

Guide

August 2015



**GREAT  
EXPECTATIONS –  
A CAREERS  
GUIDE FOR  
PARENTS**

**TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE, TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE**

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The not-for-profit organisation champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has more than 135,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

# Great expectations: A careers guide for parents

## Guide

## Contents

<b>About this guide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The future of work</b>	<b>3</b>
• What jobs could my child do in the future?	3
• What skills are employers looking for in young people?	3
• What can my child do if they want to get more skills?	4
• Where can my child go to learn more about careers?	4
<b>Key decisions in your child's pathway to work</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Years 7, 8 and 9 (11–14 years old)</b>	<b>7</b>
• Choosing what to do next	7
• Volunteering	8
<b>Years 10 and 11 (14–16 years old)</b>	<b>9</b>
• Work experience	9
• Should I stay or should I go?	10
• Staying in education – A levels and vocational qualifications	11
• Leaving full-time education – apprenticeships and traineeships	11
<b>Sixth form/college (16–18 years old)</b>	<b>13</b>
• University	13
• Higher apprenticeships	14
• Work-based alternatives to university	14
• School-leaver programmes	15
<b>Beyond education and training</b>	<b>16</b>
• Internships	16
• Graduate schemes	17
• Entry-level employment	17
<b>Transitioning into the world of work</b>	<b>18</b>
• Being a young jobseeker in 2015	18
• How are employers recruiting now?	18
• Applying for opportunities	19
<b>Further advice and information</b>	<b>21</b>

# About this guide

*‘It’s difficult to know at any age what career or job you want, but helping advise and inform a young person about pathways into work can be a real challenge.’*

It’s difficult to know at any age what career or job you want, but helping advise and inform a young person about pathways into work can be a real challenge. As a parent you might feel you’re not up to date on the latest education and training options available, or you might not be sure what skills and experiences employers are looking for now. Don’t worry – this guide is designed to help if you are a parent to a child aged 11 to 24. Taking you step by step, we’ll explain what jobs will be in demand in the future, the difference between university and an apprenticeship, the importance of work experience and how your child can get it, and everything you need to know about applying for jobs.

Are you a young person thinking about your future career? Check out our guide, *Employment: Top tips and guidance from the people who recruit*, available at **[cipd.co.uk/learningtowork](https://cipd.co.uk/learningtowork)**

This guide has been written as part of the CIPD’s Learning to Work programme, which promotes greater levels of employer engagement with young people.

# The future of work

The way we work is changing. Technological advancements, globalisation, the opening up of new areas of business mean numerous new opportunities are being created for today's young people. Currently, the average person changes job seven times in their lifetime and it is likely that this number will rise in the future. We expect workplaces of the future to be diverse and multigenerational, requiring the skills and experiences of many. Finally, to respond to the changes around them, workers will be expected to re-skill and up-skill as their careers develop.

In addition, while qualifications continue to be crucial in the world of work, skills, work experience and exposure to the workplace is increasingly important to employers when on the look-out for young talent of the future, as this guide and its advice shows.

## What jobs could my child do in the future?

The good news is that many jobs will remain the same and will still require people to do them! However, recent research has shown that young people's job expectations don't match with the roles that employers will want to recruit for in the future. This could mean that some young people will be aiming for jobs that are in short supply.

But there are things your child can do to maximise their chances of success. They can:

- 1 **Begin thinking about what sort of job would be right for them** – talking to friends, family and people in the community can help them to think about the world of work.
- 2 **Be realistic about their aspirations** – it's great to have dreams and aspirations can really help us aim higher – but it's important that they gain the qualifications and skills they need to secure a job. A solid foundation of education, training and skills will help a young person stand out – regardless of the job they wish to do.
- 3 **Take advantage of jobs fairs, open days and employer talks at school or college** – this can be a great way to open a child's eyes to careers they may never have considered.

## What skills are employers looking for in young people?

Even if your child doesn't know what they want to do, they can still begin to develop the skills employers are looking for.

A recent CIPD survey found that the **top three skills** organisations seek to develop during a young person's first year at work are:

- communication
- teamwork
- confidence.

*'Technological advancements, globalisation, the opening up of new areas of business mean numerous new opportunities are being created for today's young people.'*

Skills are separate from qualifications and education and can be gained at school, home, via hobbies or previous work experience they might have completed. Talking to your child about skills can be tricky. It's often something we learn to do once we start working. But here are some questions which might help draw out their skills, preferences and interests and help them to think about what job could be right for them.

- **What are your interests? What do you enjoy doing at school or in your spare time?** (for example, sport, music, using the computer)
- **What are your skills? What kinds of things are you good at, in school or your free time?** (for example, do you enjoy maths or IT? Do you enjoy researching new topics or preparing presentations?)
- **What are your personal qualities? What are you like as a person?** (Are you confident around others? Do you lead? Are you organised?)

### What can my child do if they want to get more skills?

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

- 1 **Get some work experience** – work experience is a great way to see what work is like and test out careers options, but it can also help build up your child's skills – we've got more on work experience later in this guide
- 2 **Volunteer** – not only does volunteering help develop skills employers are looking for, such as teamworking and communication, but it can also provide plenty of opportunities for your child to make new friends and learn from others.
- 3 **Seek out opportunities to build skills at home** – does your son or daughter help out with the childcare at home? Do they help classmates or younger siblings with their homework? Have they helped organise an event? All these activities are skills-generating!
- 4 **Consider a Saturday job or paper round** – this can often be a young person's first taste of working life, building a number of foundational skills such as time-keeping, punctuality and commitment – all skills that employers value highly.

