

A photograph of a business meeting. Several people in professional attire are gathered around a table. One person is pointing at a tablet computer that displays a document with charts and text. Other people are holding smartphones and coffee cups, engaged in conversation. The scene is brightly lit, likely from a window in the background.

# Building Effective Employer Engagement Partnerships

Tariq Sadiq

National Careers Leaders Conference

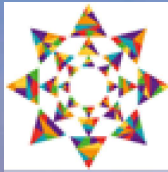
25<sup>th</sup> June 2026

# My role and context

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- Full-time, all year-round Careers, Employability, and Skills Lead at Long Road Sixth Form College in Cambridge since March 2022
- 2,700 students from across the region
- Located next to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus
- Dynamic, fast growing regional economy based on science and technology
- Many tech start-ups as part of the 'Cambridge Phenomenon'
- Most of our students are doing creative subjects
- Extensive programme of employer engagement – over 50 events and activities a year





**LONG ROAD** SIXTH FORM  
COLLEGE  
CAMBRIDGE



# Relevant Gatsby Benchmarks

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking Curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces

*Employer  
engagement helps  
you to meet all  
these benchmarks*

# Capacity Constraints



TIME



MONEY



INFORMATION



SUPPORT

# How can you use your limited resources effectively?



Comprehensive understanding of regional context and local economic geography



Clear understanding of what motivates employers to engage



Robust and resilient strategic plan



Strong, sustainable relationships with local employers



Funded by  
UK Government



Cambridgeshire  
Chambers of  
Commerce



CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH  
COMBINED AUTHORITY

PAUL BRISTOW  
MAYOR OF  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH

## Get Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Growing

A Local Growth Plan with National Reach and Global Impact



**Our Time is Now**

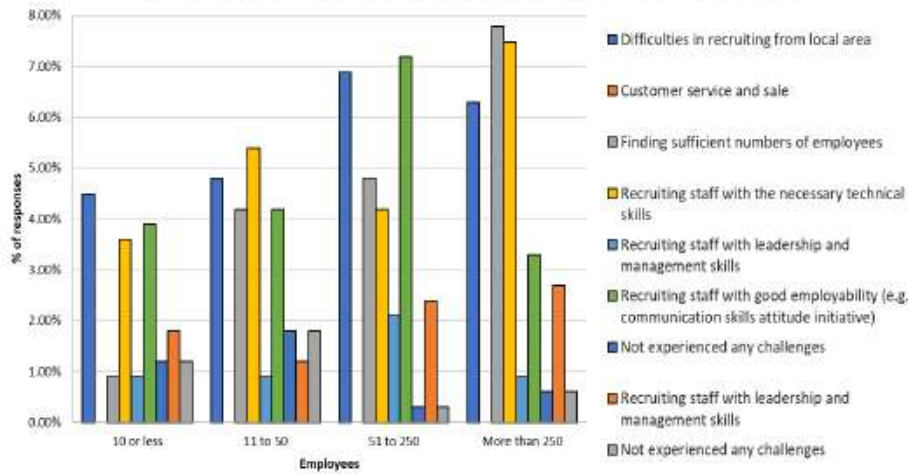
## Get Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Working Plan



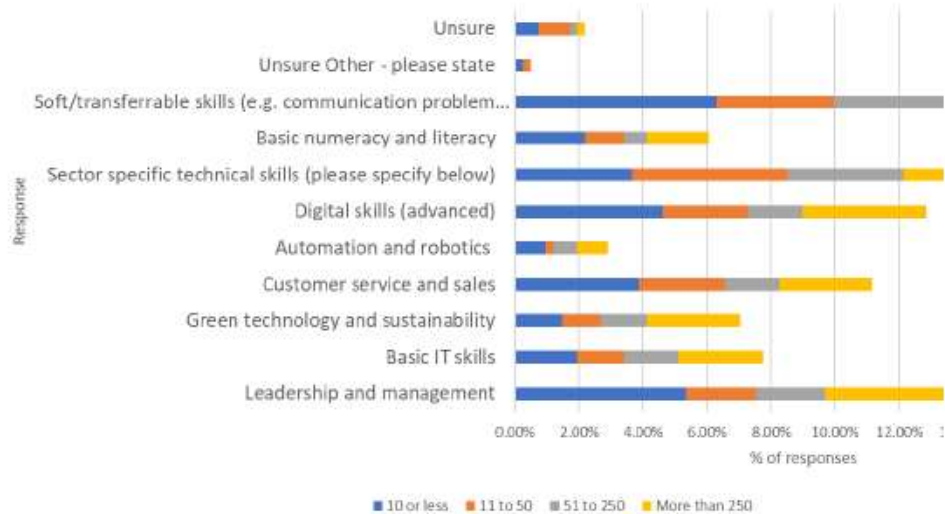
## Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Skills Improvement Plan

10 August 2023

What challenges have you experienced in looking for work most recently?



