Review of Local Destinations Data

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A York Consulting report to
The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) commissioned York Consulting LLP (YCL) in June 2020 to undertake a review of local destinations data. The aim of this work was to identify potential solutions to improve the level and quality of destination tracking in secondary schools for the three years after students complete Year 11.

2. The key objectives of the study were to: map the different approaches to collecting and tracking data across local authorities (LAs) in England; identify examples of good practice that can be shared; identify support required to collect student consent and share data for 16- and 17-year-olds; and identify effective ways to track the destinations of 18-year-olds (outside the responsibility of LAs).

3. The research approach covered two key stages:
   - Fieldwork scoping phase (July-September 2020) involving interviews with CEC Area Managers, Regional Leads, Hub Managers, Enterprise Co-ordinators, LA teams, Department for Education (DfE) and further education (FE) colleges.
   - Stakeholder engagement phase (September-December 2020) involving: an online LA survey (62 responses); an online school careers leader (CL) survey (327 responses); LA follow-up interviews (19); school CL follow-up interviews (13); and in-depth LA case studies (11). Responses were broadly representative of all LAs.

Current responsibilities

4. There are two broad sources of responsibility relating to local destinations data collection that apply to schools, post-16 providers and LAs.

Gatsby Benchmarks

5. The first, relating to the Gatsby Benchmarks, which are considered by DfE "to set a standard of excellence" in terms of careers provision, is relevant to schools and post-16 providers.

6. The Gatsby Benchmarks[1] are a framework of eight guidelines that define the best careers provision in secondary schools and colleges. The third of the Gatsby Benchmarks - 'Addressing the needs of each student' - includes a sub-element that explicitly relates to destinations data: *"School collects and maintains accurate data for each pupil on their destinations for 3 years after they leave school".*

7. This represents a particular challenge for schools, especially those without a sixth form, as the three-year expectation (16-, 17- and 18-year-olds) is now misaligned against the DfE expectation for LAs to collect data for only two years (16- and 17-year-olds).

Legislative requirements

8. The second, linked to the legislative requirements (Education Act, 1996 and Education and Skills Act, 2008 (ESA)), is relevant to LAs, schools and post-16 providers.

[1] https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/good-career-guidance

9. DfE statutory guidance for LAs covers: LAs strategic leadership; duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people; duty on LAs to promote participation; duty on LAs to identify young people not participating; monitoring the September Guarantee; additional data sharing powers to support LAs to deliver their duties.

10. Following a change in 2016-17, LAs have a statutory duty to record information about young people up to and including academic age 17 (and up to age 25 for those with an EHC plan). At the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, DfE removed the mandatory requirement for LAs to collect intended destinations, although in practice most have continued to do so. There are similar duties on schools, colleges, and work-based learning providers to provide necessary information to LAs.

Findings

11. Key findings are structured around four thematic areas including: use of destinations data; preparation for destinations data collection; data collection; data maintenance and data sharing.

Use of destinations data

12. Findings from across all stages of the research suggest that many schools and LAs recognise a range of potential benefits and the value of destinations data collection, beyond it being simply a statutory duty that they must comply with. However, there is room for greater recognition by schools of how they can use this data and for LAs to recognise why schools might be able to use data that could be passed back to them from the LA.

13. **Performance assessment.** The most common use of destinations data amongst schools is to share it with governors and the senior leadership team (SLT) (90%). Several schools also believed it to be a beneficial indicator of performance during Ofsted inspections, and something that inspectors are interested in seeing.

14. **Informing provision, including careers programmes and curriculum strategies.** A key benefit of accurate, robust destinations data is its potential for appraising careers provision. The majority of schools also reported using destinations data to analyse the effectiveness of their school's internal career programmes (82%), and to inform future careers provision (74%). Schools use the data to help them understand whether their careers strategy is working effectively, to see what courses and training their leavers have moved into, and to identify where gaps in provision exist. The data was also useful in highlighting new or existing courses that CLs were unaware of, therefore keeping them informed of the changing landscape and allowing them to adapt their support accordingly.

15. **Identification and monitoring of vulnerable and at-risk groups.** For some LAs and schools this involves looking at yearly trends to identify patterns of behaviour and to identify those in the current cohort who might benefit from additional internal, or targeted external, support. There are several ways in which schools, colleges and LAs support early identification of those most at risk: collection of intended destinations at an early age; use of Risk of NEET Indicators (RONI); targeted intervention earlier in

the school calendar; early applications to post-16 provision; presenting impartial, broader, and attractive offers to young people; and building good relationships with young people.

Preparation for destinations data collection

16. **Local policy**. Publication of strategy and plans around destinations data collection can help clarify, for schools and colleges, what they can expect from their LA. LAs conveyed their policy on careers provision and employment and skills strategy in widely differing ways ranging from published documents, to unpublished documents circulated to all schools and those that had no strategic documentation.

17. **Operational prioritisation and resourcing**. Schools are struggling to resource the task of destinations data collection to meet their responsibilities for Gatsby Benchmark 3. There is a range of different LA models for resourcing the collection of destinations data and delivery of follow-up to young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Often, the arrangements in place are a legacy of former Connexions arrangements or are subcontracting arrangements that have existed for many years. In practice, tracking activity is shared between schools, LAs and colleges.

18. Having a dedicated person responsible for destinations data in schools and effective relationships with partners are important attributes that support schools to collect data for three years between ages 16 and 18. There is good evidence of clear responsibilities in schools and emerging good practice in the establishment of Careers Leader networks across LAs. Staff capacity remains a major barrier to schools achieving Gatsby Benchmark 3. CLs were more likely than LAs to say they were struggling to resource the data collection activity.

19. **Agreements and consents**. Just under half of the CLs identified data protection issues (46%) as barriers to destinations data gathering. Many varied approaches to agreements and consents exist across the country. There is evidence of confusion about the minimum requirement (in terms of data sharing agreements and individual consents) necessary to enable the flow of information between schools, colleges and LAs. This is an area where national organisations could support schools and LAs to agree some minimum requirements to reduce the inefficiency of all schools having to engage legal advice on data protection.

20. **Partnerships, projects and initiatives**. A number of location-specific projects, partnerships and initiatives have been identified through the course of this research which may be useful for other schools, LAs or colleges to connect with. Some have worked on GDPR compliance or information transfer to support schools, colleges and LAs with data sharing; others have explored, or are looking to explore, consistency across combined authority or local enterprise partnership areas.

Data collection

21. **Early information and preparation phase.** In areas where data collection appears to be working more successfully, evidence suggests that this is partly due to ongoing engagement and communication between the various stakeholders involved. Key

elements included: early transfer of school census information, school collection of intended destinations data and risk of NEET data.

22. **Initial destinations data transfer from school to LA**. General feedback was that aspects of initial data transfer from schools to LAs were gradually improving but not quite at the standard they would like them to be. The efficiency and effectiveness of these approaches appear to be mixed, and there is a variance in terms of how 'live' this data stays (for example, the extent to which it is updated when young people's circumstances change). Two broad categories of data are required from schools, by the LA, on initial destinations of young people. This is split evenly between those that required: the Client Caseload Information System (CCIS) minimum data [general destination category such as employment, further study, apprenticeship]; or, more comprehensive detail [for example, course name, provider name, course level, course length, employer name].

23. **Initial destinations data transfer from college to LA**. Schools often feel frustrated that they do not receive information from colleges when the schools' young people have enrolled and started a course. The majority of colleges provide their LA with enrolment data by the end of September and leavers' data by the end of December. Some LAs reported difficulties due to inaccuracies in the enrolment data provided by colleges, and delays in reporting to the LA when a young person has dropped out of a course. This can cause inefficiencies in the tracking process leading both to an unnecessary use of resource and a longer reaction time by the LA or subcontractor to initiate interventions to support individuals. This is important for schools as it affects the quality of data provided back to them from their LA and in turn their ability to meet Gatsby Benchmark 3.

Data maintenance and data sharing

24. **Data management and updating by schools/LAs/subcontractors.** Ongoing data management and liaison with stakeholders are required throughout the year to identify young people who are NEET, and to capture destinations changes to ensure that the finalised CCIS data is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Some examples of good practice for schools to maintain contact with young people to age 18 include: use of social media; developing digital solutions for communication; and traditional door knocking.

25. **18-year-olds and strategies for three-year tracking**. Survey data from CLs indicates that schools are more likely to lead the tracking 18-year-olds than LAs. However, this places a greater burden on schools without sixth forms. LAs are less involved in tracking the activity of 18-year-olds (as this age-group is not a statutory responsibility). Only one of the 11 case study LAs said they systematically tracked all 18-year-olds. Tracking 18-year-olds was considered more difficult than 16- and 17-year-olds as young people start to move further afield geographically and into employment. Some LAs endeavour to support their schools with 18-year-old tracking, but do not take the lead on this.

26. A range of different approaches were used by schools. None was seen as a perfect solution, but typically they were used in combination. They included: preparatory work to encourage young people to maintain contact; establishing strong

partnerships with local colleges to gain insight; use of social media; and use of alumni networks. Some of these were not used due to resource costs (e.g. maintaining alumni networks) and others sometimes due to school policy (e.g. not using social media).

27. **Data sharing by LA to school.** Typically, LAs will share actual destinations with schools during the autumn term (although this is often only focused on those thought to be NEET or Not Known). But then there is an inconsistency as to whether further data are supplied and in what format (combined and anonymised vs. individualised and identifiable). Most (85%) LAs state that they share CCIS and related data back to schools where appropriate consents are in place. In two-thirds of LAs, data is provided on an anonymous, aggregated basis and comes in the form of Activity Survey reports. Some LAs produce Activity Survey summary reports their schools, often as a matter of course, with a smaller number of LAs saying this occurs on a request-only basis.

28. Just over a third of LAs (34%), that had shared data back to schools, said they provided individual level detail. However, only 20% of CLs said that their LA or subcontractor provides them with leavers data in a format they find useful. Where data sharing is working well between LAs and schools, it was felt to be a 'win-win' for both parties. A good working relationship is crucial to support effective data sharing.

Challenges

29. Careers Leaders believe there is value in student-level destinations data, demonstrating that it is worth the sector persisting with a focus on making the data available. However, the current system is inefficient and confusing. LAs are largely able to fulfil their duties to the DfE, but the majority of CLs are struggling to resource the task or 'just about coping', showing how the task of tracking destinations data is unlikely to improve without substantial intervention.

30. Destinations data for 16- and 17-year-olds is generally working well, although not all schools are gaining access to individualised data for all their young people. Accessing destinations data for 16- and 17-year-olds could potentially be improved by clearer guidance on consent and data sharing, enabling LAs to share individual level with schools to support their achievement of Gatsby Benchmark 3.

31. Accessing destinations data for 18-year-olds is harder for schools, since LAs are not required to collect this data. The Gatsby Benchmark 3 requirement was specified at a time when LAs did have responsibility for this age group. Reviewing alternative ways to gather, present and use destinations data for 18-year-olds is needed, including accessing aggregated data from DfE. Currently for large schools without sixth forms, individual tracking of 18-year-olds will rarely be feasible.

32. A number of other challenges arising from the findings above have been set out to frame future work on improving destinations data collection.

Duties and requirements

33. There is evidence of misunderstanding amongst some school CLs about the fact that there is no longer a duty for LAs to collect destinations for 18 year olds and that

schools can request destinations data from LAs (as reported by some LAs). There is a good understanding across LAs about the duties placed on them by the Education and Skills Act.

34. There was some evidence of confusion about how long schools need to track young people (three years after Year 11 or three years after Year 13), and how long colleges need to track young people when they leave their provision (as this is not defined).

35. While most information has been published in various documents on the DfE website, it could be made more accessible and user friendly. Current information could be placed in one location using a layered approach, enabling those involved in the destinations data collection process to understand everything they need to know at both a high level and in detail. Perhaps a summary flowchart would help give busy CLs a visual outline to refer to. This could refer to actions that a school needs to take and also what an LA needs to do.

Policy alignment

36. There is general confusion and bemusement regarding the lack of consistency between the Gatsby Benchmarks (imposing a three-year tracking horizon on schools up to age 18) and DfE CCIS policy (covering 16- and 17-year-olds). This lack of consistency causes specific problems for schools. Schools more dependent on LA destination tracking for 16- and 17-year-olds find the process of taking responsibility for 18-year-olds more difficult (especially schools without a sixth form). Essentially, the system breaks down at age 18 due to the different responsibilities on LAs and schools for tracking.

37. To date, no policy progress has been made on this issue. This explains the weaker performance of schools in the tracking of destinations for 18-year-olds linked to Gatsby Benchmark 3. Consideration should be given to whether tracking each individual pupil, up to age 18, is feasible given the LA limit to 16- and 17-year-olds. Alternatively, schools could rely on another source of data (perhaps aggregated) for understanding destinations of their former pupils aged 18 and above.

38. A separate consideration here is whether it is possible to improve data sharing directly between schools and colleges (in both directions) to avoid problems of accessing individualised LA data.

Agreements and consent

39. There is a range of different interpretations and misunderstandings about the minimum requirement to enable legal sharing of data. There is significant anxiety amongst non-legal experts, especially when differences in legal experts' opinions emerge. The result is that some organisations and individuals are making defensive decisions, which limit the sharing of information, that is, the requirements for LAs to share student level data with schools (and aggregated data) and the requirement for schools to track students to age 18.

40. While the DfE guidance documents[2,3,4] about consents and privacy policies were mentioned by, and have been used by, some LAs and schools, large areas of confusion and mixed approaches remain. Further work is required to assess the minimum requirements for different types of information, to develop templates that can be used nationally, and to then communicate them effectively so that they can be used by schools and LAs.

Training for school careers leaders

41. Although not a major issue, there were a few examples of new-in-post school CLs, sometimes with limited careers experience, who were trying to learn and understand the systems and processes very quickly.

42. This could be resolved with the production of a guide for new CLs, highlighting key current documents and signposting to helpful sources. At a local level, this could also involve an introductory email from the LA indicating points of contact. It would make sense for this to go to all school careers staff, rather than just those newly in post.

Uses of destinations data

43. Current uses of destinations data by schools includes sharing data with senior staff, analysing the effectiveness of careers programmes and using it to inform future provision.

44. Interviews with individual CLs indicated that a minority were less aware of how they could access the data and potential uses of the data to support improvement. This would range from influencing future Gatsby Benchmark achievement and/or Ofsted gradings. More could be done to develop this awareness across the CL network through training and the provision of supporting resources.

Improved IT solutions

45. Some attempts to improve the data capture and sharing systems, to get closer to one that is real-time, have been explored. However, there is no national solution to this nor any guidance on developing better systems. An example of good practice is the automation of web-based solutions to collect a young person's explicit consent electronically, as part of the destinations data collection process.

46. Specific examples of solutions include the Prospects system for gaining consent and giving schools live access to the CCIS data up to the point that the CCIS is formally submitted. Questions include: why can't this be done more widely across the country? Why can't the process continue after the submission of the CCIS to enable real-time data sharing through future years? In Norfolk, the use of a common application process helps to capture key information in an efficient way. Could this model be developed more widely?

[2] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748165/Destinations_good_practice_guide_for_publishing.pdf
[3] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561546/Participation-of-young-people-in-education-employment-or-training.pdf
[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-protection-and-privacy-privacy-notices

1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) commissioned York Consulting LLP (YCL) to undertake a review of local destinations data in June 2020.

Aims of the study

1.2 The aim of this work was to identify potential solutions to improve the level and quality of destination tracking in secondary schools for the three years after students complete Year 11. Destinations data can be used to support students' transitions and shape careers programmes.

1.3 The key objectives of the study were to:

- Map the different approaches to collecting and tracking data across local authorities (LAs) in England.
- Identify examples of good practice that can be shared.
- Identify support required to collect student consent and share data for 16- and 17-year-olds.
- Recommend how the CEC can support post-16 providers to collect and share timely and accurate data on students.
- Identify effective ways to track the destinations of 18-year-olds (outside the responsibility of LAs).

1.4 This work builds on an earlier study (unpublished) undertaken in the North East between 2017 and 2019, funded by the Gatsby Foundation.

Methodology

1.5 York Consulting's research approach broadly covered two key stages which will be discussed in detail below:

- Fieldwork scoping phase (July-September 2020).
- Stakeholder engagement phase (September-December 2020).

Fieldwork scoping phase

1.6 The purpose of this phase was to assess the feasibility of further research activity. In total, 49 individuals were consulted across the following groups (**Table 1.1**).

