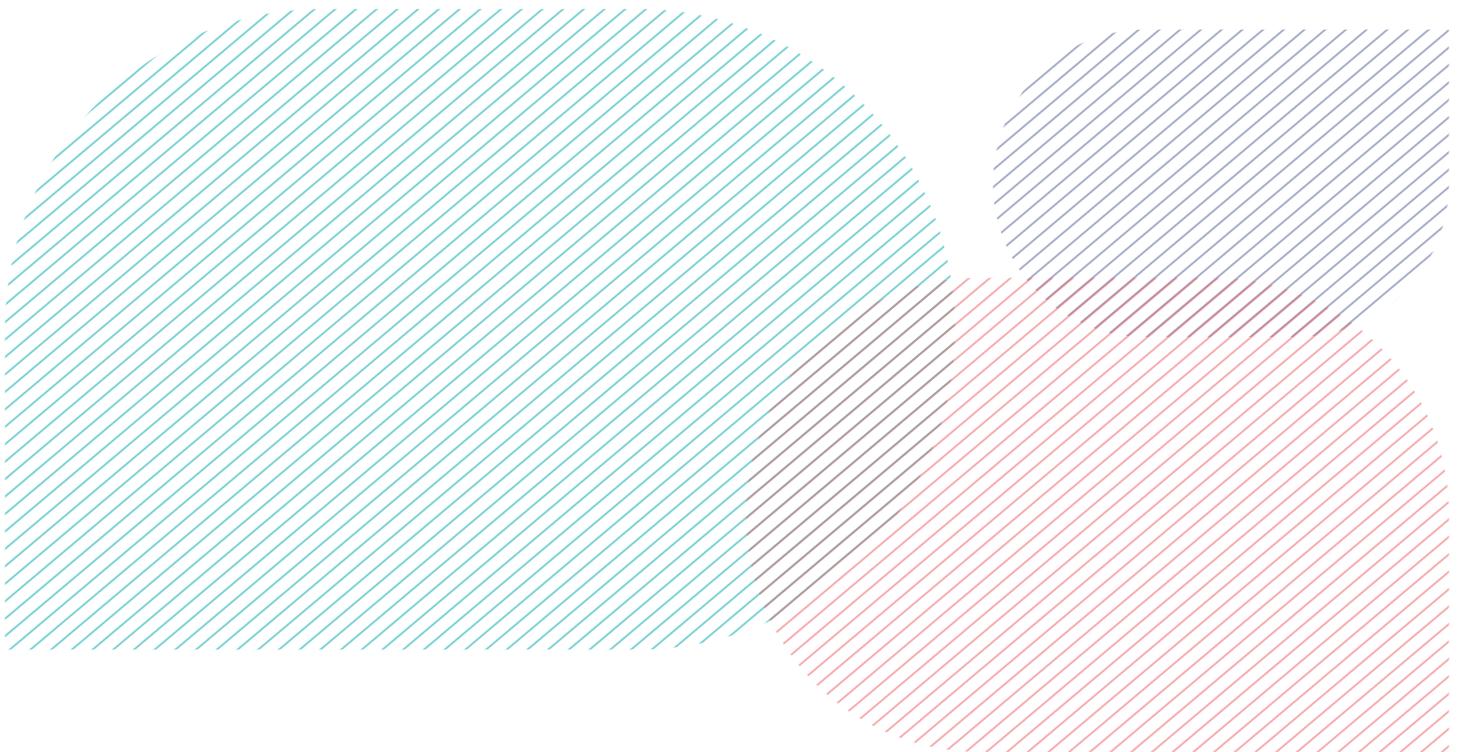


# Talking Futures Toolkit



# Welcome to Talking Futures



Talking Futures is a suite of resources originally designed by The Gatsby Foundation and built on and developed by The Careers & Enterprise Company, to help schools and colleges support families, parents and carers to have constructive careers and education conversations with their children.\*

This toolkit is designed to help you begin or develop work, to engage parents in careers education and to navigate your way through the Talking Futures resources. Choose activities to complement or develop existing provision to ensure every young person, supported by their parents, has the tools they need to make informed choices to unlock their future.

