

Working with young people 'at risk' of disengagement

Francis Barber Pupil Referral Unit, Wandsworth

A collaborative project to raise awareness of opportunity, realise potential and support students in their next steps post 16

Aimhigher London creates opportunities for young people from all backgrounds to have equal access to Higher Level learning. We believe in the benefits of Higher Education to individuals, the economy and the wider social context of society. We believe everyone, who has the potential, should have fair access to benefit from these opportunities. We do this by working in partnership (with schools, Colleges, Higher Education providers, local authorities and education/training providers) to improve access to impartial CEIAG for young people with little knowledge or experience of higher education.

Background to project

This project was proposed initially as a discreet project for the Wandsworth Pupil Referral Unit – Francis Barber. They had come into the Aimhigher London partnership as part of a cluster of borough schools from the Wandsworth Ambitions project. Although accessing the CORE Learner Progression programme Aimhigher London in collaboration with Wandsworth Ambitions agreed that a bespoke approach was needed for these particular ‘At risk’ learners.

Aimhigher London initially identified key providers within the partnership that would be best placed to collaborate on a project with this target group. Initial meetings took place with the school and local FE provider to identify the barriers associated with these learners in relation to progression and retention for post 16, commonalities were:

- Lack of long term higher aspiration.
- Lack of self-awareness in understanding their own skills and abilities.
- Limited exposure to opportunities due to educational status.
- Behavioural issues such as conflict with others, lack of awareness of how to interact with others appropriately and interpersonal skills.
- Undisclosed issues and broken trust including limited positive role models.

A programme was agreed with the key contributors that would aim to tackle some of the common barriers. The school prioritised Y11 learners for this project initially with a view to develop a longer term interaction with Y10 in the future. It was felt that Y11 were at a crucial stage in considering transition and would most immediately benefit from this type of intervention within the time scale.

Project Goal

This project aimed to bring together education providers across the school, FE and HE sectors to provide a discreet group of learners who were at risk of disengaging with learning post 16 to be aware of opportunities that are available to them, realise their potential and provide some interventions to enable them to succeed.

Aims

- To raise awareness and aspiration to the opportunities available to an identified group of ‘At Risk’ learners who have the potential to progress and succeed.
- Provide learners with the appropriate information and exposure to access these opportunities.
- Provide the learners with skills and support to access and remain on course in their transition post 16.
- To increase the aspiration for these learners to continue onto higher level learning at post 18.

Objectives

- Develop skills to support progression to the next level including organisational skills and motivation to do well
- Understand the importance of certain skills in a real world work context
- Identify their own personal pathways to defined post 16 destinations
- Be provided with the opportunity to work with and hear from positive role models

The Project

Initially Eleven Y11 students were identified by the school from both sites (Tooting and Westdean) with nine learners eventually engaging and completing the project. The students were selected based on their engagement with learning and aspirations to progress and parental support

Key contributors:

Aimhigher London (lead), Francis Barber PRU, Kingston University (KU), Goldsmiths University (GOLD), South Thames College (STC) and 'Spiral'.

Key components:

Students followed a pilot programme of interventions with positive role models from Spiral, universities and post 16 providers to support them in their progression post 16. Five developmental sessions with Spiral focused on transferable skills and two external visits to Goldsmiths and Kingston Universities focused on raising awareness of opportunity and exposure to higher level learning. It was recognised that a realistic 'next step' for these learners would be progression to an FE college and as the local provider South Thames College were well placed to offer that intervention.

- The programme was collaborative
- Facilitators were experienced in working with this target group and were continuous
- HE Student Ambassadors and role models supported delivery in each session
- 5 bespoke sessions were delivered on site with Spiral leading on a focus of:
 - Session 1 - Teamwork - teambuilding games
 - Session 2 - Self reflections/progression pathway/alternative pathways
 - Session 3 - Sales customer service (listening, presenting)
 - Session 4 - Personal Brand - presentation/ interview skills/ Professionalism
 - Session 5 - Enterprise (using skills, incentivise)
- A further three sessions were delivered off site at HE/FEC institutions:
 - KU: Intro to the benefit of HE, positive learning role models and STEM
 - STC: Intro to FE subjects, pastoral support and post 16 pathways
 - GOLD: Intro to Creative Careers, Student Finance and support and final celebration

Timescales:

October – Initial scoping & students identified

November – Programme and partner interventions approved

Dec - March - Programme delivered

May - evaluation complete

Allocation of roles:

- Aimhigher London was point of contact between organisations and overall co-ordinator of the programme using their expertise of co-ordinating impartial, collaborative outreach programmes.

