

SHAPING FUTURES

The Merseyside Collaborative
Outreach Programme

Inclusive Transitions

A toolkit to support
you with your next
steps in education.

This belongs to:

.....

.....



Contents



Check off each page after you have read it and completed any tasks.

04

Introduction

05

What are my Higher Education options?

06

Timeline

Post 16

09

About Me

12

Qualification Levels

14

Qualifications

15

Making informed course choices

16

Where can I study?

18

Preparing an apprenticeship application

19

University vs College

Higher Education

20

What support is available

21

Disabled Students' Allowance

22

My support needs

23

Research

25

What is an Open Day?

27

Open Day Reflection Log

32

Your Applications

35

Offer Holder Days

35

Transition

37

Results Day

38

Student Life

39

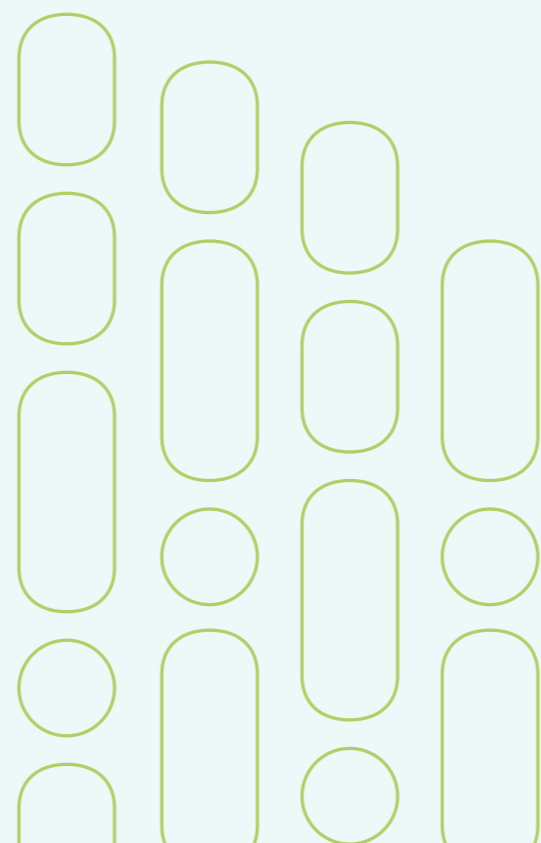
Top Tips

Introduction

This resource is designed to help you explore your options through education. You'll be in compulsory education until you're 18, and some people choose to continue studying beyond that.

This resource will help you to understand the choices you have, the ways you can study and how to research, apply and transition to your next stages of study, after Year 11 and beyond, into Higher Education.

It will also help to improve your knowledge of the support available, how to access it and build your confidence in reflecting on your support needs and advocating for yourself. Advocating means asking for what you need.



Is this the right resource for me?

This resource is for **any student who wants to learn more about their post-16 and post-18 options** and who feels they might need to access some additional support to make their Higher Education experience as successful as possible - whether this means accessing mentoring, assistive technology to support you with studying, supported accommodation or adjustments in classes or assessments.



Introduction

Who are Shaping Futures?

Shaping Futures, Uni Connect programme for the Liverpool City Region, is a partnership of 12 local Higher Education providers.

Our 12 partners are:



The Shaping Futures team work with young people and adult learners across the Liverpool City Region to help them better understand their education options, including their Higher Education options.

We help students to make informed choices about their future by providing impartial information, advice and guidance, as well as providing support with the Higher Education application process.

Task

Which of the Shaping Futures partner institutions are closest to me?

Using Google Maps, search for the location of each partner and jot down the three closest to you.

Using Google Maps again, look to see if they're walkable. If not, what are the public transport options?

1.
2.
3.

Further Education

When you finish year 11, you can study qualifications at level 3.

This is an exciting opportunity to focus on the things that truly interest you or try new subjects that you want to learn more about. There is a wide range of study options with more opportunities to study courses directly related to job roles than you'll have been used to at school.

You can study these at sixth form based in a school, a college, or through an apprenticeship. On an apprenticeship you'll spend around 80% of your time working with an employer and 20% completing a course at college.

The differences between studying at school and college are discussed in more detail on page 16 and apprenticeships are explored on page 18. Attending open evenings in Year 10 and 11, and completing some work experience, can help you make an informed decision about what type of learning experience will work best for you.

Moving to a new environment can be daunting but colleges and school sixth forms have lots of supports in place. If you have an Education Health Care Plan, your school will pass this on. It's important though, that regardless of whether you have an EHCP or not, that you feel comfortable to ask for any supports that you may need in the place that you're studying at. You can ask about which support services are available on an open evening.



Timeline

On this timeline you'll be able to see what you need to focus on at each stage of your education journey.

This booklet is divided into two sections: Post-16, which explores your options for studying in Year 12 and 13, and Higher Education, which focuses on how you can apply and the support you will receive in Higher Education, which you can begin after you have completed level 3 qualifications, like A levels, BTECs and T levels.

Task Find where you are on the timeline below:

Year 11

- + Explore post-16 pathways to the Higher Education course or career you're interested in
- + Start to build your advocacy skills by communicating any support needs to your teachers ahead of your GCSEs - for example, is it helpful for you to have copies of Powerpoints after lessons?

Year 10

- + Start to think about the course you'd like to study, or careers you're interested in
- + Reflect on your strengths and the areas you might need support

Year 12

- + Start researching your Higher Education options and support available
- + Reflect on how your support needs have changed in post-16 education
- + Create your UCAS account and start to visit Open Days at universities, colleges and employers

Year 13 (Sep - Jan)

- + Attend further Open Days if needed
- + Complete and submit your UCAS form
- + 15th October: Early admission deadline for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary courses, as well as all Oxford and Cambridge courses
- + Late January: UCAS deadline for all other courses

Year 13 (April - June)

- + Focus on your exams and final coursework submissions
- + Results day!

