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London Careers Programme

**Careers Hubs and
Careers Clusters
Evaluation Report
quantitative and
qualitative
data analysis**

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Your insights and ideas for action will play a vital role in shaping the London Careers Programme and enhancing careers education, information, and advice policies and practices (CEIAG) across London—both now and in the future.

dmh associates background

In 2008, Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE established dmh associates to encourage collaboration and fresh thinking in careers, education and skills policy, research and practice. The outcomes from the organisation's work are designed to inform and influence policies, research and practice in the UK, Europe and internationally.

Our expertise includes consultancy, evaluation, evidence and impact assessment, literature reviews, qualitative and quantitative research, digital and labour market intelligence / information (LMI). We provide a full range of activities each tailored to meet specific organisational or individual needs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This evaluation undertaken by dmh associates, on behalf of the Greater London Authority (GLA), is designed to assess London's Careers Programme focusing on the ongoing London Careers Hubs, as well as the completed European Social Fund (ESF) funded former Careers Clusters. It aims to determine whether the original objectives were met and provide insights into careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in schools and colleges for students in compulsory education across London. The evaluation began in June 2024 and was completed in February 2025.

The Careers Clusters and Careers Hubs originated from the London Careers Programme, which was co-developed by the GLA with national, regional, and local partners. The programme aimed to address key priorities in the London Economic Action Partnership's European Structural Investment Fund strategy, the Mayor's Skills for Londoners Strategy, and other Mayoral priorities. The programme and resources' core aim is to enhance CEIAG across London's secondary schools, special schools, alternative provision settings, and post-16 institutions, specifically targeting institutions with a high proportion of students in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and addressing inequalities and disparities of outcomes for vulnerable groups.

Focus

- To assess the effectiveness of the four London Careers Hubs in achieving their goals, including the impact of various programme elements and key lessons learned.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of ten former Careers Clusters, including the benefits of different programme elements and how they complemented the Hubs.
- To gain a better understanding of careers provision in education institutions delivering to those in compulsory secondary education in London.

Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative research. Evidence was gathered through desk research, interviews and group discussions with key stakeholders, two online surveys, and a Call for Evidence. Analysis was also conducted using information provided by The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC).¹

The London Careers Programme

London's education and employment landscape is diverse and dynamic, reflecting its status as a global city. In 2016, prior to the London Careers Programme, the Mayor of London established the *London Enterprise Adviser Network* (LEAN). From July 2020 to September 2023, ten *Careers Clusters* delivered pilot projects working with schools, students, employers and sectoral bodies. Since September 2021, four area-based London *Careers Hubs* replaced the LEAN and have provided an enhanced level of *strategic CEIAG support* to London's secondary schools, colleges, employers, sectoral and other professional bodies. The Hubs are co-funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Department for Education (DfE) through The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) via an annual licence agreement (Strand 1). Additional workplace experience activities were made possible through GLA European Social Fund (ESF) matched funding (Strand 2), supporting Gatsby Benchmark 5 (encounters with employers and employees) and Benchmark 6 (experiences of workplaces). The Hubs do not directly engage with students except within Strand 2. The Careers Clusters and the Careers Hubs have a priority focus to support engagement of small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in supporting activities with education institutions.

The programme received a total investment of circa £15.4m between 2019 and 2023. The funding sources for Careers Clusters (July 2020 – September 2023) came from ESF. With the conclusion of ESF funding, the Cluster projects ceased in September 2023. The strategic support and delivery of innovative project activity has been incorporated into the work of the Careers Hubs. In April 2024 the GLA developed a Work Experience (WEX) programme targeted at young people who are at risk of being not in education, employment and/or training (NEET), funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) from April 2024 to March 2025 – which is outside the scope of this evaluation. Increasing young people’s exposure to and experiences of the world of work remains a high priority for the GLA and its partners.

Key findings

The Hubs with a *strategic* focus were introduced in 2021, four years after the Department for Education's first wave of Hubs launched by The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) in 2018. While a delayed start gave the London Hubs less time to establish structures and build partnerships, significant progress and impactful achievements have been made.

“Given the ongoing changes to the labour market since 2021, we need to invest more, not less. The lack of suitable investment in CEIAG by the central government has made this challenging. Schools face inflationary pressures, decreasing available funds. Employer investment in CEIAG is also decreasing, reflecting reduced resources for Sustainable Development Goals/Social Value/Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plans due to a tighter economy.” (Respondent to Call for Evidence)

The Clusters and the Hubs have served as ‘effective connectors’ between schools, colleges, employers, sectoral and professional bodies. The Hubs have a strong focus on recruiting, onboarding and matching Enterprise Advisers (volunteers from public, private and third sector employers) to work in partnership with schools and colleges. Enterprise Advisers work with a careers leader or senior leadership team in a school or college to increase business engagement so that more young people are having encounters with employers. They work in partnership to ensure this is part of a whole school, aspirational careers plan using Gatsby Benchmarks, as the gold standard for schools and colleges to achieve.² As of the end of February 2025, 819 Enterprise Advisers were reported as actively working within the Hubs.

Hard-to-fill vacancy trends and skills gap density trends in London have broadly followed the worsening national trends between 2011 and 2022. For instance, the share of establishments with at least one hard-to-fill vacancy has increased slowly over time from about 4-5% in London to 7-8%, before shooting up to 14.5% in 2022.

London employers are slightly more engaged in work experience/placements than the England average (except for college students and unemployed adults), e.g. 33% vs 30% nationally offering any type of placement, but slightly less engaged in offering work inspiration activities in schools (8% vs 9% nationally).

Regarding sustained apprenticeship destinations (sustained for at least six continuous months in the 2022/23 academic year), the national picture has been one of slow decline from 4.7% for the 2015/16 cohort to 3.3% for the 2020/21 cohort. In London, the decline has typically been sharper, ranging from 1.4%pts (Central Hub) to 2.4%pts (East and South Hubs). As well as declining slightly faster, the London participation rates began 1-3%pts lower than the national average.

The Clusters and the Hubs delivered a significant volume of activity for young people, which was recorded principally between July 2020 and September 2023 (the Clusters) and between Jan 2022 and August 2023 (the Hubs Strand 2).

- 30,139 student participations were recorded against insight activities/employer encounters
- 7,070 student participations were recorded against work placements/workplace experiences.

- The Clusters also reported 1,313 teachers participating in enrichment/CPD activities. (The Hubs also provide teacher CPD but volumes are not formally reported).

Employer and training provider respondents highlighted their strong relationships with local schools and colleges, along with access to a future talent pipeline, as key benefits of working with the Hubs and Careers Clusters.

The Careers Clusters

The Clusters' work took place during a difficult period (during the Covid-19 pandemic and the second national lockdown in early 2021). However, challenges experienced were largely resolved. The Clusters delivered around 250 employer-led pilot projects to bring innovation to the London Careers Programme. Over 4,600 student work placements were delivered. There were 793 recorded activity participations with employers, of which 370 were SMEs. Example activities included 5-day work experiences (both virtual and physical), employer talks, site visits, work insights days, and careers carousels. The Clusters also gathered declarations/claims from 297 SME employer activities testifying to specific benefits, being 93% of all SME activities reported.

The ten Clusters were led by a combination of public, private and charitable sector organisations. Their focus on supporting young people with a higher level of need included a wide range of *delivery* activities. They all delivered:

- Support for schools and colleges to improve their careers offer and produce an employer-endorsed careers strategy
- Support teachers in schools and colleges to understand and use London's labour market information
- A 26-week sustained pilot project activity to develop innovative approaches to support careers education
- Work experience placements for students
- Engagement and support for SMEs to take part in activities.

Of the ten Careers Clusters:

- Three Clusters focused on specific sectors:
 - *Pan Out 2* (hospitality), led by Rinova
 - *Build Your Future* (construction), led by the Construction Youth Trust
 - *Waltham Forest* (digital and creative), led by the London Borough of Waltham Forest
- One Cluster provided specialist support for FE Colleges and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND):
 - *Diverso*, led by Talentino
- The remaining six Clusters - *Croydon* (led by Education Development Trust), *Inspire My Careers* (Let Me Play / LMP Education), *Local Futures* (15 Billion EBP), *Hillingdon* (Education Development Trust), *Expanding Horizons*, *Raising Aspirations* (London Borough of Hounslow 14–19 Service), and *Young Careers* (Reed in Partnership) delivered a broad and consistent range of activities, including:
 - Work experience placements (WEX)
 - Employer engagement
 - Labour market information (LMI)
 - Career guidance informed by employer insight
 - Connecting students to local career opportunities.

All the partnerships anticipated that their outputs might support others to undertake CEIAG and community collaboration and generate a broader impact. Seven critical success factors were identified: (i) being responsive to school staff, employers and their practical needs (undertaking a needs and gap analysis), (ii) integration of careers into the curriculum, (iii) deep sector-specific partnerships established, (iv) workplace visits for students and teachers, (v) school and employer-based work experience programmes, (vi) flexible placements, particularly for those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and those in Alternative Provision and (vii) micro-businesses and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) offering students experiences of and exposure to the world of work.

Interviews with Cluster Leads highlighted key challenges faced during the project including high staff turnover, school capacity issues, transport barriers, and difficulties with employer engagement. Frequent turnover of Career Leaders in some areas resulted in delays and a lack of continuity, while competing school priorities and budget constraints, especially post-COVID, led to reduced involvement or last-minute withdrawals. Transport limitations further hindered students' access to events, particularly in remote areas, and some employers were hesitant to commit to in-person or virtual activities, adding pressure to cluster resources.

"We've taken the model and now work with employers as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) to deliver to young people." Cluster Lead

Survey findings showed at least 65% of respondents from the school and college survey sustained all or some of the provision after the funding ceased. Sustained legacy projects continued to engage with micro-businesses, SMEs and Cornerstone employers in supporting students, schools and colleges, such as: *work insights days for students with SEND* e.g. Ozerlat UK, a family-owned business specialising in Turkish coffee, confectionary and fine food encouraged students to learn from their experience and use social media to make a short video to upload onto Instagram building their confidence and skills; *flexible virtual sessions by employers* e.g. HMRC's ongoing work experience model for Croydon schools, helped build confidence and continues to do so; and *sustained employer engagement, with some employers working directly with students, schools and on-site Jobcentre support* e.g. the Hounslow Cluster.

Partnerships continue beyond the Cluster phase, emphasising the potential for enduring collaborations between schools, colleges, employers, local boroughs and the Hubs, while stressing the importance of maintaining momentum. The Clusters successfully delivered for key subregional and regional stakeholders, as demonstrated through interviews, surveys, and the Call for Evidence findings. However, funding constraints remain, highlighting the need for a more strategic, long-term funding model.

The Cluster experiences generated significant learning about effective CEIAG support for students in schools and colleges. This included insights into approaches that worked in specific contexts, the factors that influence sectoral and employer engagement, and the resources needed. This learning is a useful contribution to the evidence base on how to do this work. There is scope for closer collaboration between the legacy Clusters and the London Hubs.

The Careers Hubs

The Hubs led by Reed in Partnership (Central), Education Development Trust (EDT) (West), Local London (East) and the South London Partnership (South) align their thematic goals and KPIs with those set by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC). Each has a Local Delivery Fund which provides flexibility in responding to specific local needs.

The Hubs role is to support schools, colleges, special educational needs and disability (SEND) provision, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Alternative Provision (AP) in their geographic sub-region to provide high quality, broad, structured, inclusive careers education that reaches every young person. Careers Hubs work with employers, universities and other education and training providers to bridge the gap between employers and education, ensuring that careers outcomes are improved for all young people. They also serve as ‘a filter and strategic coordinator’, streamlining information and opportunities for secondary schools, colleges, and employers to ensure accessibility and active engagement in high-quality CEIAG provision.

The Hubs have worked well individually but have also collaborated effectively on pan-London initiatives, driving impact across the city. Their joint efforts in areas such as *strategic* support for schools and colleges’ achievement of Gatsby Benchmarks, enterprise adviser (EA), employer and sectoral engagement, labour market intelligence (LMI) data-driven reports, teacher placements, training activities and conferences, have significantly contributed to strengthening CEIAG provision.

Our analysis indicates that, from the student perspective, an estimated 621,770 secondary education students in London Careers Hub target Education Institutions (EIs) were already enrolled in Hub EIs as of the end of the 2023/24 academic year. This represents 97% of the total eligible students to be in Hubs, which is about 641,000 students.

The self-assessed careers provision of London schools and colleges has improved every academic year from 2019/20 to 2023/24, from an average of Gatsby Benchmarks fully achieved from 2.6 to 5.3. This self-assessment is based on Compass survey completions by schools/colleges. Engagement rates with the Compass survey have increased significantly among London providers from 311 to 664 over this time-period, such that later years in particular provide very good coverage of all eligible institutions, while still remaining short of coverage of all institutions eligible for standard Careers Hub membership in the GLA area due to some institutions choosing not to provide Compass survey returns in each year.

Progress among mainstream education institutions (EIs) is broadly similar across the four Hubs, with slightly faster progress in the South and West Hubs (which started slightly lower) and slightly slower progress in the East and Central Hubs.

Results show an estimated 91% of eligible Hub members already having joined the Hubs as of end 2023/24 (with eligibility based on CEC’s reporting obligations to the DfE), with particular rapid membership growth in 2018/19 to 2020/21.

The national post-16 sustained education, employment and training (EET) rate has remained around 94%, with little change year-on-year. By contrast, in the London Hubs geographical areas, sustained EET rates for Year 11 cohorts in 2015/16 to 2020/21 improved between 0.2%pts (East Hub) and 1.4%pts (Central Hub), acknowledging some volatility in the data trends from year to year. In 2015/16, most Hubs were above the national average (except for Central Hub), but by the end of the period, all Hubs were 0.8%pts-2.0%pts above the national average.

For disadvantaged students, with pupil premium eligibility, the picture broadly mirrors the overall EET rate for all students. The national rate had been improving slightly over time but declined for the 2020/21 cohort leaving little difference since the 2015/16 cohort. In London, the rate improved by between 0.1%pts (East Hub) and 2.0%pts (Central Hub). This faster improvement compared to national rates combines with a higher initial rate to identify a large outperformance at the end of the period ranging from 3.8%pts to 5.4%pts across the Hubs.

“Evidence shows a reduction in confirmed post-16 NEET rate from 2015/16 to 2020/21 cohorts of 0.9%pts (South Hub) to 1.7%pts (Central Hub), compared to a broadly flat trend in England.”

The Hubs reported that they are currently working with thirty-seven Cornerstone employers. A total of 819 Enterprise Advisers (EAs) have also been recruited by the Hubs as of February 2025. The Hubs have also identified Enterprise Advisers from SMEs to support their schools/colleges in improving careers provision.

In *Strand 2*, they also recorded the number of unique SMEs participating (unique on a per-hub basis) and the number of activities, up to three with SMEs, being the minimum requirement to count as successfully completing a project. A total of 100 SMEs were identified as participating in 188 activities, the majority of which were employer encounters such as careers fairs, career talks, and workshops. Strand 2 activity presented challenges for three out of the four Hubs, as they did not bring in additional resource to deliver the Strand 2 activity at an early enough stage. The West London Careers Hub was more successful in delivering Gatsby Benchmark 5 and 6 activities (Strand 2). West London appointed a dedicated Project Manager and established a separate line management reporting structure early on. This ensured that the delivery of Strand 2 did not detract from the focus or pressures of fulfilling the Hub’s main strategic role. A key takeaway is that Careers Hubs should carefully consider how they structure delivery activities when taking on new projects in the future.

In the schools and colleges survey, several activities supported by the Hubs were reported as highly effective, with 45% of respondents highlighting success in achieving Gatsby Benchmarks and using Compass tools, and 27% noting strong engagement with employers. Also, regarding changes in CEIAG for students in London between September 2021 and July 2024, 55% reported an improvement, 16% noted no change, 2% felt it had declined, and 27% were unsure.

The majority of school and college survey respondents expressed satisfaction with the support provided by the Careers Hub Leads, with 40% (n=45) being very satisfied and 45% (n=50) satisfied. Only 6% (n=7) reported dissatisfaction. Positive feedback included praise for individual Enterprise Coordinators (ECs), improved guidance, and specific support in areas such as organising careers fairs, work experience (WEX), and navigating tools like Compass and the Gatsby Benchmarks. The most impactful support received has been in the areas of student pathway choices and improved education, employment and training (EET) outcomes.

Good practice and the importance of tailoring to specific needs

Examples of how the Hubs tailored their approaches include:

- *Needs and gap analysis* e.g. Each Careers Hub undertakes a needs and gap analysis with EIs from the outset and this is reviewed annually, ideally with a Senior Leadership Team representative governor and Careers Leader in schools and colleges.
- *Sector specific projects* e.g. Green Skills, Health & Social Care, Digital and Creative, Construction etc.
- *Careers Fairs, carousels and work insight days* e.g. sometimes provided for all students and sometimes tailored to students with SEND.

- *Give an Hour campaign* e.g. designed to attract more volunteer Enterprise Advisers (EAs).
- *Teacher Encounters* – e.g. VIP and industry days in the workplace.
- *Training and continuous profession development* – EAs and Careers Leaders onboarding, ATE pathways, special themes e.g. harnessing emotional intelligence; understanding those with neurodiverse needs; careers embedded in the curriculum; SEND approaches and effective use of resources.
- *Promoting Employer Standards and Work Experience* e.g. Equalex and ATE pathways.
- *Producing high-quality labour market intelligence (LMI)* e.g. production of brochures with CareerMag and the London LMI portal.
- *Cornerstone employers* e.g. projects focused on supporting specific target groups e.g. students and parents.
- *Careers System Impact Reviews* e.g. supporting peer to peer learning and quality improvements.
- *Networking with local groups* e.g. West London Alliance, Local London, London Borough Councils etc.

Lesson learned

The Clusters

- Teachers' limited understanding of the workings and benefits of apprenticeships and technical education (ATE), coupled with a perceived cultural bias favouring academic routes, was reported to hinder wider acceptance of these pathways. Colleges, however, were noted to be more proactive in integrating these opportunities into their curricula.
- Without Senior Leadership Team (SLT) backing in schools and colleges, Cluster programmes often struggled to gain the necessary time and resources to succeed. Engaging SLTs early and ensuring their buy-in led to more consistent engagement across schools.
- In some boroughs, schools and colleges expressed confusion over the respective roles of Hubs versus Clusters, particularly regarding career strategy development. This resulted in overlaps, inefficiencies, and misaligned expectations. Better communication between clusters, hubs, and EIs is essential to clarify roles and avoid confusion. This should include clearer documentation and distinct guidelines on what each programme offers.
- Data sharing posed a major challenge, hindering smooth communication and continuity in relationships between the Clusters and the Hubs, highlighting the need for more transparent protocols, guidelines and data sharing agreements.
- The delayed confirmation of contracts during Covid, especially during the summer months, proved challenging for schools, leaving them with insufficient time to plan and integrate career-related programmes into their academic schedules. Addressing this issue requires greater awareness and proactive measures from the GLA to mitigate this barrier to success. Lessons learned from this experience were taken on board by the GLA with a smoother contractual and more flexible delivery arrangement for the work experience (WEX) programme that followed the Careers Clusters.
- A recurring issue was the emphasis on short-term funding and hitting numerical targets rather than focusing on the quality of engagement, leading to confusion and a perceived focus on meeting goals rather than delivering optimal outcomes for students. This was to some extent constrained by the ESF funding expectations and reporting regime.

“When you give students immersive and engaging experiences with the opportunity to hear from and talk to a range of speakers they are empowered to take ownership of their career learning. We are connectors between schools, colleges and employers.” (Cluster Lead)

- There were missed opportunities for more collaboration and shared learning across the Clusters and the Hubs, including a joint celebration of key achievements, high profile inspirational CEIAG champions and improved student outcomes.

The Hubs

- Awareness of the Hubs has increased since their inception; however, a challenge remains in ensuring that all schools, academies, and college headteachers, principals, governors, and careers leaders fully understand and take up the strategic support openly available to their institution.
- Data sharing poses a challenge, with confusion around ownership and permissions in relation to Gatsby Benchmarks and Compass performance data at a local and regional level, highlighting the need for more transparent protocols, guidelines and data sharing agreements. This evaluation project facilitated improved access to data from The CEC within clearly defined and agreed parameters. CEC and GLA teams worked hard to overcome difficulties with data sharing, ultimately resulting in successful data sharing to support the report after several months. We understand that CEC is developing new protocols for data sharing which should make similar efforts smoother in the future.
- In the majority of cases, Strand 2 of the Hubs contracts did not work as well as originally anticipated. There were various reasons for this e.g. some of the work undertaken by the Hubs did not meet the set funding criteria, the Hubs were already stretched due to staff vacancies, the project officer appointment varied in experience and level of salary. A key lesson learned was to consider a sub-contractor arrangement (either internally or externally) to ensure a laser focus on the set KPIs and funding criteria outlined in the GLA Handbook.
- Training for Careers Leaders received mixed feedback in the schools and colleges survey; while 63% found it effective, some concerns were raised about variability in its type and depth.

“All four London Hubs share a unified mission: To enhance and improve the range and quality of CEIAG provision by connecting schools, colleges, and employers within their respective geographical areas and on a pan-London basis.” (Careers Hubs Leads)

Recommendations

We have developed the following recommendations based on the evaluation findings. The initial recommendations are aimed at the GLA to inform future programme commissioning and design and maximise the impact of learnings from the Clusters and the Hubs. The second set of recommendations is aimed at The GLA and its partners. The final set of recommendations are aimed at others seeking to replicate or learn from the Clusters and Hubs in London.

Recommendations for the GLA.

Programme design and delivery

Recommendation 1: Identify senior champions, potential for impact, and routes to sustainability for future initiatives within the commissioning process.

Consider the balance between CEIAG *delivery projects* and *strategic support* for schools and colleges. Prioritise approaches that address capacity and resource limitations within schools and colleges. A blended approach already exists with legacy Clusters, the Hubs, the Work Experience (WEX) programme, Integration Hubs, and Jobcentre Plus each operating separately with senior champions and local networks. There is potential to bring them together to secure buy-in, share evidence, and align priorities for the next 2-5 years, focusing on sustainable CEIAG policies and practices. Identifying key stakeholders and aligning with their priorities and decision-making timelines will support the sustainability and impact of CEIAG for all young Londoners. There is

also opportunity to consider London's CEIAG landscape over the next decade and to consider 'future scenario insights' to stimulate discussion with partners and align initiatives that promote sustainability and enhance policies and practices that can demonstrate tangible impact.

Recommendation 2: Increase the numbers of Enterprise Advisers (EAs) though the Hubs connecting with more micro-businesses, SMEs and Cornerstone employers.

While EAs are eager to support schools and colleges, the level of engagement from senior leadership teams (SLTs) and potential volunteers varies significantly. To boost engagement, it would be helpful to produce and share high-profile case studies working with schools and colleges showcasing the added value EAs bring to them and vice-versa. Additionally, building on successful practices in East London, consider celebrating and rewarding highly engaged EAs, businesses, teachers, and careers advisers as local champions. Public recognition through events and initiatives like those used by Careers Wales could help London further foster involvement and inspire others to participate.

The London Cornerstone Employer model is delivering impact, including strategies to support vulnerable young people. Now is the time to go further - leveraging their networks to increase volunteer engagement. The London Mayor's office and The CEC's national network of Cornerstone Employers could do more to enable Careers Hubs to piggyback on existing employer engagement activities, amplifying impact and streamlining efforts. Strengthening these partnerships will unlock opportunities for young Londoners while building a stronger talent pipeline for the future. Beyond this, there is also scope to align public procurement with CEIAG priorities to incentivise employer participation and making it easier for businesses to support schools and colleges through strategic planning, work insight days, industry placements, and supported internships.

Recommendation 3: Amplify the Impact of Clusters and Hubs.

Careers Hubs and Clusters have developed valuable tools and approaches that others can learn from, avoiding duplication and accelerating progress - whether in work experience, sector-specific projects, borough-level impact reports, teacher placements, or SEND and alternative provision guides. To maximise their reach, Careers Hubs should use their websites more effectively to share these resources across their networks. The GLA can also play a crucial role in broadening awareness by leveraging its influence and communication channels to extend their impact beyond local networks.

Recommendation 4: Explore opportunities to support work in primary schools and Key Stage 3.

Draw on lessons learned from earlier GLA commissioned work on career-related learning in primary schools (2022). Showcase potential career paths in specific growth sectors to primary-aged pupils across London aligned to Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities. Address the noted gap in careers provision at Key Stage 3 by educating employers about the benefits of engaging with younger students, particularly to introduce them to apprenticeship and technical education pathways before traditional academic routes become entrenched.

Recommendation 5: Future-proofing career education by embracing technology and innovation.

Harness existing online platforms like Inspiring the Future/Primary Futures which provide innovative online match-making technology to connect schools and colleges across the country with tens of thousands of volunteers working in different sectors – for free. Encourage employers to join online platforms (e.g., Inspiring the Future and Scale Up for Sustainability etc) and promote their greater use by schools and colleges for supporting careers activities and accessing opportunities.

Invest in 'test and learn' pilot projects using AI and large language models (LLMs), such as career-themed gaming (e.g., Minecraft in Scotland and Wales) and chatbot technology (e.g., Huxby and CiCi in London schools). Explore

'blended hybrid' AI approaches to make it easier for the Hubs and educational institutions, including schools, colleges, and SEND/alternative provision providers, to access these tools. Provide training to build confidence and competence in using AI-driven career education tools.

Recommendation 6: Revisit the community of practice model in each Hub.

Define what success looks like in fostering an inclusive community that engages a dynamic network of Enterprise Advisers and other key stakeholders to strengthen the CEIAG system. This should create an environment where businesses, careers professionals, enterprise and employability specialists come together with a shared purpose to improve outcomes for young Londoners. With support from the GLA, London's Careers Communities of Practice can collaborate more effectively to build a high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive pan-London system for careers, skills, and employability. They can also draw on lessons learned from area-based experiences as well as those outside of London e.g. Manchester, Scotland etc.

Recommendation 7: Enhance Access to Pathways and LMI for Parents and Teachers.

Continue producing and sharing high-quality pathway guides and LMI across London until Skills England is fully established, addressing the gap left by the end of DfE's 'LMI for All' funding. Build on successful Cluster and Hub models to ensure schools and colleges have up-to-date insights. Expand parent-focused webinars, podcasts, and events—offering flexible options like coffee mornings, after-school sessions, and weekend slots—to improve access to LMI, apprenticeships, and technical education. This will empower parents, as key influencers, to better support their children's career choices. A similar approach could be used for teachers, scaling up awareness and equipping them with the confidence and competence to embed LMI and careers into the curriculum.

