

Getting Gen Z into green jobs: we need to talk about apprenticeships

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Executive summary

Background

This report outlines the findings from a multi-method research project looking at how those influencing young people’s career and educational decisions in England perceive green apprenticeships. It was commissioned by The MCS Foundation. Fieldwork was conducted in two phases: interviews from 29th November 2023 and 16th January 2024 and survey dissemination from 1st March 2024 and 22nd April 2024. We used the [COM-B model](#) to scope subjects for discussion and to analyse the findings, allowing us to identify, with precision, the barriers for these influencers and to help generate ideas for our research questions.

Research objectives

1. What are parents, teachers and careers advisers’ perceptions of apprenticeships, and how have they formed those perceptions?
2. What are parents, teachers and careers advisers’ perceptions of green jobs, and how have they formed those perceptions?
3. How can parents, teachers and careers advisers be encouraged to actively promote both green jobs and apprenticeships to young people?

Methodology

This research was conducted in two phases:

Phase 1: Qualitative



- 59 interviews with teachers, careers advisers and parents of young people aged 11 to 18. Each of 45 minutes.

Phase 2: Quantitative



- 32-question eSurvey routed for each audience, achieving usable responses from 139 teachers, 132 careers advisers and 1,000 parents.

Key findings

Careers discussions and advice

Parents, teachers and careers advisers were all involved in careers discussions with young people on a formal or informal basis and saw this as part of their role.

Careers conversations can be university-biased.

- Student-led careers conversations can lead to a focus on favourite subjects and university choice, rather than on lesser-known pathways. This was partly a question of having sufficient time.

Many schools were not seen to support apprenticeship expansion.

- Only 48% of teachers indicated that their school would be happy if there was an increase in young people taking up an apprenticeship rather than going to university.

Teachers and careers advisers were having few conversations about green jobs.

- Only 13% of careers advisers and 9% of teachers reported having conversations with 45% of their students or more. 13% of careers advisers and 25% of teacher reported having no conversations about this career path.

Teachers and careers advisers recognise they don't know enough about green jobs.

- Only 6% of teachers and 13% of careers advisers strongly agreed that 'I know enough to inform young people about opportunities in green jobs', which led to low confidence in explaining green jobs and pathways.

Teachers are not confident talking about apprenticeships.

- While careers advisers were largely confident, only 50% of teachers said they would feel confident explaining to a young person how apprenticeships work.

The current curriculum is not seen to link learning with requirements of job market.

- Interviewed teachers felt they did not always have time to explore how their subjects link to industries and potential jobs, to help students understand the relevance of skills learned in the classroom.

Perceptions of apprenticeships

Interview participants and survey respondents were asked about their perceptions of apprenticeships and what may have contributed to these perceptions.

The application process is seen as time-consuming.

- Individual applications took time and effort.

Apprenticeships are seen as competitive and oversubscribed.

- Young people were often encouraged to also apply for university as a back-up, taking more time.

Apprenticeships are seen as for more 'practical' students.

- 94% of teachers, 87% of careers advisers and 88% of parents agreed that 'apprenticeships are a good route for young people with strong practical skills'. In interviews, some indicated that they felt it might not be a suitable route for their 'academic' children.

Apprenticeship salaries are seen as low.

- Travel to work on these salaries was also seen as a problem.

Many young people aren't seen to be ready for the workplace.

- Careers advisers (58%), parents (58%) and teachers (46%) felt that young people were not necessarily work-ready and did not have the maturity to enter a workplace.

Perceptions of green jobs

In the interviews and the survey, we defined green jobs as those that have a direct positive impact on the planet. Parents, teachers and careers advisers were asked what they know about green jobs and what perceptions they hold about them.

Understanding of green jobs was often limited.

- When defining a green job, interview participants focused on specific sectors: heating, renewable energy, car manufacture and built environment. Survey responses revealed similar perceptions.

Careers advisers in particular had positive impressions of green jobs.

- They felt they had good long-term career prospects and were suitable for those who were practical and those who achieved high grades. However, parents in particular appeared to have some doubts about the appropriateness of green jobs for young people achieving high grades, with only half agreeing that these jobs were appropriate for that kind of learner.

Young people were seen to have to be environmentally-engaged to get a green job.

- Many interview participants and 54% of survey respondents felt that young people had to be engaged with environmental issues to get a green job.

Parents didn't feel their children were strongly engaged in environmental issues.

- Only 10% parents indicated their children were 'highly engaged' in environmental issues and 51% reported that their children lacked enough interest in the environment to choose a green career.

What can be done to actively promote green jobs and apprenticeships to young people?

Improving careers discussions in schools

- **Encouraging schools to allow more time for careers adviser meetings:** enabling a wider discussion outside subject preferences and university application.
- **Building more time into the curriculum to build awareness of a wider range of potential careers:** the majority of teachers indicated they did not have the time to talk about careers within their lessons.
- **Providing improved training on apprenticeship routes,** particularly for teachers.
- **Considering the incentives in place for schools** to increase the number of young people taking an apprenticeship route over a traditional university one.

Removing barriers to apprenticeship applications

- **Streamlining of the apprenticeship application process:** for example, by developing an apprenticeship application portal or standardised application process. While UCAS does now include an apprenticeship search function, no elements of the application process are standardised. A UCAS-style application portal that is accessible and engaging for young people could potentially remove the practical barriers to apprenticeships mentioned by careers advisers.
- **Expanding access to and awareness of high quality apprenticeships:** Competition for apprenticeships was thought to be strong in some areas.
- **Providing higher salaries or free travel for apprentices:** Low salaries are potentially a barrier for apprenticeship take-up and travel expenses may take a significant portion of their salary.
- **Providing case studies of apprentices' journeys:** This would demonstrate the different routes onto an apprenticeship and show decision-making processes.
- **Increasing opportunities for work experience** and work-based skills throughout school, enabling young people to be more ready for the workplace.

Increase awareness of green jobs as an option for a wider range of young people

- **Creating guidance for teachers and careers advisers to emphasise that green jobs can be for anyone and encompass a vast range of roles:** This information would clarify that young people don't have to be 'eco-warriors' to get or enjoy a green job.
- **Reinforce this through talks in schools by people in green jobs and apprenticeships,** similar to the STEM ambassador team.
- **Creating a national information website for green jobs that acts as an accessible one-stop-shop for young people and those who are advising,** which could include job descriptions and career trajectories, routes through different qualifications and 'day in the life' videos and case studies to demonstrate the range and variety of green jobs.

Background and methodology

Background

The MCS Foundation was created to oversee the MCS standards scheme, which certifies the quality of renewable energy across UK homes. The Foundation drives positive change to decarbonise homes, heat and energy. The Foundation commissions robust, independent research that informs and shapes better decision-making to drive a carbon-free future for all UK homes. In 2023, the Foundation published [“Getting Gen-Z into retrofit and renewables jobs: the appetite is there, but not the awareness”](#), which explored Gen Z perceptions of green jobs. The report detailed the following key barriers to interest in green apprenticeships among Gen Z:

- Lack of awareness of alternatives to university.
- Insufficient information about green jobs.

Within the research, we defined green jobs as those that have a direct positive impact on the planet.

The Foundation wanted to understand what underpinned these findings, by talking to three main groups of people to whom students go for careers advice:



Teachers



Careers advisers



Family members

The underlying goal was to understand why there is not enough support or information surrounding green apprenticeships for school-aged children – and to identify what approaches need to be adopted to change this.

Research objectives

The three key research objectives for this research were:

1. What are parents, teachers and careers advisers’ perceptions of apprenticeships, and how have they formed those perceptions?
2. What are parents, teachers and careers advisers’ perceptions of green jobs, and how have they formed those perceptions?
3. How can parents, teachers and careers advisers be encouraged to actively promote both green jobs and apprenticeships to young people?

Methodology

There were two phases to this research – one qualitative, one quantitative. The combined findings provide robust evidence on which the report recommendations are based.

Sampling

While the sample was self-selecting, we achieved a broadly representative sample of teachers, careers advisers and parents within the target population of England, with a slight underrepresentation of secondary schools when compared to Further Education and Sixth Form institutions. We chose to only recruit teachers, careers advisers and parents within England rather than across the UK because national differences in apprenticeships and careers advice guidelines would require robust sampling within each UK nation to ensure they were fully represented.

Phase 1 | Qualitative



We conducted 59 online interviews, lasting 45 minutes each, with a range of participants from our target groups. We chose interviews over focus groups to give greater room for responses that might feel less socially acceptable (e.g. a lack of knowledge of apprenticeships or green jobs) and because they allow more precision in recruiting subgroups.

Interviews covered the following topics:

1. Careers guidance they have provided to young people / their child and the resources used to support them.
2. Their understanding of apprenticeships.
3. Their understanding of green jobs.



Fieldwork was carried out between 29th November 2023 and 16th January 2024.



Care was taken not to bias the sample, such as by only recruiting participants who may be more interested in sustainability – to avoid this, we did not share the precise interview subject or the Foundation's name until the end of the interview.

Phase 2 | Quantitative



Using findings from the qualitative phase to generate behaviour statements, we developed a 32-question survey that was adapted for three target audiences (teachers, careers advisers and parents) – considering their knowledge of young people. The findings from this phase were used to validate and support findings from the qualitative phase.



Fieldwork was carried out between Friday 1st March 2024 and Monday 22nd April 2024.

Following data cleaning, we achieved 1,261 clean responses, split across the following audiences, with a few having dual roles as both teachers and careers advisers:

- 1,000 parents.
- 132 careers advisers.
- 139 teachers.



Again, care was taken not to bias the sample, meaning we did not share the Foundation's name until the end of the survey.



Across both the qualitative and quantitative phases, we used the [COM-B model](#) to scope subjects for discussion and to analyse the findings, allowing us to identify, with precision, the barriers for these influencers and to help generate ideas for our research questions.

The COM-B model for behaviour change cites capability (C), opportunity (O), and motivation (M) as three key factors capable of changing behaviour (B).

- Capability: an individual's psychological/physical ability to participate in an activity.
- Opportunity: external factors that make a behaviour possible.
- Motivation: the conscious and unconscious cognitive processes that direct and inspire behaviour.

Audience profile

Profile of participants | Qualitative phase

We spoke to 59 people who had been involved with careers advice, either formally or informally.

Participant types

We spoke to three audiences:



Age of young people advised and provider types

The focus of this research was on understanding the lack of advice for school-aged young people, so we spoke to those who worked with and advised those aged 11 to 18.

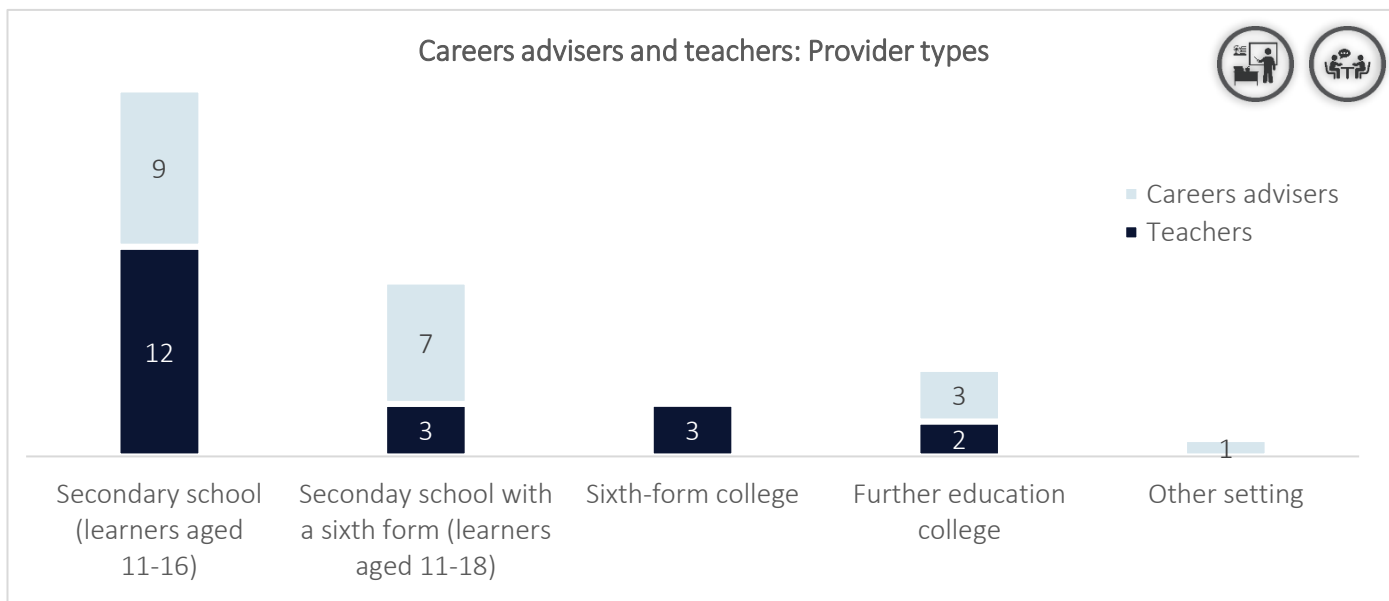


Fig. 1: n = 40.

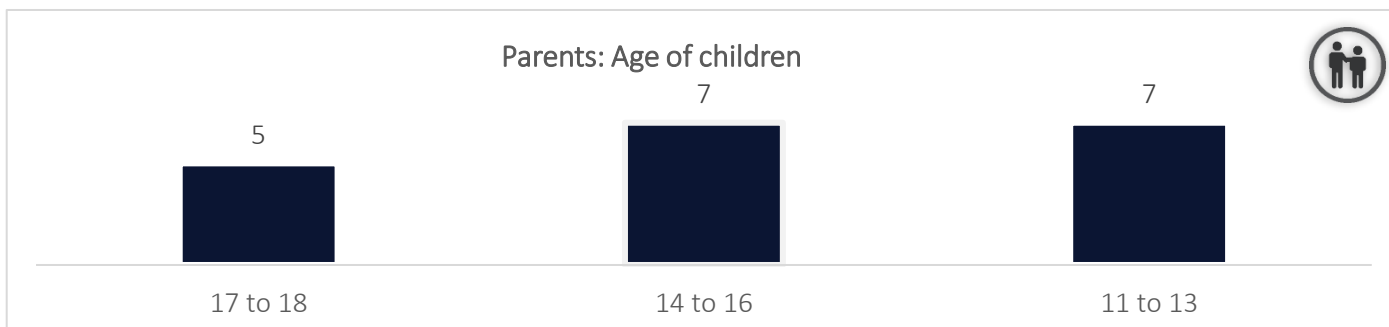


Fig. 2: n = 19.

Types of careers advice offered

The type of careers advice was an important criterion for selection, ensuring we talked to participants who could discuss experiences of providing careers advice in a variety of contexts.

