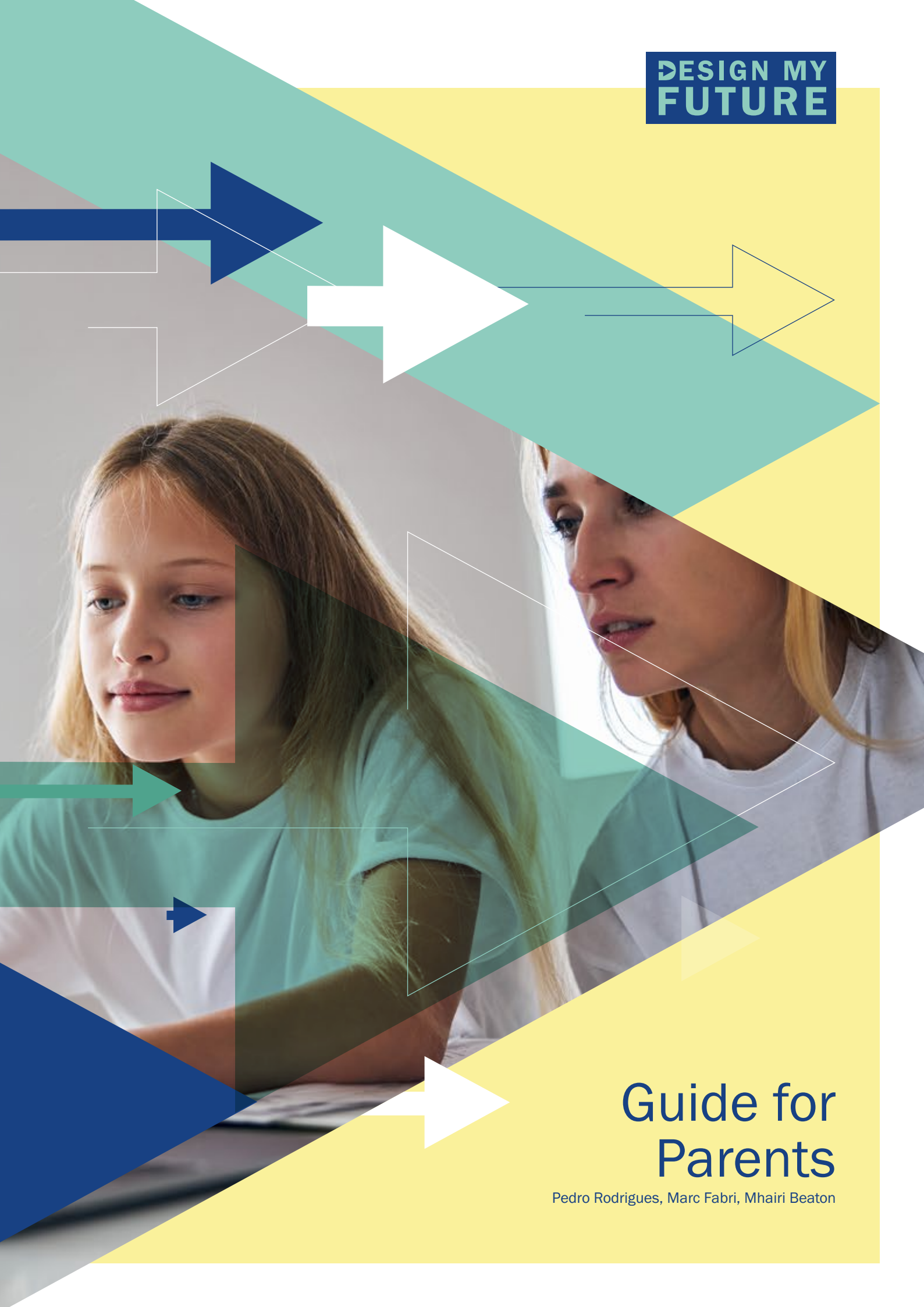


**DESIGN MY
FUTURE**



Guide for Parents

Pedro Rodrigues, Marc Fabri, Mhairi Beaton



CONTENTS

PAGE

1	Introduction	3
	1.1 About DesignMyFuture	3
	1.2 About this guide	4
2	The future of work & education	5
	2.1 The fourth industrial revolution	5
	2.2 The future job market	6
	2.2.1 What jobs could be available in the future?	7
	2.2.2 What skills are employers looking for in young people?	7
	2.2.3 Where can my child go to learn more about careers?	8
3	Career fields	9
4	Involvement in your child's career journey	10
	4.1 It's their life	11
	4.2 Tips for parents and carers	12
	4.2.1 General tips	13
	4.2.2 Promote planning	14
	4.2.3 Promote autonomy	16
	4.2.4 Promote curiosity	16
	4.2.5 Promote trust	17
	4.2.6 Promote cooperation	18
	4.3 Career ladder	19
	4.3.1 Find their motivation	19
	4.3.2 Learn what's required	19
	4.3.3 Look beyond the stereotypes	19
	4.3.4 Be wary of 'safe' choices	19
	4.4 The DesignMyFuture Game	20
5	FAQs for parents and carers	21
6	Case studies	23
7	Acknowledgements	25
8	References	27

01: Introduction

1.1 About DesignMyFuture

The Erasmus+ funded 'DesignMyFuture' project (www.designmyfuture.eu) focuses on how to best support young people as they plan to make the transition from compulsory schooling towards future positive destinations. Many young people leave school early and failing to opt into other forms of educational provision can have a long-term impact. It affects young people's career prospects, health and wellbeing, and often results in poverty and poor health outcomes in the long term.

To address this Europe-wide challenge, the DesignMyFuture project sought to create materials that would support all young people to cultivate the ability to develop an informed understanding of their skills, interests, competences, developmental needs and values and be able to communicate this to others. This enables them to make informed decisions about their future career path.

The DesignMyFuture Project recognised that young people do not make these decisions alone and so we have created a series of resources for the different individuals who might work with each young person as they make these important decisions. In addition to this Guide for Parents and Carers, the DesignMyFuture team have created:

An interactive web game for young people to discover their skills and explore possible future jobs and careers.



