

The 5% Club

21st Century Winners Briefing Paper



PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON CAREER CHOICES – THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING WITH PARENTS TO INFORM THEM ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS

Briefing purpose

To explain why it is important for employers to engage with parents in order to encourage young people to apply for apprenticeships, and recommend effective engagement activities.

Background

Parents are the most important influence on a young person's career choice. They influence both directly in terms of what advice they give and how they view different career choices, and also indirectly through the career and lifestyle choices they themselves have made and so expose their children to. Family context can influence teenagers' career choices. If they perceive parents to be happy and fulfilled with their jobs and lifestyle, they may opt for a similar route. However the opposite also holds if they feel that their parent has made the wrong career choice.

This briefing paper draws on research by all About School Leavers 2016 and 2017, GTI Media 2014 and 2015, The 5% Club member Redrow, EY, AAT, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), the Centre for Vocational Educational Research, and Education and Employers, to explore:

- The influence parents have on the career choices of their children;
- How engaged parents are in actively influencing their children;
- How informed the opinions of the parents are;
- Parental opinions and advice with regards to career choices.

It is important to note of course that parents are not a homogenous group; they differ widely in their own educational attainment, life experience, values and work ethic, and aspirations for their children.

Also the research by JRF found that the specific socioeconomic status of the parent did not show any statistically significant relationship with the level of aspiration of their child. In fact they found that there was a link between parents having clear ideas of what they wanted their children to do for an occupation and those families that lived in deprivation. The corollary is that parents who lived in less deprived areas were more likely to have a laissez-faire attitude to their children's aspirations. The study however did not cover affluent areas.

It is evident that to inform a child about apprenticeships, you must also inform the parent because their support (or not) will largely dictate whether a young person chooses the pathway. It is also clear that there is currently a lack of awareness amongst parents of the career pathways available for youngsters, and more needs to be done to provide them with information. In order to change perceptions of apprenticeships and tackle negative stereotypes it is essential to provide parents with far more information and aim to change their attitudes.

Parents Have The Most Influence Over Career Choices

Several pieces of research point to the fact that parents are the most important influence on the career choices a young person makes.

The **All About School Leavers Survey 2016** found that 56% of the students stated that parents had the most influence over their career choices, far higher than that of teachers at 16%. Only 8% said it was a careers adviser, behind their friends at 10%. This could be a reflection of the fact that their access to a career adviser is very limited; in many cases one interview during their time at school.

In the **GTI Media 2015** research paper **Parental Influence: the key role played by parents in their children's decisions about routes and pathways post-18** found that over half of parents (58% overall) were asked by their children for careers advice. Parents in the C2DE social grade were significantly less likely to get asked for advice than their ABC1 counterparts (53% v. 62%).

However all sample groups felt that they, as parents, had the biggest influence over their child's important education and career decisions. Parents who attended university were significantly more likely to feel this way (60% v. 53% overall). Parents in the C2DE social grade and parents who hadn't been to university were least likely to perceive themselves as key influencers.

The majority of parents (69% overall) felt confident giving their child careers advice and information. Parents in the C2DE social grade were significantly less likely to feel confident. The three groups most confident about giving their children advice and information were: those who had attended university, Scottish parents and parents from ABC1 social groups.

More than half the parents (64% overall) would feel more confident giving their child career advice if there was 'a dedicated website for parents, explaining the various study and employment choices available to them'.

This indicates that although parents are fully aware that they are the primary influencers of their children, and the majority feel confident in doing so, they would like to be better informed. Parents in the C2DE social grouping would particularly benefit from realising the level of influence they have over their child's career choices, and being provided with more information to enable them to confidently advise their child.

Parents Are Actively Engaged In Influencing Their Child's Career Choices

The research papers reviewed for this paper provided evidence that the majority of parents are actively engaged.

There are also reasons why parents are possibly exerting more influence than previously:

- The void left in schools careers provision by the removal of many careers specialists and the Connexions service
- The increasing costs of higher education and therefore the greater imperative parents have to ensure that their money is well spent
- The fact that, as each generation goes by, the proportion of parents who have been to university, and are therefore comfortable advising their children about it, grows – along with its flipside: the lack of awareness and knowledge of the alternatives to university.

