



WESTON  
COLLEGE

# MAKING CAREERS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

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Weston College  
Careers Advice Strategy  
2021-2024



## STRATEGY INTENTION

Weston College has a long history of providing students with opportunities to develop their skills and gain recognition for their experiences. Weston College is committed to providing impartial information, advice and guidance on education, training and employment opportunities to prospective, current and former learners. The College believes that a high-quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) and careers guidance offer raises attainment and aspirations, and is ultimately crucial in helping young people emerge from education ready and capable of achieving their potential regardless of their starting point or where they are on their journey or starting point.

All advice and guidance services contribute to the College's mission of 'creating brighter futures' by supporting their success, progress and wellbeing. This strategy aims to look at the current positioning of careers advice and guidance at Weston College, its relationship to the wider college group and the needs of its stakeholders and will determine the direction of careers advice and guidance services for the three-year period 2021-2024.

'Making Careers Everyone's Business' will be the catalyst that drives forward and sets out the expectations of how Weston College will support all students and apprentices to create, but ultimately achieve their brighter future. It is our aim to provide an innovative, comprehensive and transformative offering that 'enables every student to effectively design their own future and reach their full potential'.

The strategy aims to differentiate Weston College from other institutions, whilst mirroring developments in recruitment and assessment. The strategy will align to other strategies within the College including each faculty's Curriculum Intent and Alignment Plan by providing opportunities for students and apprentices to become work ready, develop their resilience, self-awareness and to build

their confidence to enable them to be successful in their chosen career or field of further study. We all owe it to students and apprentices to create the right CEIAG conditions for them and only through working in true partnership and making careers everyone's business can we achieve this.

"It has been inspiring to work with the team at Weston College - they are at the forefront of innovation in career education, advice and guidance.

The team at Weston College don't just work on one off projects about careers and the world of work, they work strategically, embedding information and examples about careers into so much of what they do. All of this means their young people are as well prepared as possible to take on the future."

**Andrew Webster, Education Sector Manager for FE & Skills at the Careers & Enterprise Company**

# CONTEXT AND DRIVERS

With the government's reforms to technical education and skills and the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market, there is an increasing need for colleges to work in partnership with employers, careers advisers, local authorities and other education and training providers to support students to prepare for the workplace and to make informed choices about the next step in their education or training.

Weston College works closely with the West of England Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), including the West of England Careers Hub funded by the Careers & Enterprise Company. The College benefits support from hub leads, Enterprise Coordinators and wider employer collaboration as well as a network of careers professionals to really drive forward careers provision across the region.

The 2017 DfE Careers Strategy making the most of everyone's skills and talents, (DfE December 2017)

sets out that every further education institution should use the Gatsby Charitable Foundation's Benchmarks to develop and improve their careers provision. As an FE provider, Weston College also champions the Career Development Institute's (CDI) Career Development Framework (CDI, 2021). Neither are statutory frameworks but by adopting them, Weston College can be confident of not only meeting the actions set out in the national careers strategy, but can evidence how it brings dynamism into careers to allow students in the region to fully explore, test and immerse themselves to create their brighter future.

Careers, advice and guidance is a key driver within the wider college ethos of 'careers not courses'. 'Making Careers Everyone's Business' clearly aligns to the vision and objectives within the Weston College Strategic Plan 2020-23 and can clearly be evidenced across all six strategic objectives, whilst contributing to the overall success of the College.

## WESTON COLLEGE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2020-23:

1. Provide a safe, supportive and inclusive learning culture where learners can thrive.
2. Meet the needs of employers, the local economy and regional skills shortages through a curriculum offer that puts careers at its centre.
3. Develop partnerships, collaborations and models of learning that increase opportunity for learners and apprentices from different backgrounds.
4. Enable learners to succeed, progress and meet future challenges by providing high quality teaching, learning and assessment.
5. Facilitate innovation and develop the use of technology to enhance learning, reach new markets and develop learning and smarter and more efficient working practices.
6. Remain a financially robust, sustainable and resilient organisation that can continue to develop and invest in its facilities, infrastructure and workforce.

# WHY CAREERS ADVICE HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT

In an economic crisis, young people routinely experience much higher unemployment rates than older people. In many countries, youth unemployment shot up in the wake of the Great Financial Crisis of 2007/08 and remained high for many years to follow.

