



# PROJECT NEXT GENERATION

**BUILDING CONNECTIONS REPORT 2024**

**UCAS**



## INTRODUCTION

Welcome back once again to Project Next Generation. In this, the fourth follow up to our Themes Report, we're looking at Building Connections – how colleges, universities, apprenticeship providers, and employers can best communicate and provide for young people.

With a wider array of post-secondary opportunities than ever, young people have more choice and control than ever. But that also means a greater burden of research, understanding, processing, and decision-making. Without guidance, they're likely to miss out on possibilities they didn't know existed.

From alternative routes which lead to careers traditionally only accessible via degrees, to new and exciting qualifications which are more suited to those seeking to learn while they work – today's young people need your help to make sense of this growth of opportunity.

In this report we're going to look at how they're influenced, which channels they use, and the role that parents and teachers play. With the insight from Project Next Generation, we want to help you build better connections so that they can make better decisions.

**The findings of this report, which took place with more than 1,000 participants aged 13 - 17, will help universities, colleges, and employers to inspire, educate, upskill, and improve the decision making of young people across the UK.**

**Jo Richards**

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# | CHAPTER ONE: INFLUENCE

## WHAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE AND WHEN.

### The rise and fall of influences over time.

Different resources, for different answers, at different times.

Irrespective of their age, young people are motivated by both their internal drivers and their external situations. Their subject choices are driven by their personal enjoyment, academic strengths, and their need for a future career. Those are universal.

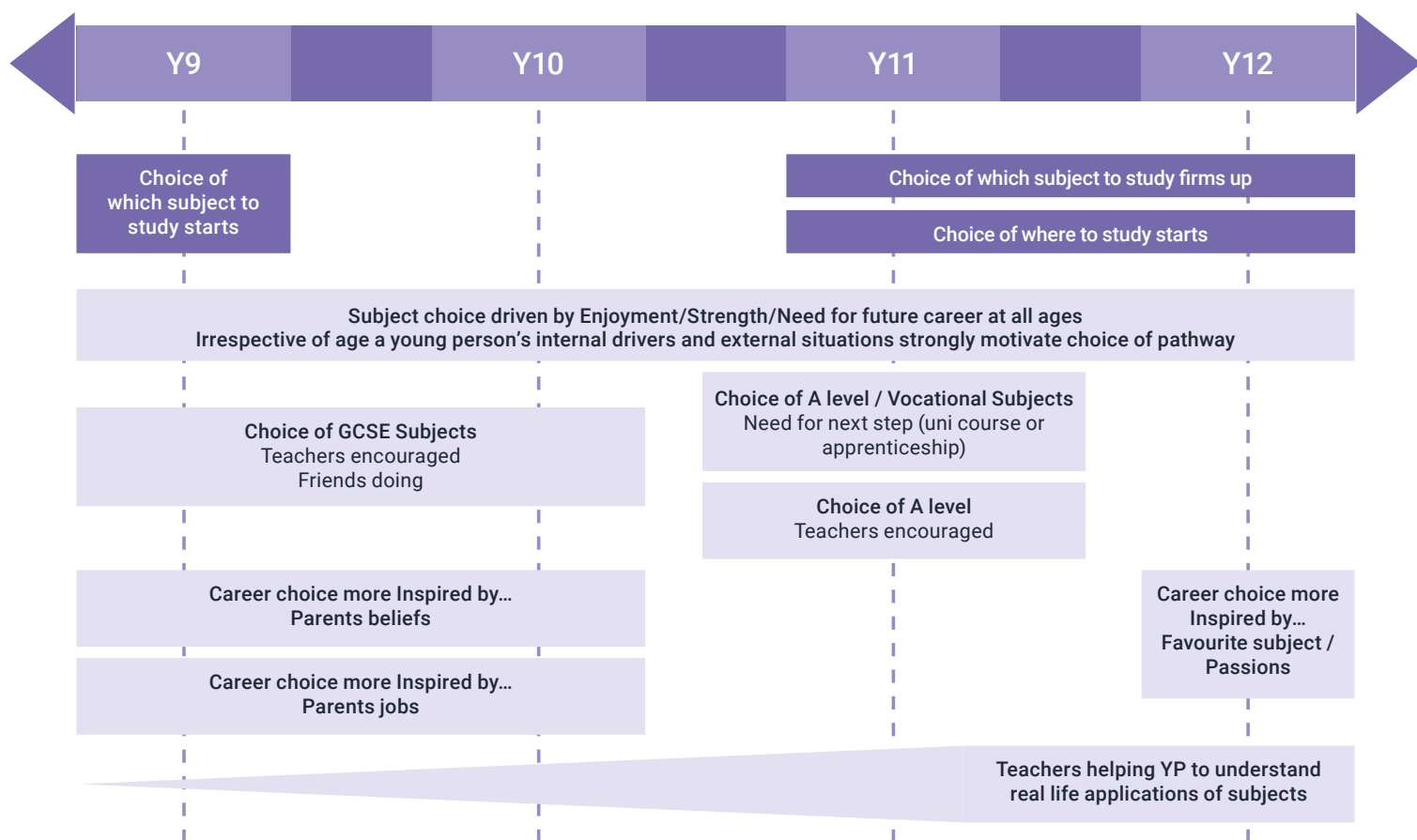
The interesting and important differences come, however, when we look at what changes by year group.

In Y9 when young people are choosing their GCSE subjects (which will inevitably and ultimately define their eventual career), it's teacher encouragement and peer activity. Beyond the subject, when they're thinking about those eventual careers, Y9s are most inspired by their parents' jobs and as they move towards Y10, by their parents' beliefs.

In Y11, when young people are choosing from their post-16 options, decisions become more practical. The 'need' for a next step appears, where they must fulfil X to meet Y – like choosing A Level subjects that will enable certain degrees. At this stage, parental influence drops and teachers become the primary influencers.

And in Y12, teachers hold more sway than ever before – as they help young people to understand the real-life applications of their subjects. This is perhaps the most important stage of choice for young people, their 'final' chance to feasibly shape their post-18 options without retraining in later life.

## University decision making



Genuine consideration of careers (and the pathways that lead toward them) starts for most from 15 - 16 years old (Y10/Y11). Much of this is done independently, via self-guided research, but influence from other people still plays a big role:



### ONLINE

- Who offers which courses
- What jobs are available in which sectors
- Which subjects are the best for certain careers
- Hints and tips for interview preparation
- Using Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube to gauge how each pathway feels.



### IN-PERSON

- Attending careers fairs to gather information on apprentices, universities, and employers
- Visiting colleges on open days



### PERSONAL

- Asking school staff for advice, especially SEN teams
- **Parents are a key, and highly trusted, source of information at this age**

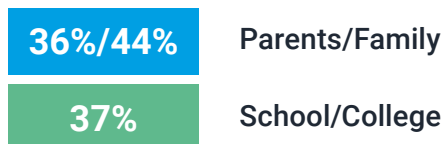
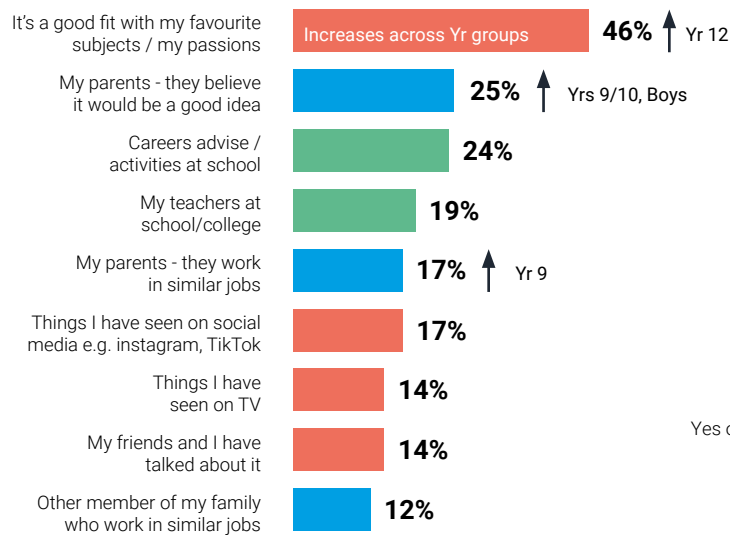
*"I began researching universities and grades to get in. I narrowed it down to courses that I think I would actually benefit from and take interest in. I have found books and leaflets on career opportunities extremely helpful" (F 15)*

*"I think it would be a good idea to create a course specifically about future options, as I think that would be beneficial for many people. Additionally, the booklet we were given in class was fairly useful as it contained some useful information" (F 16)*

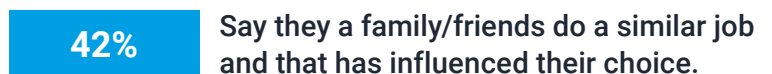
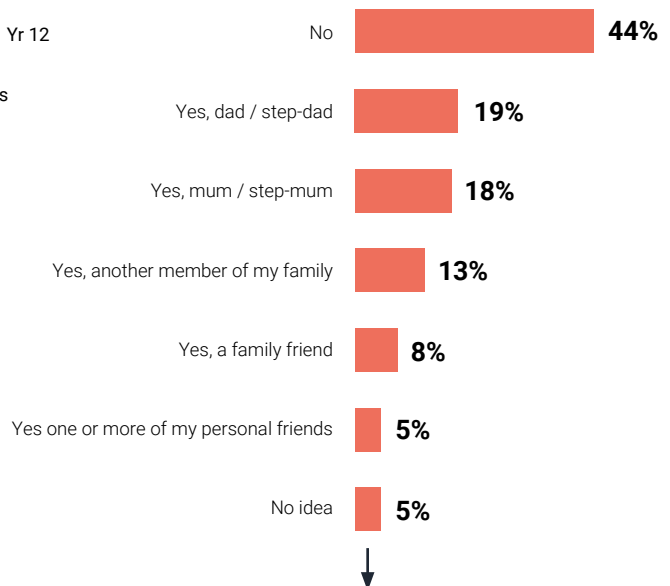
42% of survey respondents had family or friends in similar fields and this had influenced their thinking, but more important (46%) is that it aligns with their favourite subjects or their passions.

