

Understanding the factors that influence pupils' choices post-16

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Research for Pembrokeshire Learning Network in 2006

“....to determine how careers education and guidance provision could best be developed in order to facilitate access to a wide range of academic and vocational courses and training, without the restrictions of institutional barriers and interests.”

Understanding the issues

Work Based
Learning

College

Schools

9 Year 12
focus groups

Interviews
with
professionals

Testing them

883 pupils
Years 7-11

167 16+
Pembs

153 16+
Tertiary area

74 school
tutors

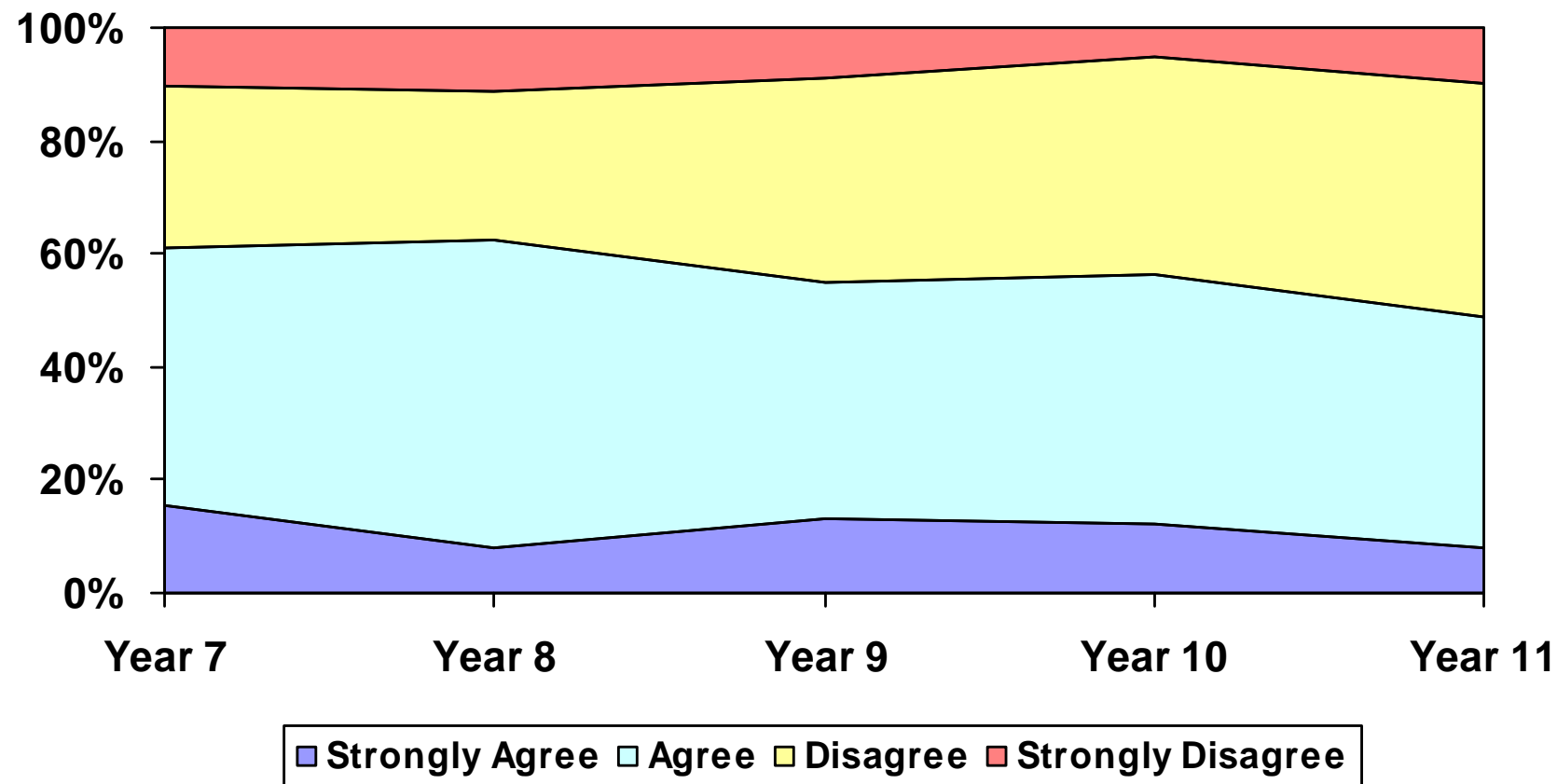
120 parents
of Y11

DECISION MAKING INFORMATION SUPPORT

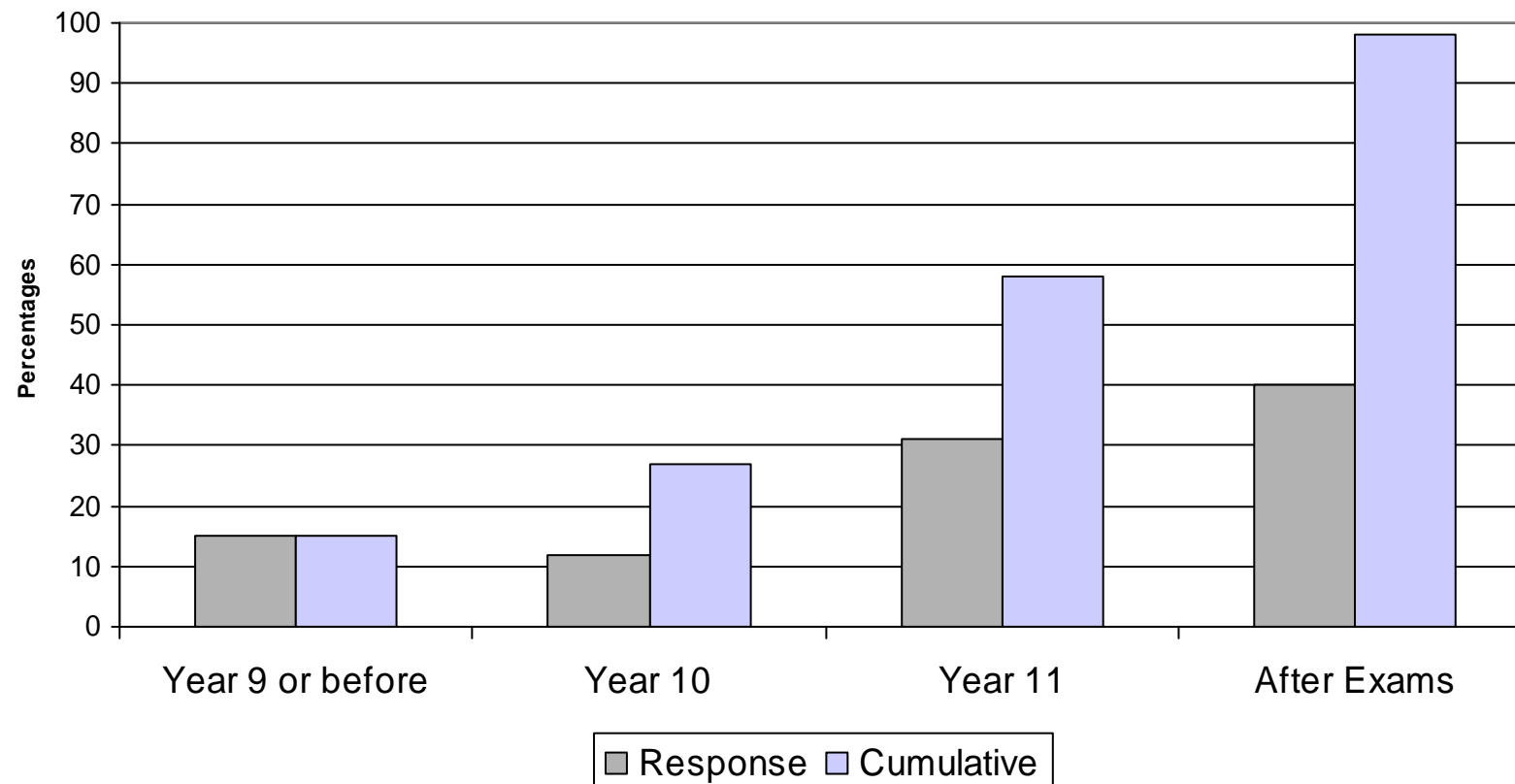
DECISION MAKING

“.....Then there wasn't really anything else I could do, so I just ended up on this course.”

