

## Career Conversations in a Nutshell

Career conversations start early. From a young age, children talk about what they like to do, their interests, what they are good at and about their hopes and dreams. As adults, how we respond to these casual chats is hugely influential. We often rely on our own experiences to inform these discussions. In this guide, we provide hints and tips on how to have constructive career conversations with your child and where to look for further information. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) careers advisers help us to navigate some of the challenges of career conversations and young people share their ideas on how we can best support them as they face choices and decisions.

Whilst preparing this guide, we at the National Parent Forum learned a lot about keeping career conversations positive, child-centred and open-ended. We hope you will find Career Conversations in a Nutshell useful.

Joanna Murphy, Chair  
**The National Parent Forum of Scotland**  
[www.parentforumscotland.org](http://www.parentforumscotland.org)

### In this guide, you will find

- information about your child's career education
- examples of careers advice in action as Skills Development Scotland careers advisers guide us through typical career conversations
- top tips from young people on supporting them with their decision-making
- links to *MyWorldofWork.co.uk* and other useful sources of information.



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# Career Conversations at School and at Home

Working with schools and Skills Development Scotland (SDS), we parents can ensure that our children have the skills and resources they need to pursue their ambitions. On this page, you will find key information about your child's career education. Then, careers advisers from SDS demonstrate their approach to career guidance.

## Career Education

As a core part of the curriculum from 3-18, children and young people will learn about the world of work, job possibilities and the strengths and skills needed for work. They will find out about:

- their personal attributes, preferences and sense of self
- the concept of work (including entrepreneurship, social enterprise and self-employment)
- skills and experiences which relate to a range of jobs and careers
- diversity and equity
- where to find help and careers information
- routes into further training, learning, apprenticeships and work.

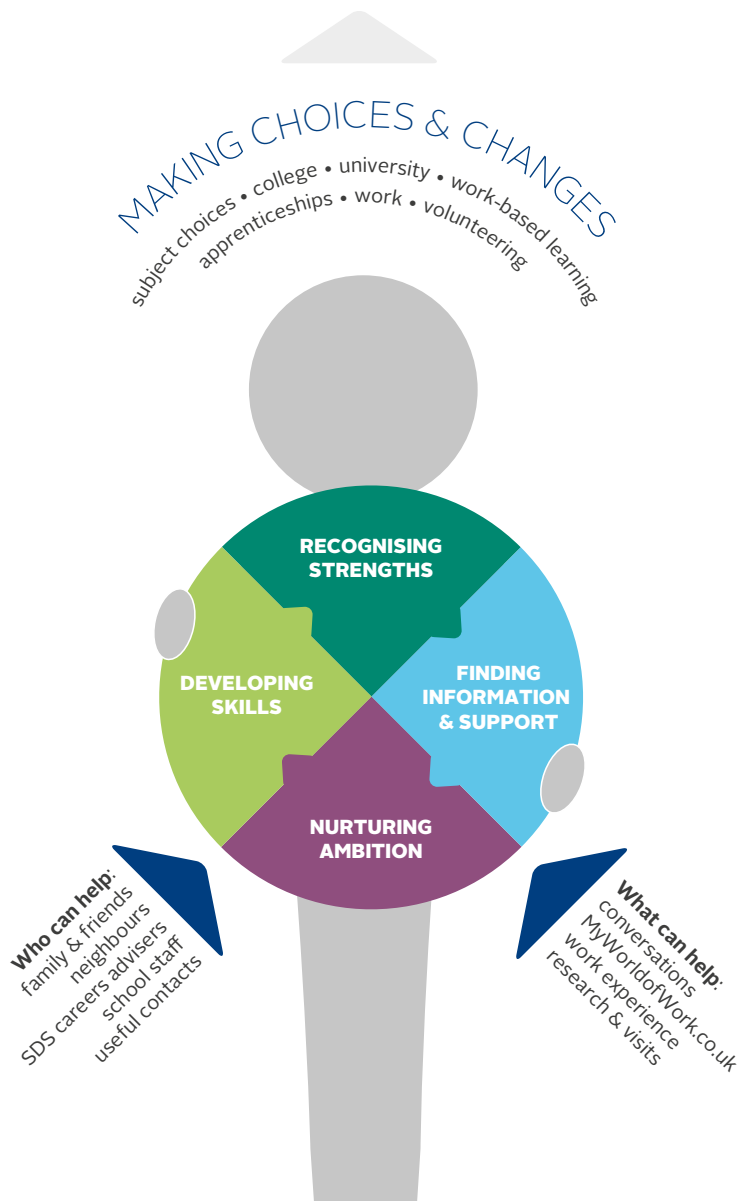
Your child's career education is supported by SDS. SDS careers advisers are available in schools and in local SDS careers centres. The website [MyWorldofWork.co.uk](http://MyWorldofWork.co.uk) is an essential source of career information for all. This website can be used at home and will also be used in schools at the following stages:

### P5 to P7

Working with their teacher, your child may use online tools called Animal Me, Skills Builder and My Interests.