1.7 **CEC contacts:** YCL consulted with 30 CEC contacts, including Area Managers, Regional Leads, Hub Leads and Enterprise Co-ordinators in order to both maximise national coverage and gain a detailed insight into local network perspectives.

1.8 Broad question areas covered included: Strengths/weaknesses of destinations data collection processes? Examples of success/how shared and exploited? Major areas of concern/areas for improvement? Suggestions for improving question areas (see below). Impact of COVID-19 on process/progress?

1.9 **LA teams:** The aim of this initial contact was to establish early dialogue, gain a broad understanding of issues faced by LAs, and check their availability to participate in further stages of research.

1.10 Broad question areas covered included: Major challenges to consider regarding destinations data collection? Likely engagement/best methods of engaging with LAs?

1.11 **Additional stakeholders:** During this initial phase, YCL also undertook a selection of interviews with representatives from DfE, and FE providers, in order to gain an understanding of the policy context and challenges faced.

Table 1.1: Sample breakdown of scoping phase fieldwork

Organisations	Number
LA Teams / CAs / LEP	15
CEC Hubs	13
CEC Regional Leads	10
CEC Area Managers	3
Enterprise Co-ordinators	4
FE / WBL	2
DfE	2
Total	**49**

Source: YCL fieldwork data 2020

Stakeholder engagement phase

1.12 Five key elements were undertaken as part of the fieldwork for this phase, leading to a rich body of evidence from which to draw insights:

- Online LA survey.
- Online school careers leader (CL) survey.
- LA follow-up interviews.
- School CL follow-up interviews.
- In-depth LA case studies.

Online LA Survey

1.13 YCL designed the questionnaire, in conjunction with the CEC, ensuring all key question areas were covered. The questionnaire is included at **Appendix A**.

1.14 An email contact list was compiled, with support from CEC staff, containing contact details for all 151 LAs in England. Seventy-three LAs responded and, following a deduplicating and data cleaning process, our final sample was 62 complete cases from unique LAs, a response rate of 41%. Top line data is included at **Appendix B**.

Online school CL survey

1.15 YCL designed the questionnaire in conjunction with the CEC. The questionnaire is included at **Appendix C**.

1.16 An introductory email and survey link were provided to CEC for distribution to around 4,000 contacts - 327 completed responses were received, a response rate of approximately 12%. Top line data is included at **Appendix D**.

LA and CL follow-up interviews

1.17 In order to draw on findings from the survey, and gain richer insights, a series of follow-up interviews were undertaken with respondents to the LA and CL online surveys who had agreed to participate in further research. The interviews allowed for a further exploration of survey responses, and detailed discussions on challenges faced and examples of best practice. Interviews were selected to obtain a broad spread by region, and in relation to their own assessment of their capability to collect destinations data.

1.18 In total, 19 LA interviews and 13 CL interviews were undertaken.

In-depth case studies

1.19 In-depth case studies were undertaken in 11 LAs, across all nine government regions (two in the North West and two in the West Midlands). Case study areas were selected to identify examples of good practice, and included a common broad structure. A total of 73 individuals were interviewed, with an average of just under seven per case study, covering:

- LA staff (1-2 individuals per case study).
- School CLs (1-3 individuals).
- College staff involved in destinations data management (1-3 individuals).
- Other relevant individuals from the CEC, local enterprise partnership (LEP), and combined authority (CA) if relevant (1-2 individuals).

1.20 Case studies LAs were guaranteed anonymity to ensure their maximum engagement with the interview process.

Balance of fieldwork

1.21 The fieldwork was broadly representative of LAs across England. In terms of NEET levels, fieldwork was evenly spread across LAs with a slight skew towards areas with higher numbers of young people who are NEET. The spread in terms of LA Not Known levels was similarly representative with a slight skew towards lower levels of Not Known. Numbers of Not Known young people are lower than those who are NEET making this a lower order issue.

2 CONTEXT

Background

2.1 The DfE sets policy on careers guidance, most recently through the National Careers Strategy[5]. The Careers Strategy, published in December 2017, set out a series of measures to be implemented between 2018 and 2020 to improve careers guidance in England, including the introduction of the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance and a named CL in every school and college.

2.2 Access to accurate and timely student destinations data is important for schools, post-16 providers and LAs. It enables education providers to evaluate their provision, plan effective career guidance, identify students in need of additional support, and build an alumni community of former students to support future cohorts.

Current responsibilities

2.3 This section sets out the current responsibilities of the various parties involved in destinations data collection. This covers requirements on schools and post-16 learning providers relating to Gatsby Benchmarks and statutory requirements on LAs, schools and post-16 learning providers.

2.4 There are two broad sources of responsibility relating to local destinations data collection that apply to schools, post-16 providers and LAs:

- The first, relating to the Gatsby Benchmarks, which are considered by DfE[6] "to set a standard of excellence" in terms of careers provision, is relevant to schools and post-16 providers.
- The second, linked to the legislative requirements (Education Act, 1996 and Education and Skills Act, 2008 (ESA)), is relevant to all three.

Gatsby Benchmarks

2.5 The Gatsby Benchmarks[7] are a framework of eight guidelines that define the best careers provision in secondary schools. One of the recommendations[8] is:

> *"Every secondary school should be responsible for publishing the destinations of all pupils for three years after their leaving date. The published destination data should be at an aggregated level, showing the main categories of employment, apprenticeship and further and higher education. The responsibility should be placed on schools, but they should have the support of HESA, NCCIS and other agencies that are currently involved in collecting destinations data for the government".*

[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents
[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents
[7] https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/good-career-guidance
[8] https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf

2.6 The third of the Gatsby Benchmarks - 'Addressing the needs of each student' - includes a sub-element that explicitly relates to destinations data:

> *"Schools should collect and maintain accurate data for each student on their education, training or employment destinations for at least three years after they leave school."* [9]

2.7 By 2019, half of all mainstream schools working towards the Gatsby Benchmarks said[10] that they had achieved this sub-element. However, detailed insight does not yet exist into what level of activity and data gathering CLs classify as meeting the Benchmarks.

2.8 This represents a particular challenge for schools, especially those without a sixth form, as the three-year expectations is now misaligned against the DfE expectation for LAs to collect data for only two years (see below, related to changes made to LA duties in 2017-18).

2.9 A similar expectation is made of colleges, although there is no explicit reference to the number of years for which they must track their leavers.

Legislative requirements

2.10 DfE views LAs as having a critical role to play in supporting young people to access education and training, which includes understanding the characteristics and current activities of young people in their area.

2.11 In terms of the participation of young people in education, employment or training (EET) there are specific responsibilities for LAs. DfE states[11] that it provides the framework to increase participation and reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET, but that responsibility and accountability lies with LAs.

2.12 DfE issued statutory guidance[12] for LAs in 2016. This guidance sets out these duties, as well as the crucial roles that schools, colleges and training providers have with regard to post-16 participation. The department monitors the performance of LAs in delivering their duties, and specifically in their tracking and supporting of 16- and 17-year-olds, using data collected by authorities and submitted to the NCCIS.

2.13 LAs' responsibilities are defined by statutory duties in terms of general participation (linked to the 'September Guarantee') and specific aspects relating to Raising the Participation Age (RPA).

2.14 LAs collect destinations data on 16- and 17-year-olds as part of their duty to support young people to participate in education and training until their 18th birthday (described in more detail below) and to submit information to the Department for Education's (DfE) National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS).

[9] https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/gatsby_benchmark_3.pdf
[10] CEC, 2019, Schools and Special Schools Benchmark Report 2018-19, www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/1236_school_benchmark_report.pdf
[11] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561546/Participation-of-young-people-in-education-employment-or-training.pdf
[12] ibid

Definition of years and age groups

School year	Destination year	Age groups
Year 11 Sep-Aug	Year 0	15-year-olds (intended destinations)
Year 12 Sep-Aug	Year 1	16-year-olds (actual destinations)
Year 13 Sep-Aug	Year 2	17-year-olds (actual destinations)
Year 14 Sep-Aug	Year 3	18-year-olds (actual destinations)

2.15 The statutory guidance to LAs[13] includes the following duties:

- **LAs should provide strategic leadership in their areas** to support participation in education, training and employment (Section 68 of ESA 2008) - working with and influencing partners by: ensuring a focus on participation is embedded and communicated throughout the authority's services for children and young people; ensuring the services for young people in the local area come together to meet the needs of young people; agreeing ways of working with other partners such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Jobcentre Plus, employers, voluntary and community sector organisations, health services (including mental health services), youth offending teams, the police, and probation services; and working with neighbouring authorities.
- **To secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people** in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19, or aged 19 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is maintained. This is a duty under the Education Act 1996. To fulfil this, LAs need to have a strategic overview of the provision available in their area and to identify and resolve gaps in provision.
- To make available to all young people aged 13-19, and to those between 20 and 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), **support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training** (under Section 68 of ESA 2008).
- **Duty on LAs to promote participation**. Under this RPA-related duty, the participation of young people (16- to 17-year-olds) in education and training should be actively promoted by LAs (Section 10 of ESA 2008). Sections 14-17 of ESA 2008 provide data sharing powers to encourage LAs to promote effective participation.
- **Duty on LAs to identify young people not participating**. To meet this RPA-related duty (Section 12 of ESA 2008), LAs are required to identify young people

[13] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561546/Participation-of-young-people-in-education-employment-or-training.pdf

(16-17-year-olds) not participating so that they can ensure that these young people get the support they need.

- **September Guarantee.** Every young person who reaches the age of 16 or 17 in any given academic year is entitled to an offer of a suitable place, by the end of September, to continue in education or training. LAs are required to lead the September Guarantee process for: 16-year-olds who are educated in their area; and 17-year-olds who are resident in their area.
- **LAs are expected to act on any information they receive** about a young person who has dropped out, contacting them at the earliest opportunity and supporting them to find an alternative place in education, training or employment with training that leads to relevant regulated qualifications.
- Sections 76 and 77 provide **additional data sharing powers to support LAs** to deliver their duties. The statutory guidance provides that LAs should agree data sharing agreements with education providers and other public bodies.

2.16 These duties give rise to the need for a tracking of young people. The DfE considers the CCIS database as the main source of evidence to monitor that LAs are discharging their duties.

2.17 Some changes that have occurred in relation to the data requirements include:

- Up to the academic year 2016-17, LAs collected data on 16-, 17- and 18-year-olds (the Gatsby Benchmarks were designed during this time hence requiring schools to track for three years). This was changed to a requirement to collect and record information about young people up to and including academic age 17, and up to age 25 for those with an EHC plan:

  > *"Relaxing the requirement on authorities to track academic age 18-year-olds. LAs are now only required to track and submit information about young people up to the end of the academic year in which they have their 18th birthday i.e. academic age 16- and 17-year-olds. There is no change to the compulsory education group, and young people with a current education, health and care (EHC) plan should still be tracked and reported on until their EHC plan ceases, which can occur at any point up to the end of the academic year in which they have their 25th birthday."*[14]

- In the 2020-21 guidance, a change was made regarding intended destinations, removing the mandatory requirement to collect these:

  > *"Following feedback from LAs we are making a change so that the collection of this data is no longer a requirement. LAs may continue to use the field if they find it useful however."*[15]

[14] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575941/NCCIS_Management__Information_Requirement_2017_to_2018_Final.pdf

[15] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/858284/BRANDED_MI_Req_2020_21_MB_PDF__1_.pdf

2.18 Although LAs are still required to put arrangements in place to identify those 18-year-olds who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, and provide them with support, they are not required to track all 18-year-olds or return data about this cohort to the department.

2.19 There are similar duties on education providers (schools, colleges, and work-based learning providers) to provide necessary information:

> "Section 72 of ESA 2008 places a duty on educational institutions to provide information to LA services in order for them to deliver their duties under section 68."[16]

2.20 Therefore, according to DfE guidance, LAs should set up data sharing agreements with education providers, and other public bodies, that set out the information they will provide, when it will be provided, and how they will ensure that data is passed securely.

2.21 Other specific references in legislation which are relevant to schools and post-16 providers include:

- ESA 2008, Section 11 places a duty on providers to promote good attendance to enable young people to meet their duty to participate.
- ESA 2008, Section 13 places a duty on all education providers to tell their LA when a young person is no longer participating. Specifically, this duty includes, if a young person leaves an education or training programme before completion (i.e. 'drops out') and enables LAs to take swift action to encourage the young person to re-engage.
- Section 72 of the ESA 2008 places a statutory duty on a responsible person at an education provider to provide LAs with 'relevant information', on request, about students. Relevant information is:

  a) The name, address, and date of birth of the pupil or student.
  b) The name and address of a parent of the pupil or student.
  c) Information in the institution's possession about the pupil or student, except where a parent of a pupil or student under the age of 16, or a pupil or student who has attained the age of 16, has instructed the provider not to provide that information.

2.22 The department provides guidance to schools and post-16 providers on privacy notices,[17] and has issued a ministerial letter (unpublished, October 2019) to improve the responsiveness of post-16 providers to supply up-to-date information.

2.23 The ministerial letter concludes with a point about "LAs sharing destinations data with education providers on pupils who have left their institution". It explains that there is "no equivalent duty under the ESA 2008 requiring LAs to share data on ex-pupils back with institutions (though LAs may choose to provide information in some

[16] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561546/Participation-of-young-people-in-education-employment-or-training.pdf
[17] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-protection-and-privacy-privacy-notices

circumstances)". It recommends that providers routinely seek pupils' consent, prior to them leaving their institution, to support LAs sharing this data back with them.

2.24 LAs are required to report to the department based on the requirements set out in the NCCIS Management Information Requirement - this includes information on each young person indicating:

- Who receive an offer under the September Guarantee?
- Who is participating in education or training – including those meeting the duty to participate?
- Who is NEET?
- Whose current activity is Not Known?

Destinations Measures

2.25 It is important to distinguish the destinations data collected by LAs from the **destinations Measures** data[18] published by DfE. Specifically, the data differs as the LA data represents a snapshot in time whilst the Destinations Measures data considers whether a destination has been sustained for a longer time period.

Destination Measures show the percentage of students continuing to a sustained education, apprenticeship or employment destination in the year after finishing Year 11 at age 16 and the year after leaving study at age 18. The definition of sustained is for at least two terms after leaving (from October to March the following year) or stayed in an apprenticeship for at least 6 months.

