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# **National Network for the Education of Care Leavers**

## **NNECL *pronounced neck-ell***





I left school midway through my a'levels. I had o'levels and was worried about becoming homeless, so I got a job.

I joined the civil service and stayed for nearly 30 years.

I went to college – day release. To get promoted into the jobs I wanted I needed a media related degree. I went to university in the evenings – I graduated in my mid 30's.

Now in my 50's I'm studying towards a masters.

My educational journey is not that unusual for people from care backgrounds.

We're a charity working UK wide. We work with education practitioners and care system professionals to transform the progression of young people from care, estranged and sanctuary seeking backgrounds into and through further and higher education. Our lived experience gives us a unique opportunity to help policymakers understand how frameworks impact in real life and to build trust with the care experienced community. Our ambition is for more young people with care backgrounds to consider, access and flourish through apprenticeships, further and higher education into fulfilling careers which will sustain them for life.

### Why we exist?

- 14% of care leavers go to university vs 47% of the wider population
- Once at university the drop-out rate is unacceptably high – 36% vs 6% of their peers
- Estranged students and those seeking sanctuary face similar barriers and challenges
- At the current rate of progress, it will take 107 years to achieve post-16 educational parity

Members include working with NNECL in Access and Participation Plans and their work towards giving students pathways to be successful in their studies and in their careers after they graduate.



## Why does post-16 education matter?

The single most important thing for adults in our society to live a happy and healthy life is a job that sustains them. Being able to feed, clothe and house yourself gives you mental security and the foundations on which to go build a life, go out with your friends, go travelling, fall in love, have a family, enjoy hobbies, climb Ben Nevis or become a turkey farmer.

The World Economic Forum's [Future of Jobs Report 2023](#) finds 23% of jobs are expected to change in the next five years, driven by industry transformation caused by increased adoption of technology, the green economy and macro-economic conditions.

Good jobs help people to build themselves up, provide stable incomes and a sense of accomplishment, hope and belonging. Good jobs are fundamental to the growth of economies in the short run and across generations and in raising standards of living.



The barriers facing care leavers entering higher education have been well researched over the last 20 years;

- **19% of children in care get a good GCSE in Maths & English compared to 65% overall**
- the stark difference in attainment between looked after children and their peers
- disrupted education, sometimes involving several placements and school moves
- financial exclusion and relationship to money
- **low expectations from key influencers and trusted adults**
- the impact of early childhood trauma
- In [a UCAS survey](#) of 500 care experienced applicants to university, 60% said they received no specific information about the support available to them in higher education

**We know that young people from care backgrounds are likely to access higher education later than their peers**



For people with care backgrounds going to university is proven to level up career success

- By age 27, 22% of care leavers are in employment compared to 57% of non-care leavers. For university graduates, 71% of care leavers are in full time employment compared to 77% of non-care experienced graduates
- Care leavers who graduate from university earn, on average £660 less than non-care leavers, just 18 months after graduation



## Maslow's hierarchy of needs



A person can only move on to addressing higher-level needs when their basic needs are adequately fulfilled

Money values are the core beliefs and principles shaping our relationship with money and driving decisions regarding how we spend, save, or invest. Our financial values are often shaped by our lived experiences; age, family's values, religious or spiritual beliefs, culture, or socio-economic background. Some examples of money values include freedom, security, legacy, genericity, or experiences.

As Brits we don't talk about money or only consider our financial values when we're thinking about investments, savings and our risk appetite.

- Our young people are constantly told there is no money in the system
- Student finance is usually considered debt to our young people and sits firmly in SAFETY NEEDS





## Flipping the script

NNECL members offer vulnerable young people mental health support, financial bursaries, year-round accommodation and a consistent contact so they don't need to keep explaining their circumstances. Local Authorities ensure staff deeply understand educational pathways, its barriers and set their young people up for success.

Cited as good practice in the final recommendations of Josh MacAlister MP's 2022 Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England, the NNECL Quality Mark supports staff in post-16 learning spaces to transform their institutions experience for care leavers.

Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills; "The NNECL Quality Mark is an important tool for improving access and raising standards for care experienced students across the post-16 landscape. I would encourage institutions to continue to work towards their accreditation."

# The Quality Mark Wheel of Success

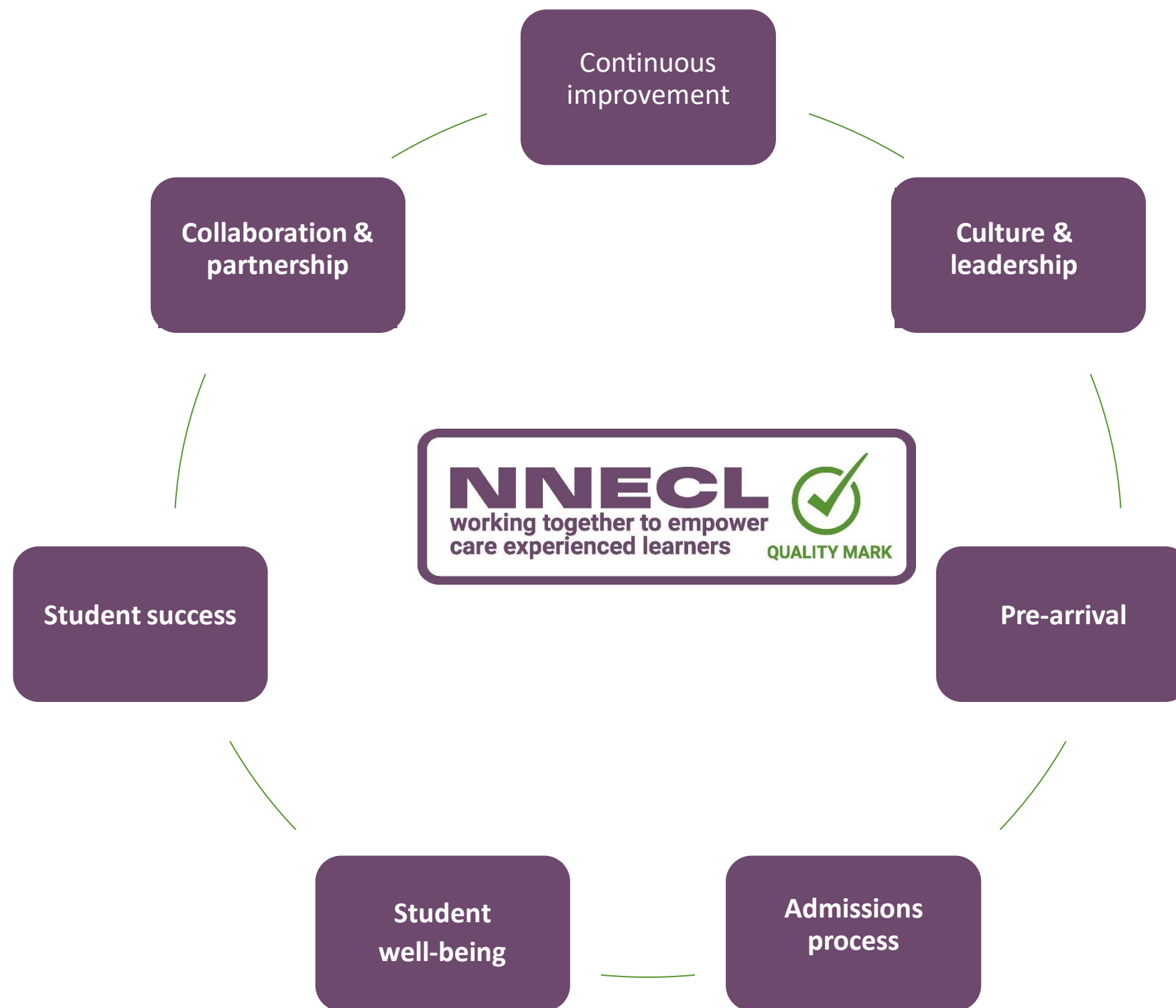
7 areas, covering whole student lifecycle, culture/leadership, collaboration & partnership, plus ongoing evaluation