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

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

There are also a number of helpful websites designed to help match your young person's experience, skills and interests with different job roles. Here are just a few to get you started:

helpline (0800 100 900 – free from landlines or you can arrange for them to call you back on a mobile) and a free face-to-face service for those aged 19+.

- **Plotr** – [www.plotr.co.uk](http://www.plotr.co.uk) – this interactive website not only provides information about different kinds of jobs, but lets users play games to help them discover jobs that match their personality, interests and skills.

# Key decisions in your child's pathway to work

From Year 9, or around 14 years old, your child will begin to make decisions which will influence how and when they enter the world of work, and with what skills, experience and qualifications. As a parent, being aware of when your child will make these important choices can help ensure they have all the information, advice and guidance they need to take their next step with confidence. To help, we have created a timeline which shows at which stage in your child's school or college career these decision points typically fall. The next part of this guide will focus on each major step in turn, providing information on the possible pathways open to your son or daughter.

Age	School year	Education/training choices	Other activity
<b>11-14 years old</b>	Years 7, 8 and 9	During Year 9, your child will choose which subjects to study in Year 10. Depending on their school, they will be able to choose from GCSEs, diplomas and vocational qualifications.*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering</li> </ul>
<b>14-16 years old</b>	Years 10 and 11	When children reach Year 11, they will need to choose between a number of options, with A levels, vocational qualifications, international baccalaureates and apprenticeships being the most popular routes. For many, they will also need to decide whether they intend to go to university as this may influence what they choose to do.*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work experience (if their school offers it)</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> </ul>
<b>16-18 years old</b>	Sixth form/college	In these two years, young people complete the qualifications they chose in Year 11 and consider life beyond school. For those heading to university, they will pick their choices of courses and institutions. Others may go on to do an apprenticeship or higher apprenticeship, traineeship, work-based alternatives to university – school-leaver programmes or find a job.*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering</li> </ul>
<b>18-21 years old</b>	Beyond school or college	The choices after graduating from university are many and include pursuing postgraduate qualifications, doing an internship or work experience, picking a graduate scheme or looking for an entry-level job. The options for those who have completed vocational options are also wide-ranging. The world is their oyster!*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internships</li> <li>• Work experience</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> </ul>

\*The range of qualifications available to your child will differ depending on where they live in the UK. To find out more, visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

## Education in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

In the UK, there are different education systems for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In general, these systems are very similar and offer many of the same courses and qualifications, but there are some differences. To find out more, you can visit the relevant government website for each nation:

- England: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education)
- Northern Ireland: [www.deni.gov.uk/](http://www.deni.gov.uk/)
- Scotland: [www.gov.scot/Topics/Education](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education)
- Wales: [gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en](http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en)

It's possible to compare the qualification levels across each nation by visiting [www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/overview](http://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/overview)

## Young people with disabilities

If your child has a disability and you would like information about education, training and employment, there is lots of information available to help you understand their options:

- For information on careers, qualifications, financial support and back to work schemes, visit **National Careers Service** [www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk) (or call 0800 100 900) or **Disability Rights UK** [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org) (or call 0800 328 5050).
- **Connexions Direct** advisers provide free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support to young people in England aged 13 to 19, or up to the age of 25 with a disability, on a range of issues including careers and learning. You can speak to the advisers on 080 8001 3219 or by visiting [www2.cxdirect.com/home.htm](http://www2.cxdirect.com/home.htm)
- For more information on your child's education and employment rights as well as further help and advice, visit **GOV.UK**
- For information about volunteering opportunities for people with disabilities, visit the **UK volunteering and social action charity, CSV** – [www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)
- For support preparing for work, finding jobs and living more independently, visit The Shaw Trust – [www.shaw-trust.org.uk](http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk)



# Years 7, 8 and 9 (11–14 years old)

In Years 7 and 8 your child will be adjusting to life and learning in senior school and finding out what subjects they like and what they're good at. By Year 9 they will be expected to decide which subjects to study in Year 10. Depending on their school, they will be able to choose from GCSEs, diplomas or vocational qualifications.

## Choosing what to do next

Every school offers a different set of options, and your child should receive options information from the school outlining the range of courses and qualifications offered. Discuss the various options available with your son or daughter to find which learning pathway might interest them and match their abilities. After Year 9, most pupils work towards national qualifications:

Qualification	What is it?
<b>GCSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Academic qualification awarded in a specified subject</li><li>• Takes up to two years to complete and is assessed via written examinations and coursework</li><li>• GCSEs are made up of compulsory national curriculum subjects ('core' and 'foundation' subjects) and schools must also offer at least one subject from each of these areas: arts, design and technology, humanities and modern foreign languages</li></ul>
<b>Diploma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualification based around practical work</li><li>• Intended to provide young people with the skills and knowledge needed for work</li><li>• Run in parallel with GCSE and A levels and supplemented by compulsory parts of the school curriculum and there are opportunities to study additional GCSEs and qualifications</li><li>• Each level (foundation and higher) has an equivalent GCSE level and grade</li><li>• Made up of traditional classroom learning, project work and hands-on experience with an employer</li></ul>
<b>Vocational qualification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work-related qualification which can be studied together with GCSEs or as part of a diploma or personalised learning programme</li><li>• Schools decide on what vocational qualifications they will offer</li><li>• Can be studied alongside GCSEs</li><li>• BTECs are the most recognised vocational qualification, but there are others</li></ul>

For more information on all of these options and more, visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

*‘Employers think volunteering is a great thing to be involved in, so it can be a fantastic way to get noticed!’*

## **Volunteering**

### *What is volunteering and why is it useful for my child to do?*

Volunteering is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, or someone/a group of people, outside of just family and friends. Volunteering can be done by anyone at any age, but can be particularly useful for young people who are looking to boost their skills or are thinking ahead to their CVs.

