



Work Readiness

Luton Research Project



Session Outcomes

By the end of this session you will be able to:

1. Refresh of the national picture/ context about employability skills
2. Consider how learners and employers feel about work readiness



Introduction

Research Question

- What is the impact of the career programmes in Luton's education providers on employability skills and work readiness with a focus on disadvantaged learners?

Aim

- To identify what employability skills Luton employers value most and what young people need for work readiness. The project has a particular focus on learner voice to provide an impact measurement of Luton education providers' career programme effectiveness.

Objectives

- Identify what Luton employers want when recruiting young people.
- Explore the arrangements for careers in a range of schools and colleges.
- Find out how well Luton learners feel they are ready for work.
- Triangulate findings analysing trends with mainstream and disadvantaged learners.
- Triangulate wider factors such as Gatsby, Career Leader Training and the Quality in Careers Standard etc.

Rationale – Luton Demographics

Our Shared Vision for Luton:

Luton will be a healthy, fair and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive and no-one has to live in poverty.

Our Strategic Priorities 2020 - 2025

Securing a strong economic recovery from COVID-19, which protects jobs, incomes and businesses and enables us to build a more inclusive economy.



Protecting the most disadvantaged in our town by prioritising services and interventions that focus on prevention, alleviate the impact of poverty and reduce health inequalities.



Making Luton a child-friendly town, where our children and young people grow up feeling happy, healthy and secure, with a voice that matters and the opportunities they need to thrive.



Becoming a greener and more sustainable town, to meet our long-term ambition to be carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2040.

