

**WAYS INTO WORK:
VIEWS OF CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
ON EDUCATION
AND EMPLOYMENT**

MAY 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth unemployment is now over one million. City & Guilds has welcomed the Government's efforts to tackle this burgeoning crisis through the £1 billion Youth Contract.

As the UK's leading provider of vocational qualifications our purpose is to enable people and organisations to develop their skills for personal and economic growth. City & Guilds is firmly committed to ensuring more of our young people can get the skills they need to find the right employment and support the UK's economic growth.

City & Guilds' Million Extra campaign to help create one million additional apprenticeship places by summer 2013 demonstrates our commitment to work-based learning, but we want to do more to understand how young people in particular view their own skills development.

In February 2012, we commissioned research which looked at the views of 3000 young people aged 7-18 around education and employment and the findings clearly demonstrated that the link between education and employment is central to tackling the issue of youth unemployment.

The connection between education and work

- It has become clear that young people's contact with employers is one of the most important indicators of their future ability to successfully enter the labour market.
- In February 2012, the Education and Employers Taskforce found that young people who had contact at least four times with employers were five times more likely to be in education, employment or training than their peers who recalled no such contacts.
- City & Guilds' research with young people found that the most useful source of advice on employment

and careers came from a visit to an employer. 44% of 16-18 year olds who had visited an employer rated this experience as 'very useful'. However, only 26% of the respondents in this age group had actually visited an employer. All age groups (7-18) agreed that visits to employers would be useful.

Careers guidance

- One third of respondents said they had not received any careers guidance.
- 64% of 14-18 year olds received careers advice from their teacher – only 14% rated this as 'very useful' compared to 31% who felt this about advice from parents and 39% from an employer visit.
- Given that employers and parents are considered to be among the most useful channels for Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG), we would urge the Government to consider how the emphasis of information provided to young people about employment can be shifted towards the channels that are most useful – i.e. employers and parents.

Entrepreneurial aspirations

- 42% of 14-16s and 49% of 16-18s agreed they would 'one day like to run their own businesses'. The high proportion of young people interested in being self-employed demonstrates an enthusiasm for enterprise and entrepreneurship which must be supported and encouraged.

Mood of a generation

- Overall, young people remain optimistic about their personal chances of success in life with 61% of 7-11 year olds, 66% of 14-16 year olds and 71% of 16-18 year olds feeling optimistic or very optimistic. However, pessimism

also rises with age. A higher percentage in the younger age groups are too unsure to comment about their personal chances of success.

- 18% of 14-16 year olds and 23% of 16-18 year olds are pessimistic or very pessimistic about finding a job after leaving school or college.
- Money worries are prominent. 64% of 14-18 year olds are concerned to some extent about earning enough money in future and 21% are very concerned.
- These findings start to contradict some of the negative stereotypes that exist in our society of young people being lazy and uninterested in the world. Instead, there is serious concern about the future and considered views on their chances of employment, success and wealth.

Maths: the key to success?

- Numeracy skills are known to have a positive impact on life chances and this study shows a majority of young people, 69%, believe that as a subject Maths can help them become successful. This figure is highest in the 7-11 age group (85%).
- However, 14-18 year olds, particularly girls, find classroom Maths boring, difficult or irrelevant.
- Many young people do not see the relevance of what they learn in school to its subsequent use in the 'real world'.
- 54% of 16-18 year olds commented unprompted that taught Maths should be more geared towards real life, relevant or practical scenarios.
- We need to revolutionise the way we think about Maths both in schools and beyond. Practical Maths would engage young people and give employers the skills they need to drive economic growth.

Based on these findings, we believe we need to improve the connection between education and employment.

Addressing the link between education and work will not only reduce the unemployment count amongst young people but will also give them the opportunities to channel their enthusiasm into a realistic understanding of the world of work. Employers would benefit from new waves of candidates who understand what work means from an early age and therefore have the best opportunity to prepare themselves with the skills employers demand.

This is a long-term campaign for us and we will be consulting with a range of groups and partners before presenting our proposals later this year.

THE LINK BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT IS CENTRAL TO TACKLING THE ISSUE OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The number of unemployed 16-24 year olds in the UK is now 1.04m¹. The youth unemployment rate, at 22.5%, is higher than at any point since comparable records began in 1992. In a bid to tackle this burgeoning crisis, Nick Clegg announced a £1 billion Youth Contract programme ahead of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in November 2011. The programme aims to create at least 410,000 work places for 18-24 year olds including wage subsidies for employers, 250,000 work experience placements and at least 20,000 more incentive payments to encourage employers to take on young apprentices.

As the UK's leading vocational education organisation, City & Guilds' purpose is to help people and organisations to develop their skills for personal and economic growth and therefore we are firmly committed to supporting the Government's agenda on driving youth employment.