### S1+

Young people will be encouraged to build their profile using the self-evaluation tools About Me, Skills, Strengths, Education and Experience. Different pathways can be explored within the Subject Choices tool, My Career Options page and Job Profiles.



### THE 'I WANT TO BE A...' CONVERSATION

Your child says they want to be a dinosaur hunter, a rock star, an inventor, a dancer, a scientist, an explorer, a teacher, a builder, a computer games designer...it could be anything and everything. How should you respond?

#### The careers adviser says:

Whatever interests your child has, these present a perfect opportunity to talk about careers and to expand their ideas. A lot of parents worry about how realistic their child's career ideas are but we can't predict what our children might achieve. For young people, knowing what they enjoy doing is a great starting point. You can help your child by

- encouraging them to find out more, either independently or with you, depending on your child's age. If they are serious about an idea, they will be keen to know more
- asking questions: what does your child already know about careers in their field of interest? What particular aspect are they keen on?
- researching and discussing the different types of jobs that are relevant to their interest
- getting in touch with someone already doing the job to ask them about how they started their career.

### THE 'I'M ONLY INTERESTED IN...' CONVERSATION

What do you say when your child only wants to do one thing? Whether it is choosing a variety of subjects, gaining new experiences or choosing a career path, how can we encourage our children to keep their options open?

#### The careers adviser says:

Think of your child's particular interest as a starting point to explore and discuss options. For example, if your child only wants to study science subjects, look at some science job profiles or vacancies. Point out that they all look for good communications skills. Discuss what else they might study or take part in to prove to a college, university or employers that they have these skills. If they only have one job in mind, encourage them to think about why. For example, they only want to be a Formula 1 driver, why? Is it the excitement, working with the cars, the travel, fame? Get them to think about, then prioritise, what is most important. Look at other options that match these priorities. If they are still resistant to any other options, ask them to treat their main idea as Plan A and talk about having a backup Plan B. Ask them to think about how their skills, experience and qualifications might help them choose and access a Plan B.

#### Further research

Online at [MyWorldofWork.co.uk](http://MyWorldofWork.co.uk)

- Identify strengths, skills and interests with the self evaluation tools and build your personal profile (a login is required). Explore different career suggestions in My Career Options  
[www.myworldofwork.co.uk/my-career-options](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/my-career-options)
- Find a course or volunteering opportunity with the Learn and Train search tool  
[www.myworldofwork.co.uk/learn-and-train](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/learn-and-train)
- Find a job or apprenticeship via the Getting a Job page  
[www.myworldofwork.co.uk/getting-a-job](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/getting-a-job)
- Build a profile and a CV, get tips on filling in application forms or practise interview techniques  
[www.myworldofwork.co.uk/getting-a-job](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/getting-a-job)
- Get help with subject choices and different routes into careers  
[http://bit.ly/subject\\_choices](http://bit.ly/subject_choices)
- Find out about career management skills  
[http://bit.ly/career\\_management\\_skills](http://bit.ly/career_management_skills)
- Read about setting up a business and entrepreneurship  
[http://bit.ly/be\\_own\\_boss](http://bit.ly/be_own_boss)

**THE 'I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I WANT TO DO' CONVERSATION** Young people are expected to make so many choices during their high school years, already a time of intense personal change. How can we help our children when they are stuck for ideas and can't decide?

**The careers adviser says:**

Young people can feel under a lot of pressure so it is important to ensure that they don't panic. Take some time to listen and to ask questions. Try to be patient and open to what your child says. You can offer help and support but in the end, they have to decide for themselves. Open questions can identify possible pathways. For example, you can ask your child

- what are their hopes, dreams and ambitions? What subjects do they enjoy or are good at? What are their interests and skills?
- what do they think about making choices?
- what do they want to happen next or in a few years?
- if they could take specific actions to help themselves, such as doing a self-assessment quiz, speaking to SDS careers advisers or using the 'I Have a Rough Idea...' tool on the My Career Options page of MyWorldofWork.co.uk.

**THE 'WHERE CAN I GET ADVICE AND HELP?' CONVERSATION** As young people develop career management skills, they will learn about where to find help and advice. This doesn't mean that they will have the confidence to do so. What can we do?

**The careers adviser says:**

We can encourage and support our children as they

- make contact with people who can help them
- write their CVs or personal statements
- apply for college or university courses, jobs or work experiences.

For some young people, it is enough to ask about deadlines and about how applications are going. For others, more support is needed. We all tend to put off difficult tasks, so sitting down together to work at CVs or applications can be beneficial. Or can you point your child to another source of help and support such as a family friend with useful knowledge and experience, SDS careers advisers or the MyWorldofWork website?