Skills required by business



Our sectors are large and impactful with space to grow further in the region. They also have key emerging frontier industries embedded within them that drive Growth as they continue to innovate and expand.

### A snapshot of our sectors

Sectors	Turnover	Employment
<b>Life Sciences</b> 	<b>£16.5bn</b>	<b>48,000</b>
<b>Advanced Manufacturing and Materials</b> 	<b>£13.0bn</b>	<b>35,000</b>
<b>Digital Technologies</b> 	<b>£13.0bn</b>	<b>35,000</b>
<b>Defence</b> 	<b>£2.7bn</b>	<b>13,300</b>
<b>Agri-Food &amp; Tech</b> 	<b>£922m</b>	<b>2,500</b>
<b>Energy and Clean-Tech</b> 	<b>£7.0m</b>	<b>2,100</b>

**Work Experience - 360-degree, immersive ...**

by Long Road

Playlist • Public • 10 videos • 296 views

These virtual reality videos were filmed by Long Road Sixth Form College, to give people insight into various ...[more](#)

Play all + Edit Share More

Manual ▾



**Illumina - Bioinformatic Scientist - Illumina**

Long Road • 132 views • 1 year ago



**Illumina Clinical Laboratory Technician - Illumina**

Long Road • 87 views • 1 year ago



**Illumina - Software System Engineer - Illumina**

Long Road • 94 views • 1 year ago



**Biomedical Scientists - Haemostatis Lab**

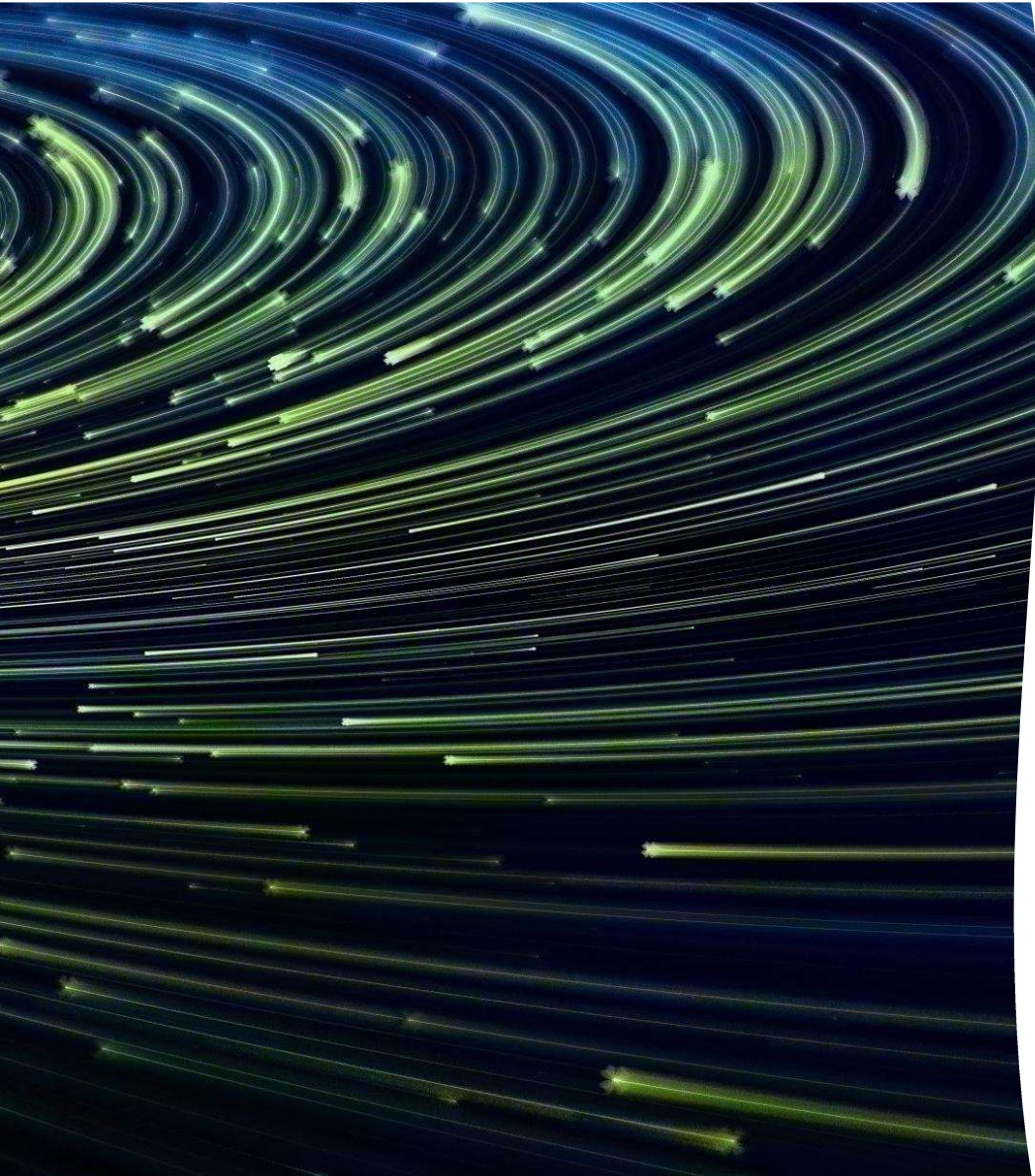
Long Road • 41 views • 1 year ago



**Clinical Vascular Scientists, Addenbrooke**

Long Road • 500 views • 1 year ago





# Employer motivations

Immediate recruitment challenges

Long term recruitment – replacement rate

Skills shortages

Environmental, Social, Governance

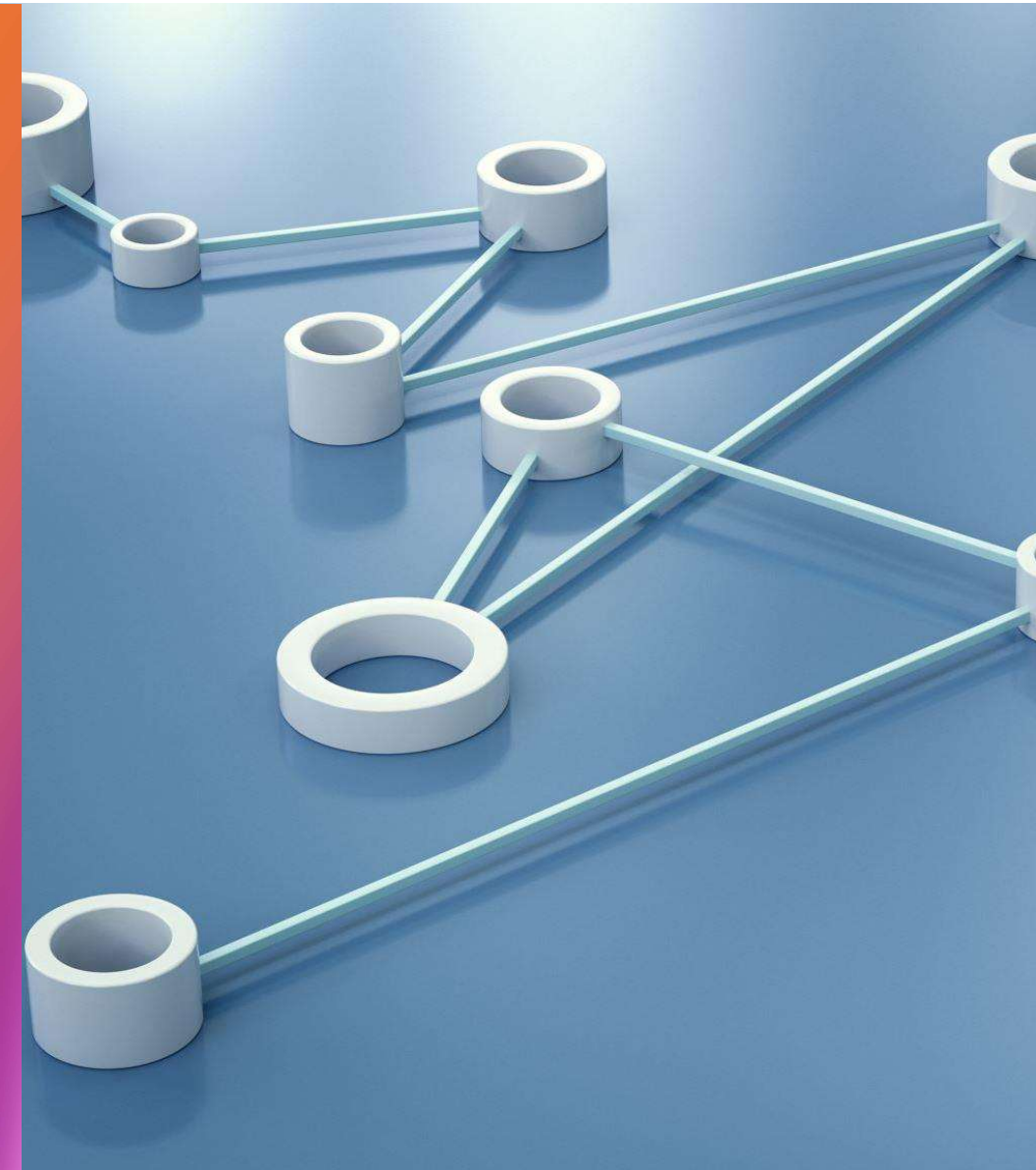
Social Value

Community outreach and engagement



## Develop a Strategic Plan

- Employer Engagement strategy as distinct from an overarching careers strategy
- Undertake SWOT and PESTLE analysis using your regional knowledge
- Go systematically through the process of setting Goals, SMART Objectives, Strategy, and Tactics
- Engage all the stakeholders and get buy-in
- Understanding and articulating strategic objectives will make your pitch more credible with employers



## Nurture Relationships

- Networking is essential
- Make contacts and connections
