

TeachFirst

Evaluating the Teach First Careers Leader programme



During 2017/18, an independent research company completed a thorough evaluation of our Careers Leader programme. Arad Research have significant experience evaluating programmes related to education and skills, children and young people, and employment and social inclusion.

We've summarised some of the key findings about the programme delivered over 18 months to 43 schools. Part one refers to the benefits of the programme for schools. Part two, focuses on the advantages of Careers Leader training for personal development and career progression.

PART ONE: BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS

A catalyst for change

Schools reported that the programme has been an important driver of change. Before the programme, some schools reported that they had no careers strategy, no senior leader taking strategic responsibility, little quality provision and little interest among teaching staff.

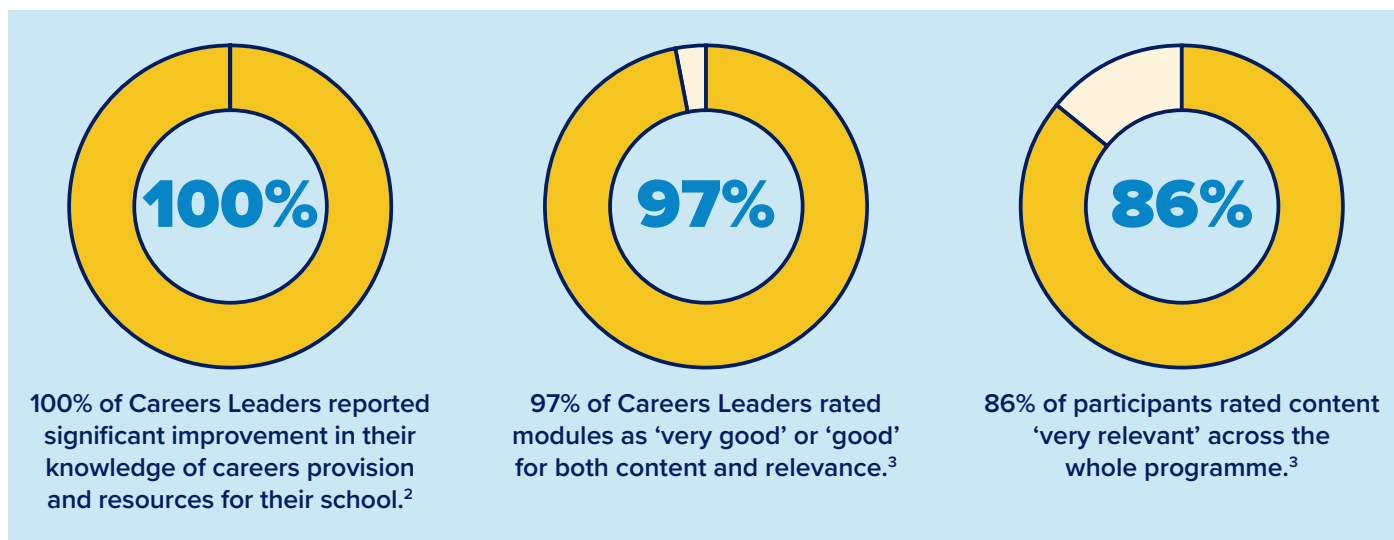
“Everything was pretty rudderless before the programme. We started with nothing and we have reached a point where we have something to build on. There is a vision to build on; we have a strategy, we have something systematic and we are now working with good quality organisations. Overall, it has helped galvanise support in the school and raise the profile of careers and where it fits in the school’s programme of improvement. Changing students’ aspirations and addressing inequality is a key focus – we are looking at the individual profile of students and want to ensure that they all have the same opportunities.”¹



¹ Arad Research (2018) Evaluation of Teach First’s Careers and Employability Initiative 2016-18, Cardiff: Arad Research, 91.
For access to the report, please contact access@teachfirst.org.uk