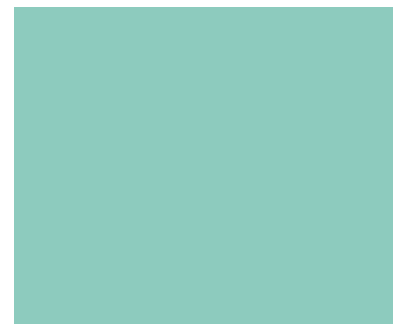
designmyfuture.eu/game

A Guide for Teachers that is based on an inclusive pedagogical approach and self-reflection for supporting young people



designmyfuture.eu/teachers

Educational resources with helpful suggestions for teachers to enhance the support they give young people.



designmyfuture.eu/teachers

1.2 About this guide

The decisions young people make from an early stage at school can have a significant impact on their future career choices and happiness. As parents or carers, you have a vital role to play in this career journey. Of course, your child is an individual with their own dreams, ambitions and unique personality. So, it is impossible to provide answers to all the specific questions they may ask you – or that you are looking for answers to.

This guide provides information about how the world of work has changed in the last few years and the implications this change might have on the career choices that will be open to your child. The guide also contains some helpful advice on how to support young people when they are thinking about future careers, and some examples of how other parents and carers have done this. It tries to answer some common questions parents and carers ask, and finally provides some case studies describing how some parents or carers managed to support their young people to a successful resolution of these important life choices.

We hope you find this guide useful. It doesn't provide you with all the answers, but hopefully it can support you by giving you plenty to reflect on as you seek to support your child through this process.

We would love to hear from you: please give us your feedback at designmyfuture.eu/feedback

Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)

Target: <9%

2020: 9.9%
2010: 13.8%



Education and Training
Monitor 2021

Men **11.8%**

Women **8%**

Native-born **8.7%**

Foreign-born **22.4%**

Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2020)
Extracted on 10/2021
©European Union, 2021

2.0 The future of work & education

You've probably found a lot of areas where your own education didn't prepare you for looking after a child, and now you've found one more – knowing how to help your child with career planning!

Research tells us that parents and carers are the primary influence on the career development of their children – their choices about education in and after high school, and about their work.

At the same time, schools are expected to provide impartial and independent careers guidance. This includes a range of careers-related activities which encourage engagement with local employers, work-based education and apprenticeship providers. The aim is to help students gain valuable work experience and insights into the world of work.

Young people today have more options available for their future than ever before. With an ever-changing workplace landscape, it is even more important for them to make informed choices for their education, training and employment.

As they make choices and plan for the future, young people need support from the people who know them best: their families.

2.1 The fourth industrial revolution

Navigating the future of work can be daunting and overwhelming, especially when there is so much uncertainty about it and there are several resources out there. The world is currently going through a Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is the ongoing automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices, using modern smart technology. Types of modern smart technology include artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, biotechnology, the Internet of Things (IoT), nanotechnology, quantum computing, robotics, 5G wireless technology and 3D printing. This technology is merging more with humans and their lives, and therefore the distinction between the natural and artificial worlds is becoming less clear. The speed of change and innovation is also happening faster than ever before.



2.2 The future job market

The way we work is changing. Technological advancements, globalisation, the opening up of new areas of business mean numerous new opportunities are being created for today's young people – some of which don't exist today! Currently, the average person changes jobs seven times in their lifetime and it is likely that this number will rise in the future.

While qualifications continue to be crucial in the world of work, skills, work experience and exposure to the workplace is increasingly important to employers who are looking to secure the young talent of the future and for young people to navigate a path through their career.

“We agree that it’s a process and at 16 you can’t have all the answers, and also that it’s not something you only get one shot at.”

DMF research participant

2.2.1 What jobs could be available in the future?

Many jobs will remain the same and will still require people to do them! However, recent research has shown that young people's job expectations don't match with the roles that employers will want to recruit for in the future. This could mean that some young people will be aiming for jobs that are in short supply. But there are things your child can do to maximise their chances of success.

Begin thinking about what sort of job would be right for them – talk to friends, family and people in the community, their school, to think about the world of work.

- Be realistic about their aspirations – it's great to have aspirations, but it's important that they gain the qualifications and skills they need to secure a job. A solid foundation of education, training and skills will help a young person stand out – regardless of the job they wish to do.
- Take advantage of jobs fairs, open days and employer talks at school or college – this can be a great way to open their eyes to careers they may never have considered.

2.2.2 What skills are employers looking for in young people?

Even if a young person doesn't know what they want to do, they can still begin to develop the skills employers are looking for (see 21st Century Skills box). Skills can be gained at school, at home, via hobbies or via work experience they might have completed.

The great thing about skills is that we're constantly acquiring them without knowing it! However, there are things a young person can do to help build their existing skills and impress potential future employers:

- Get work experience – it's a great way to see what work is like and test out career options, and it can also help build new skills.
- Volunteer – not only does it help develop skills employers are looking for, such as teamwork and communication, it can also provide plenty of opportunities to meet new people and learn from others.
- Seek out opportunities to build skills at home – does your child help out with the childcare at home? Do they help classmates or younger siblings with their homework? Have they helped organise an event? All these activities are skills-generating!
- Consider a Saturday job – this can often be a young person's first taste of working life, building a number of foundation skills such as time-keeping, punctuality and commitment.



21st Century Skills

These are the skills, competences and learning habits that are considered essential for success in 21st century society and workplace. While previous generations typically entered the workforce with a goal of job consistency, young people completing their education in the 2020s are very likely to change career fields and jobs several times over their lifetime, and they need to be prepared for this.

Acquiring 21st century skills during education ensures that the individual can lead a healthy and fulfilling life, enabling them to make informed decisions and to respond to the challenges of the modern world.

Source: Global Partnership for Education (2020)

2.2.3 Where can my child go to learn more about careers?

Depending on the age of your child, their school or college should be able to guide you towards some useful materials to help them understand their skills, think about jobs and plan for their future. This can sometimes take the form of a careers library of materials, a careers adviser, or an individual in charge of careers education.

