CAREERS INSIGHT REVIEW 2026

2026 edition / November review

Where should your next careers conversation start?

Regional hiring activity, demand signals and pay context for school careers teams.

This review looks at where employers are advertising, which occupation groups show stronger demand, and how to use that evidence in conversations with students. It also asks what changing advert patterns can tell us about AI.

9 / 11	54	332
areas led by care-worker adverts*	covered groups in critical demand**	groups in the regional comparison

*Within our screened occupation cohort. **2025 assessment, with 310 covered groups classified. Advert window: October 2025 to September 2026, available months only. This is not a full calendar-year 2026 count.

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01

One national conversation is not enough.

Care workers and home carers lead in nine areas. London and the South East have different leaders.

Region / nation	Leading covered occupation group	New adverts / month*
London	Sales accounts and business development managers	3,177
South East	Cleaners and domestics	3,064
North West	Care workers and home carers	2,008
South West	Care workers and home carers	1,813
East Of England	Care workers and home carers	1,658
West Midlands	Care workers and home carers	1,378
Yorkshire and the Humber	Care workers and home carers	1,216
East Midlands	Care workers and home carers	1,335
Scotland	Care workers and home carers	1,095
Wales	Care workers and home carers	707
North East	Care workers and home carers	704

*Average across available months within October 2025 to September 2026, rounded to whole adverts. Each leader has 10 or 11 available months. Rankings are within the same 332 SOC groups, not all occupations.

Use differences to choose employers or sectors to explore, alongside students' interests. The largest category is a starting point for discussion, rather than a destination for every student.

02

Different places, different starting points.

The five largest groups by average monthly advert activity in London and the North West, within the screened cohort.

London

Sales accounts and business development managers	3,177
Programmers and software development professionals	2,812
IT business analysts, architects and systems designers	2,361
Business sales executives	2,242
Business and financial project management professionals	1,811

North West

Care workers and home carers	2,008
Sales accounts and business development managers	1,419
Teaching assistants	1,337
Cleaners and domestics	1,328
Business sales executives	1,195

Average new adverts per available month, October 2025-September 2026. The charts use separate scales. Counts are not adjusted for population or region size, and are not entry-level counts.

03

A large advert count is not the same as critical demand.

Skills England combines five indicators to assess demand relative to usual levels. This classification is not a vacancy count or proof of a worker shortage.

2025 classification	Covered groups	Share of 310 assessed groups
Critical demand	54	17.4%
Elevated demand	108	34.8%
Not in high demand	148	47.7%

Another 30 groups have no classification. These are counts of occupation groups, not shares of employment or students. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Illustration	2025 classification
Sales accounts and business development managers	Critical demand
Care workers and home carers	Elevated demand
Cleaners and domestics	Not in high demand

A critical-demand group may still require training, experience or qualifications. Neither advert volume nor demand classification tells a school leaver how easy entry will be.

04

Salary headlines need a second question.

Recorded UK median annual gross earnings for employee jobs, across full-time and part-time work.

Occupation group	Median annual gross pay
Programmers and software development professionals	£58,770
Data analysts	£39,927
Plumbers and heating and ventilating installers and repairers	£37,794
Care workers and home carers	£23,045

These are not starting salaries, offers or take-home pay. Differences can reflect hours and work patterns as well as hourly pay. Ask what experience, qualifications and hours sit behind each figure.

ONS ASHE Table 14, 2026 provisional; tax year ending 5 April 2026. All sexes, all work patterns. Employees only; self-employed earnings excluded. Rounded to the nearest pound.

05

Is AI reducing jobs?

Some occupation groups show fewer adverts. These figures do not establish that AI caused the change.

In London, advert activity fell for personal assistants and secretaries, bookkeeping and payroll roles, data analysts, and advertising and marketing associates. However, software development adverts rose over the same comparison window. Secondary teaching adverts fell more sharply than any of these selected office and digital groups.

Selected London occupation group	Earlier window*	Recent window*	Change	Matched months
Personal assistants and other secretaries	6,338	5,774	-8.9%	10
Book-keepers, payroll managers and wages clerks	11,807	10,760	-8.9%	9
Data analysts	5,676	5,451	-4.0%	11
Advertising and marketing associate professionals	14,132	13,708	-3.0%	11
Programmers and software development professionals	28,350	30,935	+9.1%	11
Secondary education teaching professionals	14,842	8,244	-44.5%	9

*Recent window: October 2025-September 2026. Earlier window: October 2024-September 2025. Counts include only calendar months with numeric values in both years, separately for each occupation. March 2026 is excluded, along with any other unmatched months. These are selected illustrations, not the largest declines or an AI-exposure ranking.

What we can say

Measured advertising has softened in several of these groups. That is worth exploring when planning employer encounters or discussing how work is changing. The mixed pattern gives no basis for saying all digital or office work is shrinking.

What we cannot say

Fewer adverts do not measure redundancies, employment losses or roles replaced by AI. The dataset contains no employer-level AI adoption measure or reason for a hiring change. Budgets, recruitment cycles, economic conditions and changes in source coverage could also affect the figures.

A useful question for students: “Which tasks in this career might change, and what skills would help someone adapt?” That is a better use of this evidence than declaring a career unsafe.

ONS/Textkernel source disruption, imputation and suppression affect this period. Matching months avoids comparing a missing month with a populated one; it does not remove those source limitations or establish statistical significance. Treat these as descriptive signals for further investigation.

06

Where are Opportunity Scores highest and lowest?

A London comparison using the stored Certyz scoring model. These are occupation groups, not a national ranking of individual careers.