Proportionate & contextualized, reflecting diversity of institutions across HE/FE and the different policy contexts across the UK

Awarded for 3 years with mid-point review of the action plan

Building on Tick the Box and the Care Covenant, the Quality Mark asks for

- ✓ strategic commitment and data tracking to ensuring the success of students with care backgrounds
- ✓ ongoing and continuous professional development to staff, across departments to improve outcomes for our students



# What does success look like?



# That's a lot, what can I do now?

- ✓ Prioritize Maths and English
- ✓ Cookery, everyday money management, self care
- ✓ Student success email address not care.experience@univeristy.ac.uk
- ✓ Role model and be a champion
- ✓ Mind your language, would you like some support instead of help
- ✓ Normalise basic meals
- ✓ Talk about everyday money management
- ✓ Ask young people about their future selves and what career they might enjoy
- ✓ Learn what students need and keep them involved
- ✓ Invite former students to look back and tell you what they needed
- ✓ Develop realistic strategic plans with qualitative and quantitative data all the other actions

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NORTH EAST  
RAISING ASPIRATION  
PARTNERSHIP

# SUPPORTING CARE- EXPERIENCED STUDENTS INTO UNIVERSITY



Durham  
University



Newcastle  
University



Northumbria  
University  
NEWCASTLE



University of  
Sunderland



Teesside  
University

# SESSION OVERVIEW

- What is NERAP?
- Regional Care Leaver Covenant Offer
- NERAP Choices Together Programme
- Support at Partner universities
- Student life
- UCAS and Student finance
- Top tips for supporters!
- Summary and Q+A

# WHAT IS NERAP?

- Collaboration of the 5 universities in the North East
- Ensuring every young person has fair access to education
- Point of contact for Higher Education in the North East, particularly pre-16 and vulnerable groups
  - Engage. Inform. Inspire.





# REGIONAL CARE LEAVER COVENANT

All five universities have signed up to the Care Leaver Covenant as a regional partnership to ensure students who choose to study at any of the university Partners will be guaranteed continued support to access, succeed and progress.



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- Consistent offer of support for care-experienced students accessing higher education aligned with Care Leaver Covenant core outcomes
- Covers four areas; pre-entry, post-entry, employment and community



# REGIONAL CARE LEAVER COVENANT

## PRE-ENTRY

- Choices Together Progressive programme from Y7-13
- Named University contact who engages with the working group and has, or is willing to develop underlying knowledge of care-experienced students
- Automatic eligibility for University supported entry routes where relevant



# REGIONAL CARE LEAVER COVENANT

## POST-ENTRY

- Year-round accommodation available and possible social activities through vacation periods
- **Consider offering a £2,000 bursary** for all care-experienced Students
- Contact made when a student registers confirming the wellbeing services available



# REGIONAL CARE LEAVER COVENANT

## EMPLOYMENT

- CV/application/interview support offered by university careers services during course and up to three years post-graduation
- Look to actively target care-experienced students for Student Ambassador or equivalent positions and offer a guaranteed interview



# REGIONAL CARE LEAVER COVENANT

## COMMUNITY

- Offer rooms on campus for care-experienced student events, e.g., Local Authority foster carer training
- All Partners are NNECL and NorthCLASS members
- Consider holding a regional Christmas dinner via the Christmas Dinner Project- Joint effort between Partners and NERAP working with the wider community.



# SUPPORT AT PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

EACH INSTITUTION PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR CARE-EXPERIENCED STUDENTS IN AREAS SUCH AS:

- Supported entry schemes
- Bursaries/scholarships
- Wellbeing services
- Academic support
- Support with accommodation
- Graduation support



# CHOICES TOGETHER

## WHAT IS IT?

- Discover all about being a university student and what Higher Education can offer you!
- Exciting on-campus events with personalised support sessions
- Meet new friends!

