

Customer Voice Research

Information, Advice and Guidance

Sherbert Research



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DCSF-RR075**

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Objective

- To provide an overall picture of how young people (13 -14yrs and 16-17yrs - Yr 9 and 12) and their parents currently feel about information, advice and guidance (IAG), specifically in the area of deciding their future career.

Respondents

Eight, one and a half hour quads with Year 9 and Year 12 students

- Four with year 9s
- Four with year 12s
- Two, one and a quarter hour paired depths with sixteen to seventeen year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Two in each)

Two, one a half hour groups with parents (7 to 8 per group)

- One with mums of children in Year 9 and Year 12
- One with dads of children in Year 9 and Year 12

(Parents had at least one child in either Year 12 or Year 9, half in each group had a child in Year 9 and half to have Year 12)

Across England (urban and rural)

Key findings

Young people are looking to be excited and inspired by the possibilities for their futures. They aspire to find a balance between earning a decent salary and job satisfaction.

Young people find out about careers through a range of sources: TV Programmes, family and friends, hobbies and interests, celebrities and their subject teachers. There was no spontaneous recall of careers advice in schools. The world of media is currently one of the strongest career influencers, as it introduces young people to new jobs, exposes them to potential lifestyles and opportunities and brings different industries and careers to life which is important and can be inspiring.

Current experiences of IAG

Young people's knowledge and enthusiasm for IAG regarding careers in schools was mixed across the sample. The current IAG offer relating to careers seems ad hoc, with input varying between geographic location and individual schools and individuals within school.

Most young people in Year 9 were currently not aware of the IAG offer. At aged 13/14, careers do not feel relevant to them (unless they were being fast tracked into making their options earlier). The few young people in year 9 in this sample who were aware of a Careers

Advice service attributed this to having older siblings who have experienced some input from their school's service.

Most Year 12s knew about careers advice through their schools (from Year 10/11 onwards). But they reported a mixed experience which seemed to depend upon school, location, personality of people in charge of careers advice and their post GCSE decisions, i.e. whether they stayed on at school for sixth form or went to college.

Research revealed that the first formal introduction to IAG relating to careers was critical for young people's continuing engagement with the issue. Whilst the majority of young people recognised that careers advice depends as much on them to seek out information as it does on the advisors providing it; they also acknowledged that they need to be inspired and excited by opportunities before they initiate the first steps.

Furthermore there are some young people who are not mentally ready to explore careers independently and can find the process confusing. These people are at risk of retreating from the process altogether.

All young people in this sample felt that they need to trust their information source, therefore if the information they receive is inaccurate or irrelevant, then they are likely to be dissuaded from seeking further information. Therefore, the role of the careers advisor is crucial for inspiring and motivating young people to engage on this issue.

Role of the Careers Advisor

The term, 'Careers Advice' is not problematic and was understood and used by young people. Careers Advice in schools seems a relatively under utilised resource that does not seem to meet the needs of young people today. Approximately half of all young people in this sample thought they had a careers advisor in school although many seemed unsure how to book an appointment with them.

Current perceptions of Careers Advisors are spontaneously negative and seem rooted in bad experiences. These experiences are often attributed to the personality of the advisor, their levels of engagement and quality of support.

Within schools, if no Connexions Advisor is present, the role of the career advisor is often taken on by an existing Religious Education or Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) teacher. This signals to young people that Careers Advice is not something to take seriously, or that the school is less interested in IAG relating to careers. Young people felt this could change if careers advice was implemented in schools differently.

Young people believe that the role and function of the Careers Advisor in schools needs to have an elevated status and be positioned as an enriching service for all pupils. They would like to see a specific, skilled advisor in place, who has professional training in delivering specific, tailor made careers advice to young people.

Many young people were also concerned that IAG for careers should be kept separate from other advice offered by schools (e.g. emotional and health) as this would prevent it having any sort of stigma attached to it.

Connexions

Young people's knowledge and experience of Connexions was mixed across the sample. It was relatively unknown among the younger age group (Year 9s), unless they had older siblings in Year 11/12. Connexions was more familiar amongst those who had completed their GCSEs (Year 12).

