ELICIA : Hi everyone. This is Elicia Ford, your Pathways15 Conference Emcee for day 2 of our event online. Welcome back to this afternoon's keynote presentation. Before I introduce our speaker, I would just like to let you know some exciting news. All of yesterday - so day one of Pathways15 presentations are already available online, the recordings. Many thanks to our teams at ATEND and ADCET for getting those up so promptly. So if you did miss anything yesterday or there was something absolutely fabulous that you would like to revisit, you are very welcome to check those out on the ATEND website after this afternoon's keynote. And I would now like to introduce you to our presenter, Helen Cooke, from MyPlus Consulting in the UK. Helen is the CEO of MyPlus Consulting and founder of the MyPlus recruiters club and MyPlus universities club. She is recognised nationally as a leading expert in disability and graduate recruitment. Helen works with organisations to provide them with the expertise to be disability confident in their strategy, their processes and their engagement and realise the possibilities of hiring and retaining more people with a disability. Her clients include Barclays, EY, enterprise rent a car, link laters and teach first. Helen is also behind MyPlus Students club. An innovative website which provides students with disabilities or long-term health conditions the advice, support and confidence to find opportunities, approach relevant organisations, and go on to realise new possibilities with progressive employers. It also provides a platform for business to showcase themselves as disability confident employers. The uniqueness of Helen's approach comes from her expertise in HR and graduate recruitment combined with her firsthand experience of disability. Helen is a wheelchair user as a result of a childhood spinal injury. She started her career on the M&S graduate management program before moving to MARS where she spent 10 years mostly in HR and resourcing before setting up her business. In addition to her own experiences of disability Helen has worked extensively with other disabled individuals. The majority of this experience comes from her involvement with the back-up trust an organisation which supports spinally injured individuals. Helen is a mentor for the back-up mentoring program and became a trustee in 2016. Helen is an associate member of the business disability forum, is listed in the 2018 and 2020 sure trust disability power 100 list of most influential disabled people in the UK. And is a Commissioner on Lord Shinklin's 2020 disability commission. I will now hand over with pleasure to Helen to present this session. Thanks, Helen.

HELEN: Yes, thank you very much. A lovely introduction. As Elicia said, I'm the CEO and founder of MyPlus. I'm absolutely delighted to be joining you for your afternoon, it's our morning, it's 5 o'clock in the morning here, so a very early start and obviously delighted to be here, I'm delighted that you're joining us. So our vision at MyPlus is to ensure that having a disability doesn't prevent anyone from having the career they want to have. And this is something I'm particularly passionate about as a wheelchair user who I have been fortunate enough to have had an enjoyable career since I graduated many moons ago. Now, in terms of what we're going to be looking at today it is all about disability and employment. We're just going to look at the landscape of disability employment before then moving on to look at what we term the five pillars of disability confidence on campus which are understanding the employment challenges facing this group, and my plus identifying your strengths, we're going to talk about the horrible term disclosure and the benefits of being open and how to be open with an employer, we're going to talk about applying for a job with a disability and accounting for difference on your CV and talk about requesting adjustments. And just to say that during this presentation I'm going to use the word "disability officer" as a generic term, an all encompassing term for the roles that you do and I guess how the student would view you. Before we kick off further we're going to have our first poll question. David you're going to run for me. The question here is what percentage of students with a disability said that they did consult their disability officer about their careers? 33 per cent? 56 per cent? Or 92 per cent? David, over to you to run this, please.

DARLENE: Sorry, it's Darlene here, Helen. We're having a bit of trouble in the back end in trying to get the interpreter up and you. So David was on the phone to Jane. David, are you off the phone now and can you please put the poll up?

DAVID: I'm back. I'm putting the poll up now.

DARLENE: Great. Thank you. Sorry, Helen.

DAVID: So the question is: what percentage of students with a disability said that they did consult their disability officer about careers, 33 per cent, 56 per cent or 92 per cent, and I'm just launching that out to the audience now. Helen, we will just wait a little moment while the results come back in. At the moment we're at about 40 per cent return from the audience. For audience members who are in a browser you may not see the polling option and I will release the results in about 20 seconds or so. Okay, Helen. So it looks like the earlier result is in. And it's 33 per cent at 86 per cent of respondents. So the primary belief - or the answer is the first one, 33 per cent.