An overview of the activities available is included in this toolkit and more detail on delivering them and all the resources required can be found on The Careers & Enterprise Company [Resource Directory](#).

Talking Futures follows these guiding principles:

- Good careers guidance is the key to social mobility
- Good careers guidance cannot be delivered in isolation from young people's families
- Parents are an influential force on young people's decision making
- Parents do not all engage in the same way

\*Throughout the Talking Futures materials, the word 'parent' is used to refer to parents, carers and guardians and other influencers you may want to involve.

## Aims of the toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help schools and colleges to:

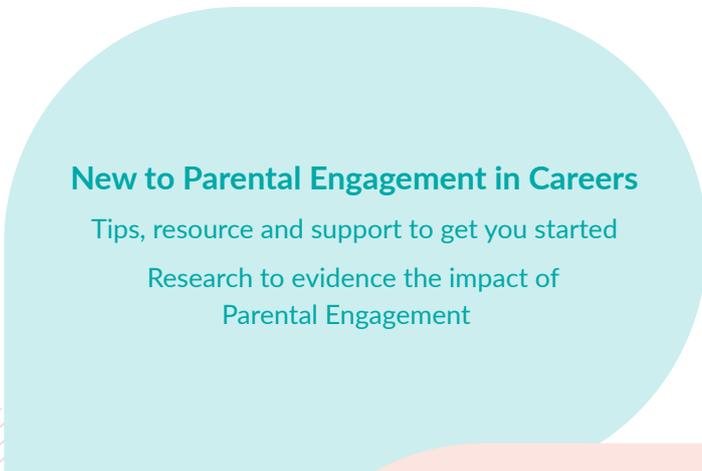
1. Maximise the effectiveness of parental engagement around careers
2. Support parents in education decision making
3. Increase participation from parents



## Audience

The toolkit is primarily aimed at Careers Leaders, as well as those that support them, such as the wider senior leadership team, careers professionals, department leads and SENCOs.

**Where are you on your parental engagement journey? Use these colour coded identifiers to find the right support.**



### **New to Parental Engagement in Careers**

Tips, resource and support to get you started

Research to evidence the impact of  
Parental Engagement



### **Comms to parents is the main focus of my Parental Engagement**

Principles for developing your provision to  
increase its impact

Support for embedding Parental Engagement  
across all your careers activities



### **Parental Engagement is embedded throughout the whole progressive careers programme and tailored to the needs of your parental community**

New insights and prompts to help you audit and  
reflect on your provision as part of your continuous  
improvement cycle

