

The Benefits of a Careers Interview

Undertaken by a qualified practitioner, a careers interview can be for your son or daughter an enjoyable and very positive experience. Careers Advisers (CAs) are skilled interviewers, conversant with the world of opportunity, and recognise that most young people need help to make important decisions.

A careers interview has the potential to:

- reduce anxiety about the future
- encourage constructive steps towards decision-making
- illustrate the most effective ways of exploring career ideas
- highlight any targets that have to be met
- show how to be realistic as well as optimistic.

What is said at a careers interview is confidential, so any concerns should be freely aired. However, many young people are just uncertain about the future in general, so this can be a good place for the discussion to begin. CAs often appreciate some information in advance, though, especially on such things as:

- health issues
- emotional or behavioural problems
- recent academic performance
- work experience undertaken.

This will help identify any factors likely to affect career choice, or to ensure necessary support. In turn, you and your son/daughter need to know in advance whether:

- he/she prefers to undertake the interview alone or accompanied
- you can rely on the CA to produce an action plan, or to take notes
- there will be any opportunity for a follow-up meeting.

Don't worry if your son or daughter has no particular career in mind. The CA can easily explore broad possibilities, probably initially through their academic subject preferences, or any work-related experience they've had. As a parent, part of your role can be offering information they themselves may have forgotten or considered

unimportant.

You may sometimes have to hold back to let your son/daughter have their say. However, the CA won't be impatient, and will expect a degree of hesitation. In any case, you'll certainly be encouraged to contribute to the discussion, and invited to 'chip in' at any point when progress seems slow.

After a time, your son/daughter may appear keen to explore one or more of the jobs or career areas touched on. If so, no major decision should be made before they've done this, and the CA may set 'homework' by recommending one or more of the following:

- exploring a particular careers-related website
- attending a specific event (like a college open day)
- arranging work experience in a suitable organisation
- consulting a teacher about improving an important subject
- becoming familiar with the structure of Apprenticeships or higher education.

No good CA will discourage ambition, but may emphasise the need for high grades or particular personal qualities, and help assess the likelihood of acquiring these. Sometimes, a young person will have nurtured the idea of a career beyond their abilities. If so, a CA can sensitively help them to recognise this, and in time to replace it by one within their grasp. For some, this will only mean employment at a lower level but within the same field (for instance, as a support worker rather than full professional); for others, it may require a complete re-think.

The age or stage at which your son/daughter has an interview may affect the urgency of follow-up. A good CA will communicate the value of a timetable to allow adequate preparation before key decisions are made. A discussion before Year 11 is often therefore advisable, but if a young person is already committed to further study (e.g. for A levels or even a degree), this may be less true.

It's essential to recognise from the outset that a CA is there to HELP your son or daughter reach important decisions, NOT to make these for them.