There are also a number of helpful websites designed to help match your young person's experience, skills and interests with different job roles, and to provide the latest information on the labour market and specific roles. **A list of resources is included at the end of this guide.**

3.0 Career fields

During school, teachers talk about different careers and opportunities. Along the way, schools promote job fairs to help students make their choices. At home, around the 9th Grade, when a child typically decides about their next career step following secondary school, these conversations become more frequent. However, schools and teachers, as well as parents and carers, are not always familiar with the current career fields.

That's why we have put together a brief overview of occupation fields (from ESCO Classification of occupations, <https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en/classification>):

- 1. Armed forces occupations** include all personnel who are currently serving in the armed forces, and who are not free to accept civilian employment and are subject to military discipline.
- 2. Managers** plan, direct, coordinate and evaluate the overall activities of enterprises, governments and other organisations. They supervise other workers and also formulate and review policies, laws, rules and regulations.
- 3. Professionals** increase the existing stock of knowledge, apply scientific or artistic concepts and theories, or teach. Supervision of other workers may also be part of the role.
- 4. Technicians and associate professionals** perform technical and related tasks connected with research and the application of scientific or artistic concepts.
- 5. Clerical support workers** record, organise, store, compute and retrieve information, and perform clerical duties in connection with money-handling operations, travel arrangements, requests for information, and appointments.
- 6. Services and sales workers** provide personal services related to travel, housekeeping, catering, personal care, selling goods in wholesale or retail shops and similar establishments. Members of this group also include fire, protection and police personnel.
- 7. Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers** grow and harvest crops, gather fruits and plants, breed, tend or hunt animals, manage forests, breed or catch fish in order to provide food and income.
- 8. Craft and related trades workers** apply specific technical and practical knowledge and skills to construct and maintain buildings, structures, machinery, tools, textiles and other articles.
- 9. Plant and machine operators and assemblers** operate and monitor machinery and equipment, drive and operate trains, motor vehicles and mobile machinery and equipment, or they may assemble products from component parts.
- 10. Elementary occupations** involve the performance of simple and routine tasks which may require the use of hand-held tools and considerable physical effort.

4.0 Involvement in your child's career journey

51%



51% of children start thinking of their prospects when they're 14–15 years old.

73%



73% of children invite their parents' or carers' opinions and advice when planning for the future.

(source: <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/publikationen/Dream-Jobs.pdf>)

“My child has to make their own decisions about their life choices. I am there to listen and offer advice if required but not to choose for them.”

DMF research participant

There are many ways that you can offer support with choices.

Here are a few ideas:

- Outside of school hours, encourage your child to find out about what courses, jobs and training opportunities are available locally. Your local authority may provide information on local options on their website.
- Encourage your child to explore all of the learning options available for 14–16-year-olds. Post-16 education or training is now compulsory. Find out about what choices your child has to make in Year 8/9 at school. They will usually be asked to choose from a selection of GCSE subjects which they want to study in year 10 and 11. Most students will have compulsory subjects which they have to study along with a selection of options.
- Talk to your child about careers they are interested in. Find out what they know already and encourage them to visit the careers library to find out more.

4.1 It's their life

As children grow up, it is important to encourage them to make their own decisions and for them to be accountable for the consequences. As they practice this, children and young people will naturally learn to take responsibility for their choices and their autonomy progresses.

It is essential to ensure that the young person assumes the decision. When someone feels they are the driver in a particular action, they will more easily commit themselves to overcome any obstacles which may arise along the way.

Autonomy also brings responsibility. So, the active involvement of parents and carers does not mean deciding for their children or lead their choices. It does mean being a driving force of dialogues and activities that will put the children's projects on a more solid and conscious basis.

It is part of your role to identify helpful and objective information about career paths, and to make this available to the young person so that they can realise the various possibilities for their school or professional path. Well-informed in this way, they can then consciously opt for new alternatives and innovative solutions. Although children may share many of their ideas and ideals with their family, "it's their life".

11

"it's their life"



4.2 Tips for parents and carers

Parents and carers provide an example of what it is like to be an adult and how the life of work can be lived. Many of a child's attitudes and behaviours come from how they watch adults "getting down to business" and moving from words to action.

There is a wide range of activities that can favour the construction of the life project and the educational and formative path of the children. Ultimately, almost everything we do in life shows us who we are, how we want to live and how we organise ourselves and progress.



Some useful tips!

