

**The  
Careers  
People.**

**What if they're  
the first?**



# Speaker Intro

## **Jessica Pieri**

- Careers Advisor and Company Founder
- Live in London
- First in Family!
- Passionate about supporting young people



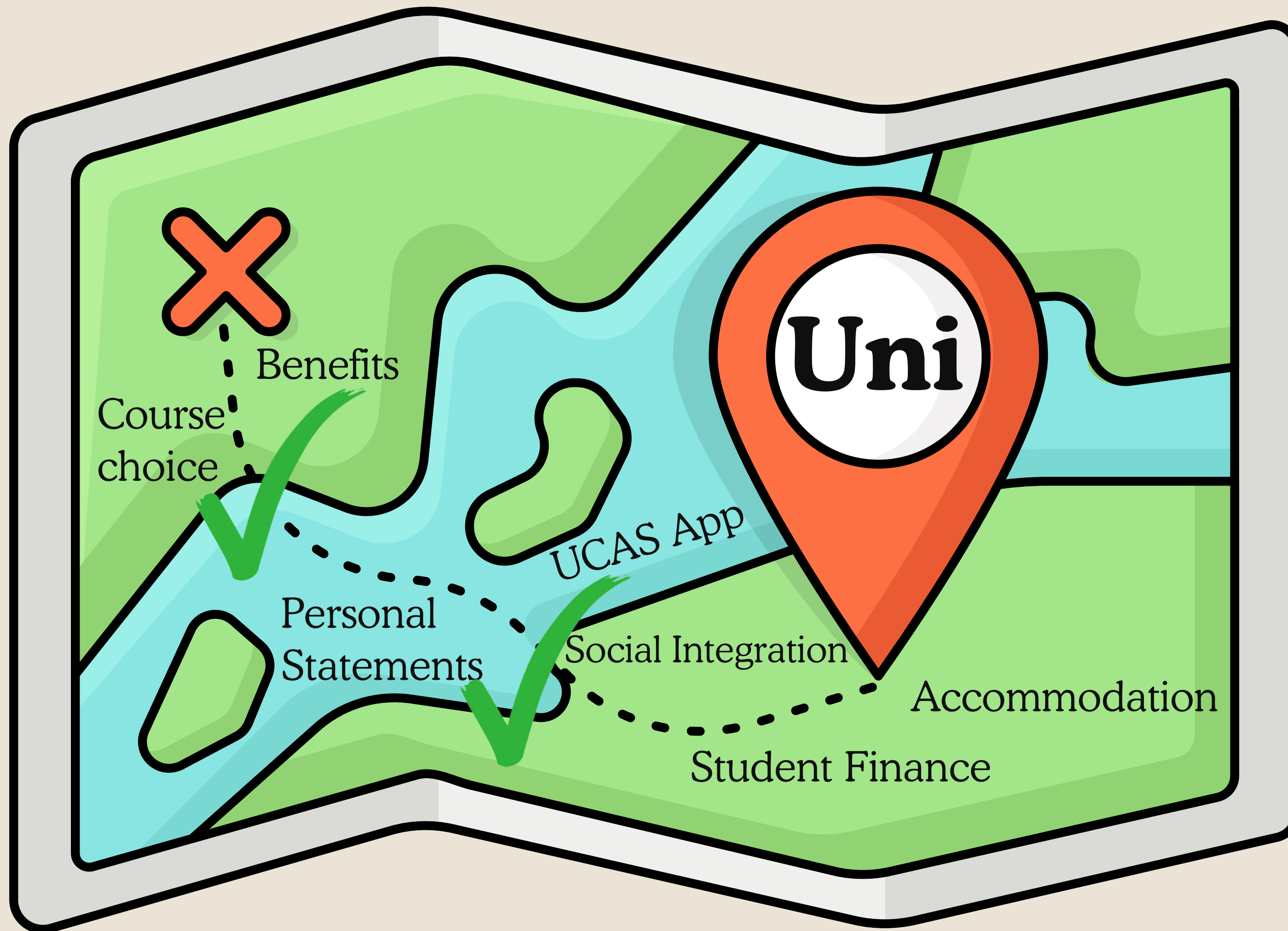




# Session Intro

Imagine being the first in your family to take the bold step towards university. It's a journey filled with excitement, uncertainty, and untapped potential - but also a journey without a map.

For many young people, the barriers to higher education aren't just academic or financial; they're personal. Without the guidance of family members who've been through it, the path can feel daunting.



# Challenges students are facing

Fear of the unknown

More options than  
ever before

Presumptive Sixth Forms

One size fits all support

Lack of family understanding (and  
sometimes, family support)

Mental health

Lack of understanding

“Student loans are haram”

Rising cost of living

Feeling that they  
don't belong or it's  
not “for them”

**So...  
What should we do?!?!?**



# **What is stated in the Gatsby Benchmarks?**

## **BM7: Encounters with HE**

- By the age of 16, every pupil should have had a meaningful encounter\* with providers of the full range of learning opportunities, including sixth forms, colleges, universities and apprenticeship providers. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and pupils.
- By the age of 18, all pupils who are considering applying for university should have had at least two visits to universities to meet staff and pupils.