Many confirmed that they had parents in similar fields and that this had influenced their thinking.

### Who/what inspired you to consider that job/career?

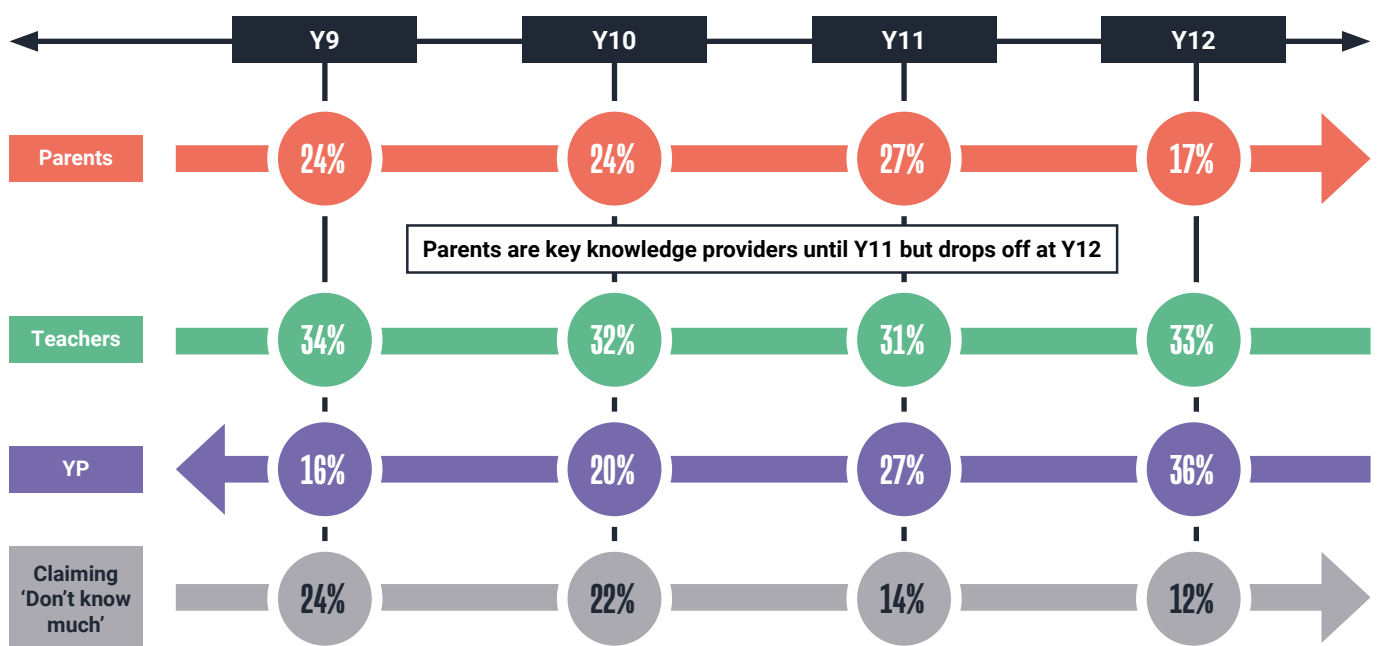


### Do any of your family/friends do something similar for a living?



Parental influence, whilst being a dominant force in pre-16 choices, falls away as young people reach sixth form age. From an influential peak in Year 11, where 27% of respondents confirm that parents have done the most work to improve their knowledge of post-18 options, there is a sharp fall in Year 12 to just 17%. As they approach the crunch time in sixth form, where A-Levels are chosen and therefore paths are a little more locked in, young people seek the advice of others who may be more attuned to their situations.

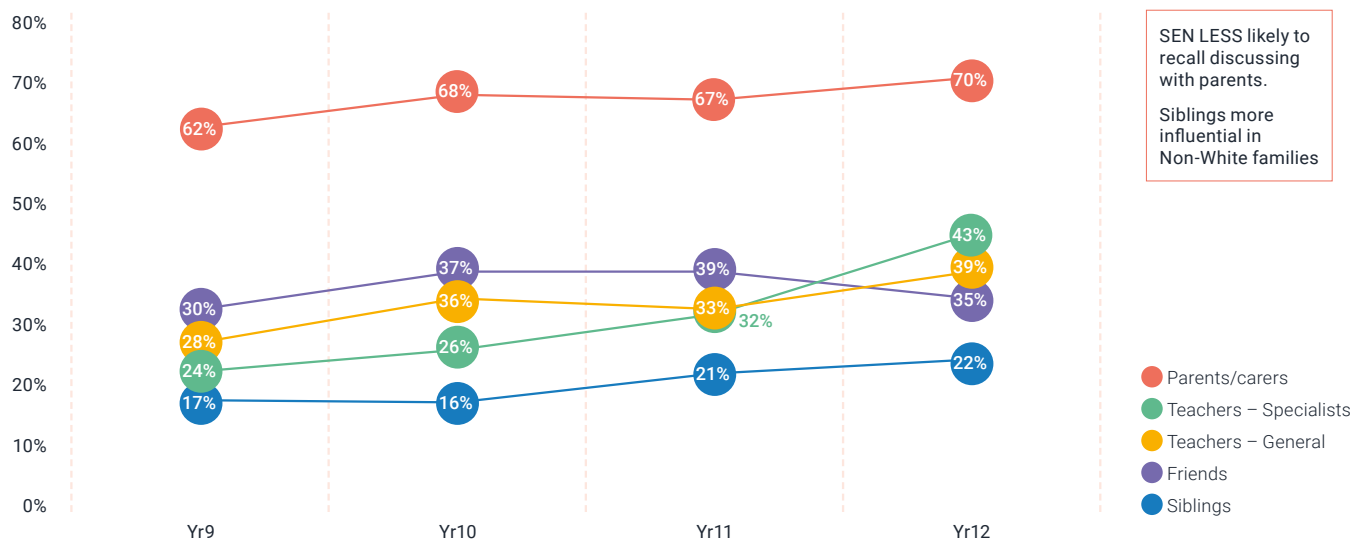
Like teachers, whose influence remains steady and actually rises from Y11 to Y12, and then their own knowledge, the internal influence of which more than doubles between Y9 and Y12.



Q: Who would you say has done most of the work to improve your knowledge around your options at 18? Base: All respondents 1000 (250/250/251/249)

But the same isn't true for discussion and debate, where parents retain their role in key conversations throughout the whole process. Their influence and ability to impart key information might wane, but as a source of support and advice only grows as young people reach sixth form. 62% of Year 9s discuss options with their parents, compared to 70% of Year 12s.

## Who are they discussing their options with?



Discussions with specialist teachers or careers advisors (i.e. those with intimate knowledge of certain subjects or pathways) are rated as some of the most useful interactions of all, and usage of these resources appears tied to proximity to decisions. General teachers are more useful earlier on, whilst specialist teachers overtake their influence and become more valuable towards sixth form age.

%	Parents/carers	Teachers – General	Teachers – Specialists in Career Guidance	Brothers & Sisters	Friends
Had a discussion	67	34	31	19	35
YR12s have had a discussion	70	39	43	22	35
Extremely useful	29	29	35	30	19
Extremely / very	63	67	73	57	50
USEFUL (Extremely/ very / fairly)	94	95	96	91	88

Q: How useful have you found discussing your options with...Base 669/351/191/313/338





Where parents do hold their own as influencers, and indeed other family members, is in their capacity as role models. Young people cite their family's hard work, selflessness, and overcoming of challenges as important sources of inspiration.



# FAMILY

## Parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles & aunts

- Young people see first-hand the work they put in
- Admired for selflessness & the support they show to others
- Challenges and supports them

*My mum and aunts are all my role models they work hard and support each other and their family friends. (Female, 16)*

*My Grandma and Nana have taught me manners and life lessons which are very important (Female, 16)*

In this, its purest form, influence is about much more than information, support, and advice. Day-to-day role models often display attributes that young people are inspired by – subject-specific, career-relevant, or not.



