

EMPLOYER PANEL

A Q&A session with a panel of employers to encourage parents to explore careers relating to a particular subject, skill or industry area with their child.

Activity objectives

- To broaden parents' understanding about the different routes that might be available to their child.
- To help parents to feel supported by their child's school/college in having career conversations with employers from different industries.
- To support families to explore the next stages of their child's transition from education to employment.

How to use it

- Focus the event on a theme such as a subject, skill or industry area, rather than a route or pathway (e.g. HE or apprenticeships).
- Most beneficial for small groups of parents of young people who have a strong interest in a similar subject, skill or industry area.
- May be particularly suitable for groups of parents you might usually struggle to engage with.
- Subject departments could lead the delivery of this event to build relationships with employers and research has shown parents often prefer engaging with their child's subject teachers about their options.

Delivery time

 45 minutes

Need to know

- You will need to engage three or four employers per panel.
- Can be delivered face to face or remotely.
- Parents and students can attend this event together.

Links to parental engagement recommendations

- Create a parent-friendly environment.
- Refocus careers activities to involve parents.
- Stimulate family conversations.
- Draw on parents as a resource.

For more information on recommended principles for parental engagement go to [Good Parental Engagement](#).

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Preparing the session with parents in mind

Content & format

- The event could be organised around:
 - **A specific subject:** to illustrate different careers related to the content and skills developed in a subject, e.g. History or Maths.
 - **A skill:** to showcase employers where a particular skill, such as creativity or analysis, is highly relevant.
 - **An industry:** to demonstrate the range of careers available and the varied routes into the sector, e.g. engineering.
- Events based around a subject or skill may suit parents with younger children exploring the breadth of options or older children who are still undecided, whilst industry-focused events may be more appropriate for older students clearer about their career aspirations.
- Decide what size of event and method of delivery would work best for your parent community:
 - Consider virtual meeting platforms to facilitate a wider cross-section of panellists and enable more parents to attend, or access recorded content after the event.
 - For a tailored and friendly feel, consider offering a smaller event, in a roundtable format, with fewer families invited.
 - To engage a larger number of families quickly, multiple panels could be hosted at one event – with parents and young people invited to attend more than one discussion.
- To develop the content of your session and source panellists, use existing resources and networks:
 - Talk to your Enterprise Advisor or ask your parent community as potential volunteer sources, and try to ensure your panellists represent a variety of career and education routes.
 - Use professional bodies and sector association websites to understand what skills are needed for different industries; many also offer volunteers for this type of event.
 - Visit the [Talking Futures](#) pages on The CEC Resource Directory for help with subject specific links and for guidance on engaging employers, including their [‘guide to making encounters meaningful’](#) to help you maximise the impact of this event.

Communication

- Parents should be invited based on their child having a strong interest in the subject, skill or industry area, rather than their academic ability. Make it an invitation-only event as research shows that disengaged parents may be more likely to attend if they feel it is a special invitation for their child in recognition of effort and enthusiasm.
- Tailor the invitation to parents to suit the age and stage of their children. For example, talk about ‘exploration and inspiration’ for parents with younger students, and ‘researching next steps’ for older students.
- Share information on the panellists’ roles and their employers in advance to allow parents to prepare questions and potentially set research tasks for parents and children to complete in advance.

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Delivery steps

Step	Activity	Time
1.	Introduce the purpose of the event and a brief overview of the panellists' backgrounds.	🕒 5 minutes
2.	Gain insight into attendees' current level of knowledge by asking parents and young people to share the types of jobs and routes they think are available within the represented industry, subject or skills area. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> If in person, ask attendees to come up and write jobs in the sector on one board/poster and then the routes into the sector on another. If virtual, allow 2 minutes for attendees to post in the chat feature the types of jobs they think are available within the represented sector, subject or skills area, then 2 minutes for attendees to share routes into the sector. 	🕒 5 minutes
3.	To kick off the employer panel, ask each participant to introduce their route to employment, industry and role. They should emphasise what they find unexpected about the role and what makes it engaging, as well as the skills required. They may want to show slides or a video. Allow a pause between each panellist for parents and students to discuss together what they just heard and note any questions they would like to ask.	🕒 10 minutes
4.	Invite parents and students to put questions to the panel. If it is a small group and restrictions allow, consider asking panellists to move around the space so parents and students can have informal conversations with them. Alternatively, if it is virtual, questions can be shared using the chat feature or use the 'raise your hand' option if available, allowing parents to take turns to speak.	🕒 10-15 minutes
5.	Round up the session with a summary of key information about the skill or industry, together with guidance on where parents can find out more, and how they can support their child to explore their aspirations further. Try this Parents presentation that can be easily edited with your information.	🕒 5 minutes
6.	At the end of the session, direct parents to try the Family action plan tool online and options information to help them structure their further research and conversations at home. Industry-specific information could also be signposted - see the Talking Futures pages on The CEC Resource Directory.	🕒 5 minutes

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Learning from the event

- As an interactive 'temperature check' on the event, ask parents and students to return to the original board/online chat, and add anything that they learnt that they did not know before, thereby allowing you to see if their understanding of the routes available to their child has expanded. You could also ask them to identify where they would go to find out more about any of the routes listed to check their learning from the presentation at the end of the session. This board can then be photographed to serve as evidence of what has been gained during the event and added to social media or your careers pages.
- Alternatively, you may want to survey attendees to establish their engagement with the event, particularly if this activity is part of a package of interventions with the same parents and students. Example questions and a survey template are available [here](#).
- To gain a deeper understanding, evaluate the event within the context of your wider careers provision, both from the perspective of students and parents – guidance on doing this is included [here](#).