Year 13 (Jan - May)

- + Attend Offer Holder Days and discuss your support needs
- + Apply for Student Finance
- + Make your Firm and Insurance Choices
- + Research accommodation if you'll need it

It's important to bear in mind that this timeline isn't prescriptive and will look slightly different for everyone. If you're applying for a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship, your timeline will be set by your employer and the information should be available on their website.

Task

Once you hit Year 12, use this space to make a note of the dates relevant to you - either from the Key Days page of UCAS.com, or from an employer website.

Deadline	Date
School/college submission deadline for UCAS application	
Make firm and insurance choices	
Student finance application deadline	
Disabled Student Allowance application deadline	
First exam	
Final exam	
Accommodation application deadline	
Offer Holder Day	
Fresher's Week	

About Me

A big part of Higher Education is becoming more independent, both academically and personally.

You'll take responsibility for your own learning and managing your own time and deadlines, although lots of support is available. As part of this you'll start to advocate for yourself more, for example discussing the support you might need, or letting someone know if you have any difficulties.

Advocating for yourself can be daunting, but it's an important life skill. A good way to start developing your advocacy skills is self reflection, so you're confident on what you're asking for and why it is important. The questions on this page are a starting point for self-reflection, and there are other prompts throughout the resource to help you with this.

A good way to start developing your advocacy skills is self-reflection, so you're clear on what you're asking for and why it is important.



Outside of Disabled Students' Allowance* and the academic advisor programme for every Liverpool medical student, I currently receive support from the School of Medicine's Wellbeing team, and Mental Health Advisory Service from the wider University services. My student support plan means I am in contact with various teams within my course and individual hospital undergraduate teams during placement rotations. This is so I can get reasonable adjustments such as with assessments (e.g. rest breaks). Living at home, I also get support from family and friends.

Sophie, Studying Medicine *Find out more on page 21

The following questions are a starting point for self-reflection, and there are other prompts throughout the resource to help with this.

Task

**What are your favourite school subjects or activities?
What do you enjoy most about them?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which areas of work or what job are you interested in?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Are there any parts of school or college that you find more difficult? E.g. loud/busy classrooms or long days?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Do you currently receive any support?
Tick the types of support that you receive below:**

Rest breaks Specialist apps for your laptop

Extra time in exams Exam scribe

Note taker Sighted guide

A laptop Support worker

Other (please add):

.....

**Is there any other support you think you'd benefit from?
Circle the types of support that you think you might benefit from:**

Rest breaks Specialist apps for your laptop

Extra time in exams Exam scribe

Note taker Sighted guide

A laptop Support worker

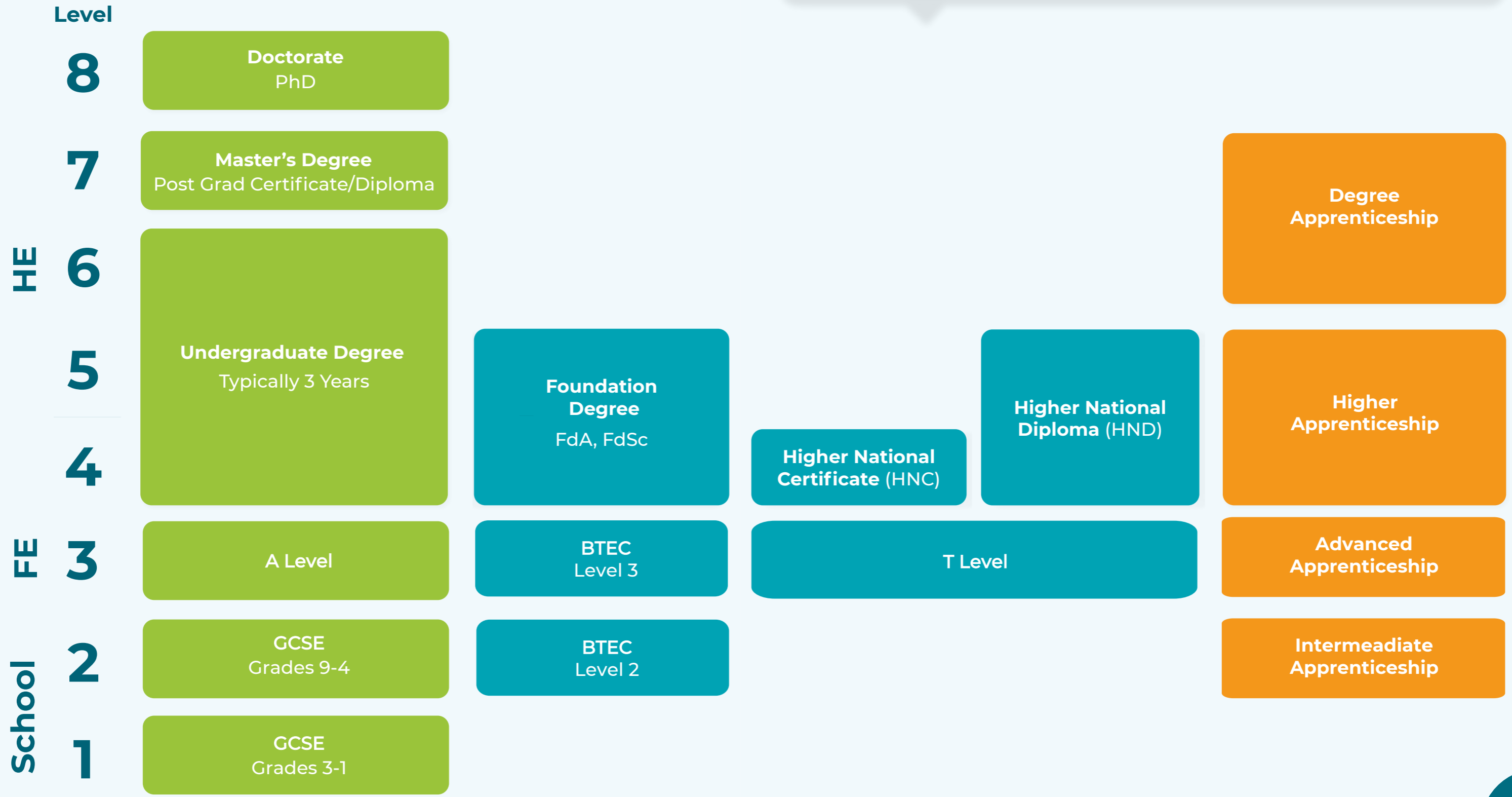
Other (please add):

.....

