



FINAL REPORT

The Big Career Conversation with Young People in England

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Director, DMH Associates, Exeter | October 2021

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Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to Dev Clever PLC for commissioning this research programme. Most importantly, I wish to thank all of the young people, headteachers and employers who helpfully contributed to the research. Bob Hughes and Harry Squire worked hard to input the majority of the data. Mike Dyer and colleagues at The Inspirational Learning Group kindly distributed the young person's survey via Summer Schools and supported some data inputting to enable the voices of young people in transition to feed in their views and experiences. Finally, thank you to my colleague Chris Percy, Senior Associate, for his critical read and constructive feedback.

"This is an excellent and timely report. Its key findings are important in understanding what the next steps should be taken to develop further improvement in career guidance for young people in England. The link between learning gains and improved career guidance for young people is crucial; embracing new technology to enhance this work is pivotal, and the role of competitions to motivate and inspire young people to be curious of the world of work eminently sensible. I thoroughly recommend this report." Carl Ward, Chair of the Foundation for Education Development (FED)

In 2008, Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE established DMH Associates to encourage collaboration and fresh thinking in careers, education and skills policy, research and practice. The outcomes from the organisation's work are designed to inform and influence policies, research and practice in the UK, Europe and internationally. Our expertise includes: consultancy, evaluation, evidence and impact assessment, literature reviews, qualitative and quantitative research, digital and labour market intelligence / information (LMI). We provide a full range of activities each tailored to meet specific organisational or individual needs.

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Executive Summary

Young people want career guidance but are struggling to find it.

Those young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who need most support, are struggling to get access to professional career guidance.

Early intervention in primary and career guidance in secondary schooling is essential from Year 7 onwards to prevent unconscious bias and gender stereotyping which can be hard to change later on.

Technology can play more of a role in modern dimensions of career guidance, complementing the work of careers and enterprise specialists.

In July 2021, Dev Clever PLC commissioned DMH Associates to undertake a research programme in England, investigating the views of young people and their experience of career guidance¹ support, mainly though not exclusively, in secondary schools in England. This research began in the context of schools faced with a roller-coaster of teaching and learner support challenges during the pandemic. Stop and start closures, social distancing, new assessment procedures and a major shift to online teaching became the 'new norm'. With rising levels of mental health, safeguarding concerns, and digital poverty this put a strain on everyone. Schools and those external organisations that support them are therefore to be congratulated for their significant efforts.

Participants involved:


- 3,615 pre-GCSE pupils from 52 schools/academies in 7 regions across England responded to a national survey. This was distributed through schools and LinkedIn contacts, both online and in hard copy, including as part of 13 Summer School experiences.
- 12 head teachers or their representatives shared their views on England's careers support system.
- 39 employers from 14 key sectors in all regions, including nationwide employers, shared their views on young people's 'work-readiness'. Office for National Statistics (ONS) data and employer quotes from national skills shortages and skills gaps were also analysed.

Aim

To inform Government on young people's views and experiences of careers guidance in England's schools and to feed into policy-making in the context of education, economic and social recovery, the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill and finding effective ways of helping school pupils catch up on lost learning as a result of Covid-19. This research report contributes to education and employability debates that seek to address young people's loss of learning during the Covid-19 (and beyond) through more effective high-quality careers guidance both within and outside of the schooling system.

For those who can discover, explore and experience the world of work as part of their schooling, they will be better placed to successfully manage their transitions into it. Participation in career guidance activities by young adults has been associated with wage premiums, lower rates of unemployment and greater career satisfaction, as well as increased academic motivation and more positive attitudes towards school.

¹ The term career guidance describes the services which help people of any age to manage their careers and to make the educational, training and occupational choices that are meaningful for them. It helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications, skills and talents – and to relate this knowledge about who they are to who they might become in life and work. (Investing in Career Guidance, 2021 - https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_762841.pdf)

A photograph of two young people in school uniforms. In the foreground, a young man with short, light brown hair and braces is smiling broadly at the camera. He is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a dark blue tie with light blue diagonal stripes. Behind him and to the right, a young woman with dark hair pulled back is also smiling. She is wearing a similar white shirt and dark blue tie. The background is a blurred indoor setting, likely a classroom or school hallway, with a wooden door visible on the left.

"I want to be able to see the point of certain things we study in maths and whether it will teach me anything useful for later in life." (Year 9 pupil)

Key findings

Britain's young talent pipeline has to be well equipped and able to contribute to future skills and economic growth. Young people have stated they want and need modern dimensions of career guidance.

Strong foundations have been laid by Government with investment in the professional development of Careers Leaders in schools/academies and over 3,000 are now part of a local or regional 'Careers Hub' to drive up social mobility. The implementation of Gatsby benchmarks is well established.

To begin with, what young people have shared about their views and experiences during the pandemic will not come as a major surprise. There is a serious decline in work experience and workplace visits²; young people have changing attitudes to exams results and technical and vocational education and training; they want more career guidance; and they are making greater use of technology.

² See also, CEC (2020), Careers education in England's Schools and Colleges 2020, London: Careers and Enterprise Company, p.13.

1. They want career guidance but are struggling to find this, yet are willing and enthusiastic to invest their own time in careers activities within and outside of school.

"I want to learn more about different careers because it feels like things are changing fast and I need to keep up with this and know certain things to make the right decision. It's a worrying time!" (Year 10 pupil)

- 39% of year 9 pupils and 23% of year 11 pupils reported they are only receiving careers support once a year or not at all. This rises to 85% among Year 7 pupils. Nearly all pupils said they had a strong appetite to learn more about career guidance during their school life but did not know where to turn to beyond parents, teachers and friends.
- 64% of young people stated that both academic and vocational paths are of equal importance but some are disheartened, 53% of pupils do not know where to go in school to find out about careers information, advice and support.
- 58% of year 11's, 60% of year 9 and 83% of year 7 pupils do not think they are receiving enough careers advice or careers activities in school.
- 72% of pupils of all years stated that for them careers information, advice and guidance activities are either "Very important" or "Essential". The majority are keen and willing to invest their own time with over 69% of Years 7 to 11 stating this, and in particular 85% of year 7 pupils.

2. The gap has widened between advantaged and disadvantaged children. As school budgets and resources remain squeezed crucial 'soft' elements of provision (which aren't soft at all but vital) such as career guidance get pushed further down the priorities listing. The children who suffer most and miss out are again those who do not have the home support or finance to make up the shortfalls.

"How can I be motivated if all I hear is about young people and their parents losing their jobs. What chance have I got?" (Year 11 pupil)

"My mum's friends' daughter used to be a tutor and she told me how important it is to know what want to do in life."

- Less than 19% of secondary pupils reported they have had a conversation with a school careers leader, careers adviser or an employer. 8% of pupils reported they had not spoken to anyone at all.
- 59% of pupils reported they had not carried out any exercises at school to identify their skills and/or personality. By contrast employers indicated that they consider important 'soft skills' such as behaviour, personality, time management, and teamwork. Most employers in this research highlighted their specific requirements for these 'soft skills' over exam qualifications in their recruitment, induction and workforce development phases.
- As pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds typically need greater support, schools serving them should anticipate greater resource allocation in clear alignment with the government's 'levelling up' policies.

3. Learning loss between primary and secondary schools is a key issue in the education sector. This trend can be reversed, turned into learning gains, through increased career dialogue with children from an early age and career guidance for young people throughout their secondary schooling.

"I want to learn more about different careers because it feels like things are changing fast and I need to keep up with this and know certain things to make the right decision. It's a worrying time!" (Year 10 pupil)

- 77% of the overall respondents said they had not or were not sure that they had learned about careers and the world of work in primary³. This lack of participation stands in stark contrast to academic and statistical evidence supporting the added-value of career-related learning in primary education.
- Only 8% of year 7 pupils recall speaking to a Careers Leader in their secondary school. The top 3 ranked activities in terms of importance to pupils were: Individual careers meetings with a careers adviser (53%), group learning activities (50%, and individual meetings with a careers leader in school (49%).

4. Technology has a major role to play in modern dimensions of career guidance. Getting the right balance between personalised online and local face-to-face careers support is essential, bearing in mind the digital poverty experienced by some young people.

"It was tough being cut off from my friends and my broadband wasn't great. I had to share a laptop. I couldn't get work experience and don't know how I'll get this. Need help to sort this one out." (Year 10 pupil)

- 72% pupils claimed they did not participate in, 'Virtual reality experiences' 67% (n=2089) did not participate in 'Virtual employer visits' and 65% (2,007) did not participate in 'Careers Games Online'. This may have been due to the fact that schools were not prepared for the sudden impact of Covid or that staff lacked the time or resources to introduce such activities into their schools.
- Over 80% (172) pupils in Year 7 stated preferences for 'Online games and virtual reality'; 'Careers competitions in school or between schools'; and 'More individual meetings with a careers adviser'. In contrast, the remaining Year Groups all stated their main preferences as 'Having more individual careers meetings with a careers adviser' and 'Group learning activities in school or online'.
- Of those young people who responded to the question on their appetite to engage in careers competitions, 68% were in favour of a national competition. This was particularly supported by the current cohort of year 6 and 7 pupils. 49% of employers surveyed said they would be prepared to participate in careers competitions as a way of attracting young people to employment and a further 33% may consider this.

Employers continue to voice concerns about the work readiness of the young people they recruit and argue for improvements in career guidance in England's schools. They highlight growing skills shortages and skills gaps in their industries and sectors and the need to urgently address occupational 'blind spots' and outdated stereotypes. They are willing to do more to support young people but there have been big challenges in gaining access in schools, mainly due to Covid-19.

³ These percentages did not vary significantly between pupils in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) and their counterparts.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Government has an important role to play in clearly articulating expectations of schools ensuring the supply of trained careers advisers and encouraging and enabling employers to work with educational providers. As pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds typically need greater support, schools serving them should anticipate greater resource allocation in clear alignment with the government's 'levelling up' policies.

Gatsby Good Careers Guidance Benchmarks offer a clear narrative for headteachers and careers leaders as a guide to self-assessment and good practice. For those in Opportunity Area 'coldspots'⁴ or those involved in 'Careers Hubs'⁵, national and local planning has actioned careers guidance activities, starting early in primary schools. Most describe the careers landscape as 'patchy' or 'uneven' with a plethora of market products targeted at schools.

The real significant challenge ahead is to fill major skills and talent gaps by harnessing young people's (and adults) knowledge, skills and experience. There is a strong desire from young people for more career guidance. Their strength of feeling about the importance of work and creating sustainable futures is palpable. Employer feedback shows a strong willingness and desire to support schools with career guidance programmes. Covid closed many opportunities for them to go into educational establishments to work directly with pupils on CVs, mock interviews, assessment training centre exercises, skills builder activities etc. It is time to reignite employer engagement in schools and colleges across England for the benefit of all school pupils - not just the privileged few - and the national economy. This will also bring new forms of contemporary labour market intelligence/information, including real-life problem solving and innovation challenges, into the education system.

To stop the erosion of career guidance for young people in England, make further gains for accelerated system improvement, and equip all young people to achieve successful transitions in learning and work, 9 key actions for government Ministers, departments, the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), the National Careers Service, employers, educators, careers specialists including those with a proven track record of success.

⁴ Opportunity Areas are in 12 social mobility cold spots where the Department for Education (DfE) is prioritising resources, and bringing local and national partners together- West Somerset, Norwich, Blackpool, North Yorkshire coast, Derby, Oldham, Bradford, Doncaster, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich, Stoke-on-Tent.

⁵ These are virtual Hubs, funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) is the strategic centre point of a localised approach to careers education that is accessible to all mainstream secondary schools, specialist education and alternative provision providers and colleges across that locality.

- 1 Young people want and need more exposure to and experience of careers activities from an early age. The Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill, would extend the duty to provide career guidance in schools to young people from Year 7 onwards. The significant loss of work experience for young people has to be urgently addressed.
- 2 New school performance measures are essential and these should evidence, celebrate and reward institutions with career guidance and world of work programmes, including 'out of school' careers activities. Connectivity to employers, destinations and new destination measures can be used more effectively to inspire more young people, parents and teachers.
- 3 Three major government departments, including the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), should work more collaboratively and involve leaders from industry, education, and the careers and enterprise sector to address specific skills deficits and co-design better signalling of opportunities to young people, parents and teachers.
- 4 A Career Guidance Steering Group should be formed with Ministerial support to ensure its success. Ministers with a portfolio in Health and Social Care, Transport, Digital Innovation, Food and Rural Affairs, Sports, Media and Culture and Women and Equalities could help prioritise career guidance for young people and set a dynamic shared agenda for Britain's economic, social and cultural prosperity.
- 5 Young people's access to local career guidance – *places and spaces online and offline* – to support career conversations must be a golden thread woven into government department and officials' citizen consultations and delivery plans. This must be viewed not only as a solution that enables the continuance of services during the pandemic, but also, e.g., for the personalisation of more tailored and targeted careers support.
- 6 The National Careers Service, Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should jointly consult with those who have a strong track record of direct delivery of quality-assured careers support for young people. There are 'two wicked questions' to be addressed: How can more young people gain improved access to career guidance? How can advances in technology encourage career exploration from an early age, as well as equip teachers and careers professionals with the right tools to do their job?