### *Is this something employers are looking for now?*

The answer is: yes! When we asked HR professionals surveyed as part of our Learning to Work survey 2015 what they thought the top three skills entry-level candidates with volunteering experience demonstrate, they said teamwork (82%), communication (80%) and an understanding of the local community (45%).

Employers are keen to discuss your child’s volunteering experiences and draw out their skills when they interview for an opportunity in their company. Some employers are even asking applicants to specify any volunteering they might have done when they apply for a role. Employers think volunteering is a great thing to be involved in, so it can be a fantastic way to get noticed!

### *How should my child use their volunteering to help them impress employers?*

It’s important that young people understand the value of volunteering. It can also be a great addition to their CV and an activity they can discuss with an employer during an interview. An employer won’t automatically assume they’ve volunteered, so young people must be proactive about

mentioning it. Secondly, when they talk about their volunteering, they shouldn’t simply say they’ve done it, but explain the background, the role they played, the results and the skills they learned (such as time-keeping, communication and teamwork).

### *How can my child get involved in volunteering?*

The good news is that there are lots of ways to take part! Some popular ways are:

- getting involved with Girlguiding or the Scout Association
- volunteering in local charity shops
- helping out in an old people’s home
- volunteering at a local youth club or community centre
- taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, which some schools offer to their students
- being a volunteer sports coach
- and lots more!

Young people can also have their volunteering accredited via programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, which some schools and other youth groups offer.

There are also a number of websites which can help your child find an opportunity which suits them:

[www.vinspired.com](http://www.vinspired.com)

[www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)

[www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

[www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)

[www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)

[www.iwill.org.uk](http://www.iwill.org.uk)

[www.volunteerteam.london.gov.uk](http://www.volunteerteam.london.gov.uk)

# Years 10 and 11 (14–16 years old)

## Work experience

As well as deciding what qualifications to do in the coming years, your child might also be asked about where to spend their work experience placement. **However**, it's important to know that **not all schools organise work experience**. Since September 2012, schools have been free to decide whether they offer work experience to their students. If they don't, your child might want to consider others ways they could learn about working life and what jobs interest them. Volunteering can be a good way of doing this at this stage, and throughout their education and beyond. We've included more information on getting involved in volunteering in this section.

Work experience takes place in the workplace and allows young people to experience what it is like to undertake a job supervised by staff who already work in the environment. Most work experience placements last for two weeks, although they can be only one week. A work experience placement while at school gives a young person the chance to find out what work is like and is a useful addition to a CV when they begin job-hunting or looking for vocational or university courses. However, it can also help your child figure out what they want to study or do as a job in the future.

### *How can I find out if my child's school organises work experience?*

If you're unsure of whether your child's school offers work experience opportunities, you can either contact the school directly

or check their website, as many have this information available to parents and prospective students. Some schools have successful partnerships and links with local employers who offer a number of placements for their students.

### *Who helps my child find their placements?*

It depends on the school. Some will spend time with the student to find out where their interests lie and find a placement with an employer in their network. However, in some cases, schools make students responsible for finding their own placements to encourage them to interact with employers and give them experience of applying for opportunities.

### *My child's school does not offer work experience. What can they do now?*

For some, this can be the case and it can cause concern for parents who may not have any pre-existing links with employers who would host a young person for one or two weeks. If your child finds themselves in this position, there are things they can do:

- 1 Create a list of employers they would like to do work experience with and show it to a teacher or work experience co-ordinator if they have one.** They may be able to provide suggestions for how your child can approach an employer.
- 2 Ask friends and family what they are doing or have done for their work experience** – and with whom. Maybe other young people have already been to the places they want to try?

*'A work experience placement while at school gives a young person the chance to find out what work is like and is a useful addition to a CV.'*

- 3 **Search local newspapers and websites for local companies that interest them** or look for the type of business they would like to work for.

### Should I stay or should I go?

During Year 11, pupils must decide on the future of their education after age 16. At this point they will face one of the most important decisions of their educational journey – whether to stay in full-time education or leave.

There are a number of options available to young people and your child must make up their own mind about what they want to do post-16; this could include doing A levels (for those who get the grades required) or vocational qualifications. This section will explore each pathway and the direction it could take your child on their career journey.