Recommendations for the GLA, their partners including The CEC, and government departments such as the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Work & Pensions .

Generating new insights, maximising learning and dissemination.

Recommendation 8: Reach agreement to ensure greater transparency in the ownership and sharing of Gatsby performance data, Compass and anonymised student outcomes.

At present, the GLA and London Boroughs do not have full visibility of data in the absence of clear protocols and procedures, although progress following this evaluation is hoped to improve matters in the future. Take steps to review the thematic areas of London Hubs work and allied KPIs, identify and streamline priorities going forward. Maintain flexibility in agreeing specific themes and KPIs.

Recommendation 9: Build in flexibility while being clear on expected outcomes.

London's careers and employability landscape is too complex for a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach. While shared goals provide direction, excessive KPIs and metrics can dilute impact. The GLA's willingness to negotiate flexible KPIs with The CEC was welcomed by Hub Leaders and should continue in future initiatives. Flexibility must be built into programme design, allowing outcomes to evolve based on real-time insights while meeting UKSPF and other funding requirements. Streamlining and prioritising KPIs will enable Hubs to focus on what truly drives high-impact results.

Recommendation 10: Leveraging employer networks.

Build on the GLA Careers Team's work on employer engagement through streamlined work and communications with employers across all GLA teams: to identify key stakeholders and umbrella organisations and how the GLA can work effectively with those to ensure that CEIAG is at the forefront for employers planning their talent pipeline e.g work already underway with support organisations such as Business LDN, and London and Partners.

This should include clear signposting for employers depending on their talent need. Similarly, The CEC headquarters team have access to key employer networks and professional bodies. Leverage these networks to enhance the Hubs, promote employer involvement in CEIAG activities, and develop employer led practical projects to improve student outcomes, especially for vulnerable groups. This will strengthen connections between London employers, schools, and colleges, highlighting the positive impact of CEIAG based on strong evidence of effective practices.

Recommendations for others seeking to learn from the Clusters and the Hubs.

Multi-agency working and capturing the voices of young people

Recommendation 11. Create more inclusive training and professional development opportunities to break down silo working and future-proof London's careers ecosystem.

Involve key stakeholders like former Careers Clusters, Hubs, WEX programme leads, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Work Coaches, the National Careers Service and other intermediaries working in schools and colleges through shared activities. Focus on improving student outcomes, including culturally relevant CEIAG, and integrating specific actions for vulnerable students (e.g., SEND, home-educated, young carers, and those at risk of becoming NEET), innovation in CEIAG etc through targeted training, partnerships, and feedback mechanisms.

Recommendation 12. Ensure young people's voices shape CEIAG through school, college and community engagement.

Make use of feedback tools like surveys and youth parliaments. Communicate key priorities identified by young people and provide progress updates with measurable outcomes. Use community youth resources and local borough partnerships to improve accessibility, especially for underserved groups (e.g., SEND, home-educated, young carers, at-risk youth). Partner with youth foundations and community centres to promote services and share resources. Adopt inclusive commissioning practices to encourage diversity in programme design and delivery

MAIN REPORT

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This evaluation undertaken by dmh associates, on behalf of the Greater London Authority (GLA), is designed to assess London's Careers Programme focusing on the ongoing London Careers Hubs, as well as the completed European Social Fund (ESF) funded former Careers Clusters. It aims to determine whether the original objectives were met and provide insights into careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in schools and colleges for students in compulsory education across London. The evaluation began in June 2024 and was completed in February 2025.

1.2 The Careers Clusters and Careers Hubs originated from the London Careers Programme, which was co-developed by the GLA with national, regional, and local partners. The programme aimed to address key priorities in the London Economic Action Partnership's European Structural Investment Fund strategy, the Mayor's Skills for Londoners Strategy, and other Mayoral priorities. The programme and resources' core aim is to enhance CEIAG across London's secondary schools, special schools, alternative provision settings, and post-16 institutions, specifically targeting institutions with a high proportion of students in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and addressing inequalities and disparities of outcomes for vulnerable groups.

Focus

- To assess the effectiveness of the four London Careers Hubs in achieving their goals, including the impact of various programme elements and key lessons learned.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of ten former Careers Clusters, including the benefits of different programme elements and how they complemented the London Hubs.
- To gain a better understanding of careers provision in education institutions delivering to those in compulsory secondary education in London, with a view to informing ongoing project planning and delivery, future programme design and funding decisions.

This report captures key insights with a view to informing ongoing project planning and delivery, future programme design and funding decisions.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods.

- **Inception Meeting:** The process began with an inception meeting to establish the evaluation parameters, ensuring clarity on objectives and expectations.
- **Desk Research:** Comprehensive desk research was conducted to review existing data and resources, aiming to avoid duplication of effort and minimise the burden on Hubs and Clusters.
- **Design of Research Instruments:** Tailored research instruments were developed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from key stakeholders involved in each Hub and Cluster.
- **Analysis of a range of performance metrics and management information systems (MIS) data, encompassing:** A review of *Progress Reports* to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions; *Project Evaluations:* Detailed evaluations of projects and case studies to assess outputs and outcomes related to the Careers Clusters and Hubs; *Financial Data:* Analysis of financial data to compare against anticipated benefits of improved careers provision. The quantitative data analysis draws on:
 - *Publicly available data from government statistics* - principally post-16 destination rates for schools/colleges and the Employer Skills Survey.

- *Management information on careers programmes from the GLA* - principally spreadsheets from individual Careers Clusters and Hubs that summarise the volume of employer participation and ESF-funded activity taking place in particular years.
- *Anonymised data from The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)* - the achievement of Gatsby Benchmarks, as reported in voluntary surveys completed across participating London schools and compared against the England-level average. Data suppression is applied to ensure that anonymity is maintained.

Report structure

Section 3.0: London Context - Provides a brief overview of London's education and employment landscape. This establishes the foundation for understanding the work of the London Careers Clusters and London Hubs.

Section 4.0: The Careers Clusters - Reviews the work of the London Careers Clusters and key findings from one-to-one interviews with the Cluster Leads, group discussions, survey and Call for Evidence responses. It highlights lessons learned, showcasing good practice to help shape and enhance the London Careers Programme both now and in the future.

Section 5.0: The Careers Hubs - Reviews key findings from one-to-one interviews with the Hub Leads, survey responses, Call for Evidence submissions, and group discussions with Cornerstone Employers and other key stakeholders. It also highlights lessons learned, showcasing good practice to shape and enhance the London Careers Programme both now and in the future.

Section 6.0: Recommendations - Builds on these insights by outlining recommendations to enhance and improve CEIAG across London's education and employment landscape. The aim is to achieve more impactful and sustainable outcomes for students while offering professional support to those involved in the design and development of London's careers provision.

Ten core questions agreed with the GLA for the research, as follows:

1. What is the recruitment and skills context among London employers?
2. To what extent are London employers supporting work experience, work placements, and work inspiration activities?
3. How has coverage of schools in the Hubs in London changed since 2021?
4. How many young people attend institutions that are being supported in the Hubs?
5. How well have projects delivered progress towards achievement of the eight Gatsby Benchmarks?
6. What improvements in post-16 NEET rates might reasonably be extrapolated from improvements in Gatsby Benchmarks? And would this benefit alone indicate value for money?
7. What are the trends in progression choices of young people?
8. What volume of employer engagement has been delivered through London Careers Clusters and the Hubs?
9. How many SMEs reported a benefit from their involvement in Careers Clusters and Hubs activities?
10. What did the Careers Clusters and Hubs do to promote Provider Access Legislation, and promote apprenticeships and technical pathways?

- **A series of 1:1 meetings and focus group workshops** were held with representatives from each Careers Clusters and the four London Hubs (n= 20), the Strategic Hubs Leads Network; Ealing Careers Leader Network; and Employer Cornerstone Group in East London (n= 36). The goal was to identify the employer engagement strategies implemented to enhance the range and quality of careers education, information, advice, and guidance (CEIAG) in schools and colleges.
- **Three targeted online surveys** to capture the views and experiences of various stakeholders:

- *Schools and Colleges*: This survey included headteachers, principals, teachers, careers leaders, and careers advisers to understand their perspectives on CEIAG (n=113).
- *Employers and Training Providers*: This group consisted of those with experience working with Hubs and/or Careers Clusters including Cornerstone Employers, Enterprise Advisers (EAs) and other providers to assess their engagement and its effectiveness (n=35) , and
- *Call for Evidence* aimed at national, regional sub-regional partnerships, London Boroughs, London Councils, alternative providers, universities, and community and voluntary organisations (n= 17). This survey sought to gather broader insights on CEIAG practices and policies.

2.2 This multifaceted approach seeks to capture comprehensive understanding of the current and potential future landscape. This structured approach aims to provide a thorough understanding of the effectiveness and impact of the initiatives within the Hubs and Clusters.

3.0 London Context

3.1 In this section, we provide brief overview of London’s education and employment landscape, including the recruitment and skills context among London employers. It outlines some key findings from the employer and training provider survey, as well as the Call for Evidence. This establishes the foundation for understanding the work of the London Careers Clusters and London Hubs. Hereafter, we refer to London Careers Clusters and London Hubs as 'Clusters' and 'Hubs,' respectively.

3.2 London’s education and employment landscape is diverse and dynamic, reflecting its status as a global city. The capital is home to a high concentration of schools, colleges, universities, and training providers, offering a wide range of pathways into education, skills development, and employment. The London Careers Programme operates within the framework of the London Economy Recovery Implementation Plan (2021)³, which seeks to address social, economic, and health inequalities while ensuring every Londoner has access to opportunities that provide a secure route out of poverty. At its core is a “no wrong door” approach, integrating skills, careers, and employment support. The London Careers Programme aligns with the Greater London Authority (GLA) priorities to promote vocational pathways, make careers everyone’s business, and raise and broaden aspirations, in supporting the Skills for Londoners Strategy and the Careers for Londoners Action Plan

3.3 It is increasingly important to identify and develop young people’s unique skills and passions, creating personalised learning and career pathways to support their livelihoods in a challenging economic and social landscape. As they progress through education, they must make frequent decisions about what to study, where to learn, the qualifications needed, and the experience required to meet the skills employers seek.

“Young people must be well equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to find purposeful learning and work opportunities on a lifelong basis. This philosophy underpins all aspects of work undertaken in the London Careers Clusters and the Hubs.”

3.4 In 2016, prior to the London Careers Programme, the Mayor of London established the London Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN). From July 2020 to September 2023, ten *Clusters* delivered pilot projects working with schools, students, employers and sectoral bodies. Since September 2021, four area-based Hubs have provided *strategic CEIAG support* to London’s secondary schools, colleges, employers, sectoral and other professional bodies within Strand 1 and Strand 2 activities. The Hubs do not directly engage with students (except within Strand 2 involving work with small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

3.5 The Mayor of London's vision for excellent CEIAG is at the heart of the London Careers Programme. By addressing systemic inequalities, fostering collaboration, and aligning with strategic priorities, the London Careers Programme⁴ is committed to ensuring young people across the city have access to the support and opportunities needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world. A key driver in the London Careers Programme is the role of Hubs and Clusters as *connectors* between schools, colleges, and employers, including the recruitment of Enterprise Advisers (volunteers from industry) to strategically and practically support schools and colleges in developing and delivering their CEIAG strategies and programmes. The London Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN) is well established⁵ as outlined below.

3.6 Launched in 2016, the London Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN) aimed to ensure all young Londoners had access to high-quality CEIAG and are aware of available opportunities. Co-founded and co-funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC), LEAN primarily connected schools and colleges with employers and professionals through volunteer Enterprise Advisers. These advisers collaborated with their matched institution to develop careers plans and enhance employer engagement, supporting progress toward the eight Gatsby 'Good Career Guidance' Benchmarks⁶. According to a SWQ report evaluating the impact of the LEAN (October 2021), this network was set up and funded to focus specifically on improving Benchmarks 1, 5 and 6. While its work may have influenced institutions in relation to the other Benchmarks, these were not its primary focus.

3.7 The Mayor's London Careers Programme⁷ established in 2019 aims to enhance CEIAG and provide experiences that improve social mobility and support positive progression outcomes for all young Londoners. A key objective is to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). While London has the lowest overall NEET rate in England at 10.6%, significant disparities exist across boroughs.

"Pockets of deprivation, poverty, health and wellbeing challenges, and the cost-of-living crisis exacerbate barriers for young Londoners, limiting their ability to succeed and prosper."
(London Careers Programme)

Focus on two key components

3.8 Within the London Careers Programme (i) the former Careers Clusters (July 2020 – August 2023) delivered pilot projects with schools, students and employers, as well as work experience placements to students; and (ii) London Hubs (Strands 1 & 2, September 2021 – present) provide strategic CEIAG support to secondary schools / academies, colleges and employers. While the Hubs do not directly engage students (except within Strand 2) activities involving work with employers, in particular small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs). They focus on raising the profile of inclusive, high-quality careers provision, supporting schools and employers to connect with one another, to work towards the achievement of Gatsby Benchmarks⁸, to make effective use of available resources, including labour market intelligence, apprenticeships and technical education (ATE) pathways, quality standards, teacher support, training and professional development, and ultimately, to improve student outcomes.

3.9 Both (i) and (ii) were co-developed by the GLA with national, regional and local partners to respond to key priorities identified within the London Economic Action Partnership's European Structural Investment Fund strategy⁹, the Mayor's Skills for Londoners Strategy¹⁰ and other Mayoral priorities.¹¹ The programme and resources' core aim is to enhance CEIAG across London's secondary schools, special schools, alternative provision settings, and post-16 institutions, specifically targeting institutions with a high proportion of students in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and addressing disparities and outcomes for specific vulnerable groups.

3.10 The Clusters and Hubs have focused primarily on post-primary schools and colleges, emphasising partnerships, resources, and professional development for schools and colleges. Earlier work in 2022 commissioned by the GLA focused on career-related learning in primary schools. Collaboration with a range of education institutions, employers, and sectoral bodies has driven recent progress in delivering the Gatsby Benchmarks (updated November 2024)¹² and improving careers outcomes for young people. While some primary school career-related learning has been supported by the GLA, it is not within the current remit of London Hubs.

Co-funding arrangements and geographical coverage

3.11 The London Careers Programme had a total investment of circa £15.4m between 2019 and 2023. Careers Clusters (July 2020 – September 2023) funding came from the European Social Fund (ESF). With the conclusion of ESF, the Clusters have been replaced by a Work Experience (WEX) programme targeted at young people who are at risk of being not in education, employment and/or training (NEET), funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) - outside the scope of this evaluation. Increasing young people's exposure to and experiences of the world of work remains a high priority for the GLA and its partners.

The London Hubs are co-funded by the GLA and the Department for Education (DfE) through The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) via an annual licence agreement (Strand 1), alongside the Mayors' ESF Co-Financing Programme in partnership with The CEC. Strand 2 focused on employability activities with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) supported by the Hubs to increase employer engagement in education, work insight and employability events, projects and SME participation.

Table 1: London Careers Clusters and Careers Hubs

Careers Clusters (x 10) £4.1m investment secured	Hubs (x4)¹³ £12.8m invested
Pan Out 2 Hospitality Careers Cluster – Led by Rinova in the London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton, Westminster, Lambeth, Islington, Camden, Hackney, and Newham.	Central London Careers Hub – Led by Reed in Partnership in the London Boroughs of Camden, City of London, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster.
Croydon Careers Cluster – Led by Education Development Trust (EDT) in the London Borough of Croydon.	South London Careers Hub – Led by the South London Partnership, in the London boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond, and Sutton.
Inspire My Careers – Led by Let Me Play (LMP Education) in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Hillingdon Careers Cluster – Led by Education Development Trust (EDT) in the London Borough of Hillingdon. Expanding Horizons, Raising Aspirations Cluster – Led by the London Borough of Hounslow London 14 – 19 service in the London Borough of Hounslow.	West London Careers Hub – Led by Education Development Trust (EDT) in the London Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow.
Local Futures Careers Cluster – Led by 15 Billion Education Business Partnership (EBP) in the London Boroughs of Newham, Barking and Dagenham. Waltham Forest Digital & Creative Careers Cluster – Led by the London Borough of Waltham Forest in the London Borough of Waltham Forest.	East London Careers Hub – Led by the Local London Strategic Partnership, in the London Boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Bromley, Enfield, Greenwich, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, and Waltham Forest.

Young Careers Cluster – Led by Reed in Partnership: in the London Boroughs of Hackney, Haringey, Islington, and Camden.

Build Your Future Careers Cluster – Led by Construction Youth Trust covering the London Boroughs of Lewisham, Southwark, Westminster, Lambeth, Barking and Dagenham, Kensington and Chelsea.

Diverso SEND Cluster, Led by Talentino: In the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Islington, Croydon, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets, Sutton, Westminster, Camden, Southwark, Bexley, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Ealing.

Challenge and Opportunity

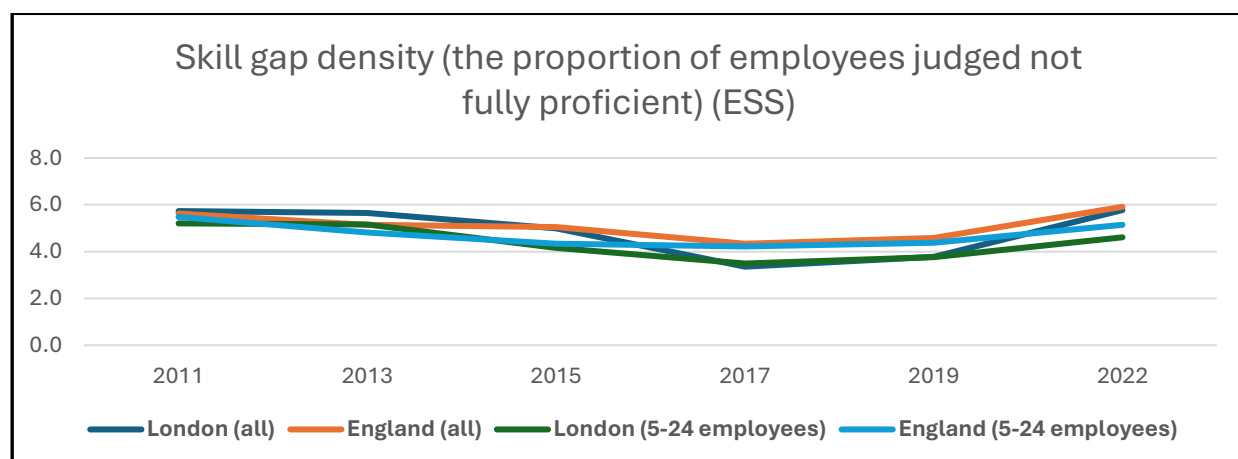
3.12 **The Employer Skills Survey (ESS) 2022¹⁴**, as commissioned by government, shows that **hard-to-fill vacancy trends and skills gap density trends in London have broadly followed the worsening national trends between 2011 and 2022**. In general, the share of establishments with at least one hard-to-fill vacancy has increased slowly over time from about 4-5% in London to 7-8%, before shooting up to 14.5% in 2022, typically 1-3%pts higher for firms with 5-24 employees compared to the average.

Figure1: Percentage of establishments with at least one hard-to-fill vacancy (ESS)



The proportion of employees judged not fully proficient declined slightly from 2011-2019, before returning to around 2011-levels in 2022, with similar trends for SMEs.

Figure 2: Skill gap density (the proportion of employees judged not fully proficient) (ESS)



3.13 **The December 2023 IFF research report for the Department for Education on the Employer Skills Survey 7ESS) data¹⁵ suggests a worsening picture in 2022.** This may reflect “a series of challenges including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, navigating new trading and labour relationships with the EU following the UK’s exit, and most recently, high inflation (which has put pressure on employers operating costs, including wages).”

“Although increased proportions of employers reported skills gaps and skill-shortage vacancies, there has not been an associated increase in workforce development activities. Fewer employers are providing work experience opportunities, a lower proportion are training their existing employees, and there has been a real term decrease in employer investment on training, with training expenditure falling since 2017.” (ESS, p182).

3.14 **The Employer Skills Survey (2022) found that 33% of employers in the London offered any type of placement¹⁶ in the last 12 months, more than the 30% found England-wide.** Among those employers who offered placements, altruistic reasons were the main reasons for 62% of employers in England – similar by employer size as well, varying from 54% for the largest employers to 67% for medium employers. Nonetheless, company benefits were a motivation for 37% of employers.

Identification of company benefits is a main reason for offering placements varied only between 31% and 56% by employer size. In other words, SMEs are often identifying meaningful company benefits as a main reason for participating as well as large employers. Helping with recruitment was a motivation even for 19% of the employers with only 2-4 staff who offered placements, increasing to 47% for employers with 250+ staff.

3.15 **In addition to the motivations listed in Figure 4, employers have also spoken of benefits for existing staff who support placements, such as skills development, practice at mentoring, personal growth and development and improvements in motivations at work.¹⁷** A London programme evaluation also identified that access to a more diverse pool of talent was an employer benefit when working with SEND young people, although making a positive contribution to society remained the primary motivation.¹⁸ Other important benefits as part of a CSR motivation can include local reputation benefits, new community links, and providing context for certain procurement regulations, particularly when engaging with the public sector.

Figure 3: Employers with anyone on placements in last 12 months (ESS 2022)

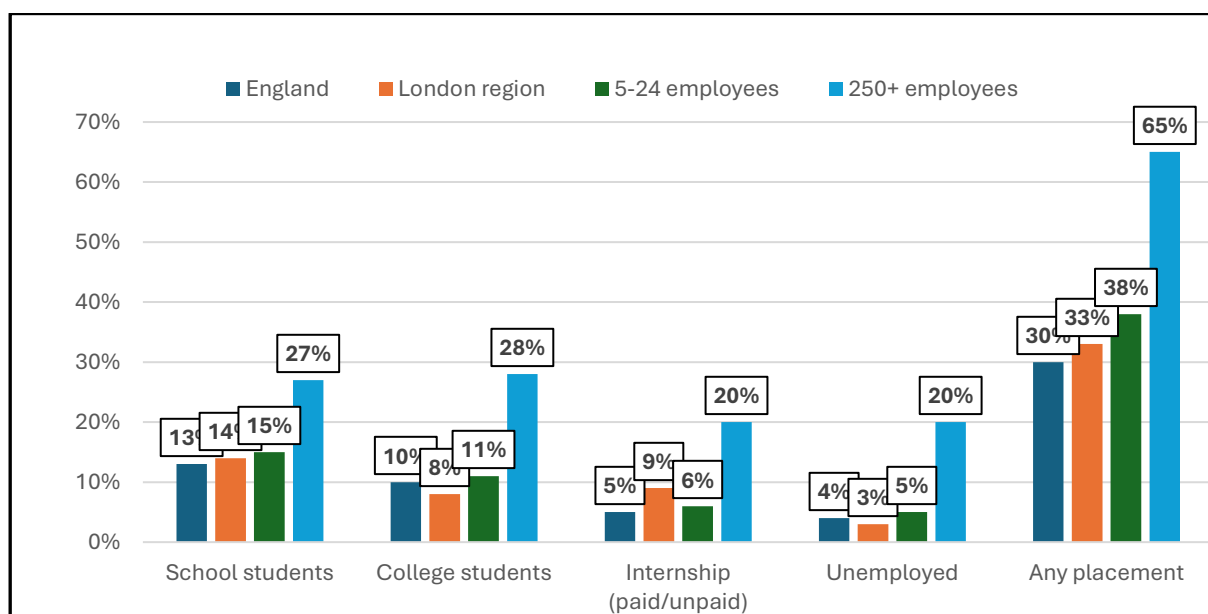
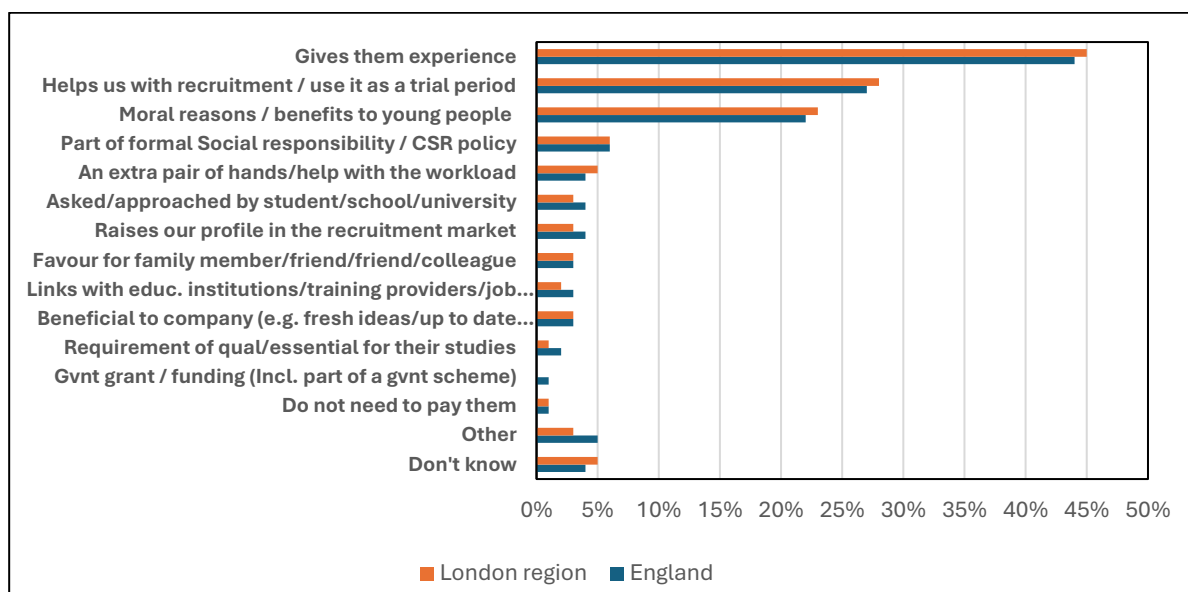
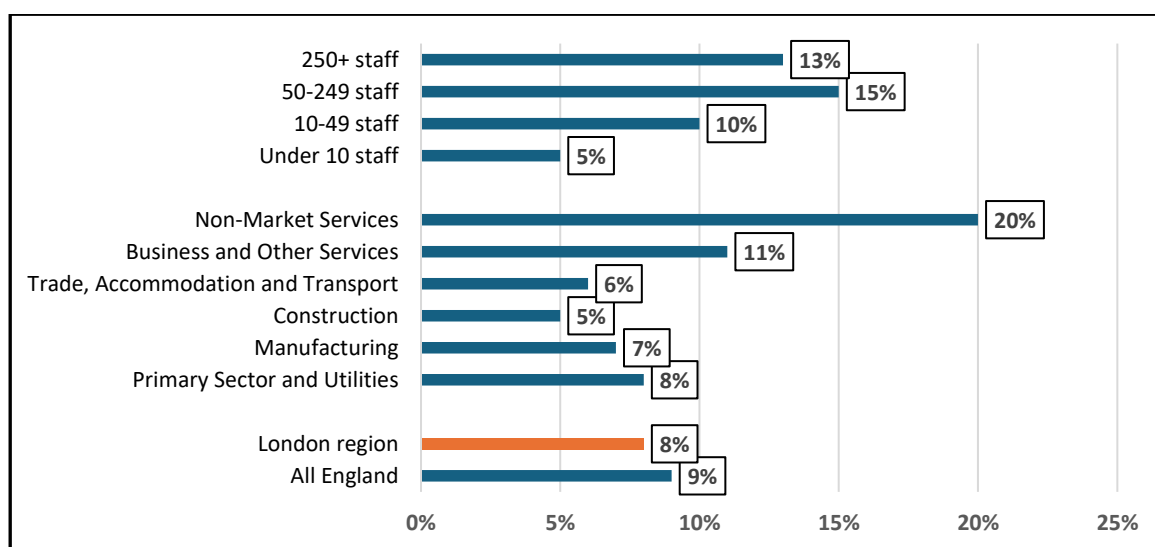


Figure 4: Main reasons for offering placements (among those with placements in the last 12 months (ESS 2022)



3.16 **The ESS data also identifies a substantial minority of employers, of all sizes and sectors, also engaged with educational institutions to offer 'work inspiration' activities (e.g. careers talks, mock interviews etc.) to students in the last 12 months.** This includes employers who did not have vacancies, skills gaps, or recent recruitment activities (although it was 2-3x more common among employers who did).