- 7 These Departments should consult on careers leadership, teacher and careers adviser training and digital skills, working with bodies such as the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT), Careers England, the Career Development Institute (CDI) and Local Government Association. All schools should have ring-fenced funds for a careers leader, careers adviser and their active participation in local career hubs that can benefit all young people, teachers and parents. A plethora of careers products currently marketed to schools are taking valuable time away from work with young people. These should be quality-assured by an independent third-party and streamlined.
- 8 Government, education technology companies and charities with a proven track record in delivery of virtual experiences using the latest technology innovations can meet to examine how best to help provide pupils with tailored and targeted career guidance, starting from an early age in primary schools. Those with a proven track record in delivery can demonstrate how from Key Stage 1 & 2 upwards - throughout the schooling system - 'career learning logs' could greatly benefit children and young people's career exploration as well as supporting family career conversations. Most importantly, hopes, dreams, knowledge, skills and experiences would be recorded and pupil learning loss would be ameliorated.
- 9 A Career Guidance Steering Group should be formed with Ministerial support to ensure its success. Ministers with a portfolio in Health and Social Care, Transport, Digital Innovation, Food and Rural Affairs, Sports, Media and Culture and Women and Equalities could help prioritise career guidance for young people and set a dynamic shared agenda for Britain's economic, social and cultural prosperity.

Finally, it should be noted, when young people are exposed to personalised guidance it makes a tangible difference to individuals with significant returns on investment (ROI) for the Treasury (Percy, 2022)².

Young people need career guidance support more than ever. The social and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be felt for many years to come. We all have a moral duty to do more.

1.0

Introduction

1.1 In July 2021, Dev Clever PLC commissioned DMH Associates to undertake a research programme in England, investigating the views of young people and their experience of career guidance support mainly, though not exclusively, in secondary schools in England. This research began in the context of schools faced with a roller-coaster of teaching and learner support challenges during the pandemic. Stop and start closures, social distancing, new assessment procedures and a major shift to online teaching became the 'new norm'. With rising levels of mental health, safeguarding concerns, and digital poverty this put a strain on everyone. Schools and those external organisations that support them are therefore to be congratulated for their significant efforts.

1.2 Looking ahead, a number of major disruptive forces will transform lives for young people, creating a new set of social and economic risks. Job displacement, financial insecurity, and home schooling have changed how young people view life, learning and work. There is urgent need to prevent inequality from growing and, most importantly, young people are Britain's future workforce. With a growing disparity between the skills employers seek and the skills Britain's current workforce has to offer lessons need to be learned. The problem is being vividly demonstrated (at the time of writing) by the ongoing skills shortages. Successful engagement of young people in the labour market and society is crucial not only for economic prosperity and well-being, but also for social cohesion. They are more affected compared to adults by uncertainty, recruitment freezes and the scarring effects of unemployment.

For those who can discover, explore and experience the world of work as part of their schooling, they will be better placed to successfully manage their transitions into it. Participation in career guidance activities by young adults has been associated with wage premiums, lower rates of unemployment and greater career satisfaction, as well as increased academic motivation and more positive attitudes towards school (Percy & Mann, 2014)⁴. The economy needs there to be a strong link between education, skills and employment. Britain's young talent pipeline has to be well equipped and able to contribute to future skills and economic growth.

1.3 Young people have stated they want modern dimensions of learning and career guidance support. They expect:

- activities that help them connect the relevance of their learning to a future world of work;
- exposure to and experiences of the world of work from an early age; and
- knowledge and skills to help them take positive steps to create a future sustainable livelihood.

1.4 This research report contributes to education and employability debates on finding new ways to address young people's loss of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic through more effective high-quality career guidance.

- It investigates England's approach to careers support in schools from a young person perspective, in combination with headteacher, careers/aspirations leaders and employer viewpoints.
- It examines how motivated and keen are young people to participate in career guidance activities.
- It explores whether or not young people in school are getting enough careers support as they move through England's schooling system.
- It considers what needs to be done to accelerate learning gains that could be achieved through career guidance for young people in England's schools.

Employability is - for most of those involved - synonymous with education and training.

- 1.5 To inform Government on young people's views and experiences of career guidance in England's schools and to feed into policy-making in the context of the education and social recovery, the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill and finding effective ways of helping school pupils catch up on lost learning as a result of Covid-19.

1.6 **Aim**

To inform Government on young people's views and experiences of career guidance in England's schools and to feed into policy-making in the context of the education and social recovery, the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill and finding effective ways of helping school pupils catch up on lost learning as a result of Covid-19.

1.7 **Objective**

The research focused on:

- how learning gains can be achieved through more effective career guidance for pupils, supporting teachers and work with employers and parents.

1.8 **Method**

A mixed-method approach was adopted to address key research questions and to inform recommendations to Government and other key stakeholders. The research data analysis was conducted between 1st July and 30th September 2021. This applied approach draws on quantitative and qualitative data to provide insight into young people's views and experiences, headteacher, careers leaders' feedback, and employer accounts on the career readiness of young people in England.

1.8 **Limitations**

The analysed data has some limitations that must be taken into account. In the set timescale, responses from young people in the East of England were not received. However, steps were taken to ensure a school perspective from Norwich was included. The timing of the survey was not ideal with only 3 weeks remaining in the academic year, as a result we also took steps to include young people in Summer Schools. We discovered many of these young people were Year 6 moving into Year 7. For these respondents, some of the questions were not relevant with regards to their first-hand experiences of secondary education. The commissioned remit did not include careers advisers. Further research is needed to build on these findings and further extend the sample-size to further validate the evidence-base.

2.0

Context

"The future is not some place we are going, but one we are creating." (John Schar)

2.1 Social and economy recovery

Since March 2020, the pandemic has had a huge effect on the provision of education. In the UK, the last 18 months was easily the most disruptive in children and young people's education since the end of the Second World War. Considering learning undertaken both at home and in the classroom, pupils on average lost around a third of the learning they would have benefited from if the (Major, Eyles and Machin, 2021)⁷. The actual loss of learning by school pupils during this time varies by context, depending on what schools and families have been able to provide in the way of remote schooling.

- 2.2 Recent projections suggest that the impact of the pandemic will widen the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers, likely reversing progress made to narrow the gap since 2011 (EEF, 2021⁸; EPI, 2021⁹). As pupils stay in education longer and the labour market becomes more turbulent, the need for effective careers information, advice and guidance grows (OECD, 2021)¹⁰.

"Covid-19 has shaken up the labour market and planted new anxieties in the minds of young people on the brink of choosing a career." (Launch Your Career report 2021, p.12)¹¹

- 2.3 Why does career guidance matter? - Firstly, this supports the effective functioning of the labour market and ultimately leads to improved productivity and economic benefits for individuals, employers and the wider economy. Secondly, it supports the education system by reducing the complexity of accessing and participating in the system and enables young people (adults) to set achievement and attainment goals. Thirdly, it helps address social goals such as social inclusion and social mobility by supporting individuals who can become better informed, resilient and proactive in their search for meaningful learning and work.

- 2.4 As Britain recovers from this and navigates its exit from the European Union, attention is turning towards skills gaps and employer needs. There's a growing recognition of gaps in areas such as technology, engineering, transport, and health and social care which is sharpening the focus on further and technical education. Young people need career guidance, mentoring and coaching services more than ever. The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be felt for many years to come. The OECD recommends governments embrace these core principles:

- Start early, and continue into later stages in different shapes and intervene at key transition points, with proactive delivery;
- Ensure that pupils can talk to career counsellors who are well-trained, independent and impartial;
- Integrate teachers into the provision of career guidance in school-wide approaches;
- Complete these approaches with the opportunities given by ICT technologies and labour market information;
- Ensure that the approaches used are personalised; and
- Focus on certain groups, those who need the most assistance. (Musset and Kureková, 2018)¹².

2.5 Since the pandemic, more services are switching toward a blended design and delivery model. Technological advances, the digital divide and uncertainty pose continuing opportunities and challenges. Technology is becoming even more ubiquitous and demographic changes across England will mean jobs emerge, evolve and disappear faster than ever before. In a world where job opportunities and patterns of working are changing rapidly, the need for increased access to different forms of career dialogue and learning is crucial. Digital exclusion creates additional problems: putting together a CV, applying for jobs or training, managing and keeping track of money, applying for further or higher education and career exploration are just some of the essential activities made that much harder for those most disadvantaged and digitally excluded. Holmes and Burgess (2021) indicate:

*“The likelihood of having access to the internet from home increases along with income, such that only 51% of households earning between £6000-10,000 had home internet access compared with 99% of households with an income of over £40,001. The link between poverty and digital exclusion is clear: if you are poor, you have less chance of being online.” (University of Cambridge blog, para.4)*¹³

2.6 Addressing inequalities created by the crisis requires a co-ordinated package of support to encourage the development of knowledge, skills, and young people’s awareness of themselves and their opportunities. The 3,615 pupils who contributed to this research provide insights into their experiences of and exposure to career guidance and the world of work (or lack of this) as part of their schooling.

2.7 The “levelling up” agenda is becoming more important than ever to ensure people in areas that were experiencing economic challenge are not left further behind. These factors have major consequences for education, economic, and social recovery plans. Government, educationalists, and wider society will now need to help children and young people adapt to the new norms in a post-lockdown world. Society is changing with increased automation, a greener economy,¹⁴ and the emergence of new growth sectors e.g., health and social care, clean energy, and digitalisation. A UK Royal Society report (2020)¹⁵ highlighted:

“From the mid-2030s, workers in their 20s will have lower skills than they would otherwise have. For the next 50 years, this has the potential to affect a quarter of the entire workforce and disadvantaged pupils are particularly at risk of falling into poverty.” (RSA Delve Initiative, para 7)

International collaboration between the European Commission, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Training Foundation (ETF, 2019) highlighted the growing importance of investing in careers guidance prior to the pandemic:

“With many new occupations emerging and many existing ones changing or diminishing, young people are in need of heightened support as they prepare themselves for working life”

(2019, p.8)¹⁶

In spite of growing needs, a 2020 flash survey of policy officials and practitioners in 93 countries showed that in many countries, careers guidance was perceived to be a neglected aspect of national responses to the pandemic with the most vulnerable often facing greatest hurdles in accessing adapted provision (p.7)¹⁷. In July 2021, the OECD joined the above-mentioned international collaboration making a strong evidence-based argument for governments to Invest in Careers guidance¹⁸. Mann and Quintin (2021) report:

“Even prior to the pandemic, careers guidance was receiving increased attention from policy makers, reflecting a concern that the skills developed in the education system might not be well aligned with emerging labour market needs, generating costly skill mismatches and shortages. The results of the triennial OECD Programme for International Assessment (PISA) give cause for concern. In 2018, only half of pupils in OECD countries reported that they had spoken to a careers guidance counsellor in school by the age of 15, and fewer than 40% attended important guidance activities like job shadowing, workplace visits or job fairs.”

The OECD is currently investigating ‘career readiness’ and finding ways of helping schools to prepare young people for working life¹⁹. New analysis of national longitudinal datasets²⁰ show that better-than-expected adult employment outcomes are commonly associated with how school-age teenagers think about their future careers, whether they explore possible employment options and gain work experience while still in school. Participation in career guidance activities by young adults has been associated with wage premiums²¹, lower rates of unemployment²² and greater career satisfaction as well as increased academic motivation and more positive attitudes towards school²³.

Educators in career guidance

For educators in England, school ‘stop and start’ closures and the need to suddenly move to online teaching produced a high level of uncertainty and stress. Concerns about the most vulnerable pupils increased over the school closure period (Kim and Asbury, 2020)²⁴. In a 2020 YouGov commissioned survey of 3,034 education professionals, the three main challenges faced by educators during lockdown related to (i) pupils not completing their work (48%), (ii) experiencing a lack of social contact/isolation (41%) and (iii) having a lack of timely government guidance (39%) (p.10)²⁵. There was also the need for training in how to use technology, curriculum training, general training and training associated with implementing safety procedures such as social distancing (p.38).

“Digital growth, increased automation, and artificial intelligence (AI) require people to be committed lifelong learners – thinking about their transferable skills, upgrading their

skills, and/or switching from at risk sectors to remain in employment” (Hughes & Akkok, 2021)

One of the main consequences of school closures during the pandemic has been the expansion of online learning and tutoring for children looking to access or catch up on lost learning.

2.10 Evidence shows those educators that perceived they had received a high level of support from their organisations were more resilient to the challenges posed by the rapid transition to online teaching (Zancajo, 2021)²⁶. This in-depth literature review recommends that policies to increase the role of online educational provision should be accompanied by the necessary institutional support for pupils and teachers in this process. The capacity of educational policies to tackle the challenges posed by social inequalities in the implementation of online learning is essential to guarantee their success.

2.11 Teachers, careers/aspirations leaders, careers advisers and Enterprise Co-ordinators have had to rapidly adapt and transform their service delivery arrangements. They have discovered more inclusive and innovative ways of using technology in career guidance to good effect. Examples include: distant and e-based careers policies and practices, delivered either by telephone, online interviews 1:1 or in groups, webinar sessions, gaming, virtual career fairs and virtual work experience or internships. Each are designed to offer more personalised and interactive digital and non-digital support commonly referred to as ‘a blended approach’. For instance, recent programme evaluations in primary schools show similar benefits from virtual interactive talks with employer volunteers as in-person career discussions: over 80% of teachers reported high or extremely high impact from both formats and pupils giving similar scores across each format against 15 different evaluation topics.²⁷ These give rise to the potential of increases in self-directed learning that can potentially transform young people’s lives.

