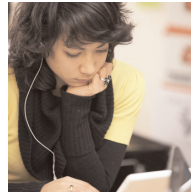


asc about... RESEARCH FINDINGS



YOUNG PEOPLE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CAREERS RESEARCH

The Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC) commissioned ECOTEC to conduct a research project to consider what strategies are working most effectively in encouraging young people to consider a career in sustainable communities.

KEY MESSAGES

- Several small-scale projects and initiatives have been identified which promote cross-sector working to support the development of the sustainable communities sector.
- Only a minority of young people have access to these schemes, highlighting the **need for increased cross-sector working** in the future.
- There are a number of approaches which have been found to be successful in encouraging young people to explore sustainable community careers, including **Learning by Doing, Learning from Others, and Learning by Example.**

- Young people's interest in sustainable communities careers is affected by **occupational awareness, careers offering status and recognition, and the local economy.**
- Influences on career decisions vary with age, demonstrating the importance of targeting appropriate activity at different age groups.
- Young people **need to see that there are real opportunities** in the area of sustainable communities if they are going to be encouraged to consider this as a career.

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to help address skills shortages among key professional groups in the sustainable communities sector by encouraging interest in relevant careers among young people. The research identifies:

- key decision making points at which young people can be encouraged to consider sustainable communities careers;

- effective engagement tools being used in the sector;
- case-study examples of UK activities at regional and national levels;
- transferable lessons establishing why certain approaches are successful in creating demand in young people to pursue sustainable communities careers; and
- recommendations about how the ASC can support the work of other providers implementing the sustainable communities agenda and effective ways of adding value to this work.

BACKGROUND

The Egan Review highlighted a number of current and future skills supply shortages in disciplines essential for the delivery of sustainable communities.

For example, it projected **future skills shortages in the engineering sector**, where declining undergraduate applications are compounded by an ageing workforce, many of whom are set to retire in the next ten years. **Other sectors with projected skills shortages include: town and transport planning, conservation, local authorities and social housing.**

ASC plays a key role in promoting initiatives and partnerships that will enable young people's skills development to fill these future skills gaps. This could include the development of new curriculum materials and running careers campaigns.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has recently launched a programme – **The Sustainable Schools National Framework** - to structure young people's formal learning within the sustainable communities sector. This demonstrates the importance placed by the government on developing skills in secondary school pupils to support future community sustainability.

UK ACTIVITIES SHOWCASING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CAREERS

There are a range of interesting projects taking place across the UK implementing the sustainable communities agenda. These projects are using a range of delivery approaches to work across various themes, such as engineering, regeneration, planning, the built environment and health. The approaches achieving impact in engaging young people include the following.

Opportunities to gain work-related experience – through contributing to 'live' projects, work placements (paid or voluntary), cadet schemes or site visits, e.g. the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust supported site visits to hospital units and gave talks on NHS job roles to young people.

Voice of experience – practitioners acting as ambassadors visiting schools, colleges and community venues to give talks about their work. Alternatively, young adults act as mentors for their peers and young people. Construction Skills, for example, train young people already



working in the construction industry to visit schools across the country to offer a real-life perspective on working in the sector.

Practical approaches – work particularly well with disaffected students who need extra support to raise their aspirations. For example, Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership provides places for 50 young people to attend a study skills weekend.

Curriculum and resource development – new courses and teaching packs help raise awareness of sustainable communities careers. Staffordshire Borough Council and local school teachers jointly designed a six week Citizenship and Planning course, to encourage young people to explore local community issues.

Website development – Virtual tools are increasingly used by providers to reach a wider audience and to enable young people to access information in a flexible and non-directive manner. For example, Renew Northwest designed a web-based prospectus of university taught courses available in the Northwest related to regeneration careers.



Advertising campaigns – High profile advertising campaigns have been launched in sectors with emerging and projected skills gaps within the sustainable communities sector. For example, the Department of Health’s campaign to promote social work careers emphasises the value this profession adds to many people’s lives.

Sector expertise and knowledge building – Research and development projects have investigated how to effectively engage young people through teaching materials and resources and specialist expertise. For example, the Academy of St. Francis of Assisi researched opportunities to help raise standards in the environment sector.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CAREERS

The following case studies were chosen to examine approaches to engaging young people with the sustainable communities agenda.