Qualification Levels

Where you are (and where you can go)

The qualifications on this page are only a selection of the wide variety that you can do, from school through to Further Education (FE) and onto Higher Education (HE) You can find out more about each of the Post-16 qualifications and what they involve on the UCAS website: www.ucas.com/further-education/post-16-qualifications/qualifications-you-can-take



Task

Which courses do your local schools and colleges offer?

.....

.....

Qualifications



Academic

A Levels are courses in traditional academic courses, like the ones you have been studying at school up until GCSE. Most people take three, but you can do more if your school is able to support this. You can find out more about A-levels here: www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/what-to-study/choosing-a-levels

Vocational

Vocational courses combine time in the classroom and time doing 'hands on' or work-based learning. At the moment you can choose from BTECs and T Levels, which are related to particular career sectors, such as Health and Social Care and Engineering. BTECs can be studied alongside A levels and are a good option if you want to try out more than one career sector. It is normal to study 1-3 different BTECs, depending on if you are combining them with other courses.

T levels offer an opportunity to explore a career sector in greater depth; one T-level is equivalent to 3 A levels. While you will spend time studying in the classroom, you will also need to complete a 45-day work placement as part of your course requirements.

If you'd like to study a degree afterwards, both BTECs and T levels are accepted by many universities, although this will depend on where and what you want to study.

You can find out more about these here: www.tlevels.gov.uk and www.findcourses.co.uk/search/btec-courses-uk

Work Based Learning

Apprenticeships are becoming very popular, and you can study them at all levels, from Level 2, all the way through to degree level.

You will apply for one of these in the same way that you apply to a job. If you are accepted onto an apprenticeship, you will spend most of your time in the workplace and earn a wage.

You will also study for a qualification, which is paid for by your employer, alongside your job. Your employer will decide what you study and where. You can find details of apprenticeship vacancies at:

National vacancies: www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

Liverpool City Region vacancies: www.lcrbemore.co.uk/apprenticeship/

Making informed course choices



It's important that if you are thinking about going to university later, and you know that you want to study a specific subject or to study at a particular institution that you check that the level 3 qualifications you are studying will meet their entry requirements.

Task

Use the internet to find out which qualifications are required to study a subject of your choice at each of the following universities. You will be able to find this by searching the name of the university + name of subject + entry requirements.

University	Entry Requirements for Law (Example)	Entry Requirements for (Subject of your choice)
University of Chester	A Levels: BBB BTECs: DDM	
Edge Hill University	A Levels: BBC BTECs: DDM	
University of Liverpool	A Levels: AAA BTECs: D*D*D*	
Liverpool Hope University	A Levels: BBC BTECs: DDM	
Liverpool John Moores University	A Levels: BBC BTECs: DDM	

What do you notice? Are there any patterns in the subjects they are asking you to have studied before? Are the grades that each university asks for similar or different?

Where can I study?

The qualifications we discussed previously - A levels, BTECs and T levels can be studied in either a sixth form or in a Further Education college.

When you are trying to decide where to study, you should consider:

- ▶ Does your school have a sixth form? Would you like to stay there? Does your school offer the qualifications you would like to study?
- ▶ Would you like to study academic, vocational or a work-based qualification(s)?
- ▶ Do you like the structure that a school provides, or are you able to create this for yourself, for example managing (and sticking to!) your own study timetable.
- ▶ Is the school/college that you would like to attend able to support your learning needs?

Sixth Form

College

Offer A-levels and BTECs.

Offer T-levels and Higher Education courses (level 4+), as well as A-levels and BTECs.

Students will be aged 16-19.

As well as 16-19-year-olds, there will also be adults of all ages studying at the college.

Smaller.

Can be very large (2000 people+).

More formal - you may have to wear a school uniform or 'business dress'.

Usually more informal- you will wear your own clothes and may call staff by their first names.

On some rare occasions, you may have an option to attend a sixth form college, which combines elements of the two environments. Like a school, these specialist colleges usually only take students who are aged 16-19, studying classroom-based courses, like A-levels and BTECs, but like a college, you will be expected to be a bit more independent and the atmosphere may be more informal than in a school.

Open Days

Sixth forms and colleges will have open days and open evenings throughout the year. It's a good idea to go to a few of these at the beginning of Year 11, so that you have some time to think about where you'd like to go and to prepare yourself for the transition.

Even if you think you know already where you'd like to go, it's important to visit at least two different schools/colleges so that you're able to compare them.



Task

Find the open evening dates for each of the schools/colleges that you want to visit. You'll be able to find these on each of the institutions' websites. It's also important to ask questions at Open Evenings so you can understand what they will be able to offer you. Some of these questions will be about the course:

- ▶ How many hours of personal study will I need to do outside of class for this course?
- ▶ Is the course assessed mainly through coursework, or through exams?
- ▶ Which skills will the course help me to develop?
- ▶ What have other students who've completed the course gone on to do afterwards?
- ▶ Is this a good course to do if I'd like to become a?

You may also have some questions about the practicalities of attending this school or college?

- ▶ Is there any money available to help pay for textbooks/equipment?
- ▶ What kinds of extra-curricular activities can I become involved in?
- ▶ Am I allowed to leave the campus during my study periods?
- ▶ What study/leisure facilities are available here?

