

# Guidance to support FE colleges with parental engagement



This resource has been designed to help Careers Leaders in FE colleges to build parental engagement\* into their planning and actively engage colleagues in other departments and teams to support their work. It includes an interactive informative guide, an editable Year Planner Template and an Audit and Review Template.

\* Parental engagement refers to the engagement of parents, carers and guardians



# Supporting parental engagement in careers



This guide contains suggestions for how you can work with other departments across your college to maximise the reach and impact of parental engagement in careers.

You can use this guide and the *Year Planner Template* as a starting point to embed careers into parental engagement provision across the college, making use of ideas you find valuable and adapting them to your setting.

## Benefits and challenges to parental engagement within colleges

- Parental engagement with colleges can improve students' attendance, attainment and progression<sup>1</sup>
- Research shows that parents are highly influential in young people's career decision-making<sup>2</sup>
- Parental engagement is a whole-college activity, so work, and the associated benefits, can be shared across teams/departments
- College students are more independent than school students and may have greater expectations of their autonomy
- Parents may not feel the need to engage with the college or may not realise the benefits of doing so
- Time scarcity and logistical issues can cause barriers to parental engagement with the college, so building flexibility into events and communications is vital

## Adapting to the differing needs of parents and families

- Best practice in parental engagement focuses on the needs of parents and communities, forming a partnership of student learning and support<sup>3</sup>
- Use a variety of methods to communicate and make full use of available technology, providing different ways for parents to engage with the college
- Consider any potential language barriers and use appropriate translation services if necessary
- Try using multimedia or visual messaging (infographics, pictures, videos etc.) to increase engagement with your content
- Communication goes both ways: make it easy for parents to communicate with you, rather than just focusing on getting information out to them

1 Goodall, J., & Vorhaus, J. (2011) 'Review of best practice in parental engagement'. Department for Education.

2 Moore, N. et al. (2021) 'Crucial impacts on career choices: Research to understand the influences on young people's choices in primary and secondary schools: Executive summary'. Derby: University of Derby.

3 Goodall, J. (2018) 'Learning-centred parental engagement: Freire reimagined', *Educational Review*, 70:5, pp. 603-621, DOI: 10.1080/00131911.2017.1358697.

# Supporting parental engagement in careers



## How to use these resources

- Parental engagement is a team effort; this guide contains suggested actions for different teams/ departments you might liaise with to support the embedding of careers provision in parental engagement, as well as promoting the benefits
- Different activities for Careers Leaders have been suggested depending on whether you are new to parental engagement, or more experienced
- **The Year Planner Template** is pre-populated with a number of suggested actions for the Careers Team to embed career provision into your wider parental engagement, which you can edit to suit your own college setting and your current level of parental engagement
- You may want to start by identifying the teams/ departments you would like to liaise with about parental engagement and action the audit activities suggested in the **Year Planner Template** - please see the individual team/department pages in this guide for more information and the **Audit and Review Template** for ideas on evaluating the current level and variety of parental engagement



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This overview year plan contains **example actions or activities which could be suggested to the key teams/departments you may be liaising with**, organised by term. Select the different teams/departments for more ideas on parental engagement and information on its benefits for each area. A more comprehensive example, Careers Team Year Plan can be found in the **Year Planner Template**.



Team/department	Autumn Term	Spring Term	Summer Term
<b>Careers Team</b>	You may already have a parental engagement plan for including parents directly in careers activities throughout the year, but some further suggestions are included in this guide.		
<b>Pastoral and Learning Support Teams</b>	Share current parental engagement approach with Careers Team	Survey parents on their preferred communication methods	Promote careers services and activities to parents
<b>ESOL/Community Team</b>	Share current parental engagement approach with Careers Team	Share from experience which communications methods are most effective	Promote careers services and activities to parents
<b>Admissions/Transitions Team</b>	Share current parental engagement approach with Careers Team	Promote careers services and activities to parents at open day events	Survey new parents on their preferred communication methods
<b>Employer Engagement Team</b>	Share current parental engagement approach with Careers Team	Approach parents who are employers to be speakers at a careers event	Promote and support the faculty achievement events
<b>Marketing Team</b>	Share current parental engagement approach with Careers Team	Promote careers events	Promote the faculty achievement events
<b>Teaching staff (by faculty/department)</b>	Share current parental engagement approach with Careers Team	Promote careers events within course progress updates to parents	Run faculty achievement events
<b>Central Administration and Finance Teams</b>	Share current parental engagement approach with Careers Team	Promote careers events	Promote careers services and activities to parents
<b>Senior Leadership Team</b>	Share current parental engagement strategy with Careers Team	Engage with partners to share best practice around parental engagement	Review impact of parental engagement with Careers Team

