7.1 Initial set up

- The Fund selection and grant award process was generally successful in identifying providers with appropriate previous experience of working with the target groups. Providers demonstrated the ability to draw on this prior experience to design packages of support for young people. This suggests similar selection criteria could be used in future funding programmes.
- Grant-funded projects often experience challenges recruiting staff to posts with short-term contracts. The difficulties appear to be exacerbated when staff with specialist skills and experience in working with particular disadvantaged groups are required. Future funding programmes focussed on disadvantaged young people should consider this when deciding on the duration of projects. If timeframes cannot be extended, priority should be given to providers with staff already in post.
- Strong partnership working between a range of stakeholders is required to provide effective careers information, advice and guidance. Where grant holders do not have existing relationships with partner organisations, it can take time to build these links. This can delay providers' ability to start delivering their projects and working directly with young people. Consequently, at the point of commissioning, it is useful to be clear about whether one of the aims of the funding is to stimulate new partnerships or whether the priority is immediate delivery of careers provision. If the latter, then providers with existing partnerships should be prioritised.

- Providers receiving funding used the initial stages of projects to adapt their delivery models and planned activities based on early experiences and feedback. This enabled them to tailor and flex project activities to better meet the needs of young people for the remainder of project delivery. The capability to work in this responsive, agile manner could usefully inform future selection and monitoring of funded providers.
- In relation to recruiting employers to offer encounters with the world of work, including work experience specifically for young people with SEND, focussing on those who are 'disability confident' businesses or have a strong CSR ethos works well.
- Employers vary in the time and resources they can commit and so offering a menu of options around how they can contribute to careers provision is likely to be more effective than requiring a minimum input or being highly prescriptive.
- Employers need to be given detailed information to raise awareness, enable informed choice and provide reassurances. The Fund providers reported that there was an appetite among many employers to support disadvantaged young people but that employers also felt ill-informed about their needs and backgrounds. This could act as a barrier to them contributing to careers provision and so information and training was required to overcome this.
- Messages focused on contributing to the local community, helping young people, widening the talent pool from which they recruit and opportunities to 'try out' a candidate before offering an apprenticeship, can be persuasive and useful in engaging employers in activities for disadvantaged young people.

7.4 Working effectively with

- Pressures within the school context may affect a school's ability to lead and facilitate employer encounters. When support is focussed on disadvantaged young people, there may be additional steps that need to be taken by schools too, which can be an extra demand on resources and time. To help overcome this, a clear Memorandum of Understanding stating the roles and responsibilities of all parties (employers, schools and providers) can help to secure commitment and ensure senior leaders are willing to help create the time required for effective participation.



