FUTURE QUEST:

EVALUATION OF A COHORT OUTREACH PROGRAMME

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APRIL 2020

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was published by the University of Bristol's Personal Finance Research Centre in April 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report submitted to the Office for Students as part of the UniConnect programme. Many thanks go to Jamie Evans for producing the statistical charts, and to Professor Rich Harris and Suzanne Carrie for their comments.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details an impact evaluation of the phase one, pre-16 cohort programme, run by South Bristol Youth, as part of the Future Quest programme. Underpinning this model is the theory that choosing a 'cohort' of students who regularly attend activities together over time will be the most effective way of achieving the desired change in how students actualise their 'possible selves' (Harrison 2018 drawing on Markus and Nurius 1986 and Oyserman 2004).

The framework focuses on three phases, ***development, elaboration, and evaluation and establishment***, broadly spanning years nine to thirteen, during which the Future Quest programme will aim to support students in developing different forms of knowledge in the following areas:

> **KNOW WHAT:** Knowledge of Higher Education and future paths
>
> **KNOW HOW**: Understanding of skill requirements for study and future life
>
> **KNOW ME:** Development of self-efficacy, ability to reflect of development and develop appropriate strategies

Using a theory-based evaluation approach, we have analysed both survey and qualitative data to understand the extent to which using a 'cohort' approach to outreach intervention has impacted on the students taking part, and if the underpinning theory of change helps explain *why* the programme has succeeded or failed.

Overall, the data finds that the Future Quest pre-16 programme has had demonstrable impact on students in terms of increasing their **KNOW WHAT:**

- Higher levels of knowledge of how to get to Higher Education
- A realistic understanding of the role a university degree could play in their future

The students on the cohort programme did appear to have a much clearer understanding of higher education than before they started.

There is also good evidence that the programme is impacting on **KNOW HOW**:

- Good GCSE attainment
- Strong speaking, listening and writing skills
- Cultural and social capital

The levels achieved at GCSE suggests that the programme, as a whole, may well be impacting positively on students in this area, as well as their self-belief in their ability; participation the programme is associated with higher belief in their ability to achieve academically, as well as apparently higher attainment amongst one year 11 cohort.

Finally, while the evidence is not as robust, there is also qualitative evidence that the programme also increases **KNOW ME**

- Developing positive personal traits such as confidence, grit and curiosity and teamwork

The programme for pre-16s helped students start to develop a different 'narrative' around their future, by encouraging them to take part in activities that they didn't feel they would be able to do, and helped them picture themselves at a higher education setting.

The most noticeable lack in the Future Quest cohort programme, in terms of helping students to find their pathways, was in career-based information and guidance. Essentially, students need to be able to visualise their life post-university, for them to start developing a pathway to lead there. For some Future Quest cohort students, they have not quite received the type of support needed to do this.

Overall, however, we conclude that the pre-16 Future Quest Cohort programme appears to have been successful in achieving its aims; these findings suggest that it is impacting on those who have taken part.

1. BACKGROUND AND METHOD

1.1. Theory of change

Future Quest have developed a conceptual framework based on the extension of the 'possible selves' theory (Harrison, 2018) which highlights the conceptual and procedural knowledge as well as the self-efficacy and reflective skills required to successfully progress to Higher Education. Harrison uses the theory as an alternative to that of 'aspiration-raising', a discourse that has increasingly been critiqued (Archer et al. 2014; Baker et al. 2014). Harrison, drawing on the work of Markus and Nurius (1986) and Oyserman (2004), produces a theory that broadens understanding how people create their 'possible selves'; these come from individual expectations, but are heavily influenced by socio-cultural context. By understanding motivation through this lens, Future Quest aims to help students broaden their expectations, and to develop pathways to a wider range of 'possible selves'.

The framework focuses on three phases, ***development, elaboration, and evaluation and establishment***, broadly spanning years nine to thirteen, during which the Future Quest programme will aim to support students in developing a different forms of knowledge in the following areas:

KNOW WHAT: Knowledge of Higher Education and future paths

KNOW HOW: Understanding of skill requirements for study and future life

KNOW ME: Development of self-efficacy, ability to reflect of development and develop appropriate strategies

We have used this framework to develop a logic chain to which we have mapped individual activities to a set of learner outcomes.

To measure the impact of the programme we are taking a theory-based evaluation approach. Theory-based evaluation has its roots in 'constructivist' evaluation, and has much in common with realist evaluation (Pawson 2006, 2013); the premise that any activity is an embodied theory of change, the integrity and validity of which can be interrogated through different forms of data.

> *"It follows the pathway of a programme from its initiation through various causal links in a chain of implementation, until intended outcomes are reached. The process is built around a 'theory' – a set of assumptions about how an intervention achieves its goals and under what conditions"* (Stern et al 2012)

Theory-based evaluation is particularly useful in understanding the impact of interventions in complex circumstances, where there is generational, or composite, causality. Some of the influences on the outcomes, especially that of progression to higher education, may not be identifiable, or if identifiable, capable of being controlled, or measured. As such, the conclusions on the impact of the programme are based on triangulation of the data to assess

the effectiveness of the theory of change in helping to achieve the outcomes as described below.

1.2. The programme

The Future Quest pre-16 cohort programme was a development of the Ambitions programme[1], which ran in six South Bristol schools between 2015 and 2017. Underpinning this model is the theory that choosing a 'cohort' of students who regularly attend activities together will be the most effective way of achieving the desired change in how students actualise their 'possible selves'. It is both the formation of a supportive peer group, who are aware that they have been chosen for their potential to progress, plus the cumulative nature of the outreach programme activities that should instil students with the confidence, skills and knowledge to see progression to higher education as a potential pathway.

This Future Quest cohort programme consisted of 15 students in years 9, 10 and 11, in each of 27 schools, who were selected to take part in a range of activities aimed broadly at achieving outcomes emerging from 'Know What', 'Know How' and 'Know Me'. The participants are expected to remain on the programme from year 9 to year 11, and on to year 13, where possible. In years nine and ten, there are around 5-7 activities each year, with year 11 focussed on mentoring, either through Future Quest, or delivered by the school with specialist advice on mentoring. In Phase one, this programme aimed to better prepare students for post 18 life through improving:

- Knowledge and understanding of higher education (**KNOW WHAT**)
- Speaking/writing skills (**KNOW HOW**)
- Cultural and social capital (**KNOW HOW)**
- Confidence and character development (**KNOW ME**)
- Teamwork (**KNOW ME**)

1.3. Data collection

We use baseline and follow-up survey data, along with data from fifty in-depth, semi structured qualitative interviews with students in years 9, 10 and 11, to understand whether and how the cohort programme has impacted on the participants' perceptions of higher education, their intentions for the future, and whether the intended outcomes had been achieved.

In total, we collected two waves of survey data from over 1,000 pre-16 students, between April 2017 and July 2018. For the year ten and eleven students, initially we excluded school from the South Bristol area, as learners there had been involved in the pre-existing Ambitions project. However, once all schools had been involved in the programme at some level, we changed method and included all schools from September 2017.

[1] Rose J., Sutherland, R., Hill, J., Triggs, P., Yee, W. (2017) *Evaluation of the South Bristol Youth Ambitions Programme (Phase 1 and Phase 3): Final Report*,

2017/18	No. participants	No. responses	Response rate
Year 9	451	450	100%
Year 10	358	296	83%
Year 11	353	283	80%
Total	**1162**	**1,029**	**89%**

The breakdown of the sample is as follows:

Year group	Year 9	46%
	Year 10	27%
	Year 11	26%
Sex	Female	47%
	Male	53%
Ethnicity	White	75%
	BAME/other	25%

1.4. Analysis

We scored the level of agreement with statements: disagree strongly as 0 to agree strongly as 4, to give a mean score; the higher the score, the more positive the response. The analysis of the survey data comprised predominantly of cross-tabulations and descriptive statistics. Chi-square tests were used to examine the statistical significance of relationships between categorical variables (e.g. year groups or ethnicity) and, where applicable, column proportion z-tests were used to identify where the main statistically significant differences lie. In the charts in the following chapters, a statistically significant increase in terms of a positive attitude is indicated in green, and a statistically significant decrease in red. Key findings are also highlighted in red.

Logistic regression analyses were also used where appropriate to examine relationships between variables in more detail whilst controlling for other factors. Statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$) in these analyses are reported

The qualitative data was initially analysed using thematic framework analysis, with the framework based on intended outcomes of phase one, and the theory of change.

