

Involving parents and carers is key part of successful career guidance, new report reveals

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When it comes to helping the young people in their care succeed in the world of work parents have to become advisers, supporters, information

providers, advocates, role models, aspirants, and facilitators—but many don't feel confident in giving careers advice, a new study has found.

In this new report, "The role of [parents](#) and carers in providing careers guidance and how they can be better supported," Sally-Anne Barnes, Jenny Bimrose and Alan Brown, of the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick draw on national and international research literature, case studies, and interviews to make the case for strong relationships between schools and homes, and highlight practical ways parents and carers could get more involved.

According to the study, which was supported by the Gatsby Foundation and J.P. Morgan, where parents take an active role in careers guidance, [young people](#) are more likely to be confident about their career decisions and to feel a greater sense of control over their choices. Parental involvement is particularly important for young people with disabilities, those with special educational needs, and those from single-parent families.

The authors were surprised to find that despite this broad recognition of the importance of parental involvement, there is a lack of evidence on the best ways for schools and colleges to engage parents. They call for further evidence to be collected on what works, in order to inform a national strategy for engaging parents, with emphasis on allowing individual schools and colleges to tailor their approaches to reflect the needs of their communities.

Dr. Sally Anne Barnes, the study's lead author, said: "Evidence from the UK and internationally shows that by supporting parents and young people to have conversations about work and careers, schools and colleges help them to feel more confident in their career decisions.

"The current situation is showing the value of strong, ongoing

relationships between schools, colleges and parents. There is a real opportunity to build on this once the schools re-open and to get parents more involved in careers activities."

Among the report's suggestions for schools and colleges are:

- Create parent-friendly environments with activities to draw parents into the [school](#) or [college](#)
- Activities should have senior leadership and management support
- Careers activities should be promoted across the curriculum to encourage an ongoing conversation about careers that involves parents and builds on current parental engagement
- Parents should be involved in the design, development and delivery of careers-related activities and events, and encouraged to contribute their own experience and expertise
- Communication with parents should be targeted and personalised to help parents understand the relevance to their child
- Offer a flexible mix of face-to-face and online activities which makes it easier for parents to get involved.

Dr. Barnes added: "Since it is predicted that after the pandemic, we will see a significant rise in unemployment amongst young people, it will be more important than ever to ensure that young people receive the best possible careers support while they are in compulsory education.

"The case studies in our report show that trying out new activities, sharing practice, learning from each other and building on what works is really important. We also found evidence that careers conversations with parents and students needs to be embedded across the curricula and to start at a much earlier age."

The report was commissioned to increase understanding of how parents and carers can be better supported by schools and colleges to feel more

informed and confident when discussing careers options with the young people in their care and to recommend practical measures schools and colleges could adopt. The [case studies](#) presented in the report include national examples, as well as international examples from Australia, Canada, France, Hong Kong and the Netherlands.

Beth Jones, Programme Manager at the Gatsby Foundation, said: "At Gatsby we work hard to support schools and colleges to deliver the best possible career guidance, framed around the Gatsby Benchmarks, to their students. We have recognised the incredibly important role of parents, and this research will be shaping our growing programme of work over the next 18 months to explore and develop support for parents."

Jessica Ferguson, the lead for UK Career Readiness, Global Philanthropy, J.P. Morgan said "J.P. Morgan is committed to helping young people prepare for career pathways. Quality [career](#) guidance, from the right source and at the right time, is key. We welcome these insights into the important role parents and carers can play in assisting young people to access quality careers."

More information: The role of parents in providing careers guidance and how they can be better supported: [warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/rese ... areerguidanceparents](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/areerguidanceparents)

Provided by University of Warwick

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