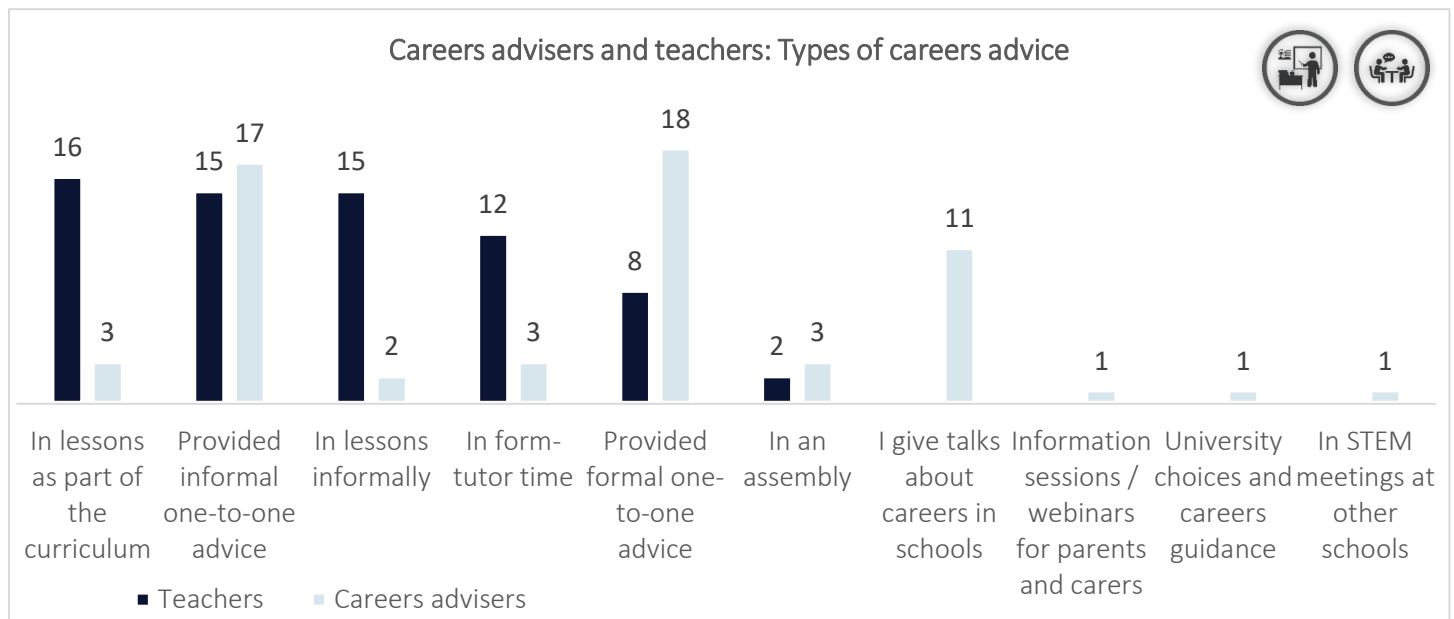
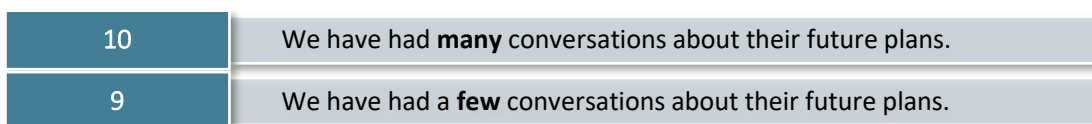


Fig. 3: n = 40.

While recruiting parents, we used statements to determine how frequently careers discussions were happening at home. Parents were required to select one of the following statements:

- We never discuss their future plans.
- We rarely discuss their future plans.
- We have had a few conversations about their future plans.
- We have had many conversations about their future plans.

We only interviewed parents who selected the latter two options, which were split as below:



Region

All participants were based in England – from a range of regions, as shown below:

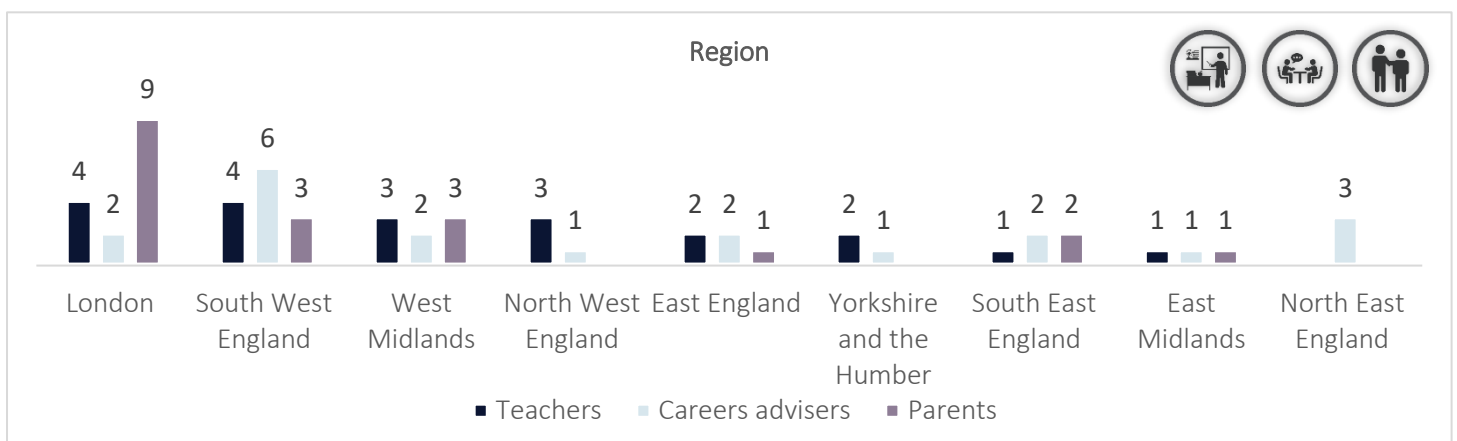


Fig. 4: Teachers n = 20, careers advisers n = 20, parents = 19.

Profile of respondents | Quantitative phase

We received usable survey submissions from 1,261 respondents across England. There was some crossover between teachers and careers advisers, as a few respondents held roles in both these areas.



Region

All respondents were based in England, from a range of regions as shown below:

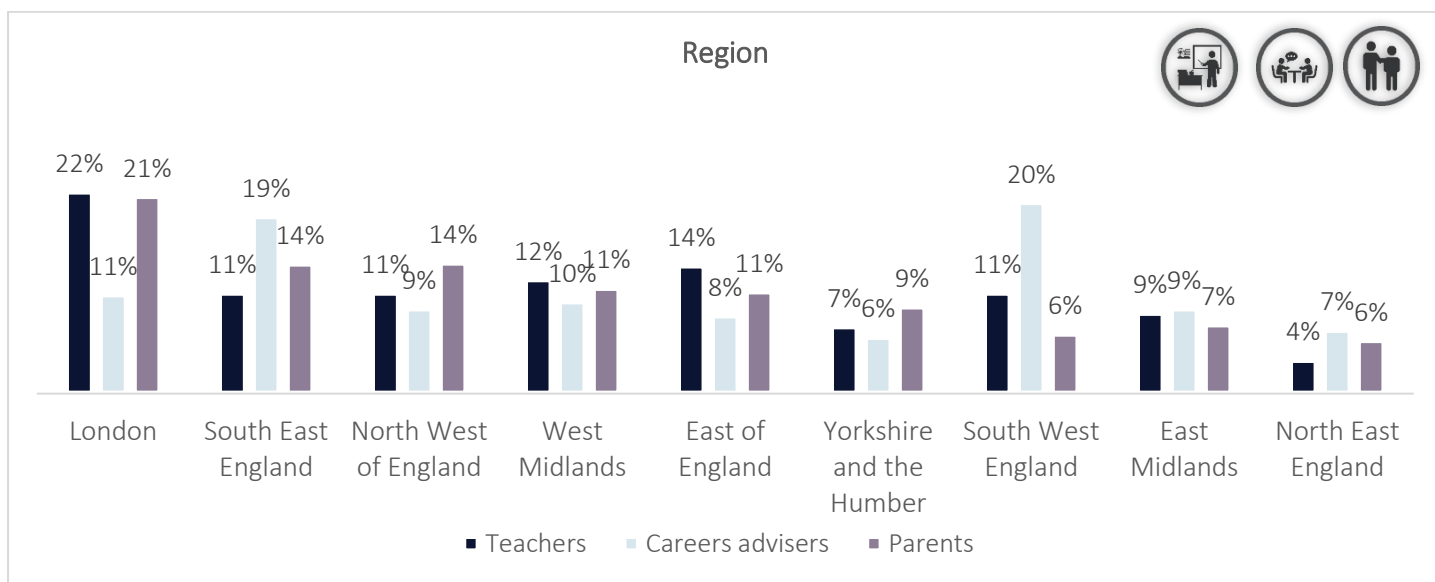


Fig. 5: Teachers n = 139, careers advisers n = 132, parents n = 1,000.

Parents: age of young people

When considering advice levels for school-aged children, it was important we reached a mixed sample of parents of children aged 11-18.

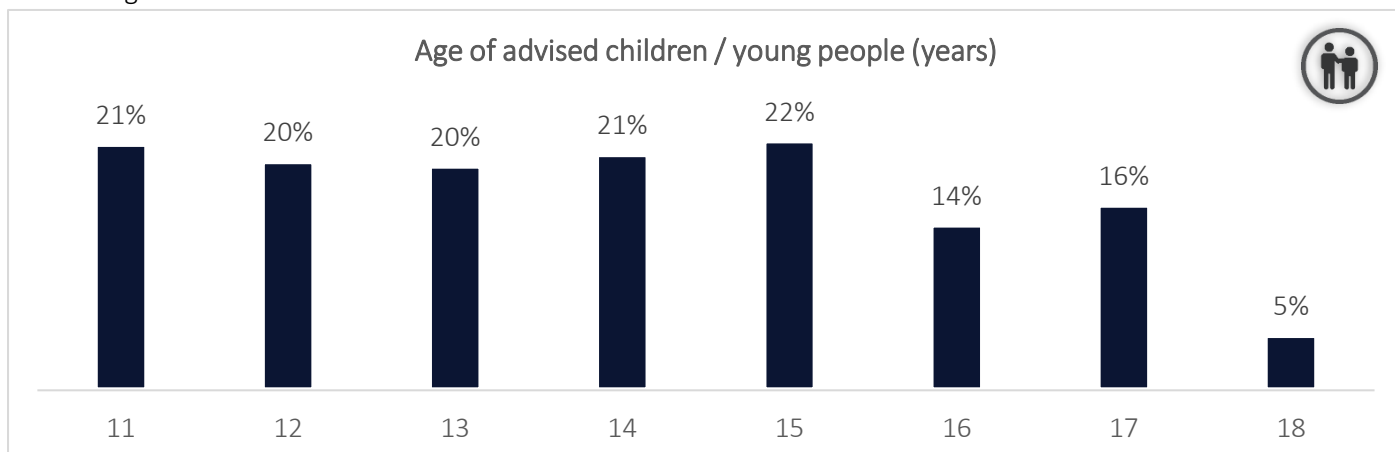


Fig. 6: n = 1,000.

Types of careers advice

Teachers and careers advisers gave advice in a variety of ways. The most selected option for careers advisers was providing *formal* one-to-one advice, while for teachers it was providing *informal* one-to-one advice.

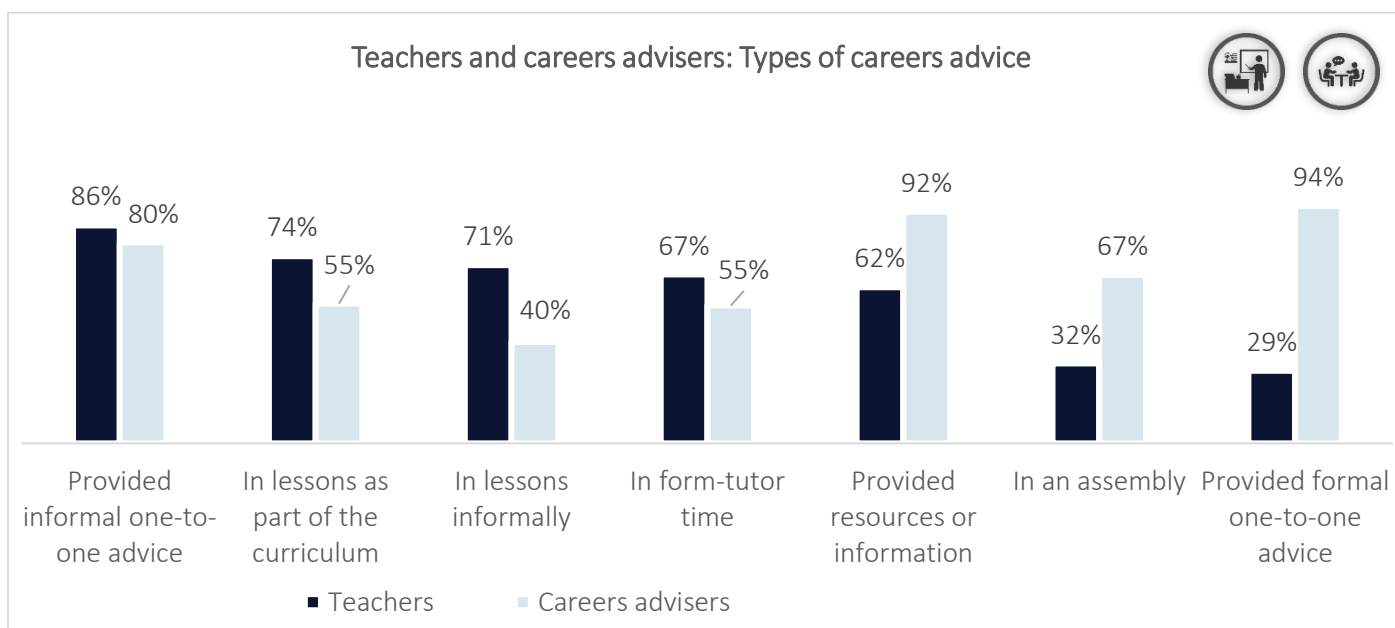


Fig. 7: Base n = 261. *Only shown responses with >10%.

Careers discussions

Careers discussions

Approach and expectations

The majority agreed it was part of their role to inform young people about potential careers

As shown in Fig. 8 below and, as might be expected, the vast majority of parents, teachers and careers advisers agreed that it was part of their role to inform the young people they are responsible for about potential careers. This suggests they are likely to be key influencers with regards to career decisions.