1.2 Objective

The aim of this research is to explore the hopes and aspirations of young people in the UK and their experiences of the education and training system to date. In doing so, we hope to bring key insights and the voice of young people into the debate.

1.3 Methodology

Data collection was via an online survey of 3000 young people in February 2012. Respondents comprised 1000 individuals from each of three age groups 7-11, 14-16 and 16-18. These age groups were chosen to represent key stages for learners in the education system: primary school, making choices for key stage 4 and school leavers. Respondents in each age group represent a 50:50 male-female split and are nationally representative in terms of nation and region across the UK.

The sample was provided by ResearchBods, an independent agency providing the most robust, responsive, responsible and ethical access to young people consumer panels in the UK. Panellists are recruited through an invitation only process and are motivated and rewarded appropriately to provide the most honest and valid responses. Children aged 7-11 complete the online surveys whilst accompanied by a parent.

Additional supporting insight was obtained with three focus groups:

- 1 x online focus group 7-11 year old participants recruited nationwide from ResearchBods' specialist panel FamilyBods.
- 1 x online focus group 14-16 year old participants recruited nationwide from ResearchBods' specialist panel YoungBods.

Online focus groups were chosen for these two younger groups as a medium where they would be comfortable, less susceptible to peer-pressure and where all individuals would be able to contribute. The groups operated live with a professional moderator facilitating the discussion and young people participating from their own locations. Individuals had their own avatars in the on-screen virtual focus group. The 7-11 year olds participating were accompanied by a parent.

- 1 x face to face focus group of participants aged 16 and over recruited from London Youth – a network of 400 community organisations serving young people and their families in every London borough.

Note on the figures: All percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

CITY & GUILDS WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO LONDON YOUTH DARE TEAM WHO HOSTED ONE OF THE FOCUS GROUPS.

¹ In period Nov 2011-Jan 2012. Source: House of Commons Library, Standard Note SN/5871 14 March 2012

2. OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE, THE ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

2.1 Young people are optimistic they will be successful in life

Overall young people are optimistic about being personally successful in whatever they do. Pessimism becomes more prevalent in the older age groups.

In the 7-11 age group, 61% of respondents are optimistic they will be successful. Only 1% are pessimistic and a large proportion (30%) don't know. This age group is generally excited when talking about the future and almost all respondents talk to their parents about it. The optimism appears to derive from the world of possibility presented to them.

7-11 year olds said:

'When I'm older I can be anything I want'

For 7-11 year olds, the advice given by parents, as cited in focus groups, is to do well at school, keep on trying; work hard. There is a belief that working hard at school will lead to success.

'If you do amazing at school you don't want to have a rubbish job'

Both the older age groups are also optimistic they will be 'successful in whatever they do'

66% of 14-16 year olds are 'optimistic' or 'very optimistic' and 7% of 14-16 year olds are 'pessimistic' or 'very pessimistic'. 27% of this age group don't know.

14-16 year olds said:

'I think I'm capable of it if I put in the effort'

'I'm confident because I know I can be bothered to dig deep and work hard.'

The increase in pessimism by age 14-16 may stem from the fact that for this age group when thinking

about the future their excitement is often tempered with anxiety:

'Feeling pressured'

'Nervous about achieving'

'I am scared of failure'

'Secretly worried'

'Makes me feel unsure about my decisions'

The personal qualities young people cited in focus groups as helping them become successful were primarily confidence, hard work, determination, self-belief. Very few young people mention any kind of support or guidance.

Optimism and pessimism are both highest at age 16-18

71% of 16-18 year olds are 'optimistic' or 'very optimistic' and 9% of 16-18 year olds are 'pessimistic' or 'very pessimistic'. 20% of this age group don't know.

For 16-18 year olds both optimism and pessimism are higher than for younger age groups. This may be because by this age individuals have accrued enough experience in school and life to have a realistic idea of what their immediate future holds. The percentage who don't know (20%) is lower for this age group than any other.

Note that questions in the following sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 were not asked of 7-11 year olds.

2.2 Young people are a little less optimistic about finding a job after finishing school or college

Young people are rather less optimistic about their job prospects than 'success in whatever they do'. The percentage that is pessimistic is highest in the oldest age group.

56% of 14-16 year olds are 'optimistic' or 'very optimistic' and 18% are 'pessimistic' or 'very pessimistic' about finding a job after finishing school or college.

56% of 16-18 year olds are also 'optimistic' or 'very optimistic' and 23% are 'pessimistic' or 'very pessimistic' about finding a job after finishing school or college.

14-16 year olds said:

'I'm not confident because I feel there are so little jobs to go round so if you don't stand out you end up with qualifications but no job'

'Because it's hard to get a job nowadays'

'Even if you have a job who's to say if it's secure?'

'You need qualifications but if you know people there is a much higher chance of being employed.'

16-18 year olds said:

'It's a lot harder and it's a lot more stress on me to find jobs. I don't have experience or qualifications so where do I go now with all these cuts?'