2.12 Summer schools and extending the school day: seeds of promise

Both Summer schools and extending the school day could offer more creative thinking in relation to learning gains that young people could achieve through increased exposure to and experience of careers guidance. From April 2021, schools in England were able to register to offer a summer school to help children recover learning they have lost during the pandemic. Incoming Year 7 pupils were predominantly encouraged to get involved, to help them navigate the important transition between primary and secondary school following a year of disrupted learning. Summer schools include a variety of activities from group activities such as sports to mental health support and academic catch up such as maths and English lessons. DfE reports “Summer schools are one part of £1.7 billion already invested by the government in ambitious catch-up activity over the next year, including high quality tutoring.”²⁸

2.13 In July 2021, Boris Johnson indicated to the Chair of the Education Selection Committee that extending the school day is “the right thing to do” and the government is examining how extra hours could be used for additional tuition and activities²⁹. Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, responded by saying “It will be vital that these proposals are properly resourced and don’t become an unsustainable burden on schools, leaders and teachers. And there will be many questions about exactly what the expectation will be over the content of longer school days.” Major, Eyeles and Machin (Ibid) highlight that just over half (53 percent) of 10,000 adults support extending the school day. Around seven in ten respondents in England, support allowing greater flexibility for pupils to repeat a whole school year, if necessary.

2.14 In September 2021, a group of leading academy trust heads have come up with proposals for a £5.8bn Covid recovery plan³⁰ given cash available for schools in England will be between 1 and 2 per cent lower in real terms – accounting for inflation – in 2022-23 than it was in 2009-10, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.³¹ Government sources have hinted there is likely to be significant further cash for education catch-up in the Comprehensive Spending Review but there will be significant pressure and demands from various competing bodies.

2.15 Ironically,

*“Just when good quality careers advice is most needed, schools are finding it hardest to offer guidance and support. The pressures of the pandemic mean schools are having to focus on curriculum delivery and assessment without exams. It’s also been much harder to expose pupils to opportunities through careers fairs, work experience and industry representatives speaking in schools.” (Launch Your Career, 2021, p.1)*³²

The current situation is likely to get worse unless greater investment in career guidance takes place in the coming year(s)³³. This paper sets out some ideas for action.

3.0

Careers strategy

Statutory Requirements

3.1 Since September 2013, local authority-maintained schools in England have been under a duty to provide impartial careers guidance to pupils from years 8 to 13 (ages 12-18). The Department for Education has published statutory guidance (most recently updated in October 2018)³⁴ for maintained schools on their duty to provide careers guidance. Many academies and free schools are subject to the duties relating to careers guidance through their funding agreements, including those which opened from September 2012 onwards and those which have moved to an updated funding agreement. Academies without the requirement are encouraged to follow the guidance as a statement of good practice.

Prior to the pandemic, the national DfE Careers Strategy (2017)³⁵ set out a vision and key actions to improve careers support services for young (and adults) across the lifespan in England. The government's expectation was for new approaches to careers provision to be tested, evaluated and rolled-out in schools/academies at a national, regional and local level. It set out a series of measures to be implemented between 2018 and 2020 to improve careers guidance in England, including for example:

- starting careers work early in primary schools
- using the eight Gatsby Benchmarks for careers provision
- publishing a careers programme by each school and college
- naming a Careers Leader for each school and college
- providing information about T-Levels, apprenticeships and technical information to pupils
- collecting and publishing data on student destinations
- improving the National Careers Service website, including it becoming a “digital first” approach.
- ensuring every child has at least one encounter a year with an employer. These should include Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) employers.

3.2 A new law introduced in 2018, commonly known as the Baker Clause, stipulated those secondary schools/academies must ensure that a range of education and training providers have access to pupils from year 8 to year 13, so that they can be informed about what technical education and apprenticeship opportunities are available to them³⁶. Ofsted may undertake a thematic review to provide an up-to-date assessment of careers guidance in England's schools and colleges and provide recommendations to improve practice³⁷. On 5th October 2021, DfE announced the law will change to give “equality” to technical education in careers advice in schools. The process for monitoring compliance and enforcement will be “covered in the updated statutory guidance which will be published at least one term before the strengthened legislation comes into force”.³⁸

3.3 In October 2019, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced it would extend an earlier pilot programme in schools aimed at aimed at 14–17-year-olds with an additional £7 million, in order to employ advisers to provide targeted support for those with special educational needs under the age of 24. In October 2019, the scheme had worked with 1,400 schools in England³⁹.

3.4 The Government's ‘Skills for Jobs’⁴⁰ white paper on further education and skills, published in January 2021, included further plans to strengthen careers advice and proposals to more strictly enforce the ‘Baker Clause’, as well as extending careers advice to pupils in year 7 (currently required in years 8-13), and reforming the work of existing careers advice bodies. Professor Sir John Holman, government's Independent Strategic Advisor on Careers Guidance,

was appointed to undertake a review of how the Careers and Enterprise Company and National Careers Service work together. This was recently further extended to include Jobcentre Plus to review and improve the way in which the parts of the careers guidance system in England work together without unnecessary duplication of effort. The Government has stated that it will consult on these changes. The Government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee is designed to allow everyone to access the education and training they need throughout their lives. To achieve this, it aims to improve training, develop apprenticeships and put employers at the heart of post-16 skills.

- 3.5 It will be some time before Sir John Holman produces his formal report to Government on areas for careers guidance improvement. School performance is measured primarily on league tables, exam results, and Ofsted reports - none of which prioritise the provision of careers guidance in schools. The implementation of Gatsby benchmarks is primarily self-assessed and in some cases is a 'tick-box' exercise. Enterprise Co-ordinators, Enterprise Advisers, careers Advisers and Careers Hub Leads have some role to play which includes moderation, quality-assurance and challenge.

Meanwhile, this year's cohort of pupils in secondary schooling will need more intensive support than ever to assist them with their career decisions in a rapidly changing world.

- 3.6 The quality of careers advice has been subject to frequent criticism, and recent governments have made several reforms, including the establishment of the National Careers Service and the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), aimed at improving the quality and range of careers advice on offer. In 2019, the Augar Review on post-18 education stated that it believed secondary schools "careers support [to be] still underfunded" and recommended that every secondary school become part of a Careers Hub. Careers Hubs, run by the Careers and Enterprise Company, work with schools and colleges to train staff to improve careers advice and provide opportunities to engage with employers. In November 2019 survey, by DMH Associates for Careers England and partners⁴¹ engaged with 191 headteachers, senior teachers, careers professionals and enterprise co-ordinators working with schools in England. The survey highlighted that 75% of respondents said they had either limited, insufficient, or no funding for career guidance provision. It suggested that:

- Only 10% [of schools] have adequate funding;
- 75% [of schools] have insufficient, limited or no funding;
- Around 5% of secondary schools receive less than £2,000 in funding per annum. Given [the] average size of secondary school is 1,000 this equates to circa £2 per student.

- 3.7 At present, there are concerns that restricted access to quality careers support, particularly (though not exclusively) for those young people outside of formal schooling, is impacting on equality of opportunity for individuals, particularly those most financially or socially disadvantaged⁴². The government's Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment; however, England's careers advisers are not part of this DWP initiative. There are calls for joining up delivery to reach those who need it most.

"As a result of the pandemic, the Government has introduced welcome new employment and skills support, including through the Plan for Jobs. Coordination of these funding streams

to target them to the needs of communities and individuals is crucial as the existing national skills and careers support system is fragmented and doesn't serve people and businesses who need it." (LGA, 2021) ⁴³

3.8 In June 2021, the National Careers Service re-procurement process was formally announced by the DfE seeking suppliers for 9 regional based contracts across England who are able to deliver high quality independent careers information, advice and guidance to National Careers Service customers. The tender opportunity will be published in September 2021 ⁴⁴. On 16 June 2021, Mark Jenkinson Conservative MP presented the Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill ⁴⁵, which would extend the duty to provide careers guidance in schools. In his announcement of the Bill ⁴⁶, Mr Jenkinson stated that the Bill would extend the requirements to provide careers guidance to children in year 7, and also implement the proposals in the Skills White Paper. The Bill has not yet been published.

3.9 Future developments include a new FE White Paper ⁴⁷ on its way, with some speculation that careers support for pupils and local communities may feature from an early age alongside promise for further capacity building throughout England. However, in the Bill's explanatory notes there is no specific mention of career guidance. Headteachers and employers who contributed to this research programme point to existing challenges and opportunities in relation to supporting pupils with CAREERS GUIDANCE in the year(s) ahead. Policy Connect (2021) ⁴⁸ argues:

"Government must harness the expertise of employers alongside education and careers professionals to advise on the most effective interventions to support appropriate education, employment, training, and careers guidance." (Foreword, Policy Connect, 2021)

3.10 Much has happened in relation to careers education and guidance and technological advancements in England's schools since 2017. Academics from King's College London, published an earlier evidence-based report 'Failing to Deliver? Exploring the Current Status of Career Education Provision in England' (2018) ⁴⁹. Based on data collected via a national survey of 13,000 Year 11 pupils attending 296 state-maintained schools and 44 independent schools in Autumn 2014, the paper argued that careers education in England was "currently patterned in ways that may be working to promote inequalities relating to gender, ethnicity and social class". The authors recommend that greater targeting of resources was needed and the introduction of monitoring student participation as well as provision by schools.

3.11 The effective targeting of scarce resources in the coming year(s) will be a major requirement by government and senior leadership teams in schools across England. Big data, machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI) and innovative online tools are hoped to provide new and dynamic approaches that can inform the design and delivery of high-quality impartial career guidance support services. ⁵⁰ But effective career guidance and personalised support for school pupils still requires some form of skillful human support. This requires investing in people and technology.

OfCom report (2021)⁵¹ that with the UK in some form of lockdown for most of 2020:

“We were more dependent than ever on online services for entertainment, shopping, keeping in touch, getting information, home working and home schooling. By the end of the year, about 94% of UK homes had internet access, up from about 89% in 2019. And we spent more time online: an average of 3 hours 37 minutes a day on smartphones, tablets and computers (nine minutes more than in 2019) as well as an average of 1 hour 21 minutes a day watching online services such as Netflix and BBC iPlayer on television sets (24 minutes more than in 2019). In September 2020, UK internet users spent nearly four times as much time on smartphones (an average of 2 hours 19 minutes a day) than they did on computers (37 minutes). 92% of 16- to 24-year-olds, said they played games on an electronic device, and over half of all gamers agreed that gaming helped them get through lockdown.” (p.3)

Chris Jefferies, CEO, Dev Clever argues:

“Today’s pupils have been raised surrounded by digital experiences in every area of life, from entertainment platforms like Netflix to social media such as Instagram, and music platforms like Spotify. Pupils – rightly – then expect better experiences of and uses of tech in all aspects of their education, so why should careers advice be exempt from this? Schools must take advantage of new technologies and bring gamification elements into careers advice and utilise tech to create immersive careers guidance experiences for their pupils. It is more important than ever that parents and schools have the tools and technology to better guide and encourage children to make good decisions on next steps towards their futures.”⁵²

- 3.12 Schools need to take full advantage of human expertise and new technologies to create more personalised, blended and immersive careers guidance experiences for young people. This must involve exploratory career conversations both online and offline to enable access to trustworthy careers information and advice. Most importantly, young people need to know where to go for specialist career guidance at moments of need.

4.0

Research Results

Primary schools

- 4.1 Learning loss between primary and secondary schools is a key issue in the education sector. This trend can be reversed, turned into learning gains, through increased career dialogue with children from an early age. The momentum from early discussions about the adult world and alternative futures from primary is being lost.
- 4.2 Very few pupils believed they received much career-related learning whilst in primary school. 77% (n=2,742) of the overall respondents said they had not or were not sure that they had learned about careers and the world of work in primary. These percentages did not vary significantly between pupils in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) and their counterparts.
- 4.3 This lack of participation stands in contrast to emerging academic and statistical evidence supporting the value of career-related learning in the primary education phase⁵³. For instance, a comparison group trial in the UK analysed the benefits of extra career learning for some 5,000 (9- and 10-year-olds), with gains in areas like career aspirations, attendance, and attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. A randomised control trial of primary age enterprise education in the Netherlands also showed gains in areas like self-efficacy, persistence, and creativity. A series of US studies relate improved career-related learning and counselling with higher grades in standardised tests, with example increases of c. 6% points in proficiency rates in English and Maths compared to similar schools that did not implement the programme.
- 4.4 Surveys of and consultations with teachers (CEC, 2019; TeachFirst 2020; EE, 2021) repeatedly confirm an appetite for greater engagement in career-related learning in primary schools. Many recognise it is easier to tackle career-limiting stereotypes and build long-lasting motivation when starting before the teenage years and the dominance of a more short-term, instrumental focus on high status examinations. One headteacher commented:

“We have consciously started a careers journey within our primary school setting as this allows pupils to start building their aspirations and skills set from an early age, whilst promoting the development of life and employability skills at the heart of the careers provision. This means when pupils move into secondary schooling, we have a good understanding of their career aspirations (and uncertainties) and can tailor personalised careers guidance provision accordingly. The Our Future Derby programme has provided invaluable resources and support.” (Neil Wilkinson, Headteacher, The Bemrose School, Derby)

- 4.5 Since March 2020, England’s primary schools have experienced enormous pressures including a move towards more blended teaching and learning during lockdown. Primary school closures created substantial inequality in time spent learning between pupils from poorer and better-off families (Andrew et al, 2020)⁵⁴. In England, some Opportunity Area ‘coldspots’, for example, Derby and Newcastle have each benefited from government investment and collaborative work in rolling-out career-related learning in primary schools over at least a 2-year period. In this context, teacher’s professional training and development in embedding careers and the world of work has yielded positive results, with the creation of practical resources for both classroom learning, home schooling and transition information sharing e.g. Our Future Derby. Career theorists suggest that children should be encouraged to sense

and sift occupational information with a view of understanding it, which can provide a valuable foundation for a more extensive careers education later at secondary school (Kashefpakdel, Rehill & Hughes, 2019)⁵⁵.

