

The Employability Equation:

a parent's guide to careers and higher education information, advice and guidance



Introduction

The world of work is changing constantly with new careers and interesting opportunities becoming available at an ever increasing rate. Young people need high quality information, advice and guidance on careers and higher education if they are to make sensible and informed decisions about their learning, training and employment against this background of change, diversity and, at times, uncertainty.

As a professional and impartial addition to school careers guidance programmes, Inspiring Futures has been supporting students (and their parents) for over 70 years. We are also **matrix** accredited, which means we work to the highest quality standards in the careers guidance profession. We are specialists in the provision of careers education activities, information, advice and guidance as well as skills development activities for students aged 14 to 18.

We believe that access to high quality information and advice enables young people to make the right choices for their future, based on their personal skills, abilities and aspirations. Guidance then helps them to understand what they need to do next to achieve their personal and career goals. The self-knowledge they acquire in this process will help them throughout their working lives.

Inspiring Futures' The Employability Equation guide for parents sets out the key choices and decisions that young people face and provides suggestions about how to research and explore their options and develop the skills required for success.

Virginia Isaac

Virginia Isaac, Chief Executive
The Inspiring Futures Foundation





Children are expected to make choices about their education at a relatively early stage and these decisions can have long lasting repercussions on their future career. They need to have a good awareness of their skills and strengths so that they're equipped to make the right choices at the right time. For those reasons, I feel passionately that careers guidance should be focused on a personalised approach.

Vivienne Cooper, Parent

The employability equation

Parents are a major influence on their child's career aspirations, planning and success. The advice and support that you can give your child to understand their interests and ambitions and to develop their employability provide an important complement to the careers education, information, advice and guidance they receive at school.

You can help your son or daughter by:

- Knowing what determines an individual's employability
- Having a good understanding of the options and choices they face as they progress through and from school
- Listening to their views without being critical or judgemental and being open to new possibilities and ideas – they are likely to go on to do a job that does not currently exist!
- Encourage your teenager to consider, research, experience and compare a breadth of learning, training and employment options

Employability is the development of skills, experience and personal attributes that enhance an individual's capability to secure rewarding and satisfying outcomes in their economic, social and community lives.

No single factor determines an individual's employability and what employers require varies within and between occupations, and is continually evolving as the world of work changes.

The employability equation summarises the key determinants and provides a framework for identifying strategies and actions to improve employment prospects.