'What makes it worse is there is not much job action...what jobs are actually there?'

The increase in pessimism regarding actual job prospects compared to 'success in life' may relate to the current economic climate. It may also simply reflect that young people have a broad idea of what defines success. When asked what success means to them 46% of 14-16 year olds and 51% of 16-18 year olds selected options around good social and emotional lives rather than work.

2.3 Young people are aware of unemployment and the economic situation in the UK

Awareness of the issue of unemployment is high and increases with age. Among 14-16 year olds 77% had read or heard about UK unemployment and this increased to 88% for 16-18 year olds. Awareness is mostly derived from TV and personal experience.

Both 14-16 and 16-18 year olds are concerned about how the economic situation will affect them but remain optimistic overall – see page 5.

By the age of 16-18, some young people reported they experience a sense of disconnection from economic concerns and that it does not affect them:

'If it doesn't affect them [young people] directly or they think it doesn't then they just move on...'

'For me the price of a packet of crisps goes up and that's the economy.'

2.4 A majority of young people are concerned about earning enough money after leaving school

A clear majority of 14-18 year olds have concerns about earning enough money after school and almost 1 in 4 is 'very concerned'.

Around two thirds of the 14+ age groups show some concern for their ability to earn money after school. In the 16-18 age group nearly a quarter of youths were very concerned:

63% of 14-16s are concerned to some extent – 21% very concerned – and 18% not sure.

65% of 16-18s are concerned to some extent – 24% very concerned – and 19% not sure.

14-16 year olds said:

'I'm worried because if I don't have a job I won't be able to pay for my uni fees'

'Makes me feel depressed that I might not be able to provide for a future family.'

Overall 14-18 year olds are worried about what effect the state of the economy is going to have on their chances to get jobs and earning potential, but the majority are, individually, positive about their personal chances of getting a job when they leave school. See page 5. There is a general understanding of the lack of jobs in the market and that they need to make themselves stand out in order to succeed.

3. HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS

3.1 The job sectors that young people most aspire to work in are highly varied and change as they grow older

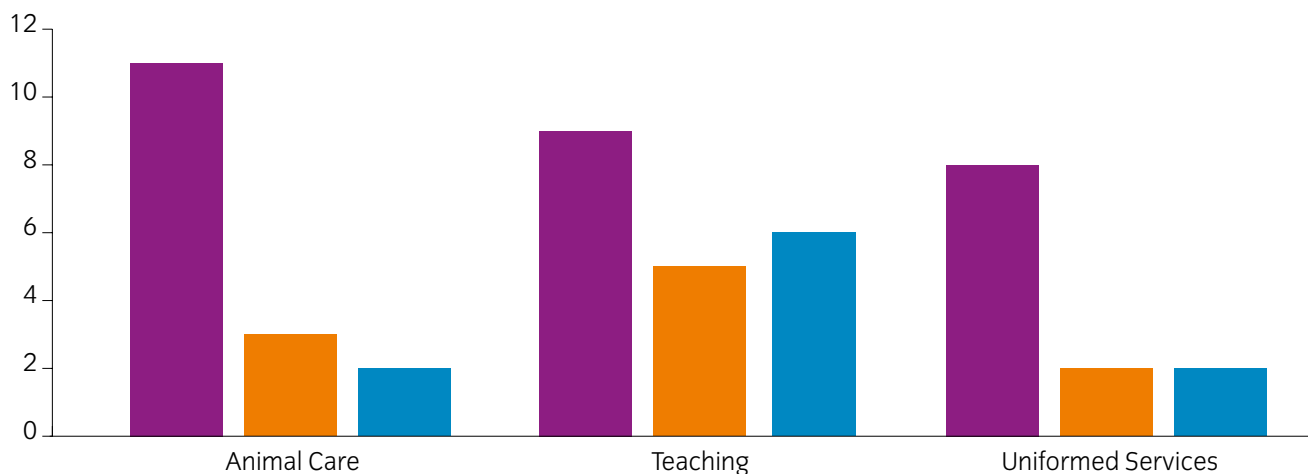
As children grow into young adults we infer from their comments that their notions of work change from being about fun and things they like, to being about money and developing their interests that are related to realistic work.

The chart below illustrates that the ideas children have about a typical dream job tend to change as they enter their teenage years. The three most popular career choices at 7-11 all decline in popularity as children grow up. At 16-18 three different sectors feature as the most popular.