### Applying for work experience:

**It's very tempting to contact an employer on your child's behalf – but don't.** Learning how to speak to employers, apply for opportunities and write professionally can be a fantastic learning opportunity for a child; so try to provide guidance and direction only. When it comes to applying for work experience, your child should:

- **First find out how best to make contact with an employer.** There is no set way of doing this, however speaking on the phone, sending an email or your child calling in with their CV are the most popular methods.
- **Once your child has decided how to get in touch, they must explain why they want to spend time in a particular business.** Writing a letter, email or explaining on the telephone why they would like to do work experience with them and what they think they could gain from the experience is an important step in showing an employer that they are keen to benefit from the opportunity.
- **If the employer would like to offer your child a work experience placement, they will decide on next steps.** This may involve sending an official email confirming the placement, providing information on beginning a placement, and details of a follow-up phone call or email before the placement begins. Encourage your child to ask questions at this stage to ensure they understand what they are agreeing to.

**Remember** – 54% of employers have told us that they offer work experience – however, not all advertise the fact, particularly if they are small to medium-sized or work locally. It may be a case of your child approaching an employer to see if they could accommodate them. For an employer, there can be real advantages, so don't assume that if they don't say they offer work experience that contacting them is a waste of time!

At the end of the placement, your child should ask the employer for a reference they can use for the future. In most cases an employer is very happy to do this as they realise the value of a testimonial when it comes to finding employment.

**Raising the Participation Age:** The Government has increased the age to which all young people in England are required to continue in education or training. This means that all young people must stay in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17, and until at least their eighteenth birthday from 2015.

Raising the Participation Age (RPA) to age 18 does not mean raising the school-leaving age. Young people do not only have the option to stay in school, but will be able to choose one of the following main routes open to them:

- **full-time education (at a school or college)**
- **an apprenticeship or traineeship**
- **part-time education or training combined with one of the following:**
  - employment or self-employment for 20 hours or more a week
  - volunteering for 20 hours or more a week.

## Staying in education – A levels and vocational qualifications

### A level qualifications

Some young people who successfully achieve at least five GCSEs at A\*–C grade go on to do A levels. For most, A levels are the most popular route for those hoping to go to university, and many young people opt to do four A levels.

Until recently, students sat their AS levels at the end of year one, which counted towards 50% of their final A level grade. However, the Government has announced plans to introduce a new system whereby students can still choose to sit AS levels, but they will no longer count towards A level grades and will act as stand-alone qualifications. These changes are due to come into effect in September 2015.

### *What does this mean for my son or daughter?*

As a result of this ‘decoupling’, students may have to decide to either spend two years studying for the full A level, or study for a year and sit the AS exam. Alternatively, they might opt to take both the AS and the A level.

### Vocational qualifications

Another option open to a child who has chosen a more vocational route through education could be to pursue higher-level continuations of vocational qualifications, including NVQs and BTECs. Both NVQs and BTECs are designed to lead to either a job or further study. Your child can also progress through different levels of ability to improve their grasp of the chosen subject. High-level qualifications in BTECs and NVQs can lead to a professional qualification, and can also be a route into higher education, such as a higher national certificate or a higher national diploma.

## Leaving full-time education – apprenticeships and traineeships

### Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is a real job with training so you can earn while you learn and pick up recognised qualifications as you go. If you are over the age of 16, live in England and are not currently in full-time study, you’re able to apply for an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships take anywhere between one and four years to complete depending on their level, and there are also no set entry requirements (although some employers do have their own eligibility criteria depending on the sector or job). In England alone, more than 150,000 employers in over 200,000 workplaces offer apprenticeships, covering more than 170 industries and 1,500 job roles.

### *Why are they worth considering as an alternative to full-time education?*

There are many reasons why an apprenticeship could be right for your child. Here are our top five:

- employers like apprenticeships
- young people can earn while they learn
- apprentices can gain hands-on experience
- they provide opportunities to study towards a related qualification
- apprenticeships provide demanding but rewarding work.

### *Apprenticeships sound interesting, but I’m a bit confused about what qualification level they should do and what it means*

Apprenticeships can be undertaken at different qualification levels. Which one your child chooses to pursue depends on their educational stage and the qualifications they currently hold. Here’s a simple way of making sense of it:

*‘54% of employers have told us that they offer work experience – however, not all advertise the fact.’*

*‘Apprenticeships are a great way to learn as they involve performing tasks and working with professionals in a real workplace.’*

- **Intermediate apprenticeships are Level 2 qualifications, equivalent to 5 GCSE passes.**
- **Advanced apprenticeships are Level 3 qualifications, equivalent to 2 A level passes.**
- **Higher apprenticeships lead to Level 4, 5 or 6 qualifications and above, equivalent to years 1 to 3 of university.**

**One last thing** – it’s important that apprenticeships are high quality, undertaken at a level which is appropriate for the young person, offer real opportunities to gain new skills and good qualifications while earning, and provide a route into work. Check out the **National Apprenticeship Service** for more information: [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

*What pay is my son or daughter entitled to, and what are their rights as an employee?*

The pay an apprentice receives is determined by age. Here’s how it breaks down:

- Apprentices **aged 16–18** are entitled to the ‘apprentice minimum wage’ of £2.73 an hour.
- Apprentices **aged 19 and over** are also entitled to the apprentice minimum wage in the first 12 months of their apprenticeship. After the first 12 months of their apprenticeship, people aged 19 and over are entitled to the National Minimum Wage.
- National Minimum Wage rates are age-dependent and rise from £5.13 an hour for 18–20-year-olds to £6.50 an hour for people aged 21 and over.

