

Exchange	CEIAG
Date of Meeting	13/02/2026
Location	Microsoft Teams
GMLPN Staff	Charlotte Jones, Chloe Forrest, Hannah Bolsher
Chair	Donna Graham, Services Lead, Positive Steps
Speakers:	GM All Aged Careers Strategy - Jayne Tramontana GMCA Implementing the Gatsby Benchmarks - Jen Gibson Positive Steps Matrix Assessment - Roger Chapman, The Growth Company & Maureen Deary, Maureen Deary Ltd
Attendees:	Joanna Whitehead (Tameside Council), Victoria Bailey (NLTG), Kate Roberts (Learning Curve), Rachel McMahon (Race Ahead Training), Lucy Tristram (Race Ahead Training), Gemma Cretney (3D Training), Tracy Walters (Career Wave), Jennifer Gibson (Positive Steps), Joanne Brookwell (Wigan Council), Christine Edwards (Creating Excellence), Joanne Hatton (Bury Council), Phil Richards (Mantra Learning)
Key Themes / Discussion Points	
GM All-Aged Careers Strategy – Jayne Tramontana, GMCA Greater Manchester's strategy focuses on building a unified, high-quality, lifelong careers ecosystem. Key themes included: System Fragmentation & Gaps - Significant fragmentation across the careers system, with gaps in provision, duplicated services, unclear access routes, and inconsistent use of Labour Market Information (LMI). - Quality standards vary widely across youth and adult careers services. - Short-term contracts and siloed funding streams destabilise provision and workforce capacity. Accessibility & Visibility - Careers support is not widely understood as a universal public service, making it harder for residents to access timely and high-quality IAG. - Early intervention opportunities are often missed, contributing to inequalities. Workforce Challenges - Shortage of Level 6 Careers Advisers.	

- Limited access to CPD and uneven prioritisation of careers education within leadership structures.
- Workforce instability due to short-term and inconsistent funding.

Wellbeing & “Good Employment”

- Learners present with increasingly complex needs.
- The system struggles to deliver personalised, timely guidance that connects wellbeing, career progression and sustained employment.

Building an Integrated System (“No Wrong Door”)

- GM aims to create a fully integrated, all-age careers ecosystem that aligns:
- Schools, colleges, ITPs, employers
- Health and wellbeing services
- DWP, NCS, GMCA Careers Hub, and other career support organisations
- Digital tools (GMACS, Beeline) This integration underpins GM's wider ambitions around social mobility, neighbourhood support, and developing a strong skills pipeline for key growth sectors.

2. Implementing Gatsby Benchmarks – Jen Gibson, Positive Steps

Independent Training Providers were required to adopt the updated Gatsby Benchmarks by September 2025. Key expectations included:

Structured & Strategic Careers Programmes

- Providers must have a stable careers programme, explicitly backed by senior leadership and governance.
- CEIAG must be embedded into provider development plans and curriculum design.

Active Use of LMI

- Learners, staff, parents and carers must have access to high-quality LMI, and learners should actively use it in decision-making.
- Activities should include job advert analysis, future trends exploration, and sector-specific LMI.

Personalised Support & Tracking

- Programmes must address individual barriers, aspirations and destinations.
- Long-term destination tracking and alumni involvement are expected.

Encounters, Employer Engagement & Progression Mapping

- Providers need to deliver meaningful employer encounters, workplace experiences, and exposure to FE/HE pathways.
- Curriculum should explicitly link learning to careers, skills and future routes.

Evaluation & Quality Assurance

- Robust evaluation frameworks are required to demonstrate impact and improvement.

3. Matrix Assessment – Roger Chapman & Maureen Deary

The Matrix Standard is the DfE's official quality benchmark for IAG. The presentation highlighted:

Core Expectations

- Strong leadership commitment to high-quality IAG.
- Alignment with Ofsted, Gatsby, EDI principles, safeguarding and statutory compliance.
- Impartiality, accessibility and parity of outcomes across all learner groups.
- A strengthened focus on wellbeing, organisational culture and safe environments.

Framework Emphasis

- Updated (2023) framework includes tech-enabled delivery, data-driven decision-making, and integration with other quality frameworks.
- Follows a Plan – Do – Review model with outcomes measured at organisational, service and individual levels.

Benefits

- More inclusive learning environments, stronger learner engagement and improved wellbeing.
- Better preparation for diverse workplaces.
- Reduction of achievement gaps across groups.

4. Discussion

Delegates discussed challenges, strengths and areas for further support. Themes included:

Barriers

- Difficulty navigating the fragmented landscape of careers services.
- Workforce shortages impacting ability to deliver personalised guidance.
- Inconsistent CEIAG quality across programmes, levels and learner types.
- Need for more LMI-linked curriculum planning, improved employer engagement and clearer progression pathways.

What's Working Well

- Growing collaboration across networks and provider partnerships.

- Increasing integration of LMI and digital tools into CEIAG.
- Improved employer engagement, including greater sector diversity.
- Better impact measurement and more frequent careers conversations with learners.

Provider Insights

- Alumni engagement is valuable for raising aspirations and contextualising pathways.
- Strong need for sector-specific exposure, workplace experience and career-linked curriculum design.
- Apprentices' employment alone is not a substitute for intentional CEIAG — structured careers input remains essential.

Resources / Links Shared

[Greater Manchester Strategy - Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#)
[Careers Leader training | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)
[Learning Curve Group | careerspro](#)
[Careers Leader training | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)
[Skills for Life | Help & Support Manchester](#)
[1995-summary-for-independent-training-provider-leaders-v7.pdf](#)
[Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit: Colleges and ITPs | CEC Resource Directory](#)
[Main home - The matrix Standard](#)
[Further education and skills inspection toolkit](#)
[Further education and skills operating guide for inspectors - GOV.UK](#)
[Inspection information for further education and skills providers - GOV.UK](#)

Actions

- **Complete the Survey - As discussed, please complete the short survey to enable us and key stakeholders e.g. GMCA, to understand the current CEIAG landscape**
- Please let us know of themes / topics for the next meeting agenda
- Please let us know if you have any best practice you would like to share at the next meeting
- GMLPN ask Paul Cocker (at GMLPN Network Meeting) - views from Ofsted on CEIAG and the use of Gatsby Benchmarks
- Next Exchange – GMLPN to get a provider who has been inspected under the new framework to input on their experience (focus on CEIAG / Personal Development)

Next Steps

The next CEIAG Exchange is on the 15th May

Other GMLPN Exchanges:

- [GMLPN Audit Exchange Tickets, Thu, Feb 26, 2026 at 1:00 PM | Eventbrite](#)
- [GM Maths Ambassador Exchange Tickets, Fri, Feb 27, 2026 at 9:30 AM | Eventbrite](#)
- [GMLPN Business Development Exchange Tickets, Thu, Mar 5, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)
- [GMLPN Apprenticeship Assessment Exchange Tickets, Mon, Mar 9, 2026 at 2:30 PM | Eventbrite](#)
- [GMLPN / ALPS: AI Exchange Tickets, Tue, Mar 10, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

- [GMLPN Mental Health & Wellbeing Exchange Tickets, Thu, Mar 19, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)
- [GMLPN SEND Exchange Tickets, Thu, Mar 26, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)