

Office for  
Students

The logo for the Office for Students, featuring a dark blue square with a yellow square in the top right corner containing the letters 'OfS' in white.

OfS

# The role of parents in decisions about higher education

Catherine Cameron

Senior Higher Education Policy Adviser –  
Student Information

NEON summit: engaging with key influencers – 3  
December 2018

Follow us on Twitter at  
**officestudents**

# Who we are

- The independent regulator for higher education in England
- We aim to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers
- Our work covers all students:
  - undergraduate or postgraduate
  - young or mature
  - full-time or part-time
  - studying on a campus or by distance learning
  - regardless of nationality.

# Our objectives

Every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers.

## Participation

### Objective 1

All students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

## Experience

### Objective 2

All students, from all backgrounds, receive a high quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of provider, campus or course closure.

## Outcomes

### Objective 3

All students, from all backgrounds, are able to progress into employment, further study, and fulfilling lives, and their qualifications hold their value over time.

## Value for money

### Objective 4

All students, from all backgrounds, receive value for money.

# What we do

- Our functions, powers and duties are set out by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. Our regulatory framework explains how we will perform these duties.
- We regulate registered English higher education providers. We do this by:
  - creating and maintaining a register of higher education providers who must meet a range of conditions
  - working to ensure that students and prospective students have access to high quality information, advice and guidance
  - providing pressure and support to providers to improve equality of opportunity
  - promoting excellence and innovation in teaching
  - working with providers and employers to address skills gaps and make graduates more employable.

# Why this matters

- Our work is important for all students. We want to ensure that all students, from all backgrounds, can:
  - access courses that meet their needs and aspirations
  - enjoy courses which stretch and inspire them, and lead to positive outcomes
  - leave courses equipped with the knowledge, qualifications, skills and attributes they need to find employment, embark on further study or to set up their own business
  - flourish in the world as it is today and might be tomorrow.

# Our current work

- Three strands which are highlighting the importance of engagement with parents:
  - Development of a strategy for information, advice and guidance
  - Working towards a new online resource to support student decision making
  - Funded outreach activities

# Improving information, advice and guidance

- Our business plan sets out the need to improve students' ability to make the right choices for them about HE through good information, advice and guidance
- We are developing a strategy for achieving this, working with a range of partners
  - Government bodies and policy makers
  - Other information providers and higher education providers
  - Careers and business organisations
  - Students, parents, careers advisers

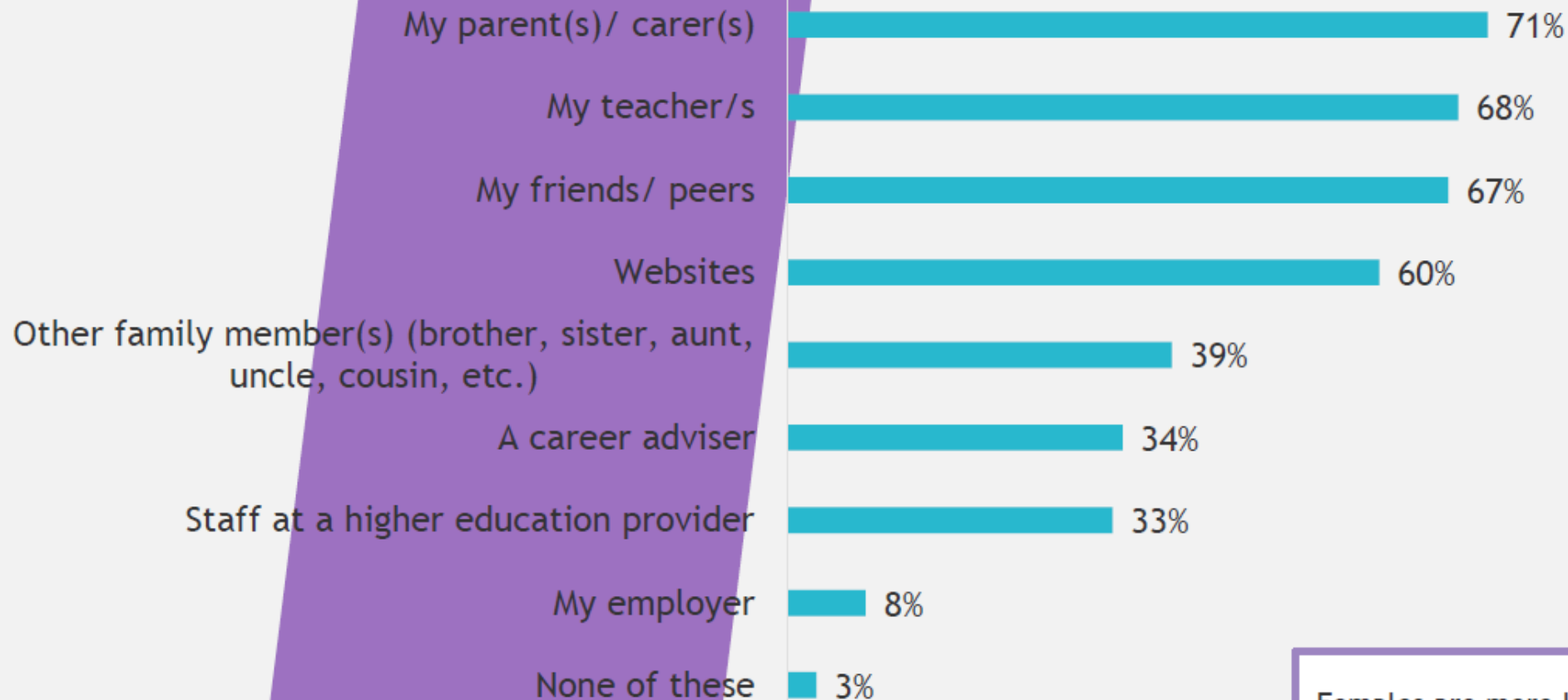
# Improving information, advice and guidance