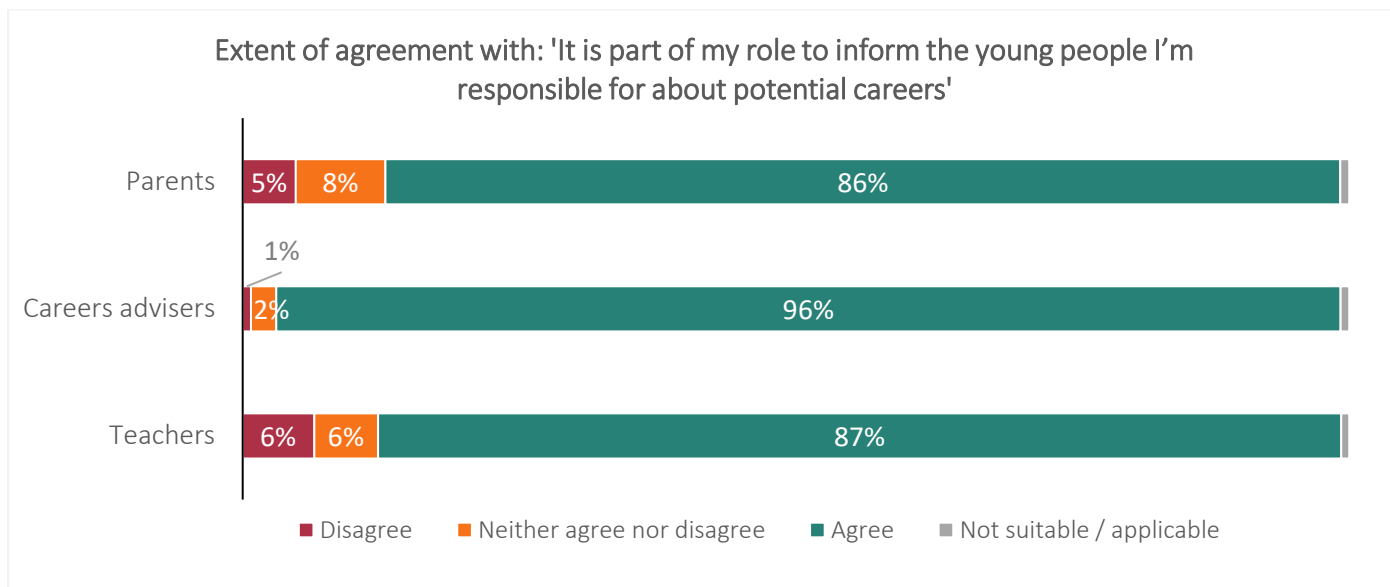


Fig 8: Base n = parents 1,000, careers advisers 132, teachers 139.

It was felt that young people expect high salaries on entering the job market...

The survey explored influencers' perceptions around the career choices of young people. There was moderately high agreement across audiences with the statement 'Young people today expect to earn a lot of money earlier in their careers' (77% parents, 71% careers advisers, 74% of teachers).

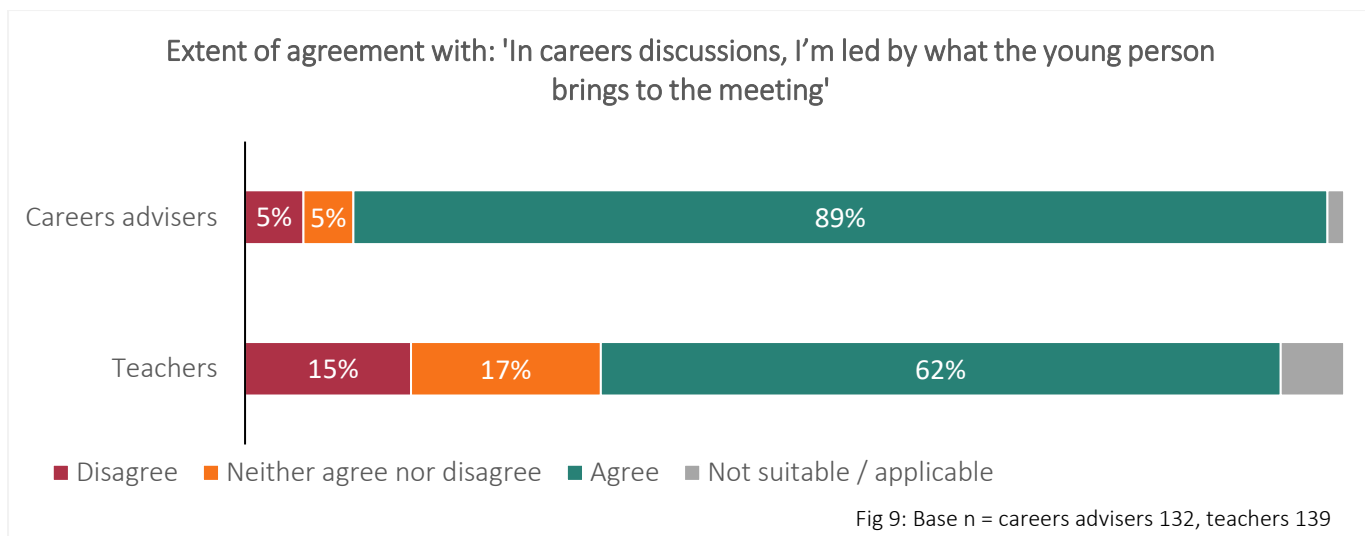
... but they should be open to alternatives

There was also strong agreement amongst audiences with the statement 'It is important for young people to keep their career options open', with 95% of parents, 94% of careers advisers and 94% of teachers agreeing. This is perhaps a positive finding, as it suggests an openness to alternative routes amongst influencers.

Teachers and careers advisers cited different experiences with career discussions

Navigating career discussions differed amongst careers advisers and teachers. As shown Fig. 9 below, while 89% of careers advisers stated that they were 'led by what the young person brings to the meeting', a lower majority of teachers (62%) felt this to be the case. This perhaps may be associated with the differing roles of careers advisers and teachers in relation to careers advice, where the former may be more advisory and exploratory, whereas the latter may veer towards presenting career options related to their subject. Additionally, teachers interact with their students

on a day-to-day basis, so have a clearer idea of their aptitudes and interests, while careers advisers can only go by what the student brings to them.



There was large disparity in levels of agreements with the statement that 'Career discussions can default to become discussions about university choices' (33% of careers advisers versus 63% of teachers, as shown in Fig. 10 below). In fact, 45% of careers advisers disagreed, which is a potentially positive finding, as it suggests that careers advisers may be likely to discuss or explore alternative routes with young people, aside from university. However, these findings do suggest that teachers may tend to default to discussing more traditional routes, which is perhaps because they are more familiar with them.

While teachers may be speaking less about alternative routes, it is encouraging that careers advisers do speak about them, albeit often with those who have brought this to them:

"I tend to ask all of them whether they're interested [in apprenticeships] because I do think it's they're not just for weak students or students who can't cope with school or can't cope with academic work, and I've had some very good students who've been keen on apprenticeships. So, I do tend to ask all of them if it's something they've considered."

Careers adviser

It is important that careers advisers and teachers have the knowledge and time to be able to discuss apprenticeships' pathways because among the parents we interviewed, while not explicitly stated, some parents clearly prioritised university as the primary option and natural choice for their child. This seemed to stem more from a perception that university is the 'academic' choice, and therefore the 'natural' choice for more academic children.

"She's really bright, she's really academic... So, in a way, university always felt like a good route for her. In terms of, I really love practical skills. I really do, but she's not – that's not her route. She's just very, very academic."

Parent

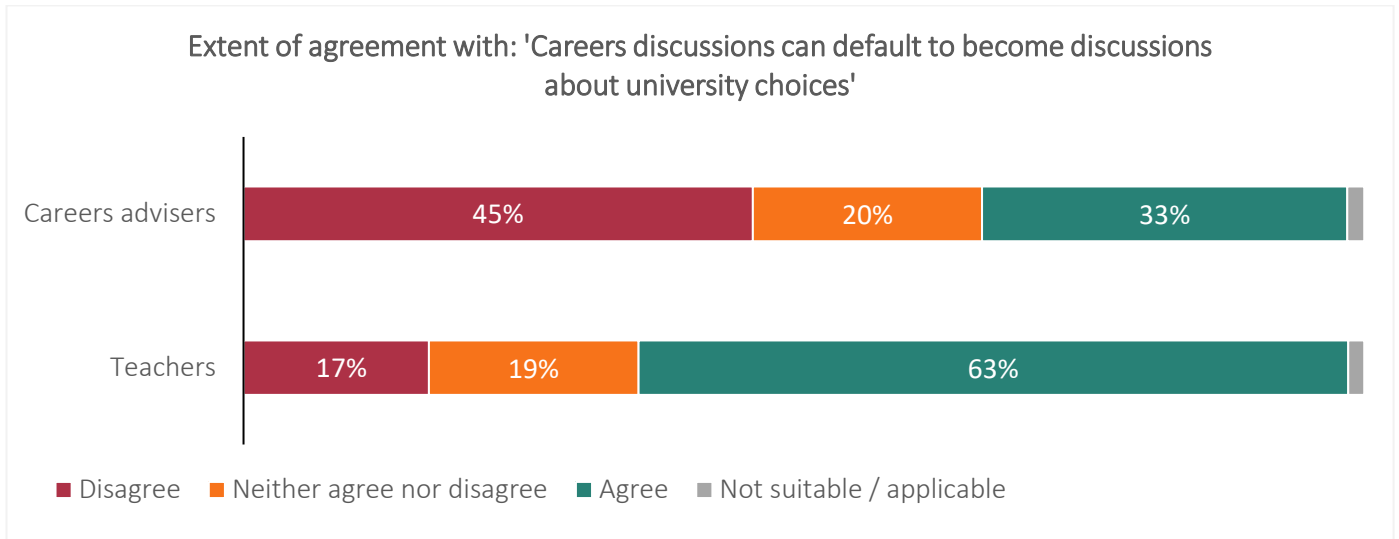


Fig 10: Base n = careers advisers 132, teachers 139.

In addition, 38% of careers advisers and 55% of teachers felt that career discussions at Key Stage 5 can end up focused on preferred subjects rather than interests. The higher agreement amongst teachers is worthy of consideration, as it may mean less exploration of general interests that sit outside of young peoples' subject choices.

Knowledge and resources

Parents and teachers found it harder to keep up to date with career options

Findings around familiarity with the job market and advising on career options suggest a lack of knowledge from parents and teachers in particular. As shown Fig. 11 below, both audiences cited lower agreement with 'I find it easy to keep up to date with the way that careers and jobs are developing', with 39% of teachers actually disagreeing.

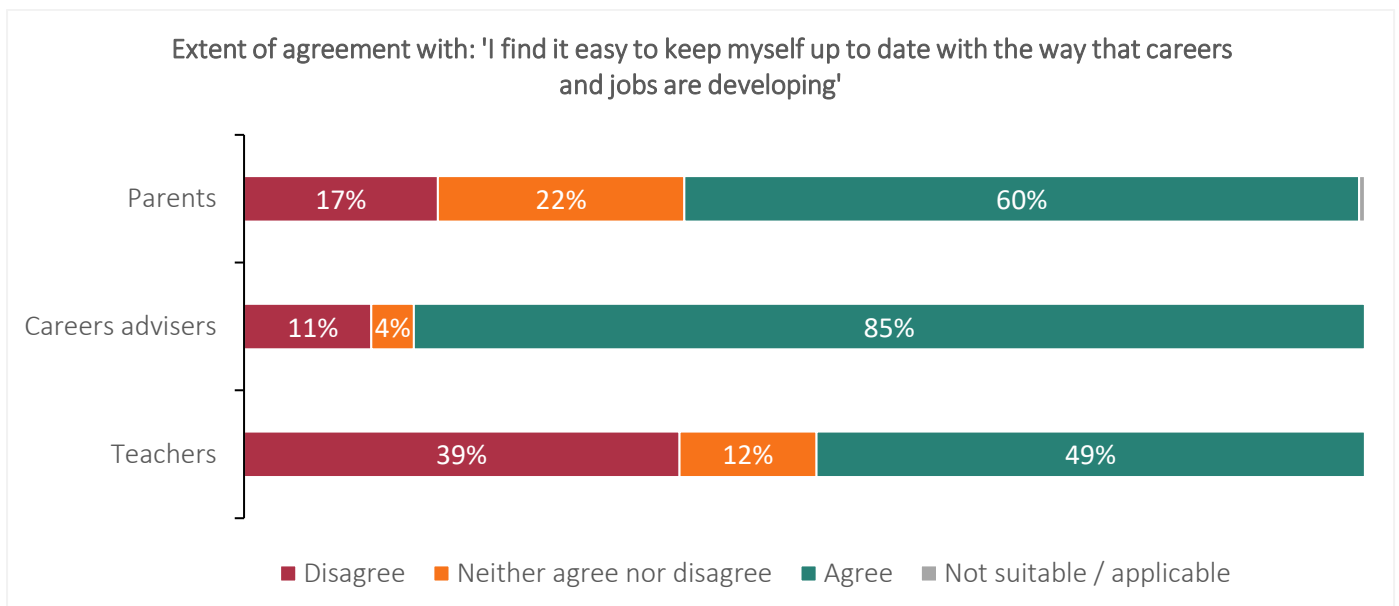


Fig 11: Base n = parents 1,000, careers advisers 132, teachers 139.

In addition, only 35% of teachers agreed that 'In career discussions with young people, I am led by the current labour market and the types of roles that are widely available', compared to 53% of career advisers.

These findings perhaps suggest less knowledge amongst certain influencers of the wider environment of the job market, which could include a lack of awareness of alternative routes. As noted earlier, teachers tended to have different experiences of career discussions, including more of a tendency to default to talking about university routes. Coupled with the findings around varying knowledge, it suggests that a lack of awareness of the wide range of career and study options could be a challenge amongst this audience in particular.

Time for career discussions appeared to be limited

Insights from both career advisers and teachers suggested insufficient time for career discussions. Around one in four (26%) careers advisers did not agree that they have sufficient time in careers discussions with young people to explore their interests in-depth – suggesting that even those in a key role related to careers support don't always have the opportunity to do so adequately. Meanwhile, only 23% of career advisers felt they had sufficient time to bring discussions about careers into the classroom. However, this is perhaps not as concerning because the format of discussing careers may vary between different schools, where opportunity to do so in a classroom setting is perhaps not as standard (indeed, 23% stated they were not sure about this statement or that it was not applicable).

Teachers appeared to be the most time-poor in relation to career discussions, with low agreement that they have sufficient time to explore young people's interests in depth or to bring discussions about careers into the classroom (26% and 24% respectively). These findings suggest that a combination of limited knowledge and limited opportunity currently makes it difficult to consider teachers as influencers with regards to alternative career options.

"I don't spend a lot of time talking about future careers, and I think it's an important thing that we don't do very well and we need to do better."

Teacher

What this means for green jobs and apprenticeships

While parents, teachers and careers advisers saw it as their role to inform the young people they are responsible for about careers, lack of time meant they often only focused on the interests young people had already expressed. Additionally, discussions with those in KS5 tended to focus on which subject to study. While influencers may be amenable to alternative pathways that allow young people to keep their options open, parents and teachers in particular may not always have the most up-to-date information about these pathways. Therefore, although the intention of child-led guidance is to explore what is best for the child, it could mean that young people are not being advised about either apprenticeships or green jobs because they haven't already expressed an interest in them.

Perceptions of apprenticeships

Perceptions of apprenticeships

To understand perceptions of *green* apprenticeships, it is important to explore perceptions of apprenticeships overall. Views on apprenticeships, and their role within the educational landscape, appear largely based on:

- How attainable apprenticeships seem to be, including their availability and competitiveness within a local context
- How well suited they are to young people, considering their academic performance, soft skills and interests.
- How well-prepared young people are to undertake an apprenticeship and if their schooling has adequately readied them to enter the job market
- If they are financially realistic for young people, in both the long and short term.
- If they are seen as a sensible way for young people to leverage their skills, informed by their perceived value compared to other educational routes, namely university.
- How secure they seem to be in terms of the standard and consistency of training provided.

Positive recognition of apprenticeships is a pre-condition for green apprenticeships being treated as a viable option for young people. Understanding how apprenticeships are viewed by teachers, parents and careers advisers helps us understand the perceived attainability and desirability of green apprenticeships. Interviewed teachers and careers advisers had some common perceptions of apprenticeships, particularly around their competitiveness and the skills they felt were required to succeed in them.