Figure 5: Employers engaging with education to offer work inspiration activities (ESS 2022)



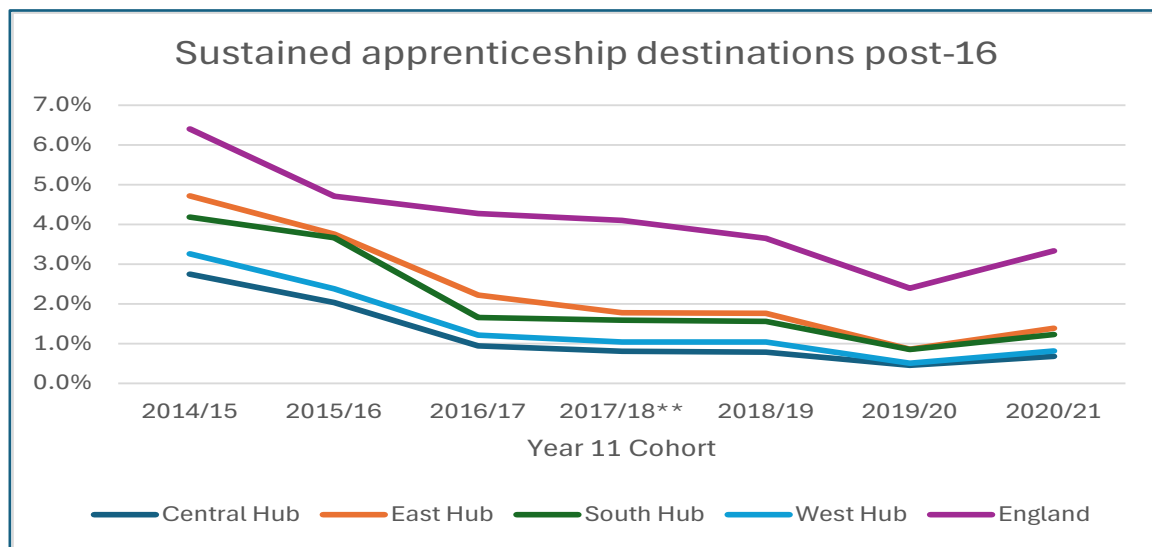
NB: Blue bars refer to all of England. Only the London region in orange addresses only London employers.

3.17 **London employers are slightly more engaged in work experience/placements than the England average (except for college students and unemployed adults), e.g. 33% compared to 30% offering any placement type.** They are slightly less engaged in offering work inspiration activities in schools (8% vs the England average of 9%).

3.18 **Sustained apprenticeship destinations (sustained for at least six continuous months in the 2022/23 academic year), the national picture has been one of slow decline from 4.7% for the 2015/16 cohort to 3.3% for the 2020/21 cohort (Figure 6).** In London, the decline has typically been sharper, ranging from 1.4%pts

(Central Hub) to 2.4%pts (East and South Hubs). As well as declining slightly faster, the London participation rates began 1-3%pts lower than the national average.

Figure 6: Sustained Apprenticeship Destinations post-16 (Compare School Performance data)



NB. Hubs are defined here as geographies not as membership groups. In other words, all schools/colleges in a given Hub geography are included in the data for that Hub, not just the schools/colleges that are formally members of that Hub in that year (such data not being available to us). Mainstream schools only (special, AP/PRU, hospital schools excluded).

* 2014/15 data should only be compared within year, not year-on-year, because DfE identified and corrected a double-counting error from the 2015/16 data year onwards. In 2014/15 this double counting resulted in a national apprenticeship rate c. 1%pt higher than in the corrected data.

** Government data not available from the Compare School Performance site for this year, so sourced from the KS4 destinations site.

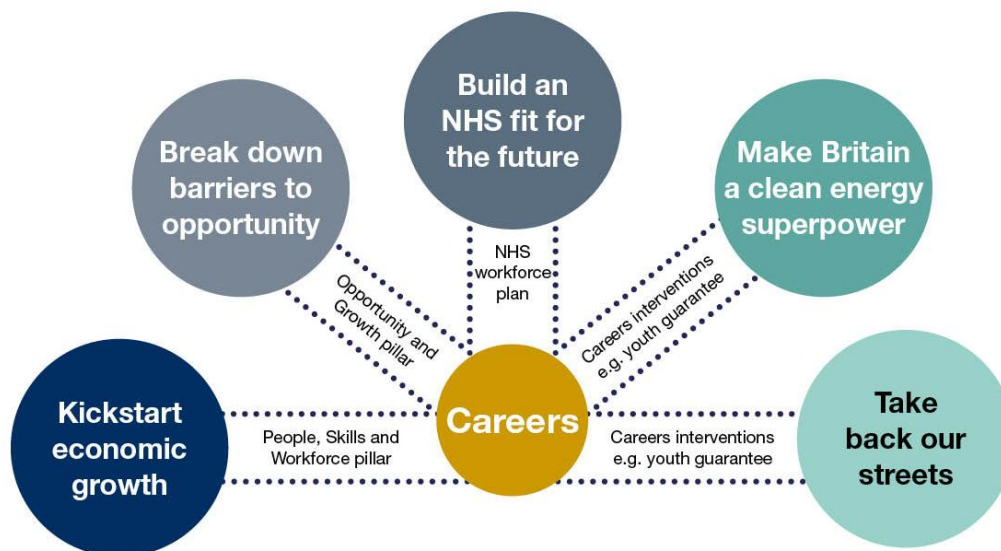
3.19 By focusing on areas of greatest need, the Clusters and the Hubs aim to raise awareness, promote equity and create positive change for young Londoners. The goal is to enable them to access meaningful and sustainable career opportunities in an increasingly complex labour market. As these initiatives strive to bridge the gap between education and industry, they face the challenge of navigating an increasingly volatile and unpredictable socio-economic landscape. A quote from the Call for Evidence below summarises this point well.

3.20 More broadly, the Labour Government’s ambition Get Britain Working¹⁹ highlights that too many young people leave school without essential skills or the necessary support to succeed in the early stages of their careers. Nationally, the NEET rate for 16- to 24-year-olds has risen to 12.2%, up from 10.8% in July–September 2024²⁰, underscoring the urgent need for targeted interventions. Careers support for young people (and adults) is viewed by central government as a vital element in the successful delivery of all government missions – see Figure 7 below.

3.21 Examples of new national policies introduced by the current government that link with current and future CEIAG provision in London (and beyond) are detailed in Appendix 1. This includes plans for all-age careers provision, featuring a cohesive, community-rooted new *Jobs and Careers Service* that aligns with mayoral priorities, central government pathway plans, and initiatives such as Connect to Work²¹ and the DfE plan to recruit 1,000 trained and qualified Careers Advisers²².

“Given the ongoing changes to the labour market since 2021, we need to invest more, not less. The lack of suitable investment in CEIAG by the central government has made this challenging. Schools face inflationary pressures, decreasing available funds. Employer investment in CEIAG is also decreasing, reflecting reduced resources for ESG/Social Value/Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plans due to a tighter economy.”
(Respondent to Call for Evidence)

Figure 7: Careers support for young people and adults



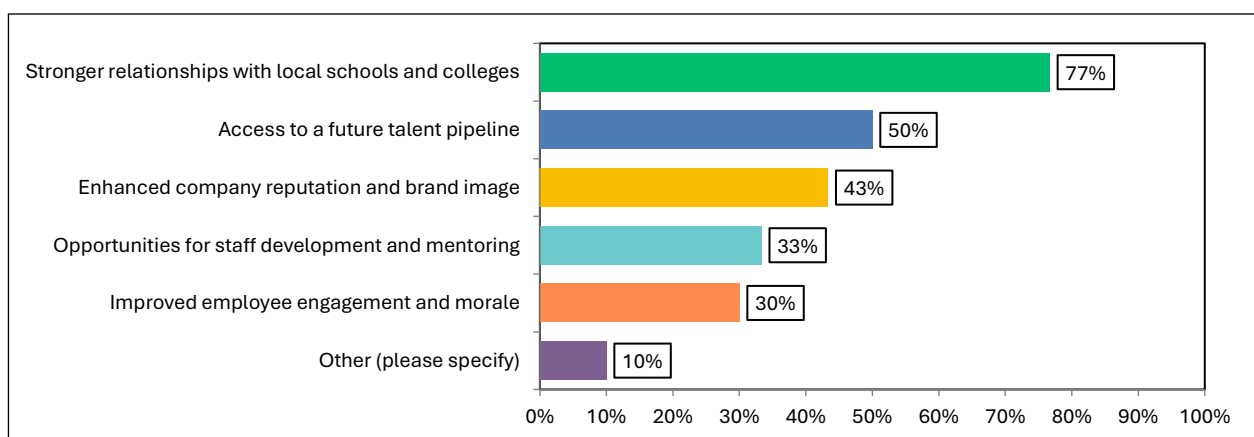
Source: DfE, CDI Conference, Birmingham (November 2024)

3.22 It is widely anticipated that central government may introduce new revised statutory guidance for CEIAG in schools and colleges. Additionally, there will be new requirements for schools and colleges to deliver 50 hours of quality work experience (equivalent of 2 weeks' worth) to every young person.²³ London has already prioritised the implementation of flexible work experience (WEX) programme, particularly for those most in need and lessons can be learned from this at a central, regional and local level.

3.23 Over the next five years, various policy drivers and trends will reshape opportunities, including changing demographics, evolving employment models, and advancements in artificial intelligence (AI). The shift towards net zero and a greener economy, along with transformations in education, health, and wellbeing, will also play a key role. These factors will impact how CEIAG is delivered and accessed across local communities and online platforms. Benefits for employers and training providers to be linked with the Clusters and Hubs.

3.24 London employers and training providers were asked in our survey, “What benefits has your organisation identified as a result of working with London Hubs and/or Careers Clusters?” The top response, given by 70% (n=23) of respondents, was stronger relationships with local schools and colleges. The second most common response was access to a future talent pipeline chosen by 45% (n=14) as shown in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: What benefits has your organisation identified as a result of working with Hubs and/or Careers Clusters?



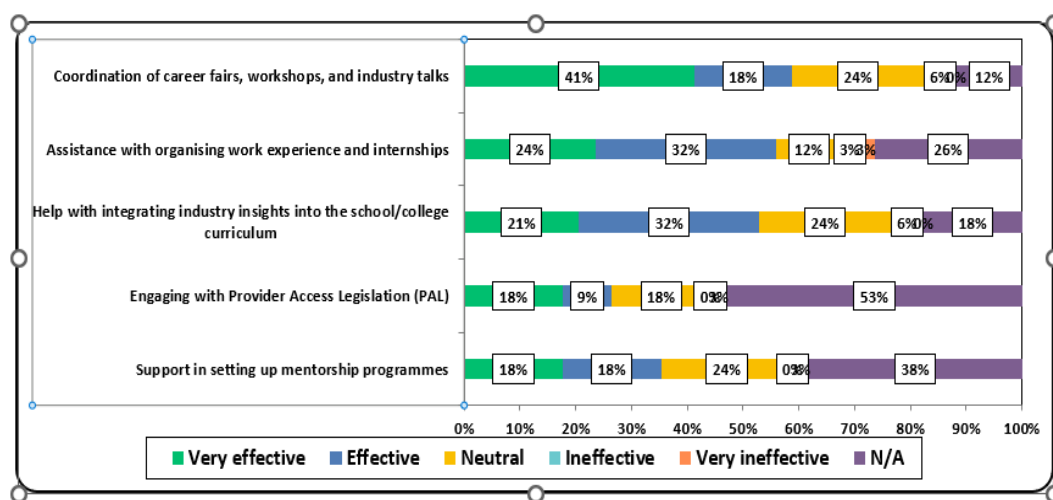
3.25 *These reported benefits mirror similar findings from The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) ‘Now and Next’ report (March 2024)²⁴ as outlined below, whereby employers report that engaging with schools and colleges through Hubs helps them develop new talent pipelines.* The CEC highlights²⁵:

- Hubs can work with LSIPs, schools, colleges, and employers to fill local skills gaps. Employers can use the local knowledge of Hubs to target their outreach efforts and fill current and anticipated job vacancies.
- Employers can use Hubs to improve the quality of their interactions with students. The Employer Standards tool²⁶, which is particularly useful for SMEs, allows employers to assess and improve their outreach programmes. Data from the tool can also inform sector- and region-specific engagement with employers.
- Engaging with students through Hubs helps employers encourage young people to pursue careers in their sector. 86% of employers reported that their engagement was having this positive effect. The most engaged employers, Cornerstone Employers, were more likely to see this benefit, at 91%.

“81% of employers participating in the CEC Employer Standards self-assessment reported that their engagement in education is helpful in creating new talent pipelines. This benefit increases to 92% for Cornerstone Employers, who are most engaged with the Hubs.” (Extract – The CEC from outreach to intake: the business case. Employer Standards for Careers Education – One year on.)

3.26 *Respondents were asked, “In the past 2.5 years, how effective was the support you received from London Hubs and Careers Clusters?”* As shown in Figure 9 below, the most popular response was coordination of career fairs, workshops, and industry talks, chosen by 44% (n=14) as the most effective support activity. This was followed by assistance with work experience and internships, noted by 22% (n=7) as being most effective. Some respondents indicated they had links with multiple initiatives.

Figure 9: *In the past 2.5 years, how effective was the support you received from Hubs and Careers Clusters?*



“So far, we have only worked with Hubs on insight events, workshops, careers fairs, and talks, and they have been incredible!” (Survey respondent)

3.27 *From the survey, in terms of benefits to their staff, employers and training providers reported that linking to the former Clusters and the Hubs in London had an impact on staff training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD):*

- 24% (n=8) indicated it helped significantly.
- 21% (n=7) said it helped moderately.
- 30% (n=10) stated it helped slightly.
- 12% (n=4) reported it did not help at all.

3.28 The Hubs and the legacy from the Clusters' work play a pivotal role by fostering collaboration, enhancing support for schools and colleges, and driving improvements in the co-design and co-delivery of CEIAG across London. The Clusters and Hubs delivered a significant volume of activity for young people, with recording on individual activities supported by grants captured principally between July 2020 and September 2023 (the former Clusters) and between January 2022 and August 2023 (the Hubs):

- 30,139 students participations were recorded against insight activities/employer encounters.
- 7,070 student participations were recorded against work placements/workplace experiences.
- The Clusters also reported 1,313 teachers participating in enrichment/CPD activities.

Their activities engaged a large number of employers, with reporting primarily focused on SMEs due to the requirements of project grants from the European Social Fund (ESF).

4.0 The Careers Clusters

4.1 This section reviews the work of the Clusters and key findings from one-to-one interviews with the Cluster Leads, group discussions, surveys and Call for Evidence responses. It highlights lessons learned, showcasing good and innovative practices to help shape and enhance the London Careers Programme both now and in the future. For an overview of the initiatives undertaken by each of the Clusters, refer to Appendix 2.

4.2 The aims and objectives of the Clusters were for each to work with a group of around ten secondary schools and colleges to develop innovative solutions to addressing gaps or weak spots in careers provision. The GLA funding for the projects ceased in late August 2023 as at that point ESF funding ceased.

The ten Clusters were led by a combination of public, private and charitable sector organisations. Their focus on supporting young people with a higher level of need included a wider range of *delivery* activities.

Objectives

- Support for schools and colleges²⁷ to improve their careers offer and produce an employer-endorsed careers strategy
- Support teachers in schools and colleges to understand and use London's labour market information
- A 26-week sustained pilot project activity to develop innovative approaches to support careers education
- Work experience placements for students
- Engagement and support for SMEs to take part in activities.

4.3 The Clusters' work took place during a difficult period (during the Covid-19 pandemic and the second national lockdown in early 2021). However, challenges experienced were largely resolved. They delivered around 200 employer-led pilot projects to bring innovation to the London careers programme. Over 4,600 student work placements, workplace experiences, paid internships were delivered. There were 743 activity participations with employers, of which at least 362 were for SMEs.

4.4 The Clusters were funded through ESF Priority Axis 2.2 – supporting SMEs to successfully complete projects which increase employer engagement in skills provision. They each began with an in-depth needs analysis with local schools (and colleges involved in the Diverso SEND Cluster delivered by Talentino on behalf of the GLA)²⁸ to identify careers education gaps; they all delivered work experience and delivered a wide range of other tailored programmes as outlined in Table 2 – See Appendix 2.

Example activities included 5-day work experiences (both virtual and physical), employer talks, site visits, work insights days, and careers carousels. They also gathered declarations/claims from 297 SME employer activities testifying to specific benefits, being 93% of all SMEs reported as participating.

4.5 Ten Clusters were led by a combination of public, private and charitable sector organisations – refer to Appendix 2.

Of the ten Careers Clusters:

- Three Clusters focused on specific sectors:
 - *Pan Out 2* (hospitality), led by Rinova
 - *Build Your Future* (construction), led by the Construction Youth Trust
 - *Waltham Forest* (digital and creative), led by the London Borough of Waltham Forest
- One Cluster provided specialist support for FE Colleges and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND):
 - *Diverso*, led by Talentino
- The remaining six Clusters - *Croydon* (led by Education Development Trust), *Inspire My Careers* (Let Me Play / LMP Education), *Local Futures* (15 Billion EBP), *Hillingdon* (Education Development Trust), *Expanding Horizons*, *Raising Aspirations* (London Borough of Hounslow 14–19 Service), and *Young Careers* (Reed in Partnership) - delivered a broad and consistent range of activities, including:
 - Work experience placements (WEX)
 - Employer engagement
 - Labour market information (LMI)
 - Career guidance informed by employer insight
 - Connecting students to local career opportunities.

4.6 All the partnerships anticipated that their outputs might support others to undertake CEIAG and community collaboration and generate a broader impact.

Seven critical success factors: (i) being responsive to school staff, employers and their practical needs (undertaking a needs and gap analysis), (ii) integration of careers into the curriculum, (iii) deep sector-specific partnerships established, (iv) workplace visits for students and teachers, (v) school and employer-based work experience programmes, (vi) flexible placements, particularly for those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and those in Alternative Provision and (vii) micro-businesses and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) offering students experiences of and exposure to the world of work.

We've taken the model and now work with employers as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) to deliver to young people." (Careers Cluster Lead)

What volume of employer engagement has been delivered through Clusters and Hubs?

4.7 Both Clusters and the Hubs provided significant amounts of employer engagement activity, some of which was captured and reported as part of ESF funding requirements. An analysis of that reported data provides an indication of the high volumes of activity taking place during the time period covered by the reporting, principally between July 2020 and September 2023 (the Clusters) and between Jan 2022 and August 2023 (the Hubs).

4.7.1 Collectively, the Clusters recorded 12,371 students participating in insight activities such as careers talks, careers fairs, site visits, careers carousels, LMI sessions, assembly talks, and interview skills. A total of 4,635 students participated in work placements, and 1,313 teachers participated in teacher enrichment or CPD activities.

Table 2: Number of student and teacher participations by Cluster

	Student insight activity participation	Student work placement participation	Teacher enrichment/CPD participation
Approximate* Total	12,371	4,635	1,313

* Within limits of reporting accuracy and completeness of cluster-level reports.

4.7.2 The Clusters reported 743 activity participations with employers, of which at least 362 were for SMEs.

Example activities included 5-day work experiences (both virtual and physical), employer talks, site visits, and careers carousels.

Table 3: Number of employer activity participations by the Clusters

	Number of employer activity participations reported	Of which with confirmed SMEs
Total	743	362

4.8 The review of the Clusters provided valuable insights gained through in-depth interviews with each Cluster Lead and findings from the school and college survey.

The following key themes emerged as outlined below showcasing the innovative creativity and effectiveness of approaches designed to address diverse needs and drive meaningful outcomes. Quotes from Cluster Lead interviews are included below.

4.8.1 Integration of careers into the main curriculum, rather than treating them as standalone subjects, proved to have a greater impact:

“We found that integrating careers into the main curriculum, rather than treating them as standalone subjects, had a significantly greater impact. While Careers Leads are valuable, we discovered that Food Tech teachers were particularly responsive to our initiatives. By developing content—such as videos and activities—that was directly linked to the Food Tech curriculum, we engaged these teachers effectively. This approach proved to be key in enhancing the overall impact of our pilot.”

4.8.2 Deep sector-specific partnerships such as those focused for example, on construction or hospitality, enhanced delivery and relevance for students e.g. initiatives like 'employer engagement weeks,' which replaced traditional work experience with tailored sector activities and employer involvement:

“We developed a new approach called 'employer engagement weeks' to replace traditional work experience. Each week, we would bring together 30 young people per sector-specific stream and collaborate with a lead employer to tailor activities around their operations. Activities included site visits, talks from a range of employees, and involvement from other employers, which enriched the experience for the young participants and enhanced their CVs. Teachers who attended these sessions gained professional development, acquiring insights into different sectors. Additionally, we offered a variety of sector streams, which broadened the scope and impact of the initiative.”

“A central aim of our pilots was to enhance labour market relevance in Careers Education, Information, Advice, and Guidance (CEIAG) in schools and colleges across Hillingdon. We specifically concentrated on the Logistics and Construction sectors, reflecting the priorities of local employers and stakeholders. This focus was informed by the anticipated significant growth of these sectors in Hillingdon, largely due to the

expansion of Heathrow Airport. Our approach was supported by an ongoing review of local labour market information throughout the project, ensuring our efforts were aligned with current and future needs.”

4.8.3 Workplace visits for students and teachers were reported as highly impactful:

“Workplace visits have proven to be extremely impactful, and the presence of a teacher during these visits offers numerous added benefits including CPD for the teacher. We collaborated closely with the career leader to design a visit that was tailored to meet both the specific needs of the school and the pupils. This approach ensured that the experience was not only enriching for the students but also aligned with their curriculum.”

4.8.4 School and employer-based work experience programmes were in demand, alongside a requirement for additional resources:

“We developed an in-school work experience programme facilitated by employers. Approximately 30 different volunteers took part in activities over 5 days in school. We succeeded in making this in-school experience as close to real work experience as possible. It is project and task led and supported by volunteers from 9am on Monday to 4pm Friday. It’s a model that’s still used today and has been a real success story. It really compliments school’s traditional work experience programmes for young people in need of more support and who would struggle to access conventional work experience.” A Careers Cluster Lead.

“We worked with HMRC Croydon to initially develop virtual and then face to face work experience. Now, HMRC has extended a model developed within the cluster to all schools in Croydon.” (Careers Cluster Lead)

4.8.5 Flexible placements proved highly successful by offering more dynamic, multi-day experiences rather than traditional single-employer work placement:

“In our experience, work placements aligned with students’ courses, particularly in Year 13, have been highly successful in colleges. In contrast, schools tended to prefer a traditional work experience format. We introduced flexible placements that spanned experience weeks instead of a conventional five-day stint with a single employer. This approach included initiatives like a town hall takeover, where more than 50 students engaged in activities at the council. Additionally, we facilitated activities such as a project with Microsoft, where they worked with SEND learners to explore the accessibility of their products while also teaching coding.” A Careers Cluster Lead.

4.8.6 Targeted Work with Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) enabling bespoke approaches:

“Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and pupils with additional needs in mainstream schools face significant challenges due to limited resources, staff, and funding, creating a strong demand for intensive, tailored support. To address this, we piloted projects in two PRUs, supported by GLA funding, enabling bespoke approaches such as individual meetings to customise work experience placements and workshops led by trained employer volunteers on interview preparation. A standout initiative was the Morgan Sindel construction pilot, combining hands-on workshops with CV-building sessions, showcasing the value of integrating practical skills with career readiness support.” A Careers Cluster Lead.

“In schools there is a difference in understanding / appetite around post-16 and post-18 apprenticeships and pathways. The language used is loaded. There’s a belief that staying in school or pursuing a technical pathway is linked to intelligence that is not true. The perception of higher-level apprenticeships is shifting – schools are recognising and appreciating how competitive and in demand these are. The university badge on higher apprenticeships has helped shift opinions of schools positively.” (Careers Cluster Lead)

4.8.7 **The importance of micro- businesses and SMEs in supporting the engagement of SEND students:**

“By demonstrating flexibility, responsiveness, and an understanding of their unique needs, our SEND Cluster built strong, lasting relationships with some colleges and many micro-businesses and SMEs who were eager to extend their working links supporting vulnerable young people.” A Careers Cluster Lead.

4.8.8 **Being responsive to school staff and their practical needs:**

“Two key innovations emerged from our pilots. The first was prioritising listening, drawing on the expertise of school staff who best understand their students’ needs to design tailored, bespoke interventions. The second was fostering collaboration with employers to integrate real-world workplace scenarios into the school curriculum, making learning more practical, relevant, and enriched with industry insights.” A Careers Cluster Lead.

