

A career of choice

Attracting talented young people into house building



Informing the debate

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This summary report was prepared by Clive Turner (NHBC Foundation) with guidance from iCeGS.

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Housing research & guidance

About the NHBC Foundation

The **NHBC Foundation**, established in 2006, provides high quality research and practical guidance to support the house-building industry as it addresses the challenges of delivering 21st century new homes. To date we have published 60 reports on a wide variety of topics, including the sustainability agenda, homeowner issues and risk management.

The NHBC Foundation is also involved in a programme of positive engagement with the Government, academics and other key stakeholders, focusing on current and pressing issues relevant to house building.

NHBC is the standard-setting body and leading warranty and insurance provider for new homes in the UK, providing risk management services to the house-building and wider construction industry. All profits are reinvested in research and used to improve the construction standard of new homes for the benefit of homeowners. NHBC is independent of the Government and house builders.

Further details on the latest output from the NHBC Foundation can be found at: www.nhbcfoundation.org.

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Contents

Foreword	v
1 Key findings	1
2 Key recommendations	3
3 Background and introduction	5
4 Methodology	7
5 How young people view construction and house building	9
5.1 Main findings	9
5.2 Views on construction in general	10
5.3 Views on house building	11
6 How young people respond to information about house building	15
6.1 Main findings	15
6.2 How interesting are house-building jobs to young people?	15
6.3 Patterns of interest	17
6.4 Positive messages about house building	20
6.5 What young people are looking for in their careers	21
7 Understanding how young people find out about careers	22
7.1 Main findings	22
7.2 Opportunities to learn about careers	23
7.3 How do young people find out about careers?	24
8 Recommendations for recruiting young people into house building	27
9 References	30

Foreword

Each recession to hit Britain in the past 35 years has had similar consequences. A sharp decline in the output of new homes and retrenchment on the part of house builders has inevitably led to a serious outflow of skilled and experienced personnel, leaving the industry with a challenge to attract new talent as and when recovery comes.

The skills shortage that faces the industry today is not dissimilar to that which occurred twenty years ago, but there is one difference. It is easier to attract new skilled and semi-skilled labour from abroad to fill specific vacancies. While this may provide a short-term fix, it is no solution to the on-going need for a regular supply of talent to fill the full range of jobs which the industry requires.

To ensure a secure future for the industry we need to build a stable workforce, and that depends upon attracting bright youngsters. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence suggesting that most other career options are more attractive to the younger generation than the house-building industry, connected in the public's mind with hard physical roles performed in all weathers. In reality, there are of course many other roles offering a range of exciting career prospects in the home-building industry, but many young people are simply not aware they exist.

I welcome this latest research from the NHBC Foundation, which both helps us to understand why young people might not choose a career in house building, and presents important new findings on what might be done to attract them. The recommendations in this report highlight the importance of selling our industry more effectively to young people and to their parents and careers advice professionals. I hope that the report and its findings help the industry rise to the challenge. We must build greater interest among young people in house-building jobs, and ensure that the sector has the skills to develop the new homes the country so desperately needs.

We are grateful to the Home Builders Federation for their support and contribution to this important work.

Rt. Hon. Nick Raynsford MP
Chairman, NHBC Foundation

1 Key findings



The purpose of this research was to establish a better understanding of how young people view house building as a career choice and to provide insights to improve recruitment of those with enthusiasm and talent into the sector. It collected the views of over 500 teenagers and young men and women between the ages of 14 and 24, and the views of those who advise them on careers.

The key findings from the research are:

1. Young people's interest in careers in the **building and construction** sector was compared with that for other sectors. For boys and young men, interest in building and construction was broadly on a par with other sectors, for example exceeding the level of interest shown for banking and financial services. For girls and young women, building and construction was the sector of lowest interest.
2. For **house building** young people could often identify jobs in the trades but, apart from architecture, were largely unable to identify professional job areas.
3. Boys and young men showed a good level of interest in careers in a range of practical, technical and managerial job areas in house building. Girls and young women were overall less interested than boys and young men, but nevertheless showed more interest in house-building career options than they had shown for careers in construction in general.
4. For the young people surveyed, interest in house-building careers was highest for those at school aged between 14 and 15. Overall levels of interest were only slightly lower among students in sixth form, sixth form college or college. In comparison those at university had a lower interest in careers in house building though, notably, their level of interest was generally higher than that for construction in general.

5. The research explored the use of positive language about house building. A series of statements, designed to appeal to different emotions, ambitions and outlooks, made many young people more positive about careers in house building.
6. The research also highlighted how young people currently obtain information on possible careers. It emphasised the importance young people place on visits to employers and presentations received at their place of study by visiting advocates and role models.
7. Young people are found to rely heavily on their parents as a source of guidance and advice on careers. 57% of young people saw their family as the first port of call for a discussion on careers. Furthermore a third regarded their family (which would typically have a limited understanding of house building) as their most valued advisor on careers.
8. The majority of career development professionals (55%) surveyed in this research felt they would not be confident in explaining the difference between jobs in house building and those in the wider construction sector.
9. The lack of clear information on professional careers in house building was seen as a major barrier to recruitment by many stakeholders who contributed to this research.

2 Key recommendations



This research, which reinforces conclusions from previous studies, provides evidence to support a series of nine recommendations (see pages 27-29) which could help to improve the recruitment of young people into house building.

In summary:

Recommendation 1:

The industry should do more to prioritise the promotion of the careers available in house building, explaining the range of practical, technical, managerial and business improvement opportunities.

Recommendation 2:

To counter the concern that house building may not provide career structures and may be a dead-end choice, the industry should, whenever possible, stress its career opportunities and flexible career paths.

Recommendation 3:

House-building recruitment should keep a focus on the things that young people look for in their careers.

Recommendation 4:

The industry should encourage the development of new and positive narrative on the wider benefits of house building.

Recommendation 5:

More research is needed to understand what is effective in attracting young people to careers in house building at different stages of their lives and education.

Recommendation 6:

The industry and Government should develop a careers guidance model that supports the delivery of greater numbers of company visits, role models and advocate speaker visits to educational and training organisations.

Recommendation 7:

The house-building sector should actively explore the development of creative partnerships with schools and colleges.

Recommendation 8:

Key websites used by young people to find out about careers should be encouraged to include consistent and influential information about house building as a career.

Recommendation 9:

More should be done to promote and champion the professional careers in house building to young women.

3 Background and introduction



In July 2013 the Government, with the support of the Construction Industrial Strategy Advisory Council, launched an industrial strategy for the construction industry: Construction 2025^[1]. As part of its SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), the strategy identified a lack of career attraction as a key threat to the industry 'due to perceived low image, lack of gender diversity, low pay and job security due to the cyclical nature of demand for construction'. The strategy also highlighted 'a pressing need to properly inform young people and their influencers (parents and teachers), about the rewards offered by a career in construction' and proposed that a central engagement with the public must begin at a young age (from 11–12, before GCSE curriculum choices are made) and then be consistently applied right through to further and higher education level.

For house building, the trends and challenges presented in 'Construction 2025' may be more significant than for construction in general. Part of the reason for this is that the range of career opportunities in house building is yet to be differentiated from construction in a way that is understandable to young people and their advisers. Indeed the lack of information about careers in house building appears to be a major stumbling block to better recruitment of the enthusiastic and talented young people that the industry needs. In addition, as highlighted in the Literature Review supporting this report^[2] it is not clear if the extensive work to understand and improve recruitment to the wider construction sector is directly transferable to the situation in house building.

As well as the lack of understanding of opportunities in house building there is, post-recession, an inadequate pool of appropriately qualified and trained entrants for a range of jobs across the manual, technical and managerial roles. For many jobs, vacancies vastly exceed (sometimes by more than ten to one) the number of

skilled young people available. In 2013 the Home Building Skills report^[3] identified specific skills shortages in house building and this is an ongoing problem across the sector, notably for smaller house builders^[4].

A further backdrop to this report is a major change in career-guidance provision, which now means that schools, pupil referral units and academies have a statutory duty to provide all year 8 to 13 students with independent and impartial career guidance. The duty is intended to ensure that young people are inspired and motivated to fulfil their potential. Statutory guidance issued to schools in April 2014 by the Department of Education^[5] makes clear the need for schools to engage with employers and states 'Schools should provide access to a range of activities that inspire young people, including employer talks, careers fairs, motivational speakers, college and university visits, coaches and mentors.'

The responsibility for career guidance now lies with educational establishments, but with the expectation that they will forge improved links with employers, generating a different model by which young people receive information and advice. In a nutshell, those employers that develop the most imaginative and inspirational partnerships with schools and colleges, will win the battle for the most talented recruits.

Through this project the research partners were keen to understand young people's perceptions of house building, and to unearth more about what should be done to make it a career of choice. The hope is that the findings will assist the industry in generating a persuasive recruitment strategy, particularly at the important overlap with educational establishments, and play a part in the industry's major campaign to improve its image.

4 Methodology



The research, carried out by the International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby, was conducted between April and August 2014 and included survey work, focus groups and interviews (Figure 1). It focused primarily on England, although young people and career practitioner surveys included some responses from participants in Scotland and Wales. The research included contributions from young people between the ages of 14 and 24 (covering those in education from Key Stage 3 to University graduate stage) and some new entrants up to age 24.