- 4.6 Greater attention to children's transitions from primary to secondary schooling could help reduce the loss from learning fading away in the institutional shift. There is scope for innovative career learning logs to become part of the transition phase from primary to secondary schooling captured in an online portal. The rationale for this is two-fold (i) all children have aspirations, hopes and dreams which if shared in a supportive learning environment can motivate them to do well in school; and (ii) all children moving into Year 7 have a record of achievement passed onto secondary schools between teachers. By sharing insight to a young person's early ambitions (even though these may change over time) this supports career learning on a lifelong basis. An innovative approach to 'Career Logs' from Key Stage 1 & 2 upwards throughout the schooling system could greatly benefit children and young people's career exploration as well as supporting teachers, careers leaders, careers advisers and parents/carers in family career conversations. Most importantly, careers guidance knowledge, skills and experiences would be recorded and pupil memory loss would be ameliorated. Some pockets of success exist in Opportunity Areas such as Blackpool, Derby and the North East.

Secondary schools/academies

"I have been really stressed about making subject choices and haven't had a chance to talk with my teacher on a 1:1 only online in a group meeting" (Year 9 pupil)

- 4.7 Earlier research by Launch Your Career (March 2021 – see Appendix 4) stated nearly half (48% n=240) of teachers say their school's ability to give careers advice to pupils has worsened since the pandemic e.g., 70% of pupils do not know or are unsure about what to do for a career. 78% of pupils are worried about making the right career choice.
- 4.8 In this research, secondary school pupils 37% (n= 1292), of which over a third of Year 7 pupils (35% n=62), stated they had not talked or were not sure they had talked to anyone about careers and/or subject choices. The extent to which schools provide careers guidance support to pupils varies considerably across England. For example,

"We are very fortunate in having a very high careers guidance profile locally and as part of the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with strong backing from within the Senior Leadership Team. We have a highly trained careers leader/In-house careers adviser. Best practice is shared with peers and our leading Northern HUB. We have a 0.8 FTE Non-teaching role able to fully focus on driving careers guidance forwards. We are beginning to further embed careers in the curriculum following a successful project-based learning (PBL) pilot. The school development plan incorporates our careers guidance policies. All pupils have a Careers Intention Survey – Planner page in 2021 with a headline aspiration cover." (Dean Jones, Headteacher, Firth Park Academy, Academies Enterprise Trust, Sheffield)

4.9 The chart below illustrates as young people progress through their schooling, they have more conversations with adults about careers and subject choices. However, it is noticeable that in the key stages of decision making (Year 9 and Year 11) almost a quarter of school pupils still do not appear to be receiving the most basic form of careers support in secondary education, in terms of alignment to subject and career choices made while at school.

Since you started secondary school, have you talked to anyone about careers or subject choices?

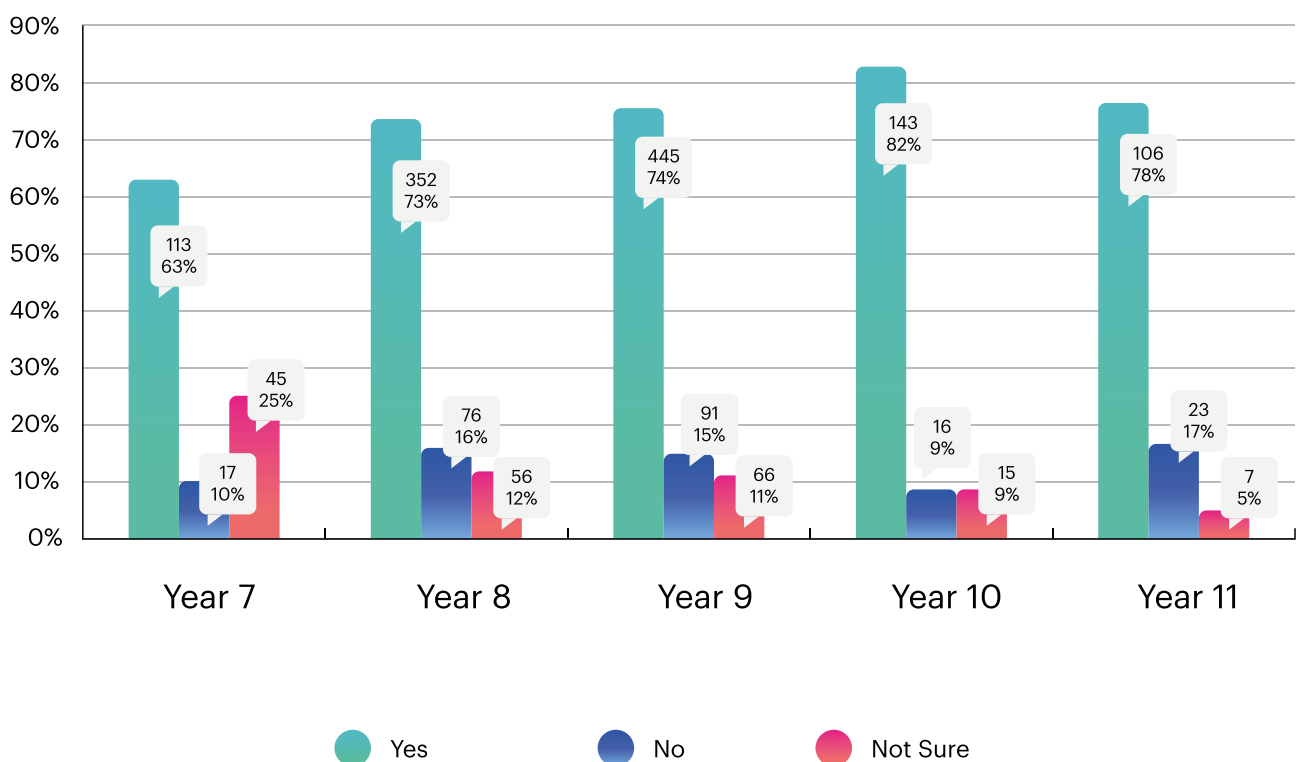


Figure 1: Percentage of pupils who have talked to someone about careers or subject choices by year group

4.10 Of those who are having conversations about their careers or subject choices, Figure 2 below shows that most pupils turned to their parents, family or friends to discuss their career ideas so far. 37% (1,322) have conversations with their subject teachers. Less than 19% (297) of secondary pupils reported they have had a conversation with a school careers leader, careers adviser who comes into school or an employer. A total of 8% (131) of secondary pupils reported they had not spoken to anyone at all.

"I am isolating so no real chances." (Year 11 pupil)

"I've relied on my mum to help me out as part of my home schooling" (Year 8 pupil)

Who has helped with your career idea(s) so far?

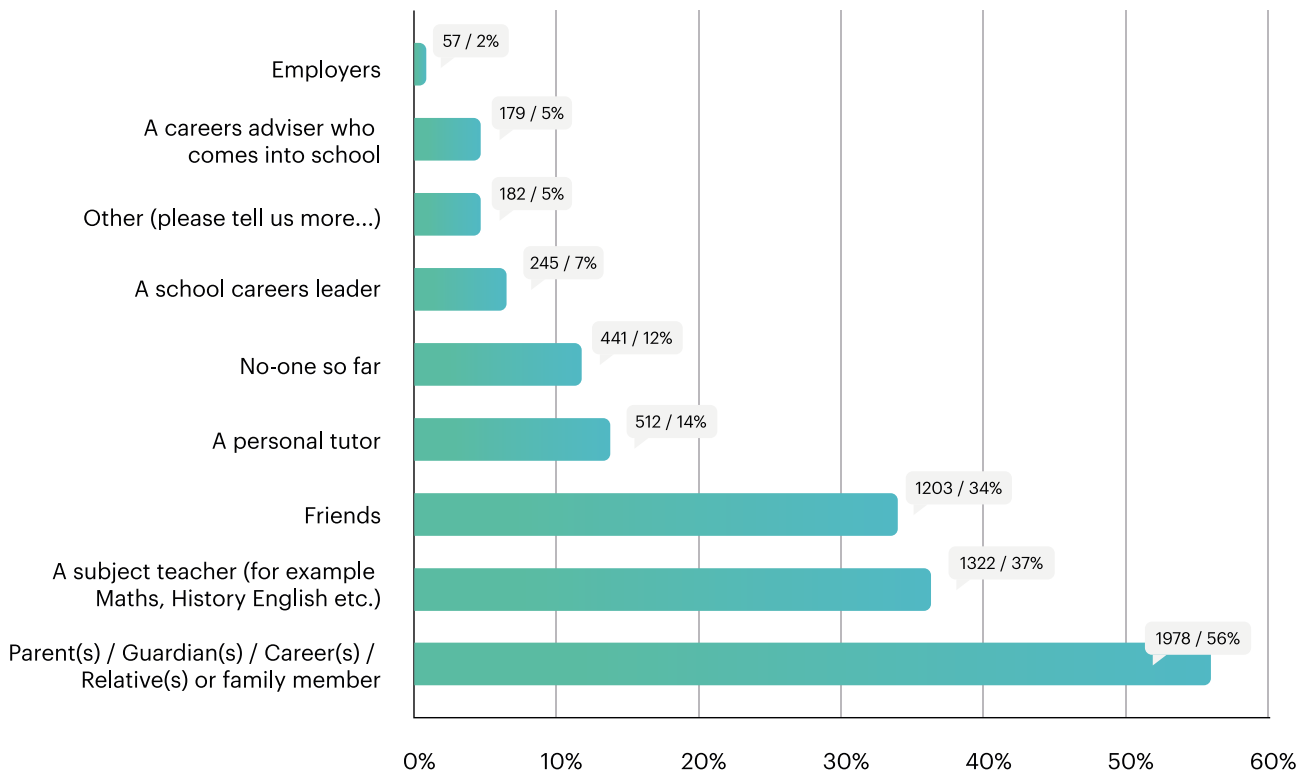


Figure 2: To whom students/pupils have turned to for help with career ideas

4.11 Parents are the main influencers on pupils' career thinking. A number of online programmes, apps and websites have been developed to engage parents in careers guidance activities, but the extent to which these are been fully utilised and by whom is under-researched. In England, careers guidance work with parents is often linked to short-term project funding. Online and offline approaches in Scotland and Wales offer insights into how careers guidance can be successfully embedded in the curriculum and the importance of parental support is recognised in school careers guidance support services. Parents undoubtedly have the potential to influence their children's career development, both positively and negatively; however, robust evidence of what, when and how parental behaviours constructively support their children's learning about career progression remains inconclusive (Barnes et al, 2020)⁵⁶.



4.12 Finding ways of easily and practically supporting subject teachers and equipping them to embed careers and the world of work in the curriculum is a key requirement. Pupils want and need to explore their interests. Personal reflection and having a system for pupils recording/logging careers guidance experiences can be a helpful reminder on what they have actually learned throughout their schooling. The OECD (2021) indicates this should be achieved through discussion including with subject teachers, counselling, and career-interest exercises. Guidance activities that involve employers are particularly important in broadening and informing student attitudes. They argue career talks (notably the carousel format), workplace visits, job shadowing and exercises focused on developing the skills needed in recruitment can be expected to be especially effective.

“Such activities should be regular, contextualised and initially mandatory to optimise the chance of pupils encountering new and useful information. As pupils get older, more personalised activities will help confirm career thinking.” (Mann et al, 2021)

4.13 A plethora of market careers guidance products are being promoted to schools e.g., Unifrog, Xello, Start, Fast Tomato, but no-one knows which of these and many other careers products are most beneficial to pupils and/or cost effective. Also, significant inequity exists for young people across the career guidance support system as some schools invest in certain products - and others do not for various reasons.

4.14 Tables 1 to 3 and Figure 3 below illustrate a damning picture, in particular more career guidance in Key Stage 3 is essential, yet pupils reported this is a rare experience. Overall, 53% (n=830) of pupils do not know where to go in their school to find out information about careers advice and support. This rises to 85% among Year 7 pupils. Even in years 9 and 10, over 40% state they do not know where to go in their school to find information about careers – see Table 1 below.

Number of pupils who do not know where to go in their school to find information about careers advice and support	
Year 7	85% (n=152)
Year 8	57% (n=278)
Year 9	43% (n=261)
Year 10	41% (n=71)
Year 11	50% (n=68)

Table 1: Responses by year group of pupils who do not know where to go in school for information about careers

4.15 Pupils were asked “In your journey from year 7 to 11, how important do you think careers advice for you will be?” – Essential; Very Important; Important; Not important at all.” The responses are outlined in Figure 3 below.