**These rates apply as of October 2014, but are updated annually. For the most recent rates, visit GOV.UK**

As apprentices are employees, they are entitled to the same employment rights as regular workers. For more information on the rights of apprentices, check out the CIPD’s apprenticeship guide:

[cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/apprenticeships-work.aspx](http://cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/apprenticeships-work.aspx)

*Where can I find out more about apprenticeships?*

For more information on the benefits of apprenticeships, the different levels available and core components of apprenticeships, and searching and applying for an apprenticeship, visit the **National Apprenticeship Service** website at [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

### Traineeships

*What are traineeships? Are they new?*

Some young people aren’t ready to do an apprenticeship because they don’t have the skills, experience or qualifications. Traineeships were introduced in August 2013 to help prepare young people, aged 16 to 24, who have not been successful in securing an apprenticeship. By doing a traineeship, your child could gain English and maths qualifications, work preparation training and a work experience placement with an employer. The programme can last up to a maximum of six months with the content tailored to the needs of your child. In the 2013–14 academic year, 10,500 people started a traineeship, of which 7,000 were aged under 19.

*Are traineeships paid?*

No, they’re not. Unlike an apprentice, employers aren’t required to pay your child for taking part in a traineeship but may support you with expenses such as transport and meals. The work placement is an opportunity to gain meaningful work experience.

*Where can I find out more?*

To find out more, your child can contact their local college or training provider to see if they are offering traineeship opportunities. You can also search for traineeship opportunities advertised regularly on the apprenticeship vacancy job site on **GOV.UK**.

# Sixth form/college (16–18 years old)

If your child decided to remain in full-time education, they will be entering their last two years at school or college and considering what to do when they leave. There are a number of choices facing 16–18-year-olds in terms of where to go next with their skills and qualifications. We've given you a quick round-up of the main routes, who they're best suited for, and where each path could lead...

## University

University remains a popular route into a job for many young people. In early 2014, the number of undergraduate applications from British 18-year-olds to UK universities hit an all-time high. University gives young people the opportunity to study a subject (or subjects) of their choosing in greater depth, gain a degree, boost their skills and expertise in a particular area and be attractive to employers.

There are a number of benefits to doing a degree. Here are just a few:

- A degree indicates that your child has achieved a certain level of skill and expertise in an area of knowledge.
- Some jobs and professions require a university degree (for example medicine).
- A university course can help to develop the skills employers want such as research and analytical skills, motivation, independent and team working, and an ability to communicate.
- Some courses require students to do work experience as part of their degree.

- Your child could have an opportunity to study abroad.
- It's an opportunity to have a great time and meet lots of new people!

However, it's worth also considering that:

- Although some professions call for a university degree, it's not the only route into work.
- For some young people, the idea of three or four years of study isn't appealing.
- Many people don't end up in jobs which directly relate to their degree.
- Lots of young people have degrees, so it's not necessarily as advantageous as it once was.
- The cost of tuition is high, and some young people might be worried about the burden of a student loan once they have graduated.

*'University gives young people the opportunity to study a subject (or subjects) of their choosing in greater depth.'*

### The cost of university

It does cost to go to university, but most student loans don't need to be paid back until after university.

**Tuition fee loan:** for home/EU students, the maximum fee chargeable by an English university is £9,000 in 2015 (this amount of tuition charged is dependent on both the country of study and the university or college). To cover the cost of the fees, UK and EU students could take out a tuition fee loan.

**Maintenance loan:** to be eligible, you must be a full-time UK student. The maintenance loan is intended to help cover living costs and is paid directly to the student in instalments. The loan comprises a non-financially assessed portion (which all eligible students can receive) and a financially assessed portion, which depends on household income.

Finally, it's worth being aware that there will be interest on these loans, but how much depends on what your son or daughter earns.

For more information on student loans and finance, visit [www.gov.uk/student-finance/overview](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance/overview)

### What do employers think of young people with degrees?

A degree is a widely recognised qualification amongst employers. This is partly because of its popularity; however, it could also be because an employer may have completed a degree themselves, or their children may be doing one. However, while there was a time when having a degree was the only way to catch the eye of potential employers, an increasing number of businesses now offer apprenticeships and other routes into work to young people.

### Do graduates earn more than young people choosing other routes into work?

It depends on a number of factors, including the job, profession or occupation a young person ends up working in. It also depends on how you look at earnings. Last year, evidence by the Office for National Statistics found that over a quarter of university graduates were earning less than school-leavers on apprenticeships. Despite this, graduates, on average, earn around £200,000 more over a lifetime than non-graduates.

But it's not all about the wages, which can change over time. It's important that your child chooses a path which they think will help them to achieve their future career

goals, matches their work and study preferences and gives them the opportunities they need to succeed.

### Where do I go to find out more?

Your child's school or college should provide information on the types of course available, selecting a subject or areas to study, and the application process in time to meet the relevant deadlines. There are lots of resources and websites available to help your child decide whether higher education is right for them; however, the UCAS website is a useful place to start: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

### Higher apprenticeships

#### What are they?

If your child has achieved five good GCSEs (grades A\*-C) and good post-16 results at Level 3 (A levels, BTECs, advanced apprenticeship, and so on) they might want to do a higher apprenticeship.