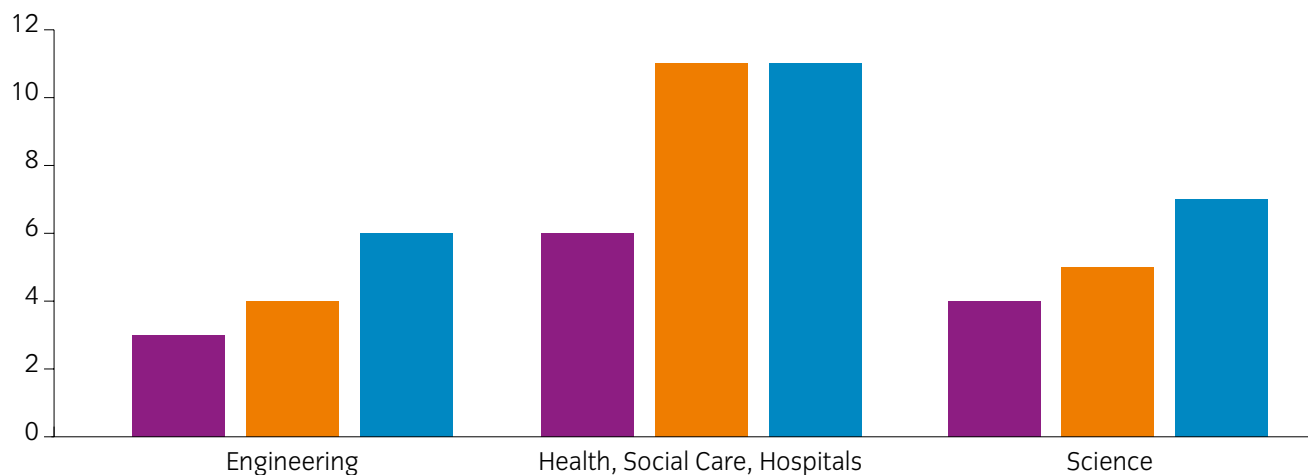
Figure 3.1

The percentage of young people in each category selecting the job sector they would most want to work in.

Three most popular career choices for 7-11 year olds



Three most popular career choices for 16-18 year olds



Key

7-11 14-16 16-18

■ In the 7-11 age group 11% of children (and 19% of girls) voted Animal Care their most desired job. This drops to 4% for girls at 14-16. At the same age 14% of boys wanted to work in Sport and Leisure but by the time they reached 14+ only 5% did.

■ For the 14-16 and 16-18 age groups, aspirations about a career in Animal Care have almost dropped off the radar. The same is true for Uniformed Services and Sport and Leisure. Instead, boys indicated that they favoured IT, chosen by 14% of 14-16 year olds.

■ In both the older age groups the Health/Social/Child Care/Hospitals sector has grown in desirability and is the most popular overall choice chosen by 11%. Among girls it is the first choice of 14% of 14-16 year olds and 17% of 16-18 year olds. Science and Engineering have also grown in popularity compared with younger age groups. IT remains very popular with boys, chosen by 10%, but does not make the overall top three because it is chosen by only 3% of girls.

Younger children (7-11) tend to mention jobs that are highly visible in the media or their lives

■ Most popular specific jobs mentioned in the focus group include: footballer, singer, vet.

■ Seeing jobs depicted on TV can also lead this age group to change their minds about their dream jobs on quite a regular basis.

■ **Social interaction** is also cited as an attraction to these careers; *'you get to meet new people and to be famous', 'the money and meeting new people', 'because it gives me a chance to meet new people'.*

■ When asked what they would do if not their dream job, answers changed to more common job roles such as 'teacher' or 'hairdresser'. These ideas were taken from observing their own family and family friends.

Older age groups (14-16 and 16-18) start talking about more common job roles/sectors that will provide money

At 14-16, professions such as IT, law, engineering and science start to feature more heavily as desired jobs. Between this age and 16-18 there is little change in what is considered desirable.

By the age of 14-16 the reasons for these choices become a mixture of their personal interests and the ability to earn money.

'The money and the ability to argue a point across' (lawyer)

'I really enjoy photography, and the thought of getting out there and doing a practical job excites me!'

'It would be interesting to see all the different court cases and to defend people who need help... and you get a lot of money!' (barrister)

3.2 Running your own business

Almost half of young people surveyed would one day like to run their own business

42% of 14-16 year olds agreed with the statement 'One day I would like to run my own business'.

25% actively disagreed.

By age 16-18, nearly half (49%) of respondents agreed that they would one day like to run their own business.

3.3 Young people appreciate it will take hard work and determination to get their ideal job

All age groups illustrate an appreciation for the hard work that is needed to get their ideal job

The vast majority of young people responding to the survey know that achieving their ambitions involves hard work, determination and doing well at school. The older the age group, the deeper the understanding of the specific education routes and skills required in getting there.

82% of 7-11 year olds believed they need to 'work very hard'. This age group already has a good appreciation of what is involved with preparing yourself to get the job you want:

'Taking lots of exams to become a teacher then helping other kids to do well.'

'A long time at college and lots of hard work.'

From the age of 7 there is a strong understanding of the link between education and getting a job.

75% of 7-11 year olds felt that they need to 'get good marks at school', and showed a general understanding, such as a need for 'lots more education and college', 'an A in every exam and a degree'.