Of our three audiences, interview findings suggested that careers advisers were the most informed on apprenticeships. They, unlike teachers, had time with students dedicated solely to careers, in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks¹, and regularly accessed careers sites and labour market information to keep abreast of routes into employment. They indicated having the opportunity to speak to students in a variety of contexts, from school talks to more formal one-on-one sessions. Teachers' opportunities to discuss careers appeared more sporadic, with their focus on curriculum limiting the time to fully explore career options with their students. Unlike careers advisers, they also lacked specific careers training to both broaden their awareness of career pathways and address potential bias.

Engagement with and suitability for apprenticeships

Teachers and careers advisers believed that more young people were suited to apprenticeship than pursued them

In the survey, we asked teachers and careers advisers to indicate roughly what percentage of their students were suitable for taking apprenticeships and roughly what percentage were taking up apprenticeships. Findings showed they believed more students were suitable to take on apprenticeships than actually pursued them.

Key findings as noted in the figure below:

- 73% of teachers and careers advisers felt that 20% or fewer of their students were taking up apprenticeships.
- 41% of teachers and careers advisers felt that 50% or more of their students were suitable for apprenticeships.

¹ The Gatsby Benchmarks is a framework outlining what good careers advice should entail within a secondary school and college setting. Its key principles are (1) A stable careers programme; (2) Learning from careers and labour market information; (3) Addressing the needs of each student; (4) Linking curriculum learning to careers; (5) Encounters with employers and employees; (6) Experiences of workplaces; (7) Encounters with further and higher education; and (8) Personal guidance. These benchmarks were implemented as part of the government's 'Careers Strategy' launched in 2017 and have formed part of the government's statutory guidance around careers advice since 2018.

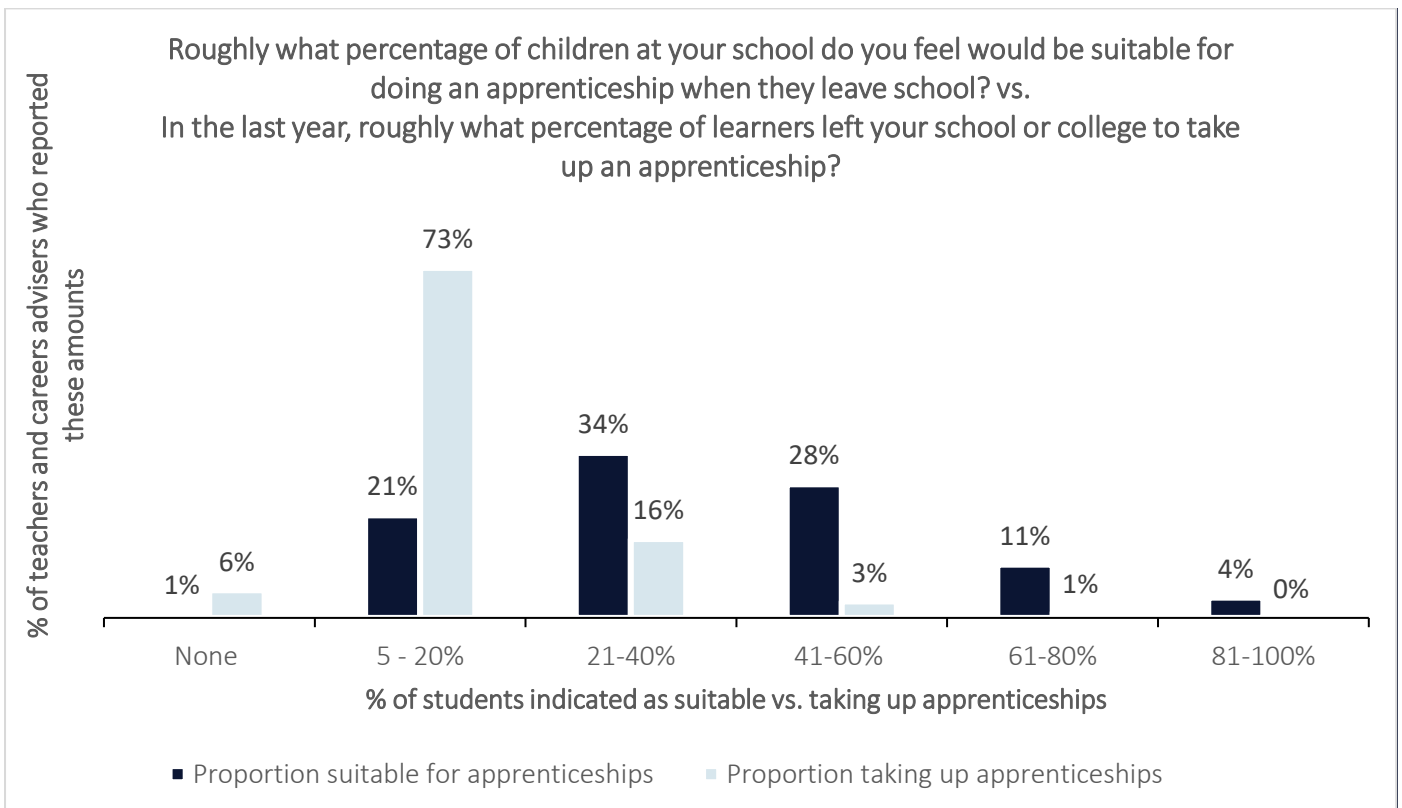


Fig 12: Base n = 261.

When asked to explain these perceptions:

- Teachers referenced the expense of going to university and young people’s desire to avoid university debt as a reason for students taking an apprenticeship. Some also noted that some students were not interested in staying in more formal education or did not feel it suited them.
- While careers advisers also mentioned the high price of university, the lack of apprenticeship opportunities available in their area was seen to override this concern in many cases, being cited as a key reason why the proportion taking an apprenticeship route was not higher. They also felt that the competitiveness of apprenticeships and difficulties securing them was a consideration.

“I think they’re really good if they can get one. Obviously, it’s become a lot more competitive. For some students, even though apprenticeship might be the better route, they might not necessarily have the GCSE grades that they need to be able to access them.”

Careers adviser

Careers advisers overall gave more modest estimations than teachers of the proportion of students both suitable and actively taking on apprenticeships. This suggests that apprenticeships are seen as more prevalent and attainable among less informed audiences. Careers advisers observed a higher standard to apprenticeship entry compared to teachers. This is likely a result of careers advisers having a clearer understanding of the barriers and challenges that can prevent young people going on to an apprenticeship.

Teachers and careers advisers seeing a relatively low proportion of young people as suitable for an apprenticeship may influence young people’s own perception of their ability to undertake one. This may also lead them to question their suitability for a green apprenticeship. However, the lower portion of students actually taking up an apprenticeship, reported by teachers and careers advisers, suggests that other factors, namely the availability and

competitiveness of opportunities, may also be undermining uptake. Supply side issues in the provision of apprenticeships must also be understood to translate this interest into real opportunities for young people, that can help meet the growing demand for green-sector skills within the emerging workforce.

Over half of parents thought their child was likely to do an apprenticeship

Surprisingly, given the low proportion of students taking on apprenticeships according to career advisers, 54% of parents thought their child was likely to do an apprenticeship when they leave school – with only 19% thinking it was unlikely. Around a fifth of parents felt their child was undecided on what career path to follow or wanted to keep their options open. Millennial parents (those born between 1981 and 1996) were the most likely to think their child would do an apprenticeship (63%), compared to only 47% of parents in Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1980).

Of those who felt their child was likely to do an apprenticeship, around 30% mentioned that their child had already expressed an interest in apprenticeships. 27% also said apprenticeships gave them the opportunity to learn on-the-job skills. For parents who felt their child was unlikely to do an apprenticeship, the most common reason given was that they wanted to go to university (33%).

This suggests a key misalignment in the perception of apprenticeships among these audiences, with a higher proportion of parents reporting their child's interest in apprenticeship compared to the proportion that careers advisers or teachers felt would be suitable to undertake one. Equally, this high degree of interest in apprenticeships reported by parents, when compared to the proportion who actually go on to take them, suggests there are barriers or obstacles to securing apprenticeships. Understanding these barriers is a vital step in working to remove them, to enable young people to take on apprenticeships in the green sector in the future.

The apprenticeship knowledge gap

Teachers reported the lowest level of confidence and familiarity with apprenticeships

Most teachers described having a lower level of confidence when advising around apprenticeships than careers in general. Only 50% of teachers said they would feel confident explaining to a young person how apprenticeships work. This was significantly lower than career advisers (94%) and also notably lower than parents (69%).

This lack of confidence may be due to teachers having less first-hand experience of apprenticeships when compared to careers advisers and parents. In the survey, only 26% of teachers agreed with the statement 'I have had a lot of experience of apprenticeships either first-hand or through a close family member or friend', as opposed to 56% of career advisers and 46% of parents. As the vast majority of teachers must attend university, and may have more peers who follow that pathway, this could limit them to a general rather than specific understanding of apprenticeship.

Teachers were also least likely to agree that 'I find it easy to keep myself up to date with the way that careers and jobs are developing', with 49% agreeing compared to 60% of parents and 85% of career advisers. This could be linked to the feeling expressed by some teachers during interviews that staying informed of new routes into careers was not part of their role. Largely due to time constraints, providing apprenticeship information was something they often deferred to careers advisers. However, as teachers spend far more time with students, this lack of awareness could mean students have not given much consideration to apprenticeships prior to speaking with careers advisers (often in years 10/11), at which point some will have already developed clear ideas of what they would like to do post-16.

“A lot of them [students] don’t have a clue about how you would get onto an apprenticeship or what that even means. We did a session in PSHE in tutor time a few weeks ago where we were reading an article, and it was about ‘what is a vocational education qualification’ and I didn’t really know that... They’d never heard of a T level, or they didn’t really know what an apprenticeship was or what the different levels meant. So I think it’s an area that we need to improve on.”

Teacher

Teachers’ lack of first-hand experience with apprenticeships and greater familiarity with university routes may be undermining young people’s awareness of apprenticeships for a large portion of their schooling. If apprenticeships are not presented as a viable option for young people from an early age, this could limit the number of students who feel that they are appropriate for them and reinforce consideration of university as the better-known, default option. Therefore, steps should be taken to shed greater light on apprenticeships, to ensure that teachers, and by extension students, are informed enough to judge if a green apprenticeship may be right for them.

Apprenticeship opportunities were not seen as well-advertised, with information sometimes hard to find

A few teachers and some careers advisers felt that apprenticeships are not well marketed and it seems harder to find consolidated sources of information about them, compared to the centralised UCAS site for university applications and information. Only 43% of teachers agreed with the statement ‘I am confident about knowing where to look for apprenticeship opportunities’. Many teachers interviewed mentioned that they would find it hard to find up-to-date information on apprenticeships. Some also mentioned that they would largely refer to their school’s careers advisers rather than personally searching for information, with curriculum-based learning taking precedent. Further consideration may need to be given to the place of apprenticeships within the curriculum in order for this situation to change.

“I didn’t really have much access to information... I don’t really have responsibility for careers education.... I personally just have a focus on mostly just teaching my subject, and I bring in careers information where I can, but it’s not on a formal, planned basis.”

Teacher, 12

Parents reported being somewhat more confident, with 57% agreeing with this statement. Unsurprisingly, careers advisers had the highest level of confidence (98%) around where to look for apprenticeship opportunities. However, the fact that under half of teachers and fewer than 3 in 5 parents knew where to look for apprenticeship information reinforces the idea that opportunities could be better advertised.

Moreover, this shows that teachers in the survey felt themselves to be the least aware of apprenticeships of these audiences, despite largely appearing to be more informed than parents in the qualitative phase. This is likely linked to them feeling more confident around their understanding of university routes into employment, in comparison to apprenticeships, but could lead to reticence around discussing them within the classroom. Furthermore, this deferral to careers advisers, combined with teachers’ limited awareness of where to look for apprenticeship opportunities suggests limited discussion of apprenticeships in the classes. Providing teachers with more knowledge on apprenticeships could therefore help teachers feel equipped to instigate these conversations with their students, meaning that apprenticeships could become more embedded and threaded through different subject areas, in turn helping young people understand and consider the range of opportunities available to them.

Parents were aware of apprenticeships anecdotally

Awareness and knowledge of apprenticeships was quite mixed among parents. Interview findings suggested that the extent to which parents are given information by schools and colleges or undertake their own research is varied. When it came to the survey, 69% of parents said they would feel confident explaining to a young person how apprenticeships work, which is somewhat higher than anticipated based on qualitative findings. However, confidence is not the same as accuracy and it's possible that some parents' explanations may be more related to traditional, trade-based apprenticeships, which seemed to have a higher level of awareness in general.

Male parents were significantly more likely to agree that they were confident in both explaining how apprenticeships work (77% versus 63% of female parents) and in knowing where to look for apprenticeship opportunities (64% versus 51% female). Millennial parents were also more likely to report some first-hand experience with apprenticeships, at 55% compared to only 40% of Generation X. This could be due to the expansion of apprenticeships into new sectors and industries and, as parents often pointed out in interviews, that the overall landscape of career options had changed considerably.

"I left school a long, long time ago, and so I don't think sharing my experiences is necessarily relevant anymore."

Parent

However, millennial parents were not significantly more likely to describe being confident around explaining apprenticeships to young people. This highlights that first-hand experience does not necessarily translate into confidence around understanding apprenticeships, which may be limited by the variety of apprenticeships that are offered and perceived variation in how they work. This reinforces our interview findings, which suggested that parents often based their perceptions of apprenticeships on anecdotes they had heard about their friends' children, so did not have the breadth of knowledge of the sectors and levels to which apprenticeships now cater. This is a particular concern for apprenticeships in growth areas, such as in green industries, where limited anecdotal information is available. This makes the production and circulation of high-quality, human-centred information on green apprenticeships all the more important.

Expectations of post-16 pathways

Some thought apprenticeships were too specific if young people aren't sure what they want to do

During interviews, there was a perception among some parents that apprenticeships may be narrowing down their child's options, compared to studying at university or college. Parents, particularly of children who had started secondary school more recently, often said that their child was not yet sure what they wanted to do and were keen to keep their options open.

"I know bits about apprenticeships, but I just wondered whether you're narrowing your focus too much."

Parent

Some parents interviewed took note of the specific job titles attached to apprenticeships and felt that further and higher education options appeared to offer more generalisable learning. A university degree was sometimes seen as a more recognisable 'standard' that was more transferable if their child chose to enter a different field, also allowing more time for students to develop their interests and soft skills before they enter full-time employment.

“She [their daughter] is really undecided so I’ve been talking to her about maybe doing something that’s a little bit more of a general degree... You can study law at university and not have to become a lawyer... with a law degree... [you can] go into banking or go into finance or other things... It’s a standard, if you like, of education.”

Parent

While there was a perception that universities offer both a recognisable standard of education and transferable skills, it should be noted that there are degrees that could also be considered ‘narrow’ – and apprenticeships are potentially being perceived as such due to a lack of understanding of what they offer.