Early experiences of unemployment are linked with long-term economic and psychological damage for individuals. Today's young people are working to accumulate education, qualifications and skills that will position them to find decent work. However, rapid changes in demand for labour (due to automation, digitalisation, globalisation, population ageing, the green transition and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic) makes decision-making about education and training options much more difficult. With many new occupations emerging and many existing ones changing or diminishing, young people are in need of heightened support as they prepare themselves for working life.

Technological advances, population ageing, globalisation and the need to tackle climate-related challenges are driving massive changes in the labour market – old jobs are disappearing, or radically changing, and new jobs are emerging that require a different balance of skills. Reskilling and upskilling are increasingly seen as integral parts of working life. More than ever, governments (and employers) expect workers to take responsibility for their own education and training, but workers can only make good decisions about investments in learning, education and training if they have access to the information and support which underpin effective career management skills. Guidance enables reskilling, upskilling and mobility. It is especially important to older workers needing to move within the labour market and who want to have their skills validated. With labour markets restructuring, it is essential that people in work, as well as those seeking work, have easy access to good quality guidance.

## SKILLS FOR JOBS WHITE PAPER

In January 2021, the government released the Skills for Jobs White Paper which aims to strengthen links between employers and further education providers. This White Paper sets out how the government will reform further education so it supports people to get the skills our economy needs. The White Paper includes a section entitled 'clear and trusted information, advice and guidance for careers and education choices', which essentially serves as a revision of the 2017 Careers Strategy making the most of everyone's skills and talents, (DfE December 2017). As detailed in the Skills for Jobs White Paper, the Department for Education published updated statutory guidance in July 2021 for education and training providers on their duty to provide careers guidance. The guidance further reinforces how careers guidance is an integral part of transforming skills and training and to support the implementation of the White Paper proposals.

The updated guidance sets out that every further education institution should use the Gatsby Charitable Foundation's Benchmarks to develop and improve their careers provision. As an FE provider, Weston College also champions the Career Development Institute's (CDI) Career Development Framework (CDI, 2021) because of it acts as a clear, tangible way to ensure that students are building the career management skills for

lifelong career development. Neither are statutory frameworks but by adopting them, Weston College can be confident of not only meeting the actions set out in the national careers strategy, but can evidence how it brings dynamism into careers to allow students in the region to fully explore, test and immerse themselves to create their brighter future.

## SCOPE

While sound careers advice and guidance is undoubtedly crucial for young people, the right guidance is no less important to adults. The impact of changing economic circumstances means that there will be a change in the skills requirements of our workforce. Access to good careers guidance enables individuals to clarify their aspirations, understand options open to them and to take control of and make informed decisions regardless of where they are in life.

As a college at the heart of the local community, we play a key role in ensuring that the local and national workforce is appropriately skilled, which has a direct impact on raising employment levels, improving productivity and supporting the local economy. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, Weston College will champion - sustainable, aspirational and accessible careers support.

# VISION

**'Making careers everyone's business'** is the core vision and title of our careers advice strategy and is essential in gaining the momentum to and capabilities to deliver an outstanding and truly impactful approach to careers. The below outlines the key initiatives that will deliver this success of the College.



Weston College has long championed the mantra of 'careers not courses' and invested heavily to create an outstanding careers service with impressive CPD, including advisors trained to Level 6. Though in response to the pandemic and following months of strategic planning work (involving students, staff partners and employers), we have gone all out to make 'careers everyone's business' via the creation of our new Career Excellence Hubs. The model is designed to build on our impressive existing wider partnership/signposting work with employers, schools and stakeholders such as the West of England LEP Careers Hub.

Collective aspiration has been achieved through the creation of the [Career Excellence Hub Charter](#) - securing a 'whole college approach'. The Charter also reflects our response to the FE White Paper to put employers at the heart of post-16 skills education and is designed to support the student every step of the way, making sustainable positive careers a reality. The charter ensures that each faculty is committed to aligning its curriculum to the needs of employers, it also offers the very best support in wellbeing, inclusive practice/SEND and digital with an ambitious vision linking to WorldSkills UK - to raise aspirations of students and apprentices regardless of their starting point in life.

## EMBEDDED AT ALL STAGES OF THE STUDENT JOURNEY

Weston College believes that careers should be a core focus at every stage of the student journey and it is essential to positive progression and individual development whether they are a current student, intended student or not.

