Sussex Boys Pilot Project

- Project rationale
- Project outline
- Evaluation Strategy
- Headline outcomes
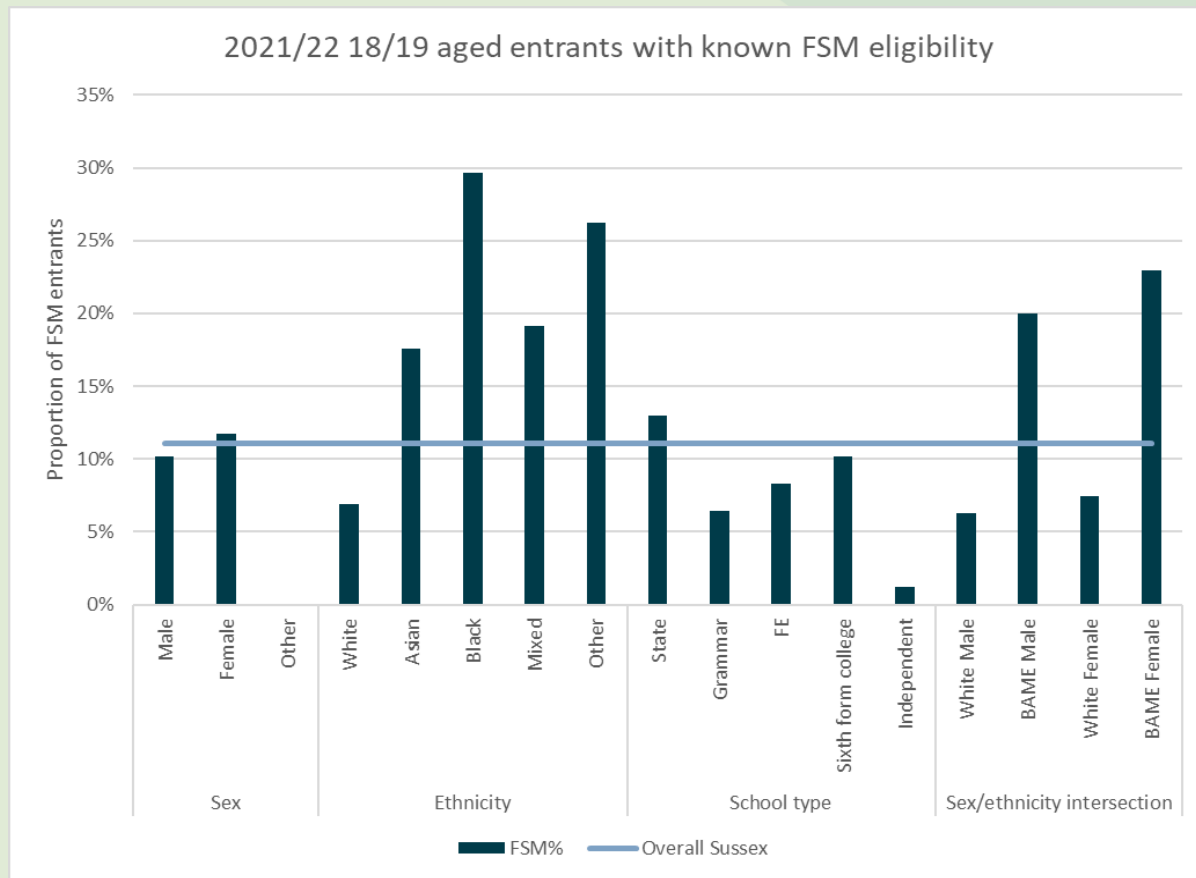- Key evaluation themes/findings
- Recommendations for 2025

Project rationale

- Access and Participation Plan targets

- Regional Data
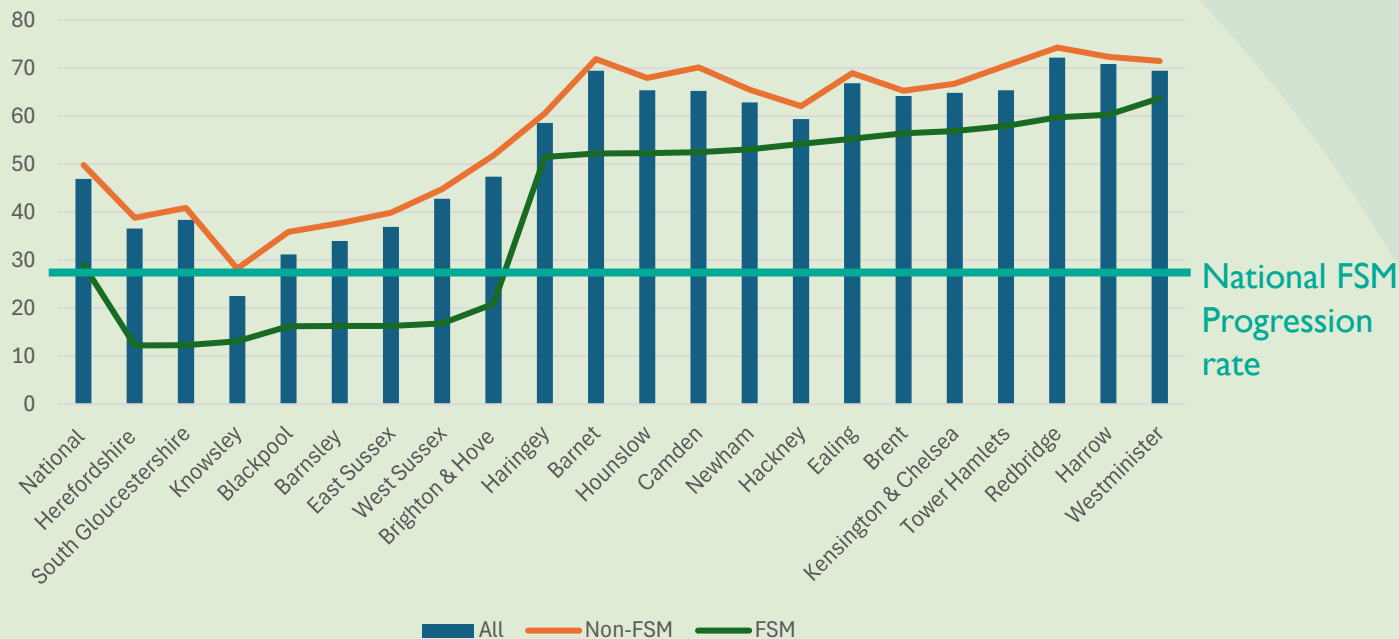
- Inspiration from others