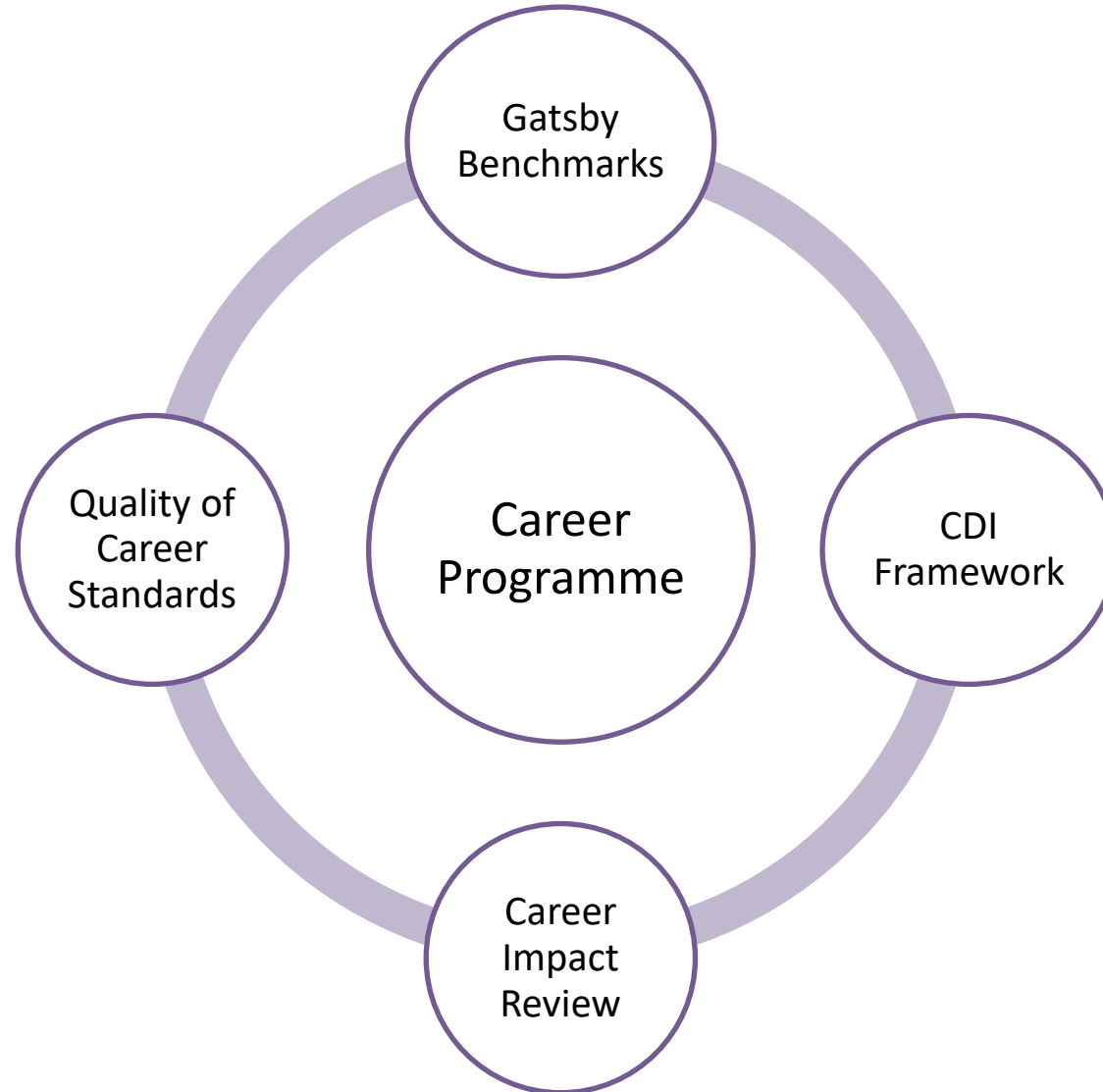


A strong and empowered community supporting fairness, equality and local pride and speaking with a powerful voice.



Rationale – Luton commitment for quality and impact

At the centre is to ensure that every young person is equipped to fulfil their potential





Introduction

The research consisted of a range of methods:

- A thorough literature review of work on employability skills, work-readiness and the broader context of careers in schools and colleges
- A Career Leader questionnaire with 15 schools and colleges
- Semi-structured focus groups with year 10 and 12 learners from a range of learning organisations
- Semi-structured focus group sessions with 10 Luton employers to identify their needs and expectations relating to work readiness.
- A quantitative survey with 1251 responses from Year 10 and Year 12 students from all participant schools and colleges using the CEC Future Skills Questionnaire.



Findings - Literature Review

In preparation for this research, literature from the past three decades on key/essential/employability skills from a variety of sources was reviewed.

Theme 1:

What are we doing already for employability skills?

Theme 2:

Wider Research and Broader remit from employability/essential skills to work readiness

Theme 3:

National context for Careers Programmes

Employers

- seeking far more than employability/essential skills.
- term 'skills' is misleading/ limiting. Other key terms - knowledge, attitudes, character and competence.

Career statutory guidance

- employability and broader work-readiness competencies support is incredibly light
(ref: CDI framework and Skills Builder)

Findings - Literature review - Employability Skills

Overall (addressing clear overlaps) there are 20 work readiness factors summarised in order of appearance below:

Factor (number of appearances)	Factor (Number of appearances)
Reflective (8)	Planning (2)
Communication (7)	Positive (2)
Team working (7)	Drive/Motivation (2)
Problem solving (6)	Organisation (2)
Digital (6)	Manage Career (1)
Creative (5)	Confidence (1)
Numeracy (5)	Resilience (1)
Critical thinking (4)	
Leadership and Management (4)	
Independent enquirers (4)	
Self managers (3)	
Aim high (3)	
Effective participants (3)	



Findings - Career Leader survey

Career Leader survey: 15 completed survey (88% school and colleges across the town)

- Overall Gatsby achievement is **6.7** compared against the national average of 4.86 (CEC October 2022). All have achieved 3 and above GBM.
- 7 respondents indicated that they have a Careers Leader qualification, with a further 4 respondents currently working towards a qualification.
- Organisations with and working towards the Quality in Careers Standard had an average Gatsby benchmark score of **7**.
- Career Leader time - the highest average Gatsby benchmark score (**7.2**) was in organisations with 0-2 hours per week. The next highest score was 6.6 where Careers Leaders had 12+ hours per week for leadership.
- Careers education in the curriculum - the highest average benchmark score (**7.5**) was from respondents with the least amount of dedicated careers education time (1-5 hours per year on average per year group). The second highest score (7.3) was from respondents with the second lowest time allocation for careers education (6-10 hours per year on average per year group).



Findings - Employer Focus Group

Employer Focus Group: 2x focus groups with 10 different employers

1. Schools should change their programmes for better CV and interview skills support.
2. Teachers should go on work/industry placements.
3. Young people need a better sense of self-awareness/awareness of transferable skills e.g. digital
4. Young people present challenges in recruitment/employment (for employers) and aren't as work ready
5. Disadvantaged learners face more barriers and need more support but make the best employees with greater loyalty and dedication.
6. Areas most lacking for young people – **umbrella communications** (speaking, listening, writing, presentation, informal, asking questions), **digital skills** (young people have them, but can't transfer the skill to the workplace), **willingness/proactivity/initiative/softer skills/attitudes/values** – overall consensus that these areas are more important than qualifications – can teach knowledge.
7. The workplace needs to change to accommodate and learn from the new generation. This presents a training need for employers to look at recruitment processes (recruit for potential) and a greater understanding of young people.



Findings - Future Skills Questionnaire: Positive trends

Future Skills Questionnaire (CEC): A total of 1251 Year 10 learners completed the FSQ and 352 Year 12 learners. A total of 25 questions, 18 of which targeted levels of knowledge on careers and impending transitions and the final 7 focused on the essential skills. Multiple choice answers.

