



MAPPING ME

A Toolkit for Discovering Your
Learning Strengths, Needs, and
How to Share Them with Others



Introduction

This toolkit is designed to help you recognise and understand your learning needs in a way that reflects your identity, experiences, strengths, and challenges. It aims to support you in developing greater self-awareness and confidence in communicating your learning styles, preferences, and any barriers you may experience.

You can use this toolkit in whatever way feels right for you - as a private space for reflection, or as a tool to support conversations in different areas of your life, such as with a teacher, manager, coach, colleague, or family member. It can act as a starting point for open and constructive dialogue.

You are never required to share anything you are not comfortable disclosing.



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Using This Toolkit



Scan the QR code to access a digital version of this toolkit. The digital version can be edited on Adobe Acrobat using the fill in forms fields (for text) and drawing tools.



In this toolkit, you can:



Highlight, circle, write and draw in it



Share it with a tutor:
Scan the above QR code for a staff guidance pack.



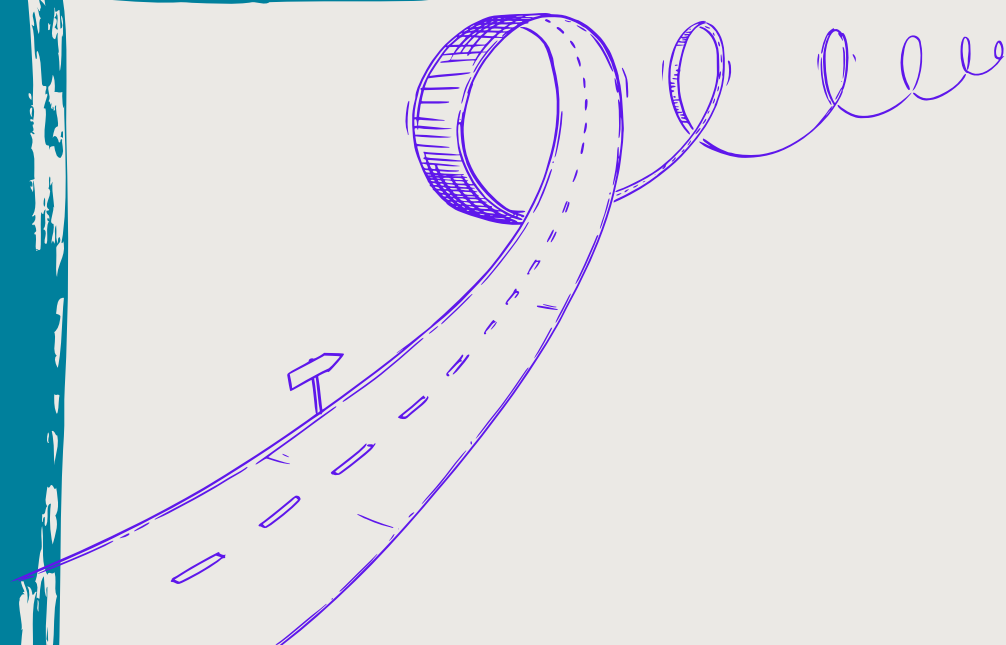
Take your time and skip sections that aren't useful for you at this time.



Remember: You are always in control of what you choose to share.

Use this booklet as a tool for empowerment, not a form to complete.

Tip: Look at the areas you'd like to share, then use the conversation starters (from page 15) to help you express them in your own words.



Mapping My Journey

This section is designed for you to pause, reflect, and respond.

Through a series of activities, you can develop a deeper understanding of how you learn, and what helps you thrive.