The three main objectives of this research were:

- To understand the key barriers that were preventing young people from considering a career in house building
- To identify approaches that could be effective in raising young people's awareness and understanding of career opportunities in house building
- To support the development of a strategic plan for improving recruitment of young people into house building.

The research consisted of the following main activities:

1. A quantitative online survey of 428 young people between the ages of 14 and 22. These young people were invited to share their understanding of the house-building industry and show their level of interest in a range of house-building career choices
2. An online survey of 130 career practitioners (mainly careers advisers, but also some careers teachers). This was to build an understanding of the ability of career practitioners to communicate house-building career options
3. An online survey of 31 new entrants to understand the effectiveness of current recruitment processes
4. 15 focus groups involving 84 individuals to gain qualitative insights from young people, parents and new entrants
5. A programme of 20 interviews with stakeholders in the industry to build a detailed understanding of specific recruitment challenges and successes.

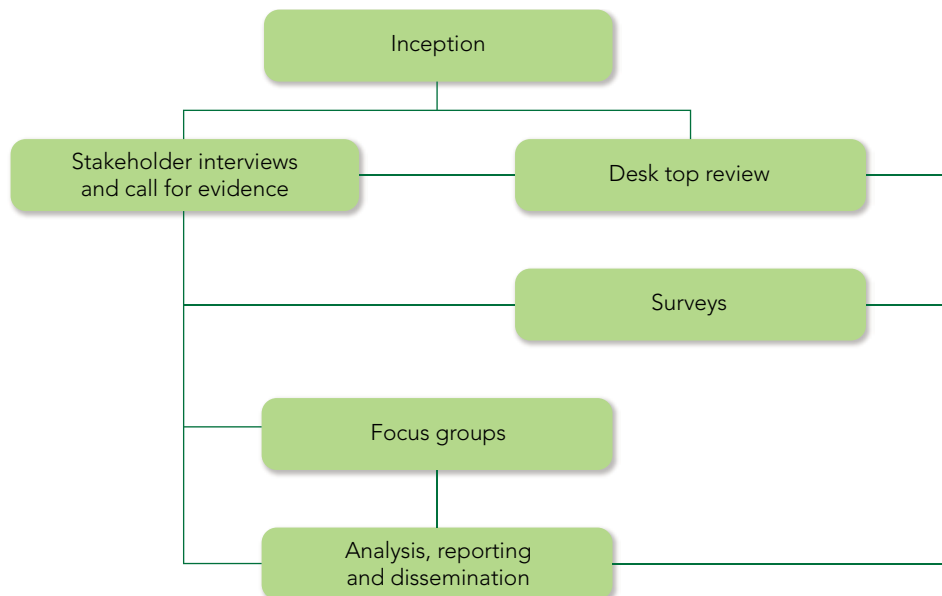


Figure 1 The overall programme of work and how each activity was related

5 How young people view construction and house building



5.1 Main findings

- **Building and construction** was identified by nearly 37% of boys and young men as an interesting sector in which to work. This compares well with their interest in other sectors.
- Only 11% of girls and young women were interested in a career in building and construction. This was the lowest level of interest recorded for any of the sectors included in this study.
- For **house building** young people could often identify jobs in the trades such as bricklaying and plumbing but, apart from architecture, were largely unable to identify professional job areas.
- A number of factors related to image, misconception and lack of information discourage some young people from considering a career in house building.
- New entrants were very complimentary about the recruitment experience and their early days at work in house building.

5.2 Views on construction in general

5.2.1 Comparison with other sectors

Initially, the young people in the main survey were asked to identify their level of interest in working within a sample of sectors. In Figure 2 those who were 'interested' and 'very interested' have been added together and the sectors presented in decreasing order of interest to girls and young women.

Of the 12 sectors compared, building and construction was the least frequently selected as 'interesting/very interesting' by girls and young women. However for boys and young men, building and construction was a middle-ranking choice and one that competed quite well with other sectors as a potentially interesting career.

The difference between genders was larger for building and construction than for most of the other sectors included in this study. This supports evidence that the construction sector as a whole (including house building) is still failing to appeal sufficiently to young women as a career choice.

Overall about 24% of all young people were interested in a career in building and construction, with the highest level of interest (about 36%) associated with 14/15 year olds.

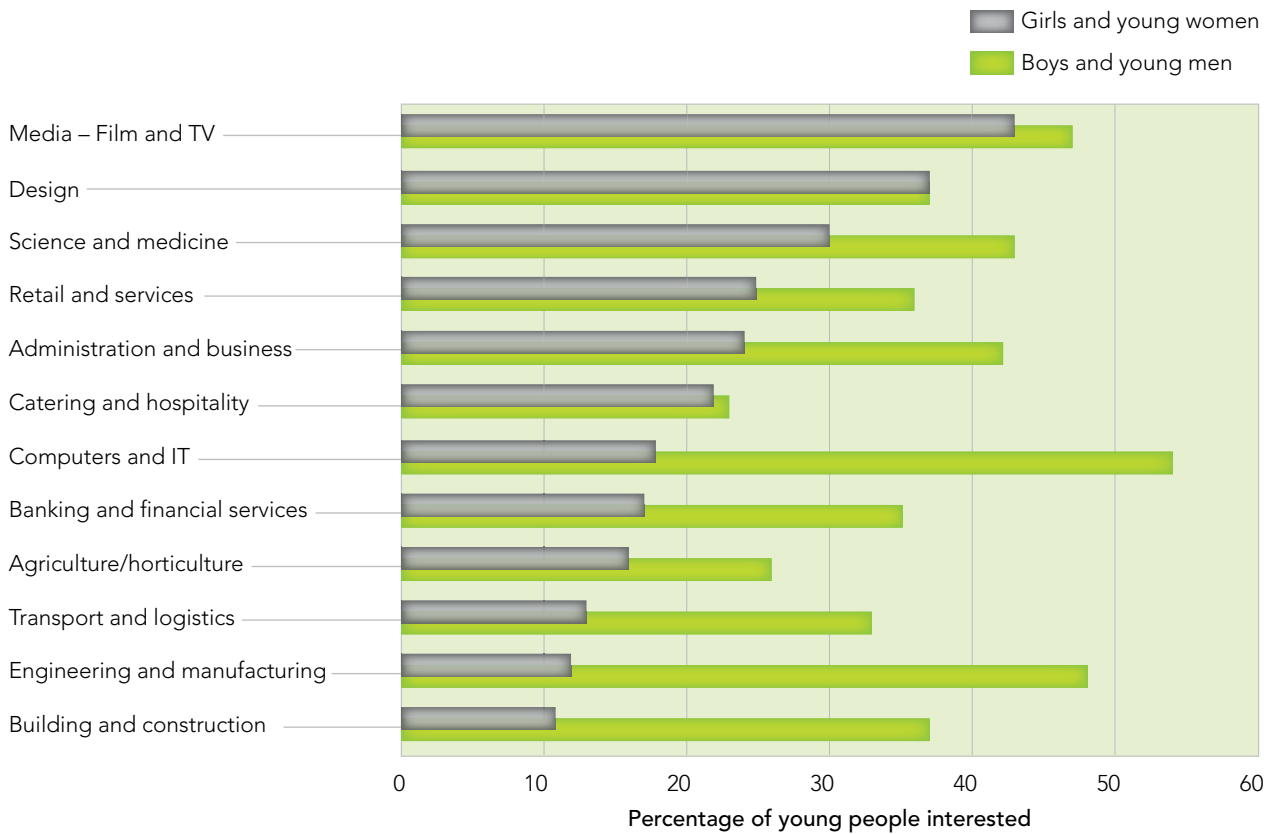


Figure 2 Percentage of young people who would be 'interested' or 'very interested' in careers in different sectors. Responses to the question 'Would you be interested in working in any of the following industries or sectors?' Sample 428. Ages 14-22

Between the ages of 14/15 and 22/24 there were differences in the proportion of young people interested in careers in the different sectors. For building and construction the number of young people interested at age 22/24 was 54% less than those interested at age 14/15. For comparison, interest in science and medicine at age 22/24 was 32% less than that shown at age 14/15, and interest in banking and finance was 27% less at 22/24 than at 14/15. While a fall-off in interest is an expected trend, as young people become more selective over possible careers with time (and select fewer areas of interest), building and construction was noted to be among the weakest in holding the interest of young people as they mature.

5.3 Views on house building

5.3.1 Jobs that young people associate with house building

In the survey, young people were invited to identify jobs in house building. With the exception of ‘architect’, young people (across the age range in the survey) were rarely able to identify professional roles in house building (Figure 3). Though a few professional roles were identified in the long tail of jobs recognised by 1% of respondents, it appears that most professional career opportunities in house building are not identified by the vast majority of young people. It is not clear from this work if young people are failing to associate professional job types with house building or whether they are totally unaware of them.

In support of Figure 3, stakeholders in this study acknowledged a lack of awareness of the range of professional career opportunities that exist in house building, summed up by one industry stakeholder who stated that young people have ‘a complete lack of understanding of the disciplines across our sector’. Another participant added ‘people only see craftsmen, portakabins and building sites, and don’t understand what’s going on behind’.

