

A photograph of two women sitting at a red table, engaged in a conversation. The woman on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a light-colored blazer. The woman on the right is wearing a black hijab and a dark sweater. In the background, there is a blue wall with a poster that reads "Scotland's Career Service" and "We offer expert advice and". The Skills Development Scotland logo is visible in the top left corner of the image.

**Skills  
Development  
Scotland**

**Scotland's  
Career  
Service**

**We offer expert  
advice and**

# **Delivering Scotland's Career Service**

**Annual Report 2023/24**

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# Introduction

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) delivers the national career service, supporting people to develop the skills and capabilities they need to achieve rewarding careers throughout their working lives.

Our services are delivered in schools and communities across the length and breadth of Scotland.

This report presents key data from our 2023/24 career information, advice and guidance (CIAG) delivery, demonstrating the impact of the work of SDS staff and our partners.

The past year has presented new and complex challenges for us all.

The cost-of-living crisis continues to have a significant effect on many aspects of people's lives, while broader trends like climate change, the adoption of new technology and global instability continue to impact our communities, economy and workplaces.

Pressure on public finances has also meant that, like many organisations across the public sector, SDS has had to prioritise the delivery of frontline products and services as we face into increasingly constrained budgets.

For SDS career services, this has meant continued innovation in the way that we reach customers.

Our organisational transformation programme, Transform 27, combines short, medium and long-term activities aimed at driving costs savings and efficiencies, increasing productivity and building greater organisational agility and responsiveness.

As part of this programme, the last year has seen us undertake a major transition of our post-school career services to local community employability hubs.

This has enabled us to realise significant cost savings through rationalisation of our estates, enhancing connections to partners and, most importantly, reaching our customers in environments which work for them.

This year we have also sought to engage Scottish Government in supporting its plans for reform, both in the context of the skills delivery landscape, and its broader plans for education reform.

This has included continued work with Education Scotland and other national and local partners, to develop a digital profile for young people, a key recommendation of the Hayward Review.

Whilst we continue to work through the uncertainty in our external environment, I want to pay tribute to the resilience, dedication and expertise of our extended CIAG workforce within SDS.

The results contained within this report highlight their continued focus on the people that matter most – the customers that need and are entitled to our vital services.

I look forward to continuing our work together to make sure that the people of Scotland continue to have high quality career services that support them throughout happy, fulfilling careers.



**Dave McCallum,**  
**Head of CIAG Operations**  
Skills Development Scotland

## Our 2023/24 Delivery

### Services in Schools

Our careers advisers work in partnership with every state secondary school in Scotland, delivering a comprehensive range of career information, advice and guidance (CIAG) to enable young people from S1-S6 to develop their career management skills.

Through our service offer, advisers deliver a range of groupwork sessions and one-to-one guidance.

Pupils can also access further information and advice through our digital and social channels, including **My World of Work** and **Apprenticeships.scot**.

#### Broad General Education S1-S3



We delivered CIAG services to

**153,739** P7  
S3

pupils across Scotland

**91%** of pupils transitioning from P7 to S1 received a group engagement

**89%** of pupils in S2 received individual and/or group support

**86%** of pupils in S3 received individual and/or group support

**85%** of pupils making option choices in S2/S3 had one-to-one support

**85%** of pupils in S3 with greatest need received extra one-to-one support

Mean score for satisfaction was

**8.7/10**

from pupils who had an option choice interview

Mean score for satisfaction was

**9.1/10**

from pupils in S3 with greatest need who received extra one-to-one support

#### Senior Phase S4-S6



A mean score of

**9.2/10**



from targeted pupils in S4-S6

We delivered CIAG services to

**94,595** S4  
S6

pupils across Scotland

**49,420** pupils in S4-S6 were identified for targeted support

**94%** of targeted S4-S6 pupils received one-to-one coaching guidance

**88%** of targeted S4-S6 pupils improved their career management skills (CMS)

**9.2/10** Mean score for satisfaction from targeted pupils in S4-S6

School leaver outcomes:

**95.9%**

of school leavers in 2022/23 were in an initial positive destination approximately three months after the end of the academic year

A breakdown of key outcomes by equality characteristic is shown in the table on page five.