**Join us at any time from Y7 to  
Y13!**



WHO IS IT FOR? 

You must be aged between 11 and 18 and be a care-experienced young person

HOW MUCH IS IT? 

The activities and sessions are all completely free!

# CHOICES TOGETHER





WHEN IS IT?



# CHOICES TOGETHER

The sessions run from November until July.

You will be given a personalised timetable with exact dates once you have signed up to the programme



# CHOICES TOGETHER

## : THE FEEDBACK



“It was nice to meet new people and learn about university life at different universities across the UK”

*Young Person*

“Having the opportunity to meet and interact with the medical staff and learning aspects of what their role entails and having the opportunity to take part in the session in a “ward” helped to give an insight into a profession in medicine was very beneficial. We were surrounded by positive and welcoming people throughout the day.”

*Parent/Carer*

“The subject taster sessions gave my daughter information about the different types of law and included the young people in the session”

*Parent/Carer*

“The discussions about their futures not being limited and all the different ways to get to a chosen outcome were very beneficial. Thank you to all the presenters both the teaching staff and the students. They were all really good with the kids and pitched their communication at the right level”

*Parent/Carer*

“The Choices Representatives have been excellent – really lovely, warm and welcoming”

*Parent/Carer*



# CHOICES TOGETHER

: FURTHER SUPPORT



## Mini Guide to Higher Education

NERAP have further developed the bespoke programme of support for young carers and care-experienced young people through the publication of a **Mini Guide to Higher Education**. This has now been distributed within the network of young carers services and local authorities.



# STUDENT LIFE



# WHAT CAN UNIVERSITY OFFER?



Travel & live somewhere new!



Have fun and make new friends!



Amazing opportunities!



or volunteer!

Join a sports club..



or create your own society..



Become a student ambassador or mentor..

Work for the University radio, newspaper or radio..



# MAKING DECISIONS...

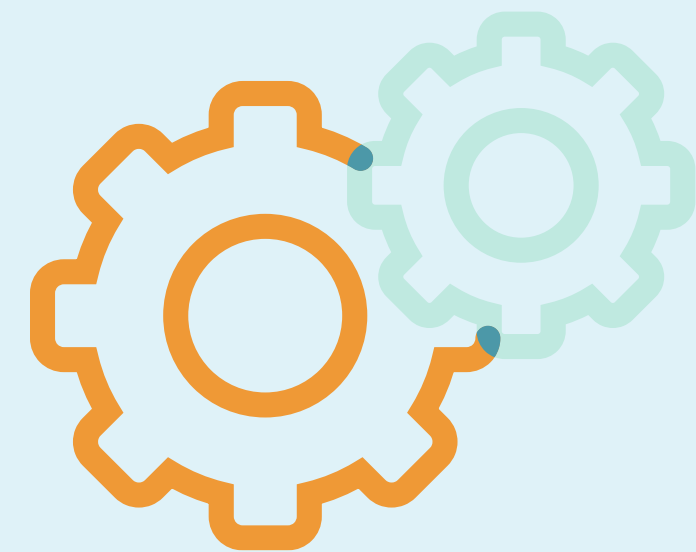
With over 52,000 courses to choose from, here are some questions to consider.



What do you enjoy?



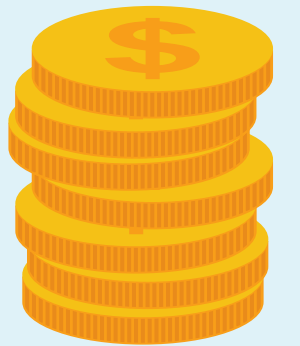
What are you good at?



Specific career plans?

# STUDENT FINANCE - SUPPORTING CARE-EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

- Ensure students choose to share their financial information with universities they have applied to
- Check the financial support that their local authority may offer.
- Have a look at the offer of financial support that each institution offers ahead of time.