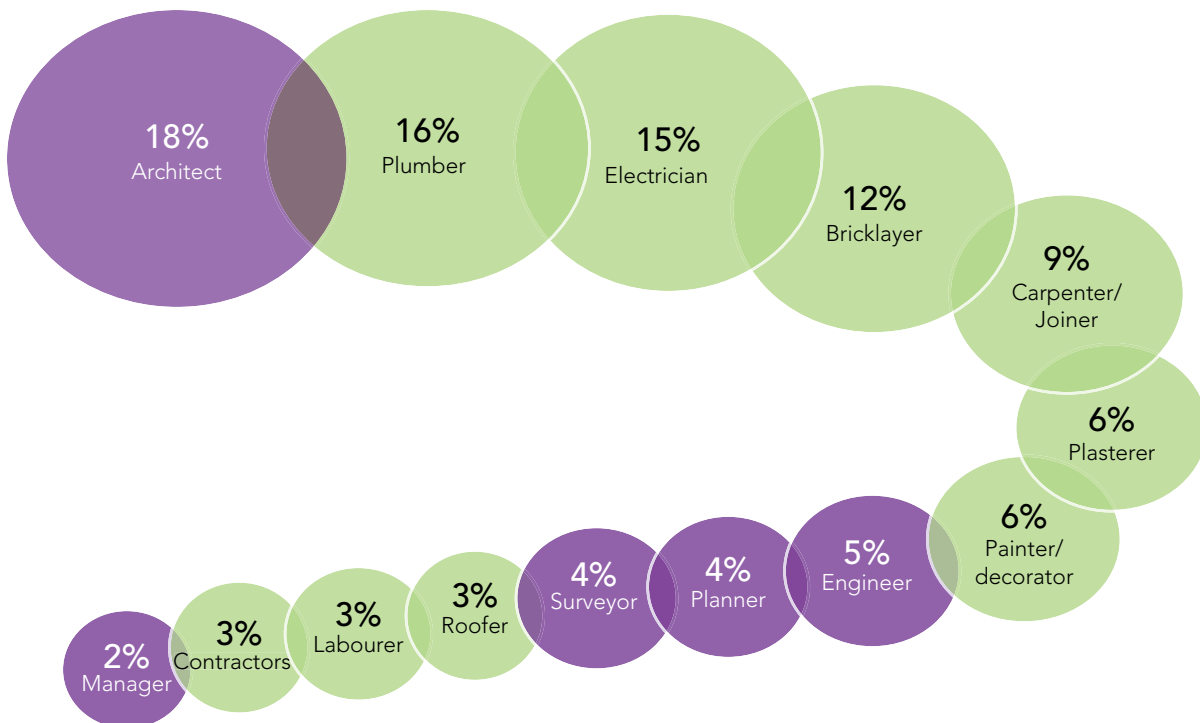


Figure 3 Percentage of young people that identified particular jobs in house building Responses to the question ‘What jobs would you include in the house-building industry?’ Participants’ spontaneous responses. Sample 428. Ages 14-24

Note: Trades identified by young people are shown in green. Professional roles identified are shown in purple.

5.3.2 Reasons why some young people might not be interested in a career in house building

To better understand why some young people might not consider a career in house building, the survey participants were asked to respond to a prompted list of views or situations that might discourage them. Responses are shown in Table 1. While some (particularly ‘image’ and ‘outdoor working’) are well-acknowledged barriers to recruitment into construction and house building, young people selected a number of other issues, related in particular to lack of information about careers and a perceived lack of professional opportunities.

The lack of professional opportunities was equally recognised as a barrier across the sample of young people, both male and female, and even by the 84 individuals who had registered an interest in careers in building and construction.

Reason for not considering a career in house building	Percentage of young people recognising each statement
I'm not attracted by the overall image of the house-building industry	28%
I don't know anybody who works in house building	23%
I don't know what qualifications I would need to get into this type of career	22%
I would not like to work outdoors	18%
I don't see house building as a professional career option	16%
I can't see any benefits of a career in house building	14%
I don't know where I can find information about job/career opportunities in house building	14%
My careers adviser did not mention it	14%
There will not be local house-building jobs for me	14%
House building is thought to be dangerous	13%
People like me don't work in house building	13%
I don't think my friends or family would think it is an interesting area to go into	10%
People I know who have worked in house building have put me off	7%

Table 1 Some reasons why young people could be discouraged from considering a career in house building. Responses to the question ‘Would any of the following discourage you from considering a career in house building?’ (Participants prompted with a list of options). Sample 428. Ages 14-24

While it should be stressed that even when prompted, the majority of young people in the survey did not recognise the statements in Table 1, poor image remains at the top of the challenges for the industry, recognised as a barrier by more than 1 in 4 young people in this survey. Views expressed by young people during the focus groups give a flavour of the image problems they perceive – see Box 1.

Box 1 A selection of comments on the image of house building from the focus groups with young people in education

Comments included are representative of the feedback received – few participants offered positive views

The whole thing on TV about cowboy builders puts you off. That's the reason why people don't think about getting into that industry because of those TV shows.

Post-16 student

House building is for people who don't have much education – you don't need much.

15-year old student

They need somehow to rid home building of its stereotype: male builder, muscly, not well paid, unsteady income, tattooed and not well-educated.

14-year old student

Builders have a bad reputation... home building has never occurred to me as a job sector as I haven't heard anything about it at school. I don't believe there are any high paid jobs in the industry.

15-year old student

The builders next door to me are all men; whether they are plasterers or plumbers, roofers whatever, they are all men.

Post-16 student

Well if you are thinking about building houses, then that would be more of a man's job. But the interior design or architecture, you would think a woman. But overall building a house you would think it's a man thing.

Post-16 student

Only when you watch Grand Designs on TV – the planner is the female, you don't see any women building the house.

Post-16 student

5.3.3 New entrants' views

The views of young people who had recently taken up employment in house building, provide a litmus test of the quality of the recruitment process currently operating. From the survey work, new entrants were very positive about the recruitment process itself, and their early days at work:

- 94% were positive about the information they received about the job, before they started
- 97% were positive about the recruitment process, including the selection interview
- 94% were positive about the induction training they experienced
- 94% were positive about the opportunities they have to develop skills and abilities.

This positive feedback (from 31 new recruits) indicates that the house-building sector does have strengths in the way it engages people for specific jobs and then works to retain them. From this close-up experience, the house-building industry is rated very highly by new young entrants.

6 How young people respond to information about house building



6.1 Main findings

- Many young people are interested in a range of practical, technical and managerial job areas which are available in house building, though boys and young men were significantly more interested in most of the job areas than girls and young women.
- For girls and young women, interest in specific house-building jobs was greater than the level of interest they had for a career in 'building and construction' in general.
- Students at school (aged 14-15) showed the highest interest in house-building careers, but good levels of interest were also shown by those receiving post-16 education in schools and colleges.
- Positive messages about house building increase young people's interest in careers in the sector.

6.2 How interesting are house-building jobs to young people?

To build a picture of how young people feel about careers in house building, survey participants were asked if they would be interested in careers in a range of job areas associated with the sector. Each job area title was supported with a single line description to ensure that participants had some understanding of what the job entailed, for example:

Services specialists – Ensuring that heating, ventilation and controls systems are properly designed and installed.

Quality control – Inspection and testing of homes, and maintenance of the right standards.

Planning – Securing planning permission for new homes and making sure homes meet national and local planning requirements.

Young people’s level of interest (those ‘interested’ and ‘very interested’) in these job areas are shown in Figure 4, ordered according to the level of interest shown by girls and young women.