4.9 Survey findings from schools and colleges showed nearly half of schools and colleges respondents were either involved in the Clusters (21%) or uncertain about their participation (27%). This highlights potential gaps in awareness or communication:

- 21% (n=23) of schools and colleges reported being involved in the Careers Clusters.
- 27% (n=29) were unsure of their involvement.

4.10 Of the 21 respondents involved in the Clusters, 29% (n=6) highlighted the importance of the support they received from the Clusters as a key success factor. Comments emphasised assistance with work experience, employer contacts, collaboration opportunities, and local partnerships between schools. For example:

“Support with work experience and new employer contacts.”

“The school has received extensive support and opportunities.”

“Opportunities for employer meetings and collaboration.”

“Local collaboration between schools.”

“Sharing good practices and ideas with other special schools in the Cluster.”

4.11 Several Clusters directly reported positive feedback from employers who valued their involvement in the school projects. For example, 100% of employers in the Croydon and Hillingdon Clusters indicated that they would recommend the programme to other businesses. The Clusters that maintained strong partnerships with local employers and stakeholders were more effective in delivering for subregional and regional needs.

“Employers, as a result of work with the Cluster are now working with Alternative Providers and SEND schools.”

4.12 In some areas, such as West London, there was a smooth transition from the Cluster to the Hub, as EDT had led the Cluster before taking over the Hub. This ensured continuity of services for schools and employers. In Clusters like Hounslow, collaboration between local education partnerships, employers, and the local authority fostered strong regional engagement, with programmes tailored to the specific needs of the area’s disadvantaged young people:

“We worked very closely with Hubs when they were created, and they carried on some of our work.”

“We always invited the Hub leads to termly catch-up meetings with schools, and when they came, it was beneficial.”

What did the Clusters do to promote Provider Access Legislation, and promote apprenticeships and technical pathways?

4.13 Several of the Clusters delivered tailored continuous professional development (CPD) sessions for careers leaders to demystify the Provider Access Legislation (PAL) and promote apprenticeships and technical

education pathways. For instance, the Pan Out 2 hospitality Cluster hosted CPD sessions across five schools to help Careers Leaders better understand and promote these pathways. In addition, the Clusters actively engaged apprenticeship providers to run workshops, offering students, parents, and educators insights through success stories and direct interactions with current apprentices, creating relatable role models for students:

"We can definitely see a shift in the understanding of Careers Leaders of PAL, Apprenticeships and technical pathways."

"We delivered CPD across five schools to demystify PALs. We also targeted schools that said they only had a few young people for whom apprenticeships would be appropriate."

4.14 The colleges were noted to be proactive in integrating vocational and technical educational pathways into their curricula. However, Cluster Leads highlighted ongoing challenges in how vocational and technical education is generally perceived within schools.

4.15 Teachers in schools were reported as having limited understanding of the workings and benefits of apprenticeships and technical education (ATE), coupled with a perceived cultural bias favouring academic routes. This hindered wider acceptance of these pathways. In some instances, schools were directing students 'at risk of NEET' to technical routes, reinforcing the misconception that these pathways are for struggling students rather than valuable, competitive career options. However, there were some seeds of hope, as illustrated above. The Clusters identified the potential to target younger students, especially in Key Stage 3, to introduce technical pathways early in their educational journey, before they commit to traditional academic tracks and to support GCSE decision-making.

4.16 Parental influence also plays a significant role in shaping students' career choices. To address outdated perceptions, several clusters held parent webinars, with one particularly successful pan-London webinar raising awareness of technical education and attracting significant participation. Despite these efforts, resistance remains in some schools, particularly those with a strong focus on academic routes, where senior leadership buy-in is crucial to promoting apprenticeships and technical pathways.

Barriers

4.17 Interviews with Cluster Leads highlighted key challenges faced during the project included high staff turnover, school capacity issues, transport barriers, and difficulties with employer engagement. Frequent turnover of Career Leaders resulted in delays and a lack of continuity, while competing school priorities and budget constraints, especially post-COVID, led to reduced involvement or last-minute withdrawals. Transport limitations further hindered students' access to events, particularly in remote or poorly connected areas, and some employers were hesitant to commit to in-person or virtual activities, adding pressure to cluster resources:

"Relationship management was needed with employers to manage expectations. Matching relatable role models to the right schools was tricky."

"Some schools were difficult to reach by public transport, which meant they couldn't access some opportunities."

"There were 8 or 9 staff changes across the Cluster, with 2 or 3 changes in some schools. Schools couldn't maintain engagement with the turnover."

4.18 Role confusion compounded by a lack of senior leadership team (SLT) buy-in. Some schools and colleges struggled with unclear expectations around the roles and responsibilities of the Clusters and the Hubs, which led to misalignment of expectations.

"Senior Leadership Team (SLT) engagement was not a KPI but on reflection it should have been – they are the decision makers – the enablers but also can put barriers in the way."

4.19 Data sharing also posed major challenges, with confusion around ownership and permissions hindering smooth transitions and continuity between Clusters and Hubs. This highlights the need for clearer guidelines and better coordination.

"We asked students permission to share their Gatsby self-assessment scores. We asked Careers Leads if they could go directly to Hubs and request this data. We went all the way to the top of CEC and our request was denied due to GDPR – even though we had written permissions from schools to access this."

"There was some confusion over the information sharing at the end of the Cluster, for example, Hubs can't share the Compass results, and they were unsure if the Clusters could share contacts with the Hubs. This could have been improved." (Careers Cluster Lead)

What good practice is there in terms of delivery partner structure/ relationships?

4.20 Some Clusters, like those focused on the construction or hospitality sectors, developed deep sector-specific partnerships that enhanced delivery and relevance for students. These partnerships helped students gain practical, hands-on experience in high-demand industries.

"The employers engaged were very supportive – especially the SMEs who were particularly good at engaging SEN students".

4.21 The importance of micro-businesses and SMEs in supporting the engagement of SEND students was identified as a critical success factor. These businesses were particularly good at being flexible and adapting to the needs of SEND students. This suggests that deliberately targeting these types of businesses as partners in delivering careers programmes can be highly effective, because they may be more willing and able to provide the personalised support and attention that these students require.

"The SEND schools were initially negative and concerned the project wouldn't understand their needs or be able to deliver for their students. They couldn't see how it would work (their students working in hospitality). However, at the end of the project the schools that wanted the project to continue the most were the SEND schools."

What has been the longer-term sustainability of the Cluster projects?

4.22 There are some positive legacy projects e.g. SME engagement often continued, some clusters developed innovative models that continued. Innovative models, such as in-school work experience, were developed to offer flexible, real-world career activities, benefiting students in SEND or PRU settings.

"HMRC continued to offer all Croydon schools a model that was developed within the cluster. They are now offering this work experience, and we continue to support them."

"The in-school work experience program we developed is still used today and has been a real success story. It complements traditional work experience for young people who need more support."

Programmes like the Careers Cluster Legacy in Hounslow²⁹ demonstrate the value of sustained partnerships between schools, colleges and employers:

"As part of the Hounslow Careers Cluster we commissioned the 'Love Your Career' Platform. The platform was built to enable the hosting of our first-ever live virtual careers fair during the pandemic. The event was a remarkable success with over 60 businesses taking part, 18 colleges and HEIs and 17 Hounslow Alumni. With a total 2,571 students and parents attending and 188 live careers conversations with employers."

"We have a Careers Cluster Legacy programme in Hounslow where we are driving more sustained employer engagement with schools." (Careers Cluster Lead)

"We have employers based on site working with students, and an on-site job centre."

The school and college survey respondents, indicated sustainability of previously funded provision varied, as indicated below:

- 20% (n=4) managed to sustain the previously funded provision
- 45% (n=9) sustained some of the provision
- 35% (n=7) sustained very little provision.

“Overall, at least 65% of respondents managed to sustain all or some of the provision after the funding ceased.”

4.23 Most were effective in creating long-term partnerships. For example, in Croydon, HMRC continued offering work experience, and smaller businesses, initially disengaged from schools but were convinced to participate again through proactive Cluster engagement. These relationships have continued post-Cluster, underscoring the potential for sustainability in SME/school partnerships. These partnerships highlight the potential for sustained impact when strong relationships are built.

“The majority of employers connected with the cluster are still engaged with the Hubs and the schools.”

“We’ve taken the model and now work with employers as part of their CSR to deliver to young people.”

4.24 While some Clusters secured additional funding from sources like the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, funding consistency remained a challenge. Clusters' reliance on external grants and employer goodwill raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of these efforts. Funding limitations have been a barrier with sustainability fragile - a more strategic, long-term funding model was and remains essential.

“We gained funding from the Borough to continue delivery of the work experience model offering young people a week of experience in a sector. We just put in a 3-year bid to continue this.”

“It’s a constant battle to access consistent funding. We rely heavily on the goodwill of employers and grants to keep delivering. The end of the Clusters coincided with huge budget cuts / restrictions in schools.”

What was the impact of different elements of programme management and grant structure?

4.25 The late confirmation of contracts, particularly during the summer, created challenges for schools, leaving insufficient time to plan and integrate career-related programmes into their academic schedules. As schools typically plan activities well in advance, ideally in the Spring, this delay resulted in missed opportunities, delayed engagement, and potential loss of impact. It is important to note this all took place during and after Covid and since then key lessons have been taken on board by the GLA.

4.26 To improve future programmes, it is suggested that grant structures and timelines should align more closely with the academic year to allow schools to effectively plan and deliver career activities from Spring onwards. The UKSPF contracts were issued on time but the funding timeframe did not match the school/academies timeframe for organising work experience. This is something the GLA is aware of and working with; however, some new funding streams are set outside of their control e.g. central government new initiatives.

“The contract awarding process didn’t align with school times—we were unable to deliver in the first term as the contract was only confirmed in the summer.” (Careers Cluster Lead)

4.27 Careers Clusters highlighted missed opportunities for more collaboration/shared learning with other Clusters and Hubs. It was noted there were GLA Strand level meetings but not everyone was aware of this or actively involved.

“The programme didn’t include a clear structure where we can all come together to hear what others have done. And we didn’t have a platform. There was no way for us to keep the network going!”

4.28 A recurring issue was the emphasis on hitting numerical targets rather than focusing on the quality of engagement, leading to confusion and a focus on meeting goals rather than delivering optimal outcomes for students. It was noted that not all Careers Clusters met the GLA requirements' set out in the programme handbooks, which are aligned with European Social Fund (ESF) regulations. As soon as the Careers Clusters were moved to the GLA Careers Team, regular project meetings covered evidence requirements and brought all the providers together regularly.

"The number of students we could reach was reduced by the additional needs of the students. Large group activities that would 'hit' the number targets were not going to be an option. This was a problem for the GLA. Although the percentage of students from each school that engaged was high, the actual numbers were lower than initially planned. The GLA continually challenged the 'numbers' required."

For ESF auditing purposes, where any identified irregularities within a single Careers Cluster project this had the potential to be extrapolated across the entire ESF programme, resulting in financial implications. As a result, it was essential to exercise the highest level of diligence and compliance throughout the process.

4.29 Some Careers Clusters also faced challenges with the rigidity of GLA contracts which were aligned to ESF regulations, particularly regarding work experience models. For example, the requirement for in-person 5-day placements clashed with employer preferences for virtual or hybrid models.

"We created a new model of 'employer engagement weeks' to replace traditional work experience. We would take groups of up to 30 young people to work with a lead employer and tailored the week around the employer. The model addresses the need and is realistic. A challenge we faced was the GLA target of every young person completing a 5-day placement – this was a rigid target that didn't best meet the needs of all the young people"

4.30 Despite these challenges, Careers Clusters generally praised the GLA's contract management team for their support and responsiveness in navigating complex contractual requirements.

"The GLA contract hoops we had to jump through were challenging, but the GLA contracts team was very reasonable and supportive."

"We can't fault our GLA contract manager. We felt they understood the young person was at the centre and the importance of delivering a quality and personalised service, however they were having to work within the rigid requirements e.g. ESF requirements and audit regime. She supported us to evidence what was needed and get the project over the line. She came along and saw our delivery on a few occasions. We felt she was invested in the programme. The consistency of having her from start to finish...Having the GLA contract manager visit some of our activities meant she was invested in and understood the programme we were delivering."

"Lessons learned from this experience were taken on board by the GLA with a smoother contractual and more flexible delivery arrangement for the work experience programme that followed the Careers Clusters. The new payment model for work experience has a partial payment if a student does not complete 5 days, as well as a full payment for 5 days."
(Careers Cluster Lead)

4.31 The Clusters achieved many successes, and in recognition of their significant impact, some providers have continued their work, leaving a lasting and positive legacy. However, the majority of Clusters had minimal or ineffective engagement with the Hubs (with the exception of West London), operating in silos rather than as fully integrated local CEIAG connected partners. Even where collaboration existed, this was often limited due to the Hubs and CEC data sharing restrictions with other providers (including the GLA) working in the same local educational institutions, pointing to a need to revisit this topic and for stronger communication, collaboration and cooperation. In essence, when funding switched from

the European Social Fund (ESF) to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), this created challenges and opportunities for everyone involved. The shift from the Careers Clusters model to a Work Experience (WEX) model was driven, in part, by UKSPF funding requirements, as well as a Mayoral team commitment to increasing work experience opportunities for all young Londoners. This was described as a positive development.

5.0 The Hubs

5.1 In this section we consider the work of the London Hubs and review key findings from one-to-one interviews with Hub Leads, survey responses, Call for Evidence submissions, and group discussions with Cornerstone Employers and other key stakeholders. We highlight lessons learned, showcasing good and innovative practices to inform and enhance the London Careers Programme both now and in the future.

5.2 ***As indicated earlier, the Hubs face unique challenges compared to those in other regions.*** They face distinct challenges due to the city's size, diversity, and varied communities. A one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective. While London offers abundant career opportunities, the volume of information can overwhelm schools, academies, and colleges striving to meet Gatsby Benchmark requirements, supported by central and local government.

5.3 ***London Hubs were introduced four years after the Department for Education (DfE) and The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) launched the first wave of Hubs*** in 2018. This delay has given London Hubs less time to embed their structures, build partnerships, and demonstrate sustained impact compared to earlier-established Hubs. The CEC has agreed more tailored and flexible KPIs that better respond to London's specific needs. To some extent they are still in their infancy. Some Careers Hub Leads highlighted initial challenges and unexpected delays in recruiting staff. This slowed down early progress, but steps have now been taken to overcome this. Despite this, the Hubs have made significant progress, particularly in targeting areas of greatest need and fostering partnerships between schools, colleges and employers.

"The Hubs in London serve as 'a filter and strategic coordinator', streamlining information and opportunities for schools, academies, colleges, and employers to ensure accessibility and active engagement in high-quality CEIAG provision."(Careers Hub Lead)

5.4 ***The overall aim of the Hubs is to raise quality in CEIAG provision, drive experiences with employers, boost skills pathways, tackle disadvantage and connect careers to local and regional economic need.***

Objectives:

- To raise the quality of careers provision against Gatsby Benchmarks.
- To provide more high-quality experiences with employers.
- To amplify apprenticeship, technical and vocational routes.
- To target interventions for economically disadvantaged young people (free schools meals and those who face barriers).
- To connect careers provision in schools and colleges to the needs of local economies.

5.5 ***The London Hubs are co-funded by the GLA and the Department for Education (DfE) through The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) via an annual licence agreement (Strand 1), alongside the Mayors' ESF Co-Financing Programme in partnership with The CEC.*** The latter (Strand 2) focused on employability activities with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) supported by the Hubs to increase employer engagement in education, work insight and employability events, projects and SME participation. The two strands of the Hubs funded

activity involved ESF outputs (as below) but the key performance indicators (KPIs) around Gatsby Benchmarks (GB) 5 - Encounters with Employers and Employees, and GB 6 – Experiences of Workplaces are a better reflection of what the Hubs were doing.

- *Strand 1*
 - Number of SMEs with an Enterprise Adviser working with a school/college.
 - Number of SMEs with an Enterprise Adviser that completes at least 26-weeks working with their school/college.
 - Number of Enterprise Advisers from SMEs supported through project activities.
- *Strand 2*
 - Minimum of 22 micro/SMEs complete project activity. Evidenced through each SME completing a minimum of three employability activities and the SME confirming benefit from project activity.

5.6 The Hubs reported 17,768 student participations in employer encounters and 2,435 participations in workplace experiences as part of their reporting for ESF-funded projects, principally between January 2022 and August 2023.

We emphasise that total activity is larger than these figures, because not all activity stopped at the end of the funding/reporting period. Aligning these categories approximately with student insights and work placements from the Careers Cluster project reporting (Table 2), the combined totals across Hubs and Clusters in project reports shared for this evaluation are approximately 30,139 students participations in insight activities/employer encounters and approximately 7,070 student participations in work placements/workplace experiences. The reports available to this evaluation do not provide data on any teacher CPD delivered via the Hubs over this period.

“All four London Hubs share a unified mission: To enhance and improve the range and quality of CEIAG provision by connecting schools, colleges, and employers within their respective geographical areas and on a pan-London basis.” (Careers Hubs Leads)

The Hubs’ goals, include five broad themes raise quality, drive experiences with employers, boost skills pathways, tackle disadvantage and connect careers to economic needs and range of key performance indicators (KPIs). These are aligned with objectives set by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC). This is designed to ensure that the Careers Hub's activities contribute to the broader goals of improving experiences and outcomes for young Londoners. Each Hub tracks engagement metrics using Power Bi such as the number of institutions supported, employer partnerships established, volunteer Enterprise Advisers (EAs) recruited, CEIAG activities supported etc.

5.7 Overall, the structure and management of the Hubs are designed to ensure local responsiveness, while maintaining strategic alignment with citywide goals towards focusing on those disadvantaged and improving economic and social mobility. See the Table 4 below for an outline of the staffing structure and examples of key activities as at early February 2025.

Table 4: London Hubs (as of February 2025 – includes schools and colleges in the process of being onboarded, based on figures provided by The Hub Leads)

Central London Careers Hub ³⁰ - Managed by Reed in Partnership.	South London Careers Hub ³¹ - Managed by the South London Partnership	East London Careers Hub ³² - Managed by Local London Strategic Partnership	West London Careers Hub ³³ - Managed by the Education Development Trust (EDT)
• Careers Hub Lead (1) • Operational Hub Leads (3) • Enterprise Co-ordinators (11.5) • Enterprise Employer Engagement Coordinator (1) • Project Officer Manager (1) • Enterprise Advisers (444) • Schools and Colleges actively engaged (239) • Cornerstone Employers (10)	• Careers Hub Lead (1) • Operational Hub Lead (1) • Enterprise Co-ordinators (4.5) • Enterprise Employer Engagement Coordinator (1) • Project / Admin Officer (vacancy) • Enterprise Advisers (87) • Schools and Colleges actively engaged (101) • Cornerstone Employers (9)	• Careers Hub Lead (1) • Operational Hub Leads (2) • Enterprise Co-ordinators (10) • Employer Engagement Enterprise Co-ordinator (1) • Project Manager - multiple projects (0.5) • Enterprise Advisers (148) • Schools and Colleges actively engaged (219) • Cornerstone Employers (9)	• Careers Hub Lead (x1) • Operational Hub Leads (x2) • Enterprise Co-ordinators (9.5 fte, including a 1.5 fte SEND specialist) • Project Officer Admin (1) • Enterprise Advisers (140) • Schools and Colleges actively engaged (175) • Cornerstone Employers (9)

5.8 In line with Strand 1 requirements, all Hubs actively recruit volunteer Enterprise Advisers (EAs) to offer strategic guidance and practical support for schools and colleges, as well as engaging with employers, employees and key partners to provide encounters with real-world career insights and opportunities. Each Hub has a Cornerstone Employers Group and Cornerstone Chair in place. Every Careers Hub has at least one initiative to improve the ability of young people to take up apprenticeship and technical education pathways and they produce labour market intelligence (LMI). They each have a Hub Delivery Fund that can be used flexibly to support effective transitions linked to positive destinations.

The KPIs set for each of the Hubs and agreed with the DfE and The CEC vary each year but the key ones include:

- *Promoting The CEC Future Skills Questionnaire* – intended outcomes linked to the Hubs’ support and ensuring young people are fully aware of apprenticeships by Year 11.
- *Learning and Development* – ensuring a learning and development plan is in place which reflects the needs of the Hub informed through the Careers Hub Strategic Improvement Plan and engages with The CEC blended L&D programme and attend all national face-to-face meetings with Hub Leads and Enterprise Coordinators.
- *Partnerships* – alignment of local and national providers and other programmes including the National Careers Service, the ASK programme, DWP and professionals outside the education workforce e.g. youth workers and local authority teams etc.
- *Cornerstone Employers* – chairs and their groups support the ongoing development of The CEC Employer Standards and development of resources. Cornerstone employers support Future Industry programmes contained within the London Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)³⁴ and provide guidance on how schools can reflect local skills needs in careers provision.
- *LSIP* – every Careers Hub should have a communication and delivery plan embedded within their Strategic Delivery Plan. Hubs will with employer input identify at least one core future industry and support schools to embed this within their careers education.

“The GLA has provided additional staffing so that London has additional resource to improve KPI performance and more rapidly catch up with the national average on KPI delivery.” (GLA)

- *Provide Access Legislation (PAL)* – support the implementation of PAL by communicating changes, co-ordinating providers and schools, supporting resources and tools, including Compass to track progress. Also, support schools and providers to record and deliver access requirements, including through bespoke resources and management of the procedure whereby providers can raise concerns.

5.9 In London, the Careers Hub Leads have close and highly successful mutually supportive working relationships. They share common goals and, where appropriate, collaborate closely on planning and co-production activities, such as LMI and Employer Guides³⁵; strategically supporting Careers Fairs and events e.g. Skills London³⁶; leveraging Power BI data³⁷ for tracking and improving engagement, the London LMI Start platform³⁸, quality assurance and CPD training etc. This approach had led to cost efficiency savings.

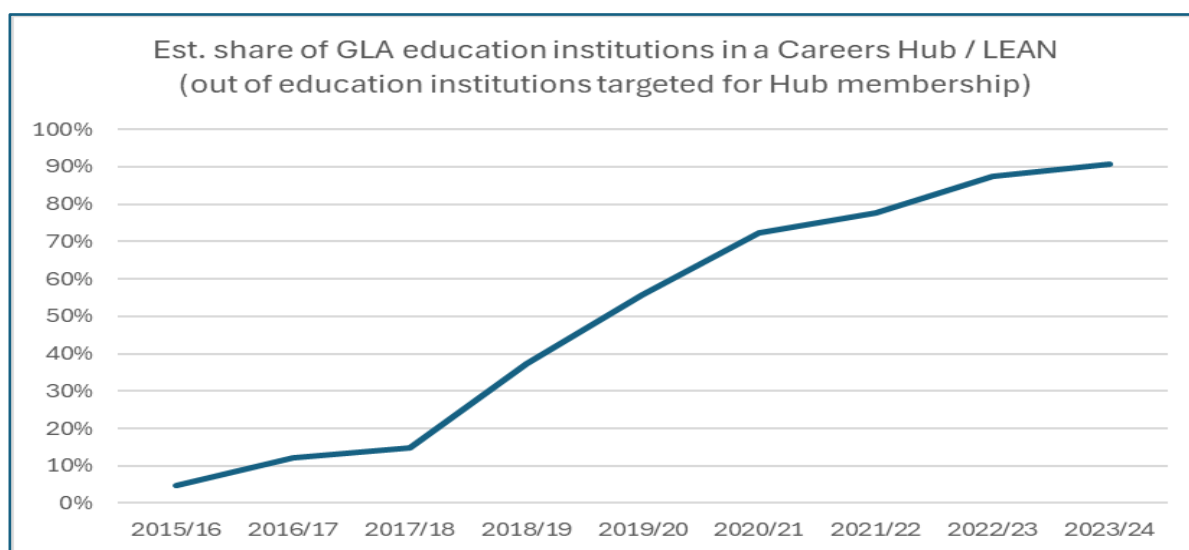
5.10 They each have a laser focus on key growth sectors in their area and across London supporting LSIP priorities³⁹. For example:

- **Central London Careers Hub:** Professional and Financial; Information and Communications; Arts, Entertainment and Recreation; Health & Social Care; Hospitality; and Retail.
- **East London Careers Hub:** Construction and Engineering; Health & Social Care; Digital & Creative; Manufacturing; Distribution and Logistics.
- **South London Careers Hub:** Health & Social Care; Construction and the Built Environment; Hospitality; Retail; Information and Communications; and Education.
- **West London:** Health & Social Care; Creative, Media & Film; Hospitality, Transport & Logistics, Retailing, and Manufacturing.

How has participation in the Hubs and LEAN evolved since 2015/16?

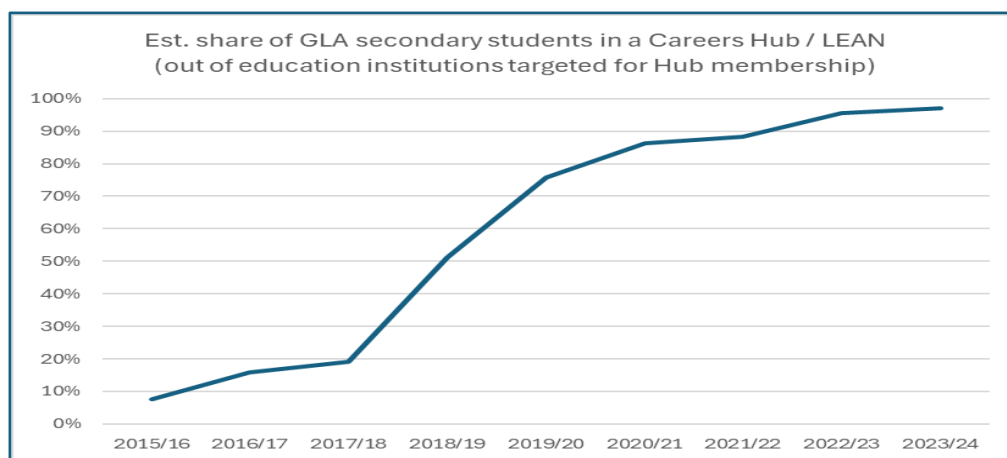
5.11 The GLA provided the joining date for each education institution (EI) participating in a Hub or the preceding London Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN)⁴⁰. This was from an earliest joining date of February 2016 through to July 2024. We compare this against a CEC-provided list of 766 EIs they prioritise for Hub membership, based on those which are eligible for CEC's reporting to the Department for Education as of November 2024.⁴¹ The results identify an estimated 91% of eligible Hub members already having joined London Hubs and LEAN as of end 2023/24, with particular rapid membership growth in 2018/19 to 2020/21.