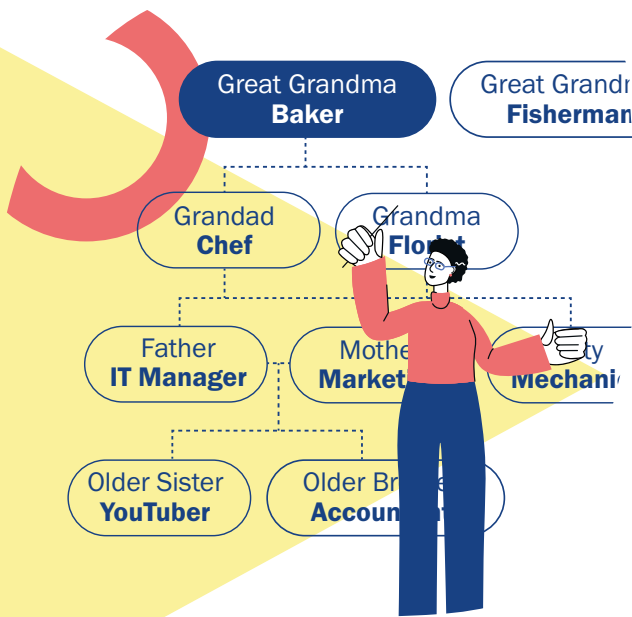
12

- + **Encourage activities that create dialogue** with the young person and provide access to relevant information. For both parents/carers and children, there are many meaningful activities that speak for many words! (see *suggestions on next page*)
- + **Support your child to investigate potential avenues for their career** based on their interests. You can use the DesignMyFuture Game for this (designmyfuture.eu/game).
- + **Encourage your child to be self-reflective** as research indicates people are more successful in careers that closely align to their interests and strengths. Be reflective yourself to ensure you aren't passing your own biases on to their career choice!
- + **Cultivate a space for dialogue** between You and your child. The exchange of ideas on everyday topics fosters this dialogue and helps to strengthen bonds of trust. Listen to your child's dreams. You will get a better idea of their individuality and what has special meaning for them. On the other hand, by listening to your life experiences, your child will feel that, after all, they share similar situations, analysing how their parents or carers draw valuable conclusions from this.
- + **Take advantage of occasions to address key aspects**, for example, if the family has seen a remarkable film, why not use this experience as a starting point for conversation? Family conversations are an opportunity for children to express their wishes and reveal their interests. They are also privileged moments for encouragement, for sharing and for reformulating ideals. Throughout life, it is necessary to take on different roles and put into action various skills and knowledge. Prepare your children for these challenges.
- + **Adopt an Active Listening approach** when talking to your child (see *box on page 14*). This helps build trust and makes for more effective communication

Activities to create conversations

Parents and carers provide an example of what it is like to be an adult and how the life of work can be lived. Many of a child’s attitudes and behaviours come from how they watch adults “getting down to business” and moving from words to action.

There is a wide range of activities that can favour the construction of the life project and the educational and formative path of the children. Ultimately, almost everything we do in life shows us who we are, how we want to live and how we organise ourselves and progress.

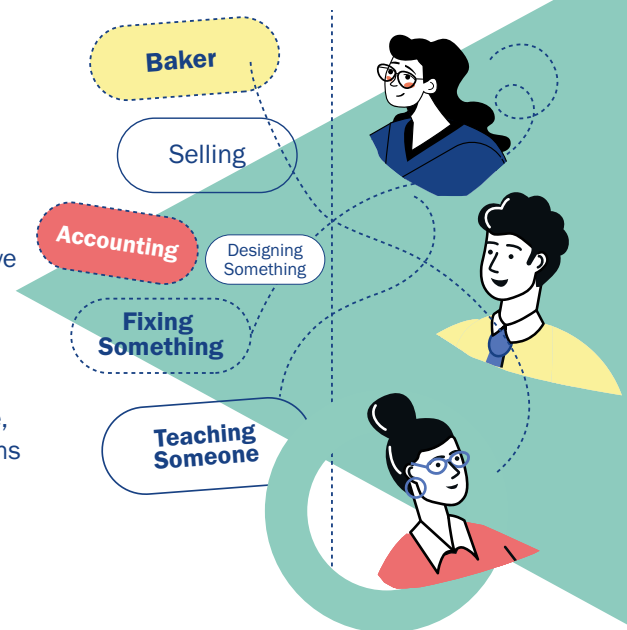


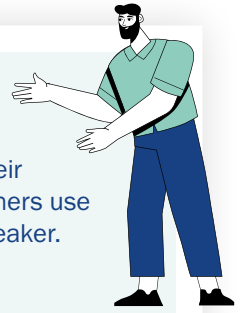
Activity 1 - Family Career Tree

Create a family career tree with your child, putting the job for each family member in one of the branches. Encourage your child to interview some family members to collect information about their current job and their career path. Invite your child to choose some potential professions for them, then compare the similarities and differences between them.

Activity 2 - Whose Job?

Who’s the right person for the job? You have a list of different jobs, e.g. selling goods, attending meetings, building something, etc. And then you have the people that you are playing with. The player has to choose between the different persons in the game, including themselves, and then give reasons for that choice.





Principles of Active Listening

Active listening is the ability to focus completely on a speaker, understand their message, comprehend the information and respond thoughtfully. Active listeners use verbal and non-verbal techniques to show and keep their attention on the speaker.

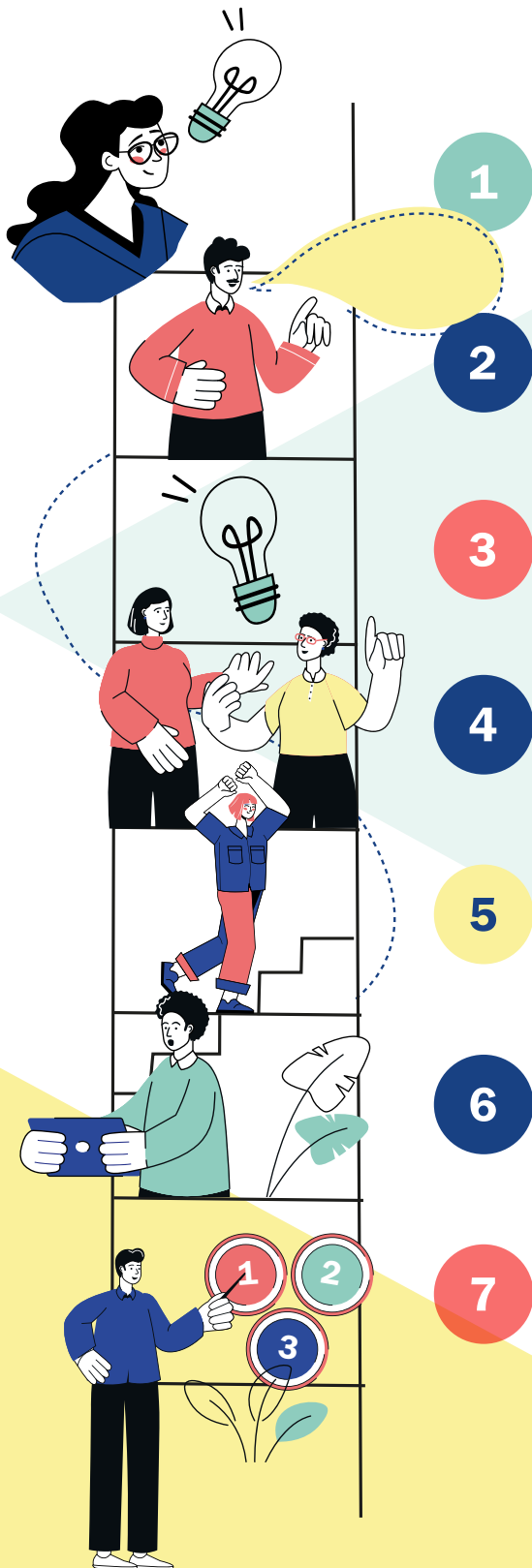
How to practise your active listening skills:

- Put the speaker at their ease
- Get rid of any distractions (including your mobile phone!) and give the person speaking your full attention
- Empathise with the speaker; try not to judge what they are saying
- Listen to feelings (expressed verbally & non-verbally)
- Ask open ended questions
- Repeat the conversation back to them, in their own words, providing your interpretation or understanding of what they are trying to say (paraphrasing)
- By reflecting the content of what is being said back to the speaker, you can check your understanding of what they are trying to say
- Be as accurate in summarising the speaker's meaning as you can

4.2.2 Promote planning

- How does your child envision the future? Promote positive scenarios for the future. Encouraging hope is important to get children interested in preparing for the future.
- What kind of future have your children imagined? Imagining multiple possibilities is the first step towards finding options that will interest them.
- Be aware of upcoming educational decisions or training decisions in your child's life. This could be choices for secondary education after Year 9? A specialist subject after grade 12? How can they prepare for these decisions? What deadlines and dates are important? What sources of information and support services are available to find out about and prepare these decisions? Accompany your children. Dedicate time and energy to help them with service consultations and activities that prepare for these decisions.
- Help your child make a plan to reach a goal they value. For example, if your child would like to do an activity during the holidays, help them plan how to achieve that goal. What requirements and training are required? Where and when to get the training? What obstacles might arise and how overcome them? Without an action plan, the objectives are likely to remain mere intentions. (see also activity box)

Activity: Climbing the Goal Ladder



1

Let your child choose their big goal. Ask them questions like: What do you wish you could achieve? or What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?

2

Discuss the purpose of their goal. Ask them questions like: What do you think is the greatest benefit to you doing well in this area? or How can that help others?

3

Think about the skills involved. Ask them questions like: What are the top three skills required to reach the goal? And What can you do to acquire those skills?

4

Ask a friend. Discuss with your child if there is a person they could ask for more information about the goal or career they have in mind. This could be someone already working in a similar role, or a teacher, or a careers advisor.

5

Break the big goal into a sequence of smaller steps that lead to the goal. Draw a "goal ladder" to break down the big goal, where each step builds on the previous one.

6

Consider potential obstacles. Ask your child to write them all down. If they want to give up on their goal, remind them of the purpose behind it. Give examples of your own struggles at their age.

7

Ask your child to name three action steps to overcome these obstacles. These are the things they can do, or ask others to do, to overcome a specific obstacle. Focus on how they can continue improving.

When going through these steps, model positive self-talk: Always celebrate their efforts, acknowledge their determination, and recognise their persistence when climbing the "goal ladder".

4.2.3 Promote autonomy

- Make your child feel responsible for their own future. It is essential that your child is confident that you believe they are capable of gradually taking autonomy and taking responsibility for their decisions.
- What factors does your child consider important for the way their life will develop? Is it fate? Pure luck? The general state of the world? Share with your child personal situations or those of relatives and acquaintances in which the person's willpower, determination and personal capacity to exercise control were decisive.
- Encourage your child to take the initiative and make them responsible for certain tasks that are necessary for the whole family. For example, ask your child to budget their weekly or monthly expenses and encourage them to do their own shopping, within agreed limits. Help your child manage their time and activities, according to the priorities that they assume. Help your child feel in control of their own lives.
- Encourage your child to research the life of a personality they admire (e.g. through interviews and/or biographies). Take advantage of the many opportunities for your child to learn from the example of others, or from their own experience. Illustrate the importance of taking responsibility for leading their own lives with determination and effort.

4.2.4 Promote curiosity

- Encourage your child to explore more about who they are, what the alternative educational and training choices are, and what possible future occupations there are. For the creation of ideas and possible scenarios for the future, it is essential to be curious and for your child reflect on themselves and explore the world around them. The DesignMyFuture Game can help your child with this designmyfuture.eu/game.
- Who are the people your child most admires? Find out what they admire in these people. Explore together what activities these people do, and how they got to where they are now. What qualifications or skills are required? What other professional activities are related, that these skills can transfer to? Based on your child's preferences, stimulate the search for other, similar fields of activity.
- To what extent has your child had the opportunity to "immerse" themselves in concrete work experiences? Ask your child about the situations in which they have learned more about themselves. Explore together what kind of support they would need to explore the areas in which they are competent (what they already do well), the areas they are interested in (what they enjoy doing) and the areas they value and aspire to (what allows them to achieve important goals for themselves).
- How active has your child been in exploring educational and vocational alternatives? Which occupations do they know and what do they know about them? Encourage your child to expand their knowledge in this area, identifying and using available sources of information. This could be for example information on the Internet, talking or following a professional's day at work, talking to a family friend or relative with a relevant occupation. Encourage your child to broaden their knowledge of the labour market by trying out certain jobs through work placements, part-time work or volunteering.

4.2.5 Promote trust

- How does your child usually face challenges? Do they achieve this with confidence, or do they avoid putting themselves to the test, for fear of failure. Find out more about the extent to which your child understands and potentially underestimates their skills and abilities.
- Help your child develop a “Growth Mindset” (see box) to build resilience and adaptability.
- What your child says and does will help you to better understand their personality, values, interests, skills and abilities. The construction of your children’s “life project” should be based on their strengths, and it should allow them to express themselves freely.
- Whenever there is effort and persistence on behalf of your child, praise the obtained result, even if it is modest. Take advantage of such situations where you can express encouragement and support to your child. Through trial and error, one obtains small personal achievements and learns to persevere and find a way to make things work. When you fear failure too much, you feel unable to try to succeed.
- Encourage your child to address their fears through concrete activities. In doing so, children often discover resources they didn’t think they had and feel more confident and effective. Some “radical experiences” (e.g. going climbing) are, after all, controlled ways of meeting the challenge and feeling capable, whilst managing the risk. Help your child identify situations that helped them feel more confident about themselves in the past. This will enable them to embrace opportunities and face future challenges.

