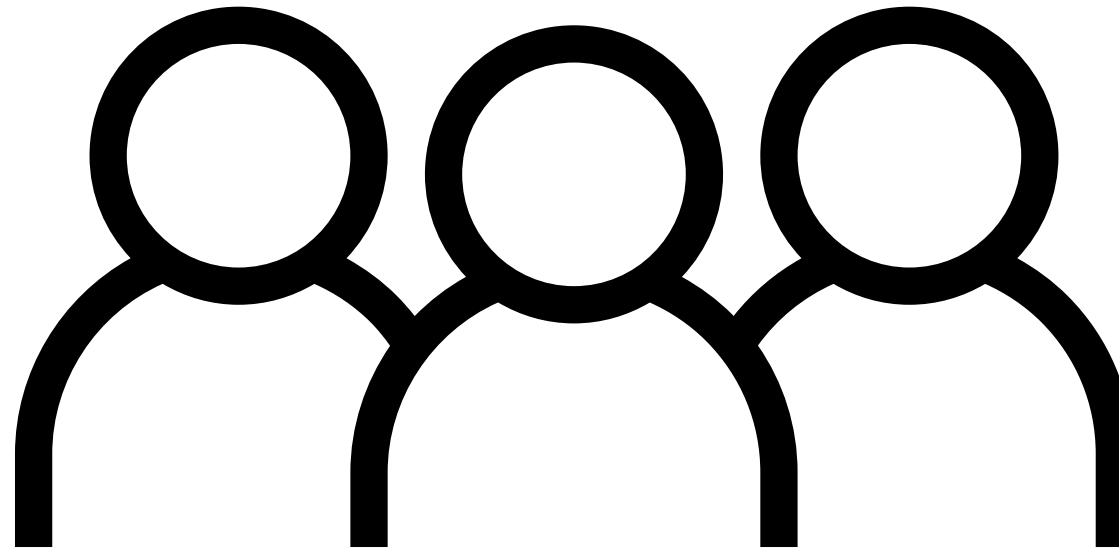
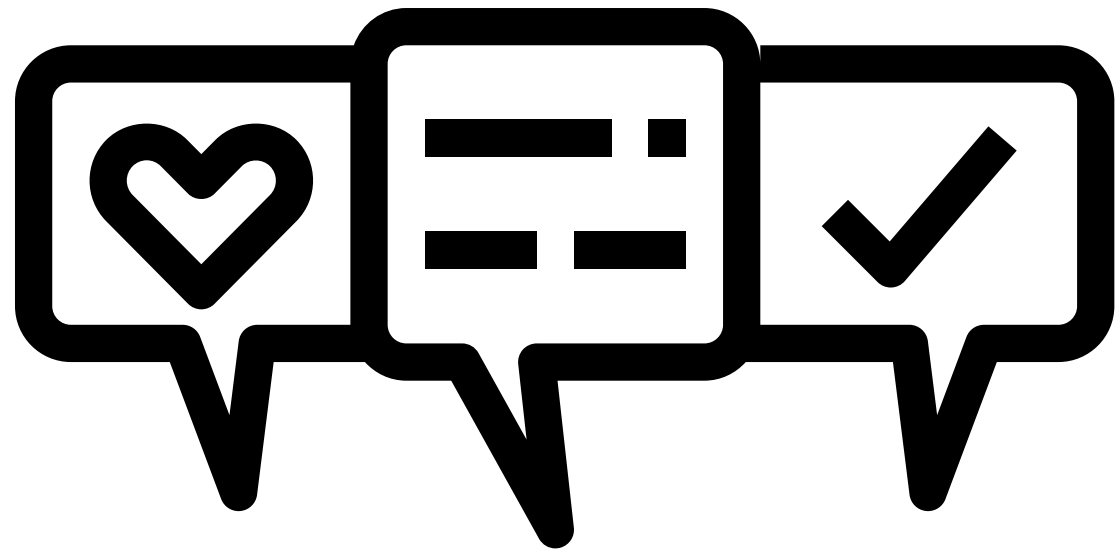


Defining and Measuring 'Meaningful Encounters': Inclusive Employer Engagement for SEND, SEMH and NEET Learners





Poll



<https://www.mentimeter.com/>

Code:

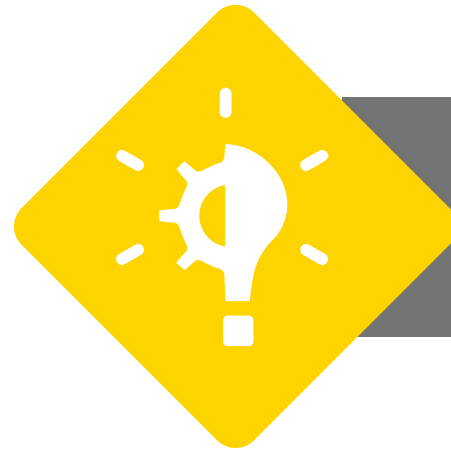
When you hear the phrase
'meaningful encounter', what
comes to mind first?"

Above&Beyond
CAREERS BY HANNAH GILL

Introduction

- Founded Above and Beyond Careers in 2021
- Greater need for SEND, SEMH and NEET guidance
- Over 20 years experience
- Lived experience





What

- Understand the concept and importance of “meaningful encounters.”
- Explore five themes emerging from recent research.
- Apply findings through practical, interactive activities.



Why

- 69% of practitioners reported no specific training to support the delivery of Benchmarks 5 &6
- Delivery is often compliance driven, inconsistent and weak for SEND learners.
- Only 32% of SEND schools fully met all eight benchmarks *

Policy Context



Benchmark 5

“Every year, from the age of 11, pupils should participate in at least one meaningful encounter with an employer”



Benchmark 6

“By the age of 16, every pupil should have had meaningful experiences of workplaces. By the age of 18, every pupil should have had at least one further meaningful experience.”



Policy

Statutory guidance
Careers guidance and
access for education and
training providers
Updated 8 May 2025

The Practice Gap

Policy



- Gatsby Benchmarks
- Provider Access Legislation (PAL)
- Work Experience
- One to one guidance
- Parent and Carer Engagement
- Compass

Practice



- 69% of practitioners - no formal training
- Lack of clarity
- Tokenistic
- Compliance led
- SLT Pressures

Why does it matter?



Internal

“We find them roles within school or with their parents”

‘We keep them safe, but we also keep them small.’