# What does this resource cover?

## 1 Why does parental engagement matter?

p5

## 2 Principles of effective parental engagement

p6

## 3 Equipping parents with the information they need

p10

## 4 Meeting the needs of your parental body

p12

## 5 Delivery guidance

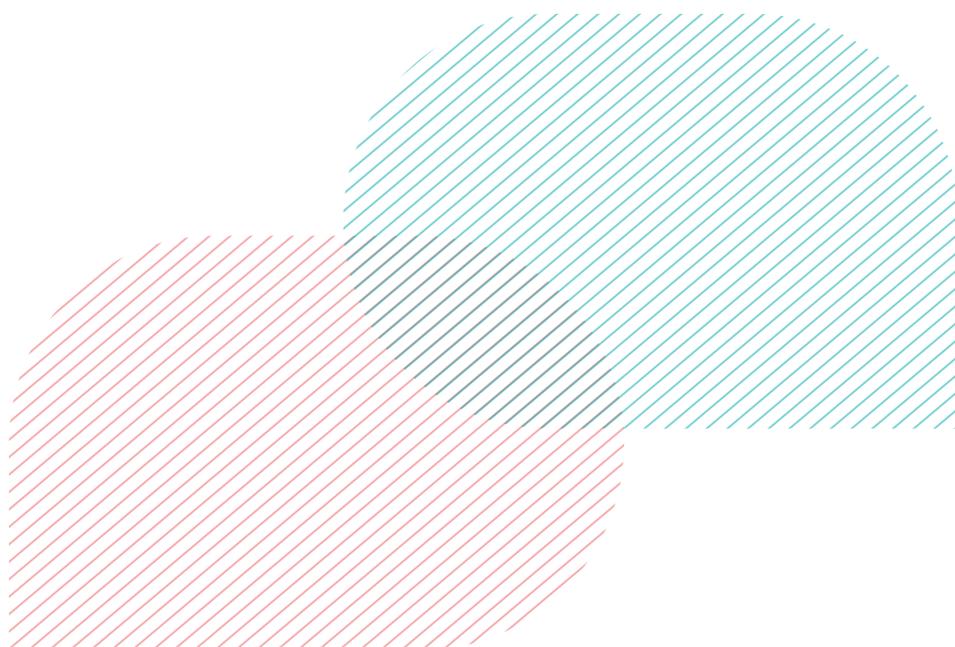
p13

## 6 Activities and resources

p14

## 7 Evaluating delivery

p15



# Why does parental engagement in careers matter?

It is well understood that parents have a major influence on young people around careers and education decision-making.

## Key research findings:



Parents believe children should take their views into account when making important decisions



Some parents underestimate the influence they could have on their child's choices



Conversations around key decisions start as early as Year 7, before parents note receiving information from their school or college



Four in five parents note action was taken as a result of their conversations with children about careers options

## Parental engagement is important for supporting the development of:

1. Information-seeking and research behaviours
2. Self-efficacy, career decision-making and confidence
3. Planning, goal setting and creating a sense of direction
4. (Career) adaptability, flexibility and employability skills (such as entrepreneurship and team working skills)

It is also possible that improving parental engagement around careers may act as a hook for other types of parental engagement and lead to whole-school or college benefits, such as attendance and even attainment.



# Principles of effective parental participation

## Parental participation Strategy – School/College wide

As a national charity, [Parentkind](#) give those with a parenting role a voice in education. Parentkind invest substantial resources in representing parent views on their child's learning to local, regional and national governments and agencies because evidence tells parental participation in education benefits all children in all schools and society as a whole. Parentkind is the network of PTA fundraisers in the UK, bringing specialist fundraising support and advice to parent volunteers so that every school can benefit from a successful PTA. Parentkind's 13,000 PTA members raise over £120+ million per year, placing them alongside some of the largest charities in the UK.

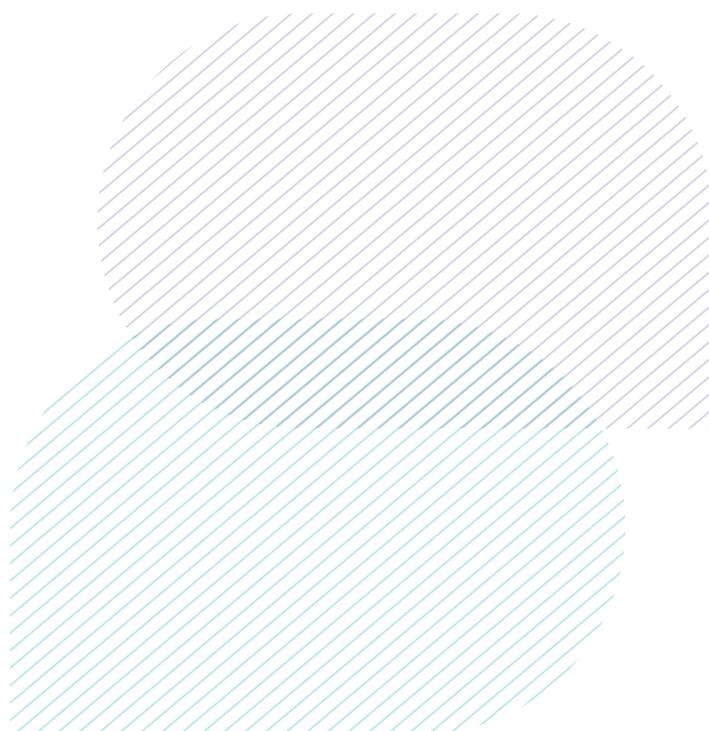
Parentkind's [research](#) on the relationships between parents and schools has shown that parents want to play an active role in their children's education and make a meaningful contribution to school life. Harnessing parent voice and power represents huge benefits for children's outcomes, the effectiveness and capabilities of schools and the community beyond. In response to an annual survey of parents, Parentkind's Parent Voice Report 2021 noted that a large majority (85%) of parents said that it is important for them to support their child's education by helping with their career choices.