- Our approach is based on evidence
  - Review of information about teaching, learning and the student experience
  - Literature review on student information behaviour by CFE Research
  - Large scale polling
  - In depth interviews and focus groups
- Key findings about information, advice and guidance
  - Existing landscape cluttered/patchy/poor quality
  - Importance of personalisation
- Timescale for developing our approach
  - Engagement ongoing, consultation soon [www.officeforstudents.org.uk](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk)
  - Strategy due in spring/summer 2019



# Where do applicants go for info about what/where to study?

Applicants are more likely to go to their parents, teachers and peers than websites



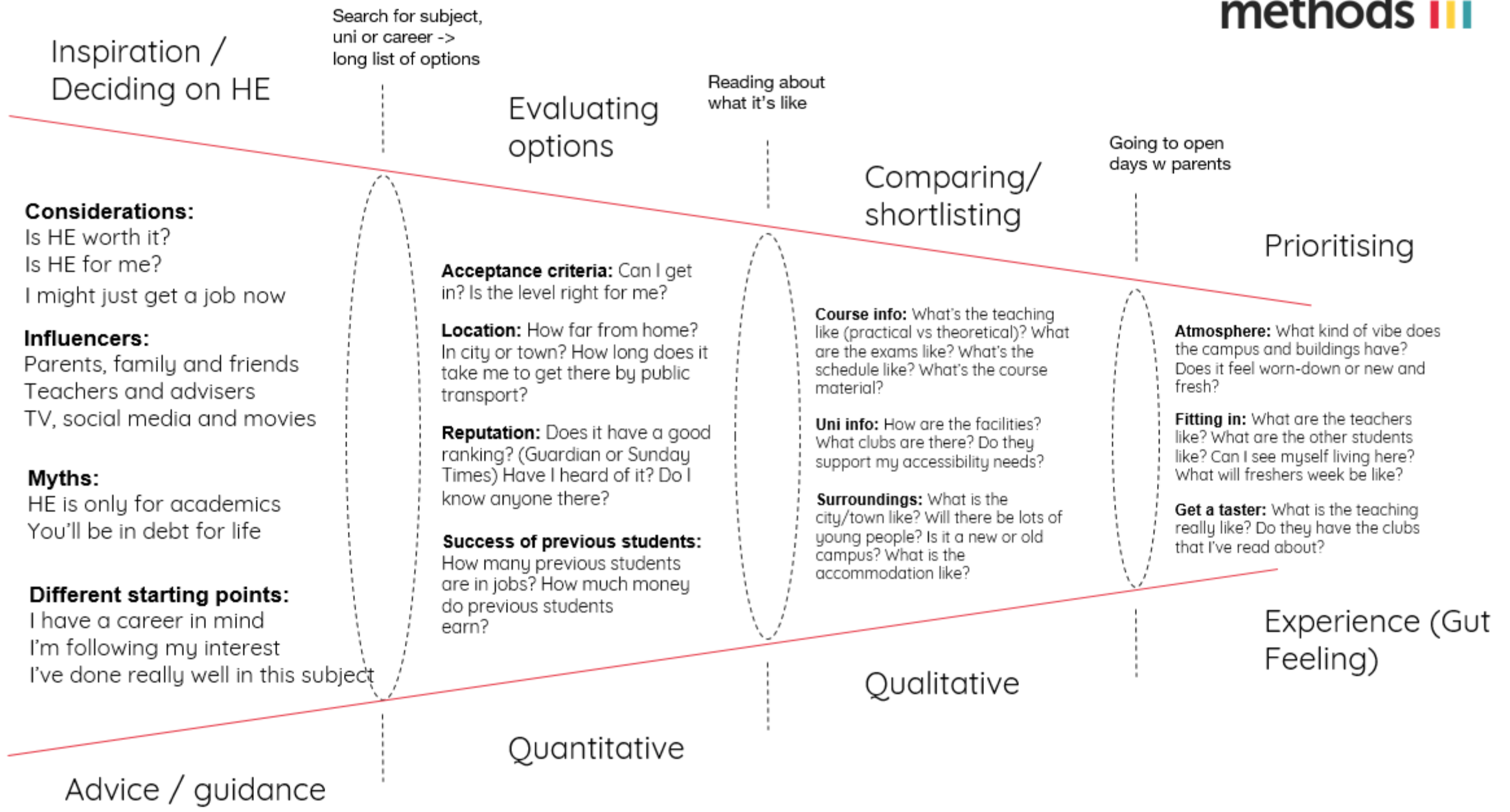
Females are more likely to consult their parents/carers than males.

