



Researchers from Northumbria University joined forces with the North East LEP to develop a report which outlines a need and willingness to provide career-related learning in primary schools using data provided by teaching staff.

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All primary school children should receive early careers education

A report prepared by academics at Northumbria University and supported by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (North East LEP) calls for a nationwide approach to providing careers education in primary schools.

Statutory guidance says only schools catering for pupils in Key Stage 3 (aged 11 to 14) and above need to offer careers education and guidance. However, [research shows](#) that children understand jobs exist from around the age of

three or four and begin to form ideas about their futures when they are as young as five or six.

Researchers from [NUSTEM](#) at Northumbria University – a group launched by the University almost 10 years ago to increase the diversity of people working in STEM careers – joined forces with the [North East LEP](#) who had already run a pilot project on career related learning within primary schools. Together, they have developed the report which outlines a need and willingness to provide career-related learning in primary schools using data provided by a range of teaching staff - including headteachers - and the outcomes of the pilot, known as the [North East Ambition Career Benchmarks: Primary Pilot](#).

Some of the key findings in the report come from a survey involving over 2,000 primary school teachers in England, conducted using [Teacher Tapp](#), a daily survey app which asks the opinions of teachers on key topics.

- Only 9% of primary teachers rated their knowledge to deliver career-related learning as ‘good’ or ‘better’
- 46% of primary teachers agreed they would value a resource toolkit for career-related learning
- 100% of primary teachers agreed that schools ‘should help break down gender stereotypes relating to subjects and careers’.
- 53% of primary teachers aware of the Gatsby Benchmarks for Secondary education agree a similar framework would be helpful.

“What this report tells us is that there is absolutely the appetite to run career-related learning in primary schools, because there’s already some fantastic work happening,” said Director of NUSTEM, [Dr Carol Davenport](#), who worked on the project with Senior Research Assistant, [Annie Padwick](#).

“However, there are many schools that could do with more support. We would like children in all schools to be able to access high-quality career-related learning from an early age. Our report suggests that a structure is needed to help primary schools do this better and provide consistent learning across the curriculum.

“The adapted set of benchmarks for primary schools proposed by the North East LEP as part of its primary pilot would provide that structure, and deliver

the additional support primary schools need to provide effective careers education and guidance.”

The North East region has been progressive in leading pilots to implement this aim. The initial pilot of the Good Career Guidance Benchmarks, now commonly known as ‘Gatsby’ Benchmarks within secondary education, was delivered by the North East LEP and took place in the region from 2015 to 2017.

The North East LEP has since partnered with the EY Foundation on the two-year *North East Ambition Career Benchmarks: Primary Pilot*, to trial career-related learning within 70 primary schools.

Following the pilot, which concluded in 2021, the North East LEP has gone on to expand the number of primary schools it supports to deliver careers education and guidance from 70 to 100. It has also delivered a project with feeder schools to support pupils’ transition from primary to secondary education.

Nationally, the Department for Education has also recently funded *Start Small, Dream Big*, a career-related learning project involving 2,250 primary schools and 600,000 pupils, located in 55 Education Investment Areas (EIAs) across the country. In the North East, *Start Small, Dream Big* will support careers learning in primary schools across South Tyneside, Sunderland, and Durham.

Matt Joyce, Regional Lead for [North East Ambition](#) at the North East LEP said: “We know from our two-year pilot, and continuing project work, that there is an appetite here in the North East and in other areas of the UK for delivering careers related learning in primary schools.

“We also know the positive impact on school staff and pupils of using our adapted set of Benchmarks as a framework to support schools to design and deliver a high quality, age-appropriate careers programme. This research adds weight to the increasing evidence base that this work needs to be extended, so that we can start sowing the seeds of ambition nationally.”

Support for this research was provided through the Capacity in Policy Engagement (CAPE) project funded by Research England. More information about CAPE, a partnership between University College London and the

universities of Cambridge, Manchester, Northumbria and Nottingham, in collaboration with the Government Office for Science, the Parliamentary Office for Science & Technology, Nesta, and the Transforming Evidence Hub, is available [here](#).

The full report, *Career-related learning in primary schools - a snapshot of current practice*, is available online [here](#).

ENDS

Notes to editors

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About the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

The North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is a public, private, and education sector partnership that covers Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland local authority areas. www.northeastlep.co.uk

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