

Sustainable Futures Programme Evaluation

Final Report



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About iCeGS

International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) is a research centre with expertise in career and career development. The Centre conducts research, provides consultancy to the career sector, offers a range of training, and delivers several accredited learning programmes up to and including doctoral level.

The Centre employs seven researchers with a range of academic and professional backgrounds and works closely with a network of research associates and partners who contribute specialist knowledge and capacity. iCeGS has a strong ethos which connects our research to policy and practice.

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Executive summary

Background

- The Sustainable Futures programme, a careers education initiative led by WWF-UK in partnership with Villiers Park Educational Trust and Founders4Schools (WWF and Partners), aims to prepare students for a green economy by enhancing their understanding of sustainability and career pathways.
- The current evaluation assesses its impact from November 2022 to July 2024, focusing on its relevance, integration, effectiveness, and longevity, and provides recommendations for future development to align with the programme's and WWF's 2030 sustainability goals.
- The Sustainable Futures programme was received positively by schools and colleges as a strong introductory model for raising awareness of sustainable career pathways and encouraging engagement with sustainability.

Impact

- The programme significantly enhanced students' understanding of sustainability, the role of business in building a sustainable future, and career opportunities within the sustainability sector. In the post-programme survey, an increased knowledge of sustainability was reported by 95% of students (140 out of 147 respondents) who participated in the course.
- After the programme, students felt more optimistic about their ability to secure a job in sustainability, showing increased concern for the future of the planet and greater enthusiasm for working in the sustainability sector. Additionally, the programme increased young people's aspirations for participating in sustainable career pathways, with 88% (66 out of 75 respondents) reporting that a career talk positively influenced their perception of sustainability's role in future careers, while 89% (145 out of 163 respondents) stated that an insight day heightened their interest in pursuing a sustainability-related career. By comparing responses from the same individuals after the programme,

students significantly increased their understanding of career pathways in sustainability ($z=-7.094$, $p<0.001$) and more students felt it would be easy to secure a job in sustainability after the programme ($z=-4.336$, $p<0.001$).

- There was a significant behavioural shift amongst students after the programme. Many students not only took individual responsibility to make positive environmental impact ($z=-2.890$, $p=0.004$), but they also influenced family members, friends ($z=-3.254$, $p=0.001$) and a company or a politician ($z=-4.566$, $p<0.001$) to engage in environmentally beneficial activities.
- Among the three key elements of the programme—student course, career talk, and insight day—the insight day received the highest level of approval. 89% of respondents (147 out of 165 respondents) would recommend the insight day to friends, compared to 58% (84 out of 145 respondents) for the student course and 69% (53 out of 77 respondents) for the career talk. The students mentioned that seeing sustainability applied practically, becoming familiar with workplace culture, interactions with employees and the networking activity were very useful and provided an insight into careers post-education. Working alongside employees on real business sustainability tasks also emerged as a particularly popular activity, as reflected in the insight day surveys.
- The findings of this report suggest that the integration of both theoretical (student course) and practical (insight day) elements of the programme is the most effective approach to maximise the programme's overall impact. All 9 outcomes were, statistically, significantly improved ($p<0.05$) after the students participated in the student course and an insight day; but only 5 outcomes have seen a statistically significant improvement ($p<0.05$) after the students participated in either the student course or an insight day.
- Educators gave positive feedback on the Sustainable Futures programme, with all the participants recognising its importance in teaching students about sustainability in careers. The majority of them (80.6%, 25 out of 31 respondents) were likely to implement the programme in the next academic year, although time constraints and the need for additional staff were cited as key considerations.

- The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions achieved their goals, with educators reporting improved understanding of sustainability ($t(37) = -8.947, p < .001$) and increased confidence in related topics. Many found the labour market and green careers information particularly useful (79.5%, 35 out of 44 respondents).

Key recommendations

- WWF and Partners can enhance career talks by incorporating valuable labour market information on sustainable careers, creating a dedicated forum for entrepreneurs to expand the network of role models, simplifying the volunteer application process, and introducing an efficient feedback system to gather insights from business role models for ongoing improvements.
- Workplace experiences are widely considered the most impactful element of the Sustainable Futures programme. To further enhance this element, WWF and Partners can provide clear guidance and support for school and college staff, ensuring effective communication with businesses about expectations. Strengthening partnerships with senior leadership teams is crucial for the adoption of the programme in schools and colleges. Additionally, businesses would benefit from clearer guidance on their roles and responsibilities as providers of work experience, which would encourage greater involvement and enhance the overall impact of this valuable component of the programme.
- It is essential to strengthen coordination and communication between delivery partners to ensure the programme's benefits are consistently delivered to educators and stakeholders, improving the flexibility of its integration into extra-curricular activities and curriculum subjects.
- Emphasising the programme's alignment with broader career development frameworks, such as the Gatsby Benchmarks and CDI framework, is necessary to improve its visibility and effectiveness as part of a wider effort to prepare young people for sustainable careers and contribute to environmental goals.

- One of the key actions for future evaluations should be to introduce a registration system for the programme's open-access materials to track usage which will enable better assessment of the impact of the programme.

1. Introduction

The Sustainable Futures programme is a careers education initiative delivered by WWF, in partnership with Villiers Park Educational Trust and Founders4Schools. The programme was made possible through the generous support of the Evolution Education Trust, JLL and other supporters. Designed to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to thrive in a green economy, the programme has been implemented across schools and colleges since November 2022. The current evaluation aims to assess the impact of the programme during its initial delivery phase, from November 2022 until July 2024, and to inform future developments in alignment with the programmes' and WWF's 2030 sustainability goals.

This evaluation, commissioned by WWF, serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it seeks to assess the effectiveness of the programme in its current form, identifying the degree to which it has influenced participants' awareness of sustainability, career decision-making, and behaviour. Secondly, the evaluation will provide evidence-based recommendations to shape the programme's evolution for its next phase, ensuring it continues to contribute meaningfully to the 2030 sustainability agenda. The evaluation of the Sustainable Futures programme has focused on four key criteria: to assess its relevance and quality; integration; effectiveness; and longevity.

This evaluation builds on a foundation of key activities, including a comprehensive literature review that examined relevant UK and international research and policy literature on careers education and sustainability. It also incorporates secondary data analysis, using data collected by the Sustainable Futures programme's delivery partners to assess the effectiveness of the programme to date. Additionally, the evaluation critically reviewed the [Theory of Change](#) and the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework, assessing the programme's alignment with its 2030 goals and WWF's 2030 goals, evaluating whether current tools effectively measure the programme's impact.

The final report builds on these insights, shifting focus to the remaining areas of the programme's integration, effectiveness, and longevity. We will assess how well the programme integrates across different audiences and stakeholders, ensuring that it addresses the needs of young people, educators, and employers. Additionally, we will evaluate the programme's effectiveness in achieving its outcomes and examine how these results contribute to long-term goals. Finally, the report will explore the longevity of the programme, determining how well it can continue to benefit stakeholders beyond the current delivery phase, and provide recommendations for the next phase post-July 2024.

2. Background

The [Sustainable Futures programme](#) is a free educational initiative aimed at students aged 14 to 18, led by WWF in partnership with Villiers Park Educational Trust and Founders4Schools. WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) is a global environmental charity helping bring our world back to life. Villiers Park is a national social mobility charity committed to improving the life outcomes of young people from underrepresented backgrounds, and Founders4Schools is an edu-tech charity that helps educators improve the life chances of young people by connecting them to volunteer role models from the business world.

The programme provides educators and careers leaders with the tools and resources needed to empower students to build sustainable careers. Focused on preparing young people for the future green economy, Sustainable Futures equips students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to thrive in any career, while also contributing to a sustainable world.



Figure 1. Diagram of the three components of the Sustainable Futures programme: student course, career talks and insight days.

The student course is a key component of the Sustainable Futures Programme, aimed at equipping students aged 14 to 18 with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate an increasingly sustainability-focused world. Delivered by teachers, careers leaders, careers advisors, or facilitators, the course introduces students to the core principles of sustainability and its significance in both business and society. It encourages them to reflect on their own skills and values and how they can be applied to potential career pathways that align with sustainable practices. By linking sustainability to real-world opportunities, the course promotes informed decision-making, personal growth, and a deeper understanding of how students can contribute to a more sustainable future through their career choices. This integration of knowledge and self-reflection supports the broader objectives of the Sustainable Futures programme.

Another key feature of the programme is the career talks, which aim to bring the concepts of sustainability to life through engaging interactions with professionals from various industries. These talks provide students with first-hand insights into how sustainability is integrated into different roles and sectors, offering real-world examples that make the theoretical aspects of the course more tangible. The speakers, whether from environmental organisations or companies transitioning to more sustainable practices, share their experiences and demonstrate the practical application of sustainability in their work. These talks are delivered virtually or in person through the Founders4Schools platform, depending on the availability and preference of the school or college and volunteers.

As part of the programme, Founders4Schools also offers a range of work experience opportunities with a sustainability focus, providing students with hands-on opportunities to explore how sustainable practices are applied in real-world settings. These placements span various industries, from renewable energy to hospitality, allowing students to gain valuable insights into diverse sectors. The programme initially aimed to provide a variety of work experience opportunities focused on sustainability, including block placements, workplace shadowing, and extended placements across different sectors. However, it was soon evident that 1-day virtual or insight days were a more appropriate activity model for school classes. This

adjustment, facilitated by WWF and Founders4Schools with the support of corporate partners and volunteers, offered students structured opportunities to explore sustainable practices within a shorter, more practical timeframe. The shift allowed for greater student engagement while maintaining alignment with the programme's educational objectives.

From June 2022, when the student course pilot began, to July 2024, the programme has reached a wide range of students and educators. A total of 5,969 students accessed the sustainability course resources across the UK, providing them with materials on sustainability topics and 9,615 students engaged with career talks, learning about sustainable career paths. Of these, 548 students participated in sustainability-related experiences of the workplace. Additionally, 162 students from underrepresented backgrounds participated in an enhanced programme that combined all elements – the student course, career talks, and insight days.

In terms of engaging educators, 815 teachers and careers leaders accessed CPD training to support student engagement with sustainability. The delivery of these activities was supported by WWF and Partners, ensuring the programme's availability to schools and colleges during this period.

This report presents an evaluation of the Sustainable Futures programme following the initial 3-year pilot including one year of research and design and two years of implementation. It examines the programme's effectiveness in achieving its objectives, such as enhancing students' understanding of sustainability, supporting career development, and facilitating industry engagement through a combination of activities. The findings from this evaluation will guide future enhancements to ensure the programme continues to meet the needs of students, educators, and partners.

3. Methodology

This study employs a comprehensive mixed methods approach for evaluation, integrating several quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and case study visits to capture a holistic view of the programme's impact on young people, educators, and other stakeholder groups.

For students, pre- and post-programme surveys were designed and conducted to measure changes in their knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes resulting from the programme. These surveys aimed to assess the programme's impact on students over time, providing a before-and-after comparison.

For educators, an online survey was designed to explore several key areas such as the alignment and complementarity of the programme with existing careers education frameworks, educators' experiences in using the programme elements, the impacts on young people and organisations, participants' knowledge of the programme, and the extent to which consideration had been given to aligning programme outcomes with the institutional goals at schools and colleges. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to identify trends, correlations, and significant findings relevant to the programme's objectives.

Secondary data analysis was conducted to evaluate the data collected from participants in the CPD sessions. The data was collected through two surveys, administered before and after the CPD sessions, which were designed by the University of Derby evaluation team. The aim was to examine the role of CPD in enhancing the capabilities of educators involved in the programme.

All datasets were analysed using SPSS. To assess statistical differences between pre-survey and post-survey responses, paired sample t-tests, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests, and Chi-Square tests were conducted. A significance threshold (p-value) of 0.05 was applied to determine whether differences between groups were statistically significant. Results with p-values less than 0.05 indicate a statistically significant difference between the groups.

To collect qualitative data, we conducted eight school or college visits both in-person and online to gather data on how the programme is implemented. At each school or college, depending on their availability, we spoke with career leaders, curriculum teachers, careers advisers or the senior leadership team. Focus groups with students were held during these visits, both in-person and online, to gain a direct understanding of students' experiences with the programme. These sessions offered valuable insights into how the Sustainable Futures programme influences career aspirations and sustainability awareness, providing a well-rounded evaluation of its effectiveness and impact.

Ten stakeholder interviews were also conducted with a range of participants, including educators, senior leadership teams in academy trusts, business role model volunteers, workplace visit partners, and other relevant stakeholders. These interviews helped assess the level of awareness of the programme and its integration into careers education. The discussions also contributed to understanding how the programme supports career preparedness and sustainability goals, offering insights into its overall impact.

One factor to consider in this evaluation is that the programme does not maintain a comprehensive record of all users accessing the materials, as these are freely available without the need for registration. While this open-access approach promotes inclusivity and accessibility, it also results in partial data on the extent of engagement with the resources.

Another key consideration is that the partnership structure, involving multiple stakeholders, has introduced complexities in tracking usage, making it more difficult to gather comprehensive data and fully capture the programme's reach and impact. A more structured approach to tracking usage could provide valuable data for future evaluations, helping to better measure effectiveness while still maintaining the accessibility that is a key strength of the programme.

4. Student Experience

The following sections present a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the evaluation process, including insights from surveys, stakeholder interviews and case study visits to schools and colleges, which provide deeper context and examples of the Sustainable Futures programme's impact on students. Case study reports from the participating schools and colleges are incorporated within the main body of the report to highlight key examples of programme implementation and outcomes. For a more detailed analysis of each institution's engagement, readers are directed to the annex, which contains comprehensive case studies of eight schools, providing an in-depth exploration of their unique experiences and interactions with the programme.

To review the impact of the programme on students, we invited students who participated to complete the surveys before and after the programme (pre- and post-programme surveys). It aimed to measure changes in their knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviours resulting from the programme. These student surveys ran from April to July 2024. We received 105 responses from the pre-programme survey and 253 responses from the post-programme survey. The responses came from more than 12 secondary schools and colleges.

Demographic characteristics

Understanding the demographic profile of the students who took part in the survey is essential to contextualising the findings and assessing the programme's reach and inclusivity. By examining factors such as age, gender, socio-economic background, we can gain deeper insights into how different groups engaged with the programme and whether its objectives were met across a diverse student population. The following section provides an overview of the key demographic characteristics of the respondents.

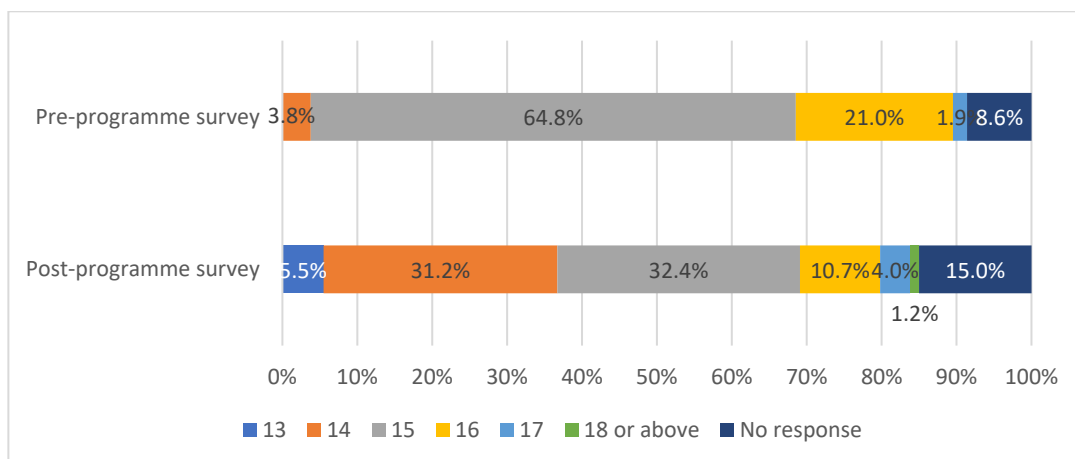


Figure 2. Respondent's age in pre-programme survey and post-programme survey (Pre-programme survey: 105 respondents, Post-programme survey: 253 respondents)

In the post-programme survey, out of 253 respondents, 63.6% (161 respondents) were aged 14 or 15.

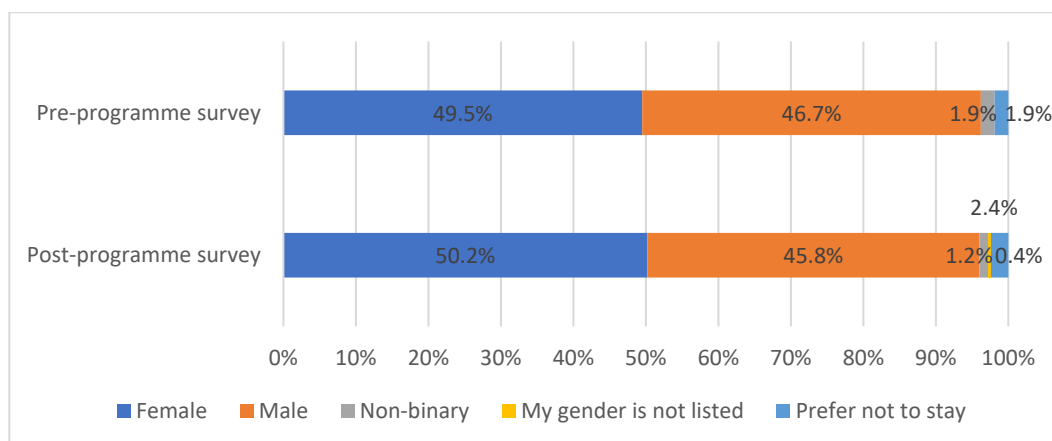


Figure 3. Respondent's gender in pre-programme survey and post-programme survey (Pre-programme survey: 105 respondents, post-programme survey: 253 respondents)

There was a slight predominance of female respondents over male respondents in the post-programme survey. Out of 253 respondents, 50.2% (127 respondents) were female, while 45.8% (116 respondents) were male.

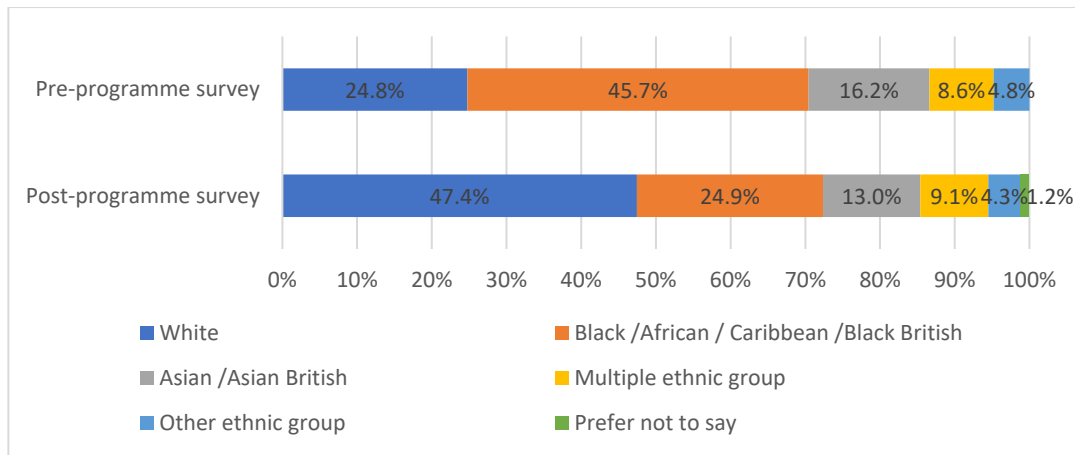


Figure 4. Respondent's ethnicity in pre-programme survey and post-programme survey (Pre-programme survey: 105 respondents, post-programme survey: 253 respondents)

In the post-programme survey, out of 253 respondents, more than half (51.4%, 130 respondents) of our sample came from minority ethnic backgrounds. It was ethnically diverse, with 24.9% of respondents (63 respondents) identifying as Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British, and 13% (33 respondents) identifying as Asian or Asian British.

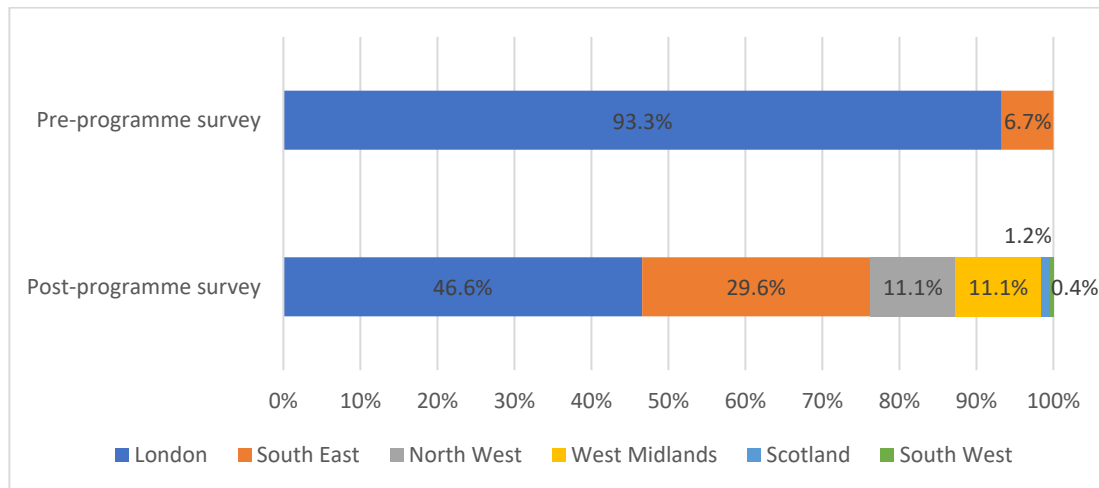


Figure 5. Respondent's region in pre-programme survey and post-programme survey (Pre-programme survey: 105 respondents, post-programme survey: 253 respondents)

In the post-programme survey, nearly half of the respondents were based in London. This was due to WWF running an enhanced programme in the 2023/24 academic year for a selection of academy schools based in London, working with students

from underrepresented groups (those eligible for free school meals and/or identify as from a minority ethnic background).

Student course

As a free careers programme, Sustainable Futures' core purpose is to address the urgent need to prepare young people for the future job market and help bring our world back to life. The student course forms the central component of the Sustainable Futures programme, providing students with foundational knowledge and skills related to sustainability.

As the programme's core element, the course introduces key concepts such as climate change, environmental responsibility, and sustainable career pathways. It combines both theoretical content and practical applications to ensure students can understand sustainability and explore ways to apply this knowledge in their personal and professional lives. Designed to be accessible to a diverse student cohort, the course aims to address various sustainability challenges, aligning with broader educational and environmental goals.

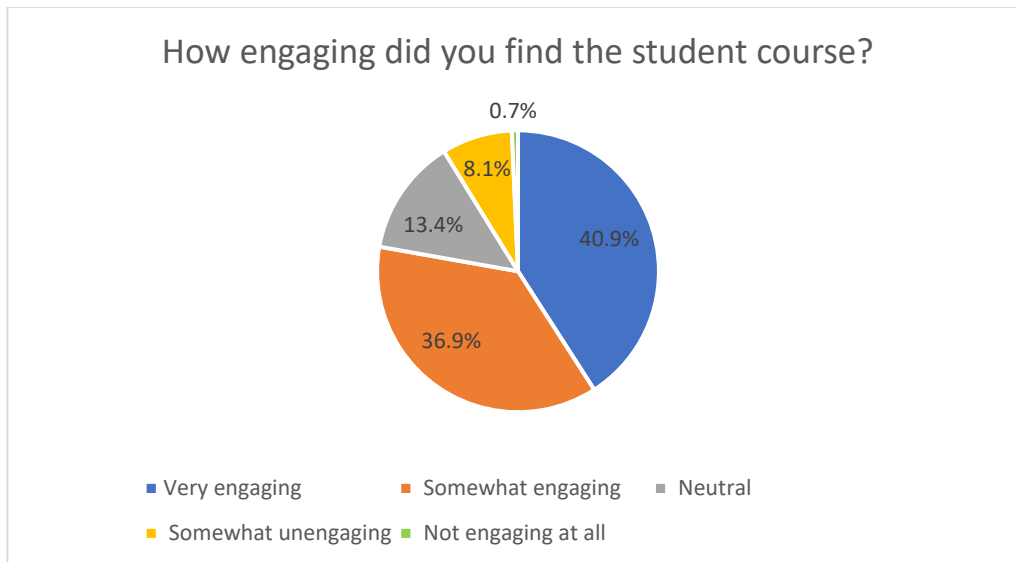


Figure 6. How engaging did you find the student course? (149 respondents)

The reception of the student course indicates a generally positive response, with 77.9% of respondents (112 out of 149) expressing that they found the course materials to be engaging. This suggests that, for a significant portion of participants,

the course succeeded in maintaining interest and relevance. However, the results also highlight potential for improvement, as a minority of students did not share the same level of engagement, pointing to areas where the course content or delivery could be further refined and become more engaging.

The general positive experience of the students is further supported by qualitative insights from the focus group discussions during the case study visits at schools and colleges. One student explained that their initial curiosity about sustainability motivated them to join the programme, despite having limited knowledge about what to expect. This experience not only expanded the student's knowledge but also deepened their engagement with sustainability, transforming their initial curiosity into a more informed perspective. The student noted:

"I've always been kind of interested in sustainability, but to be honest, I didn't really know what I was getting into when I signed up for the Sustainable Futures programme. I was curious about climate change and stuff like that [...] I thought it'd be a good chance to learn more. Once the course started, I realised there were a lot of things I didn't know much about. I learned about stuff I'd only thought about a little before. I didn't realise how some of these sustainable practices were actually happening out there in the real world."

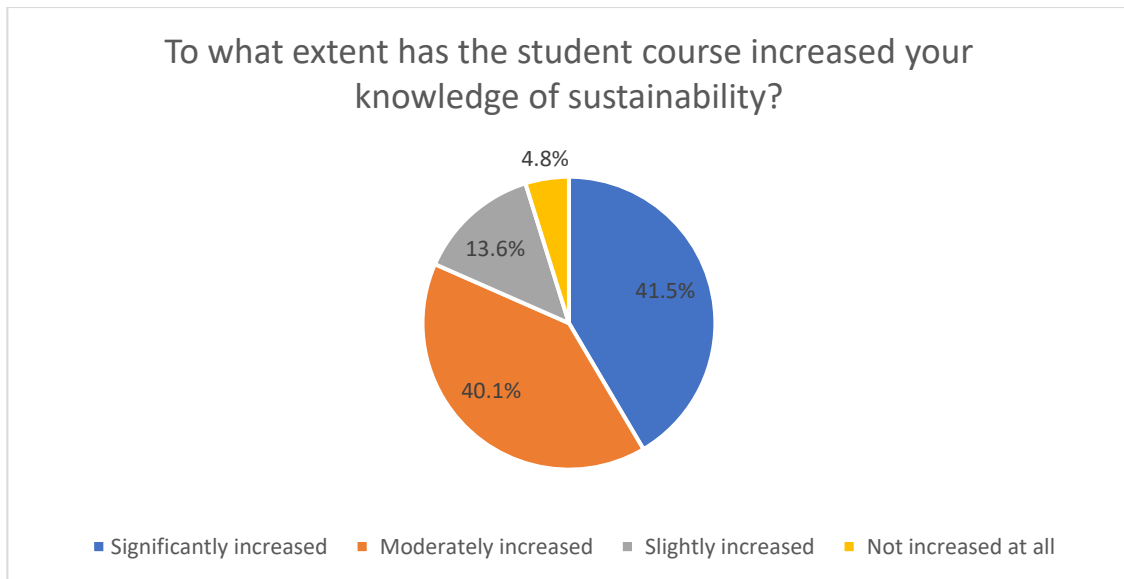


Figure 7. To what extent has the student course increased your knowledge of sustainability? (147 respondents)

Out of 147 respondents, nearly all respondents (95.2%, 140 respondents) indicated that the student course enhanced their understanding of sustainability. This suggests that the course was effective in contributing to participants' knowledge development in this important area.

In case study visits, there was consensus amongst the students in the focus group that the Sustainable Futures programme has improved their existing knowledge and understanding of sustainability:

“From documentaries, Geography classes, we sort of had a basic level of understanding of sustainability. Where I think we would all agree that through this course we saw our understanding of sustainability strengthened and are more confident in our understanding of what sustainability actually is.”

One student noted the personal impact on their learning and self-awareness about sustainable behaviours:

“The programme made me more aware of sustainability and how it works. Learning about different recycling methods and how CO2 is absorbed was really satisfying. It made me realise how important these practices are and inspired me to use them in my daily life. This new knowledge has changed the way I think about the environment.”

Students participating in the programme reported gaining new insights into significant environmental concepts that were previously unfamiliar to them. For example, several students described learning about concepts such as greenwashing, doughnut economics and the circular economy, which transformed their understanding and inspired them to incorporate sustainable practices into their daily routines, such as more mindful consumption and waste management:

“Like the circular economy, like I had no clue what that was. But I guess now you can kind of relate that to your everyday life to how things are made”.

And

“We learned a new word called 'Ikigai,' which means like finding your purpose in life. I thought it really impacted me because it got me thinking about what things in my life make me feel like I have a purpose. That was quite meaningful, and I also enjoyed the career talk.”

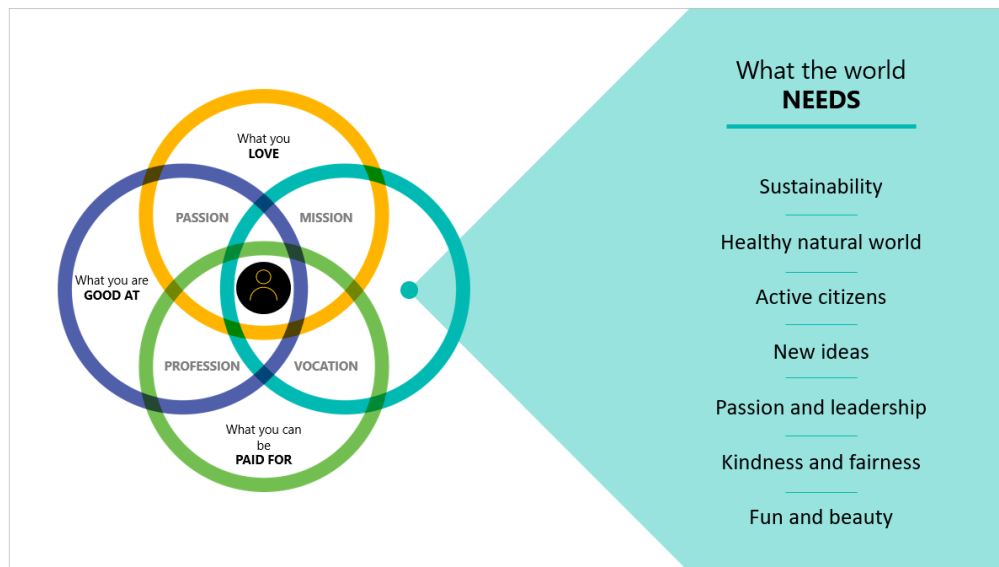


Figure 8. Diagram of 'ikigai', a resource from the student course.

Some of the students specifically highlighted their exposure to the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals through the student course, which not only educated them about the broader efforts towards environmental conservation but also the importance of collective and informed action in addressing global challenges across all three sustainability pillars:

“I wasn't really aware of the economic side of it all or even just linking with the UN 17 rights. I had no idea about that. So, I've now found myself integrating particular ideas about circular economy into my daily life”.



Villiers Park
Education of Trust
Founders Schools



Figure 9. Diagram of the UN 17 Sustainable Development goals, a resource used for the student course.

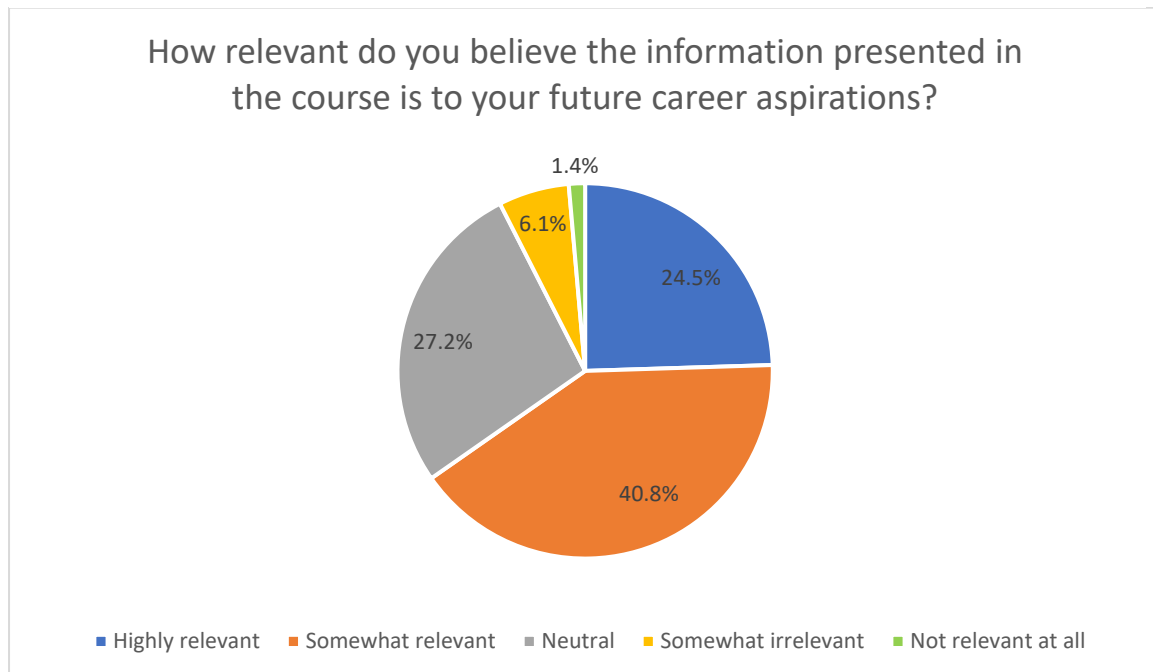


Figure 10. How relevant do you believe the information presented in the course is to your future career aspirations? (147 respondents)

Out of 147 students who responded to the post-survey programme, a majority (65.3%, 96 respondents) believed that the information presented in the course was

relevant to their future career aspiration which shows the perceived value of the course in aligning with the professional aspirations of many students.

The findings from the focus group also provide evidence that the Sustainable Futures programme has significantly influenced the career aspirations of its participants:

"When we were learning about how sustainability will impact our future and how we are the change for that future, it really made me think about how sustainability could make my life easier because there will be more job opportunities in the future. It got me considering what I need to do now to get to where I want to be."

Another student mentioned how their career trajectory was profoundly impacted; initially intent on pursuing a career in accounting, the student shifted their focus to becoming a climate adviser. This decision was directly influenced by the insights and knowledge acquired through the programme, which not only broadened their understanding of sustainability but also inspired a commitment to contribute to environmental solutions:

"Originally, I wanted to be an accountant, but I'm looking into like working in the climate advisory sector, so helping companies become net-zero. For example, I'm trying to get work experience at a company called xxx and they basically create net-zero plans for massive companies, for example Nestle".

This shows a deep engagement with the programme's content and a tangible application of the educational experience to real-world contexts, showing the programme's potential to reshape students' professional goals and prepare them for roles in emerging sectors that address critical global challenges.

