

Young people's experience of education and training from 15-24 years

A Report to the Scottish Government

September 2017



SQW

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Executive Summary

Introduction

SQW, in partnership with Young Scot, was commissioned by the Scottish Government to co-design and deliver research into young people's experience of the education and training system in Scotland.

Methodology and approach

There were four main stages involved in the study:

- **Document review** – a desk review of existing data, evidence and research pertaining to young people's experience of the education and learning system in Scotland was carried out to inform the research design.
- **Establishment of Insights Panel** – a panel of 12 young people aged between 17 and 23 was set up to co-design the research and provide input and guidance throughout.
- **Workshops** – a total of 14 three-hour long workshops were delivered during March and April 2017, engaging 145 young people aged 15-24 from across Scotland.
- **Insights Lab** – a one-day event was held in central Edinburgh in May 2017, which was attended by 45 young people and 11 policy officials from the Scottish Government.

The research was qualitative in nature, aimed at gaining **in-depth insights** into young people's experiences of the education and training system in Scotland. A total of **210** young people were engaged from a broad range of backgrounds. The depth of engagement was high, generating a combined total of **1,100** volunteer hours – an average of **five hours** per participant.

Review of existing evidence

A total of 15 documents were included within the desk review, most of which involved **primary research with young people** on their experiences of the Scottish education, skills and learning system. The majority of the studies were **small scale and qualitative in nature**, focussing on one particular geography or cohort of learners. A gap was identified in terms of **larger-scale studies that considered the experiences of all learners** within the Scottish education and learning system.

The key messages from the review of existing evidence were that:

- Young people's decisions about career pathways are **not taken in isolation** from wider social and cultural considerations.
- There is a need for **better integration** of the various elements of the education and learning system, and for learners to receive **appropriate advice and support at key points** in their journeys, to enable them to successfully navigate this.
- Young people with additional support needs, or who are facing other barriers to progression, require **intensive and tailored support** in order to make successful transitions.

Key findings: Young people's experiences of education and training

- Young people report a **strong focus on attainment and qualifications within schools**, to the neglect of wider development and support needs.
- This focus on attainment and qualifications was reported to be resulting in **high levels of stress and pressure on young people**, particularly during exam periods.
- The study found that poor attendance and low attainment were often the result of **personal and social issues**, such as mental and physical health problems, family breakdown, bereavement and caring responsibilities.
- The consensus was that educational institutions were not always well equipped to **deal with some of the external issues that young people might be facing** and which can hold them back from progressing in their learner journey.
- There is a perceived **lack of parity of esteem between academic and vocational career pathways**, with fewer options available to those who want to pursue technical subjects in the senior phase of secondary school, and an assumption that those who do well academically should go to university.
- Young people report the **benefits of working part-time (whilst studying)** in terms of developing 'soft' skills, but this can sometimes have a negative impact on attainment and coursework, as well as wider health and well-being.

Key findings: Decisions and transitions

- The first key decision point in young people's learner journeys is when they make subject choices in secondary school. These were reported to be based mainly on **things they enjoyed or were good at** rather than on a career plan.
- For young people planning to go to college or university, the decision of what stage to leave school is usually based on when they expect to have **achieved the qualifications required and secured a place**.
- There was reported to be good support available within schools to complete college and university application forms, but less adequate support available to help young people **decide for which subjects and courses to apply**.
- For those going on to college, apprenticeships or employment, decisions about the next steps are often based on **what is available locally at the time they are looking**.
- **Taking time out of formal education** can provide an opportunity for young people to think about what they want to do, travel, explore different options and develop their confidence. However, this is often **not a realistic or practical option** for those who are not being financially supported by their parents or who are in poverty.
- A lot of young people report **challenges securing full-time employment** and **negative early experiences of the world of work**, including insecure employment, zero hours contracts and poor pay and conditions.
- **Lack of work experience** was cited as one of the main barriers to employment facing young people leaving school, college or university.

Key findings: Influences

- **Parents** are key influencers on young people's career choices and learner journeys, both directly and indirectly.
- For disengaged young people with unstable family backgrounds, **grandparents can be a positive and stabilising influence**.
- **Friends** were also found to be a key influence young people's learner journeys, particularly those who were pursuing apprenticeships or other types of training.

- Young people's learner journeys are often influenced by **personal and social issues**, such as their own and family member's health problems, economic drivers (a need to earn money) and the skills and confidence gained through sports and other hobbies.
- Careers advisers were found to have had **most influence** on young people who were disengaged or at risk of disengagement.
- Career guidance was reported to work best for those who **know what they want to do and wanted to work in traditional occupations**, but is less effective for those who are not sure or looking to pursue opportunities in new and emerging industries.
- Most research participants said they would have liked **more contact with a careers adviser whilst at school**, particularly to help with subject choices.
- Work experience can have a **profound impact on career choices**, but young people report limited opportunities to access good quality placements.

Key findings: Ideas for change

A one-day event was organised to ask young people what they thought **need to change** to better enable young people to make effective decisions about life, learning and work. They were asked to consider **what would have made their own learner journey better** and voted on their **top priorities for change**.

The top five ideas for change were:

- **Review and redesign of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)** – so that it provides young people with the skills required to succeed in life. These include how to develop a CV and prepare for an interview, how to manage finances and how to develop and maintain healthy relationships. A secondary suggestion was that any review of PSHE be done in collaboration with young people themselves to ensure that it meets their needs.
- **Better links to additional support** – there was a reported lack of support within educational institutions to deal with some of the personal, social and health issues that young people might be facing. It was acknowledged that these institutions might not always be best placed to provide this support, but that teaching and support staff should be able to identify when young people are experiencing

problems and signpost them to the appropriate support. Getting the right support at the right time was identified as key to enabling young people who are facing these types of issues to continue to progress in their learner journey.

- **Coursework not exams** – it was suggested that educational institutions, particularly schools, consider shifting their emphasis from exams to coursework, with the perception being that coursework is much more aligned to the realities of working life. Young people do not always see the value in exams, described by some as “memory tests”, success at which does not necessarily equate with an ability to succeed in the real world. Less of a focus on exams would also reduce the intense pressure and stress faced by many young people during exam time.
- **Focus on ‘life skills’** – young people report that they often feel unprepared for life after school and that this can hold them back in their learner journey. For example, many who go to university have to cope with living independently (often in a new town or city) for the first time. If they are ill-prepared to do that, their learner journey will falter, regardless of how well they are doing academically. They suggest a need for a greater focus on developing the life skills required for them make successful transitions, particularly within the senior phase of school.
- **Overcoming bias of choices** – young people are aware of biases surrounding different post-school routes. University is positioned as the ‘gold standard’ for those who achieve well academically, with alternative options and routes rarely considered or discussed with this cohort. Vocational pathways, including apprenticeships and other types of training, were perceived as being a lesser option. Young people said that they would like to be given impartial information on all available pathways in order to make informed choices.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 SQW, in partnership with Young Scot, was commissioned by the Scottish Government to co-design and deliver research into young people's experience of the education and training system in Scotland. This document reports the findings from the study, including summary conclusions and recommendations.

Approach

- 1.2 The main stages involved in the study have been:
- **Document review** – a desk review of existing data, evidence and research pertaining to young people's experience of the education and learning system in Scotland was carried out to inform the research design
 - **Establishment of Insights Panel** – a panel of 12 young people aged between 17 and 23 was set up to co-design the research and provide input and guidance throughout
 - **Research design paper** – covering recruitment and sampling strategies, development of tools for the workshops with young people and the online task
 - **Communications and branding** – a plan for engaging stakeholders and partners in the study was developed, along with associated project branding and logo
 - **Workshops** – a total of 14 workshops were delivered during March and April 2017, engaging 145 young people aged 15-24 from across Scotland
 - **Analysis and synthesis of findings** – the key findings were reviewed and a coding framework developed and applied to the data gathered
 - **Draft report** – the first draft report of the findings from the workshops was submitted to the Scottish Government on 8 May 2017
 - **Insights Lab** – a one-day event was held in central Edinburgh on 25 May 2017, which was attended by 45 young people and 11 policy officials from the Scottish Government
 - **Final report** – the report was finalised based on the feedback received on the first draft and incorporating insights from the one-day event.

Document structure

1.3 The remainder of this document is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** reports on the headline messages from the review of existing evidence
- **Chapter 3** details the methodology and approach to delivering the fieldwork
- **Chapter 4** reports on young people's experiences of education and training
- **Chapter 5** considers key decision points and transitions
- **Chapter 6** discusses the main influences on young people's learner journeys
- **Chapter 7** reports on young people's ideas for change
- **Chapter 8** provides summary conclusions and recommendations.

2. Review of existing evidence

Chapter summary

- A desk review of **existing evidence** relating to post-15 learner journeys in Scotland was carried out.
- A total of 15 documents were included within the review, most of which involved **primary research with young people** on their experiences of the Scottish education, skills and learning system.
- Most of the studies were **small scale and qualitative in nature**, focussing on one particular geography or cohort of learners.
- A gap was identified in terms of larger-scale **studies that consider the experiences of all learners** within the Scottish education and learning system.
- The key messages from the existing evidence are that:
 - Young people's decisions about career pathways are **not taken in isolation** from wider social and cultural considerations.
 - There is a need for **better integration of the various elements of the 'system'** and for learners to receive appropriate advice and support at the right time in their journeys to enable them to navigate this.
 - Young people with additional support needs, or who are facing other barriers to progression, **require intensive and tailored support** in order to make successful transitions.

Introduction

- 2.1 A key aim for the study was that it **moved beyond what was already known about the issues and challenges within the post-15 learner journey in Scotland** to generate new insights and resultant policy and system implications. To this end, a **desk review of existing data, evidence and research** on the learner journey was carried out and this chapter reports on the headline messages from this. It begins with an overview of the approach taken to the review, followed by a summary of the key messages arising from this.

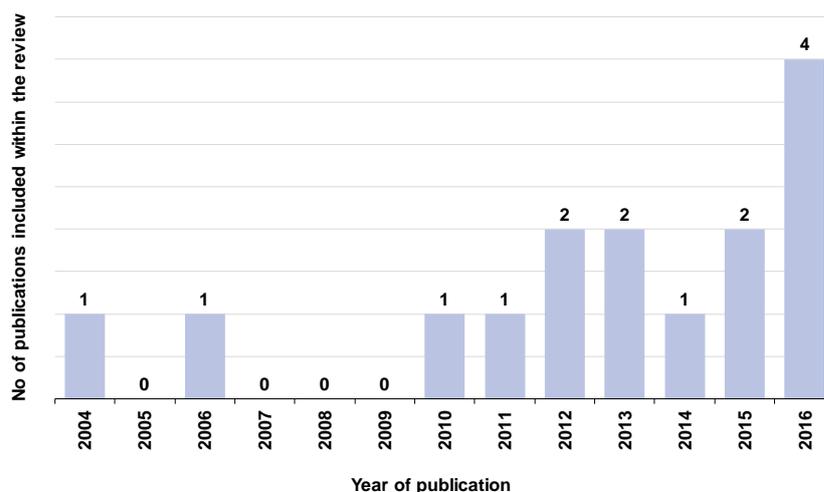
Approach

- 2.2 A total of **15 documents** were included within the desk review and these are listed in Annex A:. The majority were commissioned by public sector organisations with a remit in relation to the education and skills system in Scotland, or by third sector organisations representing the interests of particular cohorts of young people. They were sourced from a combination of online searches, references made within the brief for the study and publications that the study team were aware of from previous work.
- 2.3 A **standard template** was developed and applied to each of the documents included within the review to produce a series of short summaries. These were then synthesised to identify the findings of relevance to the current study.