In the survey, 25% of parents explicitly agreed with the statement ‘Apprenticeships are often inappropriate for young people as they are too narrow’. Male parents were significantly more likely to agree with this statement (29%) compared to female parents (21%). Only a slightly lower proportion of career advisers (20%) agreed that apprenticeships were too narrow, while teachers were least likely to agree (14%). While this view was not held by a majority of any group, it represents a notable proportion of parents, particularly male parents, and careers advisers – as shown in Fig. 13 below.

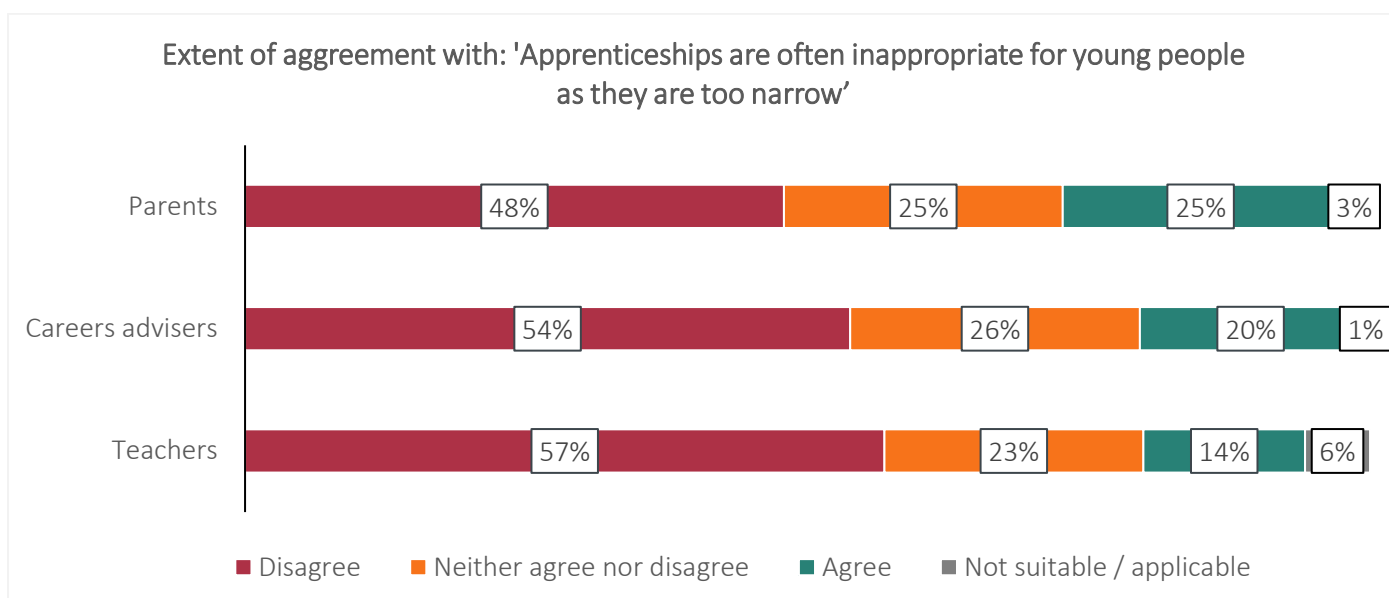


Fig. 13: Base n = Parents 1,000, careers advisers 132, teachers 139

Although 20% of careers advisers considered apprenticeships too narrow, they are still required to advise on this pathway because 86% indicated that students often came to them saying they want to do an apprenticeship. This suggests that careers advice must tread a careful line between being led by the student’s interests and what they as a careers adviser feel would be a suitable pathway for the student. Careers advisers’ impressions of the narrowness of apprenticeships may stem from their experiences with advising students who want to study for an apprenticeship, but are not completely sure in what area they would like to complete it. Broader recognition of apprenticeships as a ‘standard’ of education, which also gives young people the opportunity to gain experience of work and transferable skills, may help undermine this sense that their ‘narrowness’ could close off other options, alongside case studies which illustrate the variety of ways in which careers can develop after an apprenticeship.

Some parents seemed to see university as the more aspirational choice

Many in the overall sample acknowledged that apprenticeships were an ideal means of gaining real-world experience that could be highly beneficial to young people's careers. However, 68% of teachers and 52% of careers advisers agreed that 'Many parents would rather their child went to university than took up an apprenticeship'. This assumption was reflected by a number of parents interviewed, many of whom spoke positively about apprenticeships, yet still defaulted to discussing university. As such, degree apprenticeships were spoken of very positively by parents, feeling they would offer the 'best of both worlds' of study and experience. Parents with a child considering a role that does not currently have an apprenticeship route – for example, training as a doctor – said they would consider a degree apprenticeship, if it was offered. This indicates that, while not explicitly stated, some parents clearly prioritised university as the primary option and natural choice for their child. This may stem from a perception that university is the 'academic' choice, and therefore the 'natural' choice for academic children.

"She's really bright, she's really academic... So, in a way, university always felt like a good route for her. In terms of, I really love practical skills. I really do, but she's not – that's not her route. She's just very, very academic."

Parent

Amongst parents in the survey who answered that their child was 'unlikely' to do an apprenticeship when they leave school, the top three reasons given were that they felt their child:

- Wants to go to university (33%).
- Is simply unlikely to choose an apprenticeship (23%).
- Is 'academic' or an academic route would be more appropriate for them (13%).

Some also acknowledged in interviews that the social dynamic of being at university, where they could meet lots of new people their age, was a persuasive factor. This social component, in contrast to apprenticeships for which there may be only one opening in a company, could be a factor in those potentially interested in and suitable for a green apprenticeships choosing university instead. This mirrors the findings of the [previous research with Gen Z](#), which noted the importance of the social aspect of the 'university experience' in young people's decision-making.

Attitudes towards apprenticeships

Teachers felt that apprenticeships were more geared towards 'practical' students than those with high grades

Many interviewed teachers were aware that an increasing number of apprenticeships are being offered – with varying levels of technical, practical and academic requirements – in a growing number of sectors. However, some interviewed teachers believed that apprenticeships were more appropriate for more 'practical' students. This is supported by survey findings in which 94% of teachers agreed with the statement 'Apprenticeships are a good route for young people with strong practical skills', whereas only 58% agreed that 'Apprenticeships are an appropriate route for young people with a record of high grades'. This was the most notable disparity of all audiences, with a significantly smaller difference in the levels of agreement shown by careers advisers (87% 'practical', and 81% 'high grades').

"I think my general advice to all of them [students] is always choosing subjects that they enjoy, thinking about things that they're going to enjoy studying...and then if maybe it is a student that is not as academic as could be, maybe suggesting things like an apprenticeship or other vocational courses that they can do."

Teacher

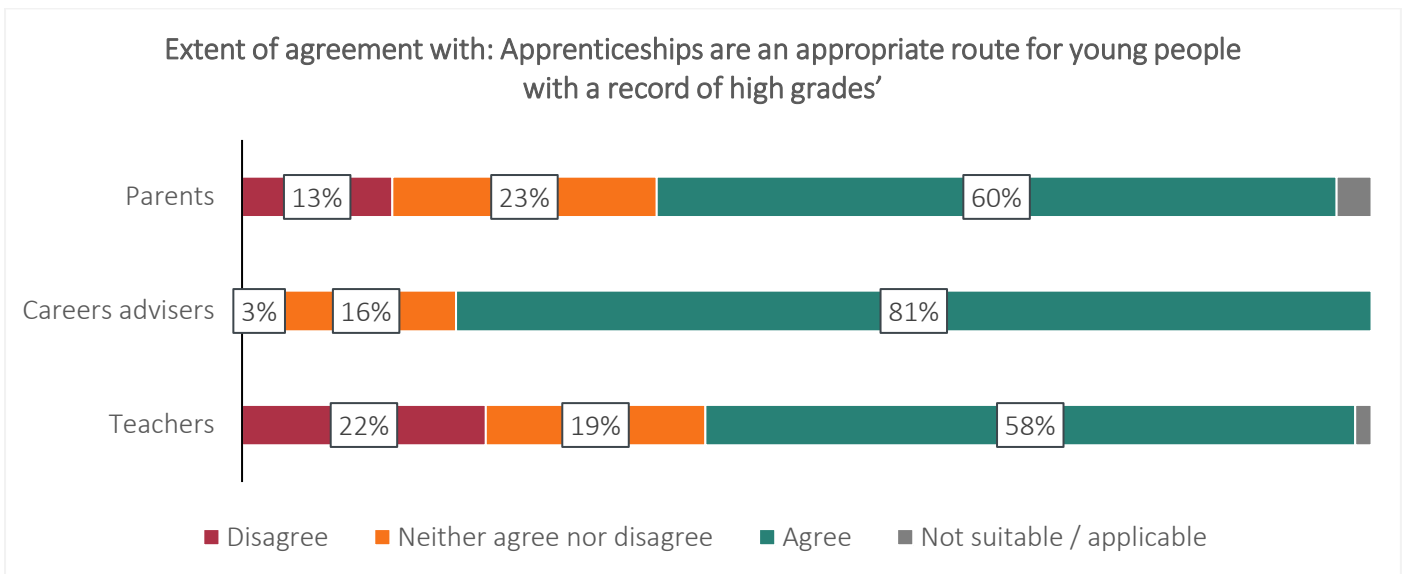


Fig. 14: Base n = Parents 1,000, careers advisers 132, teachers 139

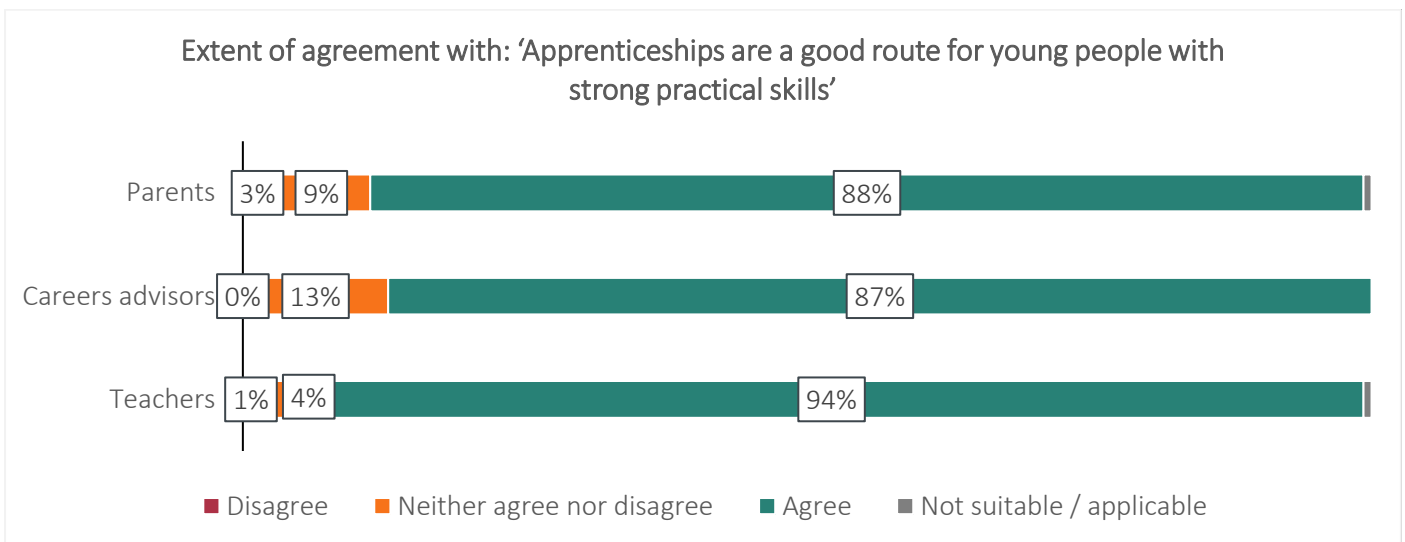


Fig. 15: Base n = Parents 1,000, careers advisers 132, teachers 139

This may be linked to how teachers' perceptions of apprenticeships often appeared to be influenced by what kinds of apprenticeships they were aware of in their area, i.e. some in rural areas were more aware of trade-based apprenticeship, such as construction or agriculture, which were more common where they lived. There also seemed to be a higher level of awareness of these types of apprenticeships more broadly.

“Apprenticeships are for some of the brightest students as well. It isn't just for those who are weaker. But our offer locally at the moment, tends to focus on things around building, plumbing, animal care, that type of thing, which tends to appeal to students who aren't as academic... because of what's available, the school generally tends to focus on the students who are... grades three to five. They tend to be those students who are capable, but maybe not academic.

Teacher

Furthermore, a few teachers spoke of apprenticeships as a good alternative to university for less academically able students, without the necessary UCAS points. The relatively low proportion of teachers who felt that apprenticeships

are an appropriate route for students with high grades (58%) suggests that some still hold a view that apprenticeships are not best suited or intended for academically high-achieving students.

Nonetheless, 87% of teachers and 82% of parents did agree that 'Apprenticeships are a good route into any work, not only hands-on trades'. This suggests that there is some awareness of the breadth and levels of opportunities, but that those less versed in apprenticeships may be holding on to perceptions of them as primarily for students with a more practical skillset. This is important as, despite having less dedicated time to discuss careers with young people than careers advisers, 86% of teachers had provided informal one-to-one advice to young people and often discussed careers in form time (67%) and assemblies (32%) – giving ample opportunity for this view to influence young people's perceptions of apprenticeships and, by extension, green apprenticeships.

Some felt that young people did not have the necessary maturity or soft skills to complete an apprenticeship

Teachers interviewed largely saw apprenticeships as a great opportunity for students to develop hands-on skills and experiences while learning, offering them more freedom and independence than traditional academic study. However, some felt that apprenticeships did not suit all learner types and that doing one might be demanding for some. Careers advisers shared this perspective, which was informed by their understanding that apprentices are employees and therefore need to demonstrate transferable skills associated with being 'employable'. Maturity, resilience and work readiness were often cited qualities they felt were required to be successful in an apprenticeship, alongside punctuality, organisation, teamwork and communication skills.

Perceptions of the relevance of apprenticeships to young people appeared to be linked to participants' perceptions of Gen Z. Some remarked that many students have not yet developed the necessary soft skills to be successful on an apprenticeship. This was sometimes linked to the impact of Covid lockdowns and the effect this had had on teaching, student confidence and their overall attitude to work.

"Going into apprenticeship, you have to show a degree of resilience and determination and independence... Because when you learn on the job, not everything goes right and you have to be prepared to be told that that's wrong... they're told to work in a slightly different way, or perhaps work faster. Sometimes I think they live in a bit of a bubble at school."

Teacher

These findings were supported by the survey, in which 58% of careers advisers agreed that 'Many young people lack the maturity to enter the workplace successfully'. The same percentage of parents agreed with this statement, despite it not being a notable theme in parent interviews. This may be due to interview discussions being primarily focused on their child, whereas this survey question related to young people in a broader sense. Teachers were less likely to agree with this statement (46%), though they were notably more likely to agree than disagree (32%).

This shows a concern across audiences that young people are not yet ready to start work, and may benefit from additional time in education to build up soft skills before entering the job market, usually through attending university. It may also reveal a need to start discussing jobs and work-related skills at a younger age, to better prepare young people for transitioning into work.

Some felt that young people would benefit from more experience of work before entering an apprenticeship

The perception that students might not be ready to start work, combined with the idea raised by teachers and careers advisers that young people missed out on a crucial period of socialisation as a result of Covid lockdowns, could explain why most respondents agreed that ‘Young people considering an apprenticeship should do some work experience first’. 53% of parents and 65% of teachers agreed with this statement, rising to 82% among careers advisers.