- Build a database of contacts
- Invest time in building relationships
- Take it step by step and let partnerships grow organically
- Build trust and loyalty
- Bring others in to share the connections

# Build progressively

01

Build connection and trust

- Initial one-to-one meeting at workplace
- Build personal rapport

02

Request low effort engagement first

- Class or assembly talk
- Collect feedback and report on impact
- Build trust and prove value

03

Invite to careers fair or careers carousel

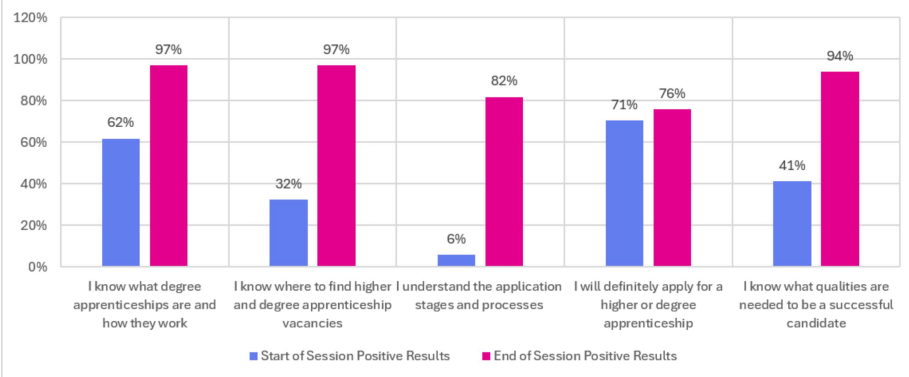
- Interact with other employers
- Learn from peers how they have found engagement useful



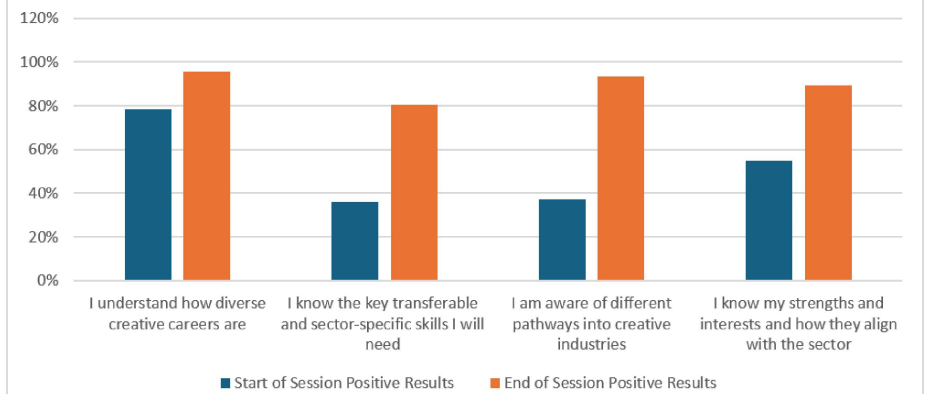
## Targeted, bespoke engagement

- Design a bespoke activity aimed directly at meeting employer needs
- Co-design with employer
- Set clear learning outcomes
- Brief everyone involved
- Collect feedback from all parties
- Engage in reflection with employer
- Adapt, improve and repeat
- Publicise and celebrate successes

Improvement in Apprenticeship Understanding Between Beginning and End of Workshop