With this in mind, the College will not only ensure the curriculum offer has careers at its core, but that other vital stages such as pre-enrolment IAG is efficient, robust and enables learners to be placed on the most appropriate programme aligned to their career aspirations. The College will therefore continue to invest heavily time and resource into careers activity regardless of the stage of the

Taking part in competitions is proven to enhance a person's learning and development with WorldSkills designed to focus on capacity building in core skills and competencies valued by employers.

Key to the delivery of this strategy will be ensuring faculty and the central careers advice team have an equal responsibility in the delivery and making this strategy a success. Alongside the Career Excellence Hubs, the following further supports this approach:

- Curriculum Intent and Alignment Plans that use advanced LMI to make sure industry skills and knowledge are at the heart of all programmes, including Industry Advisory Boards to critically evaluate our provision
- Pioneering knowledge, skills and behaviour programme 'I.D' is delivered as a core component of all 16-19 study programmes. There will be a strong focus on 'ready to learn and ready to work', including digital identity and wellbeing with the aim of preparing students and apprentices for higher study or employment.
- Innovative careers tutorial programme that is co-delivered by the Careers Advice team and curriculum tutors
- Launch of the World Skills 5 Educator posts across the College

student journey, whilst placing an emphasis on working with key influencers such as parents and schools to support individuals with their decisions, progression and career management.

When focusing on the delivery of careers not courses, the following will provide overarching direction for all pre-enrolment activity:

1. Deliver an effective, needs-led and coherent pre-enrolment service that results in high levels of student satisfaction and retention
2. We will deliver and implement a programme of careers outreach activity that supports local skills needs working with schools and community partners.
3. Place a great emphasis on permeating careers within all sources of information such as our website, prospectuses etc.
4. Provide a consistent approach to all elements of the student applicant journey that ensures all prospective students are advised on what college provision will best support them to achieve their career goals.
5. We will ensure that college staff are trained and understand what is required to deliver effective, needs-led CEIAG.
6. We will ensure that key influencers (e.g. parents, school staff) and support networks have the knowledge and resources to support students with their Weston College journey.

## SEND

We know that all young people face challenges in finding employment, with only 5.7% of people with a learning difficulty are in employment nationally, and with 71% of those working part-time, there is a clear need to increase this statistic nationally and regionally. Many of them face unique challenges in progressing from school to further learning and the workplace, with research identifying that they can and do want to work, but are often denied the opportunity because there are many barriers to finding meaningful paid work. Therefore, establishing a sustainable model of support which can continue long-term across the area will be a key focus.

Many young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) benefit from intensive specialist career support such as supported internships, apprenticeships and employment. In addition, extended workplace interviews, job profiling and coaching alongside accessing real-work environments preparation through supported enterprise activities and volunteering. With the right support, encouragement and empowerment through specialist interventions, many of these students can access the broad range of career outcomes available to their peers which lead to successful outcomes.

The SEND Code of Practice 2014 introduces the Preparing for Adulthood agenda for all young people and following these national guidelines and ensuring we adhere to the Preparing for Adulthood agenda, Weston College has introduced the SEND Supported Employment Hub. Through this inclusive delivery model, staff utilise innovative teaching, learning and assessment methods which sees students empowered to develop strategies to overcome their barriers. They gain the sustainable

skills needed to progress onto and through cross college provision, internships, traineeships, apprenticeships and/or employment. There is a strong focus on empowerment combined with robust mentoring that embeds exciting enterprise and community-based projects. This works to improve communication and team working skills for learners', to make informed personal choices and decisions regarding their future aspirations.

To ensure that careers guidance for students and apprentices with SEND is differentiated, where appropriate, and based on high aspirations and a personalised approach. The College's Careers Advice Team work in collaboration with specialist SEND practitioners to ensure that careers guidance for students and apprentices with SEND should be based on the individual's own aspirations, abilities and needs.