HELEN: Okay. Thanks, David. I have to say that you're way off track in the research that we did a few years ago it was 92 per cent, 92 per cent of students said that they would speak to their disability officer about careers, and actually that was a much higher percentage than those who said that they would speak to their careers adviser which was around 52 per cent. So I think that's a really important statistic to just remember. And I think that this comes from the fact that the relationship a student has with their disability officer is such a trusted relationship, and they're going to talk to you about these things or if they don't necessarily know their career officer in the same way that they know you. So let's move on. We're now going to talk about disability and employment. You know, you might have been thinking, well, what's that got to do with me? You know, I'm not involved in careers. However, not only do we now know that over 90 per cent of students are going to talk to you about their careers, but supporting students to develop employability skills goes way beyond the remit of the careers service. And key reasons students go to university is either that they want to pursue a particular career, or they want to get a better job than perhaps they think they would have done if they hadn't gone to university. And that's true for students whether or not they have a disability. Yet, it remains considerably harder for students with a disability to obtain employment upon graduating than it does for their non-disabled counterparts. And the reasons for this are many and varied and we're going to come on to that. However, if we are serious about removing those barriers that prevent individuals from finding employment, we have to recognise that employability teams, disability teams and, indeed, all key support services across the university are going to have to work together to provide the advice and guidance that's required. But before I move on to look at the stats around disability employment, I just wanted to remind ourselves about the importance of work. Obviously, money is important but I tend to say I think it's just a housekeeping factor. Employment is so important. We know that when we're excluded from that it has a huge impact on us, it particularly has a huge impact on our mental health. Work gives us a purpose. It gives us our reason to get up in the morning. It develops our self-worth. It's how we contribute to society. People ask you what do you do and if you don't do anything it's very hard to be part of something, and being at work, being part of a team creates that sense of belonging, and I think for me as well one of the really key and important things is that it provides our social interaction. When I think about some of who my closest friends are I've made them through work. Indeed, I've continued to meet amazing people since setting MyPlus and the work I've done here. Work is so important and nobody should be excluded from that. And I'm not necessarily talking about full-time paid work. This could be part-time work, this could be voluntary work but it's about - as I said, it's about this whole work essence and what it provides us for. Let's just have a look at what's happening in the world of employment for students with disabilities. Well, we know there's an increasing number of students at university have a disability. And we know that they find it harder to find employment when they graduate than their non-disabled counterparts. We know that students can find it more difficult to gain work experience than their non-disabled counterparts, and recent research also found that 76 per cent of students don't want to disclose their disability to an employer. Now, we're going to come on to that but that's a really important statistic, not least that it's a huge barrier because not only are some individuals so concerned to be open that they've taken themselves out of the recruitment process altogether. Others are applying but because they don't want to share information about their disability they're hitting a barrier in the recruitment process and they're being rejected and they're being rejected for roles that actually they're more than capable of doing. This whole issue of disclosure - and I don't like that term - I'm going to come on to that - it is a massive, it is a massive issue. Some students with disabilities believe that their disability will be seen as a weakness by an employer. And that's a term that they've used with me a lot in the work that we've done and, indeed, some of the students see their own disability as a weakness, something that I find incredibly hard to hear when people talk about that. So these are the facts but how do we address them? So at MyPlus what we did was that we identified five pillars of disability confidence as being absolutely crucial in terms of being able to provide that expert careers advice that students with disabilities require, and it is expert careers advice because whilst, yes, students with disabilities have got the same questions and concerns about careers and finding the jobs as those without a disability, because of our disability we have got a whole other swathe of challenges that I just outlined to you going on and we need expert careers advice too to be able to address those. And I think that one of the things happening at the moment is that they're getting inconsistent advice. Different people are telling them different things. It's coming from careers advisers, coming from academic staff, it’s coming from disability advisers, it's coming from parents. What we've got to do is we've got to get on the same page and we've got to provide consistent advice to these guys. So I think it's worth - so in terms of what we're going to do now we're going to look at these five pillars of disability confidence. And these are understanding the employment challenges that face students with disability, we're going to look at MyPlus, we're going to look at the whole subject of disclosure, we're going to look at applying for a job with a disability, accounting for the differences on your application, and we're going to be talking about requesting adjustments. So first of all, let's start with understanding the employment challenges, pillar 1. I think first of all it's worth just reminding ourselves that finding a job is difficult for anyone and rejection is part of the course regardless of whether or not you have a disability. And it's very easy to blame our disability. The reason I didn't get a job is because I have a disability but it's not most of the time. It’s simply because it's a really competitive field and there are better candidates out there. But as I said, having a disability can make this harder and we need to understand what those challenges are and we need to be able to help our students to address these challenges. Let's have a look at what the barriers and challenges are. First of all, let's start with lack of confidence. I think some individuals really lack the confidence to apply to jobs believing that employers aren't interested in them. Maybe they've been led to believe that a career isn't for them, it's not going to be possible by their teacher or their parents. It may be they've recently acquired their disability and they've had a huge knock in confidence as a result of that. Or it may be that they're comparing themselves to others. I think it's human nature to compare ourselves to others and see what we can't do, no longer can do or are going to find difficult doing. As a result of that, it leads me on to that second point here as a result of that comparison they see themselves as a weaker candidate. And not surprisingly if they see themselves as a weaker candidate because of their disability, it leads them on to this question about should I be open about my disability? Should I inform an employer about my disability? And as I said, this is a huge question which we're going to come on to and look at in a bit more depth but if you don't - if you're not open about your disability it's very difficult to get the support you potentially need during the recruitment process. Not surprisingly people with disabilities fear discrimination, I tell me, you don't want me, you're going to find a reason to take me out of the recruitment process, and often they have what I call differences in their CV. Again we're going to come