## FAMILY FEATURES HEAVILY...

- Parents (Especially Mum)
- Males - more likely to mention DAD as a role model
- Siblings (older)

But also...

- Friends
- Teachers
- Other school staff (SEN)

*“My maths teacher is very helpful and supportive with my learning. He’s very encouraging and makes me believe in myself that I can do the work. He has built my confidence over the last few years and made me love maths and enjoy the lessons. I will really miss him as he was a great role model” (F 16)*



## BROADER ROLE MODEL ATTRIBUTES ADMIRER...

- Hard working & successful
- Caring
- Helping out - at their own or other’s sports activities
- Positive outlook and influence
- Independence
- Supporting
- Loving
- Look after themselves - body & mind
- Inspirational - achieving their goals
- Having their own business
- Show that you can achieve anything if you put your mind to it
- Resilience

*“My mum is a positive role model for me because she always gives me advice and help when I need it and helps me to be optimistic and not to give up. She has influenced me to step out my comfort zone a lot” (F 14)*



Influence comes from much further afield, too. Outside of the family home, in the celebrity world, online, and in social media – there’s a much wider range of people and places where young people come into direct and indirect contact with positive sources of influence:

## MUSIC STARS

BTS  
Dave  
Kendrick Lamar  
Harry Styles  
Jax Ion  
Taylor Swift

## INFLUENCERS

Molly Mae  
Natacha Oceane  
Katie Fang  
Baylen Levine  
Kim Kardashian  
Gaming YouTubers

## SPORTS STARS

Serena Williams  
Jayson Tatum /  
Joel Embiid /  
Karl-Anthony Towns  
Ronaldo  
Leah Williamson  
Lewis Hamilton

God

## ACTORS/ACTRESSES

Emma Watson  
Ellen Pompeo



## ATTRIBUTES THAT THEY LOOK UP TO...

- Hard working
- Driven
- Reflect who they are / are relatable
- Winning mentality
- Overcome adversity - beaten the odds - come from 'poorer' background / eating disorders
- Use their SM platform positively
- Speak out about: equality / feminism
- Positive outlook
- Successful
- Kind
- Doing something they LOVE
- Can do anything if you put your mind to it
- Wealth
- Charity involvement

## ACTION LIST

### 1 Tailor your messaging to year group

Recognise the changing influences on students based on their year groups and develop targeted messaging for each stage, highlighting what's most important to them at that time.

### 2 Empower teachers in Y12 decision-making

Acknowledge the heightened influence of teachers in Y12 and develop resources to help them show the real-life applications of university subjects (and to help foster passion.)

### 3 Collaborate with school staff and SEN teams

Develop good relationships and communication with key school staff, especially Special Educational Needs (SEN) teams – and offer additional support and resources to cater to the diverse needs of students.

### 4 Cultivate parental involvement and trust

Recognise the shifting dynamics of parental influence and adapt marketing strategies accordingly.

Develop initiatives that involve parents in discussions, ensuring they remain a trusted source of support and advice.

*Serena Williams - "She is a female who came from a poor background and despite the challenges and lack of people who were like her (black female tennis players) she became one of the biggest tennis stars that ever lived. She is an inspiration because she over came the barriers, didn't allow anyone's views to dictate her future and she showed the world she is a boss and deserved the platform and attention she now gets. And the best part about her story is she gets paid to do something she loves, she does charity work which has had a positive impact on the lives of so many others and she has more than enough money to live for the rest of her life" (Female, 15)*



## CHAPTER TWO: TEACHERS

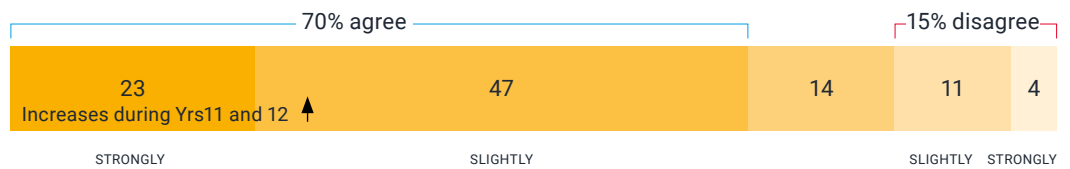
### THE IMPACT OF SCHOOLS AND WHAT STUDENTS WANT.

**The pivotal part that teachers play.** School support is paramount to pupils.

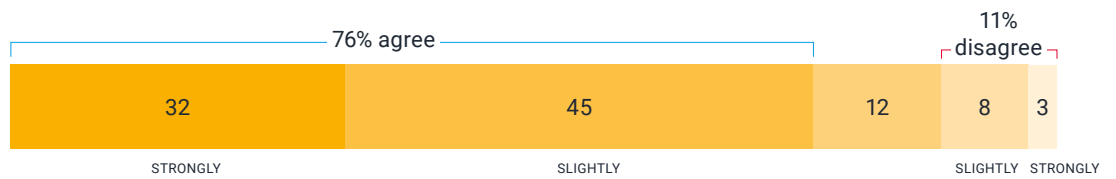
School is the logical starting source of support for young people making big decisions. The academic environment, the peers navigating the same journey, the staff who have faced the same decisions in the past – it's a wellspring of shared experiences. But it's the teachers, with whom pupils often develop strong bonds and relationships, who are most likely to make the difference.

70% of young people believe their teachers help them understand how their lessons will help them in future careers, and 76% believe they're being listened to when making decisions about their future.

My teachers help me understand how the things we are learning about, might help us in life / in future careers



I feel like I am being listened to when making decisions about my future



But it's worth noting that whilst these are big numbers, the amount of young people who 'strongly' agree with these statements is actually quite small. Only one in four and one in three respectively, which suggests there's room for improvement on the depth of connection between teacher and pupil during these crucial, formative years.

The good news is that school support comes from plenty of places:

- **Careers advisors** – group/individual skills sessions, explore interests and career matches, CV prep
- **Careers fairs** – interact with university/apprenticeship contacts and discuss job opportunities
- **Careers days** – advice and info on further education and careers
- **Careers websites**
- **Employers** – coming into school and promoting opportunities
- **Apprenticeship exhibition** – learning what's available
- **Booklets / PowerPoint** – about career opportunities and skills needed
- **Visits** – to local colleges and universities
- **Post-16 assemblies** – to discuss and explore different options
- **Zoom sessions (group)** – advice on chosen career pathways and the chance to ask questions.

*"I have been with school to visit colleges which has helped as I now know what to expect after I finish school" (M 15)*

*"The bronze industrial cadets STEM course gave me some really useful insights to university/college life as well as alternative information. This provided much more information through one course than what I'd been told in school by teachers etc" (F 16)*

But not all advice is created equal, and they don't need advice on every single thing. This generation is remarkably self-sufficient, and they're adept at seeking out support to fill gaps in their knowledge and confidence. Some of the most useful advice they told us about was:

- **Help with applications** – for colleges, courses, and apprenticeships
- **Help with choosing the right option** – to reduce being overwhelmed, and acknowledge university isn't the only path
- **Help with apprenticeships** – understanding that this may be a better route for some, and learning what is involved and what to expect
- **Help with passion** – how to find and choose a career they love
- **Help with skills** – how to learn new things
- **Help with work experience placements** – to provide valuable insights
- **Help with ideation** – like using career quizzes
- **Help with subjects** – knowing which GCSEs will help most for future studies or careers

BUT OVERALL, THE VERY BEST ADVICE IS BEING TOLD TO **ENJOY WHAT THEY DO** AND **KEEP THEIR OPTIONS OPEN**. IT MINIMISES THEIR ANXIETY AND STRESS AND IS PARTICULARLY VALUABLE IF THEY HAVE A LESS DEFINED PATH.

Poor advice is as frustrating as good advice is soothing. And whilst poor advice can come from anywhere, it's teachers who need to pay particular attention to the impact of their words – as they are often the most consistent and accessible source for many pupils (and what they say sticks):

*"Teacher's negativity/stereotypical opinions - I was asked if I think I'm cut out for the options I have considered (legal/law) which I felt was a negative comment" (F 15)*



We asked young people what they were most disappointed with when it came to teacher advice and school support:



Being told that university is the only option or route into certain careers



A lack of appointments with career advisors and a lack of work experience opportunities



That exam achievement is the main focus and determines future success



Limited information on different routes – college, university, and apprenticeships



Being told what to do, or being told you've made the wrong choices



A lack of knowledge and support from teachers, and negative comments – “you can't do that”

## POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

- Help applying for college
- Two-way listening and provision of accurate advice
- Available job opportunities

*“I was given pretty much good advice for leaving school and applying for college” (M 15)*

## NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

- Generic advice, with a lack of personal insight and advice
- Lack of knowledge, information, and listening
- Focus on the ‘favoured’ children
- No work experience
- Too much emphasis on grades.

*“Teacher’s advice has been not so helpful, it doesn’t always answer the questions I have. The advice is basic, and I feel as if when I reach out to the teacher, I receive a standard response” (F 15)*

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Face-to-face meetings instead of leaflets or websites
- More support in lessons, on topics like revision techniques and independent living
- Facilitated work experience
- More ‘clued-up’ and involved teachers.

