



# The North East Ambition Primary Network

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Supporting schools to deliver careers  
activity in primary settings

## Overview

**In this toolkit, you will find information about The North East Ambition Primary Network to share with your network of primary schools and careers leads.**

### Content includes

- An overview of the Primary Network and why early careers education is important
- Suggested content for your newsletters
- Link to the North East Ambition website
- Links to useful resources



## Why is it important to help primary school children explore the world of work?

- Children have their first career aspirations aged two to four years
- By age five and six, children are beginning to think about what they can and cannot do because of their gender
- Young people make career-limiting decisions by age 10 which they solidify by age 14.

### **The National Careers Strategy recognises the importance of social mobility:**

“Children who meet employers from a young age can find out about a wide range of jobs and understand how the subjects they learn at school connect to their future. This is particularly important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who may lack a diversity of role models with experiences of different jobs and careers. Children (and their parents) may also have fixed views about what kind of jobs might be suitable for them, so it is important to challenge these views before they become entrenched and ambitious, realistic aspirations encouraged instead”.

## What is the North East Combined Authority doing to support primary career-related learning?

North East Ambition, a programme delivered by the North East Combined Authority, is committed to supporting primary schools to raise and broaden aspirations, challenge negative stereotypes, engage parents/carers, and develop meaningful encounters with regional and local employers.

From 2019 to 2021 The North East Ambition Primary Pilot explored how to sow the seeds of ambition from an early age by supporting schools to use an adapted set of the Good Careers Guidance Benchmarks (aligned to those used within secondary schools and further education) as a framework to strategically develop an age-appropriate career and personal development programme. The Primary Pilot aimed to enable the schools to help broaden pupils' horizons, raise their aspirations, and support them to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to be successful in the next stage of their education and beyond, regardless of their starting point.

North East Ambition has also supported primary schools across the region to participate in Start Small; Dream Big, a national Department for Education-funded pilot with the Careers and Enterprise Company, to raise aspirations, challenge stereotypes and help children connect their learning to the world around them.

Through the pilot, schools are supported to access Career Leader training provided by Teach First and to make links with local employers to create opportunities for children to encounter the world of work by the NEA Primary Facilitators. These encounters help children to develop an understanding of the link between what they learn in school and the range of careers available to them – broadening their horizons and helping them to dream big.

The North East Ambition team are building on these pilots to work with all regional primary schools to embed the Primary Benchmarks so that every child can dream big.

A 'Primary Network' has been created to help do this. This Network currently includes around half of the region's primary schools, but the aim is for all North East primary schools to be part of the Network.



## What is the Primary Network and why should a school join?

Careers related learning (CRL) in a primary setting is not about asking a four-year-old to choose a career. It is about exploring how we open up possibilities, broaden horizons and help children and their families see that anything is possible.

It is also about equipping young people with the skills that will help them achieve their ambitions, regardless of their starting points.

The Primary Network brings together school Careers Leaders with the North East Ambition team. It serves as a pivotal platform for schools to develop their strategic approaches to career-related learning.

Through the Primary Network, schools have free access to:

- Facilitator support for each school to develop a careers strategy and annual action plan
- Access to a self-assessment audit tool linked to the Primary Benchmarks
- Regular network meetings (both local and regional) to help develop effective communities of practice
- CPD and training opportunities
- Access to the North East Ambition website with case studies, links to CRL providers and resources (including the new 'Think, Solve, Succeed: Maths and Careers in Action' resources, designed in collaboration with Winning With Numbers, local businesses and primary schools)
- For 25-26, all schools in the North East will have funded access to MyPath. This is a fantastic platform containing hundreds of careers resources, including a huge bank of short videos showcasing a range of jobs and sectors that can be easily embedded into the curriculum.

In addition, to help support a greater number of schools using the Primary Benchmarks as a framework to help deliver high quality CRL, local Careers Champions have been appointed. The role of these experienced Careers Leaders within the network is to host local meetings and to further develop the Hub model through effective, local communities of practice.

## What are the North East Ambition Primary 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
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

\*Please note, each Benchmark is made up of a number of sub-characteristics

## What teachers are saying about careers activity in primary schools:

"My highlight is seeing the impact that has been made. I can see where careers education has worked and now children are starting to challenge gender and class stereotypes in the world of work paving the way for a more accepting and diverse community."

"I am really proud of the extraordinary opportunities our pupils have had this year. From a visit to Northumbria University and NERAP workshops to exploring the world of robotics at Nissan – they have been far ranging. During National Careers Week, our school focused on careers in the creative sector as we wanted our children to understand how creativity (the essential Skills Builder skill) is used across different professions."

"This year, children had an opportunity to meet an actress, a freelance artist, a graphic designer, an architect and explore career opportunities in Ubisoft. Children were inspired by the engaging professionals and the visits. The employee and employer encounters proved impactful as evidenced in the pupil voice and the shift in their aspirations."



## Newsletter or Website Content

You can help us spread the word about the role of careers education in primary settings by sharing details of the Primary Network in your newsletters and on your websites.

Here is some suggested content:

### **Title: Join the Primary Network and embed meaningful careers activity in your school**

Did you know that by the age of five and six, children begin to form career-limiting perceptions based on factors such as their gender and background?

Career-related learning in a primary setting is about exploring how we open up possibilities, broaden horizons and help children and their families see that anything is possible.

Through its Primary Network, the North East Combined Authority is supporting primary schools in our region to create meaningful careers related learning that will raise aspirations, challenge stereotypes and help children connect the classroom to the world around them.

You are invited to join this Primary Network and the offer is entirely free to all schools in the North East. By joining the Network, your school will benefit from one-to-one support to undertake a careers education self-assessment audit and to develop a careers action plan.

In addition to individual support, schools also have access to:

- Regular network meetings (both local and regional) to help develop effective communities of practice
- CPD and training opportunities
- Access to the North East Ambition website, containing resources, case studies and links to careers-related learning providers.

To join the Primary Network, submit an Expression of Interest by completing [this form](#) as soon as possible and a member of the North East Ambition Primary team will get in touch.

## How schools can join the Primary Network:

If a school would like to join North East Ambition's Primary Network ahead of next academic year, they can submit an Expression of Interest by completing [this form](#). A member of the team will then contact the school with further details about the onboarding process, including an invitation to optional online webinars to learn more about the offer.

There are limited spaces available for schools wishing to join the network ahead of next academic year. Early expressions of interest are therefore strongly encouraged.

## Website links and resources

The [North East Ambition website](#) has a wealth of resources to help you embed exciting careers activity in your school. Take a look at what is available.

## Video resource:

Hear from local schools and employers on their experiences of primary careers activity in this [short video](#)

## Contact details

To learn more about North East Ambition and the Primary Network, get in touch:

[goodcareers@northeast-ca.gov.uk](mailto:goodcareers@northeast-ca.gov.uk)