

Core Outreach Programme Evaluation Report

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Shaping Futures Core Outreach Programme: 2025-26 Evaluation Report

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Overview

This report brings together evaluation across Shaping Futures core outreach programme for 2025-26. The interventions in this offer are split across the three key themes highlighted in the core offer Theory of Change (Know What Higher Education Is; Make Informed Decisions; Skills for Success). Sessions were delivered to learners in Year 7-11, through to post-16 learners at college and Sixth Form, aimed at providing progressive and sustained support.

Over the course of the year, the core programme was delivered in 28 target schools and 5 partner FE colleges. 269 activities were delivered, including assembly talks, workshops, post-16 one-to-one support, and 18 campus visits.

Impact seen

- A high majority (94%-100%) of surveyed teachers reported that sessions met their intended outcomes.
- Learners reported increased knowledge of Higher Education (HE), confidence in making decisions, and sense of belonging towards HE.

Evaluation Methods

- Learner surveys
- Teacher feedback
- Practitioner reflections
- Learner worksheets

Learner pre-and post- surveys were carried out at a large event and on campus visits throughout the year. Some evidence from learners, in the form of notes and worksheets, was collated alongside evidence collected in 2024-25. As the programme of delivery was the same in 24-25, this evidence could be used to inform evaluation of learner engagement. 140 sources of evidence were collected, demonstrating active engagement, understanding, and task completion within sessions. Practitioner reflections have also been used, particularly in session development and quality assurance. Quality assurance and session development took place throughout the year, with renewed focus over summer when schools were closed.

For core delivery across 2025-26, teacher feedback was used as another evaluation method to assess whether the intended outcomes for each session within the offer were being met. Teacher feedback provides a useful perspective, validating evaluation from student surveys/worksheets and practitioner reflections (Affejee et al, 2024, p.111). A total of 71 teacher observations were analysed to gain insight into the impact of delivery sessions across the three themes. The data was then coded using an inductive approach, using terms and phrases that repeated across the data to portion it into groups. These coding groups were placed in a framework of four main categories to which the data could be ordered. These categories related to core programme outcomes and were supported by the framework set out in Thomson et al. (2022). In addition, initial analysis highlighted the opportunity to record the role played by the practitioner or ambassador in the effectiveness of a session. These framework categories included Knowledge of Pathways; Attitudes and Aspirations; Cognitive and Practical Skills and Practitioner/Ambassador Performance. Two members of the Shaping Futures team scored

teacher feedback separately to ensure inter-rater reliability of the data. Within the framework categories, codes were created that reflected the dataset:

Category	Code	Definition
Knowledge of Pathways	Awareness Shift HE	Evidence that a student's understanding of HE pathways has increased.
	Awareness Shift Next Steps	Evidence that a student's understanding of their 'next steps' has expanded.
Attitudes and Aspirations	Affective Shift	Engagement with the session. Observed change in student confidence, motivation.
Cognitive and Practical Skills	Tool/Strategy Adoption	Students using or planning to use a specific resource or strategy.
	Concept Recall	Specific model, theory or technical term noted.
	Skill Development	Evidence that a skill has been developed or enhanced.
Practitioner/Ambassador Performance	Expert knowledge, approachability, delivery & communication	Specific subject knowledge or expertise highlighted. Evidence that practitioner reduced student anxiety or built rapport. Evidence that practitioner translated complex info into appropriate terms for student.

Key words and phrases indicated where data should be placed in the framework. For example, 'confidence' and 'inspired' indicated an Affective Shift, whereas 'growth' indicated Skill Development. An average of the coded data was then produced across the three themes of the core programme.

Qualitative Data Interpretation

The percentages reported in the following sections represent the proportion of unprompted teacher comments matching code criteria, rather than a direct measure of session impact. As comments were open-ended, these figures highlight the changes that teachers thought were most noteworthy to record. The fact that changes were spontaneously highlighted indicates that the shift was notable enough to be a key takeaway for the teacher observing the session. Lower percentages relating to a code do not necessarily indicate a lack of impact but instead point to

the theme and focus of the session being clear and weighted towards certain codes (e.g. an Intro to HE session scoring high on Awareness Shift HE but low on Concept Recall). Alterations to evaluation design are noted in the recommendations of this report, with the aim of evaluating more accurately on session impact as opposed to teacher reporting ability.

Evaluation Results

Know What HE Is

- 59 activities in this theme were delivered across schools and colleges.
- 100% of teachers felt that sessions met the intended outcomes.

