

#DITCH *the* #DOUBT

Boosting Confidence and Self Belief to Help Students Into Higher Education

The DitchTheDoubt project ran for the first time from March 2022 to June 2022 with schools including Outwood Academy Carlton, Outwood Academy Shafton, Firth Park Academy, Meadowhead Secondary School, Saint Pius X Catholic School, Longley Park Sixth Form College and Winterhill School taking part.



What is DitchTheDoubt?

DitchTheDoubt is a HeppSY initiative that aims to give specific groups of students who face additional barriers beyond those of their peers intensive experiences that will help to boost their inner confidence and self-belief, as well as give them the information they need about higher education to make informed choices. The topics the programme covers are:

- Is it for me?
- How do I get there (pathways)?
- Support available at HE?
- Is it worth it? (Where might it lead)?

The programme brings together:

- **HECan:** targeted at increasing the knowledge and confidence of working-class white males who are unlikely to consider higher education.
- **SHECan:** targeted at increasing knowledge and self-belief in young women who lack the confidence but not ability to progress to higher education
- **JustTheJob:** an opportunity for students to consider and learn about alternative routes into higher education including degree apprenticeships
- And **Amplify:** targeted at increasing sense of academic and social belonging and fit within HE in Black students in years 9 and 10



Although all these initiatives had different target audiences, the audiences all faced, or perceived, similar barriers, including negative perceptions of higher education, knowledge of the different pathways, sense of belonging and parental influence.



The DitchTheDoubt model brings these projects together to offer a combined programme with a bespoke element to target the individual need, with keeping in touch video between each interaction:



The 2022 Programme

This year the project launch took place virtually in March 2022 with students and their parents invited to attend, this gave all involved an overview of what to expect throughout the programme.

The second interaction, an introductory session, was delivered by the Higher Education Engagement Assistants, who themselves are all recent graduates. The session covered key higher education and careers knowledge with interactive games and activities, as well as an opportunity for the students to ask the graduates questions about their own experiences.

The third interaction, a coaching workshop, focussed on increasing the confidence of the young people involved, highlighting areas such as presenting in front of an audience and self-belief. The session got students to think about their fears and helped them to think of ways to address them and how to flip negative thoughts into positive ones.

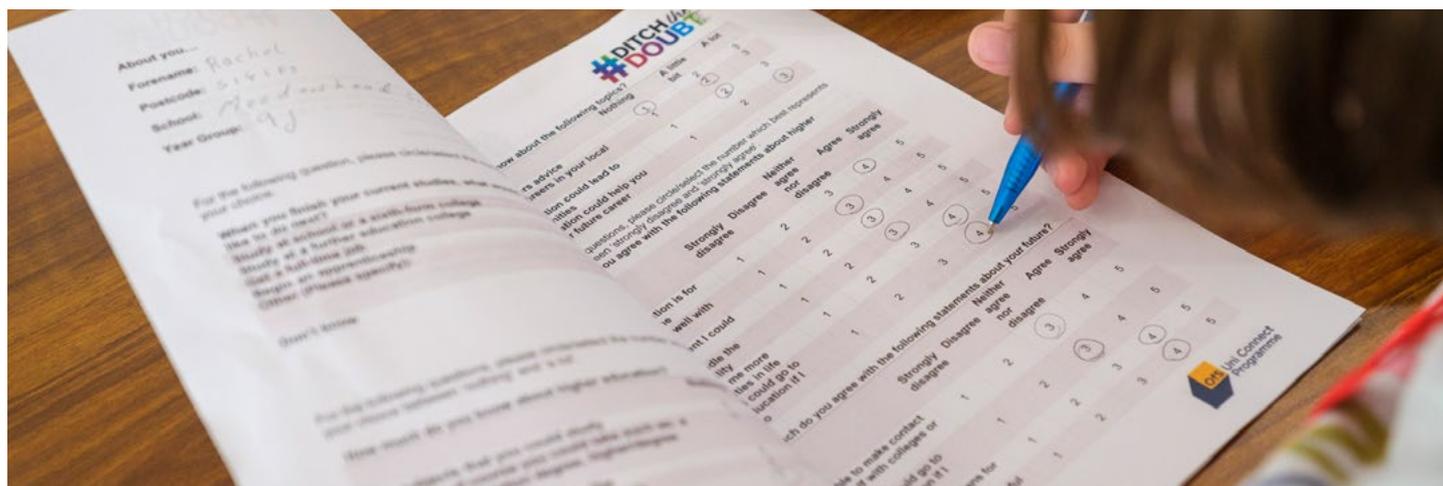
The fourth sessions were the bespoke activity which was tailored to the individuals needs and which of the four projects DitchTheDoubt brings together was most relevant to them, this year students on the initiative focussed on **SHECan** and **JustTheJob**:



SHECan: Those on the SHECan strand undertook a confidence boosting Oracy Workshop with Talk the Talk. *Within the workshop each student spoke in front of their peers, a minimum of three times, while learning core components around visual, vocal and verbal communication.*

JustTheJob: Students following the JustTheJob strand were asked to think about what an assessment centre may entail. The session focussed on a mock in-tray activity where students were asked to take on the role of a fictional employee and given workplace scenarios to make a judgement about.

The programme culminated in a Celebration Event which took place at Sheffield Hallam University, with students invited to attend with their parents/carers. During the evening, as well as celebrating the students' success, attendees could speak to HeppSY Careers Advisers and recent graduate and role models, tour the campus, hear from Motivational Speaker Ashleigh Porter-Exley who took part in the Young Apprentice and tour the campus facilities.



Impact and Reflections

Students who completed DitchTheDoubt said that it had had a positive impact on their thinking and understanding of higher education.

After students took part in the coaching workshop there was:

- A 24% increase in their confidence to communicate strengths and abilities to others
- A 26% increase in their feelings of confidence in their ability to achieve things they set their mind to
- A 21% increase in feeling they could trust their own judgement
- A 25% increase in positive feelings about their futures

How did students answer: Has taking part in Ditch the Doubt changed how you feel about yourself?

- "It hasn't really changed how I feel about myself. Although it has made me more confident in what I can do to get into higher education."
- "Yes, I have more of an idea of what I want to do after school and where I can go."
- "Helped with my knowledge of higher education"
- "Make me believe I can do things"

For more information about the DitchTheDoubt Programme please contact your School and College Programme Manager or heppsy@shu.ac.uk