The majority of 14-18 year olds understand that education will help them.

77% of 14-16 year olds agreed with the statement 'Education will help me get my dream job' and only 7% did not. Among 16-18 year olds 80% agreed and only 6% did not.

At 14+ respondents showed the same appreciation for hard work with the added awareness of current difficulties in the job market and economy:

'... there is competition for uni places, the course is hard, there is competition for jobs in that field.'

This understanding has broadened into the wider context of knowledge and skills and become more specific in regards to the path they will need to follow.

Understanding becomes more detailed and involves attributes not directly taught in school, including a mix of training and qualifications and contacts:

'I need top grades in my GCSEs and A levels then I need to study for a degree'.

'You need to be good at all core subjects and you must be a good listener, have a practical mind, and be a good communicator'.

'You have to have good contacts to succeed...because if you don't know people who are already in firms, you will struggle getting employed among all the competition'.

61% of 14-16 year olds responded that they see a link between what they study at school and what they want to do for a job, with 73% of all 14-18 year olds also believing they have a good idea of the knowledge and skills they need to do the job they want.

4. THE ROLE OF PARENTS

4.1 Less than half of the 14+ respondents feel their parents are the biggest influence on what they will do with their lives

Parents have an influence at all age groups but their influence is lower with older children.

Parents always have some degree of influence on a young person's outlook on life and their potential job choices. At an early age parents encourage us to believe we can 'be anything [we] want'. But by the age of 14-16 42% agree to some extent that their parents are their biggest influence on what they will do with their lives. In the 16-18 age bracket those agreeing drops further to 35%.

7-11 year olds:

The youngest age group believe they can do anything '...because my mummy said I can', although this also means that they change their minds often, 'because when I'm older I can be anything I want.'

14-16 year olds:

There is more of a split in the views of the 14-16 age group as to how important their parents are in influencing their future decisions. 42% agree to some extent but 32% disagree to some extent that their parents are their biggest influence on what they will do with their lives.

'I like to think I'll make them proud.'

'I have the ultimate choice in my future- they just help me.'

'After all if you accept everyone else's opinion, it's not your dream job is it?'

16-18 year olds:

Only 35% agree that parents are their biggest influence and 38% disagree.

'They conflict with other stuff I have read.'

'In my house my mum just wanted me to get into work as quickly as possible she didn't care...'

The 14-16 and 16-18 respondents also indicated that they are much less inclined to talk about jobs and work with parents. They talk about it with parents sometimes or not at all.

4.2 The jobs the youngest age groups see in their own family are not those they desire themselves

As children get older, their desired jobs match more closely the job sectors actually represented by the adults in the population around them.

By age 16-18 some major sectors are mentioned as desired jobs equally to their occurrence: Health/ Social Care/Hospital/ IT, Engineering, Business Services. At age 7-11 all of these are under-represented as desired jobs.

However, across all age groups some job sectors are consistently desired less than their actual occurrence among families in the population particularly Building Trades, Government, Transport and Chef/Restaurants. i.e. there are many more parents working in Building Trades than there are children who want to work in this sector. If desire for jobs translates into action this could imply a potential future shortfall in skills.

Please see table 4.2 on the page opposite.

4.3 Young people generally do not want to follow in their relatives' footsteps

Only 8% of young people in our survey are clear they do want the same type of job as their relative.

Younger children are more likely to want to follow in family footsteps. The percentage wanting the same

job as a close relative peaks at 11% with 7-11 year olds, falls to 7% with 14-16 year olds and is 5% with 16-18 year olds.

A 7-11 year old said:

'I want to be a gas man just like my dad.'

The reason cited in the focus groups for not wanting to follow in parents' footsteps was often based on observation of the effect of jobs on their own parents.

A 7-11 year old said:

'No, it makes them tired and stressed.'

A 14-16 year old said:

'My mum has too much work, she does the jobs of about seven people and I think it's too much.'

The percentage of young people who are clear they **do not want** the same job grows markedly with age from 52% of 7-11 year olds up to 71% of 16-18 year olds. The percentage saying 'maybe' also shrinks with age from 27 to 21%.

Table 4.2

Job sectors observed in families		Job sectors desired by young people		
Top 10 most common work sectors of relatives	% of all jobs	7-11 (%)	14-16 (%)	16-18 (%)
Health/Social Care/Hospital	12	6	11	11
Teaching	9	9	5	6
IT	7	3	4	6
Engineering	6	3	4	6
Building Trades	5	<.5	1	1
Government	4	<.5	1	2
Chef/Restaurant	3	3	2	1
Uniformed Services	3	8	2	2
Transport	3	3	>.5	1
Business Services	3	0	2	4

The three columns on the right compare with the percentage desiring those jobs for each age group.