Careers advisers’ strong agreement with the need for work experience links to how they had the most understanding and experience of the apprenticeship landscape and were most likely to report that getting an apprenticeship is ‘very competitive’ (87%). Work experience, while building up CVs, could introduce young people to the demands and expectations of work, and help them assess if they feel an apprenticeship is right for them.

“I would say relatively few, certainly of my year 11 students, I think have the maturity to go off and do a full-time apprenticeship. I think an awful lot of them still need to be in education.”

Careers adviser

While ‘experiences of workplaces’ is one of the Gatsby Benchmarks, there seems to be a lack of work experience opportunities in schools. A [recent report by ‘Speakers for Schools’](#)² found that only around half of the state school students completed any work experience, which was stated as acting as a barrier to entry to Russell Group universities. However, the lack of opportunity to gain exposure to work and develop employment-related skills can also be seen as a notable barrier to apprenticeships, that could undermine both students’ confidence in undertaking one and the likelihood of careers advisers, teachers or parents recommending them to young people.

Many careers advisers noted in interviews that they would never discourage a student from taking an apprenticeship, but they do encourage them to think realistically. This includes having alternative options lined up in case none of their applications are successful, and also thinking critically about whether an apprenticeship is the best choice for them. This could, in turn, undermine students’ own perceptions of their readiness to undertake an apprenticeship as well as effectively doubling the work required if applying for multiple progression routes.

There was also a belief, voiced by a few teachers during interviews, that the current curriculum does not necessarily align with the requirements of the job market. While teachers often mentioned referring to jobs linked to teaching content at the end of lessons, they were not always given enough time. How the curriculum links to specific careers does not seem to be prioritised in lessons and is approached in a seemingly unstructured way, meaning the extent to which this is discussed is largely at the discretion of teachers – who must balance numerous demands on their time. This can be seen to further undermine students’ preparedness for apprenticeships, as teachers feel they are not always able to explore how their subjects link to industries and potential jobs, to help students understand the relevance of skills learned in the classroom. This suggests a need to examine the curriculum and the extent to which it adequately prepares students to enter the job market. Clearer alignment between teaching content and the development of work-based skills may help account for this lack of confidence and smooth the transition from formal education to work.

² Double Disadvantage Policy Report, *Speakers for Schools*. April 2024.

Certain subject areas were seen as more likely to have related apprenticeship opportunities available

Awareness of the breadth of apprenticeships appeared to be dependent on a teacher's subject specialism. Interviews suggested that teachers in business and IT-related disciplines had the highest level of awareness, particularly around higher-level apprenticeships. Teachers of less directly vocational subjects, such as languages and history, tended to have more limited awareness. This may be the result of there currently being a larger number of applicable apprenticeships offered in business and IT-related areas compared to humanities-related subjects. However, an assumption that these subjects will not have related apprenticeship opportunities available, utilising the transferable skills gained through their study, could limit the scope of students who consider exploring this pathway, which could include green apprenticeships with a more social or political orientation.

The majority of surveyed teachers were aware that apprenticeships now cater to a broad range of areas, with 87% agreeing that 'Apprenticeships are a good route into any work, not only hands-on trades'. While this degree of agreement was not significantly higher for teachers of any particular subject, there was agreement from 98% of those working in post-16 providers (further education colleges and sixth form colleges). This may be due to post-16 educators being better versed in apprenticeships, as a more present concern for their students. However, this variability may also prevent young people from gaining an awareness and understanding of apprenticeships early enough in their schooling to give them due consideration.

Many felt there could be financial barriers to students getting or completing apprenticeships

Careers advisers appeared to have more in-depth careers discussions with students than teachers, weighing up their various options and considering what is realistic for them. Therefore, careers advisers had a good understanding of the various ways in which financial considerations could factor into decision-making. A few noted that, for some students, having financial freedom and being able to contribute financially to the household is a persuasive factor. Students and families may also not find university a viable option, if they don't expect to receive sufficient financial assistance. Avoiding university debts was a widely cited consideration among all audiences.

"If he went to uni, he would potentially have quite a large debt and he wouldn't have to worry about the burden of that ... [there is] no guarantee now that if you leave university... that you'll end up getting a job."

Parent

On the other hand, careers advisers mentioned that parents may stop receiving child credits for children who are completing an apprenticeship, as opposed to those who go on to further study at a college or sixth form. While this was not raised by parents, it may impact how viable and potentially risky apprenticeships are as an option for their child, and act as a barrier to lower-income households if they feel an apprentice salary would not afford students financial independence.

One theme referenced by all audiences was that, while apprenticeships let students 'earn while they learn', low apprentice wages would also need to be factored into decision-making. Parents in particular felt that 'Low starting salaries for apprentices are off-putting for young people', with 71% agreeing with this statement. Over half of careers advisers and teachers also agreed (53% and 52% respectively).

"Sometimes the entry salary point, when they [students] see that number, they're like, 'Oh my God, no,' you can't possibly earn such a little amount of money."

Teacher

Parents spend most time with their children and their children tend to go to them for advice so probably best understand what young people find important, particularly in relation to finances. However, financial considerations are also most likely to affect parents, who may need to continue financially supporting their child, so will be a more front-of-mind concern for them. Interview findings suggest that low wages were perceived to be a particular barrier for those who would need to relocate or travel for an apprenticeship, given rising rent and train fares. Therefore, while avoiding university expenses was seen as a notable consideration, the appeal of apprenticeships may be tempered by concerns that young people completing an apprenticeship may still need to be somewhat financially dependent on their parents. To appeal to a generation that, as the [previous research with Gen Z](#) research identified, are financially mindful and informed by current economic instability, green apprenticeships must present themselves as offering financial security to young people. This includes the extent to which they can account for their short-term expenses, such as rent and transportation and stable income moving forward.

Perceptions of apprenticeship opportunities

Apprenticeships were seen to be competitive and over-subscribed

All audiences agreed with the statement ‘Getting a good apprenticeship in my local area is very competitive’. Agreement was particularly high among career advisers (87%), followed by teachers (76%) and parents (66%), but with a notable majority across all audiences. Interviews found that the competitiveness of apprenticeships was a particularly top-of-mind perception among careers advisers, who were best informed about specific apprenticeships, application processes and requirements.

“I’ve now started saying to students that, you know, it’s [getting an apprenticeship] as competitive as getting into Oxford or Oxbridge.”

Career adviser

Teachers and careers advisers reported apprenticeship opportunities being very over-subscribed – often receiving hundreds of applications per position. While specific requirements in terms of qualifications may be achievable, careers advisers noted that competition may drive up employers’ expectations. There were also concerns that there are a limited number of opportunities available locally for apprenticeships in coveted fields like accountancy and law, exacerbating the competitiveness of these positions. This points to demand for apprenticeships exceeding supply, pointing towards an opportunity to expand the provision of green apprenticeships to meet this need.

Apprenticeship applications were seen as rigorous and time-intensive

Interviewed teachers and careers advisers often felt that apprenticeship applications are more demanding and time-intensive than those for university or further education. Unlike UCAS applications, apprenticeship applications have to be submitted for each company and role, and are posted at different times, requiring students to frequently check for new opportunities and submit discrete applications.

“University, in a way, has become the easier option, because all they have to do is get the grades... rather than putting themselves through a competitive, lengthy [apprenticeship] recruitment process... it’s easier just to apply to uni.”

Careers adviser

Echoing this, 65% of careers advisers in the survey agreed that ‘Applying for apprenticeships is more time-consuming than applying for university’. Parents (27%) and teachers (24%) were notably less likely to agree with this statement,

but careers advisers are best informed of apprenticeship application processes, sometimes using their allotted time with students to work through applications. In interviews, they stressed that students need to be committed and prepared to take on the additional work of monitoring and completing apprenticeship applications. This demand on students' time was also given as a reason why they would sometimes encourage students to submit a university application, as a back-up.

“The school is keen to ensure that we support the students in terms of the process and actually they have a policy that every student does a UCAS application because some students change their mind on results day and then they have no UCAS application in situ.”

Teacher

This more involved application process was often attributed to the fact that apprenticeships require a more well-rounded skillset than further study, as they entail on-the-job responsibilities alongside learning, with employers expecting apprentices to work to a high standard. Therefore, the bar of entry was sometimes seen to be higher for apprenticeships than other study options. Interviewees often pointed towards university as increasingly the ‘easier’ option. This suggests a need to examine apprenticeships’ application processes and bring them more in line with the standardised process available to university applicants, so their time-intensive nature does not deter capable prospective apprentices.

Availability of local apprenticeship opportunities was seen to create travel concerns for young people interested in apprenticeships

This local competition led some interview participants to believe that students may have to move away to big cities to secure an apprenticeship. Large, national-level companies, generally seen to be based in urban centres, were also viewed as highly competitive, often with a higher bar to entry than university. All audiences in the survey were more inclined to agree than disagree with the statement ‘Doing an apprenticeship often requires leaving home or travelling long distances to work’. 43% of parents, 43% of carers advisers and 37% parents agreed with this – however, a notable proportion also gave a more neutral response of ‘neither agree nor disagree’ (see figure below) suggesting this was not a particularly widely-held belief, despite many respondents being in agreement.

Extent of agreement with: ‘Doing an apprenticeship often requires leaving home or travelling long distances to work’

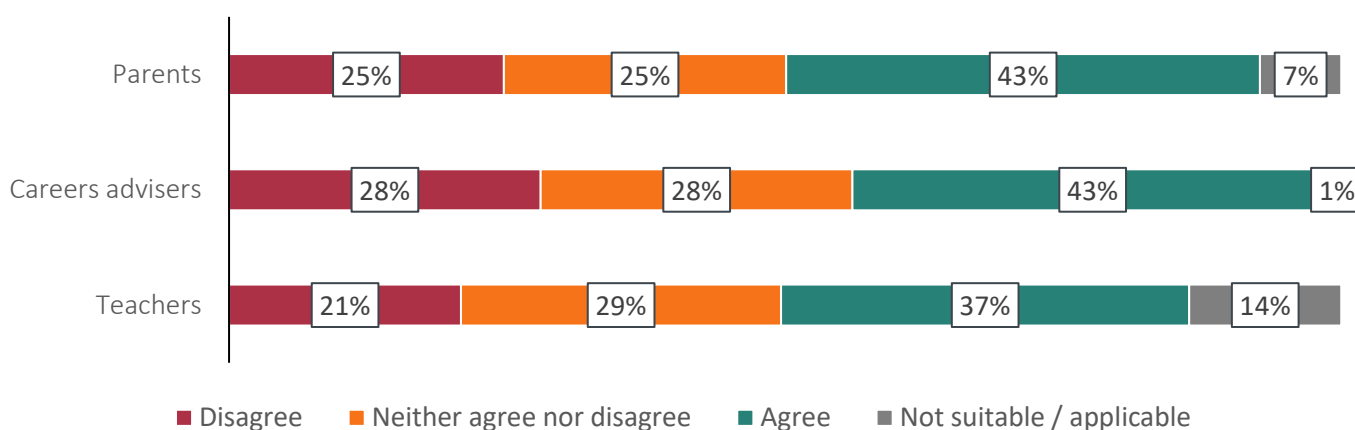


Fig 16: Base n = Parents 1,000, career advisers 132, teachers 139

This perception is notable, as a number of teachers felt that many of their students were not interested in moving away from their area. They mentioned that the expense of travel and costs of relocation would be a concern for young people, especially if they did not feel their wages accounted for it. Therefore, a lack of opportunities locally could prevent students from seeking apprenticeships. This could serve as a further barrier to young people considering green apprenticeships. However, advocating for and raising awareness of the green apprenticeship opportunities available locally, and not just in urban centres, could help negate these concerns.

“A lot of students end up coming on full-time education just because there are no apprenticeships available.”

Teacher

Some felt that apprenticeship provision can be ‘patchy’

While interviewed careers advisers felt that the number and variety of apprenticeships had increased in recent years, some saw them as inconsistent in quality. Careers advisers had heard mixed feedback from students, and there was concern that apprenticeships could fall through, at which point it may be difficult for students to take up alternative opportunities.

Despite this being raised predominantly by careers advisers during interviews, 80% of surveyed careers advisers agreed that ‘Apprenticeships generally provide high-quality training’, as opposed to only 66% of teachers. Parents were most likely to agree with this statement (85%). The lower level of confidence in apprenticeship quality shown by teachers may be due to their more anecdotal accounts. Teachers may be more likely to hear from students who have had a poor experience and need to re-enter college or sixth form, or require help with a university application, as opposed to those who are able to successfully undertake their apprenticeships.

This perceived lack of consistency could serve as an additional factor in encouraging students to consider alternative pathways as a back-up, as it may undermine their confidence and commitment to pursuing apprenticeships if they feel they may be difficult to secure or less reliable. This could be a factor when considering apprenticeships that are perceived to be in a ‘new’, less established area, including green job roles for which there is generally a lower level of awareness – for example, only 32% of survey respondents were aware of the job ‘corporate responsibility manager’, which will be discussed later in the report.

Less than half of teachers felt that their school would be happy to see an increase in students taking up apprenticeships over university

During interviews, some teachers and career advisers referenced that showing student pathways was an important part of school marketing. They mentioned this would often include the proportion of students that went on to university, particular Russell Group universities. They noted that this may also reference students who went on to prestigious or coveted apprenticeships.

“There's a pressure in the sixth form to have a certain number of students go on to higher education within the Russell Group, and it seems to be a measure that's tracked and advertised locally on the website... with some of the apprenticeships, if they're with a quite prestigious company that would also be advertised in an equal sort of way.”

Teacher

This being said, only 48% of teachers agreed that ‘My school would be happy if there was an increase in young people taking up an apprenticeship rather than going to university’. This proportion was notably higher amongst post-16 teachers (58%) – likely related to the fact that this group tended to agree that ‘Apprenticeships are a good route into

any work, not only hands-on trades'. Careers advisers (60%) were the most likely group to agree that schools would be happy with an increase in apprenticeships.

As well as having less familiarity with apprenticeships, teachers – unlike career advisers, who are expected to remain independent – may feel compelled to take into account what they feel is in the best interest of the school, when advising young people around careers. Their lower level of agreement that schools would be happy if students went into apprenticeships over university suggests a lingering bias within schools that university is the favourable path. The higher level of agreement amongst teachers in post-16 providers, where apprenticeships may be discussed more regularly and a greater diversity of qualifications is offered, reinforces the idea that young people are exposed to greater understanding around the value of apprenticeships relatively late in their schooling. This suggests a need to raise the profile of apprenticeships among teachers across all school years, not simple those working with young people at the time when they are selecting their options.

Therefore, increasing consideration of green apprenticeships will require challenging this apparent bias towards university pathways in schools. Increasing the recognition of apprenticeships, so that securing one – not just at high-profile companies but also more local employers – is treated as an equal accolade to acceptance at a prestigious university, may help broaden the scope of young people who consider pursuing green apprenticeships. Currently, the higher workload required to secure an apprenticeship combined with the fact that they are less recognised, is likely to be undermining their popularity.