Overview of the literature

- 2.4 The main focus for the review was on **studies carried out since 2010**, although a couple of relevant publications were included that dated further back (Figure 2-1). A lot has changed within the Scottish education and skills system over this period and this will need to be taken into account in the interpretation of the findings.
- 2.5 A general comment on the body of work is that it is **could be considered quite sparse** given the time period covered and the levels of investment that have gone into the education and skills system over this time.

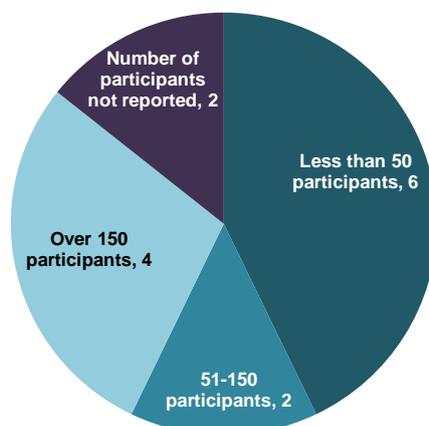
Figure 2-1: Publication dates of literature included within the review



Source: SQW Document Review
Base: 15 studies

- 2.6 All of the studies (with the exception of one) **involved primary research with young people on their experiences of the Scottish education, skills and learning system**. Figure 2-2 shows that most were quite small scale, with the majority engaging fewer than 150 young people.

Figure 2-2: Number of young people participating in the research



Source: SQW Document Review

Base: 14 studies that included primary research with young people in Scotland

- 2.7 Most of the smaller studies were **qualitative in nature**, focussing on a particular geography, institution or cohort of learners. The larger studies each involved **quantitative surveys**, but also focussed on one particular area, one type of learner journey or one cohort of young people. There is therefore a clear gap in the existing literature in terms of large-scale **studies that consider the experiences of all learners within the Scottish education and learning system**.

Key findings

Young people's decisions about career pathways are not taken in isolation from wider social and cultural considerations.

- 2.8 The migration and employment decisions taken by young people from rural areas are complex and interrelated. In particular, decisions relating to higher education and graduate destinations are **not made purely based on economic considerations** – a range of social and cultural factors also play a part. These include considerations such as the ability to keep a part-time job, the cost of travelling to and from university and the cost-effectiveness of living with friends or family after university. The literature also highlights the importance of **social and cultural proximity**, with the locations of family and

friends, in particular, exerting an influence both on choice of higher education and graduate destinations.

- 2.9 Young people from minority ethnic groups are **more likely to consider family and community expectations in their decision making** than those of white British backgrounds. In particular, such young people were found to have concerns about leaving home to follow different career pathways and were also concerned about having space to observe religious commitments whilst at college and university. The research suggests that inter-ethnic mixing is more likely to occur at secondary school than in further and higher education, partly due to the alcohol culture of college and university life, which can exclude some young people from ethnic minorities.
- 2.10 A **lack of parity of esteem between different qualifications and career pathways** was also highlighted in the literature as a social and cultural barrier for some young people in pursuing particular routes, particularly in relation to vocational pathways.

The evidence suggests a need for better integration of the various elements of the 'system' and the need for learners to receive appropriate advice and support at the right time in their journeys to enable them to navigate this.

- 2.11 The literature highlights the need for **clearer pathways to support businesses to develop the skills they needed for the future**, as well as a system which allowed for their meaningful input. It also highlights the need for learners to receive appropriate advice and support at the right time in their journeys to enable them to make informed and considered choices. Related to this, educators need clarity on the landscape of provision and support in strengthening relationships which allow for **collaboration with schools, businesses and agencies**.
- 2.12 The literature highlights a need for greater consistency in the **quality of support offered by schools in supporting transitions** and the extent to which employability is embedded within the curriculum. It also points to a need for colleges and universities to consider new approaches to embedding employability and to **review the support needs of each student during induction** to help mitigate the high drop-out rates of some cohorts (particularly those from deprived areas) during their first year of college or university.
- 2.13 The findings point to a need for a coherent source of advice and support to be made available to young people **before, during and after transitions**. It also suggests a need for better integration of the various elements of the 'system' to enable smoother transitions.

Young people with additional support needs, or who are facing other barriers to progression, require intensive and tailored support in order to make successful transitions.

- 2.14 As a group, care-experienced young people are **more likely to have poorer outcomes from the education and learning system** than their non-care-experienced counterparts. The literature found that most encounter challenges whilst in school and lack confidence in making post-school transitions. The evidence suggests that they require **intensive and individualised support in order to pursue their aspirations**. In this context, relationships can be seen as pivotal to providing a good service, particularly where the young person has had negative experiences of being let down by others.
- 2.15 Young people who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH), and who also come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, were found to be **exposed to more risks than their more advantaged peers** (who are also DHH). They were also reported as receiving less support in school and college and experience greater difficulties in obtaining well-paid work. When entering the labour market, those from disadvantaged backgrounds were found to be less confident, had limited work experience and a belief that their disability limited the range of jobs that they could do. This suggests that young people who have a disability, and who also come from a socially disadvantaged background, require **more intensive support in order to make successful transitions**.
- 2.16 Young people from deprived areas were identified as requiring **additional support for learning at school** through things like classroom support, homework clubs and supported study. The provision of **additional support for learning in out of school settings (including home)** was also identified as offering the potential to improve the attainment of young people experiencing poverty. This included supporting students' use of (and access to) computers and the internet. Interventions aimed at **fostering positive attitudes and behaviours** were also identified as having the potential to improve outcomes for this cohort.
- 2.17 The evidence suggests that there are **no quick-fix solutions** to the problems of young people who are socially and /or economically disengaged. These problems are often wide-ranging and can include housing, family and health issues. In some cases, they can also be associated with drugs, alcohol and offending behaviour. These are not issues that can be dealt with wholly in the education or learning sector, suggesting that a **holistic approach** is required to improve the outcomes and life chances for this group. Youth workers were identified as being able to develop the kind of close, supportive relationships

with disengaged young people that can be difficult to develop in secondary schools.

- 2.18 Young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) were found to need **individualised and person-centred support** to ensure that their specific needs are recognised and met. The evidence suggests a need for more choices in terms of the **range of alternative provision** open to young people who are repeatedly excluded from school.

3. Methodology and approach

Introduction

3.1 This chapter details the main stages involved in the design and delivery of the research covering:

- Establishing the Insights Panel
- Research design
- Project branding and communications
- Delivery of the workshops
- Online task
- Analysis and synthesis of results
- Insights Lab
- Total participation and engagement.

Establishing the Insights Panel

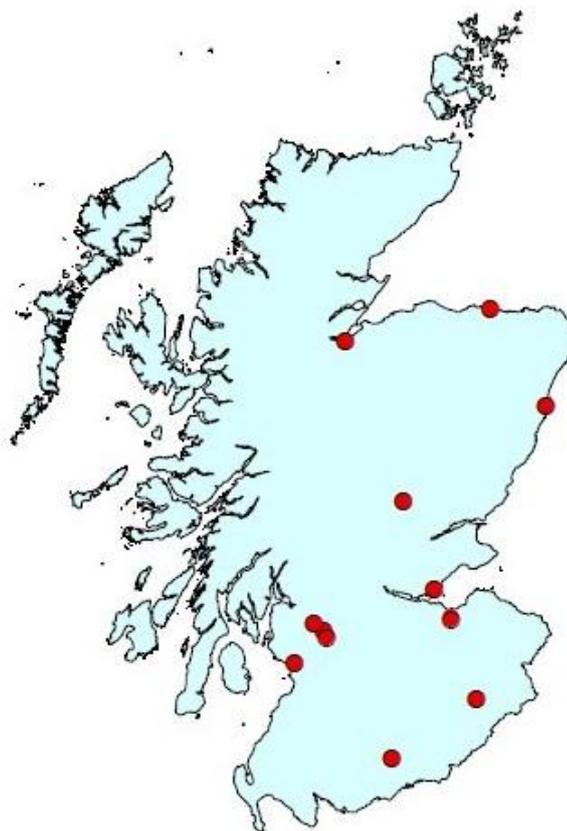


- 3.2 An **Insight Panel** made up of 12 young people aged between 17 and 23 was established to co-design the research and provide input and guidance to the SQW / Young Scot team at key points throughout the study. This section provides an overview of the profile of the Insights Panel and their role in supporting the study.

The Insights Panel was made up of young people from across Scotland, with representation from both urban and rural areas.

- 3.3 Figure 3-1 shows the distribution of Insights Panel members across Scotland. It shows that around half were from in and around the central belt (mainly Edinburgh and Glasgow) and the remainder were spread across the North and South of the country¹.

Figure 3-1: Location of Insights Panel members



Source: Produced by SQW 2017. Licence 100030994
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Contains National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right [2016]

¹ See Annex B: for full details of Insight Panel members home town / area, demographics and education / employment status.

The Insights Panel was made up of young people from a range of different backgrounds and learner journeys.

3.4 It would not have been possible for the Insights Panel to be fully representative of all young people in the 15-24 age range. However, the intention had been to ensure broad representation from a range of different backgrounds and learner journeys. Figure 3-2 provides an overview of the profile of the panel in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and education / employment status, demonstrating the balance of gender, and the predominance of young people over the age of 18, all of whom would have made some transitions.

Figure 3-2: Demographics of the Insights Panel



Source: Insights Panel Equality and Diversity Monitoring Forms

Most Insights Panel members had previous experience of co-design projects.

3.5 The timescales for the study meant that it was not possible to take an open recruitment approach to the Insights Panel. Members were recruited, therefore, via **Young Scots' existing networks and contacts**. The majority

had been involved in co-design projects in the past and therefore had an understanding of the process, which meant that they were able to contribute immediately.

- 3.6 Several members of the Insights Panel were active across a number of youth engagement fora and could therefore be considered very 'engaged'. However, most had also faced **issues, challenges and barriers** in their lives and learner journeys and brought insights into approaches that might / might not work for less engaged groups.

The Insights Panel provided input and guidance throughout the study.

- **First meeting** – the first meeting of the Insights Panel took place over a residential weekend in January 2017. The focus for the first session was on the development of the research tools to be used in the workshops.
- **Basecamp** – to enable ongoing communication and engagement throughout the project, an online platform was established using [Basecamp](#). This was used to share the final research tools, update the Panel on workshop dates and locations and confirm arrangements for future meetings.
- **Second meeting** – the meeting in February 2017 focused on finalising the research tools for the workshops and creating an introductory video featuring Insights Panel members. This video was played at the start of each workshop.
- **Delivery** – Panel members were made aware of each workshop and were welcome to attend and assist with facilitation. Workshops in Dumfries and the Borders were organised and co-facilitated by Insight Panel members.
- **Moderation of findings and agreement on key messages** – the Insights Panel met again in April 2017 to review the data and materials gathered from the workshops and to discuss and agree on the themes emerging from these. They were given an introductory tutorial to qualitative data analysis, before being tasked with creating a coding framework for the next stage of analysis.