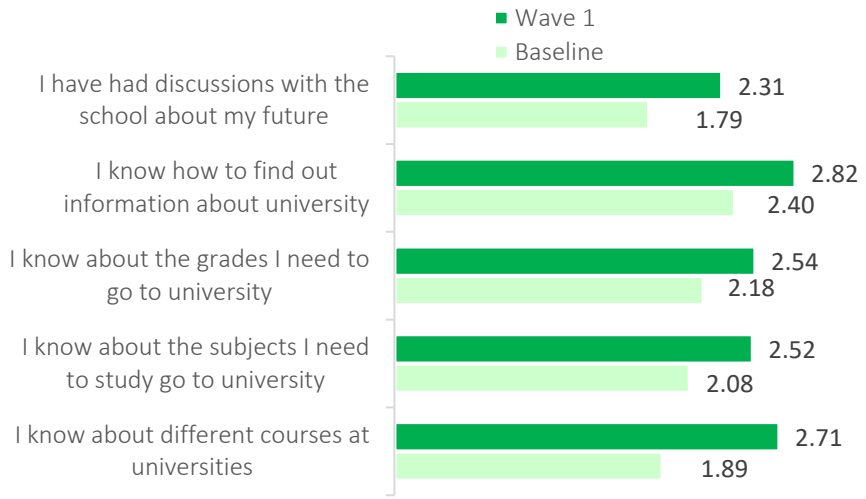
2. RESULTS

In this section, we explore the extent to which the cohort programme has impacted on achieving the intended outcomes, as described in **Knowing What**, **Knowing How** and **Knowing Me.** In the first sections we use the findings from the pre/post survey findings to measure impact; in the latter, we use self-reported attitudinal data from the post survey only. Qualitative data from the depth interviews is used throughout.

2.1. **Knowing What:** getting to higher education

The cohort programme appears to have had the strongest impact in increasing participants' knowledge and understanding of information needed to apply to university

Figure 2.1: Pre-16 cohort participants change in knowledge of HE



NB: Base size varies slightly per statement. Baseline (n=837 to 876) Wave 1 (n=599 to 604)

There was a statistically significant change in the level of agreement with all of the above statements, with the change positive in each case, between the Baseline and Wave 1. Broadly speaking, these changes were consistent among different year groups, although the increase in agreement with the statements on *'knowing what grades were needed'*, and '*having discussions with the school*' was not significant for those from year 10. There were no differences by sex in terms of responses, however for students from a Black, Asian or Ethnic minority background – while their agreement with each of these statements increased – it was only statistically significant in the case of 'knowing about the different courses at university'. This may reflect the smaller base size of this group, however, rather than indicating that the programme had impacted less. Broadly speaking, the cohort programme has uniformly increased the knowledge of HE among its participants.

From the qualitative data, it is clear that information played a key role in increasing the capacity of students to aim for HE. The information and guidance provided through Future Quest, as well as through the schools, will help to guide students from expressing a slight desire to go to university, but not knowing what to study, through to taking the right subjects

they need to in order to get there. One or two students noted the lack of a longer-term timescale in the nature of the advice given at school; the advice seems too focused on the next step, rather than looking at the whole trajectory through to work. In year nine, for example, some students talked about how they were given advice about their GCSEs but not about how that might affect any further step.

> ***"It's like not as if everybody knows what they want to do in the future,… to have a careers advisor you need to know what you like or dislike, … I'm not sure at all what I want to be when I grow older but I want to keep my options open…so I guess Future Quest helps in that way as well because they show you different, different things you can do"*** *(Year 10, female)*

Many of the year tens had not sought advice on their post 16 options, at the time of interview. This does suggest a need for a more proactive approach in assisting students who are not seeking assistance by themselves, as post-16 choices will affect those made post-18, and opens up an opportunity for Future Quest to play a role in facilitating a more joined up pathway of advice and options discussion.

> ***'We get a lot flung at us about go to University, go to University, go to University, but we don't get a lot of, oh these are your options for sixth form, college*** *(Year 10, male)*

The year 11 students were generally very positive about the mentoring they had received, as well as the general sessions, both of which had helped them to narrow down their options. One year 11 student talked about how mentoring in year 11 had allowed them to decide which subjects would be best to study, but also to work out logistically how and where he could do this, which involved studying at two different institutions at post 16.

The mentoring that Future Quest offered in year 11 mirrored the support that some students were getting from their families; the opportunity to talk through ideas and the encouragement to explore ways to achieve this. Those students who only had a vague idea of what they wanted appeared to benefit the most from the mentoring. The mentoring offered an insight into job roles, and different ways to get into careers. It emerged that for some students, one key barrier to making educational choices was uncertainly as to where that would lead, in terms of an eventual career or job.

> ***"one of them, she wanted to be a nurse for the whole of her life, the other one didn't, she just decided to be one…so I think that was good to do, because, they went completely different routes so it's good to know that even if you don't take the route that a lot of people say, you can still end up doing what you want"*** *(Year 11, boys)*

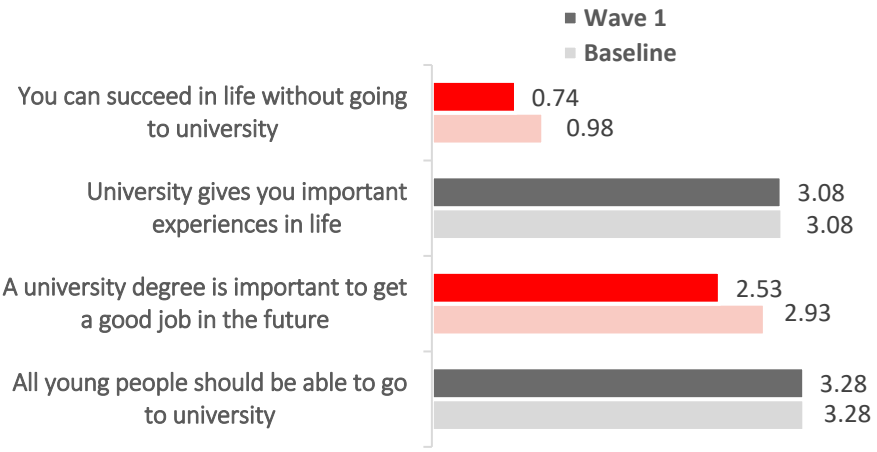
It is important, therefore, that the Future Quest programme incorporates an understanding of different pathways to jobs into all elements of the programme, and not just focus on degrees; many students are not interested in education just for its own sake, and do not know the many routes to work.

More positively, one year-eleven student was given the confidence to change from sociology to biology A level, through the support and advice they were given from the Future Quest mentor, as she was interested in studying midwifery eventually. Again, this highlights the role of self confidence in helping students to achieve their ambitions with a realistic but ambitious attitude

Providing broad information about universities generally is, therefore, only one part of the knowledge that students need to progress to HE; it is clear that the programme needs to facilitate the individual guidance needed to get each student on the pathway for them, whether to HE or to further training

2.2. **Knowing what:** Perceptions of benefits and importance of higher education

Figure 2.2: Pre-16 cohort participants change in perception of importance of HE



NB: Base size varies slightly per statement. Baseline (n=837 to 876) Wave 1 (n=599 to 604)

The survey results suggest that, overall, there was little impact of the cohort programme on perceptions of the benefits of university. However, students from all year groups started with a strong belief in the benefits of a university education, with three statements scoring over three out of four in the baseline survey. This perhaps confirms the theory that lack of aspiration is not a particular barrier to progression to higher education.

There was a statistically significant decrease in the number of students who believed that a university degree is important to get a good job in the future, and an increase in those who felt that you can succeed in life without a degree[2]. These results could be interpreted to show that participation in the Future Quest cohort programme has increased understanding of the different pathways, not just via higher education, that can lead to a desired career. On

[2] Agreement with statement is reversed on this statement to reflect levels of positivity towards HE progression across all statements (see methodology for full details)

this basis, it may be fair to conclude that lack of an understanding of the benefits of higher education is not one of the barriers to attending, among the NCOP target group.

This change was not statistically significant among students from a Black, Asian or Ethnic minority background, who agreed that a degree is important to get a good job; however, this may be as a result of a smaller number in the base size, as the broad pattern of change was the same as for white students.

There was no statistically significant change for male students in terms of believing that you can succeed in life without going to university, which reflects a stronger belief in this from the outset. In the baseline survey, 32 per cent of male students strongly agreed with this, compared with only 18 percent of female students. This may be reflective of attitudes contributing to the current gender gap in higher education.[3]

The qualitative interviews helped explain some of the ways in which students saw the pros and cons of going to university. The younger students, in year 9, in particular, overwhelmingly saw the main benefit of higher education as helping them to secure a better job, and that they would earn a higher salary than if they hadn't been. Therefore, the benefits of HE were potentially motivating, but still very abstract. Year nines also expressed worry about leaving home, however.