In response to schools' needs for a workable model, Parentkind commissioned extensive research into how schools can embed parental participation and this has led to the creation of an evidence-based foundation for schools to maximise parents' contributions – [The Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools](#).

Built on five key drivers, reinforced with three guiding principles – written plans, time to reflect and adequate funds - and a shared common language, the Blueprint supports the overcoming of challenges and formalises a whole school approach to parental participation with a clear and effective framework.



## Parentkind



# The Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools - Five key drivers

## Driver One: Leadership, Ethos and Resources

Senior leadership is key to developing effective parental participation across a school and allowing it to thrive.

- Appoint a dedicated staff member to liaise with parents, develop a written plan and measure successes
- Set a direction, focus and a culture that values parental participation
- Establish clear boundaries and expectations for parents
- Provide a forum that supports consultation and shared decision making
- Monitor the training available for staff on engaging with parents

## Driver Two: Effective Two-Way Communication

Effective two-way communication between schools and families is the bedrock of parental participation, providing a pathway to other aspects of effective engagement.

- Be accessible and find ways to hear from a diverse range of parents
- Gauge parents views, ideas and how best to communicate
- Actively establish and improve different channels of communication that work for all and in both directions

## Driver Three: Supporting Learning at Home

Parents supporting children's learning and sharing a positive attitude towards school and education, complements the work of teachers and is related to increased achievement for young people.

- Coordinate learning activities at home that work with their experiences at school
- Help parents build their confidence and skills and empower them to take an active lead at home
- Help parents understand what their child learns and the impact they can have on their child's learning
- Work with parents to produce resources and materials together
- Provide curriculum rationale and real-life challenges, so parents see the relevance



## Driver Four: Involvement in School Life

Parents want to play an active role in their children's education. This has been highlighted as important and is seen as one of the ways to reduce educational inequalities.

- Make use of parents' skills and interest and ways to make a meaningful contribution
- Ensure volunteering activities are varied, inclusive and reflect community diversity
- Allow parents to inform policies, improvement plans and decisions that affect them
- Encourage parent support groups and set up a PTA to bring parents and teachers together to raise funds to support the school – Parentkind represents over [13,000 PTAs](#) and the opportunity to link to a wider network to share views, ideas, successes and knowledge

## Driver Five: Community Engagement

Strong and developed links to community groups and leaders can benefit schools in reaching those parents and families who may struggle to engage within school.

- Build a strong relationship with the local community and openly value what it can offer
- Offer a range of activities, clubs and support to pupils, parents and families
- Connect with community groups and leaders to increase your reach
- Utilise the school as a community hub by hiring out buildings, facilities, staff and expertise.

## Parentkind have a range of resources to support schools:

**Parental participation training:** Parentkind offer CPD accredited training for school staff, including an introductory workshop, two masterclasses and bespoke training packages. The training explores Parentkind's Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools, how to overcome barriers to parental participation and how to develop a plan for your school. These can be [booked here](#) or contact [schools@parentkind.org.uk](mailto:schools@parentkind.org.uk) for a free discovery call.

**Self-assessment audit tool:** Parentkind's [self-assessment audit tool](#) will allow schools to see how well they are implementing ideas and methods to maximise the benefits of parental participation in school life. At completion, schools will receive a set of results and recommendations and be sign-posted to resources. The audit tool launch is upcoming in 2022.