5. CAREERS ADVICE AND WORK EXPERIENCE

5.1 Young people find out about jobs through parents, teachers and the internet

The 7-11 year olds expressed a more restricted world view with more faith in both parents and teachers as a source of information than older age groups. A wider world view emerges from 14-16 onwards. Their preferred sources for careers information have changed.

For 7-11 year olds, parents are very firmly their first source in finding out about jobs.

Please see table 5.1 on the page opposite.

All three of the options that involve talking to someone are chosen by a higher percentage of girls than boys. For example, girls (88%) are more likely than boys (81%) to talk to parents for advice between 7 and 11.

7-11 year olds said the sources of information on jobs are limited:

'You just meet people with these jobs or they are on TV.'

Many said they prefer parents as their main trusted source of advice on careers:

'They wouldn't lie to you.'

Teachers are also a popular source with this age group, mentioned by 53% of 7-11 year olds. But some individuals believe teachers only know about teaching (a view that is held more strongly by older groups):

'If they are a teacher they don't know how to become a builder.'

For 14-16 and 16-18 year olds, they reported:

- The internet becomes the first choice by the age of 16-18.

- Parents remain a valued source but drop down the list as first port of call for only 24% of 14-16 and 17% of 16-18 year olds.

- 66% of 14-18 year olds have had careers advice from parents or family members.

- Their teacher remains the third or fourth choice for all age groups.

Across these age groups, there is general desire to speak to people who actually do the jobs, believing only they know what it is really like. A widely but not universally held view across the 14-16 and 16-18 age groups is that teachers can only advise on one thing:

***'Definitely not teachers because they only know about one career: teaching.'* (14-16)**

***'There should have been a lesson where they kind of pave a path for you. Talking about different colleges and stuff...I had no idea what I wanted to do when I left school.'* (16-18)**

5.2 Young people rate some sources of careers advice and guidance more highly than others

A clear mismatch emerges especially for 16-18 year olds between what was received and what was 'very useful' to the young person.

Of those who have received careers advice, views vary on how useful this advice actually was. Some sources are seen as more useful than others.

Please see table 5.2 on the page opposite which shows young peoples' actual advice sources ranked by their usefulness.

*We asked about visiting an employer as a source of careers advice. Respondents may not be taking into account their work experience placement, which other surveys show many young people will have experienced.

By far the most useful source of careers advice for 16-18 year olds was a visit to an employer with 88% saying it was 'very useful' or 'useful'.

Overall, only 2% of young people aged 14+ who have experienced an employer visit felt it was not useful or relevant to them. This is the highest level of engagement for any source of careers information, advice and guidance.

Yet few get exposure to employers. Only 26% of 16-18 year olds and 16% of 14-16 year olds had visited an employer and only 50% of 14-16 and 53% of 16-18 year olds had been to a careers event at school.

A recent research study by the Education and Employers Taskforce² found a direct correlation between work experience and employment for young people. Positive relationships exist between the number of employer contacts (such as careers talks or work experience) that a young person experiences in school at 14-19 and confidence, at age 19-24, with progression towards ultimate career goals and the likelihood of whether they are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Although few have experienced it, all age groups agree that visits to employers would be very useful.

² Mann, A. (2012) It's who you meet: *Why employer contacts at school make a difference to the employment prospects of young adults*, Education and Employers Taskforce.

Table 5.1

Source for finding out about different kinds of jobs	% selecting
Parents	85
Internet	60
Teacher	53
Other relatives	29
Books/ magazines	21
TV	16
Friends	19

Table 5.2**16-18 year olds**

Advice Source	% who received this	% rating intervention 'very useful'
Visit to employer*	26	44
Parents	65	27
Website	53	24
Books	23	18
Teacher	62	16
Event at school	53	15
Careers counsellor	62	12
Friends	29	11

14-16 year olds

Advice Source	% who received this	% rating intervention 'very useful'
Visit to employer*	16	39
Parents	67	31
Website	44	26
Books	45	20
Teacher	22	14
Event at school	64	14
Careers counsellor	50	14
Friends	25	6

7-11 year olds said:

'You can ask people what they do and if they like it.'

'It helps you understand what they do.'

'Ask why they work there and if they like the job.'

14-16 year old said:

'You are getting advice from people who actually know their stuff!'

16-18 year old said:

'More jobs that allow you to go in...when I went to Google...that was amazing to watch and see ...he told us the kinds of things they do and how they did it. I was like - I wish I knew that when I was younger.'

5.3 Work experience is rarely a priority step towards getting a dream job

Gaining work experience is not a priority for young people in any age group.

A minority of 7-11 year olds (35%) considered work experience as something that would help them to get their dream job. Work experience was eighth on a list of ten.

Please see table 5.3a on the page opposite.

It is interesting to note that there is a statistically significant gender difference: Girls were more likely than boys to select 'go to university' (47% v 36%), 'get good marks at school' (80% v 71%) and 'study the right subjects' (44% v 34%).