The **All About School Leavers 2016** survey found that 78% of the students said that parents helped them most to make career decisions

In the 2014 research paper '**Parental influence in children's academic and employment choices**' written by GTI Media Research along with the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services and professional services firm EY, it was found that more than half (54%) of the students who took part said that their parents had actively tried to exert influence over their choice of course or career, while 69% said their parents had tried to influence their choice of university.

Students did not object to parents' attempts to influence them; 66% thought this was the right thing for parents to do, while only 7% thought it was wrong. More than 3,000 students took part in the survey, along with just over 800 parents.

The 2011 Joseph Rowntree Foundation research "**The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations**" – undertaken with 13 year olds and 15 year olds in 3 schools in deprived areas of London, Nottingham and Glasgow found that parents and families play a key role; there is clear alignment between what the parents say they want for the young people and what the young people then aspire to themselves. They found that families tended to support the young people well, with approximately 72% of young people saying that they talked to their parents about what they wanted to do when they were older.

Families were also a very important source of occupational ideas for young people. Many cited family members as giving them ideas for their preferred job, either there was someone in the family who already had that job or the idea for the job came from parents ("mum wants me to be one"; "my dad would like me to be a doctor").

Responding parents were found to be actively engaged and were very interested in the future of their children, with 74% describing themselves as thinking 'a lot' or 'somewhat' about what they wanted their child to do when they left school. An even greater number of parents (84%) described themselves as having talked 'a lot' or 'somewhat' with their child about what they wanted to do when older.

The 15-year-olds were asked whom they talked to most at home about what they might do when they left school. In Glasgow and Nottingham around 85% cited one or both of their parents but in London this fell to just over 60%. This could possibly be a consequence of the London families being largely from the immigrant population, and that the youngsters felt that parents would not be able to advise them about the UK system.

The research found that the career aspirations of the young people were broadly consistent with the desires of those they talked to about the future, and that the parents were actively engaged in helping their children, although to a lesser extent on London. The JRF report concludes that the hopes, and the advice, of the people approached by the students for advice really matters and influences their career choices.

Those choosing an apprenticeship have often been actively encouraged to do so, particularly if they are starting it at a younger age, according to a 2017 study for the **Centre for Vocational Educational Research - The Decision to Undertake an Apprenticeship**. The study used the results of a questionnaire distributed to all incoming apprentices at the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) at the University of Sheffield in September 2015.

The apprentices reported high levels of encouragement from their family. A majority (73%) report that they were encouraged to do an apprenticeship, with virtually no-one reporting being discouraged. This is the case whether the apprentice had parents in professional/managerial occupations or not. Very few of the AMRC apprentices did not have personal acquaintance with apprentices through either friends or families. Such legacy effects therefore seem to have a strong effect on the decision to participate in apprenticeships.

Over half of the apprentices (56%) were encouraged a lot by their parents to do an apprenticeship, with a further 17% encouraged a little. Only 3% of them were actively discouraged by their parents. There are large differences in parental encouragement by age group. The younger age group seem to be much more likely to be encouraged to do an apprenticeship by their parents, with 90% being encouraged, 73% encouraged a lot, and none discouraged at all. For those aged 19+, the parents seem much more likely to leave them to make their own decisions, with just over a half neither encouraged nor discouraged.

It is evident therefore that youngsters doing apprenticeships are usually actively encouraged to do so by parents who have personal knowledge or experience of apprenticeships.

Parents Are Not Well Informed About Career Choices

It is clear therefore that parents are the main influencers, and the majority are actively engaged in influencing their child's career choices, but unfortunately the evidence points to the fact that they are influencing without being adequately informed. This is particularly the case with regards to the alternatives to university, and which occupations have the best future employment opportunities.