Preparing an apprenticeship application



After all of your research, you may have decided that you'd prefer to do an apprenticeship over doing a level 3 course full time. If this is the case, you will need to apply for your apprenticeship in the same way that you'd apply for a job.

Unlike college courses, you can begin an apprenticeship at any point in the year, so it is important to keep checking company websites to see what is available.

You can also search for apprenticeships at LCR Be More. This is a resource which advertises all of the apprenticeships available in the Liverpool region and these are updated regularly.

This is usually via an online application form, although recruitment processes will vary depending on the company.

If you are successful at the shortlisting stage, you'll be invited for an interview. This is an opportunity for the company to learn more about you and also for you to understand if the role will suit you.

Top tips for interviews

- ▶ Research the company beforehand on the website so that you understand what they do.
- ▶ Prepare answers to questions that you think you might be asked. It's important not to sound as if you're reading from a script, but a little preparation will ensure that you don't feel caught off guard by anything you are asked. You could ask a family member or a friend to give you a practice interview, using the questions below. Common questions include:
 - ▶ What are your strengths/weaknesses
 - ▶ Describe a time when you had to work as part of a team/problem solve/manage your time well.
 - ▶ Why do you want to work at this company?
- ▶ Decide on what to wear to the interview. If you are unsure, you can ask your contact at their company.
- ▶ Leave plenty of time to arrive and try to arrive 5-10 minutes early so you have time to sign in at Reception and settle yourself.
- ▶ At the end of the interview, you'll be given an opportunity to ask your interviewer(s) some questions. Take this opportunity as it shows that you are genuinely interested in what the company does!



Higher Education

Once you've finished compulsory education (until 18), you might want to continue learning. This might be because you have a genuine curiosity about something, want to learn new or refine skills, or because it will help you get into a particular career.

Higher Education refers to all qualifications at Level 4 or above. These fall into the same pathways as Further Education: academic, vocational and work based (see page 12). In most cases, you will need a Level 3 qualification. If you don't have A levels, BTECs or T levels you could complete an Access course.

Higher Education is more flexible than school, for example, you might choose to study part time, rather than full time. Part time takes longer but it's a great option for students who need to work or those who want reduce pressure on themselves.

There is also flexibility in where you study: you could study online, if you didn't want to go onto a campus every day. You also don't have to even study in a building! Some institutions offer online courses and the Open University is entirely remote. If you'd like to study in person, you can study for a degree at a university or a college, with different benefits at each. Colleges can be more local to you, reducing commuting time if you plan to stay at home. They're often a smaller environment, which some students might prefer. You might even have the option to take your Higher Education qualification at the same college that you completed your post-16 studies at, which will provide continuity.

Universities are typically much bigger with a wider range of courses and a larger student body, potentially, giving you more opportunities both academically and socially.

There are also some specialised institutions, like music conservatories and drama schools which offer a limited number of Higher Education courses. If you choose to do a degree apprenticeship, your employer will decide what you study and where.

What support is available?

Whether you choose to study at a college or university, your institution is committed to ensuring you can access academic and social opportunities and will provide support to help you do this.

The support available will vary at each institution but will always be tailored to you, your needs, and your course. Support can be provided for each element of your academic experience: lectures, seminars, practical learning in laboratories and studios, placements, independent study, and accommodation.

Support at a university will be provided by a dedicated team, which might be called something like Student Support, Disability Advice and Guidance, or Inclusion. We'll use the term Student Support in this resource. These are some examples of support available at Shaping Futures partners:

- ▶ Support with managing your time effectively and organising/planning your work.
- ▶ Disability Coaches who can help with initial support enquiries, identifying support you may be eligible for and how to access it.
- ▶ Counselling and mental health support, alongside assessment and support for mental health issues.
- ▶ Transitions Days, which provide an extra opportunity for you to familiarise yourself with the institution and start to set up support.



Almost all colleges and universities will offer you the chance to set up a document that details any reasonable adjustments you need, or recommendations to help you succeed.

The name of this document will vary institution to institution, but might be called a Learning Support Plan, Student Support Information Sheet, or something similar.

This document will be co-created with you by a specialist team within the college or university and can be shared with appropriate staff (such as tutors) to ensure you can access Higher Education.

Disabled Students' Allowance

Alongside the support offered by your university or college, you may be able to apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) as part of your Student Finance package.

DSA is provided to cover study-related costs you might have as the result of a disability which impacts your ability to study, such as a:

- ▶ Specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, or ADHD
- ▶ Mental health condition, such as OCD, anxiety, or depression
- ▶ Physical disability, such as mobility issues, hypermobility, or multiple sclerosis
- ▶ Sensory disability, such as visual impairment or hearing loss
- ▶ Long-term health condition, such as cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome or diabetes

The type of support you get is tailored to you and your individual needs, but you could get help with the costs of:

- ▶ Specialist equipment, such as accessibility software or a laptop
- ▶ Non-medical helpers, such as specialist note takers or BSL interpreters
- ▶ Travel, to facilitate your ability to attend your course or placement
- ▶ Other disability-related study support, such as help with printing costs or a study skills tutor

How do I get Disabled Students' Allowance?

You'll apply online as part of your Student Finance application, at the same time as you apply for your Tuition Fee Loan and Maintenance Loan.

Once you've been accepted, you'll take part in an informal assessment, to discuss the support you'll need based on your individual needs and your course. After this, you'll receive confirmation of the support you'll be receiving and information on how to arrange it.

To find out more about Disabled Students Allowance and see the process visit: www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa



My Support Needs



Schools are much smaller environments than colleges and universities. Your teachers will have had a lot of time to get to know you and will be well aware of your support needs.



This information will not necessarily be passed on to the institution where you go to study for a Higher Education qualification.

It is important that you take on the responsibility for advocating for your needs so your university/college knows how you need to be supported and so that this support is in place from when you begin your Higher Education qualification. This can be a daunting process but it's an important life skill.

