



inspiring  
choices

York & North Yorkshire

# Activity Handbook

**2025/2026**



# Our stakeholders said..

“The students feel really valued and special and love the opportunities they are given.”

“Thank you for all your support, we are proud to be a partner of Inspiring Choices.”

“A very professional team who work to the highest standards.”

“We have been grateful for the opportunity to work with Inspiring Choices to reach a different group of people with the intervention training, which in turn has enabled more struggling learners to be supported.”

“The Inspiring Choices programme and staff offer great understanding and personal insight into HE for our varied and mixed cohort.”

“It has given service children a space and time to develop themselves as individuals and also work together.”

“Future Selves brought out some great conversations and ideas from students who are usually quite quiet. All students were FSM on purpose.”

“The Inspiring Choices team is professional, knowledgeable and a pleasure to work with.”

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# Welcome!

We are excited to launch our new Activities Handbook which outlines the activities and projects that our partner schools, colleges and stakeholders can access, free of charge, from Inspiring Choices during the 2025-2026 academic year.

In this handbook you will find details about our new outreach offers, our team and a list of our partners.



## Who are Inspiring Choices?

Inspiring Choices is part of the Office for Students Uni Connect Programme. Running since 2017, our aim is to reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups. We support young people and adults who live in York and North Yorkshire to make well-informed decisions about their future education and career.



We are also continuing to support the following strategic groups:

- Care experienced young people
- Young carers
- Military service young people
- Working-class boys

If you would like to contact us, please email [inspiringchoices@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:inspiringchoices@yorks.ac.uk).

We have been working towards making all of our delivery materials and resources more neuro-inclusive and accessible. This is an ongoing aim of the programme, if you have any feedback or specific requirements, please get in touch.

# Meet the team

The Inspiring Choices team are based at York St John University.

Louisa Dobson	Programme Manager
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## Delivery team

Penny Garner	Outreach and Partnerships Manager
Jamie Thompson	Outreach Coordinator
Molly Crowe	Outreach Coordinator
Abbie Salkeld	Outreach Coordinator
Izzy Rhodes	Outreach Coordinator

## Office-based team

Laura Fenwick	Research and Impact Evaluation Officer
Jess Ely	Impact Evaluation Assistant



# Links to Gatsby Benchmarks

We have linked our activities to the Gatsby benchmarks where they fit. These sessions can be used to enhance your school's careers programme. We also have the capacity to offer individual personal guidance for particular students where needed, or after a delivered session.

## Gatsby Benchmarks

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each young person
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal Guidance

# Programme Monitoring

As a condition of Uni Connect funding, the Office for Students (OfS) require partnerships to track all learners engaged with their activity. We are required to use an OfS-approved tracking service; we use the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT). The tracking data enables us to understand how participation in Inspiring Choices activity impacts progression to higher education, and is an essential part of evidencing the impact of Uni Connect. This also includes pre- and post-evaluation surveys we conduct before and after some sessions.

What we need from you:

- Sign and return the Data Sharing Agreement and Service Level Agreement
- Securely send cohort data for year 10-13 (first name, surname, DOB, postcode and gender)
- Return registers from all activities

## Signposting

- This year, we are increasing our signposting provision and website resource and we would love for our schools and colleges to engage with us on social media, share our resources, and tag us in posts!
- We will continue to update our blog, events pages, and resource sections for students, parents/carers, and teachers and practitioners.
- We also love attending your careers fairs, so please let us know when they are.

[Link to website portal](#)

- Find out more:



[@inspiring.choices.uc](#)



[inspiring-choices.co.uk](http://inspiring-choices.co.uk)



[Inspiring Choices LinkedIn](#)



[Inspiring Choices Facebook](#)

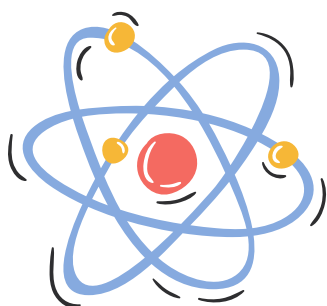
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# Our Activities for 2025-2026



On the next few pages, you will find details of our activities on offer for 2025-2026. You will find a short summary for each which will help you decide which activity is appropriate for your students.

