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YORK  
ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY

# Impact Evaluation Report: Project Dare

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 futurehy

 ofs Uni Connect  
Programme



## Background

Employer engagement is considered valuable in facilitating work-readiness as well as encouraging more general transferable skills such as punctuality and self-presentation (Haight, 2012). There is also evidence that formalised employer engagement can improve job prospects and earnings (Mann & Percy, 2014) and be a useful tool in raising aspirations for accessing Higher Education (Huddleston, Mann, & Dawkins, 2014).

In considering the latter, students report that employer engagement helps clarify the steps required to achieve their professional goals in a number of ways such as selecting a degree programme, understanding university admissions processes, and facilitating success when in higher education (Jones, Mann, & Morris, 2016).

Employer engagement is also valuable and useful for the employers themselves, as well as Higher Education providers. Such activities help maintain relationships that allow the co-creation of educational provision that is academically rigorous and meets the current and future needs of employers (Bennet & Kane, 2009).

## Aim and scope of evaluation

Here we report the evaluation of the impact of part of the outreach intervention programme undertaken by FutureHY. The specific part of the outreach intervention programme is **Project Dare**.

Project Dare provides students with real-life experiences of both the workplace and a HE campus at a local employer as they problem-solve, offer solutions, in newly formed teams of other students.

## Research questions / hypotheses

Our research question was; can taking part in a dare project improve confidence, aspirations, and career knowledge, as well as key transferable skills (communication, planning and teamwork)?

Involvement in Project Dare was designed to provide novel and challenging experiences to students in a supportive workplace context. It was expected that it would improve student confidence, aspirations, and career knowledge, as well as key transferable skills.





## Characteristics of outreach

<b>Detailed description</b>	<p><b>Project Dare</b></p> <p>An initiative delivered in partnership with a charity (York Cares) and facilitated by local employers who hosted a “dare” project on a voluntary basis. Project sessions were facilitated by student ambassadors from a FutureHY partner university. Sessions were delivered at the employer or HE provider site</p> <p>As each project was hosted by a different employer, the theme of the project and the tasks involved varied. However, the overarching structure of each project was the same: (1) a subject-related session which involved familiarisation with the subject area, (2) ice-breaker activities to form teams, (3) a group challenge with an accompanying brief, (4) a group presentation of the solution, and (5) a visit to the host organisation to learn about industry and meet employees from a range of job roles</p>
<b>Activity type</b>	<p>Skills and Attainment (other – employer engagement / workshops)</p>
<b>Timing, duration and frequency of activity</b>	<p>Project Dare usually takes place over three weeks, with one session per week, all usually the same day of the week and timings</p>
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	<p>Delivered on-site at work place or HE provider</p> <p>Face-to-face in a classroom setting</p> <p>Each dare project included a mix of students from different schools to encourage communication and teamwork with students they did not know</p>
<b>Target group or groups</b>	<p>Year 10 students (age 14-15)</p>

## Outcomes

<b>Outcomes for NCOP / Uni Connect target learners</b>	<p>Ability to make informed choices about KS5 study to facilitate access to higher education</p> <p>Confidence in ability to succeed at higher education</p> <p>Likelihood of applying to higher education</p>
<b>Outcomes for parents</b>	None
<b>Outcomes for teachers / school staff</b>	None

## Methods used to evaluate impact of intervention

<b>Type of evaluation</b>	Type 2: Empirical Enquiry
<b>Type of research approach</b>	Primary quantitative (pre-test/post-test design)
<b>Rationale</b>	The approach was adopted for pragmatic reasons and the difficulty associated with creating a control or comparison group in the setting, as well as meeting expectations and time provided by partner schools
<b>Data collection methods</b>	<p>Survey (pre/post intervention)</p> <p>Questions and response formats are reported in Table 1</p>
<b>Sampling and response rate</b>	<p>The current sample represents a subsample of the total students who received the workshop</p> <p>The survey was distributed to 81 students. Of these, 77 students completed all questions on both pre-test and post-test surveys</p> <p>The sampling strategy was one of convenience (based on availability and additional time to complete the survey) and purposeful (students undertaking a project)</p> <p>Students were from eight colleges and high schools in the North Yorkshire region</p>
<b>Timeframe for evaluation</b>	Survey was completed immediately before and immediately after the project
<b>Approach to data analysis</b>	<p>Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations)</p> <p>Change scores (percentage change)</p> <p>Paired samples t-test</p> <p>Effect size to quantify the size of change (Cohen's <math>d_z</math>; Lakens, 2013)</p>