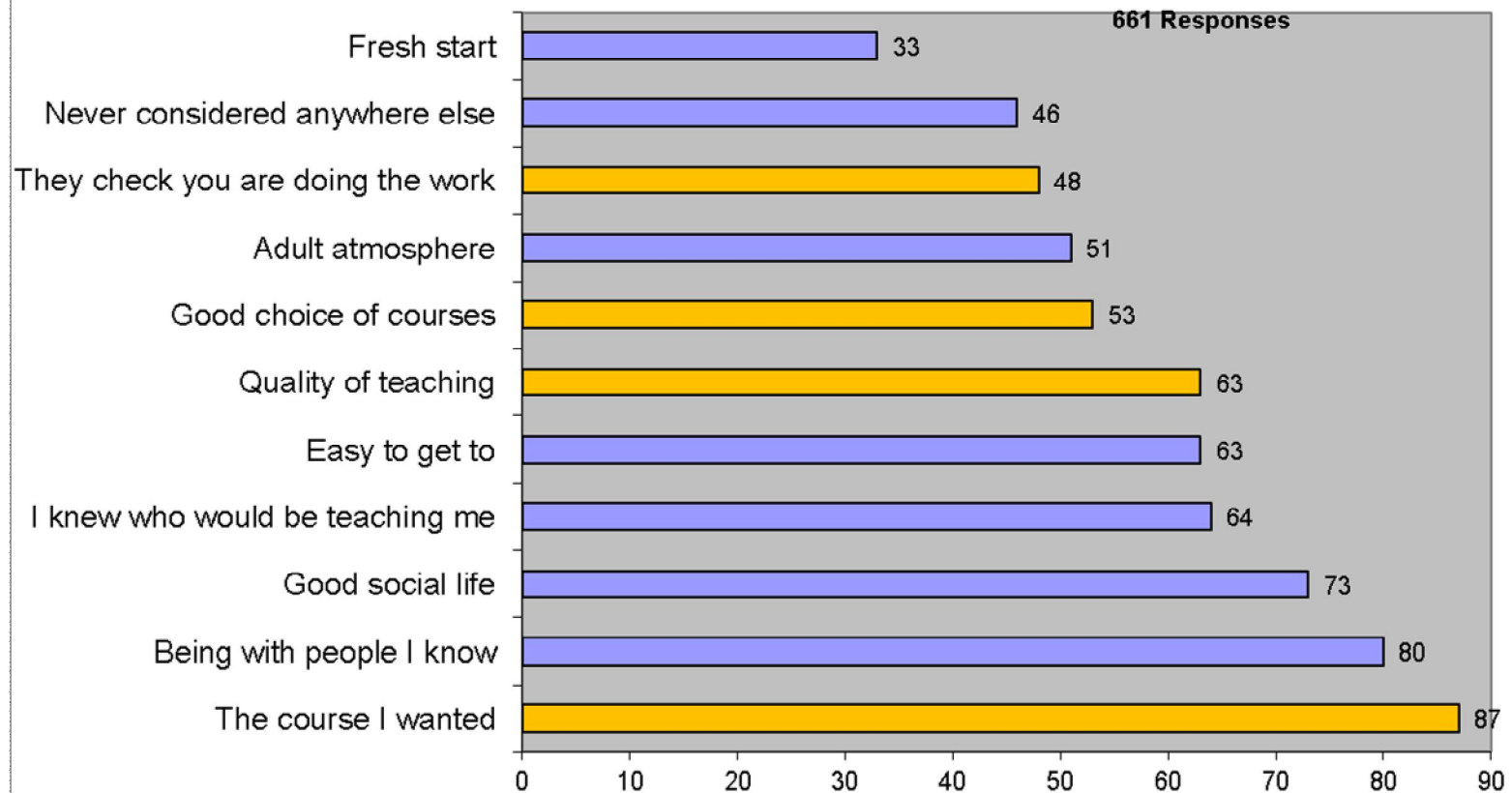
‘I change my mind quite a bit
about what I’d like to do’



When did you decide on the activity you are doing now?



Reasons for choosing where you learn



Gender, class, ethnicity, geography
Opportunities, self perception, aspirations

Serendipity

TACIT PREFERENCES

Attitudes

Partial information

Emotion

Reaction to barriers

ACTIONS OF OTHERS

Pragmatically Rational Decisions

According to rational models, a person weighs up his or her options, and selects the one that is likely to bring most satisfaction.

Reality is different. Most people are pragmatic about decision-making, operating on partial information, in ways informed as much by emotion and tacit preferences as by considered logical choice.

Hodkinson 2004

What helps?

“...there was a predominance of young people who appeared to have made their decisions in a rational way in schools where impartial advice and guidance was accompanied by a caring and supportive ethos and where pupils believed that support (whether academic or pastoral) was available and was focused on helping them...”

(Blenkinsop 2005)

And what doesn't?

"...Young people who ...follow the easiest path when making a decision or who seemed to be fatalistic about their decisions were ...largely found in schools where the process of decision making was seen as less crucial by staff, or where staff acknowledged that parental (hence pupil) expectations were low."

(Blenkinsop 2005)

INFORMATION

“ ‘Cos I got to admit, I didn't know whether to go to sixth form and sometimes now I think to myself, Oh I wish I'd gone to college; but because you don't know what it's going to be like.....”

32% of young people 16+
agreed or strongly agreed
'I wish I had known more about it
before deciding'

What is the issue?

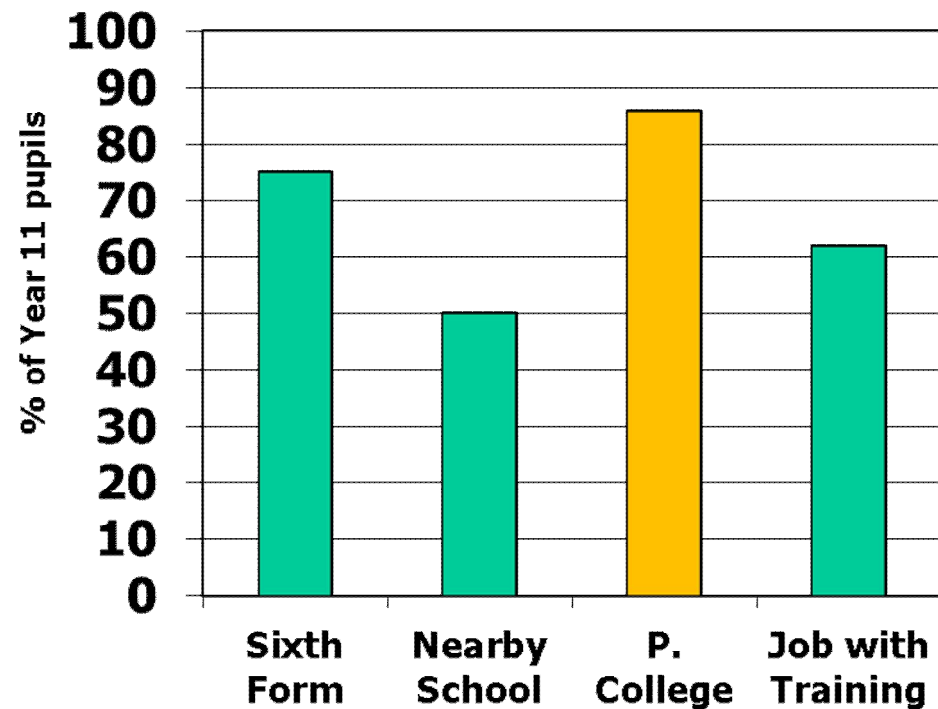
- Do pupils know how to find out more?
- Is the information available?
- Do they use it?
- Does it help?