Higher apprenticeships are the same as other apprenticeships – combining on-the-job training while studying – however, they provide the opportunity for young people to work towards a high-level qualification, often equivalent to a foundation degree, bachelor's degree and soon at

master's degree level in some sectors. This means a young person needs to have entry qualifications typically at level 3 such as A levels, advanced level diploma, NVQ level 3 or an advanced apprenticeship. With 47 higher apprenticeships ranging from aerospace to accountancy, construction to creative and digital media, higher apprenticeships range across the sectors and represent hundreds of different job roles.

Higher apprenticeships are aimed at school-leavers who may not wish to go to university or want to pursue a clear work-based pathway. The potential to achieve graduate and postgraduate-level qualifications while learning and earning in a real business can be an attractive proposition.

For more information on higher apprenticeships, visit [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

### Work-based alternatives to university

Despite the pull of university, more young people are considering work-related higher education courses. They can be taught in colleges, universities and special institutions (such as art or agricultural colleges) and qualifications include:



- diplomas
- bachelor degrees
- foundation degrees
- postgraduate degrees.

These are typically one-year courses that can prepare your child for either employment or facilitate their entry into the second year of a degree if they choose to continue their studies (depending on the eligibility criteria of the subject and institution).

Work-related higher education courses (such as foundation degrees) are often designed and delivered in partnership with employers and higher education providers, so business understands what skills the young person has gained by doing them. Qualifications such as higher national diplomas and certificates can also play an important role in helping young people prepare for the workplace, as they are job-related and available in a wide range of vocational areas.

For more information on work-based alternatives to university, and to search and apply, visit **GOV.UK**

### School-leaver programmes

School-leaver programmes are becoming increasingly popular with employers who want to get talented young people through their doors at an early age. School-leaver programmes are offered by larger organisations and provide another way for young people to begin building their careers in a particular field or area.

#### *Why are they worth considering?*

Firstly, like apprenticeships, school-leaver programmes offer young people a way of earning and learning at the same time; in fact, in some cases starting salaries are extremely competitive. However,

school-leaver programmes also offer the opportunity of a full-time training programme, lasting anywhere between four and six years, which not only gives a young person a pathway into employment, but a professional qualification, valuable experience, coaching and mentoring, and access to networks and further opportunities. Competition for places in school-leaver programmes can be fierce, and there is usually a set eligibility criteria for acceptance onto these programmes, including certain A level subjects and grades. Each programme is different, so it's important to bear this in mind.

#### *Where can my child go to find out more?*

In many cases, places on school-leaver programmes are advertised on employers' recruitment pages or websites, so this can be a good place to look. However, there are also more general websites which can signpost your child to more information.

*'Qualifications such as higher national diplomas and certificates can also play an important role in helping young people prepare for the workplace.'*

# Beyond education and training

*‘Internships can help young people to decide if a particular industry is right for them before they enter it.’*

Landing their first job can be tricky for young people as they are new to the job market, and have less experience of work and applying for opportunities, and may not yet know how to ‘sell’ their skills, qualifications and strengths to a prospective employer. However, there are a number of pathways, placements and opportunities your child could consider to help them prepare for, and transition into, work. We’ve explored a few in this section.

## Internships

### *What are they and who are they for?*

An internship is a method of on-the-job training usually used for office jobs and professional careers. Interns are often university students or recent graduates, but internships can be open to people who haven’t been to university. Internships are designed for people who are just starting out in their career, are usually full-time and can last anywhere between six weeks and 12 months. Internships are an increasingly competitive business. Applying for an internship is similar to applying for a normal job. In many cases employers advertise internship vacancies on their website or use an online jobs board.

### *Why are they a good thing to do?*

Increasingly, people who want to go into certain careers – for example finance, media and communications – are expected to have completed one or more internships before they will be considered by an employer for a permanent vacancy. Internships

can also help a young person to decide if a particular industry is right for them before they enter it. Finally, in addition to preparing them for a particular field or profession, internships are a good way of building up contacts and networks which they may not benefit from without being a part of the world of work. In some cases, if an internship goes well, your son or daughter might be offered a permanent position once their internship is complete – however, it’s important to remember that there is no guarantee of this.

### *Should my child be paid for doing an internship?*

The good news is that most employers understand that paying interns is the right thing to do – not only for their business but for the young person taking part. However, this doesn’t mean that there aren’t unpaid internships available out there. While organisations like the CIPD are working to stamp out this practice, it’s important that your child understands the difference between paid opportunities (like internships) and voluntary placements (where they aren’t paid for their work) to avoid being caught out.

To find out the difference between volunteering and an internship, whether they should be paid, and how to report an employer if they’re not, your child can visit **[www.internaware.org](http://www.internaware.org)**

## Graduate schemes

### *What is a graduate scheme?*

Graduate schemes and graduate training programmes are offered by many large employers. They typically last a year, but some extend to 18 months or even two years. Graduate schemes can help a young person quickly learn the ropes of a working environment, receive relevant skills development and possibly professional accreditation and gain experience working in a specific role or through working on a number of assignments in different areas of the organisation. Like internships, they can be quite competitive as they usually offer an impressive array of opportunities in recognised organisations with well-known brands.

The chances are that if your child attended a graduate fair at their university, they would have encountered this route into work, as large employers 'do the rounds' to ensure their opportunities reach students. There are a range of graduate schemes available in areas such as accountancy and financial services, management and business, hospitality and retail, and even charity work.

