

# Informal Q&A

A parent-friendly session where families can explore careers or education options with the school/college.

## Activity objectives

- To make families feel welcome at school/college.
- To engage parents who might otherwise not feel confident about attending an event at school/college.
- To help parents feel that their role in their child's careers decision-making is important.
- To showcase your institution's careers programme and demonstrate to parents where they can get support and further information.
- To prompt conversations to take place at home.

## How to use it

- Either as a standalone session or combined with other parental engagement events to kick off discussions and add interactivity.
- With parents as an opportunity to ask questions without their child present.
- With parents you might otherwise struggle to engage.
- At times that might suit parents best, for example, before work or just after drop-off time – you may need to test different options.

## Delivery time

 35 minutes

## Need to know

- This is an informal event which relies on you choosing appropriate stimulus that families will respond to.
- You may want to supply coffee and tea or snacks to make parents feel welcome if you are delivering in person.
- This activity works best delivered face to face.

## Links to parental engagement recommendations

- Create a parent-friendly environment.
- Build trust with socially-disadvantaged families.
- 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






- Choose a topic based on the needs of a group of parents that you are trying to engage. To boost engagement, you could survey the parents you are trying to reach to find out what topics they would like to explore. Ideas include:
  - A general theme e.g. 'post-16 options' for Year 9 parents who have not attended previous choices activities.
  - A specific topic such as 'careers related to Maths' for parents who do not usually attend parents' evening but whose children have potential in a particular area.
  - A general introduction to careers conversations e.g. for parents new to the school/college with students who are showing signs of disengagement, to help establish expectations for what they can do at home to complement the careers programme.
- The Delivery steps below outline two pieces of content you can use to begin discussions in the session, however, you will also need to decide on an additional stimulus that is related to the topic you are focusing on. For example, it could be a film about careers in a specific field.
- Design the session to maximise engagement. Think about how you can encourage parents to join the event – particularly those who would not usually engage with school/college. Could the session be an early breakfast meeting to allow working parents to join? Could you set up toys for young children, with appropriate supervision where necessary, so that lack of childcare is not a barrier? Could you offer coffee, tea and snacks to make parents feel welcome?
- Ideally, this session would take place face to face. If you are delivering this event remotely, invite parents to attend the event virtually and use online chat functions to manage questions from parents. Consider appointing someone other than the presenter to manage the chat.
- If families have English as an additional language, consider community leaders as speakers at the event. You could also ask previous alumni or older students to support the event if it would enable parents to access the content and make the most of the session.

### Communication

- To keep the event small and avoid families feeling overwhelmed make it an invitation only event. In your invitation, highlight the relaxed nature of the session as well as other steps you are taking to make parents feel welcome – e.g. toys for young children, coffee, etc.
- You could consider just inviting half the number of parents and suggesting they each invite another family so they can attend with someone they know to increase their likelihood of joining.
- Follow up your first invitation with a text message reminder or message sent via students.

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## Delivery steps

Step	Activity	Time
1.	Welcome families and introduce the topic of the session. Start with a short icebreaker to encourage those who are less confident to feel comfortable participating. For example, pair up families and ask them to find out the other parent's name(s) and a fun fact about them such as what they wanted to be when they were at school. Families can then introduce each other to the group, but be aware some parents may feel less confident speaking in front of the group.	 10 minutes
2.	Show the first stimulus. If you're using the <a href="#">post-16</a> or <a href="#">post-18</a> landscape overview, ask families to think about (a) one piece of new information and (b) one thing they knew already. If you're playing the <a href="#">family conversations</a> film, ask parents to think about which family's conversations they relate to and what they think the impact of the conversations were on the young people. Make paper and pens available if delivering in person, and whether they are at home or on site, encourage them to take notes to help them remember any questions that come up and any information they might like to discuss with their child after the session.	 5 minutes
3.	Families discuss their thoughts on the stimulus. This could be in pairs and then swapping to share with someone else or by being invited to share one thought each with the whole group if you're delivering virtually.	 5 minutes
4.	Encourage them to share any questions that the stimulus raised and see if other parents can help provide the answers. Support where necessary with more information and promote discussions around how they could find the answers themselves at home.	 5 minutes
5.	Repeat steps 2-4 with your topic specific stimulus, including relevant prompts for them to discuss.	 10 minutes

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## Learning from the event

- After the event, send parents who attended a list of the questions and answers discussed under the heading such as 'Your questions answered' and text or email the Talking Futures link to everyone alongside the link to your institution's parent area.
- The [family conversations](#) video and the [post-16](#) and [post-18](#) landscape overviews are available on the Talking Futures parent hub. Signpost them to parents who attended the event to prompt them to continue conversations at home and highlight them to parents who missed the event.
- To gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the event, consider phoning a small number of parents with follow-up questions or invite them in for a focus group. This would enable them to feed back on the careers programme as a whole, not just the event. You could also offer them the opportunity to ask for further resources in specific areas. Example questions and a survey template are available [here](#).



## Feedback

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

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