A 2013 study undertaken with over 1,000 Netmums members by **AAT**, the UK's leading qualification and membership body for accounting staff, found 81% of parents are unaware that a Higher Apprenticeship is a university-level qualification. Parents also misjudged the financial benefits of these programmes. 73% underestimated the amount that a young person's lifetime earnings are boosted by doing a Higher Apprenticeship. A similar number (72%) believed the starting salary for a young person doing a Higher Apprenticeship at a top firm like KPMG to be significantly lower than the actual £20,000 figure. Nearly two thirds (63%) of the parents admitted they did not understand apprenticeships enough to explain them to their child.

The **All About School Leavers Survey** found that there is a high level of awareness amongst parents of apprenticeships as an option for school leavers, but not about the different levels available. In the 2016 survey parents were asked which of the options for young people when they leave school they had heard of, and 94% said College / FE, 93% Apprenticeships, 85% university and 73% were aware of going straight into work as an option.

However when asked about which **types** of apprenticeships they had heard of in the surveys in 2016 and 2017 it seems that parents are not fully informed. In both years the apprenticeship most known was the Higher Apprenticeship, and the least well known was the Degree Apprenticeship. 19% had heard of Advanced Apprenticeships in 2016, slipping down to 13% in 2017. Awareness of Degree Apprenticeships, though very low, had increased from 3% to 7%, and the awareness of Higher Apprenticeships had slipped significantly from 21% to 16% in 2017. Awareness of Intermediate was fairly stable at 15% and 16%.

Therefore it appears that the majority of parents are unaware that there are multiple levels of apprenticeships.

When students were asked in the survey how they currently find out about companies offering job opportunities for school/college leavers, e.g. apprenticeships, school leaver programmes and sponsored degrees, it was clear that despite parents being the strongest influence, they are not the main source of information for job opportunities. Only 24% cited parents, behind Google at 56%, Careers advice and jobs websites at 42%, subject teachers at 39%, and careers advisers and companies attending school / college both at 33%.

It is evident therefore that although parents are influential, the students know that their parents are not well informed.

In the 2017 survey parents were asked how they would prefer to find out more information about school and college leaver options, and interestingly most parents (48%) said they would like to find out from meetings with school teachers and careers advisers. This was followed by online resources at 45%, emails from school at 39% and open days / evening run by employers at 38%. Relatively few wanted print resources, at only 3%.

It appears therefore that parents value the information gleaned from schools or their own internet searches above targeted materials or employer specific information. This could be due to a desire to find objective guidance, or to be able to filter or compare different career options.

When parents were asked in the 2017 survey about which careers events they had attended, it was found that a large majority (64%) had not attended any. 18% had attended an "after school options" event at school. Very few had attended national or regional careers events.

It should be noted that relatively few schools provide events for parents to find out career options, and yet it would perhaps be the most effective way to transmit the information via the parent to the child, and ensure that the parent is adequately informed to advise their child.

The 2017 survey also found that the majority of those parents who went to a careers event said that they themselves wanted to find out more about their child's options and so demonstrated an active interest in improving their own knowledge, compared to 21% who thought it was best for their child to go, and 14% who said their child wanted to go. The parents also stated that the information they looked for at the careers event was university /sponsored degrees (56%) and school leaver / apprenticeships (50%) with only 22% seeking information about work opportunities.

Unfortunately 70% of the 36% who attended careers events said that none of them were useful, with only 14% stating the after school options event at school was useful. So it appears that careers events are not meeting the needs of parents in terms of equipping them with sufficient information to advise and guide their child, and this is particularly important with regards to apprenticeships because schools supply better guidance about the university route.

When the parents were asked which industries offered the most opportunities for school leavers, those named were actually sectors where many apprentices are employed: Engineering and Manufacturing (48%), Construction (43%) Health and Care (38%), Information and Communication Technology (37%), and Business and Law (34%).

Interestingly only 19% thought there were opportunities in the Science and Maths sector, and yet there are many employment opportunities. This lack of awareness and therefore lack of parental support could perhaps be a factor affecting the low uptake of maths and science at A level, particularly amongst girls.