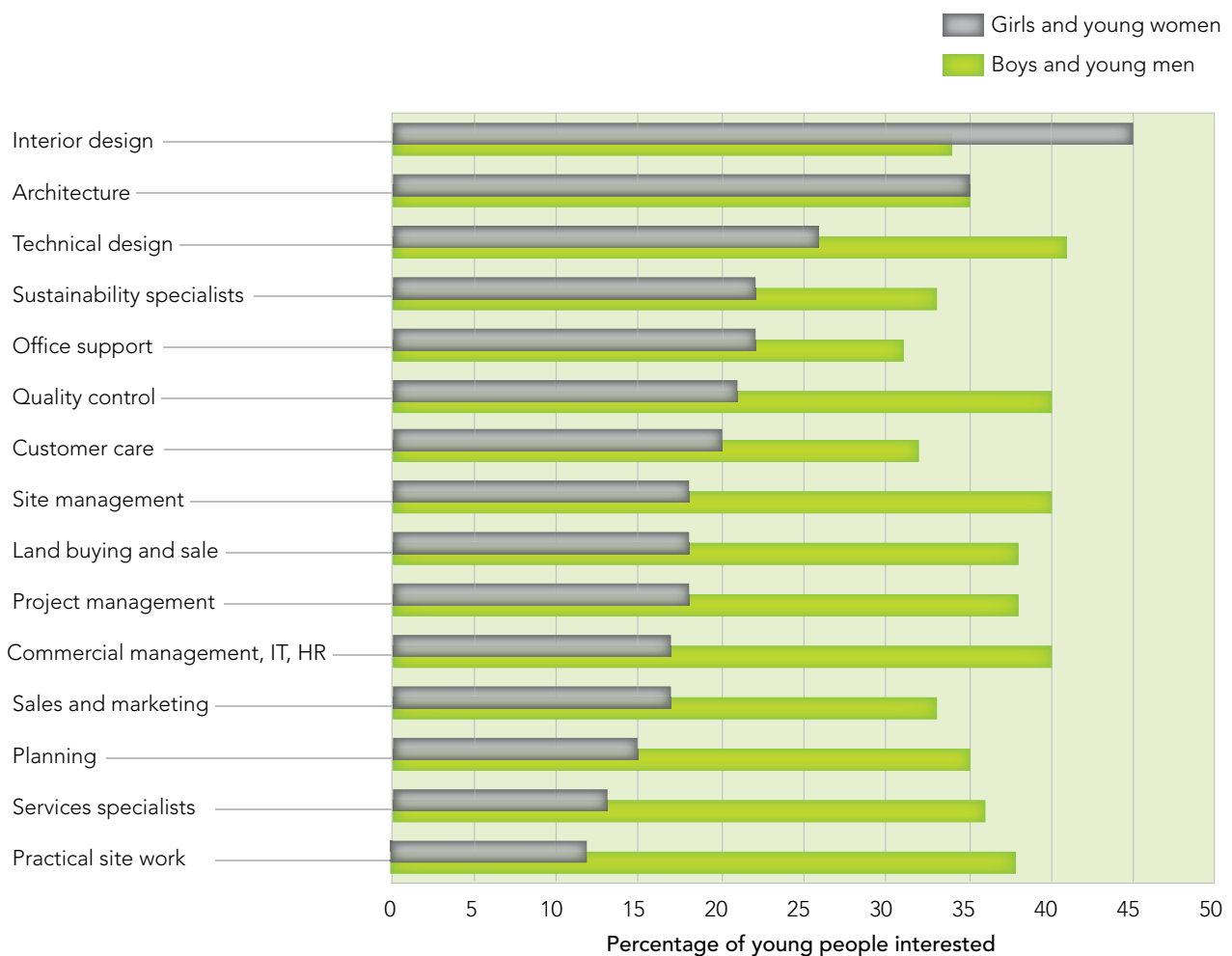


Figure 4 Percentage of young people who were either ‘interested’ or ‘very interested’ in a range of careers/job areas in house building. Responses to the question ‘Would you be interested in any of the following areas of work within house building?’ Sample 428. Ages 14-24

For boys and young men, interest in specific careers in house building was on average similar to the level of interest (37%) they had for the construction sector overall (Figure 2).

For girls and young women, the level of interest in specific careers in house building, was higher than their interest (11%) for a career in building and construction. Their interest was strong in a number of technically-oriented jobs in house building, such as architecture, technical design and sustainability specialists. It is encouraging that young people show these levels of interest across a range of house-building careers.

6.3 Patterns of interest

6.3.1 Those particularly interested in construction

The sub-sample of survey participants (Figure 5), which had shown most interest in careers in the building and construction sector, showed high levels of interest in the job areas in house building. This sub-sample had a welcome diversity of interest, with a high proportion interested in practical site jobs. This is good news for an industry dependent on a skilled workforce and managers with a practical mentality.

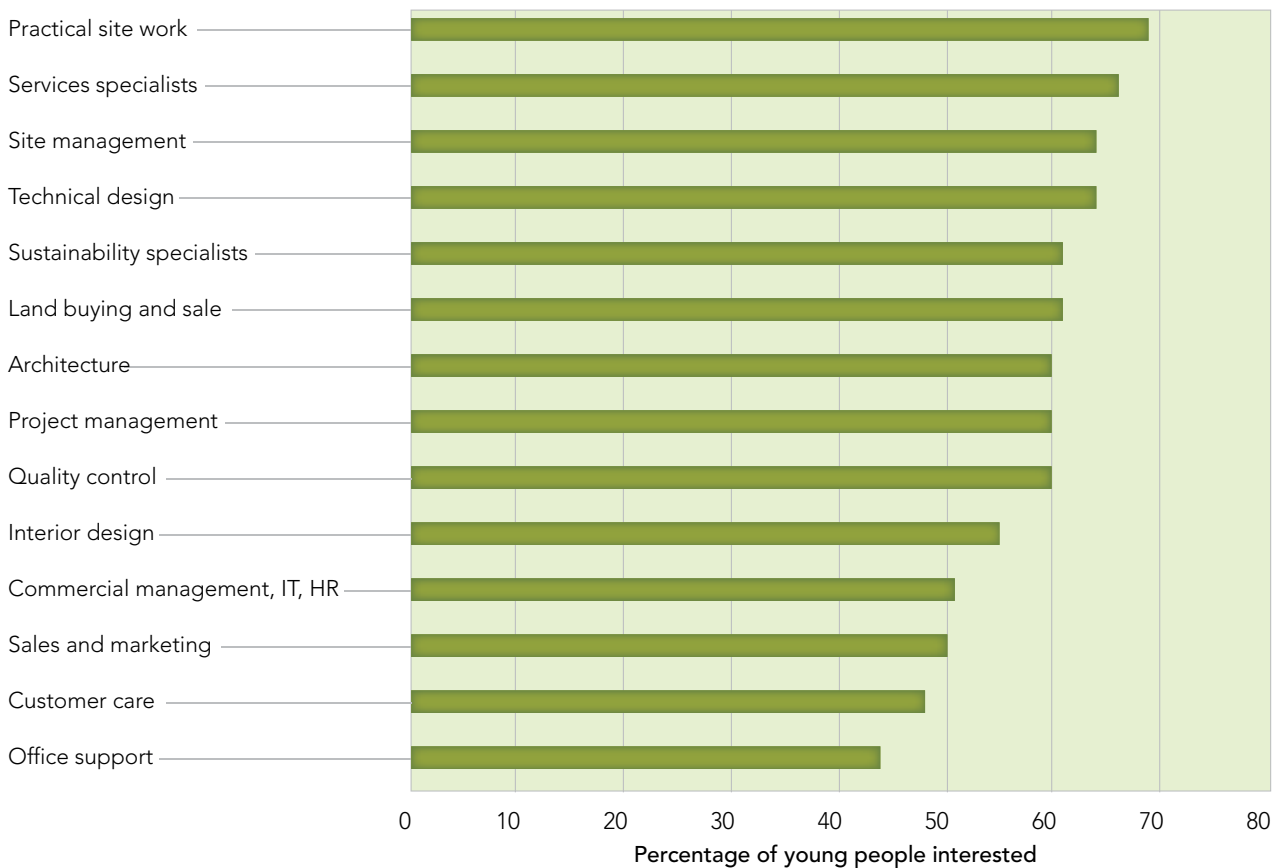


Figure 5 Sub-sample of young people with a particular interest in building and construction. Percentage who were 'interested' or 'very interested' in a range of careers/job areas in house building. Responses to the question 'Would you be interested in any of the following areas of work within house building?' Sample 84. Ages 14-24

6.3.2 Educational stage

While the overall objective should be to improve recruitment of those with enthusiasm and talent, regardless of educational background, the house-building industry does align its recruitment activities to key qualification and transition points in schools, colleges and universities. To inform approaches to recruitment there is merit, therefore, in understanding the levels of interest shown for different house-building careers among people at different educational stages. Figure 6 shows levels of interest for job clusters that can be used to characterise house building, plotted for three educational stages.

The levels of interest shown by young people for particular careers are generally highest for those in school (up to age 16). However levels of interest seem to be only marginally less for those in sixth form and college. For university students, interest levels seem markedly less.

Significantly, interest in house-building jobs among people in post-16 education seems to be generally higher than that shown for building and construction in general, and interest seems to be highest for the range of design and technical jobs (Figure 6a). Analyses of this kind help us to understand where more effort might be needed to build interest and encourage recruitment into the key areas of need. So, for house building, the low interest in services specialists is of high significance, bearing in mind the growing number of building services jobs in housing related to the delivery of low carbon homes. For construction as a whole it is estimated that there are over 12 building services jobs for each qualified person^[6]. A larger sample of young people should be surveyed to confirm the trends in Figure 6 and their possible use in understanding recruitment challenges and opportunities.

While the graphs in Figure 6 do show a lower level of interest in most job types for people at university, this is also a trend noted for the other broad sectors examined in this work. The important context is that even a 10% interest level constitutes a substantial pool of young people who might be open to a particular career path.

The current study does not provide sufficient data to give insights from young people undergoing vocational training as apprentices and those on work experience. Some insights on developments related to apprenticeships, and the barriers and enablers related to the house-building sector, are set out in the Literature Review prepared as part of this project by the University of Derby^[2].

