

Direction of travel for the Health Careers website:
an analysis of user feedback

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New research has been carried out to provide insights into overall user perceptions and satisfaction with the Health Careers website. An online survey was devised by Health Careers which included questions for its potential and actual users. Responses were collected during December 2016 and January 2017.

833 responses were received from respondents across the main target user groups (students, those in health-related employment, and those who advise these groups).

Awareness and levels of use

The survey could not determine a representative view of awareness of the Health Careers website amongst its entire potential user audience, but there was evidence of awareness and use amongst all its key user groups across the UK and more widely.

More than half of those who have visited the site have done so more than three times, suggesting that they value its content. This proportion was slightly lower amongst students and employed respondents, than advisers, but still almost half.

Most respondents accessed the site following an internet search, but there was also evidence of many doing so through referral by an adviser, colleague or peer, or career-related information, but few reached it directly as a result of social media.

The most common user activity was to explore job roles but substantial proportions used it to help in career planning, understand entry or skills requirements for progression or to access careers resources.

Impressions and usability

Users of all types were overwhelmingly impressed by the professional look and feel of the website and found its information to be up-to-date and relevant, and easy to navigate. These were very positive endorsements of the overall design, structure and layout of the website and the information it contains.

There seems to be some scope to 'deepen' its information as a minority of users felt that it catered better for those considering entry to health-related study or employment, rather than for those already established as doctors or health professionals. There was also appetite for more information in some specific areas such as healthcare roles and apprenticeship pathways.

Although many respondents were registered users of the website, many users who were not registered were unaware of the benefits of registration.

Usefulness and value

Most end users (as opposed to those who advise them) reported the website to be reasonably or very useful in helping them take the next steps in their career decision-making, with only a very low proportion not finding it useful.

Few perceive that substantive types of content are currently 'missing' from the website, although some advisers (the most regular and demanding users) would appreciate more content and more detail. Specific recommendations for stronger coverage included more content on apprenticeships and on healthcare assistant and related roles.

The majority of respondents who had not used the Health Careers website stated that they did have needs for information about health-related careers, suggesting that there is significant appetite for these types of information, particularly amongst those already in a health-related career. Once they understood the site's purpose and content, most current non-users indicated that they would be very likely to use the site in future.

Recommendations

- The Health Careers website should continue to be supported as a channel to provide career-related information to those considering, studying towards or working in a health-related career.
- To maximise its value, there is a need to continue to promote the site to prospective and current students and those already employed in the health sector.
- While the website is fit-for-purpose, continued incremental improvements to the content and functionality are recommended in order to keep it up-to-date and satisfy evolving user needs.
- There is some evidence that users are not finding the full extent of the information available to support the career development of established doctors and health professionals, so it would be advisable to make this accessible from the role page areas.
- More coverage around apprenticeship pathways and the roles achievable through them would be valuable, as well as more attention to healthcare-related roles in general.
- If greater numbers of registered users are sought, there would be value in making the benefits of registration with the website more explicit and prominent.
- The Health Careers team should review the detailed comments provided by survey respondents as part of its ongoing content development process.

2. Background, aims of the evaluation and methodology

The Health Careers website was launched in October 2015 as part of the range of services provided by Health Careers (part of Health Education England, HEE) which has the aim of supporting people in education and at all stages of their career to discover more about the job roles available in health, how to get in and to progress. The website includes detailed information about some 350 health-related occupations or roles.

Since its launch, a programme of user-focused testing and evaluation has been undertaken to explore usability of the website and identify areas for development and improvement. This new research attempts to provide insights into overall user satisfaction with the website and its usefulness (i.e. value and impact).

More specific aims of the exercise included:

- To assess current satisfaction levels and perceived usefulness of the website amongst its target audiences, overall and for its constituent sections;
- To understand the influence that the website has on users' individual career decisions;
- To provide evidence and intelligence to support future proposals for development and signpost areas for more specific evaluative research where needed.

The key target audiences for the website include those considering a health-related career, medical students and others in training, those already working in health roles, and a range of professionals (teachers and advisers) who provide advice to these groups.

An online survey was devised by Health Careers which included questions for a wide range of potential and actual users, utilising response logic to provide appropriate questions. The questionnaire is included at Appendix A. Potential respondents were invited as follows:

- A 'carousel' invitation on the site's homepage to current visitors;
- Email invitations to registered users (21,670 at time of survey);
- An email campaign to other known contacts, including medical schools, HEE careers contacts, public health contacts and schools' careers services;
- A 'snowball' campaign using social media.

The online survey was open for responses during the period from 22 December 2016 to 31 January 2017. Analysis of the survey results was performed by the Careers Research & Advisory Centre (CRAC), which performed user evaluation studies of the Medical Careers website in 2010 and 2012.

In total, 833 responses were received to the online survey. With the attraction method used, it is not possible to determine a response rate as the total number invited to participate is unknown. Data from these responses are presented in this report, together with sample response sizes (*N*). All data are unweighted; any percentages below 1% are shown as *%.

There is undoubtedly value in the information derived from these 833 responses as they were all from individuals of the target audience groups and answered relevant questions, although it is not possible to be certain how representative their responses are of the total target user populations.

3. Survey results

Respondent characteristics

Figure 1 illustrates the current situations of respondents, based on the options offered in the survey questionnaire, showing that just over 36% were in education (5% at school or a FE college and 32% at university), and 34% were employed - the majority of whom were working in a health-related role. Over 21% identified themselves as careers advisers or teachers. Respondents were grouped into three major user types so that analysis of other responses by user type could be performed (Figure 2).