Knowledge enhancement about careers

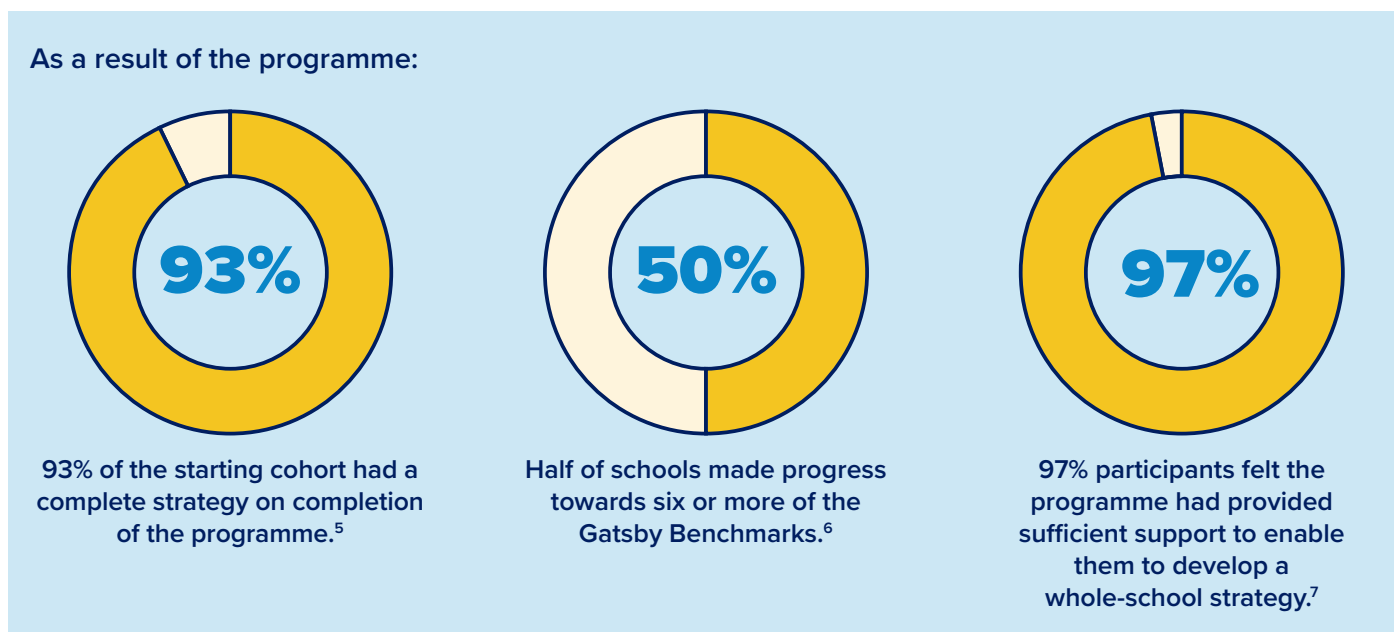
Many schools had limited knowledge of high-quality career guidance before the programme. They found the information provided about the Gatsby Benchmarks, examples of good practice, and practical support to improve careers invaluable.



*"It enabled us to reflect on our strengths, recognise our strengths, and put some actions in place and plan forward from that."*⁴

Developing a structured, whole-school strategy

A key aspect of the programme is developing a careers strategy tailored to the needs of each school. This is grounded in the Gatsby benchmarks to provide a structured whole-school approach, with investment from all staff and pupils.



*"As part of a whole-school approach, we are developing careers champions to support the strategy as a good model needs good structures and people to support it. The programme inspired this approach – it has enabled us to become more formalised, in terms of structures, job descriptions for the careers team, it is becoming fully embedded in school system."*⁸

² ibid. 14, 42.

³ ibid. 31.

⁴ ibid. 83.

⁵ ibid. 9.

⁶ ibid. 12.

⁷ ibid. 34.

⁸ ibid. 93.