- FBPRU to select Y11 cohort and provide staff to support all sessions
- Spiral lead delivery of 5 sessions on site
- KU and GOLD provided suitable Student Ambassadors to support project
- Kingston and Goldsmiths University to lead on delivery of off site visits in liaison with Aimhigher.
- South Thames College to organise and lead visit focused on next steps in liaison with Aimhigher.

Costings:

£7000 Included:

Aimhigher: Project Coordination, administration, evaluation and KU visit catering

Spiral: Development and staff delivery of 5 workshops and final visit

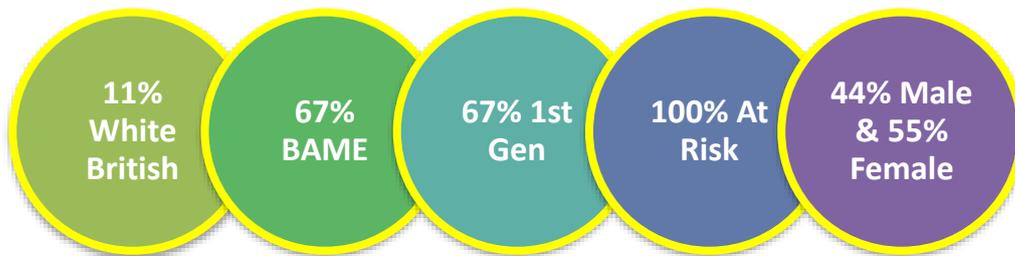
Kingston University: Student Ambassador costs to support sessions and KU visit

Goldsmiths University: Student Ambassador costs to support sessions and GOLD visit plus catering

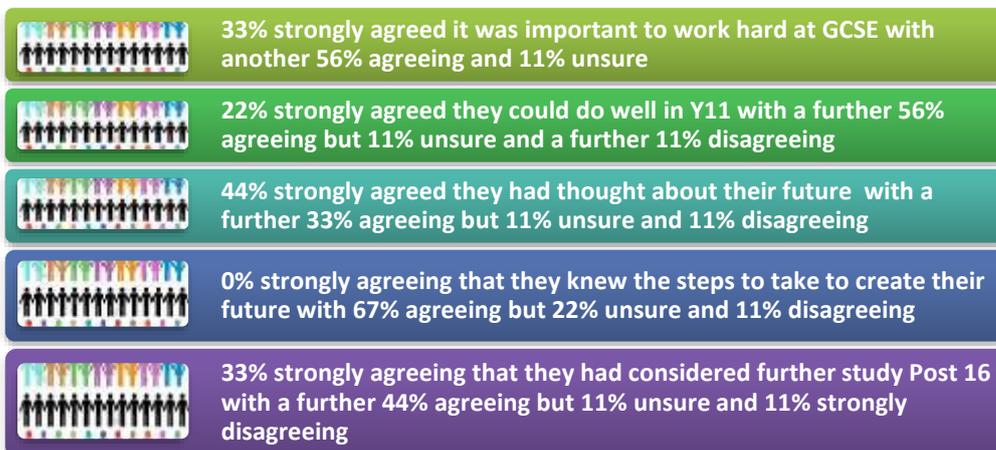
South Thames College: visit plus catering

