

DECISION TOOL | PRINTABLE A4

Parent Career Decision Canvas

A structured family conversation for decisions about degrees, apprenticeships, vocational routes and professional careers.

ONE PATHWAY AT A TIME

Complete one Canvas for each pathway seriously under consideration.

UNCERTAINTY IS USEFUL

Blank spaces and "not sure yet" answers show where evidence is still needed.

START WITH THE TEENAGER

Step 1 belongs to the teenager; the rest is a family conversation.

PATHWAY WE ARE CONSIDERING

COMPARED WITH (OPTIONAL)

DATE STARTED

DECISION DEADLINE

Six steps

1 Fit

2 Commitment

3 Decision-critical risks

4 Uncertainty

5 Robustness

6 Next evidence

NOTE

No score. No recommendation algorithm. The Canvas helps you make the decision - it does not make the decision for you.

STEP 1

Is this something they actually want?

Start with the teenager. The goal is not to prove commitment; it is to test whether the attraction survives contact with the reality of the work.

SPECIFIC COURSE / EMPLOYER / PROGRAMME

ROUTE (tick one)

☐ University / college degree

☐ Paid work-and-study / apprenticeship

☐ Professional / vocational training

☐ Other: _____

ASK YOUR TEENAGER - write it in their own words, not yours

What attracts you most about this path?

WHAT DOES THE WORK ACTUALLY INVOLVE?

Write down three activities that appear regularly in the real work - from research, not imagination.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY OF THESE FOR REAL?

☐ Yes - through work experience, shadowing or a project

☐ A little - informally or through a school programme

☐ Not yet

AFTER SEEING MORE OF THE REAL WORK, YOUR TEENAGER IS:

☐ More interested

☐ About the same

☐ Less interested

☐ Still not sure

WHAT CHANGED - OR CONFIRMED - THEIR VIEW?

STEP 2

What are we committing to?

Make the shape of the commitment visible: time, money, qualification gates and the first sensible point at which changing direction would still leave something useful.

TIME UNTIL FIRST VALUABLE QUALIFICATION

_____ years

TIME UNTIL INTENDED PROFESSIONAL POSITION

_____ years

APPROXIMATE OVERALL FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

- ☐ Low - employer/state funded or minimal personal cost
- ☐ Moderate - standard undergraduate financing / manageable
- ☐ High - tuition plus significant living costs and limited income
- ☐ We have not worked this out yet

MAIN QUALIFICATION OR REGISTRATION HURDLES

WHERE IS THE MOST SENSIBLE AND REALISTIC POINT TO CHANGE DIRECTION, IF NEEDED?

WHAT WOULD ALREADY HAVE BEEN GAINED AT THAT POINT?

Qualification, experience, network, portfolio, professional contacts or transferable knowledge.

STEP 3

What could actually change this decision?

The Career Risk Lens has eleven dimensions. Do not assess all of them again. Select the two or three that could realistically change this decision for this teenager, at this moment.

☐ **Underlying demand**

Is durable human/economic need for the profession strong or uncertain?

☐ **Training Lock-In**

Is the length and specificity of the commitment a concern?

☐ **Task-level AI exposure**

Is AI already changing important tasks in the profession?

☐ **Career Portability**

Does the qualification retain value if the destination changes?

☐ **First-Rung Risk**

Is the early-career learning ladder changing in ways that matter?

☐ **Alternative pathways**

Could another route to the same destination suit better?

☐ **AI Complementarity**

Does AI raise rather than replace professional value?

☐ **Geographic exposure**

Is the work locally anchored or exposed to remote/offshore competition?

☐ **Economic substitution pressure**

Do the economics of automation create meaningful pressure?

☐ **Evidence confidence**

Is the current assessment based on strong or thin evidence?

☐ **Regulation and accountability**

Is regulatory protection real, conditional or changing?

NOTE

Not sure which to pick? Choose the dimension where a different answer from what you currently believe would most change your decision. That is the dimension worth investigating.

