End of year newsletter

Inspiring Choices July 2026 Newsletter

Welcome to our newsletter for the end of the 25/26 academic year. We've had another busy year, visiting you in-school, delivering a variety of campus visits and continuing to deliver our strategic projects.

Have a read through to discover all we've done since our last newsletter, and what we still have coming up. What a fantastic year it has been!

Newsletter highlights

Data Snapshot

Recent Delivery and Events

Upcoming Delivery

Thank you

OfS Uni Connect Programme

inspiring choices
York & North Yorkshire

Data Snapshot 2025/26

Laura Fenwick, Research and Impact Evaluation Officer

This year*, we have engaged with 21 schools and colleges. We have delivered over 400 activities to over 2500 young people. These activities accounted for over 450 hours of contact time.

Activities: 425

Known Students: 2795**

Contact Hours: 456

Schools and Colleges: 21

This includes 135 in-school workshops, attendance at 11 Careers Fairs, organising 26 campus visits (including three to FE institutions), and supporting external organisations to deliver activities.

In the final month of the academic year, we still have activities to be delivered. This includes campus visits, mock interviews, Project Dare, and our fifth annual STEM Conference. Have a read through our newsletter to learn more!

*Up to 19th June.

**Known students are counted when they are named in one of our activity's registers. Known students are only counted once no matter how many activities they participate in.

Stakeholder Consultation

As stakeholders in Inspiring Choices, the Uni Connect Programme for York and North Yorkshire, your views and suggestions are essential in determining our delivery. We want to ensure that our impartial and independent careers and higher education information, advice and guidance meets the needs of the young people that we work with so twice a year we ask you to complete a Stakeholder Consultation.

In April 2026, we shared our stakeholder consultation feedback on how the school based activities and campus visits from September to December 2025 had been received by students and staff.

In February 2026, we also ran a Stakeholder Twilight session on York St John University campus when we invited all our stakeholders to come and share their experiences of Inspiring Choices and hear more about some of our newer projects. It was great to have this opportunity to talk with our stakeholders.

The next consultation will be sent out shortly, where you will have the opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas about our delivery between January and July 2026. Thank you for your continued support and feedback.

Penny Garner, Outreach and Partnerships Manager

Boys' Impact - York and North Yorkshire Hub

Next academic year, we will be launching a Boys' Impact Hub for York and North Yorkshire, intending to address the attainment gap for young men who are on free school meals (FSM)/considered disadvantaged and/or working class. Our hub will bring together organisations, practitioners, and institutions that are working with or for young men, sharing best practice and spotlighting ongoing work in our region.

If you are interested in learning more, you can sign up for our mailing list.

Molly Crowe, Outreach Coordinator

Recent Delivery and Events

Groundwork

The Groundwork project has come to an end for another year, with three schools participating across York and North Yorkshire. The students involved successfully completed a NOCN Level 1 award in Horticulture.

Throughout the six week project, between four to six students from each school worked with a member of the Groundwork team to transform an area of land on their school site or a neighboring site. The aim of the project was to give those students who struggle to focus within a classroom the chance to gain a practical qualification whilst doing something meaningful, and provide a welcoming space for students and staff alike to enjoy.

They then had a visit to Askham Bryan College, a land-based agricultural college in York, with a University Centre. The aim of this visit was to give the students an insight into what they could achieve with their horticultural qualification, as well as provide information on the courses and facilities they have on site.

Jamie Thompson, Outreach Coordinator







Beyond the Barracks

This year, we were delighted to continue delivering the Beyond the Barracks project in two schools across North Yorkshire. We welcomed back some returning students and were also pleased to start working with some new students on the programme. The Beyond the Barracks programme provides mentoring and information for military service children, helping them to recognise their strengths, explore future opportunities and build confidence in their next steps.

Throughout the project, students have taken part in sessions covering a range of topics, including post-16 pathways, CV writing and life as a military service child. These activities encouraged students to reflect on their skills, experiences and aspirations for the future.

As part of the Beyond the Barracks programme, students also visited York St John University for a campus tour and a taster session with the Game Design department. During the visit, they gained an insight into the creative process behind developing successful games and experienced a taster of university life.