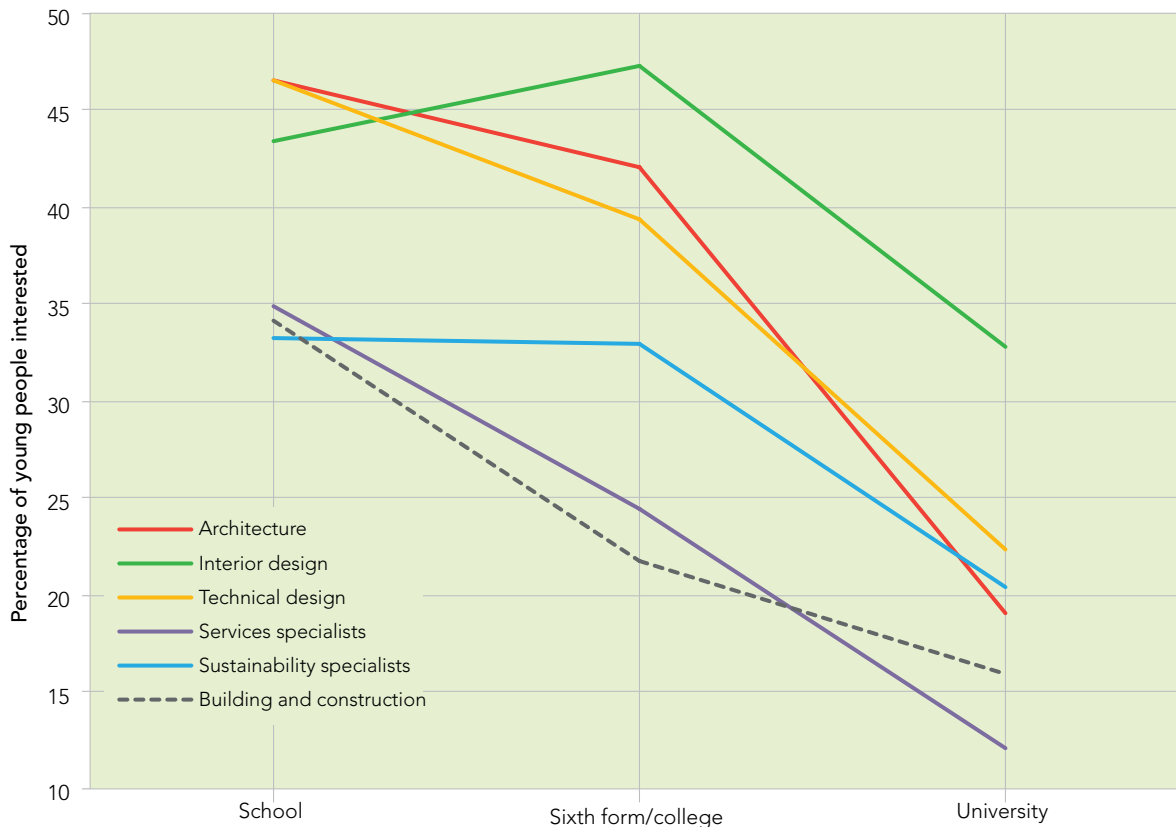


Figure 6a Interest in design and technical roles

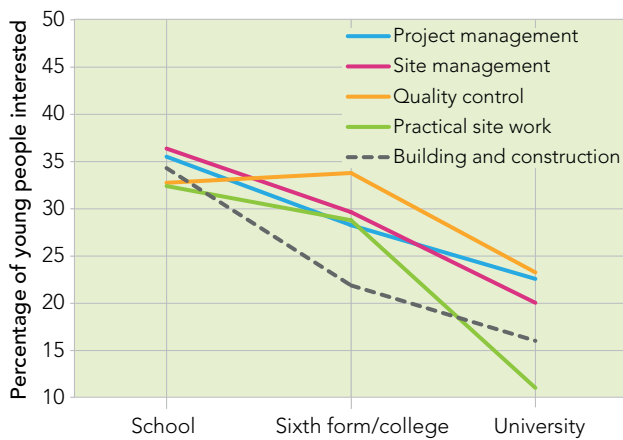


Figure 6b Interest in project-delivery roles

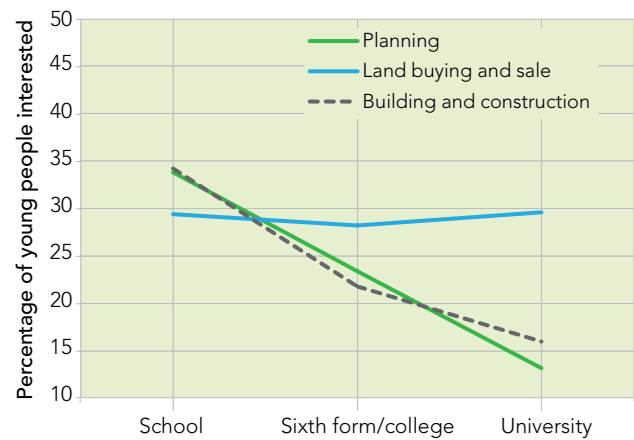


Figure 6c Interest in land and planning roles

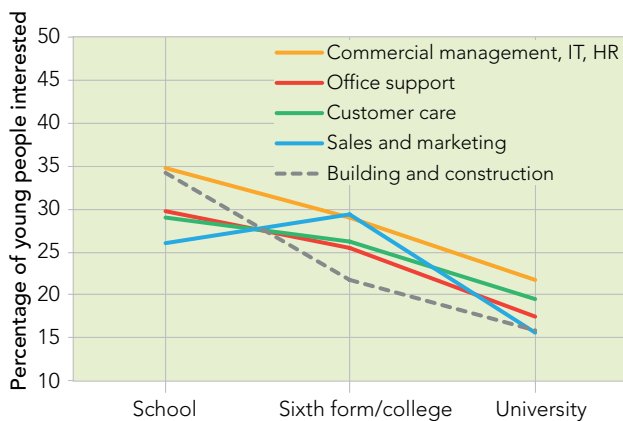


Figure 6d Interest in business-development roles

Figure 6 a-d Percentage of young people at different educational stages who are 'interested' or 'very interested' in different jobs in house building. Responses to the question: 'would you be interested in any of the following areas of work in house building?' Sample: school 116, sixth form/college 111, university 88. Data corrected to reflect the national gender balance. There is an age range in each educational stage.

Note: 'School' includes pre-sixth form students only 'Sixth form/college' includes students at sixth form, sixth form college and college (a wide grouping of educational establishments in which a range of vocational education and programmes of study will be provided).

6.4 Positive messages about house building

It is an accepted view that negative perceptions about construction and house building have been hindering recruitment initiatives for decades. Part of the study therefore explored the use of a more positive narrative with young people. Survey participants were invited to respond to a series of statements about the industry, which were written to appeal to a range of different emotions, ambitions and outlooks. Figure 7 shows the proportion of young people who, after reading each statement, felt more positive about a career in house building.

Statement	Response*
1 House building has a very wide range of opportunities across the managerial, supervisory and trade roles and in a wide variety of disciplines, such as design, engineering, research, environmental, planning, health and safety, marketing and customer care to name a few – range of opportunities	39% 50%
2 For talented people, a career in house building offers excellent prospects for rapid career progression and very competitive salaries – good career prospects	41% 43%
3 Our country has a shortage of new homes and many people have nowhere proper to live – helping to reduce the shortage is worthwhile and ethical – social contribution	36% 48%
4 There are over 3800 house-building companies in the UK, ranging from small local companies producing a few homes every year, right up to the major house builders, some completing several new homes every day. So there are career opportunities across the country – something for me	34% 47%
5 The UK house-building industry is huge. Currently it is building about 140,000 new homes a year. The house-building industry employs about three quarters of a million people – major employer	31% 50%
6 Today house building can offer high quality on-going training and support for new recruits and those wishing to develop their careers – nurturing	36% 44%
7 House building is innovating fast and needs imaginative and inquisitive minds to steer it effectively and safely as the 21st century unfolds. It is looking to recruit the next generation of leaders and high-performing teams – creativity, leadership	33% 47%
8 A career in house building leaves a lasting physical legacy: a finished product that has long-term benefit to individuals and communities – satisfaction, pride	31% 48%
9 House building adds enormously to the wealth of the country. It contributes about £25 Billion every year – national success	32% 46%
10 House building has pioneered methods for minimising the environmental impact of new housing developments. Companies invest in delivering sustainability targets and some have related employment opportunities – long-term responsibility	33% 44%
11 House building is recovering steadily after the recession and is set to provide stable work into the foreseeable future. New homes will always be needed – future stability	30% 46%
12 Home building has also been proactive in encouraging diversity and equality – respect, inclusive	32% 38%
*Response = Percentage of young people who thought that a particular statement made them feel more positive about a career in house building	Girls and young women Boys and young men

Figure 7 Response of young people to positive messages about the house-building industry. Responses to the question ‘Would any of the following things encourage you to consider a career in house building?’ Percentage selecting ‘Makes me feel more positive’ are shown in the chart. Sample 428. Ages 14-24

Note: The words in bold italics show the underlying emotion/ambition/outlook being evaluated. These words were not communicated to the survey participants.

While these show the value of positive statements within the industry’s recruitment narrative, it is acknowledged that they might not be the most effective forms of words. The challenge for the industry is in tailoring language to appeal to different ages and to male and female outlooks. The language used here does appear to have potential to help close the ‘gender-interest gap’ that has been observed (for example in Figure 4).

6.5 What young people are looking for in their careers

While, as observed above, a persuasive narrative for young people could benefit from the inclusion of specific house-building content, there are key generic characteristics of careers that are important to young people. In this study young people were asked to select what was important to them when making career decisions. The characteristics shown in Figure 8 were recognised as important by more than 50% of young males and females.

While other characteristics of careers (unprompted in this research) may be as important as those shown in Figure 8, the ability of house building to satisfy these desired characteristics would be an important inclusion in recruitment initiatives and information about house-building careers.

