

# How Young People Formulate their Views about the Future

Exploratory Research

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# Executive Summary

## Background

The aim of this research is to enhance the understanding of how those in year 7 think about educational and career issues and what factors shape this thinking. It is hoped that this information will inform further research and help construct appropriate Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) strategies to assist young people in making decisions in the context of changes in the 14-19 curriculum and the raising of the participation age by 2013. There is not a large amount of existing work done with young people at this age, looking specifically at how they view their future education and careers, and what they know about the opportunities available to them. This project is an exploratory one, seeking to map in more detail the attitudes of young people at this stage in their educational careers. It is one of the first pieces of work with the initial cohort who will be affected by the RPA (the Raising of the educational Participation Age) to 17 in 2013.

The key objectives of the research were:

- To understand the role of structural and contextual factors, prior attainment, parents, lead professionals, peers, individual attributes, what career related activities motivate them and how all these factors interact.
- To explore how developed their views are on the future and what is most likely to affect their thinking.
- To consider the most effective ways we can equip young people with the skills to make the optimal decisions.
- To provide a base for further research

## Methodology

The study consisted of focus group workshops with young people in 27 different schools in 3 different areas of the country. Participating schools reflect a range of attainment performance and school 'type' i.e. mixed/single sex, faith / non-faith, 11-16/18, academy / community or voluntary aided. A total of 610 young people participated in the study from a range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and with differing ability levels. The workshops consisted of group discussions with pupils and a series of written tasks for the young people to complete. The findings combine statistical analysis of data from the written tasks, with the feedback from class discussions with the pupils.

## Headline Findings

Over 85% of the Year 7 pupils feel they know the job they want to do in the future and 65% of these pupils have held these views for over 2 years.

These views influence what post 18 educational pathway they want to take at this point and what IAG support they would like.

These jobs are drawn from narrow parts of the occupational structure and over 80% are 'higher status positions' from NS-SEC 1-3.

A high percentage of Year 7 want to go to university: 75%. The majority believe it will help them reach their preferred employment destination or give them a better chance of employment.

Aspirations for higher education differ by geography with considerably less pupils wishing to go from the rural area in this study.

Pupils from lower socio-economic groups are as likely to want to go to HE and pursue high status jobs, as their counterparts from higher socio-economic groups.

The pupils' level of knowledge regarding post 14 educational routes and how to achieve their employment / educational aspirations is low.

Knowledge of the RPA is low, but there is considerable support for staying in education after 16 as long as there is 'choice'.

The pupils have well developed ideas of what constitutes 'success' which rank 'the academic' over 'the vocational'.

Parents have a big influence on the pupils' views but how this influence works varies and is subtle and complex.

Other significant adults play a role as influencers - including teachers, siblings and older relatives.

Year 7 would prefer a pupil-centred multi-faceted approach to IAG with an emphasis on experiential learning supported by information and personal contact with careers advisors/teachers.

Year 7 pupils are beginning to develop principles regarding the relationship between education and employment and 'success'.

## **Behind the Headlines: Summary of Findings**

*They think they 'know' what they want to do - but not how to get there*

A very high number, nearly 90%, of the young people feel they 'know' what occupation they want to do in the future, can name this occupation and are relatively sure about this with 65% holding their views for over 2 years. The research indicates that young people at this age have thought actively and in most cases in some depth (relative to their age) about future occupations. Many have a strong affinity for their present preferences and their subsequent views on post 16 educational pathways and IAG support that would be relevant to them flows logically from these preferences. This 'knowledge' has to be seen in context however. The available evidence (Foskett & Helmsley Brown (2001) and Helmsley Brown (1999)) indicates that as young people become increasingly aware of their own abilities and the opportunities that the labour market offers their preferences change and the evidence from this study outlined below concerning the pupils' knowledge of the educational system could support such a hypothesis. However, to the young people these preferences are real at this point in time. It is important that policy-makers, teachers and parents recognize this and factor it in when offering IAG support to young people.

The knowledge that year 7 have of the relationship between occupations and the qualifications they require is very low, as is the understanding of educational pathways post 14. The majority of pupils have a weak grasp of the difference between university and further education, what apprenticeships or diplomas are and what skills/qualifications their preferred job requires. Most were not aware that the education leaving age had changed to 17. Slightly over 50% of pupils who go to 11-18 schools and over 30% of those who go to 11-16 schools think that the leaving age is 18. For the majority of pupils remaining in education until 17 is not necessarily a problem as long as education does not necessarily mean school. Pupils at this age would not be expected to have in-depth knowledge of post 14 pathways. However, as they are clearly thinking about future educational/employment routes now it may be necessary to ensure that they have an appropriate level of knowledge regarding such routes as well.

*Aspirations are high but vary by geography*

The occupations that year 7 pupils want to pursue are predominantly higher earning / status ones. They are drawn though from particular parts of the occupational scale - it appears that year 7 pupils have a 'patchy' view of the occupational structure and there are large swathes of jobs they do not either see or consider as employment options at this stage. Three quarters of young people want to go to Higher Education (HE). This majority holds across different types of school and with pupils from different genders and social background. Existing levels of attainment has little role to play here. The main reason these pupils want to go to HE is to 'improve themselves' and get a better job. Slightly more girls (82%) than boys (68%) want to go to HE which is consistent with the higher number of females going to HE in recent years than males. Surprisingly, more young people from lower rather than higher socio-economic backgrounds (85% as opposed to 66%) want to go to HE so there was little evidence of 'lower aspirations' regarding higher education from the groups that it is usually associated with. However, there were differences by geography with higher proportions of young people wanting to go to HE from the more urban areas.

*University means success*

By year 7, young people have clearly developed ideas of occupational hierarchy. There is a very strong association between success and university attendance and in particular participation in courses associated with professional occupations. This view of success is common to young people who do not want to go to university as well as those who do and different types of school/social background. There is evidence though, that their view of the Higher Education universe was even patchier than their view of the occupational structure. For most young people, they have not thought about what university they want to go to - but for those who do it is either the nearest they know of to home or Oxford / Cambridge. There were many examples of how young people had developed the view that these were the 'best' universities, were hard to access and had the brightest students. The prevalence of such views of university hierarchy amongst year 7 pupils, in the context of their overall high aspirations, could have some distinct implications for how they will view HE entry as they get older and hence the policy options regarding supporting/encouraging HE entry.

*Parents matter but so do teachers and school*

The influence of parents comes through very strongly in this study. Across gender, school type and social background parents are seen as sources of support and their backing is very important. In several cases, young people said clearly that their educational and career choices are based on what their parents want, but these were only a minority. Parental support and backing is the most important thing to the pupils, but they want to be supported to pursue their own ambitions not necessarily ones that their parents hold for them. There is also evidence that going to HE is based in some cases on wanting to imitate their parents but the majority want to go because it fits with their own ambitions. However, the influence of a significant older person / adult is not confined to parents. There were numerous examples of the influence of adult relatives and older siblings / cousins, and teachers. The ability of a teacher to shape the young people's horizons at this stage should not be under-estimated - they exist as examples of success and their support is crucial also. The young people were less keen to acknowledge the influence of the media and their friends directly when asked, but in the case of the media in particular, it did come through as having an important role that could be larger than the pupils are willing to explicitly recognize.

*Year 7 understand IAG options*

Young people themselves see the need for IAG at this stage of their school life. The evidence above in terms of the gap between aspirations and knowledge makes a strong case for such activity. Year 7 pupils were able to consider various support options and express their preferences regarding them and in the majority of cases support these choices with cogent reasoning. Activities where they can see or experience future educational/career pathways are seen as most useful, as is the regular support of an advice professional. Most year 7 pupils understand the merits of learning about what an occupation or university is like to help inform their choice process. There is less support for more information-based means of IAG delivery - such as booklets, magazines or the internet. Although with the internet, the role that it could play is well understood by some pupils.

*Year 7 pupils are developing 'career choice identities'*

The employment preferences of the pupils in the majority of cases will not be realised. Comparing the jobs that the young people want to do against the numbers of people in the population doing those jobs reveals starkly how the odds are against them. As they get older and more aware of their own abilities and the labour market their views will re-adjust. What may be more robust however, are the principles regarding educational and career issues/choices that they are developing. These principles have a greater chance of being re-affirmed by future experiences. The study shows such principles combining together in mutually reinforcing but also in contradictory ways to lay the foundations for 'career choice identities' amongst the young people. These identities can be understood as the young person's framework by which they interpret and understand employment/educational choices and issues. This process is at different stages of development across individuals and groups but virtually all the pupils have begun it. The areas in which the pupils are developing these principles are listed below.

- What is the relationship between education and employment?
- Who do I think is successful?
- What constitutes success?
- What jobs and courses bring success?
- How do you decide what job is right for you?



## Implications for policy and practice

### **Deliver a coherent IAG support programme for Key Stage 3 pupils including those at year 7**

This study has shown that year 7 pupils are engaged in a process of trying to understand what they want to do in the future and what principles should underpin the decisions they will face. They need support to work through their preferences and help build the decision making skills they will need to navigate the realities of the labour market.

### **Acknowledge that year 7 pupils have employment preferences**

IAG support strategies need to recognize that, to year 7 pupils, their ambitions, while they may never be realised, are real to them. This implies a pupil-centred approach acknowledging existing educational / employment preferences.

### **Increase pupils' knowledge base and support them in developing career choice identities**

The pupils clearly need to develop a more comprehensive knowledge base regarding education/employment over Key Stage 3. Equally, if not more, importantly they also need support in constructing their individual sets of principles regarding educational / employment principles i.e. their career choice identities.

### **Tailor the HE aspirations/information mix to different contexts**

Raising aspirations is not the major challenge for such a support strategy at this level in all geographical areas but remains a challenge in some. However, addressing the gap between aspirations and knowledge is one common to all contexts.

### **Certain groups of year 7 pupils need particular support**

The majority of young people from lower socio-economic groups want to go to HE at 11/12. Structured active support should begin at this point to build on these aspirations and supplement them with the appropriate knowledge. This group may be more vulnerable to a disjuncture between their aspirations and abilities which could lead to consequent negative impacts on their learning.

### **Emphasise the merits of vocational options**

If young people are to make informed choices at year 9 & year 11 that give weight to both academic and vocational options, their knowledge of vocational options and their merits may need addressing at year 7. The primacy of HE and academic destinations is already taking hold at this stage and the longer it remains, the harder it could be to affect. HE is also seen very much in terms of 'academic' options and the availability of more vocational routes may also need to be emphasised.

### **Use the education: employment relationship to support Key Stage 3 engagement**

Most year 7 pupils perceive a strong, positive relationship between education at school and further / higher education and employment (and life) success. This relationship could be built on from year 7 to encourage engagement in learning and schooling.

**Emphasise choice in the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA)**

While knowledge of the RPA is low, as long as it is presented to pupils as enhancing choice, it is likely to gain support from the majority of pupils when they are in year 7.

**Use the role of parents in educational/employment choice to support their overall engagement**

Parents are perceived as having a positive, legitimate role in supporting the development of educational / employment preferences. There may be a policy opportunity to build on this role to support continued parental involvement as it gets harder to sustain for certain groups over Key Stage 3 & 4.

**Make IAG support experiential and use it to support choice making skills**

IAG support for year 7 should have a strong activity / experience element and be based as far as possible around the individual needs of the pupil. Year 7 pupils want choice in their future options and understand the merits of choice. An IAG programme with an element of pupil choice built in is likely to be more popular, and help them develop the ability to make choices and decisions - crucial in the RPA context.

**References**

Foskett, N.H. & Helmsley-Brown, J.V. (2001) *Choosing Futures: Young People's Decision Making in Education, Training and Careers Markets* London:Routledge Falmer

Helmsley-Brown, J. (1999) 'College Choice: Perceptions and Priorities' *Educational Management and Administration*, 27 (1), 85-98.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Aim

The aim of the project was to increase understanding of how young people think about their future employment / educational destinations when in year 7 of the English school system.

The **objectives** of the project were:

- To explore the decision making process of those in year 7 to rank the relative influences on them as they start to consider future subject choices and their early thoughts on eventual careers.
- To understand the role of structural and contextual factors, prior attainment, parents, lead professionals, peers, individual attributes, what career-related activities motivate them and how all these factors interact.
- To explore how developed their views are on the future are and what is most likely to affect their thinking.
- To consider the most effective ways we can equip young people with the skills to make the optimal decisions.
- To provide a base for future work which explores the issues quantitatively.

## 1.2 Background

The Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned this piece of research in November 2008, to look specifically at the 2008-09 cohort of year 7 pupils. They are the first to be affected by the raising of the participation age (RPA) to 17 by 2013, the first step in the government's commitment to raise the participation age to 18 by 2015. They will also be one of the first cohorts to benefit from extension in choice at 14 as the Diploma offer will have advanced considerably by the time they are in year 9, and will be approaching completion when they enter year 11 in 2012. This is an exploratory piece of work. As argued below, there is not a coherent body of work looking at the employment/educational preferences of year 7 pupils.

### 1.21 Low level of existing work with year 7 pupils

While DCSF has commissioned several pieces of work in recent years looking at educational and career choices at 14 and 16, DCSF recognizes the paucity of research into the views of pupils at early Key Stage 3 regarding their future educational and employment preferences. The DCSF then Department of Education & Skills (DfES), commissioned a review of pupil choices conducted by the National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER) in 2005 (McCrone et al 2005). Given that the major 'pupil choice' in Key Stage 3 is at the end of year 9, this is where the review concentrated. At this point, it found significant gaps in existing research as most of the work on decision making had occurred at Key Stage 4. Moreover, the review found that the work that did exist looked at either particular issues e.g. around gender or ethnicity, individual subject choices/perceptions or the role of policy interventions such as career education and guidance. There did not appear to be work that attempted to establish how year 9 decisions were reached over the course of Key Stage 3 from age 11. The review argued that such gaps at Key Stage 3 should not be surprising given the nature of the English system with the decision at 16 being so important for future trajectories. It can be added that the structure of the schooling system at age 11 - with the vast majority of

pupils transferring schools also conditions the major priorities where year 7 pupils are concerned i.e. transition to the next Key Stage (not future educational / career choices). This is further reflected in assessing the policy developments that have taken place with year 7s - they focus mainly on the issues surrounding this transition and what can be done to make it as smooth as possible.

The lack of specific research with year 7 pupils on educational / career choices described above implies that broader theories on decision making of young people per se should be drawn upon to inform this research. Theories regarding how young people form views about career choices can be divided into those that focus on the degree to which decisions are a product of an interaction between structural constraints and individual choice, and those that look at how young people's educational / employment preferences change and evolve over time.

## **1.22 Structural constraints & individual choice theory**

In her review of choices at the end of compulsory schooling in 2003, also commissioned by the DCSF, Payne (2003) pointed to three models of decision making outlined below.

### *Structuralist Model*

This is the view that educational and career choices are primarily the outcome of structural constraints which may be a combination of the institutional, economic and cultural. Young people, as a result of interactions with their parents and the nature of the community in which they grow up, internalise assumptions about their future paths. The outcome is that they reach destinations which reflect the nature of their class, gender and ethnic background. Such work draws upon a long history of sociological educational research that gives the home greater influence than the school in defining the educational progression of pupils (Douglas 1964, Plowden 1967, Willis 1977, Brown 1984). More recent research that is of quite specific relevance to this project focuses on how early differences in attainment by class can be identified. The millennium cohort study led by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies at the University of London is tracking the progress of 15,500 boys and girls born between 2000 and 2002. Initial findings show that the three year old children of graduates were found to be 10 months ahead of those from families with few educational qualifications (Hansen & Joshi 2007).

### *Economic Model*

In contrast to the above, young people here make 'rational' assessments of the relative benefits of different education and training options before deciding which one to 'invest' in. As rational choosers this model assumes that young people are willing and able to weigh up the costs and benefits of the different options open to them before making objective decisions based on the evidence in front of them (Becker 1975). This approach also has grounding in educational sociology and economics.

### *Pragmatic Rationality*

This model attempts to recognize that young people do make cost and benefit decisions, but that these decisions are bounded by the perceptions that young people may have of different options (grounded in their backgrounds) and the information available to them and their ability to use it. It aims to combine the insights of the above two models, to avoid as Hodkinson & Sparkes (1997:29) state '*the twin pitfalls of implicit social determinism or of seeing (young) people as completely free agents*'.

### 1.23 Theories on how young people's views evolve over time

Developmental explanations focus primarily on how young people's views on educational / employment preferences change as the pupils get older. Hodkinson & Sparkes' work on pragmatic rationality does recognize the importance of key turning points as young people move through education and training. Gottfredson (2002) has produced a 4 stage framework for understanding temporal developments in career preferences - the theory of Circumscription and Compromise. Stage 3 is from aged 9-13 and involves 'circumscription' which entails the progressive elimination of least favoured alternatives as pupils become aware of occupational choices and recognize the limits of their aspirations. Foskett & Helmsley Brown (2001) and Helmsley Brown (1999) also point to phases through which young people progress in making career choices. Applicable to the point at which year 7 are, would be the 'development' phase where the preconceptions that the pupils have regarding employment and education are interpreted in the context of the need for approval from family and peer group.

Both the theories based on temporal change described above do provide the context for this study, but as with the explanations that focus on a structure: rationality dichotomy, they are not based explicitly on contemporary work with year 7 pupils.

## 1.3 Methodology

The study consisted of focus group workshops with young people in 27 different schools in 3 different areas of the country. There were 610 participants in the study. The fieldwork consisted of workshops of approximately 1 hour, with groups of between 15 and 30 pupils. This a 'mixed methods' study which has taken a triangulated approach combining written tasks that have been analysed using quantitative techniques, with group discussions generating data analysed using qualitative techniques.

### 1.31 The Sampling strategy

Background characteristics of all participating schools are to be found in Appendix 1. The schools come from across the achievement spectrum at Key Stage 4 and include various types of school: mixed / single sex, faith / non-faith, 11-16/18 and academy / community school / voluntary aided. Appendix 1 outlines in more detail the characteristics of the school sample. Each workshop group consisted of pupils with a mix of ability levels. The nature of the participating schools also means that the sample of young people contains those from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and different ethnic groups. This study does not reflect the overall distribution of schools in England by faith orientation, pupil gender, 11-16 / 11-18 etc. Rather the aim was to construct a purposive sample that would include the range of different schools in the maintained, non-selective sector thus allowing young people's views in a diversity of contexts to be explored.

The schools were drawn from three different areas of the country to allow exploration of the impact of different local labour market contexts, community ethnicity profiles and socio-economic backgrounds on the views and attitudes of the young people. The areas chosen were:

**Urban Area A:** This area has a large ethnic concentration of ethnic minority pupils and the highest degree of movement of pupils between schools.

**Urban Area B:** This is a conurbation in the north of England. It has a multi-ethnic character, but not to the same degree as in Urban Area A.