$$E = (Q + S + WE) \times C$$

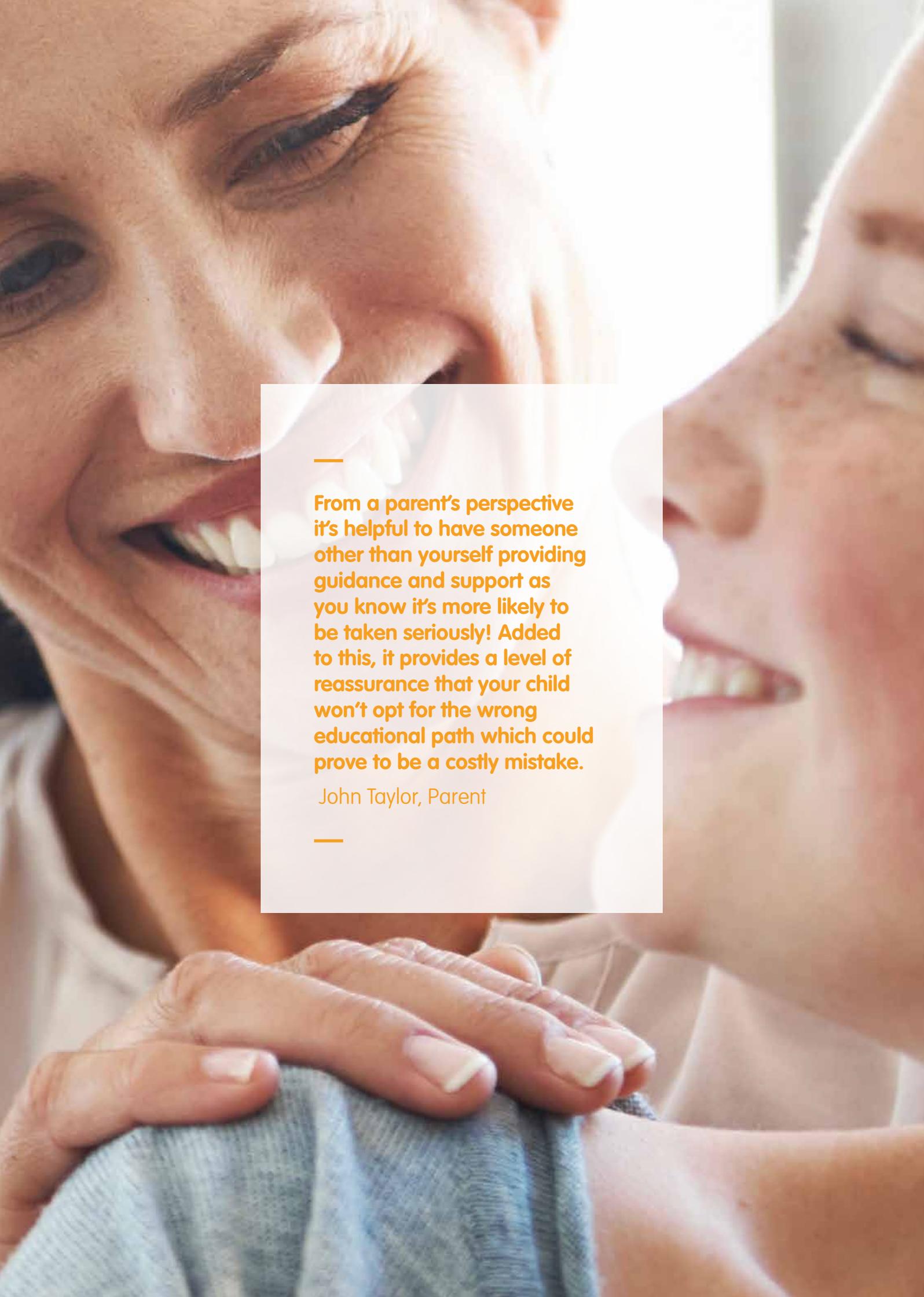
E = employability Q = qualifications S = skills
WE = work experience C = contacts

Understanding what determines employability, what options are available, what employers want and what support is available will help you to help your teenager make informed decisions and choices as they progress through school and into the world of work.

Over half of parents (58% overall) were asked by their children for careers advice.*

* Parental Influence: the key role played by parents in their children's decisions about routes and pathways post-18

July 2015 Prepared by Chris Phillips, GTI Media Research



From a parent's perspective it's helpful to have someone other than yourself providing guidance and support as you know it's more likely to be taken seriously! Added to this, it provides a level of reassurance that your child won't opt for the wrong educational path which could prove to be a costly mistake.

John Taylor, Parent

Qualifications

$$E = (Q + S + WE) \times C$$

Your child's choices at 14+, 16+, 18+ and 21+ are key determinants of their employability and career options. The entry routes and requirements for some careers, for example medicine or engineering, are clearly defined and require specific grades in specific qualifications, but for many career entry routes and requirements are more flexible. It is therefore important for you and your child to have up to date information about labour market trends, which career sectors are growing and which are declining, their entry routes and requirements as well as details of the subjects, courses and training options available to your child locally, nationally and internationally.

The qualifications ladder:

- 14+ GCSE or National 5 choices – a combination of core (compulsory) and option subjects that will give as much flexibility of choice as possible**
- 16+ Education A levels, Highers, French Baccalaureate, IB or Matura), vocational qualifications (BTEC or NVQ) or work based learning (apprenticeships)**
- 18+ Higher education (degrees), vocational qualifications (diplomas), work based learning (apprenticeships and school leaver schemes)**
- 21+ Post-graduate professional qualifications**

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Schools, colleges and universities provide detailed information about the subjects, courses and qualifications they offer. Professional associations and employers provide information about entry routes, preferred and essential qualifications and other entry requirements.