**Resources:** Parentkind's site links to [resources](#) listed under the five Key Drivers that schools can utilise to support their parental participation plans.

**Schools newsletter:** [Sign up](#) to receive the schools newsletter for updates about Parentkind's work, training, tools and resources.



## Parentkind have a range of resources to support schools:

### Parental participation training:

Parentkind offer CPD accredited training for school staff, including an introductory workshop, two masterclasses and bespoke training packages.

The training explores Parentkind's Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools, how to overcome barriers to parental participation and how to develop a plan for your school. These can be booked here or contact [schools@parentkind.org.uk](mailto:schools@parentkind.org.uk) for a free discovery call.

### Self-assessment audit tool:

Parentkind's self-assessment audit tool will allow schools to see how well they are implementing ideas and methods to maximise the benefits of parental participation in school life. At completion, schools will receive a set of results and recommendations and be sign-posted to resources. The audit tool launch is upcoming in 2022.

### Schools newsletter:

Sign up to receive the schools newsletter for updates about Parentkind's work, training, tools and resources.

### Resources:

Parentkind's site links to resources listed under the five key drivers that schools can utilise to support their parental participation plans.

## Parental engagement in careers education

Research carried out by the [Warwick Institute of Employment Research \(2019\)](#) explored how best to provide information and support to parents via schools and colleges to help young people make decisions.

This research, combined with the findings on different parent groups and their needs, has been translated into 11 practical recommendations. Depending on where you are in your Parental Engagement journey, these practical recommendations could help your continued progress.

The principles:

1. Provide timely careers information
2. Build on current parental engagement – colleges see this resource for further support
3. Co-create with parents
4. Create a parent friendly environment
5. Build trust with socially disadvantaged families
6. Refocus careers activities to involve parents
7. Stimulate family conversations
8. Combine home and school or college
9. Offer a blended delivery
10. Draw on parents as a resource
11. Involve the Senior Leadership Team
12. Full information on the principles is available here

These principles are also referred to in this [resource](#) to help you present to SLT about the value of parental engagement in your work.

Good to explore which of these principles you could most easily tackle first.

For example: **Principle 1- Provide timely careers information**

Evidence shows parents begin conversations with their children on careers choices early. For example, in schools this can be from Year 7. This highlights the need to provide supporting information to parents as soon as a student joins a school or college. Signposting to the support a school or college can offer to parents around career guidance during the student transition process is important and should be reiterated frequently.

Focus in on principles that could help you expand beyond comms

For example: **Principle 6- Refocus careers activities to involve parents**

It's good practice to invite parents to existing activities such as careers fairs, open days and where appropriate their child's personal guidance session. You may also want to design new activities that engage parents, employers and the local community, such as 'meet the employer events', 'guess my job' and informational events on topics requested by parents. Section 5 of this toolkit provides an overview of the activities developed as part of Talking Futures which are all available online and can be used as a starting point for refocusing your provision.

Reflect on your institutions current parental engagement strategies and identify any principles not currently covered.

For example: **Principle 3 – Co-create with parents**

If you don't already, consult parents and shape your careers activities around their needs and concerns, you may find this drives informed and supportive interest. The most effective parental engagement strategies involve planning, collaboration and continuous improvement using parent feedback. This supports Gatsby Benchmark 1 in which a stable careers programme is developed through evaluation and improvement.

# Equipping parents with the information they need

The education and careers landscapes are constantly changing. Many parents are reliant on lived experience which may mean they are potentially passing on misconceptions or outdated information to their children. This is particularly concerning as research shows that parents are having key conversations with their children about careers before they have received up to date information from their children's schools.

Gatsby Benchmark 2 states that every pupil and their parents should have access to high quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. Parents should be encouraged to use this type of information to support their children directly and generate questions to explore further with their school or college.

Talking Futures can support with resources to fill potential knowledge gaps and help parents feel prepared ahead of time to support their children at key decision points.