**Rural Area:** Rural locations are also important and present a quite different context in terms of local labour market context. This area is in the south of England and contains towns with a variety of different labour market traditions. The pupils in the sample are drawn from two different towns in the area.

Eight schools in Urban Area A, nine in Urban Area B and eight in the rural area participated. The schools were asked to construct groups of year 7 from across the ability range and they varied in size from 15 to 38. It was important to work with pupils of different aptitude levels to explore how views of the future were affected by the pupils' own position within the educational hierarchy at year 7. In many cases the school made a 'form' group available to the research team i.e. a mixed ability group that would meet daily for registration / pastoral support with the same teacher for the course of the academic year.

### 1.32 Who participated in the project

The table below outlines the breakdown of the sample of participants.

**Table 1 - The nature of the sample (in %)**

#### Gender

Male	Female
46	54

#### Free School Meal Status

Free School Meals (FSM)	No FSM
27	73

#### Residence & Deprivation

Resident in bottom 14,000 Local Super Output areas (LSOAs) in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (1)	Non resident in the bottom 14,000 LSOAs	Could not be classified
41	39	20

#### Residence and Geography

Urban A	Urban B	Rural
32	34	34

#### Attainment

SATS average score Level 6	SATS average score Level 5	SATS average score Level 4	SATS average score Level 3	No Answer
1	35	33	9	22

(1) The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England. This allows each area to be ranked relative to one another according to their level of deprivation. The country is divided into 32,482 small areas based on postcodes. These are called Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and each one is ranked by its IMD score. The bottom 14,000 LSOA's represent the bottom 40% of areas in terms of deprivation.

### **1.33 Ethnicity**

Ethnicity information was not collected from the pupils as it would have been hard to classify pupil definitions offered here. There were high numbers of black and minority ethnic pupils in all the Urban Area A schools, a concentration of black and minority ethnic pupils in certain Urban Area B schools and very small numbers from black and minority ethnic groups in the Rural Area schools.

### **1.34 How the workshops were delivered**

Each workshop was delivered by two researchers, with one leading discussions with the pupils and the other observing and taking notes. The workshops were based around a booklet (see Appendix 4) which addressed the research objectives set by DCSF, and contained written tasks for the pupils to complete. The researchers guided the pupils through the tasks and before / after each one there was a group discussion on the key topics in the research which built around the activity. The field researchers in the study were 3 white males aged from their mid thirties to their early fifties, two with qualified teacher status and extensive experience working in schools and one with considerable experience working with young people in classroom settings but in a higher education outreach context.

### **1.35 The analysis & presentation of the data in this report**

A complete summary of how the data was analysed is in Appendix 2. The important point to make here is that this project has produced both quantitative data from the analysis of written tasks/exercises in the workbooks and qualitative data from discussions with the pupils. Therefore, when the results are presented in the following sections it is a combination of statistical information and feedback from discussions. This means that while at times it is possible to say the exact numbers or percentage of the sample, or sub-group of it who express a particular viewpoint (when dealing with the quantitative data), at other times an approximation of the extent to which a view is held is stated (when reporting the results of the qualitative data).

## **1.4 Structure of the report**

Sections 2 to 6 of the report outline the findings from the work with the pupils. Sections 7 and 8 bring these findings together to consider how the study has advanced our understanding of how year 7 pupils think about their futures and the implications for future policy and research. Finally, the Appendices provide more detailed information on the pupils' employment preferences, references to other research quoted in this study and a copy of the workbook used with the pupils.

**Section 2** is entitled **What I want to be when I grow up: Year 7 pupil's visions of the future**. It will explore the pupil's ideas regarding future employment destinations. It will look at how the young people justify these preferences and how they relate to social background factors.

The following section examines the pupils' knowledge and views regarding the school and education system up to 18. **Section 3: How do I get there?** outlines what the pupils know about progression at 14 and 18, and where the gaps are. This chapter includes their knowledge / views about the RPA, higher education and the 'practical' and the 'academic'.

**Section 4: What does success mean to me?** looks at how the pupils view success. It considers how 'academic' and 'vocational' destinations relate to each other in the views of year 7. This chapter also describes who the young people view as successful and their characteristics.

**Section 5** examines what influences the views that the young people hold of future employment and educational destinations. **What influences me?** concentrates on an exercise undertaken with the young people which asked them to rank in order of importance the factors which shape their decision making.

**Section 6** is entitled **What helps me?** It summarises the feedback from pupils on a range of IAG activities, and why they may be of assistance to year 7.

**Section 7 Explaining how year 7 pupils view the future**, outlines a potential framework for interpreting the findings of the study and understanding how year 7 view the future. It emphasises the importance of considering the principles regarding educational / employment preferences that the young people are developing which could inform how they view career choice issues. It also highlights several groups of young people who may merit particular support though Key Stage 3.

The final **Section 8 - Conclusions** states the policy implications and themes that could be explored by further work.



## 2. What I want to be when I grow up: Year 7 pupil's visions of the future

This chapter will examine the extent to which year 7 pupils have occupational preferences at this stage in their lives, what any such preferences are and how these views vary by different background characteristics. It will show how the evidence in this study allows several different 'types' of year 7 pupil in terms of occupational preferences to be identified.

### 2.1 What year 7 pupils want to do in the future

The analysis of the pupil workbooks illustrated that nearly 90% of young people in the sample have a clear idea of what they want to do in the future. This finding supports the outcomes from group discussions with pupils across different types of school. Most of the pupils could readily answer the question '*what do you want to do in the future?*' and many were willing to share these answers. When working with this age group it is important to consider the extent to which they will provide answers that they think the teacher wants to hear. This would include the researcher to an extent, as the pupils at year 7 do not find it easy to differentiate between someone who leads the class and a teacher. This question was asked at the outset of the session, and it elicited a strong response in every workshop. The pupils were then asked to write down what it is they wanted to do.

A further attempt to gauge the strength of these opinions was asking them how long they had 'known' they wanted to do this job. Over 65% of the sample said they had this preference since the age of 9 or earlier. This finding affirms that their job preferences were not ephemeral to most of the pupils - they had felt this way for some time. The box below contains quotes from the young people on their future occupations. They are annotated with the gender and whether the young person comes from urban area, urban area B, or the rural area.

*I want to be an actor. I have known since I was 6. (Rural area male- rm)*

*I want to be an accountant. I have done since I was 8. (urban area A male -uam)*

*I want to go to college and I want to be a vet. I have known this since I was 7. (urban area B male - ubm)*

*I want to be a fashion designer because I like textiles. I have wanted to be one since I was 5. (urban area B female - ubf)*

*I want to go to the LSE (London School of Economics) and become a stockbroker or a lawyer. I have known this since I was 10. (rm)*

*I want to be an archaeologist. I am in an archaeology group already. (uam)*

*I want to be an animal carer abroad. I love animals and I have resilience and patience. I have known this since I was 8. (rural area female - rf)*

*I want to be a professional dancer. I am very sure because I love dancing and have wanted this since I was 5 years old. (urban area B female - ubf)*

*I want to be a politician or a doctor to help my country. I have known since I was 9 years old. (ubm)*

*I want to be a primary art teacher because I like kids and I love art. I decided this when I was 7 or 8 (uaf)*

*I want to be a vet and want to help animals. I have known since I was 5 (rf)*

*I want to be a lawyer because I like to get people out of trouble. I have known since I was 10 years old (ubm)*

*I want to be a dancer I have wanted to for ages, since I was really small. (ubf)*

What age? (researcher)

*About 7*

Table 2 below illustrates the occupational preferences of the young people in the study in terms of the 20 most popular jobs they wish to do. The full list of all jobs is available in Appendix 3.

**Table 2 - The most popular occupational preferences**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>	<b>% of pupils</b>
Performing Arts (singer / dancer / actor)	72	11.8
Professional Sports Player	49	8
Teacher	33	5.4
Vet	31	5.1
Lawyer / Barrister	28	4.6
Police Officer	23	3.8
Doctor / Surgeon	22	3.6
Animal Care	17	2.8
Fashion Designer	15	2.4
Working in IT	13	2.1
Hairdresser	13	2.1
Accountant	10	1.6
Engineer	10	1.6
Armed Forces	10	1.6
Artist	9	1.5
Chef	9	1.5
Personal Trainer / Sports Coach	9	1.5
Mechanic	9	1.5
Nurse	7	1.2
Scientist	7	1.2
Other jobs	152	24.9
Not sure	62	10.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>100</b>

## 2.2 Employment Choice Pupil Typologies

We can divide the pupils in this study into 4 broad categories on the basis of their employment preferences.

- ***'The Professionals'***

These pupils want to pursue occupations that are in the top two categories of the NS-SEC occupational scales as produced by the Office for National Statistics. This scale separates the vast majority of occupations in the UK into 8 different categories. The majority wish to pursue jobs that are highly visible to them (and perhaps their parents) either through personal experience or through the media. The most popular occupations are teacher, 'lawyer', vet and doctor but this category also includes some other less visible occupations such as accountant, archaeologist and scientist.

- ***'Sports and the Arts'***

The most popular preferences in this category are singer, actor and dancer or a professional sports player (with footballer the most popular). The majority of these pupils are actively involved in a performance / sport related field and believe they have ability in it. The sports and arts category is divided by gender. Over 90% of the performers are girls and over 80% of the 'sports' young people are boys.

- ***'The mid-rangers'***

This is a heterogeneous group of occupations mainly NS-SEC 2-3 but down to 7. There is some clustering here with boys expressing preferences for the police / armed forces and girls for nurse / child care and hairdressing / beauty.

- ***'The Undecided'***

This group of pupils consists of 12% of the sample who do not have a future occupational preference they can name at this point.

'Sports and the Arts' is clearly the most popular destination & professional sports player features highly. This is not surprising. It supports the arguments outlined earlier that year 7 are still in a 'development' phase regarding their futures. However, what is interesting is that in the discussions several pupils recognized that the odds of becoming actors or sports stars were slim, and they needed to be in a position to pursue other routes as well.

*'I want to be a journalist or an actress or singer. (uaf)*

Which one would you prefer? (researcher)

*I would like to be an actress or singer, but probably a journalist - it is more realistic. Being an actress or singer is not impossible, but I might find it hard to get there. (uaf)*

*I want to be a fashion designer, but I also need something to back me up so I would stay in school maybe and then go to college. (ubf)*

*I want to be a footballer, but I would go to college as well, in case I don't make it as a professional. (uam)*

This view was the exception not the rule, but it reveals that year 7 have the ability to comprehend simultaneously pursuing your 'dreams' and something more 'grounded'. Hence, there is potential to work with them in such a way so as not to deny them the ability to pursue media/sports careers, but try and ensure they have other options in place.

Furthermore, Sports and the Arts preferences while high, are still only just over 20% of all jobs. The vast majority of pupils want to pursue less 'glamorous' occupations. Professional occupations, in certain fields, feature highly in Table 2 which points to a key aspect of the occupational spread shown by the data. The pupils preferred jobs were very strongly biased toward 'high status' occupations. Mapping their choices against the NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-economic Classification) eight category occupational scale shows that over 80% of the jobs chosen were in NS-SEC 1-3. Pupils at this point see occupations as something that you should aspire to rather than something you result in doing. The likelihood is that many of these pupils will have to revise their preferences 'downwards' as they get older. A key question for future research is what impact will this have on them, and their attitude to education?

### 2.3 Why have young people made these preferences?

The most common connection that young people make here is with activities they are involved with in (or out) of school, or subjects they are doing at school which they enjoy. This theme of enjoyment or personal interest is far more common than financial reward or the influence of parents for example.

*I want to be a pilot in the RNLI. I like volunteer work. (uam)*

*I want to be a zoologist because I really like animals.(uam)*

*I want to be a dancer. I like to perform and I won awards. (ubf)*

*I want to be an actor, because I am good at it and I just want to be one. I do drama and Miss said I am good at it. (ubm)*

*I want to be dancer because it is something I enjoy doing.(uaf)*

*I want to be a footballer. I have already had trials with 2 clubs. (rm)*

*I want to be a successful restaurant owner because I love cooking. (rm)*

*A journalist because I like writing and reading magazines.(uaf)*

*I want to a surgeon. I am million percent sure. I am really interested in the human body. (uam)*

### 2.4 Employment preferences and social background

The fact that 80% of the pupils want to pursue high status occupations implies that the variation by socio-economic group or gender is not likely to be great, On the basis of work with older pupils the expectation would be that those from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to want to enter occupations which are classified in the bottom half of the NS-SEC scale (Archer et al 2003). As Table 3 below shows on the basis of the indicators of socio-economic group used in this study, this is not the case (the final category of job in the

NS-SEC scale is actually not working, hence Table 3 states 4-7 not 4-8 as no pupils actually chose as a future preference 'not to work').

**Table 3 - Employment Preferences by socio-economic background**

Social background	NS-SEC 1-3	NS-SEC 4-7
FSM	83	17
Non-FSM	82	18
Deprived area	79	21
Not deprived area	77	23

There is also very little variation by gender as can be seen in Table 4 below.

**Table 4 - Employment preferences by gender**

Gender	NS-SEC 1-3	NS-SEC 4-7
Male	84	16
Female	76	24

Boys are slightly more likely to express a preference for jobs in NS-SEC1-3. This is a consequence of their greater likelihood to prefer professional sports occupations which are classified in NS-SEC 1-3 and girl's greater likelihood to prefer the occupations of hairdressing and animal care which are classified in categories 4-7 in the NS-SEC structure.

The lack of variation by social background has implications for 'structuralist' explanations of educational progression. At this point in time, social background is not shaping aspirations in the way the theory predicts for the majority of young people i.e. young people from lower socio-economic groups are not in the main wishing to enter jobs that are the most visible in their families and communities. There were examples of parental influence, and pupils who wanted to follow their parents' employment destinations. These examples were more prevalent amongst boys.

*I want to join the army because most of my family are in it. (uam)*

*I want to be a doctor because my mum is a nurse. (rf)*

*I would like to be a teacher. My dad was a teacher and my mum is a teaching assistant. (female)*

*I want to be a policeman because my dad is one. (rm)*

However, there was also quite the opposite view expressed several times and a desire not to go down the route that parents had taken.

*Why would you get a job you don't really want to do? My dad is like that. (uam)*

## 2.5 Employment Preferences and school

The 4 types of pupils described above are found across different schools. There is a concentration of those who wish to go into the performing arts/fashion design however in the all-girls schools. In the sample overall the performing arts/fashion design pupils are virtually

all girls, but they are also clustered in certain urban, all girls schools. Of the 65 pupils who saw these as their preferred destinations 70% came from these three schools, with 1 in 5 coming from one of these three schools in particular.

Of the schools in the sample 20 out of 27 have 'specialist status'. When a school is designated with such status, it affects the identity of the institution and it will give a priority to subject areas and activities associated with its status. It could be argued this might influence the educational / employment preferences of the pupils in the school. This is not the case on the basis of the evidence collected in this study. There is not a relationship between the school specialism and the preferences of the pupils. However, it could be argued that given the pupils have only been in the school for a relatively short period of time this is not surprising.

## 2.6 The influence of geography on employment preferences

There are some differences in pupil preferences on the basis of geography emerging in the study however. There is a slightly greater tendency for pupils in the rural area to select occupations that reflect their rural location i.e. animal care, vet and also for boys to express a preference for sports orientated roles. The tendency for pupils in rural areas to express a preference for occupations that could be described as exclusively rural should not be exaggerated here however. Only a small minority of pupils, less than 20% stated in their workbooks that their future employment preference lay in occupations that could be described as having a rural element. The only other specific geographic element in this area was in Urban A where, as outlined above, there was a greater tendency for female pupils to select the performing arts.

## 2.7 The jobs that pupils see - partial and patchy

The total number of occupations that the pupils wanted to do in the future was 72. Given the sample size is over 600 this is not a big number. There are large swathes of the occupational structure that do not feature in the pupil's answers. Table 5 below maps the pupil's responses against the percentage of the UK labour force employed in these particular areas. Table 5 illustrates that there are large sectors where employment is highest that the pupils, at the moment, do not express a preference for.

**Table 5 - Pupil occupational preferences and the UK labour force by sector**

Industry	Total number employed in that industry	% employed in that industry	% of Y7 choosing these careers (n=483)
Agriculture & Fishing	250,943	0.9	0.21
Energy & Water	171,718	0.6	0.21
Manufacturing	2,875,201	10.6	0
Construction	1,280,044	4.7	5.18
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants	6,477,187	23.8	2.28
Transport and Communication	1,580,448	5.8	6.42
Banking, Finance and Insurance	5,760,210	21.2	3.11
Public Administration, Education and Health	7,329,546	27	36.23
Others	1,455,977	5.4	46.38

(The sectoral breakdown by employment is taken from [http://www.humanonline.co.uk/news/the-uk-labor-force-employment-by-sector\\_83.html](http://www.humanonline.co.uk/news/the-uk-labor-force-employment-by-sector_83.html) accessed 15 May 09)

Table 5 re-affirms the argument that the pupils want to pursue particular kinds of high status jobs but also emphasises the contrasting reality that will face them in the future. While there is evidence that the demand for skills will increase and the employment structure will shift toward more high status / earning jobs (DIUS 2007), this shift is not likely to be enough to satisfy the demands of all the pupils. Below, is another version of Table 2 which shows for the 20 most popular occupations the percentage of the sample who expressed this preference and the percentage of the population who according to the 2008 Labour Force Survey, are employed in that occupation.

**Table 6 - Pupil occupational preferences (top 20) and the UK labour force by job**

Career	No of Y7	% of Y7	No of employed in area(n=27,181, 274)	% employed in area
Performing Arts (singer / dancer / actor)	72	14.91	60,000	0.22
Professional Sports Player	49	10.14	15,000	0.06
Teacher	33	6.83	767,000	2.82
Vet	31	6.42	15,000	0.06
Lawyer / Barrister	28	5.8	196,000	0.72
Police Officer	23	4.76	185,000	0.68
Doctor / Surgeon	22	4.55	214,000	0.79
Animal Care	17	3.52	54,000	0.2
Fashion Designer	15	3.11	61,000	0.22
IT	13	2.69	444,000	1.63
Hairdresser	13	2.69	225,000	0.83
Accountant	10	2.07	149,000	0.55
Engineer	10	2.07	499,000	1.84
Armed Forces	10	2.07	93,000	0.34
Artist	9	1.86	34,000	0.13
Chef	9	1.86	260,000	0.96
Personal Trainer / Sports Coach	9	1.86	104,000	0.38
Mechanic	9	1.86	214,000	0.79
Nurse	7	1.45	528,000	1.94
Scientist	7	1.45	141,000	0.52

(The UK labour force by job is taken from [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_labour/UKallinemploybySOCApr-Jun2008.xls](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_labour/UKallinemploybySOCApr-Jun2008.xls) accessed 15th May 2009)

Table 7 brings home the extent to which the pupils are going to have to re-align their preferences at some stage as the evidence dictates that the majority will not achieve their ambition at year 7. Looking at all the pupil employment preferences they cover only 30% of the occupational structure. Therefore, most of the pupils are going to have to adjust their expectations. The important issues this presents are which pupils will have to make this adjustment? What will the impact on pupils be and will it differ by different pupil groups? And finally, how does the educational system support pupils in making this adjustment?