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# Careers

**Parental engagement will help to raise the profile of the Careers Team within the community and promote the college.**

**As careers and progression are topics of interest to parents and families, improving communications, events and services in this area should drive overall parental engagement with the college. Evaluations can promote the Careers Team within the college, including to the Senior Leadership Team.**

## Benefits to highlight

- Careers services and events are a positive engagement tool for parents
- Careers services and events are a positive marketing tool for the college

## Potential challenges

- Embedding parental engagement into your wider careers provision requires time and resources; monitoring and evaluation is vital to ensure that these are not being wasted on unsuccessful initiatives
- You will need to liaise with a number of teams/ departments within the college
- Careers Team staff may require additional training on parental engagement e.g. with different community groups



# Careers Team

## Suggested actions and activities

If you're new to parental engagement, you could start with the activities below:

- Communicate with any relevant teams/departments to:
  - Understand the ways in which they currently engage with parents, including strategies, methods and outcomes
  - Review parental engagement over the year, including successes, challenges and learning points
- Provide regular briefings for relevant teams/departments on upcoming careers events and services to be advertised to parents
- Create a termly careers newsletter to send to parents, including an overview of upcoming career activities and careers information related to the time of year (e.g. student finance, higher education applications, apprenticeship information etc.)
- Explore the Talking Futures resources for Careers Leaders [here](#). You will have access to a range of activities and ideas to engage with parents

If you've got a good grounding in parental engagement, you could deliver the activities below:

- Monitor parental engagement by:
  - Creating a survey for parents on their preferred communication methods
  - Evaluating the different methods/media used for parental engagement (e.g. surveys, monitoring of engagement data, social media analytics tracking, feedback from colleagues)
- Create an end-of-year report for SLT evaluating parental engagement in the wider careers provision (using the data collected)

If you're experienced with delivering parental engagement activities, you could start with the activities below:

- Run a careers-themed evening event for students and their families, covering the full range of options for progression after college
- Integrate careers into other team/department parental engagement activities e.g. faculty/department achievement events



# Pastoral and Learning Support Teams (Student Support teams)

Student Support teams are likely to have good engagement with parents, so have both expertise and resources in this area.

They will be able to advise you on the support needs of your students, as well as on language and accessibility factors.

Careers is an important concern for parents of students with support needs, meaning communications related to this area can be a useful driver of parental engagement.

## Benefits to highlight

- Parental engagement improves attendance, attainment and progression
- Careers services and events are a positive engagement tool for parents
- Useful communication with parents improves community relationships
- Multiple communications (e.g. from different teams/ departments) is likely to increase overall parental engagement with the college
- Working with the Careers Team will enhance overall student support
- Highlighting the importance of both careers support and parental engagement in supporting students can help to gain buy-in from Student Support teams
- Close team working between the careers and Student Support teams prevents duplication of effort and allows sharing of resources and best practice

## Potential challenges

- Student support teams are likely to be extremely busy, with many demands on their attention and resources
- Student Support may not be clear on how they can help so making careers referral processes clear to them can help

## Suggested actions and activities

**If you're new to parental engagement, you could start with the activities below:**

- Understand how the Student Support teams currently engage with parents, including strategies, methods and outcomes using the Audit and Review Template.
- Student Support teams to liaise with the Careers Team to include careers content in progress reviews/ meetings with parents of the students they are working with
- Careers Team to advise the Student Support teams of upcoming careers events and ensure up-to-date information on careers services and referral methods are provided, so these can be promoted to the parents/ families the student support teams are in contact with
- Student Support teams to advise the Careers Team on the information needs of parents/families in relation to careers and wellbeing
- Review parental engagement over the year, including successes, challenges and learning points

**If you've got a good grounding in parental engagement, you could deliver the activity below:**

- Student Support teams to distribute a survey for parents on their preferred communication methods

# ESOL/Community Team

The ESOL/Community Team is an excellent resource for improving understanding of the communities that make up the college and the needs of parents within those communities. They will understand the culture, values and challenges of your college communities, and will be able to advise on language, accessibility and other important communication factors.