Each activity has been mapped against the Gatsby Benchmarks.



Our activities have been designed to be delivered individually or as part of a package.

As part of our 25-26 offer, we would like to give schools the option of having a coordinator stay on site to offer a drop in follow up to a session. This will give students the opportunity to ask questions about the workshop 1-1 instead of in front of a group. All of the coordinators hold an enhanced DBS certificate.





# Our Sessions at a glance

## Employability:

- Transferable Skills
- CV & Cover Letters
- Interview Techniques
- Digital Skills

## Study Skills:

- Academic Skills
- Revision Techniques

## Future Selves:

- Passions
- Choices
- Goals

## Financing Your Degree:

- Student Finance
- Budgeting

## Post-16 Options:

- Your Post-16 Options
- Apprenticeships

## Preparing for Student Life:

- Student Life
- Student Accommodation

## Campus Visit/In School

### Pre-16:

- What is HE?
- HE & You

## Campus Visit/In School

### Post-16:

- Why HE?
- Applying to University
- HE & You

## Campus Visits

- Pre-16 HE Campus Visit
- Student Life Campus Visit
- Post-16 HE Campus Visit
- Subject Specific Campus Visit

# Employability

What is it?

In a competitive job market, it is important to know what employability skills are valued by different employers. This package offers a series of workshops that will set students off to a good start in the world of work.

Who?

Years 10, 11, 12, 13 and FE Learners

How?

There are four workshops on offer that can be delivered as a series or individually. The workshops are typically delivered in the following order:

- Transferable Skills
- CV and Cover Letters
- Interview Techniques
- Digital Skills

Optional Addition:

- Small-scale Mock Interviews delivered by the Inspiring Choices team

Gatsby  
Benchmark(s)

2, 3, 5, 7, and 8

What was  
the most  
useful part  
of the  
workshop?

"I really needed help writing a CV and I just didn't understand it properly, however this session helped me to know more about it and provided me with a CV template."



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# Study Skills

What is it?

These workshops equip learners with the skills they need to succeed academically in Higher Education, and provide an insight into learning in a Higher Education environment. These workshops focus on revision techniques and research techniques.

Who?

Years 10, 11, and 12

How?

There are two workshops on offer, that can be delivered as a series or individually.

- Academic Skills (aimed at Year 12)
- Revision Techniques (aimed towards Years 10 and 11)

All workshops will include a range of information, advice and guidance centred around how to prepare for study in a Higher Education setting. They will incorporate various activities that can be completed individually or as part of a group.

Gatsby  
Benchmark(s)

3, 7 and 8

What was  
the most  
useful part  
of the  
workshop?

“I enjoyed learning about the different research materials and how uni libraries operate.”



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# Future Selves

## What is it?

These workshops are an opportunity for students to use their imagination to explore how their current education connects to different possible futures. Using self-reflective exercises, these interactive activities aim to help students identify their strengths and interests, develop decision making skills, and set their own goals.

## Who?

Year 10+

## How?

Three separate workshops that work best in the following order:

- Passions
- Choices
- Goals

Passions seeks to help students identify what they are interested in, both in and out of school. Through a series of interactive activities, they are encouraged to reflect on their personal likes and preferences to help them envision possibly future pathways that might suit their personality.

Choices breaks down different decision making methods to show how an individual's ability to make choices will depend on their priorities at any given time. To do this, we play a number of games to explore how we would react in different scenarios before asking students to reflect on the methods that they personally found most helpful.

Goals outlines the differences between educational, professional, and personal goals and then demonstrates how each person will set themselves all three in order to connect present school experiences to our future selves.