It has been fantastic to see so many students engaging enthusiastically with the project this year. Their willingness to explore new opportunities, recognise their strengths and consider a wide range of future pathways has been wonderful. We would also like to thank all the Student Ambassador mentors who have worked with the students throughout the programme.

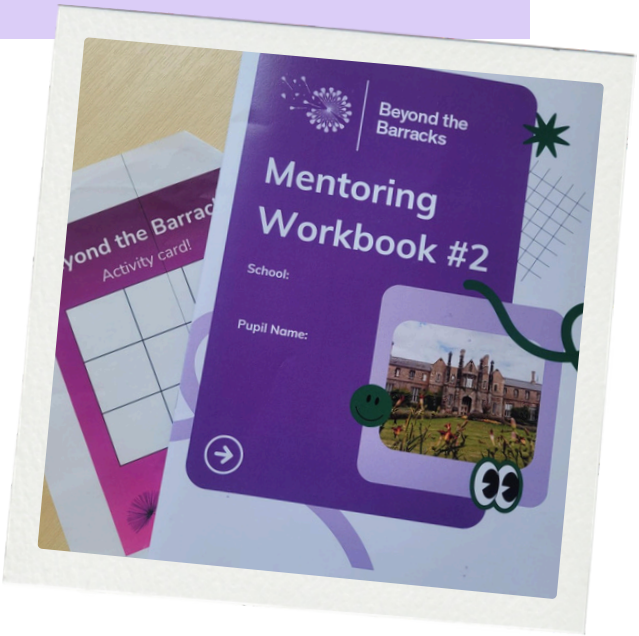
Abbie Salkeld, Outreach and Partnerships Officer

Est. 1841 | YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

inspiring choices
York & North Yorkshire

ofs Uni Connect Programme

Beyond the Barracks



Destinations Festival

In February, we hosted our second annual Destinations Festival. We invited two schools (80 Year 10 students) to York St John University for a day of fun and informative activities focused on higher education. The festival aimed to give the students the chance to see a university a lot sooner than they may have anticipated and to give a more fun and interactive experience of a university campus.

The activities we had on offer were a careers fair, student life workshop with student ambassadors, creative media taster, policing taster, tour of campus and a tour of the allied health department. There were also lots of fun crafting activities and a sports competition. The schools were split into two groups creating four groups in total. Each group had a timetable to follow and engaged in each activity in a carousel like format.

Accessibility was an important part of the day's preparation. We created a programme for each school group with their timetable and photos of the spaces in, as well as creating a quiet space. The quiet space was available to anyone who needed it and it had mood lighting, stimming toys and bean bags.

The student feedback we received suggested they gained so much from engaging in the activities, particularly the knowledge they need to make an informed decision regarding their futures when the time arrives. Staff also found the day really valuable for their students, and it opened their eyes to progression routes they were not previously familiar with.

Thank you to everyone who helped to make the festival a great success. Destinations Festival will return in 2027!

Jamie Thompson, Outreach Coordinator

Transitioning to HE as a Disabled Learner

In April, we successfully ran the first part of our new project focused on providing SEND young people with knowledge about HE and disability support so they can make an informed choice about choosing the right HE option for them.

The first part included a workshop for a small group of Year 10s at a school on the coast. The workshop focused on explaining what HE is, the financial side of university, how support is different in schools and universities, and an activity where the young people were able to match up different fictional student profiles with the appropriate university that matched their support needs.

We look forward to welcoming the same group of young people for a campus visit to York St John University to complete the project. The young people will be able to tour the campus and speak directly to Student Ambassadors, the disability team about student support, and learn about university accommodation and any additional requirements. There will also be a visit from Jaffa, one of the campus therapy dogs!

Jessica Ely, Evaluation and Accessibility Coordinator

Podcasting Project

Over four sessions in May and June, a small group of Year 10s from a coastal school in North Yorkshire learned everything there was to know about podcasts. Working with academic Jonathon Brown, programme lead for Journalism and Sports Journalism at York St John University, and two second-year students, participants researched, developed and recorded their own ten-minute podcast.

Following three sessions in school, the group visited York St John University. Podcasts were recorded on a variety of subjects, from what-if history to horror films. After a morning of recording and editing, we visited the TV Studio and participants had the opportunity to film a news show, taking on the roles of presenters, sports commentators and behind-the-scenes crew. It was a fantastic day and an enjoyable project overall!