### 3. How do I get there?

This section will investigate both pupil attitudes and pupil knowledge. It will look at what they know about the 14-19 phase of education and how the young people think they will reach the employment destinations described in section 4.

#### 3.1 What pupils know about educational routes

While over 90% of pupils at year 7 can specify a job they think they would like to do in the future, they are much less clear about how to get to the jobs they would like to do. In particular they have low levels of knowledge of the routes from 14 -18 available to them. Just over half the pupils (52%) felt they had some idea what **A-Levels** were. Of this 52%, less than a quarter could give a detailed answer. The majority of pupils think it is a 'test' or exam but did not go beyond this and there was considerable confusion regarding when they were taken with 20% of the students who offered a response thinking that this happened at the same time as GCSE's. There was an association made several times by pupils however, between A Levels and academic ability.

*If you get good grades at school and do well you do A Level.(uaf)*

*A test preparing you for college as certain colleges then only accept you. (ubf)*

*The clever teens do A-Levels.(uam)*

*They are a bit harder and you have to done well before to be able to take them.  
(ubm)*

Again only a minority of students, 30%, could offer any thoughts on what **apprenticeships** were and no students had aspirations to do an apprenticeship. However, in the group discussions the pupils understood what an 'apprentice' would do (much of which was taken from the popular TV series which was being broadcast at the time of the fieldwork of the same name). In the discussions several pupils were able to offer good definitions of what an apprentice would do, and it was welcomed by some as an option they could consider. There is a platform then to build on here, and to further the understanding the pupils have of apprenticeships and their merits.

*It is like when you get a job that you want to do, and then you learn about it by doing it. It is like when you have a mentor who helps you learn. (uam)*

*It is where you work and learn on the job and get paid for it. (uam)*

*It is when you go to work with someone, like a plumber and they can help you to learn physically instead of learning from a teacher'. (rm)*

In the case of the **14-19 diploma**, only 18% of pupils could offer any definition of what it could be and less than 10 could be described as accurate. The most common interpretation of the diploma in discussion was a literal one 'a scroll of paper', and it was associated by several with some form of 'graduation' where you would receive your diploma (again the media may have a role here, as there were references back to US TV series where they had seen high school graduations).



*You get one of the scrolls and it's like a graduation. (uam)*

*It is a certificate from university. (rm)*

*Is it when you graduate from university?(rm)*

Pupils were asked later in the session about whether they would prefer to do one subject after year 9 in depth or a range of subjects. Just under 50% of the pupils said that yes they would prefer to do one subject in depth after year 9. Hence, as with apprenticeships, the study does reveal that the pupils could be open to a form of study consistent with the diploma.

This low level of knowledge regarding certain post 14 and 16 qualifications is not surprising given where they are in year 7. However it could be a concern because the majority of pupils, as we saw in section 2, have a view of what occupation they want to do. If they are forming these ideas at year 7, it would be logical to help them also understand what their preferences are at year 7 and how they could reach these destinations.

### 3.2 Subject Choice at Year 9

While their knowledge regarding post 16 qualifications is low, the pupils are more able to identify subjects they would like to pursue at 14. They were asked to list as many subjects as they felt at this stage they would like to do. Table 4 below lists the 10 most popular subjects.

**Table 7 - Subjects that pupils would like to pursue at Key Stage 4**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
English	50%
Maths	49%
Science	42%
PE	34%
Drama	31%
Art	29%
DT	21%
Music	16%
ICT	14%
History	11%

Unsurprisingly, English and Maths were the most popular subjects. Given that the pupils are early in their secondary school careers they are only starting to understand the wider Key Stage 3 offer. However, the prevalence of science could be seen as interesting given recent policy directives to encourage more students to pursue science related careers / courses at schools (DCSF 2009). There is certainly an interest in science at year 7 which could potentially be built on.

### 3.3 The Raising of the Participation Age (RPA): What I want and what I would like to do

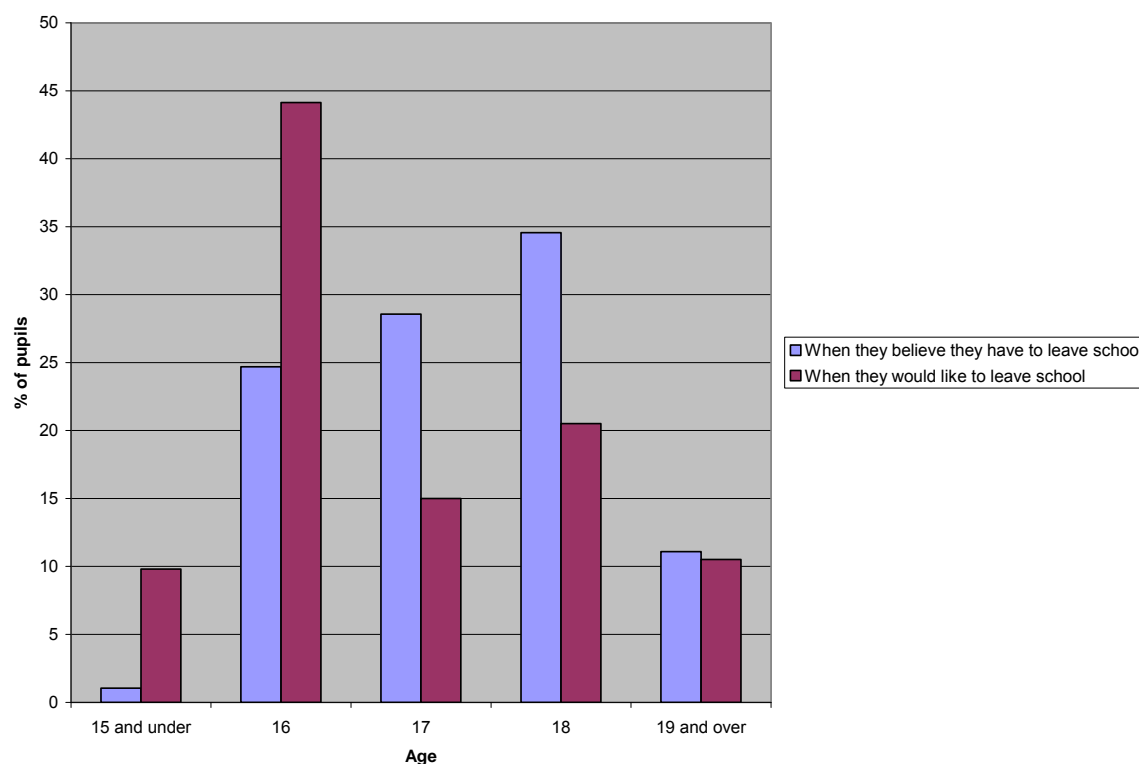
As outlined in the introduction to this report, the fact that this year 7 cohort is the first to be affected by the RPA is a cornerstone of the study. The results show that only a minority of pupils are aware that the education leaving age has changed. In less than 5 schools the pupils recall having been informed and hence were aware that they would have to stay in

education until they are 17 because of the RPA. Even in these schools though, they interpreted leaving education as leaving school. The pupils were asked to state in their workbooks the age they would like to leave school, when they would like to leave education, and when they think they have to leave school. They were asked about school leaving age as well as the education leaving age, because the pilot sessions indicated that the pupils had real problems understanding the concept of 'leaving education' in the time available to explain it to them. The RPA could have been explained to them in detail, but this would have taken too long in the context of the session and would have also meant telling them that the RPA extended education until 17, so it would not have been possible to explore their own views about when you have to leave school or education.

Furthermore, in methodological terms the principle adopted as researchers was to have as little effect as possible on what the pupils know and explore their opinions as much as possible 'as they are'. After the pupils had completed the question in their workbooks, it was then explained to them in basic terms what the RPA meant and they were asked their views on this. This provoked numerous questions about how the RPA would work, confirming the problem faced if an extensive explanation of the RPA had been attempted. The quotes below reveal the problems the pupils have understanding the RPA which is not surprising given their lack of knowledge of post 14 routes described above. As argued below however, the pupils are not necessarily hostile to having to remain in education longer than their predecessors but there needs to be specific work with them to explain what the RPA means and the choices it will provide them.

The age where most pupils think you have to leave school is 18, followed by 17. However, when they were asked when they would like to leave school the most common age is 16 - with nearly half of pupils selecting this age. When you have to leave school and when you would like to leave school is shown in Diagram 1 below:

**Diagram 1 - When pupils think they have to leave school and when they would like to leave school**

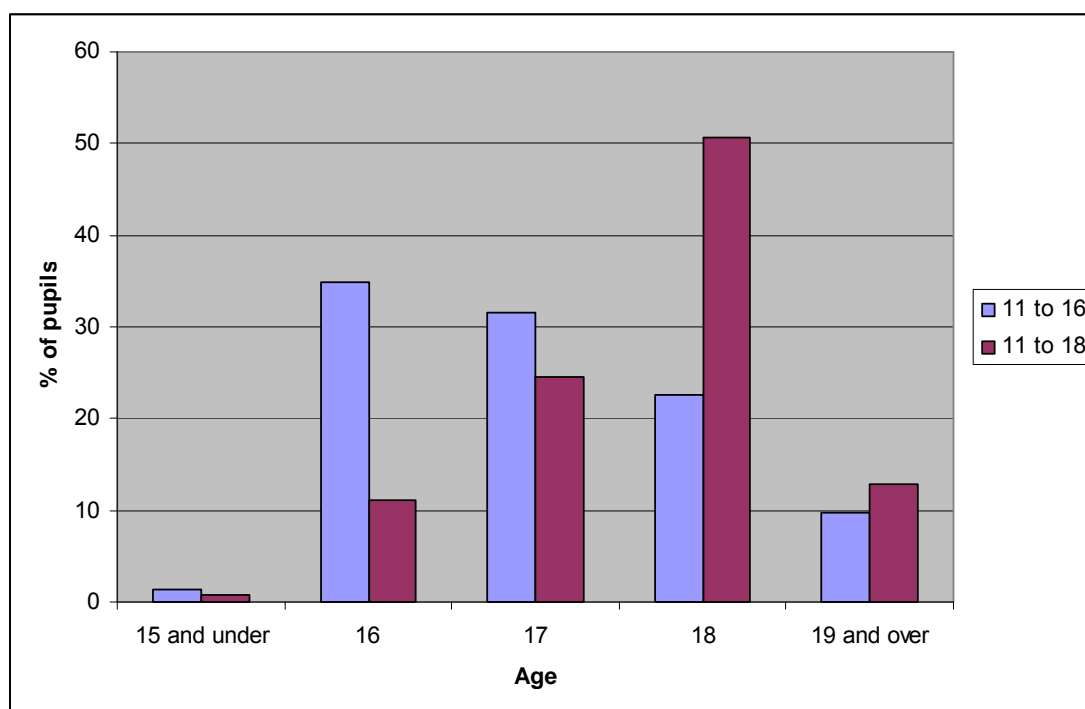


It is not clear why so many of the pupils believe the leaving age to be 18. Also, the fact that nearly 30% believe it to be 17 should not be taken necessarily as confirmation that the pupils have been informed of the RPA. The discussions revealed as argued above, that the majority of pupils were not aware.

### 3.31 Does going to an 11-18 school have a role to play?

While the study did not explore in detail why so many of the pupils believe the school leaving age to be 18, there is a relationship between the pupils answers here and whether they attended an 11-16/11-18 school. Diagram 2 shows how the pupils at 11-16 schools are more likely to want to leave earlier than those at 11-18 schools.

**Diagram 2 - When pupils in different schools think they have to leave school**



The diagram shows clearly the difference in views regarding when you have to leave school amongst those who attend 11-16 and 11-18 schools. It may be the case that pupils in 11-18 schools have already gained an impression from being in the school that they have to leave at 18. This in turn is affecting their views on when they want to leave. This is an area in need of further exploration, but this study certainly indicates that IAG policy at year 7 with respect to the RPA, may need to factor in the different impact of 11-16 and 11-18 schools on pupils.

A further factor to consider here is any influence by social background. There is evidence to suggest that young people from lower socio-economic groups want to leave school earlier (Maychell et al 1998). However, as with the relationship between structural theory and employment preferences this desire may start later than year 7. At 11/12 pupils resident in deprived/non-deprived areas have a very similar distribution of preferred leaving dates. Those from deprived areas certainly do not seem to want to leave school earlier.

### 3.32 What pupils think about the leaving age

After they were asked about the school leaving age, the pupils were told about the RPA. The response to the information was mixed. Some pupils thought it unfair, and some could not see the rationale for further learning. There was also confusion regarding the implications of the RPA for their future educational paths with some individuals thinking that an extra year of education would delay their entry to university. This reveals the gap in knowledge that many year 7 have where post 16 educational routes are concerned.

*Don't want to finish school at a young age and not be able to manage university. (uam)*

*It will slow me down in becoming a vet. (rm)*

*You would be a year behind for college and university. (uaf)*

*It's taking a year off my life when I could go to university or college. (uam)*

However, the majority of pupils are not troubled by the plans. When they were asked why they supported the change the reasons offered supported the belief that education is vital for future employment progression.

*I don't mind about this. I want to get a better education, so I can get a better job. (uam)*

*The more education you get the better you can do in your job. (uam)*

*You will have more of a chance of the job you want. (rf)*

*You can get more brains and go and do something better than McDonalds. (rm)*

*I want to be a fashion designer, but I also need something to back me up so I would stay in school maybe and then go to college. (uaf)*

*It is good they have put an extra year on - so it will give me a better education. (ubm)*

Furthermore, those who were sceptical about the RPA were definitely more at ease with staying in education, if it meant they could 'go to college' and/or have greater choice of subjects. They are not clear about whether that means sixth form college/further education or indeed a school sixth form. The key theme appears to be their ability to exercise choice of their learning destinations.

*6 years in one place is too much, nobody wants to stay any longer than that. I want to do something at college that I can choose to do. (ubm)*

*If we have an extra year it could be quite boring. I would rather go to college. (uam)*

*I want to be able to go to college but then it (the RPA) might be OK. (ubm)*

*I want to go to college so I can prepare for the job I want to do as soon as I can but I want to stay learning until I am at least 20. (uaf)*

### 3.4 Going to the university - the 'right' thing to do?

The educational road to 18 is unclear to most of the pupils, with varying degrees of uncertainty about how to navigate it. There is less ambiguity about where they would like the road to lead. Of the whole sample, 75% wanted to go to university, with another 18% who were not sure. Only 7% of the pupils did definitely not want to go to university. This is consistent with other research that looks at HE aspirations amongst 11-16 year olds, that also finds an average of 70% of each age group who want to go to HE (Sutton Trust 2008). However, what is quite striking about the data is that pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds are no less likely to want to go to HE. This is not consistent with other evidence. The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England in 2006 showed only 53% of those young people resident in the 40% most deprived communities as measured by the Index of Deprivation, aspiring to HE (Cabinet Office 2008). Table 8 illustrates how views on HE differ by the 2 measures of socio-economic background used in the study.

**Table 8 - Higher Education Aspirations by Social Background**

Measure of social background	Wants to go to university	Not sure about university	Does not want to go to university
FSM	78.5	17	4.5
Non FSM	75	18	7
Deprived area	85	10	5
Non-deprived area	66	23	11
Boys	68	20	12
Girls	82	9	9

When seen alongside the results in Section 1 on employment preferences, the views that the pupils hold here support the idea that the majority of year 7 pupils have high 'educational / employment' aspirations. As Table 8 also shows, there are differences in aspiration to higher education by gender. The higher numbers of girls wanting to go onto higher education is consistent with recent higher education entry figures for those aged 18-30 showing girls out-performing boys significantly. Finally, there appears little difference at this point in aspirations to attend higher education by attainment but a slightly lower percentage of pupils with Level 4 SAT score (75%) want to go to HE than their counterparts with Level 5 or 6 (83%). The data, as with that on aspiration by measure of socio-economic background by area is not consistent with what happens when pupils get older and enter HE.

#### 3.41 Why do pupils want to go/not want to go to HE?

The reasons that the pupils gave for wanting to go into HE were framed mainly in terms of supporting their future employment ambitions. Young people framed their reasons generically, as improving their overall employment prospects or supporting progression to their preferred future occupation. In the group discussions most of the young people were very forthcoming regarding HE entry. It appeared for the vast majority something they had already thought about (including those who were not sure/didn't want to go). Those who did want to go appeared very sure in their opinions and 70% of all those who wanted to go were also able to give clear answers as to their reasons why.

*I want to get a good job and pay and I was 5 when I thought about. (uam)*

*I want to go because when I go for a job interview, if I have degree on my CV it will look good with the interviewer. (ubm)*

*I want to go because it will give you a head start in life and give you a much bigger variety of jobs. Also you could specialise in your favourite subject. I want to go to Oxford. (ubm)*

*(Yes) because then I have a better education and more chance of getting the job I want. I also might not like being a child doctor so I will still have the qualifications to be a mid-wife. (rf)*

*The job I want to do requires the skills you get from university. (uaf)*

*I want to go because I want to get a diploma in acting and would like to go as soon as possible to an acting school.(ubf)*

*I want to be an engineer and you need the university qualifications to do that and to have done a lot of learning. (ubf)*

*I want to get more out of myself and a successful career. I was 8 when I thought about it. (uam)*

Parents and other older influencers, particularly siblings, do have an influence on the young people's HE aspirations but this was not as strong a theme emerging through the discussions as the perceived benefits that university attendance can bring.

*I decided at 10 I wanted to go because I want to graduate like my mum and dad and I will become more intelligent. You cannot get a job if you are not smart enough. I want to go to Oxford.(uaf)*

*I decided when I was 10 because my sister is in university and I want to be a barrister.(rm)*

*I want to carry on and get a better education because my brother is going. I would like to go to Sussex or Middlesex because I have read the little booklets.(uam)*

*I started thinking about university when I was 5 and my parents kept telling me to. I would go to Oxford University because my older cousin studies there. (uam)*

*My dad wants me to go and he said that my sister went to Sheffield (University) and he doesn't want me hanging around the house doing nothing when I am older. (ubm)*

### 3.42 Which university to attend - even more partial & patchy

It was argued in section 2 above that the year 7 picture of the employment structure is incomplete and there are many occupations/occupational areas that they either do not want to do, or are not aware of. This partial and patchy picture is repeated where universities are concerned, but may be more extreme. It would not be reasonable to expect year 7 pupils to have a wide knowledge of the university system, given it is not something they are likely to have addressed in school. The group discussions explored with the young people what universities they would like to attend. For the majority this was something they had not thought about. However, where there were answers Oxford and Cambridge were by far the most favoured institutions. There was occasional mention of an institution a relative attended and some reference to wanting to stay local but Oxford and Cambridge were mentioned repeatedly. They were associated with being high status and able to therefore confer greater advantages on those who attended.