If you want more information on graduate schemes, you can visit websites such as **[www.milkround.com](http://www.milkround.com)** or visit employers' websites directly to search and apply.

### Entry-level employment

With the array of schemes, programmes and placements available, it might be easy to forget that many young people choose to enter straight into employment after they have finished formal or vocational education and training, at whatever stage that may be. Depending on their qualifications and skills, young people can apply for entry-level employment.

### *Isn't entry-level employment just a job?*

An entry-level job is the first job that a new trainee or graduate takes upon completion of a training or degree programme. Taking up an entry-level job usually means that they are entering a profession at a level which doesn't require a significant amount of (if any) prior work experience in the field.

### *What does an entry-level job involve?*

Entry-level jobs can be full-time, part-time or temporary – so in a sense they are similar to regular jobs for regular workers; except that entry-level jobs are often targeted at young people with Level 4 qualifications and usually offer a higher salary than jobs aimed at those with fewer qualifications. These positions are more likely to require specific skills and knowledge. For most university graduates, these are the roles they will apply for upon leaving education.

# Transitioning into the world of work

*‘Landing your first job is an important moment in everyone’s life and an equally proud moment for parents, as years of hard work and preparation for life after education begins to pay off.’*

Landing your first job is an important moment in everyone’s life and an equally proud moment for parents, as years of hard work and preparation for life after education begins to pay off. However, it can be a worrying time for your son or daughter, particularly when youth unemployment in the UK remains high.

But how do young people in 2015 set about finding, applying and preparing for work? What should they be putting on their CV in order to get noticed by employers? How can they stand out from the crowd? From finding work, to applying for jobs and interviewing, this section will provide useful advice on the steps a young person will take when finding work.

## **Being a young jobseeker in 2015**

Young people in most countries face challenges finding their first job. In the UK, some young people do a variety of temporary jobs to find something that suits them and gain the experience they need. Others may discover that their lack of time spent in the workplace means it’s difficult to compete with more

established jobseekers. Some may even decide to undertake activities – paid or unpaid – aimed at improving their CV, skills or experience, such as an internship or a work experience placement. No two journeys into work are the same.

As a parent, it can be hard to know how to advise your son or daughter on finding and applying for work. Furthermore, each industry, field and profession is different, which can make it seem more confusing. But don’t worry; read on for some general tips, hints and information to help you understand what employers are doing, and what young people need to know, in order to help them secure their first job.

## **How are employers recruiting now?**

Employers continue to advertise vacancies using a range of methods; however, many now prefer to do the bulk of their recruitment online. Recruiting and hiring has changed significantly over the years and continues to evolve as technology changes. This means that for most young people looking for work today, the Internet is the place to begin their search.

### **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional networking site with over 300 million users. LinkedIn allows users – employees and employers – to create profiles and connect with each other. It is increasingly being used for recruitment and profiles include similar information as a CV. Jobseekers can search for job openings directly on LinkedIn and follow companies to get the latest news from them.

Recently, LinkedIn reduced the age that people could use the site to 13 years old to reflect young people’s desire to make useful links and establish connections at an earlier stage. For LinkedIn to be most effective, however, the user’s profile should be kept up to date and completed as much as possible so recruiters and employers can be easily found when they search for candidates who fit the bill.

[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

### Top tips

- 1 **Visit an organisation's website** – if your son or daughter has a company in mind, check their website for information on vacancies. This is where most organisations post news about their opportunities.
- 2 **Get social** – some employers – particularly those who have a strong public presence or are involved in the media and creative industries – use Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to spread the news about posts. This can be where the news breaks first.
- 3 **Online jobs boards** – these allow you to view a wide selection of vacancies in one place and also let you sign up for job alerts tailored to the types of role you are interested in. Some of the best ones are:
  - [www.gov.uk/jobsearch](http://www.gov.uk/jobsearch) – official government Universal Jobmatch website, which allows candidates to save job searches, upload their CV, set up email alerts and keep track of their past applications
  - [www.monster.co.uk](http://www.monster.co.uk)
  - [www.totaljobs.com](http://www.totaljobs.com)
  - [www.jobsite.co.uk](http://www.jobsite.co.uk)
  - [www.fish4.co.uk](http://www.fish4.co.uk)
  - [www.milkround.com](http://www.milkround.com) – for university graduates.
- 4 **Don't forget: the old ways are sometimes the best!** Posting advertisements in local and national newspapers, using high street recruitment agencies, sharing vacancies via Jobcentre Plus, and attending jobs and careers fairs are all activities employers use to recruit. It's worthwhile keeping in mind, as you may be more aware of this than your child.
- 5 **'It's who you know'** – the old adage is true. Build a good contact network of friends, family, teachers and tutors who may have heard about jobs being advertised, or have ideas about where to look for opportunities. This is also why volunteering, work experience placements and internships are so important.

**TOP TIP:** Your son or daughter might find they're completing a large number of applications and it can be hard to keep up. Encourage them to keep a record of the opportunities they're applying for to avoid any mistakes being made!

But the Internet is a big place – it can be difficult to know where to begin. Here are our top tips from the people who recruit.

