

THE Awards 2020

Widening Participation/Outreach Initiative of the Year



Engaging young men in the North East to consider and apply to higher education is one of the challenges facing the Uni Connect programme in the region. Our solution has been to develop an Enterprise Challenge to capture learner voice and enable young men to develop their own ways of communicating what higher education means to them through a 12 week structured programme.

Newcastle University is the lead institution for the Uni Connect Programme in the North East region funded by the Office for students. The programme brings together a partnership of all universities and colleges in the region to provide activities which aim to increase participation in higher education among underrepresented groups. The scale and the scope of the collaboration provides a real opportunity to make a step change in the progression rates of young people.

Enterprise Challenge is an innovative project created in partnership with our local football club education teams (Foundation of Light, Middlesbrough FC Foundation and Newcastle United Foundation). It is an intensive 12 week programme which utilises the Premier League Enterprise Programme to inspire young people and increase their aspiration and skills and to support informed decisions about higher education. The programme incorporates school focused frameworks such as the Gatsby Benchmarks; the Careers Development Institute framework and PSHE/national curriculum.

The challenge was delivered to 450 boys across 44 schools between April - July 2019 and included events at each of our five universities followed by 10 hours of school based sessions delivered by the football education teams culminating in celebration events at each of the stadiums across the region. The programme is underpinned by a competition in which the boys must create their own storyboard for a digital/media advertisement aimed at encouraging their male peers to consider higher education in the North East. In 2019, the winning team had their storyboard turned into a 30 second YouTube advertisement (viewed 46,937 times) and each area winner had their storyboard adapted into a comic book which is now being used in schools across the region. This advertisement was launched on North East Live and broadcast on Tyne and Wear TV.

Enterprise Challenge provides an immersive experience into higher education and related careers and enables us to understand and develop key messaging created by boys for boys to help redress the low expectation of higher education progression- capturing the learner voice and using it to effect change.

Our evaluation focused on skills gained by the participants and the shift in attitude to consider higher education. 84% of students participating in the programme stated they were now considering higher education. Teachers commented on the "engaging" and "high-quality" content of the programme. The challenge brief was also identified giving the young men "autonomy over their projects [and] really allowed the boys to develop their organisational and teamwork skills, and promoted independence". Schools have highlighted that the programme has continued to have a positive impact upon the young men's motivation to participate in additional opportunities due to their involvement in Enterprise Challenge.

See the full advert [HERE](#).

See the launch feature [HERE](#).

See the comic book [HERE](#).