Case Study Student Force for Sustainability

Approach Community Activity

Case Study National Education Business Partnership Network

(Tower Hamlets)

Approach Visiting Speakers

Case Study Planning for Real in the 21st Century

Approach Project Design Activity

Case Study Police Cadets

Approach Community Activity

Case Study Construction Skills Arkwright Week

Approach Project Design Activity

Case Study Planning and Citizenship in School

Approach Project (Stafford Borough Council) Competitions

Case Study Schools Challenge Project (Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Health Authority)

Approach Ambassadors, Visiting Speakers

Case Study St John’s Ambulance Police Cadets

Approach Community Activity

Young people have a good understanding of what ‘sustainable communities careers’ mean. Their understanding varies, however, depending on the extent to which teachers and practitioners used this term in discussions and course

material. Most young people recognised the construction, planning and transport sectors as essential for community sustainability. A number of approaches have been found to be successful in encouraging young people to explore sustainable community careers. These are:

- **Learning by Doing:** community activities, work-related learning, work experience;
- **Learning from Others:** careers fairs, occupational ambassadors, visiting speakers; and
- **Learning by Example:** family members, neighbours, community workers.

Young people’s interest in sustainable communities careers is affected by a range of factors, including **occupational awareness, careers offering status and recognition, and the local economy.** Awareness of the range of careers available within the sustainable communities sector varies, and tends to reflect the careers that were most important to their local area.

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING YOUNG PEOPLE'S INTEREST IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CAREERS

Career influences: There are a number of key influences that inform young people's career decision making, as follows.

Ages 7-11: initial awareness of different jobs is informed through the experience of others, such as family, friends and people in the media.

Ages 11-14: developing hobbies and subject interests and engaging in community work; developing understanding of the work of adult family and friends.

Ages 14-16: making study choices in occupational areas; school and community projects; careers events; visiting speakers; work experience.

Ages 16-19: pursuing extended study in occupational areas; undertaking voluntary, community or paid work; making university, college and job applications.

These findings demonstrate the importance of targeting appropriate activity at different age groups.

Career motivations range from personal fulfilment through recognition, prestige and financial rewards, to community contributions through holding positions of responsibility. Young people are not simply motivated by opportunities for linear career progression, but are keen to reflect laterally on the opportunities available within and between allied sectors. Career guidance materials should therefore be developed around occupational sectors, illustrating the range of

related careers that people can pursue. Young people are interested in sustainable communities careers that **support community development alongside career development** (in planning, engineering, or utilities). They are also interested in sustainable communities careers that **combine helping people with opportunities for career development** e.g. health, teaching, or law enforcement. The sustainable communities careers young people are less interested in are those that focus on service provision (retail, waste disposal, and public transport).

CONCLUSION

There are a number of UK projects that are working across the sustainable communities sector to promote opportunities for employment growth and develop skills in occupations with emerging or projected skills gaps. The research found that: **Engaging young people with sustainable communities careers is most effective when methods are combined.** For example, community activities can reinforce advice provided by visiting employer speakers, by creating an opportunity for young people to practically apply approaches and learn from their own experiences. Similarly, entering competitions can increase the impetus for young people to explore project design activities, heightening their awareness of career opportunities. **Challenges to establish engagement methods centre on maintaining the input of professionals**, such as through ambassador schemes. One-off employer engagement activities are easier to secure, through visiting

speakers and through providing expert inputs to design processes. Employer engagement initiatives represent important learning opportunities towards future careers.

Most development work with young people in the sustainable communities sector is currently project-based activity, characterised by short term funding or community and voluntary sector provision. There is a need to make the case for mainstream core funding to enable projects to refine their activities and provide continuation activities for students in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. This would enable young people to develop work-related skills throughout secondary school and pursue a career pathway in the sector post-16 through work experience and part time work to complement vocational and academic studies.

ASC ABOUT NEXT STEPS

ASC will continue to build connections with young people in the 07/08 Business Plan aiming to attract new entrants into the sustainable communities sector and raise knowledge and awareness.

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