on to this, perhaps a gap in their education, they may have lower grades, they may be lacking work experience and actually how do we account for these and how do we do so in a way that's positive and is not going to lead to automatic rejection. Not surprisingly I think another barrier are the judgments, assumptions and perceptions that we tend to believe that people are going to have about us and let's face it they don't really tend to be very positive and finally I think there's the challenge of requesting support and adjustments. It's hard to ask for something that seemingly no one else is asking for and we fear that we're going to be seen as a hassle or be seen as causing a fuss. Again, it's just another reason we're giving the employer to take us out of the recruitment process but, again, if we don't request that support potentially we're going to be rejected. So how do individuals overcome these challenges? Well, it's not easy. I'm not saying that there's an easy answer to this but, as I said, I do believe that universities have a collective responsibility to work with individuals to help them to overcome these barriers. And also to challenge perceptions of what's possible. So key, first of all, is getting fully involved in university life in order to develop employability skills. Employers look for a lot more than just good academics. They look for leadership skills, they look for initiatives, they look for people skills, they look for people that have got involved in things. And you can only do this if you get fully involved in university life. But actually, when you're managing your disability or when you lack confidence, it can be very difficult to get involved with clubs and societies to take on positions of responsibility and get involved in voluntary work. That's not to say you can't do it but we need to encourage these individuals to do that. Individuals need to be able to position their disability positively. It's very easy, as I said, to think about the things that we can't do or can no longer do but instead we need to think about the extra skills and abilities, and attributes that we develop as a result of managing our disability on a day-to-day basis in a world that's not always been up to it and I'm going to come on to that. I think it can also help to prepare an openness statement. So I think one of the biggest challenges is how do we inform an employer about a disability to get the support we need. And as I've already shared with you, over 76 per cent of individuals don't want to be open about their disability. But actually preparing an openness statement is going to make it easier. It's not going to make it easy but it's going to make it easier. Individuals need to find a way to share this information because most of us with disability, it isn't going to go away. And they need to become an expert in what they need in the support and adjustments. It's not always easy. Our disabilities fluctuate, it might be newly acquired. We may not have applied to companies before but we need to become an expert in what we need and be able to articulate that to an employer. Finally, we need to be able to gain work experience, we need to take part in internships and we need to take part in placement opportunities, just like those without a disability do. Again, as I said, I know this isn't easy but we shouldn't be taking ourselves out of this remit to start with. There is absolutely no reason why you're not able to do this. There's going to be some challenges but we need to believe that we can. So now that we understand some of these challenges, let's move on to the other four pillars which are all designed in some way to build our confidence to address these challenges. So the first pillar is my plus and I guess it's very much the essence of who we are. I always say I don't believe that I'm any more special than anyone else because of my disability, but I do believe it's given me something extra, it's given me a plus. As I said, those are the skills and the strengths and the abilities that I've had to develop to manage my disability on a day-to-day basis in a world that's not always geared up for it. It's my determination to overcome the barriers that are in front of me. It's the problem solving to get around the daily challenges, particularly around access. And it's the interpersonal skills to build relationships with others, particularly when I need them to assist me. And if I just give you, you know, an example of that, I live in Windsor, which is west of London. And before lockdown I used to travel into London probably two or three times a week. We have a small unmanned station at Windsor. And the challenges start with, is there going to be accessible parking by the station, the schools tend to use the accessible parking spaces to drop their kids off, just for a few minutes but in that time I can miss my train. It's an unmanned station so I have to wonder whether the guard is going to come out and get me on to the train, we still use old fashioned ramps on trains here in the UK, are they going to remember to get me off the train when I get to Waterloo in London, are the lifts going to be working around the Jubilee line. Are the taxi drivers going to be helpful to get me into the car, are the toilets going to be unlocked, are they going to be filled with cleaning equipment or baby high chairs. These are the day-to-day challenges that I have to get around. Not surprisingly, I develop these skills and abilities to get around them because otherwise I'm going to be really stuck, believe me. And just a few more examples here. These are some of the students that I've worked with. So Rosie has what she terms upper limb deficiency. Her left arm finishes at the elbow. She says I'm very good at problem solving as through my life I've had to come up with alternative ways to complete physical tasks. When she talks about what her plus is she talks about appearing calm and positive under pressure because it's always important to her that people don't perceive her to be struggling on account of her upper limb difference. She says even when I'm facing challenges I habitually exude confidence. Then we have Will who has OCD. He says he thinks it has helped him to build resilience. Coming to terms with his condition has led to a greater sense of perspective. He also is very organised since knowing when things need to be done by relieves and reduces his anxiety so he can prepare for it and it also leads to effective prioritisation of tasks and deadlines. Now, if we just take those two individuals. We've got appearing calm under pressure, exuding confidence, building resilience, being organised. These are all types of things that you see on a job advertisement. It's all the types of skills and strengths an employer is looking for. And therefore we need to be working with our students to help them to identify their plus. So this pillar is all about encouraging your students to identify their plus and building their confidence as they begin to focus on their unique skills and abilities and working out how they can stand out for the right reasons and the positive reasons and to help them to do this I firstly encourage them to identify four or five strengths that they actually possess. For each of these, to develop examples or a story to illustrate each of their strengths. They can then differentiate themselves from other candidates by identifying unique strengths that are unique to them as a result of their disability, but they do need to be accurate. They need to ensure that the strengths they identify are ones they actually possess, rather than ones that are simply asked for in the job description. So we’re now going to move on to talk about encouraging openness. Now, we often talk about disclosure and I know many of us are trying not to use this term any more. I think it makes it sound like we've got this horrible secret that we're keeping under our hat. And we tend to talk about openness informing, sharing information, having said that if you go on to our website you will see that we use the word "disclosure" and the reason for that is we went through the whole of the website removing it because it's not a term I like but it’s what students Google, so we had to put it on. Now, before we move on any further. David, I hope you're still there and we're going to move on to our second poll question.