A good way to start developing your advocacy skills is self-reflection, so you're confident about what you're asking for and why that is important to you.

The questions on this page are a starting point to support you with this self-reflection.

- ▶ Are there any parts of the school or college day that you find more difficult? E.g. loud/busy classrooms or long days?
- ▶ Do you currently receive any support? E.g. rest breaks in exams or using a laptop to complete your work?
- ▶ Is there any other support you think you'd benefit from? For example, a note taker, access to a quiet room

When you're researching universities and colleges it's important to consider the areas you might need support in and what that support might look like.

The prompts on this page can act as a starting point but you may also want to talk your ideas through with someone you trust. If you have an EHCP or an IEP this can give you some ideas.

After you've done your research and have a shortlist of courses it's time to head to some open days! These are often targeted at year 12 students so there's nothing to stop you going along.

Research

The first stage in your Higher Education journey is deciding what you'd like to study and researching the options around that subject.

Some students will be interested in a career that requires a specific qualification, while others will want to carry on a subject they enjoy.

If you're unsure of what to study, speak to a careers advisor in school or try a careers quiz like www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zh9dmbk as a starting point.

You might start your research stage in Year 12, or earlier, whenever you feel ready to think about your Higher Education journey!



The aim of the research stage is to create a shortlist of courses you'd like to apply to.

Research will look different for everyone, because everyone has different interests, priorities, and needs, but some of the most common criteria for shortlists include:

- ▶ Does this course cover the areas I'm interested in?
- ▶ How far is the university, college or apprenticeship from home? Can I commute in? If I'd need to move away, can I easily travel back if I need to?
- ▶ What are the accommodation options?
- ▶ Can I do work placements, or study abroad?
- ▶ Are the entry requirements roughly in line with my predicted grades?
- ▶ Can the university, college or apprenticeship meet my support needs?

Support is created to give students like us an even standing despite our difficulties.

Jack, Studying Biological and Medical Sciences

Can you think of any other questions that will be important for you during your research?



The last criteria can be the most important one for students with special education needs or disabilities. As part of your research it's important to consider areas you might need support and what that support would look like, so you're able to see if the university or college offers it. The prompts on this page can act as a starting point, but you might also want to talk it through with someone you trust. If you have an EHCP or IDP, this can give you some ideas too.

After you've done your research and have a shortlist of courses, it's time to head to some Open Days. These are often targeted at Year 12 students, but there's nothing to stop you going along earlier!

Task

Use this space to reflect on your support needs:

What are my support needs?

E.g: Note taking, feeling anxious in busy places, needing to access my medication

.....
.....
.....

What would I need to support me with this?

E.g: A note taker, access to smaller classrooms, quiet accommodation on campus

.....
.....
.....

What is an Open Day?

Open Days are events organised by universities and colleges to give you a chance to look around the campus and talk to staff and students. UCAS describes them as 'the best way to get a real taste of university life'.

You'll be able to look at teaching spaces, accommodation and student life buildings, talk to current staff and teaching staff, and attend talks about the university or college.

You can go by yourself, or take a parent, carer or friend along. If you have questions about the support offered at an institution, an Open Day is a great first opportunity to speak to staff and find out more.

To find out when Open Days are taking place, you can visit the university or college website directly, or use the UCAS Open Days search tool.

Employers will often run specific Open Days or Careers events too, in order to promote their apprenticeship schemes.

If I had to give any tips to students with Special Education Needs or Disabilities considering Higher Education, speak to universities on Open Days and ask what support they can offer you, although it may be daunting at first it is 100% worth it.

Lillie, Studying English Language

Task

What are 2 key questions you'd like answered on an open day?

1.
.....
.....
.....
2.
.....
.....
.....

Which open days would you like to attend? Jot the dates down here!

.....
.....
.....
.....

Useful links

UCAS.com

As well as an Open Days search tool, UCAS has guides for lots of different courses, and a course search tool with filters to help you with your shortlist.

UniTasterDays.com

This is a directory of Open Days, taster days, workshops and more, offered by universities and colleges across the country.

TheUniGuide.co.uk and DiscoverUni.gov.uk

These websites provide course profiles with information on entry requirements, course content, graduate outcomes, student satisfaction and more. UniGuide includes the A Level Explorer tool, which suggests what students with your subject combination have gone on to study.

Unibuddy.com/for-students

This is a forum (also available as an app) where you can ask current students questions about the courses and universities that you want to study at.

Top Tips

- ▶ After each Open Day, make a note of what you thought using our Open Day Reflections Log on the next page. Noting your thoughts down at the time means you don't forget anything and can be helpful later on.
- ▶ You can usually register for Open Days in advance and can often ask about any access requirements in the process.
- ▶ Once registered, you'll receive information about what's on offer and can plan your day out to get the most out of it. If you can't attend an in person Open Day, most universities, colleges and employers will offer Virtual Open Days, online chats, or a chance to visit outside of Open Days when things are less busy.
- ▶ As well as Open Days, some universities offer summer residentials for students with additional learning needs and disabilities to Year 12 students, which give you an opportunity to experience university life for yourself. For example the University of Chester run **Taste of University**.

To find out more, contact the universities you'd like to visit.

Open Day Reflection Log

University/College Name:

Date:

I saw:

- Teaching facilities
- Accommodation
- Sports Facilities
- Libraries
- Student Union
- Student Support Teams
-
-

The blank spaces are for you to jot down the important things you want to see beyond this list e.g: music facilities, student health centres, art studios, laboratories.

I asked questions about:

.....
.....
.....

I found out:

.....
.....
.....

What questions do I still have?

.....
.....
.....

What did I like?

.....
.....
.....

What did I dislike?

.....
.....
.....

University/College Name:

Date:

- I saw:**
- Teaching facilities
 - Accommodation
 - Sports Facilities
 - Libraries
 - Student Union
 - Student Support Teams
 -
 -

The blank spaces are for you to jot down the important things you want to see beyond this list e.g: music facilities, student health centres, art studios, laboratories.