The aim of destination measures is to provide comparable information on the success of schools and colleges in helping all their students take qualifications that offer them the best opportunity to progress. Sources include:

- National Pupil Database (NPD) [encompassing individualised learner record (ILR), school census, awarding body data, alternative provision census and Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) data]
- Employment data and out-of-work benefit data (linked to the NPD to form the longitudinal education outcomes (LEO) dataset. LEO data is used to calculate employment destinations, drawing on two administrative datasets: employment data from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC); and out-of-work benefit data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

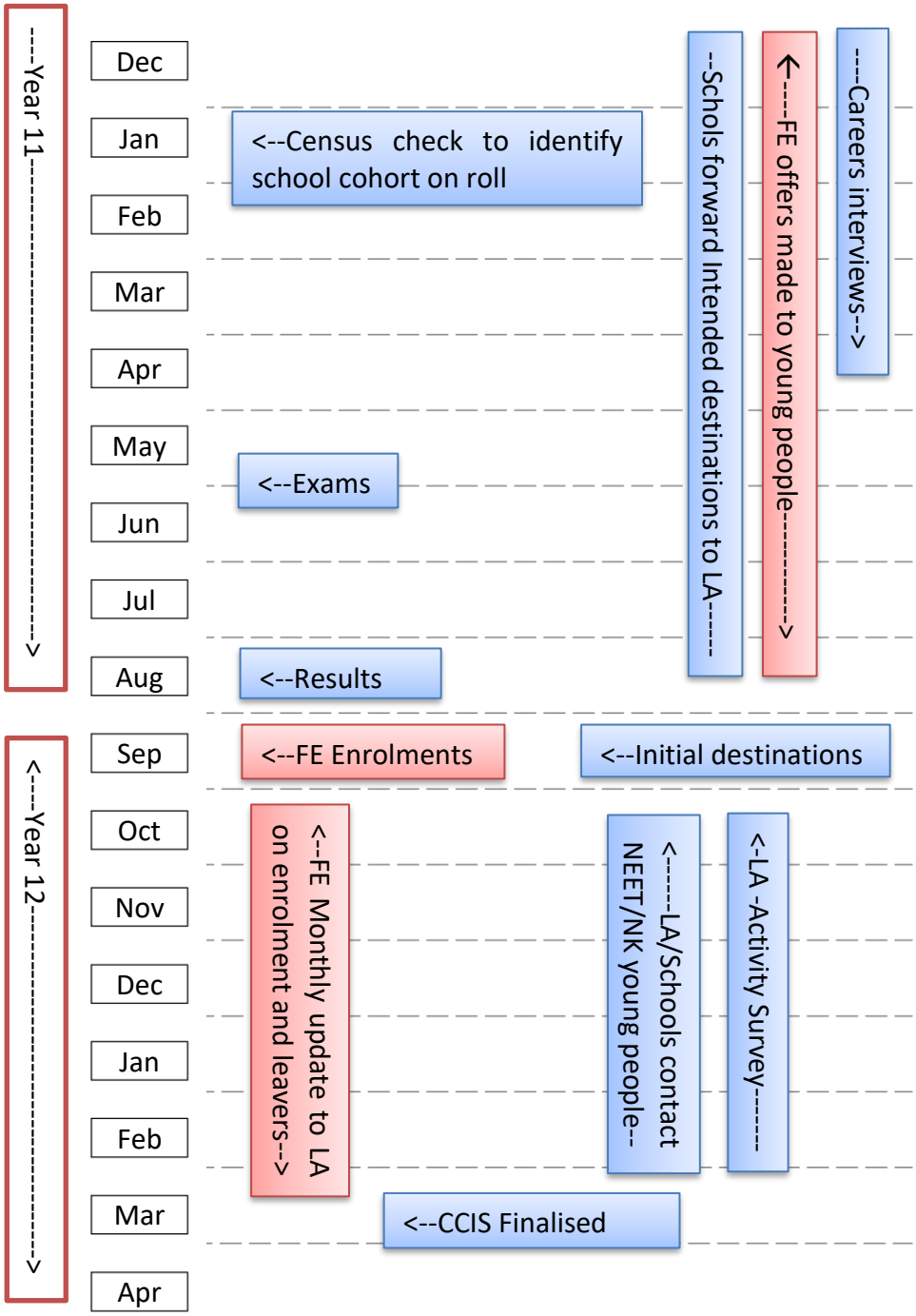
The next published data is expected to be released in January 2021, for the 2017-18 cohort of leavers who finished Key Stage 4 and 16-18 study during this period.

Chronology of local destinations data collection (the generic model)

2.26 There are varying practices across the country (Figure 2.1). However, we set out a broad set of current arrangements which are taking place (recognising that not all aspects occur in every LA). These varying practices, that have evolved over time, have led to a patchwork of different approaches across the country.

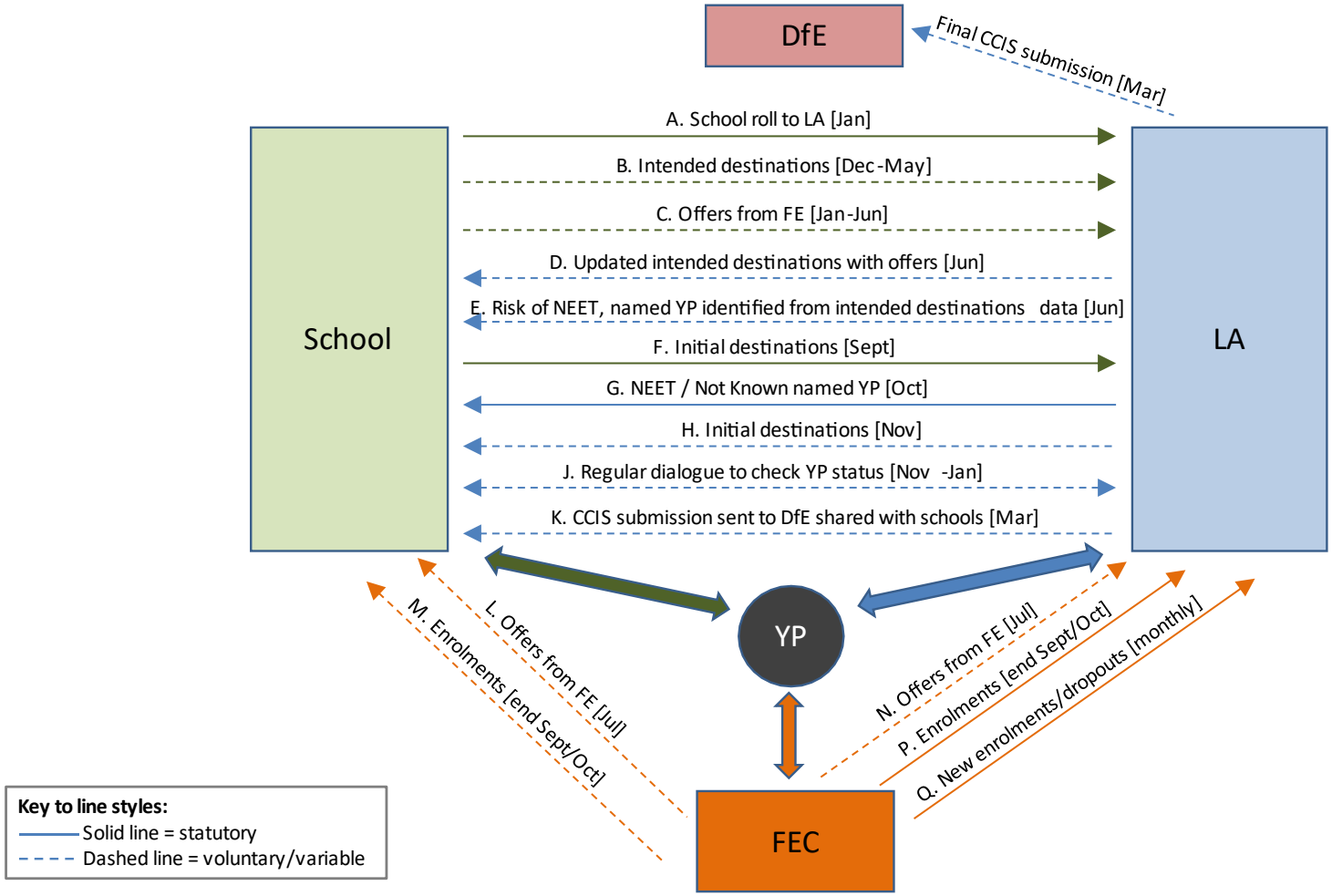
[18] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/destination-measures-for-key-stage-4-and-16-to-18-students

Figure 2.1: Chronology of local destinations data collection



2.27 This model gives rise to a range of data flows between the respective organisations, as depicted in **Figure 2.2**. Some of these are part of the statutory requirements and others are voluntary or variable in terms of common practice.

Figure 2.2: Destinations data information flows



Themes in scope

2.28 The main themes that emerged from this research - that we discuss in detail later in the report - are set out in the inset box below. These include aspects of current practice, challenges that constrain schools achieving Gatsby Benchmark 3 and examples of good practice.

2.29 For transparency, we also outline some key related areas that have not been explored as part of this research, although they were raised by some stakeholders given their related nature:

- Careers programme delivery.
- Risk of NEET indicators.
- Data sharing from school to college (prior to progressing to college).
- Work-based learning providers and their role in destinations data collection.
- Support provided to those with no destination (NEET and Not Known).

Thematic areas

(A) Use of destinations data:
- Performance assessment.
- Informing provision including careers programmes and curriculum strategies.
- Identification and monitoring of vulnerable and at-risk groups.

(B) Preparation for destinations data collection:
- Local policy.
- Operational prioritisation and resourcing.
- Agreements and consents.
- Partnerships, projects and initiatives.

(C) Data collection:
- Early information and preparation phase.
- Initial destinations data transfer from school to LA.
- Initial destinations data transfer from college to LA.
- Vulnerable groups.

(D) Data maintenance and data sharing:
- Data management and updating by LA/subcontractor.
- 18-year-olds and strategies for three-year tracking.
- Data sharing by LA to school.

2.30 For each of these themes we discuss the issues faced and the extent to which solutions can be identified to help schools to meet Gatsby Benchmark 3.

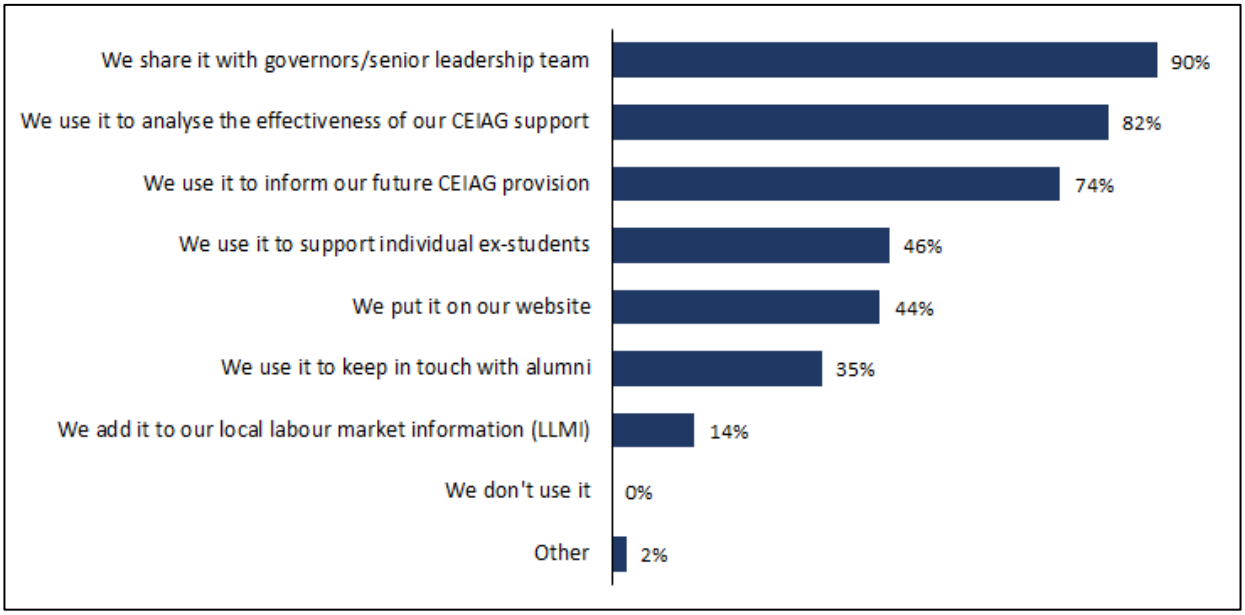
3 (A) USE OF DESTINATIONS DATA

3.1 Findings from across all stages of the research suggest that stakeholders understand the wide-reaching potential benefits and value of destinations data collection, beyond it being simply a statutory duty that they must comply with. There are however aspects where improved awareness of uses of destinations data could benefit schools and LAs.

3.2 Actual destinations data are used in a myriad of ways by schools, LAs and colleges. CLs who received destinations data from their LA, in January, were asked how they use this. All the CLs mentioned at least one usage and most (73%) provided three to five uses (mean of 3.8). Similarly, just over three-quarters of LAs (76%) identified five or more ways in which they used destinations data (average of 6). **Figures 3.1 and 3.2** show a breakdown of CL and LA usage of destinations data.

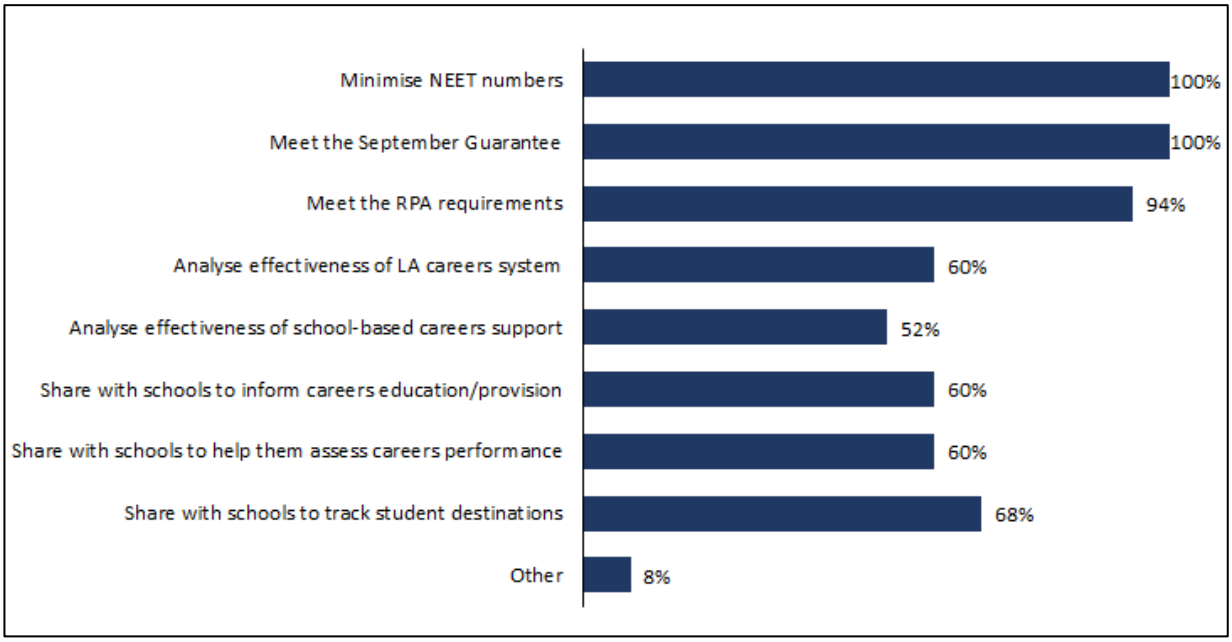
3.3 Fewer LAs identified 'sharing data with schools' as a use of the data than the 85% of LAs who said they share CCIS data (where consents are in place), suggesting that some LAs are not aware of the value of this data to CLs and schools.

Figure 3.1: Uses of destinations data by schools



Source: YCL Career Leaders survey Q17: How does your school use destinations data?
Base: 124 (Career Leaders who receive further destinations data from their LA in January)

Figure 3.2: LAs uses of destinations data



Source: YCL LA survey Q18: What is the destinations data collected by your LA used for?
Base: 62 (All Las participating in the survey)

3.4 Use of destinations data by schools and LAs can largely be grouped into three areas:

- Performance assessment.
- Informing provision including careers programmes and curriculum strategies.
- Identification and monitoring of vulnerable and at-risk groups.

Performance assessment

3.5 As Figure 3.1 shows, the most common use of destinations data amongst schools is to share it with governors and the senior leadership team (SLT) (90%). These findings were echoed in follow-up interviews with CLs and in the case study interviews.

3.6 Destinations data is seen to be a useful addition to the school performance toolkit, and used as one of several indicators when reporting to governors and SLTs. Several schools also believed it to be a beneficial indicator of performance during Ofsted inspections, and something that inspectors are interested in seeing when presented in a comprehensive way:

> *"As an AP [alternative provider], this is one of our key performance indicators – how well we prepare our pupils for transition." (School)*

3.7 One LA believes that schools are only just beginning to understand how valuable this data is in helping them to *"tick Ofsted boxes"*, among other reporting requirements, and that to really understand the value, they need tangible examples of what the data can look like and how it can be used. In the academic year 2019/2020, only one school in their area had all appropriate consents in place to enable full, individualised data sharing to occur. However, the LA's intention is to use this school as an example

of what data can be shared, and how it can be used *"as a carrot*" to encourage other schools to put the necessary processes and procedures in place:

> *"What does work well is passing the data to governors who see it as important in assessing the school's importance. It helps them be critical, which is a good thing. It is also important for Ofsted. This is the way the LAs need to approach schools for the destinations data work. They would buy in more if it was framed as something that can help with Ofsted."*

3.8 Although less common, in several cases, in addition to assessing performance internally - the data is also used for promotion and marketing purposes and as a means of keeping in touch with former pupils. Forty-four percent of CL survey respondents said they put the (anonymised) data on their website and 35% used it to keep in touch with alumni. There was also evidence of this during the follow-up and case study interviews, with schools displaying alumni information and case studies on their walls, or reporting on destinations in communications and/or prospectuses to staff, students and parents.

3.9 In one school, case study posters were created and used during PHSE/careers lessons and in the careers programme being designed by the CL. This will involve 10 x 20-minute sessions covering the different post-16 options including college offerings and courses that Year 11 leavers have moved onto in the past. In other examples, schools promote the percentage of Year 11 leavers going onto, for example, university and/or an apprenticeship.