## Key Outcomes by Equality Characteristic

Equality Characteristic	All Targeted Pupils (S4-6)	Females	Males	Disability	Ethnic Minority	Care Experienced
Targeted Pupils Receiving Coaching Guidance	94%	93%	94%	94%	94%	96%
Targeted Pupils with Improved CMS	88%	88%	88%	86%	87%	87%

# Understanding Young People's Career Choices

SDS has a programme of research which allows us to understand young people's career choices

Young People in Scotland Survey  
1,500 S1-S6 pupils

Pupils' Voice:  
Senior Phase research  
11,000 S4-S6 pupils

Young People's Career Ambitions research  
1,500 school leavers

SDS's research with young people explores **career choices** and **preferred pathways**, **influences** on career choices and pathways, and experience of **CIAG support**.

## Career Ambitions



Over a third of S1 to S3 pupils aim to go to **university**.



By S4 to S6 the range of options young people are considering broaden to **university, college and apprenticeships**.



The **sectors that young people want to go into vary considerably by gender**. **Males** are most likely to want to go into STEM related careers such as **construction, engineering, IT and science**, whereas **females** are more likely to want to go into **teaching, medicine, caring careers and creative industries**.

## Influence



Young people are most influenced by their **strengths and interests** when thinking about their future career.



**Parents and carers are a key influencer** on young people's career decisions. However, **parents and carers do not see themselves as a key influencer** on their young person's choices.



**Teachers and careers advisers** are also key influencers on young people's career decisions, particularly in the senior phase.

## Job Expectations



Young people in school think that employers are looking for **hard-working individuals and individuals with the right qualifications**.



Whereas **school leavers** think employers are also looking for **soft skills** such as being reliable, a positive attitude and communication skills.



**Good pay** is priority for school pupils when thinking about a future job, but **school leavers consider more factors associated with fair work** such as job satisfaction, work-life balance and learning new skills.

\* The programme of research with young people is led by the SDS Evaluation and Research team. The Young People in Scotland Survey was last commissioned in 2022 and is being replaced by an in-house pilot research project in early 2025. The Pupils' Voice: Senior Phase research was last conducted in July 2024 and the Young People's Career Ambitions (YPCA) research was last carried out in 2022. The 2024 YPCA research will go into the field in October 2024.

## Post-school Services

Our advisers offer person-centred career information, advice and guidance to customers of all ages from a network of SDS centres and community venues nationwide.

For those moving on from school who may need some additional support to find the right career opportunity, our targeted Next Steps service is on offer.

Next Steps customers are aged 16 to 18.5-years-old (or 16 to 25-years-old with care experience), unemployed and seeking work.

The Next Steps service offer involves young people having regular contact with their local SDS team until they reach their goal of further or higher education, training or a job.

## Our 2023/24 Delivery

### Next Steps

# 6,840

customers were supported through  
20,608 one-to-one or group  
sessions delivered by SDS advisers

 **69%**  
of Next Steps customers  
progressed to learning,  
training or work

 **73%**  
of Next Steps customers  
progressed to learning,  
training or work and  
sustained it for at least six  
months

 **62%**  
of Next Steps customers  
who were assessed  
improved their career  
management skills

Mean score for  
satisfaction was

## 9.5/10

from customers who had  
received the Next Steps  
service offer

Mean score for  
recommending the  
Next Steps offer was

## 9.4/10

from those who had  
received the service

A breakdown of key outcomes by equality characteristic is shown in the table below

### Next Steps Key Outcomes by Equality Characteristic

	Overall	Female	Male	Disability	Ethnicity	Care Experienced
% Next Steps Customers Progressing	69%	68%	69%	65%	71%	62%
% Next Steps Customers Sustaining	73%	73%	73%	68%	71%	63%
% Next Steps Customers with Improved CMS	62%	62%	62%	60%	65%	61%



Read our case studies to  
find out more about our  
work with customers

## Universal Services

Our advisers also provide a universal service offer which supports people of all ages and at all stages of their career to take control of their future, which includes:

- information, advice and guidance on career choices
- advice on the routes into careers including jobs, apprenticeships, training and learning
- help with CVs, application forms and interviews
- careers events
- insight into the local labour market
- access to Scotland's careers website, My World of Work
- redundancy support through the PACE Partnership.