Characteristics of a Growth Mindset

Psychology Professor Carol Dweck from Stanford University has argued that it’s not intelligence or education that sets successful people apart, but it’s their mindset. She coined the term “Growth Mindset” to explain how self-motivation and effectiveness can help reach one’s goals.

Having a growth mindset means believing that a person’s abilities aren’t innate but can be improved through effort, learning, and persistence. A growth mindset is all about the attitude with which a person faces challenges, how they process failures, and how they adapt and evolve as a result.

The characteristics of a growth mindset are:

- You believe that achievements are down to effort, not just inherent talent
- You’re willing to learn from your mistakes and find value in criticism
- You believe that your intelligence and ability can be developed
- You’re willing to ask questions and admit when you don’t know something
- You seek out challenging tasks and take on risks

A growth mindset can help you become more resilient and more adaptable. It is considered an essential part of 21st century skills.

Source: Dweck (2017)



4.2.6 Promote cooperation

- How do they feel when they meet a new group? It is becoming more and more important for people to work together as a team. How does your children relate to other people. Do they tend to prefer to be alone? Do they like to feel part of a group? There is no right or wrong approach as teams work best if there is diversity amongst team members. It is helpful though to be aware of one's own preferences.
- How does your child feel when they are working in a team? At school or in out-of-school activities, how do they approach these situations? As mentioned in the previous point, teams need a mixture of members. Do they tend to take charge of the tasks themselves or let others decide? Do they like to participate and do their part in the team? What have they already learned about the best way to work in a team.
- Stipulate in the family the sharing of responsibilities, negotiating with children the division of age-appropriate tasks. Do not give in on facilitating or carrying out agreed-upon tasks for children. As your child gets older, involve them in planning and carrying out activities that also concern them, such as setting the budget for family expenses, shopping for the family, a weekend outing, holidays, etc. It is important that everyone cooperates and feels part of a whole.
- Encourage your child to take on new social roles outside the family, to broaden their base of relationships and to adjust to different people and situations (e.g. work experiences during part-time or holiday work, voluntary activities, recreational and cultural activities, doing certain training outside of school, such as first aid course, etc.).

“As a mum of a strong-willed 14-year-old daughter, I’m lucky to work delivering school leaver opportunities. Without this experience, I’d be following the ‘go to university’ approach when discussing next steps. So, my advice is: find out about the options available together, don’t dismiss anything and consider employers alongside academic options.”

DMF research participant

“Many school leavers have no idea what career they want, so don’t despair if your child is in this camp. Encourage them to research employers – to discover early careers opportunities and whether they suit your child’s values and skills. Don’t research for them! Employers look for drive; if you do the work, your child won’t be able to demonstrate this convincingly.”

DMF research participant

4.3 Career ladder

Some people have their mind set on a career as a doctor or a journalist from an early age. But what if your child isn't sure? You might find it helpful to work through the following pointers with them.

4.3.1 Find their motivation

It's important for your child to be motivated by their career choice, both in terms of working hard to get the grades they need and progressing their career when it comes to starting work. Encourage them to think about what's important to them in life. Money? Helping people? Being creative? This may help to guide their research into careers.

Their interests can be another useful starting point. If your child is a Formula 1 fan, would they enjoy designing cars as an automotive engineer? If their weekends are spent shopping, how about a career managing a store – or even a whole chain? Also consider with your child which subjects they are good at and what other skills they have. Perhaps they are good at speaking in front of large groups of people or working out and sticking to a budget. Keep these skills in mind when reading about different jobs.

4.3.2 Learn what's required

Many careers are open to young people regardless of the subjects they've studied for their different levels. This is often (but not always) the case in areas such as business, finance, law and the media. So it's fine if your child doesn't feel ready to decide yet or wants to change path later on.

However, some careers do require a particular degree or vocational training path and often specific subject choices. This tends to be the case in areas such as science, medicine and engineering. So it's a good idea for your child to start thinking about careers now, in order to make subject choices that leave open doors to careers that might appeal. Encourage them to work through the careers that do require particular subjects and decide whether they are happy to rule them out or they would prefer to keep these options open.

