

# The role of parents and carers in providing careers guidance and how they can be better supported

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## Practice report

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Produced March 2020

This report has been produced by the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick with the support of the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and J.P. Morgan. While this report has been supported by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and J.P. Morgan, the contents and opinions in this paper are of the authors alone and do not reflect the views of the Gatsby Charitable Foundation or the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, JPMorgan Chase & Co, or any of its affiliates.

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# Introduction

Career guidance is important for young people making informed decisions about their educational and learning pathways. Ensuring that they have access to career support and up-to-date career information is essential, but parents (this term is used throughout to refer to parents, carers and guardians) also need support, and information, so that they may assist those in their care with career decision-making more effectively. In ever-changing labour markets, parents have an increasingly crucial role to play, so there is an urgent need for those young people in education, as well as their parents, to understand not only the options within education and training, but also the sometimes bewildering array of career progression routes available that follow (Langley, Hooley, & Bertuchi, 2014). Whilst there is a growing body of evidence on the importance of the role of parents in this respect, it is also recognised that parents are not always confident about the advice and support they provide because of their own lack understanding of available pathways and labour market options. Recent surveys of parents and students reported that just three in five parents felt confident in advising their child about 'how they can achieve their career/job goals' or 'what career/job options would be best for them' (Knibbs et al., 2018; Lindley et al., 2019). There is a need, therefore, to understand how parents and carers can be better supported by schools and colleges to feel more informed and confident about their own support and advice. It was the aim of the research study that underpinned this evidence report to address this gap, as well as identify evidence relevant to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The ways in which parents, carers and extended family can effectively perform this supporting role in career transitions into the labour market are increasingly becoming the focus of research and discussion, both nationally (e.g. Haywood, Brennan, & Molesworth, 2010; Hooley, Matheson, & Watts, 2014; Irwin, & Elley, 2012; Knibbs et al., 2018; Lindley et al., 2019; Youth employment UK, 2019) and internationally (e.g. Aaltonen, 2016; Broadbent, Cacciattolo, & Papadopoulos, 2012; Çelik, 2019; Musset, & Mýtna Kureková, 2018; Rogers, Creed, & Praskova, 2018; Ross, & Lloyd, 2013; Turan, Celik, & Turan, 2014; Zhang, Yuen, & Chen, 2015). Continued parental support throughout a young person's education and career trajectory is seen as a key factor contributing to successful career development, with parents operating across different roles, including: advisers, supporters, information providers, advocates, role models, aspirants and facilitators. In a context of entwined technological advancement and newly emerging educational and training qualification routes, parents can often find it challenging to stay reliably informed so that they can, in turn, advise their children with confidence. Careers education plays a key role in not only supporting young people directly while in education and training, but also in engaging and involving parents through various means so that they understand, better, their children's current options for education and career pathways.

## Approach and aim of the study

The overall aim of the research study was to understand how parents can be better supported by schools and colleges to feel more informed and confident with their support and advice to their children about their career choices. It has examined evidence from the UK and internationally, as well as speaking to professionals with responsibility for supporting parents. A key element of the research was to identify careers interventions involving parents, so recommendations could be identified that are practical and implementable.

The terms 'career education', 'information', 'advice' and 'guidance' are used interchangeably and in different combinations. Whatever the terms used, they refer to the services schools and colleges provide to support students (young people) with their education and learning decisions, together with the mediation of an accurate understanding of the labour market, with available vocations.

## **Methodology**

A literature and international system review, alongside interviews with practitioners, stakeholders and experts in the field were used to gather data. An agreed reporting procedure and dissemination strategy were deployed to communicate results.

In the UK, six career guidance practitioners were interviewed; three who were delivering one-to-one or personal guidance and three occupied a careers leader or leadership role. To complement the UK interviews and to support the international review, expert interviews were also undertaken with five international experts engaged in careers education activities with parents, as well as in-depth discussions with other specialists in the field. Additionally, ten expert stakeholder interviews were undertaken with those in the UK, including policy makers, leaders in the field and representatives of professional bodies.

## **Report structure**

Following this introduction, a summary of evidence on parental engagement and involvement in education and careers is presented, along with current careers, education and guidance (CEG) activities with parents. Learning from these activities and interventions, detailed later in the report, is summarised. This is followed by a section on what schools and colleges could do to engage parents and young people in careers, education and guidance. Example of practices supporting, engaging and involving parents in the UK and internationally are outlined in the final section of this report.