\* A 'meaningful' encounter is one in which the student has an opportunity to explore what it's like to learn in that environment.

# **What is stated in the OTHER Gatsby Benchmarks?**

## **BM3: Meeting the Needs of all Pupils**

- A school's careers programme should actively seek to challenge misconceptions and stereotypical thinking, showcase a diverse range of role models and raise aspirations.

## **BM8: Personal Guidance**

- Every pupil should have at least one personal guidance meeting, with a careers adviser by the age of 16, and a further meeting by the age of 18. Meetings should be scheduled in the careers programme to meet the needs of pupils.



# Making it progressive

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Year	All students	First in Family
7	What is university	Also offer to Parents and Carers
8	What are the benefits of higher education	Follow up group guidance meetings
9	What do universities look for	Suggestion Card from teachers telling them the qualities and skills THEY have that universities would admire
10	Design your own university	Follow up group session to discuss what they felt was important and why – this can be picked up on in Year 11 one to ones
11	How do GCSEs impact university	Provide UCAS first in family guide as part of one to one guidance meeting

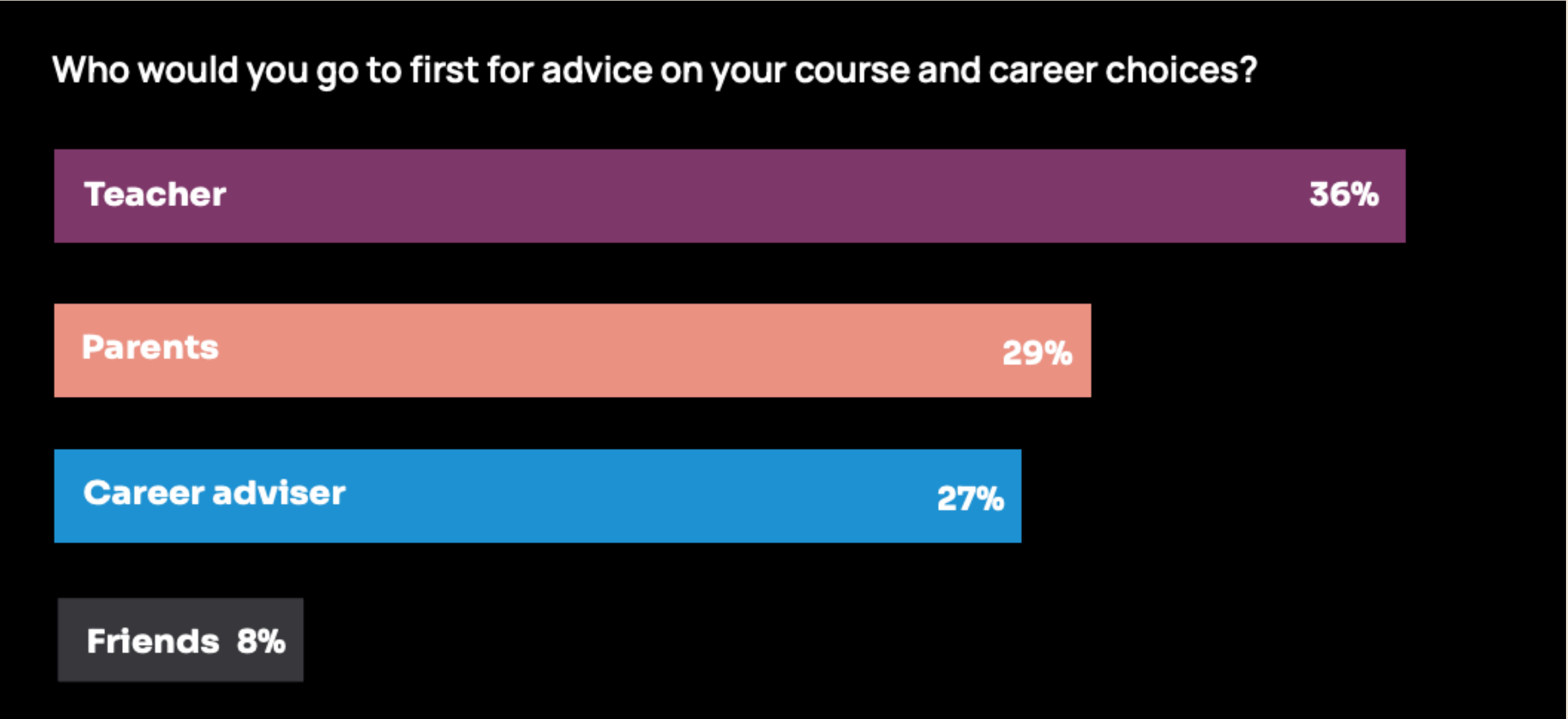
# Making it progressive

Year	All students	First in Family
12	Skills needed for university	<p>Alumni mentor (ideally who is also first in family and has a similar profile in terms of subject, family background, ethnicity, culture, religion etc)</p> <p>Futures Evening for all parents, including a "benefits of HE" session for parents and carers of first in family students. Ensure this is accessible and meets the needs of parents attending (think about languages, level of understanding and cultural barriers)</p>
13	University vs Degree Apprenticeships	<p>As part of one to one guidance, complete a full recap of information from what is uni to date. Ensure students know that no question is off limits and they can ask anything they need to. Offer parent meetings if required.</p>

Continuing to increase awareness of our role in and out of education settings.



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Maria had always dreamed of going to university, but being the first in her family to consider it, she didn't know where to start. Her school wasn't particularly helpful, and the teachers didn't give her much guidance beyond the basics of applying. Everyone in her year group attended the same sessions.

She'd often hear classmates talk about university open days or guidance from their parents, but Maria's family had no experience to offer. Her parents were proud but anxious about the costs and unsure of how student loans worked.

Maria didn't fully understand the benefits of higher education, and without help, she felt overwhelmed by the complex application process. No one explained scholarships or student finance options to her, so she struggled to see how she would afford university.

She submitted her application but she was exhausted and uncertain of her future. Without support from her school or local universities, she felt as though she was navigating the process alone.



Maria was the first in her family to think about going to university. Her school did a survey to find out which students were first in family. All students were signed up to an outreach program dedicated to supporting first-generation students, and Maria was given a one to one meeting to introduce her to the available resources.

Her school arranged for her and her family to attend a local university fair where they all learnt about different courses, student loans, and scholarships.

The university staff offered mentoring sessions and explained the benefits of higher education to her parents, who had doubts about the costs and whether Maria would succeed. They also invited Maria to visit their university campus, where Maria could see the facilities, speak with students, and get a feel for the environment.