This is echoed in the findings of the **Education and Employers Drawing the Future** research published in 2018. They were interested to find that maths and science were the most popular subjects amongst primary school children in the UK, yet is well documented that maths and science lose their attraction in secondary school. When the young people were asked about how they heard about the jobs they drew, the analysis found that parents along with other extended members of the family (siblings, grandparents etc.) were the most influential in defining children's career aspirations.

However they found that there is a major disconnect between aspirations of children and the predicted jobs of the future, and that the parental influence is therefore not helping to guide children to a successful career destination.

A survey of 1500 British parents released in 2017 by **EY** found that despite parents being the number one influencer on the career decisions their children make, 50% worry that their level of understanding of today's ever-changing career landscape could hinder their child's future.

EY found that 37% of the parents admitted they have reservations about discussing career options with their child, worrying they may give the wrong advice. Also 30% fear they don't know enough about the range of jobs that exist today; 29% feel they don't know enough about what their child wants to do; while 25% said they simply don't have the time to talk about career options with their child.

74% of the parents said they didn't receive the guidance they needed themselves to pursue their dream job so perhaps it's not surprising that many parents don't feel confident enough to discuss the full range of career options available. Almost two-thirds (65%) of parents said they didn't feel wholly informed about the alternatives to university for their child – be they apprenticeships, gap years, or starting a business.

The EY survey found that 95% of parents felt that more young people doing apprenticeships straight out of school is a good thing for the UK as a whole, and so it could be assumed that more parents would encourage their child to do an apprenticeship if they were better informed about them.

The **GTI Media 2015 paper: Choices after 18: university and the alternatives** found that university appears to be the default route for parents to suggest to their children, and also found that awareness of non-university routes is very low. Schools, too, promoted universities more than other routes. It is not surprising therefore that only 5% of the parents surveyed actively encouraged their children to choose a non-university route post-18.

All the parent sample groups had significantly more knowledge of university degrees (87% overall) than the other career routes available to their children, including 'school leaver programmes' where 28% said they had 'some knowledge'. Parents who went to university were, unsurprisingly, significantly more likely to know about university degrees.

Perceived awareness of non-university routes was low, with 1% of parents saying they knew 'a lot' about school leaver programmes, 6% about vocational FE courses and 9% about apprenticeships/higher apprenticeships. Regardless of the type of school children attended, parents received significantly more information on university degrees (59% overall believed they 'knew something') than the other career options available to their child/children. Parents whose children went to an independent school were significantly more likely to receive information about university degrees (83% v. 59%). When asked about the information and help they received about all the other routes to a job or career, fewer than 5% of parents said they received 'a lot'.

Just under half the parents said they did talk to their children about alternatives to university, so around the same number did not talk to their children about alternatives to university. Of these, 26% of parents didn't know enough about the alternatives to university and therefore didn't feel confident giving advice, and 20% of parents were convinced that university was the best choice and so didn't talk about alternatives.

Overall, only 5% of parents encouraged their children NOT to go to university. Parents were more likely to encourage their child to go to university as they thought it was in their child/children's best interest for their long-term career prospects (49%).

The top three reasons parents gave for encouraging their children to go to university were:

- I feel it's better for their long-term career prospects than going straight into work / an apprenticeship / school leaver programme
- They need a degree for the career they have chosen
- I want my children to have a more successful career and opportunities for progression than I had.

Parents would most expect to find information about the alternatives to university 'from teachers and careers advisers at their children's school/college' (57% overall), followed by 'careers events at school/college run by employers where I can meet trainees who chose not to go to university' and 'Google or other search engines'.

Half of parents overall said that the best way for them to find information about alternatives to university would be through a publication or a website. This was twice as popular an answer as 'from briefings/discussions with careers advisers/teachers at school'. This is very different from the findings of the All About School Leavers research, where parents expressed a preference for advice from school staff, and could perhaps be due to the fact that it covered parents of students from Year 9 to Year 13, and so covered post 16 options, whereas the GTI survey focused only on post 18 choices.

Only 7% said they didn't want or need any more information about alternatives to university. The university route was perceived by parents to be the most promoted route by schools with 37% of parents feeling that their child's school 'promotes the university route as the best route to take', with 67% of parents with children at independent schools and 63% with children at grammar schools feeling this to be the case.