Figure 10: Estimated share of GLA education institutions in a Hub / LEAN (out of education institutions targeted for Hub membership)



5.12 Considering the student perspective, an estimated 621,770 secondary education students in Hub target EIs) were already in Hub EIs as of end 2023/24.⁴² This represents 97% of the total, which is 641,000 students.

Figure 11: Estimated share of GLA education institutions in a Hub / LEAN (out of education institutions targeted for Hub membership)



5.13 Whilst there has been progress in raising awareness since 2021, it remains a challenge to ensure that schools and college headteachers, principals and careers leaders fully understand specific the roles and responsibilities of the Hubs and harness the expertise of Enterprise Advisers.

5.14 **Findings from Enterprise Advisers' volunteer engagement with schools and colleges across London indicate at least 706 were signed up within the Hubs network in September 2024.** Around this time, a national CEC survey was completed by 23% of EAs (n = 938), of which 158 were based in the London hubs. The following is a summary of the responses from the EAs based in the London hubs:

- On average, they spend 4 hours per month on their EA responsibilities.
- 75% (n = 119) of those who responded to the survey are active, meaning they have provided support to a school or college in the past 12 months.
- 37% (n = 58) have been an EA for less than 1 year, and 31% (n = 49) have been EAs for less than 2 years.
- 73% (n = 115) stated they are at least satisfied or very satisfied with the support they have received from the hub. This compares to the national figure of 80%. Note: This may be expected since the London hubs have been in place for a shorter time compared to the rest of the country.
- 71% (n = 111) are satisfied with their EA experience; 80% (n = 126) would recommend being an EA to others, and 78% (n = 123) are happy to continue in this role.
- 47% (n = 74) claim that the EA role has been helpful in improving the quality of careers provision in schools and colleges, and 63% agree that their work has helped support the school/college in achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks.

When asked, "How can their EA experience be improved?" the two most important answers from a list were (i) increase opportunities for collaboration and connection, and (ii) Improve induction and training.

Has CEIAG changed much in London in recent years?

5.15 **When asked in our schools and colleges survey, "In your opinion, has CEIAG for students in London changed between September 2021 and July 2024?" the responses were as follows:**

- 55% (n=53) reported this had improved.
- 16% (n=15) stated there was no change.
- 2% (n=2) thought this had declined.
- 27% (n=25) were unsure.

For those who were unsure, we do not know the reason for this, possibly they may have been new to the Careers Leader role. Selected comments include:

"Schools are taking more responsibility, which is the main driver of change. We are eager for more support, but it must be driven by expertise and links with local companies and schools if it is to be more successful." (Careers Hub Lead)

"It is now embedded in all lessons. There is a lot more free support from companies in terms of workshops and insight days."

"The Enterprise Co-ordinators (EAs) have improved; there are better resources available."

"For SEND students, there is more awareness and opportunities for them."

"More sharing of local opportunities and more online access to careers information."

"Improved slightly. Government funding needs to come directly to schools to be able to afford independent careers advisors, work experience, CEIAG platforms, and other resources."

These findings are broadly similar to the responses received from employers and training providers and Call for Evidence findings.

Collaboration between Education Institutions (EIs) and the Hubs

5.16 Survey results from schools and colleges reveal a generally positive experience of collaboration between EIs and the Hubs:

- 19% (n=20) rated collaboration as "excellent."
- 53% (n=56) rated it as "good."
- 23% (n=24) rated it as "fair."

Positive experiences include well-established partnerships, such as with local businesses and initiatives e.g. Camden STEAM and CLCH, which provide valuable student sessions. Challenges remain, as one respondent noted difficulties in independently building links with colleges and training providers.

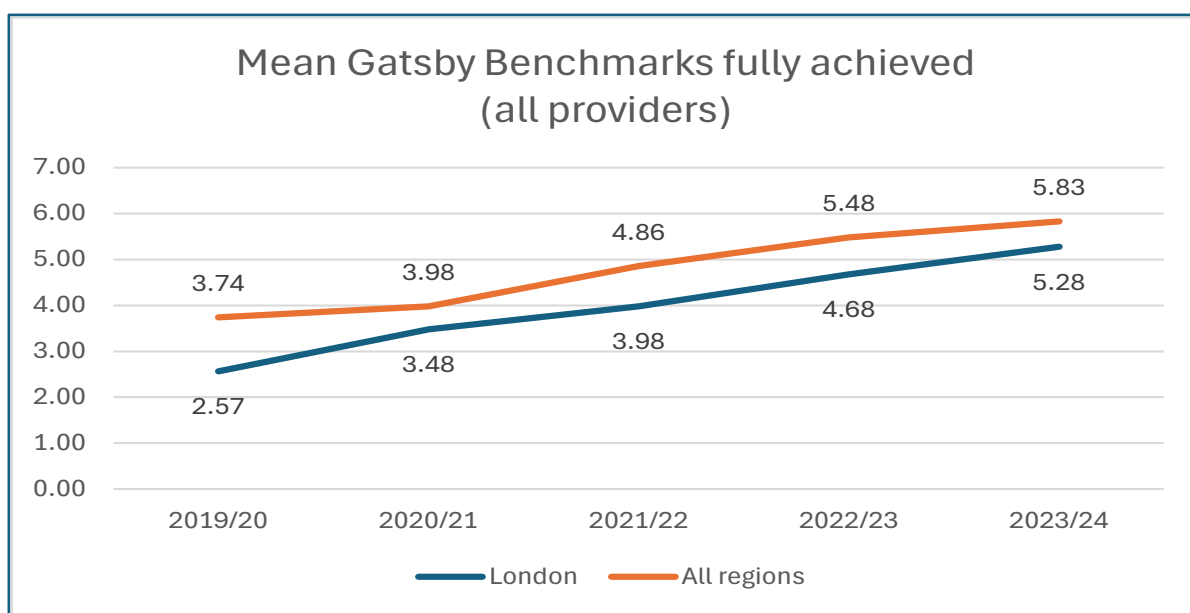
"We are trying to build links with local colleges and training providers but are very much doing this on our own at present." Also, "Work experience has built good relationships with local companies, but we would like links to bigger national companies."

How well has London progressed towards achievement of the eight Gatsby Benchmarks?

5.17 The self-assessed careers provision of London schools and colleges has improved every academic year from 2019/20 to 2023/24, from an average of 2.6 Gatsby Benchmarks fully achieved to 5.3.

The primary investment period of interest was academic year 2020/21 to 2023/24, beginning with Career Cluster project budgets from 2020. As a result, we compare the baseline Gatsby Benchmark achievement as reported in 2019/20 against the achievement reported in 2023/24. While some achievement might have occurred after the completion of Compass forms in early in 2023/24 while still being in the 2023/24 period for funding/impact, this is partly offset by the parallel discrepancy in the 2019/20 baseline data.

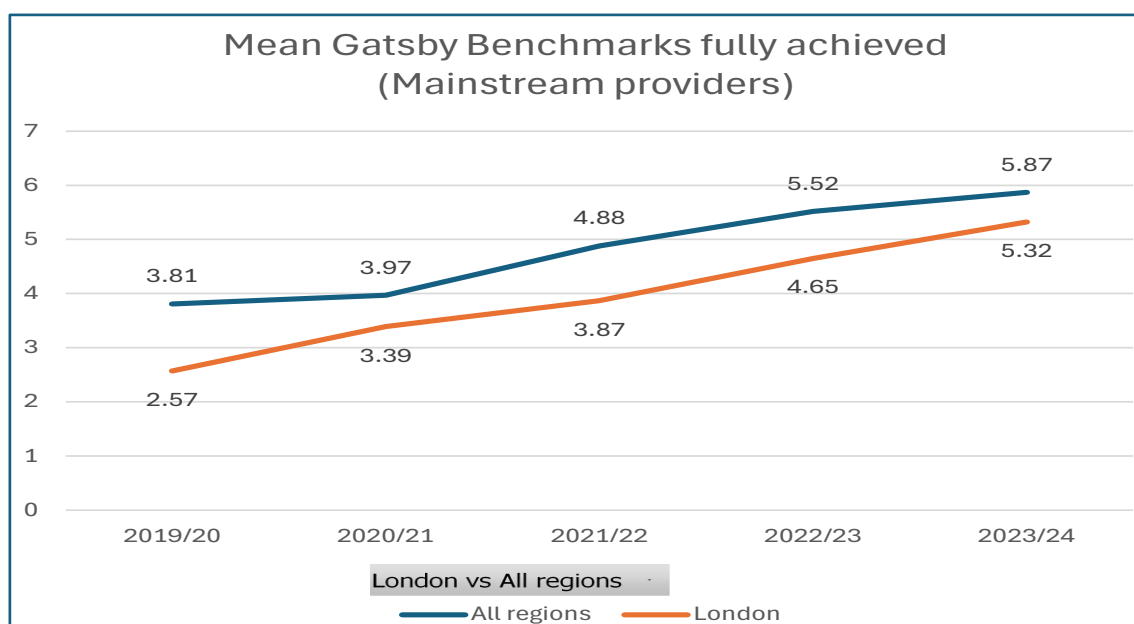
Figure 12: Mean Gatsby Benchmarks Fully Achieved (All Providers) (CEC data)



The comparison over time is imperfect as different sets of education providers might complete the self-assessment tool (Compass) in each academic year. However, the national trend has been for earlier adopters of the Compass tool to be more engaged with their careers provisions than later adopters. In other words, the average progress over time is understated by the inclusion of (at least initially) less career engaged providers in later cohorts. For the same reasons, the average level of provision is estimated to be lower than described in these statistics, especially during the early period, as not all secondary providers complete Compass. Nonetheless, Compass engagement rates have increased significantly among London providers from 311 to 664 over this time period, such that later years in particular provide very good coverage of all eligible institutions.

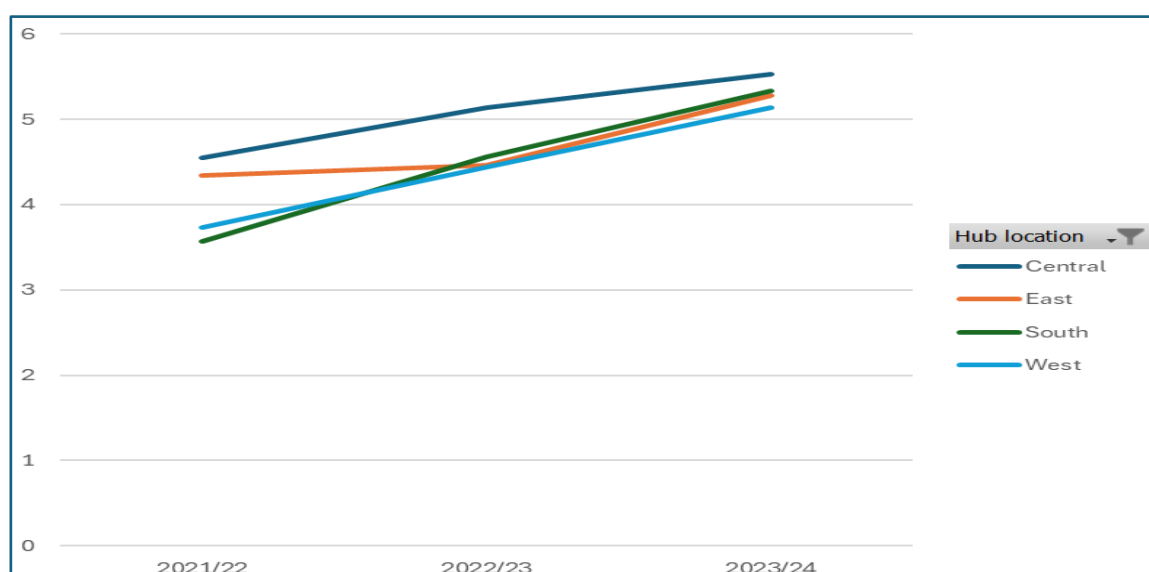
5.18 In general, the gap between London education institutions and the England-wide average has been narrowing slightly over time. Albeit with some inconsistencies in trend, with the gap closing strongest in Alternative Provision institutions (almost entirely closed) and weakest in FE/Post-16 (slight widening). For instance, 2023/24 is the academic year with the narrowest Gatsby Benchmark achievement gap (0.55) between mainstream schools in London and the England-wide average, based on the education institutions completing the Compass self-assessment tool in that academic year (results for other provider types can be found in Appendix 3).⁴³

Figure 13: Mean Gatsby Benchmarks Fully Achieved (Mainstream Providers) (CEC data)



5.19 Progress among Mainstream Providers is broadly similar across the four London Career Hubs, with slightly faster progress in the South and West Hubs (which started slightly lower) and slightly slower progress in the East and Central Hubs (refer to Appendix 3 for details).

Figure 14 - Progress among Mainstream Providers



Improvement in careers provision is theorised to have a range of benefits, from better education-pathway decision making, greater confidence and motivation in education, and better early career choices, ultimately translating into higher earnings and engagement rates on average. One medium term metric that partly captures this benefit for the subset of students at high risk of disengagement is the post-16 NEET rate.

5.20 Progress in Gatsby Benchmarks across all providers can be compared with CEC estimates for the relationship between Gatsby Benchmark achievement and this NEET rate, controlling as far as possible for possible confounding factors.⁴⁴ The key headline from that analysis is that “on average, each additional

benchmark fully achieved is associated with a 1.1% decline in non-EET rates” (p-value < 0.01; n=5,453 secondary providers from 2016/17 to 2018/19). Using that analysis, we can estimate the increased number of Year 11 graduates in confirmed sustained post-16 EET destinations in each year, relative to the baseline provision in 2019/20 (see Table 5 below).

Table 6: Progress report

London providers	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
# providers with Compass returns	487	488	608	664
# Year 11 students	63055	62534	79102	88341
Average GB fully achieved	3.48	3.98	4.68	5.28
Increased GB vs 2019/20	0.91	1.41	2.11	2.71
Correlated improvement in EET rates	0.06%	0.08%	0.11%	0.14%
Increased EET students	35	51	90	122

5.21 The increased number of students in post-16 EET is estimated at about 300 students over the last four years relative to the 2019/20 baseline, given improvements in careers provision. The estimate is slightly conservative as the level of improvement in Gatsby Benchmarks is reduced on average by new education institutions engaging with the Compass self-assessment tool at each year throughout the period. We also only include benefits against providers completing Compass returns, even though there is typically some improvement area wide as a result of strategic approaches to improving careers provision. These conservative assumptions provide some cover against uncertain assumptions that may prove optimistic, such as the possibility of unidentified confounders in the CEC analysis driving the EET improvement estimate. There are also caveats in applying the national level relationship to London. However, on balance, it is plausible that the relationship between careers provision and destination outcomes would be stronger in London than a national average.

- *Firstly*, because post-16 destinations are typically easier to improve via careers provision for at-risk NEET students where there is a diverse range of post-16 provision available within travel distance, such as FE colleges with a large-scale course provision, diverse employers offering apprenticeships or work with training, and multiple secondary education providers. Due to its population density and strong public transport network, London is estimated to have particularly rich options available.
- *Secondly*, because higher quality careers provision has greater leverage when it has access to many and diverse employers within a suitable travel distance to support careers talks, workplace visits, work experience, and other activities. Again, due to density and public transport, London is well-placed in this regard. London’s recent provision also builds in the leading careers strategy of London Ambition, which provides a strong base for impact.

5.22 The fiscal value of EET improvement varies from case to case. For some students, remaining in EET post-16 can provide a shift in trajectories that provides affords sustained engagement in education and work throughout their early career, bedding down benefits for the rest of their life. For other students, improved careers provision may only improve EET outcomes in the short-term, providing some benefits, but not enough to shift their overall early career trajectory. In previous analysis using a 2019 base year, the CEC has drawn on third party fiscal studies and willingness-to-pay data from government departments to identify an average fiscal benefit of £41.9k each additional student engaged in post-16 EET status as a result of improved careers provision⁴⁵, which we increase to £47.3k for 2022 as a midpoint year in the target period.⁴⁶

5.23 The combined fiscal value of these four years of inferred EET outcomes, in net present value terms, is £14.1m. To emphasise, this should not be considered the total fiscal value of the careers provision improvement, let alone its social value, given the other benefits of careers provision that have not been monetised in this estimate, particularly for Year 11 students not at risk of NEET and students in other year groups. This £14.1m can, nonetheless be compared cautiously against different investments in careers provision, to provide an indication of value for money.

5.24 From the GLA's perspective, the key investments from 2020/21 to 2023/24 total about £12.3m.⁴⁷

However, just as the £14.1m only covers a partial view of the benefits, so does £12.3m only cover a partial view of the costs. Improvements in careers provision are driven by large amounts of activity which are not directly funded via the above programmes. For instance, these numbers do not attempt to directly capture the resources and time contributions of employers, volunteers, and school/college staff (both directly focused on careers and other staff), staff and project spend coordinated at the borough level, the premises and overhead spend which is not always covered in the project budgets (e.g. the GLA staff budget only includes salary costs), and the considerable goodwill often involved in a wide range of participants and partners.

Nonetheless, strategic area level investment and encouragement are considered important catalysts for leveraging in a significant proportion of improved provision. We also acknowledge that not all of the activities were targeted across all schools and colleges (especially the 2020/21 Careers Clusters provision) or specifically towards Gatsby Benchmark achievement, but the vast majority of activities would have directly or indirectly supported the same goals of good career guidance that are embodied in the Gatsby Benchmarks.

What are the trends in progression choices of young people?

5.25 Improvements in London's careers provision identify a possible factor that is anticipated to drive improvement in reducing the numbers of those not in education, employment or training (NEET). While acknowledging that the headline NEET rate is also affected by a range of other factors, it is important to examine actual changes in destinations. Actual changes in destination provide an indirect sense-check of the inferred impact of careers provision improvement, where the alignment of changes provides a partial view of whether careers provision improvements are apparent in the data or whether they are overwhelmed by other factors.

5.26 We draw on data from the government's Compare School Performance⁴⁸ service in order to identify the total cohort of Year 11 graduates across London mainstream schools and the total number who end up in different destinations. This approach was used to arrive at a student-level EET rate (i.e., student-number-weighted average across provider-level data). Schools are only included in the analysis where the relevant destination data are available. Data are typically only not available due to small cohort sizes (i.e., data suppression to support anonymity), which is mostly immaterial by definition in aggregate analyses across Hub-level geographies. However, for the 2017/18 cohort of Year 11s, all performance data are suppressed on the Compare School Performance service, because it lines up with Covid-19 related data suppressions (the 2018/19 destinations are reported in 2020/21, being the year in which all institution-level performance data were suppressed). Data for the missing Year 11 cohort are identified from the KS4 destinations page; efforts have been made to adjust for differences in format/coverage but minor differences may remain which limit comparability.

Post-16 confirmed education, employment and training (EET) rates

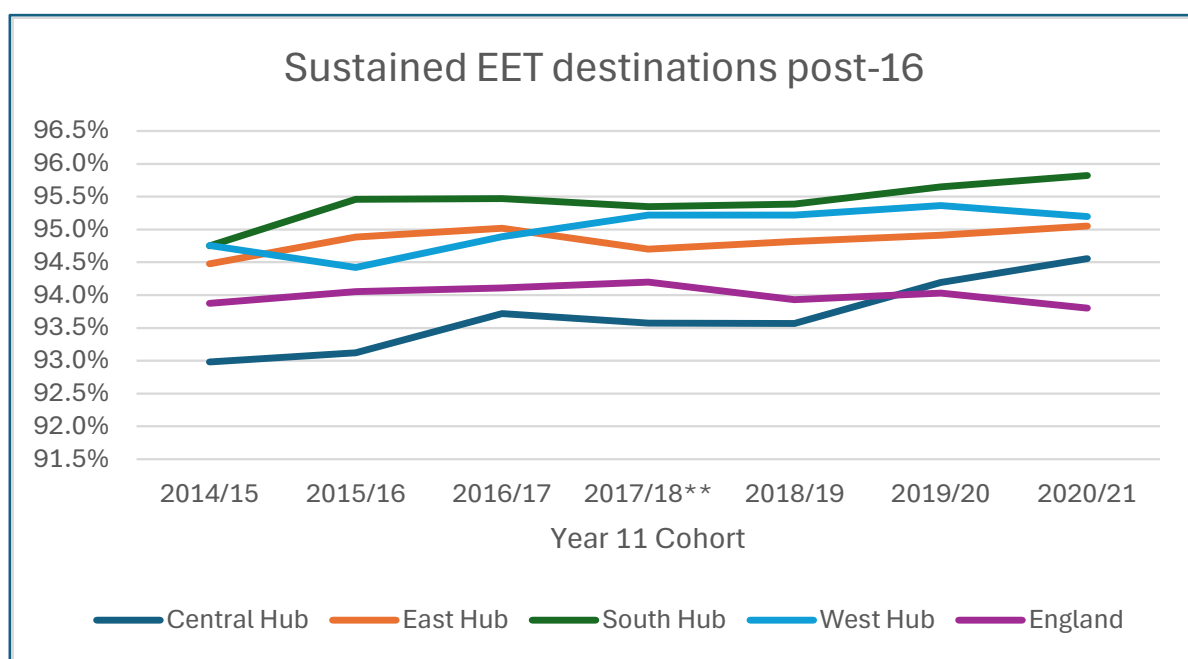
5.27 The national post-16 sustained⁴⁹ EET rate has remained around 94%, with little change year-on-year. By contrast, in the London Hub geographical areas, sustained EET rates for Year 11 cohorts in 2015/16 to 2020/21 improved between 0.2%pts (East Hub) and 1.4%pts (Central Hub), acknowledging some volatility in the data

trends from year to year. Overall post-16 confirmed EET rates are shown by Hub geography in the chart below, contrasted against the national average. Changes in reporting methodology and data suppression rates provide caveats against year-on-year comparisons, especially in the early years, but within year comparisons remain valid and year-on-year comparisons indicatively valid, at least for the metrics highlighted in this report.⁵⁰

5.28 A review of the provisional national and London level data for students who left key stage 4 study in 2021/22, i.e. following their destinations in 2022/23, confirms that the outperformance trend for London continues. Specifically, sustained EET rates for both London and the national average dropped by about 1%pt compared to the previous year. The overall national average dropped to 92.9%, while the average across London dropped to 94.1%. The provisional data for students who left key stage 4 study in 2021/22, i.e. following their destinations in 2022/23, was published after this report was prepared (revised data to be shared in Spring 2025).

5.29 In 2015/16, most Hubs were above the national average (except for Central Hub), but by the end of the period, all Hubs were 0.8%pts-2.0%pts above the national average.

Figure 15: Sustained Education, Employment and Training (EET) Destinations post-16 (approx. six-month sustainments) (DfE Compare School Performance data)



NB. Hubs are defined here as geographies not as membership groups. In other words, all schools/colleges in a given Hub geography are included in the data for that Hub, not just the schools/colleges that are formally members of that Hub in that year (such data not being available to us). Mainstream schools only (special, AP/PRU, hospital schools excluded).

* 2014/15 data should only be compared within year, not year-on-year, because DfE identified and corrected a double-counting error from the 2015/16 data year onwards, primarily affecting apprenticeship rates.

** Government data not available from the Compare School Performance site for this year, so sourced from the KS4 destinations site.

The sample sizes for the above chart are provided below.

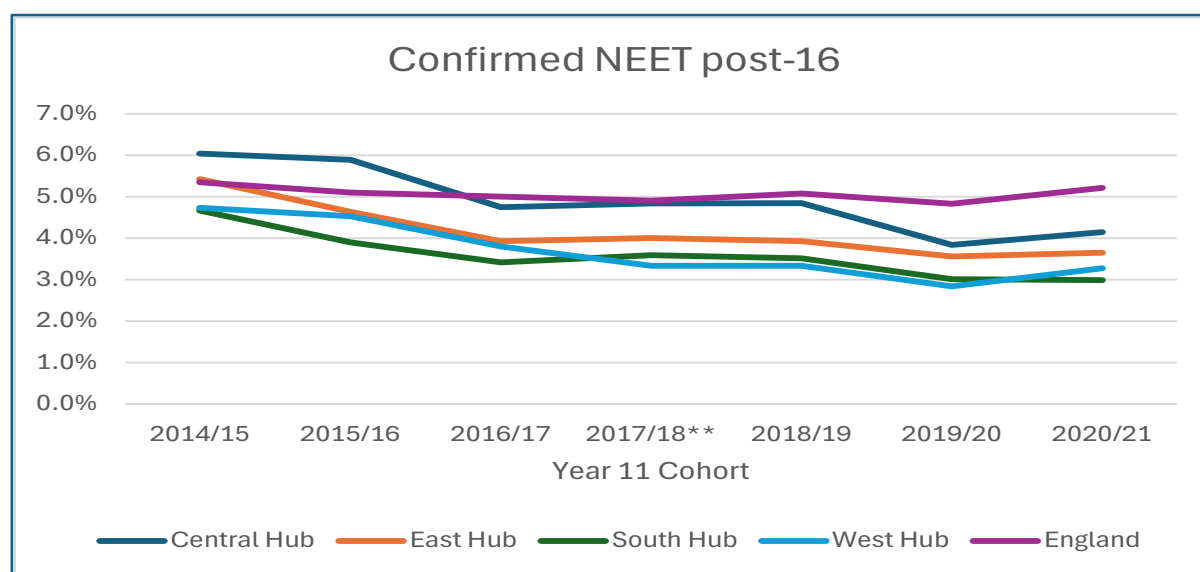
Table 7: Post-16 Sustained EET Rate: Sample size by number of schools and colleges

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18**	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Central Hub	124	124	125	144	140	141	144
East Hub	136	136	135	149	147	148	149
South Hub	61	58	58	63	61	64	64
West Hub	97	101	104	116	116	118	120

The sustained EET rate above is for young people confirmed as EET, i.e. it excludes young people whose destinations are unknown or untracked. To check that the results above are not purely reflecting changes in tracking rates, we examine the confirmed NEET rate (see Figure 16 below).