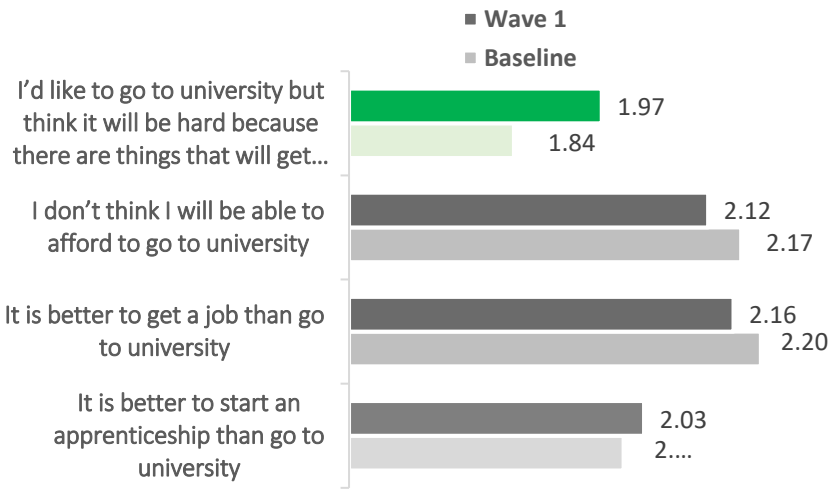
By year ten, the lifestyle was mentioned more frequently, and HE was becoming a more concrete vision for future life. It became the potential for an enjoyable experience in itself, rather than just a means to an end.

> ***"you can choose different things and very few people are doing exactly what you're doing so you're trying to be independent,…I also feel if we go to university and college you have the chance to meet different people you wouldn't have necessarily met before or like been friends with"*** *(Year 10)*

This pattern continued into year 11. However, at this point, not knowing what to study if they were to go on to HE started to become a barrier to attending.

Figure 2.3: Pre-16 cohort participants change in perceptions of HE

[3] https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/data-and-analysis/Documents/patterns-and-trends-in-uk-higher-education-2018.pdf



NB: Base size varies slightly per statement. Baseline (n=837 to 876) Wave 1 (n=599 to 604)

Overall, there was a statistically significant change in the number of students who felt that they would like to go to university, but thought that things would get in the way, that is, fewer student agreed with this statement in wave 1. This improvement was largely driven by a decrease in year nine students agreeing with the statement, although there was a slight decrease in agreement among year eleven students too. There didn't appear to be any particular differences stemming from gender or ethnicity. As with the statements measured in figure 4.2, the results may reflect an increasingly realistic, informed understanding of both the benefits and drawbacks of a university degree, but in this case, suggests that Future Quest had helped remove some of the perceived barriers to HE progression.

The qualitative data highlighted a number of ways in which Future Quest seemed to be influencing perceptions of Higher Education among its participants. For the younger students, it allowed them to see progressing to university not just as place of further study, but as the opportunity for a whole different lifestyle. Essentially, it gave them the chance to picture themselves at university; one vital step toward achieving it. In year nine, in particular, it is clear that many students lacked a vision of what going to university would be like; it was a very abstract idea, largely conceptualised as an extension of school. Future Quest gave students the chance to start thinking about HE as a tangible pathway for them, at a relatively early stage. It gave substance to a future that they may well not have been otherwise considered, certainly in year nine. While some barriers may remain – in particular, not knowing what they would like to study – being part of the Future Quest programme gave them the opportunity to experience what they may yet choose to reject.

It was also successful in making participation in HE an achievable option for the future. A number of students noted that prior to Future Quest, they didn't think that they would be able to get into university.

> ***I know that I want to go to university when I'm older. I didn't give it much thought [before] because I thought it would be a hard place to get into. When I realised it's actually a lot easier to get into****. (Year 10, male)*

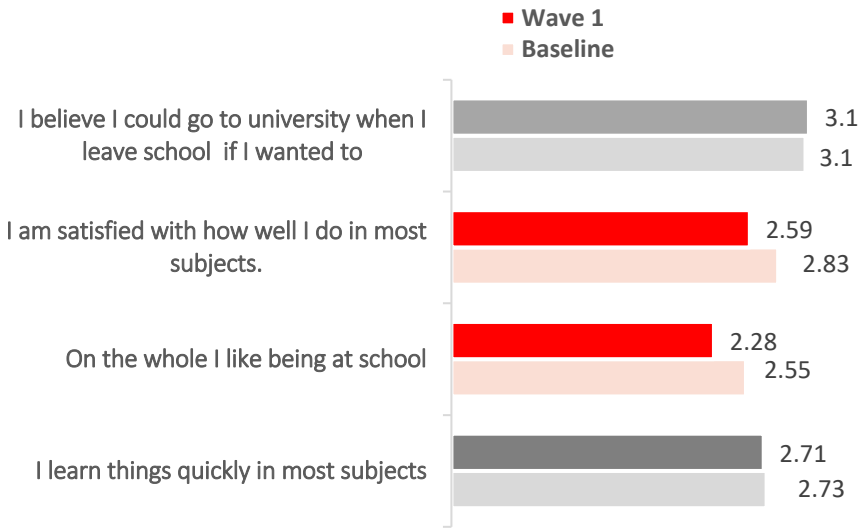
To a large extent, the Future Quest cohort programme has succeeded in fleshing out an idea of university into something more tangible; aside from the most important aspects to know when thinking about going to university, grades needed for example, other less commonly mentioned aspects were discovered by participants; details that may help encourage application to HE, or that may have been a silent barrier to some.

> ***"It's given me good advice about like different options, if you don't want to carry on with your given subject you want to do, because the student ambassadors when we went there, they were saying they chose this but later on they changed it"*** *(Year 10 boys)*

The mentoring programme in Year 11 was particularly noted for focussing on details that were important to each individual, allowing them to start plotting their own pathway to HE.

2.3. **Knowing How:** Self-belief in progression capability

Figure 2.4: Pre-16 cohort participants change in self-belief



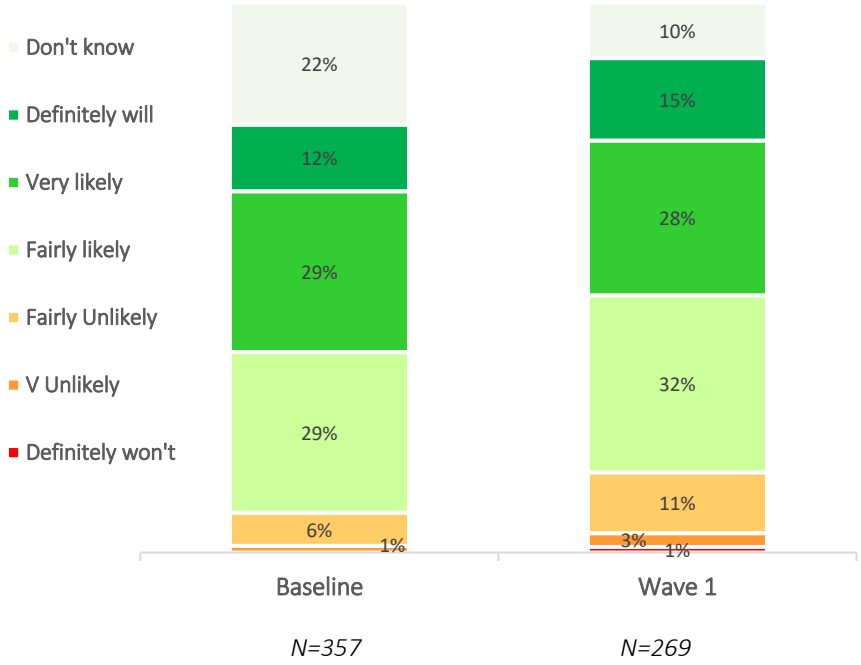
NB: Base size varies slightly per statement. Baseline (n=837 to 876) Wave 1 (n=599 to 604)

Interestingly, there was a significant decrease in satisfaction with how well students felt they did in school, as well as a decrease in how much they liked school. This change was significant among year 9 and 10 students, but not amongst those from year 11. The baseline survey was conducted at the beginning of the school year, when students had just been approached about the Future Quest cohort programme, so this may have bolstered the scores at this point. When the wave 1 surveys were conducted around Easter, this was coming up to an exam period, and therefore students may be feeling more negative about school. It should also be noted that these questions are not directly related to the Future Quest programme. Finally, while there was no change in agreement with the statement that they believed they could go to university if they wanted, belief in their potential to progress to HE was high in both waves, again, reflecting that lack of aspiration is not the issue. .