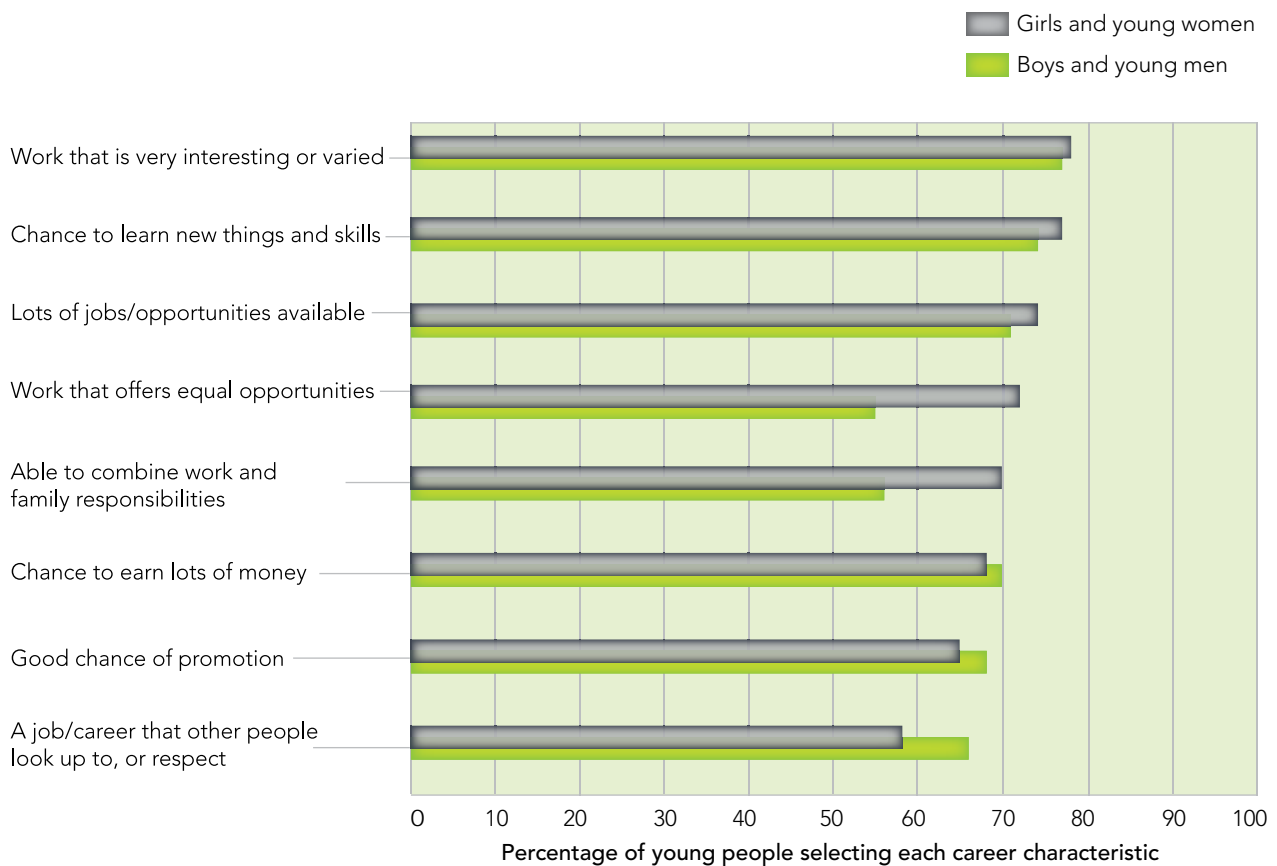
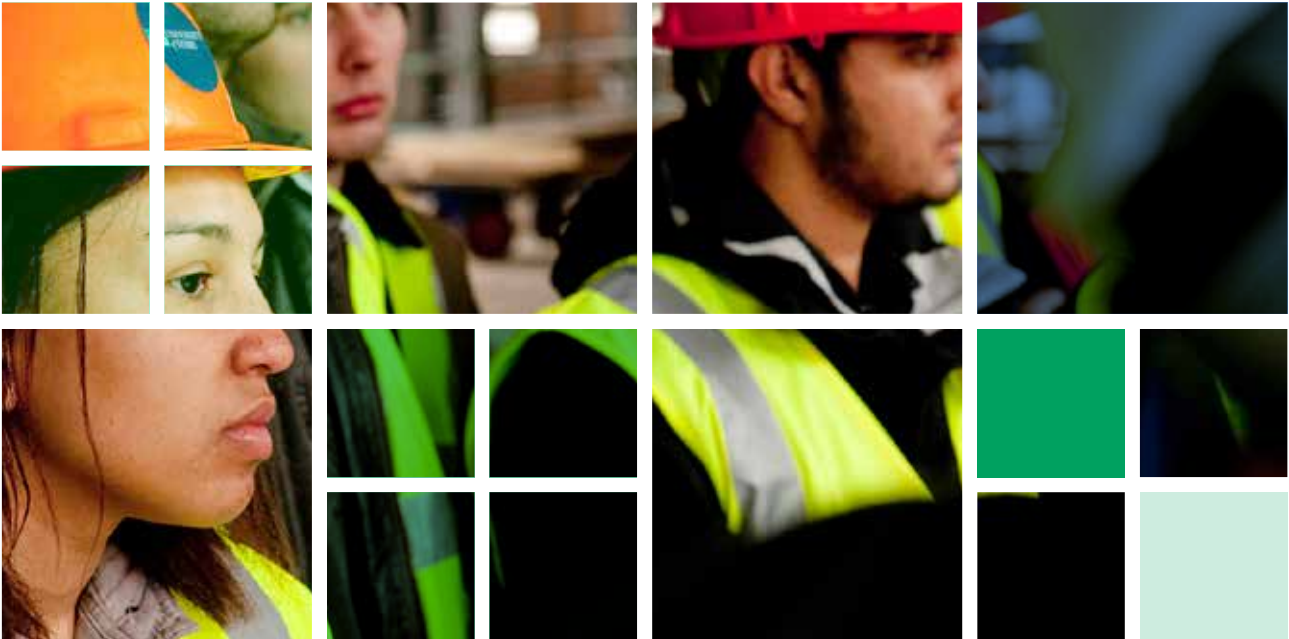


Figure 8 Career characteristics important to young people.
 Responses to the question ‘Which of the following are important when choosing a job or career?’
 Sample 428. Ages 14-24

7 Understanding how young people find out about careers



7.1 Main findings

- About 80% of young people have experienced organised activities, such as careers discussions and talks from employers, to learn about careers.
- The most valued opportunities, particularly among girls and young women, are visits to employers and talks from people who do particular jobs.
- Young people use a range of sources to find out about jobs and inform their decisions about careers: websites are the most popular, but the family also plays a key role in advising young people.
- While careers advisers felt that they had the skills to provide advice, many were not confident in explaining the difference between jobs in house building and those in the wider construction industry.

7.2 Opportunities to learn about careers

When prompted with a list of organised opportunities to learn about careers, 80% had experienced at least one (Figure 9). These opportunities have been ordered in terms of the ‘helpfulness’ that the sample of young people associated with each opportunity.

Figure 9 supports an established view that young people gain good insights on how to develop their career ideas from direct contact with employers and people who can speak to them from a position of experience. It seems likely that they recognise the authenticity of such contacts and feel they get an honest view of particular career options; this applies particularly for women. While the construction sector as a whole has been active in this area, house builders should work to expand activities such as work experience, visits to companies, work-related activities and role models to help develop a positive view of the various careers in house building. House builders should look to identify receptive schools and colleges who are prepared to explore the adoption of ideas and learning from house building into the curriculum.

It is rather disappointing that 20% of young people had not experienced an organised opportunity to interact with people who could inform their thinking on careers in any of the sectors included in this study.