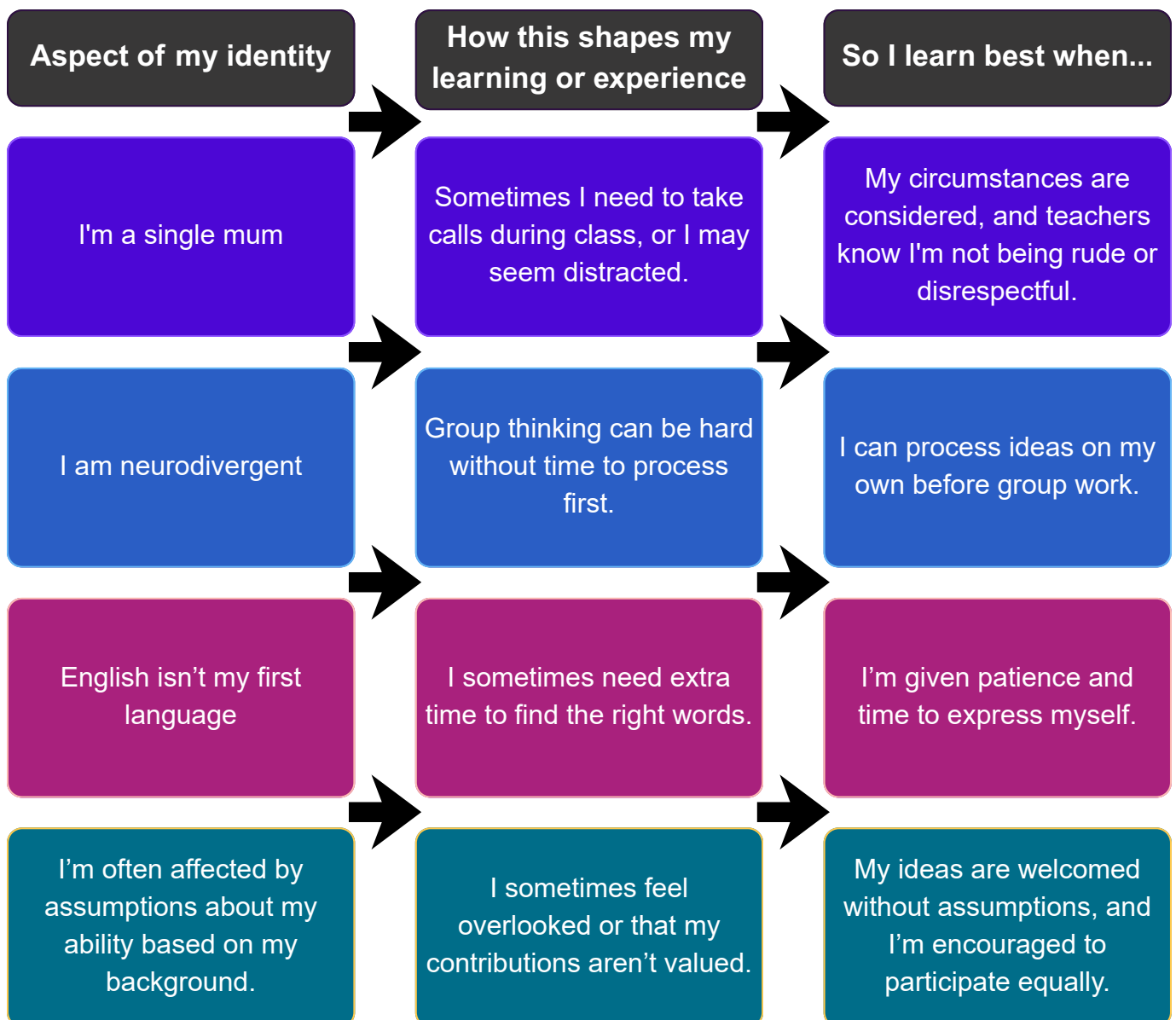
Identity Mapping



Why do this?

Reflecting on your identity can help you understand how you learn best and what you might need to feel supported. Learning isn't just about what we know, it's shaped by who we are, our experiences, and how we've been understood (or misunderstood) in the past.

Circle the prompts that feel relevant below or add your own on the next page.



Identity Mapping



Aspect of my identity	How this shapes my learning or experience	So I learn best when...



Learning Needs Inventory



Why do this?

Everyone learns differently. This checklist helps you notice what support helps you thrive without needing to label yourself.

- I need support with sensory regulation (e.g. light, sound, textures)
- I experience anxiety or mental health needs that affect how I learn
- I need physical access considerations (e.g. fatigue, chronic pain, mobility)
- I need flexibility around time, energy or attendance
- I benefit from trauma-informed spaces (e.g. feeling safe, supported)
- I have cultural or religious needs that affect how I learn
- Other

Use this space to expand on anything you've selected.

This can help you think through what you need, and may also help staff support you - if you choose to share it.

Reflecting on Intersecting Barriers



Why do this?

Different parts of your identity can overlap and shape your experiences. Look at the example below, then create your own on the next page - using words, sketches, or any format that feels right to you.

Emotional safety note: This section explores personal experiences and identity, which may feel sensitive or triggering for some people. Please take your time, pause if needed, and refer to the [support information](#) from page 24 if you would like further support.

Have you ever felt excluded or misunderstood in a learning environment?



Describe what happened

1 I was called disruptive and asked to leave the class.

How did it make you feel?

3 It makes me feel misunderstood and isolated in class.

Do any cultural or personal values affect what information you share about yourself?

5 Stigma in my community means I don't always share my ADHD diagnoses, even when I need support.

2 What intersecting characteristics influenced the situation?

I'm a black woman with ADHD

4 What could have helped in that moment?

If my teachers had more understanding of ADHD and offered flexible ways to participate, like alternative assignments or check-ins, instead of assuming I was misbehaving.



Reflecting on Intersecting Barriers

Have you ever felt excluded or misunderstood in a learning environment?

Describe what happened

1

What intersecting barriers were at play?

2

How did it make you feel?

3

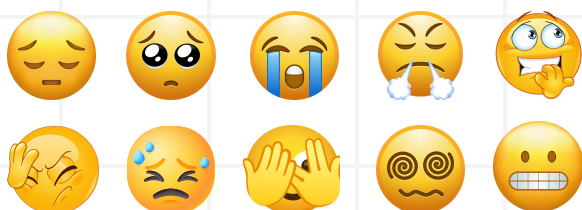
What could have helped in that moment?

4

Do any cultural or personal values affect what you share information about yourself?

5

If it's easier pick an emoji



See **Where Else to Turn** on page 23 for support information.

Access Practices That Support Me



Why do this?

Drawing on previous sections in the toolkit, you can use this section to name and summarise what works for you in learning spaces, so you can feel more confident asking for it or setting it up for yourself.

Complete the sentence:

Use words, sketches, or whatever feels right.

1

I learn best when...

(e.g... I can process information quietly before discussing it.)

Light blue rounded rectangular box for writing.

2

It helps me when...

(e.g... instructions are written clearly.)

Light purple rounded rectangular box for writing.