Some Year 12s in this sample positively recalled the Connexions website and booklet received during 'options' and some reported having Connexions in school, although many felt Connexions needs to be more visually present.

The majority of those who had used the service regularly, found it beneficial and said they would use it again. However, there were some who had a less positive experience, which they attributed to the personality and skills of the advisor.

Many liked the idea of Connexions taking over the role of career advisor in schools and having regular contact with pupils during their school career.

Young people who were NEET in this sample appeared to have little interest or motivation in careers advice. They reported that the relationship between them, Connexions and school careers advisors was one sided with all the effort coming from Connexions and school. These young people need specialist help which outlines clear directions, actions and consequences.

Entitlement

The idea of having an IAG entitlement was applauded across the sample. Both parents and young people welcomed a consistent approach, accessible to all young people. Many felt that if executed well it could be an effective way of helping young people make informed choices.

Ideally it would mean that young people would be equipped with life skills and be exposed to different opportunities.

However many respondents doubted whether plans could be realised in practice. They questioned the following:

- Human and physical resources within schools, including the commitment from staff to implement effectively
- Whether if careers advice becomes part of the curriculum, it would risk being a 'bunked' lesson,
- Would it be a module? Would it be assessed?
- Logistically how could it work fairly across the country?
- Who could they complain to if the IAG entitlement isn't realised: Head of Year, Head Teacher, Local Authority, MP?

Ideal IAG

The following outlines the ideal delivery of careers advice for young people from Year 9 to Year 13:-

Year 9: Inspire

Year 10: Bring it to life

Year 11: Planning

Year 12: Action

Year 13: Action

Careers advice in schools would unlock potential, be directional; guided conversations with friends; one to one chats with welcoming, friendly, expert staff; relaxing space with access to resources and inspiring.

Ideal Careers Advice in more detail

Year 9: Inspire

Information: Factual information of options in relation to potential careers. Subject specific career information.

Advice: Take time considering options, think them through and make them relevant to you.

Guidance: Try not to let the 'logistics' get in the way of making decisions that suit you (e.g. my friends aren't doing it, I don't like the teacher)

Action points:

- Interesting and detailed written information to take home on option subjects with a related career component
- Multimedia and experiential communication (reflective of youth communication)
- Group workshops - role playing: getting excited about the world of work

Year 10: Bring it to life

Information: Understanding the purpose of work experience and how it will help develop and identify skills

Advice: Understand where your strengths are and use them to your advantage

Guidance: Reflect and learn from work experience, whether it was a positive / negative experience, understand why and move forward

Action points:

- Personality tests
- Mock interviews
- CV writing and practise
- Meeting people with range of different jobs and interacting with them
- Visits to different places of employment
- A one on one debrief following work experience

Year 11: Planning

Information: Higher education requirements versus employment and apprenticeship/training options

Advice: Focussing on your GCSEs is important right now, but don't lose sight of your goals and make sure you have a back-up plan

Guidance: Think about diversifying skill set and building on strengths and activities you enjoy. Make use of your long summer

Action points:

- Revisit CV
- Confidence building exercises
- Peer chats
- Careers fairs
- Personality profiling
- Further discussions with professionals that pupils express an interest in meeting
- Tuition on 'how to research' - an introduction to key websites, services and how to use them

Year 12: Action

Information: Individualised and personal, enabling students to know what to seek.

Advice: Reflect on skills learnt during GCSE years and build a plan around them. Have a back-up plan and make yourself aware of different options.

Guidance: Don't panic if things aren't going to plan, there is more than one option. Different routes work for different people, work out which route best suits you

Action points:

- Retake personality tests
- Group talks with current university students
- Team building exercises
- Regular tutorial sessions
- Peer chats
- Regular tutor sessions
- More work experience

Year 13: Action

Information: University, which grades meet which courses, UCAS. Employment/training options.

Advice: Reflect on new and developed skills since moving from GSCE - A Level. Have a backup plan and make yourself aware of different options,

Guidance: Different routes work for different people, work out which route best suits you. Consider what else there is that can enrich your life skills (e.g. volunteering, travelling, work experience, internships etc)

Action points:

- University trips
- Mentoring with older peers (recent graduates)
- An introduction to which degrees fit which careers

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