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About this report

was developed by The Careers & Enterprise Company,
University of Derby and the Skills Builder Partnership.

The report also presents the results from over 2,000 young people who took part in employer encounters, workplace experiences or personal guidance and who completed the

greatest improvements were made and highlight the skill areas that are strongest and weakest for young people.

Foreword

This important piece of work from The Careers & Enterprise Company helps to illuminate what the impact of high-quality careers provision can be: to develop critically important insights into the world of work; to enhance and refine aspirations; and to build the skills to realise those goals.

Over the last ten years the Skills Builder Partnership has seen that every young person can build the essential skills to thrive. Our 800 partners, including schools, colleges, employers and other youth organisations, are united in our diverse work by a common understanding and approach to building essential skills, including teamwork, presenting and creativity.

We have seen that a thoughtful, deliberate approach to building these skills can be transformative: identifying gaps, understanding the next step of progress, and combining direct teaching with many opportunities for application and practice.

We have been pleased to work with The Careers & Enterprise Company over the last year to develop the Future Skills tools that underpin their impact measurement. Using the Skills Builder Framework as a starting point we have defined clear indicators of progress in essential skills, alongside other key skills to be career-ready.

The results show a strong impact in a number of important areas: leadership, listening, presenting, problem-solving and creativity all showed meaningful improvements as a result of activities. These results will make a tangible difference to the career prospects of our young people and should be applauded.

But effective impact measurement does more than just celebrate. It motivates us to strive for more. And it also helps to focus our efforts: the Future Skills tools give us greater clarity and alignment behind the outcomes that we are all striving for. As we learn from these tools we can hone our programmes to boost progress further.

This report, and the tools that underpin it, are an important step forward in ensuring that every young person is equipped with the career insights, aspirations, and skills to succeed.

Tom Ravenscroft
Chief Executive, Skills Builder Partnership

Foreword

As a Founder of The Inspirational Learning Group and the National Enterprise Challenge I have always been committed to ensuring young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve career success.

Formal qualifications are important indicators of ability, but they can only ever be part of the picture. That is why we welcomed the creation of The Careers & Enterprise Company and why we were keen to be involved in delivering Enterprise Days to Young People across the UK in partnership with Business Enterprise Support.

Employability and enterprise skills are vital for young people's work readiness,

Executive Summary

The opportunities for young people to develop employability skills through careers and enterprise education are increasing. The latest evidence from the State of the Nation shows that more than 3,800 schools and colleges are tracking their progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks of good career guidance and that all aspects of careers education are improving¹. To measure the difference that careers education makes, The Careers & Enterprise Company developed Future Skills – a self-completion questionnaire for young people to assess their employability skills before and after an activity. These skills, which include problem-solving, resilience, awareness of different options after school and career planning, are important because they help young people to make informed choices, plan for their future and be successful in work.

Employability skills are vital for young peoples' work readiness, entrepreneurship and career progression.

- There is consensus across education, business, government and young people themselves that employability skills are as important as academic attainment for getting a job and career progression.
- The employability skills of young people do not currently meet the expectations of employers, highlighting the need for more support for young people before they leave school and college.
- The Gatsby Benchmarks of good careers guidance provide a framework for skills development through employer encounters, workplace experiences and personal guidance, among other activities.
- The Careers & Enterprise Company is funding scale-up and innovation in these activities to extend access for young people, particularly in areas of disadvantage.

- The Future Skills Questionnaire is a self-completion tool for young people measuring personal effectiveness, career readiness and essential skills.
- It was completed in 2018/19 by over 2,000 young people taking part in career activities.