Figure 1 Respondents' current situation, at time of survey (N=833)

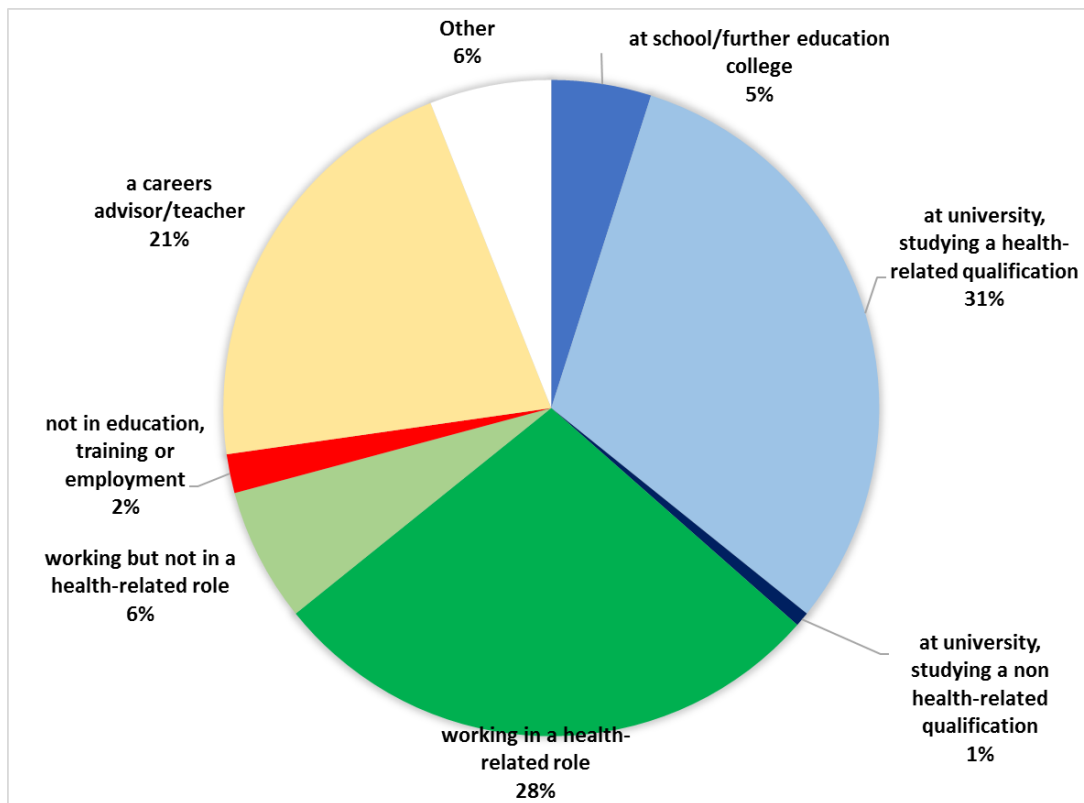
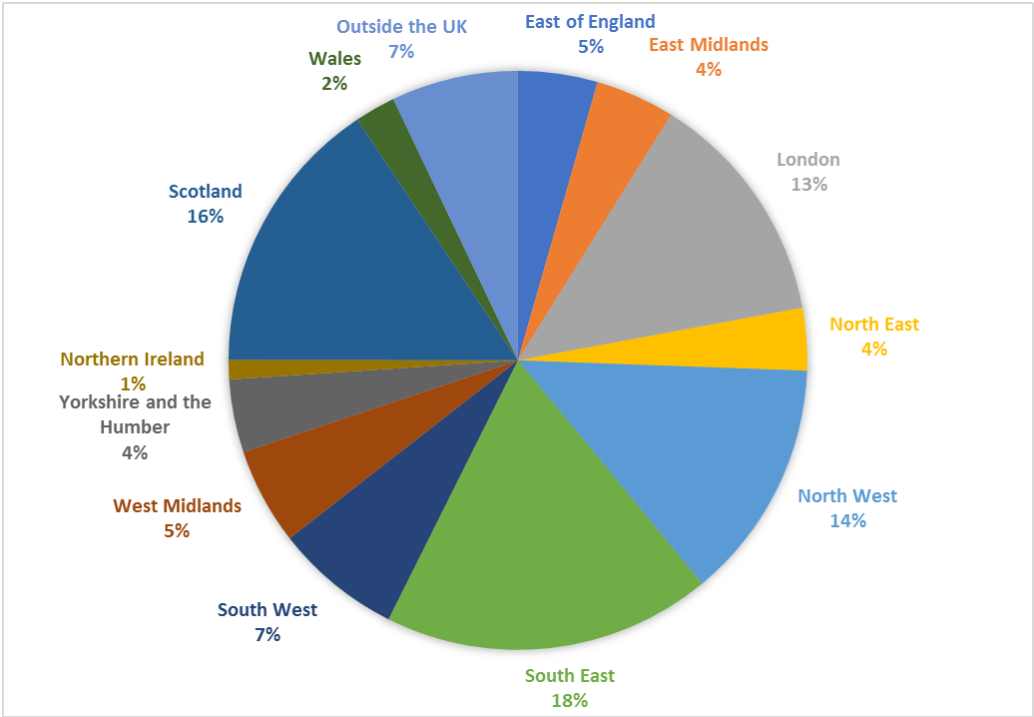


Figure 2 Respondent type groupings used for analysis

	N	%
Employed	286	34.3
Student	304	36.5
Adviser/teacher	177	21.2
Other	66	7.9
Total	833	100.0

There were at least some responses from all the UK nations and all the regions of England, with almost three-quarters of all respondents living in England, 19% elsewhere in the UK and the remaining 7% outside the UK (Figure 3).