Inspiring Choices would like to thank Jonathon, as well the student volunteers Chloe and Genie, for sharing their expertise and contributing to such a rewarding project.

Molly Crowe, Outreach Coordinator

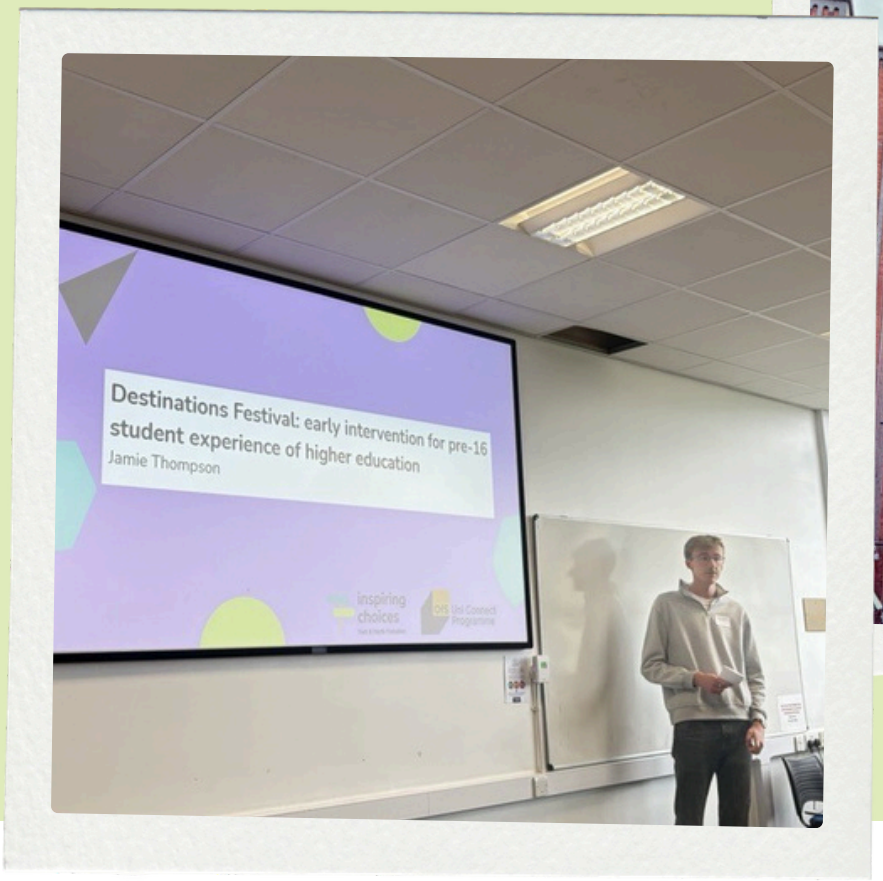
Neon Symposium

In June, members of the team headed to Liverpool John Moores University for two brilliant days at the NEON symposium, an annual conference which gives the higher education sector the opportunity to come together – and we didn't let it be.

The theme was 'All together now' putting a spotlight on the importance of collaboration. We were proud to present two papers at the event. Jamie delivered a presentation on the Destinations Festival, a one-day campus experience for Year 10s interested in exploring higher education and Molly spoke about our collaboration with the National Railway Museum to deliver our annual STEM Conference – showing that with a little help from our friends, we can deliver projects that are fun and impactful.

It was a first time visit to Liverpool for some of the team, and we took the opportunity to visit the city centre, and explore the birthplace of the Beatles – a real magical mystery tour, and a highlight of the trip.

Louisa Dobson, Head of Inspiring Choices





Project Dare with Aviva

In a three way collaboration with York Cares and Aviva, we are running Project Dare again this year with a group of Year 10 students from a school on the North Yorkshire coast. These 20 students have been selected by the school to participate in this project as they have shown an interest in learning more about business organisations and the employment opportunities and apprenticeship options.