I asked questions about:	I found out:
.....
.....
.....
.....

What questions do I still have?
.....
.....
.....

What did I like?	What did I dislike?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

University/College Name:

Date:

- I saw:**
- Teaching facilities
 - Accommodation
 - Sports Facilities
 - Libraries
 - Student Union
 - Student Support Teams
 -
 -

The blank spaces are for you to jot down the important things you want to see beyond this list e.g: music facilities, student health centres, art studios, laboratories.

I asked questions about:	I found out:
.....
.....
.....
.....

What questions do I still have?
.....
.....
.....

What did I like?	What did I dislike?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

University/College Name:

Date:

- I saw:**
- Teaching facilities
 - Accommodation
 - Sports Facilities
 - Libraries
 - Student Union
 - Student Support Teams
 -
 -

The blank spaces are for you to jot down the important things you want to see beyond this list e.g: music facilities, student health centres, art studios, laboratories.

I asked questions about: **I found out:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

What questions do I still have?

.....

.....

.....

What did I like? **What did I dislike?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

University/College Name:

Date:

- I saw:**
- Teaching facilities
 - Accommodation
 - Sports Facilities
 - Libraries
 - Student Union
 - Student Support Teams
 -
 -

The blank spaces are for you to jot down the important things you want to see beyond this list e.g: music facilities, student health centres, art studios, laboratories.

I asked questions about: **I found out:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

What questions do I still have?

.....

.....

.....

What did I like? **What did I dislike?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

You'll probably attend more than 3 Open Days - you can visit www.shaping-futures.org.uk to download extra copies of the Open Day log.

Your Applications



Once you know where you'd like to apply, the next step is completing your UCAS or apprenticeship application and getting it submitted.

For UCAS there are a few different sections, like personal details, qualifications and personal statement.

You'll get help from your school or college and there's lots of guidance on UCAS.com. Apprenticeship applications will be unique to each employer.

UCAS Application

You can create your UCAS account and start your application from around May in Year 12, and can submit from September of Year 12 onwards. The deadline is in late January, unless you're applying for a course at Oxford or Cambridge, or Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Sciences courses at any university. The aim of the application stage is to get your shortlist narrowed to the 5 courses that'll go on your UCAS application, and get your application submitted!

As part of your UCAS personal statement, you will answer three questions. This is your opportunity to stand out amongst all the other applicants! It is recommended that you draft your answers to these questions over the summer between Year 12 and 13 so that you have enough time to have your answers checked over by your school or college and can make an application that you feel happy with.

It will also help you manage your time in Year 13, when you may have lots of other important commitments.

The questions you will answer are:

- Why do you want to study this course or subject?
- How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?
- What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

If you are applying for a joint degree, you will need to talk about both subjects in your answers.

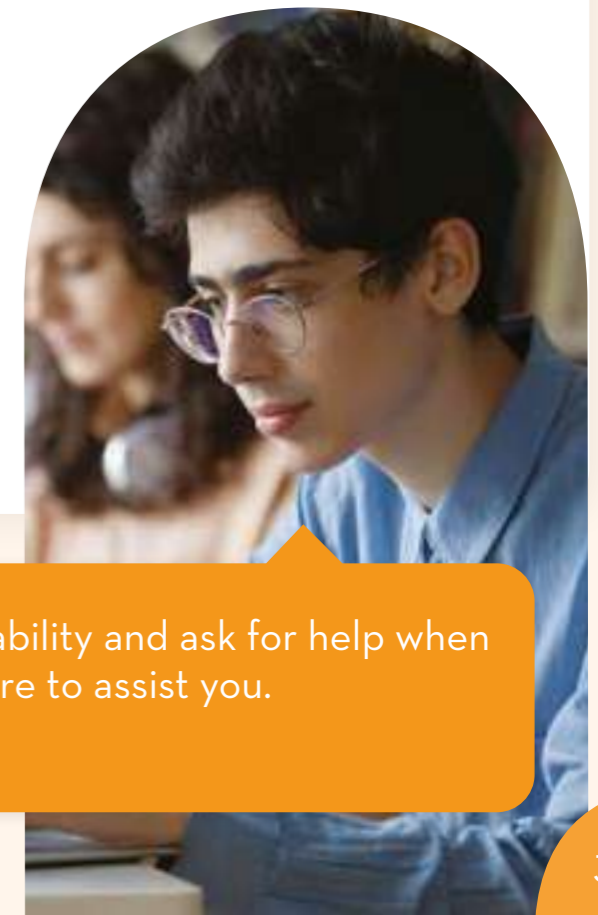
UCAS has created guides for how you might approach answering these questions for different degree subjects, which you can find here: www.ucas.com/explore/search/statement-guides

My school/college deadline is:

Your Applications

Top Tips

- ▶ You'll have the option to disclose your special education needs or disabilities on UCAS - if you feel comfortable doing so, we'd encourage you to do this! It flags to the university or college that you might need some support and can start the process. **It doesn't have any impact on your likelihood of receiving an offer.**
- ▶ Don't wait until the last minute to submit your application!
- ▶ Check if your course has any additional entry requirements, like an interview, admissions test, portfolio submission or audition. If they do, contact the institution in advance to discuss any adjustments you might need. You can also make a note of any key timings if they're available - for example, that interviews or auditions at one of your choices are always in the first week of December. This will help you plan ahead and know what your term might look like.
- ▶ You can apply to some Higher Education courses delivered at colleges direct to the College.
- ▶ If you'd like to do this, check with the college for the dates relevant to them.
- ▶ If you're applying to Higher or Degree Apprenticeships, you'll apply direct to the employer. Applications for apprenticeships are similar to jobs, they are advertised all year around with deadlines specific to the role. You can search for these through UCAS but will be directed to the employer to apply.



Don't be afraid to disclose your disability and ask for help when needed. The university staff are there to assist you.