New evidence shows that employer encounters, workplace experiences and personal guidance are most strongly associated with improvements in

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1 | Introduction

Importance of skills

It is widely accepted across education, business and government that young people's employability skills are as important as academic attainment for work readiness, entrepreneurship and career progression. Research by the Sutton Trust found that 94% of employers, 97% of teachers and 88% of young people regarded 'life skills' as being at least as important as academic grades to future success². More than half of the teachers surveyed (53%) thought that skills were more important than academic grades. Clearly, employers look for these skills when they're recruiting. In the CBI's most recent survey of employers, character, behaviour and attributes were a top priority when recruiting school and college leavers³. As the world of work changes to require greater adaptability, the need for employability skills will only intensify⁴.

We use the term employability skills in this report to cover career readiness skills (such as career planning) and essential skills (such as problem-solving and resilience). These overlap with what others refer to as life skills or soft skills.

2. Cullinane, C. & Montacute, R. (2017).

The skills gap

The Careers & Enterprise Company delivers funds to scale-up, innovate and build evidence on career activities involving employer encounters (such as career transition programmes, mentoring and business enterprise competitions), workplace experiences and personal guidance, with a focus on areas of greatest need. The aims of these activities are to broaden understanding of jobs and careers, build the knowledge and skills required in employment, support successful school to work transitions through information, advice and guidance and increase motivation to work hard at school or college.

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2 | The Future Skills Questionnaire

The Careers & Enterprise Company works across England to help prepare young people for the world of work. We test new approaches, find out what is effective, and share this knowledge with schools, colleges, employers and providers. To support this, we developed the Future Skills Questionnaire to measure the impact of careers-related activities on young people and their preparedness for the world of work. Our intention is to provide the evidence needed to enable programmes to improve and educators to make evidence-informed choices.

The Future Skills Questionnaire is a self-completion tool for young people to measure their progress in the skills and personal attributes needed to make the transition to the world of work. It uses well-established questions and frameworks to measure personal effectiveness, career readiness and essential skills for employability. It also collects young people's perceptions of the value of activities as we know from previous research, that more positive attitudes towards activities are related to outcomes. The evidence is strong that improvements across these attributes will support young people to secure better educational and career outcomes.

The Future Skills Questionnaire was developed by The Careers & Enterprise Company, the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby and Skills Builder in 2018. The aim was to identify questions that measure the core areas of personal effectiveness, career readiness and essential skills according to the following principles:



Brevity (as few questions as possible).



Relevant to young people in England.



Scientifically valid measurements.



Freely available to use.

The questions and scales selected are described below.

Skills areas

3 | Results from the Future Skills Questionnaire

About the young people

During 2018/19, 2,927 young people completed the Future Skills Questionnaire. They were all participants in careers guidance activities including volunteering, career talks, work experience, transition skills, enterprise, workplace visits, personal guidance and mentoring. The majority took part in activities that were funded by The Careers & Enterprise Company with the remainder from schools in the Enterprise Adviser Network. The young people were fairly evenly