Research design

- **Quotas** – a series of quotas relating to the profile of workshop participants were developed based on analysis of demographic information for the age group and the findings from the document review.
- **Research tools** – the plan for the workshops, including the research tools, were co-designed with the Insight Panel. The three-hour workshop session plan that was used can be found in Annex C:.

Figure 3-3: Worksheets for participants to show their learner journey

_____'S LEARNER JOURNEY. AGE _____ COMPLETED ON _____. CONSIDER THE KEY MOMENTS IN THE PAST, MORE RECENT STORIES AND THE FUTURE TOO.

NAME: _____

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNER JOURNEY. PICK OUT KEY MOMENTS AND DIG DEEPER UNDER THE AREAS BELOW. DRAW A LINE FROM YOUR JOURNEY TO JOIN THE INFO UP.

DECISIONS

INFLUENCERS

BAD EXPERIENCES

GOOD EXPERIENCES

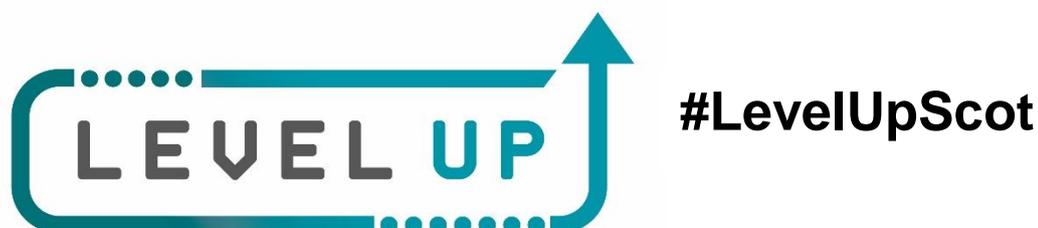
IDEAS FOR CHANGE

LEVEL UP

LEVEL UP

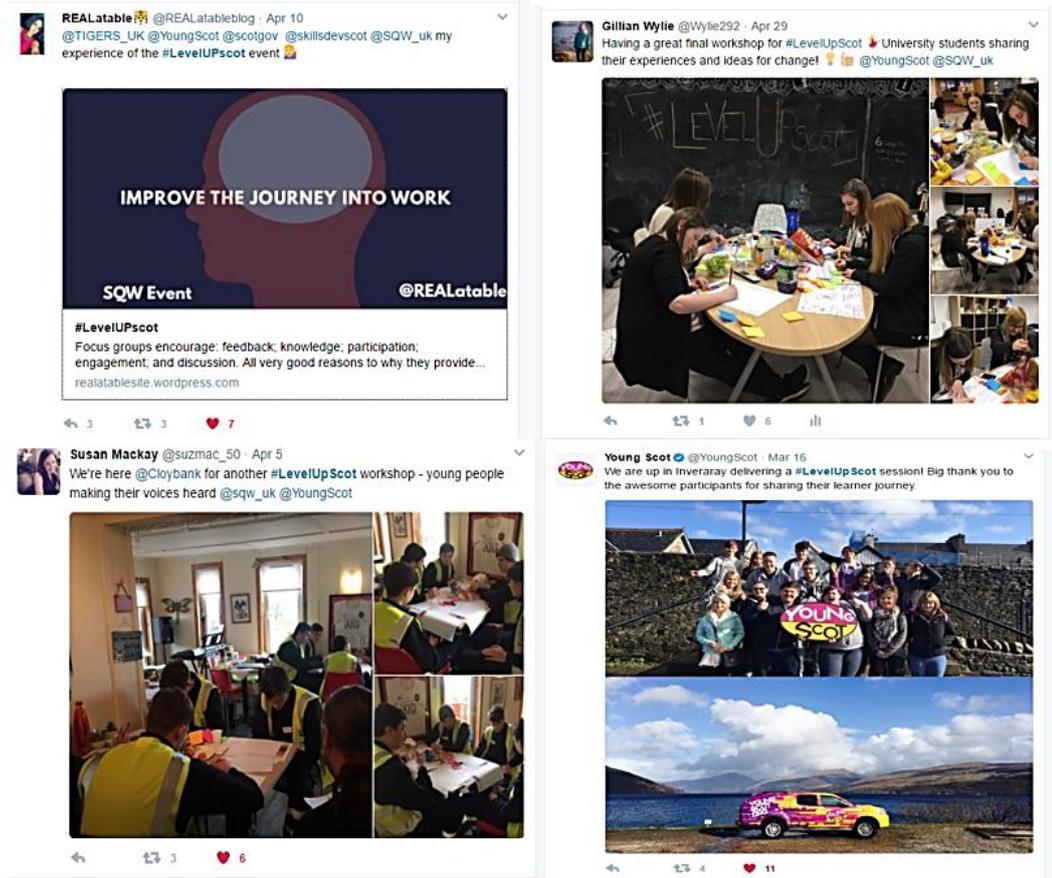
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Project branding and communications



The project was given the title LevelUp. The logo and hashtag above were used in all communications relating to the project.

- 3.7 **LevelUP** was based on a gaming reference, with the suggestion being that you complete each level of your learner journey before progressing / unlocking access to the next. It also incorporated the concept of **equality of opportunity** (i.e. by 'levelling up' the playing field) and the idea that you can 'reboot' or restart your learner journey at different times. The hashtag #LevelUpScot was used on all **social media communications** relating to the project. The hashtag had a lively Twitter feed, which could be viewed without the need for a Twitter account. Workshop participants contributed to this, with one writing about her experience in an online [blog](#).



Delivery of the workshops



SQW, Young Scot and the Insight Panel's networks of contacts were used to engage stakeholders and recruit workshop participants.

- 3.8 An email communication was issued to partners and stakeholders providing an overview of the study and an invitation for the young people with whom they were working to participate in the workshops; these were followed up with phone calls. Levels of engagement were mixed, with a **noticeable lack of engagement from universities** but high levels of engagement from **employability training programmes**.

A total of 14 workshops were delivered across Scotland, engaging 145 young people aged 15-24.

- 3.9 The demographic profile of workshop participants is outlined in Annex D. An above average proportion were in the younger age groups, due to the challenges experienced in engaging university students and those in employment, who tend to be older than those on training programmes. A relatively high proportion of participants reported having a disability, with 12 per cent having some form of mental health condition. Representation from BME and care-experienced groups were in line with the population as a whole.

Online task

Young people were able to contribute to the study via an online task, however engagement with this was lower than anticipated.

- 3.10 An online task was set up to provide an alternative option for young people to participate in the study, particularly those who were unable to attend any of the workshops. It was designed as a single, open question with several prompts for young people to think about (see Figure 3-4).

Figure 3-4: LevelUP Online task

Share your learner journey! In doing this, you may want to think about:

1. What have been the key stages in your journey?
2. What big decisions have you had to make?
3. What support have you received to help plan and navigate your journey?
4. What have been the main influences on your journey, both positive and negative?
5. What (if anything) would have made your journey better?

- 3.11 The online task was posted on the Young Scot website and promoted to Young Scot Reward Card holders. It was also circulated to stakeholders working with young people in the target age range, including those who were unable to participate in the workshops. A total of **30 responses** were received, from which the relevant responses were combined with the notes from the workshops and included within the analysis.

Analysis and synthesis of the results

A moderation meeting with the Insights Panel was held to discuss and agree on the emerging themes from the workshops.

- 3.12 For each workshop, a 'hot report' of headline messages was produced within three days of the event, followed by a fuller write-up of the main discussion points. These documents, alongside the raw materials produced by workshop participants, were reviewed by the Insights Panel with a view to identifying emerging themes. These were used as the basis of a **coding framework** for the analysis and interpretation of the results.



Insights Lab

- 3.13 A one-day event ("**Insights Lab**") was held in central Edinburgh on 25 May 2017. The event was attended by 45 young people² and 11 policy officials from the Scottish Government. The aim of the event was to **bring together**

² See Annex E for an overview of the profile of the young people who attended the event.

policy officials working on the Learner Journey review with young people to explore the support available to them to make decisions about their future and to progress in their learner journey.

- 3.14 The young people participated in **two workshop sessions with policy officials**, during which they were invited to share their own learner journey experiences and to reflect on what was working well, what was not working or could be improved, and their ideas for change. In the final session, the ideas from the two workshop sessions were collated to provide overall suggestions for change from the day. These were then voted on by the young people to identify their **top priorities for change**.

Total participation and engagement

Over 200 young people participated in the research, contributing a total of 1,100 volunteer hours.

- 3.15 Research participants include Insight Panel members (12), workshop participants (145), those who completed the online task (30) and attendees at the Insights Lab (45). Taking account of those who participated in more than one activity, this resulted in a total of **210 unique research participants**. The depth of engagement was high across all of the activities (with the exception of the online task) generating a combined total of 1,100 volunteer hours – **an average of five hours per participant**.
- 3.16 The study was qualitative in nature, aimed at gaining **in-depth insights** into the learner journey as it is experienced by young people in Scotland. As noted above, participants contributed an average of **five hours each** to the study. It would not have been possible to achieve this depth of engagement, whilst also attaining a sample that was fully representative of all young people in Scotland. However, the profile of participants (see Annex D and Annex E) shows that young people from **a broad range of backgrounds** were included within the study.
- 3.17 A recent academic study³ found that 80% of the key themes from qualitative research are discoverable within three focus group sessions, and that 90% are discoverable within three to six focus groups. The fieldwork phase of the current study involved 14 three-hour workshops and a one-day event. **We are therefore confident that the themes emerging from this represent an accurate representation of young people's experiences of the education and training system in Scotland.**

³ Guest, et al. (2017) *How Many Focus Groups Are Enough? Building an Evidence Base for Nonprobability Sample Sizes*. Field Methods, Vol 29, Issue 1, 2017.

4. Key findings: Young people's experiences of education and training

Chapter Summary

- Young people report a **strong focus on attainment and qualifications** within schools, to the neglect of wider development and support needs.
- This focus on attainment and qualifications was reported to be resulting in **high levels of stress and pressure on young people**, particularly during exam periods.
- The study found that poor attendance and low attainment were often the result of **personal and social issues**, such as mental and physical health problems, family breakdown, bereavement and caring responsibilities.
- The consensus was that educational institutions were **not always well equipped to deal with some of the external issues that young people might be facing** and which can hold them back from progressing in their learner journey.
- There is a perceived **lack of parity of esteem** between academic and vocational career pathways, with fewer options available to those who want to pursue technical subjects in the senior phase of secondary school, and an assumption that those who do well academically should go to university.
- Young people report the **benefits of working part-time (whilst studying)** in terms of developing 'soft' skills, but this can sometimes have a negative impact on attainment and coursework, as well as wider health and well-being.

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter reports on young people's experiences of the education and training system in Scotland covering experiences of school, academic versus vocational pathways, developing life skills and experiences of employment.

Experiences of school

Young people report a strong focus on attainment and qualifications within schools, sometimes to the neglect of wider development and support needs.

- 4.2 A clear and consistent message from across all 14 workshops was that the latter stages of secondary school (from S4 onwards) are characterised by a **strong focus on school performance**, as measured by attainment and qualifications. This was sometimes felt to be at the expense of individual learning, development and support needs, including preparation for life after school.
- 4.3 The focus on attainment and qualifications was reported to be resulting in **high levels of stress and pressure on young people**, particularly during exam periods (which is when the workshops were carried out). Young people noted that this had an adverse effect on those who are less academically able, as grades are perceived to be the only measure of their 'worth' within a school context. It was also said to have an impact on those who are expected to do well as they feel the **pressure of expectation**, compounded by a belief that the grades they achieve will determine the course of the rest of their lives.

