



THE
BIG
AMBITION



THE BIG AMBITION FOR JOBS AND SKILLS
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The Big Ambition for Jobs and Skills

“There should be more awareness of the university courses, as well as more degree apprenticeships.”

– Girl, 17.

- In *The Big Ambition*, 51% of respondents agreed that children knew about apprenticeships, university options and career paths.
- 65% of respondents agreed that children knew about good jobs for when they were older.
- 70% of children agreed they had the same opportunities as other children and young people.
- 57% of responses by or on behalf of children with SEND agreed they had the same opportunities as other children and young people, compared to 76% of responses for children without SEND.
- 59% of responses by children with a social worker or on their behalf agreed they had the same opportunities as other children and young people, compared to 72% of responses for children without a social worker.
- In *The Big Ambition* 61% agreed that they, or the child for whom they were responding, knew about money and life skills.
- 48% of responses by or for children with SEND agreed they knew about money and life skills, compared to 64% of responses for children without SEND.

The Big Ambition results show that most children and young people feel like they have the same opportunities as their peers, they feel confident in their knowledge about apprenticeships, university options, and career paths and most feel that they have learnt about the skills they will need in later life. However, this is not the case for every child. Some children feel like they have not been given the support they need to succeed in adulthood.

Children and young people are desperate to learn about the world of work. They are ambitious and driven by their dream careers and want to be given the support they need to achieve their goals. They want PSHE lessons to be the most exciting and engaging lesson on the curriculum, to equip them with all the skills and knowledge they will need for adulthood. They want greater access to vocational routes and subjects which excite them

and lead to brilliant careers. It is clear from the findings of *The Big Ambition* that we need to rebalance the education system to focus more on how to better prepare children for adulthood.

What children and families have told the Children's Commissioner over the last three years

The Children's Commissioner has engaged with hundreds of thousands of children, parents, and carers since assuming her role in 2021, actively listening to their aspirations and dreams for the future.

In *The Big Ask*, children's top priority for the future was getting a good job or career. Over two thirds of children (69%) said that having a good job in their future was one of their top priorities.

This generation exhibits remarkable ambition, striving for success and showing their determination to get on in life. Many children have told the Children's Commissioner that their biggest dream is to find a job that is fulfilling and makes the most of their talents. Children want to pursue a brilliant range of career paths, from vocational routes through to academic.

Yet despite these ambitions, children have told the Commissioner that they are often not equipped with the advice and support they need to pursue their dreams. Children are desperate to learn about the life skills they will need as adults but do not feel like schools and colleges are set up to provide them with these life lessons.

Young people have told the Children's Commissioner that they want support to learn about a wide range of careers and to choose the path which is right for them. They want to learn about the workplace and their options after education. Children and young people want to see schools, colleges, and employers work together to improve the careers advice they receive.

The Commissioner has heard from children who want better access to vocational career routes, whether through vocational qualifications or apprenticeships. They recognise the value of practical skills and emphasize the need for their education to focus on the skills needed for the world of work.

The Commissioner has also spoken to children with additional needs about their aspirations for the future. While these children share the level of ambition of other children, sometimes they feel like they do not receive the extra support they need to achieve their goals. These young people have remarked that they want greater access to programmes which will allow them to secure a brilliant job in the future.

What needs to happen

The Children's Commissioner set out the five over-arching outcomes that she wants for every child, namely that they are safe, healthy, happy, learning and engaged in their community. She believes that there are three over-arching principles that the Government should prioritise in their jobs and skills reforms. These are:

1. Every child is taught about the life skills they will need as adults.
2. Every child has access to high-quality careers advice, information, and guidance which is tailored to their interests.
3. Every child, no matter their background, is given the support they need to secure their dream job whether that is through further or higher education or an apprenticeship.

Ambitions

Ambition 1: Every child is taught about the life skills they will need as adults.

“Schools should teach more to children about life skills, money and health matters giving them more of opportunity to learn about skills that will help them grow.” – Adult on behalf of girl, 10.

What is needed to get there:

- **The Department for Education updates the statutory RSHE guidance to include life skills, economic wellbeing, financial education, and careers planning.** Children told us how much they valued the teaching of wider life skills, including financial education. They were keen to make sure all children were taught about these issues, either through PSHE or the wider school offer.

“Less PSHE lessons about unimportant things more about money and finances and taxes to know issues we will face when we are older.” – Boy, 16.

- **All teachers receive better and more thorough training on how to deliver the RSHE curriculum.** Training for teachers on RSHE needs to be regular, high-quality and connected to local services. Teachers should be trained in how to deliver high-quality RSHE for children with special educational needs.

"I think more money should be put into mental health and better sex education in schools about symptoms and where to go if you need advice, also to teach about healthy relationships and how to be a good person generally." – Girl, 16.

- **Oak National Academy becomes a platform that teachers and professionals can go to access high-quality, kitemarked materials and resources to support the teaching of RSHE.** These materials are freely available and without the copyright limitations that some resources have. Schools must be confident that these materials are age-appropriate, in line with parents' and children's preferences, and reflect the statutory guidance.