Francis Barber PRU: Travel and staff cover costs for sessions

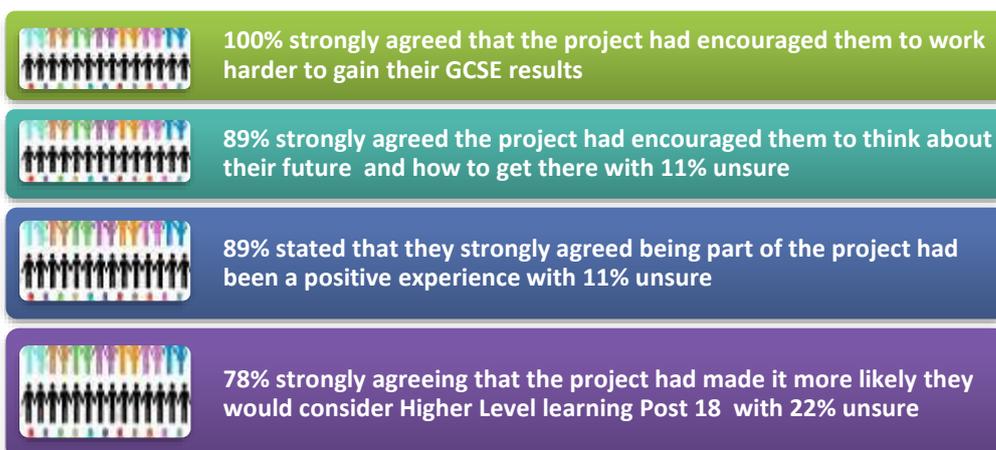
Evaluation



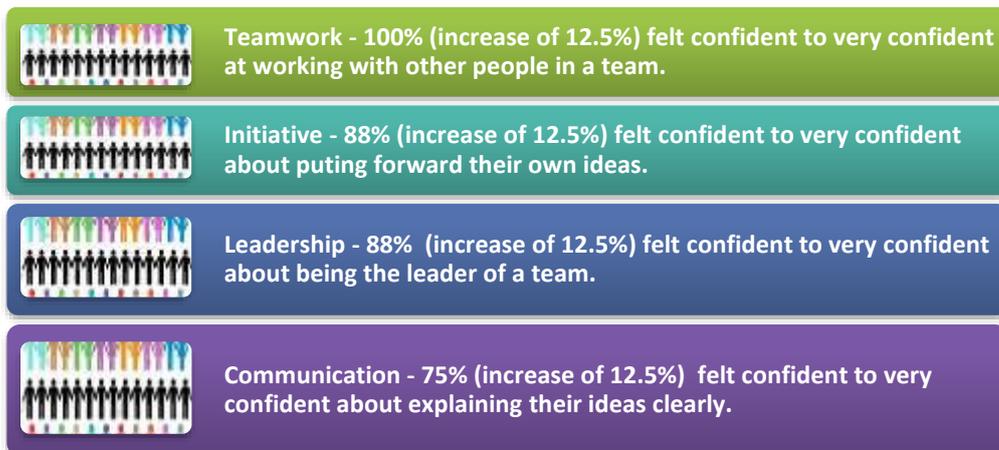
Attitude to learning and transition prior to the project:



Attitude to learning and transition post project:



Feedback on Skills achieved:



- In terms of attainment of CORE subjects all the young people involved have maintained or improved at least 1 level on their attainment grade for CORE subjects of Maths and English.
- In terms of transition all the young people involved have made at least 1 application to a post 16/Apprenticeship provider.
- Of all the young people that took part 89% stated they would recommend a project like this to their friends and fellow classmates.

Future developments:

The PRU are keen to work with year 10 students. Following the initial pilot we will consider how best to work with this group. Aimhigher also see potential in rolling out the model to work in a longitudinal way with 'at risk students with potential' in schools and to work with 'pathway' students post 16 and to support them with their transition. We hope to create a sustainable 'legacy' from the pilot phase supported through Wandsworth Ambitions.

Noted that identifying a group of STC students to support the PRU project in future could lead to the development of a pyramidal support programme involving HE ambassadors supporting FE students who in turn support the PRU students.

Employability – Aimhigher and Wandsworth Ambitions would be keen to develop further exposure for these learners to employers as part of any future programme whether through links with existing collaborators Spiral and STC or will additional wider partnership links.

AHLS outlined potential for staff to access the existing CPD programme but could look to develop this further with Academic exchange with FEC/HE colleagues to understand further supporting these learners through transitions. In addition could look at key development opportunities for FBPRU staff from our HEI partners to access CPD opportunities or gain training and development in specific areas.

One thing that I have learnt through this project....

"That university isn't for one type of person"

"That anyone can go to university and you can get help with finance"

"I have improved my confidence and I am better at working as a team"

"That things can be achieved easier in groups"

"I have learnt more about the real world"

"To be confident"

Y11 Learners from the project