Improvement of Understanding of Creative Careers Between the Beginning and End of the Talk



# Employer-led, skills-based challenges

- Sookio Marketing Challenge
- Ramboll Engineering Challenge
- Skanska Regenerating Places Workshop



*Working in teams  
with people you  
don't know to  
analyse and solve  
problems*



# Co-design with employers

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## PEM/FI 'Murder Mystery' Accountancy Challenge

- Designing an activity to dispel myths about accountancy careers
- Targeting a diverse range of sixth forms with different demographics
- Training provider and employer partners
- Aim is to get students to use and develop transferable skills useful in accountancy
- Accountancy apprentices will be infiltrated into the activity
- Will involve visiting several workplaces to collect 'clues'
- Pushing students out of comfort zone e.g., using telephones, talking to strangers



# THE CASE OF THE MISSING MILLIONS

A MURDER. A HIDDEN MOTIVE. A TRAIL OF LIES



## YOUR MISSION

Explore the city to  
discover clues

Talk to suspects and  
follow up leads

Put evidence together

## CAN YOUR TEAM SOLVE THE CASE?

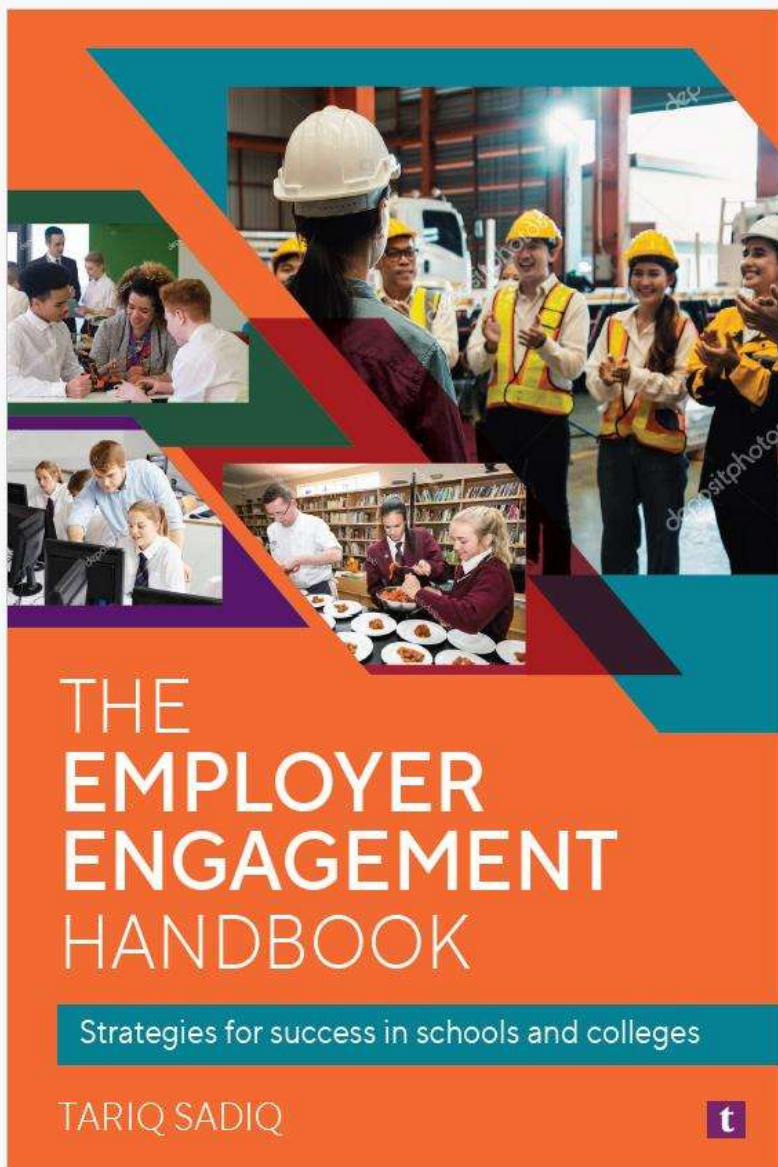
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LOCATION: TBC

# Key takeaways

- It takes time to build effective relationships
- Network in the right places to meet the right people
- Build a database of contacts
- Having a robust strategic plan for engagement will make your pitch to employers more credible
- Place the characteristics and needs of your region at the heart of your strategy
- Find out what motivates employers
- Measure the impact of your activity and report back to employers
- Be creative and imaginative





<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Employer-Engagement-Handbook-Strategies-Colleges/dp/1911759116>