The Sustainable Futures programme also encouraged students to explore sustainable practices within business, organisational values and different types of sustainability accreditations and certifications. This enabled students to consider how potential future employers approach sustainability within their practice. In the following quotes, the students reflected on working practices in several well-known organisations they had identified and how they are now more aware of sustainability

considerations across different sectors. Examples included the National Health Service (NHS) and how they dispose of their goods:

“The healthcare field and things like that, because obviously lots of things get thrown away for sanitation reasons. We were saying we probably wouldn't turn down a job or like not work in the NHS for example, simply because they're not sustainable. But it does lead you to question could things be done differently? [...] There are different ways of going about disposal of goods, so it would be much more [about] making a change in that field rather than avoiding it and working somewhere else”.

The students also reflected on their understanding of sustainability practices in different organisations and the value-based decision making when it comes to choosing their career path:

“I think Amazon's use of packages become a lot more prevalent now, especially during lockdown where everybody realised how big Amazon was and the power they have. And I do think there could be more sustainable ways to organise that whole system, but I don't feel comfortable working for a company like that, especially because of the way they treat their employees as well”.

It seems like discussing the issues surrounding sustainability in the workplace became an important value for students to consider when deciding who to work for, suggesting that the programme broadened their career thinking. The following quote presents a student's reflection on how companies' sustainable practice would influence their decision to be employed by them:

“I wouldn't want to join a company that dumps tonnes of waste everywhere and destroys everything. Companies like Apple, which produce a lot of e-waste... They use up a bunch of resources that end up being thrown away quickly. It made me more conscious about the kind of organisations I want to work for in the future. I want to be part of a company that is working towards reducing its environmental footprint.”

This highlights the development of critical thinking and ethical awareness that the programme aims to encourage in students' approach to their future careers. The programme wants students to not only learn about environmental issues but also to reflect on the ethical dimensions of business practices. The discomfort expressed by

a student regarding working for a certain company demonstrates a growing alignment with sustainable and ethical values, which the curriculum likely reinforces:

“Being part of the programme has definitely influenced my career thoughts. I’m still figuring things out but learning about sustainability and climate issues has made me consider jobs that match these interests. I now think more about how sustainable potential employers are and want to work for a company that cares about the climate. This programme has shown me different ways I can make a positive impact”.

The overall analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data indicates that the Sustainable Futures programme has made significant progress in achieving several of its 2024 outcomes. More schools are integrating sustainability into their careers provision, and there is a rise in young people's aspirations to pursue sustainable early career pathways. This suggests that the programme is succeeding in its goal to cultivate informed, conscientious students who are prepared to make ethical decisions in their future careers.

Although still in the early stages of the project, the programme is beginning to show effectiveness in aligning with the [Theory of Change](#) outcomes by encouraging an understanding in students that individual and corporate actions significantly impact the environment and society. Such insights are essential for developing future employees who can advocate for and implement sustainable changes in various sectors, including the corporate world.

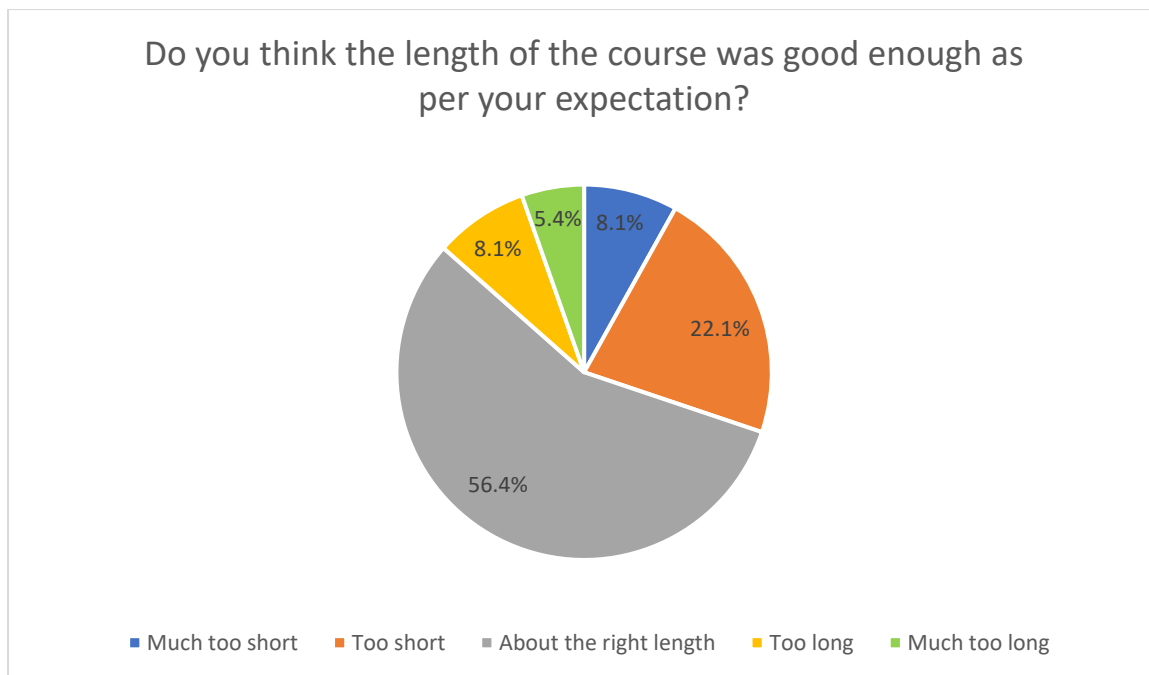


Figure 11. Do you think the length of the course was good enough as per your expectation? (149 respondents)

Out of 149 students who completed the survey after taking part in the student course, more than half of the respondents (56.4%, 84 respondents) reported that the course was about the right length. However, a notable proportion, 30.2% (45 respondents), indicated that the course was either too short or significantly too short. This feedback suggests that while many participants were satisfied with the course duration, a considerable number would have preferred more time for engagement or content.

Some students were interested to see more depth and breadth within the Sustainable Futures programme's student course. For example, one of the students in a focus group suggested a reduction in the quantity of the content, to allow for detailed study of a smaller number of topics:

“There could be fewer topics but more in-depth coverage of each. The doughnut economics section in particular is a big topic, and we only scratched the surface. It’s quite hard to remember exactly what we covered because it was so quick. The titles of the units all kind of blurred together since many of them were 'sustainable this' and 'sustainable that.' It would be more effective if we could spend more time on fewer, bigger topics to really understand them.”

Some students suggested that the programme and teaching of sustainability should be embedded further within the subject curriculum of their school or college:

“Maybe even it being a compulsory part of the curriculum for Geography or maybe other subjects because it [sustainability and the Sustainable Futures Programme] is definitely something people should be aware of. Questioning what they are doing on a daily basis.”

Students also highlighted the value of incorporating more practical activities into the student course, suggesting that hands-on experiences would deepen their understanding of the concepts taught in the classroom. They believed that learning about sustainability in real-world environmental settings and engaging directly with nature would significantly enrich their learning experience, making the programme more impactful by connecting theoretical knowledge with practical application:

“Everyone loves the beauty of nature, and adding more nature-based activities to the programme would make it more fun and engaging. If we don't take care of the environment, beautiful gardens and landscapes won't survive, which affects everyone. By focusing on sustainability now, we can make sure we have a beautiful and sustainable future. Bringing in practical, nature-focused activities will help participants see how sustainability works in real life and why it matters.”

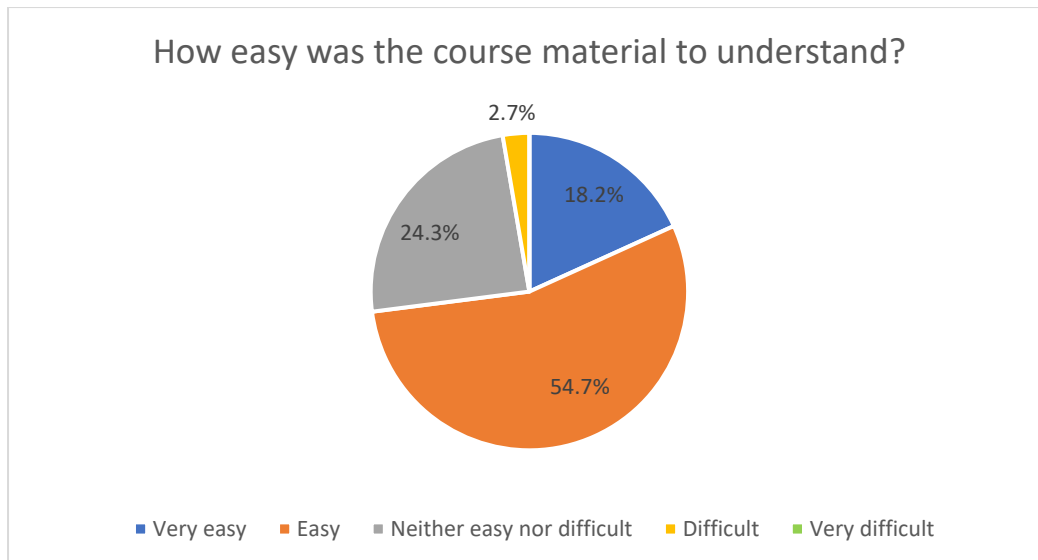


Figure 12. How easy was the course material to understand? (148 respondents)

Out of 148 students completing the student course, the majority of respondents 73.3% (108 respondents) reported that the course material was either very easy or easy to comprehend. This indicates that the content was generally accessible and well-structured, allowing participants to engage with the material without significant difficulty.

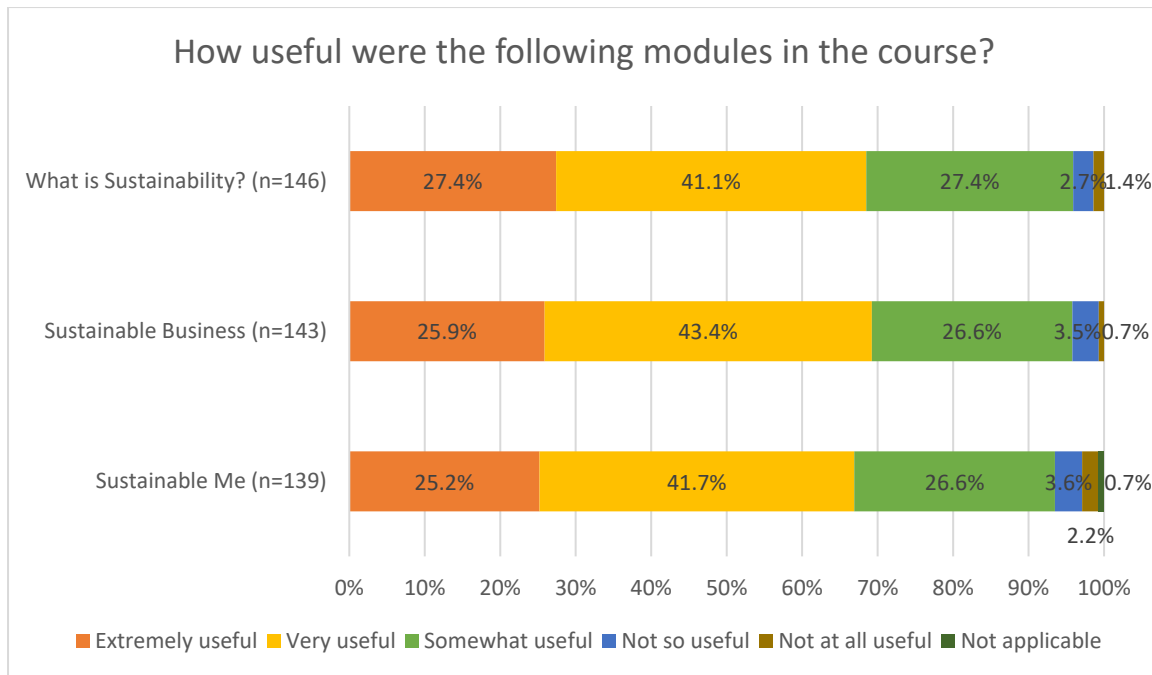


Figure 13. How useful were the following modules in the course? (139-146 respondents)

Nearly all respondents indicated that the modules within the course were useful. Specifically, 95.9% (140 out of 146 respondents) found the "What is Sustainability" module valuable, 95.8% (137 out of 143 respondents) rated the "Sustainable Business" module highly, and 93.5% (130 out of 139 respondents) considered the "Sustainable Me" module to be beneficial which suggests a consistently positive assessment of the course's content across various topics.

During case study visits and conversations with students, several recommendations emerged directly from the participants in order to enhance the quality of the student course. Students suggested offering more opportunities for "independent research tasks," allowing them to explore topics of personal interest in greater depth. They also expressed a desire for continued access to resources after completing the course, such as "additional materials on the WWF website and links to local sustainability projects like beach clean-ups."

These suggestions indicate areas where the programme could be enhanced to better support ongoing engagement and learning and potentially improve the overall impact and effectiveness of the student course.

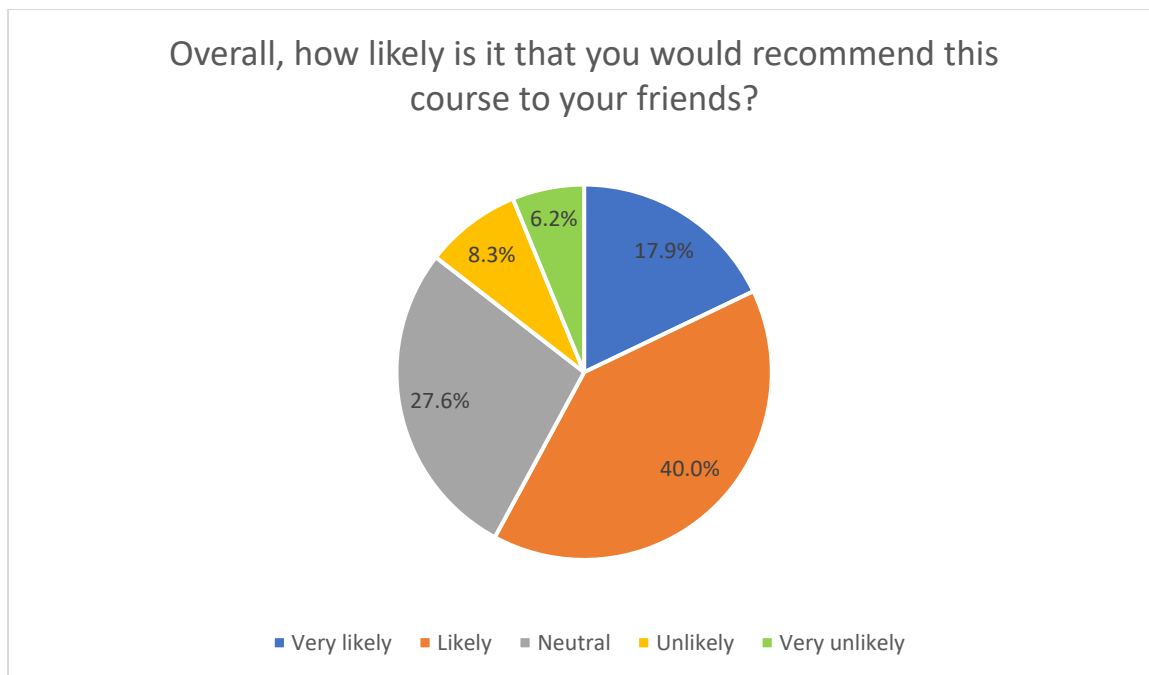


Figure 14. Overall, how likely is it that you would recommend this course to your friends? (145 respondents)

Peer recommendations play a crucial role in spreading the programme’s message and encouraging greater engagement amongst students. When students feel inspired and motivated by a course, they are more likely to share their positive experiences with their peers, helping to amplify the programme’s impact. Out of 145 students who participated in the post-course survey, more than half (57.9%, or 84 respondents) indicated they would very likely or likely recommend the course to their friends.

Students in focus groups were generally enthusiastic about recommending the programme to their peers. One student remarked that they had shared their experience with friends, emphasising that the programme was not just about enhancing your CV but about gaining critical knowledge and skills that are relevant for the future:

“I talked to my friends about the programme and told them it was really interesting. It’s not just about building your CV—it’s about learning things that are important for the future. I would definitely recommend it to anyone who has the chance to take part”.

A significant outcome of the programme was its ability to empower students to become advocates for sustainability within their own personal networks. The knowledge gained during the course inspired many participants to share what they had learned with family and friends, encouraging others to adopt sustainable practices. This peer-led approach can help with the broader impact of the programme, as students actively took on the role of educators, extending the programme's reach beyond the classroom. One student articulated this by saying:

"I've tried to share what I learned about sustainability with my family and friends. For example, I talked to my family about the impact of our carbon footprint and what we could do to reduce it."

And

"I'd totally recommend this programme to my friends. It's super helpful for anyone who doesn't know much about sustainability but wants to learn more. It raises awareness and shows how you can actually make a difference. It is a way to see how sustainability works in real life."

Many students mentioned that they felt motivated to share what they had learned, sparking conversations at home about environmental responsibility and sustainable practices. One student highlighted this, stating:

"I talked to my mum about the programme and told her it was really good. I'd definitely recommend it to my friends. I think it's important for people to know more about the world and how their actions affect it. Hopefully, it will change how they think about what they're doing and how it impacts the environment".

As well as their personal networks, students were enthusiastic about sharing their learning with their teachers, and influencing change in their respective school or college:

"After the Sustainable Futures programme, we met with our teachers to share our ideas about how to make the school more sustainable. We discussed small things like turning off lights and other actions that could help. It felt good that our ideas were taken seriously."

After the initial analysis of the data, we were interested in exploring whether any differences in student course feedback could be observed across gender and ethnic groups. In particular, we aimed to examine whether factors such as course length

and recommendations to others varied significantly between these groups, as this could provide valuable insights into the inclusivity and overall impact of the course on diverse student populations.

Following further analysis, we identified no significant gender effect in student course feedback. Comparing ethnic backgrounds, more than half of respondents from both white and non-white backgrounds felt the course was the right length (white background: 62.3%, 43 out of 69 respondents vs non-white background: 51.3%, 41 out of 80 respondents). However, a higher percentage of non-white respondents reported that the course length was too short (40.0%, 32 out of 80 respondents) compared to white respondents (18.8%, 13 out of 69 respondents). This difference was statistically significant ($X^2(2)=9.107$, $p=0.011$). Additionally, more non-white respondents (69.6%, 55 out of 79 respondents) would recommend the student course to their friends than white respondents (43.9%, 29 out of 66 respondents). This difference was also statistically significant ($X^2(2)=9.890$, $p=0.007$).

Similarly, when comparing regions, more than half of respondents from both London and outside-London areas felt the course was the right length (London: 53.8%, 49 out of 91 respondents vs outside-London: 60.3%, 35 out of 58 respondents). However, more respondents from London reported that the course length was too short (38.5%, 35 out of 91 respondents) compared to those from outside-London areas (17.2%, 10 out of 58 respondents). This difference was statistically significant ($X^2(2)=11.266$, $p=0.004$). Additionally, more respondents from London (70.5%, 62 out of 88 respondents) would recommend the student course to their friends compared to those from outside-London areas (38.6%, 22 out of 57 respondents). This difference was also statistically significant ($X^2(2)=14.407$, $p=0.001$).

In terms of age, respondents aged 15 or older were more likely to recommend the student course to their friends (70.2%, 59 out of 84 respondents) compared to respondents aged 13 or 14 (46.3%, 19 out of 41 respondents). This difference was statistically significant ($X^2(1)=6.798$, $p=0.033$).

A key finding from our analysis was the notable differences between respondents who participated in both the student course and the insight day compared to those

who only took part in the student course. A significantly higher percentage of respondents who attended both the student course and insight day found the course material easy to understand (82.3%, 51 out of 62 respondents), in contrast to those who only participated in the student course (66.3%, 57 out of 86 respondents), with this difference being statistically significant ($X^2(1)=4.664$, $p=0.031$). Additionally, those who attended both events were more likely to recommend the course to their friends (75.0%, 45 out of 60 respondents) compared to those who only participated in the student course (45.9%, 39 out of 85 respondents), and this difference was also statistically significant ($X^2(2)=12.244$, $p=0.002$).

Career talks

An important aspect of the Sustainable Futures programme's design is to bridge theoretical learning with real-world applications by facilitating meaningful encounters with professionals in different sectors. These career talks, whether virtual or in-person, provide students with direct insights into how sustainability is embedded in various industries. Hearing from employees of environmental organisations or companies transitioning to more sustainable practices helps students see the practical implications of the concepts covered in the course. The following data reflects the extent to which these career talks contributed to the overall programme experience.

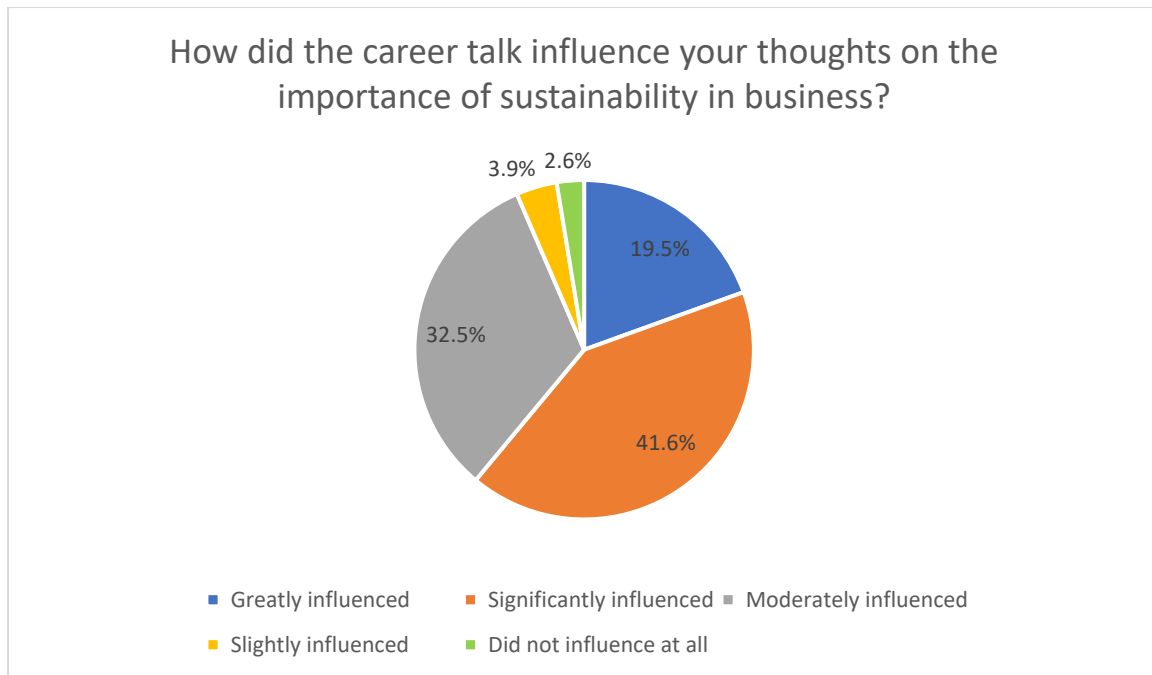


Figure 15. How did the career talk influence your thoughts on the importance of sustainability in business? (77 respondents)

Out of 77 students who had the experience of attending a career talk, nearly all of them (97.4%, 75 respondents) reported that the career talk influenced their thoughts on the importance of sustainability in business.

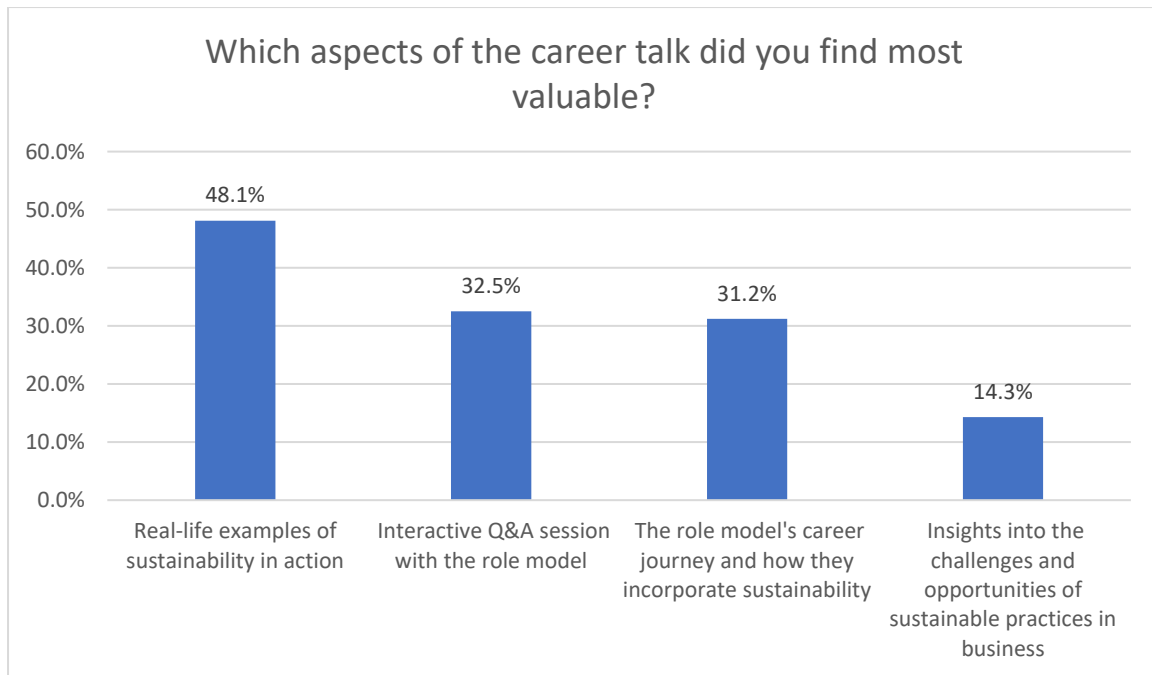


Figure 16. Which aspects of the career talk did you find most valuable? (77 respondents)

When asked about the most valuable aspects of the career talk, nearly half of the respondents identified ‘*real-life examples of sustainability in action*’ as the highlight (48.1%, 37 respondents). They found value in seeing how sustainability concepts were applied in professional settings, making the abstract ideas from the course more tangible and relevant to their future careers. “Interactive Q&A sessions with the role model” was the second most appreciated aspect (32.5%, 25 respondents), indicating that students valued the opportunity to directly engage with professionals and ask questions about their experiences and sustainability practices in the workplace. These results highlight the importance of integrating practical examples with direct engagement opportunities, as this approach not only enhances students' understanding of sustainability but also encourages deeper reflection on its application in real-world careers.

The qualitative data collected in the focus groups with students at schools and colleges also showed that this hands-on approach can help to make the concept of sustainability more achievable and relevant to the students' personal aspirations, making it clear that they could play a role in sustainable practices regardless of the career path they choose:

“Meeting people from different businesses was really helpful because they gave us ideas on what we could actually do in the future. It wasn’t just theory—it was practical advice we could use in our careers. It made everything feel more real.”

And

“I hadn’t thought much about sustainability in engineering before, but now I can see how it’s important. The business talks made me realise that sustainability can be a part of any career, including engineering, which I’m interested in”.

A majority of the students highly valued the opportunity to engage in conversation with a business role model. The face-to-face interaction enabled the students to build a connection with the employee and ask questions about their critical knowledge and experience of sustainability and careers. Learning about the business role model’s career journey was also an element that encouraged some of the students to consider their own career journeys and the opportunity to be a citizen for sustainable change:

“We were able to ask her [the business role model] questions. Personally, I was able to ask her about her journey and how she made it there and what made her make that decision to work in a sustainable programme. And that really made me think about my future as well, alongside what we were learning about, how sustainability will impact our future and how we are the change for the future.”

And

“She the business role model] talked about her experience, how she got into it and what she did at school and stuff. I thought it brought relativity to the subject and it kind of made it seem like it wasn’t so difficult. It kind of gave us insight into how we can also follow in our footsteps”.

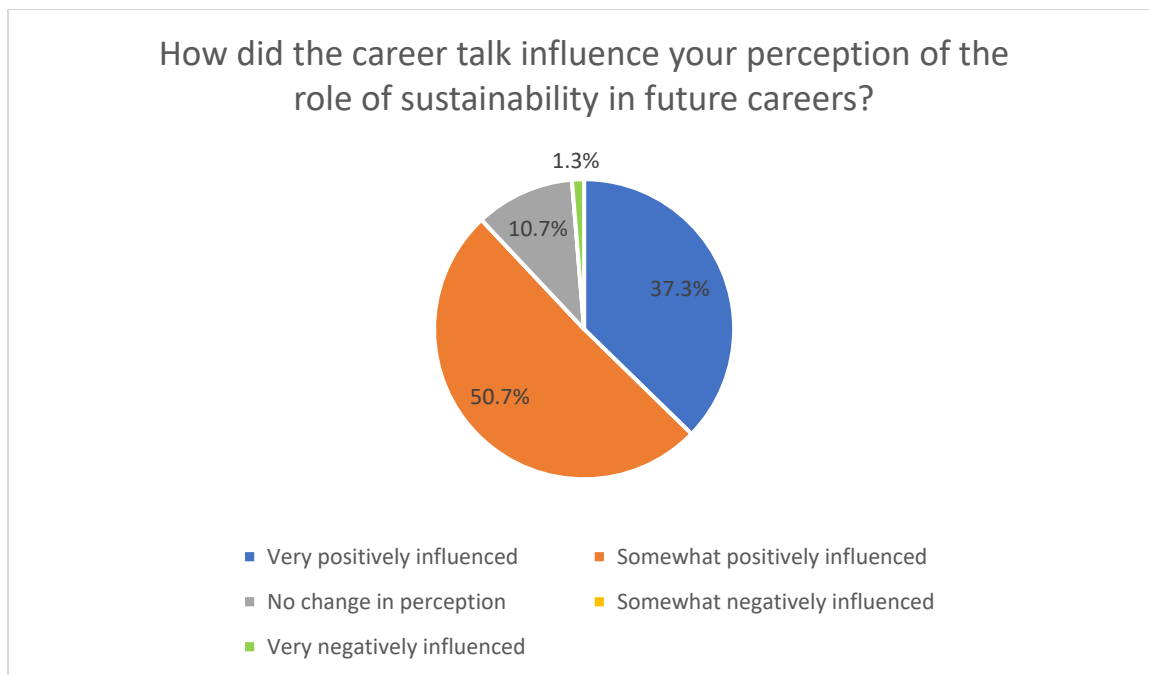


Figure 17. How did the career talk influence your perception of the role of sustainability in future careers? (75 respondents)

Out of 75 students, a significant majority of the respondents (88.0%, 66 respondents) reported that the career talk positively influenced their perception of the role of sustainability in their future careers.

“One of our Year 11 students wanted to be a mechanic, and he was talking about how now when he goes into being a mechanic, he wants to look at different ways to recycle the oil and how he will be thinking about that. Just by doing the course with us, in his head already, he’s thinking when he’s got a garage, what’s he going to do with all his oil? That shows the bigger idea—it’s not just about going into a sustainability-specific job but applying sustainable principles in any job”.

This student’s proactive approach exemplifies how the programme encourages students to think critically about their future roles and the impact they can have on the environment.

Another student described how their learning about ‘the circular economy’ could be applied to a career in journalism:

“I think for me, thinking about the circular economy, because you are distinguishing between careers which might not be particularly green and just thinking about how you might twist any jobs which you might be interested in. So, for example, you might be interested in journalism but thinking how you might change that to fit in with the circular economy. So, for example, reporting on new ecological developments and that kind of thing.”

This illustrates the programme's success in embedding sustainability principles in students' career aspirations, showing that sustainability can be integrated into any career, beyond traditionally green jobs.

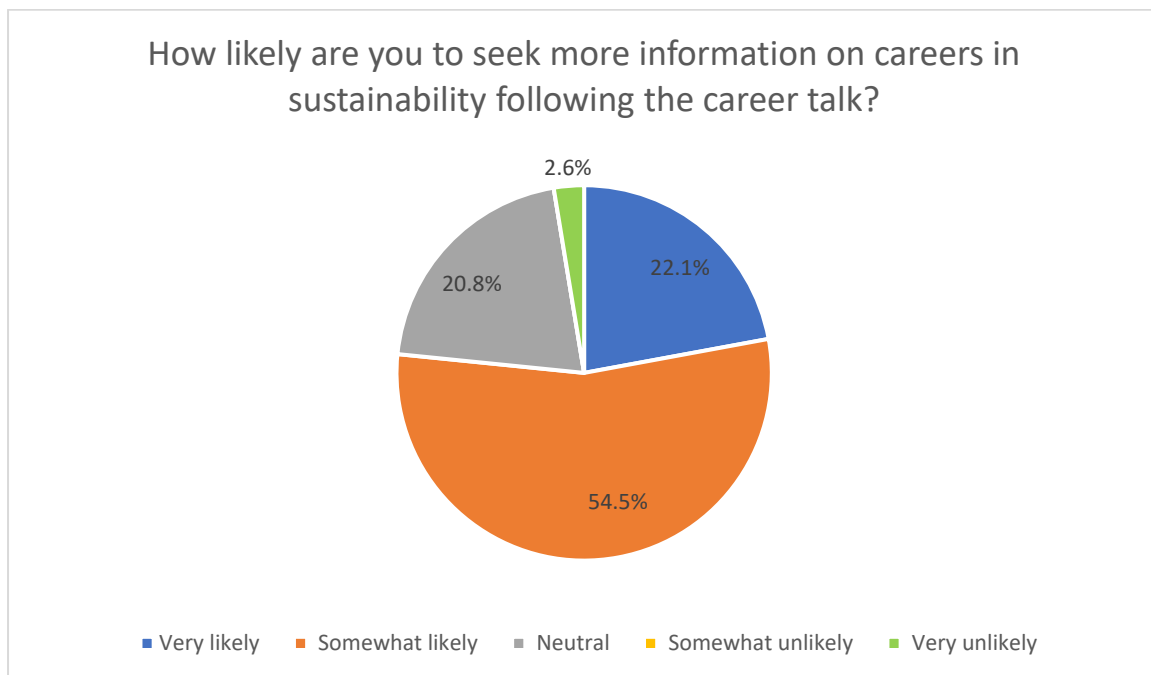


Figure 18. How likely are you to seek more information on careers in sustainability following the career talk? (77 respondents)

Out of 77 students, most of them (76.6%, 59 respondents) reported that they would like to seek more information on careers in sustainability following the career talk.

The business role models who delivered the career talks have been successful in inspiring the students by sharing their personal and professional experiences. One student recounted their experience of a career talk and the motivation that they gained from this significant encounter:

“A particular speaker stood out to me because her story was a lot like mine. She talked about not knowing what career she wanted, but her love for geography and the environment led her to great opportunities. Her talk about climate change and her unplanned career path really hit home for me. It was nice to see that you don't always have to follow a strict academic route to be successful.”

This shows the importance of relatable role models in illustrating the diverse career pathways available within the sustainability framework. The narrative of a successful professional who navigated an unplanned career path resonates with students, demonstrating that passion and interest in environmental issues can lead to rewarding opportunities, even without a conventional academic trajectory.