5.31 The improved performance in London is even sharper when analysing NEET rates, with a reduction in confirmed post-16 NEET rate from 2015/16 to 2020/21 cohorts of 0.9%pts (South Hub) to 1.7%pts (Central Hub), compared to a broadly flat trend in England. The data show the broadly positive trend reverses slightly from 2019/20 to 2020/21. The accompanying DfE narrative reporting relates this positive trend reversal to Covid-19 related consequences, essentially because of the changing mix between education and work-based pathways, rather than to underlying changes in the economy/education sector.⁵¹

Figure 16: Confirmed Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) post-16 (DfE Compare School Performance data)



NB. Hubs are defined here as geographies not as membership groups. In other words, all schools/colleges in a given Hub geography are included in the data for that Hub, not just the schools/colleges that are formally members of that Hub in that year (such data not being available to us). Mainstream schools only (special, AP/PRU, hospital schools excluded).

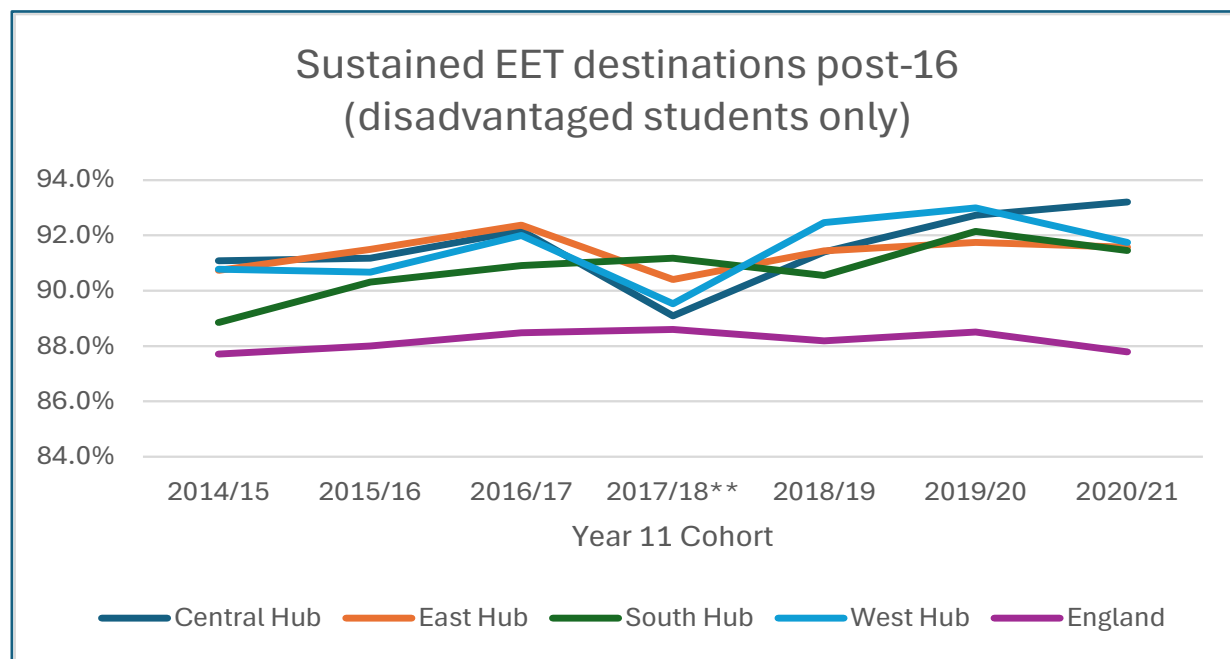
* 2014/15 data should only be compared within year, not year-on-year, because DfE identified and corrected a double-counting error from the 2015/16 data year onwards. In 2014/15 this double counting resulted in a national apprenticeship rate c. 1%pt higher than in the corrected data.

** Government data not available from the Compare School Performance site for this year, so sourced from the KS4 destinations site.

Table 8: Post-16 Confirmed NEET rate: Sample size by number of schools and colleges

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18**	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Central Hub	54	61	125	144	140	141	144
East Hub	63	69	135	149	147	148	149
South Hub	29	24	58	63	61	64	64
West Hub	45	54	104	116	116	118	120

Figure 17: Sustained Education, Employment and Training Destinations post-16 (disadvantaged students only) (DfE Compare School Performance data)



NB. Hubs are defined here as geographies not as membership groups. In other words, all schools/colleges in a given Hub geography are included in the data for that Hub, not just the schools/colleges that are formally members of that Hub in that year (such data not being available to us). Mainstream schools only (special, AP/PRU, hospital schools excluded).

* 2014/15 data should only be compared within year, not year-on-year, because DfE identified and corrected a double-counting error from the 2015/16 data year onwards. In 2014/15 this double counting resulted in a national apprenticeship rate c. 1%pt higher than in the corrected data.

** Government data not available from the Compare School Performance site for this year, so sourced from the KS4 destinations site.

Table 9: Post-16 Confirmed EET rate (disadvantaged students): Sample size by number of schools/colleges

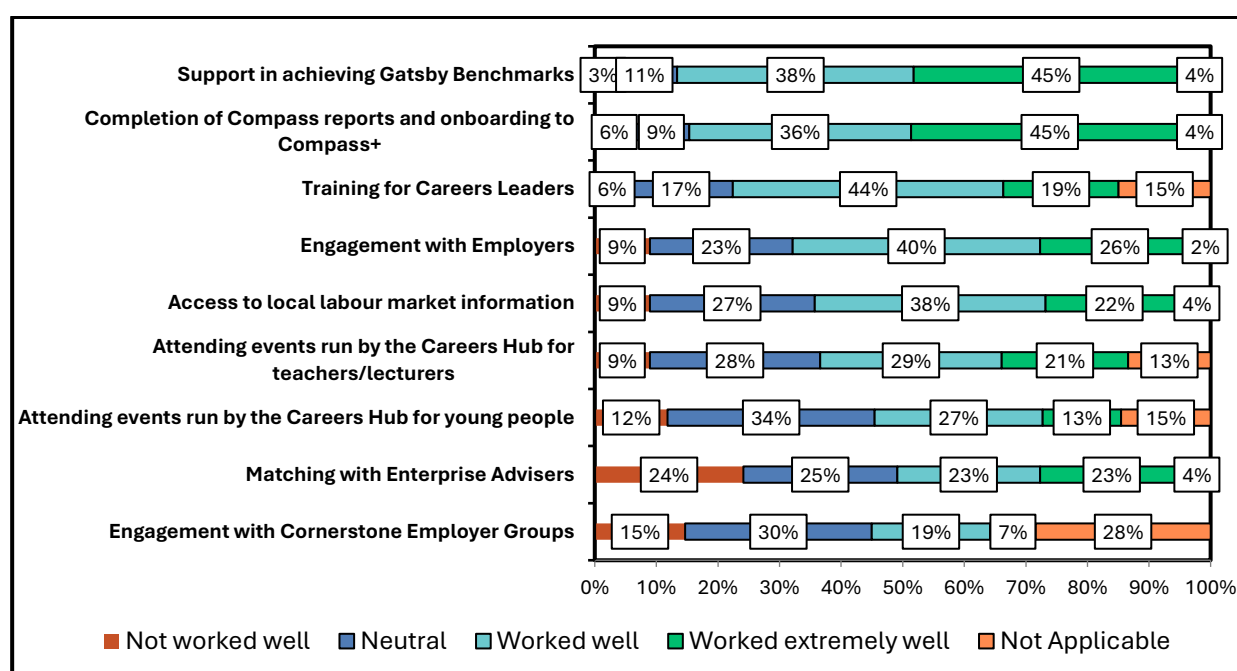
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18**	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Central Hub	121	121	122	111	113	114	116
East Hub	127	130	132	108	133	126	130
South Hub	55	51	57	53	53	55	51
West Hub	94	96	102	86	97	102	106

Table 10: Post-16 Apprenticeship rate: Sample size by number of schools/colleges

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18**	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Central Hub	77	35	125	144	140	141	144
East Hub	110	62	135	149	147	148	149
South Hub	38	24	58	63	61	64	64
West Hub	66	27	104	116	116	118	120

5.34 **Survey responses from schools and colleges supported by the Hubs are presented below. In Figure 18** the bright green bars represent activities that worked extremely well, while the light blue bars indicate those that worked well. The red bars show activities that did not work well. Orange bars represent not applicable.

Figure 18: Careers activities delivered to schools/colleges by the Hubs



Effectiveness of Careers Hub Activities

5.35 **Several activities supported by Hubs were reported as highly effective:**

- Achieving Gatsby Benchmarks and Completing Compass Reports/Onboarding Compass were each cited by 45% (n=49) of respondents as working extremely well.
- Engagement with Employers ranked third, noted by 27% (n=29).

On the other hand, **certain areas were less successful:**

- Matching with Enterprise Advisers (EAs) was highlighted as the least effective, reported by 22% (n=24).
- Additionally, 30% (n=31) of respondents stated that Engagement with Cornerstone Employer Groups was not applicable to their institution.

Support received from the Hub Leads

5.36 ***The majority of school and college survey respondents expressed satisfaction with the support provided by Careers Hub Leads, with 40% (n=45) being "Very satisfied" and 45% (n=50) "Satisfied."*** Only 6% (n=7) reported dissatisfaction. Positive feedback included praise for individual Enterprise Coordinators, improved guidance, and specific support in areas such as organising careers fairs, work experience (WEX), and navigating tools like Compass and the Gatsby Benchmarks.

Some of the comments received include:

"Our Enterprise Coordinator supported the Investors in Careers assessment process."

"I would not have managed the role on just 2 hours a week, which is the time allocated for it, without the support offered by [xx]."

"They have been extremely supportive and encouraged me to develop the careers programme. Great advice, up-to-date knowledge of opportunities for students, excellent training, and follow-up support." (School Careers Leader)

Support for Compass and Gatsby Benchmarks

"[x] has been amazing in supporting our journey with The Gatsby Benchmarks and how best to implement them in our setting."

"Very helpful with suggestions on how to improve the Compass evaluation."

Employer engagement support

"We need more support in engaging employers, particularly those that offer work experience. So far, the number of employers provided has been very limited."

"More than anything, we require employer contacts and assistance in meeting them. This has improved in the last 12 months, particularly with help in organising our 'You're Hired' day."

5.37 ***Group discussions with employers highlighted similar findings with high levels of satisfaction in the support provided in each of the Hubs.*** In the Call for Evidence findings, several key themes emerged.

- Five responses, for instance, highlighted an increased focus on work experience opportunities and employer encounters, noting that while improvements have been made, young people still feel there are not enough opportunities.
- Two respondents mentioned that the Hub has been very effective for their schools, while another two identified Ofsted's emphasis on CEIAG as instrumental in maintaining its priority status within schools.
- One respondent noted the benefit of *"a more targeted approach"* while another commented that *"the Local London offer and focus remains a steady anchor for the schools and colleges."*

Some selected examples of Cornerstone employers and other SMEs and micro-businesses engaged in work with the Hubs include :The Civil Service, the MACE Group, Barclays, KPMG, Guys and St Thomas Hospital, JP Morgan, London South Bank University, STEM Learning, Microsoft, Framstore, Transport for London (TFL) Engineering UK, CITB Construction Industry Training Board, the Home Builder Federation (HBF), the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Build UK, British Beauty Council, Into Film, NHS England (Health Education England), UK Hospitality, Springboard UK, the British Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and Innovate UK, Flannery Plant Hire, Berkeley Group, AND digital, Ferrovial, Sculpt, Hillingdon Council, Cisco, Capgemini and the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital.

There have been some challenges, common to all Hubs, in SME employer engagement. The Hubs recorded the number of unique SMEs participating (unique on a per hub basis) and the number of activities up to three, being the minimum requirement to count as successfully completing a project. A total of 100 SMEs were identified as

participating in 188 activities, the majority of which were employer encounters such as careers fairs, careers talks, and workshops.

Table 11: SME activity participations by Hub

Hub name	Number of SMEs identified	Number of activities identified
Central	26	53
East	16	15
South	4	3
West	54	117
Total	100	188

In the majority of cases, Strand 2 of the Hubs contracts did not work as well as originally anticipated. There were various reasons for this e.g. some of the work undertaken by the Hubs did not meet the set funding criteria, the Hubs were already stretched due to staff vacancies, the project officer appointment varied in experience and level of salary. A key lesson learned was to consider a sub-contractor arrangement (either internally or externally) to ensure a laser focus on the set KPIs and funding criteria outlined in the GLA Handbook.

Amplifying Young People's Voices in the GLA's Future Careers Programme

5.38 Our employer and training provider survey asked: How can young people's views be given greater priority in shaping the GLA's Careers Programme?

Four key themes emerged from the responses:

- Employer Engagement and Diversity:** Expanding employer participation across diverse industries ensures young people are exposed to a wide range of career opportunities.
"Increase engagement from a variety of employers, not just those in construction."
- Youth Voice in Decision-Making:** Embedding young people's perspectives into CEIAG programmes through learner voice activities, youth parliaments, and feedback mechanisms strengthens decision-making.
"All schools and colleges have learner voice activities—we can share these with you."
"Surveys should involve young people in decisions that affect their future."
"The GLA's Careers Programme must reflect young people's top priorities, with clear progress updates."
"Use social media more effectively to engage and involve young people."
- Community Engagement and Local Resources:** Strengthening partnerships with youth organisations and local authorities enhances access to CEIAG for underserved groups, including SEND students, home-educated learners, and young carers.
"Leverage existing youth foundations and community centres."
"Rather than duplicating school efforts, fund local authorities to provide in-house CEIAG services."
- Collaboration and Innovation:** Encouraging cross-sector partnerships fosters innovation and maximises the impact of CEIAG delivery.
"Bring together organisations to share ideas and funding."
"Move beyond reliance on a single entity (e.g., The Careers and Enterprise Company) to encourage innovation in programme design."

What good practice is there in terms of Hubs structure/relationships?

5.38 *The structure within each Hub varies in response to local circumstances.*

The arrangements seem to be working well despite some early recruitment challenges. The role of the Employer Engagement Enterprise Coordinator (EEEC) is highly valued by the Hub Leads and there is a strong desire to continue with this.

“Hubs turn down the noise and help be the bridge between employers and education. There are so many offers we make sure careers leaders know about these. We funnel the offers and push out the information in a timely manner.” (Careers Hub Lead)

5.39 *Good practice across all Hubs include:*

- *Needs and gap analysis* e.g. Each Careers Hub undertakes a needs and gap analysis with EIs from the outset and this is reviewed annually, ideally with a Senior Leadership Team representative governor and Careers Leader in schools and colleges.
- *Sector specific projects* e.g. Green Skills, Health & Social Care, Digital and Creative, Construction etc.
- *Careers Fairs, carousels and work insight days* e.g. sometimes provided for all students and sometimes tailored to students with SEND.
- *Give an Hour campaign* e.g. designed to attract more volunteer Enterprise Advisers (EAs).
- *Teacher Encounters* e.g. VIP and industry days in the workplace.
- *Training and continuous profession development* – EAs and Careers Leaders onboarding, ATE pathways, special themes e.g. harnessing emotional intelligence; understanding those with neurodiverse needs; careers embedded in the curriculum; SEND approaches and effective use of resources.
- *Promoting Employer Standards and Work Experience* e.g. Equalex and ATE pathways.
- *Producing high-quality pathway guides and labour market intelligence (LMI)* e.g. Next Steps in London pathways guide.
- *Cornerstone employers* e.g. projects focused on supporting specific target groups e.g. students and parents.
- *Careers System Impact Reviews* e.g. supporting peer to peer learning and quality improvements.
- *Networking with local groups* e.g. West London Alliance, Local London, London Borough Councils etc.

What do Hubs do to promote Provider Access Legislation (PAL), apprenticeships and technical pathways?

5.40 *The Hubs are highly active in both promoting the PAL, apprenticeships and technical pathways. There has been substantial effort made by the Hubs to promote apprenticeships and technical education, resulting in improved awareness and understanding among schools.* This is evident from initiatives like the delivery of CPD for careers leads, newsletters and recent podcasts which offered a means to demystify PALs, along with working with apprenticeship and training providers to further enhance knowledge and understanding. Some selected quotes from Careers Hub Leads are provided below:

“We delivered a pilot across five schools to deliver CPD to careers leads to demystify PALs and worked with apprenticeship providers on this. We also targeted alternative provisions and particularly targeted schools who said they only have a few young people for whom apprenticeships would be appropriate.”

“There's still some resistance from schools, some pushback as they focus mainly on young people going to university especially the Russell Group institutions

How well are Hubs delivering for key subregional and regional stakeholders?

5.41 *The Hubs are providing high-quality resources on key growth sectors, LMI, Gatsby Benchmarks, PAL, professional development, and, in some cases, attracting additional funding to bring extra to support vulnerable young people.* For example:

“In Central London, the Careers Booster Fund was designed to support specific schools who are part of the Central London Careers Hub to deliver careers activities which meet the requirements for Gatsby

Benchmarks 5 and 6 in the 2021/22 academic year. Eligible schools were identified for the fund based on need to ensure that students who may be unable to access GBM 5 and 6 opportunities could do so through the Booster Fund.”

“Labour Market Information platform, launched in September, provides in-depth information with borough individualisation, displaying available apprenticeships and also providing free lesson plans to schools. A webinar series will be running throughout the year to support schools to use this platform. This is accessible for all our local stakeholders and at a sub-regional /regional level.”

5.42 They are raising awareness of their work and identifying employers and Enterprise Adviser (EA) volunteers willing to lend support to schools and colleges. For example:

“Our Careers Spotlight newsletter July 2024 has a wide range of opportunities and labour market information which helps to further raise our profile and bring this to the attention of a wide range of schools, colleges, sector specific organisations and employers.”

“EA volunteers are disappointingly often under-utilised by schools. They have so much to offer!”

5.43 Quality assurance and assessing the impact of the Hubs’ work was described as a top priority in all four Hubs linked to encouraging more schools and colleges to adopt quality frameworks e.g The CEC Careers Impact System, Ofsted framework, Quality in Careers Standard (QiCS) and/ or DfE-owned matrix quality Standard.

“Quality assurance really matters to us – we don’t adopt a tick box mentality!”

Positive Impact

5.44 School and college staff were asked in our survey, “In your opinion, which of the following areas has CEIAG provision supported by London Hubs in your school/college had a positive impact?” Table 12 below shows that the most impactful support received has been in the areas of student pathway choices and improved education / employment/training (EET) outcomes.

Table 12: In your opinion, which of the following areas has CEIAG provision, supported by the London Hubs in your schools/college, has a positive impact?

	NO IMPACT	LOW IMPACT	MODERATE IMPACT	HIGH IMPACT	N/A
Student pathway choices (e.g., subjects/institution to apply to)	9% 9	13% 12	32% 29	37% 33	8% 7
Improved Education/Employment/Training outcomes	14% 13	12% 11	41% 37	24% 22	8% 7
Student pathway success (e.g., getting into and thriving on their chosen route)	14% 13	13% 12	40% 36	26% 23	7% 6
Student motivation	18% 17	16% 14	35% 31	22% 23	9% 5
Student destinations	19% 17	18% 16	31% 28	22% 20	9% 8
Student attainment	27% 24	18% 16	33% 29	12% 11	10% 9
Work with parents/carers	24% 22	22% 20	38% 34	7% 6	9% 8

Student behaviour	32% 28	21% 18	25% 22	10% 9	11% 10
Student attendance	32% 29	23% 20	25% 22	9% 8	10% 9

There is scope for the Hubs and partner organisations to highlight the broader range of benefits to schools, colleges and employers on CEIAG provision that has a positive impact on student attainment, attitudes, and behaviours drawing on robust academic evidence.

5.45 Respondents also provided insights on the benefits of working with the Hubs.

“Engagement with schools and colleges through a variety of initiatives. It's allowed us to expand our offering for schools and improve our outreach.” An Employer

“We had three session of teacher encounter which were great and gave us an excellent opportunity to connect with more schools.” An Employer

“The Careers Hub makes working with schools and colleges so much easier for us as it is a central place from which we can coordinate that work and therefore have greater impact as it's at scale across multiple industries/sectors.” (Employer)

5.46 Additionally, respondents stressed the importance of raising awareness SEND student needs and other vulnerable groups. Positive feedback also focused on how the Career Hubs facilitate collaboration with schools, enabling greater outreach and impact. Many emphasised the ease of working with schools and colleges through the centralised support provided by the Careers Hub, which allowed for a more coordinated and scalable approach across industries and sectors. Overall, engagement with London Hubs was seen as enhancing partnerships, expanding outreach, and increasing awareness in the education sector.

5.47 The Call for Evidence findings affirmed the impact taking place:

“Activity through Hubs has certainly improved.”

“The closure of schools during lockdown and subsequent social distancing limited access to students. In this context, organisations and employers across London have found innovative ways to deliver high-quality employer-led careers education through hybrid and virtual delivery, enabling effective online engagement with young people.”

“We are gaining better insight into the current employment ecology for young Londoners and the changing barriers.”

5.48 The GLA and CEC are seen as key players in this area, with their extensive contacts offering a potential solution to some employer engagement challenges, as noted in an example where the involvement of the Mayor of London led to greater employer participation in a Green Skills project. More could be done to build on this and for greater sharing of information on major Cornerstone Employers and small to medium-sized enterprises.

5.49 The Delivery Partner structure and relationships in each of the four Hubs is working well. Community collaborative networks and shared learning is effective between and across the four Hubs.

The Hub Leads, employers, volunteer Enterprise Advisers, schools, and colleges speak positively about the collaboration that allows them to jointly identify best practices and develop innovative solutions to common challenges. Regular meetings (both face-to-face and online) and the sharing of experiences were reported to lead to improved strategies and greater effectiveness in London's careers provision. By pooling resources and

organising inclusive events, the hubs maximise their impact and foster a sense of community among stakeholders. This approach promotes knowledge exchange and strengthens networks.

“EDT have been the provider from the start. We managed the Hillingdon Careers Cluster. There was a seamless transition into the hub. We took the 18 months learning as a launch pad to start the hubs...West London frequently collaborated with neighbouring hubs, creating opportunities for joint events and shared best practices that contributes to efficiency savings...EDT and SPARK pool their resources to deliver an event open to everyone, career leaders, frontline staff, young people, enterprise advisors.”

“We border with Surrey, so we recently met with their Careers Hub to look at synergies.”

“Collectively there’s a key role that GLA and CEC could play in employer engagement with their extensive contacts. Example given: a struggle to engage employers in a green skills project, but when the Mayor of London was mentioned, we got a much bigger take up. More can be done using this approach going forward.” (Careers Hub Lead)

5.50 Having access to granular data about education institutions (EDIs) allows the Hubs to effectively target their initiatives. However, the GLA does not have access to this data (a special data request and new protocols for data sharing were formally agreed between the GLA and CEC as part of this evaluation). Utilising detailed data enables Hubs to tailor their support to the specific needs of schools, colleges and students, particularly those who are most disadvantaged. This targeted approach ensures that resources are allocated where they are most needed. A lack of clarity and transparency in data ownership and sharing is a major area of concern for those outside of the hubs e.g. the GLA, careers teams in boroughs providing careers support to schools and colleges.

“The Hub has access to all 173 institutions data through the CEC at a granular, granular level, so we can prioritise need, they can break down and target the need. For example, disadvantaged, free school meals.”

“There is an issue concerning the extent to which Hubs can share this data with other borough careers providers working in schools and colleges and some confusion between regional and national CEC views on the actual ownership and distribution of the data. The CEC is aware of this and is hoping to provide clearer guidelines.”

5.51 Partnerships with specific industries and sectors (e.g., health and social care, environmental, hospitality, STEM, digital and Net Zero) enrich careers experiences for students and teaching staff. This introduces them to various career pathways within key sectors. For example:

“We identified our top growth sectors for 2022-23 as: London Growth sectors incl. Green Economy and Green Skills Event; Art, Entertainment and Recreation; Information & Communication; Human Health & Social Work; Wholesale & Retail Trade; Accommodation & Food Service Activities. Schools from across Central London gathered for an event hosted with the Royal Institution which highlighted the various avenues of employment open to young people which could support with reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2030. The Mayor of London, in association with Bloomberg, awarded five London schools with a grant of £10,000 each to pursue various projects that will help fight against negative climate impact on a local level.”

Local London Careers Hub (East)

Case Study 1 – Annual Impact Reports

The Hub created nine Annual Impact Reports for each of the Boroughs to showcase the breadth and depth of its work. These were very well received.

Case study 2 – Visiting Industry Professionals (VIP) Days

The Visiting Industry Professionals (VIP) Days initiative offers disadvantaged students—including those in mainstream schools, Alternative Provision, and SEND settings—first-hand exposure to industries and workplaces. Developed in collaboration with employers such as Framestore, TfL, the Financial Times, PRET, RICS, and others, VIP Days enhance the CEIAG curriculum, providing real-world insights into diverse careers. In 2024/25, over 700 students will participate, gaining experience across sectors from media to manufacturing. A dedicated SEND VIP programme, delivered in partnership with Ductu, ensures tailored career exploration for young people with SEND. Since April 2024, 210 SEND students have attended 40 VIP Days, visiting care homes, manufacturing sites, and car dealerships, helping them build confidence and workplace skills.

On-site employer engagement and support services are central to many Careers Hub initiatives, with examples such as employers working directly with the Hubs in strategic planning and delivery, including targeted work in schools, colleges and on employer premises. For example:

West London Careers Hub

Case Study 1 – The Cornerstone Employer Group

The group consists of Flannery Plant Hire, Berkeley Group, AND digital, Ferrovial, Sculpt, Hillingdon Council, Cisco, Capgemini and the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. The group meets termly and is working towards clarifying the encounters they offer - whether to students, teachers, or parents. They have agreed that these encounters should: (i) focus on pathways, including apprenticeships and technical education; (ii) include Q&A sessions with apprentices, trainees, school leavers, or T-Level students; (iii) prepare young people for the application process; and (iv) highlight hidden roles within the sector." The development work is informed by data from Compass, the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) and employer standards. This is a proactive group, committed to bringing in new employers to help build the system of CEIAG support. All of these employers are involved in amplifying the Employer Standards - either by offering support at one of the workshops delivered by the Careers Hub across three terms, or by holding briefings with their supply chains to roll out the Standards across West London.

Case Study 2 - Best Next Steps project

Work has begun on a Best Next Steps project in partnership with an Alternative Provider with the offer of employer encounters, work experience and 'Bridging the Gap' teacher encounters programme. The focus is on preparing young people for the application process using modern recruitment practices such as assessment centres, using The CEC Equalex framework⁵² to guide quality experiences of the workplace.

5.52 *Securing external funding has enhanced programme capacity and effectiveness.* For example:

"We get additional external funding from the Integrated Care Board (NHS workforce fund), we put a bid in for young people to experience the world of work in health and social care. This complements the Hub greatly. It's increased staff capacity and helped them hit the KPIs."

