`Everyday Economy: Better jobs and better work (The everyday economy / Better jobs and better work / Policy Commissions / Labour Policymaking)

The everyday economy provides many people with many jobs. In order to address concerns in the market economy, we must look at the nonmarket economy, such as education, to best support the UK in the future.

Good wages and working environments are key to a thriving everyday economy. We must ensure wealth, access and opportunity are equally distributed across the UK.

The RSC works closely with educators from schools to universities to ensure that the UK's workforce has the scientific and technical capability that will allow for the UK to develop with the ever-changing globe.

1. How can Labour strengthen sectors that make up the everyday economy?

- Education is a leading determinant of economic growth, employment, and earnings. Ignoring the economic benefit of education poses a threat to the prosperity of future generations. Shortages of teachers, including those with the expertise to teach chemistry, is a key issue that needs to be addressed to ensure that all young people have access to an excellent education that prepares them for a successful future.
- Good working conditions are key to retaining the existing workforce and making chemistry teaching a more attractive career for potential new or returning teachers. A key factor in this is unsustainable workload. This is the reason most often cited for why teachers leave the profession, and it needs to be addressed to improve teacher retention, especially of early career teachers.
- Supporting the existing teaching workforce is a cost-effective way of improving the situation. Investment is needed to set up a systematic approach to subject-specific CPD in the sciences. We are asking the next Government to prioritise:
- High-quality subject-specific training and development should be an ongoing entitlement for all teachers, whatever stage they are in their teaching career. It should:
  - Meet the needs of a broad range of teachers to account for differing prior knowledge, and
  - Include professional development opportunities to help teachers with a background in one science discipline gradually gain the expertise needed to teach curriculum content in one or both of the other school science disciplines.
- Schools should be able to demonstrate that their teachers have sufficient expertise for the curriculum and classes they are required to teach.
- Government (or their agencies) should collect and record information about teachers' subject-specific expertise within the sciences. They should use this to inform their workforce planning decisions.

2. How can Labour ensure its industrial strategy and other policies support creating good, secure work in the everyday economy?

- We feel there is a need to upskill and reskill those in the existing workforce so we can meet the economic challenges we face as we enter a new, greener economy. This needs to include support for continuous professional development.
- Our report on Chemistry's Contribution: Workforce trends and economic impact emphasises the role of the UK's 275,000 chemistry-using professionals in

underpinning a diversity of economic sectors which will contribute to and undergo significant change in a low carbon or circular economy future; for example, oil and gas refining, chemical feedstock production, energy supply, waste and recycling and our world leading research organisations.

- However, our Green Shoots report found that only 38% of 11–19-year-olds felt that studying chemistry can lead to lots of jobs in sustainability and climate change. Furthermore, nearly seven in ten chemists working in industry and academia think that there is a skills gap in the knowledge and skills chemists need for green jobs now and in the future. We are asking that the next Government ensures young people have the skills and careers information needed to progress into green jobs in the chemical sciences and contribute to the future green economy. We recommend that the curriculum is urgently updated to emphasise climate change and sustainability and prepare our future workforce for green jobs in a green economy.

3. How can we support businesses and workers in the everyday economy through skills, technology, and competition policy?

- We are calling for Government to prioritise retraining routes for the UK's STEM workforce so that everyone has access to continued professional development as the sector adapts to new technologies.
- Skills policies must meet the needs for training, retraining, and enabling CPD for the science workforce. Routes for retraining and accessing continued professional development will be required as the STEM sectors adapt to new technologies and requirements. The chemistry-using workforce generates £83bn per year for the UK economy (2019 figures). In the coming years, like in many industries, the nature of these jobs and the skills required will change as the focus on sustainability and green technologies grows, digital tools become more sophisticated, and manual processes move towards automation.

4. How can we enable public services in the everyday economy to meet current and future challenges?

- For the future workforce to be resilient and productive in the future, the RSC recommends the urgent prioritisation of updating the school chemistry curriculum to include sustainability and climate change. The curriculum must be developed in a way which prevents educators and students being over-burdened with content.
- The Science Teacher Survey 2022 found that 73% of teachers in English state schools see too much content as a challenge to teaching the science curriculum at KS4. Additionally, the Royal Society of Chemistry's Green Shoots report published in 2021 revealed that 48% of teachers felt that there was too much duplication of content when teaching ages 14 to 16 years, which was a barrier to teaching about climate change and sustainability
- Furthermore, in ensuring the future workforce is prepared for now and for future challenges, practical work must continue to be seen as a vital part of the science curriculum.
- Practical work offers learners the opportunity to learn skills that are useful for the further study of, and careers in, the sciences and beyond, whilst also giving them an opportunity to understand the world around them.

6. What are the specific implications of policy proposals in this area for (a) women,(b) Black, Asian and minority ethnic people, (c) LGBT+ people, (d) disabled people and (e) all those with other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010?

- For the next generation to be prepared to tackle the future challenges of the everyday economy, the UK's curriculum should be inclusive, diverse, and contextual.
- The RSC are currently undertaking work to advocate for a more inclusive, diverse, and contextual chemistry curriculum. Including scientists from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds can help students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds resonate more with science as they see more 'people like me' in science positions. An inclusive curriculum encourages an environment where diverse scientific knowledge is valued and a science capital teaching approach is applied
- It is important to continue with efforts to increase diversity in the research workforce. Policy on science and research needs to drive equality of opportunity, and an immigration system that is low cost and welcoming are essential to improve the attractiveness and inclusiveness of research, development, and innovation careers.