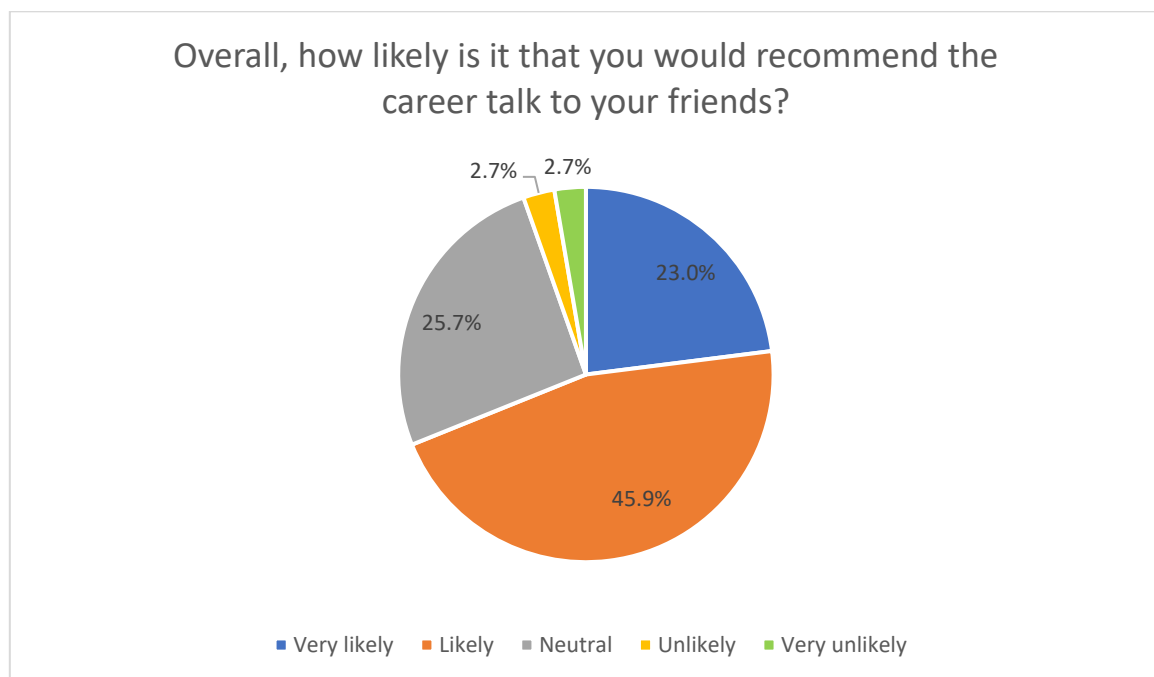


Figure 19. Overall, how likely is it that you would recommend the career talk to your friends? (77 respondents)

Out of 77 respondents, more than two-thirds of the respondents (68.8%, 53 respondents) would recommend the career talk to their friends.

Due to the limited sample size of respondents providing feedback on the career talks, we can only offer comparisons based on gender, ethnicity, and whether respondents participated in the entire programme or just the career talks. There were no significant differences across these areas, except in the perception of the most

valuable aspect of the career talks, specifically the "Interactive Q&A session with the role model," in terms of gender ($X^2(1)=4.189$, $p=0.041$). A higher proportion of male respondents (41.7%, 15 out of 36 respondents) viewed the "Interactive Q&A session with the role model" as the most valuable aspect compared to female respondents (19.4%, 7 out of 36 respondents).

Insight days

As a key component of the Sustainable Futures programme, insight days provided students with a unique opportunity to visit workplaces and directly interact with employees, gaining first-hand experience of how sustainability is integrated into professional environments. These visits allowed students to explore various industries and observe sustainable practices in action, offering practical insights that go beyond classroom learning. Students work alongside employees on real sustainability tasks and present their solutions, participate in networking with a range of employees and meet senior leaders within the business.

During these visits, students engaged with employees from different sectors who shared how sustainability influences their daily work, decision-making processes, and long-term business strategies. This direct interaction helped students understand the real-world challenges and opportunities associated with implementing sustainable practices within diverse industries:

"It was really good when we went to JLL and saw the workspace and how they work with sustainability and stuff. I thought it was really interesting, and I think it definitely made us all think about our jobs in the future".

And

"There was a lot more kind of focusing on what are green careers and that was what the students found interesting because you think about green careers, they think environmental officer or sustainability officer, but they didn't think about, you know, all the different legal financial positions".

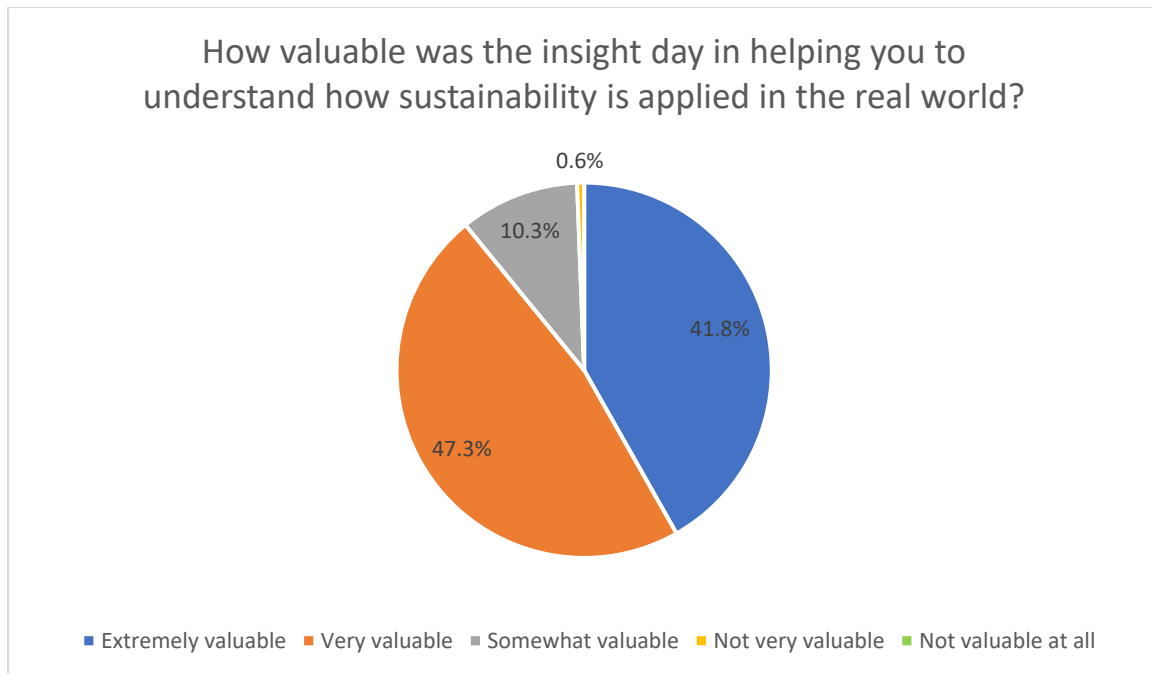


Figure 20. How valuable was the insight day in helping you to understand how sustainability is applied in the real world? (165 respondents)

Nearly all the students who participated in the insight days and responded to the survey (99.4%, 164 out of 165 respondents) reported that the experience was valuable in helping them understand how sustainability is applied in real-world settings. This feedback shows the success of the insight day in providing students with practical insights into sustainable practices within the workplace, enhancing their understanding of the role sustainability plays in various industries.

During the focus groups, students reflected on the practical learning they gained from an insight day at JLL and evidently valued the opportunity to participate in firsthand work experience:

“When we were at JLL and we did the project of designing our own office, it showed us how sustainable you can become even when designing your own kind of office. We worked as a group to collectively make ideas. And one of my ideas personally was to use AI to scan what you have, so that you can tell which bin to use, so that it can make for more efficient recycling, and it will make your office much cleaner and more sustainable.”

And

“One of the most impactful experiences during the programme was the visit to JLL. Seeing the actual workplace and being in the environment firsthand was really interesting. It wasn't just about the lectures; it was the real-world stuff that made it all make sense. Watching professionals work and seeing how they deal with sustainability every day was super cool.”

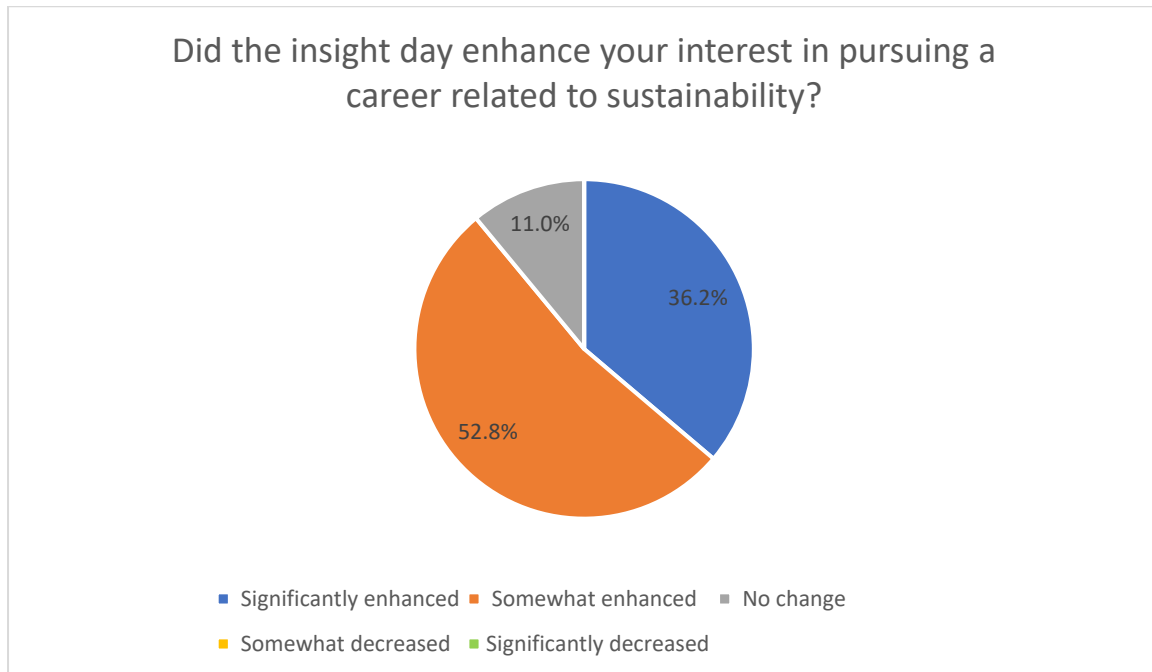


Figure 21. Did the insight day enhance your interest in pursuing a career related to sustainability? (163 respondents)

Similarly, the data shows that participating in the insight day had a strong influence on the students' future aspirations, as the majority (89.0% of 163 respondents) reported that it enhanced their interest in pursuing a career related to sustainability. Significantly, the insight days educated students about how sustainability can be applied to their preferential career choice, as well as all other career pathways:

“It kind of changed me because if I don't get my dream job [a game developer] I want to go into building and construction and then build like sustainable buildings. I can practise sustainability as a game developer too.”

And

“The workplace visit was one of the better activities. It was good to see what it’s actually like in an office, especially how they were trying to make recycling part of their culture. It made me think about how sustainability can be used in any job, not just specific careers.”

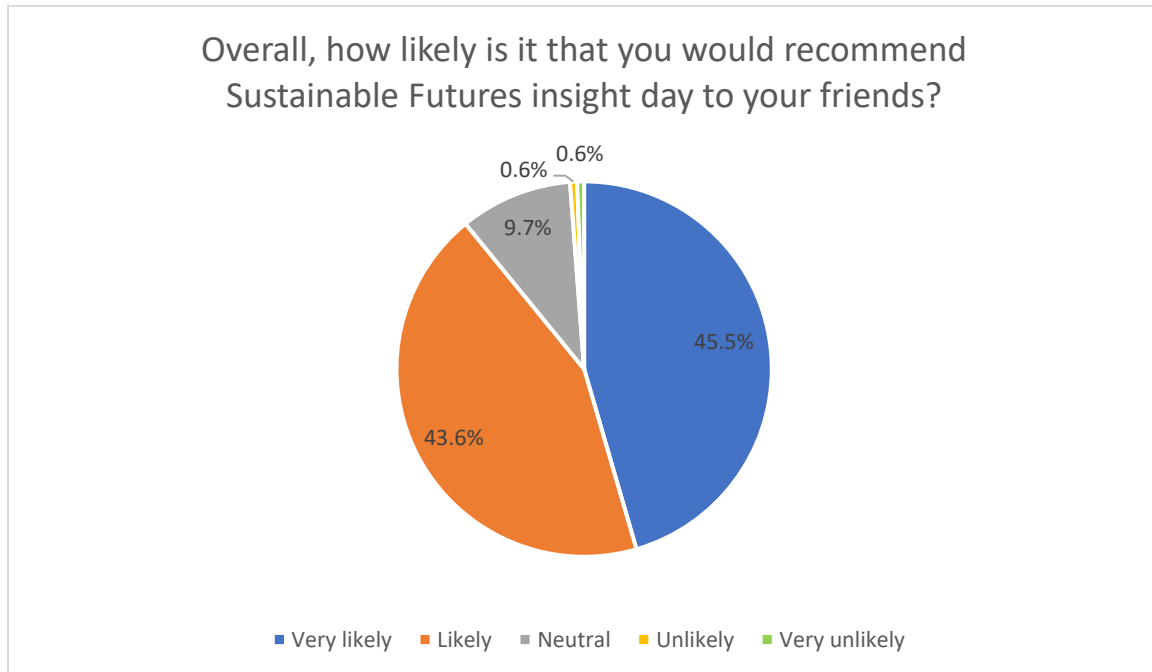


Figure 22. Overall, how likely is it that you would recommend Sustainable Futures insight day to your friends? (165 respondents)

Out of 165 respondents, the majority (89.1%, 147 respondents) indicated they would likely or very likely recommend the insight day to their friends.

The analysis revealed several significant differences in participant responses based on ethnicity, region, age, and event participation regarding their interest in sustainability and likelihood of recommending the insight day. Although, there was no significant gender effect in responses regarding the insight day, when comparing ethnic backgrounds, a higher percentage of non-white respondents reported that the insight day increased their interest in pursuing a career in sustainability (96.8%, 91 out of 94 respondents) compared to white respondents (78.8%, 52 out of 66 respondents). This difference was statistically significant ($X^2(1)=13.260$, $p<0.001$).

Similarly, when comparing regions, more respondents from London reported that the insight day heightened their interest in pursuing a career in sustainability (95.2%, 80 out of 84 respondents) compared to those from outside-London areas (82.3%, 65 out of 79 respondents). This difference was statistically significant ($X^2(1)=6.960$, $p=0.008$).

In terms of age, respondents aged 15 or older were more likely to recommend the insight day to their friends (94.7%, 89 out of 94 respondents) compared to respondents aged 13 or 14 (79.6%, 43 out of 54 respondents). This difference was statistically significant ($X^2(1)=8.058$, $p=0.005$).

There was also a notable difference between respondents who participated in both the student course and the insight day, and those who only participated in the insight day. A higher percentage of respondents who attended both the student course and the insight day were more likely to recommend the insight day to their friends (95.2%, 60 out of 63 respondents) compared to those who participated in the insight day only (85.3%, 87 out of 102 respondents). This difference was statistically significant ($X^2(1)=3.962$, $p=0.047$).

Impact on student outcomes

To evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, we aimed to track changes in students' attitudes, understanding, and actions related to sustainability before and after their participation. By comparing individual responses across pre- and post-programme surveys, we were able to capture the possible shifts in their perception and behaviour.

A total of 88 participants completed all or part of the programme and were successfully paired across both pre- and post-programme surveys, allowing for a comparison of individual responses. This pairing enabled the tracking of changes in attitudes, understanding, and actions related to sustainability throughout their participation in the programme.

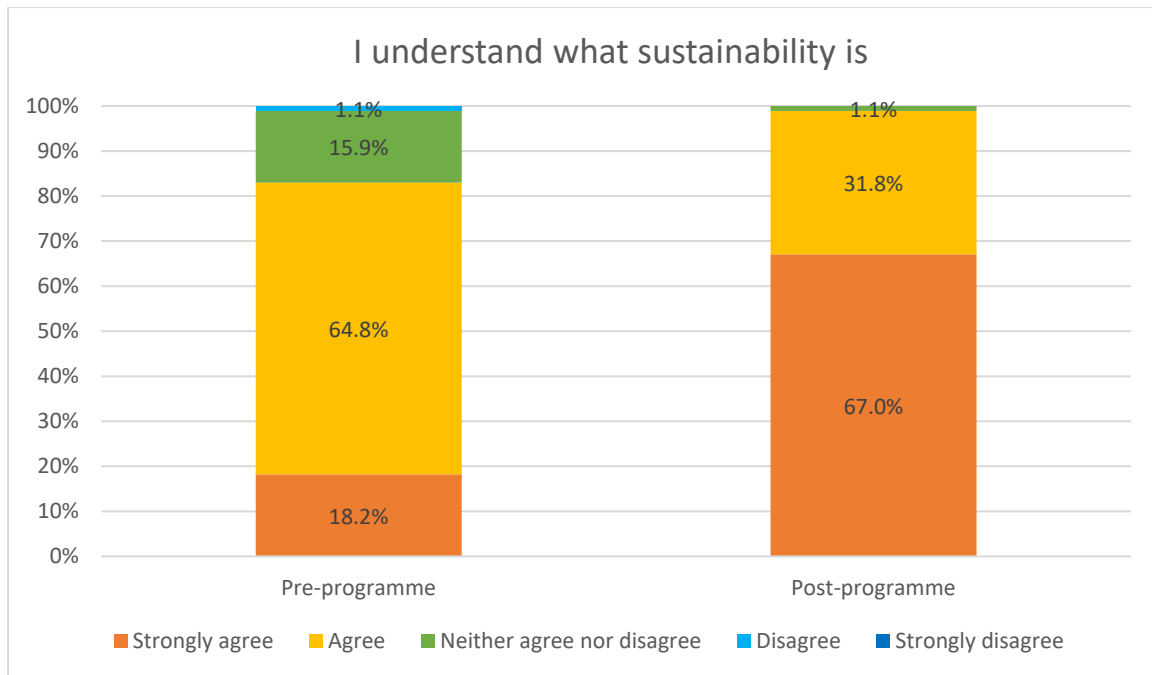


Figure 23. Agreement on the statement “I understand what sustainability is” (88 respondents)

After the programme, 98.9% of student respondents (87 out of 88 participants) agreed that they understood what sustainability was, compared to 83.0% (73 out of 88 participants) before the programme. When comparing the same individuals' responses before and after the programme, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed a significant improvement in students' understanding of sustainability after completing the programme ($z=-6.520$, $p<0.001$).

In addition to the quantitative data collected, several students who participated in the survey offered qualitative feedback, providing deeper insight into how the programme impacted their understanding and attitudes towards sustainability. One student noted a shift in their perspective, stating:

“Not gonna lie, before this I had no interest, or not being rude, even hated sustainability. It had nothing to do with me. The last 3 sessions have been so fun and engaging, and I've learnt so much.”

This illustrates how the content of the sessions changed the student's attitude from indifference, even resistance, to an appreciation of sustainability, which shows the

programme's ability to make the subject more accessible and enjoyable for participants.

Several students provided insightful feedback about the programme's influence on their career aspirations and personal development. One student expressed how the programme significantly shaped their future plans, stating, *“You inspired me heavily and I want to 100% pursue a sustainability career.”*

Students were motivated by the realisation that all careers can be sustainable, including their prospective career choice. For example, one student reflected on how they can embed sustainability into their career aspiration of becoming a pharmacist:

“I never really thought about sustainability when I decided to become a pharmacist. But after this programme, I get that you can make eco-friendly choices in any job. Like in the pharmaceutical industry, companies can cut down on their carbon emissions and recycle waste. I’d love to work for a company that cares about the environment and does its part to reduce its impact”.

Another participant emphasised the value of practical engagement, noting, *“The networking activity was really fun and gave me general insight on careers post education.”* This reflects how the programme's interactive components, such as networking, offered students a clearer understanding of potential career paths and opportunities within sustainability sectors.

The broader implications of sustainability in the workplace were also mentioned by some participants:

“The Sustainable Futures program has given me a great insight into the world of work and how that factors into sustainability. It has given me amazing ideas on how sustainability can influence anyone in any job.”

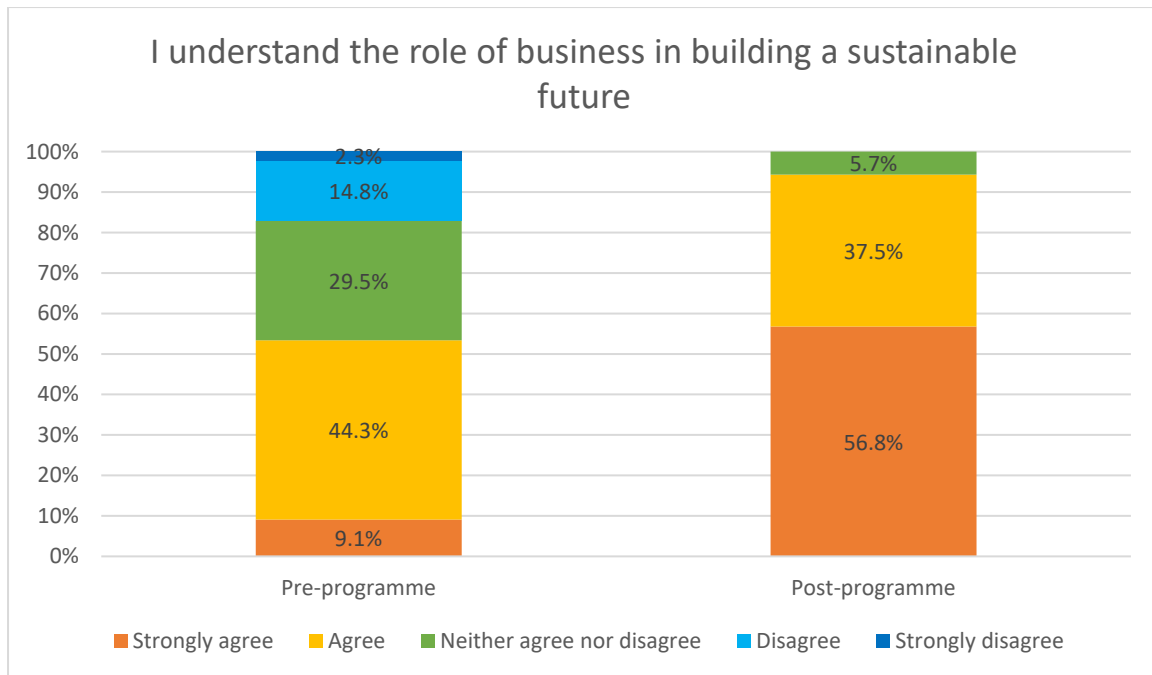


Figure 24. Agreement on the statement “I understand the role of business in building a sustainable future” (88 respondents)

There has been a significant increase in the number of respondents who agreed that they understood the role of business in building a sustainable future after the programme (94.3%, 83 out of 88 respondents), compared to the pre-programme respondents (53.4%, 47 out of 88 respondents).

When we compared the difference from the same individual across the surveys, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that students’ understanding on the role of business in building a sustainable future was significantly higher after they completed the programme ($z=-6.802$, $p<0.001$).

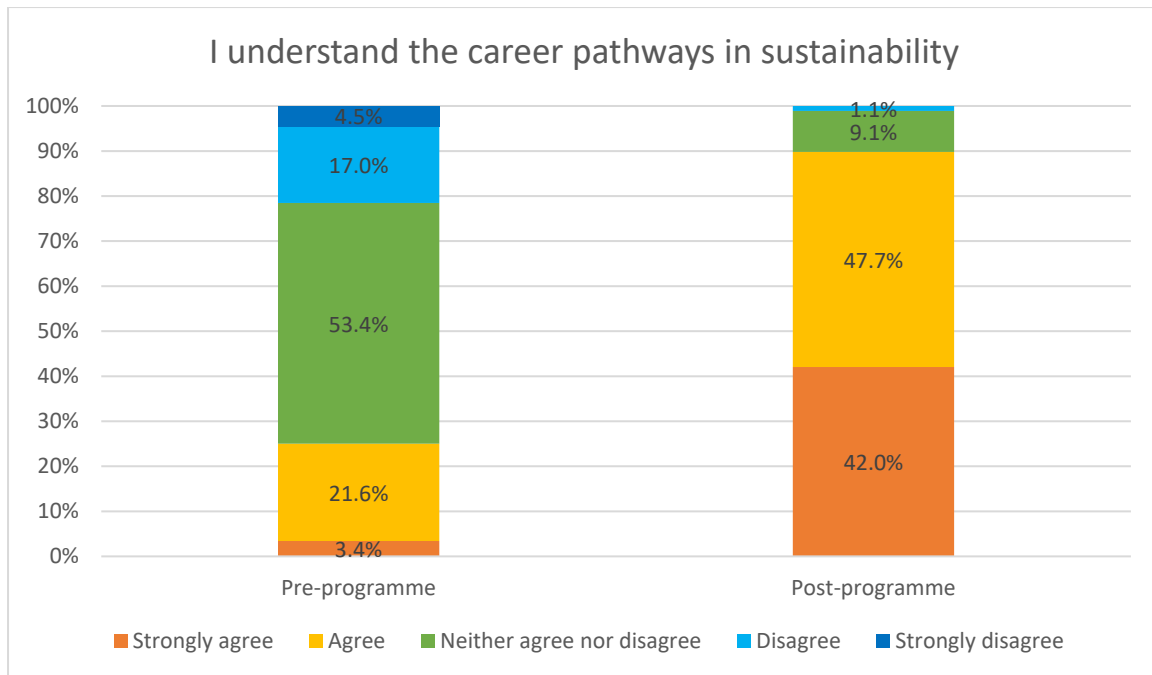


Figure 25. Agreement on the statement “I understand the career pathways in sustainability” (88 respondents)

A significantly higher proportion of student respondents reported that they understood the career pathways in sustainability after the programme (89.8%, 79 out of 88 respondents) compared to before the programme (25.0%, 22 out of 88 respondents).

Tracking individual responses across the surveys, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated a significant increase in students’ understanding of career pathways in sustainability after completing the programme ($z=-7.094$, $p<0.001$).

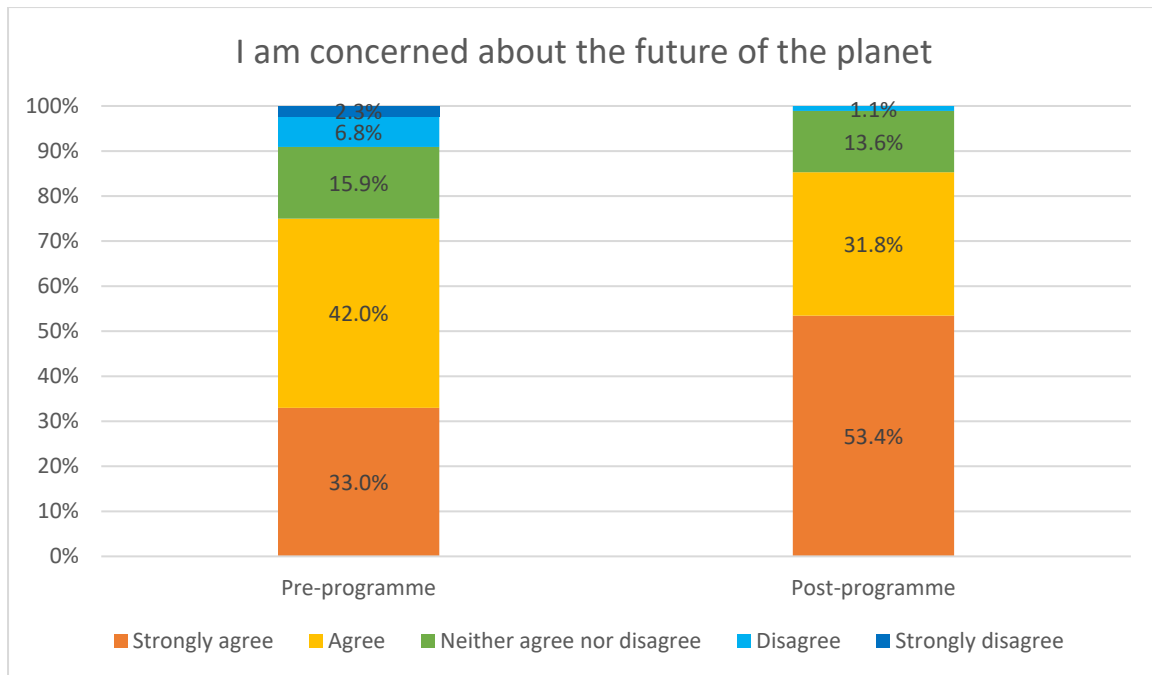


Figure 26. Agreement on the statement “I am concerned about the future of the planet” (88 respondents)

A greater number of student respondents reported being concerned about the future of the planet after the programme (85.2%, 75 out of 88 respondents) compared to the pre-programme survey (75.0%, 66 out of 88 respondents).

When we compared the difference from the same individual across the surveys, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the concern about the future of the planet was significantly higher after the programme ($z=-3.928$, $p<0.001$).

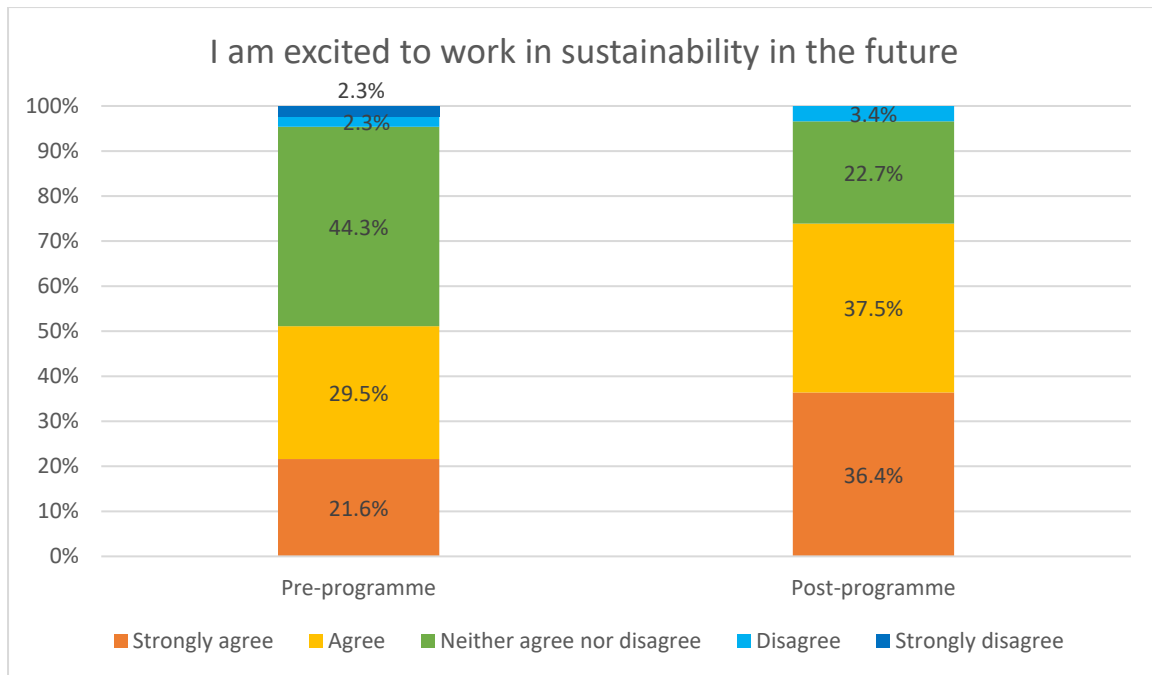


Figure 27. Agreement on the statement “I am excited to work in sustainability in the future” (88 respondents)

A larger proportion of student respondents expressed excitement about working in sustainability in the future after the programme (73.9%, 65 out of 88 respondents), compared to before their participation in the programme (51.1%, 45 out of 88 respondents).

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed a notable shift in attitudes, with significantly more student respondents expressing excitement about pursuing a career in sustainability following the programme ($z=-3.103$, $p=0.02$).

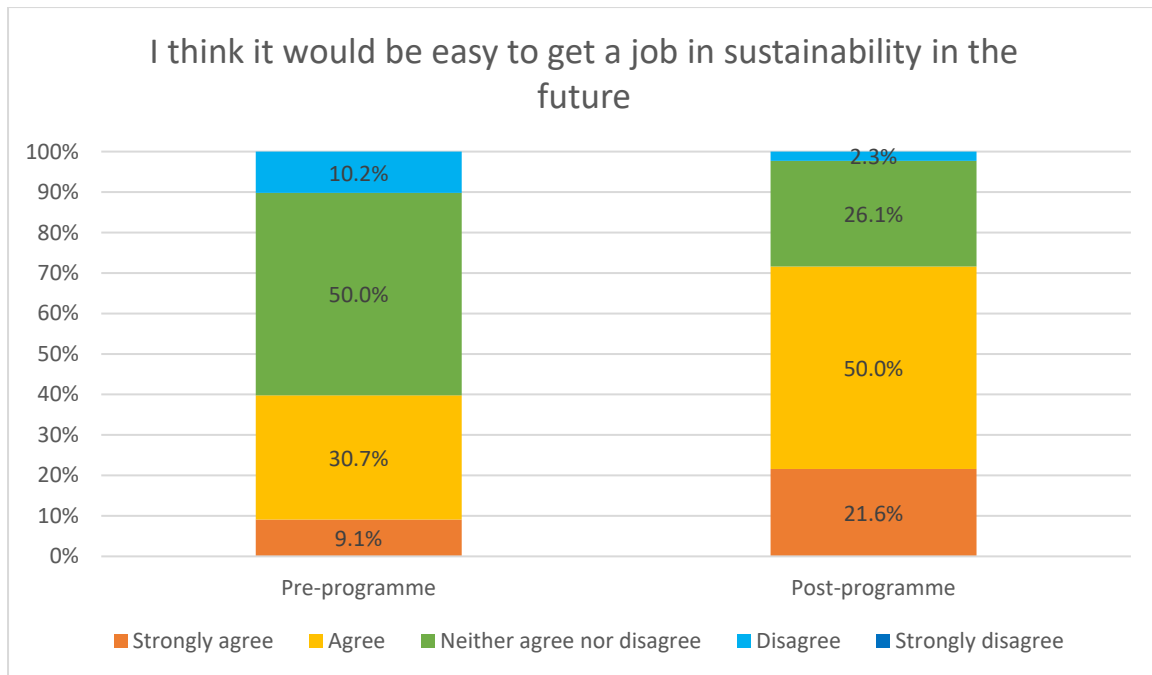


Figure 28. Agreement on the statement “I think it would be easy to get a job in sustainability in the future” (88 respondents)

A notable shift in confidence was observed amongst students, with 71.6% (63 out of 88 respondents) believing it would be easy to secure a job in sustainability after completing the programme, a significant increase from the 39.8% (35 out of 88 respondents) who felt the same prior to the programme.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed a significant difference between pre- and post-programme responses, indicating that after completing the programme, significantly more student respondents believed it would be easy to secure a job in sustainability ($z=-4.336$, $p<0.001$).