2.4. Impact of Future Quest programme on intentions to study at HE

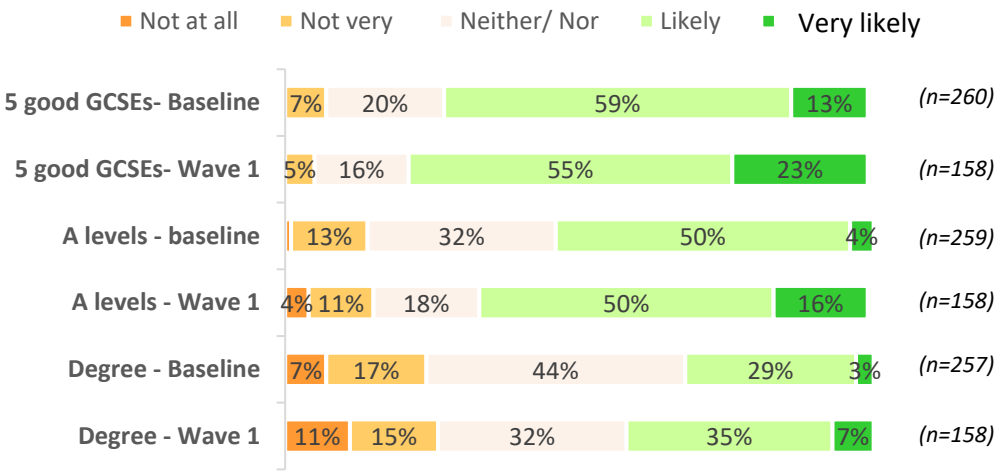
The question of likelihood to apply to HE in the future was only introduced in September 2017, and was therefore only asked of the Year 9 students who joined the programmes then.

Figure 2.5: Changes to likelihood to apply to HE (Year 9 only)



There was a statistically significant change in the perceived likelihood of year nine students to apply to higher education. However, the change was both positive and negative at the same time; more believed they were fairly unlikely to go, but more but more believe that they were fairly or definitely likely to go. This suggests that the Future Quest programme is helping students envisioning and planning their futures.

Figure 2.6: Changes to belief in likelihood to achieve certain qualifications (Year 11 only)



There was an overall increase in belief among Y11 students that they could achieve a range of qualifications. There was a statistically significant increase in perceived likelihood that they would achieve A Levels, and a statistically significant increase in the number who thought it was very likely that they would achieve five good GCSEs. There was little change in attitudes among other year groups, however, gender affected how students responded. Girls had started with a higher belief in their likelihood of getting A levels (with over 60 per cent thinking it likely), but showed a significant increase in those who thought it was not very likely (going from 6 percent to 10 per cent). Boys showed a similar increase in those thinking it less likely, however they also showed in increase the number who thought it was very likely (5 percent to 9 per cent). Whether this is as a consequence of being part of the Future Quest programme is not possible to say, as we didn't measure changes in non-participants' attitudes, but it is positive to see an increase in self-belief in ability to achieve the qualifications necessary to progress to higher education.

2.5. Findings from regression analysis

A series of binary logistic regression models[4] were constructed in order to explore the association between different attitudes to Higher Education and various pupil, school and programme characteristics. The advantage of such a method is that this allows us to identify associations while controlling for other factors, allowing us to determine those factors which are most strongly associated with differences in attitudes. The odds ratio (O/R) let us know whether one group (e.g. boys) have higher or lower odds than another group (e.g. girls) of this event occurring, or the odds of a change in levels of agreement with a statement from one wave to another. For example, an O/R of 2 means that an event is twice as likely. Statistical significance is indicated by a p level of < 0.05.

About the models

Students' responses to four separate questions were used as the outcome measures in the models, with a value of '1' indicating the response that the regression model is predicting the odds of occurring:

- *"I know about different courses at universities" (1 = strongly agree or agree)*
- *"It is better to get a job than go to university" (1 = strongly agree or agree)*
- *Whether considering going to university, either locally or away from home (1 = yes)*
- *Likelihood of applying to HE at end of year 13 (1 = definitely will apply or very likely)*

Models 1 to 3 were run twice, firstly using the responses of all of those who had completed both a baseline and wave two questionnaire; the unit of analysis being 'occasion' rather than 'pupil', and then using only these participants' wave two responses, but with additional programme characteristics added into the model, the unit of analysis then being 'pupil. This

[4] See Appendix C for full tables

allows us to test, in the first instance, whether there is a significant difference between baseline and wave two responses (when controlling for other factors) and, secondly, whether the number and nature of Cohort programme activities is associated with any difference in students' responses. The question used in Model 4 was asked of students only in wave two.

Regression results

The models show limited differences in students' attitudes to Higher Education between baseline and wave two, when controlling for school and pupil characteristics. Having participated in the Cohort programme, students were no more likely to say that they were considering going to university (O/R = 0.8, p = 0.25) and no less likely to say that it is better to get a job than go to university (O/R = 1.3, p = 0.35). They were, however, significantly more likely to report increased knowledge about the different courses on offer at universities (O/R = 5.5, p = < 0.01). This confirms the descriptive statistical findings above, and suggests that participation in the Future Quest programme may have left students more informed, but that it is perhaps too early to fully establish whether this will have a significant difference on their actual behaviours or educational attainment.

There are a number of other factors shown to have a statistically significant association with differences in attitudes to Higher Education, most notably student ethnic background, school type and student gender. Compared with white students, those from a black ethnic background had higher odds both of knowing about different courses at universities (O/R = 2.78, p = < 0.01), having considered going to university (O/R = 2.97, p = 0.03) and intending to apply (O/R = 2.4, p = 0.01). Students from Asian or Arab backgrounds meanwhile had considerably higher odds only of having considered going to university, compared with white students (O/R = 4.99, p = < 0.01). Female students also had higher odds of considering going to university (O/R = 2.4, p = < 0.01) and lower odds of believing that getting a job is better than continuing into Higher Education (O/R = 0.51, p = 0.01).

In terms of school type, those at sponsor-led academies and 'other' school types (including voluntary-aided, foundation and studio schools) tended to have more negative attitudes towards Higher Education. Indeed, compared to 'academy converter' schools, those at 'other' schools were more likely to believe that getting a job is better than going to university (O/R = 2.3, p = 0.05) and were less likely to say either that they had considered going to university (O/R = 0.2, p = < 0.01) or that they were planning to apply to a HE course (O/R = 0.4, p = 0.02). Those at sponsor-led academies were also less likely than those at academy converters to say that they intended to apply to a HE course (O/R = 0.5, p = 0.02).

Lastly, for wave two respondents, we considered whether the number and nature of the Future Quest activities that they had participated in affected their responses to the above questions. For all models we find no significant difference by: the number of activities overall that a student had participated in, the number of Cohort activities participated in, the number of one-to-one activities participated in, the total number of contact hours, average level of intervention received per activity, and the number of activities delivered at a FE campus. Interestingly, however, we find that the higher the number of activities delivered at

a HE campus the lower the likelihood of saying that getting a job is better than going to university (O/R = 0.29, p = 0.01). This is perhaps as one would expect, but it is useful to see this confirmed within the students' questionnaire responses.

In the next section, we asked participants to determine the ways in which they felt that they had benefited from each activity, in terms of the outcomes listed in the introduction. For a brief description of activities, as well as full survey data tables, see Appendix A and B.

2.6. **Knowing how:** Understanding of Higher Education

Not surprisingly, universities visits were the activities that were believed to improve understanding of what university life would be like. 79 per cent of year 9 students and 72 per cent of year 10 students stated that these visits improved their understanding a lot, with nearly all others stating that it helped a bit (16 % year 9, 23% year 10). Only half of year 11 student, however, felt it helped a lot, with a further 41% reporting a little improvement. This suggests that the university visits may have more impact on younger students.

As noted already in this paper, the Future Quest programme had given its participants a much broader idea of what university life would be like. The year 10 UWE sport and societies day helped many students to see that going to university would not just be about studying, but also about the range of extracurricular activities:

> ***"we've been there [UWE] on like 2 or 3 trips now and it's like all really modern and there's so many different activities and it's really cool down there, .. it's awesome, it's like a whole new city!"*** *(Year 10, female)*

It is also clear that the effect lessens as students get older, which is something to consider when planning the future direction of the programme. The converse was true for the finance meeting, however, with only 24 percent of years nine thinking it improved their understating of university life a lot, in comparison with 33 per cent of year 11s.

2.7.**Knowing how:** Speaking and writing skills

One of the key objectives of Future Quest was to increase attainment through improving speaking and writing skills. This will be measured by any increase in attainment at key stages four and five, as well as through the survey and interview data.

The Speaker's Trust event, where students had to prepare and deliver 3-minute speech to a large group, was the key programme activity overtly aimed at improving public speaking ability. Overall, it was judged to have done so successfully by learners; 60 percent of year nine students, and 46 per cent of year ten students felt it had improved their speaking and writing skills a lot, with 92% and 84% respectively seeing some improvement overall. For year 11 students, who didn't have the opportunity to take part in the Speaker's Trust, it was the profiling day that was most effective in this respect, with 29 per cent finding it improved their skills a lot, and a further 54% saying it improved them a little. However, mentoring was

equally useful for improving speaking, listening and writing skills: with around a quarter (26%) finding it helped a lot, and 57% a little.

From the qualitative data, the vast majority who have taken part felt that it had not just give them the confidence to speak up in public, but that they had also gained the knowledge and practical skills needed to be a good public speaker.