Will you consult or have you consulted any of the following to help you make your choice about what, and where, to study? Base: Applicants only (529)

# A new resource to support decision making

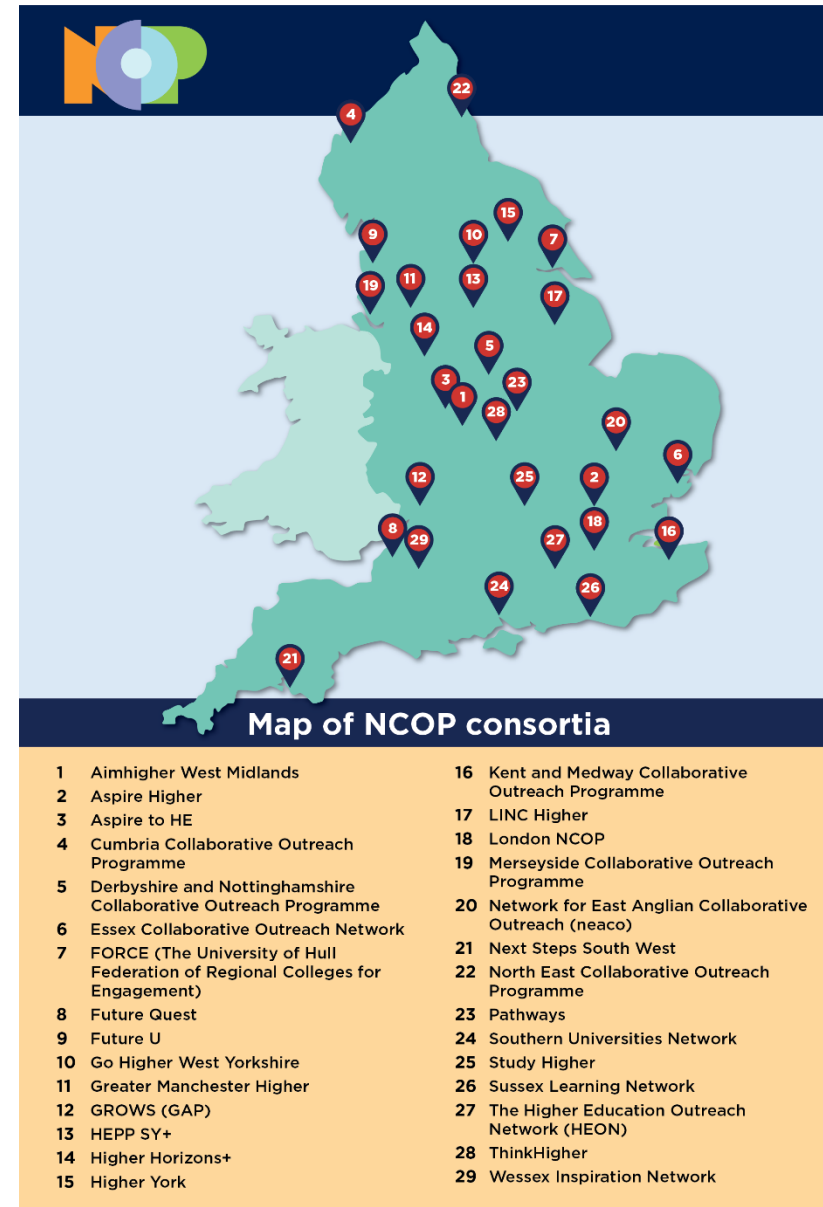
- We are also developing a new resource to support student decision making about higher education. Work so far has found:
  - Something different is needed – too much information, not enough support
  - Importance of personalisation – we're all different
  - Big decision
  - Some students need more help
  - Myths and misperceptions
  - Influencers need support too – parents are key in the decision whether to go into higher education

# Decision making journey and user needs



# National collaborative outreach programme

- National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) brings together 29 partnerships of universities, colleges and other local partners to deliver outreach programmes to young people in years 9 to 13.
- Work is focused on local areas where higher education participation is lower than might be expected given the GCSE results of the young people who live there.