## Gatsby Benchmark(s)

3, 4, 7, and 8

What was the most useful part of the workshop?

"It was fun and I liked how it helped with planning my future."



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# Financing Your Degree

## What is it?

These workshops are for students who have applied for, or are considering, an undergraduate degree. They will introduce students to the Student Finance application process, and budgeting skills to prepare them for independent living.

## Who?

Years 12 and 13, and FE Learners

## How?

We offer two workshops with a focus on financing HE:

- Student Finance
- Budgeting

Student Finance is a hybrid workshop. It introduces students to the Student Finance application process, discusses key dates, and outlines how maintenance loan amounts are calculated. In addition to the standard Student Finance process all prospective students will follow, we also discuss scholarships, bursaries, and other financial support such as Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) to give participants a broad understanding of what support is offered.

The budgeting workshop focuses more on managing day-to-day finances as a student with increased financial freedom. Using a number of games and activities, we encourage students to think about living on a budget when it comes to grocery shopping, managing bills, buying academic materials, and having enough money to enjoy yourself at university.

Gatsby  
Benchmark(s)

7

What was  
the most  
useful part  
of the  
workshop?

“Knowing what extra  
financial support I  
could get.”



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# Post-16 Options

What is it?

Start to explore a student's options beyond their GCSEs. This package will cover the different types of qualifications and provision, and the transition from school to college/sixth form.

How?

- Workshop - Your Post-16 Options
- Workshop - Apprenticeships
- Visit to an FE campus (full day for max. 60 young people)

Gatsby  
Benchmark(s)

3, 7, and 8

What was  
the most  
useful part  
of the  
workshop?

“To learn about the differences between A-Levels, T-levels and BTECs and learn what an NVQ is.”

“Learning about what the different forms of higher education involve on a more day to day basis.”



# Preparing for Student Life

What is it?

This workshop and campus visit is for students who have applied for, or are considering an HE course. It aims to equip learners with the skills required for student life and prepare them for their transition to Higher Education.

Who?

Years 12 and 13, and FE Learners

How?

- Workshop Student Ambassador-led - Student Life
- Student Life Campus Visit
- Workshop Student Accommodation

Gatsby  
Benchmark(s)

3, 7, and 8

What was  
the most  
useful part  
of the  
workshop?

“I have learnt how student accommodation works as well as how to apply for it.”



# Campus Visit/In School

## Pre-16

What is it?

This package offers workshops at York St John University campus as well as in schools. For Pre-16, this will be a beginners guide to Higher Education, informing students what HE is and allowing them to envision themselves within an HE setting.

Who?

Years 10 and 11

How?

Two workshops within campus visit:

- Beginners Guide to HE
- HE & You

Two workshops within schools:

- What is HE?
- HE & You

Gatsby  
Benchmark(s)

3, 4, and 7

What was  
the most  
useful part  
of the  
workshop?

“I think it was  
helpful to  
decide my  
future.”





# Campus Visit/In School

## Post-16

What is it?

This package also offers workshops on York St John University campus and within schools, with the main difference being the level of detail. Post-16 students looking at Higher Education will get information on how to apply, student finance, accommodation and more.

Who?

Years 12 and 13, and FE Learners

How?

Two workshops within campus visit:

- Beginners Guide to HE
- HE & You

Three workshops in schools or within campus visit:

- What is HE?
- Why HE?
- Applying to University

Gatsby  
Benchmark(s)

3, 4, and 7

What was  
the most  
useful part  
of the  
workshop?

“I feel that the  
session was very  
informative and  
useful.”



# Campus Visits

What is it?

- Pre-16 campus visit to York St John University.
- Post-16 campus visit to York St John University.
- Student Life campus visit.
- Subject Specific campus visit.

Who?

- Up to 60 Year 10 or Year 12 students
- Minimum ratio of staff to students 1:15

How?