THREE HIGHEST SCORES

Occupation group	SOC 2020	Opportunity Score
Solicitors and lawyers	2412	91
Chartered surveyors	2454	90
Quantity surveyors	2453	89

THREE LOWEST SCORES

Occupation group	SOC 2020	Opportunity Score
Library clerks and assistants	4135	13
Hospital porters	9262	22
Groundworkers	9121	23

Solicitors and lawyers lead this comparison, followed by chartered surveyors and quantity surveyors. Library clerks and assistants sit at the other end. These are market signals, not verdicts on the value of the work or whether a career suits an individual.

How to read the comparison

The model weights hiring activity at 40%, recruitment pressure at 25%, future openings at 20% and employee pay at 15%. Inputs are compared with the model's imported reference sets. A high score can coexist with lengthy qualifications or competitive entry; a low score does not mean there are no opportunities.

Some evidence comes from broader occupation groups, UK-wide surveys or long-term projections. The score is not entirely local evidence, a probability of getting a job, an entry-difficulty rating or a Personal Match score.

Ranking pool: 286 London groups with all four scored components available, from the 340-group prepared cohort. Excludes 40 groups using a neutral-pay fallback and 14 without a score. The same six groups remain the extremes if the 40 fallback scores are included. Whole-number stored scores are shown; unrounded model values break ties. Quantity surveyors appear here because scoring uses a separate eligibility policy from the 332-group regional advert comparison.

Evidence periods: adverts October 2025-September 2026; Employer Skills Survey 2024; openings projections 2020-2035; employee pay 2026 provisional, with UK pay fallback where required. Data extracted 10 November 2026. No scores or settings have been changed for this report.

07

Three useful activities for a careers programme.

Suggested uses of the findings, rather than measured outcomes.

Compare interest with local activity

Ask students which careers interest them, then compare their choices with the leading local occupation groups. Explore what is familiar, what is missing and what students want to understand. Use this to choose sectors and employers to explore.

Challenge one salary assumption

Choose a familiar role. Separate annual pay, starting pay, hours, qualifications and experience. Use the median as context, then research an actual route into the work.

Connect demand with a route

Choose a critical-demand group and investigate specific roles within it. Compare university, apprenticeship and employment routes where they apply. Check current entry requirements with providers, then build a lesson or careers encounter around the questions students uncover.

08

What this review covers.

Analysis of stored evidence, extracted read-only on 10 November 2026.

Scope and dataset

The analysed JobFacts snapshot contains 5,440 evidence records: 5,410 validated and 30 unavailable, spanning 340 four-digit SOC 2020 occupation groups. The completed 5 November import contains the same evidence as the approved 30 October snapshot used here. These are data records, not job counts.

Regional comparison

There are 3,740 unique occupation-area advert series: 340 groups across nine English regions, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland is excluded. We retain 332 groups with at least nine numeric months in every area and at least nine matched prior-year months in every area. The other eight groups are excluded from the regional volume rankings.

Advert averages

For each occupation-area pair, average monthly adverts = sum of numeric counts in October 2025-September 2026 divided by the number of numeric months. Suppressed values are never zero-filled or extrapolated to a 12-month total. Available months differ, so rates are descriptive rather than perfectly like-for-like seasonal measures.

Year-on-year changes

The AI discussion uses selected London groups with at least nine matched months. Each recent month is paired with the same calendar month one year earlier. Change = (recent matched sum / earlier matched sum - 1) × 100. Both sums and the matched-month count are shown. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place. Occupations may use different matched month sets, so their changes are not an exact common-calendar ranking.

Opportunity Score ranking

Read-only extraction of the prepared four-dimension model using the approved base and 31 October supplement imports. Rankings use the 286 complete-evidence London scores, with no new calibration or score calculation. They are separate from the descriptive advert cohort. Model values are relative to their imported reference distributions, not national career desirability. Projections and shortage evidence may be broader than the named four-digit group.

Advert limitations

Online adverts measure posting activity, not all jobs, currently open vacancies, hires or entry-level opportunities. Uncoded adverts and recruitment through other channels are outside this view. Recent source changes, imputation and suppression limit interpretation. March 2026 is suppressed. The analysis does not attribute a decline to AI.

Different periods and coverage

Demand classifications use the 2025 Skills England assessment, with 310 groups available. Its methodology changed from the 2024 release, so we do not compare those classifications over time. Pay is provisional 2026 ASHE employee earnings. The 340 groups are the stored Certyz cohort, not the full SOC catalogue. No count has been multiplied by the number of careers mapped to a group.

09

Bring the market picture into the student conversation.

Use this review as a starting point for discussion.

Combine market evidence with students' interests, circumstances and professional guidance. Certyz connects personalised career reports with combined school insights into interests, intended routes, clarity and confidence.

Explore Certyz for schools

Sources and attribution

1. **Online adverts.** ONS labour demand volumes by SOC 2020, using Textkernel; January 2017-September 2026 edition. Accessed via JobFacts. Official source.

2. **Demand classification.** Skills England / Department for Education, Occupations in demand, 2025 assessment. Accessed via JobFacts. Official source.

3. **UK employee pay.** ONS ASHE Table 14, 2026 provisional edition. Accessed via JobFacts. Official source.

4. **Regional employee pay.** ONS ASHE Table 15, 2026 provisional edition. Used in the stored score model where available. Official source.

5. **Recruitment pressure.** Department for Education / Skills England, Employer Skills Survey 2024, published July 2025. Accessed via JobFacts. Official source.

6. **Future openings.** Department for Education, Labour market and skills projections 2020-2035; updated August 2024. Projections are scenarios of future change, not current vacancies or precise predictions. Accessed via JobFacts. Official source.

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