The ESOL/Community Team will be experienced in methods of parental engagement and successful communication, so will be an excellent source of guidance and/or training. Careers is an important topic for parents and community groups, meaning communications related to this area can be a useful driver of parental engagement.

## Benefits to highlight

- Parental engagement improves attendance, attainment and progression
- Careers services and events are a positive engagement tool for parents
- Useful communication with parents improves community relationships
- Multiple communications (e.g. from different teams/departments) is likely to increase overall parental engagement with the college
- Working with the Careers Team will enhance overall student support
- Close team working between the careers and ESOL/Community Team prevents duplication of effort and allows sharing of resources and best practice
- Highlighting the importance of both careers support and parental engagement in supporting students can help to gain buy-in from ESOL/Community Team

## Potential challenges

- The ESOL/Community Team is likely to be extremely busy, with many demands on their attention and resources
- The ESOL/Community Team may not be clear on how to refer students and their parents for careers information and support

## Suggested actions and activities

**If you're new to parental engagement, you could start with the activities below:**

- Understand how the ESOL/Community Team currently engages with parents, including strategies, methods and outcomes
- Careers Team to advise the ESOL/Community Team of upcoming careers events and ensure up-to-date information on careers services and referral methods are provided, so these can be promoted to the parents/families the ESOL/Community Team is in contact with
- ESOL/Community Team to advise the Careers Team on the information needs of parents/families in relation to careers and wellbeing
- Review parental engagement over the year, including successes, challenges and learning points
- ESOL/Community Team to liaise with the Careers Team to include careers content in progress reviews/meetings with parents of the students they are working with



# Admissions/Transitions Team

**The Admissions/Transitions Team is likely to have significant experience and expertise in parental engagement, particularly parents of prospective students. They are also likely to have a good understanding of the information needs of parents, including those related to careers and progression. Events related to admissions/transitions, such as open days, are an excellent way for the Careers Team to make itself known to parents, gather contact data (such as email addresses) and promote careers services and events.**

## Benefits to highlight

- Parental engagement improves attendance, attainment and progression
- Careers services and events are a positive marketing tool for the college, including to prospective students
- Careers services and events are a positive engagement tool for parents, including parents of prospective students
- Useful communication with parents improves community relationships

## Potential challenges

- There is so much information given to prospective/new students (and their parents) that careers services run the risk of getting lost in the noise
- Use clear branding and provide useful information and advice from the outset to gain buy-in from parents
- Highlight how careers provision helps to market the college to prospective students and their parents to ensure you have the to the Admissions/Transitions Team's expert aid

## Suggested actions and activities

**If you're new to parental engagement, you could start with the activities below:**

- Understand how the Admissions/Transitions Team currently engages with parents, including strategies, methods and outcomes
- Careers Team to advise the Admissions/Transitions Team of upcoming careers events and ensure up-to-date information on careers services and referral methods are provided, so these can be promoted to the parents/families the Admissions/Transitions Team are in contact with
- Admissions/Transitions Team to advise the Careers Team on the information needs of parents/families in relation to careers and progression
- Review parental engagement over the year, including successes, challenges and learning points

**If you've got a good grounding in parental engagement, you could deliver the activities below:**

- Careers Team to be involved with admissions/transitions experiences, promoting the careers service and interacting with parents
- Admissions/Transitions Team to distribute a survey for new parents on their preferred communication methods

# Employer Engagement Team

The Employer Engagement Team already shares priorities and goals with the Careers Team, so are likely to be a useful support with parental engagement in wider careers provision.

Demonstrating that the college has good links with local employers will be useful in engaging with parents, providing evidence of the college's focus on the employability of its students. Using parental engagement as a way to improve employer engagement (e.g. by parents volunteering to support the college in their capacity as employers/workers) can provide mutual benefits to collaboration with the Employer Engagement Team.