# UCAS- SUPPORTING CARE-EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

- Ensure students tick the box on their UCAS application
- UCAS offer specific advice and guidance for care-experienced students on their website
- Support students to research any supported entry routes that Universities offer- most will offer care-experienced students access to these
- Speak to students about their options and support them with researching



# STUDENT FINANCE - SUPPORTING CARE-EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

- The named contact at each university also provides support for any financial queries.
- SFE offer specific guidance for care-experienced and estranged students when applying for Student Finance
- If students have a disability, including mental health conditions, long-term illness or specific learning difficulties, they can also apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance.



# HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Research early
- Know the deadlines
- Browse courses
- Attend open days
- Understand Student Finance
- Be prepared for results day (clearing/adjustment)
- Understand entry requirements
- Read Personal Statements

# USEFUL LINKS

- **NERAP:** <https://www.nerap.ac.uk/students/care-leavers-covenant/>
- **NNECL:** [www.nnecl.org](http://www.nnecl.org)
- **UCAS toolkit and training:**  
<https://www.ucas.com/advisers/toolkits/adviser-toolkit-supporting-students-individual-needs/supporting-care-experienced-students>
- **Student Finance England:** <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/care-leaver-opportunities/>
- **Propel:** <https://propel.org.uk/UK/>
- **Become:** <https://becomecharity.org.uk/get-information/higher-and-further-education>