88% of Year 11
pupils agreed or
strongly agreed

'I would like to
find out more
about the
different things

I could choose'

'I am sure I know how to find
out about...'



Careers Exploration Skills:

- least likely to switch courses or drop-out of courses, post-16
- most likely to be on a course that would lead to a higher level of qualification than they had already achieved at 16
- true for *all* young people, whatever their level of attainment at GCSE.

Morris 2004

Developing high levels of skill

“..... individual research exercises were essential in helping young people refine their careers exploration skills”

What do young people say helps them?

- Information mediated by discussion, e.g., individual discussion, open days;
- Experience, e.g., work experience or tasters.

Strong support for 'tasters'

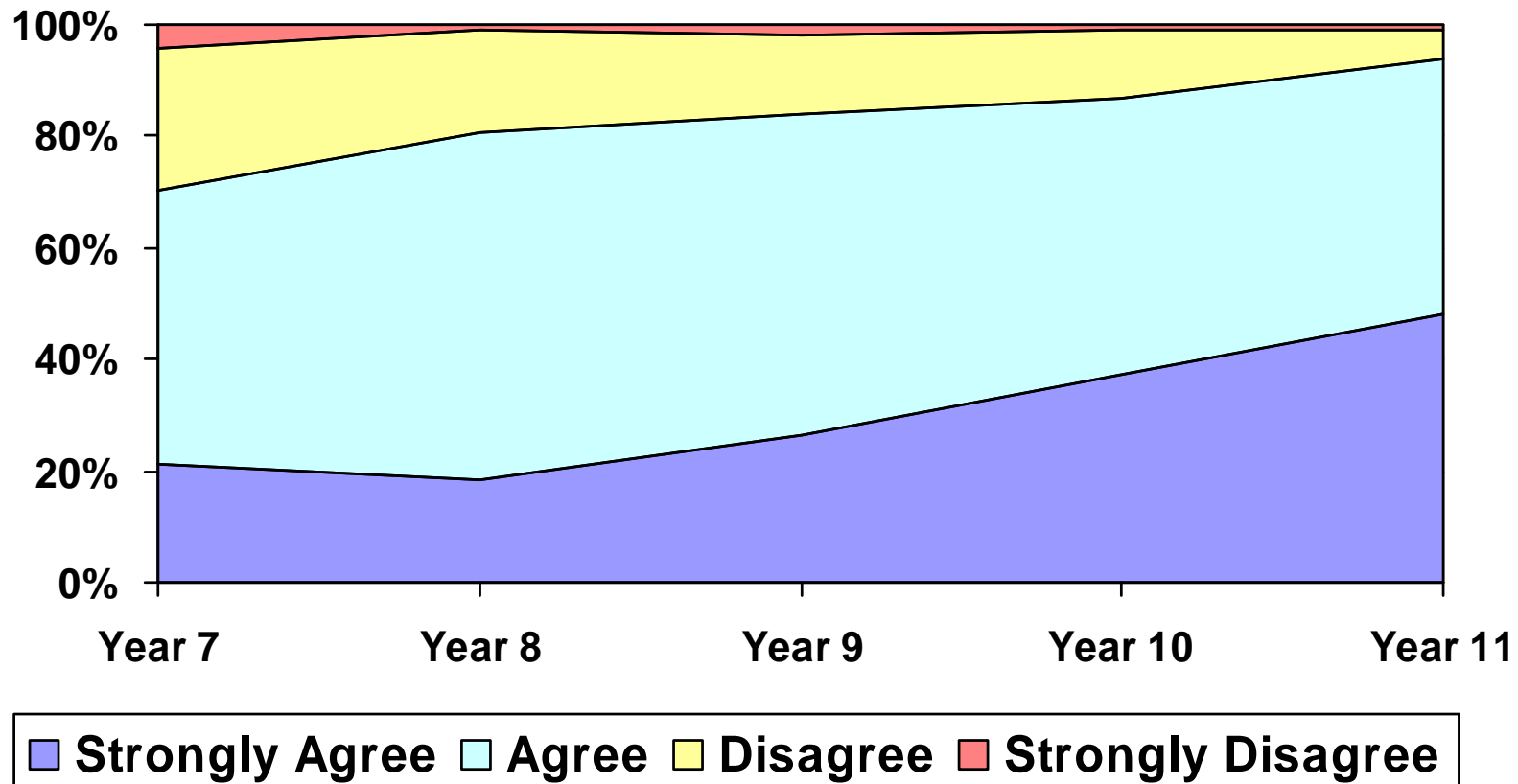
47% of young people 16+
agreed or strongly agreed