## Benefits to highlight

- Many parents are employers too (or provide links to employers), so are an excellent potential resource for improving employer engagement
- Parental engagement improves attendance, attainment and progression
- Careers services and events are a positive marketing tool for the college, demonstrating the employability of its students to employers
- Useful communication with parents improves community relationships, which includes employers/community groups

## Potential challenges

- Engaging with parents as employers/workers (potential volunteers to support the college) will require different messaging to engaging with parents on careers provision
- Ensure that communications on these different goals are distinct to prevent dilution or confusion of these separate messages
- Promote the college's engagement with local employers to parents to highlight progression opportunities available to students and place the college within its community setting

## Suggested actions and activities

**If you're new to parental engagement, you could start with the activities below:**

- Employer Engagement Team to invite parents to their events
- Understand how the Employer Engagement Team currently engages with parents, including strategies, methods and outcomes
- Review parental engagement over the year, including successes, challenges and learning points
- Employer Engagement Team to liaise with any community/outreach teams within partner employer organisations to share best practice and resources on parental and community engagement

**If you're experienced with delivering parental engagement activities, you could deliver the activities below:**

- Employer Engagement Team to support and promote other team/department careers and parental engagement related activities e.g. by facilitating guest presenters/speakers from industry and advertising events with relevant employers
- Employer Engagement Team to liaise with the Admissions/Transitions Team to include employer partners at open events

# Marketing Team

The Marketing Team will have significant experience and expertise in communication methods and media.

They may have access to specific resources, such as the college social media channels, and will be able to promote careers events and services.

They will have a good understanding of community needs and values, which will aid you in tailoring your parental engagement activities.

## Benefits to highlight

- Parental engagement improves attendance, attainment and progression
- Careers services and events are a positive marketing tool for the college
- Careers services and events are a positive engagement tool for parents
- Useful communication with parents improves community relationships
- The Careers Team is well-placed to liaise with multiple teams/departments, promoting collaboration and helping to prevent silos

## Potential challenges

- If communication channels are restricted (e.g. access to the college's social media) this creates challenges to effective communication with parents
- Gaining buy-in from the Marketing Team of the importance and potential benefits of careers-related communications with parents is vital
- Allowing the Marketing Team oversight of the Careers Team's communications with parents (at least initially) may help to provide assurance of their quality
- Monitoring and evaluation activities (such as surveys and data analytics) will help to prove the value of parental engagement within wider careers provision

## Suggested actions and activities

**If you're new to parental engagement, you could start with the activities below:**

- Understand how the Marketing Team currently engages with parents, including strategies, methods and outcomes
- Careers Team to advise Marketing Team of upcoming careers events and ensure up-to-date information on careers services and referral methods are provided
- Review parental engagement over the year, including successes, challenges and learning points

**If you've got a good grounding in parental engagement, you could deliver the activities below:**

- If possible, arrange necessary access to college communication channels e.g. social media
- Marketing Team to advertise careers events and services in the college marketing materials

**If you're experienced with delivering parental engagement activities, you could deliver the activity below:**

- Marketing Team to support and promote other team/department parental engagement activities e.g. the careers-themed evening event

# Teaching staff (by faculty/department)

Creating good links with teaching staff can be extremely helpful for promoting careers services and events to students and parents. Teachers/tutors have an expert understanding of their cohorts, which can help you to better understand the individual needs and situations of your students.

Faculties/departments can hold achievement events to celebrate their students' work (e.g. a gallery, showcase, online portfolio, competition, practical demonstration, project etc.) and inviting parents to attend these events provides opportunities to promote potential career or progression pathways with families.

## Benefits to highlight

- Celebrating achievement within the faculty/department can improve engagement of students, parents and employers/community partners, whilst promoting the college
- Parental engagement improves attendance, attainment and progression
- Careers services and events are a positive engagement tool for parents

## Potential challenges

- Persuading teachers/tutors to organise achievement events may be a tall order: try starting with a faculty/department that already has some form of showcase (e.g. performing arts, art and design etc.) and use their positive experiences as a model for other faculties/departments
- There may be many different faculties/departments, so engagement can be time consuming
- Identifying staff within a faculty/department with a particular interest in careers can provide you with useful ambassadors
- Monitoring and evaluation activities can also provide evidence of the benefits of achievement events

## Suggested actions and activities

**If you're new to parental engagement, you could start with the activities below:**

- Understand how staff (in each faculty/department) currently engage with parents, including strategies, methods and outcomes
- Careers Team to advise teachers/tutors of upcoming careers events and ensure up-to-date information on careers services and referral methods are provided, so these can be promoted to the parents/families that teachers are in contact with
- Teachers/tutors to advise the Careers Team on the information needs of parents/families in relation to careers and progression
- Review parental engagement over the year, including successes, challenges and learning points