In order to continue to provide high-quality careers support and SEND outcomes the College will continue to prioritise the following:

- Investing in high-quality specialist practitioners who are highly qualified and skilled in SEND
- Continue to develop individualised pathways that will lead to positive outcomes
- Pitch real-life experience at the right level
- Support employers closely by providing extra support and dedicated advice

# ADULT

Our commitment to the Lifetime Skills Guarantee is to support the transformation of the skills system so everyone, no matter where they live or their background, can gain the skills they need to progress in work at any stage of their lives. This will be critical in ensuring we play our part in providing employers with the access to the skilled workforce they need, and that more people are trained for the skills gaps that exist now, as well as in the future.

In addition to exploiting the opportunities through schemes such as the National Skills Fund, Weston College will provide an inclusive careers service to enable adults to understand the range of opportunities available to them to acquire the skills and qualifications they need to succeed. To achieve this, the College will:

- Focus on increasing accessibility to careers advice for adults.
- Looking at new ways of embedding CEIAG into adult programmes.
- Exploiting funding opportunities to put in place provision and care to better support them throughout the learning journey, addressing any potential barriers.

# APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

The Government continues to prioritise the importance of improving work-ready skills alongside a central focus on technical and professional education, which is part of a much broader plan to increase productivity as we emerge from the COVID pandemic. Key to this is driving a cultural change where apprenticeships and traineeships are seen as 'a high quality and prestigious path to successful careers, with opportunities across all sectors of the economy, in all parts of the country and at all levels'.

Employers tell us they are crying out for higher level technical skills and that apprenticeships are great for their organisations. Employers want a more diverse talent pipeline into their organisations and apprenticeships open doors by allowing individuals to earn while they learn, achieve a sought-after qualification standard, and get years of work experience. On qualifying these apprentices are in really high demand".

As a college we have a strategic focus on apprenticeships and traineeships, including higher and degree apprenticeships which must be explicitly considered in each instance of curriculum development. At the same time, we must ensure that these individuals are given the opportunity to benefit from programmes that really develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to succeed in their chosen industry, whilst also still being able to access high-quality impartial careers advice to support them with their next steps.

To support the apprenticeship and traineeship agenda and ensure we as a college play our part in meeting the local skills need and achieving a far closer alignment between employers and colleges, we will:

- Continue to raise the profile of apprenticeships and traineeships to ensure that schools students are informed to consider these routes as an attractive and desirable option, alongside academic and technical programmes.
- Upskill assessors so they can play a key role in supporting apprentices with careers advice and helping them progress onto their next steps.
- Embed careers into the programme of all Weston College apprenticeships and traineeships, whilst making sure all know how to access impartial careers advice as and when required.
- Raise the profile of degree apprenticeships and other higher education options open to apprentices.

# PILLARS OF INNOVATION

In order to achieve the vision of 'Making Careers Everyone's Business', four pillars of innovation have been created that underpin the strategy and will ensure the College is able to realise its vision and drive forward the College's approach to careers excellence.

## LEADERSHIP AND ETHOS

The commitment to making careers everyone's business and careers excellence is shared by managers and leaders at all levels including the governing body. The Principal and CEO, has set career excellence as a key strategic priority and is recognised as an essential component in the construct of outstanding learning, progress and progression for students and apprentices.

This strategy led from the top of the organisation aligns to Weston College core values and specialisms, such as creating an inclusive talent pipeline, as well as being seen as one of the final pieces of the jigsaw following aspirational capital expansion to provide students with the opportunities to experience 'real world learning' within the college campuses.

In addition to a central careers committee that ensures careers advice and support evolves and is truly from the ground up, as well as a commitment from the Principal & CEO to fund staff for qualifications who are involved in the delivery of careers advice, careers representation at Leadership Board level unites for a truly 'whole college' approach.

## IMMERSION

'Making careers everyone's business' is based on the belief that the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours for careers is best embedded within the curriculum and supported with access to impactful co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. An embedded approach avoids careers being viewed as a set of skills or experiences that are developed in isolation or alongside the students' programme of study.

This embedded model via Career Excellence Hubs embraces a student centric approach in which careers and employability skills are inter-related and developed incrementally across the curriculum. Furthermore, this holistic approach fosters an independent mindset to learning and career management at an early stage of the student journey.

## EXPLORATION AND COLLABORATION

Our students and apprentices experience information overload on a daily basis - so the old-fashioned positioning of the careers service as an information hub is no longer desired. We actively encourage students and apprentices to look critically at skills and experiences and how they relate to ambitions. Regardless of where they are in their journey, we work with students and apprentices to explore career paths, employability enhancing opportunities, and their next steps.