Only a minority, 33%, of 14-16 and 16-18 year olds consider work experience as part of their plan to get their dream job. There is very little difference between the two age groups.

Please see table 5.3b on the page opposite.

7-11 year olds on work experience

Some of the respondents told us they have visited their parents' workplace. Those who have agree this is a good way to learn about jobs and generally talk with a sense of fun and excitement about it. There is some awareness already of how this could be useful for them.

'[I'd ask...] 'is it hard to do and what do I need to learn to work here?'

And none thought it would be very easy to get work experience:

'You can't get it just because your dad works there.'

14-16 year olds on work experience

Many do value the idea of work experience even if they haven't experienced it themselves:

'It separates the realism of the job from the dream.'

'My current job has nothing to do with what I want to do, but it's still work experience.'

'Any work experience I think is good, even if it doesn't relate to your job.'

Many said they have strong concerns, however, that ultimately qualifications are the deciding factor.

'Contacts help, but without the qualifications you stand no chance against someone who is qualified if you aren't.'

Most 14-16 year old focus group participants did not think it too hard to get work experience, but feel the difficulty is rather in getting experience in the job you want. Several obstacles were raised in this respect including a minimum age required to work in certain facilities, what might be available where you live and competition for places in popular jobs.

'It is quite hard, with so many people wanting experience to get jobs.'

'It's easier to get experience if you want to be a hairdresser than a barrister.'

The need to be proactive is a view common to both older groups. There is little faith in the ability of schools to cater to all interests and some held a cynical view already on why should they?

'They only really focus on your grades, after all how else do they get to one on the leader boards?'

16-18 year olds on work experience: Often disillusioned about their personal experience.

'Work experience was terrible in year ten. If you don't find your own it was terrible.'

'I knew I'd be doing paperwork, but better to be there so I could get a feel of what it's like. You see it on TV, but it's nothing like it, you have to be in there.'

What they want from work experience:

'When growing up from primary school, we should get little tasters of the things that are out there to do. That's when our minds are dreaming and really active...it doesn't matter if you change your mind as you've got time to try something else.'

This comment from a 16-18 year old suggests a practical way to benefit from the changeable enthusiasms of younger children as evidenced in the views of 7-11 year olds in section 3.1.

Table 5.3a

What will help you get your dream job?	% selecting
Work very hard	82
Get good marks at school	75
Believe in myself	57
Get qualifications	55
Be enthusiastic	45
Go to university	41
Study the right subjects	39
Gain work experience	35

Table 5.3b

Activities to get the dream job	14-16 year olds % selecting	16-18 year olds % selecting
Go to university	54	56
Combination of university and work experience	21	20
Combination of vocational quals and work experience	10	7
Seek work experience	3	6

6. ATTITUDES TO MATHS

Numeracy skills are known to have an impact on our life chances both as young people and as working adults.³ For this reason a number of questions were asked about attitudes to Maths at school.

6.1 Most young people believe Maths will help them be successful

A majority of young people across all age groups believe Maths will be useful in everyday life after leaving school. They also believe Maths as a subject will help them be successful. However, these beliefs reduce with age.

Among 7-11 year olds, 85% believe Maths will be useful for them in everyday life after they leave school.

This age group already understands that Maths is helpful in life:

'Numbers are everywhere'

'Say if you go shopping to make sure you have enough money'

For 7-11 year olds, Maths is a close second only to English as a subject that will help them be successful.

- English 82% – Boys 78%, Girls 86%
- Maths 78% – Boys 76%, Girls 79%

By 14-16, 63% of 14-16 year olds and 63% of 16-18 year olds believe Maths will be useful for them in everyday life after leaving school or college – substantially lower than for 7-11 year olds who held this view.

These age groups also have an appreciation of the relevance and importance of Maths.

'Definitely need it to get into college'

'Every employer and university looks for it'

For 14-16 year olds, a majority still believes Maths is a subject that will help them be successful, though this has reduced from 78% at 7-11 to 69% by 14-16.

- English 73% – Boys 68%, Girls 78%
- Maths 69% – Boys 72%, Girls 67%

6.2 Young people have mixed feelings about the Maths taught at school

Among 7-11 year olds, Maths as a subject is as equally liked as disliked. It ranks as the most liked and the most disliked subject. By the older age groups Maths carries an increasing number of negative associations particularly amongst girls.

7-11 year olds already appreciate that they need Maths but the fact that it is thought of as 'boring' and not 'fun' splits opinion.

- Overall Maths is slightly more disliked than liked in this age group, with 21% voting it their favourite subject and 24% voting it their least. There is a gender difference – Maths is disliked by a higher proportion of girls.
- 27% of boys and 15% of girls chose Maths as their favourite subject.
- 16% of boys and 32% of girls chose Maths as their least favourite subject.