What this means for green apprenticeships

These findings evidence the perceived practical, cultural and economic barriers that may prevent young people from getting or completing an apprenticeship, as well as some areas where their provision could be expanded and strengthened, so more students see them as a viable career option. This points to several key areas for consideration, both in regards to equipping young people to take on apprenticeships and providing opportunities that meet the needs of both students and the job market.

Preparing young people to enter green apprenticeships will entail:

- Giving young people the necessary information to consider apprenticeships earlier in their schooling, so university does not become the default. This will require building up teachers' awareness of apprenticeships, so apprenticeships aren't raised at a point where young people have already decided on their preferred path, based on a limited understanding of the opportunities available to them.
- Examining the extent to which current school curriculums equip young people with the knowledge and skills to successfully enter apprenticeships. This would include making more explicit the links between subject teaching and employment-related skills.
- Providing opportunities for young people to learn on-the-job skills and confidence through work experience, giving them the opportunity to develop the maturity and soft skills to smooth the transition into work.

Creating opportunities that young people feel are right for them will entail:

- Advocating for more local opportunities, so apprenticeships are available where young people live and over-subscription does not make applications unrealistically competitive for otherwise capable students.
- Ensuring young people are offered appropriate financial compensation for apprenticeships, to reduce economic barriers to entry.

Promoting apprenticeships as a recognisable standard of education, with a translatable value outside of specific job roles to minimise the perceived risk of them narrowing young people's career options. Being mindful of these considerations is crucial to promoting uptake of green apprenticeships. However, the perception of 'green jobs' also plays a key role in determining the perceived desirability and attainability of green apprenticeships, as will be explored in the following section.

Perceptions of green jobs

Perceptions of green jobs

This section of the report details interview participants and survey respondents' awareness and perceptions of green jobs. We have defined green jobs as those that have a direct positive impact on the planet.

Findings appear to show a lack of awareness of green jobs and a prevailing perception that green jobs are suited to those who are already engaged in environmental issues, which paired with the focus in careers discussions on interests, indicates that conversations about green jobs between young people and parents, teachers and careers advisers are rarely happening.

Engagement and conversations around green jobs

Most parents reported their children as being at least aware of environmental issues, with 40% saying their children were engaged, including 10% 'highly engaged'. The percentage who felt their children were highly engaged rose to 25% in those who had a post-graduate degree. Interestingly, parents were more likely to indicate that they, rather than their children, were environmentally engaged.

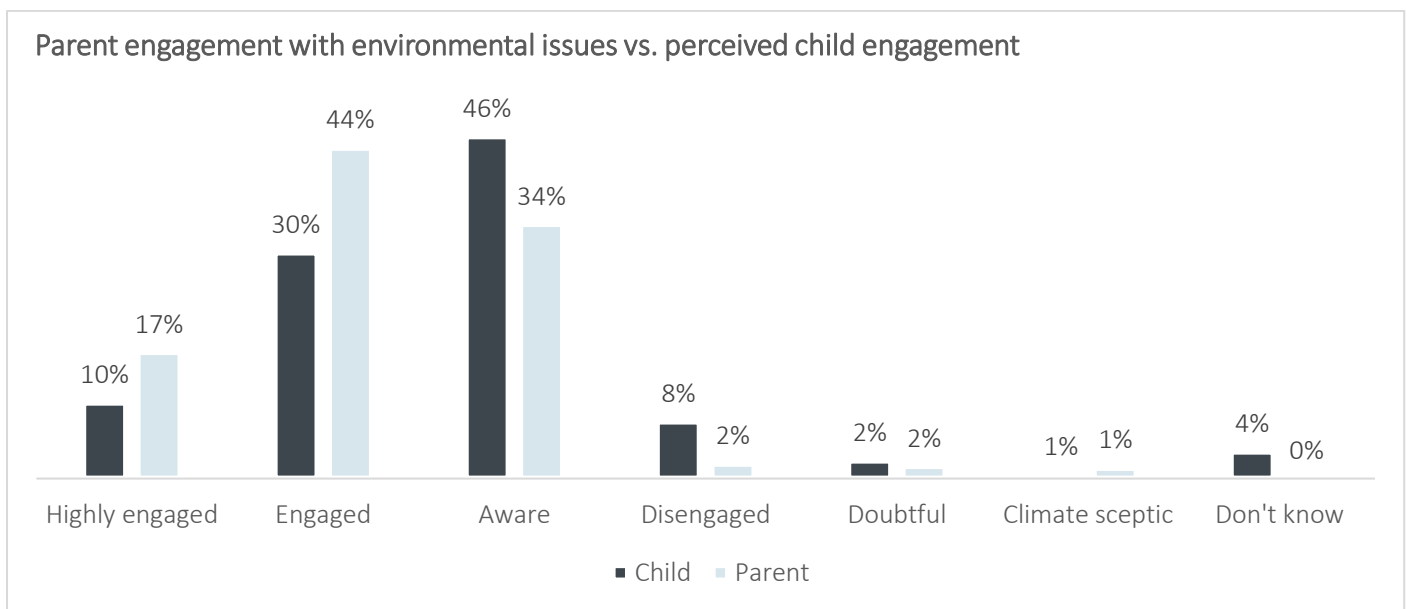


Fig 17: Q: Thinking about your children aged 11 to 18 and still in school, how would you rate their level of engagement with environmental issues? and Q: How would you rate your own level of engagement with environmental issues?, Parents base n = 1,000.

46% of all parents in our survey indicated that their children would be 'interested' in a green job or career, rising to 52% of millennials and 52% of those who were university educated. 89% of those whose children were highly engaged with environmental issues indicated that they would also be interested in a green job or career. Children's reported interest followed that of their parents, with 58% of those who reported themselves as engaged with environmental issues also indicating that their children would be interested in this career path.

Despite these high levels of interest, teachers and careers advisers reported relatively few conversations with pupils about green jobs. We asked teachers and careers advisers with what proportion of their students are they having conversations about green jobs. Some key insights emerged:

- Only 13% of careers advisers and 9% of teachers reported having conversations with 45% of their students or more.
- 13% of careers advisers and 25% of teacher reported having no conversations about this career path.

- 2% of careers advisers and teachers had discussions with all of the young people they were responsible for.
- 18% had not had any conversations about green jobs in the past year.
- 26% had spoken to only 5% of pupils.

However, despite the low number of conversations, careers advisers and teachers did not feel that green jobs would be unsuitable for young people – 13% of educators felt that green jobs might be suitable for all young people.

More positively, 40% felt the proportion of young people with whom they were having these conversations was slowly growing, while 13% indicated that the proportion was growing quickly.

Attitudes towards green jobs

While conversations about green jobs were not common, attitudes towards green jobs themselves appeared very positive, with career advisers in particular seeing them as appropriate careers for a range of learner types. However, parents in particular appeared to have some doubts about the appropriateness of green jobs for young people achieving high grades, with only half agreeing that these jobs were appropriate for that kind of learner.

While our interview participants often noted a wide range of skills that might be required by ‘green jobs’, including curiosity, thoughtfulness, communication, teamwork and leadership, the survey revealed a belief – held by around half of respondents – that a high level of interest in environmental issues is required to get such a job. Similarly, around half of parents indicated that many children lacked the interest in the environment required for such a career. This may act as a barrier to parental support and suggestions, particularly given that, later in the survey, only 10% of parents indicated that their children are highly interested in environmental issues.

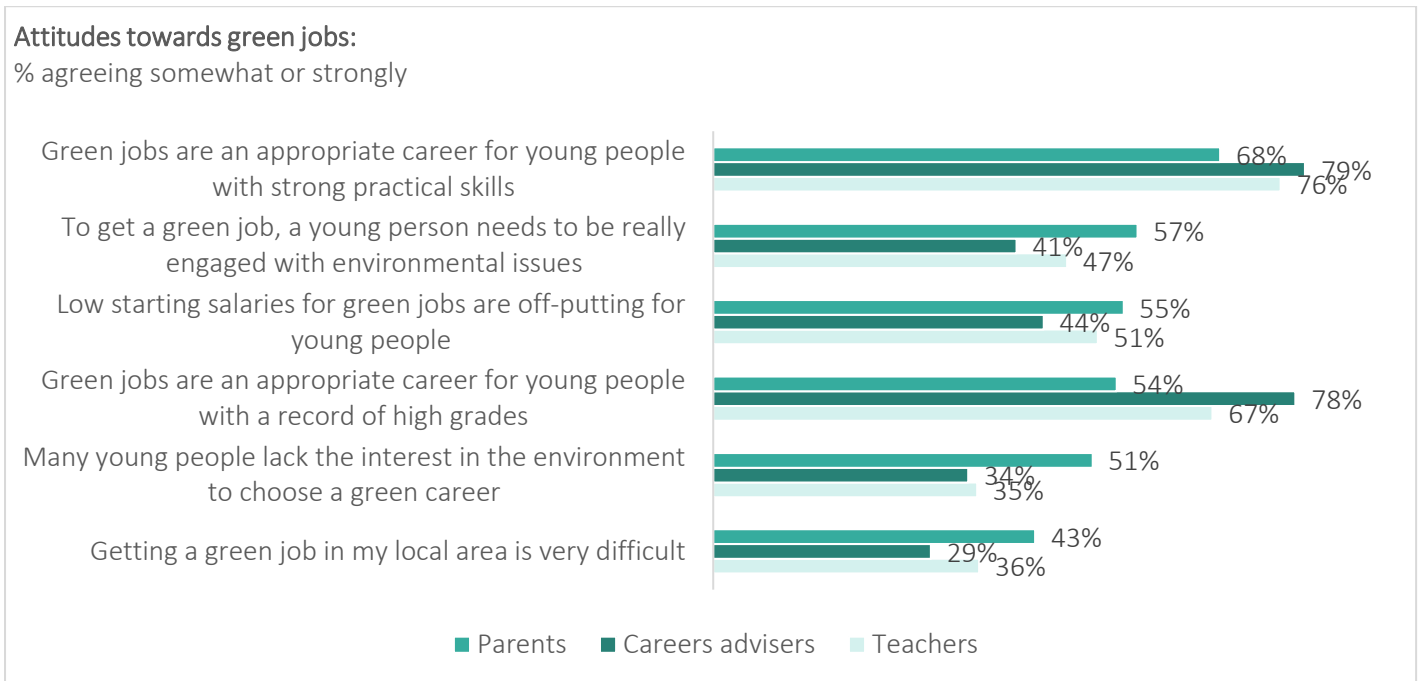


Fig 18: Base n = Parents 1,000, careers advisers 132, teachers 139.

A similar limitation was revealed during interviews, in which participants across all audiences indicated a feeling that STEM and geography were helpful subjects on the path to a green job. This was potentially because many participants were only considering jobs related to sustainability and the environment. Additionally, there was a perception that green jobs require thinking about more than just yourself – one parent felt that to be successful in a green job, a

young person needed to have social awareness and not be inward-looking. Again, this perception may limit the number of young people with whom influencers discuss these kinds of roles and career paths.

For interest in these roles to become more widespread, there may need to be greater clarity that these jobs are now mainstream positions across a range of sectors in which many young people might be interested, rather than merely reserved for those with a high level of interest in the environment.

Perceptions of potential opportunities in green jobs

Linked to this are influencers' attitudes towards the opportunities available for young people in 'green jobs'. While careers advisers appeared convinced of the long-term career prospects for 'green jobs', parents and teachers seemed less convinced. Many were unsure as to whether they offered high salaries and, while only a third of teachers agreed that getting a green job locally was very difficult, another third felt that they didn't know whether they were or not.

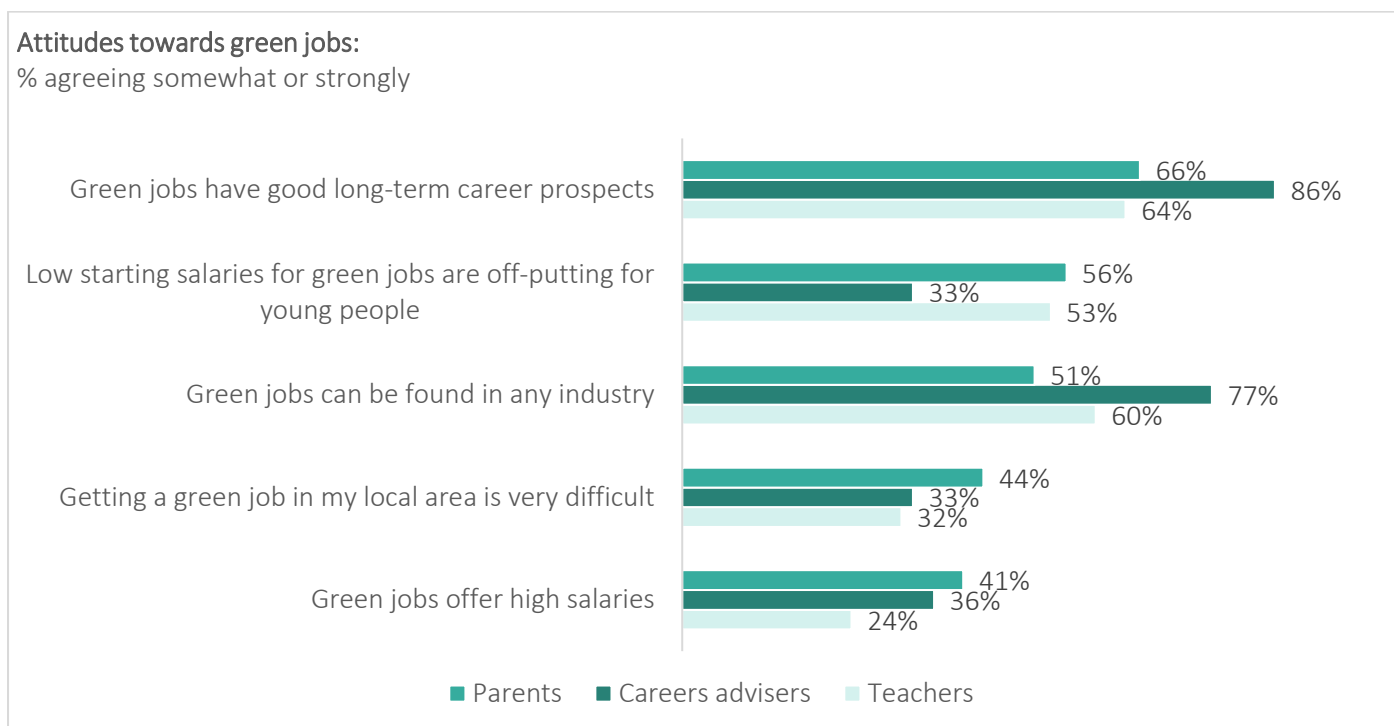


Fig 19: Base n = Parents 1,000, careers advisers 132, teachers 139.

In order for these careers to be promoted more widely by those influencing young people's choices, it is potentially important that they understand green jobs not as poorly paid roles, undertaken by enthusiasts, but as a rational career choice, with opportunities both nationally and locally.

Influencer expectations

Related to this, one key finding from the interview stage was that teachers, careers advisers and parents are very much led by the interests of young people. Parents and teachers were more likely to offer advice after a child had come to them with a particular interest. Careers advisers also tended to structure their conversations with young people around the student's interests, which may revolve around specific subjects.

