Best Foot Forward – Careers Policy

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1. Introduction and Context

Best Foot Forward (BFF) supports informed choices, high aspirations and suitable next steps through careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). Forward Thinking is our personalised careers programme, delivered alongside agreed learning and mentoring in homes, schools, community venues and online.

This policy sets expectations for learners, families, commissioners, employees, self-employed practitioners and others delivering careers support on BFF's behalf. Read it with the current Careers Programme, which describes the learning sequence and possible resources.

BFF is a non-school alternative provision provider. Agree its careers contribution, hours, guidance and transition responsibilities with the learner and commissioner; a limited placement does not automatically supply every school careers entitlement.

Plan around strengths, needs, aspirations, existing careers records, relevant EHCP outcomes and available time. Provide suitable challenge and reasonable adjustments; SEND, anxiety or low attainment must not automatically limit aspirations.

Aim for sustainable participation in suitable education, training or employment, with independence and preparation for adulthood. Do not promise admission, a qualification, a job or a destination of choice.

2. Careers Programme

Forward Thinking combines subject-linked careers learning with planned activities and personal guidance. Short placements prioritise urgent decisions and handover; longer placements build progressively on earlier learning and experiences.

Use an individual learning plan (ILP) to identify starting points, careers goals, activities, support, responsible people and review dates. Coordinate with the school/local authority to avoid duplication or gaps in personal guidance, provider access and workplace experiences.

The programme follows a flexible sequence: understand strengths and aspirations; explore reliable options; prepare for and reflect on encounters/experiences; make informed decisions; apply and plan transition. Review with the ILP at least every six weeks, sooner for short placements, changed needs or approaching deadlines.

AQA Unit Award Scheme certificates recognise achieved outcomes, not regulated qualifications or credit towards GCSE, Functional Skills or BTEC. Verify selected units, evidence and submission arrangements before offering certification. BTEC/SWEET and other qualifications require confirmed current specifications and approved centre/partner arrangements; do not guarantee awards from teaching alone.

Tutors and mentors link learning to careers and support agreed activities within competence. Teaching employability topics or helping with an application does not itself qualify a practitioner to provide specialist personal guidance.

Our Careers Programme aims to:

- Encourage students to be ambitious, broaden their horizons and explore their own career aspirations.
- Develop knowledge, skills and confidence for suitable next steps, with support where needed.
- Help learners interpret current career, course and labour-market information and apply it to their choices.
- Develop research skills and critical evaluation of recruitment, training and online information.
- Support continued learning and sustainable participation in appropriate pathways.
- Provide accessible individual support and timely qualified guidance under agreed arrangements.
- Support inclusion, challenge stereotyping, and promote equality of opportunity.
- Connect curriculum achievement, independence and preparation for adulthood to meaningful progression.

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3. Statutory Requirements and Expectations

Apply legal duties according to BFF's actual status and activity. The DfE school/college careers framework informs quality and commissioning; it does not make BFF a school or create a governing body. Schools and local authorities retain their applicable statutory responsibilities, alongside any specific contribution commissioned from BFF.

DfE careers guidance was updated on 23 June 2026. Its school scope includes Years 7–13; school provider-access legislation requires at least six opportunities concerning technical education/apprenticeships during Years 8–13. Agree how learners placed with BFF access the responsible school's arrangements; BFF activities alone do not establish that duty is met. Relevant guidance and standards include:

- DfE, Careers guidance and access for education and training providers (23 June 2026), including current workplace-experience planning guidance.
- The updated Gatsby Benchmarks and appropriate Career Development Institute (CDI) professional guidance.
- SEND Code of Practice; Equality Act 2010; DfE alternative provision guidance and non-school AP voluntary national standards. Ofsted requirements apply only within its remit; do not imply routine Ofsted regulation of BFF's non-school provision.

BFF requires careers information and guidance to:

- Be impartial and promote the learner's interests, with any conflicts declared and managed.
- Explain a suitable range of academic, technical, vocational and supported routes, including apprenticeships, further/higher education and supported internships where eligible.
- Support informed choice without commercial pressure towards BFF or a particular partner, institution or route.

The Equality Act's applicable non-discrimination and reasonable-adjustment duties inform BFF delivery. Do not assume that every school/college public-sector equality duty applies automatically to BFF in the same way; check the actual function and arrangements. Coordinate preparation for adulthood with relevant EHCP/SEN support and transition reviews. BFF contributes evidence and agreed support; it cannot amend an EHCP or replace the local authority's duties.

Personal guidance should be delivered by an appropriately qualified careers adviser. Schools may use qualified internal advisers, supplemented by external sources to meet the independent-guidance duty. External means external to the school/college; this differs from being independent of BFF. Bethany's BFF role must be transparent, and advice must remain impartial.