5.53 *Hubs have concentrated on building connections and providing strategic support mainly between schools, colleges, and employers in line with their current remit.* The Careers Hub and former Cluster Leads each noted independently that their internal community of practice was functioning well. Whilst this is the case, some CEIAG external providers e.g Careers Advisers and borough specialist careers providers reported feeling disconnected from the Hub's ongoing work.

"There is scope for the Hubs to become more inclusive in involving careers advisers in their work given many schools and colleges work with independent and/or borough careers specialists."

“In East London, strides have been made to address this gap e.g. localised projects are focused on support needed in the local boroughs such as organising a Construction Taster days with local colleges and bringing in employers to deliver the sessions, focusing on engineering and schools building a racing car which has included sessions from the Formula E Team.”

“While some progress has been made in involving local careers information, advice, and guidance providers operating in boroughs, there is still significant work to fully integrate them into the Hubs.”

5.54 Specialised communities of practice enhances support for specific student and teaching staff populations. Examples were given of activities to increase the level of awareness and response to the needs of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), neurodiverse students and emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) students and other vulnerable groups including those in alternative provision. Other examples include: *“Uxbridge College’s Vocational Carousel for years 10 and 11 students and the London Transport Museum’s SEND-specific career-focused programmes combine skill development with real-world applications, preparing students effectively for employment.”*

“We’re developing a SEND community of practice Inclusion Network across special schools, plus mainstream and alternative provision.”
(Careers Hub Lead)

Central London Careers Hub

Case Study 1 - Talent Talks: Creative Careers and Neurodiversity in collaboration with BAFTA streamed live from Addey and Stanhope School.

Designed to celebrate neurodiversity in the creative sector in this broadcast in collaboration with BAFTA. This session aimed to shine a light on the unique strengths that neurodivergent individuals bring to the creative industries and share stories of those who have already found their place within the sector. Through an inspiring career panel, we explored different routes into the industry and the skills that can help burgeoning creatives find their place there too. Total live viewing figures were 25,920 people, and there since has been over 5000 additional views. Highlights reel : <https://vimeo.com/986318507> The full broadcast is available until July 2025 to view on demand : [Central London Careers Hub – Careers Live](#)

Case Study 2 - Autism Reality Experience

This initiative aimed to address these issues by providing educators with a firsthand experience of the challenges faced by autistic students, improving their ability to support these students effectively. The timing of the initiative aligned with the findings of the *Buckland Review*⁵³, which emphasised the need for increased autism training for educators, further validating the importance of our project.

The Careers Hub partnered with a provider that designed the virtual reality experience with input from individuals with autism, ensuring the authenticity of the perspectives shared. This approach allowed educators to experience a school-based scenario that accurately represented the sensory and social challenges autistic students face daily. The experience was followed by a workshop to facilitate discussions and further learning. **Impact:** By the end of the project, over 200 educators will have participated in the experience. The feedback from initial sessions has been overwhelmingly positive, with teachers reporting a greater understanding of autism and more confidence in supporting autistic students in their classrooms. The findings featured in CareerMag Issue 7 (pp.12-13). There are plans to run three additional sessions to more educators, ensuring that this valuable learning tool continues to make a lasting impact.

5.55 High-quality pathway guides and exposure to local labour market intelligence (LMI) delivered to schools, colleges, and local communities. Careers fairs and events broaden exposure to industries, offering students valuable work experience and employer insights e.g.

“The West London TV & Film Skills Festival by the West London TV & Film Skills Hub.”

“The Old Vic’s ‘Take the Lead’ programme in South London.”

Careers Hubs pan-London

Case Study 1 – Student and Teacher Pathways Guides

The Hub Leads work together to produce high-quality student and teacher pathway guides published on the London LMI platform and social media which they all use to inform and promote their work.

5.56 Training and/or continuous professional development opportunities for Careers Leaders and teaching staff. The four London Hubs offer this to schools and colleges either through Enterprise Co-ordinator inputs or sub-contract arrangements with specialist providers, aiming to enhance the quality of careers education, information, advice, and guidance (CEIAG). While their core objectives align, each Hub tailors its training or CPD offerings to address the specific needs of its local educational institutions and labour market.

“We offer CPD localised based on the requests from Careers Leaders. Meeting by local authority area normally termly - three are run by us and the remaining ones are run by Enterprise Co-ordinators based on local need. We also host a conference for all Enterprise Adviser (EA) meetings and Networking; and EA Training is delivered e.g. today was around ‘What is good careers education?’”

South London Careers Hub

Case Study 1 – Celebrating Success with Awards

Hosted an awards ceremony to recognise and celebrate the impactful work already being done across the five South London boroughs, including Career Leader of the Year, Enterprise Advisor of the Year, Business of the Year, Collaboration of the Year, Apprenticeship Provider of the Year, and Careers Champion of the Year. Note: East London has also celebrated achievements and distributed awards.

When asked in a survey about the CPD received from Hubs in relation to CEIAG in schools and colleges, 45% (n=46) reported this worked well, while 18% (n=19) said it worked extremely well.

The types of CPD varied significantly and there was mixed feedback:

- Nine respondents reported training on platforms like Unifrog, Compass, START Profile, and Careers Leader Training (Level 5 or 6 at Warwick University).
- Specific workshops were attended by careers advisers.
- Some participated in accredited courses, such as those offered by the Career Development Institute (CDI) or Open University’s Level 6 Diploma.
- Additional CPD included networking meetings, workshops, and conferences.

This reflects that while some activities are widely beneficial, others require refinement or greater alignment with school and college needs. This feedback highlights a diversity in CPD offerings, spanning introductory workshops to more advanced qualifications, catering to a range of teaching professional needs. There is scope to review what works well and to investigate economies of scale and broadening the CPD offer to intermediaries more widely.

Lessons Learned and Areas for Improvement

5.57 The Hubs in London face unique challenges compared to those in other regions. Given the size, diversity, and varying community areas across the city, a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective. Respondents emphasised that, in relation to the national CEC and the set key performance indicators (KPIs), the London Hubs had been constrained in their progress by earlier KPIs that did not account for local context and circumstances. There have been successful negotiations between the GLA and the CEC in this regard, which Hub Leaders have welcomed.

5.58 Interviews with the Hub Leads highlighted key challenges, including unforeseen delays in recruiting staff with the necessary skills and expertise at the salaries offered (with the exception of West London).

“We had to ensure we had a staff team of sufficiently trained and experienced enterprise co-ordinators who could hit the ground running in supporting schools and colleges, as well as employers and volunteers. It was crucial to show confidence and professionalism in our programme of work.”

5.59 It is acknowledged that Hub initiatives are still in the early stages (compared to other regions) and will require more time to fully embed into the education, skills and employer engagement support system. It took time for the Hubs to educate schools and colleges that their role was different to the Clusters who in the main focused on delivery of CEIAG rather than strategic CEIAG guidance and support.

“At first, many schools and colleges thought we would come in and deliver CEIAG to students in the classroom. Instead, our role is to strategically connect employers and volunteer Enterprise Advisers and to provide resources to help strengthen the careers offer.”

“A Hub's role is to connect and convene. It works well, but we can't be everything to everyone.”

5.60 While the programme management and grant structure have made important progress, some aspects could be improved for greater efficiency. It has been noted that additional time and resources are required to effectively consolidate CEIAG policies and practices. To mitigate the risk of overload or mission drift, particularly as the GLA and CEC introduce new projects and initiatives, streamlining processes, including KPIs, could help maintain focus. Specifically, Hubs have reported that the amount of bureaucracy in form-filling for both the GLA and CEC could be reduced, allowing them to allocate more time and effort to their core work.

5.61 The volume of information provided by the CEC and the GLA has been identified as overwhelming.

Insights from the interviews reveal several challenges and areas for improvement in programme management and grant structures within the Hubs. The reported overload of information can create confusion when setting priorities, reduce the capacity to absorb crucial insights, and limit opportunities for reflection and learning. As a result, valuable time and resources that could be better focused on planning or implementation are instead spent managing and processing excessive information:

“You lose focus and quality when you have five pages of KPIs, you can't focus on what's the impact. You're trying to be everything to everyone. You need to be more realistic with what can be achieved.”

“The introduction of more specific KPIs tailored for London is viewed as a positive development. The feedback from the Hubs suggest that the recent efforts to localise and clarify KPIs for London have been beneficial.”

Condensing and prioritising KPIs would improve the Hubs' ability to focus on meaningful, high-impact outcomes.

“The CEC made the KPIs more specific for London this year for the first time, which is really important. The five national priorities work well.”
(GLA and Careers Hub Leads)

5.62 While the intention behind regular CEC residentials and training sessions is likely to foster networking and strategy alignment, this time commitment is viewed as excessive in some cases e.g. particularly when it takes key staff away from planning and implementation. For example:

"We do a two-day residential with the CEC three times a year. It's too much time. It could be better spent planning. It is helpful to build networks, but two of these residentials are strategic Hub Leads only, and we already know one another. Operational Hub Leads also do three residentials. Enterprise coordinators also do termly days."

5.63 The evolving careers ecosystem, with central government placing greater emphasis on youth hubs, the youth guarantee, and careers support for adults—both unemployed and in work—will require close monitoring and strategic collaboration between the GLA, DWP, and CEC to ensure effective strategic planning going forward.

5.64 There was some concern expressed about the expectation for Hubs to deliver on ever expanding new projects within tight delivery timescales, driven by a national agenda rather than regional/local needs. It was noted:

"They keep adding to our workload...It is time to take stock and do a few things really well rather than stretch the portfolio where we become all things to all people."

5.65 Without dedicated roles focused on building and maintaining relationships with employers, many schools and some Hubs struggle to secure consistent and meaningful employer participation. This can result in a reliance on a small pool of local employers, which is particularly challenging in areas with fewer large businesses. However, there is optimism that the introduction of Employer Engagement Enterprise Coordinators (EEECs) will help improve coordination, providing a more structured approach to building sustainable relationships with employers. The GLA has supported this approach using additional funding.

"We chose not to employ an employer engagement enterprise coordinator (EEEC). In hindsight, this was the wrong decision, so we're getting an EEEEC role this year, with the hope that our approach will be more coordinated, structured and ensure sustainable, embedded relationships with employers. We we're in the leafy suburbs, not a huge number of large employers here, so it's a big ask of a few employers who engage across our programmes."

"Benchmark 7 needs improvement at Key Stage three. There's a challenge regarding supply issues, with a lack of employers who have focused more on key stages four and five."

5.66 Parental involvement is viewed by Careers Hub Leads as a critical success factor in CEIAG. For example:

"We need to get parents on board. Parents are blockers or enablers, usually unintentionally, we need to change the narrative. We did a pan London parents webinar that was very well attended. We also delivered one for students and one for educators."

"This is a difficult 'nut to crack' but we are focusing more on finding effective ways to work with parents."

Barriers

5.67 The schools most in need of support from the Hubs are often the least engaged. This is largely attributed to time constraints and capacity issues within these institutions:

"Careers leaders, who are responsible for coordinating careers education, often feel overwhelmed by their workload, and frequent turnover in these roles exacerbates the issue."

"It's the Hub's role is to support careers leaders who sometimes had no handover from the previous careers leader and don't know what they're supposed to do."

There are reported high levels of turnover among Careers Leaders in some Boroughs, requiring teams to repeatedly start from scratch with each new appointee:

“Our Careers Hub can see evidence that a school is about to make incremental progress or a major breakthrough in achieving Gatsby Benchmarks and improving opportunities for young people and parents, then at the start of a new term or year everything changes and we have to start all over again! Leadership buy-in and support is so important for continuity of careers provision.”

Despite best efforts, resistance from some schools remains a significant barrier, particularly regarding a strong focus on university pathways rather than embracing the full range of options available to students:

“Time is needed for these initiatives to embed, but further focus on engaging SLTs and governor bodies, addressing parental perceptions, and targeting younger students with earlier employer engagement will be key to maximising the impact of PAL and expanding access to a broader range of career pathways.”

5.68 Additional challenges included capacity issues within schools and colleges, particularly insufficient “buy-in” from headteachers and principals. The GLA was proactive in hosting a Headteachers’ conference in November 2024.

“Whilst there are many brilliantly motivated Careers Leaders and teachers, their efforts are often hampered by constraints on budgets, time and commitment from senior leaders. Without their support, it makes it difficult to sustain the work and can sometimes lead to burn-out.”

5.69 Confusion exists around the distinction between careers education and career guidance. Stakeholders including schools, career leaders, and other partners—often conflate these two areas, leading to misaligned expectations. In many cases, there is a lack of or highly variable senior leadership team (SLT) buy-in to CEIAG. Some schools struggled with unclear expectations around the roles of Hubs. Engaging SLTs early was crucial for ensuring a consistent commitment to CEIAG.

“Some schools mistakenly assume that the Hubs provide direct careers guidance, when in reality, they are focused on broader careers education and infrastructure support.”
(Careers Hub Lead)

5.70 A particular expressed area of concern is around work experience. Many schools struggle to provide meaningful work experience opportunities for students, largely due to a lack of resources, leadership “buy in” and support. The GLA has invested in a new work experience initiative designed to help address this issue.

“The challenge is still around work experience, as there is no dedicated support for this within the Hub and it is not the role of the Careers Hub but schools need this. They don't have the budget or resource. Some schools do better, but it's a postcode lottery.”

5.71 There is an urgent need for dedicated resources in schools to provide a consistent careers support offer for young people. Most respondents emphasised the importance of having a full-time Careers Leader with dedicated funding for this role. Schools with strong support in this area typically perform better, but inadequate funding continues to be a significant barrier.

“Without these resources, careers education often becomes a secondary priority, leading to limited engagement from senior leadership teams (SLTs) and governors.”

“Schools need resource for a Careers Leader with full time responsibility for careers: Dedicated funding for every institution to have a dedicated resource, as was planned in the 2018 strategy but this hasn't happened- Schools need a full time Career Leader, a whole school approach, and SLT and governors engaged.”

5.72 The Hubs serve as a vital conduit between schools, colleges, and employers, fostering strong partnerships that bridge the gap between education and the world of work. By connecting educators and students with Enterprise Advisers and industry leaders, the Hubs help inform and support educators (and their students) to gain invaluable insights into career opportunities, develop employability skills, and access real-world experiences such as work placements and mentoring.

How well did the Clusters and the Hubs complement each other? How could closer working have been made possible?

5.73 *Careers Clusters and Hubs had both complementary and challenging aspects in their collaboration.*

Clusters were often focused on practical delivery, while the Hubs emphasised strategy and planning, which sometimes led to a disconnect and feelings that the Hubs were less attuned to actionable outcomes. However, in some cases, such as in West London, successful transitions occurred, with Hubs continuing to support schools and employers after the cluster project ended. Also, some Careers Clusters managed to sustain their work in local areas without GLA funding e.g. Croydon, Inspire My Career and Build Your Future Careers Clusters

5.74 *In areas where Clusters and Hubs did not work closely together, inefficiencies arose, particularly with data-sharing challenges* (e.g., Gatsby Benchmark self-assessment and Compass results) and confusion over roles. Clearer role definitions and improved data-sharing protocols, especially regarding Gatsby Benchmark performance, could have facilitated more effective collaboration. Despite these challenges, where closer working relationships were established, transitions were smoother, and services continued seamlessly. However, missed opportunities for scaling successful, innovative approaches were noted, with some Cluster Leads highlighting the lack of funding and support for scaling impactful pilot projects. A more aligned approach could have enabled better sharing of best practices between Clusters and Hubs, leading to broader success across schools and regions.

5.75 *There was a perception within the Clusters that the Hubs were more focused on strategy and planning, while Clusters prioritised practical, on-the-ground delivery.* This created a disconnect between the two, this was not the case for all Hubs. For example, in West London, the Hub continued to support the schools and employers involved in the cluster.

“It’s great that there’s been a lot of investment in strategic thinking/strategic planning (i.e. via the Hubs) but more money needs to be made available for practical delivery in schools and colleges.”

Where Clusters and Hubs worked closely together, successful transitions ensured continuity in services. However, clearer clarification of roles and better data-sharing protocols, particularly in relation to Gatsby Benchmark performance in schools and colleges, are needed to avoid overlap and ensure that Clusters and Hubs can complement each other more effectively. Greater alignment could have enabled the Clusters to share their innovations with the Hubs and scale best practices across more education institutions and workplaces.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 In this final section, we build on the earlier insights by outlining recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the Hubs and provide specific suggestions for improving CEIAG across London’s education and employment landscape. The aim is to achieve more impactful and sustainable outcomes for young Londoners while offering professional support to those involved in the design and development of careers provision.

We have developed the following recommendations based on the evaluation findings. The initial recommendations are aimed at the GLA to inform future programme commissioning and design and maximise the impact of learnings from the Clusters and the Hubs. The second set of recommendations is aimed at The GLA

and its partners. The final set of recommendations are aimed at others seeking to replicate or learn from the Clusters and Hubs in London.

Recommendations for the GLA

Programme design and delivery

Recommendation 1: Identify senior champions, potential for impact, and routes to sustainability for future initiatives within the commissioning process.

Consider the balance between CEIAG *delivery projects* and *strategic support* for schools and colleges. Prioritise approaches that address capacity and resource limitations within schools and colleges. A blended approach already exists with legacy Clusters, the Hubs, the Work Experience (WEX) programme, Integration Hubs, and Jobcentre Plus each operating separately with senior champions and local networks. There is potential to bring them together to secure buy-in, share evidence, and align priorities for the next 2-5 years, focusing on sustainable CEIAG policies and practices. Identifying key stakeholders and aligning with their priorities and decision-making timelines will support the sustainability and impact of CEIAG for all young Londoners. There is also opportunity to consider London's CEIAG landscape over the next decade and to consider 'future scenario insights' to stimulate discussion with partners and align initiatives that promote sustainability and enhance policies and practices that can demonstrate tangible impact.

Recommendation 2: Increase the numbers of Enterprise Advisers (EAs) through the Hubs connecting with more micro-businesses, SMEs and Cornerstone employers.

While EAs are eager to support schools and colleges, the level of engagement from senior leadership teams (SLTs) and potential volunteers varies significantly. To boost engagement, it would be helpful to produce and share high-profile case studies working with schools and colleges showcasing the added value EAs bring to them and vice-versa. Additionally, building on successful practices in East London, consider celebrating and rewarding highly engaged EAs, businesses, teachers, and careers advisers as local champions. Public recognition through events and initiatives like those used by Careers Wales could help London further foster involvement and inspire others to participate.

The London Cornerstone Employer model is delivering impact, including strategies to support vulnerable young people. Now is the time to go further - leveraging their networks to increase volunteer engagement. The London Mayor's office and The CEC's national network of Cornerstone Employers could do more to enable Careers Hubs to piggyback on existing employer engagement activities, amplifying impact and streamlining efforts. Strengthening these partnerships will unlock opportunities for young Londoners while building a stronger talent pipeline for the future. Beyond this, there is also scope to align public procurement with CEIAG priorities to incentivise employer participation and making it easier for businesses to support schools and colleges through strategic planning, work insight days, industry placements, and supported internships.

Recommendation 3: Amplify the Impact of Clusters and Hubs.

Careers Hubs and Clusters have developed valuable tools and approaches that others can learn from, avoiding duplication and accelerating progress—whether in work experience, sector-specific projects, borough-level impact reports, teacher placements, or SEND and alternative provision guides. To maximise their reach, Careers Hubs should use their websites more effectively to share these resources across their networks. The GLA can also play a crucial role in broadening awareness by leveraging its influence and communication channels to extend their impact beyond local networks.

Recommendation 4: Explore opportunities to support work in primary schools and Key Stage 3.

Draw on lessons learned from earlier GLA commissioned work on career-related learning in primary schools (2022). Showcase potential career paths in specific growth sectors to primary-aged pupils across London aligned to Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities. Address the noted gap in careers provision at Key Stage 3 by educating employers about the benefits of engaging with younger students, particularly to introduce them to apprenticeship and technical education pathways before traditional academic routes become entrenched.

Recommendation 5: Future-proofing career education by embracing technology and innovation.

Harness existing online platforms like Inspiring the Future/Primary Futures which provide innovative online match-making technology to connect schools and colleges across the country with tens of thousands of volunteers working in different sectors – for free. Encourage employers to join online platforms (e.g., Inspiring the Future and Scale Up for Sustainability etc) and promote their greater use by schools and colleges for supporting careers activities and accessing opportunities. Invest in 'test and learn' pilot projects using AI and large language models (LLMs), such as career-themed gaming (e.g., Minecraft in Scotland and Wales) and chatbot technology (e.g., Huxby and CiCi in London schools). Explore 'blended hybrid' AI approaches to make it easier for the Hubs and educational institutions, including schools, colleges, and SEND/alternative provision providers, to access these tools. Provide training to build confidence and competence in using AI-driven career education tools.

Recommendation 6: Revisit the community of practice model in each Hub.

Define what success looks like in fostering an inclusive community that engages a dynamic network of Enterprise Advisers and other key stakeholders to strengthen the CEIAG system. This should create an environment where businesses, careers professionals, enterprise and employability specialists come together with a shared purpose to improve outcomes for young Londoners. With support from the GLA, London's Careers Communities of Practice can collaborate more effectively to build a high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive pan-London system for careers, skills, and employability. They can also draw on lessons learned from area-based experiences as well as those outside of London e.g. Manchester, Scotland etc.

Recommendation 7: Enhance Access to Pathways and LMI for Parents and Teachers.

Continue producing and sharing high-quality pathway guides and LMI across London until Skills England is fully established, addressing the gap left by the end of DfE's 'LMI for All' funding. Build on successful Cluster and Hub models to ensure schools and colleges have up-to-date insights. Expand parent-focused webinars, podcasts, and events—offering flexible options like coffee mornings, after-school sessions, and weekend slots—to improve access to LMI, apprenticeships, and technical education. This will empower parents, as key influencers, to better support their children's career choices. A similar approach could be used for teachers, scaling up awareness and equipping them with the confidence and competence to embed LMI and careers into the curriculum.

Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Work & Pensions

Generating new insights, maximising learning and dissemination.

Recommendation 8: Reach agreement to ensure greater transparency in the ownership and sharing of Gatsby performance data, Compass and anonymised student outcomes.

At present, the GLA and London Boroughs do not have full visibility of data in the absence of clear protocols and procedures, although progress following this evaluation is hoped to improve matters in the future. Take steps to review the thematic areas of London Hubs work and allied KPIs, identify and streamline priorities going forward. Maintain flexibility in agreeing specific themes and KPIs.

Recommendation 9: Build in flexibility while being clear on expected outcomes.

London's careers and employability landscape is too complex for a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach. While shared goals provide direction, excessive KPIs and metrics can dilute impact. The GLA's willingness to negotiate flexible KPIs with The CEC was welcomed by Hub Leaders and should continue in future initiatives. Flexibility must be built into programme design, allowing outcomes to evolve based on real-time insights while meeting UKSPF and other funding requirements. Streamlining and prioritising KPIs will enable Hubs to focus on what truly drives high-impact results.

Recommendation 10: Leveraging employer networks.

Build on the GLA Careers Team's work on employer engagement through streamlined work and communications with employers across all GLA teams: to identify key stakeholders and umbrella organisations and how the GLA can work effectively with those to ensure that CEIAG is at the forefront for employers planning their talent pipeline e.g. work already underway with support organisations such as Business LDN, and London and Partners. This should include clear signposting for employers depending on their talent need. Similarly, The CEC headquarters team have access to key employer networks and professional bodies. Leverage these networks to enhance the Hubs, promote employer involvement in CEIAG activities, and develop employer led practical projects to improve student outcomes, especially for vulnerable groups. This will strengthen connections between London employers, schools, and colleges, highlighting the positive impact of CEIAG based on strong evidence of effective practices.

Recommendations for others seeking to learn from the Clusters and the Hubs

Multi-agency working and capturing the voices of young people

Recommendation 11. Create more inclusive training and professional development opportunities to break down silo working and future-proof London's careers ecosystem.

Involve key stakeholders like former Careers Clusters, Hubs, WEX programme leads, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Work Coaches, the National Careers Service and other intermediaries working in schools and colleges through shared activities. Focus on improving student outcomes, including culturally relevant CEIAG, and integrating specific actions for vulnerable students (e.g., SEND, home-educated, young carers, and those at risk of becoming NEET), innovation in CEIAG etc through targeted training, partnerships, and feedback mechanisms.

Recommendation 12. Ensure young people's voices shape CEIAG through school, college and community engagement. Make use of feedback tools like surveys and youth parliaments. Communicate key priorities identified by young people and provide progress updates with measurable outcomes. Use community youth resources and local borough partnerships to improve accessibility, especially for underserved groups (e.g., SEND, home-educated, young carers, at-risk youth). Partner with youth foundations and community centres to promote services and share resources. Adopt inclusive commissioning practices to encourage diversity in programme design and delivery.