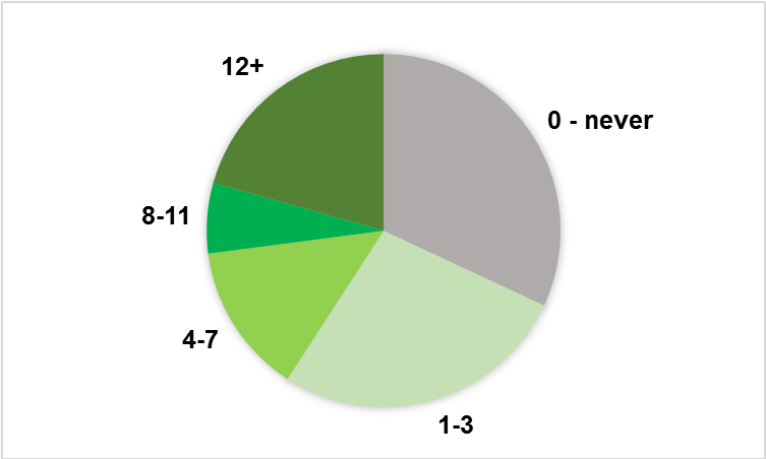
Figure 3 Home region or nation of respondents



Awareness and use of the Health Careers website

Overall, 68% of respondents had used the website at least once and 32% had not. Response to this question was used as a ‘branch’ in the survey questionnaire, so that these two sub-groups of users received different subsequent questions. Of those who had used the website, around one third reported that they had accessed it 1-3 times, while nearly as many were quite regular users reporting 12 or more visits (Figure 4). This means that 60% of those who have used the site have accessed it more than 3 times, which is a high return proportion and suggests that the site is valuable to them.

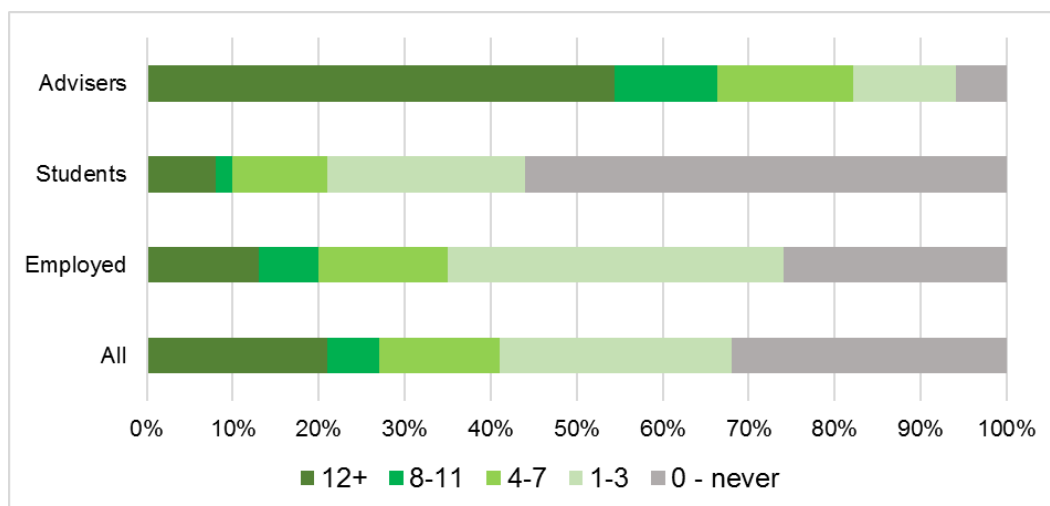
Figure 4 Number of times respondents reported that they had used the Health Careers site



When responses to this question were analysed by user type, quite strong variations were observed (Figure 5). Amongst student respondents, for example, under half (44%) reported that they had used the website, although of these nearly half had used it more than 3 times. The proportion using the site was higher amongst employed respondents (almost three quarters had used it) and, again, of these nearly half had used it more than 3 times. Over 90% of advisers and teachers had used the site and more than half of them more than 12 times, making them the heaviest users.

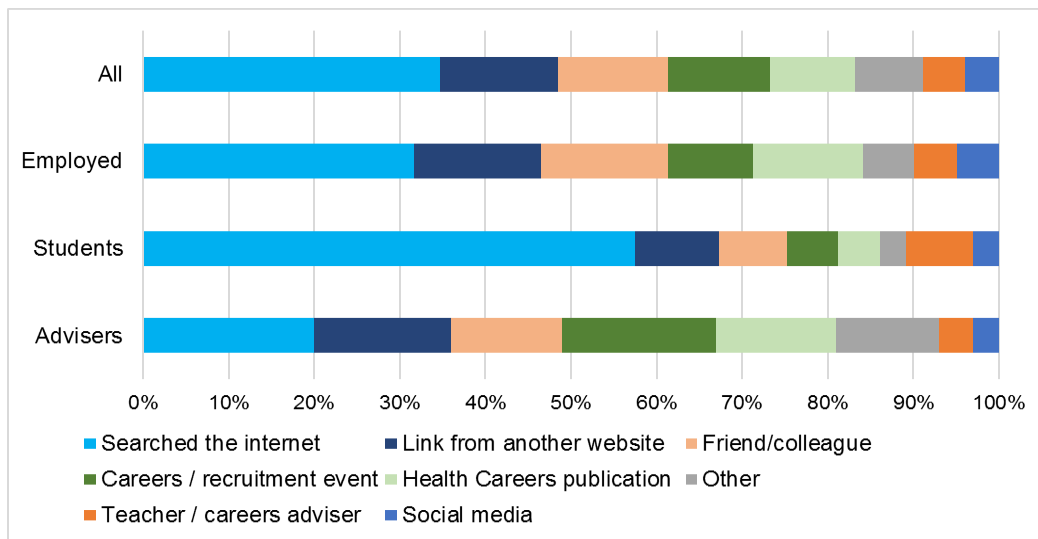
Caution should be exercised with these results as the respondent sample was not representative of all potential users and almost certainly contained positive bias due to the nature of the respondent sample and attraction strategy – which included targeting registered users. The true proportions of the target user groups who have used the website are likely to be lower than these figures and a more representative assessment would require more extensive research with potential user groups. However, the high proportions of those who have used the site returning to it on at least three more occasions suggest that they are finding it of significant value.