"Teach kids about real life issues like buying a house and applying for a bank card rather than the same PSHE curriculum year after year." – Boy, 16.

- **Teachers are able to specialise in RSHE as they do in other subjects given the nature and breadth of the topics covered.** A high quality National Professional Qualification (NPQ) in RSHE is vital to effectively prepare teachers to deliver and discuss the more challenging or sensitive topics included in the proposed curriculum in an age-appropriate and safe manner. Specialist RSHE teachers should be equipped to adapt the RSHE curriculum to the needs of their students.

"Have PSHE lessons where you learnt about important things like money and what's going on in the world and things that some people's parents might teach but other people won't have a parent figure to help them." – Girl, 13.

- **Ofsted should hold schools to account for the quality of their PSHE lessons.** Children have told the office that they want greater access to high-quality PSHE which sets them up for life. Ofsted has conducted a range of subject reviews but has not yet done one on PSHE. Ofsted should conduct a subject report on the quality of PSHE in England.

"They should prepare us for when we are older and teach us more about collages and university and life skills at school. And listen to our opinions." – Girl, 13.

Examples of how progress can be measured:

- The content of the RSHE guidance is expanded to cover life skills.
- Children report that they know about life skills.
- Number of teachers trained in RSHE.
- Number of teachers specialising in RSHE.
- Ofsted reported quality of PSHE.

Ambition 2: Every child has access to high-quality careers advice, information, and guidance which is tailored to their interests**What is needed to get there:**

- **A greater emphasis is given to careers in primary and secondary schools.** All teachers should receive basic training in the different career routes available for children and in delivering the Gatsby benchmarks. All children should also have regular access to careers advisors to speak to as they pick their options for post-16 pathways.

“More resources available for learning about future careers and GCSE options.” – Girl, 14.

- **All schools are supported by a Careers Hub by the end of 2024.** Careers Hubs were launched in 2018. They bring together schools, colleges, employers, and apprenticeship providers in local authorities to improve the quality of careers provision for young people. The Department for Education has set a target for 95% of schools and colleges to be in a Careers Hub by August 2024. This should be 100%.

“That there should be more in school about futures. Careers and universities, I feel like I don’t know what will happen when I go to a uni and I still am not sure what I want to be.” – Boy, 14.

- **All Careers Leaders are given training on improving careers provision and establishing relationships with local employers.** Training should be mandatory and focus on how best to support children from underrepresented groups. The Department for Education should update its statutory guidance with a minimum expectation around how much time Careers Leaders should have protected for fulfilling their duties as a Careers Leader.

“The government should get schools to talk about future careers more often and tell more people at a young age about jobs.” – Girl, 11.

- **All primary schools, secondary schools, alternative provision, special schools and colleges publish child-friendly guidance on their careers provision.** This guidance makes clear to children and young people the careers provision that they can access in school and college and in their local area.

“Perhaps make schools talk more about career paths? Because I'm in y8 and I don't really know much about apprenticeships and career paths. I know what I want to be but not exactly how to achieve it...” – Girl, 12.

Examples of how progress can be measured:

- Number of children supported by a Careers Advisor.
- Number of schools supported by a Careers Hub.
- Number of Careers Leaders who complete training in careers provision.
- Number of children sustaining a positive post-16 destination.
- Reported child satisfaction on careers provision.
- Number of schools which publish child-friendly guidance on their careers provision.

Ambition 3: Every child, no matter their background, is given the support they need to secure their dream job whether that is through further or higher education or an apprenticeship.

“Give more opportunities to people who don't have the means at home to have a bright future.” – Parent on behalf of girl, 8.

What is needed to get there:

- **All school leavers are offered a Young People's Apprenticeship Guarantee.** The government introduces a separate ring-fenced funding stream for apprenticeships for 16 to 18-year-olds so all apprenticeships for this age group are fully funded. Businesses are offered a further financial incentive to hire young people using their levy funding, this could involve allowing businesses to pay young people's salaries through the levy.

"Finance companies to encourage more apprenticeships for younger people." – Girl, 13.

- **The government introduces more supported internships for children most at risk of becoming not in education, employment, or training.** This scheme is extended to reach more young people.

"I want to get a job I have EHCP but the college said I can't go there because there's no money to support me so I'm at home waiting for them to send a tutor. All I am going to get is 4 hours a week English and maths. I want a job but no one is helping me except my mum and dad." – Boy, 16.

- **Care leavers are supported with their educational goals.** Care leavers should be able to access year-round accommodation when attending higher education, and the value of the higher education bursary should be increased. UCAS should provide a consistent, single source of information about every institution's offer for care leavers, and a quality kitemark scheme should be introduced to acknowledge those settings that provide the best offer.

"Look after children in the care system even after they turn 18- make sure they are safe, have a place to go, have an adult/family they can trust and go to when needed." – Girl, 17.

Examples of how progress can be measured:

- Number of young people taking up apprenticeships.
- Employment outcomes for children with SEND and children known to social care.
- Number of care leavers progressing to higher education.



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