*I want to go to university because it will change my life. I want to go to Oxford because that is the best. We have been told in school and my parents say.(uaf)*

*Cambridge is the university I want to go to. It is a very good university and you will get the best education. (ubm)*

*I want to go to Oxford if I do English or Cambridge if I do Chemistry.(uam)*

*I would like to go to Oxford University. I have heard it is very good and you can earn a lot of money from it. (rf)*

Which university do you want to go to?

*Oxford*

*Why?*

*It is the best.*

Why is it the best?

*It just is. Everyone knows.(ubm)*

The conversation between the researcher and the pupil above is interesting because it suggests a common 'taken for granted assumption' that Oxford is superior to other universities.

This view of Oxford and Cambridge cuts across different schools, and pupils from different backgrounds. This presents a key question: how are year 7 pupils forming this association between 'higher education' and Oxbridge and what are the implications of this? The frequent appearance of these two universities could be a cause for concern, particularly when considered in the context of the other evidence in this study. Pupils may want to go to HE, but for many, as with the 14-19 educational pathway, their knowledge of what this entails and how HE relates to employment is low. For the majority of pupils they will have to adjust their HE aspirations, as they will not achieve the results necessary to apply for Oxford or Cambridge. How young people make this adjustment and whether the association of Higher

Education with Oxford and Cambridge has any impact on how they view HE entry and what higher education offers is worthy of further exploration.

A final interesting point may be the role of universities in developing close partnerships with schools, through sponsoring academies. In the one school in the study that was co-sponsored by a university (University 'A'), some of the group were aware of the relationship.

*When we sat down at the start of the year they said we could have a straight path to University A if we work hard. That could be good for us. (ubm)*

*School have said to us that University A will be easier for us to go to.(uaf)*

*We are part of University A at our school I think. (rm)*

### 3.43 Going to university - the knowledge gap again

While a high percentage of pupils want to go to HE, it is less certain that they are aware whether a HE qualification is required for the preferred occupation. Below is another version of Table 2 from section 2. It shows for the 20 most popular occupations whether the pupils also wish to go to higher education.

**Table 9 - Most popular occupations by Higher Education Aspiration**

Occupation	Wants to go to HE	Not sure	Does not want to go	No of Pupils
Performing Arts (singer / dancer / actor)	51	16	5	72
Professional Sports Player	18	21	10	49
Teacher	29	3	1	33
Lawyer / Barrister	28	0	0	28
Vet	26	4	1	31
Police Officer	15	6	1	23
Doctor / Surgeon	21	1	0	22
Animal Care	8	5	2	17
Fashion Designer	14	1	0	15
Working in IT	12	1	0	13
Hairdresser	8	2	3	13
Accountant	8	0	2	10
Engineer	6	1	3	10
Armed Forces	5	2	3	10
Artist	7	1	1	9
Chef	5	2	2	9
Personal Trainer / Sports Coach	5	4	0	9
Mechanic	2	3	4	9
Nurse	7	0	0	7

Table 9 shows that in a considerable number of cases pupils wish to go to HE, but also wish to pursue occupations that do not necessarily require a degree. For certain jobs in an occupational area a degree is required and it certainly could be seen as an asset e.g. performing arts. Increasing numbers of occupations welcome graduates and a degree can be advantageous e.g. the police force. Indeed it would be possible to find Level 4 courses in virtually all the occupations that the year 7 pupils wish to pursue. However, the group discussions suggest that there is gap between what the pupils want to do and how they think that HE can contribute.



*I want to go to university because I would like to get degrees for fashion design and modelling, but also for maths. I would also do degrees like a Masters one. (uaf)*

*I want to go to university so that it will be easier for me to be a professional footballer. I'd want to go to Open University or Middlesex, I have known since I was 10. (uam)*

*I want to go to university for a year to get a degree in break-dancing and fitness training. (rm)*

*I want to be a beautician and go to university so I can study hard and get the qualifications that I need. (rf)*

*What shall I put down here? (uaf)*

*What do you want to put down? (researcher)*

*Don't know, I want to be a lawyer.*

*You need to go to university then (researcher)*

*Do I? I should put that then.*

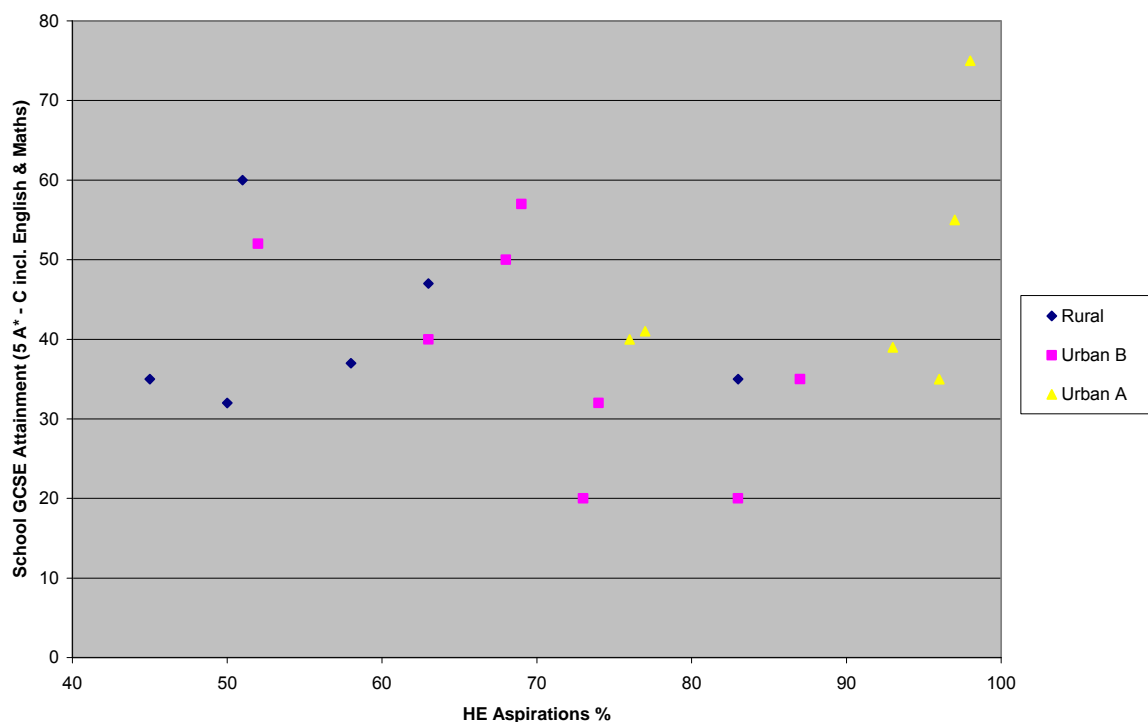
*(pupil was classified as not sure about HE)*

It can be interpreted as a positive finding that pupils may be aspiring for HE while wanting to be footballers, police officers etc. But this platform needs to be built on if they are to maximise their future options by continuing in education.

### **3.44 The school and Higher Education**

The final relationship to be examined here is that between the school and the pupils desire to go to higher education. As with the relationship between social background and individual employment / educational aspirations, it could be hypothesised that in schools where there are higher levels of GCSE attainment more pupils want to go to university. The diagram below shows HE aspirations against GCSE attainment for each school in the study. It shows that at similar levels of GCSE attainment there are very different levels of aspiration. Also, it appears that there are real differences between areas with aspirations highest in the urban areas.

**Diagram 3 - Higher Education Aspirations by school GCSE Attainment**



The diagram suggests two things. Firstly, schools with similar measurable background characteristics can contain pupils with very different views and attitudes regarding higher education. Secondly, where the pupils live is having an impact on how they view higher education.

### 3.5 The practical and the academic

How pupils like to learn could be an important factor in their decision making regarding their future educational pathways. The work with the young people indicated that this was an area that they were only just beginning to identify with as they became more familiar with the different curriculum offer at Key Stage 3. In the workbooks the young people were given the choice of 7 different either/or options with one set of options broadly characterised as 'academic' preferences, and one set broadly characterised as 'practical' preferences.

**Table 10 - 'Academic' & 'Practical' Choices**

Academic choices (answers by % of sample)		Practical choices (answers by % of sample)
Classes where you do mainly reading and writing	OR	Classes where you mainly make things
26.46		73.54
Being tested on how well you are doing in exams at the end of term	OR	Being tested on how well you are doing by giving in a folder of work at the end of term
54.66		45.34
English	OR	Art and Design
35.96		64.04
Maths	OR	Design and Technology
34.2		65.2
Spend most of time after year 9 studying one subject I am really interested in	OR	Spend most of time after year 9 studying as many subjects as I can
46.59		53.41
Spend a week at a university in year 10 learning about what it is like	OR	Spend a week in year 10 going to work everyday and learning about a job
47.32		52.68
Learn things in year 7 and 8 that connect to a college or university course that I could do		Learn things in year 7 and 8 that connect to jobs that I could do
55.85		44.16

The data above indicates that the young people are split quite equally in their preferences across most of the questions. There are distinct preferences for making things and studying art / design and technology. This is not too surprising given that young people will tend to prefer subjects and activities that are perceived as more expressive (Colley & Comber 2003). It is interesting that a slight majority prefer exams. Also, there is support for specialisation after year 9 which as argued earlier could be used as a basis for encouraging pupils to consider diploma study at 14.

Further analysis of the data attempted to gauge the extent to which the pupils were answering in a consistently 'academic' or 'practical' fashion i.e. choosing mainly one or the other series of options and how this varied by social background. If a pupil answered "practical" they were given a score of 1 and if they answered "non-practical" they were given a score of 0. Each pupil could therefore score a maximum of 7 (if they answered all seven questions). This score was divided by the number of answers so if a pupil answered "practical" i.e. scored as 1, for each question they answered, their mean score would be 1. The results are shown in Table 11 below. The mean scores using each indicator hover around 0.5. This implies that for each of these groups of young people there is a very slight tendency to favour the practical options answered, but the tendency is very slight indeed.

**Table 11 - Academic and Practical Preferences**

Background characteristic	Answer	No	Mean
Free-school meals	Yes	154	.58
	No	383	.56
Deprivation	Yes	225	.55
	No	226	.58
Gender	Male	249	.55
	Female	304	.58

Independent sample tests were carried out to see if there were significant differences across the factors of gender, free-school meals and deprivation. None of the differences were significant suggesting that these pupils in these groups do not differ in terms of whether they prefer academic or practical approaches to studying.

### **3.51 Need for further investigation of academic & practical learner identities**

On the basis of this study pupils do not see themselves as having academic and practical learner identities at this point. This issue needs further investigation though. Research focused explicitly on learning styles looking at how the pupils view different aspects of the curriculum in detail, may be able to ascertain a clearer picture of whether there are early signs of such identities forming.

## 4. What does success mean to me?

An important element in understanding how young people's views of the future are constructed could be extent to which they have coherent views regarding hierarchies of future employment/educational destinations. Sections 2 and 3 above, have already illustrated that the pupils themselves aspire in the main to higher status occupations and higher education entry. This section will examine in more detail what they understand as 'success', and who they think is successful.

### 4.1 Successful people - a mix of the public and the personal

Initially in this part of the session, group discussion with the year 7 pupils explored their views on 'successful people'. The researchers were careful not to lead the discussion here and offer examples. The pupils' views fell into 2 camps: family members / other significant adults from their own world and performers / sport stars / business people & politicians. There is a view that young people are heavily influenced by certain figures e.g. performance artists, sports people and those who appear in the media (Giles & Maltby 2004). 'Celebrity figures' are important but in the group discussions the Year 7 pupils were just as likely to name someone from their own personal world as an example of success as someone who they are familiar with via the media. Moreover, when they did select someone from the 'public' world the choice was more eclectic than expected and did not feature any figures known for their celebrity alone. The reasons they gave for their choices were instructive. These centred around two themes common to personal and public figures: earning money, and overcoming obstacles to get where they are.

*Duncan Ballantyne - he started off in an ice cream van and is now a successful person. (uam)*

*Bill Gates - he is the richest person in the world and he invented Microsoft and windows. (ubm)*

*Barrack Obama - he is the first black person to be the President of America.(uaf)*

*I think that Jacqui is the most successful because she is a livery yard owner, she has raised 2 children and she has a husband who has a brain tumour. She gets up at 6 o'clock everyday to look after 40 horses.(rf)*

*Oprah Winfrey - she came from a very poor background and if she can do well then it means we can. (ubf)*

*My sister - she is halfway through university and is doing really well and she didn't do well at school. (ubf)*

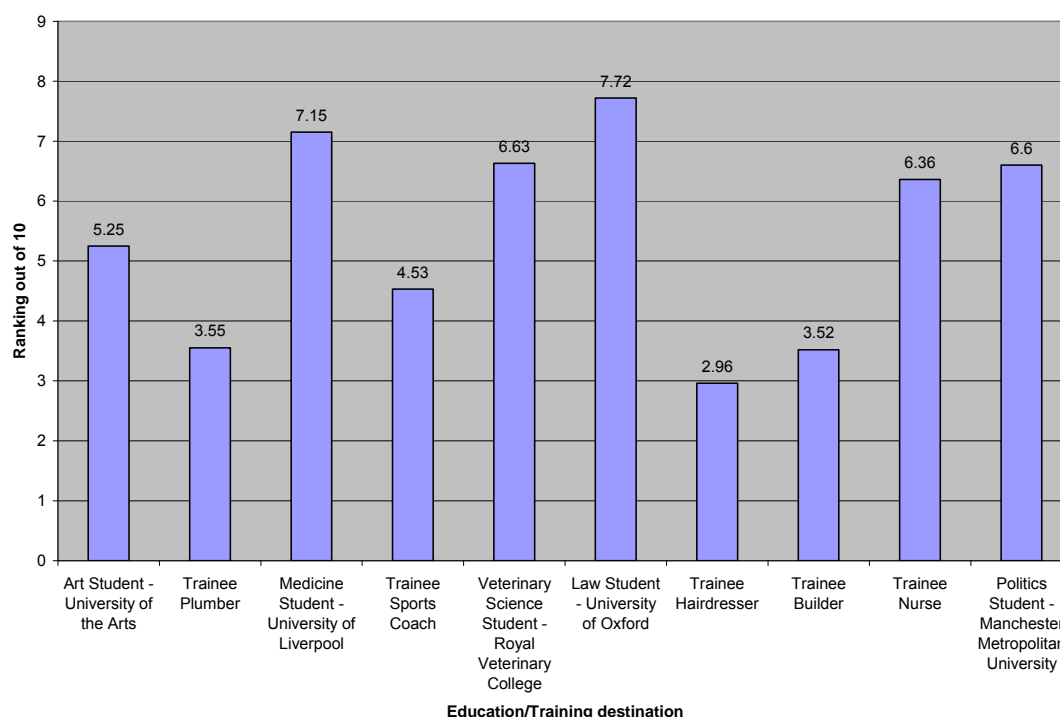
*My uncle - he started with nothing and has had 3 different jobs and lives in America. (ubm)*

The views of the young people in this area suggest that public media figures are not the only role models for year 7 pupils, and they do not see success in purely monetary terms.

## 4.2 Successful destinations - academic over the vocational

After the discussion regarding successful people, the pupils were asked to rank a number of destinations in order of success and then give reasons for the choice of their most successful. They were given a selection of possible educational/training roles to place in order. They included students pursuing different courses at several universities and trainee roles in certain occupations. The pathways are ones that are most likely to be followed from age 18/19 to the early 20s. It was emphasised to the pupils to try and select roles they thought were successful, not what they would like to do. The aim was to explore their views of success, not their personal aspirations. Diagram 4 below shows how these roles were ranked by the pupils.

**Diagram 4 - Most successful education / training destinations**



Consistent with the fact that most of the pupils want to go to HE, the HE student destinations were seen as the most successful, with the Law student at Oxford University receiving the highest average mark. The reasons that the pupils gave for favouring this option focused mainly on the course but also repeatedly mentioned the university itself. There is also a clear link here with section 3 in terms of which universities were identified most frequently by the young people as potential destinations. In the discussions, the dominant theme regarding why law was successful were its prestige and earning power - but also that those working in this field can help others.

*I chose the law student because he has gone to Oxford. Law is normally a very successful business and Oxford is a brilliant university. (uaf)*

*I think that law student is the most successful because they are in Oxford University and that's a great university. (uam)*

*I think that law student is the most successful because Oxford University is a high standard uni and law is a very serious subject also you can get paid quite a lot of money. (rf)*

*Law Student - they have to work very hard especially at Oxford University. Law is a very hard subject. (ubf)*

*I think that law is successful because you can help other people with their situation and give them advice. (rm)*

The association between success and helping others also came through strongly as factors behind the choice of medicine student and trainee nurse. In addition no pupils saw going to University of Liverpool as a positive reason to rank medicine student or going to Royal Veterinary College as a factor in choosing veterinary science student. The lack of visibility of these institutions supports the arguments regarding Oxbridge in section 4.

*I think that medicine student is the most successful because it must take years to study medicine and it must be really hard and they must get lots of money. (uam)*

*Trainee nurse - you save people's lives and help people with problems. (ubf)*

*A doctor or a nurse. It is important to help people and try to help them. (ubf)*

*A doctor because they save people's lives and it must be amazing to do that. (rf)*

*The nurse has tried really hard and got to a point where she can save people's lives in the world and care for all the sick people. (rm)*

The other more vocational options were ranked in relatively low positions by the pupils. Where plumber and builder are concerned there is a connection here to the range of occupations that the pupils aspire to. Manual occupations involving vocational training routes hardly feature as preferred occupations identified by the young people in section 2. The low profile and status of such occupations may be slightly surprising as it is very likely that they are ones that the pupils know about - they feature in their personal world unlike some of the other employment areas described in section 2 that the pupils know less about e.g. management / administrative roles for example. Male pupils will more than likely for example have been exposed to toys that involve builders and building. They are not however being seen as desirable.