Positive trends: (50% and over responding to Yes to some extent or Yes to great extent)

Do you know what skills employers need? (Skills are personal qualities and things someone is able to do)

Answers	Year 10s	Year 12s
Yes, to some extent and great extent	71%	72%

Do you have support to help you make education and career choices?

Answers	Year 10s	Year 12s
Yes, to some extent and great extent	70%	66%



Findings - Future Skills Questionnaire: Positive trends

Future Skills Questionnaire (CEC):

Positive trends:

Essential skills Year 10 and 12 learners they excelled in.

Year 10s	Year 12s
- Resolving disagreements in a team - Identifying positives and negatives in an opportunity - Creating plans with clear targets - Being creative by coming up with different ways of doing things	- Listening critically to different points of view - Supporting others to stay positive



Findings - Future Skills Questionnaire: Negative trends

Future Skills Questionnaire (CEC):

Negative trends: (50% and over responding to ‘No, not yet’ and Possibly, I’m not sure)

Are you aware of some of the types of businesses or employers in your area of the country?

Answers	Year 10s	Year 12s
No not yet and Possibly, I’m not sure	50%	56%

Do you know of any trustworthy websites that can help you decide what to do in the future?

Answers	Year 10s	Year 12s
No not yet and Possibly, I’m not sure	66%	55%

Findings - Future Skills Questionnaire: Negative trends

Have you made contact with people who work in jobs that interest you?

Answers	Year 10s	Year 12s
No not yet and Possibly, I'm not sure	70%	70%

Have you thought about which of the above (post 16 options) might be right for you?

Answers	Year 10s	Year 12
No not yet and Possibly, I'm not sure	55%	N/A

Do you know about different types of recruitment and selection processes, including interviews and assessment centres?

Answers	Year 10s	Year 12s
No not yet and Possibly, I'm not sure	63%	60%



Findings - Learner Focus Group

Learner Focus Group: Range of focus group interventions meeting with identified disadvantaged groups (i.e. SEND, PP, LAC) and identified non-disadvantaged group in Years 10 and 12

- Learners could identify different ways their school/college helps them prepare for the future
- Learners had a good knowledge of Post-16 and Post-18 pathways.
- Disadvantaged learners in Year 10 scored the same as non-disadvantaged learners when asked if they have any challenges or barriers that will impact on their future.
- Learners did not have a good knowledge of local employers or opportunities overall.
- Learners can list skills that employers value such as teamwork, communication, resilience etc. However, when asked to describe their own personal strengths they scored much lower and were struggling to make the link between what they understand as employability skills and their own skills and qualities.

The total overall combined score showed a significant gap in work readiness of disadvantaged learners. This difference occurs in both Year 10 and 12 analysis, with Year 12 analysis showing a larger gap.



Conclusion

1. **Employability/essential skills are out of date?** - considerable variation and employer focus group feedback found Skills Builder Essential Skills to be out of date
2. **Employability/essential skills are limiting** - little consensus in what is described as a 'skill'. Values and attitudes desirable. Work readiness is more encompassing.
3. **Can learners 'walk the walk'?** - FSQ useful to temperature test and analyse mass data. However deep dives of qualitative questioning (focus groups) is required.
4. **Mixed results in trends of school/college data** - no relationship between more allocated Career Leader time and more allocated career education on the curriculum to a higher Gatsby score. Self-assessment nature of Gatsby is subjective and robustness is required to know about the quality of judgement behind the scoring.
5. **Disadvantage has a small, but significant impact on work readiness for Luton learners** - a significant gap in work readiness of disadvantaged learners, with Year 12 analysis showing a larger gap.
6. **Wider observations** – learners still need further support and development in their transition from education into work but impact of Covid-19 has had a recognised impact.

Recommendations

Partners

- Skills Builder Partnership should review the validity of their eight essential skills
- DfE needs (1) to develop a strategy for developing work readiness (2) recognise the impact of Career Leader training and the Quality in Careers Standard in contributing to improved Gatsby completion and provide investment to further support schools and colleges to gain individual and organisational accreditation.
- CEC needs to (1) review FSQ questions (2) investigate higher GBM scores vs less time for career leadership and careers education on curriculum
- School and colleges to encourage more learner validation sessions through focus groups

Luton

- exploration of disadvantaged young people being less work ready
- training and resources to help learners connect their skills, interests and experiences with the competencies local employers value the most.
- Working with local employers to develop 'recruit for potential' capabilities as well as an increased awareness of support needs of young people.
- Impact of covid-19 on Year 10 and Year 12 learners in 2022.