

# Supporting your young person to make positive career choices – Dan Odlin



For your young person, knowing where to start with their career exploration and planning can feel daunting, especially if they do not feel like they have any clear idea of what they would like to aim towards. There are lots of options to consider, and you and your young person may be worried about them making the "wrong" decision. I am always keen to reassure students that while the decisions of what to do after school and college are important, and should be made with a lot of thought, these decisions will only define their life if they want them to.

As the world continues to change and evolve around us, so will the world of jobs and careers, and therefore modern career journeys are likely to contain huge amounts of change and lots of different jobs – as such, trying to plan out an entire career is an almost impossible task.

As parents and carers, you will inevitably be keen to support your young person to make good career choices and will want them to progress into a successful and fulfilling career. Below are five suggestions of ways you can support your young person with exploring their career ideas and make positive decisions about their career.

## *1. Talk to them.*

A straightforward one to start with. Talking with your young person about their education, their career ideas, and what they might want to do, is important at any age. Whether they are making their GCSE choices, considering sixth forms, colleges, apprenticeships, or Higher Education, taking an interest, and giving them the space to discuss their ideas will help them as they start to make decisions.

Asking simple questions like “what are you good at?”, “what do you enjoy?” and “what subjects/topics excite you?” will help them explore ideas, and are much easier to answer than “what do you want to do in your career?” – for many young people, they simply don’t know at this stage and this question can make them feel overwhelmed.

## *2. Support their interests.*

Your young person is likely to have a wide range of interests and remember that they can and should come from both inside and outside of education. Be open minded and encouraging when listening to their interests and support them to explore these interests further if you can. While some interests may feel alien or unusual to you, our jobs market is incredibly diverse and niche interests can often lead into rewarding career opportunities!

## *3. Encourage them to try new things.*

Trying new things through volunteering, school clubs and work experiences (to name just a few) can help your young person to develop valuable skills, as well as help them stumble across career ideas they might have never thought about. Their school or college will be a great place to start with this, but they can also explore some volunteering opportunities on [Dolt](#), and online work experiences on [Springpod](#).

#### *4. Help them research their ideas.*

Once you have gone through the previous three suggestions, it is likely your young person will have some ideas they want to explore further. You are not expected to know all the answers to their questions, but knowing where to direct them to do their research is important. If they are looking to explore some job ideas, the [National Careers Service](#) and [Prospects](#) are two reliable sources of information. If they are interested in Higher Education (including degree apprenticeships), then [UCAS](#) should be their first port of call for a wealth of information. If they have found some new areas of interest they would like to learn more about, [FutureLearn](#) and [OpenLearn](#) provide free access to hundreds of free online courses that will not only help them learn more, but also look great on future applications.

#### *5. Encourage them to see a careers advisor.*

While you will play a key role in supporting your young person to make their career decisions, the support of a professionally qualified impartial careers advisor is invaluable. Your young person is entitled to have access to a career's advisor through their school or college, and if they are struggling with their exploration of ideas, or feel lost, you should encourage them to make an appointment with their careers advisor who will help them form an action plan to explore their ideas and take positive steps.

Finally, it is crucial that the role we play is to guide our young people to their own decisions, and not try to make choices for them. Their career choices need to be made based on their aspirations and abilities, and not yours, as this will ensure they are making their career decisions based on the things that motivate them.