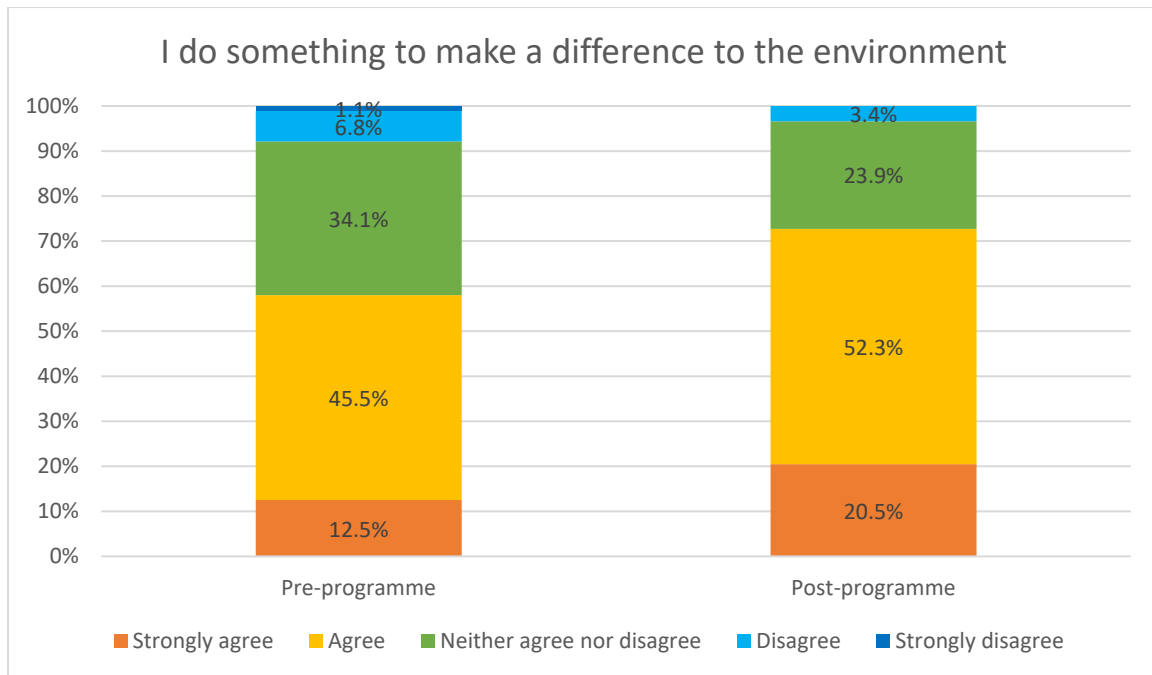


Figure 29. Agreement on the statement “I do something to make a difference to the environment” (88 respondents)

A higher percentage of student respondents reported taking action to make a difference to the environment after the programme (72.7%, 64 out of 88 respondents), compared to the 58.0% (51 out of 88 respondents) who had done so before the programme.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test, comparing individual responses across the surveys, demonstrated that more student respondents were likely to engage in activities that positively impacted the environment following the programme ($z=-2.890$, $p=0.004$).

Conversations with the students throughout the focus groups illustrate the likelihood that they would engage in sustainability activities within their school or college. On completion of the programme, one group of students revealed that they sought to enact concrete change in their school’s everyday practice, by reducing litter and making the school shop more sustainable:

“We came back from the programme with lots of ideas, especially about sustainability. We haven’t had time to put everything into practice yet because of GCSEs, but we’re thinking about changes like reducing litter and making our school shop more sustainable. The head teacher wants us to look at replacing plastic toys with more eco-friendly options, which is really exciting.”

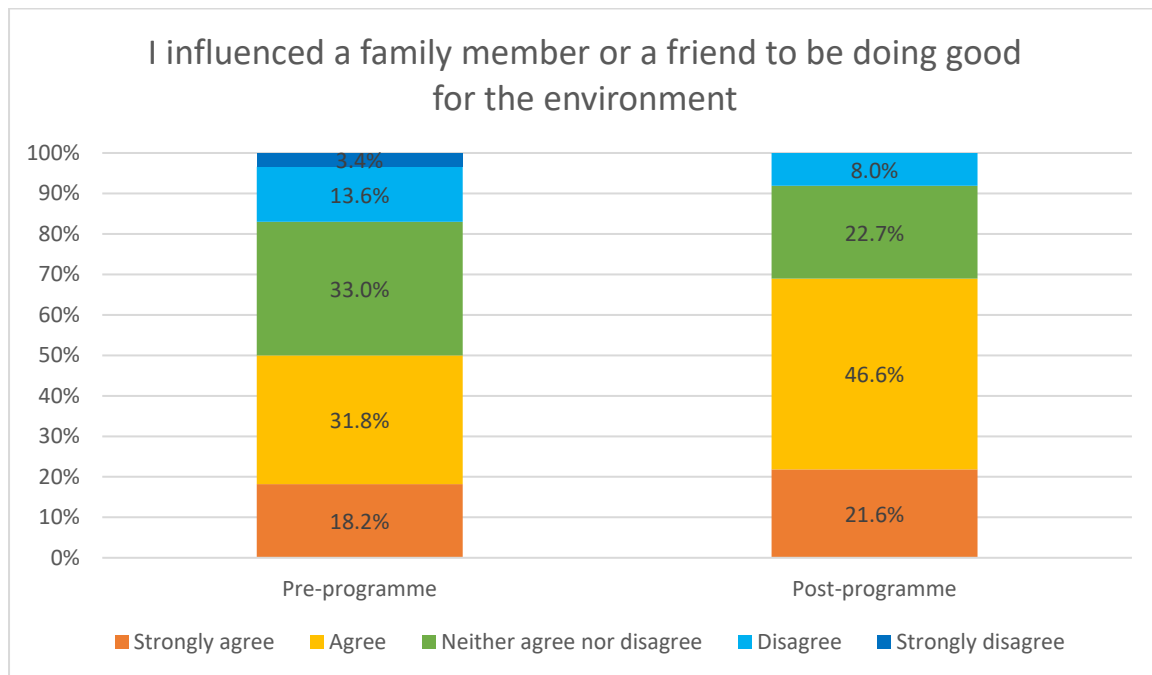


Figure 30. Agreement on the statement “I influenced a family member or a friend to be doing good for the environment” (88 respondents)

Following the programme, 68.2% of student respondents (60 out of 88) reported that they had influenced a family member or friend to take positive action for the environment, an increase from 50.0% (44 out of 88 respondents) prior to the programme.

A comparison of individual responses across the surveys, using a Wilcoxon signed-rank test, revealed that a greater number of student respondents were likely to influence a family member or friend to take positive environmental action after completing the programme ($z=-3.254$, $p=0.001$).

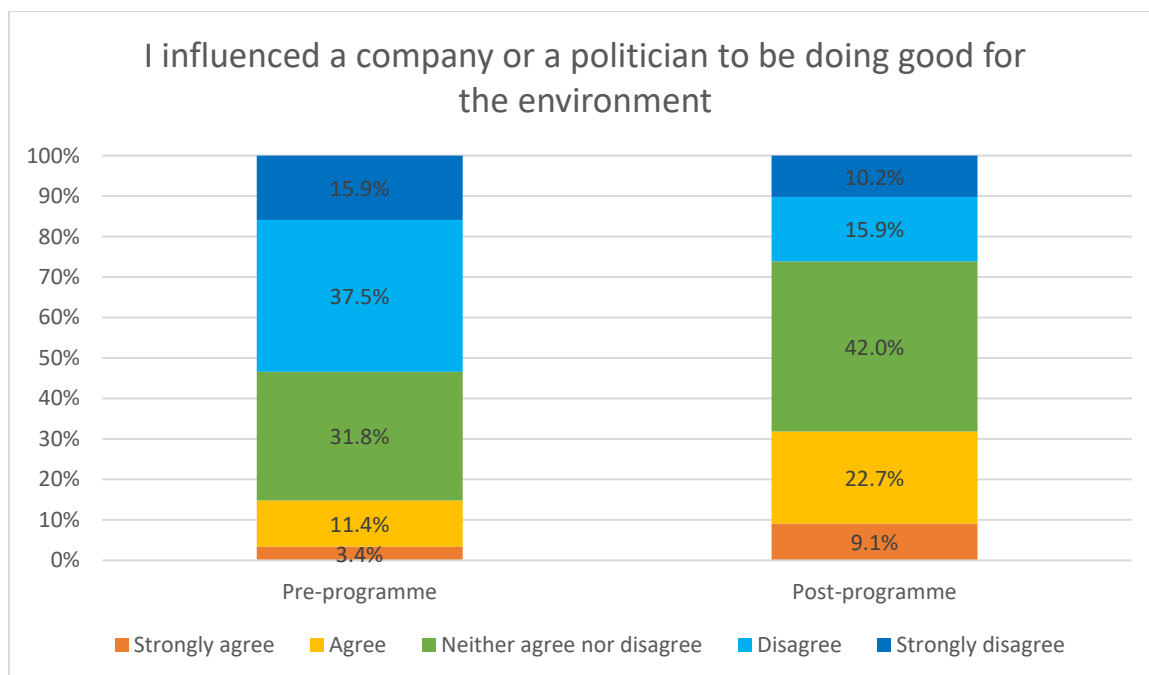


Figure 31. Agreement on the statement “I influenced a company or a politician to be doing good for the environment.”

After the programme, 31.8% of student respondents (28 out of 88) reported having influenced a company or politician to take positive environmental action, compared to 14.8% (13 out of 88) before the programme. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test, comparing individual responses across surveys, confirmed a significant increase in students influencing companies or politicians after completing the programme ($z = -4.566$, $p < 0.001$).

In general, all the outcomes were achieved after students completed the Sustainable Futures programme. The programme has increased not only young people's understanding of sustainability, but also their aspiration for participating in sustainable early careers pathways. In addition, young people not only did something to make a difference to the environment but also influenced family members, friends, companies or politicians to do good for the environment. They were more concerned about the future of the planet and were more excited to work in sustainability in the future. All these findings are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) when we compare the same individual before and after the programme.

	Statistically significant improvement on the following outcomes after the programme	
	Students participated in the student course and an insight day (n=62)	Students participated in either the student course or an insight day (n=26)
I understand what sustainability is.	z=-5.484, p<0.001	z=-3.557, p<0.001
I understand the role of business in building a sustainable future.	z=-5.740, p<0.001	z=-3.683, p<0.001
I understand the career pathways in sustainability.	z=-5.965, p<0.001	z=-3.946, p<0.001
I am concerned about the future of the planet.	z=-3.222, p<0.001	z=-2.266, p=0.023
I am excited to work in sustainability in the future.	z=-2.528, p=0.011	z=-1.924, p=0.054
I think it would be easy to get a job in sustainability in the future.	z=-4.517, p<0.001	z=-0.786, p=0.432
I do something to make a difference to the environment.	z=-4.590, p=0.013	z=-1.460, p=0.144
I influenced a family member or a friend to be doing good for the environment.	z=-2.973, p=0.003	z=-1.386, p=0.166
I influenced a company or a politician to be doing good for the environment.	z=-3.964, p<0.001	z=-2.299, p=0.022

Table 1. Outcomes of the programme by completion element

Note: The outcome which reveal a statistically significant improvements after the programme are highlighted in green. The outcome which does not reveal statistically significant improvements after the programme are highlighted in red.

Interestingly, when participants were divided into two groups—one that participated in both the student course and an insight day, and another that participated in only one of these elements—the results revealed that certain outcomes were not achieved by students who engaged with just one part of the programme. This suggests that the combination of theory (student course) and practice (insight day) is the most effective approach to ensuring a substantial impact on students.

Engaging underrepresented groups

Students from low-income backgrounds often have limited opportunities to engage with sustainability education, which negatively impacts their ability to explore future career paths in this growing sector. This disparity arises because schools in underfunded areas frequently lack the resources, time, or curriculum flexibility to prioritise sustainability-related subjects (The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation & Stockford, 2023; Department for Education, 2024). As a result, students from these backgrounds may miss out on key knowledge and skills that are increasingly important in the modern job market, particularly as industries shift towards greener practices.

The Sustainable Futures programme's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) principle ensures that there is a focus on engaging and promoting underrepresented groups across the programme and its activities. Villiers Park specifically engage with schools and colleges in underserved communities, working with them to embed Sustainable Futures within the school or college curriculum. To further support the programme's DE&I principle, as well as WWF's broader inclusion strategies, WWF implemented an enhanced version of the programme aimed at supporting young people from underrepresented groups.

The enhanced programme was developed in response to the underrepresentation of individuals from lower socio-economic and ethnically diverse backgrounds within the sustainability sector. Recognising this gap, WWF and its corporate partners sought to create a pathway for these students to engage more deeply with sustainability-related opportunities. Schools participating in the programme were able to select students who would benefit most from this additional support, provided they met at least one of the criteria: eligibility for free school meals or identification with one of the targeted ethnic groups.

Throughout the delivery of the enhanced programme, 162 students from these underrepresented groups participated, engaging in all three key programme activities facilitated by WWF and its corporate partners. This approach not only aimed to increase representation in the sustainability sector but also to ensure that young

people from diverse backgrounds were given the opportunity to explore sustainable career paths and develop essential skills for the future.

One of the educators who was interviewed observed that the presence and encounter with a business role model encouraged students from marginalised backgrounds that they can overcome such barriers in their career development:

“I think the business role model talk is really motivating for our students. A lot of them are from low-income backgrounds, specifically, free school meals. So, they found it really uplifting or interesting to hear. Like all these different career journeys.”

In communities where opportunities are often limited and aspirations can seem distant, the Sustainable Futures programme created a sense of inclusion for young people who might otherwise feel overlooked:

“It would make a real difference because some of these young people often come from backgrounds that aren't known for recycling or having much knowledge about sustainability. Many families don't know about these things, so that's why I'm really passionate about it. We're not talking about middle-class urban people who already know about this. We're dealing with a whole population of young people for whom sustainability will be [a] completely new concept, which excites me”.

As well as this, a senior leadership team member highlighted the importance of delivering the programme with sensitivity. It is important for educators of the programme to be mindful of the school or college's demographic and community, particularly students from underrepresented backgrounds:

“Our demographic is significantly disadvantaged [...] So, you need to be very mindful when you're in communication with your community, what's financially viable or at least to do things with sensitivity.”

Developed through the lens of a Possible Selves framework, utilised by Villiers Park in their core programmes, the Sustainable Futures programme provides young people from underrepresented groups the opportunity to place themselves within possible futures in sustainable industries or careers, and understand the benefits and barriers to them as individuals:

“Our students [are] more interested to have local jobs. Lots of young people here don't even consider leaving this area to find a job. Many of the students wouldn't even think about commuting into main Portsmouth for work. It's like there's a mental barrier, and they feel limited to staying within their immediate community. This lack of aspiration to look beyond their neighbourhood for opportunities is a significant challenge we need to address.”

Summary

Overall, the Sustainable Futures programme has achieved very positive outcomes in its engagement with the students. Almost 78% of respondents (112 out of 149) found the student course materials engaging, suggesting that the programme effectively maintains student interest.

Almost all the students (95.2% of respondents) reported that the course enhanced their understanding of sustainability, highlighting the programme's success in knowledge development. Regarding the respondents' level of knowledge, students significantly increased their understanding of sustainability ($z=-6.520$, $p<0.001$), the role of business in building a sustainable future ($z=-6.802$, $p<0.001$), and the career pathways in sustainability ($z=-7.094$, $p<0.001$) after they completed the student course, career talk and an insight day.

In relation to students' attitude levels, the programme increased young people's aspirations for participating in sustainable career pathways, with 88.0% of students (66 out of 75 respondents) reporting that the career talk influenced their perception of the role of sustainability in future careers and 89.0% of students (145 out of 163 respondents) reporting that the insight day enhanced their interest in pursuing a career related to sustainability. Additionally, by comparing responses from the same individuals after the programme, more students expressed excitement about working in sustainability in the future ($z=-3.103$, $p=0.02$). More students also felt it would be easy to secure a job in sustainability after the programme ($z=-4.336$, $p<0.001$).

There was significant improvement in students' behaviour levels after the programme. More student respondents not only did something to make a difference to the environment ($z=-2.890$, $p=0.004$), but also influenced family members, friends

($z=-3.254$, $p=0.001$), companies or politicians ($z=-4.566$, $p<0.001$) to be doing good for the environment.

Comparing the student course, career talk and insight day in the Sustainable Futures programme, more student respondents liked the insight day than the student course and career talk. 89.1% of students (147 out of 165 respondents) would recommend (very likely/likely) the insight day to their friends than that of 57.9% (84 out of 145 respondents) who would recommend the student course and 68.8% (53 out of 77 respondents) who would recommend the career talks. However, our findings suggest that the combination of theory (student course) and practice (insight day) is the most effective approach to ensure substantial impact of the programme on students.

5. Educators' Insight

Alongside gathering students' perceptions and experiences of the Sustainable Futures programme, it was equally important to capture the viewpoints of educators, as they are often the ones who can pioneer change within educational settings. Their views about the implementation of the programme offered crucial insights into how the programme aligns with their teaching goals and sustainability initiatives in their respective school or college. Additionally, understanding what educators found most helpful can inform WWF about how they can enhance the programme's ability to support them in integrating sustainability into their curricula.

Educators of the Sustainable Futures programme were mainly driven by a personal interest in sustainability to take on the responsibility to deliver the programme in their respective school or college. The freely accessible student course proved valuable for educators, offering them flexibility in how they delivered key concepts and topics surrounding sustainability and sustainable careers:

"I came across the Sustainable Futures programme while planning workshops for Key Stage 3 students, specifically to address green and sustainable careers. Since it was difficult to include career education in PSHE due to competing demands, I was given the opportunity to run off-timetable workshops. For Year 9, I decided to focus on sustainability. Although I only had a morning with the students, I used parts of the first module of the programme. We covered topics like the basics of sustainability, examined infographics, discussed the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and explored environmental footprints. I also tied this into our school's carbon neutrality efforts by having the school's carbon team present our dashboard and carbon footprint, which made the session more engaging for the students."

Many educators appreciated the creative freedom to tailor the programme's delivery to fit their specific classroom contexts and teaching methods. This adaptability allowed them to integrate sustainability education in a way that aligned with their students' needs and their own teaching objectives, enhancing the overall learning experience:

“I frequently use and draw upon the information from the Sustainable Futures programme for much of the work I do. For instance, during Green Careers Week, we organised a green careers workshop where I incorporated material from the WWF programme alongside activities provided by RJ Working. Together, we created a workshop focused on the emerging career opportunities linked to the transition to Net Zero. Although we haven't yet scheduled another full session for the WWF programme, I make sure to integrate as much of its content as possible into both one-to-one and group work with students.”

An overwhelming majority of the educators we interviewed appreciated the flexibility of the resources and felt that allowing schools to select the most relevant content for their needs was the best approach, as it enables tailored delivery without sacrificing important elements:

“I think lots of schools would find the material really valuable; it is such a wonderful resource! Although I struggle to fit it in in its entirety, I hesitate to say that it is too long because I feel most of the content is important. It is probably best to leave it as it is and let schools and colleges pick out the content that they would like to deliver. The first time we delivered the programme, we removed the slides on systems thinking as we thought they were too complex. Second time around, the slides had been changed and they were a lot clearer, which meant that we included it, it is such an important aspect of the sustainability work.”

Educators placed great importance on business encounters and workplace experiences, recognising their significant impact on students' understanding of sustainable careers in real-world settings. They also observed how much students enjoyed interacting with employers and professionals, which further enriched their learning. These insights are reflected in educators' comments about the value of engaging with the programme and the positive outcomes it delivered for students:

“We trialled it last year with the sixth form and then we managed to get it timetabled this year for Year 12. So, we've had two cohorts go through [...] It is one of the enrichment activities that they [sixth form students] can sign up for, but it has gone really well. We're looking at maybe incorporating it into the younger years. So, it's across a year group rather than just sort of targeted at a few individuals.”

“The experience of the workplace was so valuable in because all schools have to have the meaningful interaction with an employer and work experience, but that's died post-COVID. Very few schools do work experience now in the way that we used to, so to access a place of work for students like this was brilliant.”

“A couple of businesses have come in and talked to students about how their role is within sustainability, and the students at that time did find that sort of experience quite valuable.”

Delivering the programme came with some challenges for the educators. Educators had to manage their work commitments whilst finding suitable time to organise and deliver the programme, a common challenge which was raised across all the case studies:

“It is difficult to find the time to deliver such a content heavy programme in an already packed curriculum and tutorial programme. Also, it is something that I personally have taken on to do on top of my normal workload so it can be difficult to find the time to prepare properly, especially as it is difficult to judge what the student take up will be.”

The importance of providing time and resources for sustainability education emerged as a key theme in the interviews. Several educators highlighted that sustainability lacks a dedicated specialism within schools. As a result, staff members often need time to develop their knowledge and resources to deliver effective lessons. One interviewee emphasised that having a passionate staff member with the time to explore and identify the necessary knowledge, and then upskill colleagues, is crucial:

“The advice for other schools would be to ensure that someone is given both the time and support to focus on sustainability education, as there isn't a subject specialism for this area, unlike in geography or science. It's similar to many aspects of personal development in PSHE, where schools need to cover broader topics. It's essential to have a dedicated staff member who is passionate about sustainability, can identify the necessary knowledge, and then upskill the rest of the staff. For example, our careers leader did just that. He created some incredible lessons, designed specifically to be delivered by non-specialists.”

In addition to this, educators highlighted the importance of obtaining buy-in from senior leadership teams to meaningfully and successfully deliver the Sustainable Futures programme:

“I think it is crucially important to get senior management team involved from the beginning and pushed from that level, because I do feel that sometimes, when it is just one person pushing this forward and delivering and promoting it, it can be more of a challenge.”

Despite some challenges, educators praised WWF and Partners for creating an informative sustainable career guidance programme. In particular, the Sustainable Futures programme supported their career information, advice and guidance objectives and the educators illustrated a desire to continue to develop its use in their respective school or college:

“The Sustainable Futures programme has added significant value, and we've used it to really focus in on CIAG [careers information, advice and guidance] and careers for us and making sure that students are ready and equipped with the knowledge and skills to flourish in modern Britain, for those jobs that have to be sustainable”.

And

“My plan if I am here next year, is to run it as an after-school activity for the older students. The year 9's got very interested. Actually, we got some really good questions. Some of them were very interested in topics like green washing, and that came up quite a lot, but I think it would be good for some of the older students as well. So, what I was hoping to do was an after-school activity, we have a big Co-curricular programme which runs once a week, and I would like to work through the three modules and complete the whole programme. There were some materials that I really didn't feel I could use in a in a one-day thing without more work on it. Some of the donut economics I thought would be quite good for some of the older students.”

The programme also inspired educators to develop their own knowledge of sustainability. One educator subsequently started a conservation course, which illustrates the impact the programme has had on motivating educators to deepen their own understanding and improve their teaching of sustainability:

“My role in the school is I run our alternative provision. I'm a Forest schoolteacher. I'm an Outdoor teacher. I do all those different engagements, and I want to engage young people in making a difference. I have now myself started a level 2 sustainable conservation course at the moment. It's a free course from the government I saw online, so personally that's impacted me to want to learn more”.

Analysing the qualitative data shows that the schools' and colleges' commitment to sustainability is not confined to the immediate outcomes of the Sustainable Futures programme; it also forms part of a broader, long-term strategy. For example, the senior leadership team at one of the academies has actively engaged with the programme, recognising its potential to shape the school's future sustainability initiatives. Their approach goes beyond the programme's initial impact, aiming to embed the key sustainable principles into the school's culture and operations.

“We have internal things to do. The senior leadership team talked about the Sustainable Futures programme and what they want to do here. We'll present the same to the student body. The group is creating a video to discuss various aspects, which will be shown to everyone. This isn't just in isolation; we're planning long-term sustainable actions”.

As part of our evaluation, an online survey was designed to collect the views of the Sustainable Futures programme and the CPD sessions from educators. This survey ran from June to July 2024. Besides the educator survey, we also performed secondary data analysis using the existing CPD participants' data which came from two surveys which participants completed before and after the CPD sessions. It aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the CPD sessions and their impact on the delivery of the programme.

We received 31 responses from the educator survey.

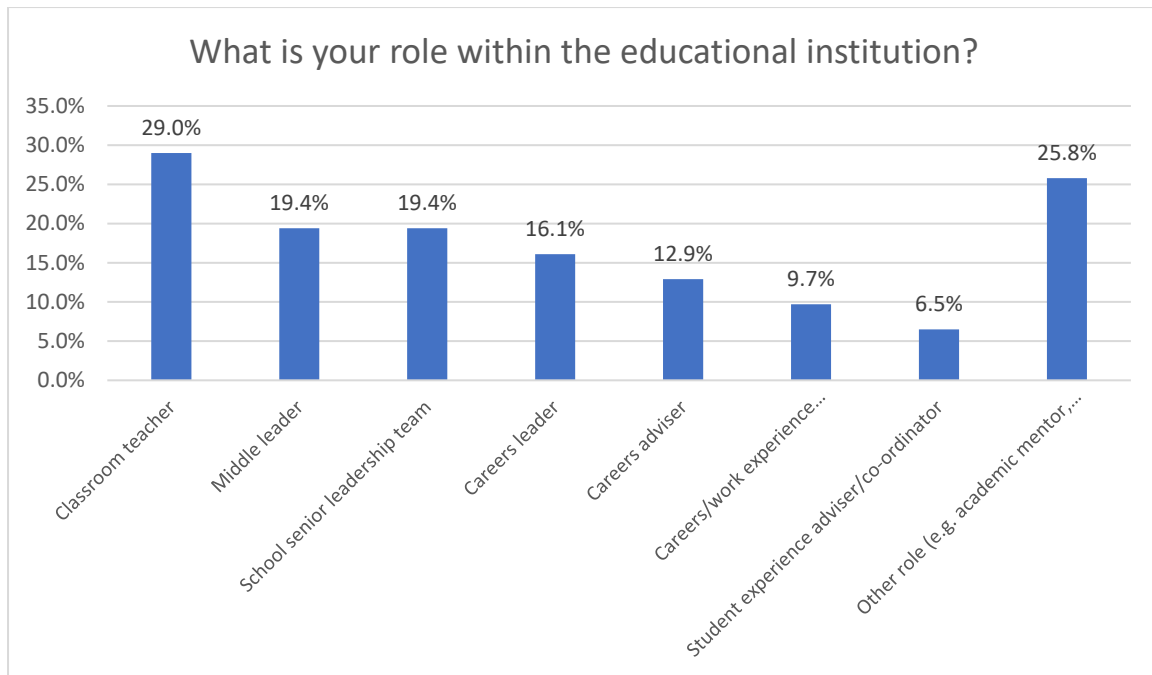


Figure 32. What is your role within the educational institution? (31 respondents)

Note: Respondents may have had more than one role.

Most of the responses came from those working in educational institutions as classroom teachers (29%, 9 out of 31 respondents).

Out of 31 respondents, 20 respondents (64.5%) reported that they initiated the delivery of the Sustainable Futures programme in their school or college.

On average, the programme has reached 230 students per school or college. 43% of these students came from minority ethnic backgrounds.

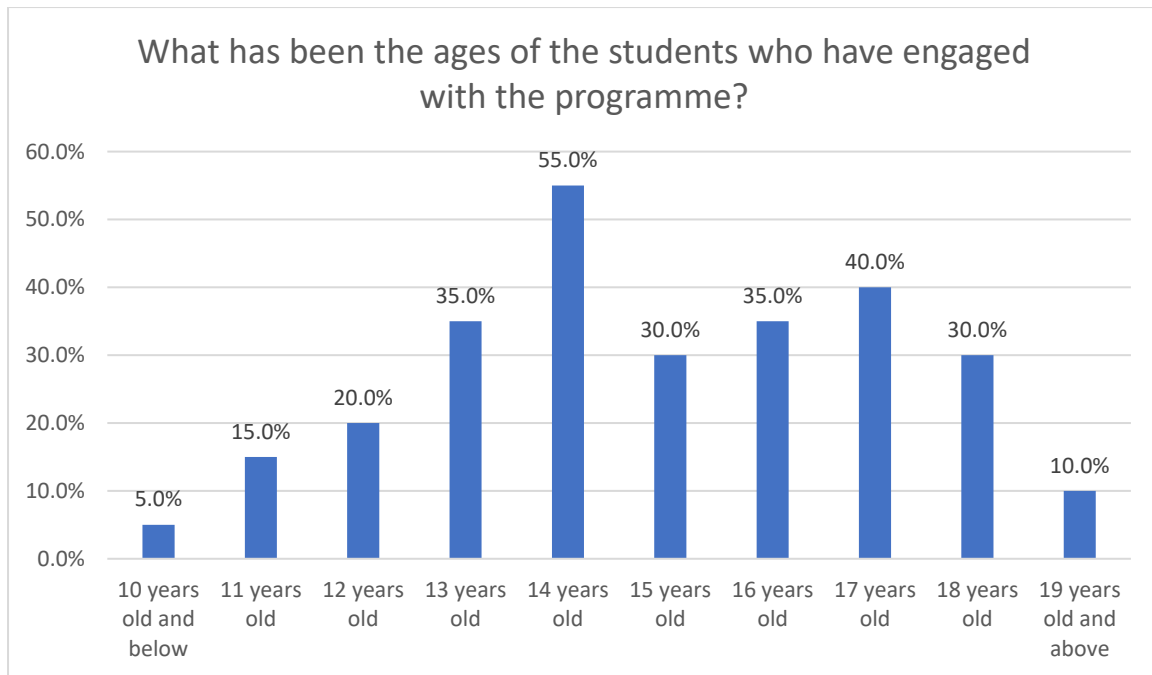


Figure 33. What has been the ages of the students who have engaged with the programme? (20 respondents)

Out of 20 respondents, more than half of the respondents reported that the students who engaged in the programme were 14 years old (55.0%, 11 respondents), followed by students aged 17 years old (40.0%, 8 respondents).

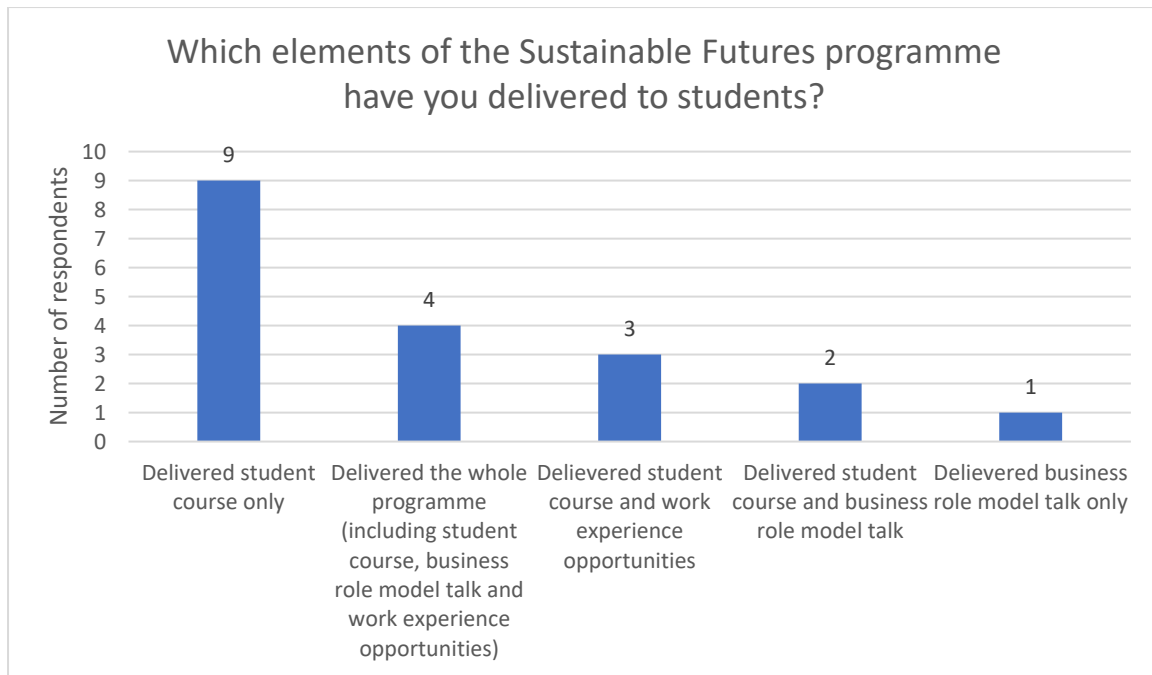


Figure 34. Which elements of the Sustainable Futures programme have you delivered to students? (19 respondents)

Figure 34 shows which elements of the Sustainable Futures programme the respondents delivered. Only 4 respondents delivered the whole programme in their school or college.

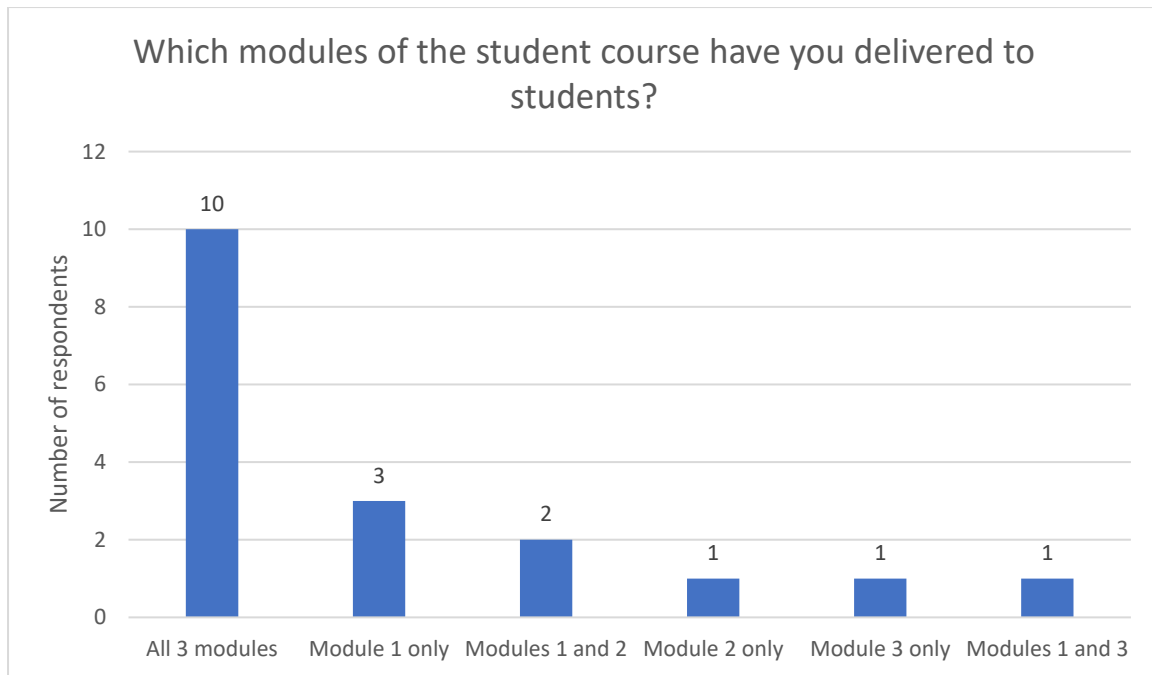


Figure 35. Which modules of the student course have you delivered to students? (18 respondents)

Most of them delivered some elements of the programme. The student course was the element which most of the respondents delivered. Among 18 respondents who delivered the student course, 10 of them delivered all three modules (Module 1: What is Sustainability, Module 2: Sustainable Business and Module 3: Sustainable Me).