"When I was younger, I had time to enjoy life, make memories and live life like how it should be. I now feel the stress and pressure of expectation to do well in school. There is no time for enjoyment, no time to relax." **Rohan, aged 16.**

Alongside the focus on grades and qualifications, there was a reported lack of support within schools to tackle the root causes of poor attendance and low attainment.

- 4.4 The findings from the workshops suggest that poor attendance and low attainment were often the result of personal and social issues, such as mental and physical health problems, family breakdown, bereavement, bullying and caring responsibilities. The most commonly reported approach to addressing low attainment was for schools to encourage pupils to **drop certain subjects or to leave school altogether**, often midway through the academic year and sometimes against their will.

"When I became a young carer, I got told that my only option was to leave school. They never told me about any support for when I left." **Tamara, aged 17.**

"They wanted me to leave school... it's easier than helping." **Michael, aged 23.**

"I struggled a lot at school with having dyslexia and never really learned anything. The school said themselves that it would be better for me to leave." **Tay, aged 18.**

"I was told that I had achieved my potential in my subjects and that I had to leave." **Ciaran, aged 18.**

"I loved music and it was the only class I was interested in. My school made me drop it because of my mental health. I gave up after that. I didn't see the point. I spent 11 months sitting in the support base not doing anything before leaving."
Jenna, aged 17.

- 4.5 There were notable exceptions to these examples, where young people reported having received '**fantastic support**' and **encouragement from guidance and / or learning and development staff**, who were often reported to be acting as advocates for the young people they were working with. However, the general consensus was that schools are **not well equipped to deal with some of the external issues that young people might be facing**. In some cases, only minor adaptations would be required in order to address some of these issues, such as sitting exams in a quiet room or being able to have a mobile phone in class in case an issue arises at home.

Parity of esteem

There is a perceived lack of parity of esteem between academic and vocational pathways and an assumption that those who achieve well academically should go to university.

- 4.6 A consistent message from the workshops was that **schools view university as the top destination for leavers**, with college being the preferred second choice. This ties in with the focus on attainment and qualifications, with a perception that the 'ideal' pathway is to achieve good grades and then go to university. This was reported to be particularly true of 'high performing' schools – that is, schools at the top of league tables and from which an above average proportion of leavers go to university.
- 4.7 There is an assumption that leavers in the top cohort in terms of grades and attainment will go to university and this route was reported to be **heavily promoted** within schools. Alternative options, including vocational and technical routes, were rarely discussed with this group. Several workshop participants spoke of a "**stigma**" **associated with apprenticeships**, based on a perception that they are for those who are less able.

Caitlin, aged 23, Modern Apprentice

Caitlin did well in her exams at school and enrolled on a university course in Events and Marketing Management. After graduating with an Honours Degree, she struggled to get a graduate job in her field, which was having a negative impact on her mental health. After two years, Caitlin secured a Modern Apprenticeship (MA) in Digital Marketing which she is thoroughly enjoying. With hindsight, she wishes she had gone straight into her MA after leaving school, but at the time she didn't think the programme was for "someone like her" (i.e. someone academic). Caitlin wants to change the perception that apprenticeships are a lesser option than university or college.

- 4.10 Several workshop participants reported **feeling pressure to go to university** from schools even when they felt that it was not right for them. This sometimes resulted in them starting university and then dropping out, or having to go against the advice of the school to pursue alternative routes.

"I left school to do sports development at university. I didn't enjoy it and wanted to make money so I left. I eventually found a job as a trainee estimator, but I hated it and so I had to leave. I am now in the second year of my apprenticeship and am finally doing something that I enjoy." **Ewan, aged 21.**

"I decided I wanted to become a civil engineer. My school organised two work experience placements for me in fifth year, which confirmed my decision. I did Advanced Higher Graphics, but didn't want to go to university (as was being suggested by my school) and so went to college instead. After college, I still didn't feel ready for university and so went to Cambodia to volunteer for three months. I still wasn't ready for university and didn't know what type of civil engineering I wanted to do. I moved to Milan for a year to do au pair work and learn Italian. I came back and started an engineering apprenticeship. I'm really enjoying it and feel that it was the right decision for me." **Gemma, aged 22.**

- 4.11 Young people report **more focus and attention** being paid within schools to those who were planning to go to college or university. This includes support to research and select courses, complete application forms and attend open days. There is much less guidance and support available to those who want to pursue other routes, including employment and apprenticeships.

There are limited options available to those who want to pursue technical subjects in the senior phase of secondary school.

- 4.12 The senior phase of secondary school was reported by many workshop participants to be **geared towards preparing people for university or college**, with a strong focus on academic subjects and relatively few options available to those who were looking to pursue more technical and vocational routes. Some workshop participants commented that they would have been **motivated to stay in school for longer** if there had been a greater range of subject choices that they were interested.

“I worked hard on my Craft and Design Intermediate 2, but I couldn't take the Higher course due to a lack of teachers for the technical department. I was also unable to pursue Higher engineering or wood and metal for the same reason. My final two years of school were horrible due to personal reasons and being unable to do the subjects that interested me and that I was good at.” **Sophie, aged 19.**

“I did woodworking for three years and wanted to continue with this, but was told that I couldn't as I had gone as far as I could with it. I was advised to take Higher Graphic Communication instead, but struggled with it as I hadn't done it before and the others in the class had been doing it for much longer.” **David, aged 19.**

“There should be more options for different types of learners. Some people are more practical and creative / visual. School is all about writing. Sitting in classrooms and listening to teachers.” **Ashleigh, aged 20.**

- 4.13 One option that has been made available recently in some areas is Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs), which offer students **work-based learning opportunities** during the senior phase. One workshop participant started a two-year FA in fifth year. However, whilst they enjoyed it, they struggled with the other subjects that they were taking (Higher maths and physics) and so ended up leaving before the end of the first year.

Developing life skills

Many young people report feeling ill-prepared for life after school.

- 4.14 The focus on attainment has created a perception amongst some young people that schools are simply teaching them “**how to pass exams**” rather than how to think for themselves, use initiative, solve problems and work in teams. Thus, many report feeling **ill-prepared for life after school**, regardless of what they had achieved (or were expected to achieve)

academically. Many called for **more of a focus on coursework** within school, as this was felt to be a better representation of working life.

- 4.15 Schools were described as offering a **safe and protected environment** for young people, with minimal exposure to 'real-life' issues and challenges. Thus, many young people describe the experience of leaving school as 'stepping into the unknown'. Many report feeling that they **lacked basic life skills** such as how to set up a bank account; how to read a pay slip; how to live on their own; and how to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Most of the young people who participated in the workshops said that they would have liked **more advice and guidance on these types of issues at school** to prepare them better for the next stage. This issue came up in each of the workshops, but was a particular point of discussion amongst those from more disadvantaged backgrounds, who may have had limited support to develop these types of life skills at home.

Young people report the benefits of working part-time whilst studying in terms of developing 'soft' skills, but this can sometimes have a negative impact on coursework, as well as wider health and well-being.

- 4.16 Many of the young people that participated in the workshops had done (or were doing) part-time work whilst at school, college or university. Most reported positive benefits of this in terms of **developing 'soft skills'** such as timekeeping, communication, team work and following instructions. For those that had since moved into full-time employment, they felt that this experience had resulted in them being **better prepared for working life**.
- 4.17 For some, particularly those who were still at school, part-time work was a source of extra money to pay for luxuries. However, for others, it was an **essential source of income** – they would not be able to continue their studies without it. In these cases, working too many hours was sometimes reported to be having a **negative impact on attainment and coursework**, resulting in high levels of stress.

"University is my future, but work pays the rent. I can't do everything... something has to give." **Michael, aged 23.**

- 4.18 The National Minimum Wage for apprentices in Scotland is £3.40 per hour. However, the rates paid are **highly variable** depending on the employer and the industry. One of the workshop participants was doing a full-time Modern Apprenticeship, whilst also holding down two part-time jobs. This meant that she was working **over 70 hours per week** and her coursework was suffering. At one point, she was hospitalised with exhaustion.

“The money you get for doing an MA is not enough to live, to run a car. I'm hoping that it will benefit me in the long run but in the meantime, I need to do extra jobs to survive.” **Caitlin, aged 20.**

5. Key findings: Decisions and transitions

Chapter summary

- The first key decision point in young people's learner journeys is when they make subject choices in secondary school. These were reported to be **based mainly on things they enjoyed or were good at** rather than a career plan.
- For young people planning to go to college or university, the decision of what stage to leave school is usually based on when they expect to have **achieved the qualifications required and secured a place**.
- There was reported to be good support available within schools to **complete college and university application forms**, but less adequate support available to help young people **decide for which subjects and courses to apply**.
- For those going on to college, apprenticeships or employment, decisions about the next steps are often based on **what is available locally at the time they are looking**.
- **Taking time out of formal education** can provide an opportunity for young people to think about what they want to do, travel, explore different options and develop their confidence. However, this is often not a realistic or practical option for those who are **not being financially supported by their parents or who are in poverty**.
- A lot of young people report **challenges securing full-time employment** and **negative early experiences of the world of work**, including insecure employment, zero hours contracts and poor pay and conditions.

Introduction

- 5.1 This section considers the key decision points in young people's learner journeys and the support available to help them navigate and transition between each stage covering subject choices, leaving school, first destinations, transitioning to the next stage and moving into employment.

Subject choices

The first key decision point in young people's learner journeys is when they make subject choices in secondary school.

- 5.2 Most of the young people participating in the workshops made their first set of subject choices in second year of high school (aged 13/14), which determined the subjects they would be taking for the next two years. In most cases, decisions were reported to have been based on **things that they enjoyed or were good at**, rather than on a career plan.
- 5.3 The next set of subject choices come in fourth year, when young people select which subjects to study in fifth and potentially also sixth year. These usually (but not always) involve **progressing a selection of subjects taken in fourth year to a more advanced level**. There were a couple of examples provided of where young people had selected subjects that they had not studied previously at this stage, but this often proved challenging as they lacked a basic grounding in the subject and felt behind the rest of the class.
- 5.4 The subject options available to young people to take during fifth and sixth year was cited by some participants as a positive feature of the Scottish education system as it enables them to **"keep their options open"** with the potential to study up to ten subjects over the two years. Related to this, some reported that sixth year offered a **second chance** to those who do not get the grades they are expecting (or hoping for) in fifth year. However, others felt that the continued focus on school subjects and exams in the final two years of school was **too inflexible** and that there needs to be a greater range of options available to help **prepare them for the next stage**.

Young people would like more time and support for subject choices, including guidance on the implications of different choices on career options.

- 5.5 Several workshop participants said that they would have liked **more time to make subject choices** as the process often felt rushed. This was particularly true for young people suffering from anxiety or other mental health conditions, who were more likely to worry about making the right decision. They would also have liked more detailed advice and guidance on the **implications of these choices** on what they would be able to do next, including information on what jobs are related to which subjects.