Appendix 1 – Central Government Strategic Careers, Skills and Employability Policy Drivers

- **Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy**– CEIAG acts as a key enabler in the smooth transition of talent into high-growth sectors, aligning with the objectives of the UK's 'Invest 2035' strategy to ensure the workforce is equipped with the skills and guidance necessary to drive long-term economic growth.
- **Skills England** – CEIAG is essential in supporting Skills England's mission by helping individuals identify labour market growth opportunities and navigate skills gaps. This new arms-length body will bring together key partners to identify and respond to skills needs of the next decade.
- **Growth and Skills Levy** – CEIAG is necessary in ensuring that young people (and adults, especially parents/carers) understand and can navigate the changes brought by the new Levy, providing clear guidance on available opportunities and pathways. The new Levy will replace the existing apprenticeship levy and include new foundation apprenticeships, alongside technical education developments that need to be better understood.
- **Get Britain Working White Paper** - CEIAG in the "Get Britain Working" White Paper, published on November 26, 2024, outlines the UK government's strategy to enhance employment support and reduce economic inactivity. A central element of this strategy is the creation of a new jobs and careers service aimed at assisting individuals in securing employment and advancing in their careers.
- **New National Jobs and Career Service** – CEIAG policies and new workforce development practices are crucial for the smooth integration of the National Careers Service with over 600 Jobcentre Plus offices, ensuring individuals receive the support needed to access better-paid work and navigate meaningful opportunities.
- **Changes to Universal Credit (UC) and new Work, Health, and Skills Plans for the Economically Inactive, led by Mayors and Local Areas** – CEIAG will become more integral to the changes underway. The Labour manifesto commits to reviewing UC to make work pay and reduce poverty, while reforming employment and wellbeing support. County Durham has a strong track record with established multi-agency partner networks helping to shape these initiatives.
- **English Devolution White Paper** (December 2024) creates more opportunities for a holistic, joined-up employment, skills, and health offer. The framework also gives Mayoral Strategic Authorities a central role in convening local youth careers provision. For example, it provides greater flexibility for the GLA and its partners to support careers provision for people of all-ages and abilities.
- **Prisoners' Early Release and Probation Services** – CEIAG will play a crucial role in supporting the successful reintegration of individuals released under a new law by offering tailored career advice, skills development, and employability support to help them transition effectively into the community and secure sustainable work opportunities.
- **A Curriculum and Assessment Review** – CEIAG is vital in addressing resource constraints in the education system by ensuring that both educators, careers and employability advisers working in schools and colleges are equipped with the right resources, training and support. Many students need and want trustworthy CIAG to make informed decisions about their future pathways.
- **Updated Gatsby Benchmarks for work in schools, colleges and Independent Training Providers (ITPs)** – CEIAG is described as 'good career guidance' with refinements made to an earlier version launched in 2014 and delivery supported through The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) working collaboratively with local and combined authorities. The Secretary for Education has endorsed this approach
- **Youth Guarantee for 18–21-year-olds, Youth Future Hubs and a New National Youth Strategy** – CIAG is vital to supporting these twin goals, helping young people access relevant education, training and employment opportunities while navigating barriers to future success. With youth unemployment at 13.3%, the highest in three years, CIAG plays a key role in addressing the challenges posed by global economic trends, rising real wage stagnation, and a cloudy employment outlook. Among 18-24-year-olds, the percentage out of work in the three months to July 2024 had last been as high in January 2021, amid Covid lockdowns.
- **Institutes of Technology (IoTs)** – CEIAG plays a key role in supporting IoTs which work in close partnerships to deliver world-class technical education and training in STEM occupations. The IoTs partnership model enables clear pathways from 16-18 education to higher technical qualifications (HTQs), apprenticeships, degrees, and employment, helping to shape individuals future career prospect

Appendix 2 - Overview of London Careers Cluster initiatives

1. <i>The Pan Out 2 Hospitality Careers Cluster</i> led by Rinova built on a successful prior initiative to enhance career opportunities in the food and hospitality sectors, expanding employer engagement across more London boroughs, primarily around Wandsworth. <i>“We’ve taken the model and now work with employers as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) to deliver to young people.”</i>	Key elements included: • <i>Raising Hospitality Career Awareness:</i> Pan Out2 addressed misconceptions, helping schools promote hospitality as a viable career path. • <i>School-Employer Partnerships:</i> Schools worked with local employers on tailored programmes like inter-school challenges and industry tours, providing students firsthand exposure to hospitality careers. • <i>Inclusive, Customised Activities:</i> The project met diverse student needs, including those with sensory impairments, through customised planning and risk assessments. • <i>Focus on Transferable Skills:</i> Activities developed skills like teamwork, creativity, and self-reliance, aligning with the hospitality industry needs, while supporting schools in meeting Gatsby Benchmarks.
2. <i>The Croydon Careers Cluster</i>, led by Education Development Trust (EDT), fostered employer partnerships, provided strategic guidance to schools, and broadened student awareness of local career opportunities. It aimed to improve career readiness and employability for disadvantaged students in Croydon by coordinating career activities across 14 schools. <i>“We worked with HMRC Croydon to initially develop virtual and then face to face work experience. Now, HMRC has extended a model developed within the Cluster to all schools in Croydon.”</i>	Key elements included: • <i>Upskilling Careers Leaders:</i> Careers consultants helped leaders develop school-wide strategies aligned with Gatsby Benchmarks. A dedicated website provided labour market information (LMI), resources, meeting minutes, and case studies. • <i>Focus on Local Industry:</i> Activities emphasised career pathways in Construction and Professional Services, sectors anticipated to grow due to Croydon’s regeneration. Work experiences, employer events, and higher education visits were tailored to student needs. • <i>Career Strategy Development:</i> Schools received intensive support to create or refine career strategies, prioritising employer partnerships and LMI use, enhancing teachers’ abilities to guide students. • <i>Targeted Student Support:</i> The project emphasised helping disadvantaged students, including those from BAME backgrounds, those with SEN, and those receiving free meals, through work experiences, awareness of apprenticeships, and hands-on career exploration. • <i>Parental Engagement and Teacher CPD:</i> The cluster engaged parents and trained teachers on LMI, helping integrate career guidance into the curriculum.
3. <i>The Inspire My Careers Cluster</i>, led by Let Me Play (LMP Education), enhanced career awareness, improved CEIAG access, and connected students in 12 schools within Hammersmith & Fulham with local career opportunities and insights into London's labour market.	Key elements included: • <i>Targeted Support for Disadvantaged Students:</i> The cluster focused on reducing employment gaps for disadvantaged young people in a borough marked by polarised deprivation and low higher education enrolment rates, aiming to

<i>“LMP Education upskilled educators to integrate career guidance into everyday teaching and sustainably embed LMI in the curriculum.”</i>	improve informed career decisions and post-school outcomes. • <i>Whole-School Career Strategy:</i> Schools adopted a comprehensive approach to career planning, working with employers and higher education institutions to deliver a cohesive, business-informed careers curriculum that embedded local labour market information (LMI). • <i>Building Sustainable Employer Connections:</i> The project encouraged lasting partnerships with local micro and SME employers to ensure that CEIAG was relevant and supportive of pupil progression. Employers provided career insights aligned with London's evolving job market. • <i>Educator Training and Curriculum Development:</i> – refer to text box example opposite.
4. <i>The Hillingdon Careers Cluster</i> led by Education Development Trust (EDT) supported 13 schools in Hillingdon by enhancing career readiness, particularly for disadvantaged students. The Cluster improved career awareness and built strong employer connections. This also enhanced career education within schools, contributing to sustainable career development aligned with local labour market needs. <i>“Work experience placements were prioritised for vulnerable groups and facilitated through partnerships with local SMEs and larger firms, such as SCS Railways and the Metropolitan Police.”</i>	Key elements included: • <i>Targeted Career Support:</i> The project provided needs-based career planning and curriculum integration, with a focus on connecting students to local labour markets, particularly in STEM and high-growth sectors like construction and logistics, due to the expansion of Heathrow and other infrastructure projects. • <i>Work Experience and Employer Partnerships:</i> – refer to text box example opposite. • <i>Teacher Training and Career Leader Support:</i> The cluster provided intensive CPD for teachers and new careers leaders, emphasising the importance of labour market information (LMI) and embedding careers guidance across subjects. • <i>Specialised Support for SEND and Female Students:</i> The cluster provided bespoke activities for SEND students and ensured a 50% female participation rate, particularly in STEM fields. Specific programmes were developed for SEND schools and students within mainstream schools.
5. <i>The Expanding Horizons, Raising Aspirations Cluster</i> led by London Borough of Hounslow 14 – 19 service, sits within lifelong learning services with staff trained to level 6/7 careers qualifications. The cluster aimed to strengthen career education across 14 secondary schools and West Thames College to create lasting employer connections, improved career awareness for students and families, and a robust framework for ongoing career education.	Key elements included: • <i>Collaborative employer-led career activities:</i> The cluster developed employer-informed CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice, and Guidance) through partnerships with local schools, colleges, and businesses, helping to align career guidance with labour market needs. <i>Targeted support for vulnerable students:</i> High-quality work experience placements and customised career support were prioritised for vulnerable and at-risk students, with activities co-produced by business volunteers.

<i>“Employer engagement through Spark! – This subcontractor facilitated business relationships, organised internships, and led activities to develop students' employability skills, helping to increase the number of micro and SME businesses involved.”</i>	• Parental involvement and whole-family approach: Recognising parental influence on career decisions, the cluster organised events, workplace visits, and focus groups for parents to improve career-related knowledge and engagement. • Teacher professional development: CPD sessions were provided to help teachers understand local labour market trends and enhance the relevance of their career advice. • Employer engagement through Spark! – refer to text box example opposite. • Development of employer-endorsed careers strategies: Schools and colleges created three-year careers strategies endorsed by employers to ensure sustainable career education aligned with the Gatsby Benchmarks.
6. <i>The Local Futures Careers Cluster</i>, led by 15 Billion EBP, aimed to enhance career support for twelve schools and colleges in Newham and Barking and Dagenham, focusing on students with varied backgrounds and needs. They successfully connected students with career pathways and supported schools in meeting career education standards through sustainable employer partnerships. <i>“Activities were aligned with growth sectors such as construction, creative industries, and tech, reflecting major regeneration efforts in Newham and Barking & Dagenham, including the Olympic legacy and other development projects.”</i>	Key elements included: • Individual needs analysis: Conducted with each school/college to identify gaps and shape priorities for activities. Schools developed individual strategies aligned with Gatsby Benchmarks. • Customised employability skills programmes and LMI access: Tailored activities focused on improving employability skills and providing labour market information (LMI), with emphasis on apprenticeships, STEM careers, creative industries, and curriculum-linked career learning. • Work experience placements: 500 five-day placements were offered at local businesses, particularly with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to provide students with real-world work experience. • Employer engagement and teacher training: The project included activities for teacher training, project-based learning, and employer networking to strengthen career readiness within schools. • Sector focus on local growth industries: refer to text box example opposite.
7. <i>The Waltham Forest Digital & Creative Careers Cluster</i>, led by London Borough of Waltham Forest connected students with careers in the creative and digital industries. The cluster aimed to enhance career awareness in creative and digital industries, build strong school-employer connections, and create a framework for inclusive, sector-aligned career education in East London.	Key elements included: • Sector-focused career activities: refer to text box example opposite. • Employer and school partnerships: The cluster established networks between schools and businesses, with 18 employer and higher education institution (HEI) pilots to support sustainable career guidance aligned with local labour market needs and Gatsby Benchmarks. • Targeted student support and inclusivity: The project addressed under-representation in the digital and creative sectors by providing immersive, experience-led activities for

<i>“Collaborating with eleven schools and colleges, the cluster provided a wide array of career-focused activities, including creative networking events, music therapy, ethical hacking, and emerging technologies. More than 70 employers, such as the BBC, ITN, and the Barbican, participated, offering students insights into creative and digital roles.”</i>	students with SEND and ensuring diverse participation from disadvantaged backgrounds. • Teacher training and curriculum integration: Through CPD sessions, teachers gained a better understanding of labour market information (LMI) and strategies to integrate digital and creative career learning within the curriculum.
8. <i>The Young Careers Cluster</i>, led by Reed in Partnership, worked with students across 10 schools and colleges in London. It aimed to enhance career readiness and opportunities for students by connecting them with local labour markets, fostering sustainable connections between schools and employers, enhanced students' practical skills and career awareness, and provided a model for inclusive, employer-informed career guidance across participating schools. <i>“Over 70 employers, including JP Morgan, British Airways, and Marriott Hotels, collaborated with schools to provide students with meaningful encounters and experiences through career fairs, workplace visits, mock interviews, and CV-building workshops. These activities aimed to help students understand the application of school subjects in real-world careers.”</i>	Key elements included: • Targeted needs analysis and career strategy: development: Each school identified career support gaps, creating tailored, employer-endorsed strategies to improve Gatsby Benchmarks, especially in employer encounters and work experience. • Employer-led career activities: see case study opposite. • Support for teachers in labour market understanding: CPD sessions and workplace visits for teachers helped integrate local LMI into the curriculum. • Focus on inclusivity and practical skill-building: The cluster prioritised support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing experiences tailored to their needs. Activities focused on bridging gaps in career guidance, particularly through mock interviews, CV development, and personalised employer encounters.
9. <i>The Build Your Future Careers Cluster</i>, led by Construction Youth Trust aimed to introduce students to diverse career opportunities within the construction and built environment sector across Central London Forward areas. The Cluster connected students to industry-relevant skills and introduced new career pathways.	Key elements included: • Raising awareness of construction careers: Helping students and teachers discover diverse career paths in construction, with a focus on apprenticeships, higher-level skills, and degree opportunities. Emphasis was placed on including under-represented groups such as ethnic minority students and young women. • Tailored needs analysis and pilot activities: Each school underwent a needs analysis to shape custom pilot projects. Key themes included boosting employer engagement, re-engaging students post-lockdown, promoting alternative career paths, and contextualising the curriculum to link subjects like math to real-life careers.

<i>“There’s a great need present for specialist support and tailored work experience programmes. Hubs provide capacity building support for schools and organisations but what is now required is financial support from the GLA and other sources to fund the delivery of work experience / workplace encounters.”</i>	• Employer-led skills sessions: Activities were designed with employers like Skanska and Higgins Partnerships to teach students practical skills like teamwork, green construction practices, and employability skills specific to the sector. • Support for students with immediate needs: Activities included immersive work experiences, in-school sessions for those facing barriers to traditional work placements, and additional qualifications, such as CSCS card training, to help students transition into the workforce. • Parental and teacher engagement: The cluster worked with schools to engage parents in students' career exploration and upskill teachers on how to link labour market insights with classroom learning. • Sustainable in-school work experience programme: Developed in response to lockdown limitations, this in-school program gave students hands-on experience with industry professionals and met Gatsby Benchmark 6 for meaningful work experiences.
10. The Diverso SEND Cluster, led by Talentino, aimed to work with ten further education colleges (FE) across London and micro-businesses and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) to support them to provide quality careers support, including meaningful employer encounters, experience of the world of work, and work placements. <i>“Connection Crew had a desire to engage with a more diverse workforce, particularly young people and improving their neurodiverse representation. Accessing students via Diverso meant that they are able to introduce students to their recruitment process, and having gone through the process twice, with 4 students having secured paid employment.”</i>	Key elements included: • The active involvement of nine FE Colleges in London: working to improve the SEND careers offer for students. • The active engagement of 50 micro-businesses and small to medium-sized enterprise (SMEs): delivering employer encounters (EE), work insights (WI), and SEND work placements (WP) • Multiple case studies of good/interesting careers policies and practices: involving employers, including young people securing paid work as a result of participating on the project. • Employers/volunteers’ knowledge, confidence, and capability in supporting SEND young people: this increased as a result of the training and resources provided by Talentino.

Appendix 3 - Additional Tables for Gatsby Benchmark progress

Academic year	Mean benchmarks fully achieved		Number of EIs with a Compass return	
	All regions	London	All regions	London
	Mainstream schools			
2019/20	3.81	2.57	2490	248
2020/21	3.97	3.39	2878	373
2021/22	4.88	3.87	3047	354
2022/23	5.52	4.65	3226	437
2023/24	5.87	5.32	3306	467
	Alternative Provision			

2019/20	2.97	2.2	160	15
2020/21	3.67	2.96	214	28
2021/22	4.47	3.48	226	23
2022/23	4.76	4.49	256	35
2023/24	5.21	5.18	277	40
	Further Education Colleges, incl. certain Post-16 Providers*			
2019/20	3.84	3.09	221	22
2020/21	3.98	3.56	239	27
2021/22	4.89	4.08	245	25
2022/23	5.48	4.52	260	31
2023/24	5.9	4.83	267	36
	SEND providers			
2019/20	3.56	2.31	425	26
2020/21	4.16	4.24	562	59
2021/22	4.87	4.52	682	86
2022/23	5.56	4.9	792	105
2023/24	5.85	5.28	901	121

*Post-16 category added in 2023/24 to replace and broaden the FE category.

By Hub	Mean benchmarks fully achieved (Mainstream providers only)	Number of EIs with a Compass return (Hub members only, as classified in CEC data)
Central		
2021/22	4.55	49
2022/23	5.14	126
2023/24	5.53	135
East		
2021/22	4.34	53
2022/23	4.46	131
2023/24	5.28	144
South		
2021/22	3.57	44
2022/23	4.56	59
2023/24	5.33	63
West		
2021/22	3.73	37
2022/23	4.44	116
2023/24	5.14	122

Please note that the accompanying confidential spreadsheet provides additional breakdowns on Gatsby Benchmark progress by Hub, borough, and type of education institution. The data tables used to produce the above estimates are subject to data suppression, which can reduce the precision in some cases, particularly for groups with few Compass returns, such as AP and FE providers in the early years. Specifically, any individual statistic based on fewer than 10 Compass returns was suppressed. Nonetheless, suppression was rare at the levels reported above. For instance, the overall England averages line up to published CEC data to within 0.01 of a benchmark.

ENDNOTES

¹ <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/>

² EAs support schools and colleges in achieving all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks, with a primary focus on: Benchmark 1 – A Stable Careers Programme, Benchmark 5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees, and Benchmark 6 – Experiences of Workplaces - <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-01/Enterprise%20Adviser%20role%20description.pdf>

³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/business-and-economy/business-and-economy-publications/economic-recovery-implementation-plan>

⁴ London Hubs and Careers Clusters were developed to respond to the priorities identified within the [London Economic Action Partnership's](#) European [Structural Investment Fund strategy](#), the Mayor's [Skills for Londoners Strategy](#) and other Mayoral priorities.

⁵ <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/volunteering/get-involved/enterprise-adviser-network>

⁶ Gatsby Benchmarks originally published in 2014 - <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf> and subsequently updated in 2024 'Good Career Guidance: The next ten years', Gatsby Foundation, London - <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/programmes/good-career-guidance-the-next-ten-years>

⁷ London Careers: Programmes and Resources - <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/education-and-youth/london-careers-and-preparing-workplace/london-careers-programmes-and-resources>

⁸ Gatsby Benchmarks 2004 latest revision - <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/programmes/good-career-guidance-the-next-ten-years>

⁹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-mayor-does/priorities-london/londons-recovery-coronavirus-crisis/london-partnership-board/londons-local-enterprise-partnership-2012-2023>

¹⁰ Mayor of London (2018). Skills and Adult Education Strategy for Londoners -

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/osd32_sfl_strategy_final_june_20186_0.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/education-and-youth/london-careers-and-preparing-workplace/london-careers-hubs>

¹² Each of the Careers Clusters produced detailed self-evaluation reports which were reviewed to inform this evaluation. We have not detailed every specific activity, instead we have focused on what worked well, lessons learned and sustainable CEIAG policies and practices that continued, where feasible given funding constraints.

¹³ Match funding for the Hubs was supported through ESF Priority Axis 2.2, until summer 2023, and GLA and UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) funding replaced ESF from summer 2023 to summer 2025.

¹⁴ Employer Skills Survey 2022 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/employer-skills-survey-2022>

¹⁵ DfE (2024) Employer Skills Survey 2022 Research report, November 2024, IFF Research

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65855506fc07f3000d8d46bd/Employer_skills_survey_2022_research_report.pdf

¹⁶ Types of placements included: Placements for people at school; Placements for people at college; Placements for people at university; Internships, either paid or unpaid; Placements specifically targeted at giving work experience to the unemployed; Work trials for potential new recruits; Voluntary work; Special needs / Disability course / programme; Work experience / Graduate programme; Unspecified student/trainee; Traineeships; Other types of placement.

¹⁷ Percy, C., & Rogers, M. (2021). The Value of Volunteering: Volunteering in Education and Productivity at Work. London: Education and Employers. www.educationandemployers.org/research/the-value-of-volunteering

Percy, C., & Rogers, M. (2020). Working Well: How volunteering to help young people also boosts volunteers' wellbeing. London: Education and Employers. www.educationandemployers.org/research/working-well-report

¹⁸ Hughes, D. (2023). DIVERSO, London: Final Evaluation & Impact Assessment Report.

<https://www.talentinocareers.co.uk/employers.html>

¹⁹ Get Britain Working White Paper, November 2024 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-britain-working-white-paper/get-britain-working-white-paper>

²⁰ FE News, September 2024 - <https://www.fenews.co.uk/exclusive/why-hasnt-the-neet-rate-budged-the-answer-lies-in-early-intervention/1>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/connect-to-work>

²² <https://educationbusinessuk.net/news/01072024/labour-pledges-recruit-1000-new-careers-advisors>

²³ <https://www.fenews.co.uk/skills/labours-pledge-to-boost-work-experience-and-careers-advice/>

²⁴ The Careers and Enterprise Company (2024). Now and Next Report, CEC, London, March 2024.

<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/evidence-and-reports/careers-education-202223-now-next/>

²⁵ The CEC (2024). From outreach to intake: the business case. Employer Standards for Careers Education – One year on - <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/5jdfj3dg/1958-employer-standards-for-careers-education-one-year-on-v10-non-print.pdf>

²⁶ <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/employers/employer-standards/>

²⁷ The SEND Careers Cluster was exclusively focused on working with up to 10 Further Education Colleges. A total of 9 were identified as being 'active' participants throughout the project.

²⁸ <https://www.talentinocareers.co.uk/diverso-report.pdf>

²⁹ https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20025/schools_and_colleges/2357/hounslow_careers_cluster

³⁰ <https://londoncareerscentral.co.uk/> The Careers Hub serves the boroughs of Camden, City of London, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth, and Westminster. This encompasses central boroughs with a diverse urban population.

- ³¹ South London Careers Hub - [South London Partnership](#) The Careers Hub serves the boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond, and Sutton. This covers southern boroughs characterised by a mix of urban and suburban communities.
- ³² Local London Careers Hub East - <https://www.careershubs-east.london/page/home-page> The Careers Hub serves the boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Bromley, Enfield, Greenwich, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, and Waltham Forest. This covers eastern boroughs, including areas with significant economic development zones.
- ³³ West London Careers Hub - <https://wlcareershubs.com/> The Careers Hub serves the boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, and Hounslow. This comprises western boroughs with a blend of residential and commercial areas.
- ³⁴ <https://www.businessldn.co.uk/what-we-do/people/the-london-local-skills-improvement-plan>
- ³⁵ Next Steps London Guide for young people and parents - <https://wlcareershubs.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Next-Steps-in-London-Guide.pdf>. See also: <https://wlcareershubs.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Next-Steps-in-London-Employer-Guide-Oct-2024.pdf>
- ³⁶ <https://www.businessldn.co.uk/skillsldn/event-information>
- ³⁷ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/power-platform/products/power-bi/>
- ³⁸ <https://london.startprofile.com/page/home-page>
- ³⁹ London LSIP priority areas - https://www.businessldn.co.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2023-08/BLDN_Report_LSIP_DIGITAL%20FINAL%20compressed_0.pdf
- ⁴⁰ London Enterprise Adviser Network - https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/volunteering/get-involved/enterprise-adviser-network?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- ⁴¹ GLA confirmed that no EIs have left the LEAN/Hubs since joining. A small number of EIs could not be aligned between the GLA and CEC lists. In some cases, this reflects Hubs inviting additional EIs to participate in a Hub, even where not included in this list, e.g. where such participation is considered beneficial to the Hub as a whole. In others, it reflects multi-site organisations which might not be allocated to GLA in CEC data, despite having at least one site in the London region. For such multi-site EIs, we analyse the relevant student numbers across all sites, as data on individual sites are not available in the source data and are not always applicable (e.g. students attending multiple sites). The list of target EIs also varies slightly from year to year, based on new EIs opening, closing, or merging, as well as new data availability and definition changes. Our analysis focuses only on the most recent list of target EIs. There is a small data discrepancy between which EIs are considered Hub members in CEC and GLA data, in which case the GLA date on hub joining is given priority. The discrepancy does not affect the overall conclusions from the data.
- ⁴² Headcount data only identifiable and non-zero for 718 EIs. Headcount data based on 2022/23 academic year census data for Key Stages 3-5 where available. For colleges not covered in the census data, we take the total number of 16-18 students were available (TPUP1618). For 16 EIs, neither census nor college data are available, so the total number of pupils from Edubase is used. For those 16 EIs, there are likely to be a number of non-secondary education students, but unlikely to be more than a few hundred and not sufficient to skew the presented figures. Of the 16 EIs, 15 are special schools and one a 5-18 PRU. All special schools have a maximum statutory age of 25 or less (mostly 19 or less). 14 of the EIs include some primary age provision, but with total pupil numbers across all 14 of only 969.
- ⁴³ For more detail on national changes in Gatsby Benchmark provision, please see The Careers & Enterprise Company. (2024). Insight Briefing: Gatsby Benchmark results for 2023/24. <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/evidence-and-reports/insight-briefing-gatsby-benchmark-results-for-2023-24/>
- ⁴⁴ Such controls improve confidence that the correlations are indicative of a causal relationship, but cannot demonstrate it internally within the dataset, which would require randomised interventions to alter careers provision while holding all other factors constant. Nonetheless, a pragmatic level of confidence, in the absence of other data, can be reached by combining correlation evidence with specific mechanisms in a theory of change, testimonial evidence from young people and teachers, case studies, and experimental evidence from other jurisdictions that buttresses key pathways within a theory of change. For references and further discussion, please see Percy, C. (2023). Technical note: Further analysis on post-16 destinations for the 2016/17 to 2018/19 cohorts. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company. <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/our-evidence/evidence-and-reports/the-benefits-of-gatsby-benchmark-achievement-for-post-16-destinations/>
- ⁴⁵ Percy, C. (2020). Personal Guidance in English Secondary Education: An initial Return-on-Investment estimate. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company. https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/wa1dsjc2/partial_roi_estimation_for_personal_guidance_-_chris_percy_2020_vpublic.pdf
- ⁴⁶ 13% inflation from 2019 to 2022; see <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>
- ⁴⁷ Corresponding in most cases to the Mayor's London Careers Programme, where the main funding sources are European Social Fund (ESF), the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) (which is funded by the Department for Education (DfE)), and the GLA. The programme consisted of two sets of programmes: the Hubs which delivered strategic support to schools and colleges; and the Careers Clusters, which looked to deliver pilot projects with schools and employers as well as work experience placements to students. ~£3.5m for Career Clusters from March 2020 to Sept 2023 (Source: Project closure data forms). ~£7.8m Hubs from 2021 to end Sept 2024 (Source: GLA email Dec 2024; 2021-22 was £0). ~£1m for GLA staff salaries across 4-8 staff members for academic years 2020/21 to 2023/24 (Source: estimates based on GLA email Dec 2024). The LEAN budget is not included.
- ⁴⁸ <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/publication-timetable>
- ⁴⁹ Sustained from October to March in the academic year after completing Year 11
- ⁵⁰ Details of methodology changes are available in each year's methodology report, summarised in Annex 1 of <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/methodology/key-stage-4-destination-measures-methodology>
- ⁵¹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-destination-measures/2021-22>
- ⁵² Equalex Framework - <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/modern-work-experience/>
- ⁵³ The Buckland Review - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-buckland-review-of-autism-employment-report-and-recommendations/the-buckland-review-of-autism-employment-report-and-recommendations>