

# Essential Guide to...contacting employers

## A guide for North East school Careers Leaders to help them build up employer contacts

	Action	Why?	What does the LEP suggest?	Done
1	Decide on how you want to record all relevant employer details	You need a go-to place for all your employer contacts, not just to make life easy for you but also to pass on to others in the school should they need it	Use a bespoke spreadsheet and think about who else needs access and can it be used if you were unavailable. There are also commercial careers programs you can use to maintain a database	
2	Consider how broad to make your directory: is it just employers or more of a provider directory?	By making it a provider directory you can also include your many other partners such as colleges, universities, training providers and any other local/regional organisations you work with	A provider directory is more comprehensive and shows the full range of partners your school works with. If you have upgraded to <a href="#">Compass+</a> you may have seen the 'Careers Partners' database which you can populate and then link all careers activity to individual pupils	
3	Consider carefully who you want to contact and why	Try to avoid random calls simply asking employers to work with you. What is the purpose for their involvement?	Reasons could be to improve knowledge of local employers, to increase apprenticeship uptake amongst students, to give SEND students experience of meeting employers or perhaps raising awareness of regional growth sectors	
4	Start with people you know: family, friends, ex-colleagues	You often forget the people you are in regular contact with who are easy to contact and may be happy to become involved	Still approach with caution – just because you have a personal connection with someone doesn't mean they can communicate well with students or would want to	
5	Then consider your wider network: school colleagues and their own contacts, school contractors, parents and governors	The most effective relationships are likely to be local ones – people who have a vested interest in the area, understand the local labour market and are willing to engage in a longer term relationship with the school	Ask your colleagues in school informally through conversation or formally through CPD, talk to the school business manager about contractors, use parents' evenings and newsletters to reach out to parents and talk to your link governor about accessing support from the governing body	
6	Maintain contact with your ex-students and build up an alumni database	School leavers can be the most effective role models for your current students because they have been through the system	Don't just think about those who have left in the last 2-3 years, or just university graduates, think about a range of alumni across the ages. <a href="#">Future First</a> is a commercial service that can support you in this	
7	Ensure you are linked up with an Enterprise Adviser	The <a href="#">EAN</a> is a national network of employers in a senior position who can support a school in a number of ways	The LEP can work with you to match you with an employer and ensure there is mutual benefit to the relationship. The LEP can also support with access to other employers eg, for careers fairs	
8	Register with online volunteer databases of employers	Thousands of inspirational role model speakers are now available from around the country and can be booked in advance to talk to your students	Four prominent online organisations you can register with are <a href="#">Inspiring the Future</a> , <a href="#">Founders4schools</a> , <a href="#">Speakers for Schools</a> and <a href="#">WISE</a>	



9	Consider local business organisations you can link with (some may have membership fees)	Local organisations will vary depending on where you live but they are well worth investigating – you could always ask local businesses who they connect with on a wider scale	Some examples could be local business or retail parks, chambers of commerce, local authority business networks and <a href="#">rotary clubs</a>
10	Register with regional and local business bulletins	A daily or weekly digest of business activity in your area could reveal a wide range of potential employer partners covering all sectors over time	In the North East there are two popular daily e-bulletins: <a href="#">Bdaily</a> and <a href="#">Business Live</a> . But keep an eye out for things in your own local papers which often have a business section
11	Think about other organisations who can help, not just employers	There may be voluntary, charitable and community organisations who can be equally supportive of schools as 'traditional' employers	Many towns and cities have volunteer centres who might be able to advise on how their members can support schools. Or try your local library?
12	Contact your local public services organisations eg, local government, Civil Service and health services	Many public sector services are keen to work with schools both to engage with their citizens and promote the wide range of career opportunities available in the sector	Find out the public sector services available within your local labour market area and see if they are able to engage with you eg, local councils, HMRC, DWP, NHS, armed forces and other uniformed services (police, prison and fire & rescue)
13	Try cold-calling	Using an online search engine to find employers in your area can lead to highly successful interactions with employers. Remember to target your cold calls though (see point 3)	You can also try yell.com, the online Yellow Pages. This can help you narrow down your search to specific sectors and/or companies so that you can target your calls
14	Using social media to spread the word	Many employers, employees and the self-employed engage in social media for business use. Schools can utilise the same means to reach out to potential volunteers	Set up high-quality social media accounts on <a href="#">LinkedIn</a> , <a href="#">Twitter</a> and <a href="#">Facebook</a> which are regularly maintained and focus on the quality of followers rather than the quantity
15	Read a much more in-depth approach to contacting employers with a ready-made toolkit	This current document is a brief 'essential guide' only - looking through this co-produced <a href="#">CEC publication</a> will give you some practical tips on how you can keep track of all your employer work	Check out section 3 of this publication which provides templates such as a sample letter, project plan format and tracker. Bear in mind useful tips like giving employers plenty of time before booking them in and creating a calendar of events
16	Remember to 'make it meaningful!'	You want to ensure that your provider engagement is meaningful for your students and that there is a high quality level of interaction	Have a look through the CEC's ' <a href="#">Make it meaningful checklist</a> ' to ensure that what you do with employers and partners once you have contacted them adds value to your careers programme
17	Aim to develop a long term relationship with your employers	So that you both understand each other's culture and needs and can do much more than one-off events together	Attendance at a careers fair could expand to project-based learning in lessons, staff CPD, mentoring and meaningful <a href="#">work experience</a>
18	A final thought...	You don't want to forget who all this is for; your students	So why not ask them who they would like to see in school and what areas of work they would like to find out more about?