# Evidence on parental engagement in education and careers

There is much evidence that parental engagement in careers is important to facilitate and/or expand opportunities for young people, with a need for them to be ‘career aspirants’, which refers to them being supporters of education and career pathways and providers of information. Key findings that emerged from the literature review for this research study are presented next. [For the fully referenced evidence, please refer to the Evidence report, available as a separate document].

## The role of parents in careers development

The influence of parents is exerted through particular kinds of behaviour, as well as through family conditions that foster the development of values, attitudes, and self-concepts in the young people in their care.

## Defining parental involvement and engagement

This can be defined as firstly, parent activities at home and within educational institutions (schools and colleges for those aged 11 to 18 years) that provide psychological, financial, learning and well-being support and structure; and secondly, institution based activities, which include communication and/or collaboration with teachers and careers practitioners, plus attendance and participation in school and college activities. Both types of involvement emerge from the evidence as having positive impacts on young people that actually go beyond careers.

Parental careers support can be conceptualised as:

- Instrumental and practical support – parents’ support with career-related skill development (e.g. writing applications, CVs, etc.), practical support (e.g. financial and material), as well as researching and analysing information in order to provide rational input into discussions;
- Career-related modelling and informational support – parents’ use of their own examples of relevant career-related behaviours, experiences and knowledge;
- Verbal encouragement – parents’ praise and encouragement of educational and career development choices; and
- Emotional support – parents’ support for educational and career development experiences by enabling a space for careers conversations to shape self-efficacy, discussions on feelings, as well as offering empathy.

## Measuring involvement and engagement of parents in careers

There have been various attempts to measure parental support and engagement. Existing evidence indicates that levels of this engagement exist on a continuum from those parents who are fully disengaged, to parents engaged only at key points, through to those who are fully and actively engaged.



Overall, evidence indicates that parental engagement is important for supporting the development of:

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

Parental engagement in careers is important to facilitate and/or expand opportunities for young people to draw upon a variety of sources and experiences to help with their career decisions. This includes work experience, attendance at careers fairs, internet access, career guidance interviews, with the school acting as a source of information. Indeed, parents need to take on the active role of 'career aspirants' for the young people in their care.

### **Impact of parent careers support and advice**

The home/caring environment, in which the parent-child relationship is located, emerges as a significant factor in a young person's career learning and development. This environment shapes attitudes and beliefs related both to education and to post-education learning. Evidence also consistently stresses the significant role of parents in the career choices and aspirations of young people, with parents' own experiences of education, in turn, influencing and shaping their recommendations and expectations for their young people, particularly in terms of the educational routes supported. In contexts where there are high levels of parental support and low levels of parental influence, young people are able to develop their career adaptability competencies, which supports their career and learning choices.

Young people value parental support and often ask them to provide a 'rational' input into their career decision-making processes. Parent's own experiences of education influence and shape their recommendations and expectations for the young people in their care.

The literature review found evidence that where parents and the young people in their care have shared career conversations, there may be greater congruence in terms of career aspirations and education attainment for young people and increased motivation for parents. Moreover, educating young people about the range of factors that influence career decision-making can promote the use of more deliberate career choice strategies. International evidence confirms that parental support positively affects young people's career adaptability and career decision-making self-efficacy.

### **Importance of parental support for particular groups**

Research demonstrates that, for particular groups of young people, parental engagement and involvement is particularly important in supporting educational pathways. Specifically, young people with disabilities, with special educational needs (SEN) and those from one-parent families.

### **Policies and strategies to engage parents from UK and other countries**

A review of the policies and strategies which set out guidance on how the education system could engage parents was undertaken in the UK and other selected countries. It found that:

1. National and international evaluation evidence on parental engagement policies is lacking;

2. There is a need to support parents in shaping practice and guidance both in the UK and internationally;
3. National policies and strategies that identify how the education system could engage parents were found to be in place in, for example, Denmark, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands.
4. National policies and strategies (where in place) often encourage and/or facilitate careers, education and guidance, rather than making it mandatory.
5. Countries are moving away from passive forms of involvement and information giving to creating space for active engagement and involvement.

