Your Future, Your Voice

Young people's views on careers education

May – July 2026

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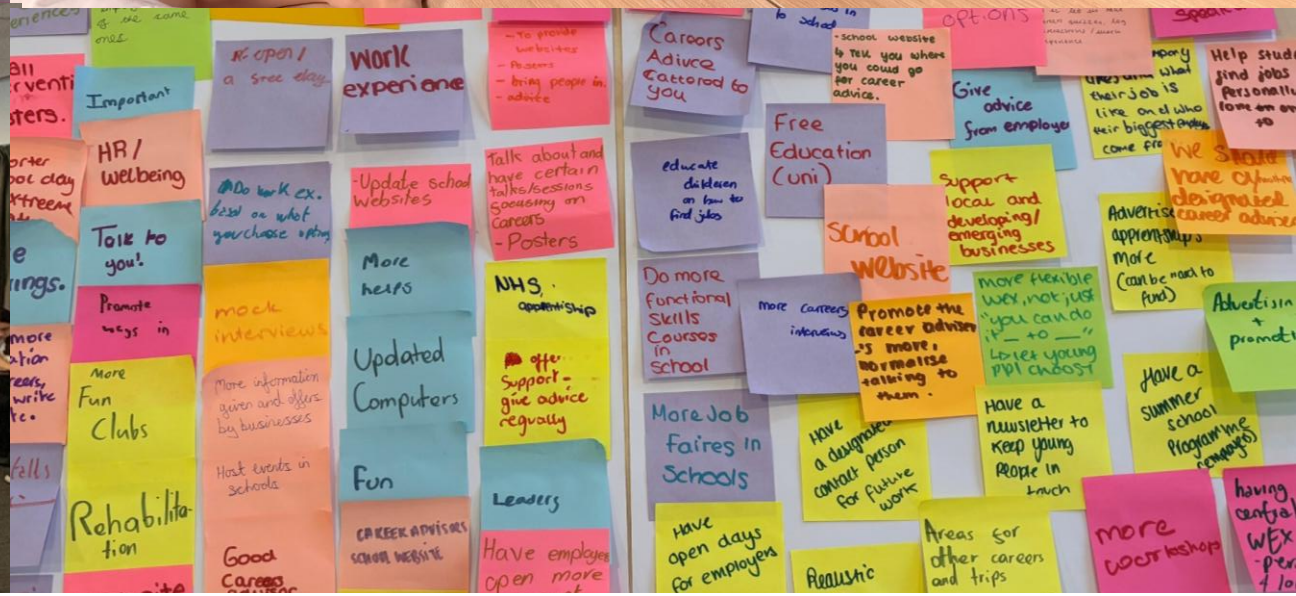
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Following a series of interactive workshops at the **Young Essex Assembly**, **Thurrock Youth Cabinet** and **Southend Make Your Mark Youth Event** we explored young people's experiences and views on careers education. Students expressed a want for careers education that is practical, personalised and connected to the real world.

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Key themes

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1. Work experience is the most valued careers activity

Young people believe it helps them:

- Understand workplace environments
- Explore career interests
- Develop confidence and employability skills
- Make informed decisions about future pathways
- Gain real-life experience that cannot be replicated in the classroom

However, concerns were raised about limited availability, unequal access, and placements that are not always relevant to students' interests. Young people want more opportunities, greater variety, and experiences that are meaningful and linked to their aspirations.

> **"Helps you understand what goes on behind the scenes.**
>
> **Builds confidence and reliability in a future job"**

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2. Careers fairs need to evolve

Whilst careers fairs are generally viewed positively, however young people felt they often lack:

- Relevance to individual interests
- Variety of sectors and pathways
- Meaningful interaction
- Practical activities
- Opportunities to ask questions

Students called for careers events to be more engaging, interactive and representative of a wider range of careers, particularly those outside traditional or well-known pathways.

> **"Careers fair not relevant to certain career paths.**
>
> **More engaging, more activity, more meaningful."**

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3. Strong demand for employer engagement

A consistent message for greater interaction with employers and industry professionals.

Young people want:

- Guest speakers
- Workplace visits
- Employer-led activities
- Career talks from professionals
- Opportunities to hear authentic career journeys

These interactions were viewed as more useful and credible than generic careers information and helped students better understand career opportunities and routes into employment.

> **“Get big company owners to give lectures… on how to get a job and create good job applications.”**

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4. Careers guidance should be more personalised

Students repeatedly highlighted the need for careers support that is tailored to individual interests, goals and circumstances.

Young people asked for:

- One-to-one careers guidance
- More meaningful conversations
- Earlier intervention
- Support that reflects their ambitions and strengths

There was frustration with generic careers advice and a perception that some careers provision is not sufficiently focused on individual needs.

> **"Teachers should help guide and put our best interests at heart."**

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5. Information and awareness gaps persist

Many young people reported feeling unclear about:

- Available opportunities
- Local labour market information
- Career pathways
- Next steps after school or college
- How to access opportunities

Students called for clearer signposting, simpler information and better communication from schools and employers.

> **“Not enough time – not enough information.**
>
> **Tell us more about next steps.”**

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6. Greater variety and inclusion are needed

Young people want careers education to reflect the full range of available opportunities.
Key requests included:

- Wider representation of industries
- More vocational and technical pathways
- Reduced focus on university as the default route
- Greater inclusion for SEND learners
- More opportunities for students without existing networks or connections

Students felt careers education should expose them to a broader range of possibilities and be accessible to all young people.

> **"It needs to be more accessible for SEND kids.**
>
> **Greater opportunities other than university focus."**

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7. Careers education supports confidence and employability

Students recognised that careers activities help them develop:

- Confidence
- Communication skills
- Teamwork
- Networking skills
- Interview skills
- Understanding of workplace expectations

Many viewed careers education as valuable not only for informing career choices but also for preparing them for adult life and employment.

> **"Improves confidence in world of work.**
>
> **Allows a development in hard and soft skills."**

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Conclusion

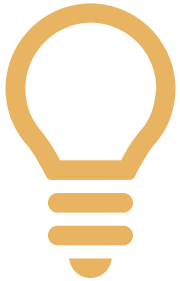
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Across Greater Essex, students are calling for:



more **personalised** careers guidance



interactive careers events that **inspire** and **engage**



stronger partnerships with employers



high-quality work experience opportunities



better **access** to information and opportunities



more **inclusive** and **diverse** career pathways

Thank you

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