'I would have liked to try this out
before deciding'

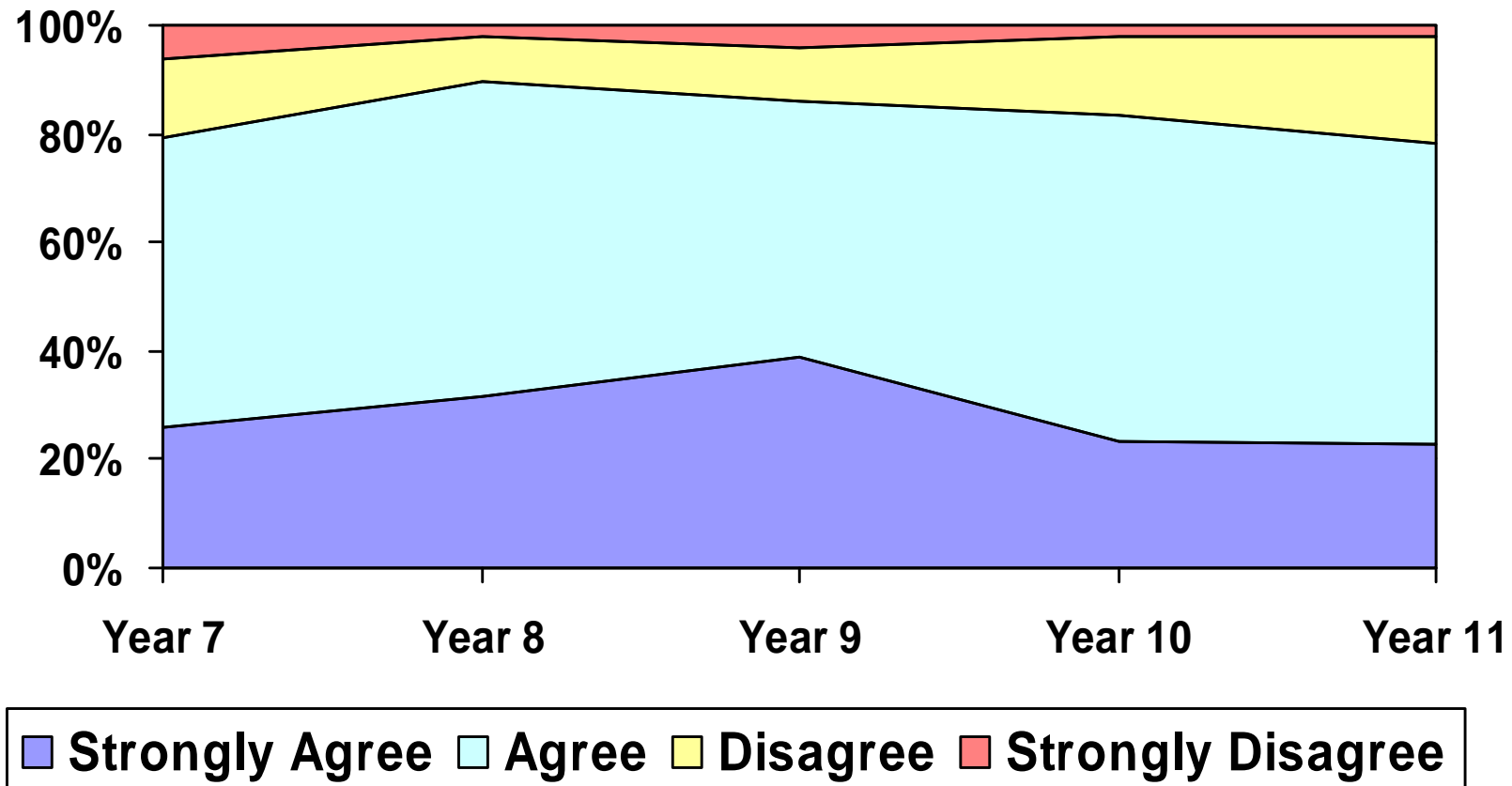
SUPPORT

- When do pupils start to think about their choices?
- What/ who influences their choices?

‘I have started to think about what I will do after my exams in year 11’