"It would have been good to have more time to choose my subjects – it all felt very rushed." **Christian, aged 17.**

“It would have been good to know about college courses and entry requirements before making my subject choices.”

Donna, aged 19.

- 5.6 Some young people reported a tension between choosing subjects that they enjoyed versus those offering better career opportunities. For example, workshop participants reported a **strong push on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects within schools**, even in cases when they were not a good fit for an individuals' skills and interests. This was said to be resulting in some young people selecting STEM subjects, but then dropping them midway through the academic year. In other cases, young people had to go against the wishes of the school in order to pursue the subjects in which they were interested. Related to this, several young people cited the need to be **pro-active, resilient and determined** as being key to progressing successfully in their learner journey.

“I decided to study advanced music in sixth year (piano and bass guitar) rather than science as this was my interest.”

Megan, aged 20.

- 5.7 The **online resources** available to young people to help inform subject choices (including My World of Work and Planit Plus) were reported as being **informative and useful** by several participants who had gone (or were planning to go) to university or who had a clear idea about what they wanted to do. They were referenced **much less frequently** by those who were pursuing other pathways or who were unsure about what they wanted to do. Of those that found them useful, most said that they would have also have liked the opportunity to discuss their options with someone who was **knowledgeable about the career pathway that they were looking to pursue**.

Leaving school

For young people planning to go to college or university, the decision of what stage to leave school is usually based on when they expect to have achieved the qualifications required and secured a place.

- 5.8 Most of the young people who had gone (or were planning to go) to university reported **knowing from a young age** that this was the route they wanted to go on. As referenced elsewhere in this report, this was **often not a conscious decision** – it was assumed by teachers and careers advisers that they would go to university if they performed well academically. Feedback on the **application process** for university was very positive. The UCAS system was described as **straightforward, clear and easy to navigate**. Schools

were also reported to be very familiar with the system, meaning that they are able to offer guidance and support to young people with this.

- 5.9 College was viewed as the **preferred secondary option** for those who did not meet the conditions to go to university immediately on leaving school, sometimes with a view to getting the required qualifications to enable them to progress to university later. Related to this, several participants cited **good links between colleges and universities** as having helped them to progress in their learner journey. Apprenticeship opportunities were reported as being **very rarely discussed** with those who chose to stay in school past fourth year, with the assumption being that they were on a university pathway (either directly or through college).
- 5.10 College was also reported as being the preferred option presented to those who wanted to **leave school before the end of the senior phase**. Several workshop participants reporting being 'forced' to complete college application forms before being 'allowed' to leave school, despite making it clear that they had no intention of taking a place if successful. This experience was widespread and came up in **all of the workshops** involving young people who had left school before the end of the senior phase.

For those going to university, course choices were usually based on personal interests and subjects that young people enjoyed rather than a long-term career plan.

- 5.11 Feedback from the workshops suggests that there is a lot of support available within schools to complete college and university application forms, including personal statements. However, there seemed to be less adequate support available to help young people **decide which subjects and courses to apply for** and the advice that is provided is sometimes at odds with what young people want to do.

Kerri, aged 24, University Student

Kerri was identified by her school as someone who would do well in science and the school expected her to continue studying this at university. However, Kerri hated the subject and preferred arts and humanities. She made the decision to study history at university – a decision that was against the wishes of her school. She explained that the school was “shocked” that she applied to study history. She is happy with her decision, but recognises that it required extra effort and courage on her part to go against the school and study a subject that she enjoyed.

- 5.12 Young people reported feeling that it was important to choose subjects that they were going to like given that they could be studying them for up to four years. At this stage, most were not thinking about what opportunities will be open to them at the end – that still felt too far in the future. In this way, university was a means of **deferring entry to the labour market** and decisions relating to this.

Rebecca, 24, PhD student

Rebecca always knew that she wanted to go to university, but struggled to decide what to study and what classes to take when she got there. She decided to study psychology simply because it looked interesting (she had no experience of studying the subject before applying). As it turns out, Rebecca enjoyed the subject and has continued to study it at postgraduate level – she is now completing a PhD in psychology. Although the subject choice worked out well for her, she recognises that it was not an informed choice.

- 5.13 The main exceptions to this are when young people have a **fixed idea about exactly the type of job they want to do** and the routes into this are clear and easy to navigate. These are usually **traditional occupations and professions** with well-established career pathways.

Abby, 15, School Pupil

Abby wants to be a dentist when she is older. She selected subjects for her National 5 exams based on the entry requirements for the course. She excels at school and achieved high marks in her prelims, which she hopes she can maintain in the final exams in May. She plans to study Highers and Advanced Highers in 6th year before going to Dundee University to study dentistry.

For young people pursuing more technical or vocational routes, decisions are often based on what is available locally at the time they are looking.

- 5.14 Most young people pursuing technical or vocational routes after school tend to make decisions based the **options that are available locally**. These tend to be short-term and transient – something to do now – rather than as part of a career plan or a stepping stone towards a goal. This can lead to a series of 'false starts' before they manage to settle on something that they enjoy.

"I attended college for a year training to be a chef. It turns out the industry wasn't for me. I then worked in several jobs – in a restaurant, a call centre and then for a landscaping company. I have now applied to be a funeral arranger, but have also applied for an MA in Carpentry and Joinery. I have wasted so much time since leaving school not knowing what I wanted to do and chopping and changing my mind." **Abbie, aged 19.**

"I left school at 15 to go to work in a hairdresser. I didn't like it and started looking at college courses to get into childcare. With help from my old guidance teacher (who gave me a recommendation), I got a place on a Level 2 Introduction to Caring for Children and the Elderly. However, I was frustrated that I was mainly learning about caring for the elderly and not children. I left after 8 months as I didn't feel it was benefiting me. I decided that I would like to get into working in retail and got a Level 2 qualification working in a charity shop, where I still volunteer now and again. I did this for two years and completed my apprenticeship. After this, I still had a desire to work with children and applied for a childcare apprenticeship. I am now in my second year and am enjoying it." **Megan, aged 20.**

Taking time out of formal education can help young people to think about what they want to do, travel, explore different options and develop their wider skills and confidence.

- 5.15 A small number of workshop participants reported that they had delayed the decision of what to do next by taking time out of formal education. In all cases, this was reported to have had a **positive impact**, both on their personal and social development and in helping them to decide on the next steps.

"I took a year out after school to deal with my health issues. After this, I was ready to focus on what I wanted to do next." **Ashleigh, aged 20.**

"After college, I didn't feel ready for university and so went to Cambodia to volunteer for three months. I still wasn't ready for university and didn't know what I wanted to do. I moved to Milan for a year to do au pair work and learn Italian. I came back and started an engineering apprenticeship.... Taking the time out helped me to make the right decision for me." **Gemma, aged 22.**

"I want to go to university, but I'm not sure what to study. I chose science, but then changed to humanities. I have deferred entry to university for a year to take a scholarship in

China. This will give me more time to make my decision.”
Ana, aged 17.

“Going travelling is the best thing I have done in my life.”
Kirsty, aged 24.

- 5.16 As part of the ice-breaker task as the start of each workshop, participants were asked to write down something that they wanted to do in life. The most common response across all of the workshops was to **“travel the world”**. This suggests that many young people would welcome the opportunity to take time out of the ‘system’ to have new experiences. However, this is **not a practical or realistic option** for most young people who are not being financially supported by their parents or who are in poverty.

Transitioning to the next stage

When young people are approaching the end of their first destination from school, there are more decisions to be made about what to do next.

- 5.17 For young people completing apprenticeships, there is an assumption is that they will **continue in the same occupation or industry** having achieved industry-recognised qualifications and experience. However, this is far from guaranteed and many of the workshop participants reported that they had changed course at the end of their apprenticeship and decided to pursue other options. Again, this was often driven by the opportunities that were available locally at the time.
- 5.18 As referenced earlier in this report, a lot of young people who go to university defer consideration of labour market options until the **latter stages of their degree**. The exceptions to this are those who have a clear idea of what they want to do from the outset of their course. The sample of young people who had completed a degree was small, but most said that their exploration of options for what to do next was **self-directed rather than guided by university teaching or careers staff**. However, at least one participant described the support they had received through the university careers centre as being ‘very helpful’.
- 5.19 For the young people that participated in the workshops, college was often viewed as a **‘stepping stone’** to other destinations. For example, it is often used by young people to ‘top-up’ the qualifications required for entry to university or apprenticeships. It is also used to get the qualifications required for particular jobs. In these cases, the desired next steps are clear, but are dependent on the opportunities being available.

- 5.20 In some cases, completion of a college course can enable entry to second year of university. However, a couple of the workshop participants reported that, when presented with that option, they chose not to take it. The reasons related to concern that they might find themselves **behind the rest of the class** on core subjects, and that **missing out on the social elements of first year** (such as freshers' week) would make it harder for them to fit in and make friends.

Moving into employment

A lot of young people find it difficult to get full-time employment and many report negative early experiences of the world of work.

- 5.21 The challenges faced by young people trying to secure full-time employment was a key topic of discussion during the workshops. Many participants' early experiences of the world of work were negative, with some reporting that they felt they had been (or were being) **exploited or unfairly treated by employers**. Examples included not being paid what they had been promised, not being given holiday pay, being made redundant with little or no notice or explanation and extended work experience placements with no guarantee of a job at the end. Zero hours' contracts were also prevalent amongst this age group, which make it difficult to make financial plans or live independently.

Erin, aged 18, Unemployed

Erin left school at 16 and got a job straight away in retail. He loved his job and was good at it, achieving all of his sales targets and getting on well with customers. Erin was given a lot of responsibility and was pleased at being trusted enough to have a set of keys for the shop. However, the business was not doing well and he was made redundant. Since then, he has had a few short-term and zero hours contracts, but has been unable to find secure employment. He misses work and having a routine.

Lack of work experience is a key barrier to young people getting jobs.

- 5.24 Young people on employability programmes, or not in employment, education or training, were sometimes submitting **upwards of 30 job applications per week** and not hearing anything back. These types of open job applications were perceived as being a waste of time for those with few qualifications and limited work experience. A more successful route to securing opportunities was said to be through **connections** made through employability

programmes (rather than the programme itself) and targeted work experience placements.

“I couldn't get a job or an apprenticeship after leaving school. My friend told me about this course and here I am 10 weeks later. I have gained work experience, which will be good for my CV, as well as a good reference.” **Ray, aged 18.**

“My work experience placement has given me a lot of hope and confidence for the future.” **Josh, aged 22.**

- 5.25 Similarly, the challenges faced by college and university leavers in securing full-time employment often related to a **lack of relevant work experience**. A couple cited **unpaid graduate internships** as a means to getting this experience. However, these were described as “**exploitative and wrong**” and not a feasible option for those who were not being financially supported by their parents.

6. Key findings: Influences

Chapter summary

- **Parents** are key influencers on young people's career choices and learner journeys, both directly and indirectly.
- For disengaged young people with unstable family backgrounds, **grandparents can be a positive and stabilising influence.**
- **Friends** were also found to have a strong influence on young people's learner journeys, particularly those that were pursuing apprenticeships or other types of training.
- Young people's learner journeys are often influenced by **personal and social issues**, such as their own and family member's health problems, economic drivers (a need to earn money) and the skills and confidence gained through sports and other hobbies.
- Careers advisers were found to have had **most influence** on young people who were disengaged or at risk of disengagement.
- Most workshops participants said they would have **liked more contact with a careers adviser whilst at school**, particularly to help with subject choices.
- Work experience can have a **profound impact on career choices**, but young people report limited opportunities to access good quality placements.