The survey found that only 12% of careers advisers and 9% of teachers agreed that students come to them often wanting to do a 'green job'. Although the intention of child-led guidance is to explore what is best for the child, it could mean that young people are not being advised about either apprenticeships or green jobs because they haven't expressed an interest in them. It may be that there is a circular effect here, with young people not hearing about green jobs because they have not shown an interest in one because they haven't heard about them.

This suggests that encouraging green apprenticeships and jobs may require greater engagement with young people themselves, to ensure they come to careers interactions with a sense that green jobs are of interest. It may also flag a need to readjust the student-centred approach of current careers advice to facilitate discussions around career paths of which young people are not fully aware.

Current understanding of green jobs

For green apprenticeships to be popular and successful, it is necessary for those who influence young people to be aware of the roles that are available for them and understand how to guide them towards these career paths.

Our interviews found that across the three audiences, awareness and understanding of green jobs generally focused around the terms 'sustainability' and 'environment', with a particular focus on specific sectors: heating, renewable energy, car manufacture, and built environment. Parents were generally less aware of green jobs, falling back onto 'sustainability' and 'environment', but also specific jobs, such as recycling and farming.

"I guess working in energy industry, probably something to do with wind turbines or solar panels or renewable energy like water. I don't know...heat sourcing."

Teacher

"Probably working anything to do with green energy...wind turbines have come into my head. Electronic cars have come into my head. Trying to think green jobs, anything to do that with ethics and doing the right thing by the environment."

Teacher

Almost all survey respondents who were teachers or careers advisers were able to name at least one green job in an open question. However, 23% of parents were not able to mention even one, indicating perhaps high levels of disengagement or a simple lack of awareness with these potential careers. This reflected the findings of our interview stage, in which participants were much more likely to see 'green jobs' in terms of sectors such as heating and energy rather than specific roles. This may be compounded by the fact that our sample tended to have little involvement in these areas, even informally through friends and family.

Technician and installation roles in sustainability were mentioned by only 18% of careers advisers, 3% of teachers and 7% of parents. Raising the profile of these roles and making them 'top of mind' for all those who influence and inform young people's career choices looks to be a key challenge.

In this survey, we're defining 'green jobs' as those that have a direct positive impact on the planet. What green jobs can you think of?

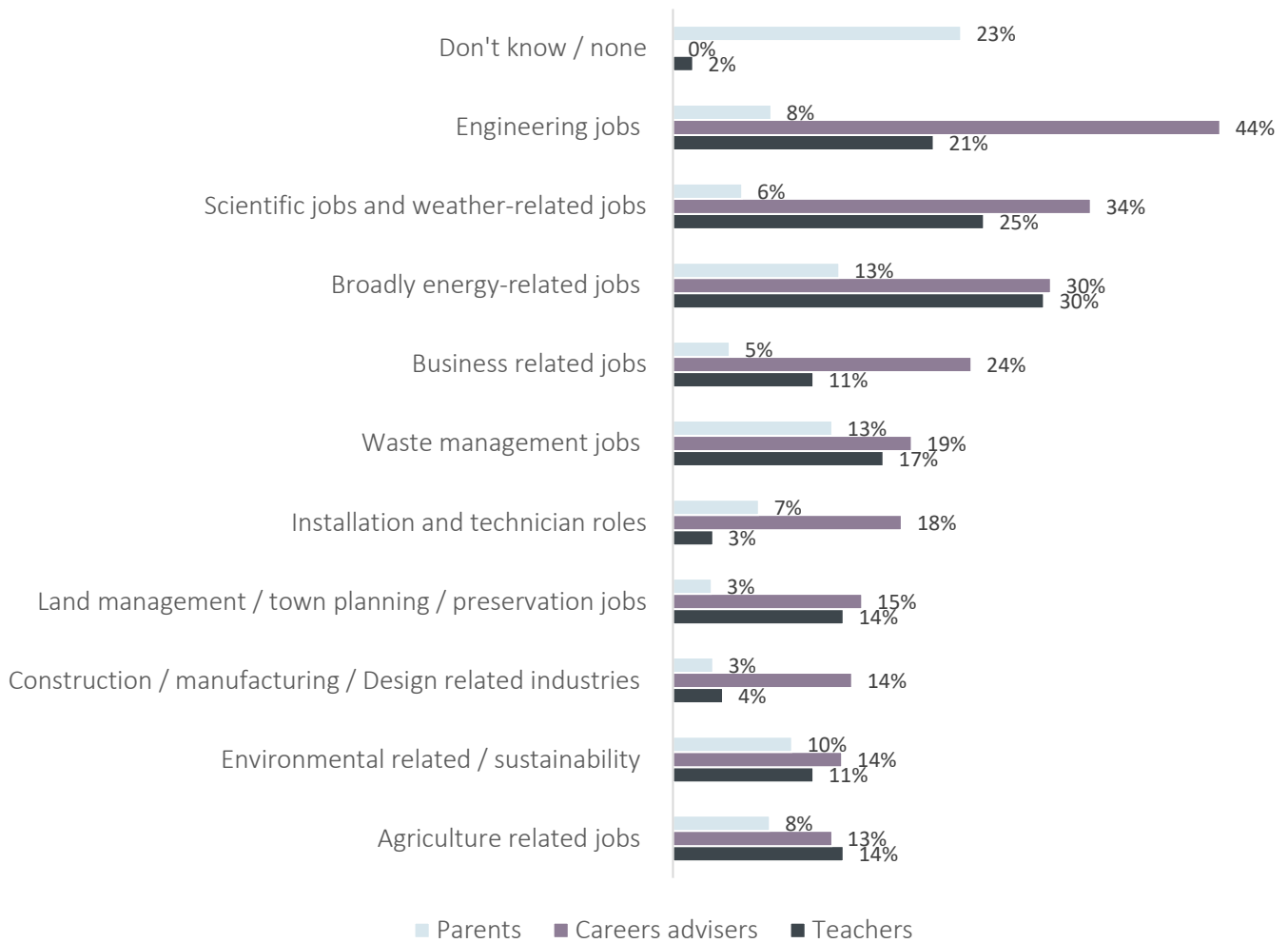
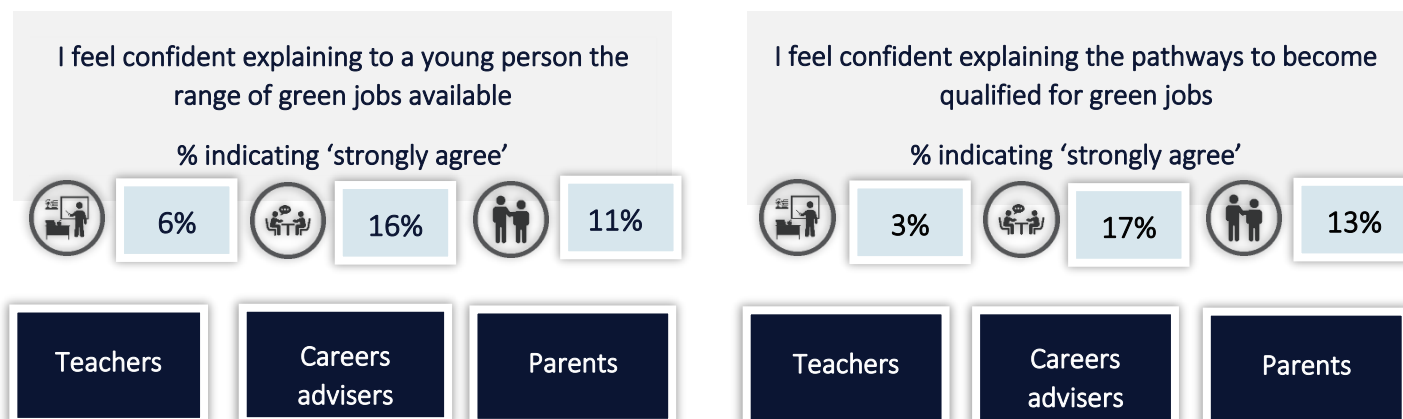


Fig. 20: Base n = 1,137, open question, coded to closed codes.

Awareness of green jobs was also tested in a closed question in the survey, where we asked participants whether they were aware of 7 specific 'green jobs' and asked them to indicate how confident they would feel around offering advice about each one to a young person.

	Not aware			Aware and confident or very confident		
	Careers advisers	Teachers	Parents	Careers advisers	Teachers	Parents
Chief Sustainability Officer	7%	31%	30%	58%	28%	36%
Environmental Impact Assessor	8%	24%	27%	62%	35%	41%
Corporate Social Responsibility Manager	11%	29%	35%	64%	26%	35%
Heat Pump Engineer	5%	20%	22%	70%	32%	40%
PV (photovoltaic) Installer	35%	32%	39%	33%	27%	31%
Forester	3%	13%	18%	78%	43%	48%
Ecologist	2%	12%	17%	78%	53%	48%

Again we see the pattern that, while careers advisers are relatively aware of these positions, parents and teachers lag behind in terms of their knowledge and confidence across a range of roles. This was reflected again when asked about their confidence in advising young people around these roles in general.



Consequently, only 6% of teachers and 13% of careers advisers strongly agreed that ‘I know enough to inform young people about opportunities in green jobs’. If opportunities here are to be grasped nationally and if green apprenticeships are to take off, there is clearly work needed to educate these important influencers so they are confident in guiding young people’s career choices towards this growing area of employment.

Resources and what can be done

The survey indicated a lack of resources in this area to help influencers guide and inform young people. 63% of teachers and 38% of careers advisers disagreed that ‘I have enough resources to support me in talking about green jobs’, with 43% of teachers strongly agreeing.

Respondents had many ideas about what could be done to help them advise young people about green jobs³, including:

Spreading greater awareness	Visiting schools and colleges	Offer talks, training or workshops	Create resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Via advertising, posters and leafleting, attendance at job fairs and parental newsletters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many educators in particular wanted direct engagement with schools through assemblies, workshops, and career fairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These talks could be provided to young people or given to careers advisers and teachers to improve their own understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggestions included an email newsletter, an app, brochures, online seminars, videos and lesson plans for PSHE sessions, curriculum-linked teaching packs, videos and quizzes, as well as careers resources focused on green jobs.

³ Asked in the context of what the MCS Foundation could do to help them in advising young people about green jobs.

It was clear from the comments that there was strong enthusiasm for further involvement from organisations such as the MCS Foundation to inform and support parents, teachers and careers advisers, in an area that many admitted they knew little about prior to our research.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The key takeaway from this research is that teachers, careers advisers and parents are led by the interests of young people, so all influencer audiences need greater access to information about apprenticeships and green jobs to enable more conversations about these options.

Parents and teachers were more likely to offer advice after a child had come to them with a particular interest. Careers advisers also tended to structure their conversations with young people around each student's interests, which may revolve around specific subjects. Although the intention of child-led guidance is to explore what is best for the child, in terms of this research, it could mean that young people are not being advised about either apprenticeships or green jobs because they haven't expressed an interest in them. This means that the prior research conducted with Gen Z about not receiving enough information about apprenticeships becomes a circular argument – with young people not hearing about green jobs because they have not shown an interest in them because they haven't heard about them. Limited time in both careers adviser meetings and within the curriculum to discuss careers could also be contributing to lack of discussion about alternative pathways and green jobs: they simply don't have the time to discuss anything outside of a young person's interest or curriculum requirements.

Several perceptions around apprenticeships need to be debunked, such as them being more suitable for 'practical' students and not for those with higher grades. This indicates that more information is needed about apprenticeship pathways, particularly degree apprenticeships. Additionally, interviewed teachers and careers advisers believed that apprenticeships require a young person to have resilience, perseverance and strong soft skills, such as communication and teamwork, because they are entering the world of work. Survey findings supported this. This perceived lack of maturity meant that sometimes teachers and careers advisers were reluctant to discuss apprenticeships. Again this suggests that clearer information about skills requirements would be helpful.

However, a reputational boost around apprenticeships may lead to more applications and there is already a concern that apprenticeships are very competitive and can be hard to find in some areas. Therefore, apprenticeship provision across the country needs to be improved and access barriers, including financial, removed. Interview participants thought that young people were less likely to bear the financial impact of moving to a new area for an apprenticeship than for university, as salaries were not seen as high enough. Consequently, young people need to feel reassured about the financial benefits of taking an apprenticeship and if organisations start advocating for an increase in apprenticeship wages or free travel, it could support apprenticeship uptake.

Currently awareness and perceptions of green jobs are limited to the concepts of 'sustainability' and 'environment'. This would not necessarily be an issue in itself, but coupled with a perception that the young people who would be most interested in green jobs are those who already have an interest in sustainability and the environment, discussions around green jobs are quite rare. Teachers and careers advisers felt that the number of young people coming to them about green jobs was increasing, albeit slowly, which, while positive, perpetuates the idea that career discussions centre on a young person's interest. Raising the profile of green jobs and demonstrating the breadth of green jobs available would help to overcome the idea that only those who are interested in the environment would be interested in and suitable for a green job.

Furthermore, while careers advisers appeared convinced of the long-term career prospects for green jobs, parents and teachers seemed less convinced. Many were unsure as to whether they offered high salaries and were also unsure about the ease of securing a green job. In order for green jobs to be promoted more widely by those influencing young people's choices, it is potentially important that they understand green jobs not as poorly paid roles, undertaken by enthusiasts, but as a rational career choice, with opportunities both nationally and locally.

The research indicates that there is an information gap around apprenticeships for parents and teachers in particular, and an overall information gap around green jobs. To promote green apprenticeships and jobs, there is a requirement for clear and accessible information.

Recommendations

Improving careers discussions in schools

- **Encouraging schools to allow more time for careers adviser meetings:** enabling a wider discussion outside subject preferences and university application.
- **Building more time into the curriculum to build awareness of a wider range of potential careers:** the majority of teachers indicated they did not have the time to talk about careers within their lessons.
- **Providing improved training on apprenticeship routes,** particularly for teachers
- **Considering the incentives in place for schools** to increase the number of young people taking an apprenticeship route over a traditional university one.

Removing barriers to apprenticeship applications

- **Streamlining of the apprenticeship application process:** for example, by developing an apprenticeship application portal or standardised application process. While UCAS does now include an apprenticeship search function, no elements of the application process are standardised. A UCAS-style application portal that is accessible and engaging for young people could potentially remove the practical barriers to apprenticeships mentioned by careers advisers.
- **Expanding access to and awareness of high quality apprenticeships:** Competition for apprenticeships was thought to be strong in some areas.
- **Providing higher salaries or free travel for apprentices:** Low salaries are potentially a barrier for apprenticeship take-up and travel expenses may take a significant portion of their salary.
- **Providing case studies of apprentices' journeys:** This would demonstrate the different routes onto an apprenticeship and show decision-making processes.
- **Increasing opportunities for work experience** and work-based skills throughout school, enabling young people to be more ready for the workplace.

Increase awareness of green jobs as an option for a wider range of young people

- **Creating guidance for teachers and careers advisers to emphasise that green jobs can be for anyone and encompass a vast range of roles:** This information would clarify that young people don't have to be 'eco-warriors' to get or enjoy a green job.
- **Reinforce this through talks in schools by people in green jobs and apprenticeships,** similar to the STEM ambassador team.
- **Creating a national information website for green jobs that acts as an accessible one-stop-shop for young people and those who are advising,** which could include job descriptions and career trajectories, routes through different qualifications and 'day in the life' videos and case studies to demonstrate the range and variety of green jobs.