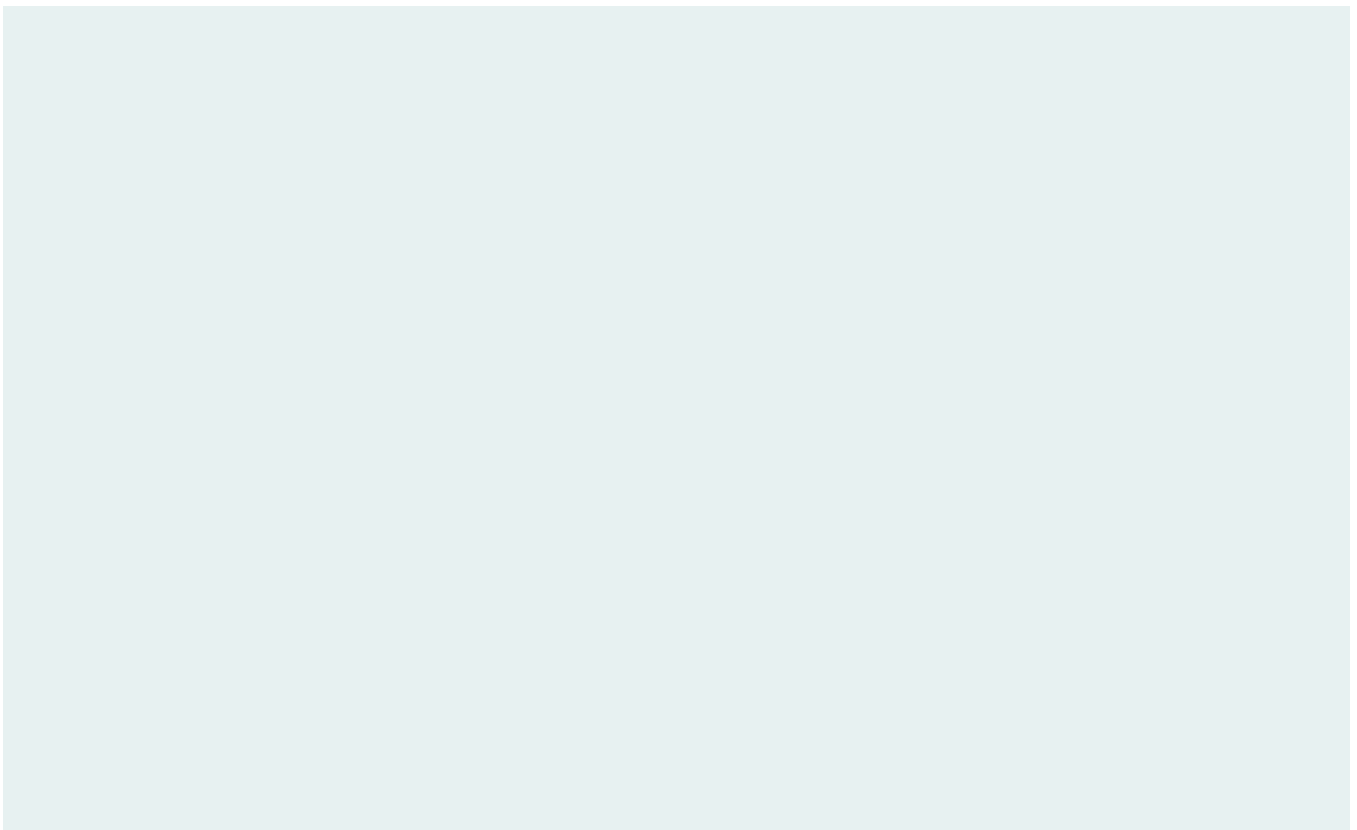
¹⁷ across all eight items

indicators.

There was a statistically significant difference between the pre and post-activity mean scores of each of the eight items and in the total score¹⁸. To illustrate the difference between the two timepoints, the chart below shows the proportion who thought that each statement was pretty much or very true (as opposed to not at all true and a little true). The largest changes (ten or more percentage points) were seen for the questions relating to resilience and motivation. The proportion of young people agreeing that 'When I do not understand

something I ask the teacher again and again until I understand' rose from 53% to 68% indicating an increase in academic motivation. There were also substantial increases in agreement with 'I try to answer all the questions asked in class' and 'When I try to solve a maths problem, I will not stop until I find a solution'.

The other indicators of personal effectiveness reflected young people's perceptions of themselves to be more