50% of written teacher comments noted an observed awareness shift in student HE knowledge. 42% of the feedback attested to an affective shift, where students were engaged in the session or teachers had observed a positive change in confidence or motivation towards HE as a pathway. 35% felt that the expert knowledge, communication style, and approachability of those delivering the sessions played a part in the progress of pupils. Examples of such comments included

“Pupils will now appreciate the variety of university pathways available to them”.

“Clear and concise delivery, excellent presentation. Questions clear and misconceptions addressed”.

This is intensified further when looking at the feedback for campus visits. Small-scale (30 learners) campus visits for Year 9 or 10 were offered to priority schools for 2025-26 and delivered by the core team or in collaboration with partners. 67% of teachers noted engagement with activities, and 44% spoke of the expert knowledge demonstrated by those delivering the session. Comments here include responses such as:

“Engaging and thought-provoking. Awareness of the life of students clear.”

Additionally, 40% teachers noted evidence of increased understanding of what HE is and 100% felt that the campus visit met its intended outcomes. Out of the 18 core offer campus visits delivered, 9 were evaluated using pre-and post- learner surveys. The remaining visits were not evaluated due to time and implementation constraints on the day. Learners reported a 24% increase in Higher Education knowledge and a 22% increase in positive answers relating to sense of belonging towards HE.

Making Informed Decisions

- 80 activities in this theme were delivered across schools and colleges.
- 94% of teachers felt that sessions met the intended outcomes.*

Teacher feedback highlighted that pupils’ awareness of new skills had shifted alongside an affective shift, scoring 47% and 41% respectively. During a Labour Market Information session, for example, comments from teachers included:

“Students stated that it has helped them to consider other options and salaries when making future plans”.

* When asked if they felt session outcomes had been met, one teacher questioned how this could be measured and did not provide an answer, indicating difficulty with the feedback measure which then impacted reporting ability. A recommendation of this report is to provide more clarity and guidance for teachers providing feedback.

Student worksheets also provide evidence of learners making use of action and careers plans to support planning and decision-making within these sessions.

Promising student evaluation was collected from a Post-18 Pathways session, supporting learners seeking to follow a career in the NHS. Working with student pre and post feedback surveys, there were increases in student knowledge of HE; their confidence in making decisions; and sense of belonging towards HE. Positive answers increased by 10%, 5%, and 7% respectively across a cohort of 77 learners. There was no notable rise with regards students' HE expectations. However, as this event engaged learners already seeking an HE pathway to various careers in the NHS, the lack of a positive shift in this area is to be expected.

Skills for Success

- 130 activities in this theme were delivered across schools and colleges.
- 100% of teachers felt that sessions met the intended outcomes.

34% of teacher feedback suggested an affective shift in Skills to Succeed sessions. 35% showed evidence of tool or strategy adoption by students, with teachers noting learners' creation of revision timetables during Study Skills sessions:

“Students engaged with timetable”.

Evidence from learners' work also demonstrated tool or strategy adoption, particularly with the STAR method for answering application and interview questions, with a notable increase in the detail of student answers and use of the STAR structure to scaffold written and spoken answers.

14% of teacher comments reflected student skill development in the session, with one teacher commenting on the way that the Year 11 Revision Skills session provided:

“Fantastic development from the [Study Skills] session” in Year 10”.

20% of teachers specifically mentioned practitioner/ambassador performance when feeding back on Skills for Success sessions. One noted the advocate's ability to build rapport, reducing anxieties around sharing experiences:

“The advocates engaged with the students well and the students felt more comfortable sharing distractions/revision techniques”.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

- The evaluation evidence indicates that Shaping Futures core programme achieves its intended outcomes for students:
 - Enhanced student knowledge, increased confidence and motivation, and skill development.
 - Small-scale campus visits had a positive impact on HE knowledge and learners' sense of belonging.

Recommendations for evaluation in 2026-27

- Seek to improve on teacher feedback evaluation design. The limitations of the evaluation design noted above should be addressed to more clearly evaluate actual session impact as opposed to teacher ability to comment in a way that supports the evaluation. Prompts and Likert scales would support a more direct and standardised observation of learner changes

across sessions. Now that a coding framework is in place, questions asked of teachers can align with more clarity, aiding in that process.

- Continue to collect evidence of learner engagement, developing analysis techniques of this qualitative source.
- Aim to collect evaluation data on essential skills awareness and development as this becomes a focus moving into 2026-27.

References

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