Ammar, Studying Law



Offer Holder Days



After you receive an offer, you'll usually receive an invitation to an Offer Holder Day at the university or college.

This is like an Open Day, but more focused on your course. You might have a chance to look at the facilities, take part in a taster lecture, view the accommodation, or meet more current staff and students.

Offer Holder Days are usually quieter and smaller than an Open Day, and can be a useful tool if you're holding multiple offers and unsure which to Firm/Insure. Offer Holder Days are also a great time to meet with Student Support to discuss your support needs if you'd prefer to do this in person.

Student Finance

Student Finance opens in February or March each year, the exact date varies. You can sign up via the Student Finance website to be notified when applications open.

Once they're open, you'll create an online account, as will your parents/carers if you're applying for more than the minimum maintenance loan. You'll also indicate if you'd like to apply for additional support such as Disabled Students' Allowance. The whole process usually takes 30 minutes or less, but it's a very important part of the process!

Alongside the support you'll receive from Student Finance, you might be eligible for bursaries, scholarships or other financial support from your university or college.

Useful Links

www.gov.uk/student-finance

- The official Government site providing an overview of the support available, application and repayment process. There is also a calculator you can use before applications open each year to give you a rough idea of how much maintenance loan you'll receive.

www.youtube.com/sffilm

- Student Finance England offers video guides to each element of the Student Finance process including applications, how parents/carers complete their sections, finance for part time students and more.

Top Tips

Complete your Student Finance application as soon as it opens. This helps ensure your finance is in place for the start of your course and is especially important if you'll be applying for Disabled Students' Allowance, as this has a longer processing time.

You do need to put down a university or college and course you'll be studying - if you don't have all your offers, pop your favourite down, you can always update it later.

Decision making

After submitting your UCAS form, you'll then wait to hear from your 5 choices about whether they can make you an offer.

This can be stressful, so if you're finding it difficult, please have a chat with someone you trust. Once you receive responses from your 5 choices, you'll select Firm and Insurance choices from the offers you're holding.

Your Firm is your first choice, where you most want to go. Your Insurance is the choice you'd want if you didn't meet the conditions of your Firm choice offer. It would usually have slightly lower requirements than your Firm.

Accessing support

Once you have your offers, it's a good idea to contact each university to start discussing the support they could offer you and what the process is to get this in place.

The most important thing is to know what your next steps are at each institution, and the best place to start is usually by contacting the Student Support teams.

If you have one, it can be helpful to share your EHCP at this stage. While it doesn't apply in Higher Education in the same way it does at school or college, it can be helpful as a starting point to discuss your support needs and identify areas where support might be useful. You don't need to share the whole EHCP, you could share the relevant parts.

Once you've contacted each university or college where you hold an offer, note down the name and email/telephone number of the relevant person or team.



Transition



After you've made your Firm and Insurance Choices, you can start to relax in terms of your Higher Education journey and turn your focus to your final exams and coursework deadlines, while also getting excited as you plan for September.

Independent Living

If you're planning to move out for university or college, you'll need to apply for student accommodation. The options will vary from institution to institution, so it's important to consider what might suit you best – on campus or off campus, en-suite or shared bathroom, studio or shared flat, university college owned or private etc. The process of applying for accommodation will be different at each university or college, so it's important to carefully check the institution's website, or get this information on an Open Day or Offer Holder Day.

If you're opting for a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship, you won't usually be able to access student accommodation and may need to opt for living at home or a private rental. You should chat to your employer for advice.

Before you make any decisions, you should reflect on whether you have any specific needs that your accommodation would need to accommodate, such as:

- ▶ **Shreya**
A Law student needed accommodation with space for a mini fridge in her room to help her with managing Type 1 Diabetes.
- ▶ **Anna**
An Environmental Science student, needed a studio flat to help her manage her OCD.
- ▶ **Ellen**
A Geography student, needed a ground floor flat because of her ME/CFS.

Your Reflection

Results Day

On Results Day you'll receive your final grades and UCAS will update to show if you've received a place on your chosen course.

The UCAS Results Day page: www.ucas.com/undergraduate has a guide about what to expect.

After you've been accepted, your university or college will be in touch to discuss what happens next. This might include additional opportunities to visit the campus, prep work for your course, accommodation deadlines, finalising any support you've previously been discussing with them or move-in dates.

It's important to keep on top of your emails from your new institution as there may be important tasks you need to complete.

Clearing

UCAS Clearing shows all the courses that still have places available, so you can see if any suit you and then contact those institutions to see if they can offer you a place. You'll usually get answers quite quickly.

Using Clearing can be an unexpected change to your plans, so you might want to have a parent/carer, teacher or trusted friend support you as you go through the process.

Your teachers or careers advisors can provide guidance and advice on your options. A great place to start can be those universities or colleges you looked at in your initial research, but who didn't make the final five.

If you secure a place through Clearing, you'll need to update Student Finance with your new course and institution, and contact the Student Support team there to discuss your support needs.

You can usually visit the campus at an Open Day around this time to check it is the right choice for you and ask any questions you have.

Every school and college will do Results Day slightly differently, so check in advance:

- ▶ Do you receive your results in person or online?
- ▶ If you get them in person, what time does the building open?
- ▶ Are you allowed to bring someone for support if you'd like?
- ▶ Who can you speak to on the day if you have questions, or if things don't go to plan?

Top Tip

If Results Day doesn't go as well as you'd hoped, and you don't receive the grades you need for your Firm or Insurance choice, Clearing provides an opportunity to get a place on another course.

Student Life



There's a lot more to Higher Education than your academic studies – you'll also have lots of options to meet new people, socialise and try out new things that you may never have encountered.

A **Student Union** is the heart of your student social life. They put together social events, list volunteering opportunities, house societies and sports teams for a wide range of different hobbies and interests. They're run by students for students, and offer all kinds of support too!