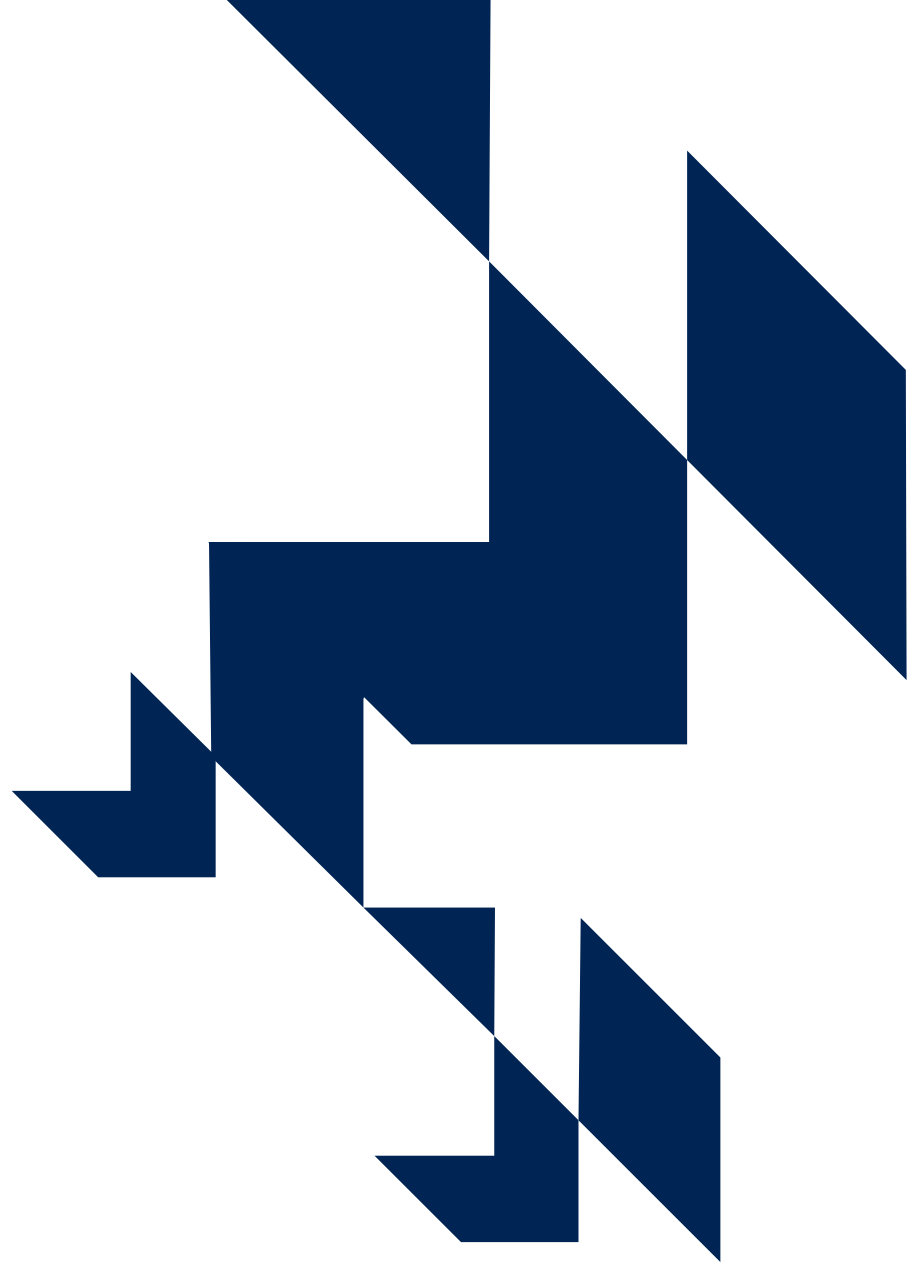


# National collaborative outreach programme

## NCOP evaluation

- Survey of 28,000 young people found parents have a significant influence on decisions that young people make about careers and education, yet a substantial proportion of the young people surveyed know of no-one in their family who has experience of higher education.
- Engaging with parents and carers to ensure they are equipped to support young people to make an informed decision forms part of the approach of almost all NCOP consortia (28 of 29 report that they are engaging with this group).

**Questions?**



Office for  
Students

The logo for the Office for Students, featuring a dark blue square with a yellow square in the top right corner containing the letters 'OfS' in white.

OfS

# Thank you for listening

## Copyright ©

The copyright in this presentation is held either by the Office for Students (OfS) or by the originating authors. Please contact [info@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:info@officeforstudents.org.uk) for further information and re-use requests.