In contrast, only 5% of parents believed their children's school promoted the work route as the best route to take. 25% of parents thought their children's school didn't promote one route over another.

Parental Opinions and Advice About Career Choices

The research papers reviewed indicated that many parents had a clear preference for their child to go to university. This was for myriad reasons; that they themselves had been to university, that they thought it would be the best way to access a professional occupation, that they did not know about the alternatives, or that they felt apprenticeships were only for roles in the trades. Previous briefing papers have also cited evidence of there being a stigma associated with apprenticeships.

According to the **EY August 2017** survey, university is still seen as the sole option for a significant percentage of parents, regardless of the future career their child had chosen. A quarter (25%) of parents admitted 'there was nothing to talk about' when it came to discussing career options with their child, as they were going to university after school - no question.

In **GTI Media 2014** survey it was found that only 27% of the students said their parents had discussed alternatives to university with them. This could be partly because of a lack of access to information about alternatives, because 76% of parents said they did not know where to find online information about alternatives to university.

70% of parents said they encouraged their children to go to university and of those, 43% felt a degree would improve their children's long-term career prospects more than an apprenticeship, school leaver programme or joining the job market after college or the sixth form.

In the **All About School Leavers Survey 2016**, 26% of the parents said they strongly or tend to agree that their child is too smart to do an apprenticeship, with 58% saying they strongly or tend to disagree. It is likely therefore that there is a perception that apprenticeships are more about gaining skills than using intellect, because 85% said they strongly or tend to agree that an apprenticeship would be a great opportunity for their child to learn valuable new skills. Also 89% stated that they strongly or tend to agree that apprenticeships are a good alternative for school leavers looking for a new challenge

Many parents are also likely to have a limited or out of date understanding of the apprentice job roles currently available.

Redrow's survey of 1,000 parents of school age children revealed that 33% of parents believe a career in construction mostly involves manual labour and more than a quarter (28%) of parents believe a career in construction mostly involves being on a building site. The result is that more than 72% of parents have never discussed the prospect of a career in construction with their child. More parents have discussed the prospect of their child undertaking an apprenticeship (65%); however this means that approximately a third of parents are not speaking to their child about this option.

In the **Investors in People Apprenticeship Perception poll 2017** 52% of parents surveyed described their understanding of an apprenticeship as predominantly being a career route for people who want to work in the trades.

The **Partnership for young London** research found that families are a source of direct pressure to go to university, with cultural and racial identity and attitudes towards education being significant.

The JRF research found there was a clear preference (89 per cent) across all the parents for their children to find work in the managerial, professional, and technical professional occupations. A much smaller number of parents suggested their children should work in the trades or in personal service occupations, although a proportion of parents (73 per cent) 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they would be happy with their child working a trade or doing an apprenticeship. Therefore there is some evidence that an apprenticeship that leads to an aspirational career with managerial or professional status would be seen as an attractive option for parents, rather than an association with a blue collar trade role.

Parents had fairly high educational aspirations for their children, generally higher than their own education level. Three quarters (77 per cent) of parents expected their children to go to college or university, but only 30 per cent of parents themselves had actually gone to college, university or had a professional qualification. Seventy-eight per cent of parents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that it was important that their child got better qualifications than they had themselves.

An important finding in the JRF research was that parents appeared to be unhappy with the idea of their children entering the workforce at 16, with 63 per cent 'disagreeing' or 'strongly disagreeing' that they would be happy if their child left school at 16 in order to start work.

It may be therefore that the negative sentiment surrounding apprenticeships could be largely driven by attitudes to Intermediate Apprenticeships and the requirement to leave full time education at 16. It is important to note that many parents may aspire to their child completing their 6th Form or college education.

When asked what their parents hoped they would do in the future, for the young people in the JRF survey in Nottingham the most common answer was that parents did not mind what job they did in the future as long as it made them happy. Just under 30% stated that their parents wanted them to have a specific job or go to university. In terms of named jobs, around a third were for trades (for example, joiner, mechanic or electrician) although accountants, lawyers and scientists also featured.