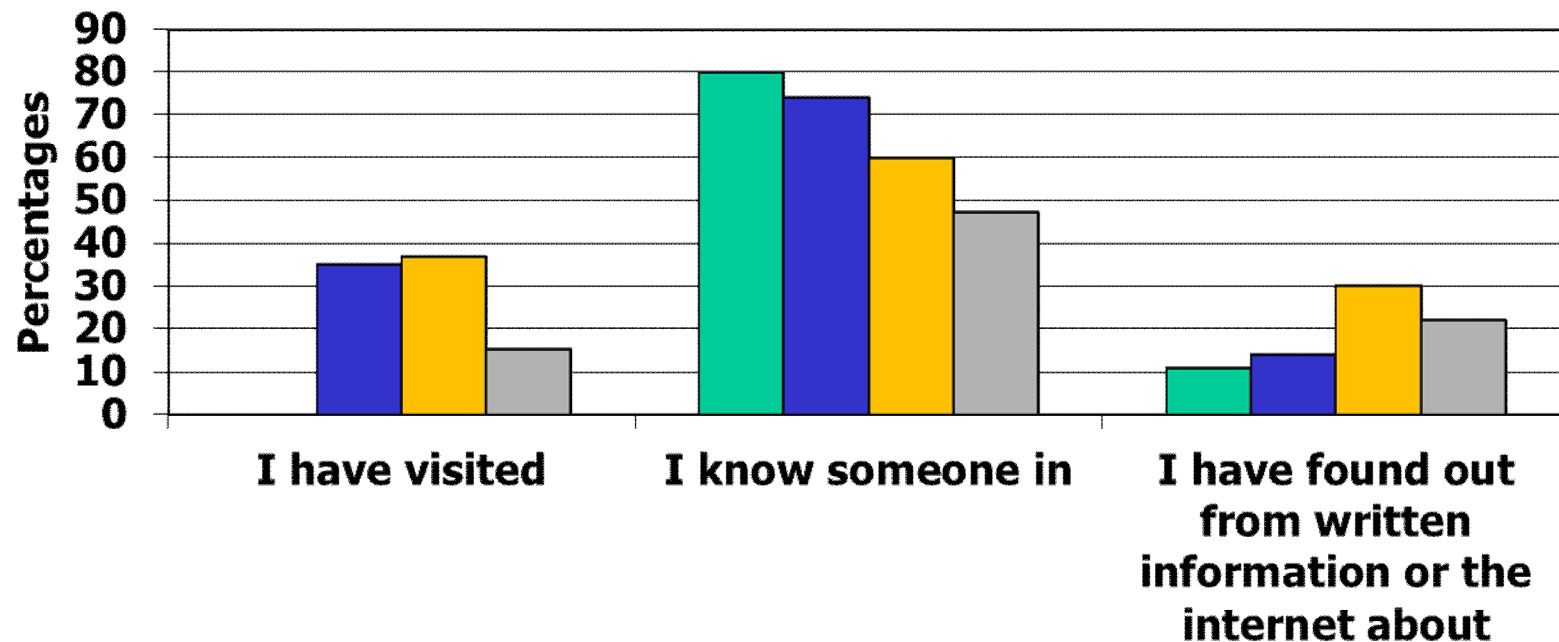


‘I would like to find out more about the different things I could choose’