### **Summary of evidence**

- The notion that involving parents in careers, education and guidance is highly desirable is neither new nor innovative
- There is a significant body of evidence outlining the importance of parents in young people's career decision making and career development.
- Although parents undoubtedly have the potential to influence the career development of young people in their care, both positively and negatively, robust evidence of what, when and how parental behaviours constructively support their children's learning about career progression remains both inconclusive and elusive.
- Integration of parental support is positively associated with young people's information seeking and research behaviours, self-efficacy and confidence, planning, goal setting and creating a sense of direction, career decision-making and career adaptability.
- Where parents and the young people in their care have shared career conversations, there may be greater agreement in terms of career aspirations and use of more deliberate career choice strategies. International examples of practice reported that these shared parental-children CEG experiences have positive outcomes for young people.
- There is much evidence of the need for parents to be supported by schools and colleges. However, there is a lack of evidence on the most impactful approaches to engaging parents with CEG programmes. Importantly, parents respond differently to interventions as they have different expectations, needs and capacity.
- Internationally, policies that involve parents were found in: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the USA. Where in place, policies tend to encourage and facilitate CEG, rather than making it mandatory.
- Parental engagement strategies were found to work well in some cases, but not in others, with educational context and student population being key factors. Consequently, a twin focus on underlying national strategy and an individual school approach could be adopted to increase engagement.
- Some key learning from international interventions highlights the importance of a trained facilitator for events and workshops, as well as the creation of a supportive environment.

## Current careers practice supporting parents

Through practitioner and expert stakeholder interviews, a wide range of CEG related activities and interventions designed to engage parents were identified across the UK:

**Parents' evenings** – events regarded as a good opportunity to raise the profile of careers and education services and the importance of career planning to parents.

**Careers fairs and careers open days** – based in educational institutions or local workplaces, these events were considered important by representatives of schools or colleges interviewed. The success of securing parental involvement in such events rested on basic practical points, such as scheduling and timing. Some schools and colleges collaborated to deliver bigger, more ambitious careers events.

**Breakfast and coffee clubs** – seen as potentially excellent ways of getting parents into schools and colleges, as well as involving employers, and parents who are employers.

**Curriculum activities** - viewed as effective careers guidance interventions for young people, parents and education staff (e.g., 'guess my job...' where a parent answers questions from young people about their job which young people then have to guess).

**Personal guidance sessions** – parental involvement in these types of session was found to be patchy, not necessarily due to a lack of interest, but again due to time and resourcing constraints. Parental involvement has both positive (e.g. emphasising the importance of career decision-making to the young person), as well as less positive aspects (e.g. inhibiting the young person's predisposition to talk openly).

**Careers open days** – the same caveats apply here as for the first two activities above.

**Employer/sectoral events** (where employers make presentations and answer questions) – events that are well-timed in terms of young people decision points can pique parents' interests and involvement, especially since parents can feel that the services are targeted at the young people in their care, rather than being too generic.

**Expert presentations on topics such as the future labour market, employability skills, apprenticeships, etc.** – where schools and colleges had engaged experts from their local area (such as those from universities, colleges, local enterprise partnerships, etc.) to present at parents' evenings. Such events had been well-received as they provide up-to-date knowledge. However, some parents could regard the value and applicability of the experience of presenters as overriding the value of school or college-based careers service.

**Career guidance sessions for parents** – useful in improving parents understanding of the training and employment opportunities available to them in their local area. Some schools and colleges commented that parents' knowledge of the labour market and interest in their children's careers had increased as a result of this type of engagement.

# Learning from others in the design and delivery of careers-related activities to engage and involve parents

Some key learning for the design, development and delivery of careers-related activities and programmes to support parental knowledge and careers advice in schools and colleges has been identified from the study. These include:

- Activities need **senior leadership and management support**, and should involve teaching staff, parents and, where possible, governors.
- Parents should be **involved in the design, development and/or delivery of careers-related activities** and events, as their inputs are valuable, as well as the process of involvement supporting parental communication with education staff and raising awareness of what CEG activities are taking place. Activities should be linked where possible.
- Creating a **parent-friendly environment** within the educational institution has been powerful in getting parents engaged and involved in their children's education more generally.
- Communication with parents needs to be **targeted, personalised** in terms of their needs and their children's interests and subject choices (where possible) and appropriate in terms of content and timing. All practitioners need to be able to communicate with parents in different ways on a variety of topics, and be expert in LMI and opportunities, so CPD for staff in schools would be a valuable and needed aspect of delivery.
- Activities, programmes and/or events that offer **direct, personalised benefits** to young people and their parents can help to develop engagement and trust.
- **Mixed methods of delivery** (i.e., online and face-to-face) have been found to be effective at reaching parents, because it enables engagement to take place at a time, and in a manner, of the parents' choosing.
- Workshops involving both parents and young people **create a shared careers related experience** and can be a good way of parents' learning about careers and on starting a dialogue with their young people about their educational and career pathways. Workshops with small numbers offer more opportunity for personalised and tailored support.
- Events that **stimulate family conversations** about careers create a shared understanding of young people's career direction, which is essential for progressing thinking and positive for constructive career development.
- **Starting activities in educational institutions** with young people, which they then take home to complete, has been effective at encouraging parents to get involved, possibly because the home is considered a safe and unpressurised location for parents to engage in learning activities and with the online materials.
- Careers practitioners in schools and colleges need **time to support both parents and young people** in their career conversations to ensure they are supportive, informative and useful. This is particularly important where parents may be absent and additional care and support may be needed.

# What could schools and colleges do to engage parents and young people in CEG?



**Create parent-friendly environments** with activities to draw parents into the school or college, such as breakfast and coffee clubs, and career guidance sessions for parents.

**Promote and communicate careers activities** across the curriculum, such as asking parents to contribute to classroom activities, getting them involved in homework activities and through careers days. This will help ensure careers is part of an ongoing conversation.



**Build on current parental engagement** in the school or college. Existing good practice, e.g. well-established and effective communication channels, parents' forums, involvement of parents in co-curriculum activities, and links with parent governors, can be extended to promote the importance of parents' involvement in career choice.



**Involve parents in the development of your careers guidance provision and strategy** as this can support informed and supportive interest from parents. It is important to understand parents' needs, issues and concerns as this will help shape methods aimed at increasing their interest and involvement in careers. Effective parental engagement strategies that are based upon planning, leadership, collaboration, engagement, and sustained improvement using parent feedback.





**Use technology** to engage parents in their child's learning and CEG as it offers ways to communicate, disseminate and enable access to information. It can also be used to monitor engagement and determine what support is needed.

**Create targeted activities and communications** that help parents understand the relevance to their child. Presentations from employers and/or education training providers, which are targeted at particular subject groups, are more likely to appeal to students and their parents. This may involve more work from the school or college.



**Redesign existing activities** to involve parents, so, for example, schools and colleges are inviting parents to their child's personal guidance session, careers fairs and open days, ensuring they are held at times when parents are more likely to be available. Support that is tailored to parental need, reflecting different expectations, needs and aspirations, as well as recognising that there will be different levels of engagement is important.

**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 that involve local experts. Try to ensure that the parent-school and parent-college relationships are not reduced to a static series of concrete activities.





**Organise specific aspiration raising activities** that cover educational and personal development. Many are offered by third sector organisations and charities, e.g. the Brilliant Club. These can be effective in addressing the needs of socially disadvantaged students.

**Draw on parent's expertise** to build your careers programme. Many will be employed, have good links to employers or run their own companies. Their expertise and experience can be well-used in targeted presentations, group discussions, or careers club activities to develop students' insights into the world of work.



**Involve students** and encourage them to prompt their parents to get involved. If learners have really enjoyed a careers event, then part of the communication strategy could include encouraging students to share good experiences with their parents.

**Develop 'peer communities'** within and across schools and colleges, in initial teacher training, with careers education and guidance associations, etc. to support skill and knowledge development of careers practitioners and teachers, ensuring new and interesting practices are disseminated, with their uptake encouraged and supported.



# International and UK case studies of practice: Parental involvement and engagement in CEG interventions

This section provides examples of parental engagement and involvement in CEG activities within schools and colleges both internationally and in the UK. For each example, key learning is highlighted.

## Parents as Career Transitions Support program (PACTS), Australia

The Parents as Career Transition Support (PACTS) is an Australian program based upon the insight that parents play a significant role in supporting their children to make informed decisions in their career pathway planning. PACTS was designed to help meet the need for transition support for students and their parents for a changing world.

