

Electricians and hairdressers are predicted to be among 2020's bigger earners. By **Karen Higginbottom**

**H**ave you dismissed pursuing a career as an electrician or opening up your own hairdressing salon? If so, think again, as it could have huge earning potential.

According to a new report by City and Guilds called "Future Earnings", "golden" vocations such as electricians, hairdressers and those in the building trade, now command salaries 30 per cent above the national average. By 2020, the fortunes of people following many more vocations will improve as their earnings climb at a faster rate than those of most Britons, due partly to increasing demand for their skills, the report found.

Traditional skilled trades such as plumbing and electrical work are also in line for a pay boost above the UK average by 2020, with top electricians anticipated to be earning £52,610, compared to a projected national average wage of nearly £36,606 in 2020.

The findings of the report banish the misconception that people who pursue a vocational occupation are destined to earn low salaries, says Keith Brooker, the director of group markets and products at City and Guilds.

"There will be an increasing demand for vocational workers in the UK," he says, "so it's really encouraging to see that there are clear incentives in terms of earning potential, which will attract more people into these occupations over the coming years."

The financial rewards of these 'vocational' professions are increasingly attracting white-collar workers. Take Richard Gates, who left his job at the BBC in September to embark on a six-week fast-track course to become an electrician. "Being a music researcher



was a lovely job working with creative people but it didn't pay well," says Gates. "I was on £21,000 after seven years and I'd just turned 30."

Gates completed the City and Guilds fast-track course in December last year and set up his own company, 365electrics.com. Apart from the potential to earn more money, Gates believes that changing careers has allowed him to improve the

### THERE IS A BIG GROWTH IN THE OCCUPATIONS OFFERING SERVICES'

quality of his life. "My quality of life is far better since I left the BBC. I suffered from Crohn's disease but I can pretty much eat what I want now. I'm in control of my hours as well."

Gates adds that his colleagues at the BBC were very supportive of his decision to change career. "A lot of people were concerned about their future in the BBC. Everyone knows about the shortage of electricians and people thought

it was the best thing for me. I was a bit daunted by giving up this job and my parents were concerned, but now I've done it, they are so positive."

Hairdressers and beauticians will reap the benefit of the population's higher disposable income and increased demand for leisure services over the next 15 years, according to the report. Leisure, hair and beauty managers are currently enjoying an annual salary increase of around six per cent, much higher than the average of 3.34 per cent predicted by the report.

This is due to a boom in the demand for skilled leisure workers in the UK, says Professor Mike Campbell, the director of research at the Sector Skills Development Agency. "There is a big growth in the occupations offering personal services," he says.

A hairdresser is anticipated to earn £30,754 in 2020, with managers of their own hair salons raking in £63,015. The potential explosion in earnings potential vindicates the decision of 23-year-old Nicole Hoggan to drop out of her degree course in interiors and

**Skilled trades such as electrical work are in for a pay boost**  
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architecture to pursue a career in hairdressing. At school, she was actively discouraged from pursuing a career in hairdressing by the careers adviser who warned her of many years of low pay. Undeterred, Hoggan started her apprenticeship at the McMillan hair salon in Glasgow and qualified within a year.

After five years of training, she is now the artistic director of this salon and has ambitions to open up her own. Hoggan admits that some friends were sceptical of her decision to quit her degree. But her family has been very supportive. "My Dad is as proud of me doing what I am doing now as if I had stuck with architecture," she says.

Brooker believes that the report highlights a growing realisation that vocational careers offer similar rewards to those offered to people with degrees. "There is still prejudice against vocational careers but it's diminishing," he says.

"Middle-class parents still tend to want their offspring to get a degree. That's their view regardless of whether it's relevant or not."