Around 45% of the young people in London who gave a reply were able to name a specific job or occupation that the person whom they talked to about their future wanted them to do. Of the remainder, 15% said their parents hoped they would get an unspecified 'good job', with only half of that percentage reporting that they hoped for their happiness. Of those who named a specific occupation, the majority identified law and medicine, with only one naming a trade.

The results for Glasgow were more evenly balanced than elsewhere: while a desire for happiness was the most common answer (33%), a specific job or occupation featured in the same proportion of answers and the range of jobs was wider than in London. Another quarter of replies concerned hopes for an unspecified 'good job'.

The **AAT** research with Netmums revealed common and old-fashioned misconceptions about apprenticeships, including that they are geared more towards boys rather than girls (48%) and are for less academically able young people (32%).

When asked what the most important factors to young people securing employment were, parents rated good GCSE and A-Level exam results (56%) first, with experience of a workplace environment (54%) as second. However, a Higher Apprenticeship - which provides workplace experience and a professional qualification - was ranked a lowly eighth out of nine options, lagging behind extracurricular activities such as music lessons or volunteering (25%) and holiday jobs (28%). Having a 'foot in the door' through existing industry contacts was rated more highly than a university degree (35% compared to 30%). It was evident that the parents surveyed did not know what apprenticeships involved and how highly valued they are by employers.

Based on these findings, AAT called for the re-education of parents so routes into careers other than academic qualifications and university degrees, including Higher Apprenticeships, are recognised and promoted as a viable first choice for young people.

Jane Scott Paul OBE, Chief Executive of AAT commented: *"Half of parents think they are well informed about the various options out there for their children, but our research clearly suggests otherwise. Apprenticeships are being overlooked because parents' knowledge is incomplete and based on archaic stereotypes. While parents recognise the imperative value of workplace experience, they don't know that Higher Apprenticeships are a high-quality route to getting that vital experience. Alternative options for young people will only become sought after when we change perceptions and this starts with the parents."*

The research discovered that some parents are completely misinformed about the modern-day

apprenticeship; 42% of parents still perhaps mistakenly believe that a university degree is viewed as the most employable qualification by all employers, and over half (52%) admitted they were surprised about employers positive response to Higher Apprenticeships.

Parents were also surprised about the range of apprenticeships available. For example, 90% of parents were aware that construction firms offered apprenticeships, but only 36% surveyed knew that MP's offices also employ apprentices.

When comparing the current picture with the aims outlined by the Government the research found that, in fact, a third of parents still do not believe that the apprenticeship route will become as normal for young people as going to university (33%). However, over three quarters of parents would be supportive if their child chose this route (76%).

Summary

The results of the surveys reviewed for this paper provide firm evidence that parents are the most important influence on a young person's career choice, and the majority are actively engaged in supporting, advising and guiding their child. However the research gives a clear indication that parents are not well informed with regards to all the options available for their child, and information provided by schools is heavily weighted towards continuing with full time education. There is therefore very little awareness of the different levels of apprenticeship, the variety of apprentice roles, the remuneration, and what an apprenticeship involves with regards to the combination of work based skills and classroom based knowledge, unless the parent has personal experience of an apprenticeship or knows someone who has been an apprentice.

There was evidence that the majority of parents have high aspirations for their child in terms of personal happiness and career success, and the results pointed to the fact that many parents assume that university is generally the best route to achieve a good employment outcome. However, it is important to note that high aspirations amongst many parents and children of a lower socioeconomic status may never be reached, not through a lack of desire, but because they do not know what it takes to succeed in an aspirational occupation in terms of appropriate subject choices, grades required, skills, work ethic, and the need for a degree, or an Advanced or Higher Apprenticeship.

It is not enough for young people and the parents just to aspire; they also need to be able to navigate the paths to their goals, and to find out what employers want, and many do not know how to.

There was little awareness that employers value apprenticeships highly, and in some cases, they are preferred to a degree level qualification.