How important pupils think careers advice will be for them

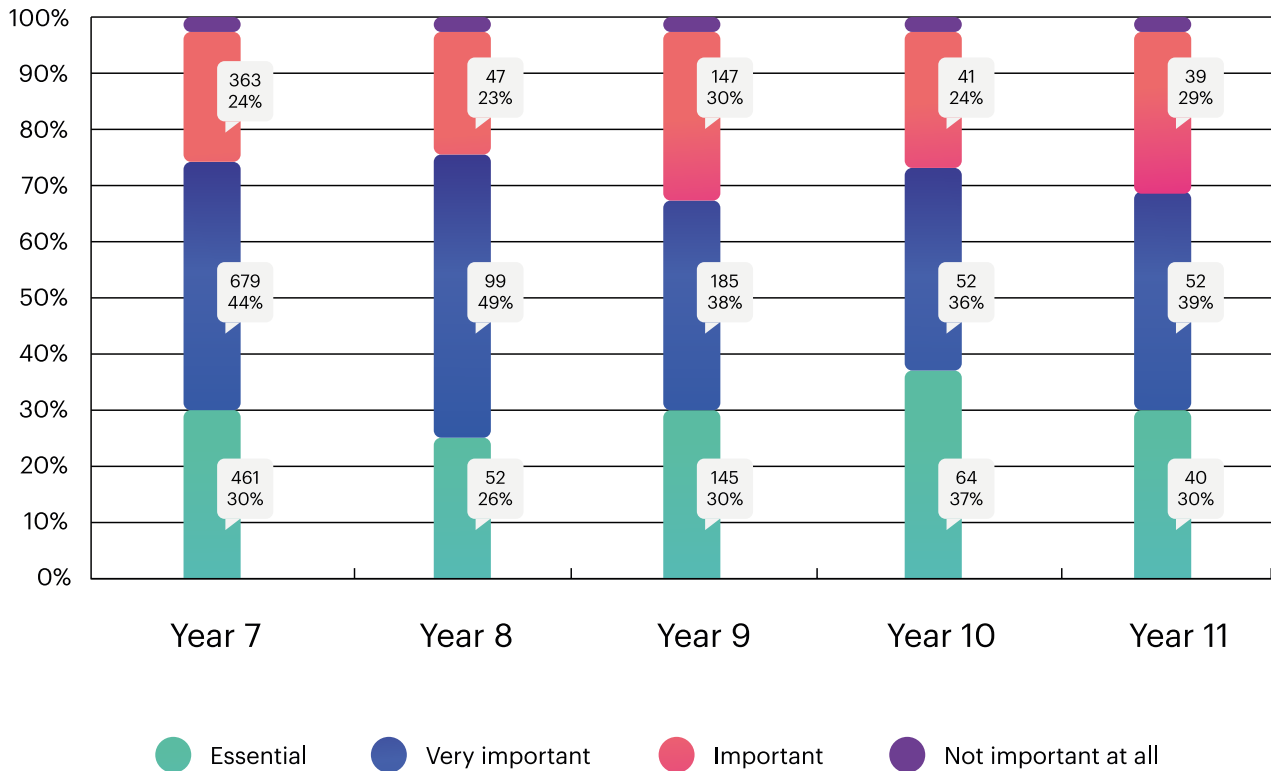


Figure 3: How important pupils think careers advice will be for them

This indicates that even in the early years of schooling, pupils place a high level of importance upon receiving career guidance in school.

4.16 Importance of Career Guidance

When asked how pupils rated achieving good results in exams versus receiving good careers advice:

- 67% (n=2161) of pupils believe that having good exam results and receiving good careers advice are equally important.
- 20% (n=626) think that having good exam results when leaving school are important
- 7% (n=210) believe that receiving good careers advice is important.

From Year 7 onwards, many young people report they are not receiving sufficient careers activities and advice in school – see Table 3 below. They view career guidance as very important which contrasts with them not knowing where to go.

Year Group	Number who do not think they received sufficient careers activities and advice
Year 11	58% (n=79)
Year 10	44% (n=79)
Year 9	60% (n=361)
Year 8	32% (n=182)
Year 7	83% (n=166)

Table 2: Responses by year group: "Do you think you are receiving enough careers activities and advice?"

58% (79) of year 11's and 60% (361) of year 9 pupils do not think they are receiving enough careers advice or activities in school.

- 4.17 Table 3 below indicates that the earlier year groups appear to receive fewer activities and these gradually increase as the pupils' progress through their schooling. For instance, 29% of Years 8 & 9 pupils are receiving either no careers advice at all or only advice once a year, compared to 85% of Year 7. The impact of Covid appears to have affected young people's access to personalised careers guidance in particular their preparedness for better understanding changing world of work.

Year Group	Year 10 + 11	Year 8 + 9	Year 7
At least once a fortnight	37% (n=114)	35% (n=375)	4% (n=7)
Once a month	18% (n=55)	16% (n=171)	6% (n=10)
Once a term	25% (n=76)	21% (n=233)	6% (n=11)
Once a year	14% (n=43)	13% (n=144)	46% (n=80)
Not at all	6% (n=19)	16% (n=164)	38% (n=66)

Table 3: responses by year group: How frequently pupils have careers lessons

4.18 Specifically, 39% (236) of year 9 pupils and 23% (31) of year 11 pupils reported they are only receiving careers support once a year or not at all.

4.19 Good career guidance is as much about personal reflection and dialogue as it is about access to information. Careers support activities should begin early in schooling. Pupils need time and encouragement to sift, sort and comprehend their possible futures in work and relate this to their educational choices. Career guidance support is key, particularly in years 9 and 11 as this is when pupils are expected to make important choices about options which impact upon their futures. Student subject choices are one of the key areas where current evidence reveals the inadequacies of the status quo and the potential for positive return on investment from increased careers support. Recent evidence from UCAS suggests that 40% of young people heading to university are making poor qualification pathway decisions that they later regret.⁵⁷ Many regret their subject choices aged 16-18 and the impact those choices have on their future options. The policy opportunity to inform and influence these choices is primarily from Year 7 to Year 11 – exactly the stage that student respondents to our survey are so critical about the quality of support available from their schools.

4.20 **Careers activities in which pupils participated and how these were rated**

Tables 4 to 7 below illustrate how pupils rated various career guidance activities, out of those in which they were involved. The activities most highly rated by year groups 8 to 11 were: Career talks online or in school and Presentations in assembly. In years 8, 9, and 11, the 3rd rated activity was: Vlogs, YouTube or other social media videos. Whereas the year 10 pupils 3rd rated activity was “Information sessions with colleges/6th forms/universities/apprenticeship providers.”

4.21 What is noticeable are the large numbers of pupils in each year who did not do the activity which is shown by the highlighted cells in each of the tables. Having previously outlined the impact of Covid on the ability of schools to deliver career activities, this likely to be a major contributor to this low participation. Also, pupils in years 6 and 7 have not had the opportunity to participate in activities. Some quotes from pupils include:

“I haven’t completed a lot due to Covid 19.” (Year 10 pupil)

“The reason why we haven’t done too much is because of Covid” (Year 7 pupil)

Year 11	At least useful or extremely useful		Did not do the activity	
Career Talks (online or in school)	47%	64	36%	49
Presentations in assembly	37%	50	40%	54
Vlogs, Youtube or other social media careers videos	34%	46	52%	70
Skills assessment and/or Personality profile	33%	45	46%	62
Careers fairs	32%	44	54%	74
Information sessions with colleges / 6th forms / universities / apprenticeship providers	30%	40	67%	90
Individual meetings with careers teacher	27%	37	66%	89
Career conversations during tutorials	24%	33	64%	87
Teacher	23%	31	72%	97
Work experience	23%	31	76%	103
Enterprise activities	21%	28	72%	96
Virtual employer visits	21%	28	75%	101
Mock interviews	19%	25	79%	106
Career games online	16%	21	72%	97
Virtual reality experience	10%	14	86%	116

Table 4: Year 11 rating of career activities

Year 10	At least useful or extremely useful		Did not do the activity	
Career Talks (online or in school)	72%	125	21%	36
Presentations in assembly	61%	105	22%	38
Information sessions with colleges / 6th forms / universities / apprenticeship providers	54%	94	42%	73
Career conversations during tutorials	50%	88	37%	65
Vlogs, Youtube or other social media careers videos	47%	81	35%	61
Virtual employer visits	47%	81	43%	75
Careers fairs	44%	76	48%	83
Skills assessment and/or Personality profile	44%	76	40%	69
Work experience	42%	73	55%	95
Individual meetings with careers teacher	39%	68	56%	97
Individual sessions with careers teacher	39%	67	57%	100
Enterprise activities	34%	60	55%	96
Mock interviews	32%	56	60%	105
Virtual reality experience	30%	53	58%	101
Career games online	30%	52	54%	94

Table 5: Year 10 rating of career activities

Year 9	At least useful or extremely useful		Did not do the activity	
Career Talks (online or in school)	55%	319	34%	193
Presentations in assembly	48%	274	35%	199
Vlogs, Youtube or other social media careers videos	39%	223	48%	278
Career conversations during tutorials	37%	214	55%	315
Skills assessment and/or Personality profile	35%	199	54%	310
Information sessions with colleges / 6th forms / universities / apprenticeship providers	34%	194	61%	351
Enterprise activities	34%	195	59%	341
Virtual employer visits	32%	182	59%	339
Careers fairs	30%	170	65%	377
Career games online	29%	165	59%	341
Mock interviews	27%	154	68%	394
Individual meetings with careers teacher	26%	151	69%	396
Work experience	25%	146	72%	410
Individual sessions with careers teacher	23%	133	70%	405
Virtual reality experience	23%	130	70%	403

Table 6: Year 9 rating of career activities

Year 8	At least useful or extremely useful		Did not do the activity	
Career Talks (online or in school)	56%	267	30%	141
Presentations in assembly	52%	247	30%	142
Vlogs, Youtube or other social media careers videos	44%	209	41%	193
Career conversations during tutorials	40%	189	49%	233
Information sessions with colleges / 6th forms / universities / apprenticeship providers	37%	174	56%	265
Skills assessment and/or Personality profile	34%	160	54%	254
Work experience	32%	151	65%	308
Virtual employer visits	31%	149	59%	284
Enterprise activities	29%	139	59%	282
Careers fairs	28%	133	68%	327
Career games online	26%	121	58%	277
Individual meetings with careers teacher	25%	120	68%	322
Virtual reality experience	23%	106	70%	329
Individual sessions with careers teacher	22%	103	72%	342
Mock interviews	18%	88	73%	350

Table 7: Year 8 rating of career activities

- 4.22 Nonetheless, the results show the importance of a rich and varied diet of careers guidance activities. A review of the tables above suggests a correlation between pupils' rating of an activity and the extent to which they were exposed to activities during the school year. What is surprising is that 72% (2,240) pupils claimed they did not participate in, 'Virtual reality experiences' 67% (n=2089) did not participate in 'Virtual employer visits' and 65% (2,007) did not participate in 'Careers Games Online'. This may have been due to the fact that schools were not prepared for the sudden impact of Covid or that staff lacked the time or resources to introduce such activities into their schools.
- 4.23 Of significance is the number of pupils in each year group who claimed not to have 'an individual meeting with a careers teacher or careers adviser', particularly for those in years 8 and 9, where approximately 70% of the pupils in each year group stated that neither of these activities took place. In contrast 63% (378) of year 9 and 10 pupils stated that when selecting their options at year 9 their choices were influenced by potential career interests.
- 4.24 Table 8 below shows the responses of Year 7 pupils for which most did not participate in the activity as is shown by the number of highlighted cells. Some activities such as mock interviews, work experience, individual sessions with a careers adviser may not be relevant at this stage; however, many of the other activities are highly relevant as part of their transition and career learning.

Year 7	At least useful or extremely useful		Did not do the activity	
Enterprise activities	88%	169	9%	17
Presentations in assembly	83%	163	11%	22
Vlogs, Youtube or other social media careers videos	80%	158	12%	24
Career Talks (online or in school)	18%	36	77%	151
Mock interviews	16%	32	77%	152
Career games online	16%	31	79%	155
Individual meetings with careers teacher	16%	31	81%	160
Career conversations during tutorials	16%	31	78%	154
Skills assessment and/or Personality profile	15%	30	80%	156
Work experience	15%	30	80%	158
Individual sessions with careers adviser	15%	30	80%	158
Virtual employer visits	15%	30	77%	153
Careers fairs	15%	30	81%	161
Virtual reality experience	14%	28	80%	156
Information sessions with colleges / 6th forms / universities / apprenticeship providers	13%	26	83%	162

Table 8: year 7 rating of career activities

4.25 The majority of pupils said they wanted to experience more and were prepared to invest in their own time to learn more about careers and the world of work. 71% (1,142) pupils stated that careers advice for them was at least 'very important' or 'essential'. Around two-thirds of pupils 69% (1,088) said they wanted to experience more and were prepared to invest their own time to learn more about careers and the world of work. The level of agreement differed slightly between year groups as follows:

- Year 11 - 72% (n=97)
- Year 10 - 72% (n=125)
- Year 9 - 74% (n=443)
- Year 8 - 53% (n=251)
- Year 7 - 85% (n=172)

This leads to opportunities to reimagine what careers guidance could look like both within and outside of formal schooling using a blended of skilful human support and technology advancements such as safe online platforms, apps, virtual reality, chatbots, gaming, social media etcetera.

4.26 **Career pathways**

For many young people (64%) staying on in education or findings an apprenticeship were reported to be of equal importance.

- 27% (n=866) of pupils believe that going into sixth form, FE college or university is the most important career path for them
- 9% (n=288) believe for them an apprenticeship is the correct path for them
- 64% (n=2019) state that both paths are of equal importance

When further analysed according to those pupils who have been or are in receipt of Free School meals (FSM) only a slight difference in the responses were received:

- 25% (n=196) of the pupils believe that going to sixth form, FE college or university is important
- 10% (n=79) believe for them an apprenticeship is the correct path
- 66% (n=525) believe both are equally important

4.27 **Work experience**

Work placements, community volunteering and part-time employment help pupils confirm their career aspirations, gain valuable experience and develop useful social networks. Very few pupils in Years 7 - 9 knew how they would get work experience. Traditionally, this happens mostly in Year 11 within the final term, rather than during secondary school life. Over 60% of pupils did not know where to get work experience and 69% of Year 9 pupils reported they did not get any actual work experience. Both pupils and headteachers reported concerns that Covid stopped work experience in 2020-2021.

Questions regarding work experience were tailored to each age group of respondents noting years 8 and below will not as yet have received any work experience.