Information about what subjects, courses and qualifications are available to your child should be supported by impartial, independent advice and guidance. Careful consideration of subject or course content, as well as teaching, learning and assessment methods, is important and will help your child choose options and combinations which they will enjoy and in which they will succeed, thereby providing a firm basis for the next step up the qualifications ladder.

Aptitude, interests, values and personality assessments are an excellent basis for guidance discussions with a qualified careers and higher education adviser, the result of which is a personal action plan that will help your child research, compare and decide on which route through education and which qualifications are most appropriate for them and which will help them achieve their career and life goals.

But good qualifications alone are not enough...

All sample groups felt that they, as parents, had the biggest influence over their child's important education and career decisions.*

This individual career profile equipped my daughter with the opportunity to explore in more detail the career paths that she had shown an interest in. At the same time she was able to discover whether she has the skills and aptitudes to succeed in those areas.

Denise Smith, Parent with a daughter enrolled in Futurewise

Skills

$$E = (Q + S + WE) \times C$$



Qualifications get you the interview, but won't get you hired

The Undercover Recruiter

The subject knowledge and skills developed by studying for specific qualifications at school, college or university are the basis for entry to some careers, but many employers place great emphasis on employability skills, also known as transferable skills. These employability skills include:

Communication – oral, written & visual, teamwork & leadership, investigating & analysing, initiative & self-motivation, planning & organisation, flexibility & adaptability, time management, negotiating & persuading, numeracy, self-awareness, computing & IT, decision-making & action planning, curiosity & creativity

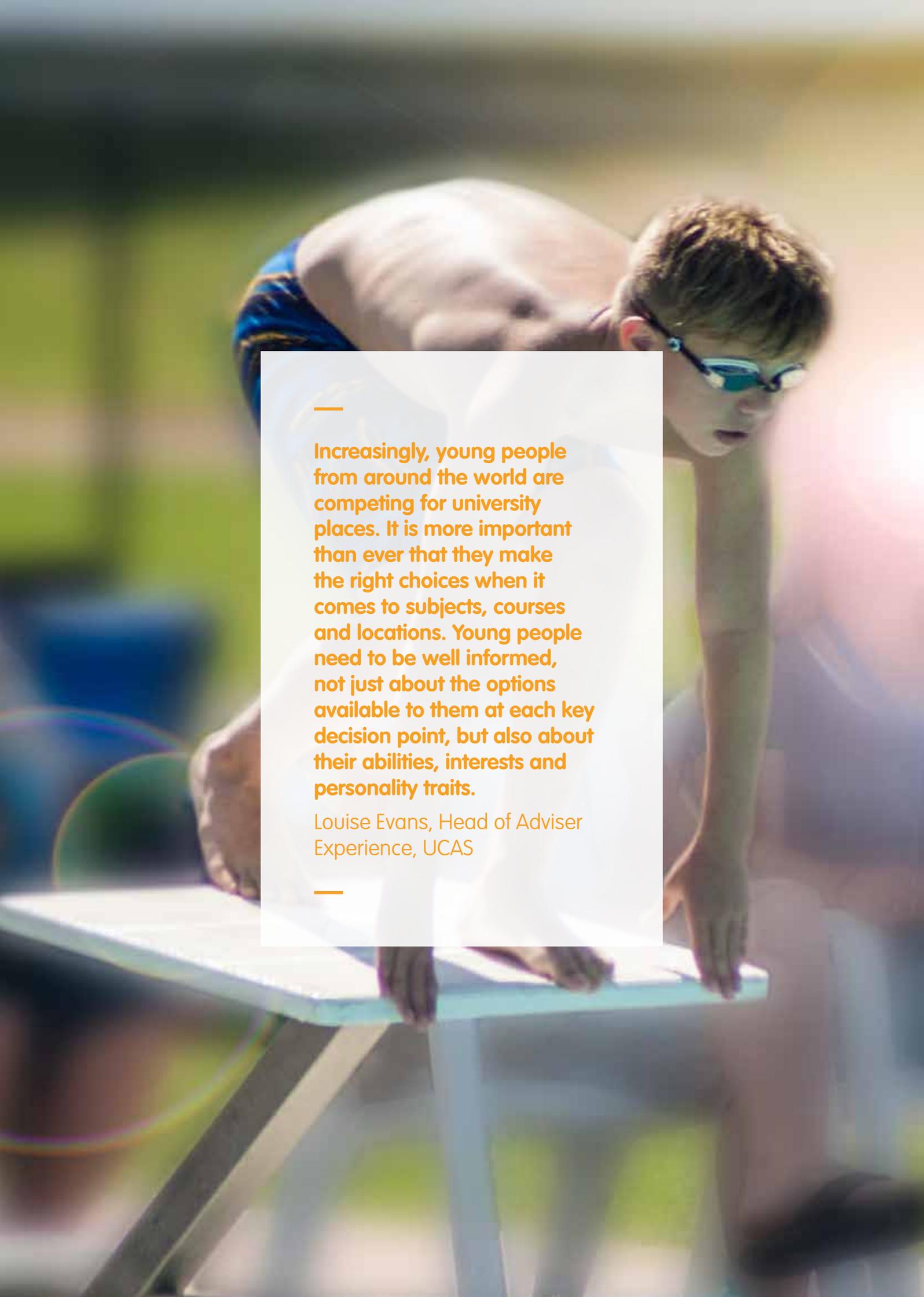
These skills can be developed and evidenced through the school, college or university curriculum, super-curricular activities such as independent study and projects, co-curricular activities such as drama, music, sport, positions of responsibility at school, college or university and work experience, volunteering and employment.