> ***"I loved it because like I can talk till kingdom come and everything, so it was like fun for me, [but] they taught you a lot of things that you shouldn't and should do, because I walk around a lot and I talk and I use my hands a lot, and I got told you shouldn't do that, because it makes you seem as like very kind of uppity and fidgety which I am, generally, but it can come across as something bad to an interviewer if you want to get a job or something"*** *(year 9, male)*

The skills mentioned were the importance of making eye contact with the audience and how to stand when speaking. How to structure a speech was also a key part.

> ***"I've really boosted my confidence and I can talk in front of everyone… you know what to do with the eye contact, and how you stand and stuff, and it makes you look really professional"*** *(Year 9, female)*

As is clear from the above, many of the students interviewed could still remember in detail the skills they felt they had gained, which suggests that the activity had had a considerable impact on them. One student noted that although he was already happy to speak in public, he now felt he could 'do it properly'.

For most, it was the first time that they had stood up and spoken in public. For one or two, the skills learned would feed directly into the speaking part of their GCSEs. Interestingly, while students didn't rate it well in terms of their favourite events, it was spontaneously mentioned in very positive terms by those who were interviewed in depth. This suggests that while it wasn't necessarily a 'fun' event, it left a deep impression on those who took part; a pride that they had done something that they didn't necessarily think they were capable of.

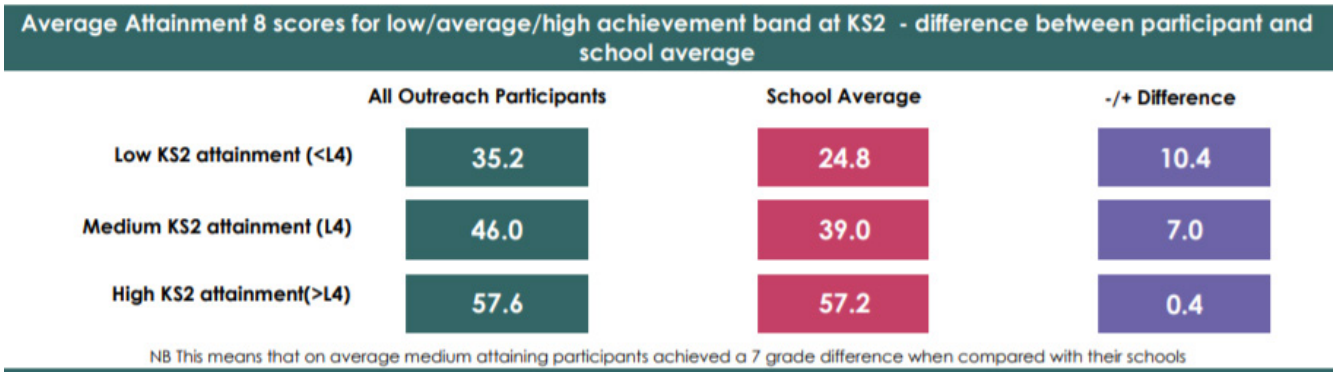
> ***"My favourite bit of [Speakers Trust] was a moment when we were given random topics, then you pick it up and you turn it over and you've got a random topic to talk about, and mine was about doing speeches….And I've got anxiety so standing in front of a room full of people and speaking is extremely nerve-wracking and especially when it's on the spot talking about what you don't know, … my knees start shaking and my hands are feeling shaky and my heart goes and I just want to get out, but once you get started and you start that momentum and you just keep on going, once it's over you just kind of breathe and it's okay again"*** *(Year 10, male)*

Interestingly, no other event came close to matching the Speakers Trust day for perceived impact on speaking, listening and writing skills. A number of students also mentioned the CV writing workshop – which was part of the future skills day – as having helped them improve their ability to write about themselves.

2.8. Impact of cohort programme on attainment

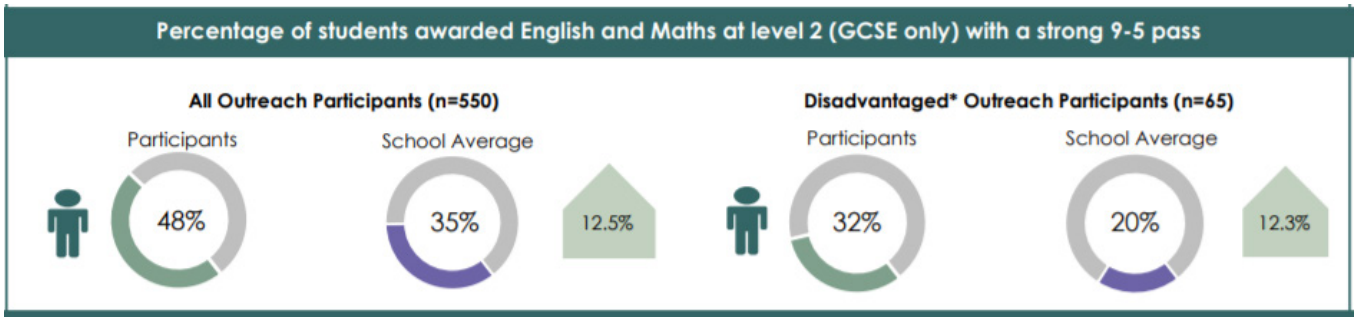
Recent data from HEAT finds a considerable increase in KS4 attainment amongst those that had taken part in the cohort programme compared with their non-participant peers.

Figure 2.7: Average attainment 8 at KS4 from 2017/18[5]



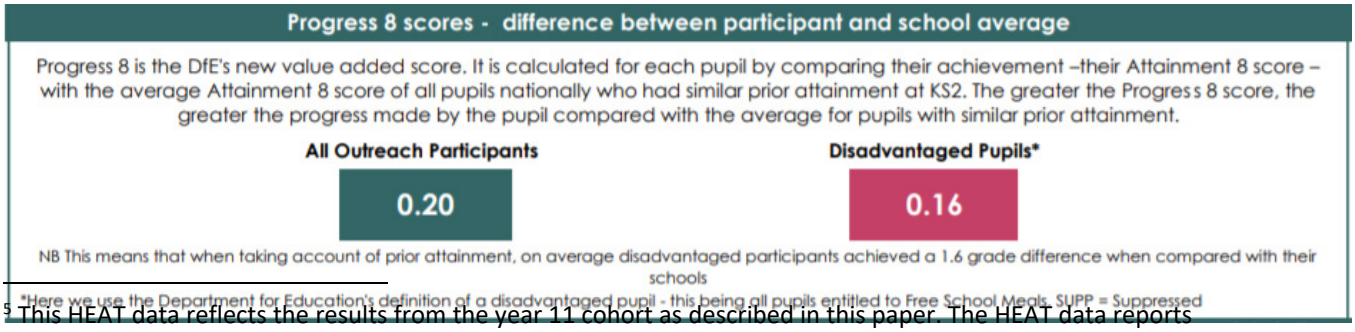
Overall, those who took part in the cohort programme achieved higher KS4 results than those who didn't, and this is particularly noticeable among those who had low key stage 2 attainment (n=300), and medium KS2 attainment (n=205). While there was little difference among those with high KS2 attainment, this may reflect the small number (n=65).

Figure 2.8: Percentage of students with a strong pass (5-9) in English and Maths GCSE 2017/18



Both overall, and for disadvantaged students, there was a substantial, over 12 percentage point difference in the numbers achieving a strong pass in Maths and English GCSEs.

Figure 2.9: Participant Progress 8 score differential 2017/18



[5] This HEAT data reflects the results from the year 11 cohort as described in this paper. The HEAT data reports on all 550 participants, including those from the Ambitions schools that were excluded from the survey

This achievement in attainment is reflected in the Progress 8 scores, which are higher among all outreach participants, as well as those who were disadvantaged. The GCSE scores achieved by participants, therefore, do not appear to just reflect higher KS2 attainment.

2.9. **Knowing how:** Cultural and social capital

Cultural and social capital is hard to define, and therefore difficult to gauge the impact of the Future Quest programme on participants in this respect. What is clear, however, is that many participants had not previously been to places such as the Bristol Old Vic, the Aerospace Museum or Clifton Suspension Bridge. For some of the year nines, this was the first time they had been to the theatre at all. There was a definite impact on one year nine student, at least, as after the visit, he joined the extracurricular drama club held at the Bristol Old Vic.

The university visits were most consistently rated as the activities that had increased student's level of comfort with cultural activities. This perhaps indicates the extent to which university has been perceived as something 'alien' to Future Quest students, and how repeated visits have increased a sense of cultural capital for them.

> ***"The tour around Bristol University was really interesting, and yes I really liked that. Because I never really had enough confidence to walk around there, you know, just like have a wander and an adventure around that campus, because I always felt like that's the university campus, that's for students".*** *(Year 11, male)*

It is important to note that while the cultural activities were enjoyed, particularly by the younger students, some of the year eleven and above students didn't really see the value directly. Older students were less inclined to miss lessons unless they felt that they would really gain for the activity.