The Parents as Career Transition Support (PACTS) program provides parents with up-to-date information related to their children's transitions to post-compulsory education, training and work (Borlagdan & Peyton, 2014). Through group workshops, a trained facilitator discusses with parents how they can confidently support the career aspirations and preferences of the young people in their care. PACTS seeks to build parents' knowledge of in-school and post-school pathway options. It also aims to build on information provision by offering tools to enhance parent-child engagement. The programs have been running in various formats for thirty years. They are currently operating with many different types of communities across Australia, predominately in Victoria. They can be delivered in different formats but the basic programme involves three two-hour workshops with a maximum of 20 parents per group.

A key feature is that they are interactive facilitated workshops that: focus on discussion and participation; are supported by a simple, easy to understand workshop handbook which all attendees receive; can be held in school, community or workplace environments; help develop increased understanding about the school, its people and services; and that emphasise networking and forming relationships with other parents.

### Impact

PACTS builds parent confidence to support their children's transition decisions. PACTS breaks down parent misconceptions about linear and fixed 'careers'; career decision-making as only occurring in Year 12; and parents' sole responsibility for making career decisions for their child. PACTS helps parents to navigate complex post-school systems. It highlights the support parents can access to guide their children through multiple pathways and post-school options. This can be especially important for parents of children with a disability. PACTS also provides practical tools for parents to engage with their children throughout this process. While parents and PACTS facilitators viewed PACTS favourably, they identified areas for development, including: programme attendance and retention; training for youth-specific service providers; and integration between PACTS and schools.

### Key learning

- The face-to-face communication and interaction with parents in an educational environment was positive at increasing their confidence in understanding the educational choices and career pathways of their children.
- Practical tools provided as part of the workshops were most valued by parents.

## Future to Discover project, Canada

The Future to Discover project began in 2003 to look at ways of reducing barriers that underrepresented students face, such as a lack of financial resources, poor academic preparation and a lack of information about post-secondary education. The Explore Your Horizons (EYH) intervention (part of the programme) provided high school students with enhanced career planning, and information about the costs and benefits of post-secondary programs. The EYH program was delivered through voluntary, after-school workshops beginning in Grade 10 (Year 11 in the UK). The workshops explored various post-secondary paths including college, university, apprenticeships and vocational training. The EYH program encompassed enhanced career education components designed to help high school students improve their knowledge of the role of post-secondary education and how they might access it; explore their future options through career education; and provide guidance to their parents on how to support them through this process.

Parents, with the young people in their care, were involved in the EYH program participated in a number of workshops on career development, managing transitions and building resilience to overcome challenges.

### Impact

The study found that the interventions, offered either separately or together, increased high school graduation rates and post-secondary education enrolment among underrepresented students, including those from low-income families and first-generation students. But, when it came to post-secondary completion, the effects were less encouraging. While the promise of financial aid encouraged college completion, neither intervention had any noticeable impact on university completion. In one province, where students were offered only the workshops, no long-term impact on post-secondary education participation was seen.

### Key learning

- Enhanced career-education programs, which included parental involvement and promises of financial support, made as early as high school boosted, college participation and completion rates. Higher participation rates yielded substantial economic returns to the lives of young people.
- Parents engaged in the workshops with their children had a shared understanding of different education routes and costs.
- A combination of interventions (workshops, financial aid, career guidance, resilience training) was found to be most effective.

## Family Group Conferences, Czechia

In Czechia, the family conference (FC) method is used as a means of preventing early school leaving by involving the whole family in the intervention (Fišarova, 2019). FC is a simple tool built around a fundamental idea that the family has expert knowledge about itself. When a student is identified as at risk of early school leaving, a Family Group Conferences (FGC) is set up. This is used to influence career decisions where it is acknowledged that there are areas where the family does not have sufficient capacity or knowledge, so careers practitioners are employed to support the family. The schools take the lead, since the main reason for preparing and carrying out FC is in response to a change in the family situation, which can have negative consequences on the child, for example, school failure, absence of attendance and/or change of behaviour. The FC offers a set of situations in which the family and a young person can be supported in their choice of study or profession. The FC coordinator ensures that the wider family network has full awareness of the process and that the family agrees on a procedure for collaboration of professionals with family members for the next six months.

### Impact

Professional expertise is sought after when the family needs support to help a child deal with a specific issue. The advantage is the possibility of creating a "safety net", setting the foundation for cooperation even if a member of the family or the young person himself/herself continues to struggle with an issue. Throughout the process of preparation of the FC and during the meeting, the family has time to discuss the joint plan and communicate with experts through a selected family member or in some cases an interpreter. This method of working with the family also produces good results when working with migrants, national minorities and socially excluded people (Fišarova, 2019).