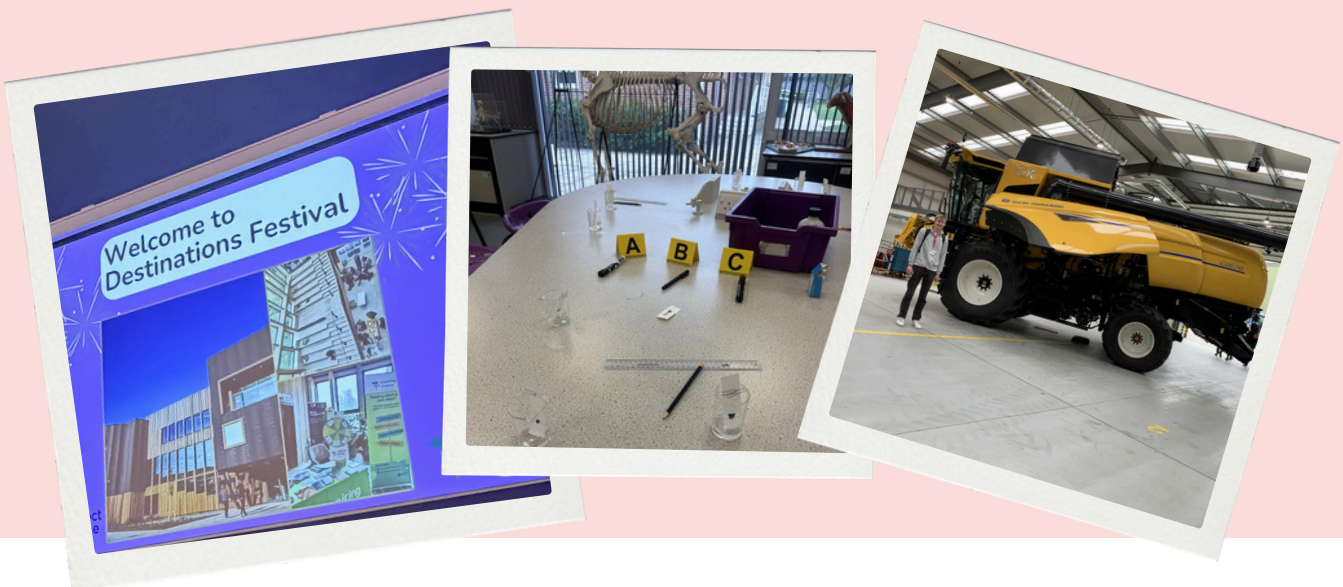
This is a two-day project working with a small team from Aviva who will support the students to develop and create a presentation based on an aspect of their business. The last time we worked with Aviva, the students were asked to create a new type of pet insurance to present to stakeholders.

The information gathering and preparation day will be spent on York St John University campus and the second day will be spent at Aviva Head Office in the centre of York, using their Boardroom, with spectacular views over the city. There the students will present their new insurance ideas and the most innovative will be selected by current Aviva staff.

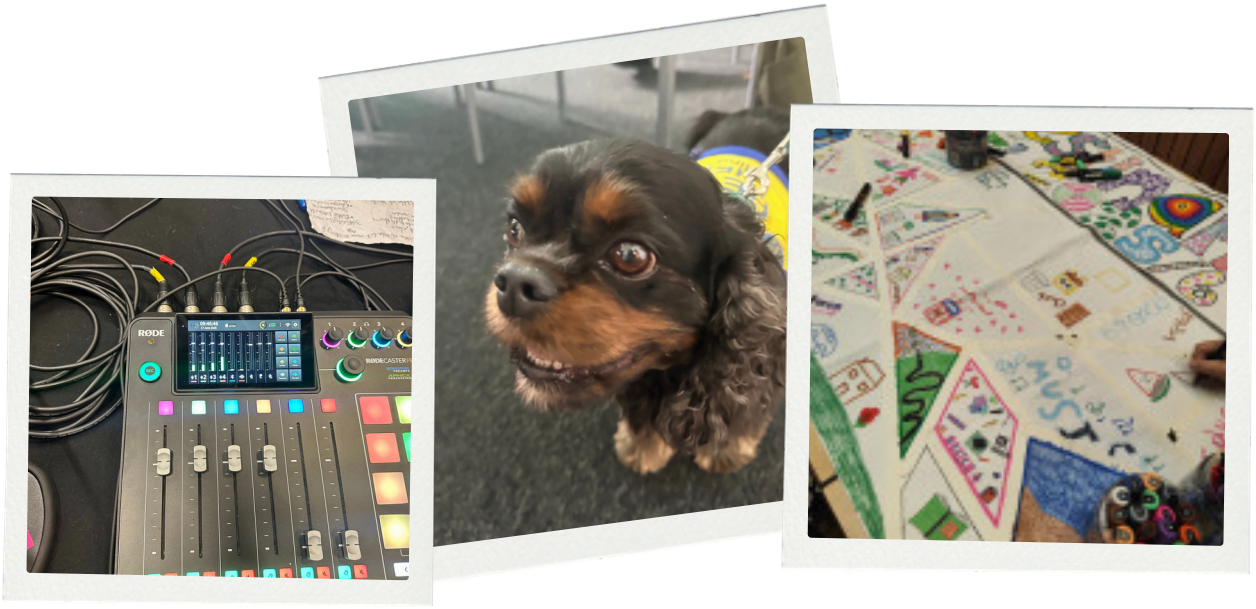
This opportunity will give the students insight into how a large business organisation works and the job roles and educational opportunities available to employees