Figure 5 Number of times respondents reported that they had used the Health Careers site, by broad user type (N=820)



Those who had used the website were asked how they had heard about it, revealing the results in Figure 6. Overall and amongst all the sub-groups analysed, the most common method of reaching the site was by an internet search, with smaller and relatively similar proportions reporting that they had found it via a link from another website, from a friend or colleague, a career-related event or publication. Amongst students especially, over half had first discovered the website via an internet search. Analysis of open-ended responses to this question showed that HEE information and emails received while in the work environment were the most commonly reported alerting mechanisms. A significant number of the advisers had migrated to the site having been users of the Medical Careers website, and others from information received from AGCAS. On the other hand, the results from these respondents at least suggest that social media activity was not a main driver to the website.

Figure 6 How respondents had heard about the Health Careers website, by respondent type (N=530)

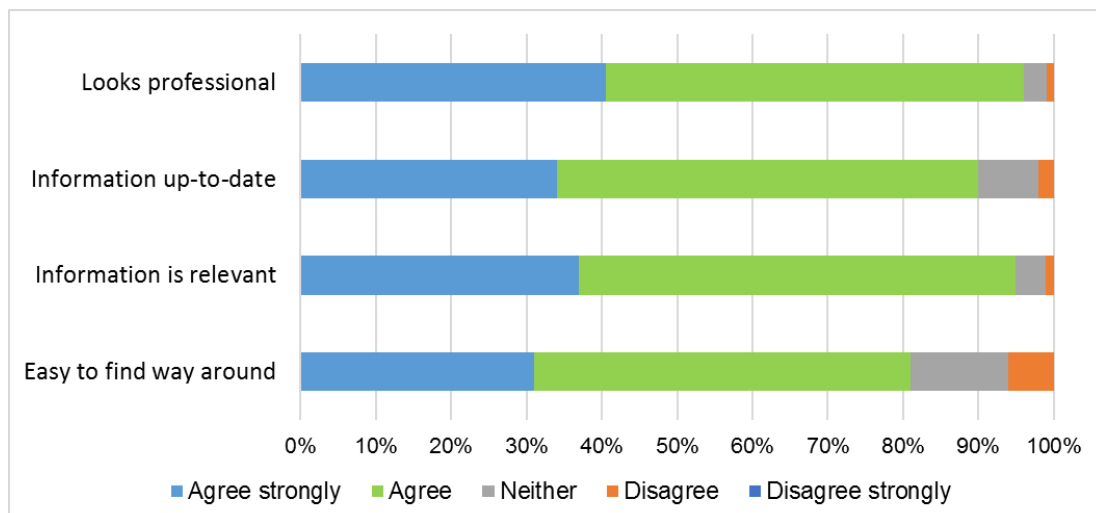


Impressions of the website

Responses from the different broad user groups to questions about their impressions of the Health Careers website were extremely similar, and so are not reported separately here. Figure 7 summarises impressions from all those who had used the website, showing that the vast majority agreed or strongly agreed that it looks professional, that information is relevant and is up-to-date, and over 80% that it is easy to find one's way around the site. Only for this latter issue did any significant number of respondents disagree, but this was only 6% of users and none disagreed strongly.

These responses represent an extremely strong positive endorsement of the overall impressions, structure and layout of the current website. Experience with other website evaluations suggest that satisfying the needs of both students and advisers to this extent is a positive achievement.

Figure 7 Respondents' impressions of the Health Careers website (N=530)



In addition to this overwhelmingly positive overall endorsement, analysis was also performed of the comments supplied by respondents when invited to comment in more detail. Most of these were broadly positive, especially from students, but amongst the more critical comments the following issues were raised by more than one respondent:

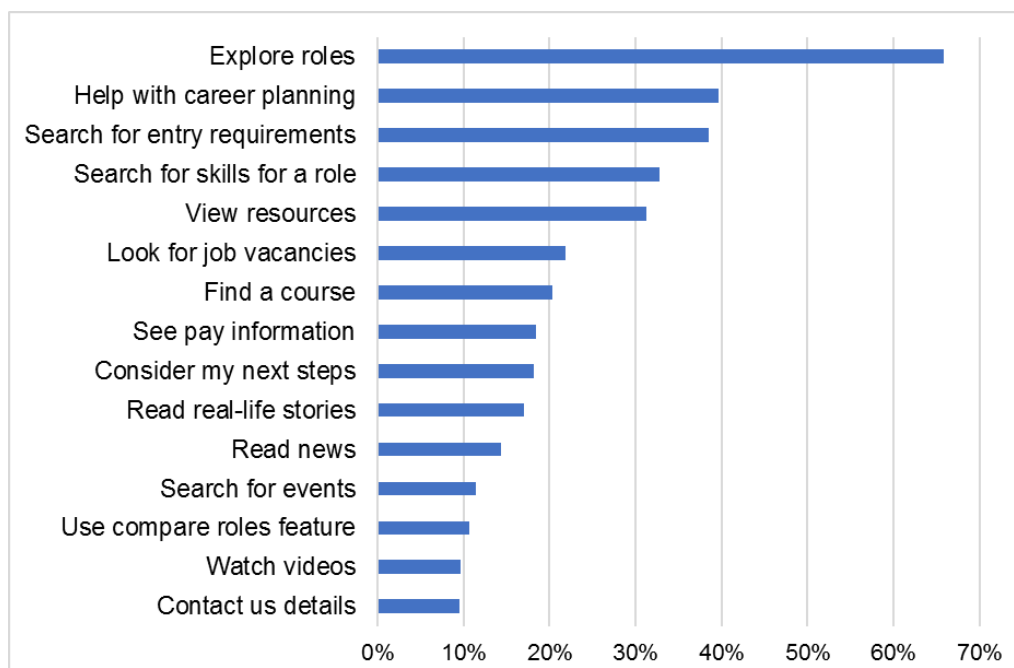
- There was insufficient detail of information for established doctors (several commented that they felt the site was targeted at students and entry-level users)
- More information around the healthcare roles that could be reached via apprenticeships and other vocational qualification routes
- The former Medical Careers website tended to be easier to use.