Introduction

- 6.2 Young people's learner journeys were found to be influenced by a wide range of factors, though often not related directly to their education and learning. This chapter reports on the key influences cited by workshop participants covering family and friends, personal and social issues, careers advice, work experience and tailored support.

Family and friends

Parents are key influencers on young people's career choices and learner journeys.

- 6.3 Almost all of the young people who participated in the workshops referenced the influence of family, **and parents in particular**, on their learner journeys. In some cases, this was indirect – parents were not telling them what to do, but they had decided to follow a similar career path to them. In others, parents exerted a **much more direct influence** on young people's choices by advising them to pursue particular pathways.

"I want to follow in my father's footsteps and pursue a career in joinery." **David, aged 19.**

"I would like to work in the prison service, as my mother has worked there all her life and it is a good job." **Emma, aged 19.**

"My family pushed me to learn subjects that would help the family business." **David, aged 16.**

"My Dad told me to join this course." **Andrew, aged 16.**

"My parents are pushing me to go to university." **Sarah, aged 16.**

For young people from unstable family backgrounds, grandparents can often be a positive and stabilising influence.

- 6.4 Several workshop participants referenced the important role that grandparents had played in their lives. They were often viewed as a **positive and stabilising influence**, particularly for those who were dealing with issues and challenges in their wider family. Several young people cited the support and encouragement provided by grandparents as being critical to helping them get through difficult times and progress to the next stage in their learner journey.

"The main person that influenced me was my Nana. She always supported me and when she passed away I wanted to show her that I could do what she always believed I could." **Niamh, aged 16.**

"When I started secondary school, I was having a very difficult time. My parent had attempted suicide multiple times. I had no idea how to cope with this but my Gran, the wonderful lady that she is, did what she does best and got me through it. The journey has been tough, but I have survived and now I have a place at university and a new start to look forward to all thanks to my Gran." **Anon, aged 17.**

Friends were found to have a strong influence on young people's learner journeys, particularly those who were pursuing apprenticeships or other types of training.

- 6.5 As referenced in previous chapters, a recurring theme in the workshops was the **lack of advice and guidance available to young people on technical and vocational career pathways**. Workshop participants who had pursued these routes often heard about opportunities through friends, rather than through school, careers advisers or employment support services.

"I was influenced by my friends who were doing apprenticeships who said that it was better to work and get paid than pay to go and study." **Mark, aged 22.**

"I joined this course because some of my friends had been on it and told me about it." **Joe, aged 16.**

"I was told about this course by a couple of friends who had been referred and I have been here for a few months. It has helped me gain experience and confidence. My time keeping and attendance has improved a lot since I started here." **Megan, aged 17.**

"My friend told me about this course and here I am 10 weeks later. I have gained experience, which will be really good for my CV, as well as a good reference." **Ray, aged 18.**

- 6.6 The influence of friends was **most pronounced for some of the young people who reported themselves as more disengaged**, who appeared less inclined to take on board advice from schools, support services or teachers. Family members, including parents, also tended to be referenced less frequently by this group.

Personal and social issues

Young people's career choices are often influenced by personal experiences.

- 6.7 When asked why they had chosen particular career paths, many of the workshop participants cited **personal experiences**. This often related to their own or family members' health issues, which led several to pursue careers in caring professions. Others referenced life changes, such as moving house, as having had a major impact.

"Moving to Scotland from Melbourne impacted me greatly. I began to evaluate which jobs were in demand there to enable me to move back. This has made my subject choices much easier. Moving helped me to understand that life changes

and not to take anything for granted. It has helped me mature in my thinking processes.” **James, aged 15.**

“When I was 9 years old, my twin sisters were born prematurely and were very unwell. They needed heart operations at one month old and constant medical care during the first few years of their lives. This had a big impact on my family and influenced my decision to pursue a career in childcare.” **Ashleigh, aged 20.**

“The issues and challenges experienced by my cousin as they transitioned from female to male and my sister as she battled anorexia nervosa has made me want to pursue a career in paediatric mental health.” **Molly, aged 20.**

“The mental health issues experienced by my family and I has made me want to pursue a career in psychology.” **Kyle, aged 17.**

Money has a major influence on many young people's learner journeys.

- 6.8 For many young people, learning and employment decisions are based on **economic need**. For example, several workshop participants said that they had decided to stay on at school in order to qualify for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Others reported that they were unable to pursue particular pathways as they **could not afford the course fees**. For many, it is a **balancing act** between pursuing long-term career aspirations through further education and training and having enough money to live.

“I wanted to become a dental nurse, but needed more science qualifications and so I did an Introduction to Applied Science at college. I passed and then applied for the Diploma in Dental Nursing. I was accepted, but could not afford the course fees. I am now working full-time in Morrison's and attempting to pursue a career as a therapist through volunteering in a community learning centre.” **Karen, aged 24.**

“In addition to my full-time MA in childcare, I had to take two part-time jobs just to have enough money to live and run a car. It was all too much and I ended up in hospital with exhaustion.” **Caitlin, aged 20.**

Sport was found to have a strong and positive influence on many young men's lives and learner journeys.

- 6.9 When asked to describe key influences on their learner journeys, many of the young men that participated in the workshops referenced the **role of sport**

and their coaches / team mates in building confidence, leadership and teamwork skills and reducing stress.

“Football coaches can give very good advice, both on and off the field.” **Buisty, aged 17.**

“Captaining the school rugby team and volunteering as a rugby coach has helped me with leadership skills, planning, decision making and confidence.” **Rowan, aged 17.**

“I enjoy fishing and once won a prize and got my picture in a magazine. This was good for my self-esteem. I enjoy the exercise and being outdoors. It helps when I'm stressed as it is out of the way and quiet.” **Jack, aged 17.**

“Kickboxing is a good way to help me de-stress and has helped me calm down.” **Conner, aged 20.**

- 6.10 Most of the examples of where sport was having a positive effect related to young men who said they were **at risk of disengagement from education and learning**, suggesting that programmes that incorporate some level of sport can be a successful route to engaging this group and maintaining their interest.

Careers advisers and teachers

Careers advisers were found to have had most influence on young people who were disengaged or at risk of disengagement.

- 6.11 Young people's reported experience of career guidance within schools was **highly variable**. Some reported having **never seen or spoken to a careers adviser**, whilst others had regular contact with them throughout school and also after they left. Most workshops participants reported that they would have **liked more contact with a careers adviser whilst at school**, particularly to help with subject choices.
- 6.12 There was a perception amongst some of the younger workshop participants that careers advisers targeted those who **did not know what they wanted to do after school**, or who were at risk of leaving school with nothing to go to. Careers advisers and guidance teachers were referenced more often by young people who were disengaged or who had left school early. Several said that their careers adviser had **called them up regularly** after they had left school to find out what they were doing, and there was one example of where an adviser had **showed up at the young person's house** and encouraged them to enrol on an employability programme.

"I had a tough time in high school, but some of the teachers were a good influence. I always felt I didn't fit in and was diagnosed with anxiety. I left school before summer 2015 and started to feel better after being depressed about school. With the help of my careers adviser, I was introduced to the Activity Agreement. This has helped me greatly and taught me that I matter." **Ryan, aged 18.**

- 6.13 **Guidance teachers** were reported as having an equal if not greater influence on young people's choices than careers advisers. They were also cited as being a **source of references** for college and university applications. Subject teachers were reported to have limited knowledge of further education or employment opportunities, even within their subject areas.

"School teachers didn't have much of an idea about further education. It would have been good have some people from outside the school coming in to talk about this." **Emma, aged 22.**

"My favourite subject at school was admin. I left school at the end of fifth year to do a Business Admin Apprenticeship. I didn't enjoy it and so I left and attended a Modern Apprenticeship event. I realised then that it was childcare that I wanted to do. I completed a pre-apprenticeship before starting the main apprenticeship and am now in my second year. It would have been good to get more information about different types of apprenticeships that are available when I was in school." **Jodi, aged 18.**

Career guidance works well for those who know what they want to do, but is less effective for those who are not sure or are looking to pursue opportunities in new and emerging industries.

- 6.14 The careers advice available in schools was reported to be helpful for those who **knew what they wanted to do and were looking to work in traditional occupations**, such as doctors, lawyers, accountants and tradesmen (i.e. vocational occupations). In these cases, the pathways are clearly articulated and relatively easy to navigate. However, this is not the case for most other industries and occupations, particularly in relatively new and emerging sectors such as life sciences, digital and IT, where the pathways are much less well articulated and can be difficult to navigate. Young people reported **limited exposure and guidance on different career pathways** available to them after school.

"It's all very well having help to fill out your university application, but you need help deciding what to do." **Emma, aged 21.**

“There is a lack of advice and support for progressing to further / higher education. It feels very rushed and that you need to go to university to succeed.” **Christian, aged 17.**

The career pathways suggested to young people are mainly based on their academic performance, with minimal consideration of wider factors.

- 6.15 The advice given to young people about potential career pathways and destinations for after they leave school was felt to be **too narrowly focussed on academic performance**, rather than the types of jobs they wanted to do, their personal interests or wider factors, such as how well equipped they are to live on their own. This was felt to be compounded by the fact that most university and college applications are assessed based on grades alone, with no requirement to attend an interview.

Emmie, aged 24, University student

Emmie always did well at school and was known for her interest in politics. She had good enough grades to get in to university and so went to study politics at Glasgow University. She did not really think much about this decision; this was what she had always expected of herself and what others expected of her too. However, Emmie soon discovered that she was unhappy on the course and was struggling to cope with living independently. She dropped out of the course during the first semester. After taking some time out to think about what she wanted to do, she decided to pursue a career in youth work.

Work experience

Work experience can have a profound impact on career choices, but young people report limited opportunities to access good quality placements.

- 6.16 Most of the young people that participated in the workshops reported having had **limited or no work experience opportunities** whilst at school, college or university. Those who did work experience often had to organise the placements themselves, a process that disadvantages those who do not have access to employer contacts and networks. Others reported that placements had to be arranged through **automated online booking systems** with no opportunity to discuss options with an adviser. Options were reported as often limited to one week with a local employer.

- 6.17 Those who did get work experience benefits reported significant benefits from this in terms of **informing their career choices**. Often they thought they had an idea about what it was like to work in a particular occupation or industry and the work experience placement sometimes confirmed or sometimes refuted this. There were several examples of where young people had **completely changed their minds about a particular career** based on their experience and others where it had reaffirmed their commitment.

Tailored support

Intense and tailored support works well for disengaged groups.

- 6.18 Several of the young people who participated in the workshops reported that they had **previously been disengaged from education and learning** after having left school early with no plan for what they were going to do next. Most reported that they were now feeling much more confident and optimistic about the future. This turnaround was often attributed to the **individualised and tailored support** provided through targeted employability programmes or youth workers.