**If you're experienced with delivering parental engagement activities, you could deliver the activities below:**

- Teaching department/faculties to run achievement events, inviting families to celebrate students' work and showcasing how careers is integrated into the curriculum
- Teachers/tutors to support and promote other team/department parental engagement activities e.g. the careers-themed evening event

# Central Administration and Finance Teams

**The Central Administration and Finance Teams are well placed to support you in liaising with different college teams/ departments and may have information on useful contacts. They may also be able to assist you with certain resources and administrative support.**

**Ensuring that these teams have a good understanding of careers services and the benefits of engaging parents with careers provision will be helpful in internal stakeholder management.**

**These teams are likely to have an excellent grasp on the overall socio-economic backgrounds of the student cohort; important information for the Careers Team to have in order to provide appropriate and useful careers support.**

## Benefits to highlight

- Parental engagement improves attendance, attainment and progression
- Multiple communications (e.g. from different teams/ departments) is likely to increase overall parental engagement with the college
- The Careers Team is well-placed to liaise with multiple teams/departments, promoting collaboration and helping to prevent silos

## Potential challenges

- These teams are likely to be involved with a large number of people and projects; prioritise your requests to ensure you do not ask too much from them (particularly all at once)
- Your college may contain students from a broad range of backgrounds: providing specific and bespoke information and advice to different sub-cohorts is likely to be a useful strategy but it may be a challenge to access the detailed information needed for this targeting
- Depending on the make-up of your college, these teams may have more interactions with students than parents, so might not be a strong existing channel to parental engagement

## Suggested actions and activities

- Understand how the Central Administration and Finance Teams currently engages with parents, including strategies, methods and outcomes
- Careers Team to advise the Central Administration and Finance Teams of upcoming careers events and ensure up-to-date information on careers services and referral methods are provided, so these can be promoted to the parents/families the Central Administration and Finance Teams are in contact with
- Review parental engagement over the year, including successes, challenges and learning points
- Central Administration and Finance Teams to advise the Careers Team on the information needs of parents/families in relation to careers
- Central Administration and Finance Teams to support with any funding applications for careers work with families
- Central Administration and Finance Teams to advise the Careers Team on areas of the college with resources available for collaboration

# Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

A strategy for parental engagement in wider careers provision that draws on existing policy or broader college strategy is much more likely to be successful.

Engaging with the Senior Leadership Team will furnish you with a better understanding of the context of parental engagement within your college. This will also provide you with an opportunity to emphasise the benefits of engaging parents in wider careers provision and so gain support for the project at a senior level.



## Feedback

Take part in our parental engagement project by providing valuable feedback on this resource by completing this [short survey](#)

## Benefits to highlight

- Parental engagement improves attendance, attainment and progression
- Careers services and events are a positive marketing tool for the college and a positive engagement tool for parents
- Useful communication with parents improves community relationships
- Collaborative working across the college improves parental engagement outcomes
- The Careers Team is well-placed to liaise with multiple teams/departments, promoting collaboration and helping to prevent silos

## Potential challenges

- Gaining time with the Senior Leadership Team is not always easy, so make sure to weave in parental engagement whenever you discuss careers
- Be prepared to present a strong case for why parental engagement matters to the careers service and why it needs separate attention from broader strategies in this area. You could use the Talking Futures toolkit on the CEC website: <https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources/talking-futures-toolkit>
- Bring your Parental Engagement Year Planner to demonstrate your strategy and ideas

- Providing an evaluation at the end of the year will allow you to showcase successes and maintain buy-in at a senior level

## Suggested actions and activities

If you are new to parental engagement, you could start with the activities below:

- Careers Leader to arrange a meeting with SLT to understand the ways in which the overall college currently engage with parents, in particular any broader parental engagement strategies, guidance or policies already in place
- SLT to advise the Careers Team on the information needs of parents/families in relation to careers, as well as any changes to policy and strategies in this area

If you've got a good grounding in parental engagement, you could deliver the activity below:

- SLT to engage with partner schools, colleges and community groups to share best practice around parental engagement
- Careers Leader to present an end-of-year report to SLT and governors/trustees evaluating parental engagement in the wider careers provision and presenting plans for the next academic year