With his mentor's help, Maria refined her application, and she was granted a scholarship that covered most of her tuition. Thanks to the support from his school and the local universities, Maria felt confident and excited about her future.

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## **Knowledge**

Students need to be given the knowledge they need to make informed choices around benefits of HE, Courses, UCAS, Personal Statements, Student Finance, Uni Transition and Accommodation.



## **Experience**

Students should be provided with experiences that enrich their understanding. This can be through outreach programmes, virtual events and in person visits. Summer schools are my favourite!



## **Guidance**

Students should be given guidance from a professional Careers Advisor to help them understand what they have learnt and apply it to themselves. They need to consider how HE would impact THEIR life.



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# What would I do?

- 1 Create a “standard” set of resources for schools outreach.
- 2 Adapt the programme for each student group; First in Family, SEND, EAL, Care Leavers etc.
- 3 Provide the inputs in a range of formats throughout the time the student is with you so they have support at a time that suits them. Make it personalised and relevant to them.
- 4 Provide a parents/carers guide for each topic your input focuses on.

**“Fair isn’t everybody getting the same thing. Fair is everybody getting what they need in order to be successful.”**

If you were to consider this quote for each element of your careers programme, how would it look different?

# Reviewing your Outreach

Here are some questions to ask yourself when considering if your careers programme is student centered, inclusive and holistic...

- Are our careers resources and guidance accessible, inclusive, and culturally relevant for students from all backgrounds, including those who are first in their family to attend university?
- Do we actively identify and support students who are potential first-generation university applicants, and tailor our interventions to address their specific barriers and concerns?
- Are we engaging parents/carers of first-generation students effectively, helping them understand post-18 pathways and how they can support their child's aspirations?
- How well do our partnerships with universities, employers, and alumni include role models who reflect the lived experiences of first-generation students?
- Do our progression data and destination tracking show equitable access to higher education opportunities for all groups, particularly those without family university experience?
- Are students equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate complex university processes, such as UCAS, student finance, and university culture?



## **This is our first year sponsoring the CDI Careers Leader Conference.**

We hope you love your "Follow your Heart" goody!

You can use your heart to to destress during work experience season (if you know, you know!), hand it to students to use as a fidget toy during guidance sessions or as a tool in guidance meetings.



We plan to create a video showcasing the creative ways it can be used as a tool alongside worksheets you can use in guidance sessions. Please scan the QR code to sign up to our Careers Professional newsletter. We will share the link there.



**We also have a free, online platform for Careers Professionals to share, collaborate and develop.**

The platform includes a file share, discussion circles, weekly virtual coffees as well as training and community events.



Please scan the QR code to join the online platform. It's completely free for everyone.

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# Contact



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