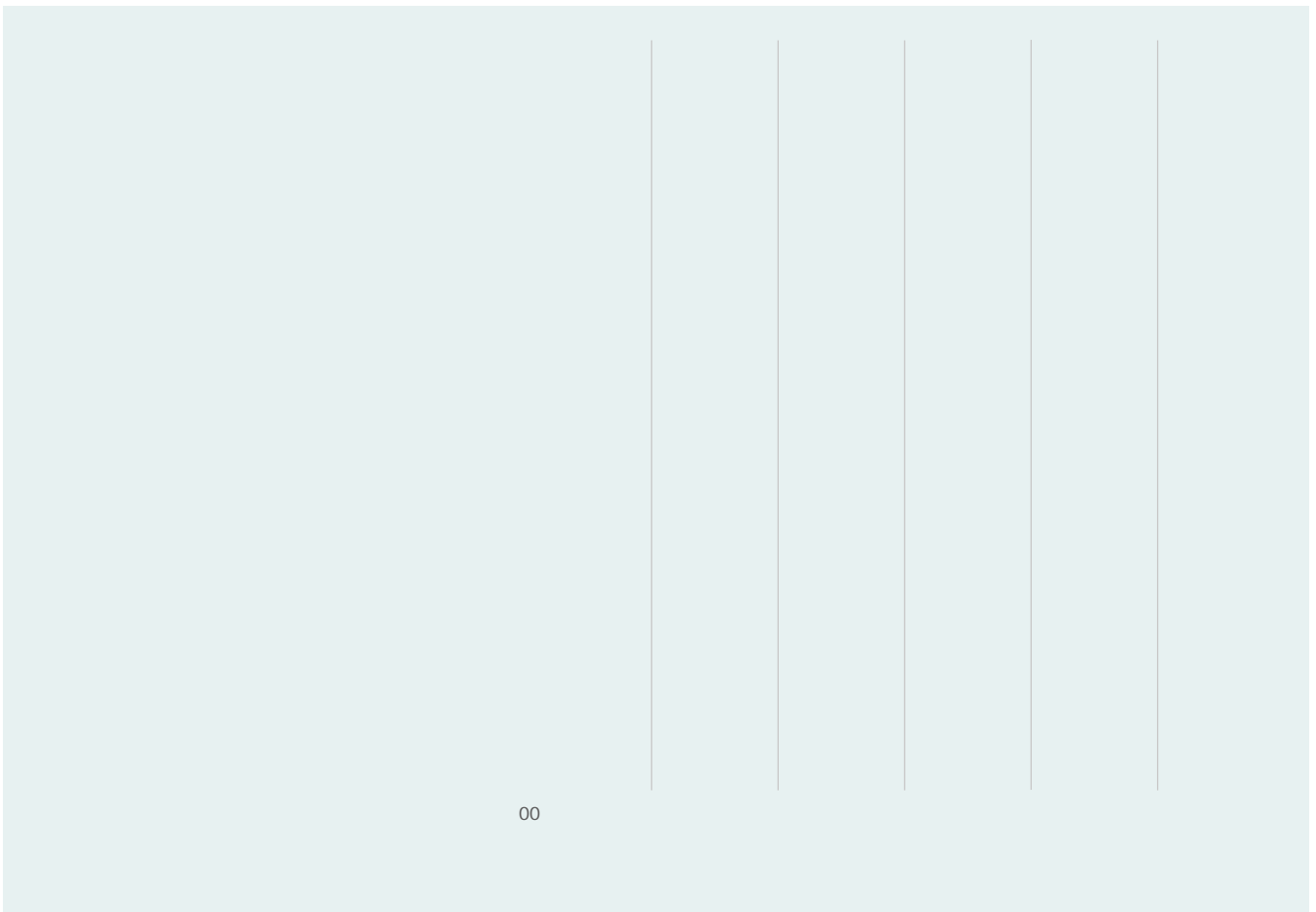
Career readiness

seeking and career management.

The mean average of 16 of the 21 individual items were significantly different between before and after the activity. The charts below illustrate change by showing the proportion of young people who mostly or completely agreed with each statement.

Overall, the young people were confident in their career planning²⁰ with approximately three-quarters of young people conveying confidence by the end of the activity. There were improvements in all ten aspects of career readiness across the time that young people took part in their career activity. The greatest changes were seen in planning goals for the next five years (14 percentage points) and deciding on an ideal job (12 percentage points).