**Other useful websites**

- For information on apprenticeships, visit [http://bit.ly/apprenticeships\\_myworldofwork](http://bit.ly/apprenticeships_myworldofwork)  
[www.apprenticeships.scot/become-an-ma/](http://www.apprenticeships.scot/become-an-ma/)
- Creative industries  
<http://opportunities.creativescotland.com>  
[www.culturalenterpriseoffice.co.uk](http://www.culturalenterpriseoffice.co.uk)

**If extra help is required**

For those with additional support needs  
[http://bit.ly/additional\\_support\\_needs\\_work](http://bit.ly/additional_support_needs_work)  
[http://bit.ly/additional\\_support\\_needs\\_learning](http://bit.ly/additional_support_needs_learning)  
[www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled](http://www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled)

**Advice and support**

- Young people can speak to SDS careers advisers in secondary schools and in local SDS careers centres. Help your child to make useful contacts (friends, family, teachers, your work colleagues) who can share their knowledge of particular courses or careers.
- Parents can refresh their knowledge of CVs and interview techniques by visiting [MyWorldofWork.co.uk](http://MyWorldofWork.co.uk)

Asking us about what we are going to do for the rest of our lives creates a lot of pressure and is overwhelming

Help us to find out about what will make us good at our job

An important message is that you don't have to be clever at school to have a good job that you like. It is enough to be good at something and to enjoy doing it

Ask questions like 'what do you like doing?' and 'if you could choose any career, what would you choose?'

Show us a range of life experiences, by going to different places and meeting different people, so that we can see there isn't just one conventional path to a career

Encourage us to keep as many options open as possible and to think about what we really enjoy. This will help us to work out what we want

Listen to what we want

If we don't know how to write a CV or fill in a job application, can you help us to find out how to do these things?

Help us to explore possibilities, and help us to say out loud what we really like to do

## Prompts from Young People for Career Conversations

How best can we help our children as they consider course and career choices?  
We asked young people for their comments and suggestions.

Our sense of identity is really important and it feeds into everything. It would be good to make the link between a sense of identity and the workplace

Encourage us to do more work experience in the holidays and at weekends

Getting real world, proper advice from people who do specific jobs is important

If we aren't ready to decide, reassure us that we have got plenty of time

Help us to have the skills to explore our options – confidence, the ability to talk to people, self-knowledge, a good intuition about ourselves and what we like and want to do

Encourage us to go out into the world and talk to people and find out how they got to where they are, and what the challenges were along the way

Help us to think about the vital qualities for a particular job. It's not just about exam grades. For example, you need a strong stomach to be a doctor, as well as stamina. Getting the right grades is only part of what you need

Don't push us into certain careers. Encourage us to have our own ideas and to take charge of our own destiny

SELF-KNOWLEDGE & RECOGNISING STRENGTHS

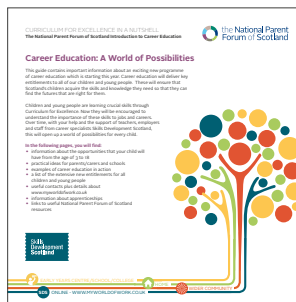
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## More from The National Parent Forum of Scotland

- **Career Education in a Nutshell** provides the essentials about your child's opportunities for learning about careers [http://bit.ly/world\\_of\\_possibilities](http://bit.ly/world_of_possibilities)
- **Learning Pathways in a Nutshell** sets out the different learning pathways that young people can follow to achieve their ambitions eg apprenticeships, college, university, training [http://bit.ly/NPFS\\_pathways](http://bit.ly/NPFS_pathways)
- **Skills in a Nutshell** describes the wide range of skills for life, learning and work that are developed through Curriculum for Excellence [http://bit.ly/nutshell\\_skills](http://bit.ly/nutshell_skills)
- **Progression in a Nutshell** shows how young people can progress through Scottish Qualifications Authority qualifications at their own pace <http://bit.ly/progression-in-a-nutshell>



The National Parent Forum of Scotland represents parents, making sure that parental voices are heard locally and nationally. Find out more about us at [www.parentforumscotland.org](http://www.parentforumscotland.org) or email [enquiries@parentforumscotland.org](mailto:enquiries@parentforumscotland.org)

## Useful Information for Parents

### MyWorldofWork.co.uk

Help and information for parents on supporting their children with subject choices, leaving school, work experience, volunteering, career education, exam results stress, job applications and more [www.myworldofwork.co.uk/parents](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/parents)

### Education Scotland

Read about the Career Education Standard (3-18), the Work Placements Standard and Developing the Young Workforce programme [http://bit.ly/developing\\_the\\_young\\_workforce](http://bit.ly/developing_the_young_workforce)

### Apprenticeships

Find out about apprenticeships and how they've changed. With more than 80 types covering hundreds of different jobs, there are lots to choose from. There's a vacancy search and case studies about apprenticeships [www.apprenticeships.scot](http://www.apprenticeships.scot) [http://bit.ly/modern\\_apprenticeship](http://bit.ly/modern_apprenticeship)



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