“I joined the Activity Agreement and have become much better at working in groups and more open. The residential part of the course has helped with this. They were flexible around me being a full-time carer for my Grandma and provided a lot of support when she passed away.” **Sophie, aged 19.**

“I joined the Activity Agreement, met new people and spoke about my problems and how to be better. This helped me to find out what I’m good at and got me into college.” **Ryan, aged 18.**

“I was at rock bottom. I would still be there if it wasn’t for the team. They helped me to see that it wasn’t too late. That I could still improve my life.” **Gordon, aged 24.**

“I owe a lot to the LGBT centre and the Young Carers Centre for helping me to overcome the obstacles that I have faced.” **Anon, aged 17.**

“I wouldn’t have gotten to where I am now if it wasn’t for the support, motivation and inspiration they have shown me. It has been amazing. They have moulded me into the person I am today.” **Josh, aged 17.**

7. Key findings: Ideas for change



Introduction

- 7.1 The young people that attended the one-day “Insights Lab” were asked **what they thought needed to change** to better enable young people to make effective decisions about life, learning and work. In doing this, they were asked to consider **what would have made their own learner journey better**. The ideas for change emerging from the discussions were then voted on by the young people to identify their top priorities for change.
- 7.2 Table 7-1 lists the **12 ideas for change** that were identified and the number of votes cast for each. The young people each had five votes, which could be allocated to single or multiple recommendations. There was a lot of consistency between the ideas for change that were put forward on the day and the discussions that took place during the earlier workshops. The remainder of this chapter looks at each of the ideas for change in more detail, including the discussions that took place in relation to each one.

Table 7-1: Top priorities for change

Ideas for change	No of votes
1. Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) – improve, redesign & repurpose	42
2. Better links to additional support – disabilities, mental health, young carers	31
3. Coursework, not exams – change the emphasis	30
4. Focus on 'life skills' – interviews, confidence and money	28
5. Overcoming bias of choices – e.g. university is the best option	19
6. Value of vocational opportunities – e.g. Modern Apprenticeships	11
7. Partnerships with employers, schools, FE/HE – diversity of topics & experiences	9
8. Mentoring schemes – industry insight, support and guidance	9
9. Try before you buy – experiences and information to make better choices	8
10. More career 'face-time' tailored to your needs – information in multiple formats and meetings with advisors	6
11. Wellbeing – support for your choice/plan	4
12. Bridge to the future – 6th year opportunities	3

Source: Insights Lab
Base: 45 participants

1. Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)

The top priority for change identified was that **Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in schools be reviewed and redesigned**. The consensus was that it was not fit for purpose and does not provide young people with the basic skills required to succeed in life. These include how to develop a CV and prepare for an interview, how to manage finances and how to develop and maintain healthy relationships. A secondary suggestion was that any review of PSHE should be done in collaboration with young people themselves to ensure that it meets their needs.

2. Better links to additional support

Young people report a lack of support within educational institutions to deal with **personal, social and health issues**. There is a perception that the system is 'inflexible' and that even some of the small adjustments required to address some of the issues faced can be difficult to obtain. Young people facing personal, social and health issues often require intensive support tailored to their specific needs. It was acknowledged that educational institutions may not always be best placed to provide this. However, it was felt that teaching and support staff should be able to identify when young people are experiencing problems and signpost them to the appropriate support. **Getting the right support at the right time** was identified as key to enabling young people to progress in their learner journey.

3. Coursework not exams

It was suggested that educational institutions, particularly schools, consider **shifting their emphasis from exams to coursework**, with the perception being that coursework is much more aligned to the realities of working life. Young people do not always see the value in exams, described by some as "**memory tests**" – success at which does not necessarily equate to an ability to succeed in the 'real world'. Less of a focus on exams would also reduce the **intense pressure and stress** faced by many young people during exam time.

4. Focus on 'life skills'

Young people report that they often feel unprepared for life after school and that this can hold them back in their learner journey. For example, many who go to university have to cope with living independently (often in a new town or city) for the first time. If they are ill-prepared to do that, their learner journey will falter, regardless of how well they are doing academically. They suggest a need for a **greater focus on developing the life skills required for them to make successful transitions**, particularly within the senior phase of school.

5. Overcoming bias of choices

Young people are aware of **biases surrounding the different post-school routes**. University was perceived as being the 'gold standard' for those who achieve well academically, and alternative options and pathways are rarely discussed with this group. College is perceived as the "next best" option and young people provided several examples of where they felt they were being 'pushed' towards local colleges even when they did not feel this was right for

them. Vocational pathways, including apprenticeships and other types of training, they felt, are perceived as a lesser option. Young people reported that they would like to be given impartial information on **all available pathways** in order to make informed choices. Some participants felt that they were not progressing in their learner journey (and repeating stages) due to making post-school decisions based on the biases of the school and not what was needed for their individual journey.

6. Recognising the value of vocational opportunities

Young people would like to see **greater value placed on vocational pathways and opportunities**. This includes having more vocational subject options within school, and greater promotion of post-school vocational routes through college and Modern Apprenticeships. Many young people see the value in vocational routes and pathways and can feel frustrated when they are not promoted or discussed by schools and other influencers. Those who achieve well academically can often feel pressure to go to university, but sometimes discover later that a vocational pathway would have been a better option for them.

7. Partnerships with employers, schools, further education and higher education

Schools are perceived as being a very protected (but also very isolated) environment for young people, providing minimal exposure to the 'real' world. Young people would like schools to **work more closely with employers, colleges and universities** in order to broaden their exposure to opportunities outside school. Related to this, young people would like more varied and "quality" work experience opportunities whilst at school to help inform decisions about the future. They would also like colleges and universities to **work more closely with employers**, again providing greater exposure to potential future opportunities.

8. Mentoring schemes

Young people would welcome access to careers advice and guidance from **people they can relate to and who have direct experience of their chosen career paths**. This could include other young people who have taken a similar course at college or university, or similar apprenticeships (perhaps matched to them through school alumni networks). It could also include employers in jobs or industries in which they would like to pursue a career in. These types of mentoring opportunities can provide valuable insights into

career pathways that are difficult to obtain from elsewhere or through more “generic” careers guidance.

9. ‘Try before you buy’

Young people report feeling that they have to make big decisions about their future based on **limited information** about what these will actually involve. They would welcome the opportunity to **try out different options to help inform these decisions**. This could include, for example, “taster” opportunities at colleges or universities, or work experience placements in particularly jobs or industries in which that they are interested. These experiences would help them to **make informed decisions** about the next steps and also help minimise the risk of taking “mis-steps” along the way.

10. More career ‘facetime’

Young people would like **more time with careers advisers in tailored face-to-face sessions**, particularly when making decisions about subject choices and career pathways. They are often directed to online websites (such as My World of Work) to research options themselves. However, whilst these were generally perceived as useful, young people would like the opportunity to talk options through with someone who is **knowledgeable and can advise on the implications of different choices**. This would give them greater confidence that they have made the right decisions.

11. Wellbeing

Young people report that they **want to feel happy with choices they have made**. This comes from knowing that they have access to the right level of information, advice and guidance at key decision points. It also comes from having the support of parents and teachers for their choices. There were several examples provided of where young people had to go against the expectations of their school or family in order to pursue career pathways that they felt were right for them. They would like their choices to be **respected and supported** even when they do not align to others’ expectations.

12. Bridge to the future

Young people suggested that the final stages of school should have **more of an emphasis on preparing them for the next stage**. A key discussion point from the day was around broadening the **scope and range of activities** that could be supported in sixth year. Some young people said that they felt this had been a “lost year” for them, particularly if they had already achieved the

grades required to get into college or university and therefore did not 'need' any more qualifications. Several said that they would have liked to have used some of their time in sixth year to do **work experience, volunteer, learn to drive or pursue other subjects not available within the school** (either at another school, college or through distance learning). However, the perception was that schools were still very much focussed on attainment and qualifications, even at this stage, and were not always inclined to support young people's wider skills development.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

- 8.1 This document has reported the findings from an in-depth study of young people's experiences of the education and training system in Scotland. The research was co-designed and delivered with young people, who have taken a lead role in shaping the approach taken to each stage. This final chapter provides summary conclusions and recommendations for consideration by the Scottish Government and wider stakeholders and partners working in the education and training sector in Scotland.

Young people's experiences of education and training

- 8.2 The research identified a number of clear and consistent messages relating to young people's experiences of the education and training system in Scotland. Firstly, young people report that the **focus on attainment and qualifications within schools** is not giving them the skills required to succeed in life, learning and work. As a result, many feel ill-prepared for life after school and this is having a negative impact on their learner journeys. This was found to be particularly true of young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, who may have limited support to develop life skills at home.
- 8.3 A second clear message is that when young people's learner journeys falter, this is often the result of **personal, social and health issues**. Young people report that schools are not always well equipped to deal with these issues. In some cases, the support required is just a degree of flexibility to respond to individual needs, and in others it is a referral to external support. Access to the **right support at the right time** was identified as being key to minimising the potential negative impact that these issues can have on young peoples' learner journeys.
- 8.4 The third consistent message from the workshops was that there is a **lack of parity of esteem between vocational and academic career pathways**. Schools were widely reported to view university as the top destination for leavers, with college being the preferred second choice. This ties in with the focus on attainment and qualifications, with a perception that the 'ideal' pathway is to achieve good grades and then go to university. There is an assumption that leavers in the top cohort in terms of grades and attainment will go to university and alternative options, including vocational and technical routes, were reported to be very rarely discussed with this group.
- 8.5 These messages were consistent across the study and no major differences were found in the experiences of young people from different equalities

groups. This includes those from minority ethnic or care-experienced backgrounds, who have been identified in previous research as facing particular issues and challenges in their learner journeys. **However, it should not be assumed that differences do not exist.** It would not have been possible to identify them in the current study as it was open to young people from all backgrounds and equality and diversity monitoring data was collected from anonymously.

Recommendation: Explore options for the provision of additional support and guidance to educational institutions to help them identify when young people are facing personal, social and health issues and facilitate access to support to help address these.

Recommendation: Work with stakeholders across the careers, education and learning sectors to promote parity of esteem between vocational and academic pathways.

Decisions and transitions

- 8.6 The study focussed on the learner journeys of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. The key decision and transition points during this time were found to relate to subject choices, first destinations on leaving school, next steps and progression into employment. In terms of subject choices, many young people reported a tension between **choosing subjects that they enjoyed or were good at versus those that were perceived to offer better career opportunities.** They also requested more guidance and support to be made available to inform subject choices, including information on the implications of these on future opportunities.
- 8.7 First destinations on leaving school were found to be **mainly determined by academic attainment**, with minimal consideration of individual aspirations, preferred learning styles, personal attributes (such as ability to cope with independent living) or final destinations. This was resulting in some young people choosing pathways that in retrospect were not right for them. In terms of next steps, the study found that most young people who go to university tend to delay consideration of what do next until the **latter stages of their degree.** For those who go to college, apprenticeships or employment, decisions about the next steps are often based on **what is available locally at the time they are looking.**
- 8.8 The study found that a lot of young people from all backgrounds find it difficult to secure full-time paid employment and many report negative early

experiences of the world of work. **Lack of work experience** was cited as a key barrier to young people getting jobs.

Recommendation: More tailored support available to young people to help with subject choices, including consideration of the implications of these.

Recommendation: Expand the range of opportunities available to young people during the senior phase of school to better prepare them for the next stage.

Influences

8.9 **Parents and family** were found to be key influencers on young people's career choices and learner journeys, both directly and indirectly. **Friends** were also found to be key influencers, particularly for those who were pursuing apprenticeships or other types of training. These opportunities were often found about through **word-of-mouth** rather than through schools, other educational institutions or support services.