> ***"I don't know if it's just me but I always love a trip anywhere,…so I did really enjoy it but it was a little bit like, not pointless because I did enjoy it and it was useful, but…."*** *(Year 11, male)*

There was, however, undoubtedly a pull towards joining and remaining in the programme for the younger students. These activities also contributed to confidence and character building, as there was generally an element of 'doing', such as the experiments at the aerospace museum.

2.10. **Knowing me:** Confidence and character development

Some events or activities were clearly aimed at improving outcomes in more than one area, and the Speakers Trust – as well as improving speaking skills – gave students a big confidence boost. Over half or year nine students (55%) and just under half of year tens (47%) reported that it improved their confidence in different situation a lot, with over a further third of each

year stating it helped a little. The Bristol Old Vic workshop for year nines, and the Sky Studio visit for year 11s also helped improve confidence, with 87% and 82% reporting an improvement, with around one third (30% and 38% respectively) saying it was a lot of improvement. Outside visits generally appeared to improve confidence in different situations, perhaps unsurprisingly, however, the profiling day was also rated by those who had participated: around a third of year 10s and three quarters of year 11 felt it had helped.

This was one of the most discussed activities in the depth interviews, involving students filling out a questionnaire and then getting a profile of their strengths and weaknesses. As with the Speakers Trust day, this was uniformly spoken of in positive terms, and in terms of having benefited from taking part.

> ***"It brought to light things that you wouldn't really think about, like if I described myself I wouldn't have thought some of the things that come up on the thing, but then when you look at it and think about it, you realise that it actually is right"*** *(year 10, male)*

It was clear that few students had given much thought to who they were as people, including what their strengths and weaknesses were, and this gave them the space and structure to do so. It did appear to change the students' view of themselves, to re-frame their characteristics in a different light, and to give them the language to talk about themselves.

> ***"it makes it easier so if you're applying for something you'd be like, oh I like that, my strengths are this, so I can like use that to write about it…{the next day} we went step by step through how to write up a CV… recognising the good qualities of employing someone…so you know what the employer is going to look for"*** *(year 10 female)*

This also highlights one of key elements behind the effectiveness of the Future Quest programme: that it involves getting students to do things, rather than just giving them information, which was helping to develop their self-confidence, and build their perceptions of themselves as people who can achieve the career or education to which they aspire. *The Future Quest programme, therefore, does appear to impact on the student's own narrative, particularly in the younger students*.

> ***I think it's made me think a bit more about [going for] college, like our sixth form scholarships go for anything that I think of…And it's like even if I don't get in I've gone for it and if I get in then I get all these offers and I've got options"*** *(Year ten, male)*

> ***"I don't think I felt like I was smart enough, so I don't think it was really an option for me. And now I've grown older it definitely is, if I can get the money… I think being chosen for it definitely made it interesting, but it was going around the universities, learning everything and seeing the different courses definitely that made me want to go to university***. *(Year 10, female)*

The post 16 students did not appear to have had their 'narrative' influenced by the programme to the same extent; while those we spoke to knew more about HE from the programme, they didn't appear to change their fundamental view on whether university was for them or not. This may be due to their age when they started the programme; they had already developed a clear narrative about their future.

Considering how best to support older learners to understand themselves is vital to the future development of the post 16 programme, as the decision to go to university or not is clearly only one part of a larger process; that is the process of deciding what sort of person they are, what kind of life they want.

2.11. **Knowing me:** Team building/ bonding

One underpinning principles of the Future Quest programme was the notion of developing a 'cohort'; a group of students who had been chosen for their potential to develop. For many, the act of having been chosen appeared to have a positive impact on their perceptions of themselves as people capable of going on to HE.

The cohort model was also intended to encourage co-operation, and to help students to learn to work as a team. There was some evidence that this was successful; that a sense of group identity emerged from the interviews, regardless of existing friendships. However, most did have existing friends on the programme, so it is hard to gauge the impact it may have had on their confidence to mix with others.

One or two of the activities were explicit in this: the visit to the Aerospace museum and notably the visit to the Sky Sports Studios. The Sky Sports Studio visit was particularly effective in helping build team working skills, as teams of six or seven had to take on different roles to produce a news report. This was even more effective if the teams were made from different schools.

For some of the older students, mixing with students from other schools enhanced the benefit of the programme.

> ***"it really does encourage you to work as a team…especially when we're with other schools, even though we didn't interact as much when we were put into groups, it helped us a bit"*** *(Year 11 female)*

To an extent, it replaced the experience of going to college or university, meeting new and varied people, and Future Quest could give students the confidence to see this as a good thing. Conversely, one younger student found it difficult to mix with students from other schools.

> ***"if you're seeing somebody that you only know through like snap chat or something and so you see them in person... it's different…if it's hard to speak to them if that's the kind of person you are…it makes things awkward for you and the day so you don't engage as much"*** *(Year 9, Male)*

3. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the data finds that the Future Quest pre-16 programme has had demonstrable impact on students in terms of increasing their **KNOW WHAT:**

- Higher levels of knowledge of how to get to Higher Education
- A realistic understanding of the role a university degree could play in their future

The students on the cohort programme did appear to have a much clearer understanding of higher education than before they started, and this is undoubtedly one aspect of helping students to eventually progress to higher education. In giving students the knowledge of how to get to higher education, however, it is important not to forget the importance of *why* they would want to go. For many, getting a university degree was not an end in itself, and the programme needs to also focus on the post HE future.

So far, it appears to have mixed impact on stated intention to go on to higher education, however, this data was only collected for year nine students.

There is also good evidence that the programme is impacting on **KNOW HOW**:

- Good GCSE attainment
- Strong speaking, listening and writing skills
- Cultural and social capital

The levels achieved at GCSE suggests that the programme, as a whole, may well be impacting positively on students in this area, as well as their self-belief in their ability; participation the programme is associated with higher belief in their ability to achieve academically, as well as apparently higher attainment amongst one year 11 cohort. We do not know whether the increased attainment will necessarily lead on to increased progression to HE, however we do know that Key stage 4 attainment is a key predictor of participation in Higher Education[6].

Finally, while the evidence is not as robust, there is also qualitative evidence that the programme also increases **KNOW ME**

- Developing positive personal traits such as confidence, grit and curiosity and teamwork

From the qualitative data, it appears that the programme achieves this impact through targeted activities that effectively improve confidence, speaking in public and increases familiarity with a higher education environment. The programme for pre-16s helped students start to develop a different 'narrative' around their future, by encouraging them to take part in activities that they didn't feel they would be able to do, and helped them picture themselves at a higher education setting.

[6] Chowdry et al (2010) Widening Participation in Higher Education: Analysis using Linked Administrative Data; IFS

It is clear that the information, and indeed confidence building, alone was not enough to do this; as well as the narrative of progressing to HE, the programme needs to be able help students find their individual pathway to university. The mentoring programme, when delivered effectively, appeared to achieve this, however, the effectiveness of delivery was not consistent in all schools, and as such, we cannot draw any conclusion

The most noticeable lack in the Future Quest cohort programme, in terms of helping students to find their pathways, was in career-based information and guidance. Essentially, students need to be able to visualise their life post-university, for them to start developing a pathway to lead there. For some Future Quest cohort students, they have not quite received the type of support needed to do this.

Overall, we conclude that the pre-16 Future Quest Cohort programme appears to have been successful in achieving its aims; the initial findings suggest that it is impacting on those who have taken part. The model behind the cohort programme in Future Quest, selecting a cohort of students to take part, who remain on the programme for up to five years, is integral to achieving this impact. The activities and events were broadly well structured for the year group they were delivered to, moving from cultural trips and hands on learning activities in year nine to one-to-one mentoring in year eleven.

Using the theory of 'possible selves' helped conceptualise a new model to encourage progression to HE, and we find that this model is useful for explaining and substantiating the reasons why the cohort model may be successful. Harrison (2018) makes three points that have particular relevance to the findings from this evaluation.

Firstly, that the activities are largely out of the school context, that they are delivered by staff not connected to the school, and that they are hands-on, or day outs to places that people go for fun, such as the theatre, or London. This is key to getting the students to see themselves differently, in a way that may be difficult while in their usual context. Future Quest is offering what Harrison describes as a "*temporal space within a pressured curriculum, as well as access to adults that are able to support them*" (p.15)

Secondly, the importance of the staged approach to the cohort programme in allowing students the space to re-write their narrative. It is clear that visiting HE institutions, and in particular seeing the non-academic side of HE life is a key part of the programme, but it may not be enough in itself, particularly for older students. As Harrison notes "*However, these activities are unlikely to be transformational for disadvantaged young people without the wider context and individualised strategies provided by the earlier interventions*" (p.14).