## Universal Services



**33,109**

individuals across Scotland accessed our universal career service



**19,665**

of those received one-to-one coaching guidance from SDS advisers



Mean score for customer satisfaction

**9.6/10**



Mean score for recommending the service

**9.5/10**

## CIAG Helpline



Total number of calls handled by CIAG helpline

**3,985**



Number of customers supported by CIAG helpline

**1,495**



Mean score for customer satisfaction

**9.4/10**

## Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE)

**8,958**

individuals received PACE information packs

**1,425**

people facing redundancy received one-to-one CIAG support from SDS advisers



**233 employers** received PACE support

**198 of 251** (78.8%)



redundant apprentices supported in 2023/24 progressed to alternative learning and/or employment destination

A further 34 were continuing to engage with SDS

In the PACE client experience survey, the level of customer satisfaction was

**84%**

## Parents and Carers

### In 2023/24 SDS supported parents and carers by:

- inviting them to attend careers appointments with their young person
- attending 769 events in schools and engaging with over 12,989 parents and carers
- attending community events
- hosting a series of webinars on careers topics attended by 1,822 parents and carers
- providing parent and carer-focused content on our digital offers My World of Work and Apprenticeships.scot.

### The level of satisfaction from parents and carers with SDS services:

**6.8/10** Careers appointments

**7.5/10** My World of Work

**8.0/10** Apprenticeships.scot

**8.1/10** Parent and carer webinars

**7.6/10** Results Helpline

**6.5/10** Overall satisfaction

**6.6/10** Likelihood to recommend

**6.5/10** Overall effectiveness

## Parents' Voice Research 2023/24

Parents and carers are a key influencer of young people's career and education choices. As such, we seek regular feedback from this important group on how they talk to their young people about careers and their awareness and use of our services through our Parents' Voice research.

The research:

- informs the way we communicate with parents and carers about our service offers
- is used to develop resources and information to enable parents and carers to support young people in their career choices
- increases SDS's knowledge of parent and carer awareness and understanding of the full range of post-school pathways and options open to young people.

[The findings of our Parents' Voice research 2022/23 can be found here.](#)



## Education Team

SDS's Education team supports teachers, other practitioners, parents and carers, and a wide range of partners across Scotland to play their complementary roles in delivering young people's entitlement to a meaningful career education. One that equips them with the skills, confidence and knowledge needed to make smart choices and take control of their future learning and careers.

In 2023/24 we delivered

 **193**

workshops both virtually and  
face-to-face to

 **5,621**  
people

The overall satisfaction  
rate with the professional  
learning delivered was

**8.0/10**

For further information on the services provided by the Education team, visit the [SDS website](#).

[Find out more about the work of SDS's Education team in schools](#)

## Results Helpline

In August 2023, SDS once again ran our Results Helpline to support learners across the country who were receiving their SQA results.

The dedicated Helpline was delivered over four working days by our expert advisers working remotely across Scotland, who handled 794 calls from young people and their parents or carers.

Information and advice was provided on course vacancies at colleges and universities, UCAS Confirmation and Clearing, staying on at school, and wider post-school pathways such as apprenticeships, jobs, volunteering and training.

Wider support was also provided over this period through our advisers in schools, SDS centres and community venues.

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**SDS is the national skills body, and we deliver Scotland's career service in schools, in our centres and with partners in community venues, through our Helpline and online at My World of Work.**

**Find out more about our career services at:**

**[skillsdevelopment.co.uk/what-we-do/scotlands-careers-services](https://www.skillsdevelopment.co.uk/what-we-do/scotlands-careers-services)**