DAVID: I'm here this time.

HELEN: Fantastic. So in research that we carried out what percentage of students with a disability said that they were concerned to inform an employer about their disability. 54 per cent, 65 per cent or 76 per cent.

DAVID: Thanks, Helen. I'm just sending that out to the audience now. And we're just over half voted now. So I will wait another couple of moments and then I will let you know. This is an interesting result. So with 70 per cent returned, 66 per cent of people believe that it is the bottom statistic, 76 per cent.

HELEN: Well, they're spot on which I would expect because I did actually give it away earlier on. So it shows that people are listening which is great. Yes, 76 per cent. That's an awful lot. As I said, that's important or stands out for a couple of reasons. One is that for some individuals it's actually stopping them applying for jobs in the first place. When we did the focus groups around this, some students said, "I'm just not ready to go there. I'm not applying for jobs." Another said, "I am going to be open but I'm really concerned to do it." So let's have a look at what these concerns are. Well, not surprisingly one of the biggest concerns was this fear of discrimination. As I said, I tell you, you don't want me, you're going to take me out of your process. They don't want to cause a fuss or hassle. As I said, finding a job is hard for anyone. And particularly graduate recruitment is incredibly competitive. In the last nine months it's become even more so. Actually, we don't want to give the employer any reason to take them out of that process and actually to seemingly be asking for something that no one else is asking for is what I believe the student - I think I'm causing a fuss or hassle. The fact that in the UK it's 14 per cent of students in UK universities, that's one in seven have a disability. I suspect it's similar in Australia, whether or not they're open about it it. Actually, there's an awful lot of people asking for support but it’s very easy to think you’re the only one. People don't want to appear different in front of other candidates. They might be ashamed or embarrassed by the disability. They may not see their condition as a disability. They may not relate to that. Equally, they may not require any adjustments. "If I don't need you to do anything for me, why am I going to fear discrimination or cause a fuss or hassle. I'm just not going to tell you at this point." Then finally this fear of favourable treatment. So in the same way I don't want to be discriminated against, I certainly don’t want to be your token hire so I'm not going to put myself out there. So an awful lot of fear and how do we help students to overcome these? Well, there's three things that I would suggest we look at which is the what, the when and the how. So what is it that we need to tell an employer, when do we do it, and what's the best way of going about it. So let's just start with the what. I always say to students, only state what's relevant. You don't need to go into your whole medical history, not least your employer is not medically trained and they're not going to understand that. Instead just talk about what is the support and adjustments that you need during the recruitment process. We're not talking about the actual workplace here. This is just the recruitment process. So what supports or adjustments do you need during the recruitment process to enable you to demonstrate your full potential. What you also need to be prepared to do is to talk about why you want that support. So it's not sufficient just to say, "I would like extra time" or "I need an orientation visit or I need to take breaks." You've got to explain what it will enable you to do, so why are you asking for that. So if you have dyslexia, it's around, you know, the extra time will allow me to process that information. In terms of when, I would ideally say as early as possible in the recruitment process giving the employer plenty of time to put those adjustments in place. Equally, you may decide to wait until you've been invited to the interview. Something I learned, something I decided when I was looking for roles that actually I didn't want anything on my application form that stated that I was - had a disability because I wanted them to recruit me 100 per cent on merit, I wanted to either be recruited, you know, invited for an interview because of my skills and competencies, not because I have a disability or not be rejected because I have a disability. You may decide I'm going to wait until I've been invited for an interview. Equally, many recruitment processes have a number of stages and you may decide only to be open at the stage that you require support. So the wheelchair user, I wouldn't need to say anything in a telephone interview or for an eye test. I wouldn't need to say anything unless I was being invited for a face-to-face interview, at which point I would talk about access. And then in terms of how to be open. Well, again, there's different ways of doing this. You could put this on the application form. You could put it in a covering letter. You could do it as part of that personal statement when people often write on their CVs. You may, as I said, decide not to have anything on your application or covering letter because you want to be judged and know that you've been judged a hundred per cent on merit and, therefore, you decide to do it by phone or email, as I said, once perhaps that interview has come through. Most important for me is to remember to position your disability positively. When I say that it's