3

I feel more confident when...

(e.g... I can ask questions without judgment.)

Light pink rounded rectangular box for writing.

4

I need others to know that...

(e.g... I work better with short, focused tasks.)

Light orange rounded rectangular box for writing.



Strengths Mapping



Why do this?

You bring valuable skills and experiences - this section helps you identify your strengths within them.

Think of real examples from your life. These can be:

- Something you often do (e.g. “I often notice details others miss”)
- Something you enjoy (e.g. “I enjoy gardening”)
- Something others say about you (e.g. “Others say I explain things clearly”)

Complete 4 examples below.



Write one example:

1

Which strengths might this link to?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Attention to detail |

Other: _____



Write one example:

2

Which strengths might this link to?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Attention to detail |

Other: _____



Write one example:

3

Which strengths might this link to?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Attention to detail |

Other: _____



Write one example:

4

Which strengths might this link to?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Attention to detail |

Other: _____

Strengths Mapping

Note any other examples you can think of here:

	Write one example	Which strengths might this link to?
5		
6		
7		

Imagine this was about someone else.

What would you notice about them?

What strengths would you say they have?

Build Your Strength Profile

My key strengths are:

I show these strengths when I:

Identifying Strengths

If you're finding it hard to name your strengths, use these examples to help you turn everyday activities or behaviours into strengths and then return to the previous section.

If you wrote something like...		It might show strengths in...
"I enjoy gardening"	→	patience, observation, planning, creativity, organisation
"I enjoy gaming"	→	problem-solving, strategy, focus, persistence
"I enjoy helping friends"	→	empathy, listening, support, communication
"I enjoy sports or fitness"	→	discipline, teamwork, resilience, motivation
"People understand me when I explain things"	→	communication, clarity, teaching
"I notice small mistakes"	→	attention to detail, accuracy
"I take the lead in groups"	→	leadership, confidence, initiative
"I speak more than one language"	→	communication, social & cultural awareness, literacy, flexible thinking, empathy.
"Others say I'm easy to talk to"	→	communication, clarity, listening, teaching
"Others say I'm creative"	→	imagination, innovation, creativity
"Others say I'm reliable"	→	responsibility, consistency, planning

Strengths Mapping Tips and Resources

You can also try these tips and resources to help you identify your strengths.

TIPS:

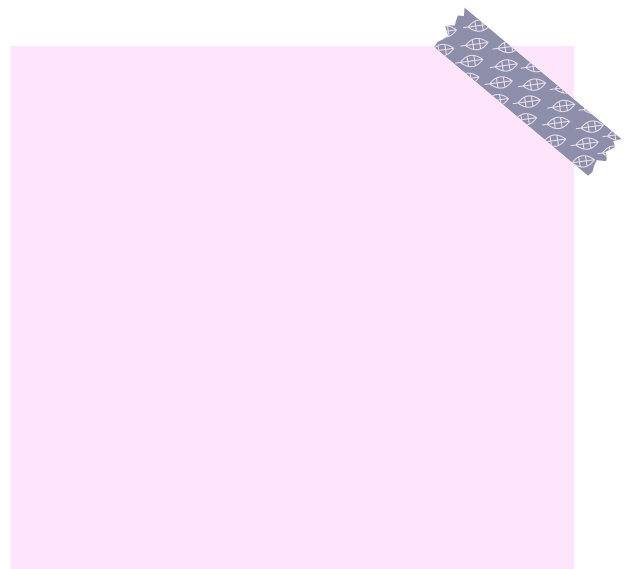
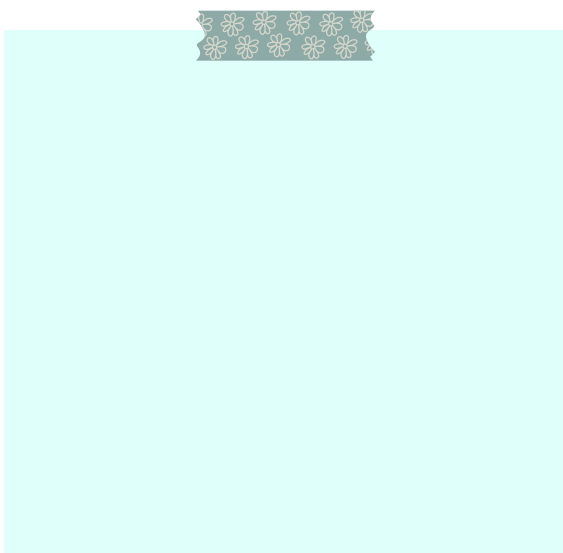
- Ask friends, family, or colleagues what they think your unique strengths are.
- Think about times you did particularly well, or past successes - what skills allowed you to succeed?
- Don't be modest when reflecting - it's okay to admit you're good at something!
- Do a search online to help you find the skills for something you do.