### Key learning

- A shared process of support and collaboration is developed by the family and facilitator.
- Builds on and uses knowledge and understanding that the family has about itself, which is drawn out with expert facilitation.
- It provides a supportive environment for discussion and debate.

## Supporting educational journeys, France

Voluntary organisations have become important in France by offering schools a range of services to help tackle social inequalities. The voluntary organisations can offer up to five hours a week to work with those who are failing. One voluntary organisation (AFEV) sends higher education students into poor neighbourhoods to work with school pupils and their parents offering tutoring support, which includes working with them two hours a week to raise career aspirations. This arrangement can last several years. The aim of the AFEV is to support young people on their educational journey and to acquire transversal skills, which will promote their integration into a knowledge society. This support ideally takes place at home, in order to foster the bond with his family, throughout the school year, at the rate of two hours per week (i.e. 60 hours of volunteering per year).

### Impact

The unique bond that is formed between the young person and the higher education student has been found to have positive effects on self-esteem, cultural openness and relationships with school. Young people and their parents considered that their student had helped them to see more clearly in their school and/or professional project.

### Key learning

- Long-term and ongoing support was valued by both parents and their children supporting with career decision and direction.

## The CLAP for Youth project, Hong Kong

An initiative is underway, focused on career development support for young people, the CLAP for Youth, which addresses the need for CEG in Hong Kong, including parental involvement. This 'CLAP for Youth project' (CLAP for Youth @JC) is a five-year Trust-Initiated Project aimed at developing an evidence-based career and life development intervention model' (Factsheet, 2019). The CLAP model uses a Youth Development and Intervention Framework, which comprises competence and career development (CLAP for Youth @JC, 2017). It was launched in 2015 with initial funding (HK\$500 million) from the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC), a charitable foundation, though future funding is, at the time of writing, uncertain. The overall vision is for all young people to find meaning in their lives and make positive contributions. A network of 52 secondary schools are being supported with various resources, including the provision of a career-life planning curriculum, teacher training, an intervention model and a work-place learning framework (CLAP for Youth @JC, 2018).

Within the project, strategies are being implemented to increase parent involvement in CEG. For example, with the aim of enhancing the awareness and willingness of parents to support their children, an award for parents was introduced. The underlying rationale was that if parents are supported to achieve their own career aspiration, or dream, they are more likely to support their children in pursuit of their aspirations. The scheme is regarded as successful for its promotional value, but probably not scalable.

Other strategies designed to increase parental engagement include parent briefing programmes, which provide parent education talks and activities, together with making educational videos, as a form of online training on the 'Parent Education Learning' Platform and parent intensive support, whereby parent counselling and parent groups are facilitated and resourced, to focus on career-related issues. Talking to young people and their parents together is regarded as the most successful approach. Optimally, this will take place after the young persons' final exams and before results are published (that is, early June) and has to be voluntary. Timing increases the probability of persuading parents to come into schools with their children, since the impending exam results concentrate them on their future. Parent Teacher Associations are also used as a method of involving parents and represent a powerful bridge between parents and schools.

### **Impact**

A formal evaluation is not currently available, but first impressions are that the project has been successful overall, particularly regarding increase of motivation. The parent/youth platform for parents called 'Let's grow together' provides parents with careers information and helps support parents to engage in career conversations with their children has been 'quite successful'.

### **Key learning**

- Whilst a range of CEG and parental engagement activities has been offered, it is a resource intensive programme. It has been successful in those schools that have been keen to engage.
- The programme has been successful in both raising parents' aspirations for themselves and supporting them to realise these aspirations.
- Barriers to parental involvement with the project were identified. First, the variable levels of motivation of individual parents to be involved in the career development of their children represented a challenge. Second, gaining access to young people attending vocational schools and/or young people in formal employment was recognised as a particular challenge. Third, the lack of school support to involve parents in CEG.

## Parents Turn, Netherlands

'Parents Turn', was a government-funded project directed at the academic stream of Dutch secondary education (Oomen, 2018). The career teachers of six secondary schools around the Netherlands were involved in the project. Dutch career teachers are teachers in academic subjects who take on the additional task of supporting students and also support tutors and teachers in delivering the mandatory CEG provision in their school. Each career teacher involved in the project delivered the career intervention, following an extensive, co-designed script for each of the four sessions with the support of tutors, teachers and heads of department at their schools. Pairs of parent(s) and children volunteered for the four successive monthly sessions (ten hours in total), which took place in the school after classes.