*“To be offered interviews which don’t have as much competition & somebody gives me a chance”. (M 16 SEN)*





Advice is less prevalent for those aged 13/14, who believe that it's less of a priority to them at that age. It's not clear whether this is correlation or causation, perhaps they only think it's irrelevant because it's not being given to them. But across all of our research, it's universally true that earlier engagement yields better results. There is a gap, and therefore an opportunity, in building connections with these Year 9s and 10s.

When it comes to the content of that advice, we know what they're looking for too. The big topics that most young people need information on are practical, like interview practice, and CV/personal statement tips, as well as:



**12 – What different careers / jobs are like**

- Help guide choices
- Work experience
- Individual choice is important
- Help prepare / know what to expect

**11 – How to stand out as a candidate**

- CV writing
- Interview techniques
- Due to the competition
- To look good in front of boss
- Better chance of success

**11 – Which careers / job match my personal interests**

- For enjoyment
- Trial days
- Less boring

**10 – Financial planning costs**

- Receive little advice on handling money
- How to budget / make money last
- Skills for life
- How to pay for Uni
- How much support is offered

**9 – Interview coaching –**

develop skills / how to prepare / mock interviews

**7 – How to choose between the different study / career routes –**

to match strengths/ weaknesses and what's best for me

**6 – How salaries for different jobs compare –**

earning potential / could impact decisions

**4 – Support for SEN –**

benefits / what support employers could offer

Qualitative research- numbers indicate volume of students who identified the information need

There is also a desire to get similar kinds of advice from colleges and employers coming into school, to advise young people on:

- What subjects are best for them
- How to get a job / steps to take
- How and what to do to become successful
- What are the step-by-step processes
- Being able to attend open days / taster days - at work/college/uni
- Reassuring that exams aren't the only option.

But alongside the practical the perhaps traditional considerations are the 'what if' topics:

## Key information needs

### 14 – What happens if I don't get my grades

- Different options available
- How important is it to pass
- To have a plan B
- Takes the pressure / stress off and ease anxiety
- What other career options are there

### 11– Options for taking time out to travel

- A priority for some
- How to go about a gap year
- How much it will cost
- How to plan it
- Important before settling into a career

### 10 – How can I work for myself / set up my own business

- Don't know enough about this
- To be independent
- How to go about it / start the process

Qualitative research- numbers indicate volume of students who identified the information need

Wherever the advice comes from, and whatever it pertains to, the most important thing is that it's **specific, relatable, and informed**. Young people want, as much as is possible, support based on real life experiences – particularly from peers who are already on similar paths.

*"I think a free government course explaining all post-18 options for free would be a great idea" (F 16)*

*"I think it would be helpful if I got advice from people who are going through the process of becoming a nurse as it would help me to understand the best opportunities" (F 16)*

Beyond the university vs apprenticeship debate, there's plenty of interest in other pursuits. When we asked young people what they'd given serious thought to doing in their post-secondary lives, there was a healthy appetite for alternative paths:

- 27% said travelling
- 20% said taking a break
- 20% said self-employment or setting up a business
- 13% said volunteering
- 11% said working in the family business.

This open-minded exploration of pursuits that aren't necessarily university, apprenticeships, or employment shows a broad consideration of options – a positive indicator of progress for the post-secondary landscape.



GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO GO TRAVELLING, BOYS ARE MORE LIKELY TO WORK IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS, AND SEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO TAKE A BREAK (OR WORK IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS.)

## ACTION LIST

### 1 Tailor advice to individual needs

Not all advice is universally applicable, so your support needs to be tailored to individual students' needs. Focus on key areas such as help with applications, choosing the right options, understanding apprenticeships, discovering passions, developing skills, and securing work experience placements.

### 2 Address practical concerns

Prioritise practical topics (like interview practice, CV tips, and step-by-step processes) in your support and resources. Collaborate with colleges and employers to offer insights on the specifics, like subject choices, job-seeking strategies, and pathways to success.

### 3 Promote continuous teacher development

Recognise the lasting impact of teachers' words on students and invest in continuous professional development for teachers, to equip them with constantly updated information and resources.



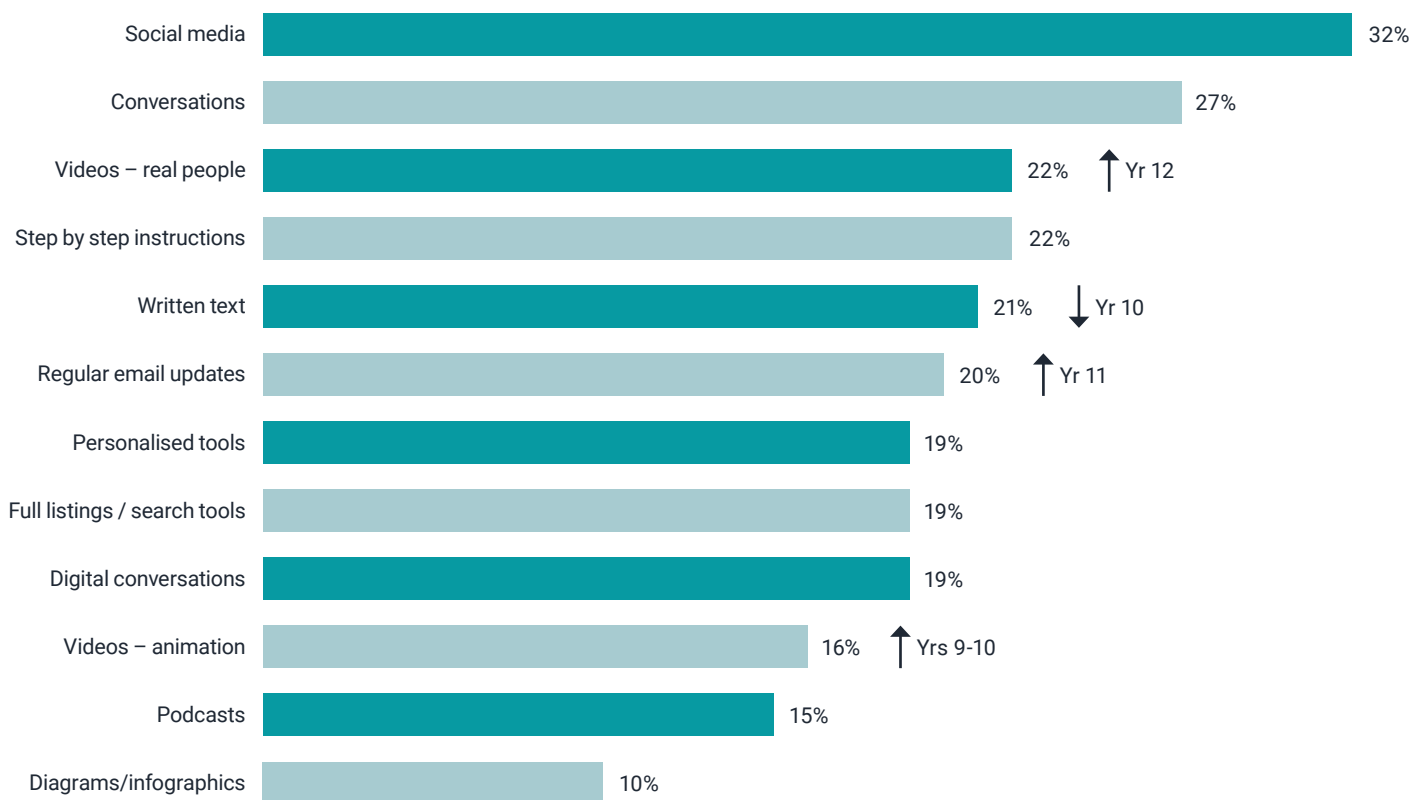
# CHAPTER THREE: CHANNELS

## AWARENESS, USAGE, AND CHANGING PREFERENCES.

The nuance, diversity, and preferences of channels.  
It's not all about convenience and digital access.

You can orchestrate the best bank of information, but if you don't use the right instruments then the audience is never going to hear it.

