

# Parents' evening appointments : Engaging parents and carers with careers

Re-orienting the usual parents' evening to offer an opportunity to discuss education and careers choices as well as progression.

## Activity objectives

- To support parents with getting the most out of parents' evening appointments and using the time to get their careers questions answered, particularly those who are most disengaged.
- To provide structure for parents holding careers conversations at home with their child and guidance on where to find support.
- To build parents' confidence in getting support from their school/college with careers information.
- To broaden parents' understanding about the different routes that might be available to their child.

## How to use it

- For whole year groups as part of existing parents' evening appointments.
- With parents who might be disengaged or lacking in confidence.
- At any time, you have an interaction with parents, e.g. a phone call home to praise academic achievement, you could offer a one-to-one session to discuss their child's future.

## Delivery time

- Either: extend parents' evening appointment lengths to allow time for careers and options conversations.
- Or: structure appointments to include time for careers and options within existing time limits.
- Or: book separate appointments with families for careers conversations with subject teachers or form tutors.

## Need to know

- This activity depends on subject-specific teachers having careers conversations with parents. Research shows that parents prefer talking with teachers who know their child well, so careers and options conversations are more likely to be fruitful.
- Ideally, parents and students will need to prepare for the event by completing together and discussing the [Family action plan](#) [3 versions available depending on the young person's certainty about their next steps] or [Pathway planner](#) [Key Stages 4 and 5].
- This activity is for parents to attend alone, or with students, depending on whether they usually attend.
- This activity works best delivered face to face.

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# Parents' evening appointments

## Preparing the session with parents in mind

### Equipping subject teachers to support parents

- So that subject teachers feel equipped, run a CPD session or brief them in advance with careers and options information, including:
  - A general overview of the careers landscape, with options highlighted that they may not be familiar with e.g. T-levels (information can be found on the Talking Futures site [here](#)).
  - Local labour market information (LMI) relevant to different subject areas.
  - A list of relevant, subject-specific careers sites where they can find further information - for example, the Talking Futures site or CEC's Resource Directory for Gatsby Benchmark 4.
  - Information sources at school/college they can direct parents to - for example, the careers team or your careers portal.
  
- A session with subject teachers on discussing careers with parents could also be helpful:
  - Share the [Family action plan](#) [3 versions available depending on the young person's certainty about their next steps] and [Pathway planner](#) [Key Stages 4 and 5], which will form the basis of their careers conversations with parents.
  - Provide them with prompt questions to ask parents along with example answers. For ideas, look at the suggested [conversation starters](#) and [Family action plan](#) tool questions. Or ask departments to create their own prompts as part of their work towards Gatsby Benchmark 4 and exploring careers in their subject area.
  
- Each teacher could produce a visual illustrating their own career path, which would be used as a conversation starter with parents. As well as their education, the visual would outline jobs they have done, from Saturday jobs to teaching, and a list of the skills they developed for each.
- Don't forget to share with teachers that they may be required to answer questions from parents or students as part of the 'Careers Challenge' if you are running that (details below).

### Other preparations

- You will need a list of questions that parents may want to ask teachers. During the session, these could be displayed on prompt cards or on a big screen or board. You could even encourage parents to share their own great questions with each other through a service like Mentimeter.
- Brief teachers/pastoral staff who are not holding appointments to circulate during the session and engage in informal careers conversations with families waiting for appointments.
- You could offer one-to-one appointments for parents and their children with the careers adviser during the event.

# Parents' evening appointments

## Preparing the session with parents in mind

- Consider preparing a student-led showcase of the careers and options activity that the year group has participated in; it's a good idea to include student representatives sharing their reflections (this could be online or face to face).
- A '**Careers Challenge**' could incentivise younger students to explore careers and education options. You could give each family a few tasks for the evening, e.g. ask two subject teachers about apprenticeships, ask one teacher about the most unusual job you could do with their subject, ask two teachers to show you their own career pathway, go home and find out about one more job.