3.10 However, some were cautious about using the data in this way. Some believed that whilst it was useful, within the school, to know about the different routes leavers had taken and, for example, the percentage of at-risk students who went onto higher education, they were wary about promoting this externally due to the message it could send around how the school values the different pathways. It was believed that there was a tendency to assume that the higher education route is the gold standard and the ultimate indicator of success, which was felt to be debatable. Some raised concerns about destinations data becoming manifested into a league table of destinations and a hierarchical value being placed on each route. A number of CLs expressed the importance, while wanting to raise aspirations, of a need to avoid implicitly communicating that one career pathway is more esteemed and worthwhile than another:

> *"With some schools, there is a clear assumption that young people have to go on to 6th form and University to be successful. It's not the case. Some see their families and think, "they're doing alright, that's good enough". We want to make sure we've challenged and stretched them. We want to raise ambitions but need to recognise academia is not for everyone and we need to present all the options and opportunities available." (School).*

Informing provision, including careers programmes and curriculum strategies

3.11 There appears to be a general consensus among LAs and schools that a key benefit of accurate, robust destinations data, is its potential for appraising careers provision. A substantial proportion of LAs recognised the value of, and used, destinations data to inform their future career strategies. Over half of responding LAs stated that the data was:

- Used by the LA to analyse the effectiveness of the LA careers provision (60%).
- Shared with schools to inform their future careers provision (60%).
- Shared with schools to help them assess the performance of their careers provision (60%).
- Used by the LA to analyse the effectiveness of school-based careers provision for young people (52%).

3.12 Some LAs were keen to highlight that this should be the prime focus of using destinations data: to continually assess and evolve the careers offer for young people to ensure that all are adequately supported. However, the capability of schools to use this data, and LAs to support them in doing so, was heavily dependent on the available resources and the level of analytical skills in respective teams:

> *"Primarily we collect it to support, encourage and guide young people - and that should ALWAYS be the focus of the destinations data. Keeping the young people at the heart of it helps meet other objectives but doesn't actually make a difference to them. The NEET numbers, September Guarantee and RPA requirements are a by-product of the system, rather than the focus of the system. If approached by schools to support them audit, monitor and support the effectiveness of their careers system, then we utilise said data accordingly." (LA)*

3.13 The majority of schools also reported using destinations data to analyse the effectiveness of their school's internal career programmes (82%), and to inform future careers provision (74%). Schools use the data to help them understand whether their careers strategy is working effectively, to see what courses and training their leavers have moved into, and to identify where gaps in provision exist. A key priority for many was ensuring that every young person has access to good guidance, and has been able to *"go onto something that's appropriate for them."* For this reason, those schools that had bought into the importance, value and worth of destinations data felt that individualised data was paramount in understanding young people's journeys and therefore refining their support offer.

3.14 The data was also useful in highlighting new or existing courses that CLs were unaware of, therefore keeping them informed of the changing landscape and allowing them to adapt their support accordingly:

> *"This year we spotted a few courses that the Careers Leader didn't know were out there, which is now built into guidance for current students." (School).*

3.15 Schools with sixth forms were particularly interested in destinations data in cases where young people had elected to go elsewhere for their post-16 studies. As well as informing their careers provision, the data was used to monitor their curriculum offer. Over time, patterns and trends were being identified and considerations taken as to whether the schools would begin to offer new courses:

> *"It can be used to shape the curricula going forward. For example, we're now considering options in computer science due to this rise in popularity and students leaving to do it elsewhere. One important part is to spot if the school are losing high achievers to other sixth forms or colleges. This is very important to the SLT and governors." (School)*

Identification and monitoring of vulnerable and at-risk groups

3.16 All responding LAs stated that destinations data are used to minimise NEET numbers (100%).

3.17 For some LAs and schools this involves looking at yearly trends to identify patterns of behaviour and to identify those in the current cohort who might benefit from additional internal, or targeted external, support.

3.18 There are several ways in which LAs, schools and colleges support early identification of those most at risk:

- **Collection of intended destinations at an early age:** Some schools collect intended destinations from Year 9 onwards, with one case study school starting this process in Year 7. This generally happens in the form of a simple questionnaire completed during a PHSE class (or equivalent). This information is used tentatively, not as a means by which to target careers IAG but as an indication of those with a less certain or wavering trajectory, enabling appropriate support to be delivered.
- **Use of Risk of NEET Indicators (RONI):** A number of LAs mentioned developing and using RONI indicators, often tailored to their areas, designed in conjunction with schools and post-16 providers, with the intention of refining them further as trend data is built up over the years. These indicators enable early identification of those less likely to make a positive transition enabling appropriate support to be delivered.
- **Targeted intervention earlier in the school calendar:** Although the bulk of careers programmes may be concentrated during Year 11, several CLs and LAs stated that intervention happens earlier (Year 10) for those identified as being at risk. For those LAs that did not offer a universal careers service for all, it was often the case that they would still offer targeted provision for those most in need.

- **Early applications to post-16 provision:** Some LAs actively encourage and support schools to begin post-16 search and application processes as early as possible in Year 11, so interventions can occur in a timely manner. This is felt to be particularly essential for those below Level 2 as they *"often make later and less well-informed choices" (LA).* An example of this is "Hampshire Futures": the LA sends a document to schools for copy and distribution to prompt these discussions early in Year 11.
- **Presenting impartial, broader, and attractive offers to young people:** Several areas emphasised the importance of supporting young people towards pathways that interest them and that they are more likely to thrive in, recognising that traditional and/or academic routes are not appropriate for everyone.
- **Building good relationships with young people:** Establishing trusting relationships with individual young people, and strong lines of communication, are thought to be paramount in securing their willingness to engage with tracking processes and also accepting any support at a later stage.

3.19 Once an early understanding of those at risk of NEET is established, it is essential that this information flows through to the various stakeholders, allowing the targeting of those without a positive, sustained destination while also enabling the monitoring of those who have progressed but might drop out. In the areas where LAs, schools and post-16 providers have strong working relationships, and more effective data-sharing processes, early indications at school-level are paramount in helping post-16 providers and LAs identify: where additional support might be required; how to reach that young person in an effective and sustained way; and how support might be delivered and by whom (e.g. whether it is more appropriately delivered by a contact in the school, a careers practitioner, community worker, or post-16 representative).

Summary

3.20 Findings from across all stages of the research suggest that stakeholders understand the wide-reaching benefits and value of destinations data collection, beyond it being simply a statutory duty that they must comply with. Promoting these examples among CLs and LAs will help increase engagement and understanding of the value of destinations data.

4 (B) PREPARATION FOR DESTINATIONS DATA COLLECTION

4.1 This theme covers contextual and preparatory work required by schools to set up systems of destinations data collection. It covers the communication of LA policy, LA arrangements for organising data collection, the challenging area of agreements and consents required to satisfy GDPR and examples of partnerships, projects and initiatives.

Local policy

4.2 Awareness by CLs of LA policy on careers support is important to help schools work effectively with LAs.

4.3 LAs were asked in the survey whether they had a published careers strategy as an indication of the extent to which they were providing strategic leadership. LA strategic leadership combined with clarity on support available can support schools to track young people to age 18.

4.4 Just over a quarter (26%) of LAs were able to say 'yes' to the question of whether they had a published careers strategy. A further 24% explained that their LA had a published participation strategy, or an unpublished careers strategy, which covered similar issues. Just under a fifth of respondents (18%) said 'not sure' and just under a third (32%) said 'no'.

4.5 The challenge is effectively communicating, to schools and other education providers, the LA's approach to the delivery of careers provision. This is one way in which LAs can satisfy their duty to provide strategic leadership to support participation.

4.6 Based on respondent information, it was evident that responsibility for careers or participation sits in a range of different departments from: Education, or Children and Young People, to Employment and Skills. In some LAs, services are well communicated, whereas in others it can be a challenge for schools to know who to deal with in the LA.

4.7 Clearly, a published careers strategy is not ubiquitous. Through interviews with LA representatives, a number of explanations were given for this situation:

- Some of those who said 'no', 'not sure' or 'other' explained that it was covered by: a broader strategy (for example, embedded in the Employment and Skills Strategy); combined authority or LEP policy; or, that it used to exist but had not been updated. In a few cases, a participation strategy was currently being developed.
- In other cases, a strategy such as a "16-19 Statement of Priorities" or a "NEET Reduction Strategy" was circulated openly to all education providers and partners, but was not available on the LA's website or formally published.
- One LA representative explicitly perceived responsibility for careers strategies to lie with education providers in line, as they saw it, with current government policy. For example:

"All LA schools and academies should publish their own careers statement on their website. We support them to deliver this through our CEIG network and support to careers leaders."

- Few saw themselves as operating a local careers service, although some did, especially where they had arrangements and contracts to provide support directly to schools for mainstream Year 11 careers interviews.

4.8 Some examples of those that have been published include:

- Barnet Education, Employment and Training Support (BEETS)
- Bracknell Forest Learning Improvement Strategy
- East Sussex Participation In Education, Employment and Training Strategy Included In 16-19 Strategy
- Kent Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy

Summary

4.9 A clear LA strategy in relation to careers policy and supporting schools to achieve Gatsby Benchmarks can provide a signal to schools about the support available from their LA. It can also help to build a partnership and effective communication between the LA, schools and colleges. There is some evidence of good practice in communicating strategic priorities.

Operational prioritisation and resourcing

4.10 Schools are struggling to resource the task of destinations data collection to meet their responsibilities for Gatsby Benchmark 3.

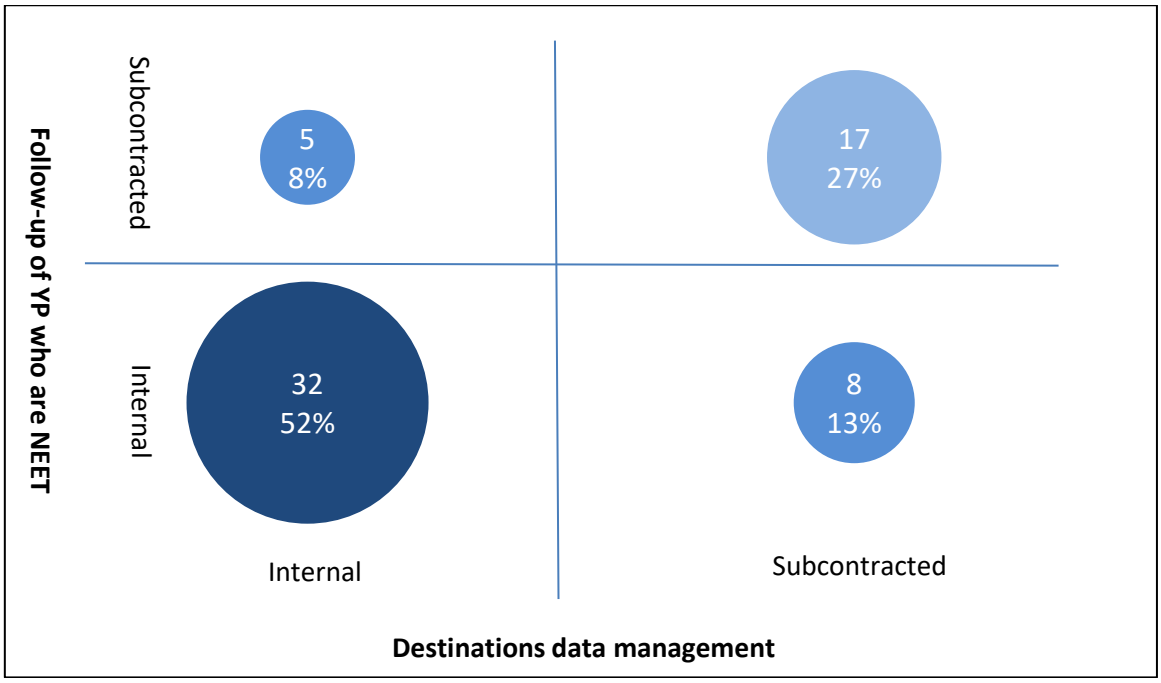
4.11 Almost half (45%) of CLs said they were 'struggling to resource all the required tasks' for following up their Year 11 leavers to age 18; an additional 15% said they were 'just about coping'. Only 17% assessed their capability as 'working well'.

4.12 When asked to assess their current capability for collecting destinations data, more than three-quarters of LAs (77%) said it was 'working well'; over three-fifths of these also stated it was 'continuing to improve'. Seven LAs (11%) said they were 'just about coping' and four (6%) were 'struggling to resource all the required tasks'.

4.13 There is a range of different LA models for resourcing the collection of destinations data and delivery of follow-up to young people who are NEET (**Figure 4.1**). Typically, the arrangement selected is linked to the level of priority and perceived need within a given area. Often, the arrangements in place are a legacy of former Connexions arrangements or are subcontracting arrangements that have existed for many years.

4.14 Just over a half of LAs (52%) said that they undertake all the activity internally. Just over a quarter (27%) contract out both elements.

Figure 4.1: LA subcontracting of destinations data and follow-up of young people



Source: YCL Survey of Local Authorities, 2020; Base: 62 local authorities

4.15 The definition of subcontracting can be confusing. For example, a LA may have a Connexions team of directly employed council staff or they may contract out to a subcontractor who delivers under a Connexions brand using similarly qualified staff.

4.16 The general feeling from LA staff was that the direction of travel was towards internalisation, as it is hard to justify additional external contracts in the current financial climate.

4.17 Some subcontractors are not-for-profit organisations, whilst others are commercial entities. Typically, they have been formed from the externalisation of Connexions teams (with staff having been transferred). In some cases, subcontractors cover a range of local authorities - for example, Prospects (national) and CSW (South West).

4.18 In many areas, former Connexions staff are involved in various parts of the system - from delivering LA responsibilities to working as Careers Advisors or CLs for schools. A number of LA respondents said that where a former Connexions member of staff was in place, the focus on destinations data was greater: *"they just get it"*.

Example: Wolverhampton

The LA has a Connexions team that follows up young people who are NEET or Not Known. The destinations data tracking is undertaken by an external subcontractor, Prospects, which works closely with the Connexions Advisors and school careers staff. This partnership has been established for many years, enabling effective communication between stakeholders to support young people.

4.19 The choice about the extent of subcontracting is an operational decision for each LA. The key is effective communication. Whether an internal or external operation, the effectiveness of the process (in relation to destinations data collection and NEET follow-up) is strongly influenced by well-established networks, levels of trust and mutual support.

4.20 With the establishment of the CL role in schools and Careers Hubs, there is evidence of some local authorities working with CEC Hub Leads to develop CL networks. This should help to improve the dialogue and communication between LAs and schools.

4.21 CLs highlight having a dedicated member of staff (mentioned by 57% in the survey) as helping to make the system work well for their school. Similarly, the importance of good relationships with colleges (53%), LAs/subcontractors (47%), and other local providers (35%), was mentioned by CLs:

> *"There is a very streamlined back and forth process with the County now…mainly due to having a solid point of contact there for a number of years. I can see this as really helping to narrow down those NEET and not known figures." (School CL)*

4.22 The major barrier, cited by over three-fifths (62%) of CLs, was staff capacity in their school. Some CLs mentioned the range of staff who might become involved in following up young people: these included administrative staff as well as careers advisers and form tutors.

4.23 Although LAs are responsible for the destinations data collection process for 16- and 17-year-olds, there is variation around who does the majority of tracking. It is hard to assess objectively without detailed research within schools and LAs. Our understanding is that, in some LAs, there are clear functions (be they careers professionals or staff focused on destination tracking) that undertake phone calls and visits; whereas, in others, there is a greater burden placed on schools to undertake all or some of this tracking activity. The CL survey indicated that around a fifth of CLs feel their school does the tracking, a quarter say it is the LA, and under half (46%) say it's a joint activity (**Table 4.1**). This proportion rose to over a third of schools (36%) for 18-year-olds and dropped to 13% for the LA and 15% for joint activity. Over a fifth (22%) said that neither do this.

Table 4.1: Responsibility for tracking destination activity by age group in schools

Age group and responsibility	16- and 17-year-olds	18-year-olds
The school tracks their activity	19%	36%
The LA (or its subcontractor) tracks their activity	25%	13%
Both the school and the LA (or subcontractor) track their activity	46%	15%
Neither the school nor the LA (or subcontractor) track activity	5%	22%
Other	6%	14%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Source: YCL CL Survey, 2020; Base=327 CLs; Note percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding

Summary

4.24 Having a dedicated person responsible for destinations data in schools and effective relationships with partners are important attributes that support schools to collect data for three years between ages 16 and 18. There is good evidence of clear responsibilities in schools and emerging good practice in the establishment of Careers Leader networks across LAs. Staff capacity remains a major barrier to schools achieving Gatsby Benchmark 3. CLs were more likely than LAs to say they were struggling to resource the data collection activity.