## Key decision points

Use a [parental journey visualisation](#) to show parents ahead of time, what the key decision points will be and what to expect whilst their child is in your setting. Highlight the support available, in and out of school/college, prior to key decision points. This can be shared on the parent pages of your website and displayed or distributed at events, such as parents' evenings.

For other ideas on how to engage parents from the outset, explore this [Guide to Transition from Primary to Secondary](#).

Parentkind also offer support and advice for parents, including webpages to [help parents offer careers advice](#) and to feel their children are [secondary ready](#).

## Possible pathways at each stage

Helping parents to understand the merits of the full range of pathways open to their child, needs to start early, not just at the point of decision making. There are a range of resources that will help amplify messaging around a variety of pathways and keep parents up to date with further career and labour market information:

- [The Talking Futures Parent facing site](#) has been designed specifically to support parents and carers to recognise their role in career decision making, providing activities to support careers conversations. It also has video content and guidance to help parents navigate the information available.
- SEND specific [posters showing potential pathways](#) for young people with SEND who are or are not likely to take GCSEs.
- [Amazing Apprenticeships](#) – resources for parents
  - [Parent & Carers Hints & Tips](#)
  - [Parent Zone](#)
  - [Parent Podcast](#)



# Meeting the needs of your parental body

Careers Leaders are unlikely to have overall responsibility for parental engagement, and so it is important to consider exiting communication routes and the current understanding of the needs of your parental body. [This resource](#) for FE may help any setting consider existing communication methods.

To understand parents' behaviour better and support schools and colleges to work with those in most need of support, Gatsby's 2019 research identified several different groups of parents based on a number of measures, including their attitude towards school and college careers provision. Follow up research in 2020 highlighted some variations in these groups, likely to be as a result of the challenges brought about by the pandemic.

## Consider:

Using your knowledge of your parental body, consider their different needs, challenges and potential hooks for engagement. How can you provide the same information in a variety of ways to appeal to all?

Consider when planning your first events or communications with parents, that you will have groups with very different needs, and you will need to vary your approach.

Take the targeting further by really exploring the nuances of your different parent groups and what works. Consider expanding your targeted offer for specific groups.

Reflect on your current comms mechanisms and whether you are tailoring them to the different audience needs. Engage with teams who work closely with those facing the greatest barriers to engaging, to find out more about the most effective engagement strategies.

# Delivery guidance

## Communicating with parents that face the biggest barriers to engaging

Some parent groups may be particularly hard to reach because they avoid social interactions and engagement with the school or college. They may also prefer not to speak on the phone and struggle to absorb large amounts of information.

Some ideas to boost their engagement:

### 1. Emails and communication via students

Include messages about how much of a difference they can make and to be empathic about the issues they may be facing.

### 2. Build on existing relationships

Send invitations via trusted staff, such as the Learner Support/SEND department or pastoral teams.

### 3. Invite the whole household

Where appropriate, include grandparents, younger and older siblings, to ensure families feel comfortable attending and to reduce barriers such as childcare.

### 4. Use trusted people to facilitate

Older students, school or college alumni, local community leaders or representatives from cultural or religious groups may be more appropriate to host or facilitate activities.

### 5. Consider location

Where would make your families feel most comfortable or make them more likely to attend?

### 6. Consider virtual or in-person

There are pros and cons for each – where appropriate, could you offer both to engage and meet the needs of different types of parents?

## Ensuring the visibility of the careers programme

Gatsby's 2020 research indicates that there has been a significant fall in how satisfied parents are with the support they receive from schools and colleges about students' careers and education options – with only 51% now feeling satisfied, compared to 60% in 2019. Parents also say they feel less informed than in the past.

Here are some suggestions to increase the visibility of your careers programme and help parents feel more informed and involved:

### 1. Use a logo

Badge all careers and options related information to parents to help it stand out from other parent communication and ensure regular recaps/updates on all activity that has taken place.