OUR SELECTED DIMENSIONS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

STEP 3

Record the dimensions you selected

For each selected dimension, capture the current view, confidence and the evidence behind it. "Not sure yet" is a valid answer.

DIMENSION 1

Dimension: _____

Our current view: _____

How confident are we? ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not sure yet

Evidence: _____

DIMENSION 2

Dimension: _____

Our current view: _____

How confident are we? ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not sure yet

Evidence: _____

DIMENSION 3

Dimension: _____

Our current view: _____

How confident are we? ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not sure yet

Evidence: _____

NOTE

Do not manufacture confidence to complete the form. If you are genuinely uncertain, that uncertainty is exactly what Step 6 is for.

STEP 4

What do we know, assume and not know?

Add as much or as little as is honest. The goal is to stop assumptions quietly turning into facts.

WE KNOW

Established, sourced evidence directly relevant to this pathway.

WE'RE ASSUMING

Reasonable beliefs or inferences that are not fully verified.

WE GENUINELY DON'T KNOW

Important questions the current evidence cannot yet resolve.

THE ONE UNKNOWN THAT COULD MOST CHANGE OUR DECISION

If it turned out differently from what we currently expect:

NOTE

"We do not know yet" is not a failure. It tells you what Step 6 should investigate.

STEP 5

Does this choice survive different futures?

These are not predictions. They test whether the pathway remains tolerable under conditions other than the ones you are currently assuming.

A | SLOWER CHANGE

AI improves productivity modestly; existing professional and training structures remain broadly recognisable.

Would this pathway still look like a good choice?

☐

Yes

☐

Maybe

☐

No

☐

Not sure

B | SUBSTANTIAL WORKFLOW CHANGE

AI materially changes early-career work; more judgement is required earlier and the first rung becomes harder to access.

Would this pathway still look like a good choice?

☐

Yes

☐

Maybe

☐

No

☐

Not sure

C | STRONGER AUTOMATION

Automation becomes materially stronger than current evidence supports and some professional services restructure significantly.

Would this pathway still look like a good choice?

☐

Yes

☐

Maybe

☐

No

☐

Not sure

IF THIS PATHWAY BECAME LESS ATTRACTIVE, WHAT IS THE MOST REALISTIC PLAN B?

WHAT WOULD STILL RETAIN VALUE?

Useful qualifications, skills, experience, portfolio, network or professional contacts:

STEP 6

What will we find out next?

Identify up to three pieces of evidence that would most change or confirm your current view. Make each target specific enough to act on immediately.

EVIDENCE TARGET 1

What do we need to find out?

Who will do it?

☐

Parent

☐

Teenager

☐

Together

By when?

First concrete action:

EVIDENCE TARGET 2

What do we need to find out?

Who will do it?

☐

Parent

☐

Teenager

☐

Together

By when?

First concrete action:

EVIDENCE TARGET 3

What do we need to find out?

Who will do it?

☐

Parent

☐

Teenager

☐

Together

By when?

First concrete action:

NOTE

Vague intentions rarely become actions. A useful first action is specific enough to do tomorrow: send an email, contact a person, check a programme page or arrange a visit.

DECISION SUMMARY

Where are we now?

This is not a score. Select the statement that best describes the family's current position after working through the Canvas.

- ☐ **Ready to choose this pathway**
The evidence is sufficient and the commitment feels right.
- ☐ **Leaning towards it, but we need specific evidence first**
Use the Step 6 action plan.
- ☐ **Still comparing it with another pathway**
Complete a second Canvas and place the two side by side.
- ☐ **This now looks less suitable than it did**
Understanding why is as valuable as a positive conclusion.
- ☐ **We don't know yet - and we know what we need to find out**
A completely valid outcome; Step 6 is the action plan.

DECISION DEADLINE

When do we actually need to make a decision by?

POST-DECISION REVIEW

When will we deliberately revisit this choice in light of new evidence?

WHAT WILL WE REVISIT AT THAT POINT?

NOTE

Review at the next meaningful education or training milestone - or earlier if important new evidence emerges. The review date is not doubt; it is a commitment to update the decision when the evidence changes.