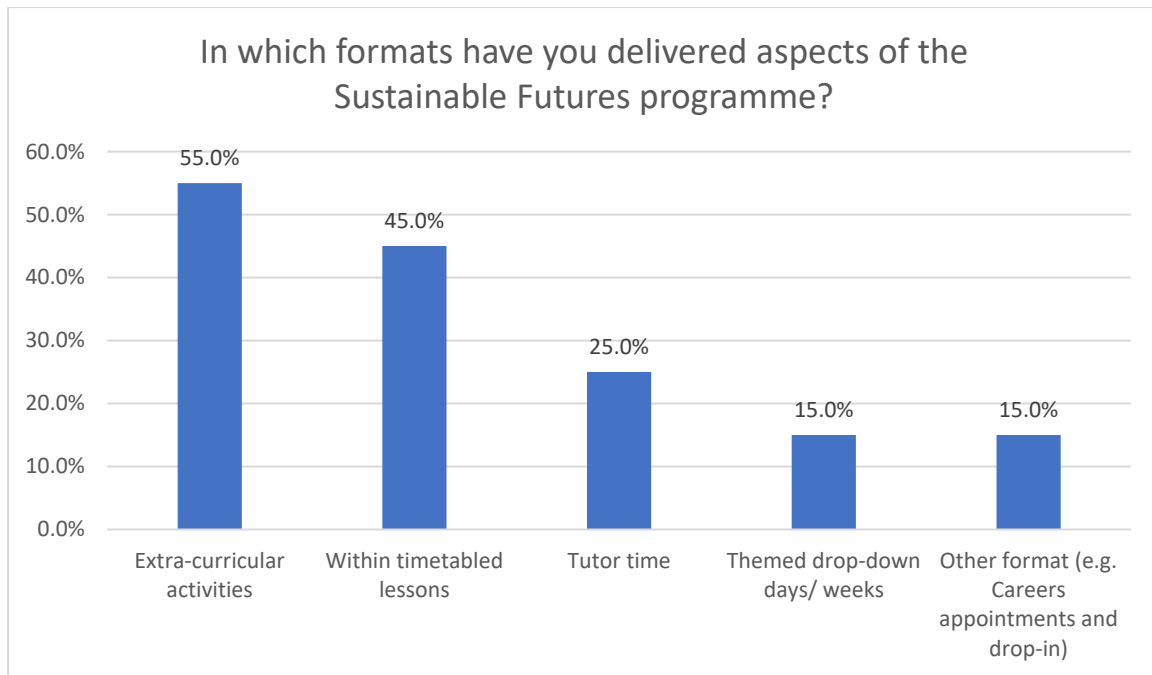


Figure 36. In which formats have you delivered aspects of the Sustainable Futures programme? (20 respondents)

Out of 20 respondents, more than half of the respondents delivered aspects of the Sustainable Futures programme through extra-curricular activities (55.0%, 11 respondents), followed by within timetabled lessons (45.0%, 9 respondents).

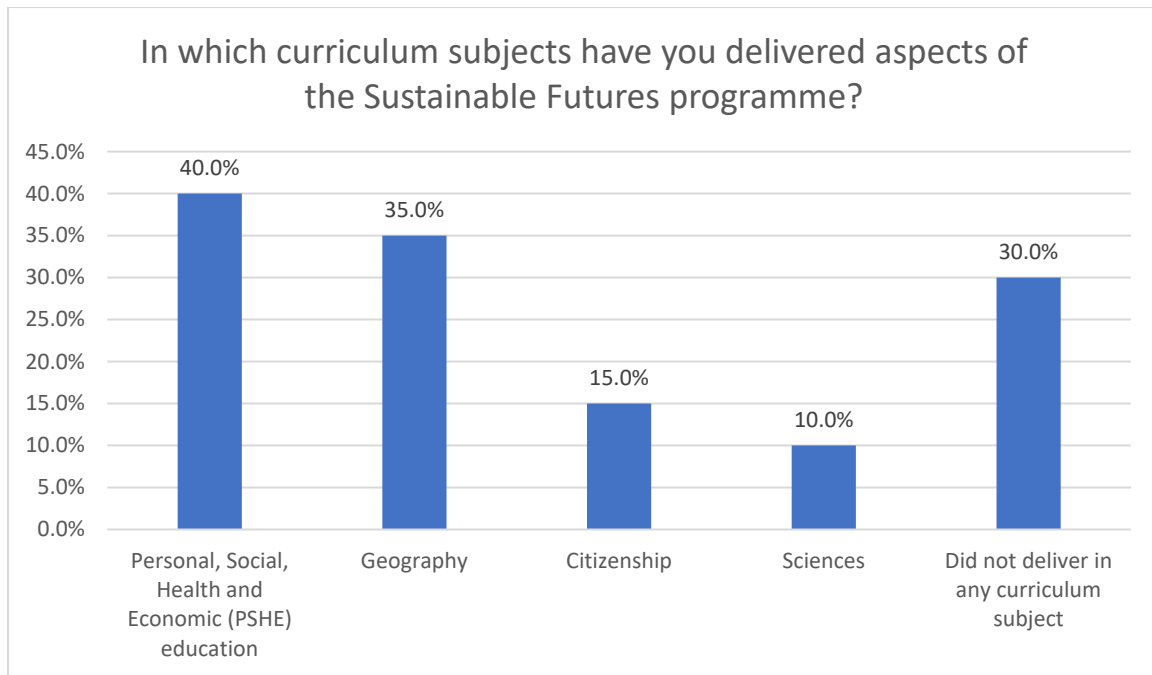


Figure 37. In which curriculum subjects have you delivered aspects of the Sustainable Futures programme? (20 respondents)

Eight respondents (40.0%) delivered aspects of the Sustainable Futures programme in Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, followed by Geography (35.0%, 7 respondents). Six respondents (30.0%) reported that they did not deliver the programme in any curriculum subject.

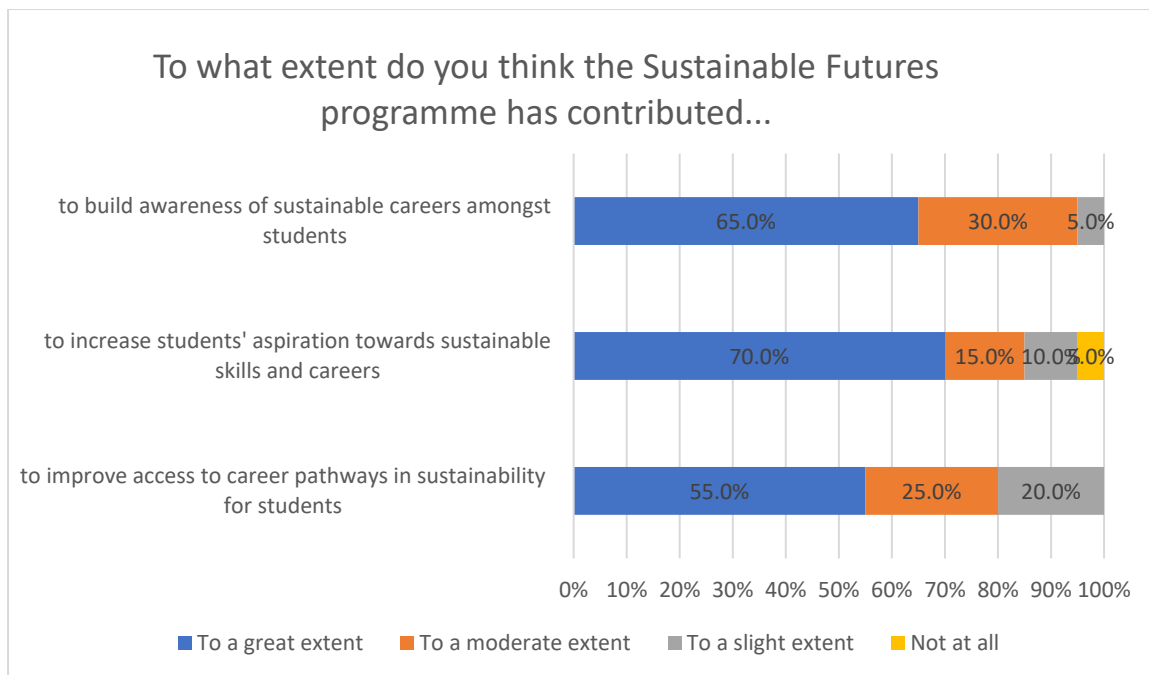


Figure 38. To what extent do you think the Sustainable Futures programme has contributed... (20 respondents)

The Sustainable Futures programme has three core aims: to build awareness of, aspiration for, and access to sustainable careers for students. All 20 respondents confirmed that the programme effectively raised awareness of sustainable careers amongst students. They also noted that the programme improved access to career pathways in sustainability and reported that the programme has enhanced students' aspirations towards acquiring sustainable skills and pursuing careers in this field.

During the interviews, educators highlighted how the programme enabled the students to take an abstract idea of 'sustainability' and turn it into action. Students initially possessed a 'save the planet' mindset, but the programme informed the students about how they can put their thinking into practice and enabled them to understand the role that they can play in taking care of the planet:

"It was a great programme to raise their awareness. I think they're thinking long term now, whereas before they had a 'we want to save the planet' mindset but didn't know how they could do it. It's given them the confidence to look to the future with this. It's like, 'this is me, and this is me for life now.' Before, it was just an abstract idea. Now, with the programme, we've moved forward significantly".

In addition to this, a senior leadership team member highlighted the importance of the teaching of sustainability as being part of students' personal development and not just being solely careers related. The programme equipped young people to be active citizens who develop moral values surrounding sustainability as they enter adulthood:

“When they're going out there running their own businesses or running the country, we want them to have that moral imperative as well as the knowledge and skills to make sure things are sustainable. So that's what we're aiming for, it's a big ask. But we think the personal development, and sustainability as an aspect of that, is equally as important as the academic outcomes. If you can get straight 9s and you're not going to use that to do good, you know, that's not quite right”.

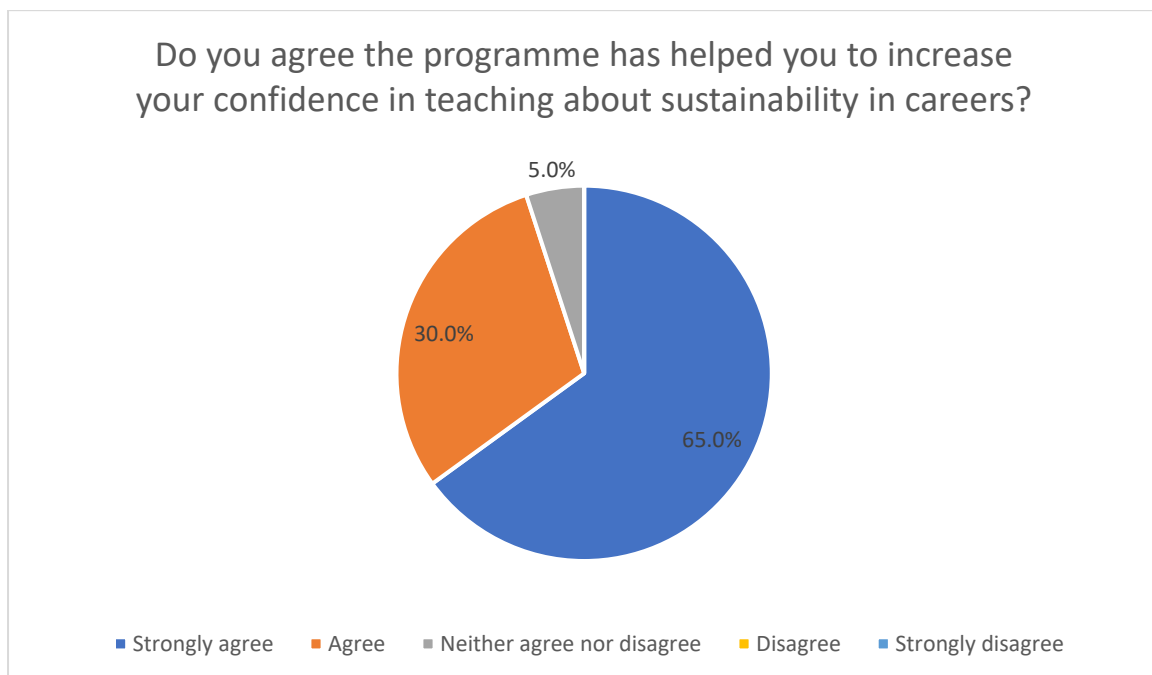


Figure 39. Do you agree the programme has helped you to increase your confidence in teaching about sustainability in careers? (20 respondents)

Out of 20 respondents, nearly all respondents (95%, 19 respondents) agreed that the programme helped them to increase their confidence in teaching about sustainability in careers. CPD sessions were also mentioned in focus groups as a

key element that played a role in helping educators integrate the Sustainable Futures programme into their schools. One educator shared their experience:

“I had CPD through WWF, which was beneficial. It went through all the different activities and tasks on the Sustainable Futures programme. Career leaders from across the trust all met during that CPD, so we got to collaborate together, which was good. During the training, we looked at the Sustainable Futures programme and thought about how we could link it into our common curriculum. As our deputy headteacher mentioned, we were already doing a lot of work on sustainability at that time, so it worked well, didn't it?”

All respondents (20) agreed on the importance of students learning about sustainability in careers, with 85% (17 respondents) rating it as very important and 15% (3 respondents) considering it important.

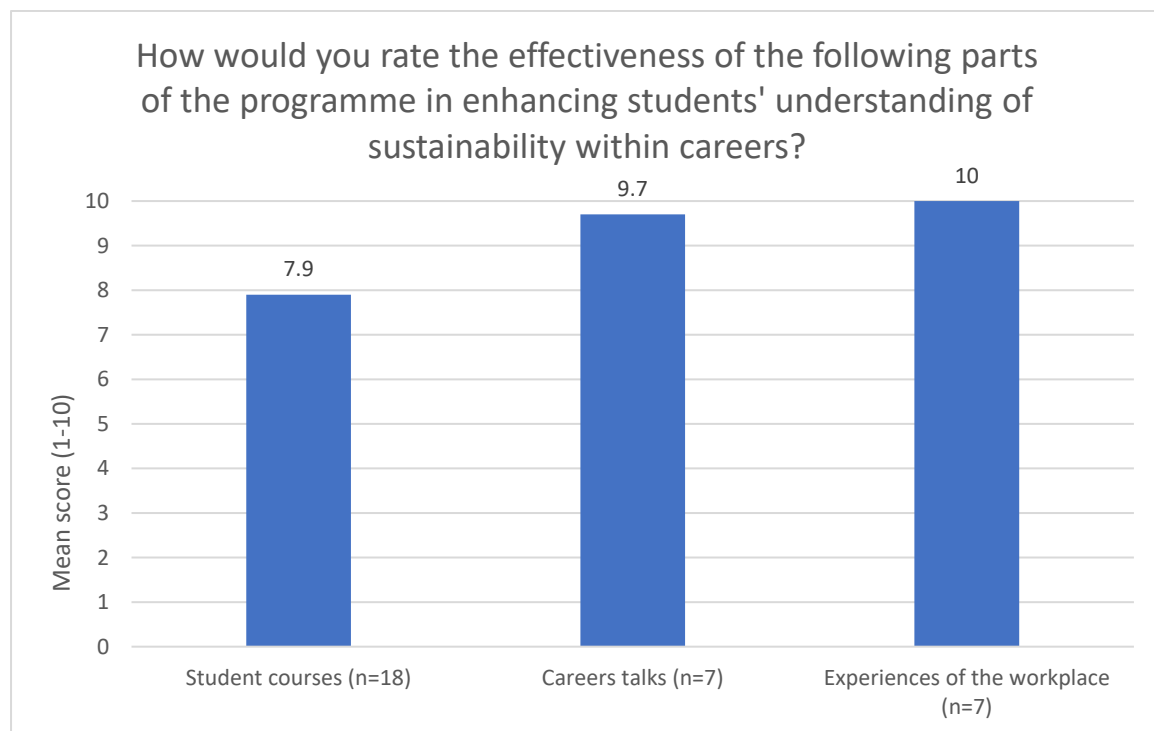


Figure 40. How would you rate the effectiveness of the following parts of the programme in enhancing students' understanding of sustainability within careers?

Regarding the effectiveness of specific elements of the programme, the respondents reported that work experience opportunities were more effective in enhancing students' understanding of sustainability within careers (mean score: 10 out of 10), whereas the student course was rated 7.9.

How likely is it that you would recommend the Sustainable Futures programme to a colleague or another school/ college?

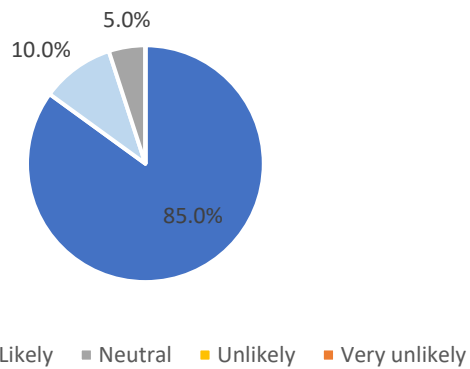


Figure 41. How likely is it that you would recommend the Sustainable Futures programme to a colleague or another school/ college? (20 respondents)

Ninety-five percent of teachers (19 out of 20 respondents) that participated in the programme would recommend the programme to a colleague or another school/ college.

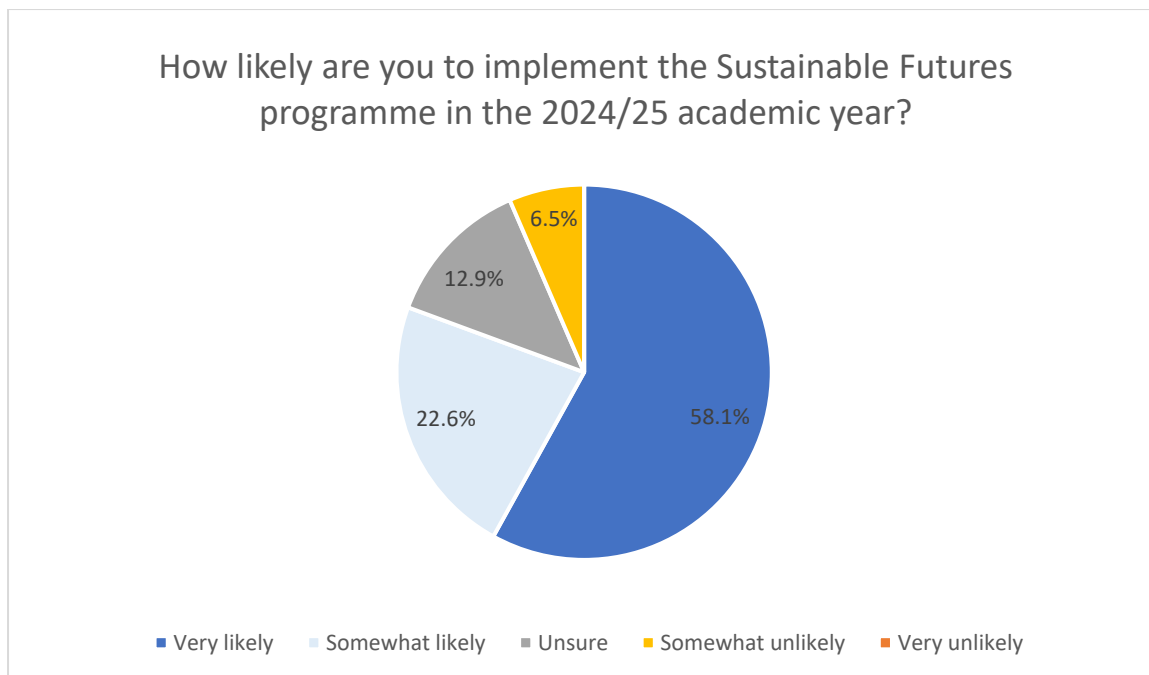


Figure 42. How likely are you to implement the Sustainable Futures programme in the 2024/25 academic year? (31 respondents)

Most of the respondents (80.6%, 25 out of 31 respondents) were likely to implement the Sustainable Futures programme in the 2024/25 academic year.

While all educators we interviewed and surveyed acknowledged that workplace experiences effectively enhance students' understanding of sustainability in careers, they noted that career talks and student courses are also essential components of the Sustainable Futures programme. They identified the most valuable elements in workplace experiences, career talks, and student courses, respectively.

For experiences of the workplace, the respondents highlighted that the opportunities expanded students' knowledge about the variety of prospective careers available to them. Students emphasised the tour of the offices and the groupwork session where they designed a sustainable office the most enjoyable aspect of work experience opportunities.

For the career talks, respondents reported that the role models inspired students and played an important role in the delivery of the programme.

For the student course, the respondents mentioned several areas which they valued, such as available resources, practical activities, and discussions. This is reflected in the following quote:

“The available resources were good, including the worksheets and the PowerPoint.”

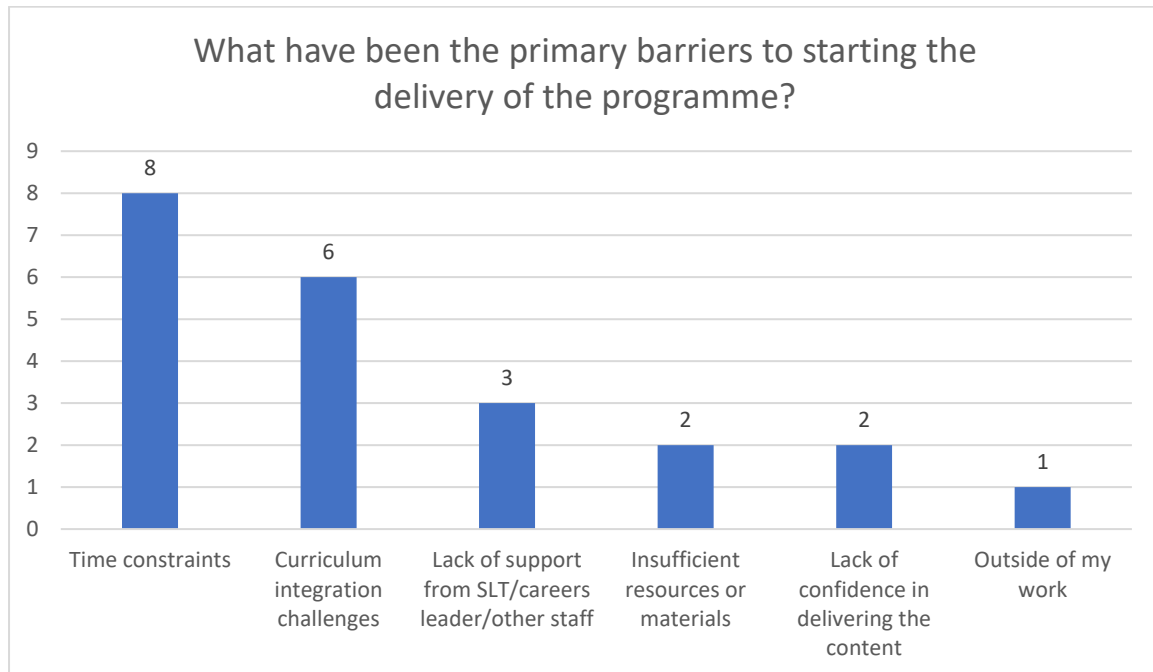


Figure 43. What have been the primary barriers to starting the delivery of the programme? (11 respondents)

11 respondents (35.5%) did not initiate the delivery of the Sustainable Futures programme in their school or college. Time constraints was the primary barrier for the educators to start the delivery of the programme, followed by curriculum integration challenges.

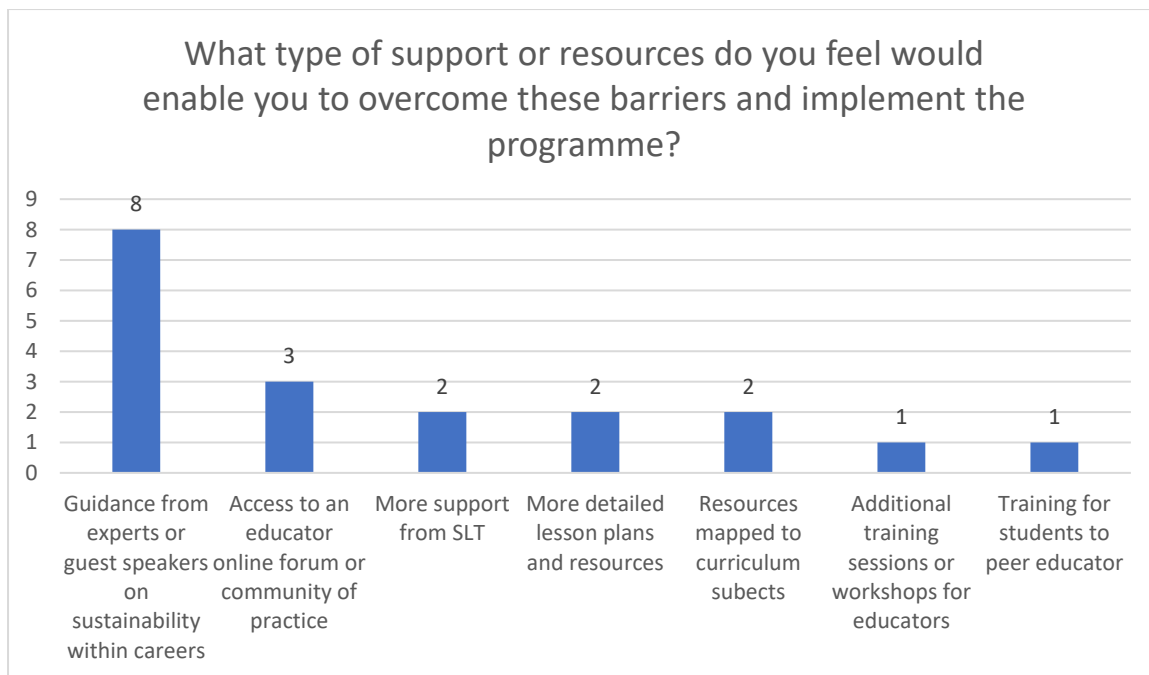


Figure 44. What type of support or resources do you feel would enable you to overcome these barriers and implement the programme? (10 respondents)

To overcome these barriers, 8 of the respondents requested more guidance from experts or guest speakers on sustainability within careers.

For the student courses, a respondent reported that Module 3 was the most difficult to deliver because mapping a career pathway was challenging for the pupils. To address this challenge, the respondent suggested that the programme should have more case studies for sustainable careers. Another respondent reported that most students already encountered a substantial amount of information presented in the student course already, either via the subject curriculum in their lower years of school or college education, or through other means, like social media. Some respondents did not find the student course particularly useful, and the resources were not appropriately targeted to Key Stage 5 students.

For the career talks, the respondents suggested that the programme should include a larger number of businesses to connect with. One respondent explained how the limited number of contacts made it difficult to organise the talks:

“Founders4Schools said that my event was too small to attach speakers to, so I had to use contacts I already had. Other teachers might not have relevant contacts or time to explore this.”

For experiences of the workplace, the respondents suggested longer work experience placements should be provided, including during the summer, for those who wish to gain more experience. They also suggested the inclusion of more diverse sectors involved in the programme. This is represented in the following quote:

“It would be beneficial to continue the insight day experience with the possibility of comparing sustainability in different sectors.”

CPD sessions

In the educator survey, 26 respondents (83.9%) accessed any of the CPD sessions.

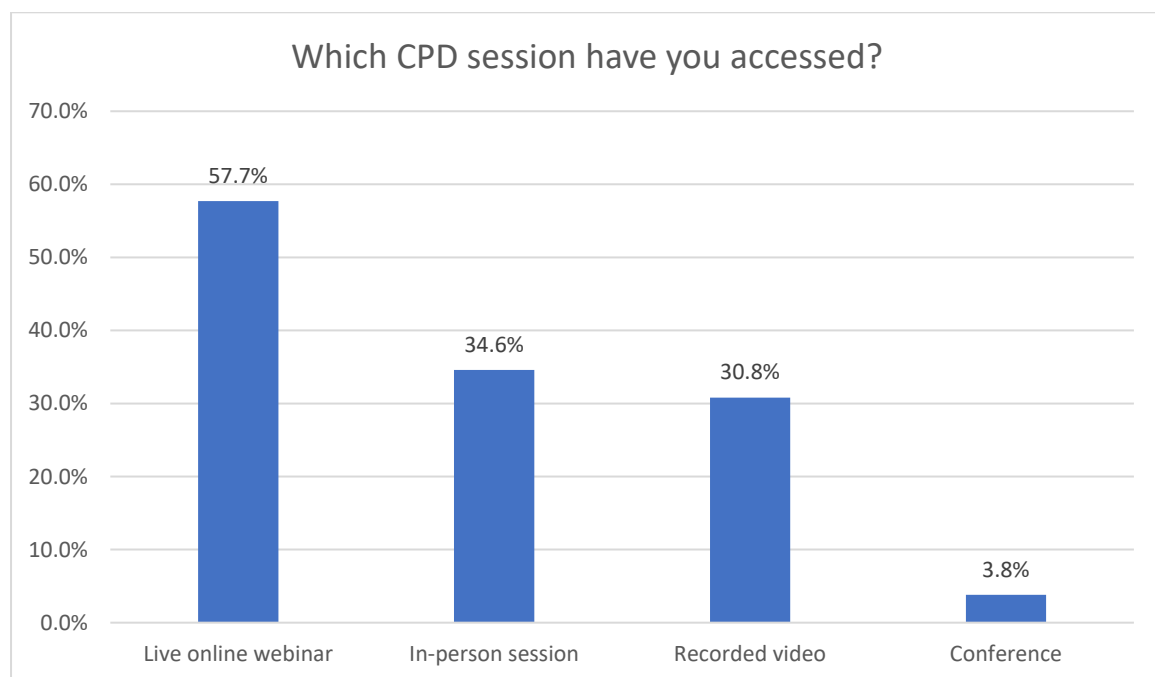


Figure 45. Which CPD session have you accessed? (26 respondents)

Figure 45 shows which CPD session the respondents accessed. Most of the respondents accessed live online webinar (57.7%, 15 out of 26 respondents), followed by in-person session (34.6%, 9 out of 26 respondents) and recorded video (30.8%, 8 out of 26 respondents). All respondents found the sessions were effective

in preparing them to deliver the Sustainable Futures programme (very effective: 57.7%, 15 out of 26 respondents; somewhat effective: 42.3%, 11 out of 26 respondents).

Besides the educator survey, we also analysed existing data from 2024 provided by WWF to evaluate the effectiveness of the CPD sessions and their impact on the delivery of the programme. There were 51 responses from the pre-CPD session survey and 44 responses from the post-CPD session survey.

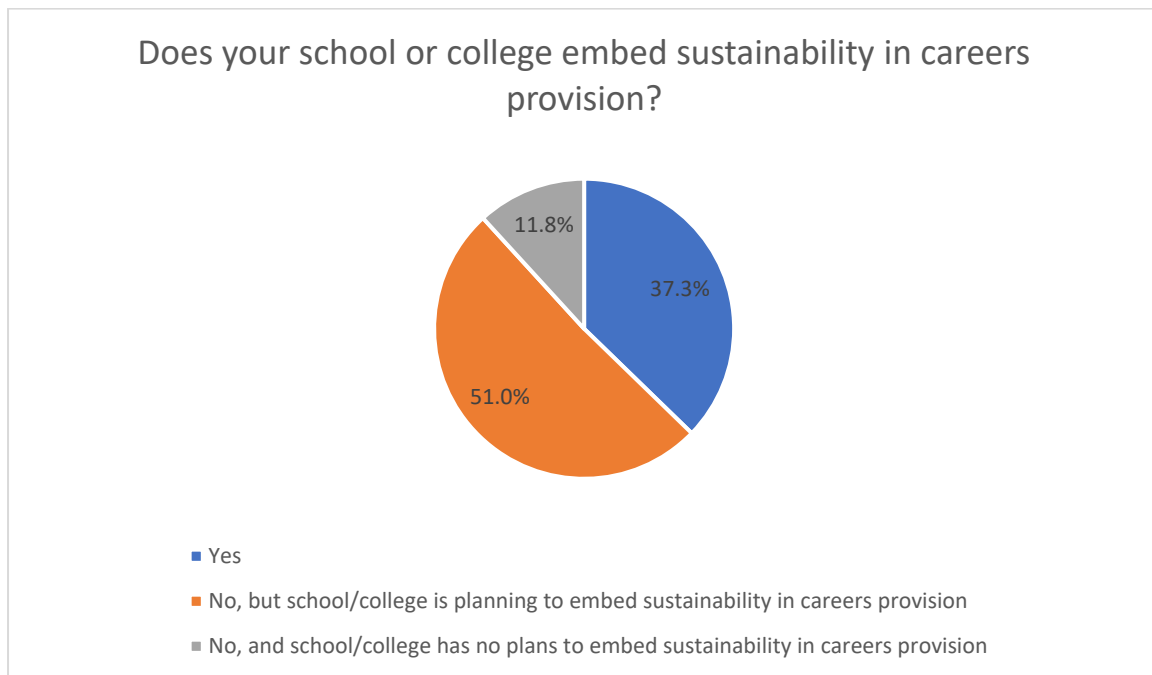


Figure 46. Does your school or college embed sustainability in careers provision? (51 respondents)

In the pre-CPD session survey, we asked if the school or college embedded sustainability in careers provision. Out of 51 respondents, more than one-third of respondents (37.3%, 19 respondents) embedded sustainability in careers provision. More than half of respondents (51.0%, 26 respondents) did not embed sustainability in careers provision, but they are planning to in the future. A few of respondents (11.8%, 6 respondents) did not embed sustainability in careers provision and they have no plans to do so.

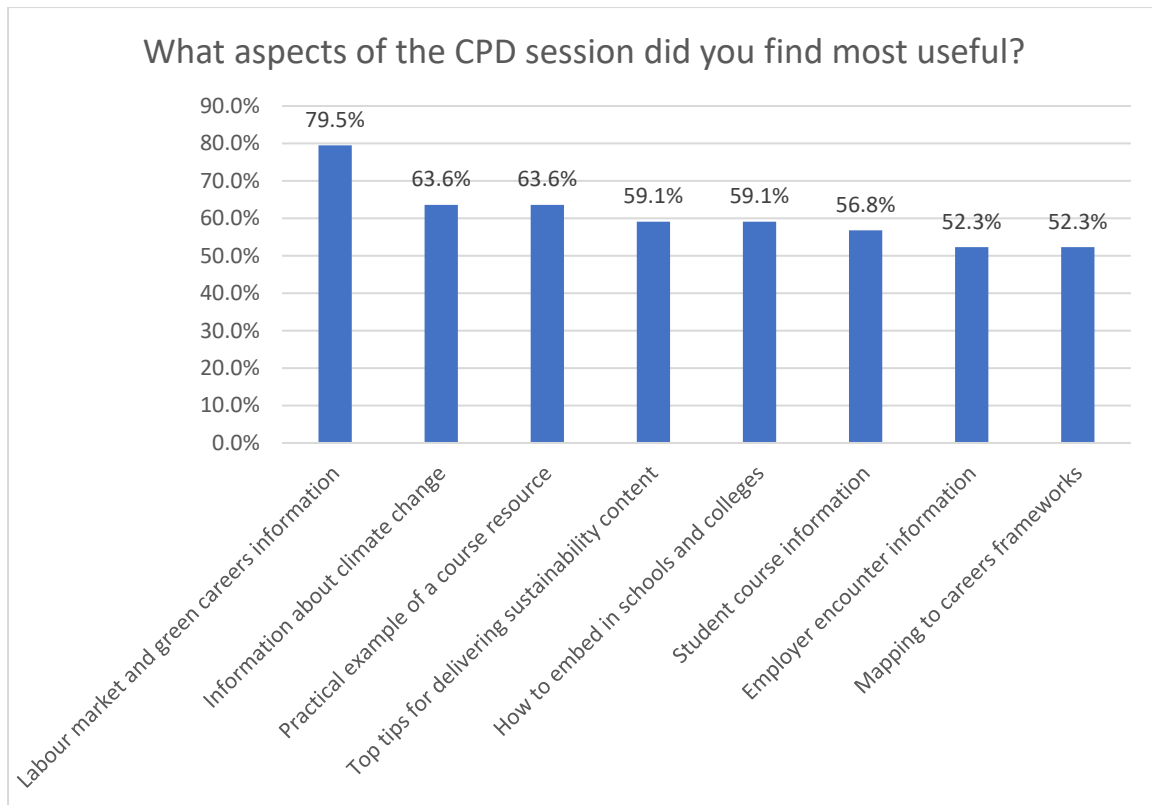


Figure 47. What aspects of the CPD session did you find most useful? (44 respondents)

Respondents found the CPD session met their expectations and needs (4.6 out of 5). Figure 47 shows the aspects of the CPD session that the respondents found the most useful. Most of the respondents (79.5%, 35 out of 44 respondents) found that labour market and green careers information was the most useful aspect of the session.

