

## Communications tips for good parental engagement in careers

### Background

Parents, carers and guardians play an important part in career and education choices of young people. The Gatsby Foundation is undertaking a programme of research and piloting in order to find out how to support schools and colleges, to help parents\* have these discussions with their children. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Gatsby and the Careers and Enterprise Company have worked together with Careers Leaders to explore ideas and good practice in working with parents in these challenging times. This guidance is part of a [suite of resources](#) developed swiftly in autumn 2021, to share what practitioners say is working in schools and colleges right now.

*\*The word 'parent' is used to refer to parents, carers and guardians*

### Context

Communication between parents and schools and colleges is essential when it comes to a students' careers ambitions and next steps. The context of the pandemic and lockdown has highlighted the need for increased communications, leading schools and colleges to adapt and engage with parents remotely through a variety of channels. It is now key to build on those channels established during lockdown and implement good practices in the long term. These communication tips have come from directly from Careers Leaders who have successfully used them in their schools and colleges.

### Communications approaches

#### (Re)stating the school/college's commitment to careers



It is key to make the school or college careers provision stand out, particularly when parents will be receiving a lot of communications at this time. This can be done through a 'manifesto' shared with parents, stating the commitment the school or college has to careers, and how provision has been adapted, to keep the careers programme on their radar. It could also be helpful to rebrand your resources and assets to ensure they are clearly identifiable as careers and easy to access for parents.

#### Further resources from the Careers & Enterprise Company

[The Parent Pledge Campaign](#) from Inspiring Worcestershire, aims to engage parents in supporting delivery of career related activities across a whole school or college. It includes resources to enable schools and colleges to engage with parents such as posters, parent letter and social media communications.

#### Regular, more focused/targeted communications to parents



Parents feel more engaged when a steady flow of communications is maintained, using a variety of media and building on existing communications.

#### ➤ **Variety of channels and technology**

A mix of traditional options (phone, text, emails and letters) can be used, combined with newer tech such as social media, Google hangouts or Zoom to boost engagement.

➤ **Little and often**

Communicating often will enable parents to stay up to date with careers information and prevent them from feeling overwhelmed by receiving too much information in one go. It also encourages greater flow of information back from parents to school/college.

➤ **Build on existing communication**

Careers information can be included in school/college newsletters, piggy-backing existing communications and driving parents to the careers section of the school/college website and careers resources.

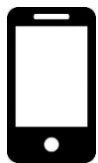
➤ **Targeted communications**

It is key to know your parents and understand their specific needs to ensure they are approached with targeted communications. This could include telephone calls to parents who are less engaged or parents of students who have a particular need, such as SEND/at risk of NEET, or are approaching a key milestone, such as higher education applications or work experience, and need more support.

*'During lockdown (and summer) I've made more calls - especially to Y11 families where there is a concern about a young person becoming NEET...These calls were all well received and I was able to mop up a number of late changes of plan and support with late applications.'*  
**Leighton Collins**, Careers Leader, Firth Park Academy, Yorks and Humber

**Ideas to consider with your Careers Adviser**

➤ **Careers mobile phone**



Having one or more dedicated mobile phones could be helpful for the careers department. The numbers could be communicated to parents to facilitate quick and easy communication by text or phone between parents and careers staff during allotted times. This is particularly helpful for parents who may find it hard to access the careers team or may be uncomfortable with more a formal approach.

*'The introduction of the careers mobile has been really positive. It has allowed two-way communication with parents; quick and rapid responses to parents/carers have been welcomed...This has proven to be really effective way to communicate with our parents.'*  
**Joanne Pearson**, Student Support Lead, Norham High School, North East

➤ **Careers helpdesk**



A careers helpdesk could be set up to support parents with information, help them explore options with their children at home and access support. A careers helpdesk can be an online platform linked to the school or college website and contain links to careers information platforms and relevant careers content. This could be linked to a careers advice helpdesk and chat/messaging function staffed by qualified advisers, to enable parents to ask questions to the careers team.

*'The virtual helpdesk had the unexpectedly positive consequence of driving more enquiries to school Career leaders.'*

**Ryan Gibson**, National System Leader: Careers, Academies Enterprise Trust

### **Further resources**

You can find other resources about engaging parents in careers guidance on the [CEC Resource Directory](#), such as the Conversation starter resource and the Working with existing resources guidance.