### Applying for opportunities

#### *Application forms*

In the same way that employers are increasingly advertising roles online, candidates are increasingly being asked to apply online by completing an online application form. Most of the information requested will be the same as that which appears on your child's CV – such as their education, skills and experience. Depending on the organisation, they might also ask a number of specific questions to find out whether a candidate is suitable for a role, or ask them to do this by writing a profile of themselves. An

employer may immediately discard an application if:

- It fails to meet essential criteria or minimum educational standards.
- There is key information missing (for example name and phone number).
- It is poorly presented or in any way unclear.
- It includes spelling or grammatical errors.
- It mentions the wrong company or the company name is spelled wrongly.

## CVs

CVs are still very important for a young person to have, both before and during their job search.

Generally speaking, CVs have looked the same for a number of years and serve the same purpose – to sell yourself to a potential employer, highlight that you have the right skills and experience – paid and unpaid – for a role within their organisation and to show that you are the type of person they are looking to recruit.

For further information on writing a CV, as well as guidance on completing application forms or writing covering letters, you can read our CIPD guide *Employment: Top tips and guidance from the people who recruit*, available at [cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/guidance-young-people](https://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/guidance-young-people)

If your child is aged 18 to 24 years old, unemployed and interested in improving their employability skills, boosting their confidence and finding a job, Steps Ahead Mentoring can help. CIPD Steps

Ahead Mentoring is a free mentoring programme that connects young people with a recruitment professional for face-to-face mentoring. Steps Ahead mentors have first-hand experience of interviewing and hiring people, and can provide your child with one-to-one careers advice, tips on job-hunting and interview hints and practice. Your child can sign up via their Jobcentre Plus work coach, or you can visit [cipd.co.uk/stepsaheadmentoring](https://www.cipd.co.uk/stepsaheadmentoring) to find out more.

### Top tips for writing a CV

**Employers know what they're looking for**, and first appearances are everything. A CV an employer wants to see is:

- a maximum of two A4 sides long
- simple, using a font size no smaller than 10 and a normal font such as Arial or Times New Roman
- laid out with the following sections: contact details; personal profile; work and voluntary experience; key skills and achievements; education and training; interests and hobbies
- written in plain and positive English with clear and concise content
- printed on good-quality paper if posted or handed in in person.

There are a few pieces of information that **no longer need to be included on a CV**. They are:

- whether you hold a driving licence
- when you were born
- details of your references
- a recent photograph of yourself.

# Further advice and information

The final section of this guide provides further information and resources you may find useful.

*Good luck!*

## For information on careers, skills, job advice, courses and qualifications

**National Careers Service** – [www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)

**Plotr** – [www.plotr.co.uk](http://www.plotr.co.uk)

**Prospects** – [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

**Direct Gov** – [www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean](http://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean)

## For information on the national curriculum

**Direct Gov** – [www.gov.uk/national-curriculum/overview](http://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum/overview)

## For information on apprenticeships or to find and apply

**National Apprenticeship Service** – [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

[www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Be-An-Apprentice/Applying](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Be-An-Apprentice/Applying)

## For information on traineeships or to find and apply

**Direct Gov** – [www.gov.uk/government/collections/traineeships-programme](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traineeships-programme)

**National Apprenticeship Service** – [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

## For information on university

**The Complete University Guide** – [www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)

**UCAS** – [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

## For volunteering opportunities

**Vinspired** – [www.vinspired.com](http://www.vinspired.com)

**Do-it** – [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)

**Volunteering England** – [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

**CSV England** – [www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)

**National Careers Service** – [www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)

**Step Up To Serve** – [www.iwill.org.uk](http://www.iwill.org.uk)

## For CIPD guidance and advice for young people

**Employment: Top tips and guidance from the people who recruit** – [cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/guidance-young-people](http://cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/guidance-young-people)

**Your CV, Your Style, Your Job** – [cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/cv-guide-young-people](http://cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/cv-guide-young-people)

## For more information and guidance from the Learning to Work programme

**Learning to Work** – [cipd.co.uk/learningtowork](http://cipd.co.uk/learningtowork)

**Apprenticeships that Work** – [cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/apprenticeships-work](http://cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/apprenticeships-work)

**Internships that Work** – [cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/internships-employers-guide](http://cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/internships-employers-guide)

**Work Experience Placements that Work** – [cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/work-experience-placements-work](http://cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/work-experience-placements-work)

# CIPD | Learning to Work

The **Learning to Work** programme is led by the CIPD to promote the role of employers in reducing youth unemployment. The CIPD's purpose is to **champion better work and working lives**, which starts with young people being able to access the labour market.

The overall aim of the programme is to promote the business case for investing in the future workforce. We encourage HR professionals to offer a wide range of access routes into their organisations and ensure their recruitment and management practices are youth-friendly. We also promote direct contact with young people via two youth volunteering programmes, **Steps Ahead Mentoring** and **Inspiring the Future**.

[cipd.co.uk/learningtowork](http://cipd.co.uk/learningtowork)

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development  
151 The Broadway London SW19 1JQ United Kingdom  
**T** +44 (0)20 8612 6200 **F** +44 (0)20 8612 6201  
**E** [cipd@cipd.co.uk](mailto:cipd@cipd.co.uk) **W** [cipd.co.uk](http://cipd.co.uk)

Incorporated by Royal Charter  
Registered as a charity in England and Wales (1079797) and Scotland (SC045154)

Issued: August 2015 Reference: 6987 © CIPD 2015