inspiring choices

York & North Yorkshire

Activity Handbook

2026/2027



OfS Uni Connect Programme

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."

"It is always a pleasure to work with the Inspiring Choices team. They are consistently friendly, approachable, supportive and incredibly easy to work with. Their commitment and enthusiasm are evident in everything they do, and I am always delighted to support their work wherever I can. It is a real pleasure to work alongside such a dedicated, friendly and collaborative team."

"Inspiring Choices is always spoken of so highly in the Scarborough area and the amazing work you all do is definitely recognised by the schools, colleges and partners that you work with."

"The STEM Conference was fantastic - the students were really engaged and enjoyed the trip. They came away with some useful information about careers as well."

"We would not be able to deliver the outreach without the connections that Inspiring Choices has with all the schools in York and North Yorkshire."

"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 2026-2027 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.

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OfS Uni Connect Programme

We are also continuing to support the following strategic groups:

- Care experienced young people
- Young carers
- Military service young people
- Boys eligible for free school meals

If you would like to contact us, please email **inspiringchoices@yorksj.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

Delivery team

Penny Garner	Outreach and Partnerships Manager
Abbie Salkeld	Outreach and Partnerships Officer
Molly Crowe	Outreach Coordinator
Jamie Thompson	Outreach Coordinator
Emily Carhart	Outreach Coordinator

Office-based team

Laura Fenwick	Research and Impact Evaluation Officer
Jess Ely	Evaluation and Accessibility Coordinator



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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.

- Find out more:

@inspiring.choices.uc

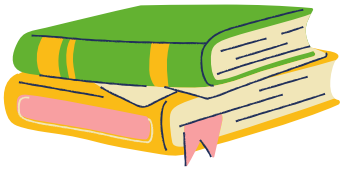
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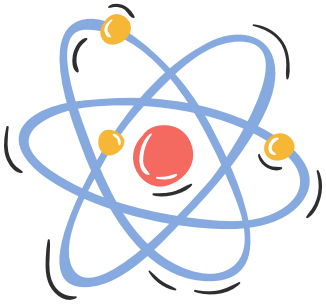
Our Activities for 2026-2027



On the next few pages, you will find details of our activities on offer for 2026-2027. You will find a short summary for each which will help you decide which activity is appropriate for your students.

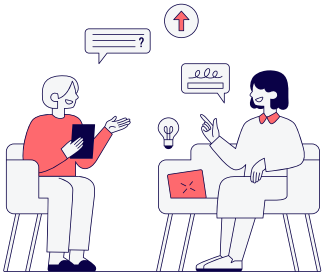
Each activity has been mapped against the Gatsby Benchmarks.





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

As part of our 26-27 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 Skills

Future Selves:

- Passions
- Choices
- Goals

Financing Your Degree:

- Student Finance
- Budgeting

Post-16 Options:

- Your Post-16 Options
- Apprenticeships

In School Higher Education:

- Choosing HE
- Applying to HE

Campus Visit Pre-16 and Post-16:

- Beginners Guide to Higher Education (Pre-16 and Post-16 available)
- Student Life
- 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 series of workshops is designed to 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?	Academic skills is all about writing and studying at higher education, giving examples of how to do both well. Revision skills is a workshop that provides young people with the tools they need in order to revise efficiently.
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 Skills (aimed at Years 10 and 11) Both workshops will include a range of information, advice and guidance centered around how to prepare for a piece of writing or exam. Particularly focusing on higher education in the academic skills workshop. Both 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.”



Future Selves

What is it?	Using self-reflective exercises within a booklet, these interactive workshops aim to help students identify their strengths and passions, develop decision making skills, and setting 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 possible future pathways that might suit their personality. Choices breaks down how to make a good decision and what things need considering in order to make that decision. We also give them the lead in making a few decisions through a number of games and activities. Goals outlines the differences between educational, professional, and personal goals. So that these can be achieved by the young people at some point in time, we help them to make their goals SMART. Motivation is also discussed, including the quality of someone's motivation and having a positive intention for doing something is usually better for one's self-motivation.
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."



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 young person 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, and other costs associated with living independently.
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 • if you are interested in taking your students to an FE College, please discuss with your Inspiring Choices contact.
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."



In School Higher Education

What is it?	Choosing Higher Education can be a daunting prospect for many students. These three workshops/talks intend to inform students of their Higher Education options and the UCAS application process.
Who?	Years 12, 13, and FE Learners
How?	• Choosing HE (Interactive Talk) • Applying to HE (Interactive Talk)
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 Pre-16/Post-16

What is it?	This package offers workshops at York St John University campus. This will be a beginners guide to Higher Education, informing students what HE is and allowing them to envision themselves within a HE setting. This will also include a Student Life workshop, to provide an understanding of extra curricular aspects of HE.
Who?	Years 10, 11, 12, 13 and FE Learners
How?	Two workshops within campus visit: • Beginners Guide to HE • Student Life • Subject specific campus visit* *available upon request (please see page 20 for further information).
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 Overview

What is it?	• Pre-16 campus visit to York St John University. • Post-16 campus visit to York St John University. • Subject Specific campus visit.
Who?	• Up to 60 learners • 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 - Student Life 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."

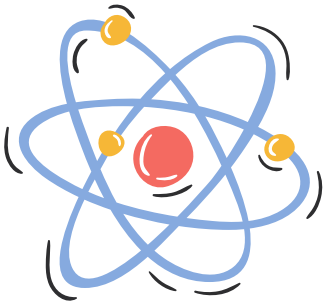


STEM Conference

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

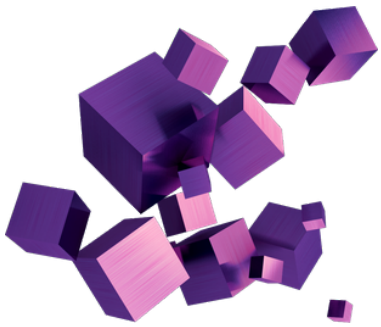


Creativity Lab

This year we are offering the chance for a group of students to visit the 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: creative media; game design; 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

National Railway Museum

NYBEP

LEP/Careers Enterprise Hub

Askham Bryan College

Groundwork Yorkshire

City of York Council

North Yorkshire Council

University of York

York St John University

CU Scarborough

Catch Up Literacy