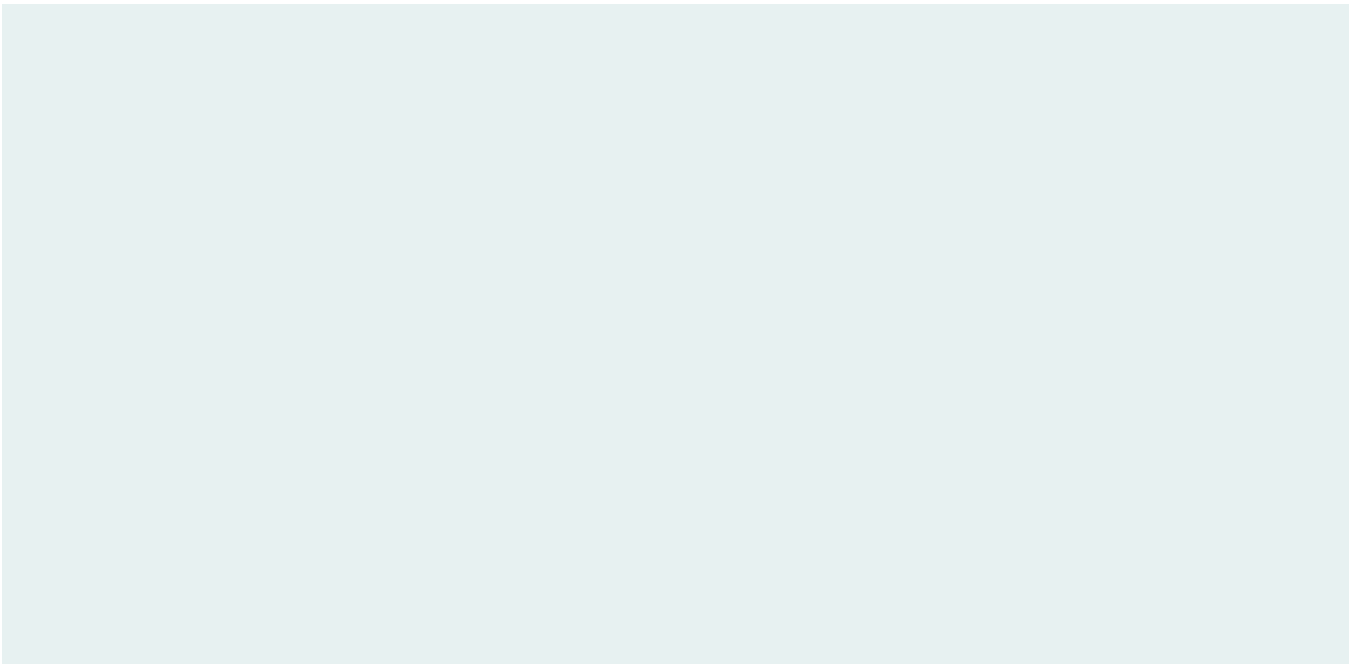
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20. Results of paired samples t-test: Career planning: $t=-12$, $df=1906$, $P<0.000$.