about, you know, it's a fact. I am a wheelchair user. You may want to say, "As a result of that I've developed certain skills and strengths that I believe are going to be pertinent to the role." Don't use words like "unfortunately" or "sadly" or "suffering". They've all got negative connotations. What we want them to do is we want them to be thinking about, actually, how am I going to stand out positively? So that's the what, the when, the how. And then the other thing that I really recommend individuals doing is writing what we call an openness statement. Now, I always say that for most individuals their disability is not going to go away. And, therefore, we have to find a way of informing the employer about what we need in a way that we feel comfortable with. And actually, by giving it some thought and writing an openness statement it makes this whole process easier. And, again, I take a three-step approach to this. What I do is when I'm working with students I get them to choose a few words for each of the following, going back to what we talked about before. This is my disability or condition. This is what it means in the recruitment process. And this is what I'm going to need. If we start off breaking it down into those three things we can turn those words into a short, sharp - a short succinct openness statement. And then I say to them practise. Practise it until you love it. When I've got a roomful of students I get them to stand up and practise with each other. Most of them do it, I give them the opt out if they don't want to, but you can see their confidence grow. I always say, "Practise it. Do it in front of the bathroom mirror, your parents, your disability manager, your parents, wherever you feel - whoever you trust, get some feedback on this" because once you feel confident with it, you're going to feel confident to share it. And I just want to show you a few examples. What on earth am I talking about here? Probably one of the questions going on in your mind. Just a few examples: the first one, "I have dyslexia. I will need 25 per cent extra time. And this will allow me to process the information I've been given." As I said, short, sharp, succinct statement. Second one: I experience anxiety. I would like an orientation visit prior to my interview and for the interviewing managers to know that I may become more anxious than others. Often when I speak to individuals with anxiety, depression, hidden disabilities - anxiety or depression, they say I'm not sure what it is I want the employer to do. Sometimes I say will it just be helpful if there was - have some understanding because I might get more anxious than others. And you can see, "Actually, that would be useful." And then the final one, "I am on medication for my health condition. I would like my interview to be scheduled for the afternoon. And this will allow the effects of my medication to wear off." You don't have to go into the ins and outs of what the condition is. If you haven’t said what the condition is, then just state it, I have a health condition. So I really urge you to work with your students to get them to write this openness statement because once they've got something they will find it so much easier to be able to put that out there and it gets one of the worries, as it were, away for them. Now, pillar 4 we're going to move on to talk about positioning your differences positively with an employer. When I say differences I'm talking to mitigating circumstances. And the common ones for individuals with a disability when it comes to employment are they might have a gap in their education when they were perhaps diagnosed with a disability or perhaps spent some time in hospital or just managing their disability, a period of ill health. They may have lower academics because of that gap in their education or because of the impact the disability has had on their ability to carry out exams, or they may have a lack of work experience. Disability is not an excuse for not trying to get work experience but we know it can be harder. And employers will take genuine mitigating circumstances relating to their disability into consideration. Key word there is "genuine". Students often say to me, you know, I don't want to feel like I'm telling a sob story. If they're genuine about their circumstances, they will be taken into consideration. Again, I would take a three-step approach to this by stating, you know, what's the fact, what's the situation; what was the implication; and actually what happened as a result of that, remembering that we want to position our disability - position our disability positively with an employer - sorry, as I said, it's very early in the UK. I'm getting my teeth wrapped around these words here. And we want to do that positively. So first one here - and these are all genuine, real examples with a student who lost 50 per cent of his vision in his first year at university, “I took two years out of university but during that time I developed adaptability, confidence and resilience”. Someone with lower academics states the fact, “I have - I experience anxiety and panic attacks, I experience panic attacks during exams leading to lower grades. I didn't fail the exams so couldn't retake them and I’d just like to ask you to please take take this into consideration”. And finally a lack of work experience, “I have a disability. I haven't obtained work experience. But actually I've developed communication and influencing skills as a result of my disability as well as planning and organisational skills”. That goes back to the whole premise of the MyPlus. As you