What do you want to be when you are older? (researcher)

*I want to drive a wagon like my dad, or something like that (ubm)*

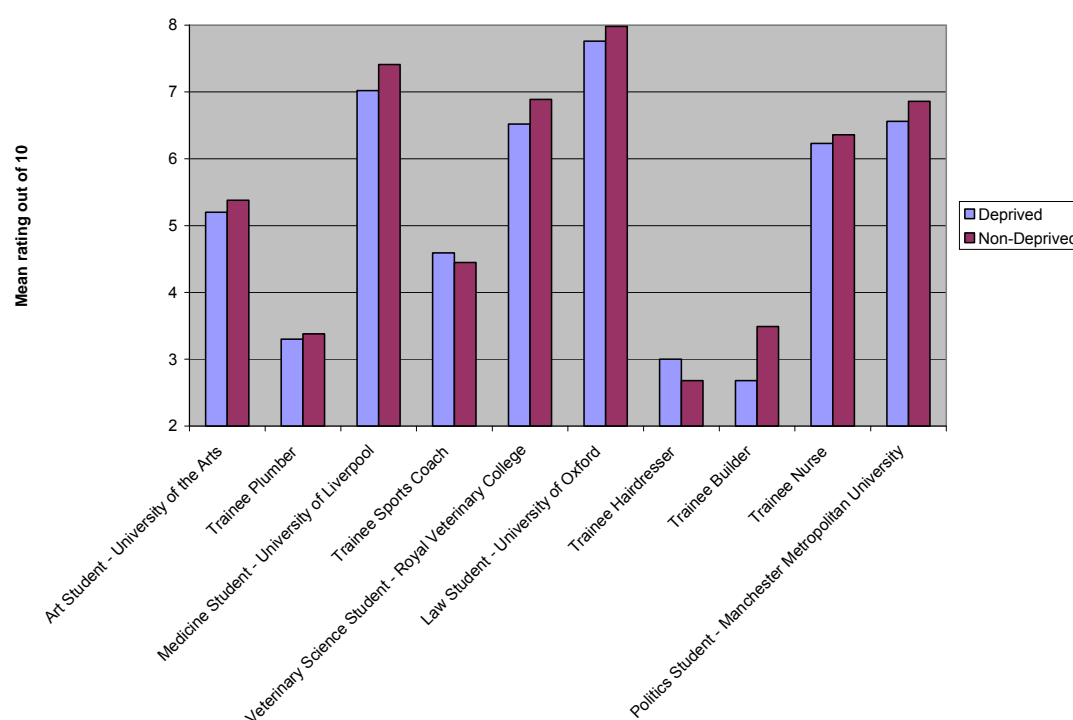
Who do you think is the most successful from these people?

*It will be the students, the law or the medicine one. They have all the qualifications and exams and will have the best lives.*

### 4.3 Perceptions of success by social background

As with HE employment preferences and HE aspirations, whether the pupils belong to relatively deprived socio-economic groups does not act as a predictor of which educational/training destinations they see as successful as Diagram 5 below shows. This data further supports the view that young people from lower socio-economic groups are no less likely to 'value' higher education than their non-deprived counterparts.

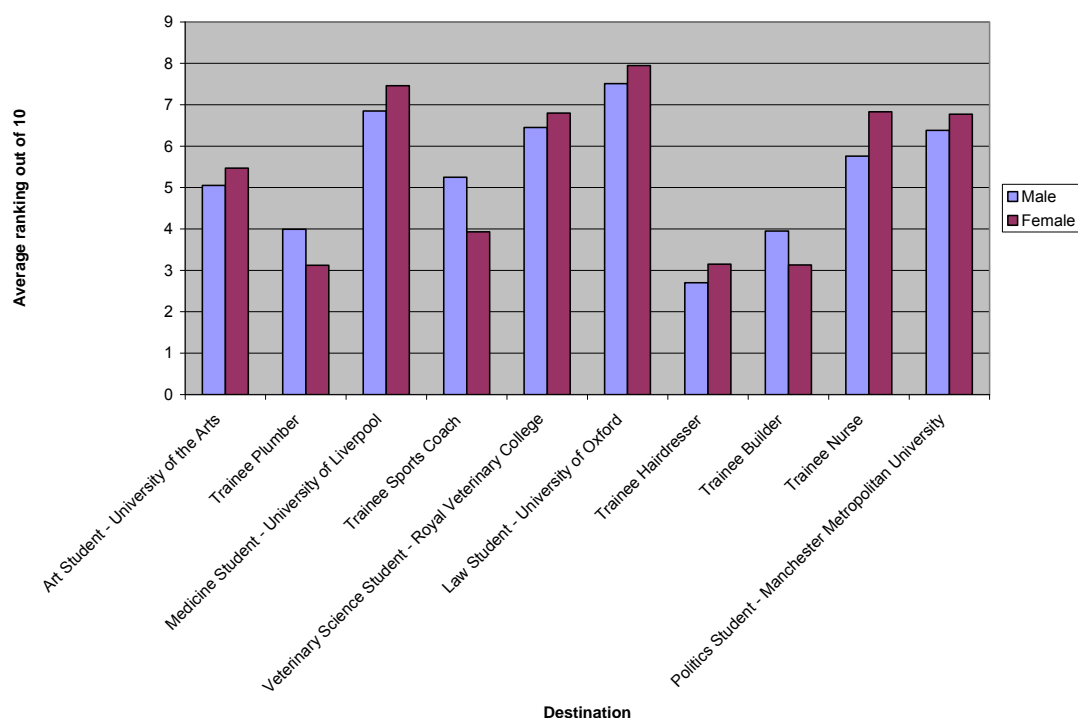
**Diagram 5 - Perceptions of successful jobs types by deprived / non-deprived background**



The gender of the pupils did act as a predictor where certain occupations were concerned. As Diagram 6 below indicates, destinations associated with sports, and manual occupations were ranked slightly higher by boys, and those associated with higher education and hairdressing/nursing were ranked slightly higher by girls.



**Diagram 6 - Most successful education / training destinations by gender**



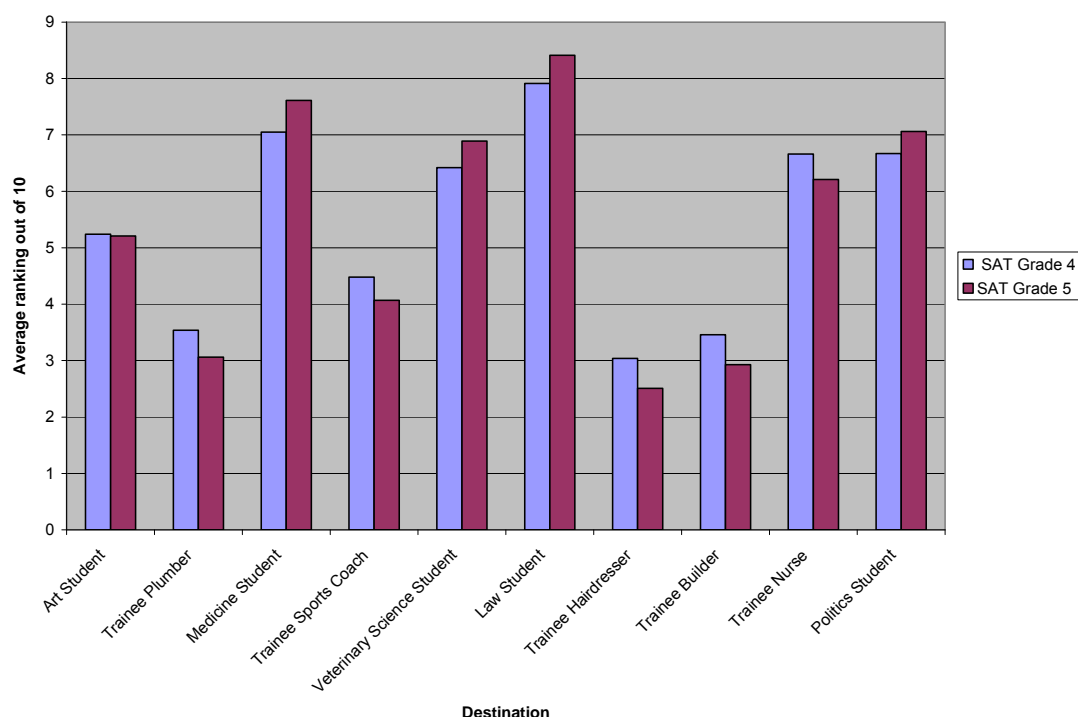
These results are consistent with those stated in section 3 regarding aspirations to enter HE where boys were more likely to want to go to HE, and those in section 2 concerning occupational preference where boys were more likely to prefer sports occupations and girls hairdressing and nursing. It appears then that some stereotypical gender related views can be seen amongst pupils in year 7.

#### **4.31 Do the views the young people have of success differ by levels of attainment?**

The data in section 2 did not show any major differences between the HE aspirations of pupils with different levels of attainment. However, we can see some differences between pupils with differing levels of attainment regarding which destinations they see as successful.

The data shows that young people with higher SAT scores at Key Stage 2 are more likely to see the 'academic' destinations as successful, in particular medical and veterinary student and those with lower SAT scores are more likely to see the 'vocational' destinations, in particular hairdresser and builder, as successful.

**Diagram 7 - Most successful destination by SAT score**

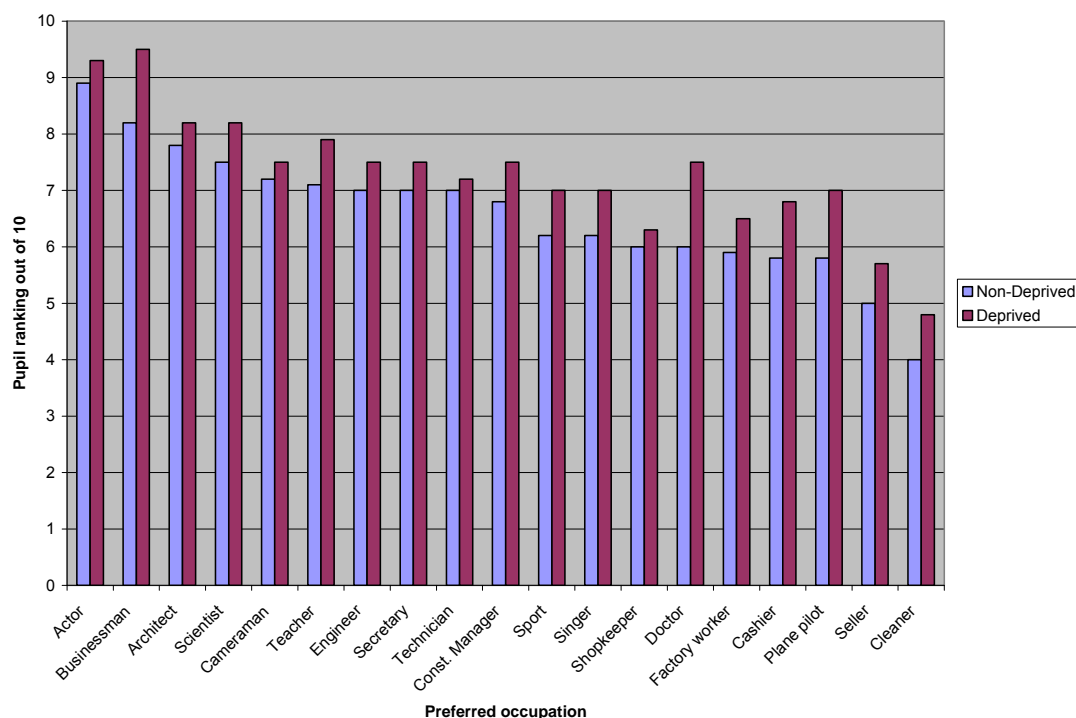


#### **4.4. After education - looking at occupational preferences**

Alongside the exercise on education and training destinations, the pupils were also asked to rank different occupations. They were given 6 sets of choices between 5 occupations each time and asked to indicate how much they would like to enter such an occupation. The pupils were not asked to rank the occupations against each other in an order, as with the education/training destinations, but rank each one on its merits.

The scores for each occupation were then added together and a mean score obtained as with the education / employment exercise. The mean scores show, as is the emerging pattern, little difference by deprived / non-deprived background in terms of which occupations the pupils prefer and overall the young people keener to pursue more high status occupations. These relationships can be seen from Diagram 8 below.

**Diagram 8 - Occupational preferences in deprived / non-deprived area**



This exercise re-affirms the argument that overall year 7 pupils have 'high' aspirations and that at the year 7 stage this includes those from lower socio-economic groups.

## 4.5 Summary

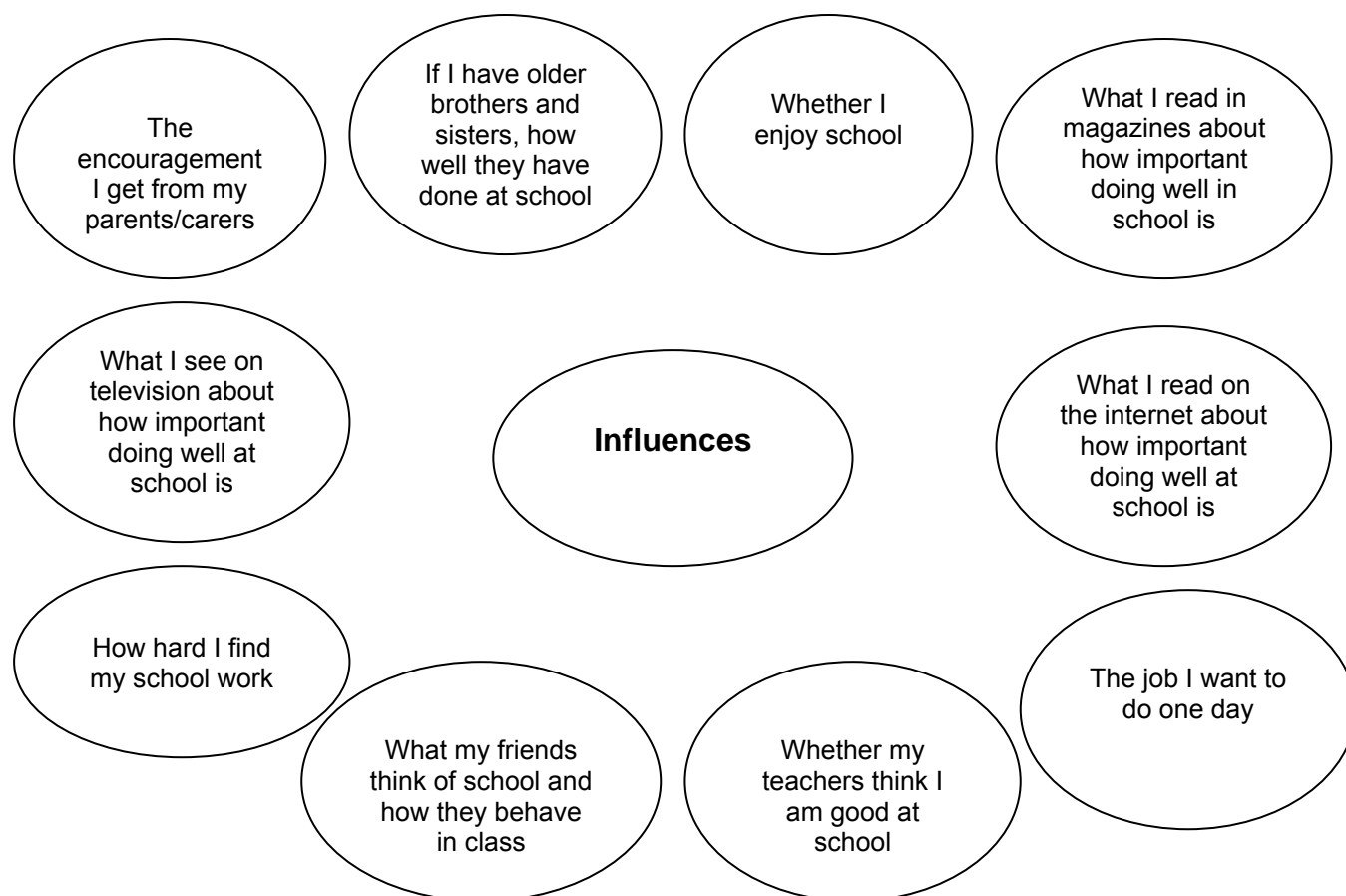
The year 7 pupils in this study are developing ideas of occupational and educational hierarchies. It appears that there is some work to do with them to ensure that vocational routes in particular, are seen as desirable and the benefits of such options made clear to avoid young people seeing such options as 'second best'. However, at this point, their ideas of what constitutes success are varied. Hence, there is the potential to work with them and build on the diversity of views, and hence construct vocational options as more desirable and 'successful'.

## 5. What influences me?

### 5.1 The Influence Ladder

Thus far, the picture emerging regarding what influences year 7 pupils' views of the future points to a major role for parents and/or other significant adults. When specific work was done with the young people on what influences them this conclusion is reinforced, but parents are not the only factors that shape their thinking. The objective of the next exercise with the pupils was to try and explore the relationship between a range of factors that could influence their views of the future.

**Diagram 9 - The influence factors in the 'influence ladder'**



The young people were asked to rank the factors in diagram 9 in order of the influence they had on their views of the future on an 'influence ladder' and their selections were discussed in the group. This was the most difficult part of the workshop for their pupils. In terms of how well developed their thinking is in this field, while they are able to state occupational and educational preferences, they find it harder to explain what has shaped their thinking regarding these preferences.

**Diagram 10 - How pupils rank the different influence ladder factors**

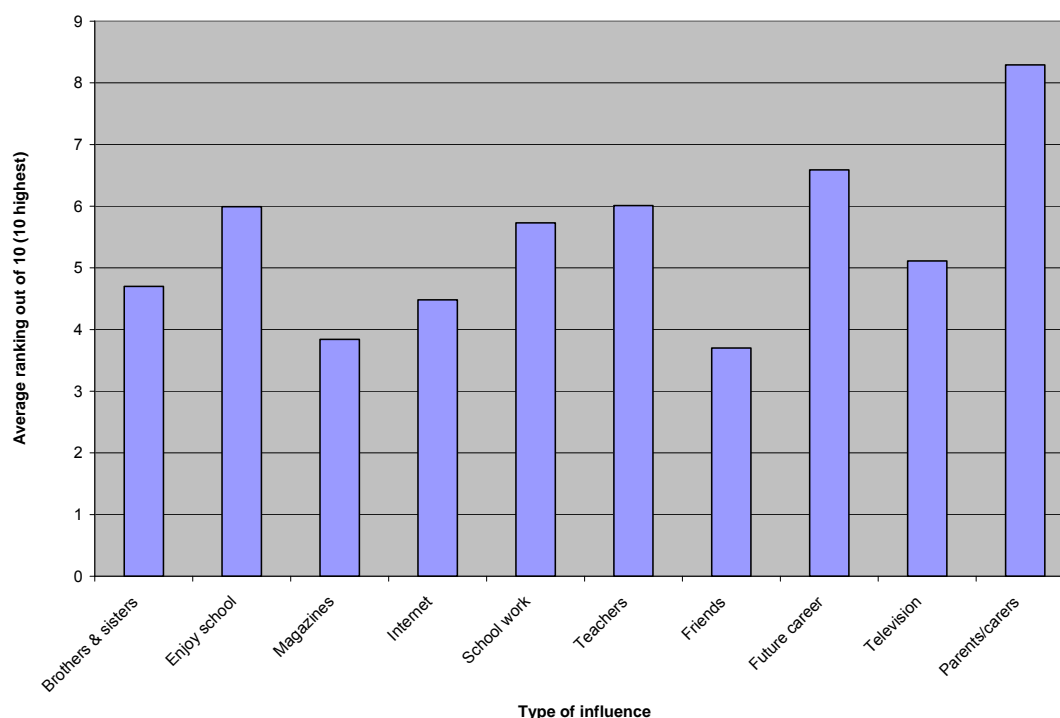


Diagram 10 shows that year 7 pupils rank parents as the most important influence on their views of the future. The importance of parents was followed up in the group discussions with the young people. It cannot be understood purely as a direct relationship with parents telling them what to do, or that their preferences are being constructed to explicitly please their parents. Nor were there many examples in the discussion of young people stating that they had a particular career in mind because it was one that their mother and father were pursuing. As would be expected, parents are advising their children regarding what they should do, but the pupils are keen to present their preferences as their own. These discussions revealed that it was the support and backing of parents that were most important to the young people: the view 'that their parents were behind them'. Pupils also felt that the parents cared the most about what the young people did and what happened to them.