21. Number of responses ranged from 2,005 to 2,039 across questions.

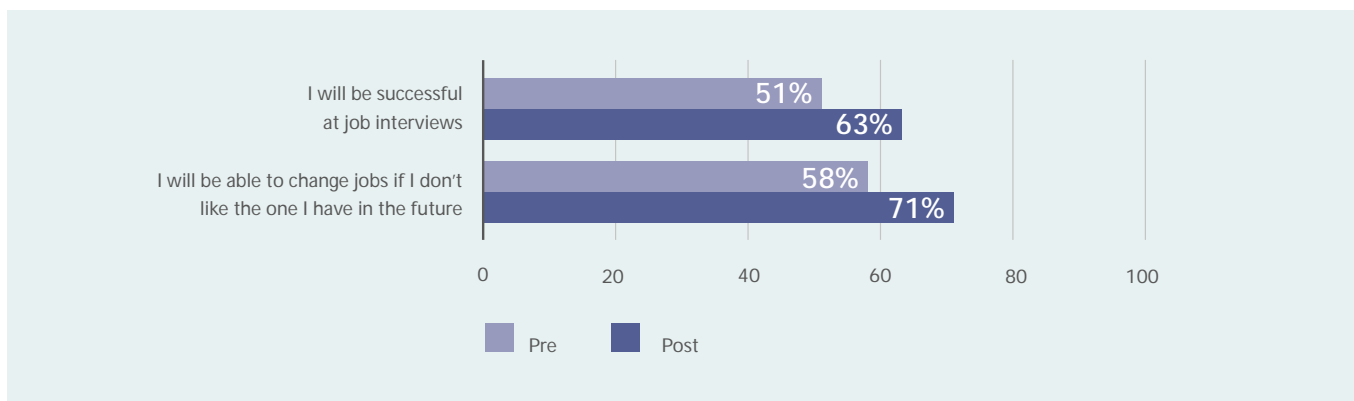
Confidence in knowing where to find information and how to seek help²⁴



The final area of career readiness related to preparedness for securing and changing jobs²⁶. There were statistically significant increases in the proportion of young people who believed they would be successful in job interviews (rising by 12 percentage points) and

be able to change jobs if they wanted to (13 percentage points). This suggests that the career activities they engaged in gave them confidence and skills to negotiate the labour market.