Agreements and consents

4.25 There is evidence of confusion about the minimum requirement (in terms of data sharing agreements and individual consents) necessary to enable the flow of information between schools and LAs.

4.26 The origin of the confusion relates to what is, or is not, provided for by the ESA 2008 and what is, or is not, required in relation to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into being in 2018. In the survey, just under half of the CLs identified data protection issues (46%) as barriers to destinations data gathering (second only to staff capacity issues, at 62%).

4.27 We start by setting out some broad examples of practice and then highlight the differences in practice which evidence the confusion referred to above. The three main categories that we have identified include:

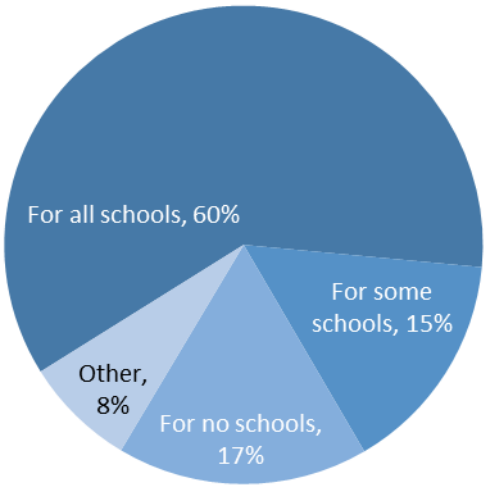
- Those who believe that a data sharing agreement between the LA and all other education providers handing data is sufficient to enable data sharing.
- Those who believe that individual student consent (and a linked privacy policy) is necessary for the LA to share data back to schools.
- Those who believe that individual student consent is not required because data sharing is covered by a combination of the ESA 2008 and their privacy statement.

4.28 We describe some of the examples that fit these categories, identified through the research. None are presented as right or wrong, necessary or sufficient; merely the current practice.

Data sharing agreements

4.29 During our survey work, we asked those who confirmed that data sharing back to schools did take place (53 out of 62 respondents), 'to what extent data sharing agreements were in place to enable the sharing of ***combined and anonymised data*** with schools?' (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.2: Extent to which data sharing agreements are in place to enable the sharing of combined and anonymised data with schools



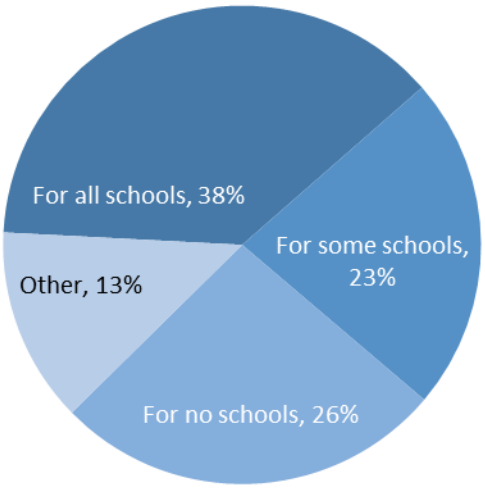
Source: YCL LA Survey, 2020; Base=53 LAs who confirmed data sharing back to schools did take place

4.30 Three-fifths (60%, or 32 LAs) said that they had data sharing agreements in place for ***all*** schools. Smaller groups said:

- For ***some*** schools (15%, or 8 LAs) – one respondent explained that this was required for non-maintained schools.
- For ***no*** schools (17%, or 9 LAs) – two respondents explained that they did not feel data sharing agreements were required for combined and anonymised data.
- ***Other*** (8%, or 4 LAs) – one respondent felt that data sharing was covered by a subcontractor's data sharing agreements; another that it was dealt with through their "wider data team (not CCIS Service)" which covered all aspects of data sharing with schools.

4.31 We then asked a similar question about the sharing of ***individualised destinations data*** with schools (Figure 4.3). A slightly smaller proportion of LAs - just under two-fifths (38%) - indicated that data sharing agreements were in place for all schools, with smaller proportions for some schools (23%), no schools (26%), and other (13%).

Figure 4.3: Extent to which data sharing agreements are in place to enable the sharing of individualised destinations data with schools



Source: YCL LA Survey, 2020; Base=53 LAs who confirmed data sharing back to schools did take place

4.32 Among those that said ***some schools***, the reasons given included that it was optional, so some schools did not sign the agreement; that some schools gained individual student consent; or that it was under development/delayed due to COVID-19. Those that said ***no schools***, indicated that their reasons included complications due to subcontracting relationships. Amongst those that said ***other***, one LA indicated that their advice had been that a data sharing agreement was not necessary as young people had been informed - through other channels, including a privacy policy - that their data would be shared.

4.33 A review of some of these data sharing agreements indicates that they tend to re-affirm schools' duties under the ESA 2008, plus the data responsibilities of schools, and young people's right to withdraw consent for data sharing.

4.34 The 11 research case studies followed a similar pattern to the survey findings. Most of the case study areas (7 out of 11) had data sharing agreements between the LA and schools, although most did not rely on this and also gained pupil consent.

Gaining pupil consent

4.35 The decision to seek individual pupil consent tends to be a school-based decision (to cover third year tracking and for receiving data from the LA). A patchwork exists across most LAs regarding which schools have sufficient consents to receive individualised data back from the LA (assuming the LA makes this available). In many cases, this involves a school collating signed consent forms from young people. An example pro forma - from a school in Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch - is shown below.

School consent form (in Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch LA)

Destinations Consent

In order to check your career planning and to ensure we offer the best careers advice, we would like your consent to collect and share information that identifies you and what you have gone on to do. We already have to share some information until you are aged 16 as a requirement of the Education and Skills Act 2008, but we need to check you are happy for us to continue. We may ask a third party to collect this data on our behalf.

We would also like to be able to contact you if we are unsure how you are doing in your education or employment after leaving School. Each contact will take no more than 5 minutes and will be done either by phone or email. To do this we will need your phone number and email address.

The data we collect will be stored in the staff area of the school's network and used to evaluate the careers support and guidance we provide. We will also share the information with the local authority and ultimately the government. For details of our Data Protection policies and privacy notice please see our website [removed] .

The data we collect will be: Course Title, Institution Name, Level of Study, Start Date, Duration of Course for those pursuing further or higher education and Job Title, Employer Name, start date, apprenticeship/full time for those entering employment.

Your data will be kept in strictest confidence. It will only be published in an anonymised format so your personal details will remain private.

Personal Details (please correct if different from the information we already hold.).

Name	
Date of Birth	
Address	
Email	
Telephone number	

Intended destination information:

Please indicate your **intended** destination. This will allow us to provide further careers information, advice and guidance as necessary, especially if you are still unsure at this stage *(tick as appropriate).*

- ☐ Work
- ☐ Apprenticeship
- ☐ Further study
- ☐ Voluntary work
- ☐ Taking time out
- ☐ NOT SURE

Course(s) or Job Title	
Institution or Employer name	
Full Time/Apprenticeship (for those entering employment only)	
Duration and Level of Study/Apprenticeship (if appropriate)	
Start Date	

I consent to the data above being collated and shared between the School and the local authority in order to review my progress and improve careers guidance and support, and to being contacted by the school for the reasons set out above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

4.36 In some cases, LAs or their subcontractors have an LA-wide process to support schools to gain this consent (see examples below from Wolverhampton, Hampshire, and North Lincolnshire). All LAs have general privacy policies, but not all have a service-specific policy relating to the collection of destinations data.

Wolverhampton LA individual consent process

Prospects - the subcontractor working with Wolverhampton City Council - has an online database which schools can use to issue consent emails electronically to pupils and/or parents. The implementation of this system was disrupted in 2019-20 due to COVID-19, but enabled a small number of schools to receive pupil-level data from the subcontractor, on behalf of the LA. It is hoped that a larger group of schools will gain sufficient consent, in 2020-21, to expand this data sharing.

Hampshire Futures individual consent process

Hampshire Futures is a careers organisation within Hampshire County Council. Consent is collected through careers guidance interviews and young people are directed to a privacy policy on the LA's website. The information collected, and consents requested, include:

- Name, Date of Birth, Address, Postcode, Home Phone, Mobile, Email, Signature, Date (of consent).
- Yes, I am happy for you to record a summary of my careers discussion(s).
- Yes, I am happy for you to share agreed actions from my careers discussion(s).
- Yes, I am happy for you to record personal information including my contact telephone number and email address.

North Lincolnshire Council individual consent process

In North Lincolnshire, young people give their consent as part of the e-prospectus (a common application process across post-16 providers in the LA). This is linked to a privacy policy and covers consent for:

- "….data being shared between school/academy/college and local authority in order to review my progress and improve careers guidance and support…"

4.37 In other cases, it is solely down to the school to develop consent processes (typically based on DfE good practice guidance[19] to schools, and linked to DfE documentation[20] on the development of privacy notices). A review of some school consent forms and associated privacy notices indicates that not all schools have used, or are aware of, the latest (August 2020) DfE publication on privacy notices.

[19] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748165/Destinations_good_practice_guide_for_publishing.pdf

[20] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/914622/Privacy_notice_guide_v1.2.pdf

Example of school individual consent form

This example from Southmoor Multi Academy Trust in Sunderland shows how schools have used the DfE guidance to structure a consent form:

Southmoor Multi Academy Trust Consent Form

Destinations data: Tracking Consent Form

In order to check how you are getting on, we need your **agreement to share information** that identifies you and what you have gone on to do. We already do this as a requirement of the Education and Skills Act 2008, until you are aged 16. We need to check you are happy for us to continue.

You may also be contacted if we are unsure how you are doing in your education or employment. Each contact will take no more than 5 minutes.

Data collected by the school and the local authority will be stored by your school so that they can evaluate the careers support they provide.

The data we collect will be:

- course/job title;
- institution/employer name;
- level of study;
- start date;
- duration of course/apprenticeship/placement.

Your data will be kept in strictest confidence. It will only be published in an anonymised format so your personal details will remain private.

Source: Southmoor Multi Academy Trust

DfE Guidance on designing a consent form

Annex C – Example of a data consent form

In order to check how you are getting on, we need your **agreement to share information** that identifies you and what you have gone on to do. We already do this as a requirement of the Education and Skills Act 2008, until you are aged 16. We need to check you are happy for us to continue.

You may also be contacted if we are unsure how you are doing in your education or employment. Each contact will take no more than 5 minutes.

Data collected by your school/college and the local authority will be stored by your school so that they can evaluate the careers support they provide. [include link to school's privacy notice]

The data we collect will be: Course/job title; institution/employer name; level of study; start date; duration of course/apprenticeship/placement.

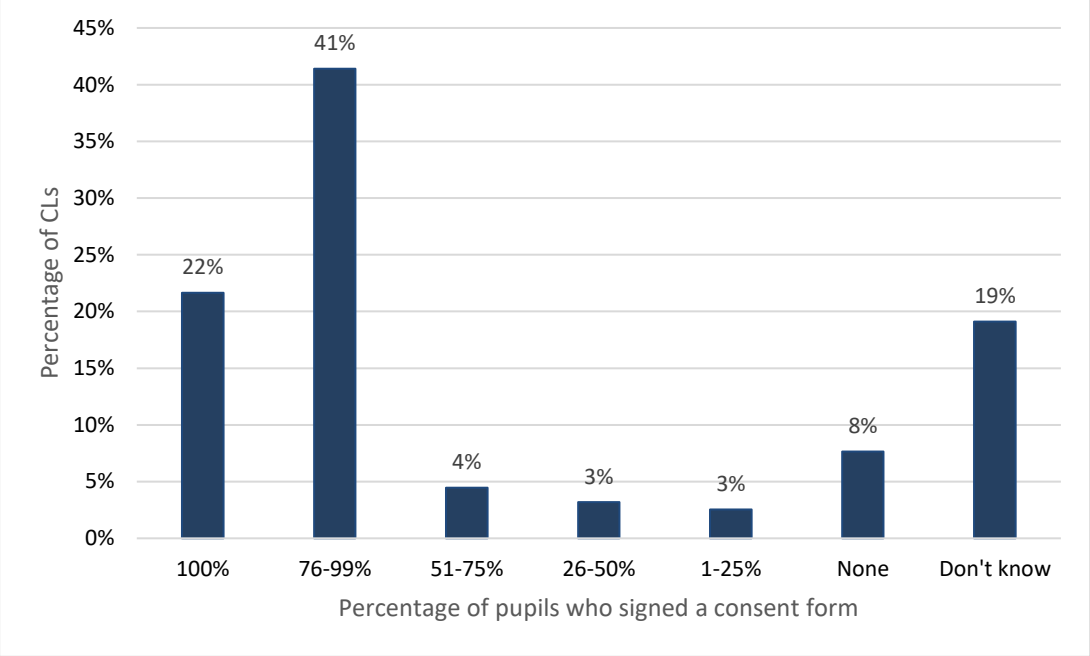
Your data will be kept in strictest confidence. It will only be published in an anonymised format so your personal details will remain private.

Source: 2018, DfE, Destinations data Good practice guide for schools, page 16

4.38 Among the CLs surveyed, just under half (48%) said that they sought pupil consent to enable the LA to share destinations data back to the school. Just under a quarter (24%) said they did not, with just under a fifth (18%) saying they were planning to do this, and 10% saying 'other'.

4.39 Those that did seek consent said they collected data on a number of occasions, including: during tutor groups/lessons; during careers lessons; during careers interviews; on exam results day. This group were also asked what percentage of pupils consented to their data being shared (**Figure 4.4**), with over three-fifths of CLs saying between 76% - 100% of their pupils consented.

Figure 4.4: Percentage of schools describing the percentage of Year 11 pupils who signed a consent form in 2019-20 academic year



Source: YCL CLs Survey, 2020; Base=157 CLs who confirmed that they had consent arrangements in place

4.40 Some CLs indicated that their school receives data from their LA. Some thought that this was because they were a maintained school, or because they had a signed agreement with the LA, so consent was not required.

4.41 The key reasons why schools do not seek consent from their pupils included:

- Lack of resource/time for school to collect consent (22% of 157 schools).
- LA is unable to share data/data not made available by LA (22% of 157 schools).
- Concerns around GDPR/data protection (18% of 157 schools).
- Lack of technical processes/mechanisms in place to collect consent (13% of 157 schools).
- Lack of resource or time for school to use the data (13% of 157schools).
- Absence of data sharing agreement with the LA (13% of 157 schools).
- Lack of staff time to engage with the LA (10% of 157 schools).

4.42 Many CLs cited multiple reasons, and some explained that the COVID-19 interruptions had affected the consent-seeking process. Some said they did not know it was a requirement, and some expressed uncertainty or thought it was not relevant to them:

"Used to when Connexions was around (who did it for the county) but nobody seems to ask for it now."

"As an academy, we do not liaise with the local authority in this context."

4.43 A few respondents were unaware that they could collect consent, or that LAs could potentially provide data back to them. There were also a few cases of CLs who were new in post and wanted to know more about the processes involved.

Pupil consent not required

4.44 A small number of LAs thought that individual consent was not required to enable sharing between the LA and the school. Those in this category felt that the sharing of this data was covered by a combination of the ESA 2008 and their published privacy policy.

4.45 One complication, in considering the need for consent, is being specific about which stage of information sharing or data transfer is being considered. For example, referring back to Figure 2.2, the provision of initial destinations data from schools to the LA, in September, is clearly covered by the ESA 2008. It is generally understood that the dialogue between a LA and a school, to agree the destination, is also covered by the ESA 2008 (this can include both organisations sharing sensitive personal information in both directions). What is most disputed, across the LAs we spoke to, is whether the LA can share a full set of individualised destinations data with a school, after the 'activity survey' is completed? And what, if any, consents or agreements should be required? There is also a question about the need for schools to have consent to hold student data for a third year.

Summary

4.46 There is evidence of confusion about the minimum requirement (in terms of data sharing agreements and individual consents) necessary to enable the flow of information between schools, colleges and LAs. Just under half of the CLs identified data protection issues (46%) as barriers to destinations data gathering. Many varied approaches to agreements and consents exist across the country.