4.3.3 Look beyond the stereotypes

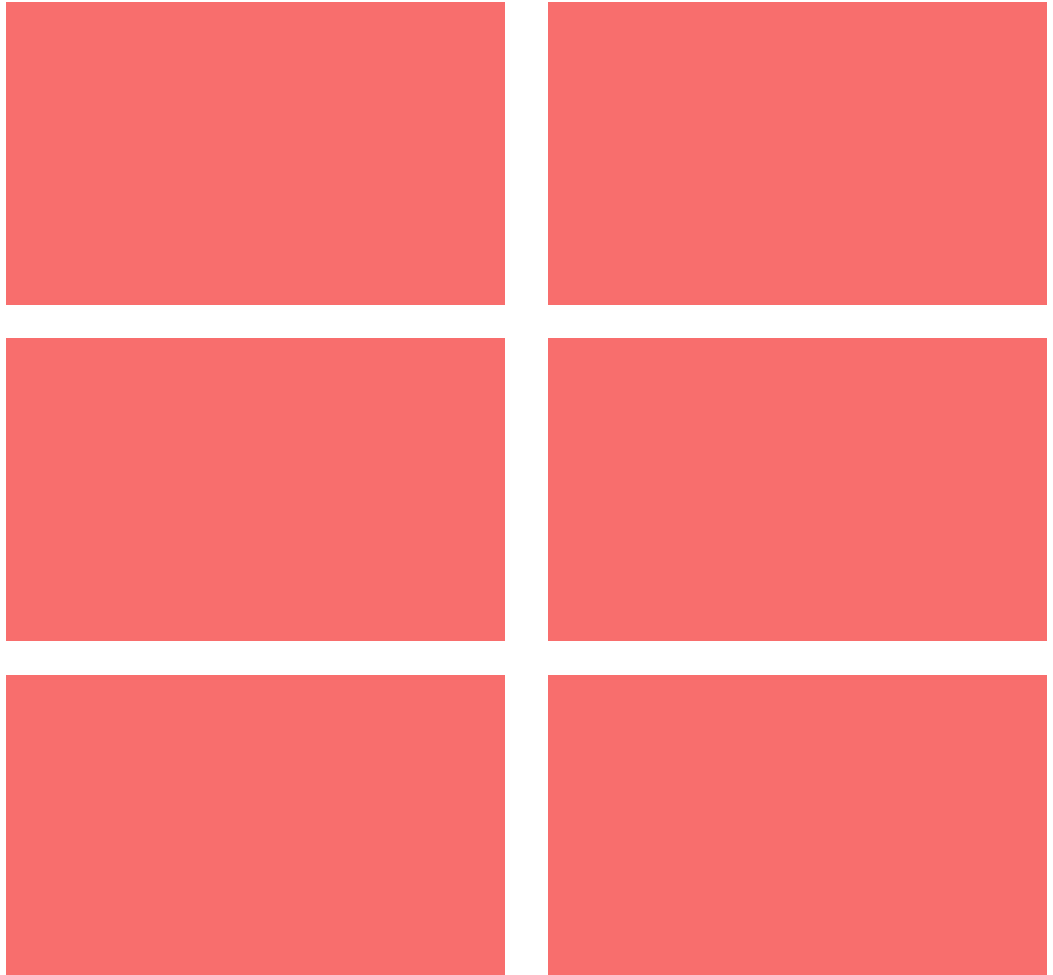
Suggest that your child should take a quick look at as many career areas as possible, rather than instantly ruling any out on the basis of stereotypes or assumptions. Plenty of engineers wear suits and go to business meetings – and engineering employers are very keen to hire more women. Many IT professionals spend more time talking to clients about their needs than they do writing code. Lots of lawyers have jobs that don't require them to defend people accused of unpleasant crimes.

4.3.4 Be wary of 'safe' choices

Take care if your child is considering an option because they think it is a 'safe choice' or a 'good job', rather than out of intrinsic interest. IT and law, for example, have a 'solid' image but it may be harder than you think for your child to get their first job and not all roles will offer a high salary. Trading in an academic or vocational path your child will enjoy for assumptions about a 'guaranteed good job' may lead to disappointment.

4.4 The DesignMyFuture Game

We have developed an interactive online game for young people to find out about their skills and competences, and how these map to potential future occupations. By travelling through space, young people find out about themselves and what is important to them. You can find the game at designmyfuture.eu/game



5 FAQs for parents and carers

Q: **My son is saying he wants to be YouTuber! Is it possible nowadays for someone to follow this career? And if so, is it a good choice in the future?**

A: Being a YouTuber is not necessarily about one type of work. Starting out making videos of oneself can likely lead to one of a range of careers. Creating content for the Internet has become a paid activity, involving several different types of professions (e.g. filmmaker, web developer, graphic design, motion graphic designer, creative, etc.). And nowadays, the labour market is quite adapted to the skills these activities develop.

Q: **My child is thinking about an apprenticeship. Aren't they just for mechanics, builders and hairdressers?**

A: There are apprenticeships available for a wide range of careers, including those which might be considered as traditionally academic or science oriented. Apprenticeships are available in accountancy, law, business as well as care, engineering, hospitality, IT, retail and many more. In the UK, graduate apprenticeship combine study at university level with industry experience and a regular salary. An apprenticeship will offer your child the opportunity to get nationally recognised qualification whilst getting practical experience. They will also be earning whilst they learn.

Q: **My daughter is fearful of rejection because she struggled at school and also because social pressure to decide her future. How can we help her?**

A: Whether your child has applied for an apprenticeship, university place, job or other next step, getting a place can be highly competitive and, inevitably, some applicants get turned down. Experiencing rejection for the first time can be tough. As adults, we have had many years to develop the coping mechanisms to deal with this type of disappointment. However, this may be your child's first experience of rejection and it can feel very personal - perhaps even like it's the end of the world. But it isn't! Help your child accept and move on from the decision, without it damaging their self-confidence.

Q: **We think that now is the right time for our son to learn how to work. How can we introduce apprenticeships to him?**

A: Whether your child has applied for an apprenticeship, university place, job or other next step, competition for places can be highly competitive and, inevitably, some applicants get turned down. Experiencing rejection for the first time can be tough. As adults, we have had many years to develop the coping mechanisms to deal with this type of disappointment. However, this may be your child's first experience of rejection and it can feel very personal - perhaps even like it's the end of the world. But it isn't! Help your teen accept and move on from the decision, without it damaging their self-confidence.

Q: **Our son is talking about his decision to work from home. Since the pandemic he's more and more certain of that decision. Is this possible as a future career decision? How can we help him?**

A: More and more companies are providing virtual work opportunities to students and young people. Placements are available across several sectors including accountancy, law, marketing and the veterinary sciences. However, not everyone is suited to working behind a screen or remotely; some may have their heart set on a more creative or hands on career option. If virtual work experience is not right for your child, there's lots of other things they can do while at home. There are limitations to what can be experienced through virtual placements, so make sure your child is aware that this may only provide a partial glimpse of what's involved in the job.

Q: **Our daughter is talking about quitting school. She says that she wants to learn something more practical, and workplace related. How can we advise her to choose wisely?**

A: What your child chooses to do after compulsory education is both exciting and daunting. There are lots of options available and understanding the pros and cons of the different choices can be challenging. Apprenticeships should not be over-looked; they offer the opportunity to combine study with paid employment, resulting in a professional qualification. Apprenticeships used to be associated with trade industries (such as electricians, mechanics or plumbers). Nowadays, apprenticeships can be taken in a wide range of industry sectors and provide entry to all types of careers, including accountancy, banking, IT, law, management and television. In the UK, graduate apprenticeship combine study at university level with industry experience and a regular salary.