What's clear from the research is the need for all parties (schools, employers and universities) to respond to the growing influence of parents, especially parents who haven't been to university themselves and/or come from less advantaged backgrounds.

Employers, especially those with higher apprenticeship or school leaver programmes, need to raise the awareness of the alternatives to university with parents as well as students. Careers teachers and advisers at school need to be aware of the influence of parents and the need to involve them, educate them and value their input in the complex business of choosing the right routes post-18 for their children.

Employers and schools must work together to ensure parents are well informed.

Recommendations

The following actions could be implemented to ensure parents are better informed and have a positive opinion about apprenticeships, and are aware that employers value apprentices so highly:

1. Schools should ensure that careers events are open to parents, and redesign their events to ensure parents are engaged and that their information requirements are met. Such careers advice should aim to explain the pathways for all post-school options, and not focus solely on further education, to enable each child to have the maximum choice. Employers should be invited to participate to engage with parents. Schools should also provide follow-up briefings to parents after they have taken students on careers related school trips to university and employer locations.
2. Employers should support schools as much as possible by sending staff, particularly apprentices and ex-apprentices to careers events and parents' evenings, and other times during the school calendar, to share their personal stories and to provide up to date information about apprenticeships. Young people make career choices based on people they meet or see in the media "if you can see it you can be it" and many occupations are often unheard of and unimagined. Therefore it is essential that employers of roles that are not widely known encourage their employees to engage with schools.
3. Employers and industry bodies could make social media and video content aimed specifically at parents, that explains the level of apprenticeships, the remuneration, the type of job roles they offer, how the young person combines on the job training with classroom based learning, and the progression opportunities available. This could be promoted to schools within an information package at careers events, as well as promoted directly on the employer's own media channels.
4. Employer open days should be designed to include parents and provide answers to the questions they are most concerned about, and ideally run during the evening or at weekends. They would perhaps be most successful if promoted to parents in conjunction with schools or posted in social media. Gaia Innovation have found that this ability to see "behind-the-scenes" and meet the staff of the business location and see the facilities of the training academy where their child would be an apprentice is particularly beneficial to reassure parents of 16 year olds applying for intermediate apprenticeships, especially parents of girls.
5. An online single point of contact for careers advice that covers both further education and apprenticeships would be extremely useful for parents, because they need to be able to compare and contrast information across the two pathways. The information should cover not only the types of qualification, but also the location where they could be pursued i.e. school, college, learning provider, university or employer. This will become even more useful with the introduction of a third career pathway in the form of T Levels.
6. Schools and employers need to work together to explain to young people and their parents what they specifically need to do in the current year to improve their chances of getting to university or securing an apprenticeship. The full range of future possibilities for educational outcomes and jobs is often poorly understood particularly when there is little experience in families of higher education and professional jobs. This means that parents need informed and detailed advice to assist them to encourage their child to take the pathways today that are likely to lead to the longer-term ambitions. One clear example is the need to avoid limitations caused by taking too few GCSE qualifications or not achieving high enough grades to gain access to university or apprenticeships. It is also important for them to be aware of the subjects that are preferred for the jobs of the future such as English, maths, science, computing, and creative subjects such as art and design technology which in turn will limit the horizons of possibility. Careers events should therefore be integrated into the activities with parents during all secondary school years, and not left until the key exam years.
7. It is recommended that employers need to strongly promote in their engagement with parents that an apprenticeship is a recognised and often preferred route to a successful career in the roles that the parents aspire to for their child such as a management, professional or senior technical occupation.

8. Employers should be mindful that many parents aspire to their child completing a 6th form or college education, and should be aware that this is why many are opposed to Intermediate Apprenticeships if their child could secure a place in further education. It is recommended therefore that employers should consider offering more Advanced, Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, and only employing youngsters as Intermediate Apprenticeships who do not have the qualifications required to stay on in further education or who have a very strong desire to leave full time education.

9. It should be noted that due to the fact that 15% of the English population and 25% of the Scottish population have very low literacy levels, and some parents do not have English as the first language, efforts must be made by employers and schools to engage with parents in person or through short films, and use easy to understand language in written materials.

28 February 2018