can see where we're coming from here it's very much sort of talking about these mitigating circumstances in a very matter of fact way. This is what happened, this is what the impact is, this is what I want you to take into consideration and, again, taking this three-step approach with individuals will make it an awful lot easier. So exactly the same as we did with our openness statement we're going to do this with mitigating circumstances. And then the final pillar is identifying your strengths, and I have talked a little bit about this already. And this is about - sorry, the final pillar is not identifying your strengths. We've had that. The final pillar is requesting adjustments and support. And there's three. When it comes to the interview process, a number of students - majority of students are going to need adjustments or support during the recruitment process. As I said, without that adjustments and support, potentially they're going to be rejected for roles. And what we want to do here is to encourage individuals to become experts in what they need and to be able to articulate that to the employer. I'm not saying it's easy because actually if you haven't been through a recruitment process before, or if your disability is newly acquired, you're not going to know necessarily what it is that you need, but I really urge individuals to become an expert in this because, again, going forward it will make it easier. And I would say there's three steps to working out what you need during the recruitment process. First of all, step 1 is finding out what the recruitment process involves and the application through to online tests, the video interview or the assessment centre. And that information may be on the website or actually it might be hard to find and they're going to have to liaise with the employer to find out what that process is. Once you know what the process is for each stage of the process they need to identify what support and adjustments you will need in order to demonstrate your full potential. So actually if it's an online test, what do I need? Do I need more time? Do I need the test in a different format? Do I need questions in advance? I don't know what it's going to be. Do I need to use technology so the font is bigger? What is it I need that's going to allow me to take those tests? Once you've identified what you need for each stage of the process, step 3 is to discuss those requirements with the employer, not just to agree what you need at each stage but also identify any other support that you might not have identified personally. So those are the three steps but the other thing that I would just like to point out here is that personally I think it's really, really important that the individual takes ownership of this, that the individual is starting their relationship with the employer and they're the person that is going to have these conversations with the employer, not you, not the careers adviser and certainly not their parent. It is really important that they develop the confidence to have the conversations with the employer themselves. So we've now gone through the five pillars of disability confidence. I just want to remind you what they are. It's about understanding the employment challenges these individuals are faced with, it's about helping them to identify their strengths so they stand out in the crowd in a positive way, it's about developing their openness statement, understanding the benefits of being open and how they can be open with an employer, it's about accounting for differences on their CV and about requesting adjustments that they need. Just before I finish, I am conscious that I've gone through an awful lot of information and I just want to talk to you very briefly about our be disability confident on campus toolkit. We developed this earlier in the year. What we realised was, was that we need to take this consistent approach to supporting students and one of the ways to do this is to have a toolkit we can all dip into, whether we’re a disability officer or whether we’re a careers advisor and the aim of this toolkit is to help people to understand what the challenges are facing students with disabilities and to raise awareness across all student support services and academic departments. It's about developing everyone's ability to provide that expert careers advice and guidance, even if it's at a light touch. It's about being able to provide your students with consistent advice and guidance and ultimately it's about enabling all of your students to be able to successfully transition into employment. And in the toolkit we've got a webinar training pack that can be used with staff, to upskill all staff. We've got what we call our conversation cards you can see there in the top right of your screen touching on these different topics because we often find that students will come to you with a certain conversation, a certain topic that they want to discuss, and actually how do we frame this conversation? And we also have four digital training packs that you can use with your students to run workshops on disclosure, applying the disability and accounting for differences, accessing support and identifying strengths and we've got those along with train the trainer guides. And we've got more information of that on my university’s club website. Actually we’re just offering a special deal for ATEND conference participants for just $2500 Australian. So please do drop me a line if you want some more information on this because it will really, really support your students as they transition into employment.