Student Societies give you a chance to pursue an existing interest, or take up a new one, make friends and have fun. No matter what you're interested in, you'll find a society for it – there are Disney Societies, Film Societies, Gaming Societies, Pro Wrestling Societies and much more!

If you're interested in sports, the **Student Athletic Union** might be of interest. Each university or college

will have a range of sports teams, representing the most common sports like football and basketball, as well as ones you might not see as often, like cheerleading, ultimate frisbee and table tennis. There'll be teams for all levels of skill and experience too.

There will also be lots of existing communities you can tap into for support and to meet other students in a similar situation, such as Disabled Students Societies.

Once you've made your Firm choice, visit their Student Union website and make a list of the societies you'd like to try!



I'm happy to report that I really found my footing at university and discovered a joy to being independent and responsible for myself. I've also made a bunch of friends and my social circles continue to grow as I progress through university.

Zack, Studying Computer Science

Top Tips

▶ **Be proactive in seeking out support and advocating for yourself**

Make sure that you have a meeting with an advisor to get a support plan in place as soon as possible. You can then talk through what adjustments could be made for you, so there is not a long period of time where you are without support.

I would also recommend letting your tutor know about your disability, so you can talk to them too if you are struggling. You deserve the support that has been given to you – so don't be afraid to ask for an extension if you need it.

Ellen, Studying Geography

▶ **Communicate if there's an issue, or something isn't working well, let someone know as soon as you can.**

I know that it's hard to disclose personal information but being open about it has allowed me to access so much more support than I even knew was available to me.

Anna, Studying Environmental Sciences

▶ **You'll have so many opportunities available to you, embrace them and try new things!**

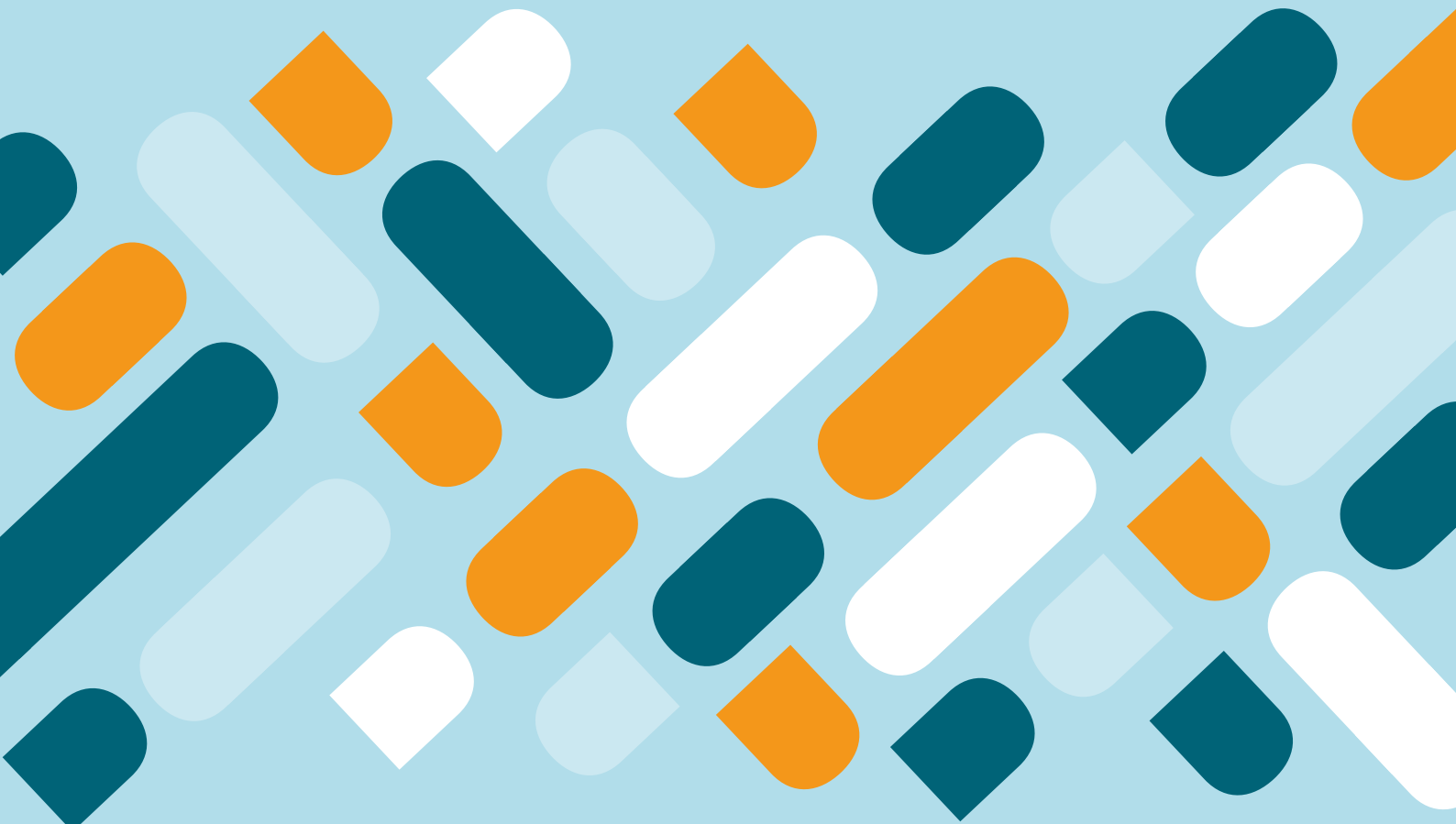
Remember to look after yourself and your own needs, but at the same time please do push yourself out of your comfort zone. You may find new hobbies or friends that you wouldn't have otherwise!

Zack, Studying Computer Science



SHAPING FUTURES

The Merseyside Collaborative
Outreach Programme



Contact us

You can contact us by
email admin@shaping-futures.info
or www.shaping-futures.org.uk

    [@shapingfutures_](https://twitter.com/shapingfutures_)