8.10 Young people's learner journeys were also found to often be influenced by **personal and social issues**, such as their own and family member's health problems, economic drivers (a need to earn money) and the skills and confidence gained through sports and other hobbies.

Careers advisers were found to have had most influence on young people who were disengaged or at risk of disengagement. The **career guidance** that is available was reported to work best for those who know what they want to do and wanted to work in traditional occupations, but was less effective for those who are not sure or looking to pursue opportunities in new and emerging industries. **Work experience** was found to have a profound impact on career choices, but young people report limited opportunities to access good quality placements.

Recommendation: Young people be given greater exposure to the world of work whilst in education to inform career choices, including quality work experience placements, encounters with employers and mentoring opportunities.

Ideas for change

8.11 The 45 young people who attended the Insights Lab identified **12 ideas for change** to better enable young people to make effective decisions about life, learning and work, and to progress in their learner journeys. There was a lot

of consistency between the ideas identified on the day and the themes emerging from the earlier workshops, with a focus on additional support to address personal, social and health issues and to develop key life skills. There was also an appeal to change the emphasis within education from exams to coursework and for access to impartial guidance on different career pathways, more varied and better quality work experience opportunities and greater exposure to different post-school routes.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given to taking forward some of the top priorities for change identified by the young people who participated in the Insights Lab.

Recommendation: The Scottish Government, and wider stakeholders and partners, should continue to actively engage young people in this evolving policy area to ensure that policy decisions relating to the learner journey are based on insights from young people themselves.

Annex A: References

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Annex B: Profile of Insights Panel

Table 8-1: Home town / area

Home town / area	Number of Insight Panel members
Aberdeen	1
Burnt Island	1
Dumfries	1
Edinburgh	2
Glasgow	3
Hawick	1
Inverness	1
North Ayrshire	1
Perthshire	1
Total:	12

Source: Insights Panel – Equality & Diversity Monitoring Forms

Table 8-2: Demographics

	Number of Insight Panel members
Age	
17 years	2
18 years	5
19 years	1
22 years	2
23 years	2
Gender	
Male	6
Female	6

	Number of Insight Panel members
Ethnicity	
White Scottish	7
Asian / Asian Scottish / Asian British	4
Polish	1
Disability	
Identifies as having a disability	2
Does not identify as having a disability	10

Source: Insights Panel – Equality & Diversity Monitoring Forms

Table 8-3: Main education / employment status

	Number of Insight Panel members
School	3
Apprenticeship	1
College	2
University	5
Employment	1
Total:	12

Source: Insights Panel – Equality & Diversity Monitoring Forms

Annex C: Workshop session plan

Task	Description	Outputs	Time for this task (mins)
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hello and welcome – few minutes to get settled Put on music and provide drinks / snacks 		5
Personal Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All attendees (including facilitators) asked to complete a short personal profile: name, age, where they live, what they do and something interesting about themselves Each person asked to introduce themselves to the rest of the group using the personal profile as a prompt 	Personal profile for each attendee	7.5
Icebreaker	<p>Asked to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 x things they are interested in / enjoy 3 x things they are good at What they would consider to be their best achievement What they would like to do in the future <p>They will then be asked to work their way around the room introducing themselves to each other and asking others guess</p>	Notes on strengths / achievements / aspirations	7.5

Task	Description	Outputs	Time for this task (mins)
	what they would like to do in future based on the things they are interested in / enjoy at and their best achievement.		
Introductory video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video played providing an overview of the aims and objectives of the research, focussing on the opportunity to influence change in the system – starring Insight Panel members and including subtitles • Opportunity to ask questions • Asked to give informed consent – including for pictures / videos. Provide plain language statement – emphasise consent. • Asked to complete E&D forms – explain purpose (to ensure we are including equal representation from all groups of young people in the research) and ensure anonymity. 	Signed consent forms Completed E&D forms	10
Mapping individual learner journeys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in pairs to map out individual learner journeys – first stage, drawing out the journey, second stage, using the prompts to discuss influences and positive / negative experiences. (There will be different options available to those with additional support needs / disabilities) 	Individual learner journeys with notes on key influences	30

Task	Description	Outputs	Time for this task (mins)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that, after the break, they will be asked to map this information on to the wall to produce a collective learner journey – confirm consent for this. 		
Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have supportive / safe space available during break if required 		15
Mapping collective learner journeys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-it notes provided for attendees to note: support accessed and positive / negative experiences / influences on their learner journey (colour coded) They will then be asked to post these on the wall, with brackets drawn out for different age ranges between 15-24 Group discussion around the wall to identify common themes / issues 	Map of collective learner journey (photos of this) Post-its with individual influences and experiences Record of group discussion (audio/notes/video)	75
Discussion of issues / challenges / areas of improvements to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asked to look at the wall and consider what could have been different at each stage to make the journey better – what might need to change Add new post-it notes to the collective journey with ideas / 	List of recommendations for change Record of group	

Task	Description	Outputs	Time for this task (mins)
the system	recommendations for change	discussion (audio/notes/video)	
Identify 3-5 priorities for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked to collectively agree on the top 3 priorities for change from amongst those that have been – for larger groups, may need to structure this task 	Top 3-5 priorities for change	10
Discussion groups to flesh these out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in groups of two or three to flesh out in more detail 3 priorities for change 		15
Pictures / quotes / next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summing up – collective agreement on top 3 priorities for change and details of these • Pictures / quotes for the final report (with consent to use these) • Ask for verbal feedback on the session • Next steps – how we will keep in touch and let them know the outcomes of the research – ensure that we have contact details for all attendees (email addresses and / or telephone numbers) 	Pictures Quotes Comments on session E-mail addresses	5

Annex D: Profile of workshop participants

Figure D-1: Home area

Local authority	Number of workshop participants	% of workshop participants
Aberdeenshire	4	3%
Angus	5	3%
Argyll & Bute	14	10%
Dundee City	4	3%
East Renfrewshire	2	1%
Edinburgh City of	4	3%
Eilean Siar	1	1%
Falkirk	42	29%
Fife	3	2%
Glasgow City	17	12%
Highland	2	1%
Inverclyde	1	1%
North Ayrshire	1	1%
North Lanarkshire	10	7%
Perth & Kinross	2	1%
Renfrewshire	3	2%
Scottish Borders	18	13%
South Ayrshire	2	1%
South Lanarkshire	2	1%
Stirling	2	1%
West Dunbartonshire	3	2%
West Lothian	1	1%

Source: Equality and Diversity Monitoring Forms
Base: 143

Figure D-2: Demographics

	Number of workshop participants	% of workshop participants
Age		
15 years	11	8%
16 years	23	16%
17 years	28	19%
18 years	25	17%
19 years	17	12%
20 years	11	8%
21 years	9	6%
22 years	9	6%
23 years	4	3%
24 years	7	5%
Gender		
Female	78	55%
Male	63	44%
Something else	1	1%
Ethnicity		
White Scottish / White British	130	91%
Asian / Asian Scottish / Asian British	4	3%
White (other)	2	1%
Polish	1	1%
Gypsy / traveller	1	1%
Other / prefer not to say	5	3%
Disability*		
Vision impairment	7	5%
Hearing impairment	3	2%

	Number of workshop participants	% of workshop participants
Mobility impairment	2	1%
Dexterity	2	1%
Learning or understanding or concentrating	13	9%
Mental health condition	16	11%
Stamina or breathing or fatigue	5	3%
Social or behavioral impairment	7	5%
None of the above	92	64%
Other / prefer not to say	6	4%
Care experience		
Has a care-experienced background	6	4%
Does not have a care-experienced background	131	93%
Prefer not to say	4	3%
Deprivation**		
SIMD Decile 1	10	7%
SIMD Decile 2	8	6%
SIMD Decile 3	7	5%
SIMD Decile 4	16	11%
SIMD Decile 5	14	10%
SIMD Decile 6	22	15%
SIMD Decile 7	21	15%
SIMD Decile 8	13	9%
SIMD Decile 9	22	15%
SIMD Decile 10	10	7%

Source: Equality and Diversity Monitoring Forms

Base: Variable depending on the question – some forms were partially completed

- * Participants could identify as having more than one disability
 ** Based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation – SIMD 1 is the most deprived, whilst SIMD 10 is the least deprived

Figure D-3: Education / employment status

	Number of workshop participants	% of workshop participants
School	28	20%
College	15	11%
University	10	7%
Apprenticeship / employment*	41	30%
Other types of training	20	15%
Not in employment, education or training	16	12%

Source: Equality and Diversity Monitoring Forms

Base: 130

* Some apprentices identified themselves as being in employment and so the two categories have been combined

Annex E: Profile of Insights Lab Participants

Figure E-1: Home area of workshop participants

Local authority	Number of Insights Lab participants	% of Insights Lab participants
Aberdeen City	2	6%
Aberdeenshire	2	6%
Angus	1	3%
Argyll & Bute	2	6%
East Ayrshire	1	3%
East Dunbartonshire	2	6%
East Renfrewshire	3	9%
Eilean Siar	1	3%
Fife	1	3%
Glasgow City	5	15%
Highland	1	3%
North Ayrshire	3	9%
North Lanarkshire	2	6%
Perth & Kinross	1	3%
Scottish Borders	1	3%
South Ayrshire	1	3%
South Lanarkshire	1	3%
West Dunbartonshire	2	6%
West Lothian	1	3%

Source: Equality and Diversity Monitoring Forms

Base: 33

Figure E-2: Demographics

	Number of Insights Lab participants	% of Insights Lab participants
Age		
15 years	0	0%
16 years	4	11%
17 years	8	22%
18 years	10	28%
19 years	2	6%
20 years	0	0%
21 years	3	8%
22 years	2	6%
23 years	4	11%
24 years	3	8%
Gender		
Female	24	69%
Male	9	26%
Other	2	6%
Ethnicity		
White Scottish / White British	32	89%
Chinese/ Chinese Scottish/Chinese British	2	6%
Arab/Arab Scottish/Arab British	1	3%
African/African Scottish/African British	1	3%
Disability		
Identifies as having a disability	28	78%
Does not identify as having a disability	8	22%
Care experience		
Has a care-experienced background	2	6%

	Number of Insights Lab participants	% of Insights Lab participants
Does not have a care-experienced background	33	94%
Deprivation*		
SIMD Decile 1	4	14%
SIMD Decile 2	3	11%
SIMD Decile 3	1	4%
SIMD Decile 4	4	14%
SIMD Decile 5	1	4%
SIMD Decile 6	1	4%
SIMD Decile 7	2	7%
SIMD Decile 8	2	7%
SIMD Decile 9	2	7%
SIMD Decile 10	8	29%

Source: Equality and Diversity Monitoring Forms

Base: Variable depending on the question – some forms were partially complete

* Based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation – SIMD 1 is the most deprived, whilst SIMD 10 is the least deprived

Figure E-3: Education / employment status

	Number of Insights Lab participants	% of Insights Lab participants
School	11	32%
University	10	29%
College	5	15%
Apprenticeship	3	9%
Employment	2	6%
Volunteering/Internship	1	3%
Not in employment, education or training	1	3%
Other	1	3%

Source: Equality and Diversity Monitoring Forms

Base: 34

* Some apprentices identified themselves as being in employment and so the two categories have been combined



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
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