Encourage your child to take the reflective **A B C** approach to skills and their applications for courses and jobs.

A is the activity
B is the benefit from the activity
C is relating the benefit to a course or a job

This approach helps your child put their skills development activities in context and will help them write effective and focussed personal statements, CVs and letters of application.

79% of parents felt that their child did not have a clear idea of what they wanted to do after finishing education.*



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Increasingly, young people from around the world are competing for university places. It is more important than ever that they make the right choices when it comes to subjects, courses and locations. Young people need to be well informed, not just about the options available to them at each key decision point, but also about their abilities, interests and personality traits.

Louise Evans, Head of Adviser Experience, UCAS

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Work experience

$$E = (Q + S + WE) \times C$$

Work experience, paid work, volunteering and job shadowing are all good ways for your child to find out about career entry routes and requirements, develop employability skills and provide 'can do' statements and examples to support their CV and personal statement.

Work experience is a placement on an employer's premises in which a young person carries out a particular task or duty, more or less as would an employee, but with an emphasis on the learning aspects of the experience. The benefits of young people preparing for, participating in and reflecting on work experience include:

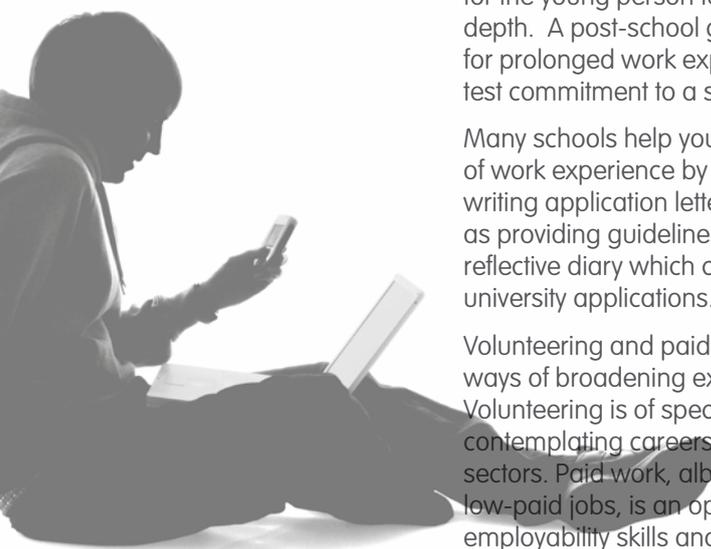
- Awareness of the factors which determine career choice and the requirements of particular employment sectors
- An understanding of possible future career directions
- An insight into the skills and attitudes required by employers
- Evidence to support learning, training or employment applications
- Improved motivation and self-esteem, greater independence, enhanced self-confidence, maturity and interpersonal skills
- Preparation for adult life, such as understanding of social, economic and industrial issues, citizenship and enterprise and an awareness of the importance of following health and safety requirements in the workplace