Schools should reform workplace-experience programmes under the June 2026 guidance from September 2026. Agree BFF's contribution with commissioners; do not promise the entire

two-week programme through every BFF placement. Quality requires meaningful learning, suitable access, preparation and reflection, rather than attendance or a worksheet alone.
Use the updated Gatsby Benchmarks to plan and evaluate BFF's contribution with commissioners; listing them is not evidence that all eight have been achieved:

- Benchmark 1: A Stable Careers Programme
- Benchmark 2: Learning from Career and Labour Market Information
- Benchmark 3: Addressing the Needs of Each Student
- Benchmark 4: Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers
- Benchmark 5: Encounters with Employers and Employees
- Benchmark 6: Experiences of Workplaces
- Benchmark 7: Encounters with Further and Higher Education
- Benchmark 8: Personal Guidance

4. Student Entitlement

Every learner should be heard and supported to access suitable careers learning. Explain the agreed programme and personal-guidance arrangements accessibly. If BFF cannot meet a need or an agreed activity is unavailable, raise the gap promptly and agree a suitable alternative with the commissioner rather than silently omitting it.
Support participation at the learner's pace, including adjustments for communication, anxiety, disability and sensory needs. Ask about preferences, barriers and aspirations; a diagnosis, questionnaire, family attendance or ability to speak confidently is not a prerequisite to being heard.
Within the agreed placement, learners can expect:

- Support at significant decision points and a practical action plan with actions, owners and dates.
- Reliable, current, impartial information, with entry criteria, availability, funding and support checked before advice is acted upon.
- Opportunities to develop self-awareness, career-management skills and independence.
- Planned careers learning and employability support linked to their ILP and commissioned programme.
- Suitable careers events where available and relevant; National Careers Week is an opportunity, not a guarantee for every placement.
- Employer encounters and workplace experiences as planned with the commissioner, reflecting benchmark expectations and the learner's needs; record what actually took place and what was learned.
- Information about relevant education/training pathways without stereotyping or unjustified restriction.
- Links between curriculum learning and future study, work and adulthood.
- Discussion with tutors/mentors within competence, with referral to qualified guidance when needed.
- Timely personal guidance from an appropriately qualified, impartial adviser. Coordinate provision towards benchmark guidance meetings by 16 and again by 18, with additional support where needs and arrangements require it.

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- Appropriate communication and support for families, respecting learner rights and confidentiality.
- Accessible opportunities to give feedback, request adjustments or use the Complaints Policy without retaliation.
- Safe, suitable visits or work experience where agreed. Confirm host suitability, responsibilities, supervision, risk controls, insurance, permissions and travel/handover arrangements before activity; DBS checks depend on the role/activity rather than a blanket rule.

Use safe recruitment and digital practices: teach scams, privacy and workplace rights; use approved accounts and dummy data for practice. Do not publish a CV, use staff personal accounts for learner applications, or share sensitive identity/health information without an appropriate lawful and agreed process. Report concerns promptly under safeguarding procedures; career activity must not delay protection.
Identify additional support promptly, including at:

- EHCP/preparing-for-adulthood reviews, contributing alongside the responsible authority and school.
- Transition reviews and urgent application or enrolment deadlines.
- Risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET): agree a named next-step contact, actions and continuity with the commissioner/local authority.

5. Parent/Carer Involvement

Families can be important partners in career decisions. Offer accessible involvement while respecting the learner's voice, age, understanding and applicable decision-making rights; family preferences must not override those rights.
Use approved work channels for handovers, weekly reports and planned discussions. Share necessary information securely; do not place detailed safeguarding disclosures or unrestricted sensitive guidance notes in ordinary progress reports.

- Offer opportunities to discuss goals and practical support without making parental attendance a condition of careers access.
- Review aspirations and next steps through weekly progress reporting and planned ILP reviews.
- Share relevant options, deadlines and events in accessible formats, with source details to check current requirements.
- Invite a suitable supporter to guidance meetings where the learner wishes or appropriate support is needed. Also offer a private opportunity to express their own views.
- Agree appropriate sharing of action plans, checking authority and the lawful basis rather than treating parenthood as automatic access to all records, particularly for older learners. Explain confidentiality limits, including necessary safeguarding sharing.
- Make the current Careers Programme, access arrangements and contact details available to learners, families and commissioners, including through the website. Check publication and links before claiming they are live.
- Questions, adjustment requests and referrals can be made to the Careers Leader using section 10 contacts.

