

# Green

# Employability.

What is a green job, and what skills can young people develop to make them more employable in the climate sector?



With the **climate and nature crises** worsening and the warnings that we must take action becoming more and more urgent, many young people are looking to make a difference as they enter the workforce. But what types of **jobs** will allow young people to take climate action, and what types of **skills** are needed? This resource looks at **green employability** and some of the different forms this might take.



## What is employability?

**Employability** refers to the transferrable skills that are needed in any workplace. Technical skills needed for specific jobs often need to be learned on the job, or in specific training courses, but young people can improve their employability by working on their ‘soft skills’ which are more **transferrable** across sectors. These are things like **communication**, **team work** and **problem solving**, which you can develop through all kinds of experiences, such as **education**, **volunteering** and **youth work**. These skills are vital for all jobs, including those in the climate sector.

One way to quantify the transferrable skills that young people gain through youth work is by using the **Youth Work Skills Framework**. This sets out **11 core skills** that young people develop through different types of youth work (pictured below). All these skills will improve young people’s employability and prepare them to enter the workforce. The Skills Framework exists to help young people learn more about each new skill they develop, breaking them down into specific behaviours and indicators to give them practical examples of when they have used these skills.



## Knowledge and experience

So, if the skills young people need to make themselves more employable are transferrable across all industries, what makes someone stand out for a job in the climate sector? The answers here are **knowledge**, **motivation** and **experience**.

Education about the climate and biodiversity crises is the bedrock of any green job. Without knowing about the challenges we are facing, young people (and everyone else) won't have the **motivation** to do anything about them. Learning about why and how climate change is happening across the world is therefore essential in order to galvanise people to take action. It's also important that young people are educated on what solutions to the climate and nature crises actually look like, as without this, it's difficult to know where to start with finding a job that makes a difference. Equipped with knowledge about **impacts** and **solutions**, young people will be not only more likely to want to work in the climate sector, they will also show future employers that this is a cause they care about and are **committed** to doing something about. The next section of this resource explains why it is so important that we act now.



## What's the situation?

Over the last year, the **IPCC** (which stands for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) has published its latest report summing up the scientific consensus on climate change **impacts, adaptation and mitigation**. You might remember the headlines from when the first part of the report came out last summer, which labelled it as a '**Code Red for Humanity**'. The warnings from the rest of the report are just as stark, showing that up to **3.6 billion people** globally live in contexts that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Greenhouse gas emissions are **still rising** and are currently higher than they have ever been. Humans and nature are inextricably interlinked, and as we are witnessing human suffering on a mass scale, we are also seeing unprecedented **biodiversity loss** and **extinction** of other species due to climate change.

The window to take action to reduce these emissions and limit warming to the globally agreed target of **1.5 degrees** is rapidly closing, with the latest installment of the report stating that we need to make **unprecedented reductions** to our emissions by 2030 if we are to stay within these limits. In order to achieve this, we need **systemic change**, with every sector of society working together. Engaging young people, businesses, the media, communities, and politicians will be vital to this success, which is why it's so important that people working in all sectors keep climate change at the forefront of their work.

**According to the IPCC, we have 8 years to turn things around and make unprecedented changes. We need everyone on board to do this at all levels.**

# What is a green job?

Green jobs are defined by the International Labour Organisation as '**decent jobs that contribute to preserve or restore the environment**'. This doesn't just mean jobs in conservation or renewable energy, although these are both vital; there are many other industries which contribute to environmental preservation in other ways. If we need all sectors to work towards **Net Zero** and climate action, then it follows that all jobs can and should be green jobs. See some examples below of how jobs not typically thought of as green can help preserve and restore the environment:

People working in the **planning and construction sectors** can make sure that all new builds are held to high environmental standards, create the smallest possible impact as they are constructed, and are as energy efficient as possible to reduce the amount of fossil fuels required to heat them. These emissions reductions contribute significantly to environmental protection.



**Lawyers and legal advisers** are increasingly taking on climate litigation cases, where individuals, communities or groups are taking governments or big corporations to court over the harm they have done to the climate. For example, in 2019, 16 teenagers including Greta Thunberg filed a legal complaint through the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, against five of the world's biggest polluters, on the grounds that they were violating their rights to a liveable future. Although they were unsuccessful, cases like these show that protecting the environment is a legal issue.

People working in **finance** can play an important role in fighting climate change. Banking and investment may seem far removed from the impacts of climate change on people and nature, but in fact the climate crisis is fueled by investments in harmful industries such as fossil fuels and industrial farming. By divesting from these industries and investing the money in climate solutions instead, the financial sector can play a pivotal role in fighting the climate crisis.



**Teachers and educators** play a vital role in ensuring that people (especially young people) are aware of the climate crisis and what they can do about it. This has long-lasting effects, causing people to make changes in their own lives, join organisations that are campaigning for change, or bring their climate consciousness to their own work. Educators of all kinds have a wide **sphere of influence**, persuading others to protect and restore the environment in different ways.

## Getting relevant experience

Once young people have developed some core transferrable skills, are aware of the importance of tackling the climate and nature crises in all sectors, and have some idea of the options available to them, their employability will be improved by gaining some **relevant experience** in these fields. This could be **formal work experience** organised through a school or college, or it could be a **part-time job** which would develop skills in retail or customer service. **Volunteering** for a cause the young person is passionate about is also a great way to gain relevant experience as well as **demonstrating commitment** to the cause, for example campaigning for better climate education (see [Teach the Future](#)) or volunteering at a local nature reserve (see [NatureScot](#)). If there aren't any options for volunteering or campaigning in the local area, young people could consider starting a group of their own to tackle local climate issues or start conversations about the environment.



## What are the barriers?

As with any industry, entering the workforce is not always plain sailing for young people who are interested in green jobs. Inevitably, there will be setbacks and difficulties, especially as many people still do not appreciate the urgency of the climate issues we face. **Lack of access** to education about the climate and nature crises, both for young people and potential employers, is therefore a barrier to young people entering the climate sector. Education and training that is specific to green jobs is often difficult to find. It can be expensive, or only available in cities, which makes it harder for young people in rural areas and islands to access it. Similarly, gaining relevant experience can be more difficult for young people in rural and island communities.

A **lack of awareness** of the different types of jobs that count as green jobs can also be a barrier to entering this sector. There are often preconceptions that jobs in the climate sector are very technical and require degrees in STEM subjects such as engineering or environmental science, but actually there are many different routes into green jobs such as **modern apprenticeships**, **college courses**, or simply **learning on the job**. Youth work can help young people overcome all these barriers by providing a space for young people to ask questions, access information about their options, and build their confidence and core skills.





# How can youth workers support young people to get green jobs?

One of the most important ways that **youth workers** can support young people in getting green jobs is to help them **articulate the skills** they already have. The **Youth Work Skills Framework** is helpful for this, and it can also help to talk through the different skills that young people are gaining through different aspects of their lives and how these are relevant to working in green industries.

Supporting young people to **educate themselves** about the climate and nature crises and their solutions is also an important task for youth workers. Even if you feel that the young people are already more knowledgeable than you on these issues, having conversations about climate change and biodiversity loss, and learning about it together can improve the young people's **understanding, confidence** and **communication** of the issues we face.

Youth workers can also support young people in thinking about what options are available to them and where they fit in to the climate sector. YouthLink Scotland's **'Where to Start?'** resource acts as a helpful starting point for discussions about what the young person enjoys doing, what their skills are, and what work needs doing.