Limited Exposure

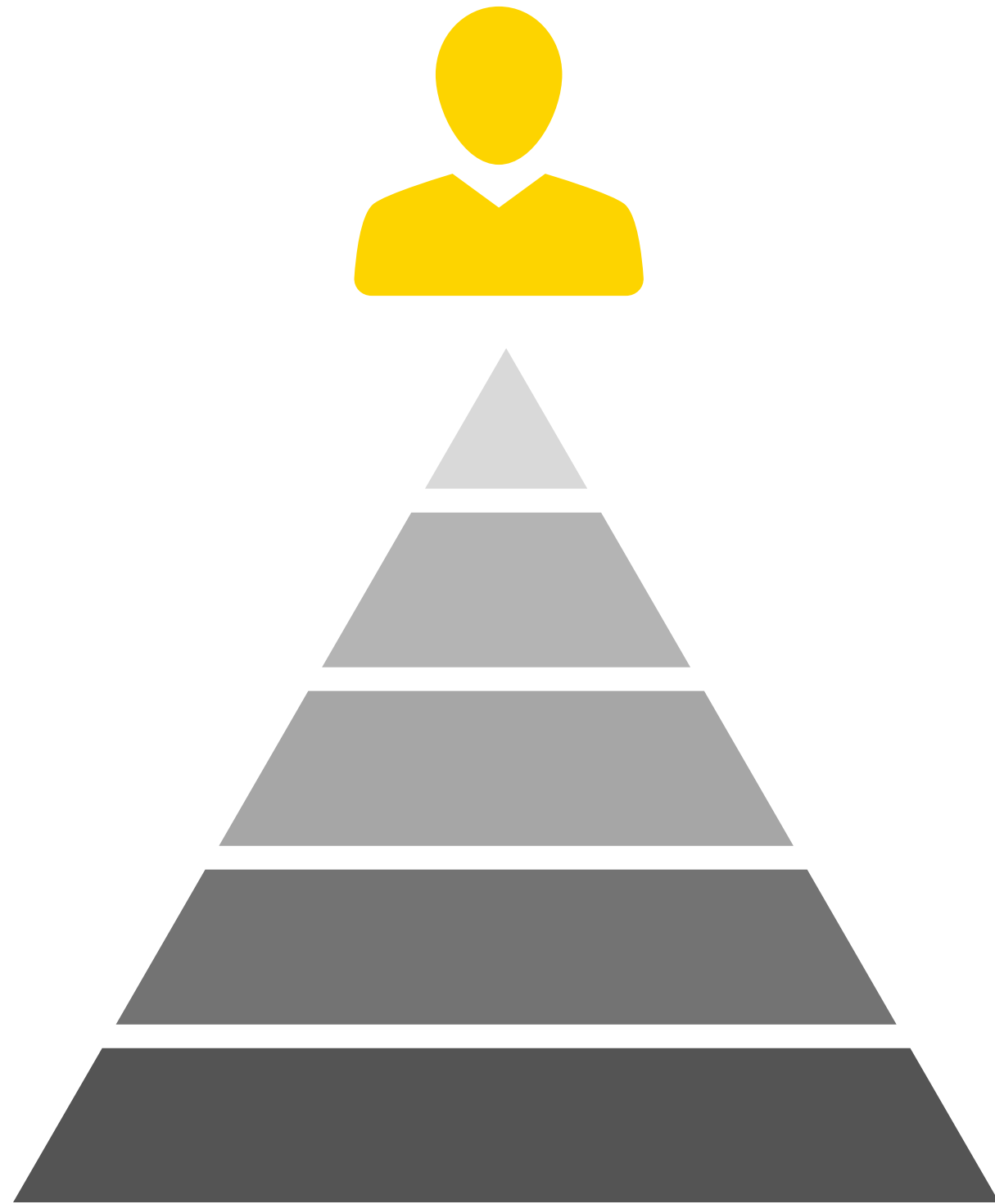
‘Safe’ Internal projects



Scaffolding not Shielding

‘That means structured preparation, clear communication, sensory planning, and trusted adults or job coaches who can bridge the gap between the learner and the employer.’

The Five Themes



1

Definition

How practitioners and learners themselves describe what 'meaningful' really means.

2

Preparation and Scaffolding

How encounters are planned, introduced and reflected upon.

3

Access and Inclusion

The extent to which every learner can participate fully and confidently.

4

Employer Engagement and Representation

How employers are supported to offer authentic, relevant experiences.

5

Evaluation and Evidence of impact

How we measure not just attendance, but learning, confidence, and aspiration.

Defining Meaningful Encounters



Subjective



Contextual



Relational



Environment

Preparation and Scaffolding



Preparation



Support



Reflection

Access and Inclusion



Enabling



Co-designing



Reflected



Relevant

Employer Engagement and Representation



Partnership



Authenticity



Representation

Evaluation and Evidence of Impact



Stories



Reflections



Curiosity

**Asking not just did it happen but what
changed because it did.**

Theoretical Perspectives



Super 1990

Life Span Theory
Self Concept through life roles.



Krumboltz 1979

Theory of Career Decision Making
Learning from exposure and role models.



Neurodiversity Informed approaches.

- Pellicano & den Houting (2022)
- Watson & Woods (2022)
- Milton (2012)
- Cribb, Kenny & Pellicano (2019)
- Florian & Black-Hawkins (2011)
- Florian & Spratt (2013)
- Goodley (2014)

Research to Practice

- How would you scaffold the preparation and reflection?
- What could improve access or inclusion?
- How might you involve employers differently or diversify representation?
- How would you evaluate whether the encounter had impact?

Definition

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Preparation and Scaffolding

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Access and Inclusion

The extent to which every learner can participate fully and confidently.