### Additional preparation session (approx. 30 mins)

- You may want to run a preparation session just before the event to help engage and support parents who might otherwise struggle. You could:
  - Support parents to complete either the [Family action plan](#) [3 versions available] or to work with their young people on the [Pathway planner](#) [Key Stages 4 and 5].
  - Discuss the careers questions parents might want to ask teachers. If they need support with writing in English, provide them with prompt cards to show teachers in their appointments.
  - Invite alumni, parent volunteers or volunteers from local employers to support individual families in this preparation session.
  - Consider how you can continue to support these parents in the main activity - you may want to be on hand during important appointments to ensure they feel confident starting the conversations they need to have e.g. 'we've just been discussing how they would like to find out more about xxxx, can you help?'

## Communication

- Design your parents' evening communications to enable parents to get the most out of the opportunity to discuss careers and options with their child's subject teachers.
  - Explain the careers focus in your first communication and re-iterate it in your reminders. If you're using a fun activity such as the 'Careers Challenge', it's a good idea to promote it in advance to both students and parents.
  - Circulate a list of suggested questions parents could ask teachers.
  - Ask parents and students to prepare for the event by completing together and discussing the [Family action plan](#) [3 versions available] or [Pathway planner](#) [Key Stages 4 and 5].
  - Consider sending a survey to parents in advance. This would give teachers information about parents' and students' interests before the appointments and allow you to identify which parents are struggling to engage with the school/college's careers offer.
- To reach the most disengaged parents:
  - Draw upon existing relationships between them and the school/college, such as via the SEND department.
  - Consider a phone call home the day before to remind parents about the event and encourage them to think about the careers and education questions they might want to raise.

# Parents' evening appointments

## Delivery steps

Step	Activity	Resources
1.	If the senior leadership team usually hosts a session at the beginning of the parents' evening for the whole year group, ask them to introduce the careers and options focus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents Presentation Template.</li> </ul>
2.	<p>Key Stages 3 and 4: Parents circulate around subject teachers as usual and discuss both progression and careers.</p> <p>a) Parents and students show subject teachers their <u>Family action plan</u> and discuss how the school can help, e.g. their target might be to research career routes in their child's favourite subject or explore more about apprenticeships.</p> <p>b) Teachers support families to populate next steps in their plan, e.g. by signposting them to websites where they can research subject specific careers, or by marking off as complete their achievements that evening.</p> <p>c) Parents and students ask teachers their questions about career routes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed examples of the Family action plan in case parents have not prepared in advance.</li> <li>Question prompts for parents.</li> </ul>
3.	<p>Key Stages 4 and 5: Parents circulate around subject teachers as usual and discuss both progression and careers.</p> <p>a) Students show teachers and their parents their <u>Pathway planner</u>.</p> <p>b) Teachers identify whether they can help with any decisions the student needs to make or signpost them to subject-specific information.</p> <p>c) Parents and students ask teachers their questions about career routes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed examples of the <u>Pathway planner</u> in case families have not prepared in advance.</li> </ul>

# Parents' evening appointments

## Learning from the event

- As an immediate indicator of engagement, teachers can keep a record of which families they had careers and options conversations with. This will provide a measure of the volume of interactions.
- At the end of the event, parents can be asked to indicate whether they felt they learnt something new about an education or careers pathway – this could be done on a tablet by the exit or a simple voting system (e.g. counters into a pot), or via a poll online.
- 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. Find out [more](#).
- In subsequent communications to parents and students about careers, reinforce the continued use of the [Family action plan](#) [3 versions available depending on the young person's certainty about their next steps] and [Pathway planner](#) [Key Stages 4 and 5] to ensure parents and students get the maximum benefit from the event. For example, parents and students can be encouraged to discuss progress at home. Students who have completed the [Pathway planner](#) can be asked to bring them to subsequent careers sessions. It's a good idea to keep track of the planners by adding them to their school planners/diaries or saving them in students' online profiles so they can be shared with relevant staff.