A common starting point to introduce young people to the world of work is a 'take your child to work day' in Year 9 / S2 or Year 10 / S3, followed by a week long placement usually scheduled either at the end of Year 10 / S3, the autumn term of Year 11 / S4 or at the end of Year 11 / S4. In some schools, work experience or job shadowing also takes place in Year 12 / S5, as this provides the opportunity for the young person to focus on a specific career in greater depth. A post-school gap year is an excellent opportunity for prolonged work experience to find out more about or to test commitment to a specific career.

Many schools help young people maximise the benefits of work experience by organising sessions on CV writing, writing application letters and interview technique, as well as providing guidelines for health & safety and keeping a reflective diary which can be used to support future job or university applications.

Volunteering and paid employment are also valuable ways of broadening experience and developing skills. Volunteering is of special importance for young people contemplating careers in the health care and education sectors. Paid work, albeit often in relatively low-skilled and low-paid jobs, is an opportunity to develop transferable employability skills and acts a source of motivation.

The majority of parents felt that a 'one-to-one careers advice discussion with your child' was the most important aspect of careers advice and information (60% overall), closely followed by 'information about subject choices at KS4 and KS5/S2 and S3' and 'information about how school subjects relate to career or job areas'.*



How you perform in the work place is not the same as how you perform in the class room, so encouraging a young person to understand their own personality, aptitudes, skills and interests alongside their academic performance in schools is a good way to motivate them to take a look at what jobs might suit them. Teachers cannot be expected to understand what all careers entail, or even recognise how a particular aptitude might translate into a perfect career option, so an impartial guidance professional will always be a good option. One of the tools at their disposal is psychometric profiling. It is an excellent way to help young people identify and understand their strengths and weaknesses. It can help them better understand their passions and therefore choose further studies and career paths best suited to them as an individual. Finding out what you love to do is a good start to finding a job you will love to do.

Stephen Isherwood, CEO of the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR).

Contacts

$$E = (Q + S + WE) \times C$$

Contacts or personal networking have always been significant contributors to employability, but technological advance and the advent of social media have changed how people make contact and network.

Traditional face-to-face networking remains important and many school, colleges and universities run networking events and prepare their students for them, but you can help your child develop the skills and confidence to be a successful networker. Career insight events, such as the ones offered by Inspiring Futures, are also excellent networking opportunities.

Advice about how to dress, how to greet someone for the first time, shaking hands, making eye contact, asking and answering questions, how to be polite and assertive but neither reticent nor passive, as well helping your child prepare a 30 second elevator pitch, will allow them to make the most of networking events, which could lead to offers of work experience, job shadowing or employment.

Online networking is increasingly important and the majority of recruiters use social media as part their recruitment process.

69% of recruiters anticipate increased competition for jobs in 2015 - 2016

93% of recruiters use or plan to use social media when recruiting

73% of recruiters plan to make more use of social media when recruiting

44% of recruiters believe that using social media has improved the quality of their applicants

55% of recruiters have reconsidered an applicant based on their social media profile

Source: Jobvite.com

Contacts

As recruiters make more use of social media as part of the recruitment process, it is important that your child recognises the contribution that their online presence, or personal brand, can make to their employability. Your advice on what to include and what not to include, as well as tips on internet safety, will help your child develop a positive online personal brand.

The first step is for your child to review their social media sites and ask themselves:

- Are they the most appropriate sites and is the content appropriate?
- Does the content enhance or diminish their reputation?
- Would they be happy for potential employers or training and education providers to see their social media sites?

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The next steps in building a positive online personal brand are for your child to consider these questions:

- Which social media sites should I use?
- What are my employability skills?
- How I am developing or how can I develop my employability skills?
- How do I evidence my employability skills via social media?



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