



Helping young people make the right decisions

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Recent changes in the curriculum mean that young people aged 14–19 are now navigating their way through increasingly complex decisions about their education: not only which of four pathways— GCSEs and A levels, Diplomas, Apprenticeships and Foundation Learning— to follow, but also the specific subjects they will study, and where they will study.

Recent NFER research has explored the way in which young people make choices at the ages of 14 and 16, and evaluated key developments in the 14–19 curriculum, such as the Increased Flexibility Pro-

gramme, the Young Apprenticeship Programme and the introduction of Diplomas.

The research provides some key messages for everyone who supports and advises young people, especially those who do not select the more established pathway of GCSEs and A levels, in their decision making.

- Young people need support in decision making from informed adults— not only guidance professionals but those with insights into specific courses, such as staff in college or training providers.
- Teachers, parents or carers who know the young person well can assist them

in reviewing and interpreting information so that they can make an informed decision that is right for them. To do this, these individuals will need to be informed about the available options.

- The information and guidance provided needs to include not only the content and learning style of courses but also, in the context of delivery by more than one institution, practical and logistical implications such as travel and costs.
- Young people need to be aware of the implications of their decision – pursuing an applied option at this stage may influence future decision making. However, non-GCSE choices at 16 do not appear to constrain their options at the end of compulsory schooling, as young people who have undertaken these qualifications have pursued a variety of routes post-16.

Further information

www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/SMD01/

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