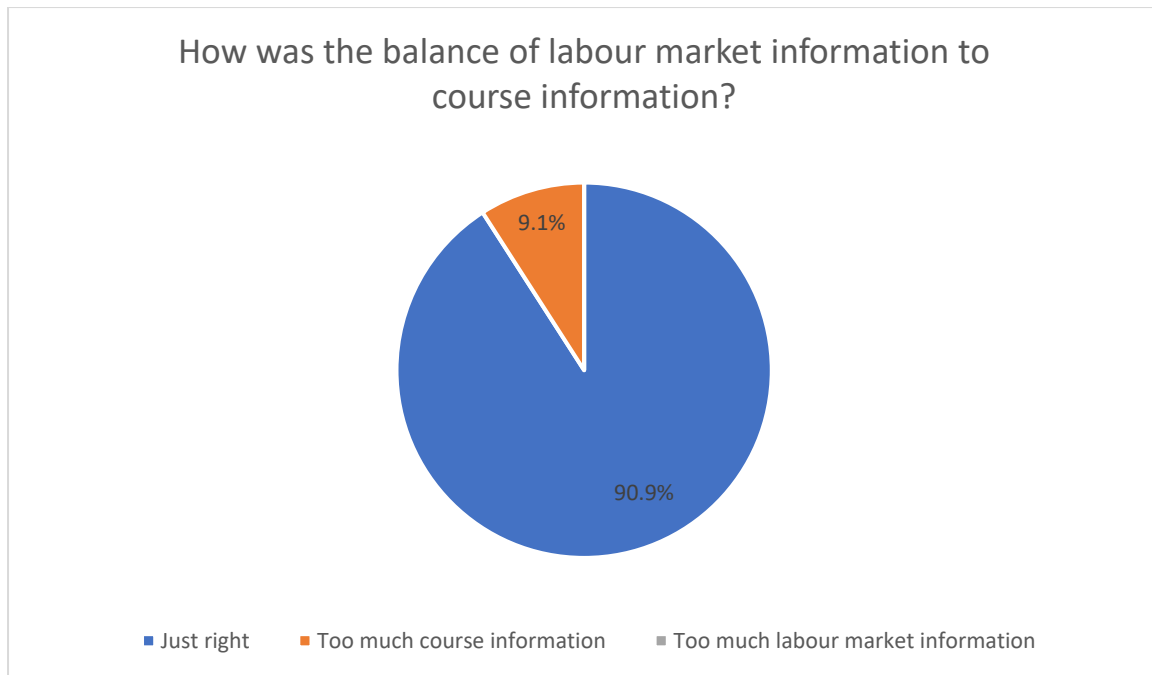


Figure 48. How was the balance of labour market information to course information? (44 respondents)

Out of 44 respondents, a notable proportion (90.9%, 40 respondents) reported that there is a right balance between labour market information and course information. Only 4 respondents (9.1%) found that there was too much course information.

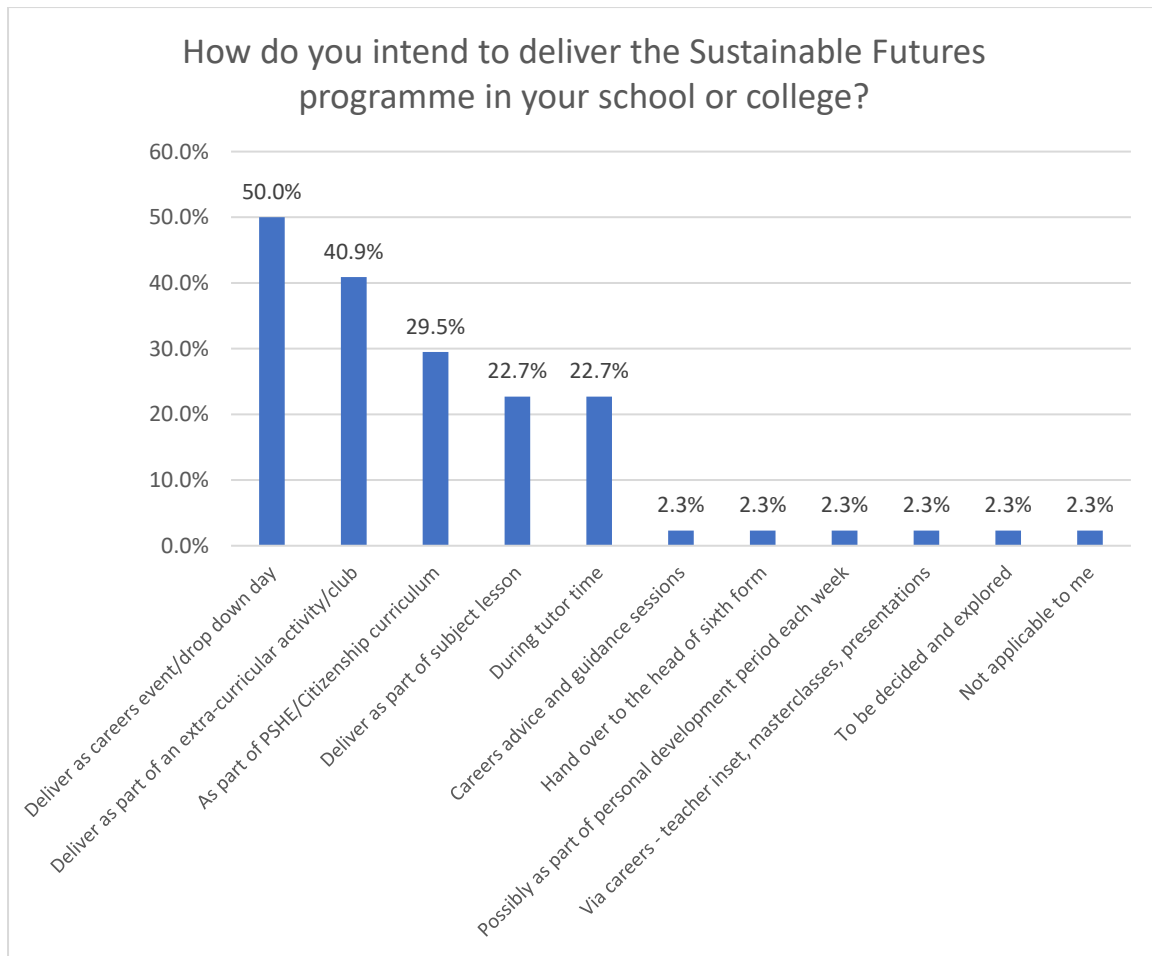


Figure 49. How do you intend to deliver the Sustainable Futures programme in your school or college? (44 respondents)

Out of 44 respondents, more than half of the respondents (52.3%, 23 respondents) intended to use more than one way to deliver the Sustainable Futures programme. The average respondent combined two separate ways to deliver the programme. Half of the respondents (50.0%, 22 respondents) intended to deliver the programme in their school or college through a careers event or drop-down day.

While implementing the Sustainable Futures programme, educators highlighted some challenges, with the primary concern being the involvement of other staff members in its delivery and the necessary information and training required. This was noted by 70.5% (31 out of 44 respondents), indicating a significant barrier to effectively embedding sustainability education within the school.

The second challenge identified was the lack of time and space within the curriculum to deliver the programme content, mentioned by 52.3% (23 out of 44 respondents). This reflects a common issue in educational settings where teachers are often constrained by tight schedules and competing priorities, making it difficult to incorporate new initiatives.

38 participants completed and were paired successfully between pre- and post-CPD session surveys.

When we compared the difference from the same individual between surveys, a paired sample t-test indicated the understanding of sustainability was significantly higher after they completed the CPD sessions (mean: 4.3 out of 5) than before the CPD sessions (mean: 3.1 out of 5), $t(37)=-8.947$, $p<.001$.

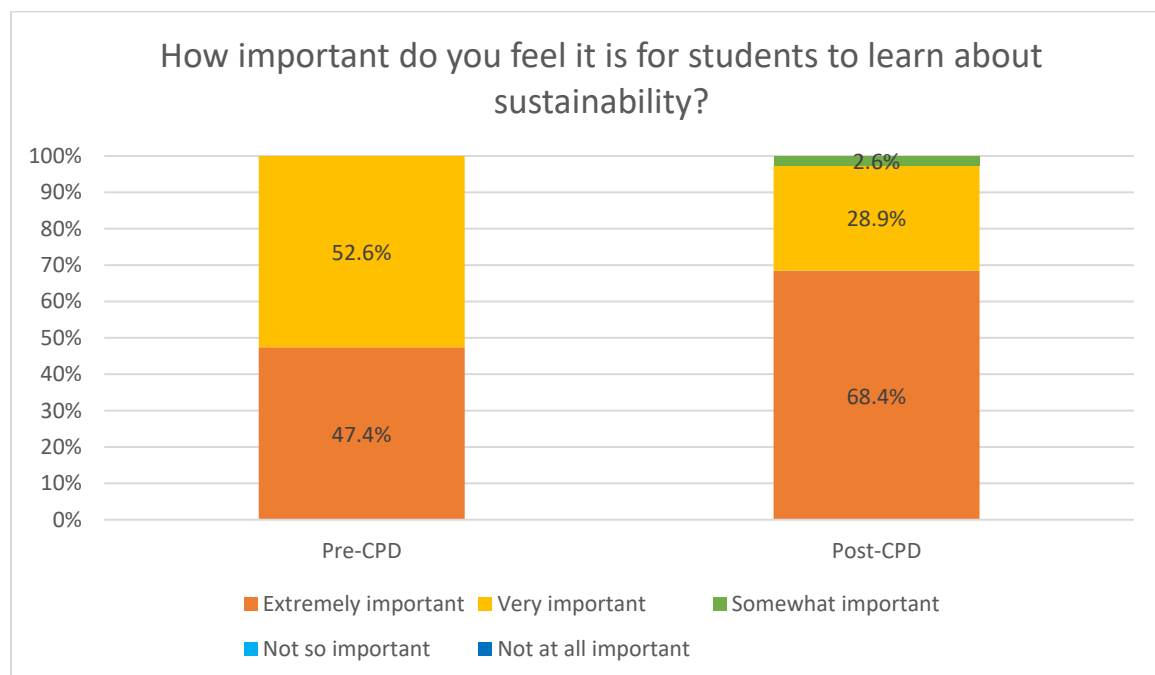


Figure 50. How important do you feel it is for students to learn about sustainability? (38 respondents)

All participants agreed on the importance of students learning about sustainability, both before and after the CPD sessions. However, following the CPD sessions, a greater proportion of participants indicated that it is extremely important for students to learn about sustainability (68.4%, 26 out of 38), compared to those surveyed

before the CPD sessions (47.4%, 18 out of 38). A Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed a significant increase in the perceived importance of students learning about sustainability after the CPD sessions ($z=-2.333$, $p=0.02$).

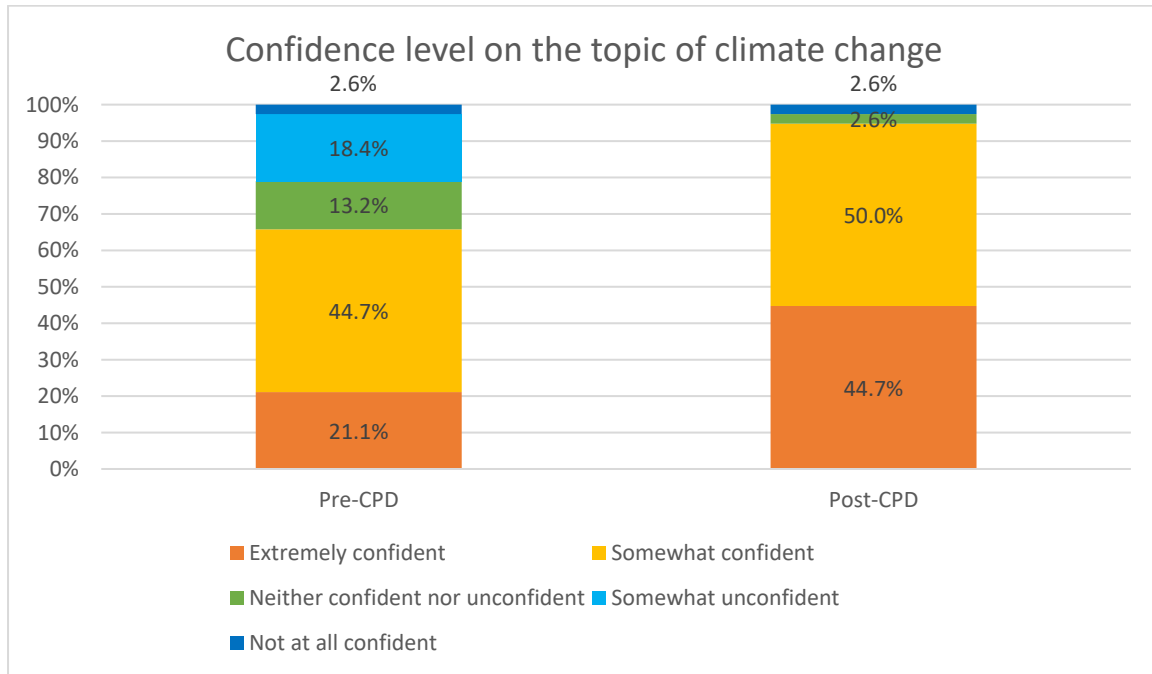


Figure 51. Confidence level on the topic of climate change (38 respondents)

A higher number of participants reported that they were confident on the topic of climate change after the CPD sessions (94.7%, 36 out of 38 respondents), compared to the pre-CPD sessions respondents (65.8%, 25 out of 38 respondents) and a Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the confidence level on the topic of climate change was significantly higher after they completed the CPD sessions ($z=-3.946$, $p<0.001$).

One of the educators specifically highlighted the importance of CPD sessions for subject teachers who did not possess prior knowledge of sustainability:

“I’m a Geography teacher. So, I obviously teach climate change, so I knew kind of all of the theory behind it. I think it would be a lot harder for somebody who might not be a geography specialist. We had a couple of the other teachers; I think one of the other teachers was an English teacher. And something they might need is a bit of training from WWF before.”

By participating in targeted CPD, teachers from various disciplines, such as English or other non-specialist subjects, can develop a stronger foundational understanding of sustainability concepts. This would enable them to confidently and effectively integrate the programme into their teaching, even if they are not subject experts in fields like Geography or Science, where climate change and sustainability topics are more commonly covered.

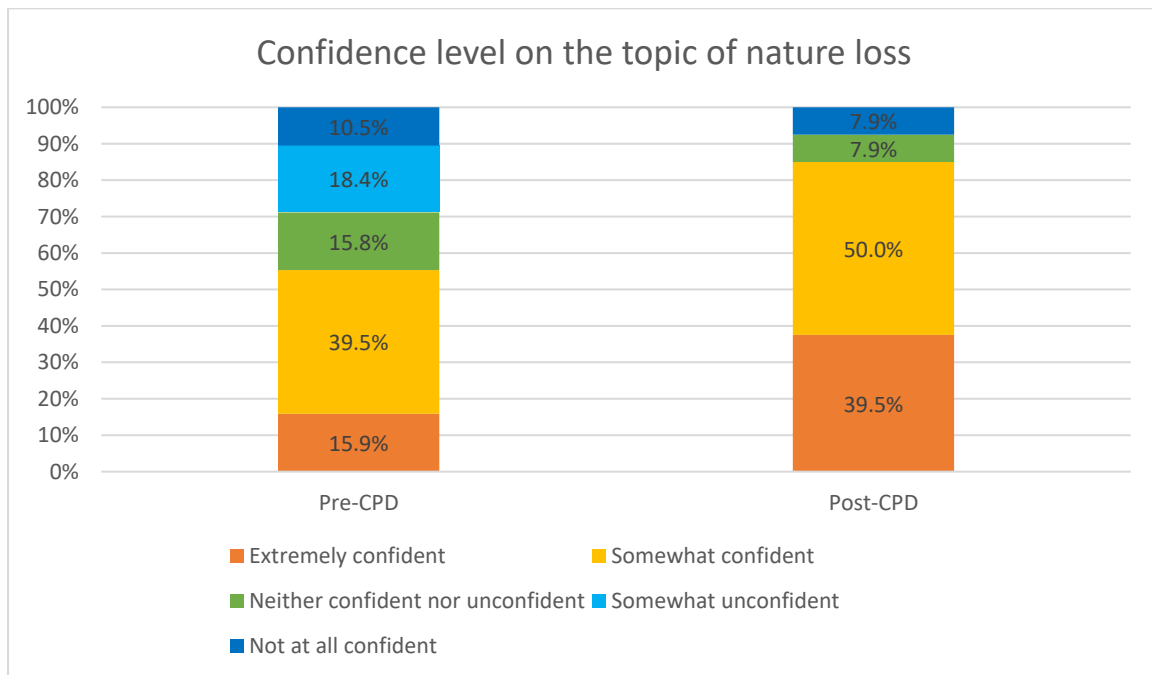


Figure 52. Confidence level on the topic of nature loss (38 respondents)

For example, the comparison of the data shows that more respondents reported that they were confident on the topic of nature loss after the CPD sessions (89.5%, 34 out of 38 respondents), compared to the pre-CPD sessions respondents (55.3%, 21 out of 38 respondents).

A Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed a significantly higher confidence level on the topic of nature loss after completing the CPD sessions ($z=-4.211$, $p<0.001$).

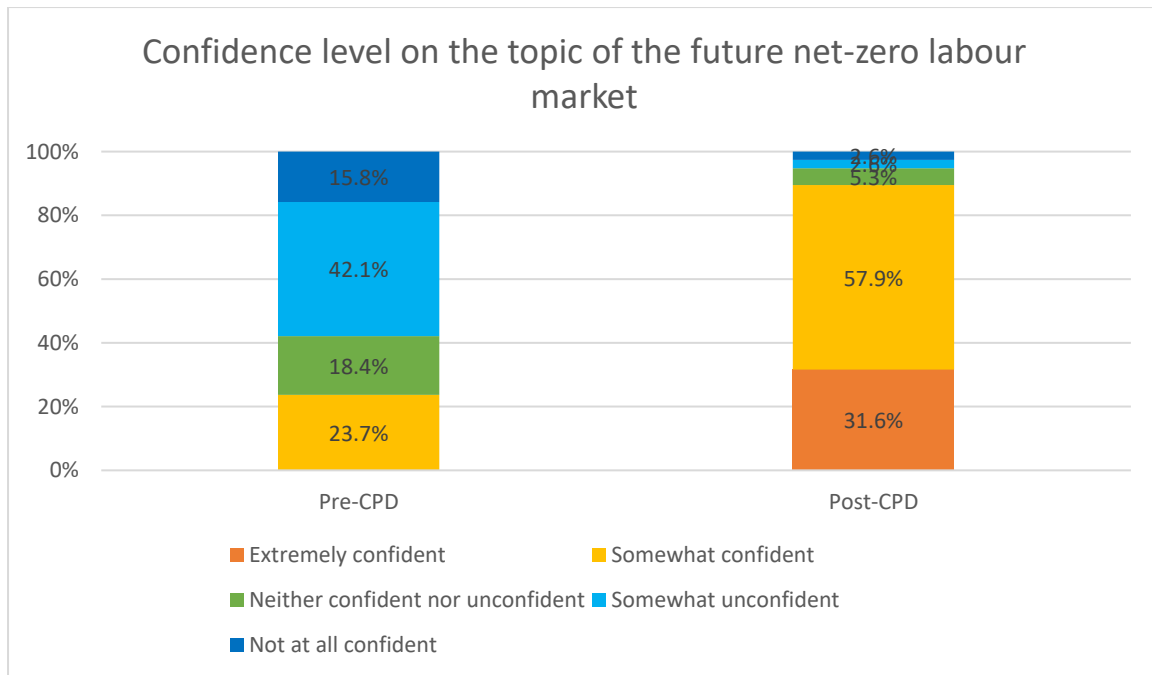


Figure 53. Confidence level on the topic of the future net-zero labour market (38 respondents)

A higher proportion of the respondents reported that they were confident on the topic of the future net-zero labour market after the CPD sessions (89.5%, 34 out of 38 respondents), compared to the pre-CPD sessions respondents (23.7%, 9 out of 38 respondents).

A Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated a significant increase in confidence regarding the future net-zero labour market among individuals after completing the CPD sessions ($z=-5.182$, $p<0.001$).

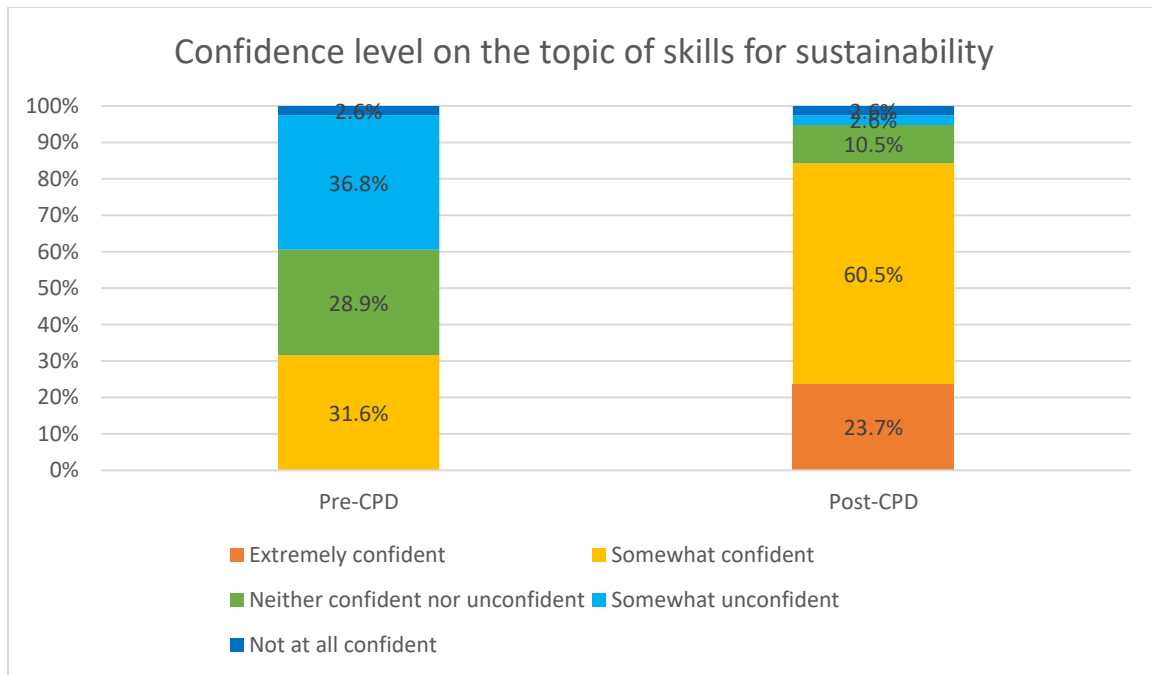


Figure 54. Confidence level on the topic of skills for sustainability (38 respondents)

A larger fraction of feedback providers also reported that they were confident on the topic of skills for sustainability after the CPD sessions (84.2%, 32 out of 38 respondents), compared to the pre-CPD sessions respondents (31.6%, 12 out of 38 respondents).

When we compared the difference from the same individual between the surveys, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that the confidence level on the topic of skills for sustainability was significantly higher after they completed the CPD sessions ($z = -4.853$, $p < 0.001$).

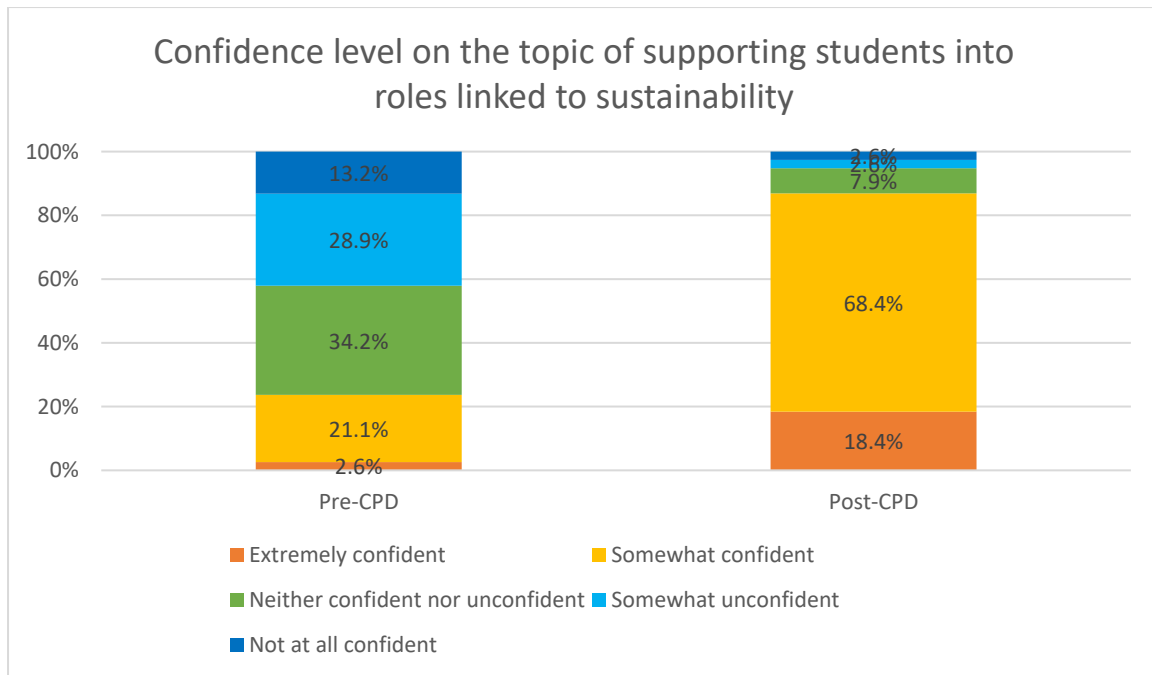


Figure 55. Confidence level on the topic of supporting students into roles linked to sustainability (38 respondents)

A higher proportion of participants mentioned that they were confident on the topic of supporting students into roles linked to sustainability after the CPD sessions (86.8%, 33 out of 38 respondents), compared to the pre-CPD sessions respondents (23.7%, 9 out of 38 respondents).

A Wilcoxon signed-rank test confirmed that the confidence level on the topic of supporting students into roles linked to sustainability was significantly higher after they completed the CPD sessions ($z=-4.970$, $p<0.001$).

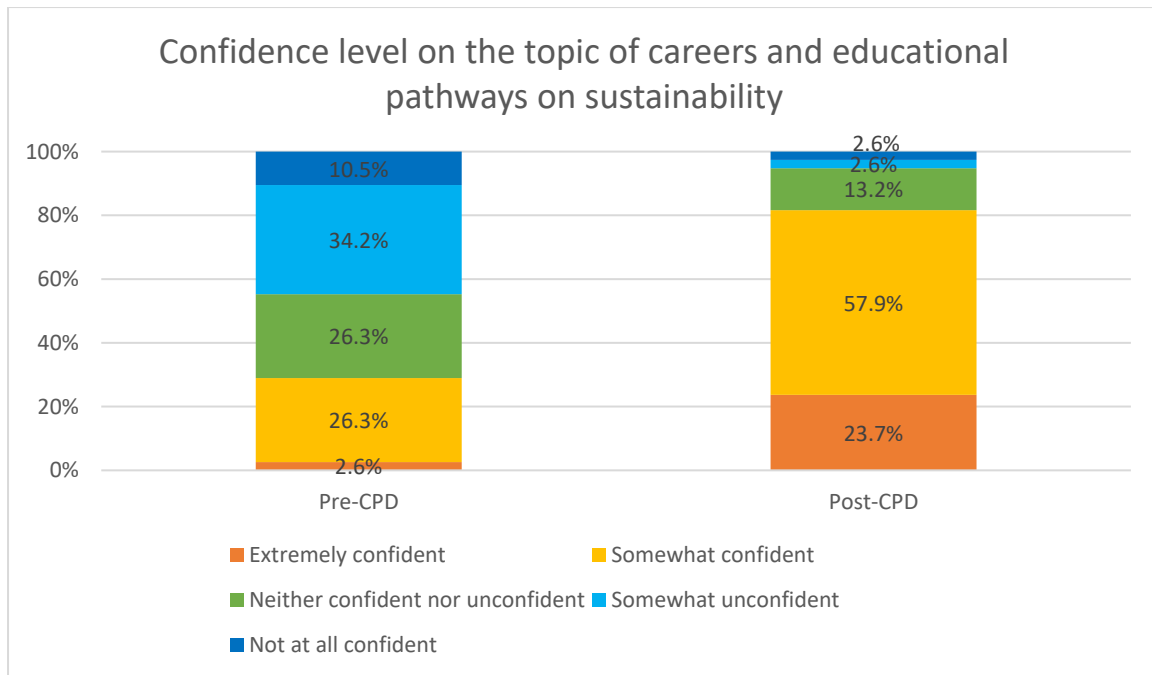


Figure 56. Confidence level on the topic of careers and educational pathways on sustainability (38 respondents)

Similarly, a greater percentage of those who took part said that they were confident on the topic of careers and educational pathways on sustainability after the CPD sessions (81.6%, 31 out of 38 respondents), compared to the pre-CPD sessions respondents (28.9%, 11 out of 38 respondents) and a Wilcoxon signed-rank test validated that the confidence level on the topic of careers and educational pathways on sustainability was significantly higher after they completed the CPD sessions ($z = -4.725, p < 0.001$).

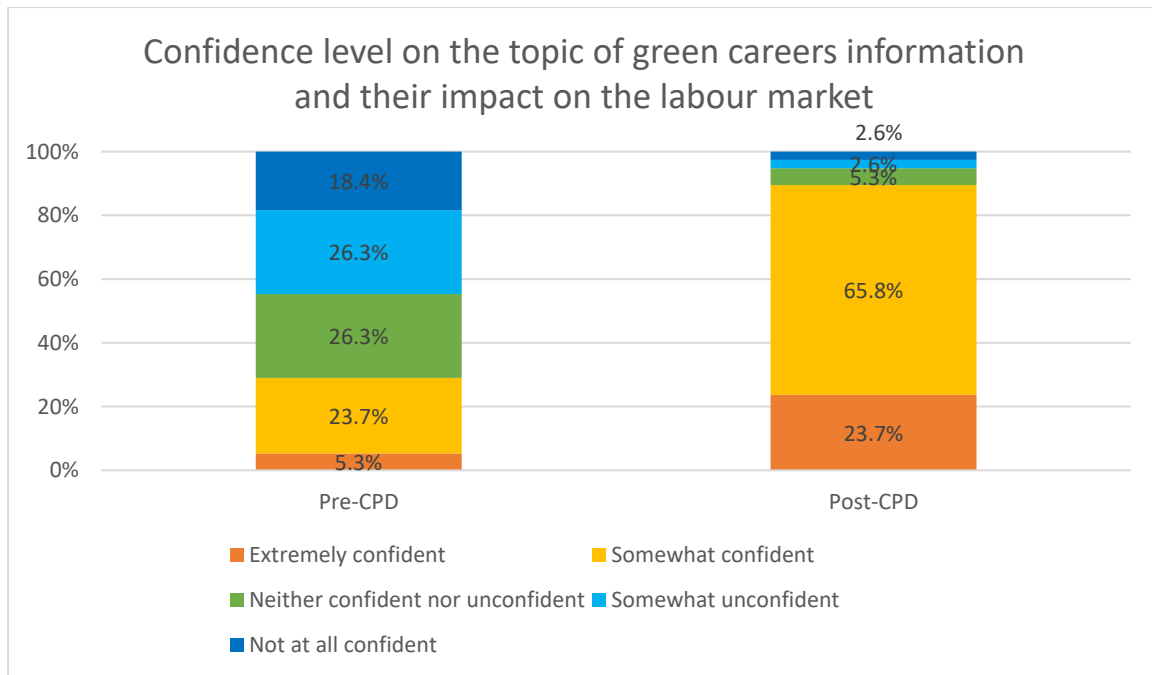


Figure 57. Confidence level on the topic of green careers information and their impact on the labour market (38 respondents)

A higher percentage of survey respondents said that they were confident on the topic of green careers information and their impact on the labour market after the CPD sessions (89.5%, 34 out of 38 respondents), compared to the pre-CPD sessions respondents (29%, 11 out of 38 respondents) which was confirmed by a Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicating that the confidence level on the topic of green careers information and their impact on the labour market was significantly higher after they completed the CPD sessions ($z=-4.791$, $p<0.001$).

Summary

Educators unanimously agreed on the value of the Sustainable Futures programme, with 100% stating that it is important for students to learn about sustainability in careers. This feedback highlights the programme’s relevance in equipping students for future career challenges.

A significant majority of the educators (80.6%, 25 out of 31 respondents) were likely to implement the Sustainable Futures programme in the 2024/25 academic. However, there were some barriers for them to start the delivery of the programme in

schools or colleges. Involvement of other staff to deliver the programme and time constraints were highlighted as the primary barriers.

For the CPD sessions, it achieved its outcomes for the teachers. After the CPD sessions, educators improved their understanding of sustainability and possessed higher levels of confidence on different topics related to sustainability. Also, most of the respondents (79.5%, 35 out of 44 respondents) found that labour market and green careers information was the most useful aspect of the CPD session.

Drawing from our analyses of educators' insights and CPD sessions, WWF and Partners could consider the following strategies to enhance the delivery and effectiveness of the Sustainable Futures programme:

1. Split CPD sessions based on prior knowledge.

Some respondents reported that they already possessed some knowledge of the content that was included in the CPD sessions, especially the topic of climate change. This was particularly the case for Science and Geography teachers. The respondents suggested that the CPD sessions should be split based on whether educators possess prior knowledge about sustainability.

2. Provide more case studies and examples.

Some respondents suggested that there should be more case studies and examples on how schools or colleges implement sustainability. The respondents also recommended the inclusion of more information about educational pathways into sustainable careers, to share with students.

3. Increase the number of employers for educators to connect with.

A limited number of employers for educators to connect with proved challenging when organising career talks. Some respondents suggested a wider pool of employers to connect with which would make it easier to organise business role model talks and broaden students' understanding of sustainable careers in a variety of industries.

4. Further resources and follow up sessions.

Further resources and how the CPD sessions link to the teaching of the programme would support educators in their delivery. Educators also

suggested follow up sessions in which WWF and Partners walked through the resources available and showed them examples on how the resources can be used for different delivery models.

6. Collaboration with key stakeholders

In assessing the effectiveness and reach of the Sustainable Futures programme, it is essential to consider the perspectives of those indirectly involved in the implementation of the programme - stakeholders from various organisations and educational institutions. This section is an exploration into the insights gathered from in-depth interviews with key stakeholders responsible for driving sustainability and career development within their respective organisations. Through these interviews, we gained a clearer understanding of the programme's successes, challenges, and overall impact.