27

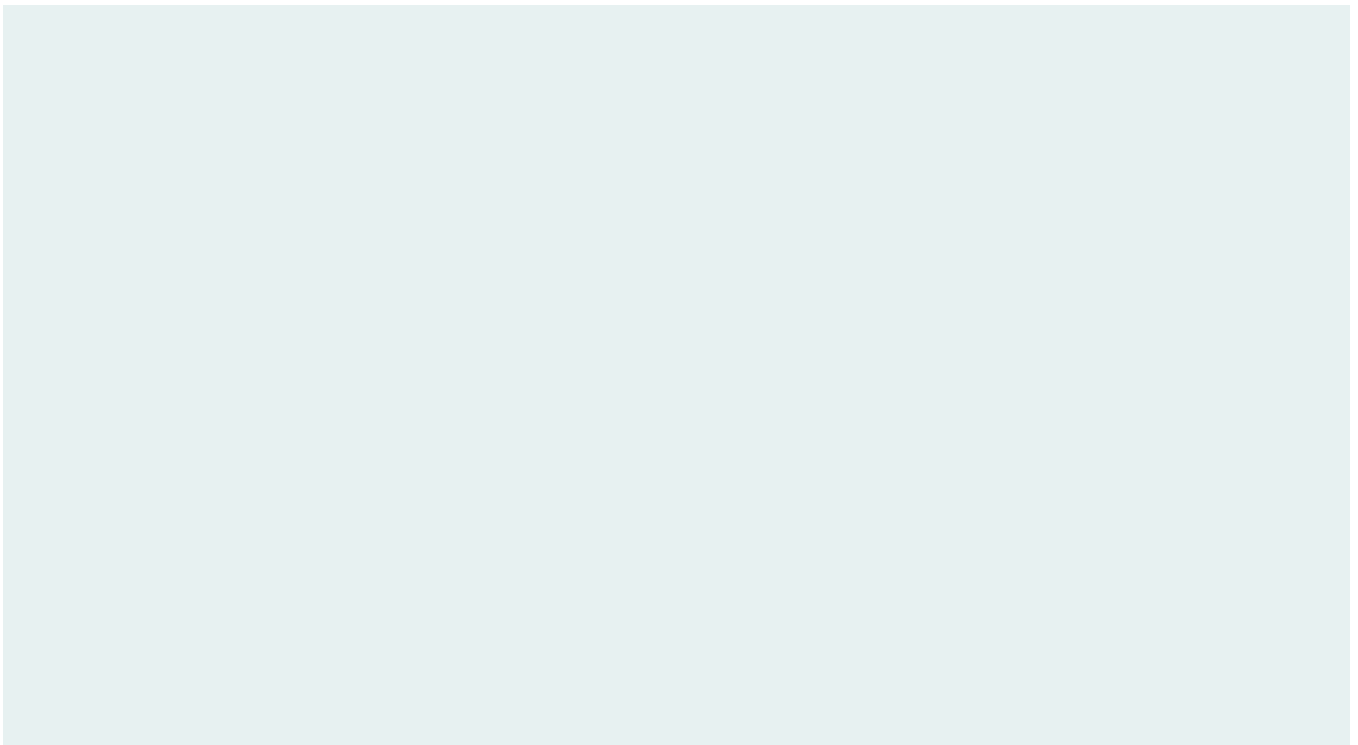


26. Results of paired samples t-test: Career management: $t=-15$, $df=1981$, $P<0.000$.

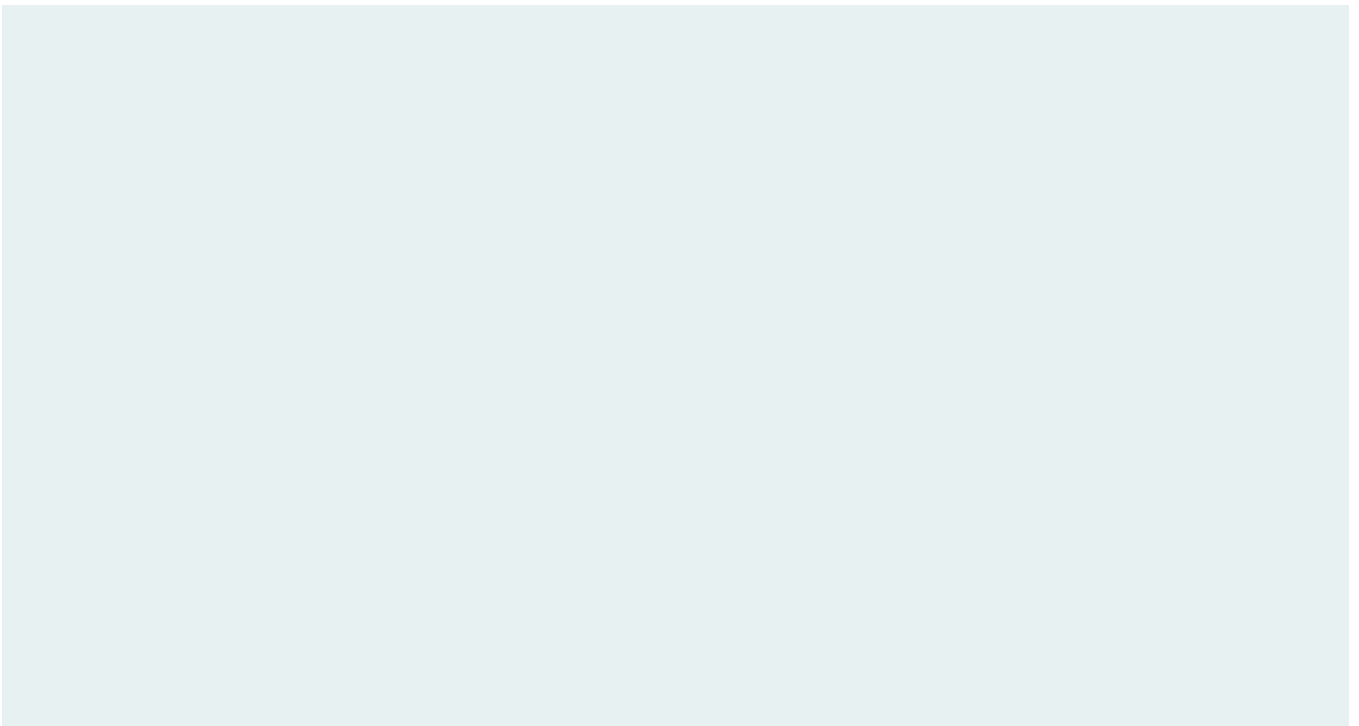
27. Number of responses ranged from 1,989 to 1,998 across questions.