Single comments of potential interest included a question as to how complete the search coverage was of postgraduate courses, whether more screening roles should be added amongst the occupations, and whether a checklist of issues to consider when embarking on a particular career path could be included.

Why users came to the website

The most common purpose for respondents' most recent visit to the website was to explore roles, which was the case for almost two thirds of respondents (Figure 8). Over 30% of respondents also identified that they needed help with career planning, were searching for entry requirements, investigating the skills required for a role or were specifically seeking resources on the website.

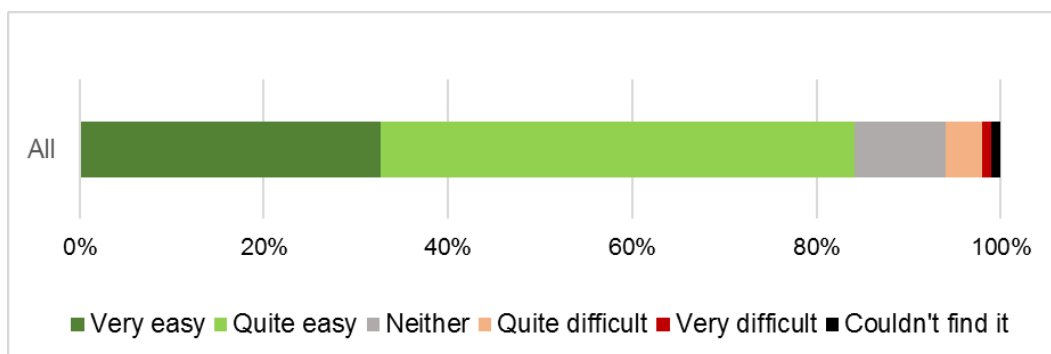
Figure 8 Reasons for respondents' most recent visit to the website (N=527; multiple responses allowed)



Usability of the website

The large majority of respondents reported that it was very easy (33%) quite easy (52%) to find the information that they were looking for during their most recent visit to the website (Figure 9), with under 10% reporting this to be difficult (of whom very few indeed found it very difficult or failed to find that information). These results differed very little between the broad groups of respondents analysed, and appear to be a positive endorsement of the structure of the site. There were few valuable open-ended comments made in responses to an invitation to specify information that they struggled to find, but these tended to relate to finding postgraduate or higher training information (for established doctors, for example), requirements to enter vocational qualifications or pathways, and also opportunities in health and social care now that the funding for nurse training has changed.

Figure 9 Perceived ease with which respondents found the information they sought during their last visit to the website (N=517)

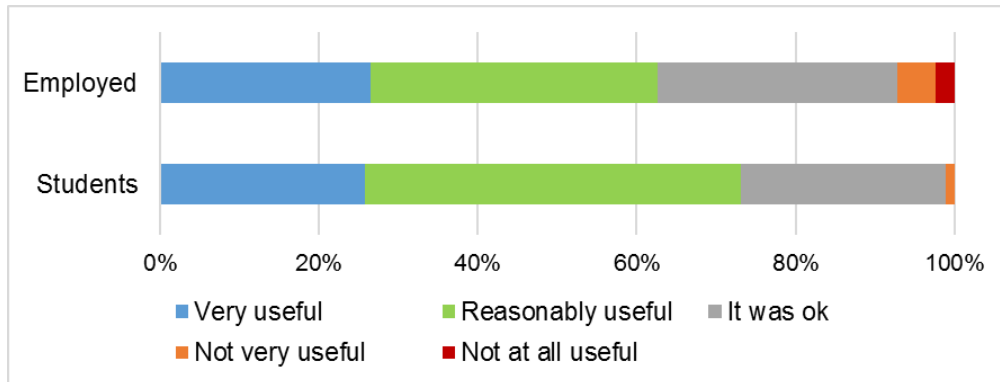


Perceptions of value or usefulness

The majority of respondents reported that they found the Health Careers website to have been very or reasonably useful in helping them take the next steps in their career decision-making. Due to the specificity of the question wording, responses from advisers and teachers were removed (for many of whom it was not relevant, literally). Figure 10 shows the results from students and users in employment, once normalised after removal of “not relevant” responses from these groups. This shows that almost three quarters of student respondents and two thirds of those employed found the site very or reasonably useful in this context. Perhaps as important, the proportions reporting that it was not useful were extremely small.

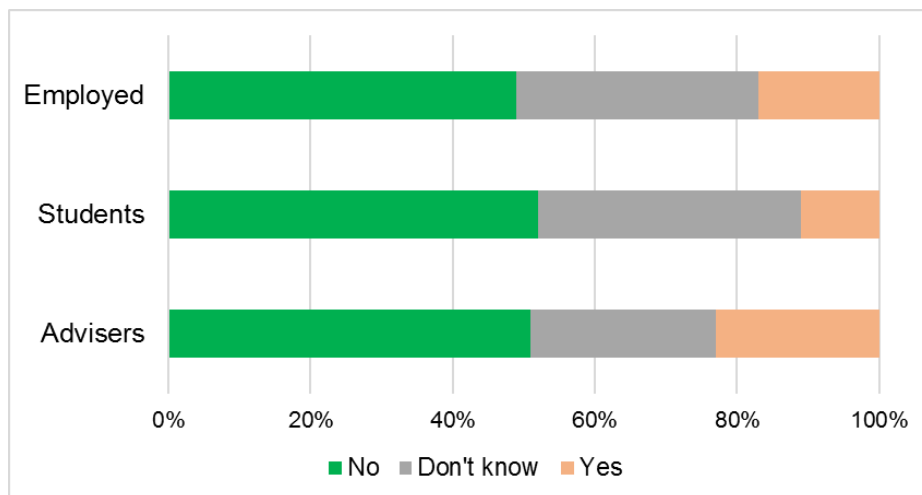
The difference in perceived usefulness could relate to differences in the context of students and employed respondents, respectively, in that the decisions that students need to make are possibly more clear cut than those being considered by those already in employment. An alternative or additional interpretation could be that this relates to perceptions of some users that the site is strongest in relation to those at entry level or early in careers, and less useful for those already established in health-related careers.