The programme resulted from a needs assessment among potential participating parents. The career intervention aimed to support parents in facilitating their children's career building by helping them to be: up-to-date and well-informed about educational possibilities and their financial consequences, the labour market and the use of information resources; and able to make considered career decisions with their child (Oomen, 2018). The physical presence of both parents and the child facilitated family-learning. Parents as well as senior students from upper secondary and first-year higher education alumni students served as resources, reflecting the diverse nature of the wider school-community to realise community-interaction.

### Impact

The findings suggest that Parents Turn built and enhanced parents' capacity to be involved in and support the career development of their child. This parental capacity consists not only of their knowledge and skills to handle the information on higher education, but also their parental self-efficacy. The parents involved increased their information level; increased their parental self-efficacy in making use of information, and of guidance and support tools; changed their parental attitudes and skills, talked more to their child and learned how to do that, and became more aware of their role and their child's; felt more able to support their child in career decision-making (Oomen, 2018).

The overall conclusion was that a school-initiated career intervention involving parents, in the form of family learning and community interaction, can build and enhance parents' capacity to be involved in and support the career development of their child, but differences related to higher education attainment affect initial involvement and the impact on parental capacity.

### Key learning

- The career interventions work differently for parents who have different levels of higher education level attainment. Significantly, parents differ in their initial needs to be involved.
- Lower-educated parents raised their parental capacity but remained unsure as a parent of how to make use of gained information, guidance and support tools, which can be related to secondary effects of social origin and the mechanisms of risk aversion and time-discounting preferences.
- Lower-educated parents benefitted less from the community interaction and the family-learning component due to social unsureness, lack of confidence and not understanding active listening skills.

## **INSPIRED Teenager online programme, UK**

The INSPIRED teenager programme is a paid-for online video course and e-book for parents and their children to 'learn at home together' that can also be delivered face-to-face. It aims to help parents become more confident, better informed and able to use coaching techniques with their children. Schools and colleges can buy a multi-user licence and integrate the programme with their parental engagement strategy. It was piloted and developed with funding from NESTA as part of Inclusive Economy Partnership initiative.

The programme has eight modules, each with its own video and information resources, which aim to motivate and inspire young people to develop their own career plan. Each module supports career learning through an exploration of key concepts and answering questions.

### **Impact**

The online and face-to-face format of the programme has been positively evaluated and reported as effective in helping parents support the young people in their care and enabling them to make informed decisions (Clark, 2019, Clark, & Parry, 2019). Whilst the numbers completing both the course and the evaluation was very small (28 pairs of parent and young people), the majority of parents said that they had gained a better understanding of the changing labour market. Significantly, engagement with the programme had facilitated and stimulated family conversations about careers creating a shared understanding of the career direction of their young people. Parents reported themselves to be more confident in helping their young people make good career choices.

### **Key learning points**

- Reflection and learning designed specifically for young people and their parents to work through together creates a shared understanding which, as already discussed in section 2, is essential for good career development.
- It has been designed for parents and young people to complete in their own time and at their own pace.

## **‘Help your child achieve their goals’, Adviza workshops, UK**

Adviza is a registered charity that offers careers guidance services to clients, particularly young people, to support their transitions to further learning and work. It arose out of the former Connexions Berkshire service. With CEC support, Adviza is currently delivering a set of three interactive workshops aimed at parents and their Year 10 children to support them with future options. Workshops are offered in the early evening and last 90 minutes. This first session is aimed at parents only, whilst at the second and third workshops students attend with their parents. All workshops comprise a mixture of presentations and interactive activities. Once parents and students have attended the workshops, students were offered a personal careers guidance interview. The aim of these sessions is to support dialogue between parents and the young people in their care. During the personal guidance interview, an action plan is collaboratively developed detailing the steps required for the young person to achieve their goal. It is hoped that schools will continue to see the benefits of these events and commission more workshops in the future.

### **Impact**

A formal evaluation of the workshops is underway, but some initial findings have been reported by the practitioners involved in the research. Whilst attendance at the workshops was lower than Adviza would have liked; all parents were fully engaged in the process and valued the personalised attention. Parents reported feeling more confident in advising their children on future options and felt more able to have a conversation. Careers practitioners delivering the personal guidance interviews said that the young people who had attended the workshop with their parents had progressed their thinking and were better prepared than those who had not.