Business Role Models

The Sustainable Futures programme career talks bring sustainable careers to life through meaningful encounters with employers and employees, who educate young people about how sustainability is integral to their work. This section of the report explores the experiences of individuals who have volunteered to be a business role model to provide students with a business encounter. The findings are based on interviews and a focus group with a range of external stakeholders who work with WWF and Partners to deliver business encounters. This qualitative methodology sought to capture the external stakeholders' experiences of collaborating with WWF and Partners on the Sustainable Futures programme, as well as their perspectives on the impact and effectiveness of the programme.

For all the business role models who participated in this evaluation, sustainability is fundamental to their profession. Their motivations to integrate the concept and practice of sustainability into their everyday professional practice stems from an authentic interest in topics such as geography and biodiversity, as well as the determination to play their part in taking care of the world's natural environment and address climate change.

The business role models' priorities regarding sustainability in their career are wide-ranging. For example, entrepreneurs' objectives include supporting start-ups in developing sustainable technology and the production of clean water and energy.

Whereas a sustainability consultant employed by a real estate company seeks to advise national and international clients on their sustainability goals and initiatives. This section of the report will investigate the business role models' motivations and priorities for sustainability in their careers, and how this translates into their capacity of being a role model for young people through the Sustainable Futures programme.

The business role models who volunteer for the programme collectively possess a wealth of knowledge and a range of experience in sustainability, as well as its application to their careers. They are dedicated to supporting start-ups and clients in a range of sustainability initiatives, services, and products:

“My background is engineering. I studied manufacturing engineering at the University of Cambridge and then I did two years of business consulting, and then I jumped into the world of start-ups. My previous startup was looking at solar powered desalination and then my current start-up which is somewhere between a start-up and a scale up, we have about 100 people, and we are developing an integrated battery and electrolyser technology”.

And

“I have been a startup person my whole career, either founding or investing or advising startups. I've done a variety of different startups, but really what is most relevant is most recently the last three or four years I have been focused on climate tech startups. I work with a few organisations.”

And

“I'm a sustainability consultant within my business's consulting team. I help our clients and their approach to sustainability. I started on the sustainability graduate scheme [ran by the business] [...] I finished my graduate scheme about two months ago now. I've just started [to] kind of transition into that role as a consultant, but most of my role is much more sitting within strategic sustainability consulting. So, how we can help our clients establish their sustainability goals and how they can find the right pathways to get there.”

The business role models illustrated their personal interest in sustainability as the predominant reason as to why they became involved in sustainability and sustainable careers. Interestingly, one of the business role model's dedications to

sustainability and environmental awareness stems from their hobby, scuba diving, and their motivation to take care of the planet's biodiversity and nature:

"I'm a scuba diver and that kind of sparked my interest in thinking, I'd love to do something in my life that helps coral reefs, and climate change is obviously a big impact on that. And over time I started to become aware that there is more and more push towards sustainability and start-ups are coming out to help do things to help fight climate change".

The business role models have clear sustainability agendas in their professions. One of the business role models' objectives is to innovate sustainable practices in the production of clean water and energy, and during their interview, they reflected on what one of their start-ups have established as part of their core company values:

"We have three company values, which is you have to 'go fast, stay safe and choose green'. So, 'stay safe' is clear, but then 'go fast' because we want to catch up with what was a conventional electrolyser but also have as much impact as possible. And then 'choose green' is really the main reason why people join the organisation".

The business role model recognises the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) but noted that their current start-up (which is in the early stages of development) does not have the time and resources to dedicate sufficient attention to CSR.

One of the business role model's sustainability agenda is to support climate technology start-ups to design and build sustainable technology that reduces damaging impacts on the environment. They are also motivated to support start-ups to become financially successful as they emerge as new businesses:

"It's clear that we want to work and help companies that are building technology which can help reduce the climate footprint that we have as a society today. Our top priorities are to support start-ups that are bringing new ways of doing things and helping them come to market in a way that they can make money as well because otherwise they won't exist, right? The technology needs to be commercialised."

The business role model's unified objectives to create sustainable technology and ensure commercial success illustrates a two-fold approach to a profession in a sustainable career. The business role model's commercial goal is to support start-

ups to become profitable; however, the start-up's production of climate-conscious technology also places CSR at the forefront, as their products and services have a positive impact on the environment.

Regarding careers guidance, the business role models supported the career development of young people getting involved in sustainable careers, whether that is through a traditional 'green job' or embedding sustainable practices into their chosen profession. From the perspective of one of the business role models, the careers guidance sector should be informed about labour market demands in green and sustainable jobs and seek to educate young people on the vast array of opportunities available:

“The main messages I'm trying to give is that there is a way to get involved in sustainability in many different functions. As an engineer, as a finance person, as a marketing person, as a data modeller, we hire all of those different people. You can have a job in sustainability in lots of [different ways] you don't have to just be a scientist. The second thing I think would be helpful is to understand which sectors we predict to grow in the future to give them [students] a bit of understanding. For example, people who maintain wind turbines, there is a huge demand for that and there's just no trained people and a huge demand. To know that that's a very secure route going forwards, I certainly would have no idea of that as a student. Which sectors are growing and desperate for people?”

Another business role model's reflection reiterates the importance of careers guidance in introducing young people to sustainable careers, highlighting the current movement towards providing opportunities for prospective employees to network and find employment in climate technology start-ups:

“In terms of career development, I think you can see there's more and more of a movement. Like job boards, networking events which are geared towards helping people with relevant skills, start finding jobs in companies that are all about fighting climate change.”

The discovery of the Sustainable Futures programme varied amongst the business role models. One of the business role models discovered the programme through their employer's existing partnership with WWF. Another business role model discovered the programme through their existing work with Founders4Schools. Contrastingly, one of the business role models did not know about the programme.

Their involvement as a role model has solely been based on their partnership with Founders4Schools.

The business role models have delivered career talks to school and college students at sustainability events online and in-person. One of the business role models prefers in-person career talks¹, although still enjoys interacting with the students online and values being a role model who can share their career experiences with young people. They also praised Founders4Schools for organising and facilitating the sustainability event:

“With being online, for safety reasons there's no camera or audio on the student's side, so it's always very hard to evaluate whether the students are listening and whether they find it interesting. You do usually get questions in the chat box and students commenting saying, ‘thanks very much’ [...] I always enjoy them, the speaking sessions. I do probably one every quarter, maybe with the Founders4Schools... They were well prepared, well facilitated, the events themselves. From a speaker perspective, that all went very smooth.”

Another business role model reflected on the interactive experience they had with students who were keen to engage and learn about careers in sustainability. The opportunity to volunteer was made possible through informative communication from their employer, which reveals the importance of businesses having a clear strategy in place to engage employees with the Sustainable Futures programme:

“I think the first interaction I had was actually going to one of the schools where they brought all the schools together and I just did a 10-minute career talk about how I got to my career and what my career and sustainability looks like. Then there was about 15 minutes of Q&A [...] Surprisingly, they [the students] were quite engaged. I didn't really know what to expect [...] Lots of questions to ask [from the students]”.

One of the business role models volunteered based on their motivation to inspire young people. During their interview, the business role model recognised their

¹ The business role model has moved outside of the United Kingdom (UK) since initially becoming a role model, therefore facilitating and attending in-person career talks is not currently possible.

middle-class background, but still sought to be a positive example to students from disadvantaged backgrounds who do not have access to opportunities to engage with employers or employees. As well as this, they appreciated the opportunity to inform young people about career options in sustainability:

“It all started out not driven by actually trying to help people get [into] sustainability [careers]. I started at Founders4Schools because I do believe that giving access to role models [...] to people who live in parts of society where they don't normally get access to them [...] I think it's a really important thing so that's what got me involved in the first place [...] I'm doing this programme because I want to help inspire kids to do, as I mentioned two-fold, that they can go and do something that might not be as conventional, and to make them also see that working in sustainability is a viable career option which I think is probably becoming a fairly recognised thing now”.

The business role model appreciated the impact the Sustainable Futures programme has on raising awareness and educating young people about climate change and sustainable careers, and highlighted how the programme contributes to developing a workforce who can work in their sector, supporting the industry's growth:

“I think we need more and more people interested in the topic, no doubt about it, right? It's one of the biggest problems of our time and I think in that context, the more people who are working in this industry, hopefully the bigger it will grow and the more opportunities there will be for our company to grow as well”.

The business role models raised several areas of the programme's business encounters which could undergo further development. Firstly, communication and networking were considered as key areas of development. As previously discussed, one of the business role models was not aware that they were a role model specifically for the Sustainable Futures programme. They recommended improved communication from Founders4Schools and WWF about not only their involvement in the programme as a role model, but also information about the programme as a whole. From a corporate and company perspective, they were keen to build a partnership with WWF, respecting the organisation's successful profile as an environmental charity:

“I’m always reluctant to get more emails because I get a lot of stuff, but even just an occasional e-mail saying ‘this is what we [WWF and Partners] do. This is what the Sustainable Futures programme is and thank you for being part of it.’ But we’re also doing this, this and this and this initiative [separate from the Sustainable Futures programme]”.

In relation to recruiting more volunteers, another business role model suggested that role models should be encouraged to share the opportunity to volunteer to their own networks. Similarly, a business who works closely with WWF and Partners recommended changing the application process for their employees to volunteer. Applying through Founders4Schools was not popular amongst the business’s employees due to what they perceived as a tedious process, and experienced technical faults and a lack of communication from Founders4Schools about what is involved in the role:

“We had concerns about the volunteering platform in terms of its accessibility and ease of use for employees that, for lack of better word, it has felt clunky to sign up [...] Referring them to an external platform [Founders4Schools] that then needs various other ways in which you sign up and create a profile, it can be a little bit clunky”.

From a business perspective, capturing feedback from their employees about their experiences as a business role model has proved challenging. Feedback has been informally collected from the various stakeholders involved (WWF, Founders4Schools and the business). One of the businesses sought a formal process of collecting feedback which is agreed upon by all stakeholders and is accessible for the business to use to consider their next steps in their involvement in the programme.

Drawing from the analysis of the experiences shared by business role models and their recommendations for improvement, WWF and Partners could consider the following strategies to enhance the delivery and effectiveness of career talks within the Sustainable Futures programme:

- 1. The inclusion of high-quality and informative labour market information (LMI).** WWF and Partner should include LMI about sustainable careers, particularly about sectors which are in demand for green workers and are

predicated to grow. As suggested by the business role models, the provision of LMI will assure young people that there are secure routes to green jobs, as well as sustainable careers that are not conventionally 'green.'

- 2. A forum for entrepreneurs and the self-employed.** One of the business role models suggested that role models should be encouraged to share the Sustainable Futures programme with their professional networks. WWF and Partners should establish a forum where the community of entrepreneurs and self-employed can share the opportunity to volunteer as a business role model, which could also serve as an opportunity for WWF and Partners to build stronger partnerships with this community who could provide critical knowledge and experience to the development of the programme.
- 3. A clear and systematic application process.** Applying to be a business role model through Founders4Schools was highlighted as unclear and tedious. The application process should adapt to a three-step process: (1) The business promotes the opportunity to volunteer as a business role model to their employees, (2) Employees apply to be a volunteer directly through their business, (3) The business informs Founders4Schools about volunteers who have applied to be a role model.
- 4. A clear and informative feedback process.** Capturing feedback from business role models has proved challenging due to the lack of a clear process for business role models and businesses to follow. A strategy WWF and Partners should adopt is collaborating with businesses and business role models to design a feedback process which collects data that answers key questions all the stakeholders have about business role models' experiences of the Sustainable Futures programme.

Workplace Partners

The Sustainable Futures programme experiences of workplaces provide opportunities for students to explore how sustainable thinking can be applied to the real-world context of careers. This section of the report examines the experiences of businesses who have collaborated with WWF and Partners to deliver experiences of workplaces, through the provision of 'insight days' at the workplace for students. The

findings are based on interviews with a range of external stakeholders who work with WWF and Partners to deliver experiences of workplaces.

The plethora of sustainability initiatives that the businesses have invested in is evidence of their commitment to being actors of positive change in their respective industry, and the significance placed on sustainability in their company agendas. The businesses are also motivated to be positive role models to young people and the incoming green workforce, recognising the impact that they can have on students' understanding of sustainable careers.

A key priority for the businesses is the sustainable transformation of their industry and services, as well as the empowerment and education of society about the role they can play in tackling the climate crisis. This section of the report will explore how the businesses' motivations and priorities translate into their role of providing meaningful workplace experiences for young people through the Sustainable Futures programme.

The businesses who provide experiences of workplaces for the programme have established sustainability agendas into their core company objectives. This illustrates their commitment to embedding sustainable practices into the workplace, serving as significant role models for students to understand sustainable careers. Their sustainability agendas are presented in the following quotes:

“Our most recent campaign around climate change, that’s been a business transformation piece of work as well as mobilising people to fight against climate change.”

And

“Sustainability as part of that whole building management and land acquisition is a huge factor in our industry and as a company specifically. We've put that as one of the key topics that clients want to engage with us on, the sustainability and technology”.

“It is [sustainability] a top priority for the organisation. How we work with our, globally not just in the UK, all our clients to embed sustainability into every part of the property life cycle [...] All our clients want to understand a lot more about how it's relevant for them. We offer those advisory services; it is a huge part of our business priority.”

As well as their company sustainability agendas, the businesses have worked closely with WWF on various campaigns. For one of the businesses, their partnership with WWF has proved successful in making concrete change in their shared interest and response to the climate crisis, through the provision of valuable sustainability education and experiences for young people in schools and colleges:

“All of these things [sustainability campaigns with WWF] would have had activations around school programmes [...] with young people and how we work with them to bring to life our campaign, but also to society, issues that young people want to talk about as well”.

Another business reflected on how the programme is closely aligned with their interests regarding sustainability. The business perceives the partnership as supportive of each other's aims and objectives; WWF and Partners inform the business about green jobs and the sustainable workforce, and the business are funders of the programme, supporting the programme's continued development for its expansion across all industries:

“It's just a huge topic [sustainability], to then be focusing on how we're building green skills and green jobs, working with external partners [including WWF and Partners] to be thinking of that pipeline of people that will be coming into the business that have got green skills, it's just going to be key for the business. Long term, absolutely it's important for us to be doing that. And then in the interim term, for us to be helping build a programme that does that for all industry with a partner as prolific as WWF is really important.”

Therefore, WWF and Partners have established foundational partnerships with businesses based on a common interest in educating society about the climate crisis and creating sustainable and greener ways of living and working. This foundation

has proved invaluable for the implementation of experiences of workplaces for the Sustainable Futures programme.

The businesses discovered the programme through their existing partnership with WWF. The businesses' sustainability agendas and careers work for young people caught the attention of WWF and Partners and the businesses were asked to become members of the programme's advisory board:

“As part of our school programme, we concentrate on climate change [...] They [the students] create climate change campaigns. That's again, how do we give them a voice in the platform to talk about this topic? But also doing it through a role, creating content, you're [the students are] doing this. You're [the students] being the producers, directors of your own content [...] It [the business' interests and priorities in sustainability career development] is about transforming our business [...] It's not just about having the skill to do the job, but it's also about having 'the how' and 'the why' you would do things in particular ways, which is very much encouraged through our transformation work”.

The businesses run insight days for students to visit their offices for a tour and taster day. One of the business's insight days provides students with the opportunity to network with employees and learn about their career journeys. At another business, students participate in an 'immersive experience,' in which they create a news report about a topic surrounding sustainability, the planet and climate change, topics of which are aligned with the wider interests of the business's sustainability agenda. The experiential and creative processes students participate in educates them about a sustainable career in the media and entertainment industry:

“Students take on roles to create their content as producers, reporters. What we're doing is a subject matter which might be around the environment and sustainability, but the creative industries and the roles within creative industry are shared with them in their process of placing a news report [...] It's writing 90 seconds worth of footage each, and each of their studios bring together a 6 minute report [...] It's very good to land really key important messages”.

As well as the students, one of the businesses highlighted the importance of paying significant attention to teachers who attend insight days too, illustrating their awareness of the valuable time teachers take out to organise and attend

experiences in workplaces. The business seeks to work with teachers to create an interactive and educational insight day which also supports teachers' teaching requirements and objectives.

The insight days have been a broadly positive experience. For one of the businesses, employees appreciated the flexibility of scheduling the insight day around their work commitments and they enjoyed sharing their career journey with the students. One employee perceived their involvement in the programme as filling a gap in sustainable careers guidance that they did not receive as an adolescent during their education. These insights reveal an authentic motivation to support and educate young people about their career options in sustainability and the corporate world of work:

“From their career insight days, hugely, hugely positive [feedback from employees]. The benefit for employees is they're not required to spend a whole day going out of the office and travelling, so it doesn't disrupt their working life too much [...] It's an employee engagement opportunity where we can get employees to really share their skills and experience and feel like they're passing on knowledge and inspiring a future generation that's coming into the workforce”.

“When I made those educational decisions to go into sustainability, the idea of taking that into a job was almost intangible. It [the subject of Geography] was something I enjoyed learning about or had interest in. How that would result in a job was really unclear to me as a kid at school. The sustainability roles weren't really there, it was become a Geography teacher, maybe you could do conservation work and ecology. But the idea of taking that into a corporate world just didn't exist [...] That was just something as a kid that I never had any exposure to and just really wasn't there. I think for me that's the impact that I feel I could have [on students' understanding of sustainable careers]”.

Based on these positive experiences and productive partnerships, the businesses are keen to continue their collaboration with WWF and Partners on the Sustainable Futures programme to develop informative careers guidance which supports students in their transition to the world of work and the green economy. These sentiments are demonstrated in the quote below:

“There is a lot of information that is shared [from WWF and Partners]. We have regular meetings that is in the diary. I think that the theme that I get, we're always trying to get to somewhere [...] Young people, schools, education is my bread and butter and that's what I do for a job from a corporate end. It's whether they [WWF and Partners] want to continue this. It's a great opportunity, it's development of career advice. I feel quite passionate about that and that could be about not necessarily just about sustainability, but career advice, what that needs to be and how it responds [to changes in society and the workplace]”.

Workplace partners suggested that some areas of the Sustainable Futures programme should undergo further development to improve its efficiency and enhance its impact. Firstly, WWF and Partners should broaden the locations where experiences of workplaces are implemented, particularly across the United Kingdom. In doing so, WWF and Partners could provide valuable workplace encounters to young people in underserved communities. Increasing the number of locations for insight days would require sufficient time, skilled staff (from WWF and Partners and the businesses they partner with) and adequate funding:

“Everything tends to happen in organisations in London. London is a very served community in terms of the partnerships that you can have in London, where if we want to have a systemic change, we need to look at some of those communities where this is underserved. The platform with Founders4Schools is good for that, because you can do virtual sessions, and you can go into schools in all sorts of social mobility black spots all over the UK. But I would love to be able to facilitate this sort of thing in our Leeds office, in our Glasgow office [...] There is the very resource intensive preparing the day ensuring the day goes smoothly. You need a facilitator to help out.”

WWF and Partners should find ways of developing effective partnerships with schools and colleges which lead to the delivery of meaningful experiences of the workplace for their learners. One of the businesses noted that the priorities and pressures schools and colleges must manage influences their capacity to adopt and deliver sustainable workplace experiences. However, securing buy-in from schools and colleges, particularly senior leadership teams to implement sustainable career guidance could ensure wider adoption of the programme in education:

“The reality is for all of this work, the teachers are your customer, and if they're not bought in, and if they don't believe how it's going to help them achieve the targets that they've been set by their senior leadership team and [that are] normally centred around Ofsted, they know it's a good thing to do [the Sustainable Futures programme] but they are making decisions based on having less time [...] I think if we're trying to get them to do more than they can we're going to hit those barriers continuously [...] And that's where I think WWF can really make the shift and change”.

Regarding the application process to run an experience in the workplace, businesses sought clear guidance about the organisation of insight days, as well as about their position and role. Such clear guidance would ensure the long-term implementation and sustainability of the programme in partnership with businesses:

“There's a format that you can set up and run and replicate like a blueprint but doesn't require so much facilitation. Depends how comfortable the schools are [...] Businesses definitely do want to do it and they'll be looking for opportunities. But do we need a little bit more hand holding than is anticipated? They'll [businesses] have things set up already like work experience programmes and CV workshops and things that they do with their careers and recruitment teams. So, there are things to tap into [...] You can't scale up to this sort of thing too quickly”.

Based on the analysis of businesses' experiences and their suggestions for areas of development, WWF and Partners should implement the following recommendations to improve the delivery and impact of experiences of workplaces and the Sustainable Futures programme:

- 1. Guidance and support for school and college staff.** WWF and Partners should ensure that the organisation of experiences of workplaces is not only considerate of the students' experience, but also the school and college staff. An appropriate channel of communication between school and college staff and businesses should be established and followed when collaborating on what the school or college expects the experience of the workplace to entail and why it is worth the school or college's valuable time.
- 2. Stronger partnerships with schools and colleges, particularly senior leadership teams.** It is vital for WWF and Partners to achieve buy-in from senior leadership teams who have significant influence over the adoption and

delivery of the Sustainable Futures programme in their school or college. Throughout the evaluation, there have been some instances of successfully engaging senior leaders and central contacts within multi academy trusts, as part of the WWF's enhanced programme and Villiers Park's place-based model working closely with schools and colleges to embed the programme within the curriculum. However, this could be improved by programme partners working more closely with schools and colleges to establish a framework and/or schedule which meets the needs of each school or college.

- 3. Clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of businesses.** One of the businesses who participated in this evaluation highlighted the importance of understanding their role as providers of work experience, as well as WWF and Partners' expectations of their involvement. WWF and Partners should establish a systematic framework for businesses to follow, as this would provide clarification about their involvement, further encouraging businesses to get involved in the programme.

Education Senior Leadership Perspectives

The following analysis integrates feedback from senior leaders and strategic leads within education, who provided detailed accounts of their experiences with the programme. Their reflections highlight both the enthusiasm and commitment that characterised the programme's launch, as well as the practical challenges encountered during its execution.

The launch of the Sustainable Futures programme was met with strong enthusiasm and support from educational institutions. Stakeholders appreciated the clarity and resources provided during the programme's introduction. A strategic careers lead at a large multi-academy trust highlighted this, stating:

"The support we had from the WWF to get the programme off the ground was very strong. There was a lot of contact and communication, especially in the beginning. The CPD sessions were very thorough, and we felt well-supported in getting the programme started."

This initial phase was crucial in setting a positive tone for the programme's integration into schools and colleges. The stakeholders felt that the early engagement provided them with the necessary tools and confidence to begin implementing the programme within their institutions.

The programme's emphasis on practical support has been widely recognised, which is reflected in the following quotes:

"The CPD sessions and the resources were of high quality, and they helped us to implement the programme effectively."

"We were able to integrate sustainability into our career guidance, which has been a great way to engage students in thinking about their future in the context of environmental responsibility."

A key success of the Sustainable Futures programme has been its focus on promoting awareness of green careers amongst students. The programme effectively linked sustainability with career development, inspiring students to consider roles in sustainability-related fields. Despite the challenges inherent in implementing a new programme, many schools have reported positive outcomes. A senior leader of an academy trust highlighted:

"We've made great progress in embedding sustainability within our schools' culture. The programme provided us with the resources and framework we needed to start thinking about sustainability in a structured way."

The flexibility offered by the programme allowed schools to tailor activities to their specific needs, which further enhanced its impact:

"What worked well for us was the ability to adapt the programme to fit our existing curriculum. We could take the elements that were most relevant to our students and integrate them into our ongoing activities."

The adaptability of the Sustainable Futures programme was particularly noted by a project manager at a learning trust, who appreciated how it could fit into various school contexts:

“The joy and the bonus of the WWF programme was that it was almost like a pickup and deliver programme. The teachers didn’t have to do a lot of prep behind it. ... but pointing out how the activities fits with the Gatsby benchmarks would encourage more active participation.”

This adaptability allowed schools within the trust to implement the programme with minimal additional workload, making it accessible despite varying levels of existing engagement with sustainability.

Despite the programme's strengths, some challenges have emerged regarding its long-term sustainability. One of the main challenges faced by the stakeholder groups is ensuring that schools maintain momentum after the initial implementation phase. Although the programme started well and was supported by WWF, the long-term impact can be negatively influenced by limited follow-up and ongoing engagement. This has raised concerns about the ability of schools to sustain the programme without further guidance or support:

“Since March, the follow-up has been lacking. I don’t think the two or three days we had are enough for schools to continue momentum on their own. Without ongoing support, it will be difficult for the programme to be sustainable. I would be hesitant to put schools through this again without more follow-up and expertise from WWF to ensure the programme's effectiveness.”

One of the key concerns in effectively implementing sustainability-focused programmes is ensuring that schools have the capacity to adopt and integrate them into their existing curricula. While external support can alleviate some of the immediate burdens, the long-term sustainability of these initiatives requires deeper engagement from schools themselves. A career hub lead reflects on these issues:

“The main challenge is getting career leaders or teachers to adopt and use these resources, as schools are already stretched. Funding third parties to deliver the work helps overcome this capacity barrier, but it’s not sustainable in the long term because it doesn’t embed the programme within the school. Despite this, I definitely want to stay involved, as there’s a shared vision between what we’re doing and WWF’s goals. Moving forward, we need to ensure the programme continues to develop and align with local initiatives to maximise its impact.”

To ensure the long-term success and wider impact of the Sustainable Futures programme, several key improvements can be made based on stakeholder feedback. Whilst the programme has been well-received for its content and delivery, there are opportunities to expand its reach, better align with school needs, and strengthen engagement with younger students. The project manager for a learning trust highlighted important areas for enhancement:

“The Sustainable Futures programme is an excellent piece of extracurricular work, especially for older students who can use it as part of their job or UCAS applications, and in understanding how life works. I think the programme has potential for more longevity if it’s introduced to younger students, around years 8, 9, and 10, where there is more time and flexibility to engage. Our middle schools were really keen to get involved, but they couldn’t participate as they wouldn’t get the accreditation or recognition for it... there’s definitely a need to involve younger students”.

An important next step for the Sustainable Futures programme is also to explore partnerships with other organisations to broaden its reach and impact. For example, a participant highlighted the potential for collaboration with groups such as Girlguiding, which has a strong focus on equipping young women with essential skills for the future. By aligning with initiatives like these, the Sustainable Futures programme could benefit from established networks that engage young people in meaningful activities:

“I genuinely think it’s a really good programme. Let’s get it out there and connect with other organisations like Girlguiding, as it would fit well into their activities. Girlguiding is very much about making sure we equip our young women with the tools for the future and sustainable careers is one of those tools.”

Such partnerships would not only expand the programme’s audience but also create opportunities to integrate sustainability education into existing frameworks, ensuring that a wider range of young people are equipped with knowledge and tools for a sustainable future. Collaborating with external organisations that share similar goals could also help with a more comprehensive approach to sustainability education, strengthening its presence in both formal and informal educational settings.

There is a strong argument for collaborating with other organisations to maximise the impact of sustainability-focused programmes like Sustainable Futures. Stakeholders highlight the importance of avoiding duplication and making better use of existing resources through coordinated efforts. By aligning with local projects and initiatives, sustainability programmes can reach more schools and provide a more comprehensive offer to students. As a careers hub lead mentioned:

“There's a really good alignment between what we're doing and what XXX is doing at WWF. So that's why we're keen to collaborate. There's a lot of other stuff going on locally as well. We are working on a project called the Green Futures Project, which is about supporting young people into future green jobs that we need to achieve net zero and nature recovery. We know we need 46,000 new green jobs to reach our ambitions, so we want to make sure young people are maximising opportunities in those jobs. We've piloted three different approaches and now we're scaling those projects”.

By working closely with organisations already involved in green job development, such as the careers hub, WWF can benefit from a more streamlined and coordinated approach to sustainability education. This could include joint webinars, CPD opportunities for teachers, and the sharing of resources to reach a wider audience. The challenge, however, lies in ensuring that the programmes are delivered effectively without overwhelming the already stretched capacity of schools.

One of the key insights from stakeholders highlights the potential for greater engagement with sustainability programmes like WWF's through external accountability mechanisms. The stakeholder notes that while schools may show interest in sustainability, consistent and meaningful adoption often requires clear expectations from regulatory bodies. Specifically, they explain:

“I think the time when you will really see massive engagement with WWF and other organisations is when Ofsted get involved because as soon as the inspectors start saying we want to see your green policy and we want to see evidence that you're doing it, then all of the schools will prioritise it immediately”.

This observation suggests that integrating sustainability into the criteria used by bodies like Ofsted could play a critical role in holding schools accountable for their environmental practices. By making sustainability a measurable and inspected

component of school performance, schools would be more likely to prioritise these initiatives and collaborate with organisations like WWF to ensure they meet the required standards. This accountability could help drive long-term, structured engagement with sustainability efforts across the education sector, leading to a more consistent and impactful integration of sustainability practices.

Youth Advisory Group

As part of the Sustainable Futures programme, a Youth Advisory Group (YAG) was set up to ensure youth voice was embedded within the programme from the beginning and throughout. The YAG was made up of 14 young people from diverse backgrounds, across England, Scotland and Wales. The group met monthly, and its objective was for young people to input into the programme, including co-designing key programme activities. It was also a personal and professional development opportunity for the young people, to support their skills development and enhance their career prospects.

During this evaluation project, we have actively engaged with the YAG throughout the evaluation process of the Sustainable Futures programme, ensuring that the perspectives of young people are central to our approach. Our engagement has been structured around several key activities that have allowed the YAG to contribute meaningfully to the evaluation.

We began our engagement by organising an initial meeting with the YAG, where we provided them with detailed information about the evaluation process. During this session, we discussed the programme's goals, the objectives of the evaluation, and the methodologies we intended to use.

This meeting was followed by a collaborative workshop focused on refining our data collection approach. The YAG provided valuable feedback on the proposed questions and methodologies, which led us to edit and improve the data collection tools to better reflect the insights and experiences of young people.

Based on the discussions in this workshop, we revised our data collection tools using the feedback from the young people by replacing some challenging questions with

more accessible, open-ended ones and rephrasing a series of questions to encourage broader discussions and increase engagement. Additionally, based on their feedback, we simplified the language of some focus group questions for clarity, incorporated preferred question styles, and introduced the option for students to share their thoughts in writing, to accommodate those less comfortable speaking in focus groups.

Following this meeting, we maintained an open line of communication with the YAG, ensuring that their input continued to shape the evaluation. In March 2024, we shared some of the preliminary findings and recommendations with the YAG based on the data gathered up to that point. This step was crucial in validating our conclusions from their perspective and ensuring that they resonate with the experiences of the young people involved in the programme. The YAG's feedback was instrumental in thinking about our final report and the next steps.

The YAG was intentionally structured not as a means of only extracting information from young members but as a platform for mutual growth and learning. Each session was thoughtfully designed to include educational elements, allowing young people to engage in conversations and gain valuable knowledge and skills. As part of WWF's commitment to transparency and recognising the contributions of the youth involved, we will present quantitative and qualitative data highlighting the specific skills and benefits those participants gained through their membership in the advisory group. This data will provide clear evidence of the positive impact their involvement has had on their personal and educational development.

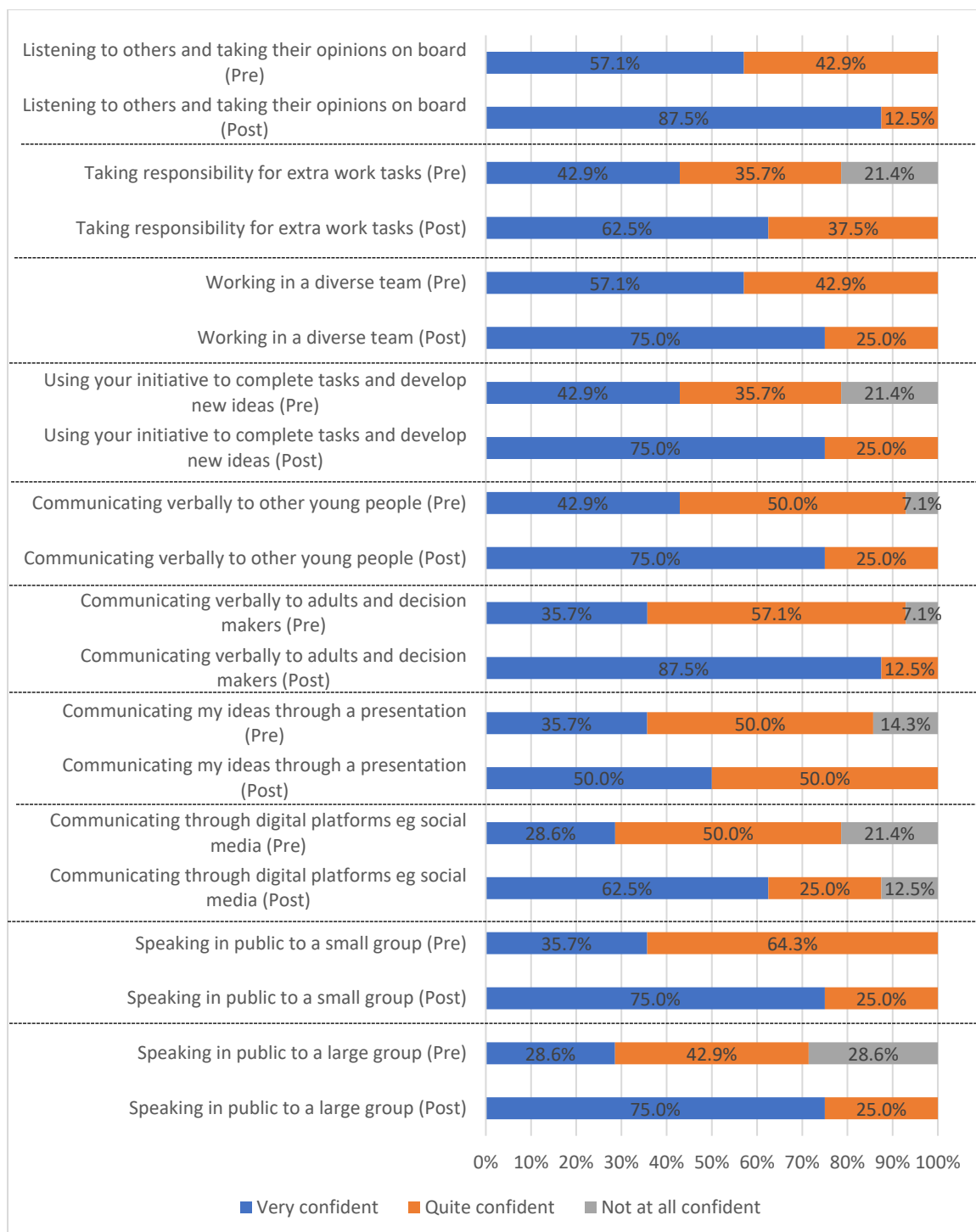


Figure 58. Confidence level on various areas (Pre-programme, 14 respondents; Post-programme, 8 respondents)

After participating in the programme, 75% of the YAG participants (6 respondents) reported being "very confident" speaking to large groups, a significant increase from the 29% (4 respondents) who felt this way before. Similarly, 75% (6 respondents)

also felt "very confident" speaking to small groups post-programme, compared to 36% (5 respondents) pre-programme.

Students also reported a marked improvement in their ability to communicate with adults and decision-makers. Before the programme, only 36% of students (5 respondents) felt "very confident" in these interactions, while a larger proportion (57%, 8 respondents) felt only "quite confident." Following their involvement in the programme, 87.5% of students (7 respondents) reported feeling "very confident" in communicating with adults and decision-makers. This demonstrates that the programme successfully enhanced students' ability to engage with authority figures and stakeholders, a vital skill for both academic and professional growth.