## Table 1. Response format of the questions and scoring (1 to 10)

Question	1 Low	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 High
Your confidence										
Your aspiration to secure a good career in the future										
Your ability to work as part of a team										
Your knowledge of which jobs are available to you										
Your ability to communicate effectively through discussion and presentation										
Your ability to problem solve										
Your ability to identify your own strengths the weaknesses										
Your ability to develop and stick to a plan										
Would you recommend to a friend?						Yes	No			

## Table 2. Scores for all respondents

Question	Respondents	Time 1 Mean	Time 1 SD	Respondents	Time 2 Mean	Time 2 SD
Your confidence	79	5.80	1.94	81	7.35	1.71
Your aspiration to secure a good career in the future	78	7.67	1.97	80	8.49	1.56
Your ability to work as part of a team	79	6.61	1.91	81	8.31	1.47
Your knowledge of which jobs are available to you	79	5.76	2.09	81	7.25	1.81
Your ability to communicate effectively through discussion and presentation	79	5.25	2.22	81	7.22	1.94
Your ability to problem solve	79	6.48	1.60	81	7.70	1.49
Your ability to identify your own strengths the weaknesses	79	6.33	1.94	81	7.42	1.73
Your ability to develop and stick to a plan	79	6.35	1.78	81	7.74	1.39
	Respondents	% Yes	% No			
Would you recommend this activity to a friend?	80	100	0			





**Table 3. Scores for respondents that completed both pre and post workshops questions**

Question	Respondents	Time 1 Mean	Time 1 SD	Time 2 Mean	Time 2 SD	% change	t	Effect size change
Your confidence	78	5.79	1.96	7.36	1.69	27	8.11*	0.92
Your aspiration to secure a good career in the future	77	7.66	1.98	8.53	1.55	11	6.63*	0.76
Your ability to work as part of a team	78	6.64	1.90	8.31	1.48	25	9.70*	1.10
Your knowledge of which jobs are available to you	78	5.73	2.09	7.29	1.82	27	8.55*	0.97
Your ability to communicate effectively through discussion and presentation	78	5.28	2.22	7.22	1.96	37	10.29*	1.17
Your ability to problem solve	78	6.47	1.61	7.72	1.50	19	8.25*	0.93
Your ability to identify your own strengths the weaknesses	78	6.35	1.95	7.46	1.75	17	7.01*	0.79
Your ability to develop and stick to a plan	78	6.35	1.79	7.74	1.39	22	7.93*	0.90

**Note.** \*denotes a statistically significant difference between time 1 and time 2 scores ( $p < .01$ , two tailed). Effect size denotes the magnitude of change in units of standard deviation (Cohen's  $d_z$ ; Lakens, 2013)



# Results and conclusions

<p><b>Results</b></p>	<p>Descriptive statistics for all respondents are reported in Table 2</p> <p>Descriptive statistics for those who completed time 1 and time two questions are reported in Table 3, along with change scores (percentage change), results of pair-samples t-test, and effect size. Effect size is reported in units of standard deviation</p> <p><b>Key findings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a statistically significant increase from pre-event to post-event in all questions</li> <li>• Ability to communicate effectively and work within a team improved the most</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impact achieved</b></p>	<p>Our evaluation indicates a positive impact of involvement in Project Dare on self-reported confidence, aspirations, career knowledge, and transferable skills</p>
<p><b>Contribution or attribution</b></p>	<p>We consider the evaluation to provide evidence of a contribution (not attribution of causality) to the observed changes due to the type of design (pre-test/post-test design)</p>

## Closing remarks

Our evaluation of Project Dare indicates that this part of our outreach intervention programme **has a positive impact** and contributes to increased confidence, aspirations, career knowledge, and transferable skills.

Students reported that they felt significantly more confident, had more knowledge and ambition centred on a future career, and had improved their ability to communicate, plan and problem-solve, and work as part of a team following involvement in the project.

## Recommendations

1. Employer engagement is a valuable part of outreach work seeking to improve knowledge and skills relating to aspirations and study success so should be included in programmes seeking to improve applications to Higher Education.
2. This type of activity is most likely to be effective when the engagement is meaningful, challenging, and enjoyable. The quality of the engagement (employer involvement, tasks, and facilitators) is vital in this regard.
3. More routine involvement and partnership between Higher Education providers and employers in integrating employer engagement events in other activities, such as open days, would be beneficial.

## References

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**Note:** This report was prepared by Professor Andrew Hill, Laura Fenwick, Rebecca Harland, and Helen Smith.

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