### **Key learning points**

- Three workshops were considered too much of a commitment by parents, so the next phase of the project is reducing to two workshops.
- Interactive content of each workshop was liked by both parents and their children.
- Parents and the young people enjoyed working together and found the conversations useful.
- Parents valued the ‘time out’ to focus on the future.

## The Brilliant Club – The Scholars Programme, UK

The Brilliant Club is a charity connecting schools and universities. Their aim is to increase the number of young people from under-represented backgrounds (aged 10-18 years) from non-selective schools to progress to higher education. It offers activities that develop the career aspirations of academically able young learners, and some schools have adapted these activities to include parents and families of prospective students. The Brilliant Club is a structured programme of funded activities for young people, such as university visits, as well as offering workshops on study skills, a series of bespoke tutorials (e.g. supporting completion of a final assignment) and a certificate/awards ceremony as part of a university graduation trip. The Club emphasises the need for targeted provision, where the direct benefits for the young people concerned are readily identifiable.

One practitioner spoke of how the programme was adapted by schools to promote family involvement in the initial Club presentations and the recruitment of young people; and direct involvement in the university trips. One school augments engagement with 'cultural and arts' activities for the whole family, such as theatre trips, as a way of developing the social and cultural capital of the families. Practitioners have regular communication with the parents to offer support and develop trust. Parents are invited to the university ceremony and encouraged to get involved.

### Impact

In terms of qualitative impact, a practitioner using this programme reported much greater engagement in the school's curriculum by the learners and much higher levels of motivation for learning. Both learners and their parents could see the direct links between the programme's academic content, and possible career routes, such as those in science. Parents also developed a higher degree of trust in the careers staff in the school and in the information that they were using to explore wider career options. The practitioner observed how parents gained a shared sense of achievement offered by the programme (and so had 'grown' alongside their children). For learners, the impact has been significant as sense of efficacy, and motivation to apply to higher education had increased.

It was also suggested that the impact of the programme was felt by the school, but beyond school to the immediate community, as more parents were expressing high levels of interest in getting involved in future delivery of the programme. Due to its success, the programme is currently being expanded to involve Years 8, 9 and 10 learners, with cohorts of 30 at each level. However, this aspiration-raising initiative is quite resource-intensive, and there is a question about how sustainable such intensive support is without on-going funding.

### Key learning

- Communication with parents, or information about specific events, needs to be targeted carefully, so that it does not appear generic and simply part of an impersonal process.
- Programmes, and/or events, that offer direct benefits to young people, and which seem credible, can help to develop engagement and trust.
- Programmes that also seek to educate and support parents can help reinforce the development of the young people concerned.
- Parents from more deprived backgrounds can be mistrustful of information from schools, especially those that promote 'official' career routes to them and their children, especially where the options are beyond their perceived horizons for action.
- LMI knowledge about future opportunities in order to challenge ideas and dated information that some parents had about particular educational pathways was considered useful.

## Acronyms

CEC	Careers and Enterprise Company
CEG	careers education and guidance
CPD	continuing professional development
EYH	Explore Your Horizons
FE	further education
FGC	Family Group Conferences
HKJC	Hong Kong Jockey Club
IAEVG	International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
LMI	labour market information
SEN	special education needs
VET	vocational education and training

## Glossary

**Parents** includes parents, carers and guardians.

**Educational institutions** refers to schools and colleges for those aged 11 to 18 years, which are the focus of this study.

**Careers education and guidance (CEG)**, and the various others terms that refer to careers guidance, is used to label the services schools and colleges provide to support students (young people) with their education and learning decisions, together with mediation of an accurate understanding of the labour market, with the vocations available to them.

**Careers practitioner** refers to those in a role working in the field of careers education, information, advice and guidance to young people (as is the focus of this study). They could be a qualified careers guidance counsellor providing one-to-one interviews to students (e.g. supporting Gatsby Benchmark 8). Other names are used in the report, such as careers adviser, guidance counsellor, careers counsellor and school counsellor, denoting similar work to that of a careers practitioner in the UK context, but commonly referred to differently in the international context.

**Careers leaders** are responsible and accountable for the careers education, advice and guidance programmes in their school or college.

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Produced March 2020

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