Exploration and Collaboration is central to the College's spectrum of exploration, a two-tier model that enables our careers advice team to work with students and apprentices to identify values and interests but also to help them get the skills and experience they need. To achieve this, we have placed a great emphasis on trying to empower learners with the tools and confidence to explore careers, so when they work with our specialist careers advice team they are already able to have an informed discussion about their career and the support they require. It is not the job of a careers advisor to tell a student what to do, it is their job to guide them towards deciding on their own path.

## TECH-ENHANCED

Our ambition is to incorporate technology into everything we do, creating an immersive experience for our students and apprentices. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we all work and our careers offer has had to adapt to reflect this. We have seen first-hand that students and apprentices wish to engage with support services in different ways and we have realised the mass of opportunities that incorporating a clear focus on digital within careers can provide.

Tech-enhanced is essential in our push to make 'careers everyone's business', as well as providing the platform for other pillars, such as exploration and collaboration.



# PRIORITIES

The following details the key priorities for the lifecycle of the strategy:

1. Use Careers Excellence Hubs as the structural imperative to truly embed careers across the College, as well as develop and deliver provision that is informed by needs of the local economy and will align to Local Skill Improvement Plans.
2. Develop an internal careers audit tool that will evidence how the College meets its statutory requirements for careers i.e. the Gatsby Benchmarks, as well as aligning to key frameworks such as the CDI Careers Development Framework
3. Improve the service that college apprentices receive in terms of careers advice, with the goal of making them better equipped to take their next step whether that be further training or employment.
4. Implement an infrastructure that can effectively deliver high-quality and needs-led careers across the College.
5. Exploit technology to improve access to careers support whilst also opening up greater opportunities for students and apprentices to become career ready.
6. Develop a comprehensive central SEND careers programme that that will actively engage and aid progression for SEND students, whilst complementing existing models such as the SEND Supported Employment Hub.
7. Improve the access adults in the College and local community have to high-quality careers advice, exploring how new partnerships, technology and curriculum planning can support the successful delivery of this.

## STUDENT ENTITLEMENT

Weston College is committed to providing impartial information, advice and guidance on education, training and employment opportunities to prospective, current and former learners. The College ensures high quality, timely, accurate and impartial Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) is provided to support individuals make informed decisions about their next steps in order for them to achieve personal and economic wellbeing throughout their lives.

The [Weston College Careers Entitlement](#) document provides a concise and visual overview of the College's careers programme and support service.



# IMPACT AND REVIEW

Success will see CEIAG services being fully embedded within the wider College Group to enable success for all. All CEIAG services will be highly responsive, financially robust, digitally-savvy and that all deliver an outstanding service.

This will be evidenced by:

- Improved attainment outcomes for college learners
- Improved progression outcomes
- Careers service engagement figures
- Reduced NEET figures and as a result, increased retention statistics
- Maintaining quality standards e.g. Matrix
- Meeting all service standards of the Careers Advice Team

Softer outcomes, such as the learner voice and feedback will also be used to evidence the strategy's success and will allow for continual development of the strategy throughout the three-year cycle. Including but not limited to:

- Increase in confidence or career readiness amongst college students and apprentices
- Increase in the service rating by students and apprentices
- Increase in the number of students and apprentices who felt supported to make an informed decision about their college programme

This strategy is owned by the Assistant Principal Students and Wellbeing as the College's Careers Leader. The aims of this strategy and operational objectives and quality improvement plans will be monitored by the College's Careers Leader and Assistant Careers Leader who will also work closely with the link governor for careers.

The strategy will be judged and resourced through the following annual college processes

- Self-assessment report (SAR)
- Associated department's Strategic Plans

The College's commitment to a coherent programme of activity throughout the curriculum is recognised by Matrix Quality Standard accreditation, assuring the provision of high quality information, advice and guidance for all our students.

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The following documents complement this strategy:

- [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#) (DfE, 2021)
- [Careers Strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents](#) (DfE, 2017)
- [CDI Careers Development Framework](#) (CDI, 2021)
- [SEND Code of Practice](#) (DfE, 2014)
- [Weston College IAG Policies and Procedures](#) (2020)
- Weston College Careers Advice Team Service Standards
- Weston College Strategic Plan: Beyond the impossible (2020)