Figure 10 Perceptions of usefulness of the website in helping respondents to take the next steps in their career decision-making (N=403)



Around half of all respondents did not feel that the website was missing anything, while 18% suggested that something was missing (and around one third did not know). Advisers and teachers were slightly more critical, amongst whom more (23%) felt there was content missing but fewer (26%) were uncertain. This is not a surprising result, as advisers are likely to be the most frequent and demanding users of the website, and it reflects the earlier result that students seem generally to be the most satisfied with the range of information on the site.

Figure 11 Respondents' perceptions of whether the website is missing anything (N=517)



Open-ended comments provided in response to a request to specify any 'missing' information were analysed. The most common themes were around:

- Apprenticeships, generally;
- Opportunities for returners to health careers for those who had taken time out [despite the presence of a specific section on this accessed from the "I am...." Menu];
- Healthcare assistant and other healthcare career options;
- Salaries and employment conditions for a range of employers (not just the NHS).

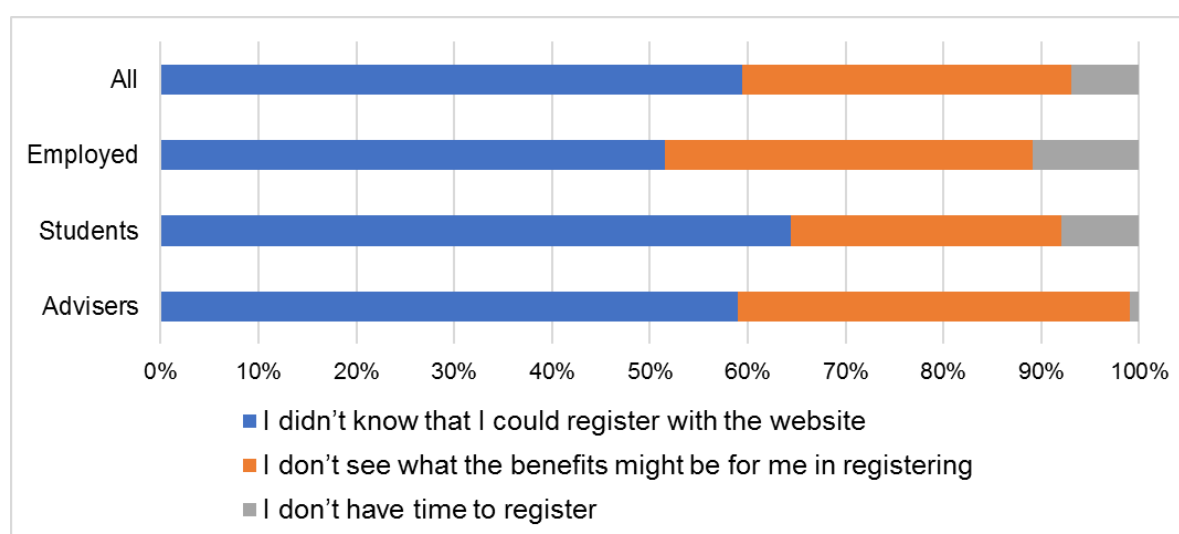
Some of the comments made by advisers were very specific, but included suggestions that there should be an 'A-Z' list of occupations (roles), better linkage to certain career-related tools (including the quiz in the StepintotheNHS website), more information on how to find work experience, and also more labour market information (LMI). Interestingly, LMI was not mentioned by any other type of user.

Registration with the website

Just under 40% of all respondents had registered with the Health Careers website. This varied relatively little with the broad type of user, although was slightly higher amongst those in employment (41%) and somewhat lower amongst advisers and teachers (34%), which is somewhat surprising given that these respondents were the most frequent users of the site.

The most common reason given for not registering with the website was that respondents reported they were not aware that they could register with the site (almost 60% of those who had not registered). The vast majority of the remaining respondents reported that they had not registered because they were unclear of the benefits of doing so. These results differed only marginally between different user types (Figure 12).

Figure 12 Respondents' reported reasons for not having registered with the website (N=295)

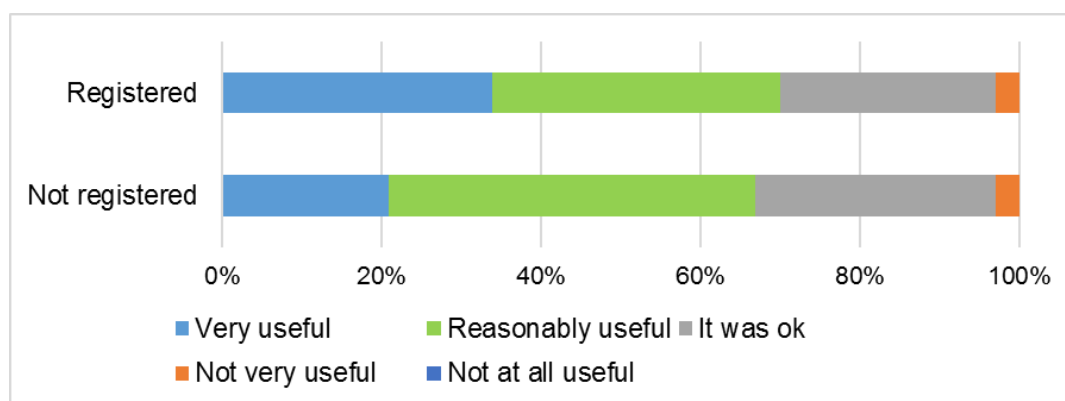


These responses beg the question of the current benefits of registration, and the extent to which the site promotes the opportunity to register. It was also interesting to note amongst the open-ended comments that some advisers seemed to think that registration was not intended for them, presumably reflecting their perceptions of the potential additionality that could be accessed via registration.