Among 14-16 year olds

- 64% describe Maths as being useful and 22% find it exciting
- 40% also find it boring, 35% find it difficult and 24% irrelevant.
- 14-16 year old girls are more likely than boys to label Maths as difficult (38% against 32%), irrelevant (27% v 21%) or boring (44% v 36%). These are statistically significant differences.

For 16-18 year olds, attitudes are very similar but:

- Those finding Maths irrelevant has increased to 30%.
- 60% find it useful, and 22% find it exciting.
- 39% find Maths boring, 36% find it difficult and 30% irrelevant.
- Again girls are more likely than boys to label Maths as difficult (41% v 31%), irrelevant (35% v 26%) or boring (43% v 34%).

6.3 Young people have clear ideas for how Maths teaching could be improved

Maths needs to be taught more practically. There is a significant desire to learn Maths in ways that can be applied in everyday life, or in business. 45% of 14-16 year olds and 54% of 16-18 year olds commented, unprompted, that taught Maths could be improved by being geared more towards real life, relevant or practical scenarios.

The UK has very low participation in Mathematics post GCSE⁴ although this is now increasing⁵. Maths is considered a useful subject but it is also considered a boring one. Much of the apathy with Maths comes from the fact that young people do not see the relevance in what they learn and do not find the method of teaching accessible. Young people would like to have *'more activities and interactive lessons about things that we will actually need to learn for our lives ahead.'*

Some 14-16 year olds think Maths teaching could be more closely related to the way it would be used in the workplace.

³ Adults with at least basic numeracy (Level 1 or above) earn on average 26% more than adults with skills below this level. Source: KPMG 2008. Adults with poor numeracy are twice as likely to be unemployed at those who are competent. Source: Carpentieri et al. 2009, NRDC 2010. Children who struggle with numeracy are twice as likely to be excluded from school as those who do not. Source: KPMG 2008 using DCSF figures

'I want to know about finance in business and money handling, not Pythagoras.'

'Maths should be more finance focused and less shapes and algebra'

Both older age groups gave clear views on how teaching Maths could be improved in schools

45% of 14-16 year olds commented, unprompted, that Maths should be more relevant to real life, relevant or practical scenarios.

'Make more of the work relevant to everyday life so that you can apply more of what you learn.'

'Do things that are relevant today, like looking at bank statements and all other personal finances.'

'Put them into scenarios where I may use them when I leave school to show me that I will use them in the future.'

54% of 16-18 year olds commented, unprompted, that Maths should be more geared towards real life, relevant or practical scenarios:

'Up until the end of GCSE (at least)...people should be taught useful things – like how to manage bank accounts, personal finances, savings, loans, etc. Somehow, I doubt I'll use trigonometry any time in the future.'

'Showing you relevant Maths not only useful to Mathematicians. Link it to everyday Math such as bills, loans, money related topics and remove the dullness around it, make it fun for students, not what teachers call fun.'

'Focus them on real life case studies rather than just learning rules from a text book, i.e. teaching how you would apply it in the real world. For example, where would you ever use differentiation in the real world.'

'Show me how I can use Maths in business, to do accounts or banking.'

⁴ In a survey of 24 countries, England, Wales and Northern Ireland had the lowest levels of participation in upper secondary Mathematics – fewer than 20% of students study Maths. Source: Hodgen, J. and Pepper, D, Sturman, L and Ruddock, G, (2010) *Is the UK an outlier? An international comparison of upper secondary mathematics education* Report Commissioned for the Nuffield Foundation

⁵ The Guardian. Accessed 20.03.2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/blog/2011/aug/18/a-level-results-science-mathematics>

7. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

7.1 Young people have mixed views on vocational routes

Note that questions in this section were not asked of 7-11 year olds.

Young people expressed mixed views on university versus vocational or practical routes. The 16-18 group has a slightly more negative view than 14-16 year olds

- Most respondents mention college and university as necessary schooling, however approximately 55% of those aged over 14 believe going to university is the best way to get their dream job as opposed to 7% who believe a vocational route would be the way to go.
- Having said this, 50% of 14-16 year olds agree that vocational (practical) courses are a good route to well-paid work. This drops to 43% in the 16-18 age group. 30% in each age group had no strong opinion.
- The 16-18 age group is split in their opinions on whether they are more likely to get a job if they do vocational qualifications.
 - 26% agree to some extent
 - 33% have no strong view
 - 31% disagree to some extent
- Although more negative about vocational routes, the 16-18 year old group tend to agree that there is more demand for practical skills than academic skills in the economy.
 - 39% agree to some extent
 - 26% have no strong view
 - 25% disagree to some extent

When asked if they would consider doing an apprenticeship to get your dream job, the general consensus amongst the 14-16 year olds is 'Yes', in certain circumstances.

'If you do well at the firm they might employ you full time.'

'If it proves a useful qualification.'

'If it meant I could get the job I wanted.'

'If they like you and your attitude to work, they may employ you.'

'Yes, because it shows you can work in a team and are interested and dedicated towards that job.'

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