Partnerships, projects and initiatives

4.47 A number of location-specific projects, partnerships and initiatives have been identified through the course of this research which may be useful for other local authorities or schools to find out more about.

4.48 Most relate directly to an aspect of destinations data collection, although some relate more widely to careers support for young people. We describe them below:

- **West Midlands Combined Authority and Careers Intervention Partnership:** The funding has been used to set up the Careers Intervention Partnership, which has been exploring the use of data to improve the tracking of young people. CIP has engaged with many professionals, regionally and nationally to identify areas of good practice and to identify ways to better identify and

engage with young people. Activities have involved exploring alignment of Matrix and Gatsby evidence requirements to align the two processes and lessen the burden on colleges; supporting college partners to develop the process of encounter reporting through improved collaboration; and plan for involvement in the Future Skills Survey. This remains work in progress and there is collaboration work happening between colleges and local authorities to identify and develop suitable interventions to prevent and reduce the number of NEETs.

- **Pan-London IYSS partnership:** The move to a single, aligned system of destinations tracking, referred to earlier, has addressed the systematic differences which caused difficulties when young people took up post-16 provision in a different borough. This process took a long time to achieve but has resulted in efficiency and time-saving benefits.
- **Greater Manchester Combined Authority**: The CA is convening a group, and preparing a position paper, to consider moving towards a common process for destinations data collection.
- **West of England Combined Authority**: Desire for strategic ideas to support improved destinations data collection.
- **Blackpool Opportunity Area (OA)**: NEET prioritisation. One of the aims of the OA partnership is to minimise its NEET figures as a measure of performance – this has triggered a push to ensure the LA and its partners work collaboratively to produce an accurate picture using destinations data and providing sufficient support for those who are NEET or at risk of being NEET.
- **North East Local Enterprise Partnership**: A pilot exercise explored the challenges of developing destinations data systems across the LEP area. Recommendations included developing a whole school data strategy and focusing on data accuracy through better information sharing between key stakeholders including schools, FE providers and local authorities.
- **Derby Opportunity Area:** Derby City Council Education and Skills team in partnership with Derby Opportunity Area developed a KS4 to KS5 transitions portal in response to COVID-19. The transition portal was a new mechanism put in place for schools to input key details of each student that would support their transition into their Post-16 destination. This included GCSE grades, awarding bodies for English & maths, attendance data, safe-guarding flags and other indicators. As a result of the lockdown situation the tracking of destination data was pivotal in identifying those students who needed additional support. Negotiations took place with Derby College and Post-16 schools to seek their agreement to inform the local authority about offers that had been made. Ordinarily they would provide this information once a student had registered in September. This allowed the local authority to cross reference intended destinations against offers made and in May 2020 Derby LA was able to identify those with no offer and those looking at the apprenticeship pathway which at that time was very uncertain due to the impact of COVID-19 on local employers. Schools were informed of this and were able to target those students for

additional support. This support included the statutory duty of the LA Connexions teams being fast tracked to May 2020; ordinarily the statutory duty would not have started until the students had left school. Schools could refer students to Connexions Personal Adviser, and these tended to be the harder to reach students as the PAs could make contact at varying times of the day. A dedicated Connexions helpline was setup and manned between 9am and 4.30pm and received calls from students and parents. Funding was received from the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Collaborative Outreach Programme (DANCOP) to provide additional support through 1:1 guidance sessions to be accessed remotely through another local guidance provider, Luminate Careers; with an on-line booking in system for schools to use and guidance took place remotely by phone and email follow up.

- **West Midlands Combined Authority:** Has supported an application, across the region's colleges, for funding to reduce the number of young people who are NEET through the DfE Collaboration Fund. This has supported a number of initiatives to track young people's progression, especially between the ages of 16 and 18. One college has employed a Student Project Officer who follows up young people who do not turn up at college, to reduce the likelihood of them becoming NEET.

Summary

4.49 These examples of partnerships and initiatives serve to highlight the range of ways that some groupings of partners within and across LAs are looking to make processes more consistent and more efficient.

5 (C) DATA COLLECTION

5.1 This theme covers the data collection phase with specific reference to school collection of intended destinations, sharing of data by schools and colleges with LAs, support for vulnerable groups and the challenge of tracking young people to age 18 to help schools meet Gatsby Benchmark 3.

Early information and preparation phase

5.2 In areas where data collection appears to be working more successfully, evidence suggests that this is partly due to ongoing engagement and communication between the various stakeholders involved. Part of this process includes proactive preparation for data collection, early information gathering - both within schools and between schools and LAs.

5.3 Several areas reported that early contact - or regular steering group meetings between the LA (and/or subcontractor) with senior stakeholders and contacts responsible for data collection in schools - were valuable. Such contact was considered helpful in order to remind parties of roles and responsibilities, and discuss timelines for data collection over the coming year. In some areas, this resulted in the production of a formalised project plan or timeline that outlined key milestones over the year (see inset below). There were also examples of LA staff visiting careers practitioners to explain the purpose and value of destinations data and required processes in schools that had taken on new staff to ensure they understand its importance, both at a statutory level and how it can be beneficial to the school.

Example: Salford data destination timetable

Term	From	To	Focus	Data	Completion Deadline
Summer Term 1	20/4/20	22/5/20	• Final Cohort Confirmation and September Guarantee	• Career Connect will also send a supporting reminder for Intended Destination data to be returned from all schools • Salford City Council return previous cohort check to school and request a final 'sign off' of the cohort by each school. Schools to confirm September Guarantee (update RON & Cohort Check spreadsheet) **Please highlight the young person's name in colour where changes have been made since previous data was sent.**	5/6/20
Summer Term 2	1/6/20	17/7/20	• Transition Meetings for Y11 RON students. (Medium-Very High) • Cohort Check and Characteristics to be completed (Y10)	• Salford City Council to share RONI with Salford City College, for current Y11 students • Transition meetings to take place for all students with appropriate providers. SENCO & Providers to have specific Transition meetings for SEND students • Salford City Council to send RON & cohort check (Y10) to school, for completion of student characteristic information to generate the initial Risk of NEET Indicator (Schools will also complete their own Risk of NEET prediction) • School to complete registration status of each student, including details of any students no longer on roll and where they have moved onto (new school, out of area into another LA)	10/7/20
Autumn Term T1	1/9/20	23/10/20	• Cohort Check RON & Characteristics (Y11)	• School to update registration status of each student, including details of any students no longer on roll and where they have moved onto (new school, out of area into another LA). • School to update all characteristics and risk of NEET information	16/10/20

				where there has been changes. **Please highlight the young person's name in colour where there are updates**	
Autumn Term T2	2/11/20	18/12/20		• Salford City Council to send previous RON & cohort check (Y11) to school that are not using TEAMS.	
Spring Term 1	4/1/21	12/2/21	• Cohort Check and Characteristics to be updated (Y11)	• School re-confirm cohort and registration status of each student, including details of any students no longer on roll and where they have moved onto (new school, out of area into another LA). • School to update any characteristics and risk of NEET information where there have been changes. **Please highlight in colour where there are changes to the data.**	29/1/21

5.4 A number of LAs mentioned the importance of extracting early data from the school census during this preparation phase, to agree the cohort in a given school, as the foundation on which to build their tracking data. However, to reduce inaccuracies, duplication of data and identify gaps, this data needs reviewing and monitoring regularly against school data to account for changes (for example, pupils moving schools and pupils moving out of the area). This task is considered fairly resource intensive, but is valuable to ensure that the LA baseline data is robust and as "live" as possible. This maximises the chances of identifying destinations for all relevant young people. However, in some cases, this liaison may only occur if the school has bought into the LA service.

5.5 Two key parts of the early information phase are:

- Intended destinations.
- Risk of NEET data.

Intended destinations

5.6 From the survey data, follow-up interviews and case studies, it is evident that the collection and sharing of intended destinations data between schools and LAs is still occurring despite it not being a statutory requirement. When asked which methods are used by LAs to collect intended destinations data from schools, just under a quarter (24%) of LAs stated that none were used as this is no longer a requirement by DfE for CCIS.

5.7 Responses to the Careers Leader survey show that most schools (70%) collect all the options young people are considering - as shown in **table 5.1** -with around a third focusing only on their first one or two choices.

Table 5.1: Intended destinations data options collected

Types of intended destinations data collected for Year 11 students (Single code)		
	Number	**%**
All the options they are considering	130	40%
All the options they are considering, in priority order	98	30%
Their preferred first and second options	57	17%
Their preferred first option only	35	11%
Other	7	2%
Base (All CLs)	**327**	**100%**

Source: YCL Survey with Career Leaders, 2020

5.8 The qualitative interviews revealed a difference in opinion with regard to the accuracy and value of intended destinations. Some LAs, schools and colleges had concerns that the collection and monitoring of intended destinations can confuse the picture in some ways, and questioned whether this data was always being used appropriately or was even necessary. Some believed that already stretched resources would be better concentrated on the tracking of actual destinations and its associated challenges.

5.9 Further, some believed intended destinations introduced a degree of predeterminism, resulting in the IAG, support or choices a young person is presented with becoming limited or skewed. This may be particularly problematic when selections may not be based on anything fundamentally concrete: if, for example, the young person is still undecided or feels pressured to select certain options because that is what is expected of them. The concern is that this can result in young people being guided down unsuitable pathways that they will potentially drop out of, at a later stage.

5.10 Nevertheless, the collection of intended destinations is generally viewed as a useful functional process; it can be used to provide levers that aid subsequent data collection (such as obtaining consent) as well as being a useful indicator of those at risk of becoming NEET. Intended destinations are also considered the first data point in a young person's post-16 journey, and the foundation on which to build further data and a rounded picture of a young person's career pathways which can be useful later. Intended destinations data give school CLs and the LA an indication of the pathways young people are potentially interested in. They are also seen as important for LAs to fulfil the 'September Guarantee', determining how intended destinations transpire and identifying any work that needs to be undertaken to meet this assurance:

> *"Intended destinations data informs the September Guarantee, to make sure everyone has got everything in place. So, if Joe has applied for L2 brickwork, under his September Guarantee he'll be tracked to see if that has transitioned into an actual destination. It must create extra work for the local authority, as they have to check what*

happens to students and ensure they have a place, but helps support the young person." (Careers Adviser)

5.11 When intended destinations data is shared and widely available, it can be valuable for schools, LAs and post-16 providers when identifying and supporting those at risk of dropping out of provision and informing the type of guidance required. If, for example, a student was thinking of leaving a course, post-16 providers can refer back to their original choices and determine whether they have any alternative options available to them to prevent them from dropping out entirely:

"Intended destinations data are more useful for our internal mechanisms. We will use it, for example, if someone has indicated they are looking for an apprenticeship, to group all of those people together and ensure they get the right kind of the support they need for that. This year, under lockdown, it triggered a letter home to say, 'your child has indicated they are interested in this and so these are the options they might wish to consider." (Careers Adviser)

5.12 Table 5.2 outlines the methods used to collect intended destinations from Year 11 students. By far the most popular method is during 1-to-1 careers guidance interviews (82%).

Table 5.2: Methods used to collect intended destinations data for Year 11 students

	Number	%
During 1-to-1 careers guidance interviews	269	82%
During tutor group meetings	138	42%
Online form or questionnaire	132	40%
During careers education lessons	78	24%
Via a careers software tool that students log into	53	16%
Via Compass+	25	8%
Other	69	21%
Number of data collection methods used		
1	90	28%
2	97	30%
3	92	28%
4 or more	48	14%

Source: YCL Career Leaders Survey, 2020; Base=327 CLs; Multi-response so total adds up to more than base

5.13 In most cases (72%), schools use more than one method to collect intended destinations data. Our qualitative interviews indicate that this is driven by the dual need for schools to collect data in an efficient, usable way - prescribed by their LA - whilst also collecting sufficiently detailed internal information which helps inform

careers support for individuals and, in many cases, future careers strategies and discussions around the curriculum offer.

5.14 Whilst the findings suggest that there is an increasing use of online surveys and/or software packages to collect intended destinations data, this is designed to streamline data collection and transfer processes and compliment, rather than replace, face-to-face interaction. Many schools and LAs stressed the importance of 1-to-1 career guidance to secure engagement, build relationships with individuals, and impartially discuss various options.

'Risk of NEET' data

5.15 Many schools and LAs operate 'risk of NEET indicators' (RONI) and similar systems. If used, the LA designs its own RONI using its own basket of measures. Some schools use the same approach as the LA whereas in others it can vary.

5.16 In some cases, this is undertaken by using a range of data to develop a compound indicator that can help identify those who may require additional support. In other cases, it is a RAG rating[21] (red/ amber/ green) based on a school-based Careers Adviser's assessment. Some CLs thought that a RONI was useful in Year 11 to help prioritise students for earlier or additional support to make their careers choices.

5.17 These data can help the school and/or LA to prioritise individual young people for earlier, or more intensive, support.

Summary

5.18 In areas where data collection appears to be working more successfully, evidence suggests that this is partly due to ongoing engagement and communication between the various stakeholders involved. Key elements included: early transfer of school census information; collection of intended destinations data; and risk of NEET data.

Initial destinations data transfer from school to LA

5.19 During our qualitative interviews, several LAs and schools discussed the work being undertaken to streamline initial data transfer from schools to LAs - in many cases, their general feedback was that aspects were gradually improving but not quite at the standard they would like them to be.

5.20 The efficiency and effectiveness of these approaches appear to be mixed, and there is a variance in terms of how 'live' this data stays (for example, the extent to which it is updated when young people's circumstances change).

5.21 Typically, intended destinations data is provided via the same means as the initial destinations data. The main method, used by more than half of the LAs (Table 3.4), was that the "schools complete a spreadsheet" (55%) to transfer intended destinations to the LA. Our qualitative interviews and case studies indicate that the efficiency and consistency of this process is varied. At one end of the spectrum, some LAs have rigid protocols and/or use templates with specifically defined fields or

[21] Red, amber, green assessment with red being high risk and green being low risk

software that directly communicates with a school's management systems (such as SIMS). At the other end, some LAs accept *"the information any way it is sent. We're just happy to get it" (LA)* and undertake a lot of data entry at their end. The latter is manageable in smaller areas with fewer schools, and/or where LAs have team members with designated data management roles.

Table 5.3: Methods used to collect intended destinations from schools

Types of methods used	Number	Percentage of all LAs (multi-response) [1]
Schools complete a spreadsheet	34	55%
Data is transferred electronically from school MIS systems	6	10%
Schools update a database	2	3%
None of these (as no longer required by DfE for CCIS)	15	24%
Other	14	23%

Source: YCL LA Survey, 2020; Base=62 LAs; Note [1]: multi-response question

5.22 Survey tools and software packages were thought to help streamline the data transfer process to LAs for both intended destinations and actual destinations, provided in September each year. Securing buy-in within and across schools was essential when initiating these processes. One LA felt that the successful roll-out of an online survey approach was partly due to them undertaking a pilot with a selection of schools the year prior to full launch. The schools involved were encouraged by the approach, and instrumental in onboarding other schools in the area, who were also persuaded by real-life examples of the data they would receive (see examples from Worcestershire and Norfolk).

Example: Worcestershire

The LA asks schools to complete a 'Learning Journey' Excel template for each student. In the case of Year 11 students this includes: intended destination; offer; actual destination. This is completed as careers interviews take place. Schools then submit the template via a secure transfer portal or through a secure email link. The Excel template is then imported into the LA's IYSS database which is CCIS compliant. Sometimes schools send hard copies or PDFs (which need re-entering), but usually they are .xlsx or .csv files (which are easy to import).

Example: Norfolk

The Help You Choose is Norfolk's careers information and post-16 opportunities website and online applications system for young people. Working through the schools, historically the database has captured between 50-70% of pupils' intended destinations through their post-16 applications. The gaps are filled via pre-populated spreadsheets sent to schools to populate with intended and actual destinations data.

5.23 Testing, and ensuring compatibility across systems, need to be considered, particularly in the case of Multi-Academy Trusts where all schools in the group are likely to be using the same MIS. There were several examples of LAs working towards automating the collection of destinations data (through same or compatible systems that can communicate with each other) and looking at ways to introduce shared systems, databases and common application portals as part of a wider aim to streamline data collection and tracking processes.

5.24 The intended destinations data, gathered by different areas, is mixed. Whilst an LA might encourage schools to record all options a young person is considering, they often only capture and record the first choices. The level of detail captured also varies, with some LAs only collecting the young person's route (e.g. Sixth Form, FE College, Training Provider, Apprenticeship), whilst others capture specific provider names and others go into more detail still about the subject area or course level.