*I say if I want to do something and my parents say go for it. (ubm)*

*My parents help me and they always back me. (ubm)*

*My parents encourage me and make me believe in what I want to do. (rf)*

*People at school might not know exactly what you want, but your parents know everything about you. (uaf)*

*My parents care about me more than anyone else. (uam)*

*I'd like to go to university because my mum said it was better than college but I want to go mostly. (rf)*

*I wanted to go to university when I was 10 because my parents always push me and support me and the more they do, the more I can achieve. (uam)*

*After school I always go home and tell my parents what I have done and they encourage me when I have had a good day. (ubf)*

*If your family don't want you to do well you can't do well. (rm)*

Parents are not the only older people who are influencing the views and attitudes of the pupils. The group discussions also pointed to an important role for teachers.

*(Teachers) they have done the GCSEs, college and university so they know. (uam)*

*They are taking about people being successful in school and it influences me to be successful. (ubf)*

*Teachers influence me because if they're boring then I don't like the subject. (rm)*

*Teachers (have an influence) because they have thought about what they want to do and have done it and have achieved it. (uam)*

What is of particular interest is the role of older siblings on the year 7 pupils. There were several cases where the older sibling had a more important role than the parents.

*My sister encourages me more than my parents, and they are still doing it. (ubm)*

*I want to go to university because my brother went to university and he got his masters in the subject of Law and Order so he is going to be a successful lawyer. (uam)*

*If my sister gets a good job I can ask her what she's got and how well she's done. (rf)*

*I decided when I was ten because my sister is in university and I want to be a barrister.*

Who do you think is successful? (researcher)

*I think that my dad is successful because he is a builder and gets a lot of money for it as well but I think my sister is the most successful because she is in university learning to be a barrister. (uam)*

## 5.2 'Acceptable' and 'Not so acceptable' influences

It can be argued that how the young people themselves see the factors that shape their views can be divided into 'acceptable' and 'not so acceptable' influences. Diagram 10 shows school and parents as acceptable - while media and friends as less so. Sections 1 to 3 show that the pupils in this study are capable of engaging with issues surrounding their employment and educational futures, and like to present their opinions as their own. They

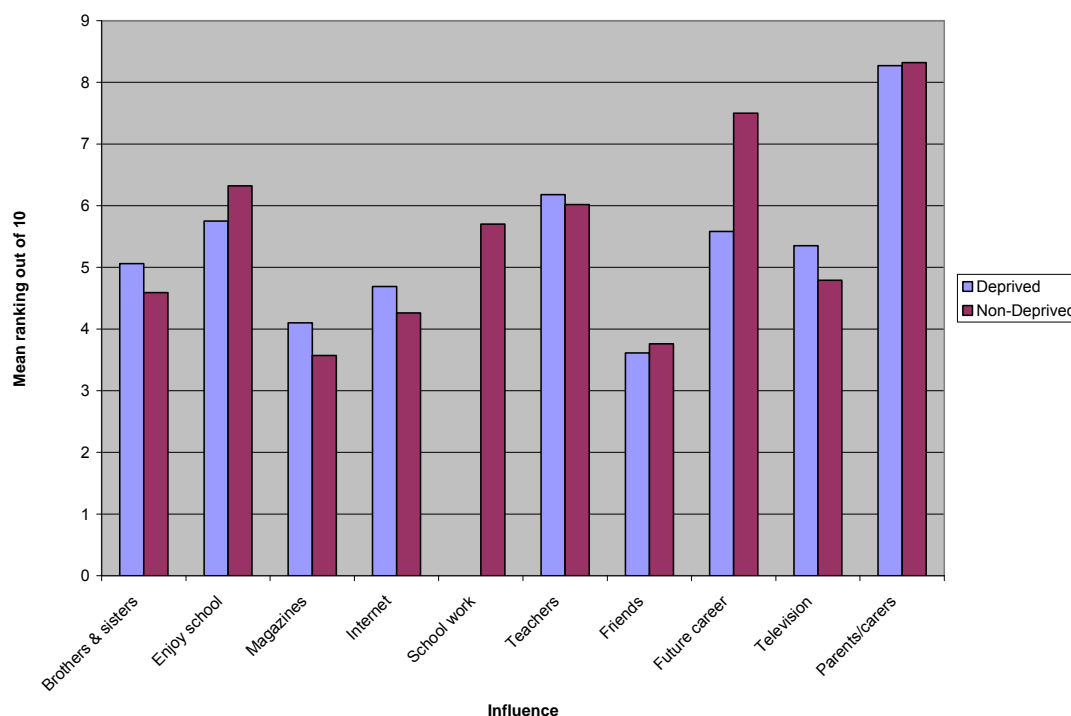
are willing to see certain people and institutions as inferring on this independence as they have an acceptable status and credibility. Parents have credibility because in the main they have proved to the young people they will support them. The school has status and their friends do have some status - several pupils mentioned that they had an impact, but placing friends at too high a position undermines this independence. In the context of acknowledged influences, the media have less of an impact because to a lot of the pupils it both lacks credibility, and secondly to say that the TV influences you does not rest with the identity of independent choice maker which is more important.

However, while the pupils may not be willing to acknowledge the media as an influence other parts of the findings of this study suggest it has a role, in particular in the occupational preferences they have expressed, and possibly the universities they prefer. How this role is dealt with in terms of IAG support needs consideration though. The role of the media is subtle and complex and the approach to support needs to reflect this.

### 5.3 Do the factors that influence the views of pupils differ by social background?

As Diagram 11 below shows, in keeping with the previous sections the overall pattern of responses does not differ drastically between deprived and non-deprived pupils. However, there are some differences to note. The pupils from non-deprived backgrounds saw future employment as markedly more important than those from the deprived backgrounds, and those from deprived backgrounds gave a slightly bigger role to magazines, internet and television and less to school.

**Diagram 11 - Ranking of influence factors by deprived / non-deprived area**

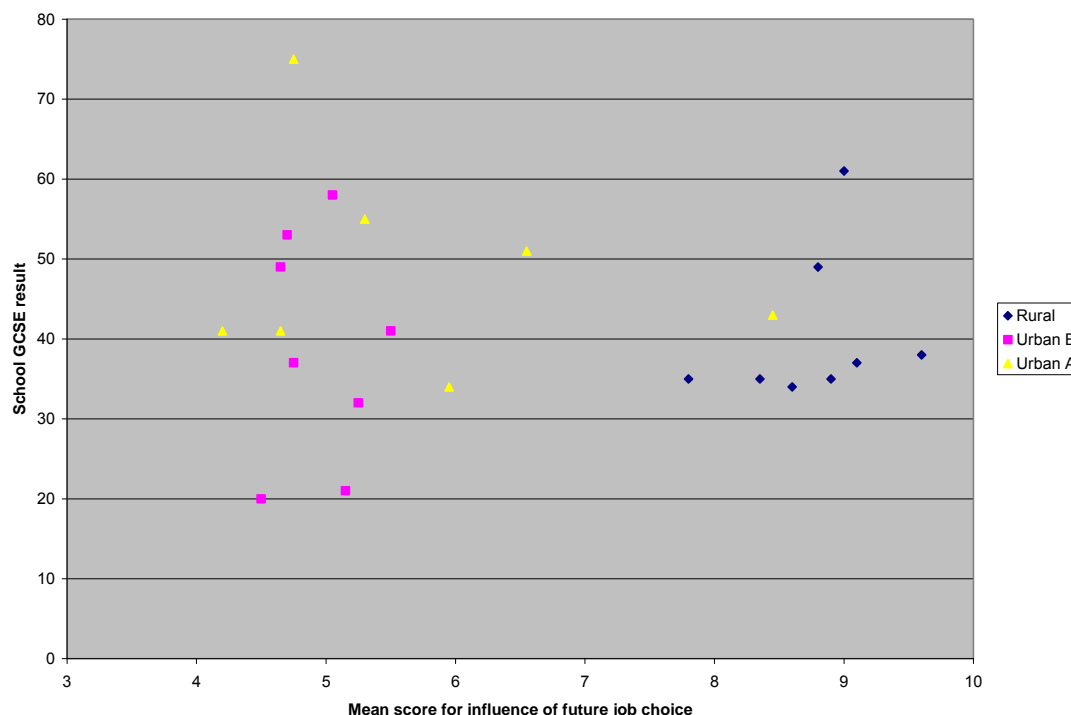


The group discussions did not indicate clearly why such differences existed. The pupils in the lower attaining schools did appear to have lower levels of knowledge regarding some of the higher status occupational preferences they had chosen. It is also possible that the parents of such pupils have lower levels of labour market knowledge and the young people will therefore turn to the media for information. However, we cannot be sure why these differences exist.

## 5.4 Geography and the influence of work

Looking at the different individual influences on the views of the pupils, the data shows that 'the job that I want to do in the future' is exerting a markedly greater influence on the views of the pupils from the rural area. This is illustrated in diagram 12 below. It plots the average ranking score for 'job I want to do in the future' against the % of the pupils in the school achieving 5 A\*-C at GCSE. It shows that the pupils in the schools from the rural area tend to rank 'job I want to do in the future', higher than their counterparts in the urban schools.

**Diagram 12 - Influence of 'the job I want to do on the future' by school**



There are some similarities between the data above and that on HE aspirations and school in section 3 in that there is a clustering of rural schools and quite different results in schools with similar GCSE results. The relatively lower HE aspirations in the rural schools studied and greater importance of work also connect with each other to support a view that pupils in the rural schools see their futures as more defined by employment than education. Furthermore, the further evidence of disparity in pupil views across schools with similar results, when also considered in the light of the differences in pupil views on leaving age in section, 2 could support the idea that there are signs of differences in 'school ethos' emerging.



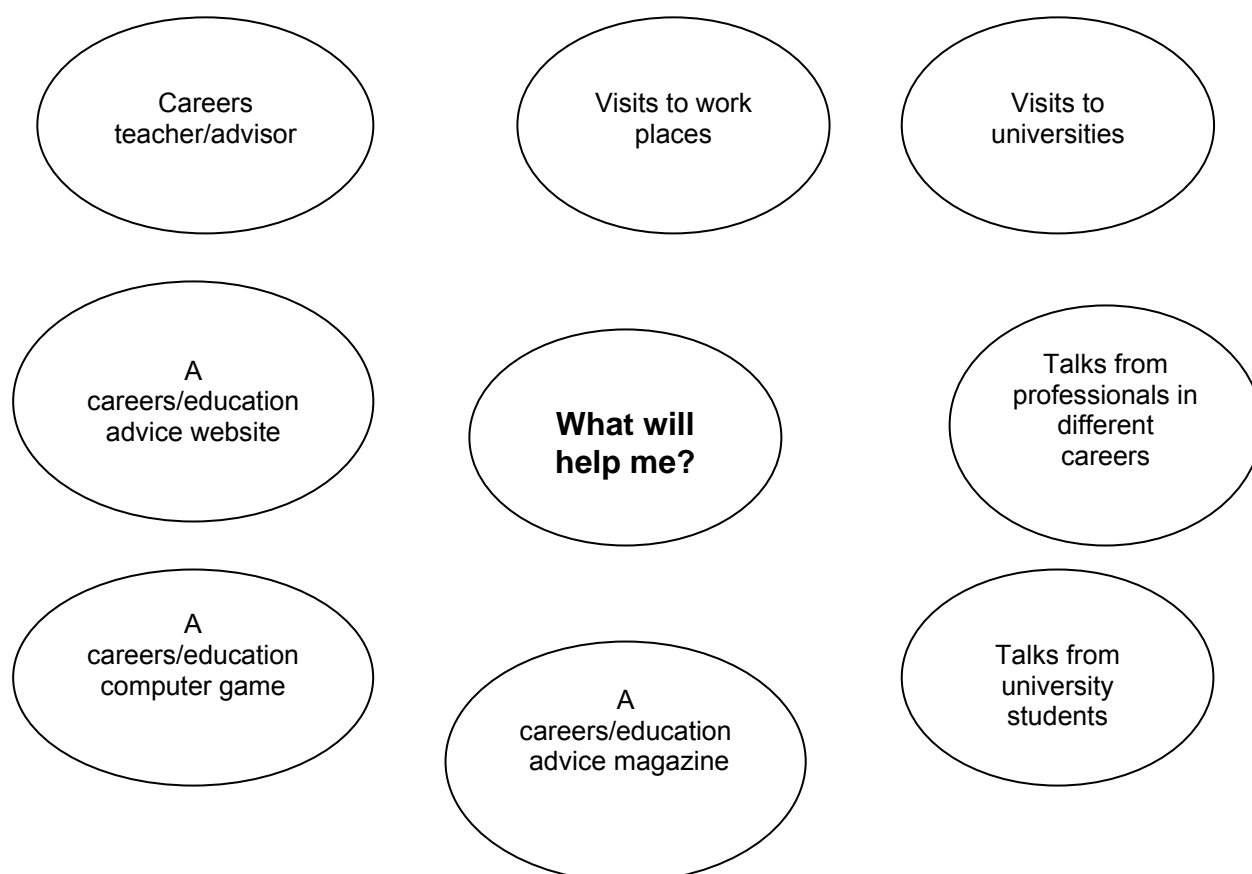
## 6. What can help me?

The next section of this report turns to the views of the pupils concerning what activities may help them learn more about educational/employment options. The pupils in the study have shown that they are engaged with some of the key issues concerning their own futures and this section shows that this engagement is also in evidence where their own needs are concerned.

### 6.1 Which activities are useful to year 7 pupils?

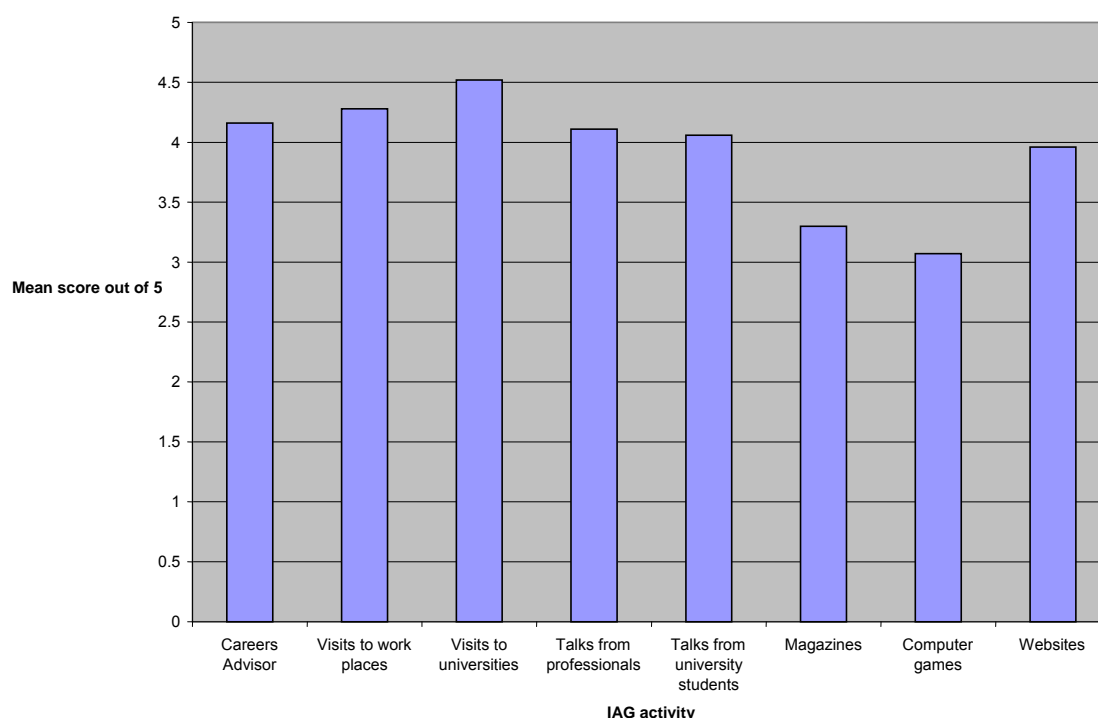
The young people in the study were presented with a range of different activities that could be of use to them and asked to rate them on a five point scale from 'very useful' to 'not useful at all'.

**Diagram 13 - IAG activities that pupils were asked to rate in terms of usefulness**



None of these activities were ranked overall as not very useful, or not useful at all by the young people - although as this is on the basis of calculating the mean score for each activity, some young people obviously felt certain things were not useful to them. Diagram 14 below compares the mean scores for each different option with 5 as most useful and 1 as not useful at all.

**Diagram 14 - The usefulness of IAG options**



## 6.2 The importance of experiential learning

As the young people see 6 of the 8 options as useful to them this would suggest that effectively equipping young people with the skills required to make decisions about the future requires a multi-faceted approach. Looking at these particular options, there was support amongst the young people for someone to speak to. We have already seen the importance of significant adults in their lives so this should not be surprising.

*When my brother was looking for something to do he went to Connexions and spoke to someone and that was very useful for him. (uam)*

*I think that speaking to an adult is the most useful because you can trust them. (rf)*

*Speaking to someone would build my confidence and help me. (ubf)*

*They (advice professionals) can tell you all the things you need to know about how to become what you want to be. (uaf)*

The high level of support for visits to universities links with the high level of aspirations to attend higher education that the pupils have already expressed. However, the reasons that emerged in discussion regarding why such visits would be useful connect to the usefulness of the visits to work-places. These activities are seen as useful to young people in helping them choose what they want to do, and in differentiating between what they like and they do not like. They can do this by helping the young people 'experience' the workplace or university in some way.