Year 7 and 8 Pupils

- 34% (n=677) of pupils in this category said they knew where they could go to gain work experience

Years 9 and 10 pupils

- 39% (n=236) of pupils know where they can gain work experience
- 59% (n=355) had not carried out any exercises at school to identify their skills and/or personality.

Year 11 pupils

- 69% (n=97) reported they did not manage to gain any work experience.

Of these

- 33% (n=14) gained work experience through their parents
- 28% (n=12) had arranged it by themselves by contacting employers
- 21% (n=9) arranged it through their school
- 7% (n=3) had their work experience arranged by a careers adviser
- 93% (n=40) said their work experience was useful.

4.28 Employer perspectives of work experience

A total of 77% (n=30) of employer responses indicated that having work experience prior to employment is very important.

"I have to say I have been extremely impressed over recent years at how many young people do find work experience or part time jobs around their studies whilst in education as this really helps them demonstrate a strong work ethic and gives them a broader set of examples in answering interview questions." (Middle manager from a large nationwide employer in the Digital sector)

"Continuous, weekly work experience, not just a few days here and there is needed, within a vaguely suitable sector. The social aspect of 'fitting in' is equally as important as any job specific skills." (Director, Small-Medium Sized Engineering Firm)

4.29

How some employers in the survey have engaged with schools/academies

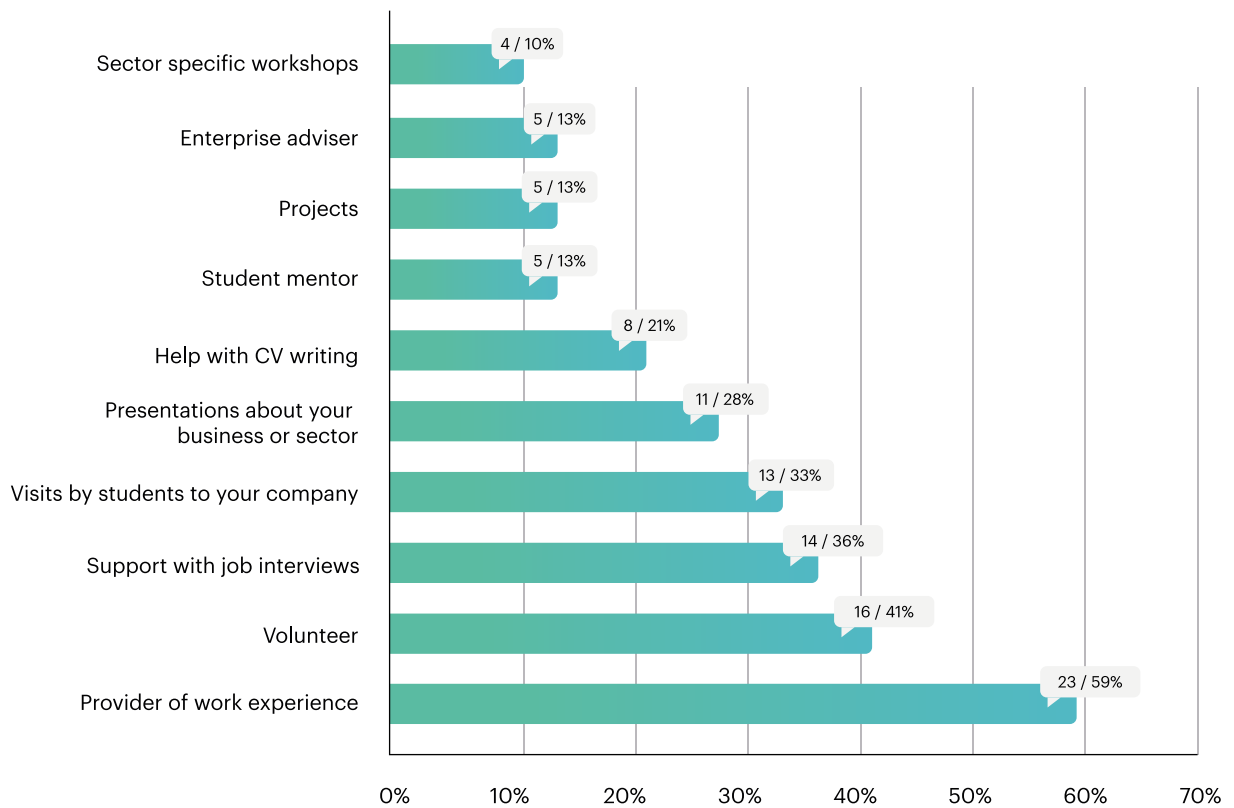


Figure 4: How employers engaged with schools

The chart above illustrates that 59% (n=23) of the employers provide work experience and 41% (n=16) volunteer and provide support with interviews.

- 49% (n=19) of the employers said they would be prepared to participate in careers competitions as an employer as a way of attracting young people to employment. A further 33% (n=13) may consider this.
- 54% (n=21) claimed that the activities in which they were engaged with in schools was part of learning and development strategy and 28% (n=11) stated they did so as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

4.30

Employers were asked What will work well in careers and employability support?

The top response was schools understanding of the world of work – cited by the majority of employers. This was followed by good and independent careers advice for pupils. Other comments included:

“People who understand the world of work but there aren’t that many in the education system”

“Making presentations exciting and interactive”

“Engaging with employers, getting young people who went to the school back in - young people relate to young people”

“Workshops on Employability Skills for the world of work.”

“Careers sessions which are short - 40 mins max - which highlight skills rather than roles.”

4.31 Pupils were asked “Have you done any online exercises/tests to see what jobs in the future or careers would best suit you? e.g., Unifrog, Start, Launch Your Career, iCould etc.”

- 37% (n=244) reported had done online exercises/tests to see what future jobs or careers would best suit them
- 63% (n=376) reported they had not or were not sure.

4.32 Many schools have to pay for careers software and portals. The specific product will vary depending on local preferences. Whilst the National Careers Service portal offers online exercises, we did not hear from any pupils using this service. Career exploration by pupils using technology resources is being under-utilised. There could be greater learning gains if schools encouraged pupils to practice using online exercises to sift and sort their career preferences from an early age.

Preferred activities for learning about careers and the world of work

4.33 Whilst pupils were aware of some careers platforms available most of them were not aware of what they did and certainly were not active users of the platforms which raises issues of value for money or consistency of approach.

4.34 When asked how they would want to learn about careers and the world of work the pupils rated out of a maximum possible score of 5. The chart figure 5 below illustrates the response received.

- Having more individual careers meetings with a careers adviser highest at 3.5;
- Group learning activities in school or online as second highest at 3.44;
- The use of a “Social Media Channel”; “Youtube or videos”; “Online games or Virtual reality” or “A careers app on a mobile” were all rated lowest in the list of delivery options.

This latter point about the use of virtual reality (VR) reflects the reduced exposure that pupils have had to these innovative delivery methods as illustrated in the tables 4 to 8 above. A key issue for pupils is how they can best build up an evidence-base of their skills, exposure to and careers guidance experiences and qualifications for later use in life.

How would you want to learn about careers and the world of work?

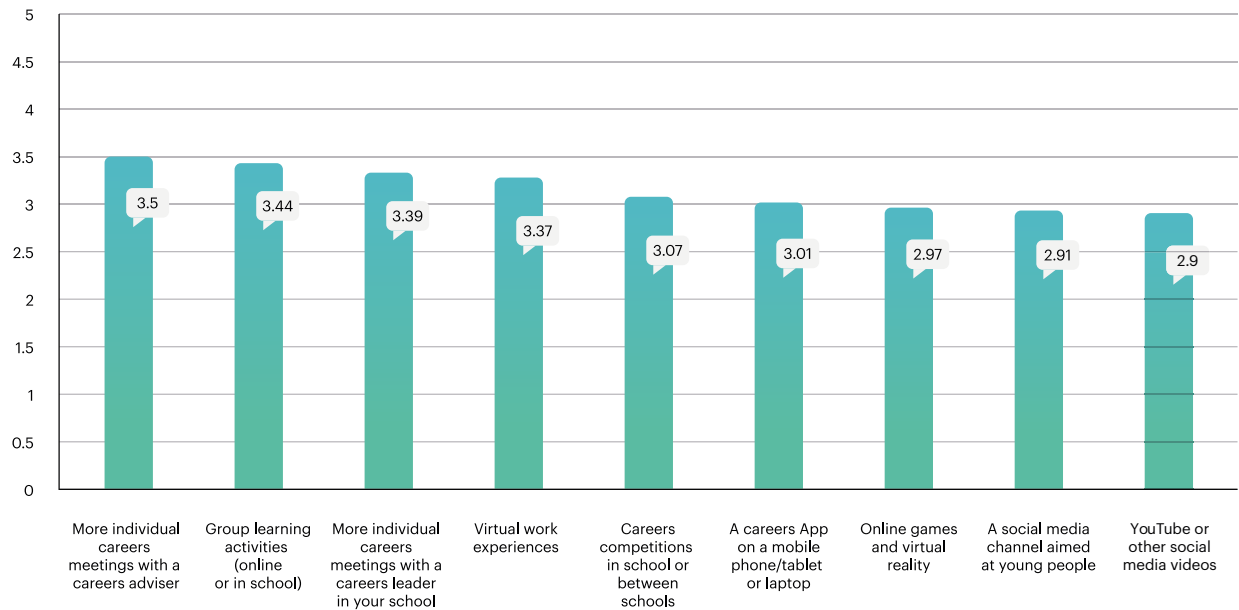


Figure 5: How pupils would want to learn about careers and the world of work

This was generally true of the responses from all of the age groups with one exception of year 7 pupils of whom over 80% (172) highly rated 'Online games and virtual reality'; 'Careers competitions in school or between schools'; and 'More individual meetings with a careers adviser'.

- 4.15 out of 5 - Online games and virtual reality
- 4.15 out of 5 - Careers competitions in school or between schools" rated at 4.15
- 4.05 out of 5 - More individual meetings with a careers adviser".

Also, nearly all pupils said they had a strong appetite to learn more about careers guidance during their school life but did not know where to turn to beyond parents, teachers and friends.

4.35 In response to 'Would you have wanted to learn more about careers in the past 5 years whilst at school?' a total of 80% (n=110) answered Yes.

4.36 A research objective was to investigate whether pupils might welcome some form of a national careers competition to help motivate and inspire their career learning. In response to the question 'If there was a national careers competition with prizes and recognition would you have been interested?' of those young people who responded to this theme, 68% (467) were in favour of a national competition. This is new concept which young people would require further information to make a decision either way, but there appears to be a mandate from these responses to test the introduction of a national careers competition in England.

4.37 **Headteachers and careers leaders' perspectives**

Headteachers interviewed highlighted 'pockets of excellence' in their own school's approach to addressing careers guidance needs. For example,

"For us career guidance is a really high priority. We have two jobs we're trying to do. Firstly, provide support for academic qualifications and secondly, to give young people the knowledge and personal skills to become more employable and a valuable member of society. We emphasise to parents we are not an exams factory. We want all young people to learn about future prospects and the world they are about to enter. We have a careers programme that backs this up. We are around the national average when it comes for FSMs but we spend disproportionately on career guidance support. Last year during the pandemic we saw the benefits of this with 100% pupils in sustainable education, employment and/or training destinations." (Greg Morrison, Headteacher, Preston School, Yeovil)

"At Catcote Academy we were delighted and honoured to have won the Careers and Enterprise Company Category for 'Special Education Needs Champion' for excellence in careers. We are a secondary school with post-16 provision and a specialist college for post 19 young adults. Our careers policies are transparent on our website and my role is full-time during term time only. I have a careers assistant and administrative support. I am very lucky compared to many other schools." (Jackie Mc Garry, Catcote Academy Trust, Hartlepool, Teeside)

"We have career guidance embedded in our Academy Area Improvement Plan. There is senior leadership team buy-in across our Multi-Academy Trust. Support systems and student progress files are in place and we regularly monitor and use destination data to inform curriculum planning. Overall, there is a need for greater consistency in schools' careers provision and ring-fenced funding for careers professionals." (Dean Jones, Principal, Firth Park Academy, Sheffield).



- 4.38 Since lockdowns began in March 2020, there has been no direct guidance to schools from Government on how best to support young people's career guidance needs in these exceptional times, beyond repeating past exhortations to achieve the self-assessed Gatsby benchmarks.

"The pandemic has exposed the flaws in our schooling system, which will only widen the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children. Most schools like mine will continue to take sensible precautions for the foreseeable future, with an emphasis on safety, hygiene, one-way systems and the like. The lack of readily available agency provision for children who need it most has become clear. As issues relating to mental health, self-harm, and domestic violence skyrocketed, schools and specialist care groups, such as children's mental health, became and still are overwhelmed. As budgets and resources remain squeezed crucial 'soft' elements of provision (which aren't soft at all but vital) such as career guidance get pushed further down our priorities. The children who suffer most and miss out are again those who don't have the home support / finance to make up the shortfalls. (Dean Jones, Principal, Firth Park Academy, Sheffield).

- 4.39 Headteachers unanimously reported they want to do more to ensure every young person received good career guidance. The Sutton Trust⁵⁸ has previously called on more private tuition agencies to provide a certain proportion of their tuition to disadvantaged pupils for free, as well as an expansion of non-profit and state tuition programmes that connect tutors with disadvantaged schools. There is considerable scope for career guidance commercial providers to adopt a similar approach and for government to co-ordinate a more equitable distribution of career guidance support to schools and pupils.