“We are now starting to upskill all teachers to make them more aware of their role in supporting school-wide careers. We have recognised that [careers] can’t just sit with one person – we have a careers team, working towards Level 6 certification, and this will enhance its quality, profile and sustainability.”⁹

“If we get to where we hope to be then careers will be talked about as part of all lessons. It will become second nature to students, it will be part of the fabric of the school and the language of learning. This will be a seismic shift, however, and needs investment over the longer term.”¹⁰

Embedding careers support for all pupils

All pupils should have access to an adequate careers provision, regardless of their age or stage of learning. Traditionally, most schools have focused careers support for pupils in Years 11-13. Particularly those higher-ability candidates for higher or further education.

The programme identified ways of embedding a wider range of support for all pupils across the school. Many schools have since expanded their careers programmes to provide support to other age groups beyond Year 11.

“Now there is a more structured programme and we’ve got a more person-centred approach.”¹¹

“The programme highlighted the need to open up more career guidance tailored to the whole school rather than just focus on Years 11-13. We have done a lot more work with lower school, using a careers adviser who is now based in the school.”¹²



“The programme helped us understand our obligation to be impartial and introduce pupils to other options (rather than encouraging them only to stay in 6th form), in order to truly meet their needs.”¹³



PART TWO: ADVANTAGES OF CAREERS LEADER TRAINING

Sharing best practice

Careers Leaders felt that their personal skills had improved as a result of engaging with other members of the programme. Those with less experience of careers provision valued the knowledge and experience shared by those with more experience, including hints about effective delivery methods.

Those with more experience also valued the opportunity to share good practice with their peers and to gather fresh, new insights from those just starting in the field of careers provision.

“It has given me ideas, confidence and expertise. The support from Teach First has been amazing as has the capacity to share ideas and problems with my [programme] colleagues.”¹⁴

Establishing confidence and networking

As a result of the programme, Careers Leaders found it easier to share careers information with colleagues, pupils and parents. Some teachers said that this gave them greater confidence with public speaking when delivering assemblies and presentations about careers. Others noted an increased understanding of employers and how to access their support or services.

⁹ ibid. 93.

¹⁰ ibid. 95.

¹¹ ibid. 80.

¹² ibid. 57.

¹³ ibid. 78.

¹⁴ ibid. 84.



“The [programme] has completely changed my confidence in the last year, it’s gone through the roof.”¹⁵

“I have developed leadership skills, confidence and more faith in myself to deliver change.”¹⁵

“It has allowed me to be a lead in careers, to be good at talking about it. I have presented to my local County Council and 35 schools recently on our progress. It has been great for validation with my peers and allowed me to be proactive in developing partnerships.”¹⁵

“The programme helped me gain an understanding of what’s in it for employers. I always felt I was going to them cap in hand. It gave me confidence to contact employers and ask for their support, as well as attending business breakfasts to encourage their involvement.”¹⁶

Personal progression and leadership

All Careers Leaders reported that participating in the programme has been a good opportunity for career progression. Some valued the experience of strategic and operational planning, a useful transferable experience.

Careers Leaders noted that the programme supported them to be effective in a whole-school careers management position. It also raised their confidence in being able to engage with the senior leadership team, wider teaching staff and external stakeholders. This has helped them raise the profile of careers and lead on developing new provision for their school.

“I have developed greater skills and knowledge and have lots more recognition and increased standing in the school. I have greater empathy with employers’ needs (when engaging with them) and everything is better organised.”¹⁷

OUR COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT

Following this review, we’ve identified that the majority of Careers Leaders struggled to put in place a robust monitoring and evaluation structure. This included suggestions to provide more support with specific tools and examples. As a result of this feedback, we’ve allocated more time to this area for future cohorts of the programme. We would also like to consider how Careers Leaders can be supported with this challenge at a national level.

TO FIND OUT HOW THE TEACH FIRST CAREERS LEADER PROGRAMME CAN SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR SCHOOL, VISIT:

WWW.TEACHFIRST.ORG.UK/CAREERSLEADERS



Thank you to our Principal Partner

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¹⁵ ibid. 93.

¹⁶ ibid. 70.

¹⁷ ibid. 84.