In Figure 13 the perceptions of usefulness of the website that were shown in Figure 10 are shown for whether the respondents were registered users or not. Again, the responses of advisers were excluded as the question was not fully relevant to them, and the results have been normalised to remove respondents answering 'not relevant'. This shows that a slightly higher proportion of registered user respondents of these types found the site useful, compared with respondents who were not registered, although the difference was very modest. On the other hand, a higher proportion of these respondents that were registered found the

site very useful, compared with non-registered users. This suggests that there is some correlation between the most satisfied users and those who have registered with the website.

Figure 13 Perceptions of usefulness of the website in helping respondents to take the next steps in their career decision-making, for registered (N=128) and non-registered (N=176) users, excluding advisers



Views from those who had not used the website

As reported earlier, 262 respondents had never used the Health Careers website, and a different 'strand' of questioning was directed to these respondents. Of these, 60% reported that they did need to access information about careers in the health sector while 14% said that they did not and 26% were unsure. Those who indicated that they did need to access careers information were asked subsidiary questions relating to this.

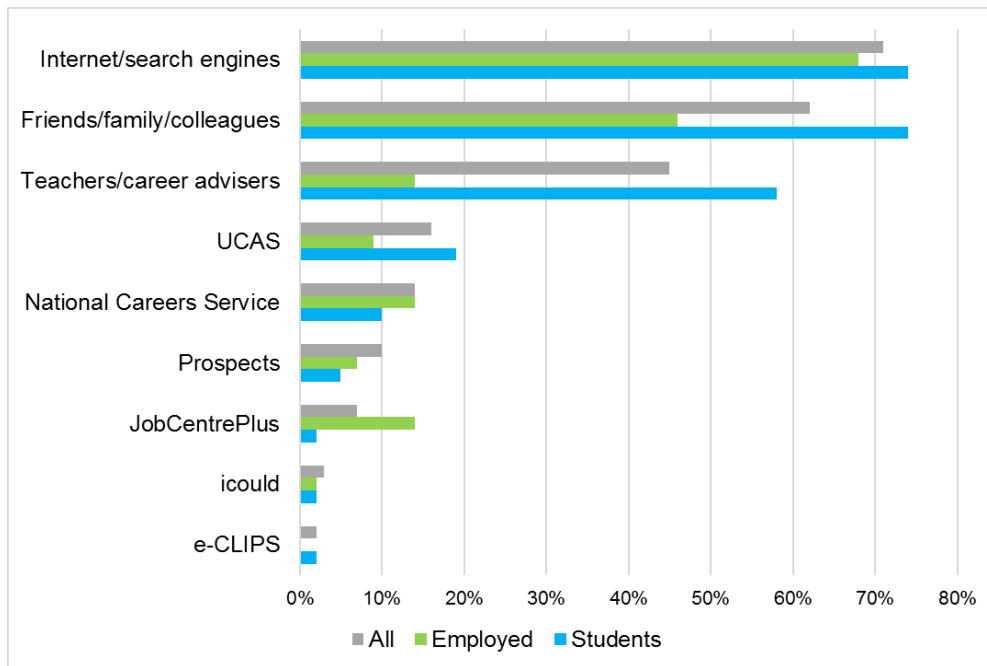
In response to a question about from whom or where they did currently access health-related career information, over two thirds indicated that they made internet searches, and well over half said that they obtained information from friends, family or colleagues (and this was notably higher amongst students, Figure 14).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, over half of student respondents reported that they consulted teachers or careers advisers, while this was the case for only a small minority of those in employment. As Figure 14 shows, relatively few used other career-related information services such as UCAS, the National Careers Service or Prospects, all of which provide a range of information online.

It is perhaps notable that only a minority of respondents cited the BMA (or BMJ), or NHS Jobs, as sites they used, within those who provided responses to an invitation to list other sources of information.

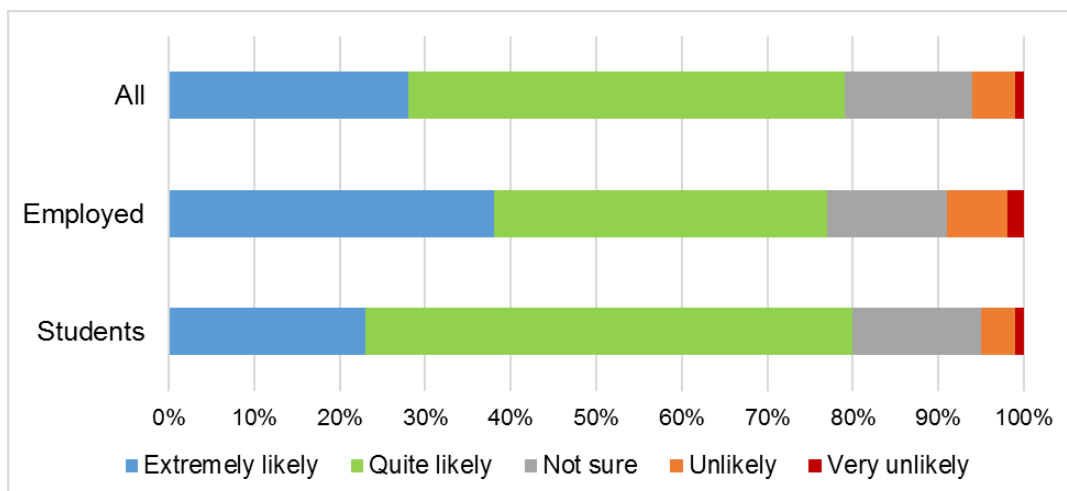
When questioned about whether they were likely to use the Health Careers website in future, having been given a brief description of what it contained, just under 80% of these respondents reported that they would be extremely or quite likely to do so. Nearly 40% of the group in employment indicated that this was extremely likely. Only around 5% of students indicated that they were unlikely to (and 8% of those in employment).