"It seems unfair that in an area one school can offer or invest in a great careers programme and another close by has significantly less careers resources. This impacts directly on young people. We are fortunate to be in an Opportunity Area and for the last year we have been legacy planning and working closely with other schools to share expertise and resources."
(Paul Collin, Headteacher, City Academy, Norwich)

"Government have made strides, there's a need to front-load careers support early on, instead of last minute in Years 10 and 11. Ministers need to be brave and make careers feature more in the Ofsted framework and this will help stop some schools falling behind again. With topics like mental health, safeguarding, supporting vulnerable pupils, new codes of practice, career guidance could end up being on the back foot again!!" (Nicola Mason, Head of School, Chase Terrace Academy, Staffordshire)

"We are inundated with emails and market products everyday being matched to the Gatsby Benchmarks. There's no quality assurance or control so how does a Careers Leader know

which is best? The budgets in schools vary considerably for careers work! A dedicated and ring-fenced budget is needed so that more young people can be guided. (James Wilmot, The Priory Learning Trust, North Somerset)

“The CEC’s work is step in the right direction, local Career Hubs need to drive up quality and learn more about local growth sectors. There needs to be real investment in professional standards, training and high-quality Careers Leaders.” (Ian Parry, Meols Cop High School, Greater Liverpool)

“More freedoms should be given to senior leadership teams for careers work. We are lucky we have a Careers Leader who is fantastic and works hard. To do more work with Year 7 and Year 8 pupils it would need reduced curriculum time or another alternative. My concern is few pupils are getting work experience this year. There are few trained level 6 careers professionals and government needs to listen more. A step forward would be a ring-fenced budget allocation of £10k to schools and more external support.” (Gary Pearson, Lydia Park Academy, Swindon)

“Due to covid restrictions and in Key Stage 3 many young people are not getting work experience and they are often tied to what’s available in their local area. Career guidance is incredibly under-funded and more needs to be done before it’s too late. Start early in primary schools and help children and young people to hold on to their curiosity. This can easily get lost. If you can’t see it, you can’t be it! New digital approaches can help broaden horizons with back-up support, if needed, from a trained careers adviser.” (Kate Hare, Aspirations Lead, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury)

Headteachers and careers leaders have a strong appetite to embed career guidance in their school/academy. They want to support Government to help get more young people equipped to navigate their way into an uncertain and fast changing world of work. Clearly, there are resources constraints and they too need support to build careers support capacity not only in young people but also in their workforce.

4.40 **Employer perspectives**

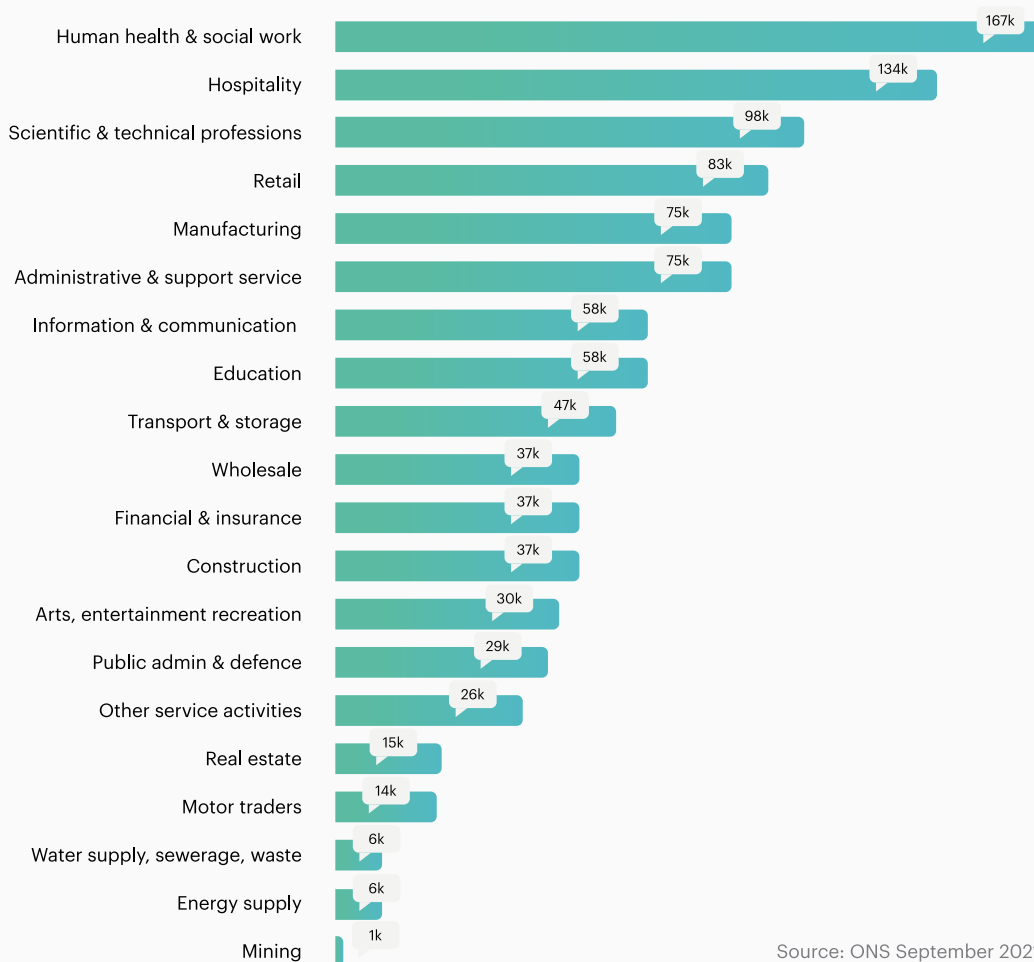
Job vacancies have hit a record high as the number of vacancies in the three months to August rose above one million for the first time since records began in 2001. ⁶ The charts below highlight the sectors most affected with a sharp increase being noted in 2021 in the transport and logistics, and similarly rises in construction and the wholesale and retail sectors

4.41 In September 2020, Business Barometer report was produced by the Open University commissioned by the Edge Foundation in which nearly six in ten (58%) of employers expect to be hiring more apprentices in the next 12 months, with a greater number of large organisations (63%) than SMEs (59%) planning to do so in England. The report further identified 48% of employers believe apprenticeships and work-based learning will be critical to their recovery post pandemic. This is corroborated by the City & Guilds Annual Skills Index 2021⁸ in which analysis of data collected by the British Chambers of Commerce concluded over half (56%) of employers face some kind of barrier to meeting their skills and talent needs – with 28% citing the mismatch between skills they need, and the skills people gain through school and education as a barrier.

This reinforces the need to ensure future skills gaps are avoided or minimised. It is important for young people making career choices to be presented with information about future opportunities and in which sectors these opportunities will be available, what skills may be required and in particular what qualifications in which subjects are relevant. Career guidance will be critical throughout their school lives to allow pupils to make informed decisions about subjects in year 9 and career paths in year 11. Parents will also need to learn more about new labour market trends. It will also be important for all young people to be aware of what it is employers are looking for when recruiting. Employers in our survey stated:

Who's hiring?

Job Vacancies by sector, June to August



Source: ONS September 2021

Figure 6

“There’s an urgent need to open up the millions of hidden roles business have available to young people that they may not have naturally considered or been aware of. i.e., the hundreds of support roles a business-like DHL have beyond lorry driving. (Public Services worker, East Midlands)

“We must make our sector more accessible to female apprentices and improving the image of construction to make it more inclusive.” (Manager, Building and Construction sector)

“The Social Care system is on its knees. It’s really difficult to recruit care workers even when the salary is increased. The message isn’t getting through to pupils in schools that caring for the elderly or working in the health service is a rewarding career. There are so many staff shortages in our sector” (Nursing Home Owner, Devon)

“We urgently need to create more role models that promote diversity and address stereotypical behaviours. The big challenge for young people is they need to know when making job or training applications they are often 1 of many. Their approach has to be well-prepared so that they manage to stand out from the crowd. I often get asked if tick-tock videos are a suitable substitute for traditional CVs. The answer is it all depends on the context and young people need to be helped in school to learn about effective ways of doing this. (HR specialist, Northants)

The total volume of online job adverts on 17 September

2021 grew by 3% from previous week, to 133% of its February 2020 average level

Volume of online job adverts by category, index: 100 = February 2021 average, 4 January 2019 to 17 September 2021, non-seasonally adjusted



Figure 7

4.4.2 To reinforce the need for improved careers guidance employer perspectives show some concerns about the work readiness of young people in England's schools and colleges, though the majority voiced most concern about the work readiness of university graduates.

Level of satisfaction with the work-readiness of young people.

- 26% (n=10) are dis-satisfied with the work readiness of school leavers
- 26% (n=10) are dis-satisfied with the work readiness of college leavers
- 49% (n=19) are dis-satisfied with the work readiness of university graduates.

4.4.3 Recruitment strategies:

- In the past 3–5 years 67% (n=26) of employers have recruited a school or college leaver as an apprentice or trainee.
- In the past 3–5 years 51% (n=20) have changed their recruitment strategy in favour of recruiting apprentices
- In the past 3–5 year 10% (n=4) have changed their recruitment strategy in favour of recruiting graduates.

4.4.4 Skills employers are looking for

Employers report they are willing to do more to support young people but there have been big challenges in gaining access in schools, mainly due to Covid-19. They highlight growing skills shortages and skills gaps in their industries and sectors and the need for better signalling and career guidance support for young people from an early age. They highlight their preferences with less emphasis on qualifications and more on 'soft skills' such as behaviour, personality, time management, and teamwork.

Skills employers are looking for in terms of importance when recruiting young people

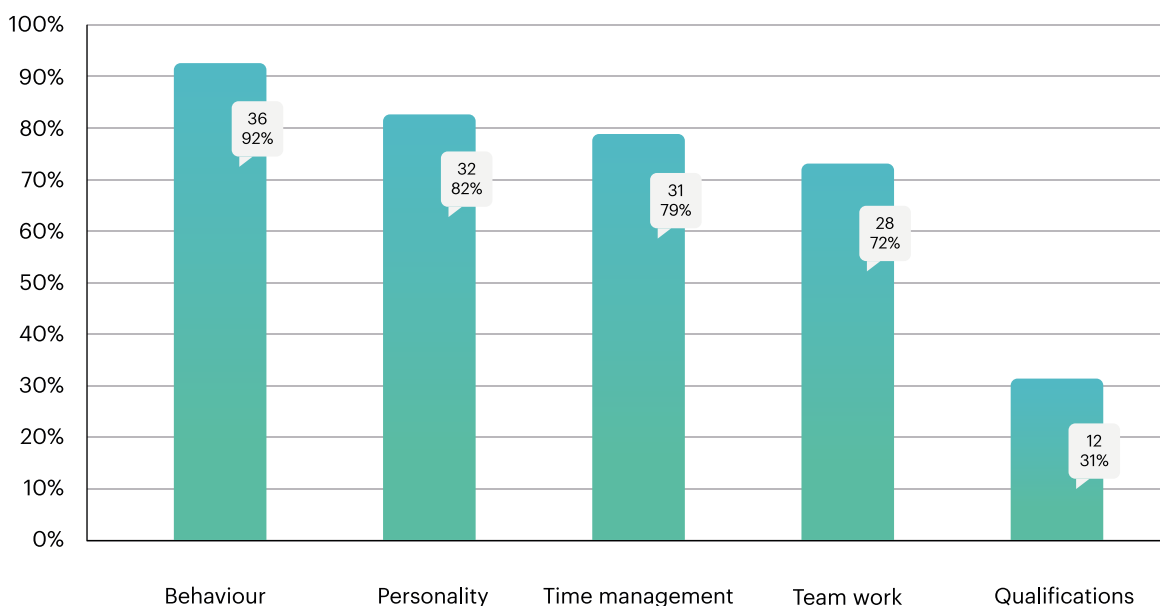


Figure 8: Skills employers look for when recruiting young people

“Children are lacking careers advice i.e., expectations from employers, some have no idea! Very immature and not prepared for job market, even at graduate level. Having to tell them no phones in workplace, to use initiative, to listen! Some come in with wrong attitude and do not like being told what to do!!!” (Sales company, Nottingham)

“Ensuring young people understand the basics around employment and team work e.g., turning up on time, being willing to learn and undertake any task, using initiative, communication. If they don't get experience whilst at school or after school, when will they learn and who will teach them the basics?” (Accountancy Firm, London)

Quotes in response to ‘What is the one single thing you would want from young people in terms of your recruitment strategies?’ “Teamwork” – quoted by 12 respondents and “Time management” – quoted by 5 respondents. Other comments were:

“There are lots of employers/ employees willing to help and support teachers in bringing their subjects alive with real problems and challenges that need to be solved e.g., climate change. We simply need to be able to get back into schools as soon as it's safe to do so!” (Anonymous)

“A genuine interest in the role and the company they are interviewing for - asking questions that demonstrate this and show that they have read up on the company in advance of the interview” (Recruitment specialist, Lincoln)

“To be work ready, in which some are not.” (Anonymous)

“I volunteered as a STEM Ambassador working in schools to help get the message across to young people that applying for jobs and getting through the recruitment process requires effort and resilience. The quality of applications from school leavers isn't great! More needs to be done” (HR specialist, Paint Manufacturing Company)

5.0

Conclusions and Recommendations

Government has an important role to play in clearly articulating expectations of schools ensuring the supply of trained careers advisers and encouraging and enabling employers to work with educational providers. As pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds typically need greater support, schools serving them should anticipate greater resource allocation in clear alignment with the government's 'levelling up' policies.

School performance is measured primarily on league tables, exam results, and Ofsted reports - none of which prioritise or guarantee the equitable provision of careers guidance for young people in England's schools. Headteacher feedback from interviews confirms this year's cohort of pupils in secondary schooling will need intensive careers guidance support to assist them with their career aspirations and decisions in a rapidly changing world of work and more needs to be done in this regard. There is a serious risk of careers guidance inadvertently slipping further down the school priority listing in the absence of dedicated ring-fenced resources.

