

[A Just Energy Transition: Briefing No.2](#)

How green jobs and skills can ensure a just transition for young people

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About the Research:

[Recent ONS data](#) reports that 770,000 young people aged 16-24 years old were not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in early 2023. Whilst a decrease from the previous quarter, this figure represents 11.3% of all young people in the UK.

High numbers of young people not in education, employment, or training, highlights the need to prioritize green skills agendas to help them find secure work in a net-zero future. Green job creation is a key plank of policies linked to energy security, net-zero, and a 'green industrial revolution'. Green jobs require [advanced technical, managerial, and cognitive skills](#), leading to a skills gap that must be addressed through targeted policies.

[Numerous government strategies](#) have envisioned green job creation as a key route for a '[Green Industrial Revolution](#)'. In the UK, [one in five jobs](#) will likely experience some change to the skills required. Targets for job creation are being made at the same time as the [government is introducing new T Levels](#) as a post-16 qualification.

With a [just transition becoming an important part of current policy discussions](#), future climate action should be devised to provide new, long-term opportunities to young people. This is a generation who have suffered disproportionately during the Covid-19 pandemic and 2022/23 economic downturn and will experience the impacts of climate breakdown disproportionately. Ensuring opportunities represents a key route to making climate mitigation and adaptation policies just.



Image credit: [Helena Lopes from Pexels](#)

This briefing summarises a review of academic, policy and government research to present a series of recommendations for how future green jobs and skills can support young people in finding new lines of secure, well-paid work in regions at risk of economic impacts of such transitions.

Policy Recommendations:

To provide young people with secure and well-paid 'green' work, future skills agendas should:

- **Create early, inclusive routes into green work** to ensure sustainable and secure pipelines between education and employment in green industries. A wider roll-out of current partnerships between further education colleges and prospective employers would go some way to doing so.

To ensure policy interventions create and protect secure, good work in at-risk areas, the Green Jobs Delivery Group must prioritise:

1. **Policies to reach those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)** by incentivising returning to education and materially supporting those doing so.
2. **Schemes that target groups that may be more at risk of economic insecurity or exclusion**, such as those living in areas experiencing economic uncertainty created by net zero policies.
3. **Designing early interventions to address disparities in access and retention of green skills and work**, particularly paying attention to gendered and race-based disparities.

Key Findings

The [British Energy Security Strategy](#) envisions creating an extra 40,000 roles to drive energy transitions. An estimated [68,000 'green jobs'](#) have been created since 2020. The [Green Jobs Delivery group](#), set up in 2022, is tasked with supporting the creation of up to 480,000 skilled green jobs by 2030.

The [Green Jobs Task Force](#) argued that there is a need to attract young people to green jobs to ensure the long-term sustainability of low-carbon sectors. The [UK's 2021 Net Zero Strategy](#) is committed to reforming the skills system to incentivize educational institutions, employers, and students to invest in green skills and job creation.

Supporting young people in green skills and work would also represent an approach of just transition, supporting those disproportionately affected by the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and [economic downturns](#). [770,000 young people](#) aged 16-24 years old are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) – signalling a need to provide new opportunities for many at risk of exclusion from work in the future.

To support young people in accessing green jobs, [policies must establish a skills pipeline](#) that integrates green skills and knowledge into school and college curricula. Key priorities should include:

- **Foster direct links between educational institutions and future employers** to facilitate the transferability of skills from education to employment. Collaborative apprenticeship programs, such as [Ørsted's](#) three-year apprenticeships in Maintenance and Operations Engineering in partnership with the Grimsby Institute in Lincolnshire and Furness College in Cumbria, can serve as models.
- **Establish specialized regional educational institutes** to provide targeted green skills training. As decarbonization policies impact different regions to varying degrees, setting up centres focused on green skills training can help mitigate potential employment disruptions. An example is the [Centro de Referencia Nacional en Energías Renovables y Eficiencia Energética](#)

in Navarre, Spain, which supports workers transitioning into the renewables sector and has contributed to a significant expansion of renewables. Similarly, regions like [Yorkshire and Humber, which face significant job insecurity](#) during energy transitions, could benefit from similar institutions.

- **Address gender and race disparities in green work from an early stage.** As in [other STEM sectors](#), green work suffers from issues of inclusion, with women comprising [less than 30%](#) of the STEM workforce in the UK and being underrepresented in apprenticeships. Moreover, there are [disparities in green skills and jobs based on ethnicity and race](#). To tackle these challenges, dedicated programs can demystify the green sector and encourage underrepresented groups to pursue careers in green jobs. Expanding initiatives like the ENTHUSE partnerships would provide younger students interested in green roles with opportunities to explore and experience these fields.

By targeting these areas, future schemes can integrate skills aspirations into broader policies and effectively support individuals seeking green jobs. However, it is crucial to combine quantitative data from sources like the ONS with qualitative approaches to ensure that green jobs are not only environmentally friendly but also provide good-quality employment.



Image credit: [Como una Reina](#) from Pixabay

Further Information

This briefing draws on work to be published in Ed Atkins' new book [A Just Energy Transition](#) published by Bristol University Press in July 2023, and is the second in this series. Please see:

A Just Transition: Briefing No.1 - [How the Great British Insulation scheme can help the most vulnerable](#).

Contact the researchers

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