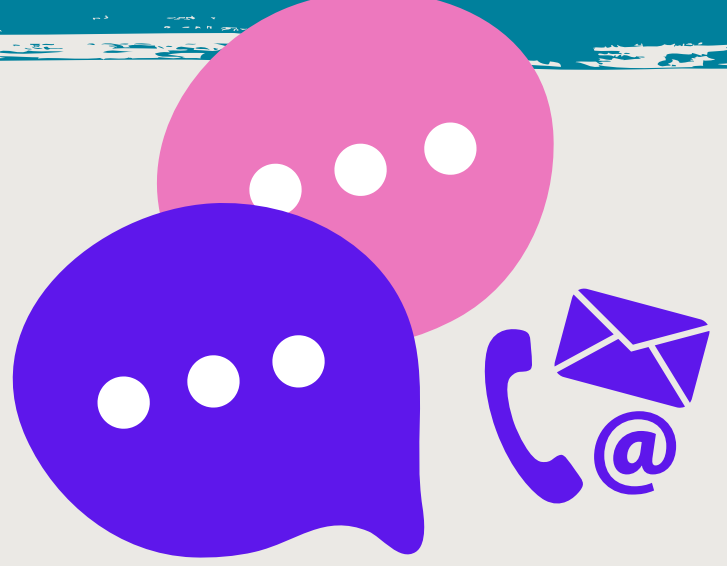
RESOURCES:

- VIA Character Strengths test: embrace-autism.com/via.
- 16 Personalities - strengths and weaknesses test based on Myers-Briggs Type Indicator - 16personalities.com
- HIGH5 Test to help you identify your top 5 strengths - high5test.com/cliftonstrengths-free

Note: You might be asked to sign up.

Notes:



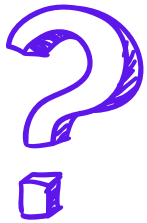


Communicating My Needs

This section provides scripts and guidance to help you share barriers you experience and request changes, if you choose to.

Remember, you are not required to share any personal information.

Scripts for Communicating Needs



Why do this?

It can be hard to explain what you need. These short scripts give you a starting point for expressing yourself clearly and confidently.

Use or adapt these simple scripts to express your learning needs:



The conditions that help me focus and succeed are...



I find it easier to engage when...

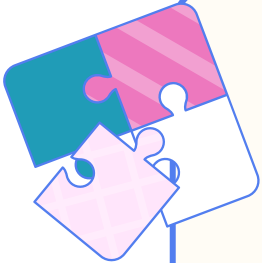


One thing I'd like you to know is...

Scripts for Communicating Needs



Can we talk about how I work best on tasks like this?



Sometimes I feel a bit singled out - is there a way we could approach this that feels more comfortable for me?



I'm not sure my experiences are being fully considered - could we chat about how to make things work better for me?



Exploring What is Possible



Why do this?

You might not always know what kinds of support are available, asking doesn't mean you're asking for too much.

Try saying:

I'm not sure what options are available - could we talk about what is possible?

Managing Feelings of Being Overlooked or Singled Out



Why do this?

Sometimes teaching approaches don't meet learning needs, it's okay to speak up if you feel excluded or misunderstood.

Try saying:

Sometimes I feel a bit singled out, is there a way we could approach this that feels more comfortable for me?

Asking for Support



Why do this?

Asking for support can feel risky, especially if you're not sure how it will be received. You deserve to feel safe when expressing your needs.

Try saying:

I'm still figuring out what works for me, thank you for being open to talking it through.

I know this might be a bit different. I really appreciate your support.

I'd like to share something, but I'm a bit nervous about how it might be received.




Sharing in Different Ways




Why do this?

You might prefer to communicate in writing, or at a different time - that's okay.

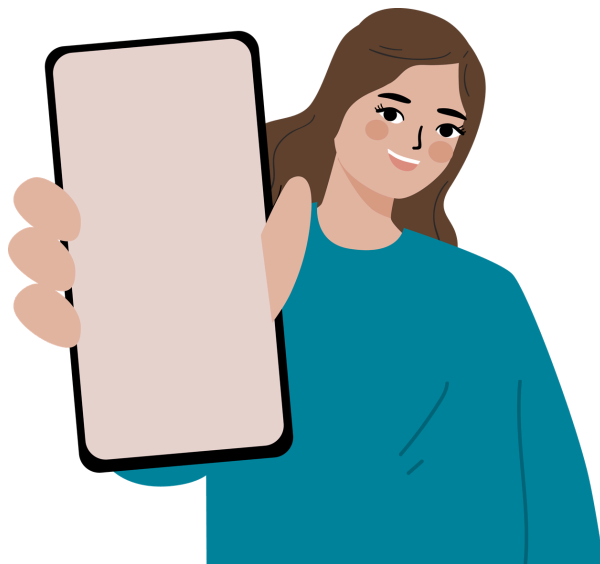
Try saying:



I've written some notes about what helps me, can I share them with you?



I'm not ready to talk right now, but I'd like to send you something later if that's okay.



What to do if you don't get the response you hoped for

Why this matters:

Asking for what you need takes courage and sometimes, you might not get the reaction you expected. That doesn't mean your needs aren't valid.

This section is here to help you keep going, even if things don't feel easy right away.



It's not about you

Sometimes people respond based on their own limitations, stress, or lack of understanding. That doesn't mean you did anything wrong by speaking up.



Try not to get discouraged

One person's "no" doesn't mean everyone will respond the same way. Is there someone else (e.g. a different colleague or teacher) who might be more open or helpful?



Keep the conversation going

If a teacher says your request doesn't fit the curriculum or space, you can say:

“Can we work together to explore how to address this, as it might also affect other students?”

Collaboration can open up creative solutions.



Where Else to Turn



This section lists UAL departments and external organisations providing additional or alternative support.

UAL Support

UAL offers wellbeing, disability, and learning support services designed to help you succeed.