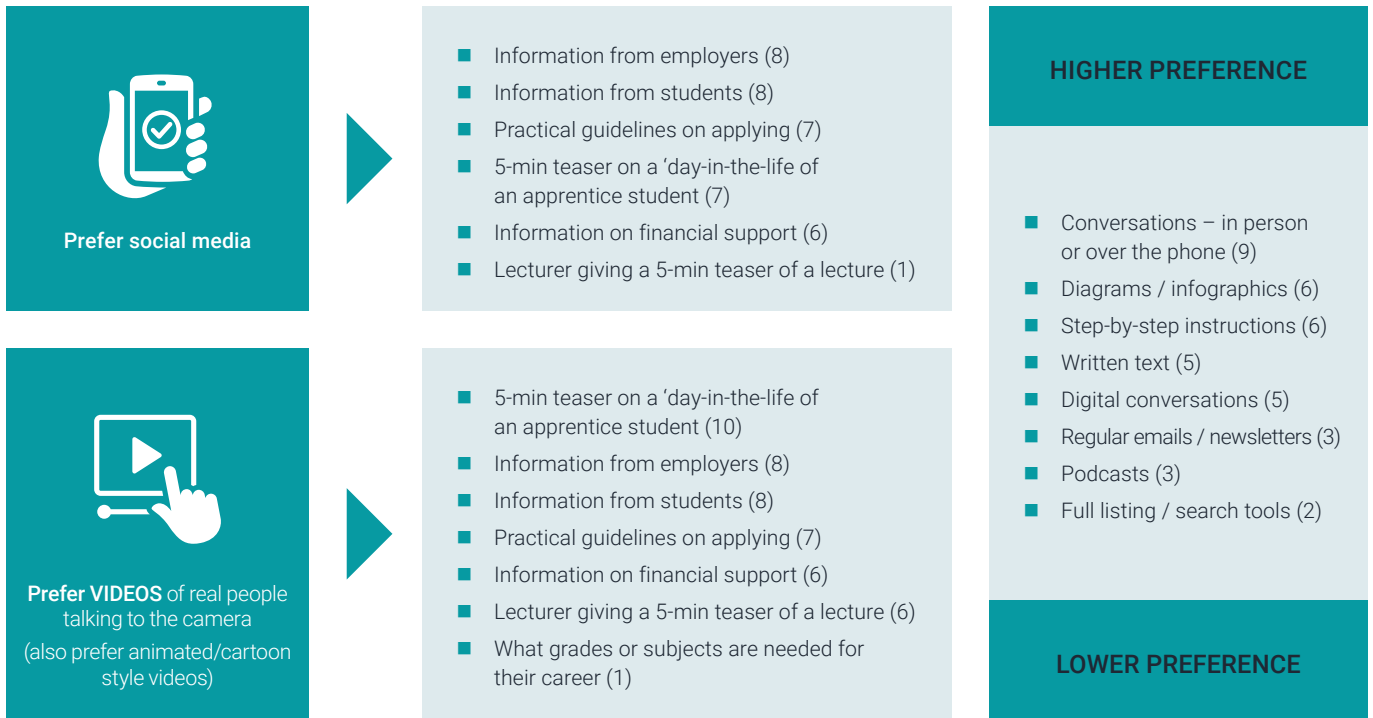
It can be easy to assume that young people, as digital natives, want to consume everything online or in the palm of their hands. But for all their tech preference in other activities, doing the research for post-secondary life is a diverse affair.



Q: What are your preferred formats for getting that information? Base: All respondents 1000

Whilst there's nothing surprising about seeing social media at the top of the charts, or a digital focus to the majority of channels, it's important to note that conversations, instructions, and written text are significant preferences. And even for those who like their information online, there's a trend of interactivity (personalised tools) and authenticity (videos of real people, podcasts etc.)

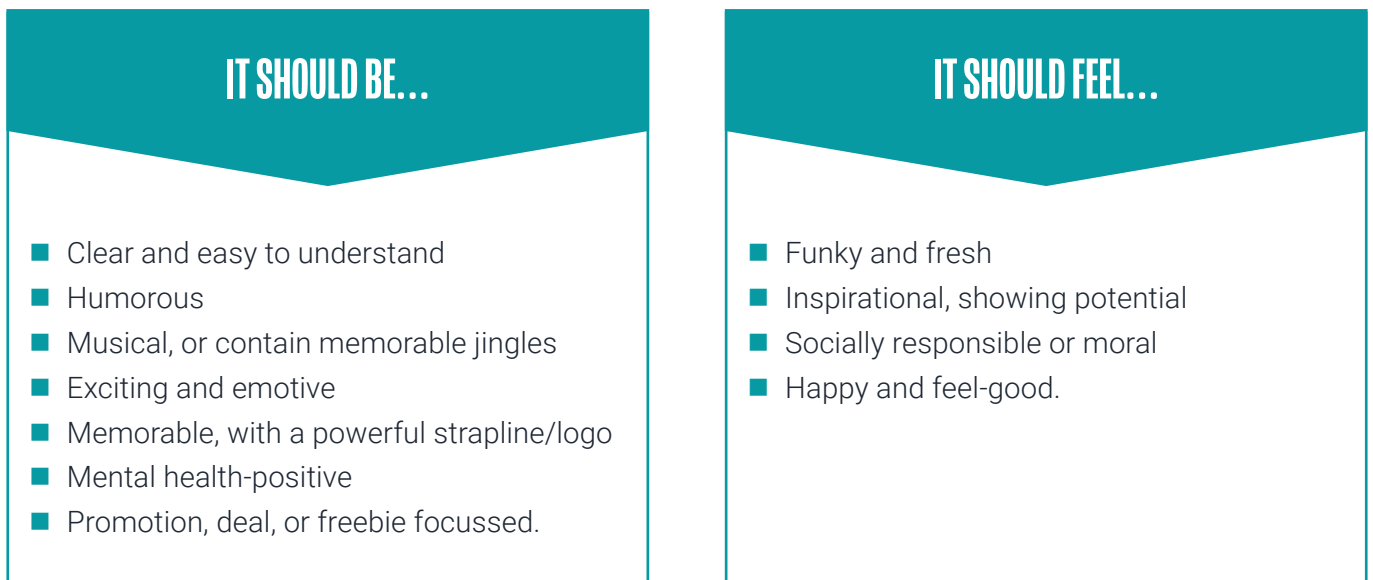
This is even clear if you dive into channels on an individual basis. When we asked those who told us they prefer social media, they still want information from employers and students, as well as 'day in the life' videos and '5-min teasers' from lecturers. This is digital content with the real world at the heart.



Source : Qualitative numbers indicate volume of students

But just because young people like their content to feel real, it doesn't mean the death of advertising. Ads still play an important role in raising awareness and capturing interest at the top of the funnel, before directing watchers to find out more in softer, more authentic content.

To build an ad that achieves this, the make-up is as follows (according to young people):



Adverts are generally seen, or at least noticed and remembered by, those nearer the end of school and sixth form. 13 and 14 year olds have less to say about ads.

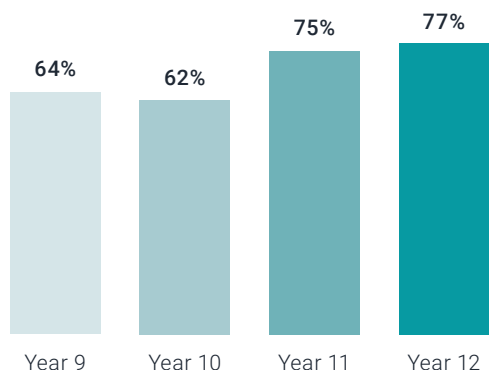
Depending on your marketing strategy, this is either an indication of what works best on these platforms and therefore best practice to follow, or an opportunity to subvert the norm and stand out by promoting adverts on channels that have 'gaps' for them:

Advertising channel	Types of adverts seen by young people
Careers fair	Opportunity-based (universities, apprenticeship providers, employers)
Spotify	Apprenticeships
Leaflets	Career pathways Colleges
School	Jobs walls, showing careers with required qualifications and salary expectations Careers posters Upcoming college tours
TV	Universities
YouTube	Careers

**OUTSIDE OF ADVERTISING, UCAS IS THE DOMINANT SOURCE OF INDEPENDENT INFORMATION. BY YEAR 12, 3 IN 5 RECOGNISE THE LOGO AND 2 IN 5 HAVE USED UCAS FOR RESEARCH.**

For universities, there are few channels that offer the control and creativity of their prospectus. It's probably the most important single piece of advertising collateral, which also provides the opportunity to address several preferences at once – fulfilling digital and print appetites, showcasing the facts and figures alongside that softer, more authentic content.

70% of young people are familiar with prospectuses, and by Year 12 this rises to 77%.



Know about prospectus

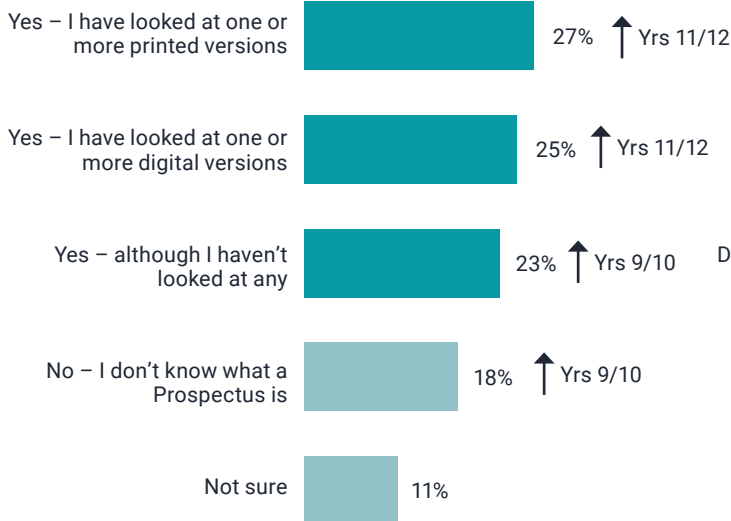
Year 11 and Year 12 show the highest levels of awareness, but high awareness amongst younger age groups