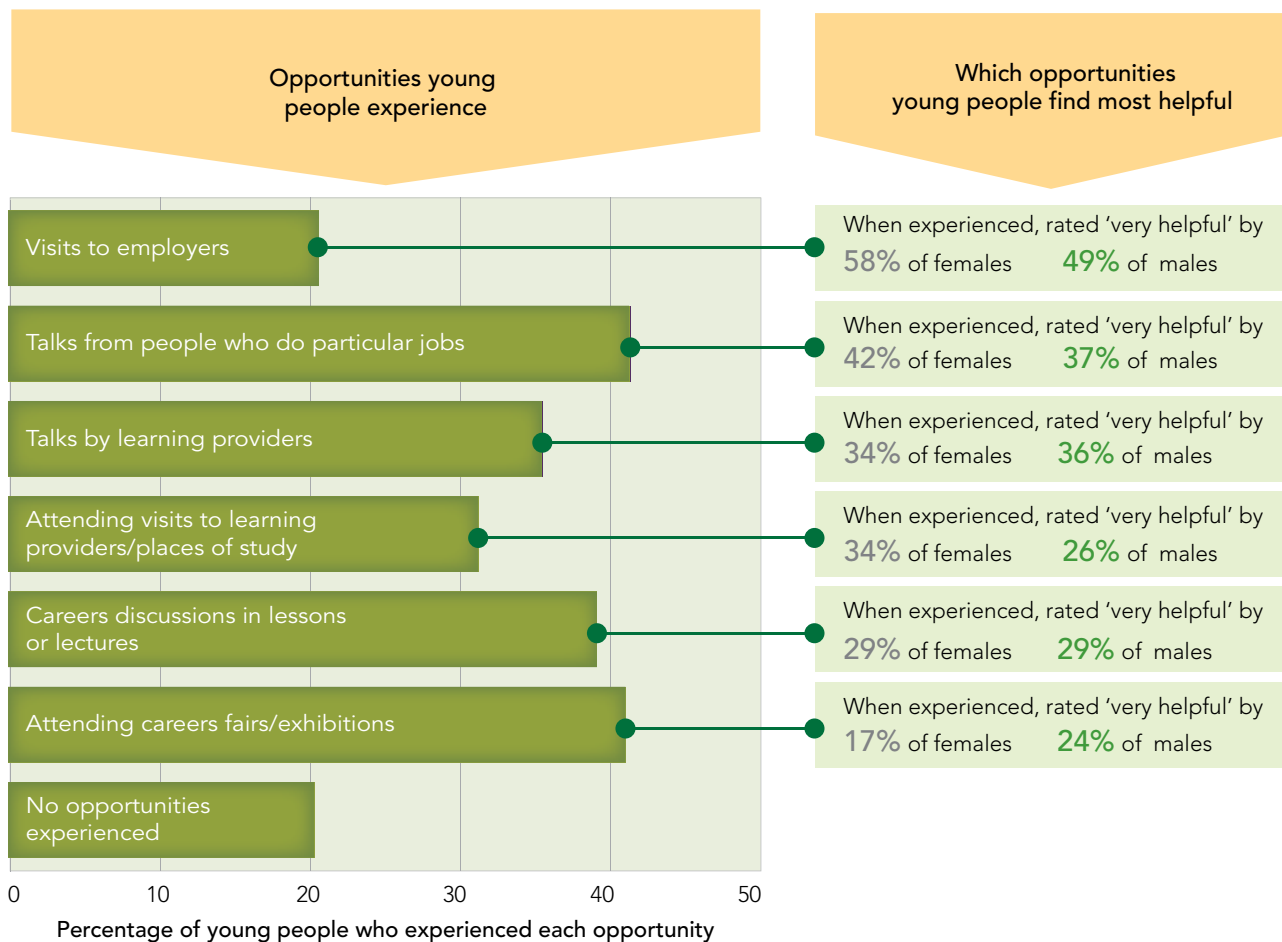


Figure 9 Percentage of young people who experienced organised opportunities to learn about careers. Responses to the question 'Have you had any of the following opportunities at the place you are currently studying to find out about careers'. Sample 428. Ages 14-24

7.3 How do young people find out about careers?

Young people were asked about the resources they had used to find out about careers and whether these had proved to be good sources of information. Their responses are summarised in Figure 10, ranked according to the proportion of users who thought a source was 'very good'. The extensive use of websites is a notable finding.

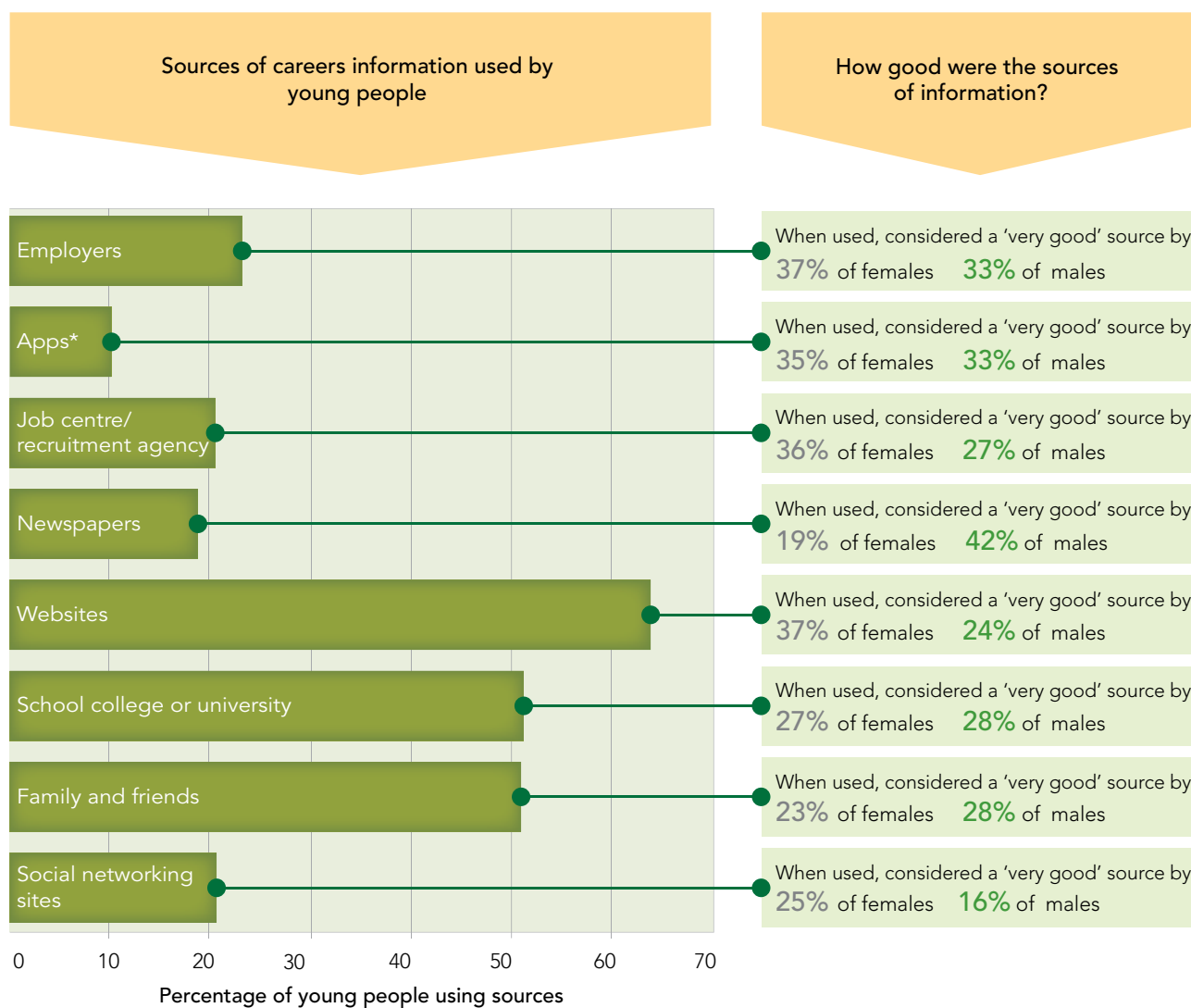


Figure 10 Effectiveness of various sources of information used by young people to find out about careers. Responses to the question 'How good were the following as sources of information about jobs or careers?' Sample 428. Ages 14-24

*Apps. An App is a small specialist program which is usually downloaded onto a mobile device such as a smart phone or a Tablet PC. These are increasingly becoming available with career-related tools and information.

7.3.1 Families and parents

A key finding from this research is the important role that families play in advising young people on careers. Figure 10 suggests that family and friends are used as a common source of information, however this appears not to be a full reflection of how important families are. In another question we asked young people to indicate which person they would consult at that moment, if they needed to have a conversation about careers. Most (57%) said they would consult their families and a large proportion of these individuals (37% females and 33% males) said that the family would be their most valued adviser. About 28% said they would consult friends, careers teachers and subject teachers, though these were much less often seen as the most valued adviser.

These findings support conclusions from other work^[7,8] that the family is critical in shaping the views of young people on possible careers, and indicate that recruitment into house building may be strongly influenced by what parents and family members tell young people. The question, though, is whether within families there is a suitable level of awareness of the jobs and opportunities within house building to stimulate interest and support good career decisions.

From the focus groups with parents it was clear that they had no fundamental concerns about their children working in house building. However, though they felt that house building was good at defining jobs, there was a view that it was weak in communicating opportunities for career progression. Feedback from parents in the focus groups are shown in the box below, indicating some of the views that might be available to young people from their families.

For house building to improve its chances of attracting the most suitable and talented young people, there seems every reason to give priority to informing parents and ensuring they have the resources at hand to give the best possible advice.

Box 2 A representative selection of comments from the focus groups with parents

You would only be able to get to a certain level, with not many opportunities once you've become skilled say as a carpenter. If it's a manual job: fine when you're 20-30, but what about in your 50-60s?

Parent

In a recession the construction industry gets hit very hard and people get made redundant

Parent

Got to be clear about what the job is like on entry, but then show you where it might lead in a number of directions and that you're not going to get stuck

Parent

Putting bricks on bricks is all there is in the house-building industry

Parent

7.3.2 Career development practitioners

Career development practitioners include a range of professionals who advise on careers and include qualified careers teachers and advisers. They provide support to young people in a number of ways including through the national curriculum, the careers curriculum, work-related learning, the provision and integration of labour market information into subject and learning option choices, and mentoring, support and guidance activities. All of these activities are aimed at helping young people to explore their ideas for the future and to make well-informed and realistic decisions about career options. The use of labour market information will be integrated throughout school in a number of ways including by introducing young people to careers resources to help them in their research. At the time of this study, 32% of young people had used careers teachers and 33% had used careers advisers as a source of information on careers: they represented an important source of information to young people, second only to families.

Career development practitioners indicated during the course of the research that they lacked confidence in differentiating between construction and house building (Figure 11) although they did indicate a high level of confidence in advising their clients on a range of careers across all sectors (Figure 12). This may be an important finding and suggests that not all career development practitioners are able to associate some jobs with the house-building industry. Where this is the case some practitioners may fail to signpost opportunities within construction and house-building companies to young people. This is an area for development and suggests that house builders need to support practitioners to make links between some jobs and house building. In advising young people (and other clients), career development practitioners may find useful the Compendium of resources^[9] developed as part of this project.