We recognise that seeking support can be challenging, and sometimes the services may not meet all your needs. If that happens, it's okay to keep asking questions, explore other options, and set boundaries that feel right for you. You deserve support that works for you.

● Creative Shift

UAL's Creative Shift helps underrepresented students grow networks, confidence, and opportunities to succeed in the creative industries.

www.arts.ac.uk/creative-shift

● Counselling, Health Advice and Chaplaincy

Support for your physical health, mental health or wellbeing. Appointments are available on college sites in person, online or on the phone.

www.arts.ac.uk/students/student-services/counselling-health-advice-and-chaplaincy

● Disability Service

Professional advice and support for students who are disabled and neurodivergent.

www.arts.ac.uk/students/student-services/disability-and-dyslexia

● Academic support

Face-to-face tutorials, workshops and other learning development activities to support with your academic skills, including essay writing.

www.arts.ac.uk/students/welcome/your-journey-to-UAL/get-support/skills#academic

● Arts Student Union

Wellbeing resources and advice service - www.arts-su.com/support/

Clubs and Societies - www.arts-su.com/communities/groups

External Support

Community groups, peer networks, and charities can also help you understand your rights, build confidence, or talk through next steps. You don't have to figure this out alone.

Mental Health



The Ultimate Graduate Resource

Not just for graduates - this resource has a section dedicated to mental health charities, plus packed with links to support your creative career.

<https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/uai/the-ultimate-graduate-resource>



Student Minds

UK's student mental health charity.

www.studentminds.org.uk/



Student Space (from student Minds)

Support services designed for students - whether it's your mental health, your studies, money, housing or relationships.

studentspace.org.uk/support-services



Mind

Student life and mental health information and resources.

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/



Top Neurodiverse Charities for Support in the UK.

Finding neurodiverse support can be tough when you are already struggling to cope. Here's a list of registered UK neurodiverse charities.

thruway.com/top-neurodiverse-charities-available-in-the-uk

Resources & Guidance



NeuroTribe UK

A neurodivergent-affirming, multicultural therapy service.

neurotribe.uk/



Disabled Students UK

Resources for disabled students including student guidance and knowing your rights.

disabledstudents.co.uk/resources/



National Autistic Society

Advice on disability discrimination in colleges, universities - www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/education/resolving-differences/disability-discrimination-in-further-and-higher-ed

Advice and guidance directory - <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance>



The Balance App

A meditation mobile app to support you with stress, mood, sleep, working with ADHD, burnout and more - sign up for 1-year free access.

balanceapp.com/

Networks and Mentoring



One2One Mentoring Network

Tailored one-to-one mentoring and coaching for Black and minority ethnic individuals in higher education or starting their careers.

one2onementoring.com



Arts Emergency

A charity connecting underrepresented young people (ages 16–26) in the arts and humanities with professional mentors to help with career pathways.

www.arts-emergency.org/young-people/get-a-mentor



The 93% Club

Networks for state-educated students and staff, providing access to connections, knowledge, and opportunities traditionally reserved for the privately educated.

www.93percent.club

Government Support



Access to Work

Access to Work can help you get or stay in work if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability.

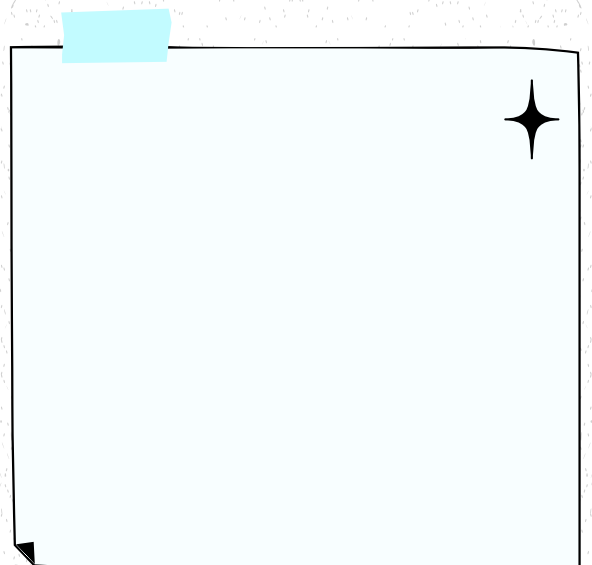
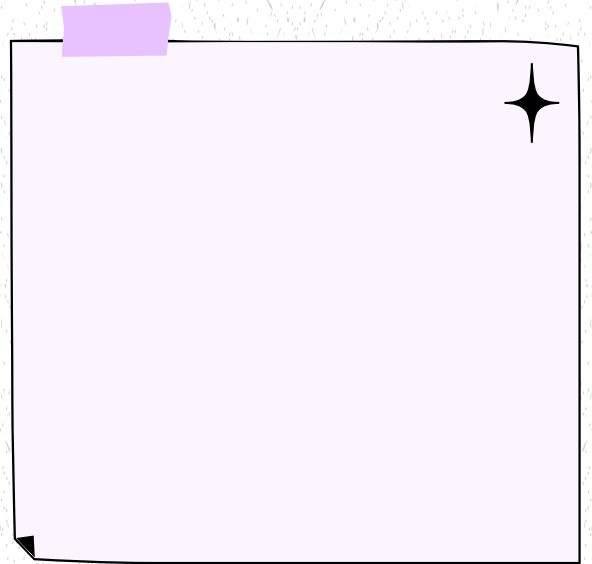
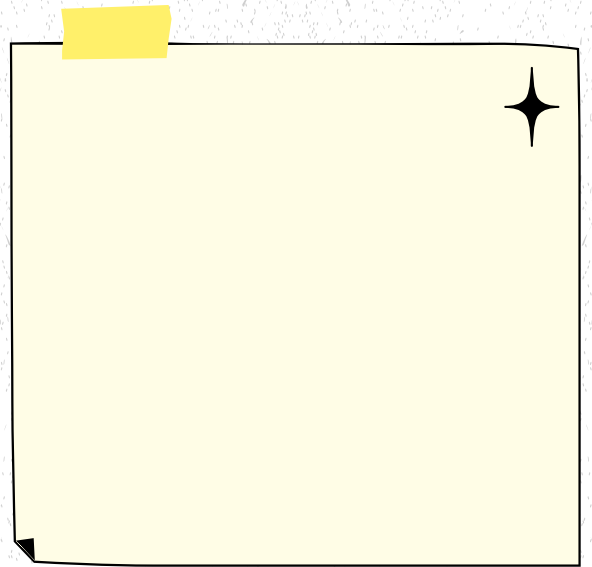
You can apply for:

- a grant to help pay for practical support with your work
- support with managing your mental health at work
- money to pay for communication support at job interviews

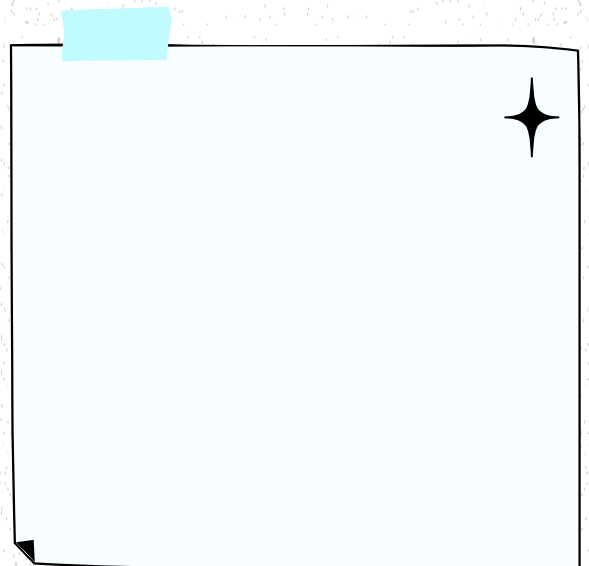
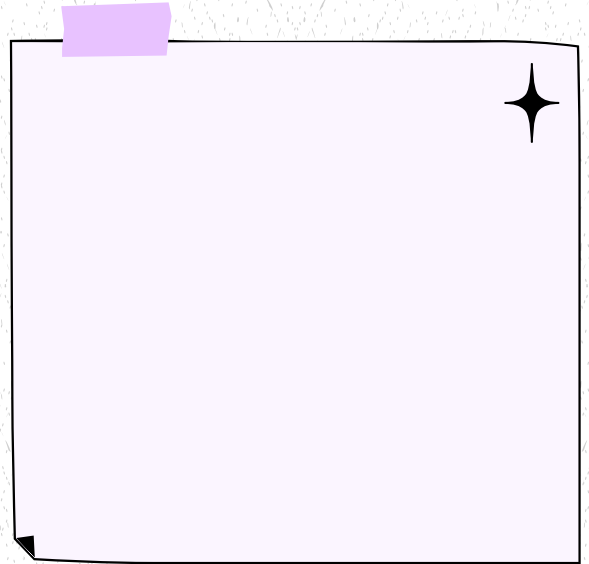
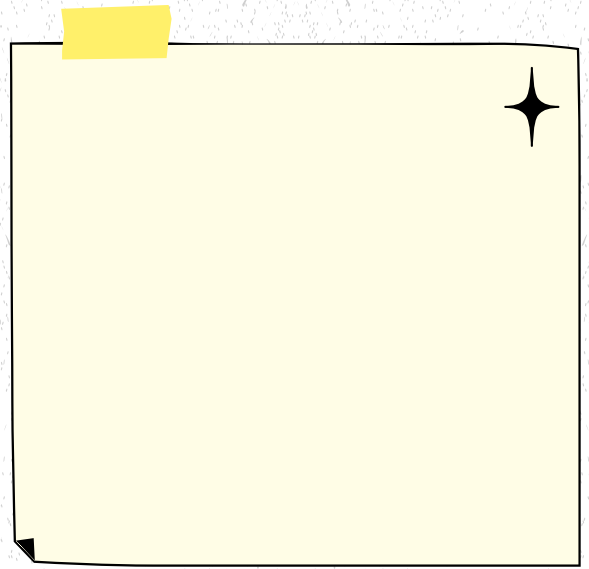
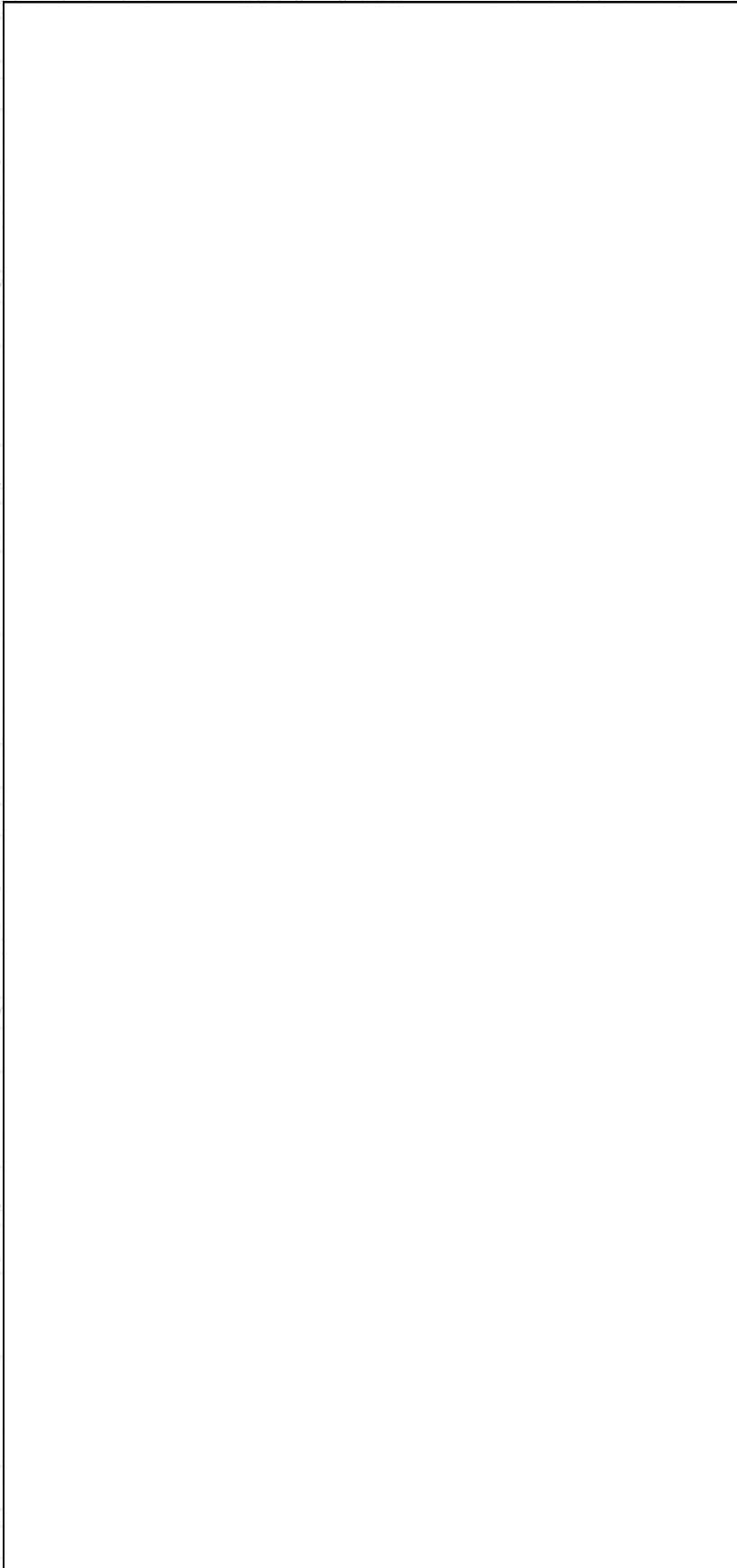
www.gov.uk/access-to-work