Q: **Is work experience a good idea?**

A: Most young people will get enormous benefit out of some interaction within a work environment. Being in a working environment and interacting with people who they haven't encountered before helps them to develop skills. It can also help to confirm whether it's the type of environment that they want to work in.

6 Case studies

The following cases will try to demonstrate some of the possible situations that young people, their parents and carers, and also teachers, must face in their lives. It's not only presenting them with the different career options and let them choose. And their difficulties in choosing has nothing to do with lack of interests or abilities has most of the cases show. And if someone thinks that parents or carers don't care about their situation, think twice because is not true. And also, their child, even though their difficulties they trust their parents to help them with this important choice.



“Cooking my future”

J. is a 15-year-old boy. He's the oldest of three brothers. He lived with his biological mother until the age of four. When his brother was born, their father left the family. Their mother always had mental health difficulties and also alcohol consumption problems. Eventually, J. was taken into care and he lost contact with his family.

At age 11, he was taken from the foster family because they abused him. He has been in an Institution since 12. J. always demonstrated difficulty to relating with others, adults manly, but also with colleagues. He finds it hard to trust others. And because of that he learned quite young to take care of himself and is quite autonomous and independent. He never talks with anyone about his personal matters, and at school no one knows what J. want to do in the future. He plays football at a local club, and his coach says that he follows all the instructions and relates with colleagues when it has something to do with the game. He thinks he likes cooking. He has some friends in the Netherlands and wishes to work there and have a better live.

The Institution team responsible for J. asked for help regarding J. future career choices. They feel that football isn't a good plan. And they have already talked with his coach who reported that J. is a good player but most probably will not get a contract with a football club.



“Guessing my future”

R. is a 14-year-old girl. She belongs to Roma community. In addition to the fact that R. and her parents are well integrated in the community, R. is continuing to go to school. Both parents feel the everyday pressure from the community, mainly R. father, and he's pointed as a man that cannot put respect and the community rituals in his family.

R. father doesn't work in traditional Roma employment. He was one of the first from his community to work as an accountant. He made school until 12th grade and went to a professional course to get certification in accountancy. But, because he takes care of the financial things from the community members, they accepted his choice. However, with R. they are not doing the same because she's a girl. Both parents ask at R. school to mediate the process, not because of R. career choice, but mainly because of community pressure. R. want to be a lawyer.



“A spectrum of choices”

C. is a 16-year-old girl. She was diagnosed with ASD at 8. Since child C. have difficulties making new friends, especially with kids their one age, this results in C. having some problems during school time. However, she’s always wishing to talk with adults. She loves to draw, and everyone tell their parents that C. should go to art school. C. doesn’t know what she wants, and her parents know how difficult it is to help C. making a choice.

But they are concern with the fact that she ends 12 grade and still don’t know what to do or if she wants to go to university. And because she has some difficulties due to her diagnosis, they feel that they should ask for guidance for C., even though they know C. would not do it by herself, and also, they know how difficult is for C. to work closely to someone strange.



“Less is best”

P. is a 15-year-old boy. He was retained once at 4th grade and again in the 5th grade. His parents already tell that this year he probably will be retained again in 5th grade for the second consecutive year. They are quite concerned with the situation, but mainly because they see their child suffering every day at school, and because paediatricians told the parents that P. was a gifted child with an excellent IQ level.

Several of P’s teachers have said the same regarding P’s capability. However, P. is starting to become more and more frustrated at school and lose his motivation. He doesn’t seem interested at school thing anymore, and has started to show some behavioural problems, namely not going to some classes and getting some troubles with his colleagues.



“Stealing my future”

D. is a 17-year-old boy. Since last year, he’s obliged by court to a 12-month sentence in a Institution. His parents told he was always a rebel and involved in trouble with other students and teachers at school. They say that at some point D. start stealing money from them, mainly to play videogames. D. is what they call a computer geek.

He has been interested in computers from being a young boy. The parents still remember when they arrived home to see their son with their computer open and D. cleaning the PC components inside. After that incident, he put their PC back together again and indeed it operates better now. Even though his parents know about D. abilities, not all teachers understand him. And now, after D. gained access to the Central Post Office website and stole cyber information, his parents have the sense that D. will give up school and get lost in his career path.

Acknowledgements



Pedro Rodrigues



Dr Marc Fabri

Marc is Reader in Participatory Design at Leeds Beckett University and co-lead for the DesignMyFuture project. He creates interactive tools for marginalised groups, championing involvement of end users in the design process. Marc has worked extensively with autistic university students on breaking down barriers to entering and succeeding in higher education.



Prof Mhairi Beaton

Mhairi C Beaton is a Professor in the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University and co-lead for the DesignMyFuture project. Mhairi's research interest focuses on the interface of teacher education, inclusion and student voice. She has led a number of international research projects which seek to improve educational provision for all young people.



We thank the following people for their helpful contributions and comments:

All young people, teachers, parents and carers who have participated in our surveys and shared their personal experiences, knowledge and advice.

Disclaimer

The DesignMyFuture Project (PICAP) is led by Leeds Beckett University. It has been co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union (Grant Reference 2019-1-UK01-KA201-061971). This publication reflects only the views of the authors. The European Commission and UK National Agency are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

References

Dweck, C. (2017). Mindset. Constable & Robinson.

Global Partnership for Education (2020) 21st century skills: What potential role for the Global Partnership for Education? Available from: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/21st-century-skills-what-potential-role-global-partnership-education>

<https://www.designthefuture.pt>

<http://www.iefp.pt>

<http://cdp.portodigital.pt/profissoes>

<http://www.dgjedc.min-edu.pt/ensinosecundario>

<http://anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx>

<http://www.dges.mctes.pt>

<http://www.universia.pt>

<http://juventude.gov.pt>

<http://www.cienciaviva.pt>

<http://www.voluntariado.pt>

<https://inspiring.future.pt>

<http://euroguidance.gov.pt/>