Q. Do you know what a 'Prospectus' is? Base = 250 Year 9, 250 Year 10, 251 Year 11, 249 Year 12

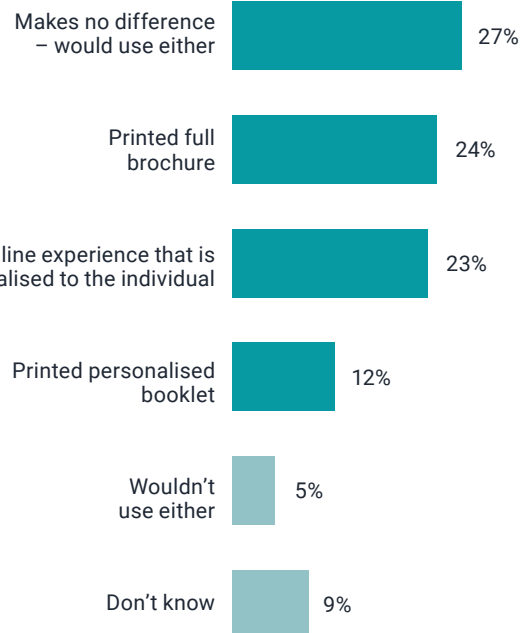


**70% Yes**

**Know what a PROSPECTUS is?**



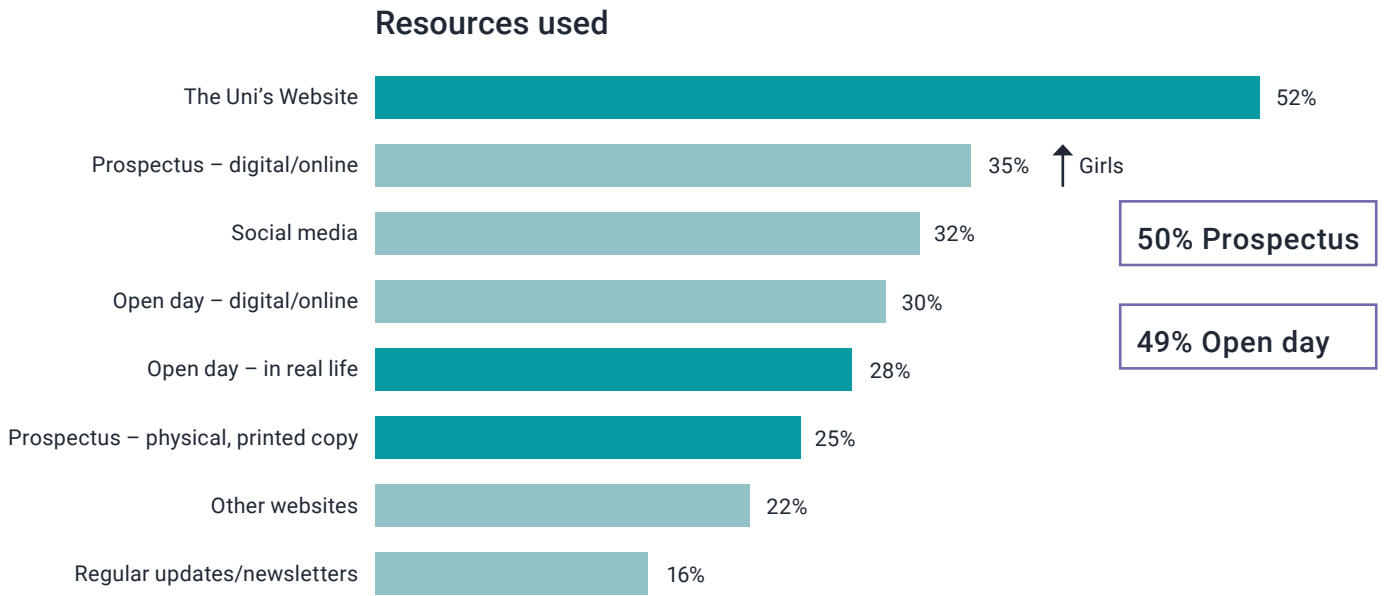
**Preferred format?**



Prospectuses are one of the most regularly used resources for researching universities, and both printed and digital prospectuses are popular. With almost 50% having a preference though, you need to make sure both are delivering quality experiences.

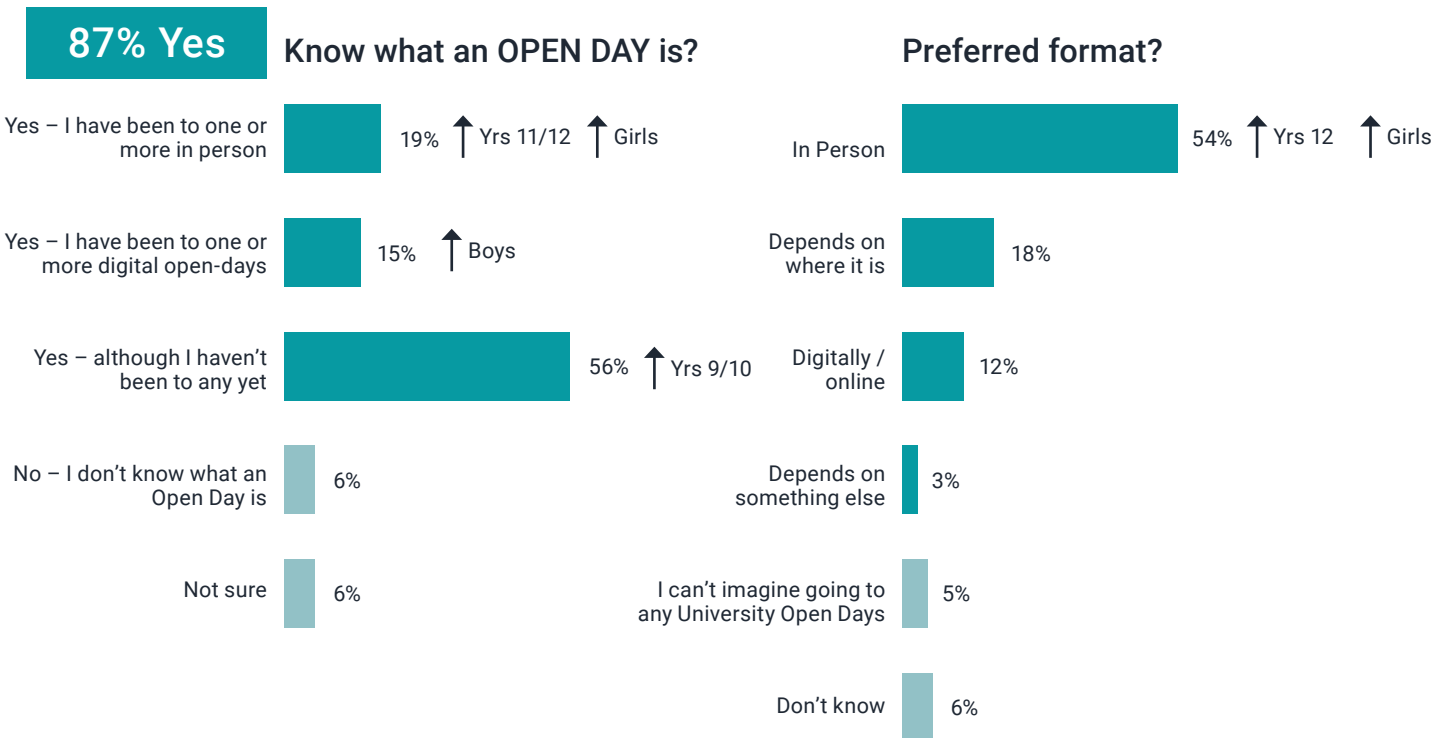


When you combine digital and printed prospectuses, they're the most used resource of all:

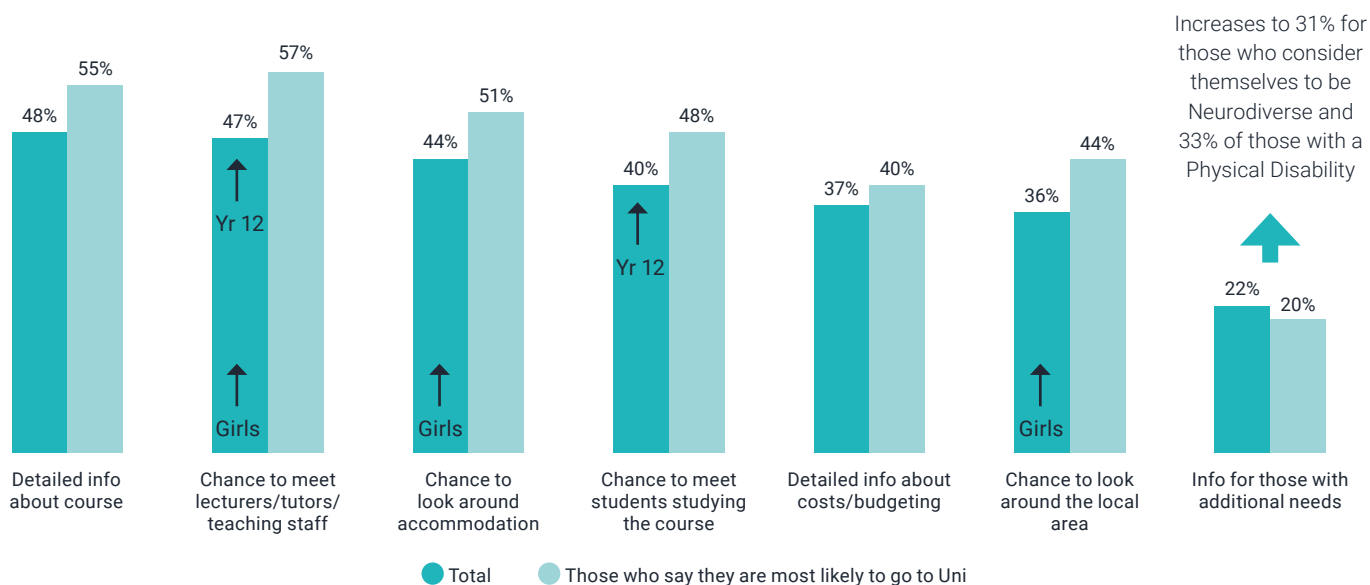


If prospectuses are the lasting takeaway that can be consumed at any time, then open days provide a quick, impactful experience. Few things can contend with visiting a campus, seeing it for yourself, and speaking to staff and students.

87% of young people know what an open day is (90% by Year 12) and there's a strong preference for the face-to-face variety.



The chance to meet people is one of the most important attractions of an open day, alongside the opportunity to see accommodation in person, and get detailed information about the course. For all the takeaway value of a prospectus and the convenience of a digital open day, visiting campus gives young people a greater chance to tick more boxes in one go. In the wide array of channels available, there's nothing else like a face-to-face open day.



## ACTION LIST

### 1 Elevate prospectus materials

Give printed and digital prospectuses the same amount of love and care, to cater to diverse preferences and audiences. Create visually appealing content that resonates with young audiences.

### 2 Reinvent Open Days

Organise physical and digital open days to accommodate varied preferences, and emphasise the importance of in-person experiences whilst also acknowledging the significance of digital engagement.

### 3 Implement a comprehensive multi-channel campaign strategy

By combining dynamic video content with visually appealing posters and ads across multiple platforms, you'll run a well-rounded campaign that captures attention and provides essential information to facilitate their post-18 decision-making process.

### 4 Application guidance

Develop an easy checklist or infographic outlining the steps to apply, targeting students from Y11 onwards. Provide interactive resources to help students discover their interests and identify new skills that they can develop through university education.



## CHAPTER FOUR: PARENTS

### THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND WHAT THEY NEED.

#### The competing sides of parenthood.

More support for parents means better decisions in children.

Parents play a monumentally important role in the post-18 decision-making process.

From inspiration and ideation, where young people look to their parents' beliefs and careers in deciding on their own, to secondary school, where parents are a dominant force in information and guidance – there are few other sources of support so trustworthy and easily accessible.

But as powerful as their allyship may be, parents are conflicted too. Like young people, they experience positive and negative feelings about post-18 life:

**Excitement and determination**  
about their child's journey generally outweigh the worries they have

Concerns usually stem from the **cost of living**, as well as how they will be treated by the world



Source: Qualitative research

*"I'm excited to watch [her] go out and find her way in the world...I think it will work out. I hope she is doing something that makes her happy."  
(Parent of F 15)*

*"I feel scared in a way, as life is tough at the moment for people and money is needed to have a comfortable life and everything is so expensive."  
(Parent of M 14)*

*"I'm excited for them to get into the job market as they get through school and see what's going to be available to them ,I want them above all to be happy and I've explained to them that the only way to get what you want is to work hard at school".  
(Parent of M 14)*

*"I think the biggest concern is her being able to find a career that she loves and helps her reach her full potential. Everything seems much harder for this generation and there are lots of barriers that we will work with her on to help support and guide her as best we can."  
(Parent of F 16)*



Parents are involved in the decision-making process, although generally accept that the final decision isn't up to them. They try to achieve a balance between being open and encouraging vs. guiding and directing.

**1 = Very involved**



Generally happy with their involvement.

They want to be involved and will always be there to support and listen to their child.

Those with a little less involvement express some wariness about taking a step back, but ultimately want their child to be independent and make their own decisions.

**5 = Not at all involved**

| Source: Qualitative research numbers indicate volume of parents

They're also juggling two very different schools of support:

## LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING INTERESTS, TO STEER THEM TOWARDS OPTIONS

- Encouraging to try new things
- Find opportunities where possible, e.g. work experience
- Listen & understand their interests
- Suggest pathways that might interest them
- Help to choose options for next stage of life, e.g. apprenticeship vs university
- Follow up on information sent through school together
- Answer questions where possible or ask around on their behalf.

## EXPLAINING THE REALITY OF ADULTHOOD AND PREPARING THEM FOR THE 'REAL WORLD'

- Explain reality- cost of living
- Job that will always be needed
- Highlight educational & training requirements
- Earning & outgoings.

***"Whilst giving him choice and his own decisions, we are on hand to advise him whether that may be a good step or bad and how he can benefit from these decisions."***  
***(Parent of M 13)***

***"We have kind of helped steer her with regards to what she is interested in and how much she can possibly earn. Things are very different now and wages are not in line with outgoings. I have also tried to explain that she needs a career that is always going to be needed."*** ***(Parent of F 14)***

But parents don't have all the answers by default. Even those with children following identical paths, who would seem more well suited to offer applicable advice, are drawing on experiences from 20+ years ago.

## 1 = Very confident & informed



Some are more confident than others if their child is following a similar path to them/another child - can draw on these experiences.

Some parents are happy and confident knowing they are always supporting, listening and giving advice where they can. Especially if their approach is more 'guide, don't interfere'.

Others need more reassurance and research to inform the advice they are giving their child.

Not all parents are thinking too much about it as it's not relevant to their child yet (e.g. 13/14 years old).

## 5 = Not at all confident & informed

Source: Qualitative research

Faced with questions that are both emotional and practical, it's a tall order to meet without help.

- What is the best fit for me?
- Am I more hands-on or suited to an office?
- What is the best fit for my skills?
- How much can I earn at this or that job?
- How do I make a good impression at interviews?
- Will I enjoy this job?
- What are my options?
- How do I get to where I want to be?
- How much can I progress?
- How long will I be away from home for?

***"Myself and my husband fell into our careers and we have said that we want better for our children!!!! From my point of view, I would have to source all the information for myself or draw on the experience of other young adults in My family and I am certainly not confident that I know all the relevant up to date regulations and options."***

***"I find it really hard to know which direction to take her. There are so many choices and things are so different now."***

***"Which direction should I steer her in? There are so many options, her experience will be different to mine as I did A Levels & university whereas she is looking at apprenticeship."***

***"Haven't seen anything but also haven't started looking yet. Other than talking about her strengths and passions...we didn't know what other options we had."***



Naturally, parents want to have at least some of the answers to their child's questions. So, faced with outdated experiences or lack of information, they go looking for information:

Parents currently source information from:

- Word of mouth. Family, friends, colleagues
- Researching online with their child or independently, e.g. job ad sites for salary information and apprenticeship sites for advice & required qualification
- Events such as open days or careers events
- Reaching out to contacts for advice & suggestions. At work, LinkedIn
- Previous experience. Either their own experience or having been through it with an older child.

Parents with children earlier in the journey (13/14yrs) tend to do less active research, and are content with using their own knowledge and passive research through word of mouth.