Penny Garner, Outreach and Partnerships Manager

Photos from delivery this academic year:



Photos from delivery this academic year:



On Track

We are delighted to have re-launched our On Track programme this year, which runs events for care experienced and care leaver young people across North Yorkshire. Working with the North Yorkshire Virtual School and our partners at York St John University, Askham Bryan College, CU Scarborough University and the University of York, we are hosting a series of fun activity days at higher education institutions over the year, designed to give care experienced and care leavers a taste of university life.

Our first event was hosted by Askham Bryan College in April for care experienced and care leavers under 17. The day went off to an unexpected start, as a squirrel chewed through a wire and caused a power cut across the entire site. Despite this, Steven McClean and the fantastic team at Askham Bryan College hosted a really engaging day that included making lava lamps, a campus tour, an apprenticeships workshop and a tour of the wildlife park! A huge thank you to Steven and the team for a brilliant event.

Our next On Track event for under 17s will take place at CU Scarborough University, which will include a variety of campus-based activities in the morning, pizza for lunch and then an afternoon by the sea! The participants will get to see what it's like to run Beach School, giving them an insight into the practical elements of CU Scarborough University's Primary Education and Teaching Studies course. Further details will be released soon.

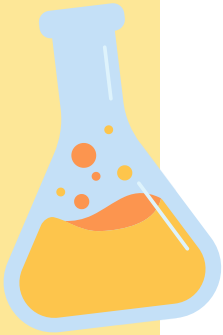
Emily Carhart, Outreach Coordinator

Upcoming Delivery

As this academic year draws to an end, we still have some delivery to go!

STEM Conference

On 14th July, our fifth annual STEM Conference will be hosted at the National Railway Museum(NRM). Three schools from across North Yorkshire have been invited to bring their Year 9s to visit the National Railway Museum, learning all about STEM careers and pathways. Local employers from across the region will be hosting stands at our Employers Fair and participating in a Q&A panel. Participants will also have the opportunity to explore the Wonderlab and NRM's Explainers will be delivering some fantastic workshops.



We always have a fantastic time at the STEM Conference and would like to extend our gratitude to the National Railway Museum for hosting such an amazing event once again.



Campus Visits

We still have several campus visits to York St John University in the last few weeks of this academic year. Its always fantastic inviting students to see a university, potentially their first experience of one, and we look forward to welcoming more Year 10s onto campus.

Molly Crowe, Outreach Coordinator

Have a lovely summer!

As always, the Inspiring Choices team would like to thank all of our stakeholders, partners and schools for your continued support throughout the 2025/2026 academic year. It has been a brilliant year, with plenty of delivery, and have had the opportunity to work with lots of lovely young people.

With the academic year drawing to an end, we hope that you all have a fantastic and relaxing summer. See you again in September!

Inspiring Choices

Get in touch with us



@inspiring.choices.uc



https://www.facebook.com/InspiringChoicesUC/



https://www.inspiring-choices.co.uk/



inspiringchoices@yorksj.ac.uk



https://www.linkedin.com/company/inspiring-choices-uc/

inspiring choices
York & North Yorkshire