Figure 14 Respondents' access to other information sources about health-related careers (non-users of the Health Careers site, N=177; multiple responses allowed)



On the surface, these can be considered as positive results, which seem to suggest that a significant proportion of the potential audience not currently accessing the website has a need for its information, particularly amongst those already in a health-related career. This, in turn, suggests that there is scope for additional benefit if the site continues to be promoted both to those considering or undertaking health-related education and training but also those already established in health-related careers.

Figure 15 Respondents' likelihood to use the Health Careers website in future, now that they are aware of it (non-users only, N=211)



4. OVERALL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Awareness and use levels

The survey obtained responses from all its potential target user groups but was not designed to obtain a robust indication of the extent to which the Health Careers website is known within those groups. That said, there is evidence of awareness and use amongst all the key user groups, right across the UK (and to some extent internationally).

Overall, more than half of those who have visited the site at all have accessed it more than three times, strongly suggesting that there is content of value to them. This proportion is only slightly lower amongst students of health-related subjects and also those in employment, of whom just under half who have used it have done so more than three times. Advisers and teachers are the heaviest users, with the majority using it 12 or more times.

Amongst these respondents, most have reached the site via a search, although significant proportions do so via other website links, hear about it from colleagues or peers or having seen other career-related information. Social media activity does not appear to be a key driver to the site currently.

The most common purpose of users' visits is to explore job roles (reported to be the case amongst the majority of respondents), but substantial proportions use it for help with career planning, entry or skills requirements for progression, and to access careers resources.

Impressions and useability

The vast majority of all key types of users are impressed by the professional look and feel of the Health Careers website, find the information to be up-to-date and relevant, and think it is easy to find their way around. These are extremely positive endorsements of the overall design, structure and layout of the website and the information it contains.

A minority of users comment that they perceive the site to be targeted mainly at those considering entry to health-related study or employment, and that there could be more detailed information for those already established as doctors or health professionals. There is also an appetite for more information on healthcare roles and pathways via apprenticeships.

85% of users report that they find it quite or very easy to find the information they seek, with fewer than 1 in 10 suggesting that it is difficult. Again, this is a strong positive endorsement from all key user types that the structure and navigability of the website are effective.

A substantial proportion of respondents were registered users of the site, unsurprisingly given that they were targeted when promoting the survey. Amongst site users who have not registered, the majority reason that this is because they were either unaware that this was possible or did not understand the benefit that this would bring.

Usefulness and value

Amongst end users of the site (as opposed to those who advise them), around three quarters of students and two thirds of employed users find the site reasonably or very useful in relation to helping them take the next steps in their career decision-making. Very low proportions report that they do not find it useful in this respect. It is quite likely that a less specific question (i.e. general usefulness) would have delivered even more positive results. The slightly lower perceptions amongst those in employment could relate to the fact that the career decisions they make are less clear cut than those required by students, or to the earlier observation that

some established professionals seek very detailed information that the site currently does not serve quite so well.

Few users perceive that substantive types of content are currently 'missing' from the website, although a quarter of advisers (who are the most demanding users) feel that there could be more content and more detail. A number of specific recommendations from respondents include suggestions for more coverage relating to apprenticeships and more on healthcare assistant and other healthcare roles, as well as implications of changes to funding of training for nursing.

Amongst those who have not used the website, 60% report that they do need to access information about careers in the health sector, suggesting that there is significant appetite for the type of information provided by the Health Careers site, particularly amongst those already in a health-related career. Once they understood the site's content, most of these current non-users indicate that they would be very likely to use it, and only tiny proportions that they would not. These results underpin the importance of continuing to promote the site to those considering or undertaking health-related education and training, and those already established in careers.

Recommendations

- The findings from this survey strongly suggest that the Health Careers website is valued by its key target audiences and is playing a significant role in providing career-related information. An over-riding recommendation is therefore that **it should continue to be supported as a channel to provide career-related information to those considering, studying towards or working in a health-related career.**
- Although the constraints of this particular survey could not determine representative views from its entire potential target audience, there is evidence that more targeted users would obtain value from it if they were aware of it. This underpins, **to maximise its value, the need to continue to promote the site to prospective and current students and those already employed in the health sector.**
- Strong positive user impressions and endorsements of the site and its useability suggest that **the site is essentially fit-for-purpose, but continued incremental improvements to its content and functionality are recommended** in order to keep it up-to-date and satisfy evolving user needs.
- There is some evidence that **users are not finding the full extent of the information available to support the career development of established doctors and health professionals.** Several users commented that the information under 'I am...working in health...' was difficult to find and it would be advisable for this to be accessible from the role page areas.
- Given the high national policy focus on apprenticeships, **more coverage around apprenticeship pathways and the roles achievable through them would be valuable, as well as more attention to healthcare-related roles in general.**
- If greater numbers of registered users are sought, **there would be value in making the benefits of registration with the website more explicit and prominent.**
- **The Health Careers team should review the detailed comments provided by survey respondents as part of its ongoing content development process.**