### 2. Celebrate success

Share images and stories of past careers events on your institution's social media feed or even involve local media, as there will be an appetite for local good news. [Sharing images of parents and students or quotes? Make sure you have the relevant permissions in place.]

### 3. Unique communications

If it is not better suited as part of existing communication mechanisms, draw attention to your communications by ensuring careers-related information arrives on a different day from other communications home.

### 4. Follow up on events

Follow up with an email or article in your newsletter. Encourage families to continue careers conversations between events by setting mini activities and signposting them to additional resources.



# Activities and resources

As part of Talking Futures, there are a range of activities available to support your school or college deliver on the recommendations from research. These fall into the following categories:

## Getting Started

Support for Careers Leaders to help you develop an effective approach to engaging parents in your careers programme, including engaging SLT and staff CPD on parental engagement in careers.

- Delivering effective parental engagement
- SLT careers meeting
- Whole staff CPD session
- Evaluating your delivery

## Parents and Carers Decision Making

Information on understanding parents and the good engagement principals.

## Activities

A variety of broad and tailored activity plans for events you can run in person or remotely to support your parent community. All resources needed and tips for delivery are included.

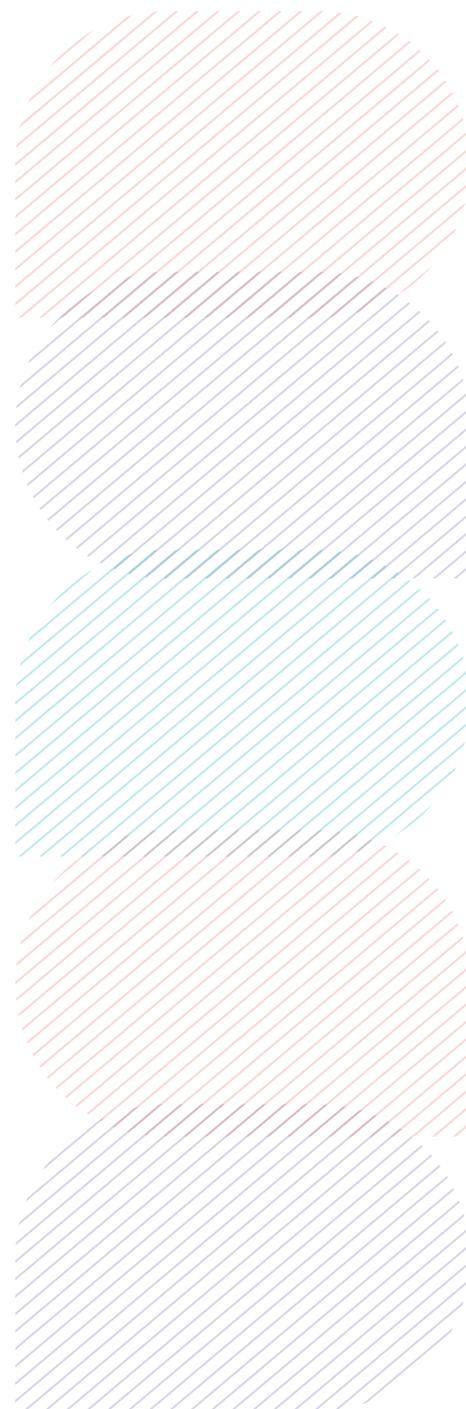
There is also a selection of short activities for students, that can complement your existing careers programme that specifically reinforce the role their parents can play in their decision making and encourage them to seek out that support and initiate family conversations.

## Resources for educators and parents

There are resources to support educators and parents to feel prepared and get the most out of activities run by the school or college. These include films and signposting to external sources to find out more about education pathways and specific careers, further and higher education.

## 'At home' activities

A selection of tools, tips and conversation starters for parents to support them, and improve the quality of their careers conversations with their children.