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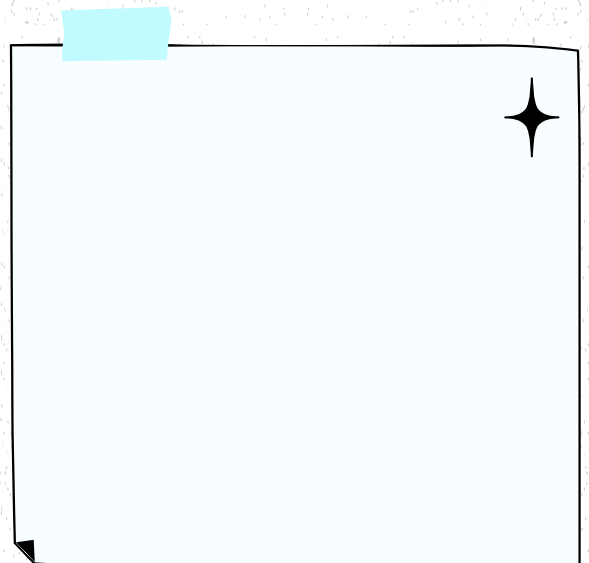
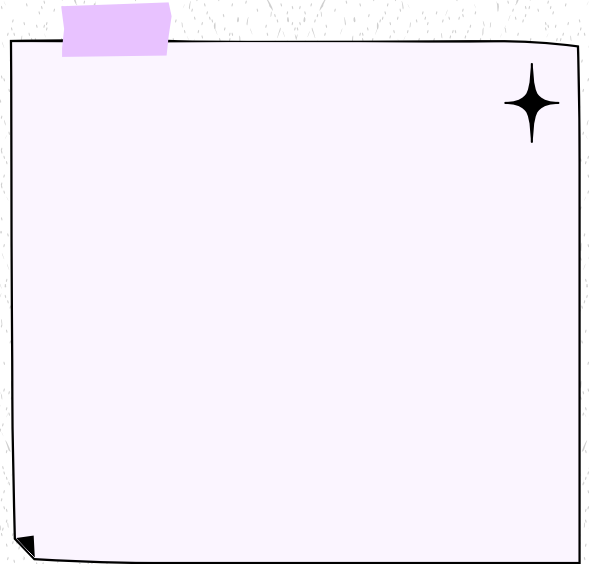
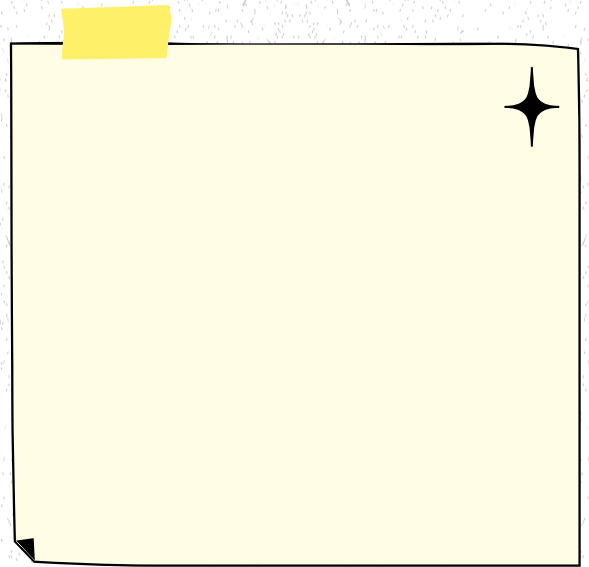