Young people's employability skills improved statistically significantly across five domains (creativity, problem-solving, listening, presenting and leadership). The teamwork domain did not see a significant change between before and after the careers activity.

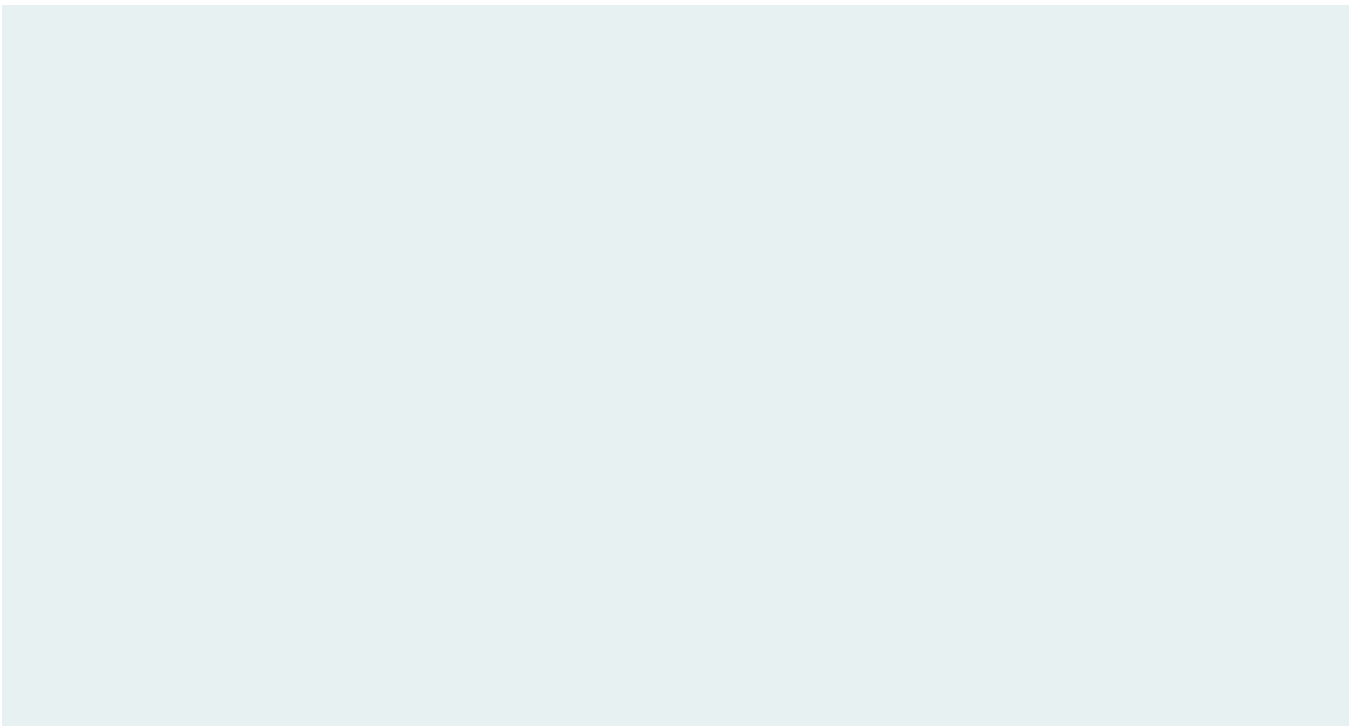
The chart below shows the percentage of young people who reported a significant improvement in their employability skills between before and after the careers activity.



For listening skills³¹



Teamwork saw the least change³⁴. Young people



4 | Summary and next steps

Previous research shows that opportunities for employer encounters and careers guidance are

References

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