# Evaluating delivery

There are two aspects to evaluation of your parental engagement work to consider:

1. Parent feedback on the careers programme:
  - To improve the effectiveness of career programmes
  - To demonstrate the value of careers provision for student outcomes
  - To inform continuous improvement of careers provision
2. The impact of Talking Futures activities on:
  - Parental engagement with your institution
  - Quality of support parents provide their children

The [Impact Evaluation Toolkit](#) is designed to support you to achieve parent feedback on the careers programme, so how can you measure the impact of Talking Futures activity?

## Why collect evidence of parental engagement?

- Increasing impact: understanding and demonstrating what is and is not working to change and improve
- Internal monitoring and accountability: reporting to the senior leadership team or governing body, making it part of school/college improvement and leadership agenda.

This detail can also be used in case studies to demonstrate your successes to others in your school/college.

Consider building in feedback and evaluation as you begin to plan your Parental Engagement journey. This will give you evidence to show what is working.

If you are currently only delivering comms to parents, it is important to measure the reach, engagement and impact of those comms. Once you expand your range of Parental Engagement opportunities, you can use this framework.

Your Parental Engagement strategy should be continually evolving. Monitoring and evaluation allows you to keep up with the changing needs of your parental community and ensure your activities continue to have impact.

Measure	Pre-measures	Post-measures
<p><b>Parental engagement with school/college:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do parents know what information and support mechanisms are provided?</li> <li>• Can and do parents access this information and support?</li> <li>• Are there effective ways to update parents on changes and developments?</li> <li>• Are there mechanisms to seek additional inputs and support, if required?</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Parental engagement in their children's decision making:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How, when and why do parents get involved?</li> <li>• Does this reflect what parents would like?</li> <li>• What support and information do parents need to help their children's decision making?</li> <li>• How can parents get this from the school or college?</li> </ul>		

## Systematic evidence collection

When capturing evidence following specific activity, it is important to cover:

### 1. Reach

- How many parents participated?
- What was the profile of the parents taking part?
- How does this compare to previous activity?
- Were you able to engage more or different types of parents with the activity?
- Are there some groups of parents who still have barriers to engaging?
- Can you identify why?

### 2. Engagement

- How did the parents respond to the activity?
- Were they engaged and active participants?
- Did they value the content?
- Did the format help or hinder the experience?

### 3. Outcomes

- What did participants learn?
- How do they intend to use the information from the session?
- How is this likely to impact on their child's decision making?

### 4. Improvements

- What changes would participants like to see?
- How would these help?



## Evidence gathering activity ideas

### Parental surveys

There are some example questions you may wish to include to assess the role parents play in their children's decision making in the [whole programme survey template](#) and in this [survey template](#).

You could also capture feedback on specific events via surveys. There are suggestions in the [activity survey template](#).

Pros	Cons
Efficient method	Only engages the already engaged
Mitigation	
Who could you involve to encourage those parents that face the biggest barriers to engaging?	

### Voting or exit poll activity

Consider the main aim of each parental engagement session and ask one simple yes/no question after an event, e.g. Do you have a better understanding of the range of Post 16 pathways? Have a straightforward way to vote yes or no: counters in voting boxes or stickers on charts.

Pros	Cons
Simple method giving clear percentages	Only explores one aspect
Mitigation	
Combine this with interviewing a small selection of parents to gain wider qualitative data.	

## Parents Advisory Group

Build a range of parent volunteers, representing the profile of your parent and student bodies. You may need to target specific groups to ensure balance and to reach parents who have not been involved before.

Pros	Cons
In depth information from a range of perspectives	Requires time to set up and maintain
Mitigation	
Who else may find this useful? This group could meet the needs of the wider institution parental engagement strategy.	

## Gathering student views

Student surveys, individual and group discussions can provide insight into the support students receive, or would like to receive, at home.

### Using existing data and evidence

What could this information tell you?

- Analytics data from careers pages on the website – any uplift after events?
- Parental careers evening attendance data
- Observations from staff offering additional support to specific students
- Reduction of instances of misconceptions, stereotypes or lack of information having negative effects on students highlighted by form tutors or careers advisors

# Feedback

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