*I would like to make a visit to the west end and maybe if possible speak to someone and see how it feels to be up on stage or go to the BBC and find out how to get a job there. (ubf)*

*I would like to meet someone who is an advisor for law and government and talk to her and for Wednesdays every week go and help her with her job. (rm)*

*I would like to go to the workplace and spend a day with a barrister and watch her argue a case. (rf)*

*I would like to be a chemist for a day. (ubm)*

*So you can see what type of learning environment you are going to. (uam)*

*You can see if they like it and what the downsides are. (ubm)*

*If you hear the good and bad things it will help us not take risks.(uam)*

*I want to go to different place and see what it is like and if you like it.(rm)*

*People to visit and tell the good things and the bad things because university costs money and you might hate it and waste money.(rm)*

*Visiting a university would be very useful so I could learn about the different courses on offer.(uam)*

*Visits to workplaces would be good so you can see if it is hard or easy.(ubm)*

*It will give you a taste of what things are like if you go to a university and help you in the important choices you have to make when you are older.(ubm)*

On the basis of the evidence in this section, supporting the development of choice-making skills appears very important. The findings here complement those in the earlier sections regarding the need to address the fit between the aspirations of pupils, their knowledge about the educational system and their own abilities. Taken together they imply seeing certain activities, certainly at Key Stage 3, in a different way - for instance HE (and to a lesser extent workplace) visits as part of supporting the ongoing process of decision making that young people are involved in rather than as tools to encourage them to go down a particular route. The value at this point of the pupils choice journey, is not judged on the contribution to the pupil's desire to aspire to HE but rather (or as well), in helping them making the 'optimum' choice be that HE or some other route. This research also implies that visits to workplaces/universities could be available at year 7 of course which is not commonly the case now.

## **6.21 The value of the magazines and the internet**

The group discussions indicated some contrasts in the value of the magazines and the internet. Exploring these particular support mechanisms was seen as valuable because they are competing/complementary ways of achieving a similar goal of information transfer. Overwhelmingly the internet was more popular amongst the pupils than magazines. The main theme in terms of the reasons given was that it gave more choice, was 'bigger' but also allows the young people greater control of the information they wanted to find.

*It (the internet) gives lots of choices while magazines don't. (ubm)*

*It is more interactive.(rf)*

*It can link from job-to-job and not just one thing.(rm)*

*You can find things out whilst magazines might lie.(uam)*

*The internet has more info. You can look for yourself and go and see all different things while magazines aren't as big. (ubm)*

*On the internet you can go on lots of sites, and look for facts, and see addresses and follow them up and in then find people who are doing jobs that you want to do. You can then follow in their footsteps. (ubm)*

There was also scepticism about what was truthful in magazines and the extent to which boys would read magazines. It was recognized that the internet also had information that may not be true, but there seemed real suspicion that magazines would try and present particular agendas that encouraged young people to make certain choices. The internet allowed more choice.

## 7. Explaining how year 7 pupils view the future

The year 7 pupils in this study are engaged in the process of thinking about their future. The extent of this engagement obviously differs across pupils, and it is possible to identify some differences by groups but the usual predictors where differences in attitudes and values for older young people and adults are concerned are not as powerful with 11/12 year olds. In this section the findings of the study are brought together to consider how much it has enhanced the understanding of year 7 views of the future.

### 7.1 Year 7 occupational preferences

On the basis of this research, it is clear that by the time pupils reach year 7, they have all considered their future employment / educational destinations to some extent. For the majority, they have considered it enough to form a view of the occupation they would like to pursue and the benefits of education here. However, when we look at the pupil's preferred occupations and the employment structure in section 2, the likelihood of the pupils actually achieving their preferences is low and we also know from other research into the development of career choices in young people that their preferences are likely to evolve and change as they become more aware of the range of job opportunities available and their own abilities / preferences. The kind of jobs that the pupils want to do is still important. The pupils believe their preferences to be robust, and IAG work needs to recognize this fact and work with them. But, it is clear that things will change and hence their occupational / educational preferences are not as robust as they think.

#### 7.11 'Preferences' or 'principles'

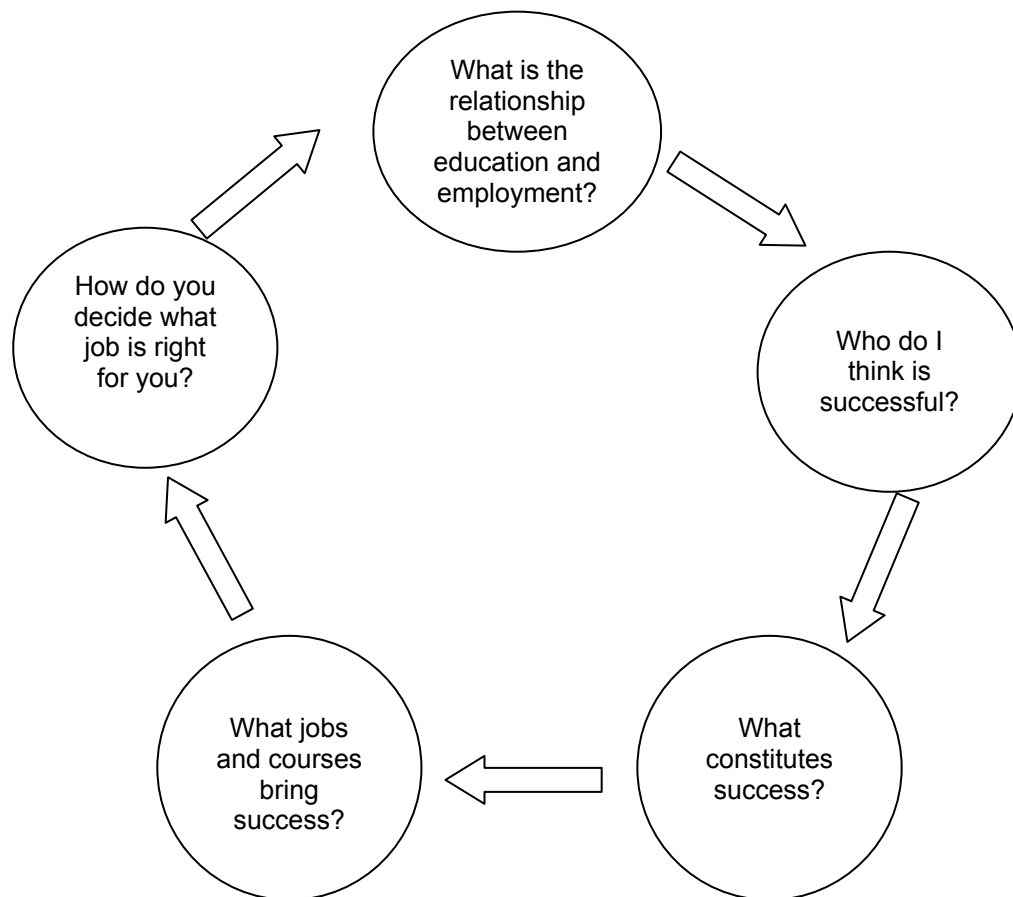
What could be of equal, if not greater importance to preferences, could be the principles regarding employment and educational destinations that the pupils' responses in this study reveal. It is these principles, rather than the actual jobs that the pupils want to do, which may be more robust and could continue to inform the pupils' decision making beyond 11. They have greater potential to be robust because they can be located in a wider context, and re-affirmed by the pupils' educational experiences in a way that their job preferences may not. For example, a significant number of pupils were sure that they were going to pursue a certain career because they believed or had been told, they were good at a particular activity especially in sports / performing arts. As they get older, the principle 'I am good enough to be a professional footballer', is not likely to be re-affirmed to them as they come to learn of their limitations. In contrast, the idea that those pursuing university courses in law and medicine are likely to be more successful when success is measured in monetary terms than those training to be hairdressers and builders will almost certainly be re-affirmed by their future experiences. Hence, supporting the principle that: 'certain academic qualifications bring financial reward'.

#### 7.12 Career Choice Identities

The pupils are developing therefore what could be described as '**career choice identities**', not career identities per se as doctors, footballers etc, but a set of interlocking principles regarding educational progression / employment destination issues which could inform their developing views. These identities can be described as a young person's framework by which they interpret and understand employment / educational choices and issues. Again it must be emphasised that the development of these principles differs across individuals / groups. In some cases certain ones are relatively embedded, and for a minority of individuals they may be quite developed in all areas. In other cases, the pupils' principles are less firm and/or they contradict each other. However, virtually all of the sample are some way to developing these principles. These principles interact with each other in different ways for

individuals and groups, sometimes in a mutually reinforcing and other times contradictory ways. Diagram 15 below illustrates the areas where the pupils are developing these principles.

**Diagram 15 - Career choice identities deconstructed**



### 7.13 The developing principles that are emerging in this study

The actual principles that the year 7s in the study are displaying can be summarised as:

**Diagram 16 - The principles year 7 are developing**

<b>Identity area</b>	<b>Principle</b>
<b>What is the relationship between education and employment?</b>	The main purpose of education is to help your employment future.  Achievement and effort in education will lead to an improved employment future.
<b>Who do I think is successful?</b>	Successful people have made some progress to be where they are and have achieved something substantive.
<b>What constitutes success?</b>	Success comes in a number of forms but the main 2 are financial achievement and / or helping others.
<b>What jobs and courses bring success?</b>	Academic courses & professional jobs are likely to bring more success than vocational courses / non-professional jobs.
<b>How do you decide what job is right for you?</b>	Employment preferences should be based on what you enjoy doing and are good at.

### 7.14 Further research

How further research building on this work could really add to the understanding of how young people make educational and employment choices is by investigating the relationship between the different aspects of career choice identity described in Diagrams 15 and 16 above in the Key Stage 3 context to answer questions such as:

- Which principle is most important in explaining the choices young people make?
- How do different principles reinforce each other / come into conflict and how does this evolve over time and vary across different groups of pupils?
- How do the answers to these 2 questions differ for year 7, year 8 & year 9 pupils?

A better understanding of these types of questions could also support policy makers and practitioners in delivering more nuanced and personalised support which targeted those particular, key principle(s) which are the important one(s) for that young person or group.

### 7.2 Relationship to theory

It was argued in section 1, that there is little existing work that has generated theoretical models regarding the future views of young people at 11/12. The existing models which aim to understand young people's views, outlined in section 1 have been of limited value in understanding year 7 perspectives. The socio-economic background of the pupils is not exerting the influence on their views of the future at year 7, consistent with the evidence regarding the educational / employment routes that young people from different backgrounds actually take. Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds do not have lower employment/educational aspirations at year 7 and have not yet internalised assumptions

about what they can or cannot achieve. At this point then, the structuralist view of educational and career choice does not resonate strongly with how year 7 pupils think. This is an interesting finding especially in the context of the research outlined in section 1 which shows differences in attainment by social background can be identified at earlier ages than first thought. This research suggests however, the picture regarding how and when socio-economic background affects young people's educational experiences is complex. While attainment differences can be identified at an early age - aspiration differences are not as evident.

### **7.21 Structural influences a weak predictor at year 7**

However, there are some early signs of structural effects emerging - with the influence of attainment on views of success for instance and the role of ethnicity. The latter has not featured in the quantitative analysis in the study because it was not measured explicitly as a social background factor through the workbook as FSM/non FSM for example. There were examples in group discussion of young people from black and minority ethnic groups with very high educational and employment aspirations (however, this was also the case with white young people of course). But this area merits further investigation.

### **7.22 Bounded / pragmatic rationality**

There was evidence of the young people displaying a degree of rationality in their assessment of the future. This may seem a counter-intuitive argument given their employment preferences, but this is 'pragmatic rationality'. The pupils make very 'bounded' decisions, as at 11 their view/experience of the world is extremely restricted and it is shaped by the influence of others: in particular parents and other significant adults. Furthermore, this is not rationality in the sense of a cost: benefit choice based upon an information search. Rather, the pupils are developing their preferences displaying the principles and mechanisms of cost: benefit analysis in the context of their limited knowledge and sometime erroneous understandings of the relationships between employment and education. In particular they are sensitive to the 'cost / benefit' of education in contributing to the achievement of their employment preferences.

Finally, the existing temporal explanations of educational and employment preferences do resonate to an extent with the views of year 7. The pupils do appear to be in a preliminary search stage, and the approval of parents is certainly very important. However, while they may provide a broad descriptive framework, what is necessary is the detailed work described above that can identify more clearly when pupils' preferences change and how this contrasts across different groups.

## **7.3 Are there groups who need particular support?**

Of particular importance in this study is the extent to which it can identify groups of year 7 pupils who may be in need of more support than others. Both the section on career choice identities and the review of existing theoretical models are important tools in helping identify several such groups. In doing this, we can return to the typology of pupils by occupational choice in section 1, adding to this what has been learnt from analysis of the rest of the data from sections 2 to 6. Classification of the whole sample to create a comprehensive set of typologies that includes all the pupils has not been attempted because such an exercise would, in the name of completeness, lead to weakly constructed groups. Rather, the aim is to construct certain groups in need of support where the evidence is judged strong enough to justify categorising pupils together. There are 3 groups it is argued who could need further support and they are described below.



### **7.31 ‘Deprived professionals’**

This group consists of those from deprived/low income backgrounds in low attaining schools who want to pursue professional occupations and go to higher education (in several cases more selective universities). In many ways it is good news that young people from such backgrounds have high aspirations. However, their aspirations are very high and the chances of reaching these heights much lower. This group also place great faith in education to help them achieve these ambitions. They could be vulnerable to degrees of disaffection if and when they adjust their preferences and could blame the system for not allowing them to achieve their ambitions. There is a need for IAG support for this group and further research into how this group progress.

### **7.32 ‘Committed sports / arts’**

This group cuts across deprived/non-deprived categories and includes boys and girls. A minority of the pupils who want to pursue careers in the sports and the arts are aware that it is sensible to pursue educational qualifications and/or consider another career because these destinations are so competitive. However, the majority did not display this awareness in the discussion. They also had the highest degree of certainty of any of the 4 occupational typology groups regarding the likelihood of reaching their chosen destination. Some, particularly boys in sports occupations, were stating that they did not need to remain in education beyond 16 as it did not fit with their chosen sporting destination. It is not being argued that IAG policy should stop young people having dreams and ambitions but it is equally inappropriate not to work with the young people and increase their knowledge regarding how to access these professions and encourage them to have back-up strategies. It is encouraging however that so many of this group want to go to higher education, showing the basis to work with them to develop back-up strategies exists.

### **7.33 ‘Rural workers’**

The final group are those young people with a strong work focus in rural areas. This group have the lowest aspirations for higher education. It could be argued in the light of the argument that year 7 have ‘too high’ aspirations, that this group are actually better prepared for the future. However, alternatively if one accepts the argument that high aspirations can influence attainment (Cabinet Office 2008) this group are in need of support. There are two further reasons why this group may need more support. Firstly, one of the present aims of government policy is to raise participation in higher education. Secondly, one of the underlying principles of IAG support is that young people should be encouraged to consider a wide range of occupations in their employment decision making process (which does not appear the case with this group).

## **7.4 Case studies**

In this section there are 3 case studies that illustrate the features of each of the groups described above and also the idea of ‘career choice identity’. What the case studies show is that the career choice identities for the young people are ‘works in progress’. They also show clearly how each individual case is different. In analytical terms what would be of interest is to separate the different opinions the pupils express and examine the underlying principles there and how they relate to each other using the framework in Diagram 15 above. Even in the boxes below we can see that it is the norm for the young people to hold what appear ‘consistent’ and ‘contradictory’ positions simultaneously.

### **Case Study 1 - Deprived professionals**

This group of young people had both high employment and educational aspirations. Of the 23 pupils who participated in the workshop 19 wanted to go to Higher Education and 80% of the group wanted NS-SEC 1-3 jobs. In terms of their career choice identities they had the belief that educational achievement via progression to HE will lead to a 'better' job and saw HE as the route to success (over 80% of pupils chose HE student as most successful). In each example below though the principles are developing in both reinforcing and contradictory ways and further research could unpick this detail.

*I want to be a vet. I want to go to university because it will help me achieve what I want to do. I was 10 when I decided this. I think I will be doing A-levels in my last year at school. Magazines are the most influential thing on my views. (male)*

*I want to be an art teacher. If you go to university you can get better jobs and can make new friends. I will be doing A-Levels in Maths, English and Science. Law student is the most successful because they get a lot of money and a good education. (female)*

*I want to be a barrister because I want to help my brother who is always in trouble. I have known this since I was 9. You have to go to university for this. My brother and mum are a big influence on me. (male)*

*I want to be a doctor because it is great knowing things. I expect I will be a doctor at 18. I want to go to university because for some jobs you will need to have been to university. A levels will be harder because it is classed as clever teens who get A-Levels. I think I will do A-Levels in High School. (female)*

*I want to be an accountant or a games designer so I will be able to get a good job and decent wages. I decided when I was 9. The law student is the most successful because they get paid a lot. My older brother encourages me and then I will go far in life. (male)*

The data on the socio-economic background of the pupils reveals the challenges they face in achieving their aspirations. There were very low levels of knowledge regarding post 14 routes in their group, a high percentage were eligible for free school meals at 50% and 90% were resident in deprived areas.

### **Case Study 2 - Committed to the Arts**

Nearly half of the girls in the group (11) wanted to pursue a career in the performing arts or fashion design. For over 80% it is something they have wanted to do for more than 2 years.

*I want to be a singer or fashion designer and I am very certain I want to do this because I believe in myself. I expect I will be in music academy from when I am 18 and language and history at university. My friends are the biggest influence on me at school. (female)*

*I want to be a singer or dancer and I am very certain about this. When I am 18 I will be learning how to be a performer because that is my dream. It would be good if at school, I could work with a vocal coach to build my confidence on stage up. I will go to university to study arts or media. My parents are always behind me and know how good I am. (female)*

*I am very certain I want to be a fashion designer. To help me become one I would like to learn about different fabrics and how to draw different things. I expect I will be studying fashion design at university when I am 19/20. I think a lawyer is the most successful person because they know how to support someone who has done the wrong thing. (female)*

*I want to be a singer. My friends think that I have a good voice. I go to drama and singing after school and at 16 I expect I will be going to a top acting school. To help me become a singer I would like to visit a university.(female)*

Like in case study 1, emerging career choice identities are based around principles that both seem to fit together and oppose each other. A difference here is that job preference can act as a basis for how the students then understand and interpret other issues. This case study illustrates therefore how 'preference' and 'principle' interact reflexively to help define each other.

### **Case Study 3 - Pupils with lower employment focused aspirations in rural areas**

Of the pupils who participated in the workshop, 60% were unsure or did not want to go to HE. Of the group of 20, 4 wanted to pursue occupations connected with horses, 3 wanted to be vets. 4 wanted to chefs, 3 wanted to be sportsmen, 1 a policeman, 1 a child minder and the other two were not sure.