5.25 A number of LAs believe that there is a lack of understanding amongst many schools about the value of the data, the importance of capturing details of the various categories, and the overall level of detail required. School buy-in, and efforts made by the schools, are felt to be partly driven by their understanding of the wider picture and of the importance of gathering indicators to both inform their own strategies, those of the LA, and to identify at-risk individuals. Contacts in schools that have a strong career-focused background (such as Connexions or ex-Connexions staff) tended to understand the requirements and purpose of the data to a greater extent:

> *"Completion of the template is variable and we have no control over how schools are doing it. Where there is an ex-Connexions Careers Advisor, they know what is being sought and they will populate the template in detail." (LA)*

5.26 Some LAs commented that a commentary accompanying data on individual choices is helpful, as they act as case notes and can be referred to if a young person becomes difficult to locate after Year 11. One LA stated, in the case of Not Knowns, that teams check back through the notes for clues on a young person's whereabouts e.g. if they have a specialist career interest that may indicate which college they may have gone to.

5.27 Data required from schools, by the LA, on initial destinations of young people was split evenly across all LAs, and was between those that required:

- the CCIS minimum data [general destination category such as employment, further study, apprenticeship], or
- more comprehensive detail [for example, course name, provider name, course level, course length, employer name].

5.28 This additional information was considered, by those that collected it, to be important in helping with continued destination monitoring.

Summary

5.29 Some good examples of practice exist which should be shared more widely. There are clear inefficiencies in the systems being operated by some schools and LAs to share data. In particular, risks of human errors in updating spreadsheets and data entry errors from re-entering data from different formats.

Initial destinations data transfer from college to LA

5.30 Schools often feel frustrated that they do not receive information from colleges when the schools' young people have enrolled and started a course. This situation is linked to data sharing limitations and that the main duty on colleges is to share the information with the LA.

5.31 Our LA survey data and qualitative interviews suggest that the majority of colleges provide their LA with enrolment data by the end of September (77%) and leavers' data by the end of December (69%). Qualitative findings suggest there are some problems gaining data from colleges outside of an LA area, especially those with very small numbers of students.

5.32 Although there is a substantial proportion of LAs noting that colleges do not provide enrolment data by the end of September (23%), our qualitative data provides some explanation of why this is the case. In addition to chasing some colleges for their data, some LAs explain that this is because data transfer is an iterative process. Initial data are sent in September with further updates provided throughout the autumn term to account for late enrolments. In addition, as a result of COVID-19 in 2020 - although not universally the case - there have been delays in transition processes and in the provision of accurate, finalised enrolment data. This is due to a multitude of factors, including an increase in late applications and last-minute changes.

5.33 Findings suggest that, overall, colleges are engaging with the process, although there is recognition that, in a minority of cases, a certain amount of chasing by LAs is required to maximise the provision of accurate data. More often than not, good relationships exist between colleges and LAs, built on mutual support and understanding of the requirements – there were several examples of LAs and colleges stating that the process works well on account of long-standing partnerships, regular engagement between stakeholders, timely communication, and shared objectives:

> *"The majority of it is built on a good relationship." (LA)*
>
> *"We have a positive relationship with the LA." (College)*
>
> *"Long-lasting understanding between LA and college of 'This is what [the LA] needs.'" (LA)*

5.34 Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that difficulties are experienced in the data transfer processes in some areas, or under certain circumstances. LAs reported that they face challenges in updating and maintaining data from smaller training providers where young people's stay is often more transient in comparison to colleges with longer-term courses. Keeping track of these young people can be difficult and

requires frequent monitoring and engagement with providers. A strong relationship with named contacts was again thought to be key to this process, along with encouraging providers to proactively notify LAs when an individual completes or leaves a course. College staff explain that it can be difficult to manage dialogue with many LAs, particularly in urban, metropolitan areas.

5.35 Almost three-fifths (58%) of LAs stated that their colleges sent them leavers data monthly, from September-December; 13% said they received it once per quarter; 10% receive it weekly; and a fifth (20%) said this was variable across different post-16 providers in their area[22]:

> *"The sixth form provides the data monthly. Another of our colleges has a student engagement team that notifies us in real time." (LA)*
>
> *"We ask for leavers data as it occurs and, ideally, monthly. Although the reality doesn't always match the aspiration." (LA)*
>
> *"Colleges are very bad at providing data on those that drop out. For learners that left at the end of the last school year, all colleges will provide a list, though 90% is now known." (LA)*

5.36 There were also incidences of LAs reporting difficulties due to inaccuracies in the enrolment data provided by colleges, and lack of reporting to the LA when a young person has dropped out of a course. This can cause inefficiencies in the tracking process leading both to an unnecessary use of resource and a longer reaction time by the LA or other organisations to initiate interventions to support individuals. If the LA is not informed of those dropping out, this can result in a time lag between individuals leaving their course and the LA being notified, increasing the difficulty of tracking them and providing support and guidance, where needed.

5.37 Colleges explain that there are necessary processes that need to be followed when an individual is identified as 'not attending' and it can take up to four weeks to formally identify that someone has dropped out. During this period, the college's pastoral and careers functions will be attempting to engage with the young person as part of their own commitment to support effective careers decisions.

5.38 In addition to the data sent by post-16 providers, some LAs also mentioned accessing or receiving data from the Individualised Learning Record (ILR) for their residents, confirming learners' enrolment and leaver data with a provider. In particular, it can be helpful to identify individuals going to 'uncommon' colleges where the LA may not have strong partnership links, especially in concentrated urban areas with many colleges. However, ILR use is regarded as problematic for several reasons: largely due to the duplication of data, and sometimes out-of-date data (as highlighted in one case study area).

5.39 Colleges upload ILR data on a monthly basis, but LAs are only granted access twice a year, resulting in the creation of duplicate records based on obsolete data. As such, the LA requests a monthly update from their colleges, which can lead to frustration

[22] Source: YCL LA Survey, 2020. Q16 "How often do colleges in your LA provide leavers data between September and October?"

as colleges feel they are having to provide this data twice. One college's MIS manager questioned the need to provide enrolment and leavers data to their LA (and subcontractor) on a monthly basis as they felt they were already providing it to the ILR *"which the LA can access"*. The LA believes that having more frequent access to the ILR would solve this issue and streamline the process for partners.

Summary

5.40 Schools often feel frustrated that they do not receive information from colleges when the schools' young people have enrolled and started a course. The majority of colleges provide their LA with enrolment data by the end of September and leavers' data by the end of December. Some LAs reported difficulties due to inaccuracies in the enrolment data provided by colleges, and delays in reporting to the LA when a young person has dropped out of a course. This can cause inefficiencies in the tracking process leading both to an unnecessary use of resource and a longer reaction time by the LA or subcontractor to initiate interventions to support individuals. This is important for schools as it affects the quality of data provided back to them from their LA and in turn their ability to meet Gatsby Benchmark 3.

Vulnerable groups

5.41 The main vulnerable groups referenced by survey respondents were as follows (recognising that there are potential overlaps between these groups):

- Young people who are NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET.
- Those categories of young people who are monitored up to the age of 25 (with EHCPs often including LAC and those with SEND).

Young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET

5.42 The general feeling across all CL and LA stakeholders was that systems work effectively to target young people who need additional support to identify career options and aid progression.

5.43 Some respondents highlighted different definitions of RONIs, but the impact of this was more focused on identifying priority young people for additional support than destinations information per se.

Young people who are monitored up to the age of 25

5.44 There was a clear understanding of the needs of these special categories of young people, with clear systems in place to support the delivery of support up to the age of 25.

5.45 Some college respondents raised issues about the currency of EHCPs. They felt that, in some cases, these had not been updated by schools meaning that they were of limited use in terms of providing a guide to supporting young people.

5.46 Similarly, other college respondents raised the importance of early knowledge and identification of additional needs (including additional categories, such as those with poor attendance records, in receipt of pupil premium funding, and free school meals)

as factors that can increase retention and reduce the likelihood of becoming NEET. In some cases, LAs have provided some of this data to colleges when schools have been unable to provide it in a prompt manner.

5.47 In Worcestershire, staff have been seeking information on young people's benefits to help them to provide high-quality advice (minimum age for entitlement to Universal Credit is 18 but this is reduced to 16 to protect more vulnerable people in exceptional circumstances[23]). They have been in dialogue with DfE and DWP to identify a solution.

Example: Worcestershire

In Worcestershire, NEET case workers are informed of a young person's status and are able to offer support when the young person is NEET or in some cases those 'at risk' of NEET. They then work with local SEND and social care teams, and community organisations, to identify and access support.

Example: Wolverhampton PRU

A PRU in Wolverhampton produced a video that was used to promote the support service provided by the Connexions Personal Adviser and Midpoint Mentors to vulnerable young people. They adopted a role of 'transition coaches' to provide additional support to their young people considering their next stages after school and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Link to the YouTube vlog: https://youtu.be/GU2a1yFmINE

Summary

5.48 There are some good examples of careers support for vulnerable groups. Qualitative fieldwork highlighted that there was a good awareness of the additional needs of these groups among CLs and LAs.

[23] Page 10, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561546/Participation-of-young-people-in-education-employment-or-training.pdf

6 (D) DATA MAINTENANCE AND DATA SHARING

6.1 In terms of data sharing, we explore how schools are involved in this process, highlighting some of the resource constraints being faced and the extent to which schools receive data back from LAs.

Data management and updating by schools/LAs/subcontractors

6.2 Ongoing data management and liaison with stakeholders are required throughout the year to identify young people who are NEET, and to capture destinations changes to ensure that the finalised CCIS data is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. This involves schools and LAs working together effectively.

6.3 Young people's circumstances change, and the fluidity of this data requires frequent monitoring and poses a number of challenges. LA capability to capture changes in a timely manner, and respond accordingly, varies from area to area and is dependent on various aspects such as:

- Size of LA area and cohort.
- Level of dedicated resource within the LA for tracking NEETs and Not Knowns.
- Strength of relationship between stakeholders.
- Pro-activeness of communication from post-16 providers and other stakeholders (including other LAs) and their understanding of their responsibilities.
- Software and systems (and the degree to which they are shared across services).

6.4 During the autumn term, and once LAs have received enrolment and destinations data from post-16 providers and have an initial picture of NEETs and Not Knowns in the area, there follows a period of verification involving chasing individuals and providers to "fill in the gaps".

6.5 The general sentiment amongst CLs and LAs is that this a very challenging, resource intensive and time-intensive stage of the process. Many respondents commented that several methods are required to achieve this to any degree of success and accuracy, and it often involves a multi-team approach. Responsibilities vary across different schools and LAs for 16- and 17-year-olds: in some, the LA takes full responsibility for this process; in others, school staff play a significant role or are responsible for the chasing process to identify destinations. For 18-year-olds schools are almost always responsible for tracking their former students.

6.6 A frequently mentioned tracking approach includes phone calls at different hours of the day, emails, contacting parents (where this information is available), followed by door-knocking, although individual circumstances mean there is no 'once size fits all' approach. Several LAs mentioned the importance of strong, working relationships with community groups, youth agencies and tapping into "on the ground" knowledge of local service providers to support this process and locate young people:

"It takes a lot of different methods to track some people down. Phone calls, emails, and a lot of knocking on doors. It can be a complex picture, there can be different agencies involved – it's like a jigsaw so the approach to finding them can be quite fragmented." (LA)

6.7 Certain circumstances made the tracking process more difficult, notably when a young person has either enrolled in provision within a different LA, or is living elsewhere. Information sharing and responsiveness across LAs is inconsistent. When a young person is either educated in the LA but lives outside of it, or vice versa, obtaining destinations data from other LAs can be patchy. Some LAs were said to be co-operative and, in some cases, proactive whilst it can be difficult to get a response from others.

6.8 This challenge was mitigated, in some areas, through building and maintaining close working, 'quid pro quo' relationships with counterparts in neighbouring LAs, and shared processes and systems: for example, between borough and county authorities, or with other boroughs in the area as per the pan-London IYSS system. This cross-communication and sharing of information between LAs is important in maintaining data integrity (assisted by LAs logging into the national CCIS database). For example, if a young person's destination is not known, but they are thought to have left the area, an LA cannot remove the young person from its system until they have an updated residential postcode. Without this information, their old LA has to continue recording them as Not Known.

Example: Ealing

Ealing belongs to the West London Integrated Youth Support System (IYSS). There are five different sub-regional systems operating across London, each using the same Core+ IYSS software and connected via an index system known as LCCIS. LCCIS was developed to support with the difficulties caused by young people moving across to or taking up post-16 provision in different London boroughs. The index system enables the tracking of young people across 32 of the London boroughs by accessing/sharing basic information between systems. Although implementation and the process of aligning codes took a long time to achieve, it has been worthwhile because of its efficiency and time-saving benefits.

6.9 In addition to locating those who are NEET or Not Known at the start of the year, LAs also need to keep track of those who complete courses, change destination pathways, and withdraw from provision. There is therefore a heavy reliance on colleges and other post-16 providers to keep accurate, up-to-date records and either be proactive in reporting changes (ideally) or be responsive to requests for data and updates.

6.10 This delay between a young person leaving a post-16 course and the LA being informed has significant implications for the young person and for the accuracy and robustness of destinations data. A young person could have been NEET for several months before the LA, or other supporting stakeholders, are aware of this and attempt to reach them *"by which point, barriers have developed, and that young*

person can be far harder to engage." (LA). Furthermore, it can lead to outdated, inaccurate information that can potentially conflate the true picture of NEETs and Not Knowns in a given area.

6.11 As part of their contract with the LA one subcontractor, consulted through a case study, collates and shares monthly NEET and EET data with the LA which is then distributed to schools. Currently, individual names are not being shared because consent letters are not in place and they believe this to be a legal requirement. However, they feel that these regular monthly updates are essential in ensuring data is as accurate as possible, to determine the difference between "initial destination" and "sustained destinations" and ultimately establishing true NEET and Not Known figures.

6.12 A major challenge, faced by many stakeholders, is young people's propensity to not engage for a variety of reasons, including: changing phone numbers; not charging phones; not returning phone calls; changing email addresses; and not checking emails. Some solutions have involved:

- Social media: for example, ensuring a connection with a school Facebook page (considered less credible), or LinkedIn group, before leaving school. Some recommend this approach, whilst others say that their school does not promote social media and hence it is not an option. When asked what works well in terms of gathering actual destinations data, only 5% of CLs said they made good use of social media to track leavers. This suggests that social media is underused for tracking purposes.
- One college has been trialling the development of an App that can be used for communication - between college and student - across the college, therefore becoming established as a recognised communication resource by young people. It will be interesting to see how this is used by students after they leave the college.
- Home visits by school staff or LA staff. This is very labour intensive, and therefore expensive, but is regarded as the only way to contact certain young people who won't engage with other communication methods.

Summary

6.13 Ongoing data management and liaison with stakeholders are required throughout the year to identify young people who are NEET, and to capture destinations changes to ensure that the finalised CCIS data is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Some examples of good practice for schools to maintain contact with young people to age 18 include: use of social media; developing digital solutions for communication; and traditional door knocking.

18-year-olds and strategies for three-year tracking

6.14 We explore the approach to tracking 18-year-olds as they are included in the Gatsby Benchmark 3 requirement for three-year tracking expected of schools but not included in the duty for LAs which only covered 16- and 17-year-olds.

6.15 Survey data from CLs indicates that schools are more likely to lead the tracking 18-year-olds than LAs (Table 3.1). In 72 schools (22%), CLs said that neither the school nor the LA tracked 18-year-old activity.

6.16 One example highlights the difficulties facing some schools:

> *"We have just gained the Investor in Careers full award, but we had to fight for it as we can't meet Gatsby Benchmark 3 because of the tracking requirement. I had to put evidence together for the assessor, explaining why we can only track for two years…[the LA] don't track for the third year, and they can only share individual data with us before then if we have the young person's consent…We just don't have the time to track these young people for that third year – two years yes, three years no." (School CL)*

6.17 A range of different approaches were used by schools to maintain contact with 18-year-old young people. None was seen as a perfect solution, but typically they were used in combination. They included: preparatory work to encourage young people to maintain contact; establishing strong partnerships with local colleges to gain insight; use of social media; and use of alumni networks. Some of these were not used due to resource costs (e.g. maintaining alumni networks) and others sometimes due to school policy (e.g. not using social media).

