

# The careers leader handbook (3rd Edition)

Book  
Review

10.20856/jnicec.5519

**Authors:** David Andrews and Tristram Hooley

**Publisher:** Trotman

**Publication Year:** 2026

**Number of pages:** 312

**ISBN:** 978 – 1 – 911724 – 55 – 1

**Price:** £36.99, EBook £30.39

**Price:** £19.79

---

Reviewed by **Claire Nix**, NICEC Fellow, UK.

---

David Andrews and Tristram Hooley have both been active over many years in supporting the importance of careers leadership. They bring their considerable experience of the policy and practice of careers work to preparing this third edition of The Careers Leader Handbook. The first edition was published in 2018, and celebrated the struggles, challenges, solutions and inspiration of career leaders working on the frontline. The third edition of this best-selling guide has been updated to take account of the review of the Gatsby Benchmarks in 2024, and to reflect the ongoing need for high quality career leadership to respond to other changes in policy, educational and economic contexts. The third edition continues the focus on international reflections on practice started in the second edition in 2022. Reflecting one of the key themes underpinning the 2024 review of the Benchmarks of inclusion and impact for every young person, this edition incorporates work in both mainstream and SEND settings.

The book lays down a gauntlet for readers: 'Career leaders should step up and be assertive about placing careers at the heart of the school or college's mission.' It is careful to provide both a clear underpinning rationale and evidence based practical approaches to equip new career leaders and more experienced colleagues to meet that challenge.

The book is divided into five clear, well-structured sections and the style is accessible and engaging. The introduction presents the background and underpinning thinking for the career leader role as well as guidance on how to get the most out of the handbook. Section 2 offers clear and practical guidance on each of the eight Gatsby benchmarks, helping readers to see the connections between the benchmarks as part of a career learning programme, rather than just regarding them a list of interventions. There is a strong and helpful focus on learning outcomes, illustrative case studies and links to resources. The career leader role

in leading, managing, coordinating and networking is explored in more detail in Section 3 setting out the breadth of the role – ‘planning, implementing and quality assuring a careers programme, managing the delivery of career guidance, networking with external partners, including employers, coordinating the contributions of teachers, tutors and SENCO.’ In the first edition, Sir John Holman said the Benchmarks are not enough, progress relies on leadership from careers leaders backed by senior leaders and this section explores how to manage upwards, build a team and distributed leadership. It also introduces the issue of Position and Pay and offers an International Reflection from Finland and Canada where the role is respected and pay relatively high. Section 4 addresses continuous improvements including the continuing professional development (CPD) of career leaders and the wider staff. Section 5 revisits the call to arms to value and promote professional career leadership.

The CDI is one of the contractors for the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) Career Leader programme and we actively recommend that learners buy the Careers Leader Handbook as part of their commitment to the course. The tone of the book, as well as its content, encourages the collaboration, commitment and creativity that the role needs. One of the challenges that delivering the course highlights is the churn in career leaders. It is good to see, in Section 4, the strong points about succession planning. It has not been possible for the Handbook to help career leaders to address the systemic barriers they face including the patchy nature of senior leader support and the shortage of careers advisers in the system but it offers a clear-eyed view on national policy and practical steps that can be taken to improve careers provision at a school or college level.

The following comments on the Handbook from recent or current students highlight the practical value placed on the Handbook.

The Careers Leader Handbook provides a decent framework for quality assurance and strategic positioning and codifies what is effective practice in high performing FE settings. The Handbook gives weight to positioning careers as part of central infrastructure rather than bolt-on enrichments and has helped me to challenge senior leadership assumptions more effectively and show how we are core to mission delivery. Some of the stakeholder engagement theory assumes resources that just do not exist. (Ravin Anenden, Oaklands College)

Reading the Careers Leader Handbook has been extremely valuable in supporting my learning on the Level 6 Careers Leader course, strengthening my confidence and strategic approach, and enabling me further to develop high quality careers provision for our students and wider community at Chessbrook. (Georjy Pantelli, Chessbrook)

I referred to the Careers Leader Handbook regularly throughout the Careers Leader course. It was easy to read and understand with a perfect mix of examples of theory and practice, as well as many useful references for further reading and research. (Joanne Rodway, East Sussex College)