10am - Arrival/Introduction  
10:15am - Beginners Guide to Higher Education  
11:15am - Campus tour  
12:00pm - Lunch  
12:45pm - Higher Education & You  
2pm - Departure

There is opportunity for one workshop to be replaced for a subject taster session, e.g. in Allied Health or Policing.

Cost

All transport and food costs will be provided by Inspiring Choices.

Gatsby  
Benchmark(s)

3, 4, and 7

What was  
the most  
useful part  
of the  
workshop?

“Today showed me  
how university can  
help.”



# Bespoke Activities

These are some specific activities and projects we run. If you are interested please let your Outreach Coordinator know. We will do our best to get your school or college involved, however please know that places are limited.

## Project Dare

Project Dare is an exciting opportunity for a group of students to collaborate with a local employer. Project Dare involves 1-2 sessions with an employer at York St John University, where the employer presents a business situation or project to the students. Working in groups, the students create a presentation and solution, which in the final session they present at the employer site.

Past employers have included:  
Hiscox, Nestle and ARUP.

What has been the most useful part of these workshops?

“Education about Nestle and the opportunities they provide.”



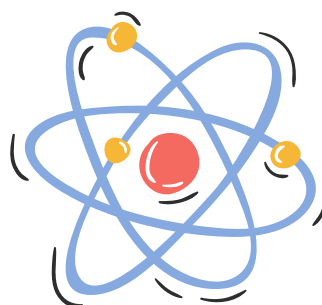
## STEM Conference

The STEM Conference is a full day event organised by Inspiring Choices in partnership with the National Railway Museum in York.

The conference is for Year 9 students at schools across North Yorkshire. Its purpose is to offer young people a glimpse into the many STEM subjects on offer through Further and Higher Education. It also gives an insight into what different STEM careers might look like.

What part of the day have you enjoyed the most?

58% said Wonderlab



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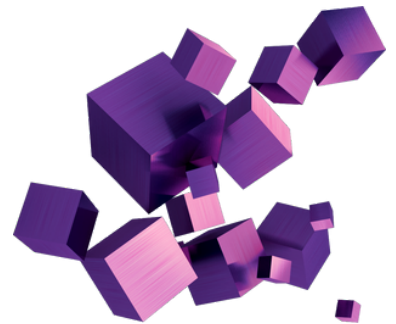
# Creativity Lab

This year we are offering the chance for groups of students to visit the new Creativity Lab at the University of York. The Creativity Lab focuses on digital creativity, including 3D design, 3D scanning and virtual reality.

The session would take place either in a morning or an afternoon, with lunch on campus, tour and student ambassador Q&A.

Write one word to describe today's session:

"Fun and creative."



## Subject Specific Campus Visit

Along with professionals in their respective fields, we run different subject specific activities. Some of the subjects include: journalism; podcasting; heritage; criminology and policing; and allied health.

Since these are delivered with the support of subject professionals and availability is extremely limited, therefore we cannot guarantee these. However, if you are interested please do let an Outreach Coordinator know as soon as possible.

Some of these opportunities will relate to attainment raising activities.



Write one word to describe today's session:

"I feel it was very interesting and the activities were fun."

# Next Steps

## So, what's next?

Following your meeting with our outreach team, you will be asked to decide which activities will work for your school. We will assist you in creating a delivery plan for the activities, and any other queries you may have.



We will also be sending out regular newsletters and information about further opportunities such as Project Dare, Creativity Lab and the STEM Conference.

## Our Partners

Find out more about our partners:

[York Cares](#)

[City of York Council](#)

[National Railway Museum](#)

[North Yorkshire Council](#)

[NYBEP](#)

[University of York](#)

[LEP/Careers Enterprise Hub](#)

[York St John University](#)

[Askham Bryan College](#)

[CU Scarborough](#)

[Groundwork Yorkshire](#)

[Catch Up Literacy](#)