Joining the YAG also positively influenced students' confidence in using digital platforms for communication, such as social media. Before the programme, only 28.6% of students (4 respondents) felt "very confident" using digital tools to communicate, with 50% (7 respondents) reporting that they were "quite confident." Post-programme, 62.5% of students (5 respondents) expressed feeling "very confident" in their ability to communicate through digital channels. Given the growing reliance on digital communication in both education and the workplace, this significant improvement highlights the programme's success in enhancing students' digital literacy and communication skills.

YAG participants also demonstrated significant improvements in teamwork and collaborative skills. The percentage of students feeling "very confident" in working within diverse teams rose from 57.1% (8 respondents) pre-programme to 75% (6 respondents) post-programme. One of the members mentioned:

"Feeling as though I have contributed and made active change fills me with immense confidence for future voluntary roles and engagement with sustainable jobs."

Additionally, confidence in listening to others and taking their opinions on board increased from 57.1% (8 respondents) to 87.5% (7 respondents). These findings indicate that the programme effectively cultivated key interpersonal skills, such as

collaboration and active listening, which are crucial for successful teamwork in both academic and professional environments.

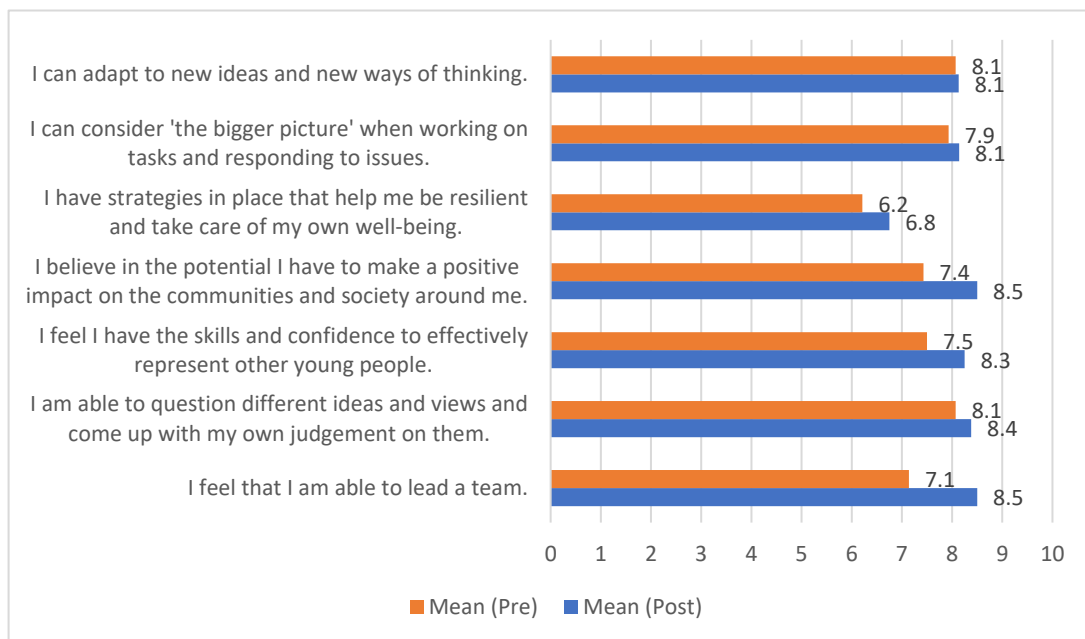


Figure 59. Agreement level of various areas before and after the programme (10-point scale) (Pre-programme, 14 respondents; post-programme, 8 respondents)

Figure 59 shows the areas of personal growth after the participants joined the programme. Many participants reported that they were improved after they joined the programme, especially in leadership from 7.1 before the programme to 8.5 after the programme (10-point scale). Besides this, 75.0% of participants (6 respondents) were willing to risk some failures to research their goals after the programme compared to 42.9% of participants (6 respondents) before the programme.

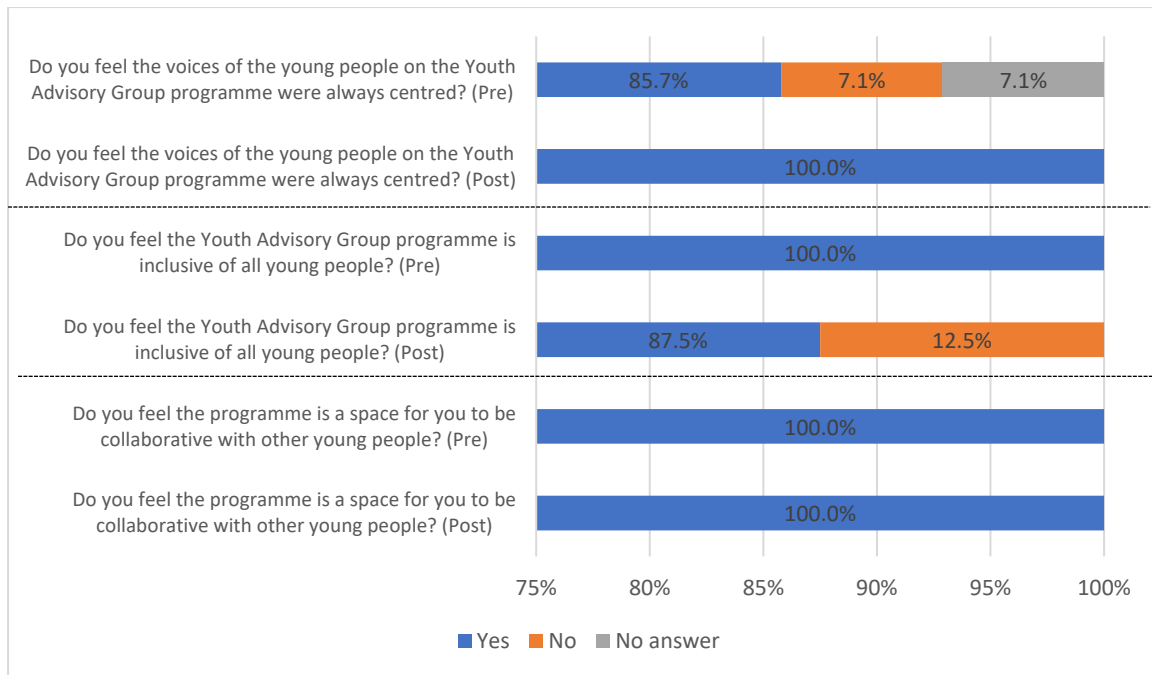


Figure 60. Feedback on the programme (Pre-programme, 14 respondents; post-programme, 8 respondents)

The participants of the Sustainable Futures programme’s YAG shared the impact of the programme. Some participants indicated that they have significantly enhanced their awareness and understanding of sustainable careers, empowering individuals to consider and engage with sustainability in their professional lives:

“I think it helped people know and understand more about sustainable jobs and have a better overview of sustainability “

And

“Has altered my choice in degree to something sustainability based.”

Participants also shared several insights about how engaging in the programme impacted their education experience. Some of the participants noted that it influenced their future educational and career ambitions. For instance, one participant shared:

"I have been infatuated with conservation efforts for a considerable amount of time, so I would like to have a bachelor of science focusing on ornithology and zoology. I am planning to study in Bangor, as this is essentially the best centre for environmental pursuits."

So, the programme has reinforced existing passions and helped guide future academic decisions. Others reflected on how the programme changed their daily habits and thinking. One participant remarked:

"It helped me learn new things that I didn't know before, and genuinely helped me, and I was able to put those lessons into my daily life."

Moreover, participants felt deeply supported by the programme's approach to youth engagement. As one participant shared:

"The SFYAG enabled me and so many other young people to give our voices a platform on the climate crisis."

And

"WWF's Youth engagement area is not just about checking a box, which is not something that can be said about many organisations. I promise they will look after you and care about what you have to say, and there will be results to prove it."

This demonstrates how the programme created a sense of belonging and trust amongst participants and a lasting impact on their personal and professional journeys:

"I found this experience immensely fulfilling, from meeting new and wonderful people I would've otherwise never encountered, to engaging my youth voice to contribute to the group."

And

"I have felt part of a team that had made me more dedicated and disciplined, along with making me feel like I'm making a difference."

In general, members of the YAG provided very positive feedback on the programme. After the programme, all of them agreed the voices of the young people on the YAG programme were always centred, and the programme was a space for them to be collaborative with other young people.

Summary

The evaluation of the Sustainable Futures programme reveals key themes that cut across the experiences and perspectives of students, educators, and businesses, highlighting both distinct and overlapping concerns. Before the programme, a major barrier for students was their lack of awareness about how sustainability could align with diverse career paths. While the programme made progress in addressing this, the limited pre-programme exposure to sustainability remains a challenge that needs to be tackled earlier in their educational journey. Before involvement with this programme, many students did not realise how sustainability could fit into a wide range of sectors beyond traditionally green' jobs. However, hands-on experiences like insight days and career talks significantly shifted their perspectives, with the majority of students reporting newfound interest and confidence in pursuing sustainability-focused roles. Practical exposure proved crucial in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world career paths.

Shared but distinct priorities

The results of the evaluation shows that all stakeholders share a fundamental recognition of sustainability's importance but engage with it differently depending on their roles:

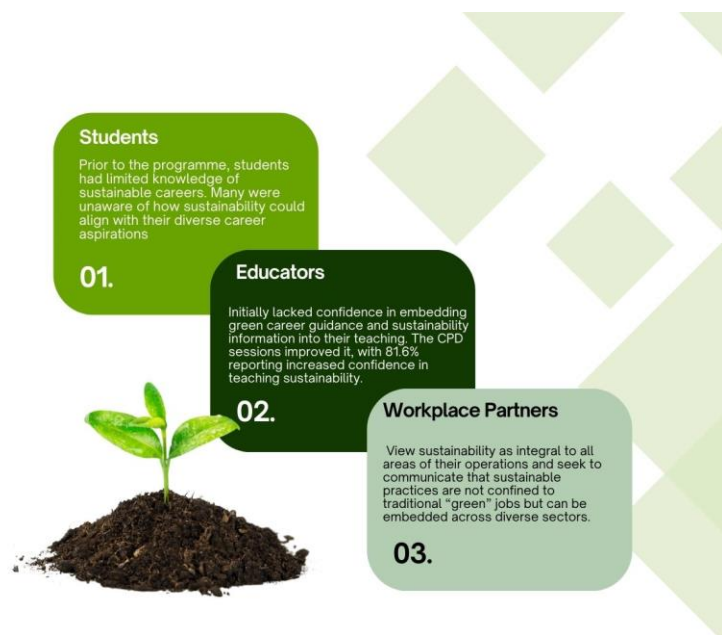


Figure 61. Shared values amongst all the key stakeholders

Educators also experienced both benefits from the programme and some challenges in implementation. CPD sessions were highly effective in improving educators' confidence in teaching sustainability and embedding green careers into their

curriculum. Many reported increased willingness to continue incorporating these lessons. However, structural barriers in school settings such as time constraints and the pressure of existing curriculum requirements sometimes put limitations on educators from fully integrating sustainability topics. The overlap between students' and educators' challenges is clear: without sufficient resources and time for educators, students' exposure to sustainability concepts will remain limited, suggesting a need for systemic changes in how sustainability education is prioritised in schools and colleges.

Workplace partners and business role models participating in the programme highlight the systemic interdependencies between industry, education, and the evolving green economy. Many businesses are driven by a deep-seated commitment to sustainability, often rooted in personal motivations and aligned with corporate strategies. Their participation in the programme, through initiatives such as career talks and insight days, demonstrates a strong desire to bridge the gap between theoretical education and the practical realities of sustainable careers. However, this participation also comes with challenges, particularly around the scalability of their involvement and the systemic barriers in shaping a green talent pipeline.

One key theme that emerges from exploring the data from different stakeholder groups is the skills gap in students transitioning into the workforce. While businesses emphasise the growing demand for sustainability-related roles across different sectors, they consistently encounter graduates who lack the necessary practical skills and sustainability-focused competencies. This highlights a critical intersection between business needs and educational outcomes, where schools and colleges must better integrate sustainability into their curricula. The alignment between business expectations and the delivery of sustainability education remains underdeveloped, with businesses often stepping in to fill these gaps through practical experiences which is often constrained by limited resources and relying on volunteers which can impact long-term engagement.

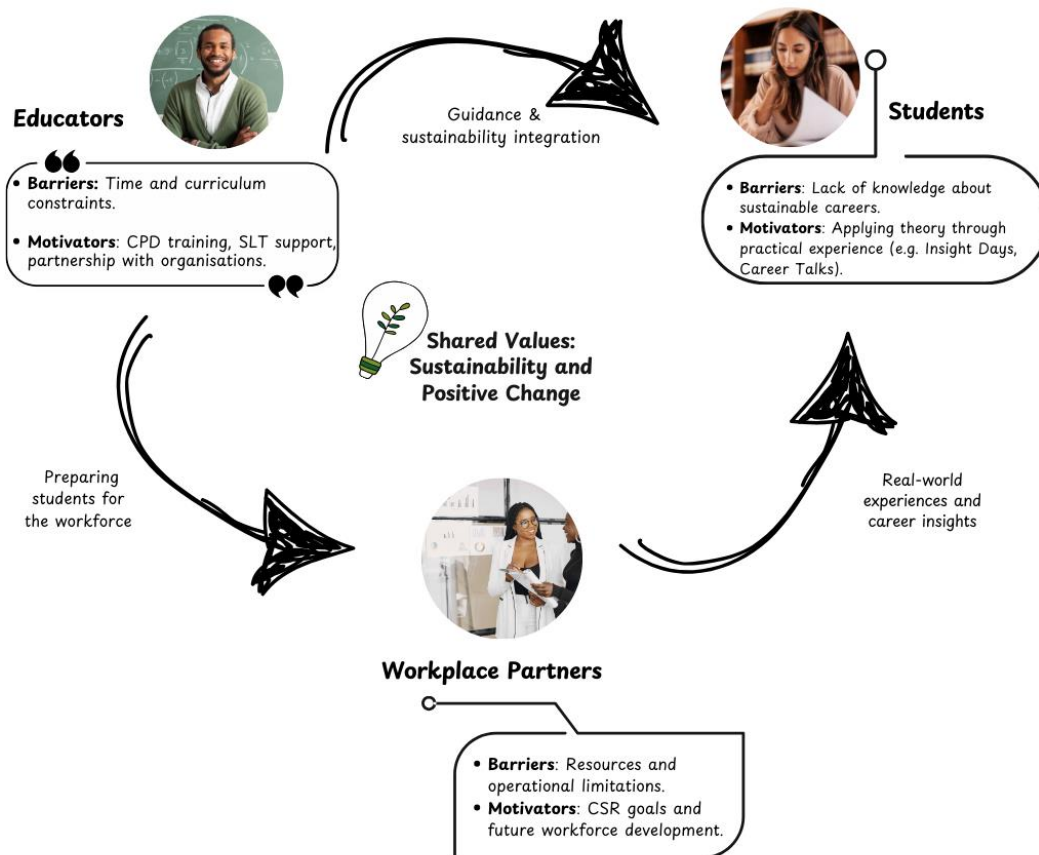


Figure 62. Stakeholder interrelationships within the Sustainable Futures programme.

The overall review of stakeholder interrelationships within the Sustainable Futures programme highlights that students, educators, and businesses share common values and a strong interest in making positive changes through sustainability education and career development. However, while these shared goals have driven meaningful contributions from all groups, the full potential of their collaboration is sometimes limited by fragmented processes and communication. Streamlining interactions, clarifying roles, and creating a more cohesive system would not only enhance the programme's efficiency but also strengthen the alignment of educational outcomes with industry needs, enabling a more effective pathway for students into sustainable careers.

7. Conclusions

The world has reached a significant moment in its history. If the sustainability of the planet is not addressed then we will begin to see irreversible changes to the planet, the social and political costs of which are unclear. Sustainability needs to be integrated into many aspects of life, including how we view career decision-making. Young people can be educated in how to integrate sustainability thinking into career choices. This is not just about choosing jobs in obviously linked industrial sectors such as renewable energy. It is also about understanding how one's values and views around sustainability can influence the type of work one does or the type of employer one wants to work for. Sustainability can be applied to every career.

As a significant thought leader in this area, the WWF has a role to play in helping young people learn how they can begin to make a difference in their career choices. To do this they have created the Sustainable Futures programme in partnership with Villiers Park and Founders4Schools (WWF and Partners). The programme offers a diverse range of experiences including a student course, career talks and experiences of workplaces. To ensure that teachers are prepared to deliver aspects of the programme, WWF and Partners offer CPD to help develop the confidence and knowledge of those tasked with delivering the programme. Materials have been developed and hosted on the WWF website where they are free to download with no registration process required. This represents significant investment by WWF and Partners, and in commissioning a comprehensive evaluation of the programme, they are underlining their intention to evolve and grow the programme so that it is fit for purpose and results in positive outcomes for young people. This section considers some of the high-level findings which address the requirements concluded from this evaluation regarding the Sustainable Futures programme's next steps.

Relevance and quality design

The Sustainable Futures programme is an innovative and integrated set of activities aimed at increasing young people's awareness of sustainability and integrating the associated values with career decision-making. The programme is flexible and uses a variety of delivery models; for example, as an extra-curricular activity, as a

standalone element of a careers programme, delivered within tutor time, or integrated into other curriculum subjects such as PSHE, Science and Geography. This latter approach provides schools and colleges an opportunity to meet Gatsby Benchmark 4 (Holman, 2014; Holman, 2018) which asks all subject teachers to integrate career learning into curriculum subjects.

The programme is structured in such a way as to provide three main components for young people:

- A taught course.
- An opportunity to meet with role models from businesses.
- An opportunity to visit workplaces including insight days and more substantive work placements.

Different components are delivered by different partners, and this can introduce a lack of consistency and coherence for educators and businesses. For example, the online materials are housed on different partner organisations' websites, with the student course resources on WWF's Sustainable Futures microsite, and resources and activities related to business encounters and workplace experiences on Founders4Schools' website. This leads to a lack of consistency and coherence and can be construed as stand-alone programmes rather than being part of the Sustainable Futures programme.

It is unlikely that learners are aware of the complexities but there should be a clear communication plan and messages for stakeholders who have indicated that at times they are not fully aware of their roles and requirements.

Research respondents have indicated that they use the programme in different ways. For example, in some organisations, the programme is delivered in a curriculum subject such as PSHE, Science or Geography and in others it is delivered through careers guidance provision. A further model is that some schools self-select materials and deliver them in a more ad hoc manner through assemblies of mixed groups. All these models are relevant; however, the materials will need to be reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently flexible to be used in such a variety of

ways. Feedback from learner respondents has suggested that the insight days are the most popular aspect of the programme.

Although the research team have run a careful evaluation of the programme, they have noted that with the current freely downloadable materials, it is nearly impossible to know who is downloading the material, how often this is happening, and where in the country this is taking place. This makes it difficult to understand the potential and full impact of the programme. WWF should consider creating a registration system which facilitates the gathering of useful data about who is accessing and downloading the programme's materials.

The programme overall has a complex delivery model with some aspects implemented by WWF and others by their programme Partners. This has led to some confusion and a lack of consistency across processes such as data collection, evaluation, and application of activities. Throughout the evaluation, we have received feedback from businesses that they have found the process of application to either provide a business encounter or a workplace visit overly complicated. Participants have recommended that application processes are streamlined, simplified, and made more explicit.

Integration across audiences

The effective delivery of the programme requires engagement, cooperation, and collaboration amongst stakeholders (educators and business members). The individual elements of the programme should be integrated in a way which ensures a coherent experience, not just for learners but for the stakeholders too. Stakeholders have provided information about their motivations for joining the programme. Educators have a strong belief that young people need to understand sustainability however the evaluation has demonstrated that this is often left to one passionate teacher to drive the agenda in the school or college, as there is currently no statutory requirement to deliver sustainability as part of the curriculum. There are two frameworks used by career development practitioners to drive forward the quality of careers education. The Gatsby Benchmarks (Holman, 2014; Holman, 2018) set out a framework aimed at improving the processes associated with career education. Of

the eight benchmarks, there are four which link closely to the Sustainable Futures programme. These are:

- Learning from career and labour market information.
- Linking curriculum learning to careers.
- Encounters with employers and employees.
- Experiences of workplaces.

Furthermore, the Career Development Institute (CDI, n.d.) has described the learning outcomes expected for programmes of careers education. The Sustainable Futures programme maps to two of these:

- Balance life and work: Balance your life as a worker and/or entrepreneur with your wellbeing, other interests and your involvement with your family and community.
- See the big picture: See the big picture by paying attention to how the economy, politics and society connect with your own life and career.

The links to these frameworks represent a compelling argument for schools and colleges to become involved in the Sustainable Futures programme. Our research demonstrates that career practitioners were less likely than teachers to be aware of and see the potential of the Sustainable Futures programme to help meet career guidance practice goals. This suggests that more work needs to be undertaken to help schools integrate the programme into their careers strategic plans.

Business members spoke of their interest in the programme because it aligned with their values and those of their organisations. The messages could be reinforced through a robust marketing and communication plan. They also indicated that they would value opportunities to come together and network to share good and interesting practices relating to the Sustainable Futures programme.

Respondents throughout the evaluation have emphasised the impact and relevance of the content of the programme. There have been occasions however, where educators and businesses particularly have expressed confusion about the links

between parts of the programme and their role in reinforcing central themes throughout. Respondents have also described the random ways in which they have learned about the programme. This has included word of mouth and social media. There is an inherent risk in not addressing these issues as some participants have indicated that they also use materials on sustainability from other organisations, as well as other curriculum materials which have been developed by individual schools and subject specialists, which have been shared through collaborative spaces. Materials of this sort do not necessarily have the necessary quality assurance processes in place however they are easy to access and there is a growing network of teachers using this approach across a range of subjects.

Part of the support for career development in schools and colleges are careers hubs which are funded by The Careers and Enterprise Company. These hubs bring together enterprise co-ordinators and careers leaders to develop quality approaches which can be replicated amongst organisations. These represent a valuable opportunity to engage business and educator stakeholders in discussions about the delivery and development of the programme. These issues could be resolved by re-visiting the management of the overall programme which in turn should result in more co-ordination and coherence in the processes and practices across all aspects of the programme. Examples might include:

- A comprehensive marketing and communications strategy to engage all stakeholders.
- A coherent approach to collecting data on the use of the materials, for example through introducing a registration process for their use.
- A robust approach to ongoing monitoring, review, and evaluation.
- A consistent approach for businesses to apply to deliver work placements and employer engagement activities.

These actions would ensure that stakeholders fully understand the importance of how the Sustainable Futures programme can support them to meet their own agendas and ensure that the process of continuous learning and improvement would be assured.

Effectiveness

This section deals with the extent to which the programme meets the desired outcomes. It considers this under three sub-headings: Outcomes for young people, outcomes for educators and outcomes for businesses.

Outcomes for young people

Young people have provided information on their motivation to undertake the Sustainable Futures programme. Some had heard of sustainability and possessed some level of curiosity, whereas others wanted to deepen their knowledge and understanding of a topic they believed to be significant. The programme has contributed to their knowledge and awareness of sustainability and sustainable careers and in several cases has redirected young people on new career trajectories which have sustainability as a core value. Educators have been clear on the importance of engaging young people early in their lives and careers, and in particular, encouraging young people for whom sustainability is not a feature of their experience or understanding. This underlines the importance of revising the taught course materials to ensure that they are developmental and age and stage appropriate.

Throughout the evaluation, young people indicated that they enjoy the course content and feel that it positively impacted their understanding of the issues associated with sustainability and the environment, and embedded significant sustainability values into their approach to career decision-making. They enjoy the encounters with role models and find the work experience activities rewarding and enlightening. Educators and business members are also clear that the programme has an impact, and that young people are far more equipped to embed sustainability into their thinking and decision-making. It is quite clear that broadly, the programme achieves its intended outcomes:

Awareness: Young people indicated that they had increased their knowledge and awareness of sustainability, and the role of business in building a sustainable future.

Aspiration: The student course, career talks and insight days increased young people's aspirations for participating in sustainable career pathways. Young people and those supporting them also perceived sustainable skills as attainable and valuable for enhancing career prospects.

Access: As a result of the programme, young people not only did something to make a difference to the environment but also influenced family members, friends, companies or politicians to do good for the environment. Students had more confidence that it would be possible to find a job in sustainability after the programme. They also expressed heightened concern about the future of the planet and were more enthusiastic about pursuing careers in sustainability. The majority of young people indicated a strong likelihood that they would recommend the programme to their friends.

Outcomes for educators

The evaluation sought the views of educators on three broad areas relating to the Sustainable Futures programme: The issues associated with the delivery of the programme, the perceived impact on students' learning and development associated with sustainability and the experience of the educator CPD sessions.

Educators were very positive about the programme and indicated that it was very important for young people to learn about sustainability. A significant majority of respondents indicated that they would deliver aspects of the programme during the next academic year. However, there were barriers to the delivery of the programme. The pressure of integrating new materials into a very tight timetable led to schools or colleges delivering the programme in some cases as an extra-curricular activity. In other schools or colleges, the programme was integrated into subject lessons and delivered by educators rather than career specialists. Educators are not trained in the delivery of careers education and need support from careers specialists to do this effectively. The Gatsby Benchmarks (Holman, 2014; Holman, 2018) require all teachers to integrate careers work into curriculum subjects; the Sustainable Futures programme does offer a vehicle for this, but this does require support for educators. WWF have anticipated the problem and have produced useful CPD materials.

However, there is a resource implication associated with this and not all teachers can make time to undergo this level of activity.

Educators had a clear rationale for delivering the programme often based on their own commitments or because they saw the benefits for their respective school or college as a whole. Educators also indicated that they had strong views about the impact of Sustainable Futures on the learners and particularly on those from marginalised backgrounds. In communities where there is a lack of opportunity or exposure to the environment and issues of sustainability, raising awareness through the programme and particularly through the facilitation of experiences with sustainability champions within businesses, was particularly important. The programme was deemed to have made a significant impact on these groups. The programme was also deemed to have had a positive impact on all students, with educators observing that students became more aware of issues of sustainability and the values learned from Sustainable Futures were being incorporated into learners' career aspirations and career decision-making.

The CPD programme broadly met its desired outcomes. Educators indicated that they had a better understanding of sustainability and were more confident about different topics related to sustainability. The career and labour market information were also found to be very useful. Respondents reported an increase in confidence after the CPD activities when it came to supporting students into roles linked to sustainability.

Outcomes for businesses

Business members become involved in the programme for a variety of reasons. For example, they may have had a passion for issues of sustainability and wished to influence and support young people to develop insights into such issues. Businesses also have CSR targets which link to sustainability and becoming involved in the Sustainable Futures programme provides a means of fulfilling these targets.

The evaluation has found a variety of ways in which businesses discover the programme. This is largely due to happenstance rather than through active engagement with WWF and Partners communications. In one instance, a business

member became involved in providing a role model due to their relationship with one of WWF's partners (e.g. Founders4Schools) and was unaware of how the role model activity integrated into the wider Sustainable Futures programme. This issue underlines the complexity of the delivery model and the lack of coherence between the different component parts of the programme. It suggests that a review of the materials used to support those involved in the programme should be reviewed to ensure that all stakeholders fully understand the programme and their part in delivering it along with the key themes and messages which need to be embedded across all activities.

Longevity

Educators and business members have all indicated the importance of helping young people to understand issues of sustainability and how to integrate key values into career decision-making. This is only going to increase in importance in the future and the future of this programme and its longevity is guaranteed if the recommendations from this report are actioned. Educators have indicated that they intend to deliver the programme in the future as they can see the benefits and impact that the programme is having, and they are likely to recommend the programme to colleagues. What's more, young people have indicated their commitment to issues around sustainability and how to integrate the values of sustainability into their decision-making as they plan their futures.

The United Kingdom has recently had a General Election and appointed a new Government whose commitment to the issue of sustainability is clear. They intend to establish a new British Energy Company focused on renewable energy, address poor water quality, and invest in public transport infrastructure. Additionally, they have set up a new body, [Skills England](#), where the green workforce has been identified as a key area with significant skills needs. All these pledges and initiatives require an increase in skills and a focus on young people making career decisions based on the values of sustainability. The Government is also undertaking a curriculum review, and the Gatsby Benchmarks are undergoing a 10-year review. All these factors offer opportunities to explore and embed the Sustainable Futures programme as a key contributor to these goals.

WWF and Partners are operating within a field where there are many organisations visiting these issues. Adjustments need to be made in order to maintain their place in the market as a leading changemaker. This evaluation concludes that each aspect of the programme has its value and can improve young people's understanding of sustainability and helps them to apply this understanding to their life and career choices. Our findings suggest that the combination of theory delivered through the student course, and practice through workplace experiences and career talks has the most impact.

8. Recommendations

Throughout the report, we have outlined a series of recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Sustainable Futures programme. These recommendations stem from comprehensive feedback gathered from various stakeholders, including educators, students, and industry professionals, who provided valuable insights into the strengths and challenges of the programme.

To facilitate the successful implementation of these recommendations, we propose several practical immediate changes that can be implemented with minimal disruption to existing workflows. These changes are designed not only to address current challenges but also to build on the programme's strengths, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective in promoting sustainability education.

1. A key issue identified is the challenge posed by having multiple delivery partners, which can lead to inconsistencies in how the programme is presented and implemented. To address this, it is essential to review the programme's online materials to ensure consistency in processes, branding, and messaging across all elements. This review should involve a thorough assessment of existing resources, identifying areas where discrepancies may exist, whether in content presentation, visual branding, or messaging tone.
2. One significant challenge identified is the need for greater flexibility in the student course materials to accommodate various delivery models. To address this, a thorough review of the existing student materials is essential, ensuring they can be adapted for different educational contexts and methods of delivery. This review should focus on making explicit links to the Gatsby Benchmarks, which provide a framework for career guidance in schools and colleges. By aligning the programme materials with these benchmarks, educators can more easily incorporate them into their existing curricula and demonstrate how the content meets national standards for career education.
3. It would be beneficial to organise the student course materials by age range, allowing educators to select appropriate resources that resonate with their students' developmental stages. This flexibility will enable teachers to adapt

their delivery based on the unique needs and interests of their students for a more engaging and relevant learning experience.

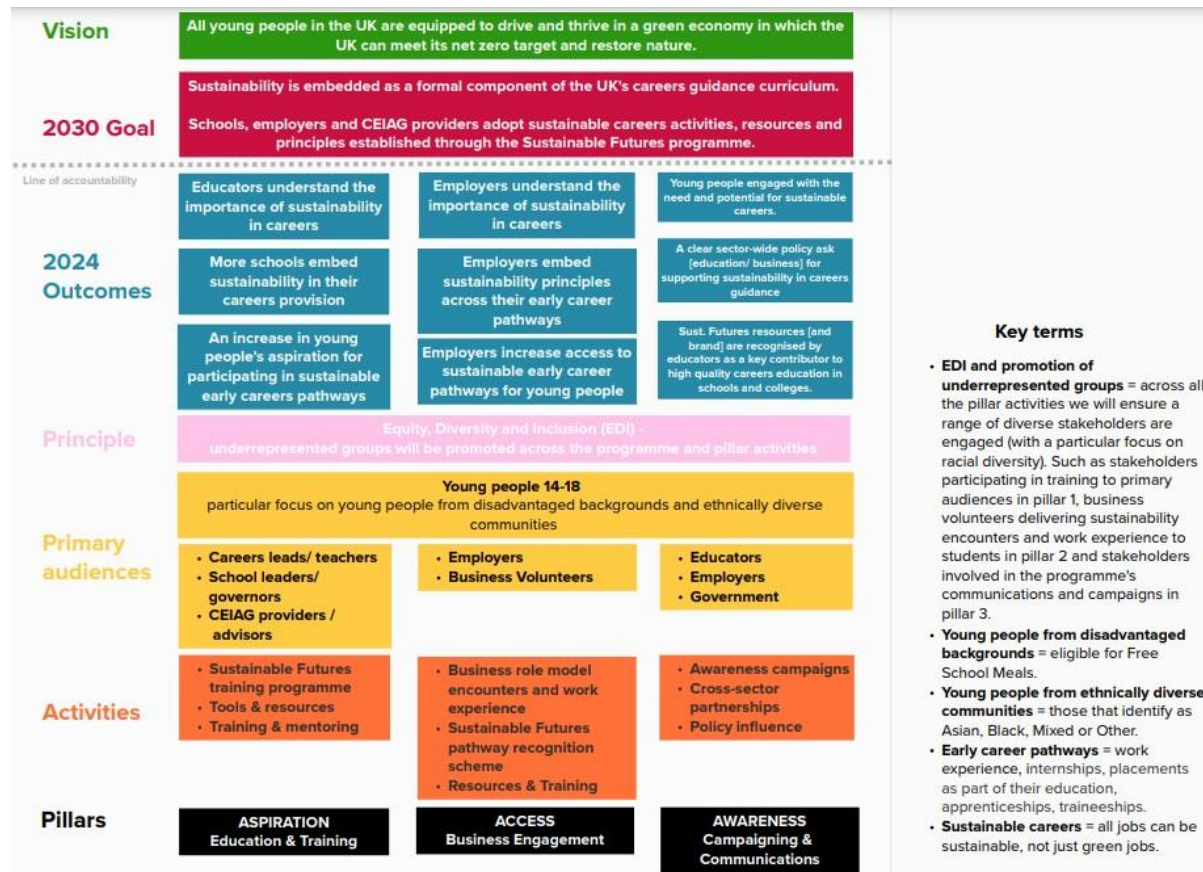
4. Introducing a registration process for accessing the online materials is essential for improving the provision of information management by WWF and Partners. Implementing this system helps to track user engagement with the resources, including metrics such as frequency of access, duration of use, and specific materials used which will provide valuable insights into how educators and students interact with the programme, enabling better evaluation of its effectiveness and identification of areas for enhancement. A registration process will also facilitate targeted communication and support for users, ensuring that their needs are met.
5. The development of materials which help educators and career development professionals to understand the potential for meeting statutory and quality requirements, and to integrate the programme into strategic career plans.
6. Revisiting the overall management of the programme to include a project manager who oversees all three elements. This will introduce more coherence across the programme and ensure that information is collected and used in a more effective manner.
7. Creating a community of practice for business members will help facilitate collaboration and sharing of best practices regarding career talks and experiences of the workplace. WWF and Partners should establish a structured network where business partners and other stakeholder groups can gather to exchange ideas, resources, and experiences related to engaging with students. This community of practice would allow members to learn from each other, discuss challenges, and refine their approaches to delivering impactful talks and organising effective workplace visits.
8. The development of a comprehensive marketing and communications plan which will ensure that all potential stakeholders become aware of the programme and its alignment with their own needs.
9. Supporting schools and colleges in understanding the return on investment (ROI) of their time spent on training teachers and implementing the programme to achieve their organisational goals. WWF should provide clear

data and case studies that illustrate the positive outcomes associated with investing in sustainability education, such as improved student engagement, enhanced career readiness, and alignment with institutional values.

10. Communicating strong messages about the importance of delivering all aspects of the programme to both educators and students is crucial for improving its overall impact. WWF and Partners should emphasise the value of a comprehensive approach to sustainability education, highlighting how each component contributes to students' understanding and engagement with sustainable careers. Reinforcing the interconnectedness of the three elements of the programme can motivate educators to fully implement its contents and ensure that students receive a well-rounded educational experience.

Appendix

Theory of Change Document



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