Finally, it is vital that the students involved are able to find their own pathways to their future, which may or may not involve a degree. There did appear to be a lack of clear career advice within the Future Quest cohort programme; either helping students to see where their degree course may lead to, or how they could get to where they wanted without doing a degree. This is perhaps the stage that is missing for future quest students in visualising their 'possible selves'

> "*it is important that young people are allowed to elaborate their own possible selves, rather than passively receive insights from adults about how they should visualise them and what their roadmaps should be*" (Harrison 2016 quoting Oyserman 2002, p.13)

Phase two of Future Quest increases the available careers advice, and offers a wide range of arts, engineering, sport and other activities based on the **KNOW WHAT, KNOW HOW, KNOW ME** framework to all eligible learners in schools, to complement the cohort programme. The aim for phase 2 is to replicate the impact of the cohort programme with a larger number of learners. Future Quest seems well placed to allow its students to imagine their own futures.

3.1. Limitations of the study

Firstly, it should be made clear that the cohort participants are not randomly selected, therefore, we cannot assume that there is a causative connection between participation in the cohort programme and increased attainment at key stage 4. Schools were able to choose their participants, although they were asked to prioritise those who were likely to get 5 good GCSEs, and prioritise boys where possible. That the majority were low or mid performing at KS2 suggests that schools did not cherry pick high performing students. We generally found a diverse approach to targeting taken among different schools, not one consistent focus on those already identified as having potential. The consistency of higher attainment among the students picked, and amongst disadvantaged students in particular, suggests that the effect is real, if not causative.

Secondly, the cohort model is a resource intensive approach, and therefore, would be expected to produce a considerable impact on those who take part in it. At the end of phase two, we will compare the results of those who took part in the broader, but less intensive Future Quest programme, to try to ascertain the extent to which this cohort model is good value for money.

3.2. References

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Appendix A: Overview of Future Quest Cohort programme activities

Introductory and celebration events for learners and their parents/carers, which were typically held at school, with the exception of the year 10 celebration events which were held at a prestigious location such as the City Hall. Evening events were held throughout the programme providing learners and their families with more information about student finance and options. All learners were invited to an evening performance at the Bristol Old Vic around Christmas time.

Year 9 activities included: visits and workshops held at cultural locations in the city such as the Aerospace Museum, the Bristol Old Vic, Clifton Suspension Bridge and the Underfall yard. In addition, learners took part in taster days at UWE Bristol, and University of Bristol and completed their Speakers Trust training.

Year 10 activities included more academic and student life taster days at both universities, a trip to Sky Studios and a trip to London that included a visit to the Houses of Parliament, and where possible a meeting with their MP. Students took part in profiling activities and had a IAG focused 'future skills day'.

Year 11 students had regular mentoring within their school. This was generally provided by a member of school staff, to build on existing strong and trusting relationships, with additional mentoring training and support provided through specialist CPD. In some cases mentoring was delivered by external providers – but all mentoring provision was overseen by the same third party with expertise in mentoring young people. In addition, year 11 students were invited to a results day conference, focusing on supporting them with options.

Appendix B: Survey data tables

Base sizes varied depending on how many had taken part in the activity. For year nine students, apart from Student Parents finance evening (n=187) the base size ranged from 244-271. For year ten students, the base size ranged from 150-168. For year elevens, there was a greater range. For mentoring, n=174, for the University of Bristol visits n=153. The base size for the other activities ranged from 99-119.

Figure 1: Improvement in understanding what university life would be like (Y9)

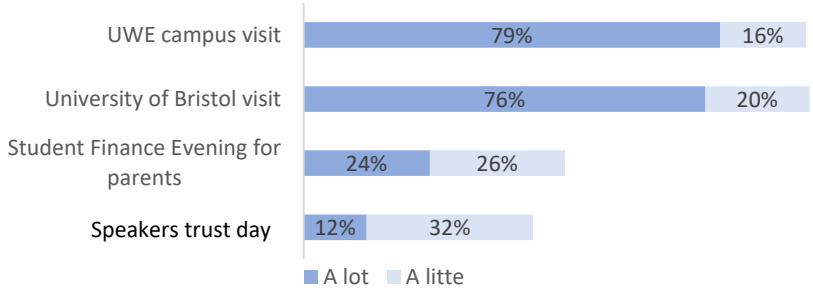


Figure 2: Improvement in understanding what university life would be like (Y10)

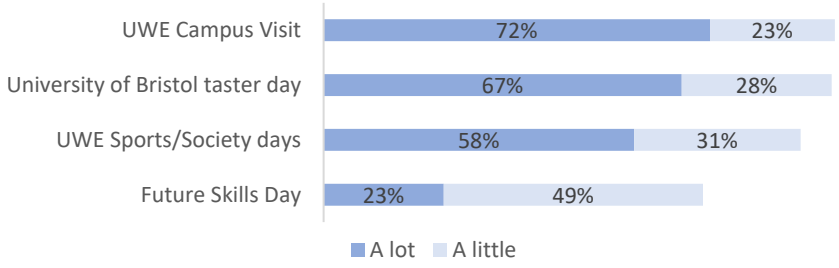


Figure 3: Improvement in understanding what university life would be like (Y11)

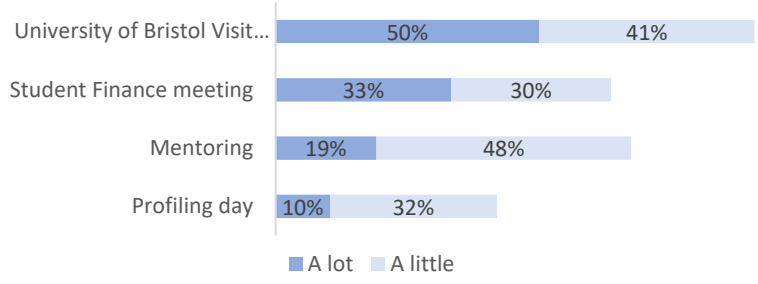


Figure 4: Self-reported improvement in speaking, listening and writing skills (Y9)

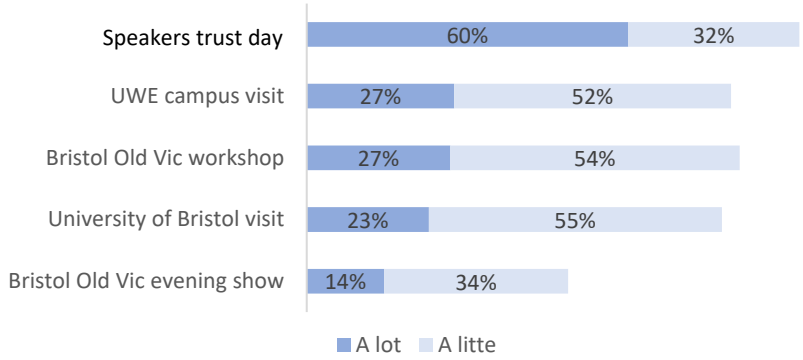


Figure 5: Self-reported improvement in speaking, listening and writing skills (Y10)

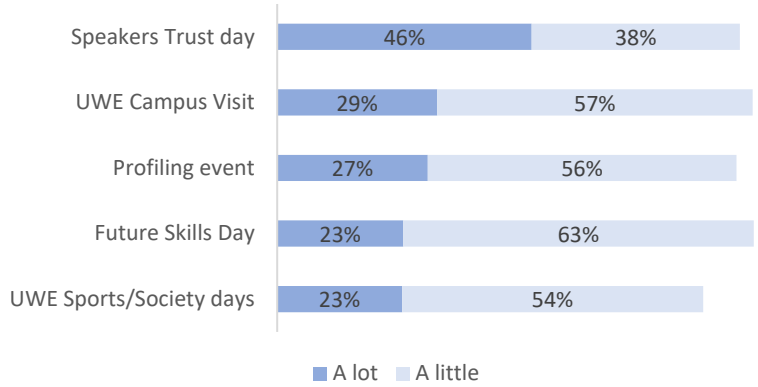


Figure 6: Self- reported improvement in speaking, listening and writing skills (Y11)

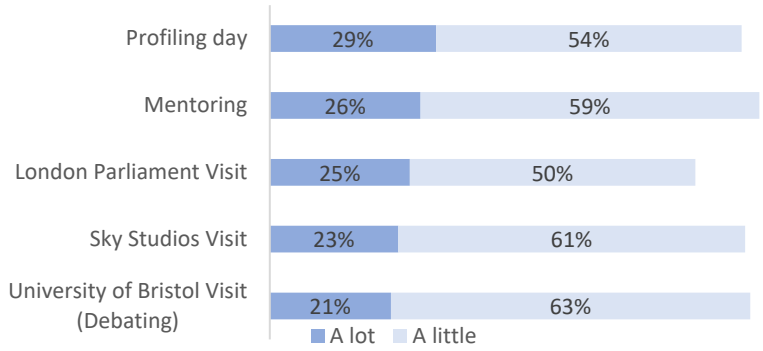


Figure 7: Self-reported improvement in confidence in different situations (Y9)