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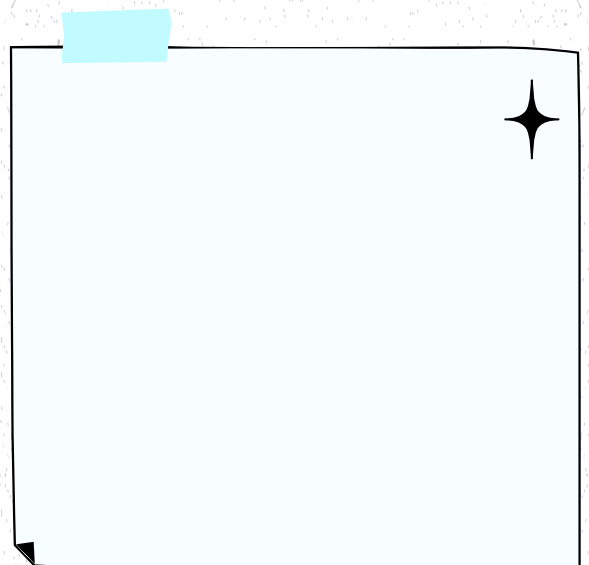
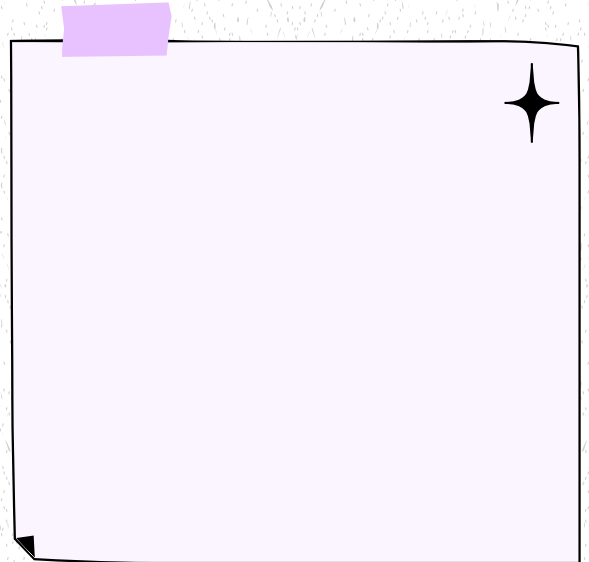
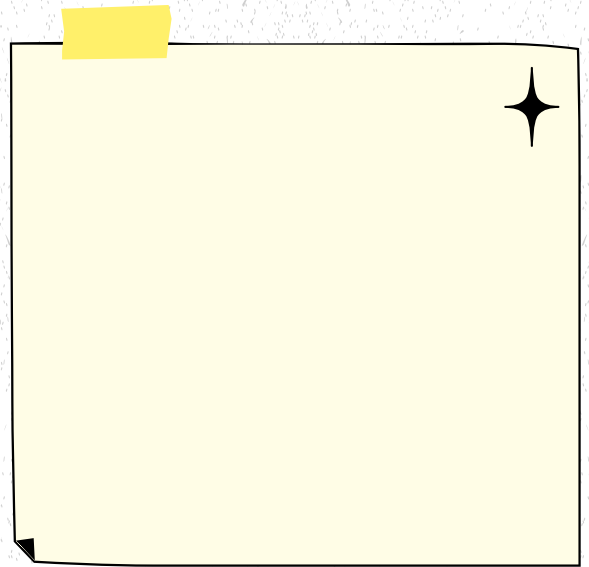


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Notes :



ual:

creative shift

shaping
diversity
in the
creative
industries



arts.ac.uk/creativeshift



[@ual_creativeshift](https://www.instagram.com/ual_creativeshift)



[UAL Creative Shift](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ual-creative-shift)



creativeshift@arts.ac.uk