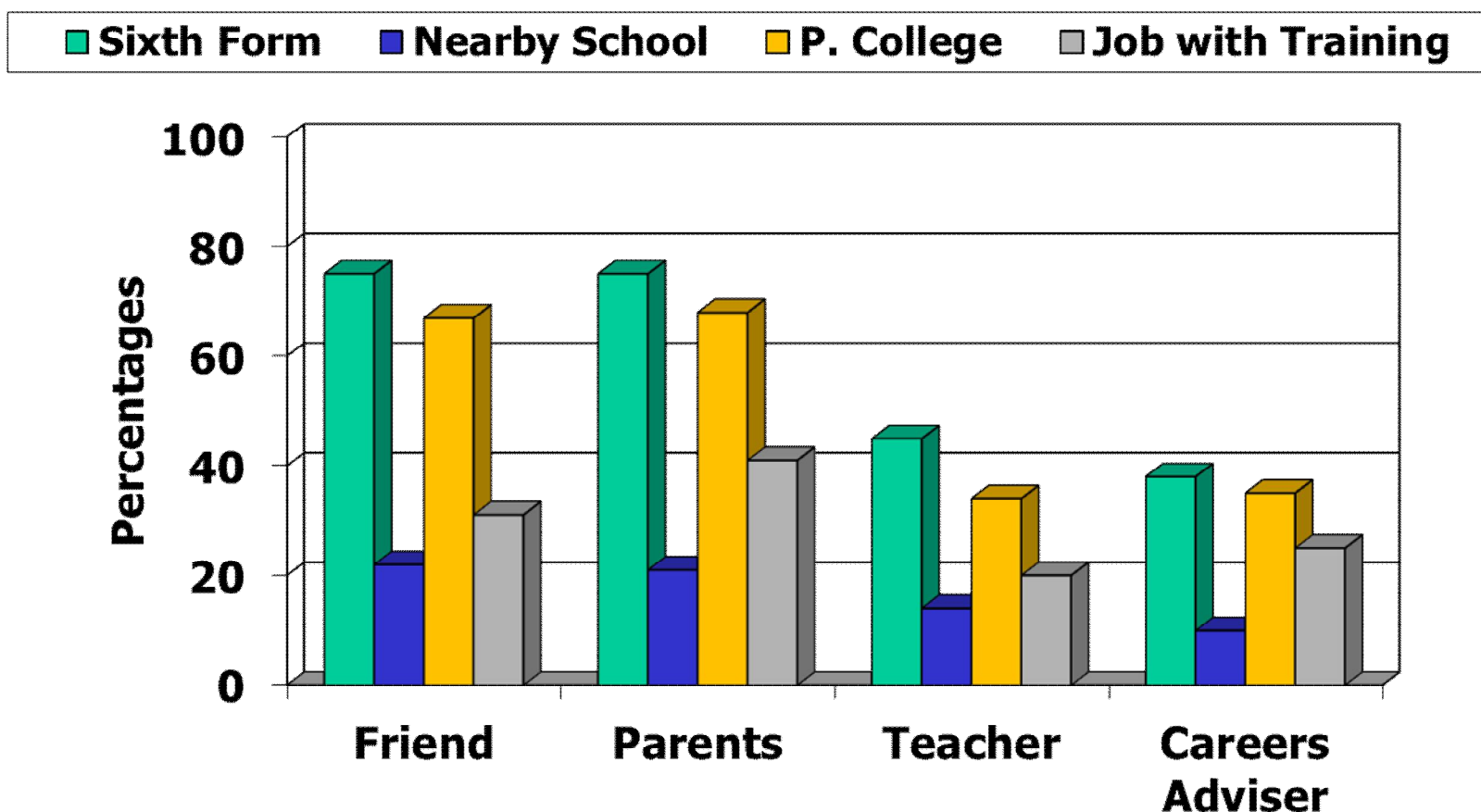


How do pupils Y7-11 get to know about..?

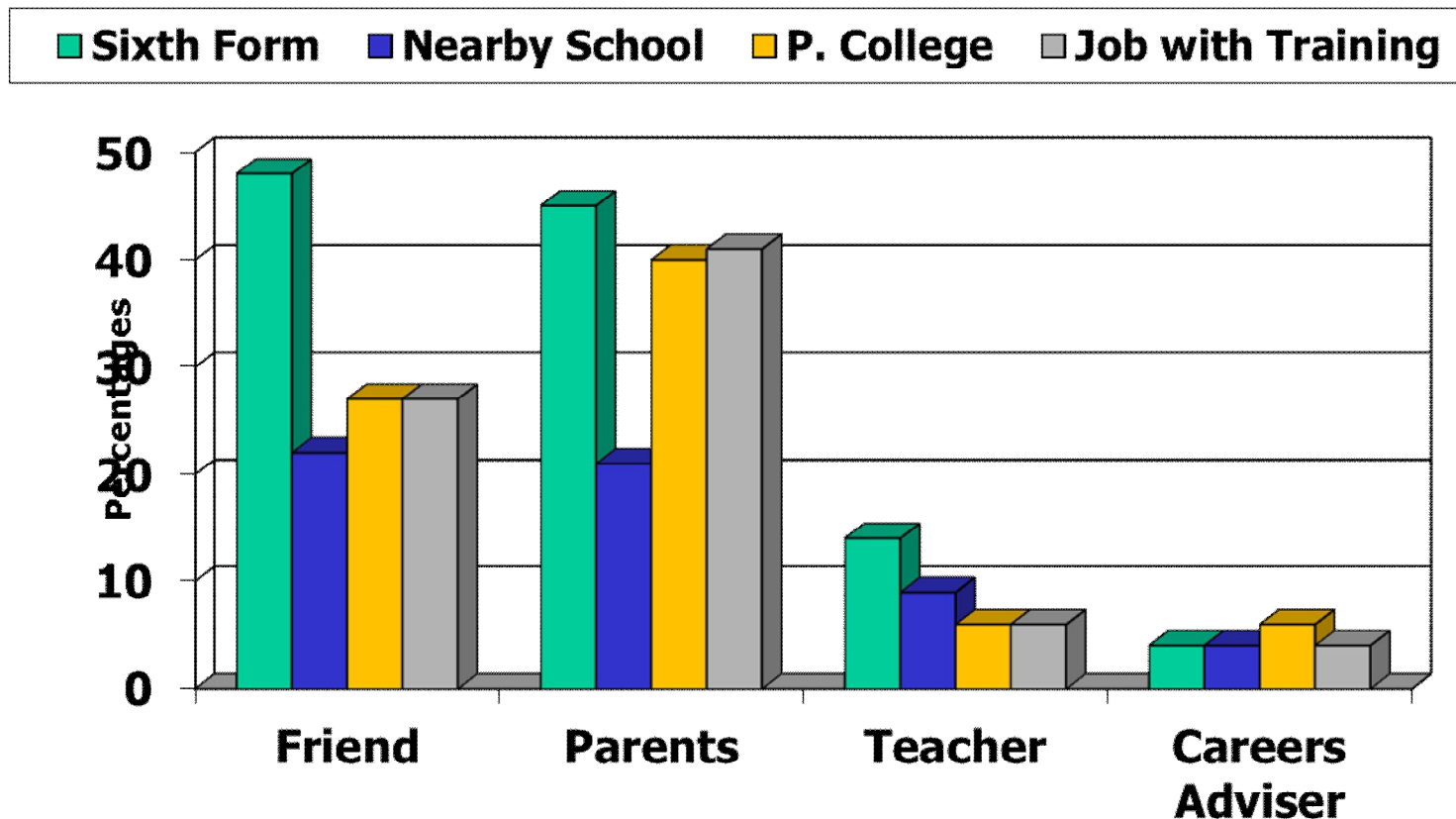
6th Form Nearby school Pembrokeshire College A job with training