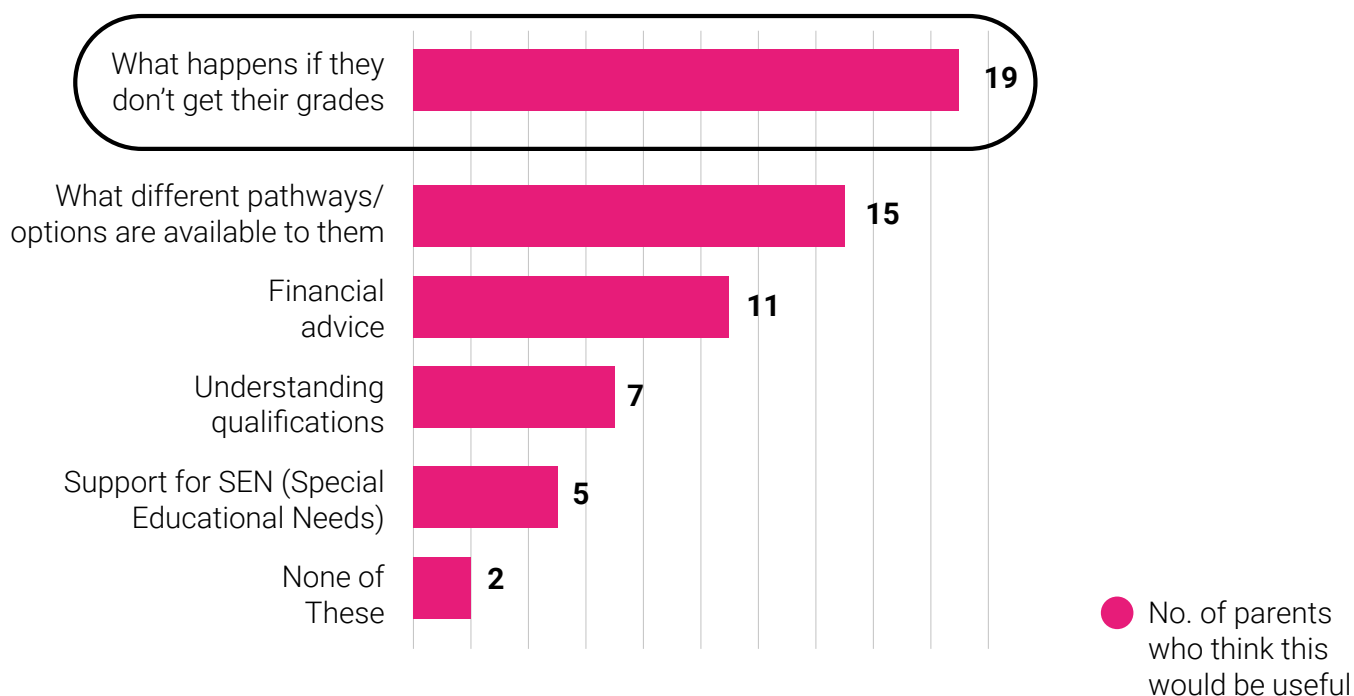
*"I feel very confident and informed because of career events and word of mouth." (Parent of M 16)*



*“LinkedIn has been a great help. I have used contacts to reach out to for advice and support. Job advertising sites it’s been good at showing salary expectations. Realistic ones. Apprenticeship sites have been good for advice and help with knowing what qualifications are required. And what the training is.” (Parent of M 14)*

The most important thing for parents to know, according to them, is what options are available (both in terms of post-18 pathways, but also in terms of what happens if things don’t go to plan.)

### General information parents may need to support their child post-18



Source: Qualitative research

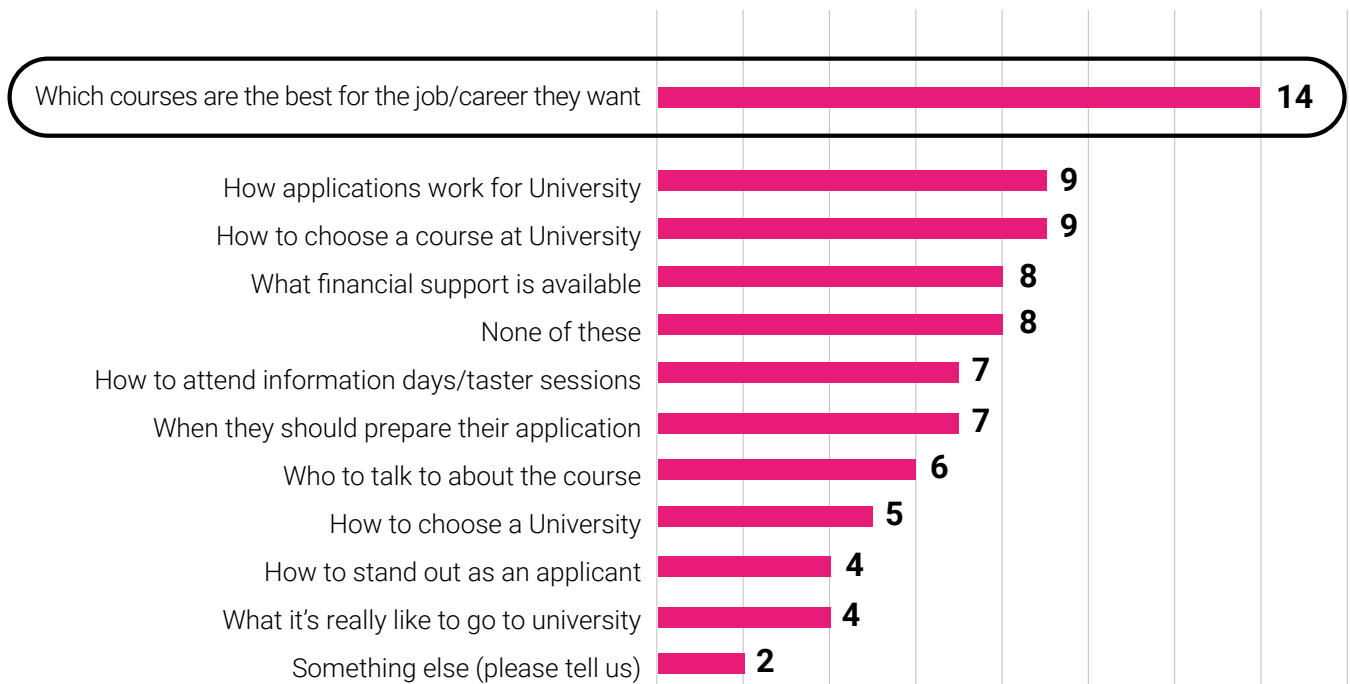
Awareness about alternative pathways, especially the finer details like apprenticeship salaries, are key.

*“What happens if they don’t get their grades (Seems fitting as she is waiting on results and a lot of pressure from school) and What different pathways/options are available to them (Even if she can’t get the grades knowing she can still get the job she wants).” (Parent of F 15)*

*“In Year 9, they don’t have any involvement with careers advisors at school which is a real shame. There needs to be so much more for parents. We don’t get any support /information from school. When choosing GCSE options, we had an options booklet sent home which provided little bits of information, but it wasn’t great, we just went with what [she] enjoyed.” (Parent of F 14)*

University logistics also play a crucial role, for those who are unfamiliar with the journey and for those who have been through it themselves but are now outdated:

### Information that parents would find useful if their child was considering university



Source: Qualitative research

● No. of parents



And just like their children, they put great stock in channels that offer in-person conversations:

## FIRST-HAND INFORMATION

- In person one-to-one meetings with their child and the careers advisor
- In person events/talks from people in different careers (case studies)
- Shadowing the environment they want to work in

As well as practical information, parents sometimes need reassuring that they are giving the right support/guidance to their child

## PREPARATION & EXPERIENCE

- Interview preparation and experience
- CV building
- Longer work experience options (one week isn't enough)

## PREPARATION & EXPERIENCE

- Information about going straight into employment
- More information from school at an earlier stage. School websites should have more info (leading up to sixth form, not just about sixth form), careers advisors should be more involved from Y9
- More alternatives & accessibility when it comes to mental health or special educational needs after leaving school

Source: Qualitative research

*"Would be ideal if there was someone you could call or go to online."*

*"Work experience doesn't appear to be as accessible as it used to but maybe it's because she doesn't have a specific career in mind so support with this would be welcomed, as would interview experience."*

*"About getting a job very quickly and getting cv done and prepared with some coaching 1:1 face to face sessions with interview preparation. After all, nothing beats 1:1 face to face experience."*

## WHAT THEY WANT FROM FACE-TO-FACE CHANNELS

- The ability to ask specific questions to a person
- The opportunity to talk with students
- Conversations and word-of-mouth information from other parent's experiences

## WHAT THEY WANT FROM ONLINE CHANNELS

- An easily accessible, single central resource for all different paths available
- Emails from government or schools
- Always up-to-date
- Videos- ads, information, and case studies of experiences
- Social media- ads and links to useful websites.

Parents would also like to see more done by their children's schools, commenting on a preference for smaller groups and one-to-one careers advice.

## ACTION LIST

### 1 Develop comprehensive resources

Create easily accessible, centralised resources covering various post-18 pathways. Provide detailed information about alternative options, including apprenticeship salaries, to address parents' key concerns.

### 2 Facilitate face-to-face interactions

Organise events, open days, and careers fairs that allow parents to ask specific questions to university representatives and gain insights from other parents (also considering smaller group sessions and one-to-one career advice to cater to parents' preferences.)

### 3 Collaborate with schools

Work closely and collaboratively with schools, to enhance the level of support provided to parents. Offer resources and guidance to them, encouraging smaller group sessions and one-to-one careers advice.

### 4 Highlight realities of adulthood

Show what adulthood is really like, including the cost of living and the educational and training requirements for different career paths (and help parents figure out how to explain this at home, too.)



## | WHAT NEXT?

So far from Project Next Generation, we've published four complementary reports:

[The Themes Report](#) analysed the major themes impacting overall student decision making.

[The Needs & Motivators Report](#) dive deep into exactly what influences them and when.

[The Early Careers & Apprenticeships Report](#) took a closer look at non-degree routes.

[The Adviser Report](#) focussed specifically on how schools and parents can help.

As well as these reports, we're also running a series of webinars which share the latest research and thinking from our teams. [You can watch all previous episodes, and sign up for future insights, here.](#)

You can also talk to us directly about the findings of these reports, and find out how we can help you turn them into direct actions for your marketing or recruitment, get in touch:

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