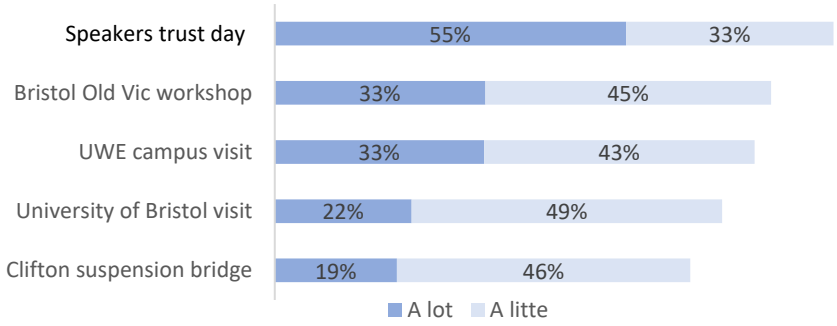


Figure 8: Self-reported improvement in confidence in different situations (Y10)

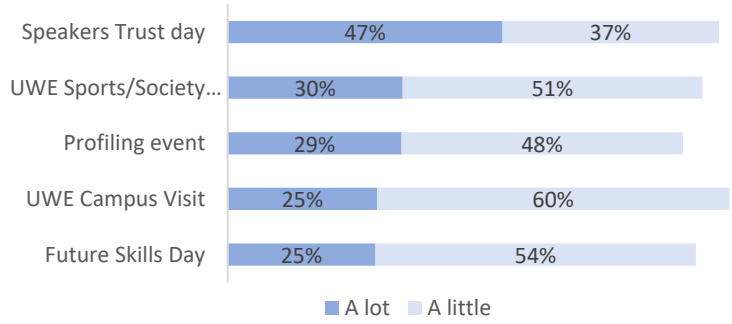


Figure 9: Self-reported improvement in confidence in different situations (Y11)

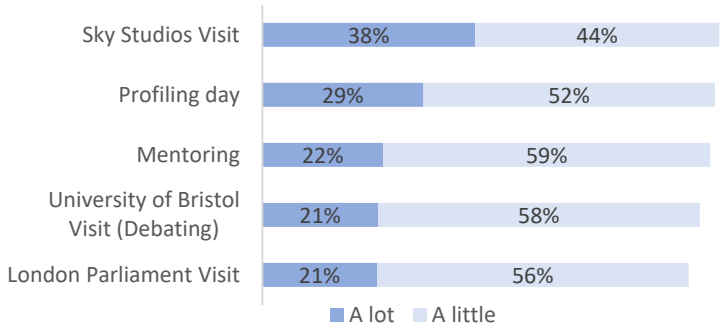


Figure 10: Improvement in feeling comfortable taking part in cultural activities (Y9)

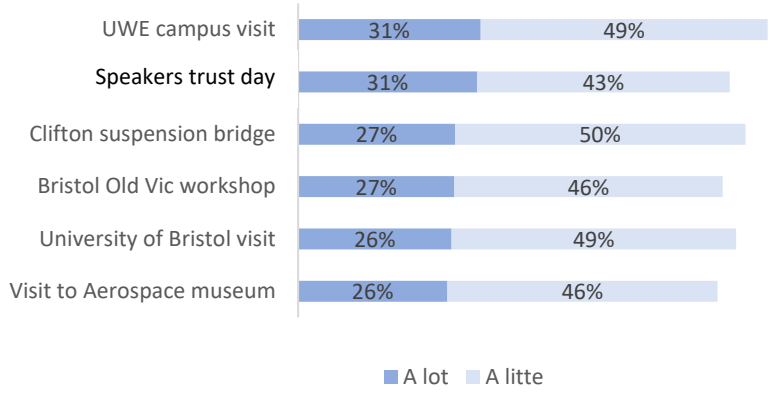


Figure 11: Improvement in feeling comfortable taking part in cultural activities (Y10)

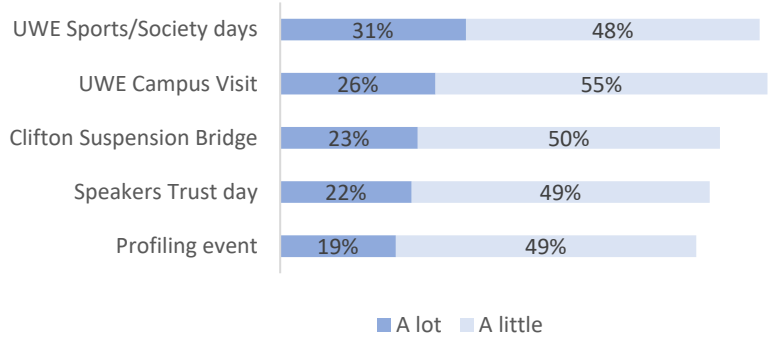
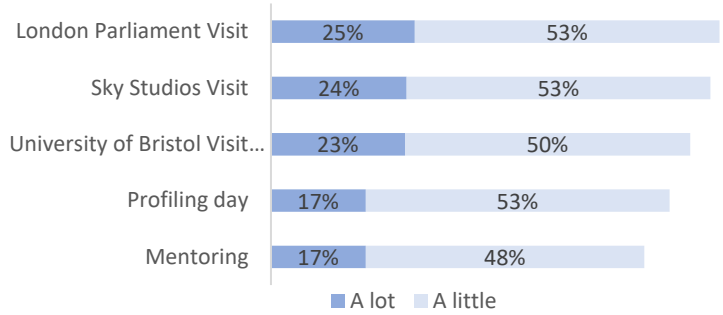


Figure 12: Improvement in feeling comfortable taking part in cultural activities (Y11)



Appendix C: Full regression table

Variable		Know about different courses offered at Universities		Getting a job is better than going to university		Has considered going to University		Plans to apply to HE	
		Odds Ratio	P-Value	Odds Ratio	P-Value	Odds Ratio	P-Value	Odds Ratio	P-Value
Constant		0.1	0.00	0.1	0.04	5.2	0.09	0.0	0.16
Baseline or wave one? (Ref=Baseline)		**5.5**	**0.00**	1.3	0.35	0.8	0.25	N/A	N/A
Student characteristics	Student ethnic background (Ref=White)		0.00		0.85		0.00		0.04
	Black	**2.8**	**0.00**	0.8	0.64	**3.0**	**0.03**	**2.5**	**0.01**
	Asian or Arab	1.2	0.38	1.2	0.69	**5.0**	**0.00**	1.7	0.12
	Mixed / Other	1.1	0.67	0.7	0.59	2.7	0.08	0.8	0.51
	Does student live in POLAR4 quintile 1 or 2? (Ref=Yes)								
	No	1.5	0.17	0.8	0.69	0.9	0.86	1.1	0.90
	Does student receive Free School Meals? (Ref=No)								
	Yes	1.2	0.33	0.8	0.61	**2.2**	**0.03**	1.2	0.55
	Student Gender (Ref=Male)								
	Female	1.0	0.73	0.5	0.01	**2.4**	**0.00**	1.3	0.17
	Cohort (Ref=Year 11 in 2017-18)		0.20		0.60		0.85		0.51
	Year 10 in 2017-18	1.3	0.13	1.3	0.47	1.1	0.62	0.4	0.27
	Year 9 in 2017-18	1.0	0.98	1.4	0.33	1.0	1.00	0.4	0.25
School characteristics	School type (Ref=Academy converter)		0.82		0.14		0.00		0.02
	Sponsor-led academy	1.1	0.64	1.3	0.46	0.6	0.08	**0.5**	**0.02**
	Other (inc. voluntary-aided, foundation & studio)	1.1	0.59	**2.3**	**0.05**	**0.2**	**0.00**	**0.4**	**0.02**
	% of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	1.0	0.67	1.0	0.59	1.0	0.12	1.0	0.71
	% of pupils classified as white British ethnic origin	1.0	0.75	1.0	0.41	1.0	0.87	1.0	0.58
	Headcount of pupils in school	1.0	0.10	1.0	0.29	1.0	0.12	1.0	0.48
Additional models (using only wave one responses):									
Programme characteristics	Number of activities student participated in overall	0.9	0.76	1.5	0.28	0.9	0.79	1.5	0.19
	Number of Cohort activities student participated in	0.9	0.82	1.0	0.95	1.2	0.68	0.9	0.62
	Number of one-to-one activities student participated in	2.4	0.13	0.6	0.63	1.1	0.87	0.6	0.41
	Total number of hours of contact	1.0	0.12	1.0	0.11	1.0	0.60	1.0	0.60
	Average level of intervention received	0.5	0.08	3.5	0.08	0.8	0.78	1.6	0.25
	Number of activities delivered at FE Campus	1.0	0.94	0.9	0.86	1.7	0.66	0.8	0.79
	Number of activities delivered at HE Campus	1.1	0.64	**0.3**	**0.01**	1.9	0.17	0.9	0.74

Notes: statistically significant results (where $p < 0.05$) are highlighted in **bold**.

Nagelkerke R-Square (for baseline & wave one regressions):	0.226	0.069	0.156	N/A
Nagelkerke R-Square (for wave one only regressions):	0.061	0.136	0.232	0.102

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