

Communication tips for good parental engagement in careers: Volume 2

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 your setting*, 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 over this academic year, to share what practitioners say is working in their settings right now.

**The word 'setting' is used to refer to school, special school, college, Alternative Provision (AP), Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)*

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

Overview

Nurturing communication between parents and your setting's careers team is crucial to enhancing students' career aspirations. During the last year, education institutions have become increasingly creative in their methods of communicating with parents, as everyone becomes more familiar with the platforms and technology available. Volume 2 of our communication tips from Careers Leaders highlights the techniques that your setting can embed to cultivate parental engagement in careers further. If you would like to read **Communication tips for good parental engagement in careers: Volume 1**, please click [here](#).

Communications approaches

To maximise parental engagement, careers provision benefits from targeted and dedicated communication efforts. The following approaches demonstrate how this can be done effectively.

Enhancing your careers' newsletter



If you do not already have a newsletter it can be a comprehensive, dedicated communication channel for your careers team. It can be issued each half term/term and offer information on the world of careers, a timeline of upcoming careers activities/fairs and subsequent write-ups of these events.

- Career spotlight feature

Introduce a 'day in the life of' feature to your newsletter and invite an alumnus, parent or local business representative to share a summary of their job and their pathway to it. This spotlight on a career can be used to inform parents of the range of opportunities that exist and raise your students' aspirations further.

- Listing local opportunities

Feature a snapshot of opportunities such as apprenticeships and vacancies to show both students and parents what career prospects exist locally and any trends in the labour market.

➤ Recruit student reporters

Give students the chance to write-up careers activities that have taken place enabling them to showcase their writing skills and helping parents to see the impact of your events. Students could also interview alumni virtually for the career spotlight feature, as an opportunity to have an encounter with an employee.

➤ Collaborate locally

If you are struggling to create a regular newsletter try raising the idea of a hub/regional newsletter with other local Careers Leaders so resources can be consolidated, and a greater breadth of opportunities can be promoted to parents.

“We have had great feedback about our careers newsletter, in the form of email, from parents mentioning how they feel much closer to what has been going on in careers.” **Sweta Thakrar, Careers Leader, Dr Challoner’s High School, Buckinghamshire.**



Getting the most out of social media

Social media can be a great way to highlight careers’ content to your parent community and sharing content on established feeds ensures it reaches a captive audience.

➤ Using your existing channels

Your existing social media channels can easily complement your setting’s careers’ newsletter by featuring similar content in time with its release and promoting upcoming events. When using your setting’s existing channels, use succinct messaging to highlight careers updates, the newsletter, careers hub or redirect to dedicated careers accounts.

“LinkedIn is a great tool to raise students’ aspirations when they can see past students’ achievements. It’s also been good for subject teachers to use to find employers to support the curriculum.” **Helen Hill, Careers Leader, The Misbourne, Buckinghamshire.**

➤ Dedicated careers accounts

To illustrate to parents that your setting has an active and dedicated careers’ offering create branded social media accounts to exclusively highlight your careers work. Generate thought-provoking discussion points, run polls and publicly follow up on careers events with parents to cultivate an engaged community and gain valuable insight from them.

“Usually, things including our own students or alumni are popular. Careers related events being advertised often get a lot of response too. We have a logo and have branded careers work, trying to make it a bit more obvious to parents and students that something is going on!” **Jennie Cole, Careers Leader, Hailsham Community College, East Sussex.**

➤ Real life stories have impact

Careers Leaders and Advisers have found that parental engagement is maximised when their posts spotlight first-hand student experiences or alumni involvement in careers activities and bring to life what careers provision looks like for students.

Using comms efficiently



Some parents will need more support to engage in their child's careers decision making. This is where targeted communication efforts can prove most effective. When using targeted comms, it is key to make the communication personal, individual and relevant by keeping in mind the needs and interests of both student and parent. This personal touch can help overcome communication barriers such as low-literacy, EAL and low access to tech.

Some example questions for consideration in your communications with families include:

- Is the student reaching a key milestone in their education setting?
- Will the student be the first in their family to go to university or college?
- Has an apprenticeship been fully considered as an option by the family?

Shared communications to parents do not always have to involve creating new/additional parent specific resources. It can be effective to provide all parents with copies of student careers presentations and resources, so they can use them to personally upskill and as a conversation starter with their child.

"We are a small school and know our students very well and are able to maintain contact during lockdown using careers as the incentive. The students are responsive to this and we are allowed to arrange virtual meetings with the student and parent to discuss careers further." **Philippa Hartley, Deputy Headteacher and Careers Leader, Huntcliff School, Lincolnshire.**

Further resources

You can find other resources about engaging parents in careers guidance on the [CEC Resource Directory](#).

"A large amount of our CIAG education is presented through our morning tutor sessions and within assemblies. To make sure these continue to be accessed/interacted with, we publish all of these on the school's website. Links to these are included in communications to parents." **Ben Jennings, Careers Leader, William Perkin C of E High School, Middlesex.**