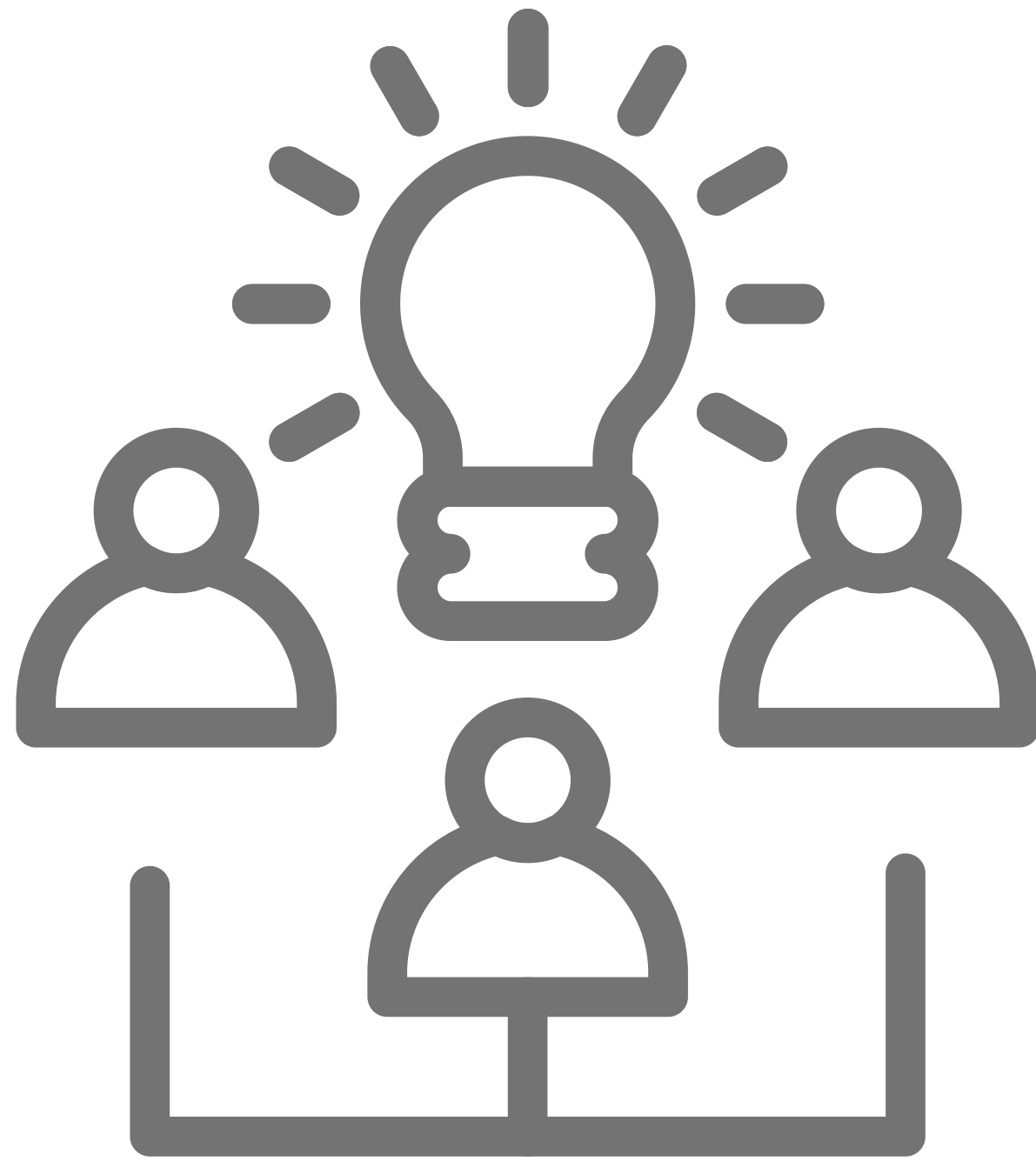
Employer Engagement and Representation

How employers are supported to offer authentic, relevant experiences.

Evaluation and Evidence of impact

How we measure not just attendance, but learning, confidence, and aspiration.

Personal Evaluation



1

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Employer Engagement and Representation

How employers are supported to offer authentic, relevant experiences.

5

Evaluation and Evidence of impact

How we measure not just attendance, but learning, confidence, and aspiration.

Key Points



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Key Points



Learner Led

Meaning cannot be imposed. It is co-created. Allow young people a voice and a choice.



Scaffolded

Preparation and reflection are what transform one off events.



Inclusive

Opportunity without access isn't equity, every learner deserves to see themselves represented and supported.



Reflective

Understanding and growth happen when learners have time and space to make sense of what they have experienced.



Any
Questions?



Above&Beyond
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“Meaning is **created** through
preparation
participation
and **reflection**
not compliance.”



Hannah Gill RCDP



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