'I have talked about this option with....' Year 11 pupils

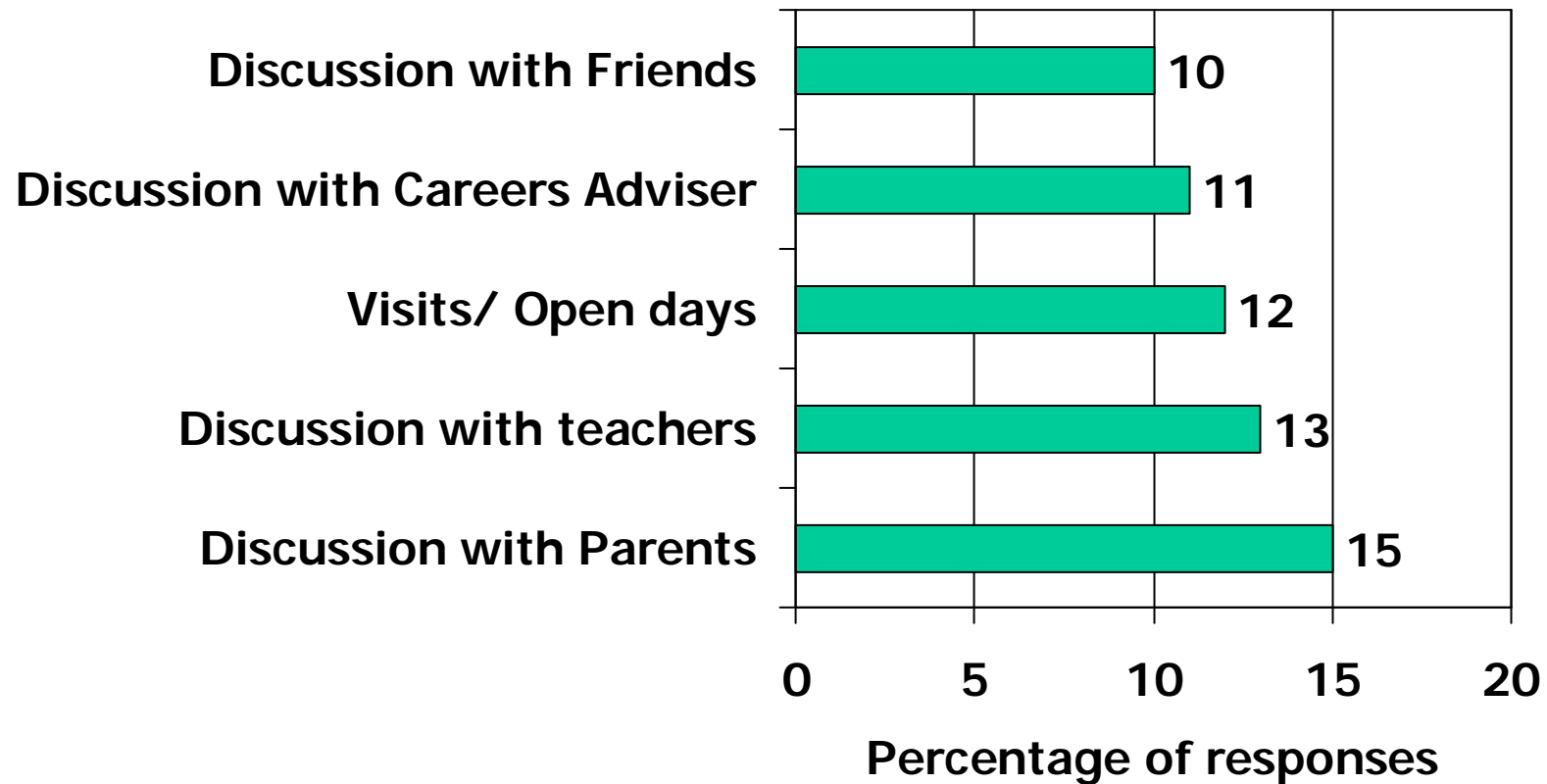


'I have talked about this option with....' Year 8 pupils



What helped you decide?

(top five)



Support from Parents

85% of parents identified topics they needed to know more about to help their child choose.

Top Five Topics

1. EMA
2. Where we can get advice and support
3. Courses at college
4. Careers that might suit my son/daughter
5. Courses in the sixth form

Help to decide

For young people currently in training
discussion with parents 20%,
with Careers Adviser 19%, Work Experience 12.5%

For young people currently in 6th Form,
discussion with teachers 19%

For young people currently in College
discussion with teachers 10%,
discussion with college staff 9%

“Because lecturers in college
have only seen you for so long ...
but teachers have seen you grow up and they say
*I’m not going to see you go down the pan, I’m going to
push you.* So lecturers won’t stay after school to help
you: they’re just paid for what...
teachers have got more commitment.”

Support from school staff

- 53% of teachers did not feel confident that their knowledge of opportunities in the 6th form was up to date;
- 74% of teachers did not feel confident that their knowledge of opportunities in the colleges and training was up to date;
- 55% did not feel they could give accurate and impartial advice on choice at 16.

For consideration:

- Key stage 3
- Parents
- School staff
- Familiarity
- Visits
- Discussion
- Tasters
- Research tasks
- Application process

Post 16 Learning Providers

(Recommendations for the Learning Network)

- A timetable for applications, “tasters” and information events;
- A format for information that allows comparison;
- A standard for application that requires pupils to demonstrate their suitability;
- Processes to monitor, evaluate and improve the system and the support.