The real significant challenge ahead is to fill major skills and talent gaps by harnessing young people's (and adults) knowledge, skills and experience. There is a strong desire from young people for more career guidance. Their strength of feeling about the importance of work and creating sustainable futures is palpable. Employer feedback shows a strong willingness and desire to support schools with careers guidance programmes. Covid closed many opportunities for them to go into to educational establishments to work directly with pupils on CVs, mock interviews, assessment training centre exercises, skills builder activities etc. It is time to reignite employer engagement in schools and colleges across England for the benefit of all school pupils - not just the privileged few - and the national economy. This will also bring new forms of contemporary labour market intelligence/information, including real-life problem solving and innovation challenges, into the education system.

The digital world has expanded exponentially since March 2020 – those without digital skills are seriously marginalised. Many won't even be able to access or find out about opportunities. With the right measures in place to mitigate the negative and costly impacts of school, college and university drop-out, despondent or low skilled youth, and rising youth unemployment, careers guidance can be assured, and guide those newly entering an uncertain jobs market to start their careers. This research highlighted that year 7 pupils preferred careers activities such as "Online gaming" and Virtual reality experiences" and "Virtual employer visits". This group and year 6 pupils' surveyed also expressed a strong appetite to take part in career competitions. It is therefore logical that for years 7 and 8 pupils, schools should embed into the curriculum more of these activities to supplement and maintain the career-related learning received in primary schools. This will effectively help prepare these pupils for making career choices when they reach year 9 and beyond. Significant numbers of young people lack sufficient access to broadband, appropriate computer equipment or other technology, and/or the digital literacy they need to access the online world.

Strong foundations have been laid by Government with investment in the professional development of Careers Leaders in schools/academies and over 3,000 are now part of a local or regional 'Careers Hub' to drive up social mobility. The implementation of Gatsby benchmarks is well established, primarily self-assessed in schools (and colleges). However, in some cases, this has resulted in a 'tick-box' exercise. Enterprise Co-ordinators, Enterprise Advisers, Careers Advisers and Careers Hub Leads have a role to play which includes moderation, quality-assurance and challenge.

Return on Investment (ROI) analysis, published by the Careers & Enterprise Company, shows that personal guidance conversations during secondary school have at least a 4x medium-term return for the Exchequer, based on reductions in youth NEET rates, reduced drop-out rates from university, and higher youth wages, evidenced through a range of longitudinal studies, comparison group trials, and meta-analyses 9.

A combined departmental and/ or joint Ministerial Career Guidance Steering Group is urgently needed to stop the erosion of career guidance for young people in England to prevent the country lagging behind other parts of the UK and further afield.

In order to make further gains for accelerated system improvement and to equip all young people to achieve successful transitions in learning and work, the following urgent actions are essential.

Recommended action in policy/legislative terms for government

1 Young people want and need more exposure to and experience of careers activities from an early age. The Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill, would extend the duty to provide career guidance in schools to young people from Year 7 onwards. The significant loss of work experience for young people has to be urgently addressed.

2 New school performance measures are essential and these should evidence, celebrate and reward institutions with career guidance and world of work programmes, including 'out of school' careers activities. Connectivity to employers, destinations and new destination measures can be used more effectively to inspire more young people, parents and teachers.

Recommended action in policy implementation specific government departments and officials

3 Three major government departments, including the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), should work more collaboratively and involve leaders from industry, education, and the careers and enterprise sector to address specific skills deficits and co-design better signalling of opportunities to young people, parents and teachers.

4

A Career Guidance Steering Group should be formed with Ministerial support to ensure its success. Ministers with a portfolio in Health and Social Care, Transport, Digital Innovation, Food and Rural Affairs, Sports, Media and Culture and Women and Equalities could help prioritise careers guidance for young people and set a dynamic shared agenda for Britain's economic, social and cultural prosperity. There is scope to think about new ideas to harness young people's enthusiasm for careers activities and helping those most disadvantaged. Summer schools, after school clubs (including: sports, green economy challenges, creative arts, health care innovation, digital clubs and transport solution, gender equality and other allied projects etc.) should be prioritised to improve skills, work-readiness and personal development. These offer 'seeds of promise' for rapid learning gains.

5

Young people's access to local careers guidance – places and spaces online and offline – to support career conversations must be a golden thread woven into government department and officials' citizen consultations and delivery plans. This must be viewed not only as a solution that enables the continuance of services during the pandemic, but also, e.g., for the personalisation of more tailored and targeted careers support.

Recommended action in Government consulting with partners to address 'learning loss'

6

The National Careers Service, Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should jointly consult with those who have a strong track record of direct delivery of quality- assured careers support for young people. There are 'two wicked questions' to be addressed: How can more young people gain improved access to career guidance? How can advances in technology encourage career exploration from an early age, as well as equip teachers and careers professionals with the right tools to do their job?

7

These Departments should consult on careers leadership, teacher and careers adviser training and digital skills, working with bodies such as the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT), Careers England, the Career Development Institute (CDI) and Local Government Association. All schools should have ring-fenced funds for a careers leader, careers adviser and their active participation in local career hubs that can benefit all young people, teachers and parents. A plethora of careers products currently marketed to schools are taking valuable time away from work with young people. These should be quality-assured by an independent third-party and streamlined.

8

Government, education technology companies and charities with a proven track record in delivery of virtual experiences using the latest technology innovations can meet to examine how best to help provide pupils with tailored and targeted career guidance, starting from an early age in primary schools. Those with a proven track record in delivery can demonstrate how from Key Stage 1 & 2 upwards - throughout the schooling system - 'career learning logs' could greatly benefit children and young people's career exploration as well as supporting family career conversations. Most importantly, hopes, dreams, knowledge, skills and experiences would be recorded and pupil learning loss would be ameliorated.

Recommended action employers/employer bodies/sector organisations and partners

9

Employers should work with schools/academies and career support organisations to offer prizes such as work experience opportunities, work shadowing, paid internships etc. for young people, particularly those most vulnerable. Competition performs a role in education by enlightening pupils on what they may or may not have been taught in class. In short, competitions have the potential to add to the experience and knowledge gained by pupils as part of their schooling – this serves as one potential avenue for careers learning. Clearly there is potential for schools and inter-school careers competitions to help motivate and inspire young people to be curious and knowledgeable about the rapidly changing world of work. The parameters of this relatively new concept would need to be more clearly defined.

Finally, it should be noted, when young people are exposed to personalised guidance it makes a tangible difference to individuals with significant returns on investment ROI) for the Treasury (Percy, 2022)⁵⁹.

Young people need career guidance support more than ever. The social and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be felt for many years to come. We all have a moral duty to do more.

6.0

References

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The Bill forms the legislative underpinning for the reforms set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper and aims to improve the functioning of the skills and post-16 education system and support the introduction of a Lifetime Skills Guarantee.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Schools/Academies

School	Number
George Spencer Academy	407
Heanorgate Science College	352
The Farnborough Academy	320
Ormiston Horizon Academy	316
Tanbridge House School	292
Co-op Academy Walkden	217
Derby Moor Academy	191
Tupton Hall Redhill Academy	188
The Pingle Academy Deferrers Trust	162
Gosforth Academy	129
Parker Academy	112
Beckfoot Upper Heaton Secondary School	108
Blessed William Howard	102
The Rawlett School	95
The Ripley Academy	80
Oakgrove Secondary School	76
Kings School	71
Eckington Leap Trust	61
Holte Secondary School	45
Glossopdale Community College and 6th Form	31
Toot Hill Academy	29
Walsall Academy	27
Malet Lambert School	22
Birches Head Academy	5
The Dorcan Academy	5

St Marylebone CE School	3
East Midlands Education Trust	3
Nova Education Trust	3
Derby Cathedral School	2
Greenway	2
Martonville High School	2
Westminster College	2
Alsager School	1
Bridgwater and Taunton college trust	1
Brine Leas School	1
Camms	1
Chellaston Academy/ QEGSMAT	1
Chesham	1
Daventry Hill School	1
Frank Field Education Trust	1
Henley	1
Landau Forte School	1
Oak Academy	1
Queen Elizabeth High School	1
Tor Bridge High	1
Tunbridge House School	1
Shirebrook	1
Thrive	1
Langley Park Boys	1
Birches head Academy	1
Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust	1
The Dukeries Academy	1

Region	Number of respondents
North West	218
North East	131
West Midlands	738
East Midlands	1762
Yorkshire	189
London + South East	391
South West	5
East of England	0

Summer School responses from Year 6 transitioning to Year 7

- The Parker E-Act Academy - Daventry
- Ormiston Meridian Academy - Stoke-on-Trent
- Ormiston Horizon Academy - Stoke-on-Trent
- The Rawlett School - Tamworth
- The Kings CofE school - Wolverhampton
- Arnold Hill Academy - Nottingham
- Holte School - Birmingham
- Blessed William Howard - Stafford
- Walsall Academy - Walsall
- The Coop Academy, Walkden - Manchester
- Beckfoot Upper Heaton School - Bradford
- Tamworth Enterprise College - Tamworth
- Beckfoot School – Bradford

Year Groups

Year Group	Percentage (%)	Number
Start year 7 in September 2021	49%	1,557
Year 7	6%	202
Year 8	15%	490
Year 9	19%	611
Year 10	6%	175
Year 11	4%	136

Note: 444 students did not answer the question.

Gender Breakdown

- 45% Males
- 51% Females
- 4% Prefer not to say

Ethnicity

- White (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British) – 78%
- Asian/Asian British – 9%
- White other – 5%
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic group – 4%
- Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British – 3%
- Other ethnic group – 2%

Appendix 2 – Headteachers and Careers Leaders

The following leaders kindly contributed to this research and agreed for the details to be published:

- Paul Collin, Headteacher, City Academy Norwich
- Dean Jones, Principal, Firth Park Academy, Sheffield
- Kate Hare, Aspirations Lead, Meole Brace School, Shrewsbury
- Nicola, Mason, Head of School, Chase Terrace Academy, Stafford
- Jackie Mc Garry, Careers Lead, Catcote Academy and Sixth Form Centre, Hartlepool
- Greg Morrison, Principal, Preston School, Yeovil
- Ian Parry, Principal, Meols Cop School, Greater Liverpool
- Gary Pearson, Operating Principal, Lydia Park Academy, Swindon
- Lin Proctor, Careers Lead, Wallington County Grammar School, Herne Hill, South London
- Jules White, Headteacher, Tanbridge House School, Horsham, West Sussex
- Neil Wilkinson, Headteacher, The Bemrose School, Derby
- James Wilmot, Director of Careers Education & Guidance (CEAG), The Priory Learning Trust, North Somerset.

Appendix 3 – Employer survey and telephone interviews

Survey responses and employer telephone interviews:

14 sectors represented are:

- Business and Administration – 21% (n=8)
- Engineering and Manufacturing – 13% (n=5)
- Education and Teaching – 13% (n=5)
- Public sector and Public Services – 13% (n=5)
- Finance and banking – 8% (n=3)
- Sales, Marketing and Procurement – 5% (n=2)
- Sport and Leisure – 5% (n=2)
- Digital – 5% (n=2)
- Legal – 5% (n=2)
- Building and Construction – 3% (n=1)
- Finance and banking – 3% (n=1)
- Health and Medical – 3% (n=1)
- Food Industry – 3% (n=1)
- Transport and Logistics – 3% (n=1)

Size of organisation

- More than 250 employees – 46% (n=18)
- 50 to 249 employees – 18% (n=7)
- 11 to 49 employees – 23% (n=9)
- Less than 10 employees – 8% (n=3)
- Sole trader – 5% (n=2)

Regions in which businesses are located

- Nationwide – 28% (n=11)
- East Midlands – 26% (n=10)
- South East – 13% (n=5)
- South West – 10% (n=4)
- West Midlands – 8% (n=3)
- North West – 5% (n=2)
- London – 3% (n=1)
- East of England – 3% (n=1)
- North East – 3% (n=1)

74% (n=11) are directors; 15% (n=6) are senior managers; 5% (n=2) are middle managers.

2 others are administrators.

Appendix 4 – Careers After Covid

Link to earlier research report findings by Dev Clever PLC undertaken between 25th February – 22nd March 2021 - https://launchyourcareer.com/en_UK/careersaftercovid/

This involved:

- 1,002 secondary school students
- 1,002 parents of secondary school students
- 500 secondary school teachers.

Selected findings

- Nine in ten teachers (87%) and two thirds of parents (67%) are worried about the impact having less exposure to the world of work will have on young people (p.3).
- More than a quarter (28%) of the students surveyed had no experience of the world of work whatsoever, not even listening to a visiting speaker in school (p.3).
- Nearly half (48%) of teachers say their school's ability to give careers advice to students has worsened since the pandemic (p.4).
- Nearly a fifth (19%) of students say they have not received any careers advice since the lockdown began, and a further 16% have been unsatisfied with the advice they have received since March 2020 (p.4).
- Parents feel they may not have access to the best skills and information to help their child. The data showed that 92% of parents surveyed have discussed potential career options with their child, however, a third (33%) do not feel equipped to give careers advice (p.5).
- Nearly half (48%) of students want to see which careers would suit their interest and personality. They are looking for advice which is tailored to them, and not a blanket careers session designed for the whole class (p.6)
- 45% of mainstream schools and colleges are now part of a careers hub and this trend is set to increase with a view to supporting the Covid recovery (p.7)
- 73% of parents said they would feel more comfortable advising their child on careers if they understood what jobs would suit their child's skills and personality (p.11).