*I want to be a cook. I am quite certain and I expect to leave school at 17 to become a cook. I think my dad is successful because he is a cook and a big influence on me. (male)*

*I want to be a police-man who watches the roads and makes them safe. At 18 I think I will be a traffic cop. I don't want to go to university as it is more time in the classroom listening to the teacher. I would like to spend a month seeing what the police do. (male)*

*I want to be an equestrian vet or photographer. I don't want to go to university because I could go to Duchie College which is an agricultural college which could be better for the qualification I want. The job I want to get one day is the biggest influence on me. (female)*

*I want to become a professional footballer and I am very certain about this. I don't think uni will help me become a footballer. I think Frank Lampard is a successful person because he worked hard and done well and plays for England. To help me I would like know what diet I need and lifestyle so it would be good to have a week doing it. (male)*

*I want to be a child minder and work in a pub. I expect I will leave school when I can. I don't need to go to university for the job I want. My mum is successful because she has been in a pub since she left school so I want to be a pub worker. (female)*

*I want to be a chef and I am very certain about this. I am not sure about university but I could go to Exeter College and do a catering course. The job I want to get is the biggest influence on me. Gordon Ramsey is a successful person because he is a great cook and made a fortune cooking. (male)*

Two principles underpinning the pupils' answers are quite clear here. Firstly, the purpose of education is to assist you in the labour market. Secondly, a successful person is someone who works in a similar field to the one you are interested which then re-affirms your desire to work in the field.

## 8. Conclusions

This final section recaps briefly what this study has found about the relationship between year 7 pupils and educational / career choices. It then summarises potential policy implications before outlining recommended themes for further investigation.

- The majority feel they 'know' what they want to do, and why they want to do it. These occupational preferences are not built on a strong knowledge base. There is a distinct gap in the extent to which the young people's engagement with the future involves engagement with post 14 educational routes. There is also evidence of considerable incoherence between what the pupils want to do, and their educational ambitions and there are whole areas of the occupational structure which they do not appear aware of. Hence, how robust these occupational choices are needs to be considered as existing research shows that young people's preferences change as they progress through the school system (Foskett & Helmsley Brown 2001). However, in accepting this it is important not to lose sight of the key fact that from year 7 onwards, **they believe** their choices to be robust and work with them in this area should recognize that fact.
- The pupils have high educational / employment aspirations. Higher Education entry is a desired goal that is common to pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds, schools and areas although there is more uncertainty with pupils from rural locations. It is perceived as able to provide economic benefits and security.
- Parents and other significant older figures, including teachers / older relatives especially siblings appear to exert the biggest influence at this point on the views of the pupils. They state that this influence is more a supportive one, and as an example of success rather than pupils saying that they are being restricted in developing their choices by what their parents want them to do. There may be a two-way relationship between how the pupils see what 'success' is and which significant adults the pupils view as important in shaping their views of the future. The presence of adults in their personal world who have either earned money, have qualifications or have a 'good' job works to confirm what is success and also present to the young people ideas of success. This is not always the parents. It can be that the parents act as examples of 'not success'. What they do value is the support of their parents in making choices. The influence of the media is there in this study but has a shadowy role. There may be commonalities with how media exposure affects choice and decision making in adults.
- There was little evidence in the discussions with the pupils of the school actively influencing their views via specific IAG activity. There was evidence to suggest that a school can exert an influence and there were early possible signs that 'school ethos' could be having an effect on pupils.

## 8.1 Policy implications

Box 1 below outlines the key implications for policy and practice that can be drawn from this study. The starting point is that year 7 pupils are already thinking about the future and need support in this process.

### **Box 1: Implications for policy and practice**

#### **Deliver IAG support to KS£ including year 7 pupils**

This study has shown that year 7 pupils are engaged in a process of trying to understand what they want to do in the future and what principles should underpin the decisions they will face. They need support in to work through their preferences, match them with their abilities and the realities of the labour market in the longer term.

#### **Acknowledge that year 7 pupils have employment preferences**

IAG support strategies need to recognize that to year 7 their ambitions, while they may never be realised, are real to them. This implies a pupil centred approach acknowledging the pupils' existing educational / employment preferences.

#### **Increase pupils' knowledge base and support them in developing career choice identities**

The pupils clearly need to develop a more comprehensive knowledge base regarding education / employment over Key Stage 3. Equally, if nor more, importantly they also need support in constructing their individual sets of principles regarding educational / employment principles i.e. their career choice identities as described in section 7.

#### **Tailor the HE aspirations/information mix to different contexts**

Raising aspirations is not the major challenge for such a support strategy at this level in all areas but remains a challenge in the rural areas. However, addressing the gap between aspirations and knowledge is one common in all contexts.

#### **Certain groups of year 7 pupils need particular support**

The majority of young people from lower socio-economic groups want to go to HE at 11/12. Structured active support should begin at this point to build on these aspirations and supplement them with the appropriate knowledge. Some of this group may be vulnerable to a disjuncture between their aspirations and abilities which could lead to consequent negative impacts on their learning.

#### **Emphasise the merits of vocational options**

If young people are to make informed choices at year 9 and year 11 that give weight to both academic and vocational options, their knowledge of vocational options and their merits may need addressing at year 7. The primacy of HE and academic destinations is already taking hold at this stage and the longer it remains, the harder it could be to affect.

### **Use the education: employment relationship to support Key Stage 3 engagement**

Most year 7 pupils perceive a strong, positive relationship between education at school and further / higher education and employment (and life) success. This relationship could be built on from year 7 to encourage engagement in learning and schooling.

### **Emphasise choice in the RPA**

While knowledge of the RPA is low, as long as it presented to pupils as enhancing choice, it is likely to gain support from the majority of pupils when they are in year 7.

### **Use the role of parents in educational / employment choice to support their overall engagement**

Parents are perceived as having a positive, legitimate role in supporting the development of educational / employment preferences. There may be a policy opportunity to build on this role to support continued parental involvement as it gets harder to sustain for certain groups over Key Stage 3 & 4.

### **Make IAG support experiential and use it to support choice making skills**

IAG support for year 7 should have a strong activity / experience element and be based as far as possible around the individual needs of the pupil. Year 7 pupils want choice in their future options and understand the merits of choice. An IAG programme with an element of pupil choice built in is likely to be more popular, and help them develop the ability to make choices and decisions - crucial in the RPA context.

## **8.2 Themes for further investigation**

The DCSF requested that the research team outline possible issues to be investigated via further research. There are a number of issues that this study raises that merit further investigation with a larger, more diverse sample over the course of Key Stage 3. One of the main reasons that they merit investigation over Key Stage 3 is that main finding of this research is that decision making on educational / employment destinations is a process. Box 2 contains the questions further research may wish to address.

### **Box 2: Questions for further investigation**

#### **Progress over Key Stage 3**

- How does the RPA affect the pupils' educational and employment preferences / principles as they progress through Key Stage 3 and 4?
- Do employment preferences / principles remain the same as the knowledge young people have of the labour market increases?
- Do educational aspirations remain high as young people become more aware of their own capabilities?

- Do pupil differences in attitudes and values between schools increase as variations in exposure to IAG activities shape their choices and their 'choice identities'?
- How do attitudes to the future affect action: in particular do they affect the level of engagement with schooling over Key Stage 3?
- Does the relative influence of parents decline over Key Stage 3 as young people become increasingly independent in their views?

#### **Socio-economic background**

- Do attitudes regarding future destinations become more closely aligned to social background as differences in attainment by socio-economic group / gender increase?

#### **Ethnicity**

- How do educational / employment aspirations at Key Stage 3 differ by ethnicity and are they higher amongst BME groups?

#### **Geography**

- Are the findings of this study applicable to other local contexts e.g. older industrial towns, commuter belt, coastal towns etc?



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## Appendix 1 - School Characteristics (number)

Characteristic			
Gender	Single Sex	Mixed	
	4	23	
Leaving age	11-16	11-18	
	15	12	
Religious designation	Faith	Non-faith	
	5	22	
Specialist	Specialism	Non-specialist	
	20	7	
Status	Community	Voluntary Aided	Academy
	9	14	4

## **Appendix 2 - Technical section on methodology**

The quantitative data for the project was analysed as follows:

### **A2.1 Section 6 and 7: Influence and Successful Job roles**

For Section 6 of the questionnaire “The Influence Ladder” and Section 7 “Roles that I think are successful”, pupils ranked the influences from 1 to 10 and the roles from 1 to 10. The overall unit of analysis was the influence or the role and so a mean ranking for each influence and role was calculated. For both the influence and the successful role, these mean rankings are shown in Diagram 10 and 4 and then the mean ranks were themselves given a rank that ordered the Influences and Roles from 1-10 where 1 was the most influential source of information/successful role and 10 the least.

Once the overall analysis had been done, the analysis was broken down by four set of factors Gender (Male / Female), Deprivation (In deprived area / Not in a deprived area), FSM (Yes / No) and Area and data was broken down by these different categories of analysis.

### **A2.2 Section 8: Usefulness of information**

For Section 8 “What would help me most about deciding about my future” students were asked a single question. This question read “What can your school do to help you decide about your future? We’ve listed a number of suggestions. For each question put one tick ☐ only in the box indicating how useful this would be for you”. The analysis was conducted by averaging the five options with Very useful = 1, Quite useful=2, neither useful or not useful=3, Not very useful=4 and not useful at all= 5. Lower averages meant higher usefulness.

In exactly the same way as Section 6 and Section 7, the overall means were calculated and the same category analysis was completed.

### **A2.3 Section 9: Practical v Non-practical**

For section 9, the issue was whether students preferred practical classes to non-practical ones. For the seven questions assessing whether pupils preferred a practical vs. a non-practical approach to studying, the data was analysed as follows. If a pupil answered “practical” they were given a score of 1 and if they answered “non-practical” they were given a score of 0. Each pupil could therefore score a maximum of 7 (if they answered all seven questions). This score was divided by the number of answers so if a pupil answered “practical” i.e. scored as 1, for each question they answered, their mean score would be 1. The mean score can also be seen as a percentage i.e. the percentage of answers answered as “practical”. Independent sample t-tests were carried out to see if there were significant differences across the factors of gender, free-school meals and deprivation.

### **A2.4 Attainment**

For the attainment data, pupils were asked what level they had achieved on their SATS. We excluded those reporting level 3 because of inadequate sample size and those stating “Don’t Know”. The attainment analysis is only pertinent to levels 4 and 5. So for example, for the successful-job-type analysis, an independent samples t-test to see if there were differences between average rankings the 4’s and 5’s for each job type.

## **A2.5 Inferential vs. Descriptive statistics**

Because there were a large number of factors being investigated for each dependent variable, it was decided at an early meeting to present the results descriptively. For example, to control for Gender and FSM and Deprivation and Area within the same analysis, we would have to run something akin to a 4 or 5-way ANOVA e.g. Job type (10 levels) x Gender (2 levels) x Deprivation (2 levels) x FSM (2 levels) x Area (4 levels) creating 320 independent cells of information. Clearly this level of analysis was not possible and combining components of the analysis e.g. Gender x FSM x Job Type without completing the full multivariate analysis meant the simultaneous control of variables would not have been completed. There were possibilities to run probit regressions or MANOVAs and even consider some structural modelling but the exercise here was exploratory and the descriptive analysis was felt the appropriate to report the findings at the level that was useful to give indications of patterns of responses.

Some inferential analysis was carried out where appropriate e.g. t-tests for attainment and practical vs. non-practical but again, the analysis, although examined inferentially should be interpreted as part of the whole picture across all the qualitative and quantitative analyses.

### Appendix 3 - Full List of occupational preferences

Occupational preference	No
Performing Arts (Singer / Dancer / Actor)	72
Professional Sport Player	49
Teacher	33
Vet	31
Lawyer / Barrister	28
Doctor / Surgeon	22
Police	23
Animal Care	17
Fashion Design	15
IT	13
Hairdresser	13
Engineer	10
Armed Forces	10
Accountant	10
Artist	9
Chef	9
Personal Trainer / Sport Coach	9
Child Care	7
Nurse	7
Scientist	7
Author	6
Bank Manager / Banker	4
Beautician	4
Journalist	4
Pilot	4
Air hostess	3
Archaeologist	3
Architect	3
Interior Designer	3
Midwife	3
Zoologist	3
Chemist	2
Fireman	2
Government Advisor / Agent	2
Mechanic	2
Photographer	2
Advertising	1
Air Traffic Control Operator	1
Astronaut	1
Business Marketing	1
Businessman	1
Child Psychologist	1
Conservationist	1
Counsellor	1
Dress Maker	1
Driving Instructor	1
Editor	1
Explorer	1
Film Director	1

Joiner	1
Lifeguard	1
Marine Biologist	1
News Broadcaster	1
Paleontologist	1
Physiotherapist	1
Plumber	1
Politician	1
Restaurant Owner	1
Shop Assistant	1
Stockbroker	1
Stuntman	1
Zoo Keeper	1
Builder	1
Farmer	1
Upholsterer	1
Not Sure	62
	<b>610</b>

## Appendix 4 - Pupil workbook



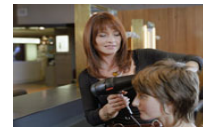
Trainee Plumber



Law Student – University of Oxford



*What will I do  
in the future...?*



Trainee Hairdresser



Trainee Nurse



Trainee Sports Coach



Medicine Student –  
University of Liverpool



Art Student – University of  
the Arts





### Some information about you...

We are trying to find out what you think about your future. This is about what you know and what you think. There are no right and wrong answers but please think about what you write and answer the questions the best you can.

What is the name of your school?

you know what do you want to do in  
the future when you finish your  
education?

If you do, please write what it is

How certain are you that you want to do  
this?

Why do you want to do this?

How old were you when you decided  
you wanted to do this?

How old are you?

Are you male or female?

What is your post code?

Do you get free schools meals

Have you ever read or been given a  
*"Moving On" Booklet*?

What level did you achieve in your  
Year 6 SATS?

What before or after school  
activities are you involved in?



I would like to finish school  
at age...

I would like to finish my education  
at age .....

## ***my expectations...***

After Year 9 I expect to be doing these subjects

After Year 11 finishes I expect I will be

When I'm about 18 I expect I will be

I have to finish school  
at age...

## PART 2 - You and your education

We need to find out more about you and what you know. Please complete the questionnaire below for us.

---

If I was doing **A-levels** what do I think I would be doing and when do I think I would be doing it...

I'm not sure what A-Levels are

---

If I was doing an **apprenticeship** what do I think I would be doing and when do I think I would be doing it...

I'm not sure what an apprenticeship is

---

If was doing a **14-19 Diploma** what do I think I would be doing and when do I think I would be doing it...

I'm not sure what a 14-19 Diploma is

---

If I went to a **university** what do I think I would be doing and when do I think I would be doing it...

I'm not sure what a university is

## PART 2 - Going to University

Do you want to go to university?

Yes

No

Not Sure

**If yes** - why do you want to go and **how old** were you when you decided?

**If no** - why do you not want to go?

If you are **not sure** - why are you not sure?

## PART 2 - What is the biggest influence on how I think about my future?

We've listed some things that might influence how you think about your future.

Can you put them in order, with the one that is least influential as **1** and the most influential as **10**.

I have chosen my no 10 because .....

*most influential*

Factors to be ranked (from top to bottom):

- If I have older brothers and sister, how well they have done at school
- Whether I enjoy school
- What I read in magazines about how important doing well at school is
- The encouragement I get from my parents/carers in my school work
- What I read on the internet about how important doing well at school is
- The job I want to get one day
- What I see on television about how important doing well at school is
- Whether my teachers think I am good at school
- How hard I find my school work
- What my friends think of school and how they behave in class

Ranking ladder (from top to bottom):

- 10
- 9
- 8
- 7
- 6
- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

*least influential*

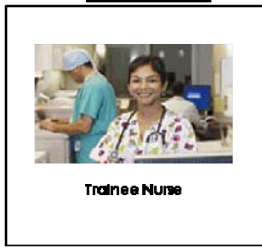
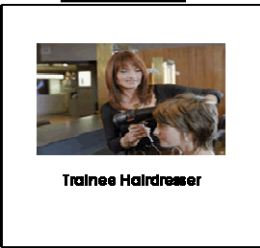
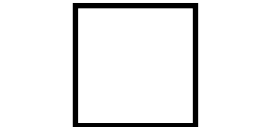
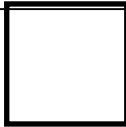
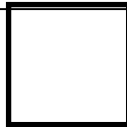
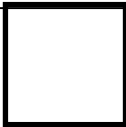
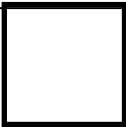
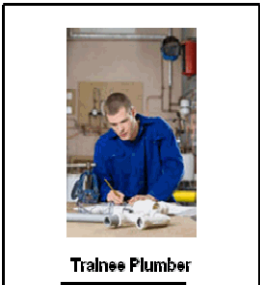
**PART 2 - Roles that I think are successful**

**Look at the pictures below of people in different roles.** Choose the 2 you think are the most successful and give your reasons why.

I think that \_\_\_\_\_ is the most successful because\_\_\_\_\_.

I also think that \_\_\_\_\_ is the most successful because \_\_\_\_\_.

Can you put the pictures of the different roles in order from most successful (10), next most successful (9) ...all the way to not very successful (2) and least successful (1)



### PART 3 - What would help me most in deciding about my future?

What can your school do to help you decide about your future? We've listed a number of suggestions. For each question put one tick ☐ only in the box indicating how useful this would be for you:

**1. A careers teacher or advisor who I could speak to individually every few months about my plans for the future**

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither useful or not useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------	--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

**2. Visits to different work-places, for example offices or factories, to find out about what different jobs are like**

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither useful or not useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------	--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

**3. Visits to universities to learn about the courses you could do there**

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither useful or not useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------	--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

**4. Talks from people with different jobs about what their jobs are like**

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither useful or not useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------	--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

**5. Talks from university students doing different courses about what their course is like**

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither useful or not useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------	--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

**6. A magazine that you could read once or twice a year about different jobs you could do and courses you could take**

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither useful or not useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------	--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

**7. A computer game that you could play which would help you learn about which jobs and courses are right for you**

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither useful or not useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------	--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

**8. A website you could visit where there was information about different jobs and courses**

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither useful or not useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------	--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

### PART 3 - You and how you like to learn

We are interested in how you like to learn things and what you want to learn. For each of the questions below, please put a tick next to the one that you prefer:

Do you prefer:

Classes where you do mainly reading and writing	OR	Classes where you mainly make things
Being tested on how well you are doing by exams at the end of term	OR	Being tested on how well you are doing by giving in a folder of work at the end of term
English	OR	Art and Design
Maths	OR	Design or Technology

Would you rather:

Spend most of time after year 9 studying one subject I am really interested in after year 9	OR	Spend most of time after year 9 studying as many different subjects as I can
Spend a week at a university in year 10 learning about what it is like	OR	Spend a week in year 10 going to work everyday and learning about a job
Learn things in year 7 and 8 that connect to a job I might get	OR	Learn things in year 7 and 8 that connect to a college or university course I could do



### **PART 3 - Final Activity**

What help do you want in deciding about your future?

**If you know what you want to do in the future:**

**In year 8** to help me become a \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to \_\_\_\_\_

**If you don't know what you want to do in the future:**

**In year 8** to help me decide what I want to do in the future I would like to

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking part.  
Good luck  
with your future!**



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