ELICIA: Elicia here, Helen, we've got just under 15 minutes left and it's been such an informative presentation as always. Thank you so much. We do have a couple of questions in the Q&A box and the chat box. Would you like to go into those now?

HELEN: Yeah, that's perfect timing because I have finished that presentation. So I'm going to stop sharing my screen, if I can. I will work out how to stop sharing my screen if you want to ask me questions.

ELICIA: Sure. Thank you, Helen. So the first question that has come through is just asking whether you have any specific advice for those job seekers who have a psychotic disability or disorder as so many people are fearful of such disorders.

HELEN: I think it's about – a really good question. I think it's about perhaps understanding why people are fearful, so actually understanding what that fear is. I think - but I think actually I would probably move away from that and to concentrate on positively positioning your disability. So, yes, I have bipolar or whatever the condition is, but as a result of that I've developed my resilience, my self-awareness, my understanding of others. So I would be concentrating on positioning your disability to be positively rather than, dare I say - and maybe I was going to say playing to people's fears but actually I think educated people are not fearful of them. I think - you know, I would say in the UK tabloid headlines, so I would almost move away from that and concentrate on actually how do I positively position this and concentrate on the skills that you do have that are relevant to the role. But equally if somebody wants to talk more about, you know, what it means, you know, to be able to perhaps - I guess demonstrate that empathy about why that fear is there and to address that fear and perhaps to give them, you know, the factual approach to this.

ELICIA: Fantastic response. Thanks so much, Helen. Just as a person who has a background working in the mental health sector, I've met so many people with quite significant psychosocial disability. And I think you're right. It's reframing the narrative for themselves. And reframing that in such a way that is positive. Because so much of their lives has been framed in a negative narrative. Whether that's self-talk or imposed by others. So fabulous to hear that the tips and strategies that you advise certainly can be framed positively.

HELEN: Can I just add to that? So a few years ago I was at an event, a very large - one of the big four employers was wanting students with disabilities. I got talking to a girl who wasn't hugely participating. Long story short she told me that she was - I can't remember her condition, you used the word psychotic in that - she had poor mental health, and she was concerned and her words to me was, if I tell the employer they're going to think I'm violent. And I had a really interesting conversation. I said, “I don't think they will. This is an educated company. And you won't be the only person in this organisation that has that condition. These companies employ, you know, thousands and thousands - hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. You won't be the only person in this organisation that has that disability”. And I think there's also something for me about, actually if you can be open about it upfront, frame your narrative, it's interesting therefore for you then to see what response you get because if you don't get a positive response, you have to question do I want to work for them and it's probably better that you know that upfront.