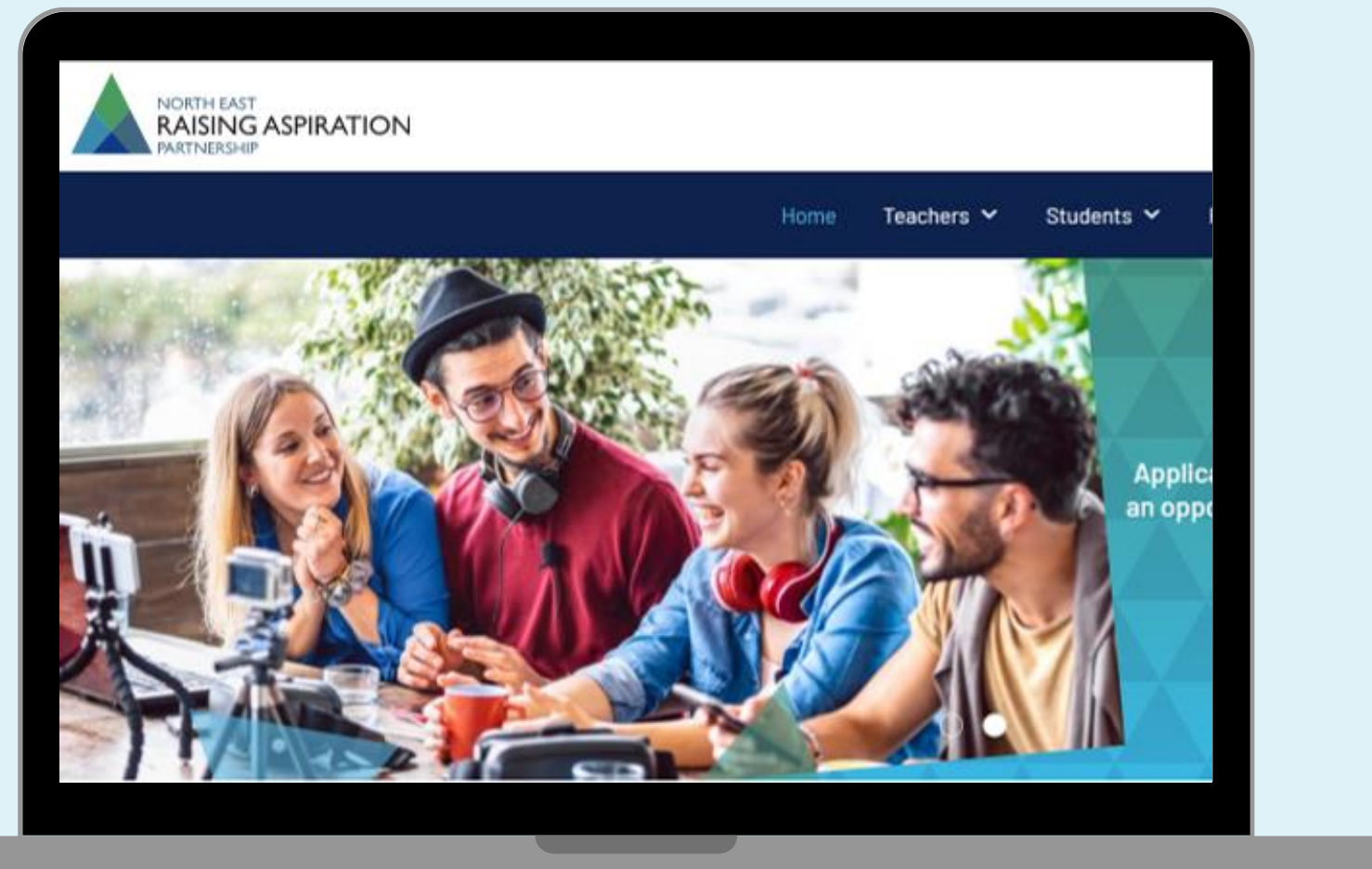
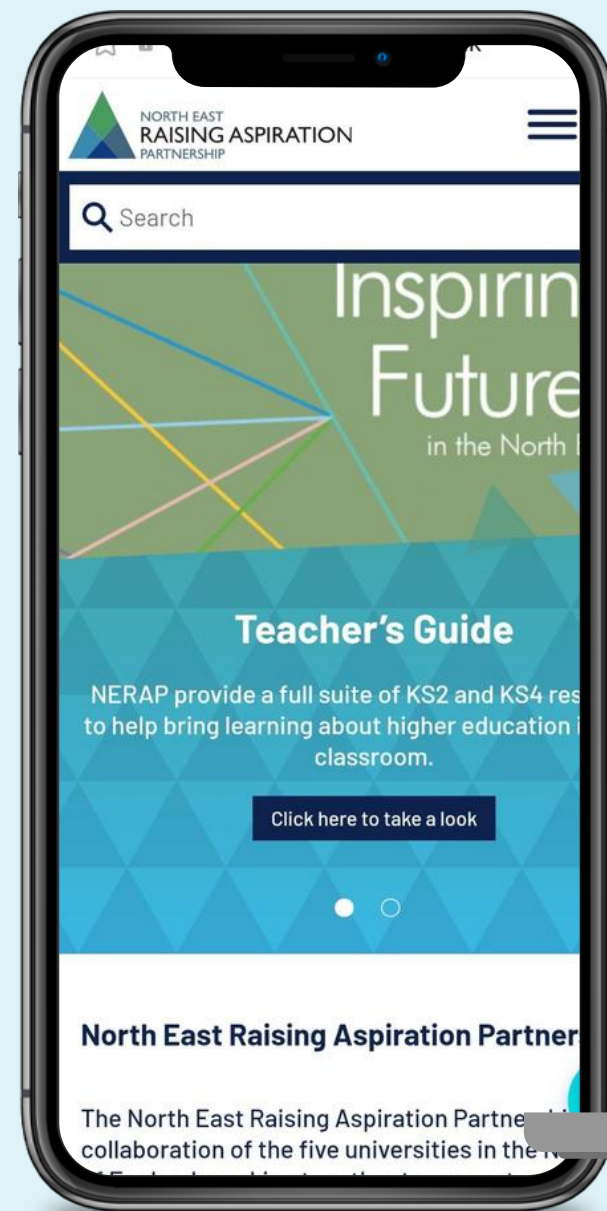
# TOP TIPS FOR SUPPORTERS

- Research support available - [Propel website](#)
- Check with local authorities regarding any further support
- Visit university campuses and meet with support services

# nerap.ac.uk



@NERAP\_Team



THANK YOU  
ANY QUESTIONS?