6.18 LAs agreed they were less involved in tracking the activity of 18-year-olds (excluding those with an EHCP). Only one of the 11 case study LAs said they systematically tracked all 18-year-olds.

6.19 Through the LA survey, a few said they collect data where it is provided (for example, through local colleges and UCAS) but do not systematically track these young people. A few said they collect it where the young person is engaged with other LA services. Some LAs monitor sub-groups of 18-year-olds, such as those who have been NEET or who were identified as being at risk of becoming NEET (in addition to those with EHCPs).

6.20 Through interviews and case studies, it was clear that some LAs would like to be in a position to track 18-year-olds but were unable to because of a lack of resources. Tracking 18-year-olds was considered more difficult than 16- and 17-year-olds as young people start to move further afield geographically and into employment. Some LAs endeavour to support their schools with 18-year-old tracking, but do not take the lead on this. A few provide a 'paid for service' to undertake this activity, creating a mixed picture across schools in a given LA.

Summary

6.21 Schools generally bear the responsibility of tracking to age 18. LAs are less involved in tracking the activity of 18-year-olds (as this age-group is not a statutory responsibility). A range of different approaches were used by schools to maintain contact with young people. None was seen as a perfect solution, but typically they were used in combination. They included: preparatory work to encourage young

people to maintain contact; establishing strong partnerships with local colleges to gain insight; use of social media; and use of alumni networks.

6.22 Only one of the 11 case study LAs said they systematically tracked all 18-year-olds. A few LAs said they collect data where it is provided (for example, through local colleges and UCAS) but do not systematically track these young people. Some LAs would like to be in a position to track 18-year-olds but were unable to because of a lack of resources. Tracking 18-year-olds was considered more difficult than 16- and 17-year-olds as young people start to move further afield geographically and into employment. Some LAs endeavour to support their schools with 18-year-old tracking, but do not take the lead on this.

Data sharing by LA to schools

6.23 Findings from the various stages of research suggest that, in most areas, the LA will typically share actual destinations, at an individual level, with schools during the autumn term (although this is often only focused on those thought to be NEET or Not Known). However, there is then a variance as to whether further data are supplied and in what format (combined and anonymised vs. individualised and identifiable).

6.24 Eighty-five per cent of LAs stated that they share CCIS and related data back to schools, where appropriate consents are in place and they consider them necessary. In two-thirds of LAs, data is provided on an anonymous, aggregated basis and comes in the form of Activity Survey reports. LAs produce Activity Survey summary reports for each school, often as a matter of course, with a smaller number of LAs saying this occurs on a request-only basis. However, only 20% of CLs said that their LA or subcontractor provides them with leavers data in a format they find useful. Qualitative interviews indicated that many CLs did not receive the data; so their response to the survey was more about receiving it than the format per se. In some cases, CLs thought it simply was not provided to the school, in others they said it might have been sent to someone else in the school.

6.25 The majority of LAs (58%) share data via secure file transfer **(table 6.1)**. In other cases, LAs share anonymised or individual level data via spreadsheets (depending on their policy on consent, as discussed previously in the Agreements and Consent section), via PDF reports, with around a fifth saying this is accessed by schools through the LA portal or website (19%).

Table 6.1: Format and mechanism of data sharing from LA back to schools

	Number	Percentage
Secure file transfer	36	58%
Email a spreadsheet	22	35%
Email a PDF	16	26%
Schools log into a portal/website	12	19%
Paper copy	0	0%
Transfer to school MIS system	0	0%
Other	2	3%
Number of data collection methods used (n=62)		
0	9	15%
1	23	37%
2	25	40%
3	5	8%

Source: YCL LA Survey, 2020; Base=62 LAs; Note multi-response question; this question referred to any type of data, potentially covering aggregated data and individual data

6.26 Equal numbers of CLs stated their school did receive data (38%), by January, as those that did not (38%); with around a quarter (24%) being unsure. Over half those that are sent additional data (56%) receive it as a list of destinations showing combined and anonymised data per destination type with 44% stating that this comes as individualised destinations data.

6.27 After January, only a small proportion of CLs stated their schools receive any additional destinations data (14%), although a substantial number (25%) were unsure whether this was the case or not. The highest proportion of schools did not receive further data after January (61%).

6.28 These findings suggest that, although the majority of schools are provided with data on their recent Year 11 leavers, they do not necessarily receive, analyse or report on the *sustained* destinations[24] of individual named young people (unless they track them themselves). Several consultees believed that it was important to make this distinction between "destinations" and "sustained destinations" to accurately capture those young people who change pathways, and to ensure schools are aware of those who began post-16 provision but became NEET or Not Known at a later date:

> *"Did we do what we were supposed to? Did we give them all the opportunities and options available and did they end up where they wanted to be? We'll look at the data to identify gaps. We want the data on individual students because it completes their story. If they have fallen through a gap, we want to be able to identify if there is anything more we could have done." (School)*

[24] This reference should not be confused with 'Sustained Destinations' referenced in the DfE Destinations Measures data

6.29 More often than not, this sharing of data is felt to be beneficial to both parties - the reasons are discussed earlier in this report (please see the section entitled 'Use of Destinations').

6.30 There were, nevertheless, some areas where data was not shared by LAs with schools, was not desired by schools, or both. Although the challenge around consent played a part in this, this was not the sole reason. In some areas, the information varied from school to school (e.g. reports with basic percentage breakdowns vs. spreadsheets), sometimes depending on whether the school had bought into the LA services. However, there was evidence that this could also depend on the strength of the existing relationship between the school and LA. In some cases, schools were collecting the data themselves and, in one case study, this was partly due to their belief that the LA data was inaccurate:

> *"We receive a basic Word document, no more than a side or two of A4. It's not meaningful at all and doesn't go anywhere in school. The data also seems inaccurate in any case from what we know anecdotally or through relationships with ex-pupils. For example, the LA data shows lower NEETs and we know this is much higher in reality through our ongoing contact/support." (School).*

6.31 While some data for 16-year-olds is shared with schools, as described above, there was very little evidence of data sharing on 17-year-olds. The LA focus at this point was on young people who were NEET or whose destination was Not Known.

6.32 In a number of cases, LAs felt that data was not requested or needed by schools. Conversely, some CLs were not aware that some LAs were making detailed individualised data available to schools (depending on consents). We do not think the LA staff were being disingenuous, but they simply did not think that schools would use the full set of data. One LA representative said, "schools have never requested it". We think there is simply a lack of awareness which means that data which could be made available is not. In other cases, LAs may not be able to do so because of resource or data sharing constraints.

6.33 LA staff thought that a greater level of support was required in some schools to enhance data skills and influence their understanding of how powerful the data can be if all parties use them effectively and to help inform strategies:

> *"Support from organisations like CEC would be good in influencing schools and helping them understand how to interrogate the data. Where have individuals ended up and does this match with their initial job choices? They need to know how to identify the gaps and deduce what happened. We don't have the capacity as an LA to drill down to individual school level and can only look at the headline percentages." (LA)*

6.34 Where data sharing is working well between LAs and schools, it was felt to be a 'win-win' for both parties. A good working relationship is crucial to support effective data sharing. As well as sharing the destinations data, some LAs meet with local schools to discuss patterns and trends, with an emphasis on reducing the number of NEETs and

how best to support at-risk pupils. The degree to which schools use destinations data relies heavily on the resources available, data skills and their willingness and ability to go beyond the headline data and use it to inform future strategies:

> *"By providing detailed destinations and pathway data, the LA can inform schools of likely outcomes for young people in the area and get the right bums on the right seats." (LA)*

> *"The LA often has a meeting with schools to review their NEET and vulnerable group data. Some schools are highly invested in reducing NEETs and take on the challenges brought forward by the data review. They're keen to work to improve their provision. Other schools care less because the young person has now left and is therefore not their responsibility. This is often due to a lack of resource to follow things up further." (LA)*

Summary

6.35 There is a degree of data sharing taking place although there is evidence of unmet needs from school CLs. It could be useful to communicate to LAs the importance of the benchmarks and schools' interest in tracking destinations to age 18.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 We start by describing the overall operation of the local destinations data system across England. We then explore the challenges and responses to the major issues raised.

Overall operation

7.2 Careers Leaders believe there is value in student-level destinations data, demonstrating that it is worth the sector persisting with a focus on data gathering and making the data available.

7.3 The current system is inefficient and confusing. LAs are largely able to fulfil their duties to the DfE, but the majority of CLs are struggling to resource the task or 'just about coping', showing how the task of tracking destinations data is unlikely to improve without substantial intervention.

7.4 Destinations data for 16- and 17-year-olds is generally working well, although not all schools are gaining access to individualised data for all their young people. Accessing destinations data for 16- and 17-year-olds could potentially be improved by clearer guidance on consent and data sharing, enabling LAs to share individual level with schools to support their achievement of Gatsby Benchmark 3.

7.5 Accessing destinations data for 18-year-olds is harder for schools, since LAs are not required to collect this data. The Gatsby Benchmark 3 requirement was specified at a time when LAs did have responsibility for this age group. Reviewing alternative ways to gather, present and use destinations data for 18-year-olds is needed, including accessing aggregated data from DfE. Currently for large schools without sixth forms, individual tracking of 18-year-olds will rarely be feasible.

7.6 The approach to destinations data collection varies significantly across schools and LAs in England. Key dimensions to the variation include:

- Schools' approach to destinations data collection ranges from focused and well-organised, with an aspiration to achieve 100% tracking, through to those who see it as primarily an LA responsibility. Those in the latter group are all aware of the Gatsby Benchmarks but, for some, it is considered an unachievable target to track for three years to age 18.
- Size of LA (both in terms geography and number of schools). We found no compelling evidence that the system works better or worse in smaller unitary authorities compared with larger county authorities. Examples of effective and less effective practice were identified across different types of LA.
- Experience of school and LA staff members was invaluable and enabled the development of effective relationships between schools and LAs.
- Different database solutions used by LAs more widely (some of which have adapted CCIS modules) has led to a variety of approaches to collecting and holding destinations data.

- Technology-based systems to collect destinations data from young people, or from schools, generally work well but are not well-developed. In a few cases, they approach real-time systems, reducing data duplication, but there remains a high reliance on the emailing of spreadsheets (with the associated risks of data entry errors) and, in some cases, paper-based systems.
- Legacy of Connexions services or similar – where the networks of relationships sustained by long serving careers professionals with schools and colleges is an important factor in effective communication and information exchange. In some cases, these staff have been transferred to subcontractors.
- Subcontracting relationships - some LAs undertake all activity internally, some commission all aspects of careers activity to subcontractors, and others use a mixed approach. This was not generally a factor affecting schools, although it sometimes means they are further removed from the LA.
- Relationships between schools and LAs/subcontractors can vary from strong personalised two-way relationships to almost non-existent, with some school staff unaware of who is responsible for destinations data in the LA. In some cases, schools simply send emails and data to a generic email address.

Challenges

7.7 A number of challenges arising from the findings of this study have been set out to frame future work on improving destinations data collection.

Duties and requirements

7.8 There is evidence of misunderstanding amongst some school CLs about the fact that there is no longer a duty for LAs to collect destinations for 18-year-olds and that schools can request destinations data from LAs (as reported by some LAs). There is a good understanding across LAs about the duties placed on them by the Education and Skills Act.

7.9 There was some evidence of confusion about how long schools need to track young people (three years after Year 11 or three years after Year 13), and how long they [colleges] need to track young people when they leave their provision (as this is not defined).

7.10 While most information has been published in various documents on the DfE website, it could be made more accessible and user friendly. Current information could be placed in one location using a layered approach, enabling those involved in the destinations data collection process to understand everything they need to know at both a high level and in detail. Perhaps a summary flowchart would help give busy CLs a visual outline to refer to. This could refer to actions that a school needs to take and also what an LA needs to do.

Summary of duties and requirements

School year	Destination year	Notes
Year 11 Sep-Aug	Year 0	• **Intended destinations** of **15-year-olds** (typically Dec through to exam results) • Good practice for schools/colleges/WBLPs to collect as part of Gatsby Benchmarks • Not a requirement for LAs to collect for CCIS, although facility exists to hold the information
Year 12 Sep-Aug	Year 1	• **Actual destinations** of **16-year-olds** • Statutory requirement for LAs/schools/colleges/WBLPs • Requirement for schools/colleges/WBLPs to collect as part of Gatsby Benchmarks, linked to Careers Strategy
Year 13 Sep-Aug	Year 2	• **Actual destinations** of **17-year-olds** • Statutory requirement for LAs/schools/colleges/WBLPs • Requirement for schools/colleges/WBLPs to collect as part of Gatsby Benchmarks, linked to Careers Strategy
Year 14 Sep-Aug	Year 3	• **Actual destinations** of **18-year-olds** • Requirement for schools/colleges/WBLPs to collect as part of Gatsby Benchmarks, linked to Careers Strategy • Not a requirement for LAs to collect for CCIS
Year 14+	Year 3+	• **Actual destinations** of all **18-25 year-olds** with statements of SEN and EHCPs. • Statutory requirement for LAs/schools/colleges/WBLPs

Policy alignment

7.11 There is general confusion and bemusement regarding the lack of consistency between the Gatsby Benchmarks (imposing a three-year tracking horizon on schools up to age 18) and DfE CCIS policy (covering 16- and 17-year-olds). This lack of consistency causes specific problems for schools. Schools more dependent on LA destination tracking for 16- and 17-year-olds find the process of taking responsibility for 18-year-olds more difficult (especially schools without a sixth form). Essentially, the system breaks down at age 18 due to the different responsibilities on LAs and schools for tracking.

7.12 To date, no policy progress has been made on this issue. This explains the weaker performance of schools in the tracking of destinations for 18-year-olds linked to Gatsby Benchmark 3. Consideration should be given to whether tracking each individual pupil, up to age 18, is feasible given the LA limit to 16- and 17-year-olds. Alternatively, schools could rely on another source of data (perhaps aggregated) for understanding destinations of their former pupils aged 18 and above.

7.13 A separate consideration here is whether it is possible to improve data sharing directly between schools and colleges (in both directions) to avoid problems of accessing individualised LA data.

Agreements and consent

7.14 There is a range of different interpretations and misunderstandings about the minimum requirement to enable legal sharing of data. There is significant anxiety amongst non-legal experts, especially when differences in legal experts' opinions emerge. The result is that some organisations and individuals are making defensive decisions, which limit the sharing of information, that is, the requirements for LAs to share student level data with schools (and aggregated data) and the requirement for schools to track students to age 18.

7.15 While the DfE guidance documents[25,26,27] about consents and privacy policies were mentioned by, and have been used by, some LAs and schools, large areas of confusion and mixed approaches remain. Further work is required to assess the minimum requirements for different types of information, to develop templates that can be used nationally, and to then communicate them effectively so that they can be used by schools and LAs.

Training for school careers leaders

7.16 Although not a major issue, there were a few examples of new-in-post school CLs, sometimes with limited careers experience, who were trying to learn and understand the systems and processes very quickly.

7.17 This could be resolved with the production of a guide for new CLs, highlighting key current documents and signposting to helpful sources. At a local level, this could also involve an introductory email from the LA indicating points of contact. It would make sense for this to go to all school careers staff, rather than just those newly in post.

Uses of destinations data

7.18 Current uses of destinations data by schools to track young people to age 18 includes sharing data with senior staff, analysing the effectiveness of careers programmes and using it to inform future provision.

7.19 Interviews with individual CLs indicated that a minority were less aware of how they could access the data and potential uses of the data to support improvement. This would range from influencing future Gatsby Benchmark achievement and/or Ofsted gradings. More could be done to develop this awareness across the CL network through training and the provision of supporting resources.

[25] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748165/Destinations_good_practice_guide_for_publishing.pdf
[26] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561546/Participation-of-young-people-in-education-employment-or-training.pdf
[27] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-protection-and-privacy-privacy-notices

Improved IT solutions

7.20 Some attempts to improve the data capture and sharing systems, to get closer to one that is real-time, have been explored. However, there is no national solution to this nor any guidance on developing better systems. An example of good practice is the automation of web-based solutions to collect a young person's explicit consent electronically, as part of the destinations data collection process.

7.21 Specific examples of solutions include the Prospects system for gaining consent and giving schools live access to the CCIS data up to the point that the CCIS is formally submitted. Questions include: why can't this be done more widely across the country? Why can't the process continue after the submission of the CCIS to enable real-time data sharing through future years? In Norfolk, the use of a common application process helps to capture key information in an efficient way. Could this model be developed more widely?