ELICIA: Absolutely, Helen. I couldn't agree with you more. I've had that exact conversation with people, you know, is that who you want to work for? Is that the culture of an organisation that you aspire to be a part of. I think that's a key point as well. We do have another question from our audience. This one is from Liz, I think it was, and apologies if I've got that wrong. The question is: I've noticed in recent years many interview and recruitment processes have changed that are not commensurate with conditions such as anxiety. For example, online interviews, the speed dating style of interviewing, and so forth. What do you suggest as strategies to work with students if you know that this is likely to be the process they will face?

HELEN: For me this goes back to the whole requesting adjustments and support piece which is for them to find out what the process is and processes are different. Different companies do have different processes. And then to identify what is it - you know, what is it that I need. So actually if, for example, I'm going to an assessment centre, let's pretend the lockdown isn't happening any more, and it's going to be a group discussion and I have a hearing impairment, actually what does that mean for me? And, again, you might say, well, I can do the group discussion but I'm going to need my interpreter or I'm going to need questions in advance which might not work. And, therefore, then you can talk to the employer about actually how do we find a way around this? And the employer is likely to have had this before. It might be that they decide to replace that group discussion with another interview, or they might go to the role play, or we've had companies in the UK where they've used managers to sit in as delegates and said, well, look, it's about working with the employer to work out, okay, this is the bit I'm going to find difficult. How do we get around it? Key for me, though, is whatever you do, don't just say, "Can I not do it?" Because the recruitment process, all those parts of that recruitment process are there for a reason. If you say, "I can't do the tests"and they say, "That's fine, don't do it" as soon as you're rejected you're going to turn around and say, well, you didn't give me as many opportunities to demonstrate my potential as everyone else. Equally if you aren't rejected, everyone’s going to turn around and say, well, you got an easy ride, you didn't have to do all of it. If there's part of the process you can't do, work with the employer to work out what you do instead but it's really important that you don’t all of it. Don't just be opted out.

ELICIA: Fantastic. Thanks so much, Helen. I think that's a really key point, isn’t it? You know, you know, you want to be a part of the entire process. So the question is really what is that process or that part of the process trying to assess or understand about me and my attributes that make me a good fit for the role and how can I do that in a different way, or what examples, perhaps, can I give the employer to demonstrate that I've been able to do this previously in a different context. So wonderful advice. There's no more questions coming through but there are some great comments in our chat box from the audience. And one in particular that I would really like to share with you which is, “Such an informative session, Helen. Thank you for your enlightened comprehensive presentation as well. I'm so appreciative of the wealth I've taken away. We've had people talk about the transferability of your presentation to education settings and, in particular, your strengths-based and outcomes focused approach. Many thanks for being with us this morning. In particular I appreciate how early you've had to get up to be here. We're ending our day as yours is beginning. I hope you can head off and have a really nice cup of coffee and enjoy the rest of your day”.

HELEN: Thank you ever so much. And thank you very much for inviting me to be part of your conference. And I hope that the next few days continue to be as good as you've told me the first few days have been. So thank you very much for having me.

ELICIA: Wonderful. Thanks so much, Helen. Before our participants leave us this afternoon, I would like to just give you a quick wrap-up of the day. I think we have had such a full and insightful day today as we did yesterday. What wonderful book ends to our day in the panel discussion facilitated by Dr Paul Harper this morning, some of my key take aways from that were around the importance of genuine and authentic consultation with all stakeholders and the importance of engagement with an ownership of our institutional leadership teams in developing and implementing our disability action plans. Through our streams, stream 1 looking at person-centred and tailored and targeted supports around employment, and stream 2 which really showcased innovations, agility and collaborations to respond particularly to the challenges of COVID-19 and all that we've faced in 2020 and now to finish with you, Helen, from MyPlus Consulting in the UK, some of the things I really took away from your session were the importance of understanding the things that students need to do but also what they fear and how we can support them to put their best self forward to be competitive in an open employment market. Thank you to all of our participants, thank you to our Captioners from Bradley Reporting, thank you to our Interpreters from Deaf Services and the Deaf Society, and many thanks to our presenters, as well as all of the people supporting in the back end of the webinars and the Zoom meeting sessions throughout the day. It's very much a team effort and collaboration is very much a theme of this conference. Thank you and we look forward to seeing you all tomorrow. Don't forget to tweet your experiences of the Pathways15 conference by using the hashtag Pathways15. And if you haven’t already, they might be closing off now for the day but from 12 pm Australian eastern daylight savings time tomorrow, our exhibitor rooms will be open, you can access the links to those pages on your conference delegates page. Thank you and good evening.