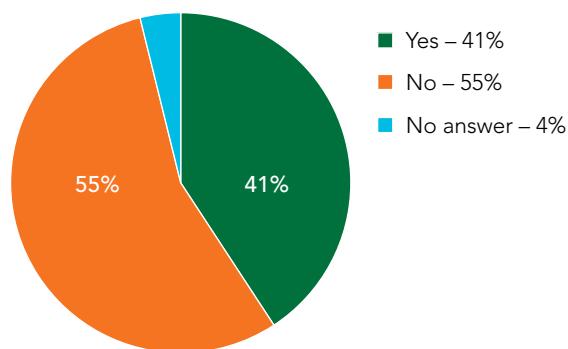


Figure 11 Career development practitioners – ability to advise about house building. Answers to the statement ‘I feel confident in explaining the difference between jobs in house building and those in the wider construction sector’. Sample 130

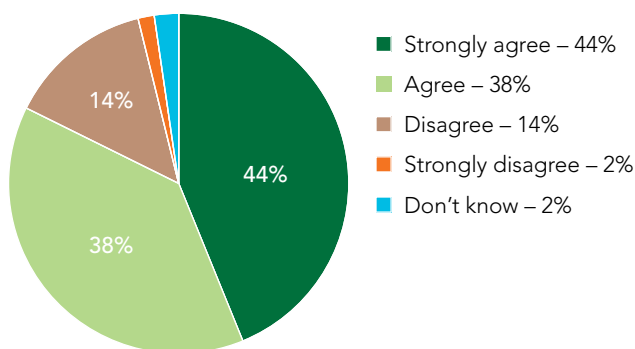


Figure 12 Career development practitioners – ability to advise about all sectors. Responses to the statement ‘I feel confident about discussing opportunities with my clients who are interested in going into employment in different sectors’. Sample 130

8 Recommendations for recruiting young people into house building



Throughout the research, young people indicated some interest in house-building careers and this indicates a strong platform on which to build. However if the industry is to attract the talent required to fill the skills gaps that exist in the industry, significant work needs to be done to engage more young people.

The previous sections introduced a series of pointers to successful recruitment into house building. These are considered below, supported by some additional insights from the various research strands that made up this project. Each could have a role in encouraging interest in house building and needs to be considered within the development of a coordinated recruitment strategy with appropriate campaign materials and resources for the key influencers.

1 Communicating the range of careers in house building

Throughout the stakeholder interviews and focus groups in particular the importance of communicating the range of careers in house building was seen as a priority. It is clear that interest levels in careers across the spectrum available in house building is quite high and this represents an important opportunity.

Recommendation 1:

The industry should prioritise the promotion of the careers available in house building, explaining the range of practical, technical, managerial and business-improvement opportunities. Industry partnerships with schools and colleges provide important opportunities (see recommendation 7). Specific guidance on house-building careers should be developed to inform parents and careers advice professionals.

2 Career progression not just jobs

Evidence from focus groups with parents and young people, and separately from careers advisers, indicates a perception that house building may not be seen to result in the personal development of young people and offers limited long-term prospects for them.

Recommendation 2:

To counter the concern that house building may not provide career structures and may be a dead-end choice, the industry should, whenever possible, stress its career opportunities and flexible career paths. Again, information should be developed to inform parents and careers advice professionals.

3 Explaining how young people can benefit personally from a career in house building

The research identified that young people could not see the benefits of a career in house building. It is central to the success of any recruitment campaign that it focuses on the key career benefits that young people seek.

Recommendation 3:

House-building recruitment should keep a focus on the things that young people look for in their careers, such as varied and interesting work and the chance to learn new skills. On this, the house-building industry should attempt to coordinate with wider construction sector initiatives and sectorial bodies to present a clear unified picture of benefits.

4 Explaining house building positively

When young people were given positive, factual information about the wider benefits of house building, many felt much more interested in considering it as a career.

Recommendation 4:

The industry should encourage the development of new positive narrative on the wider benefits of house building. Communications experts should develop specific narratives that will be influential with young people at different ages and of both genders.

5 Maintaining interest

While the good level of interest in house-building careers shown by young people at school should be nurtured, it is crucial to maintain this interest as young people mature.

Recommendation 5:

More research is needed to understand what is effective in attracting young people to careers in house building at different stages of their lives and education.

6 The right opportunities to learn about careers

Young people value highly company visits and visiting speakers (role models or advocates) who can talk with first-hand knowledge of particular jobs.

Recommendation 6:

The industry and Government should develop a model that supports the delivery of greater numbers of company visits, role models and advocate speaker visits to educational and training organisations. The CITB Construction Ambassadors Scheme is a noteworthy success in providing role models for young people^[10].

7 Partnerships between schools/colleges and house builders

Schools have an obligation to provide independent and impartial careers advice, and house-building companies could play a greater part in supporting the development of activities linked to the curriculum. Many schools and colleges are seeking such partnerships.

Recommendation 7:

House-building companies should actively explore the development of creative partnerships with schools and colleges. 'Careers Lab' is a national initiative developed by National Grid^[11], this provides an opportunity to be part of a national 'partnership' initiative with schools.

8 Websites

From this research, it is clear that young people use websites extensively for information about careers. Many websites may not be that effective in communicating beyond the availability of jobs, though some may attempt to stimulate young people to widen their thinking on careers.

Recommendation 8:

Key websites used by young people to find out about careers, should be encouraged to include consistent and influential information about house-building careers. This could be derived from material developed to meet recommendations 1 and 2.

9 Professional roles for women in house building

While indicating that young women are generally less interested in careers in house building than young men, this work highlights the interest that young women show in a range of professional jobs in the sector.

Recommendation 9:

More should be done to promote and champion the professional careers in house building to young women. A campaign to encourage greater awareness of the technical and design career opportunities might resonate strongly with young women. This should be done in conjunction with approaches developed through recommendation 4.

9 References

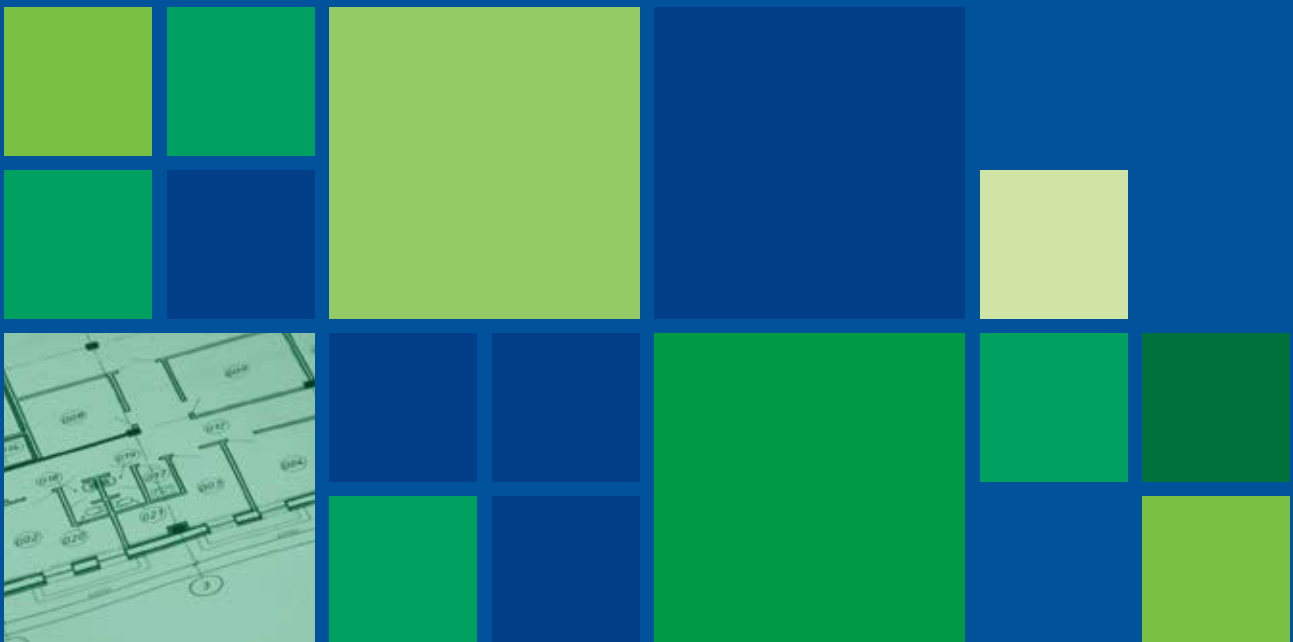
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- 11 Careers Lab. <http://www2.nationalgrid.com/UK/Our-company/Education/Careers-Lab/>

A career of choice

Attracting talented young people into house building

To remain competitive, the house-building sector must be successful in recruiting talented and enthusiastic young people. To understand how to enhance recruitment, this research gathered views from young people, industry stakeholders and those who currently advise on careers. While some challenges to recruitment were highlighted in the research, young people show encouraging levels of interest in house-building careers.

A key message from this work is that young people see parents and families as favoured advisers on their career choices. However because parents may have only a limited understanding of house building, many of the attractive career opportunities in the sector may not be sufficiently apparent to young people as they contemplate their futures.



The NHBC Foundation, established in 2006, provides high quality research and practical guidance to support the house-building industry as it addresses the challenges of delivering 21st century new homes. To date the NHBC Foundation has published over 60 reports on a wide variety of topics, including the sustainability agenda, homeowner issues and risk management. Visit www.nhbcfoundation.org to find out more about the NHBC Foundation research programme.