6. Responsibilities

All practitioners support agreed careers learning within their role and competence. Use approved systems and follow learner/risk plans, professional boundaries and safeguarding procedures. Under-18 home sessions require the agreed responsible adult present and available; community/online activities follow their controls.
CEOs oversee resources, quality, role competence and absence cover. Responsibilities are:

- Careers Leader: Bethany Russell — coordinate Forward Thinking, access, planning and evaluation.
- Transition coordination: Bethany Russell, with the learner's named BFF coordinator and commissioner — record actions, deadlines and handover responsibilities.
- BFF Careers Adviser: Bethany Russell (Level 6 careers qualification) — impartial personal guidance within competence and availability. Confirm current professional development and qualified cover; the Careers Leader title alone is not a guidance qualification.

Arrange an alternative qualified adviser when needs, capacity or conflicts require it. BFF guidance may be external to a commissioning school while remaining internal to BFF. Disclose roles and interests, provide balanced options and coordinate external sources with the school; do not imply organisational independence merely from the word "adviser".

7. Partnership Work

Develop suitable links with schools, local authorities, employers, post-16 providers and relevant professional/careers bodies. An Enterprise Adviser, Careers Hub/CEC relationship, Progress Careers service or other partnership must be confirmed before being advertised as available; this policy does not establish an agreement.

Agree delivery, costs, availability, safeguarding, data sharing and review responsibilities before joint activity. Work experience hosts manage workplace health and safety risks; BFF and commissioners must check suitability and support. Raise incompatible requirements or unmet needs rather than claiming all partner policies automatically align.

8. Equal Opportunities

Challenge stereotypes and limiting assumptions across gender, disability, ethnicity, background and other protected characteristics. Retain high aspirations and explain suitable routes, support and reasonable adjustments.

Adapt pace, communication, venue, travel and participation to individual needs. Link SEND guidance to preparation for adulthood, workplace rights and relevant employment support; do not assign a lower pathway solely because of SEND or attainment.
Referrals may be made at any point. Prioritise urgency, transition dates and need, including KS4, without excluding other learners. Agree additional adviser meetings according to assessed need and capacity/funding; there is no blanket promise of unlimited meetings. Escalate gaps and arrange suitable alternatives with the commissioner.

9. Monitoring, Review & Evaluation

CEOs retain overall oversight, with the Careers Leader and appropriate qualified advice. Record competence, resources and cover; leadership case concerns use an unconflicted/independent complaints route.

- Review delivery at least termly using learner/family and commissioner feedback, participation, access, career readiness, action-plan progress and transition outcomes. Record evidence and limitations, not assumed compliance.
- Distinguish intended destinations, applications, offers, confirmed starts and sustained participation where reliable information is available.
- Review individual careers goals with ILPs at least every six weeks and sooner for short placements, changed needs or deadlines. The leader and adviser roles may be held by one person; seek appropriate external challenge rather than describing a separate meeting as independent scrutiny.
- Provide an accessible action plan to the learner and share necessary information lawfully with authorised people. Restrict sensitive notes and retain records under Data Protection/SAR and retention procedures, including evidence-preservation requirements.
- Gather accessible learner, family and practitioner feedback, including barriers, unmet needs and adjustment effectiveness.
- Evaluate encounters and experiences against their purpose, two-way engagement and reflection; seek relevant partner feedback.
- Use relevant networks and current information for professional development; record participation actually completed.
- Coordinate destination follow-up and any required lawful information sharing with the school/local authority. Agree who follows up, when and for what purpose; BFF does not automatically hold national destination measures or guarantee long-term tracking.
- Use the updated Gatsby framework to identify evidenced strengths and gaps. Use Compass/Compass+ only if suitable access and arrangements are in place; otherwise maintain a proportionate documented review. Do not claim tool completion without evidence.
- Audit programme delivery annually and review this policy after significant changes to law, guidance, roles or provision. October 2027 is the proposed next review.
- Record improvements, owners, deadlines and follow-up in BFF's quality/improvement arrangements. Publish accurate programme information and brief practitioners on changes.

10. Further Relevant Information

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The current Best Foot Forward Careers Programme (Forward Thinking).

And other relevant policies, including:

- Curriculum; Teaching, Learning and Assessment; Inclusion and SEND Support; Equality and Diversity.

- Risk Assessment; Driving for Work; Safeguarding/Managing Allegations; Professional Boundaries; ICT/Online Safety; Remote Meetings.
- Data Protection/SAR and retention; Complaints; relevant qualification/assessment procedures.

For CEIAG questions or referrals, contact Bethany Russell: beth@bestfootforward.org.uk / 07394 950803, or admin@bestfootforward.org.uk for alternative cover. Concerns use the accessible Complaints Policy; direct statutory reporting and external rights remain available. Sources: DfE careers guidance (23 June 2026); updated Gatsby Benchmarks; SEND Code of Practice; current awarding-organisation rules. The Careers Programme provides source links.

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