- School request

Free school meal eligible undergraduates at Sussex

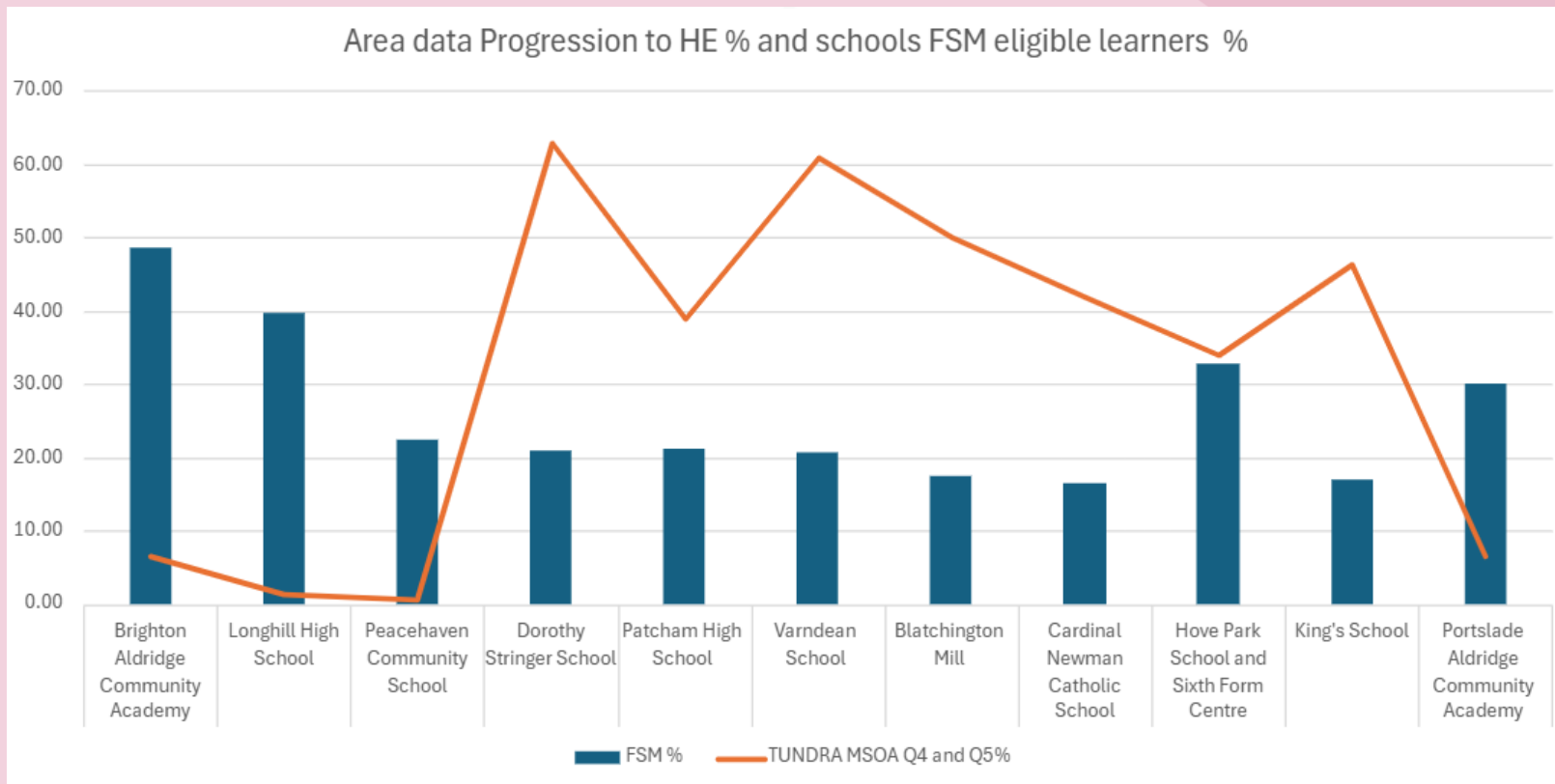2021/22 18/19 aged entrants with known FSM eligibility

Free School Meal eligible learners' progression to HE 2022/2023

Highest and lowest progression to HE Local Authorities for FSM eligible learners: 2022/23

https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education#dataBlock-b8227de1-d038-4262-8206-4dd74857a2c0-tables

Brighton and Hove: by secondary school

Area data Progression to HE % and schools FSM eligible learners %

Legend: FSM %, TUNDRA MSOA Q4 and Q5%

Our region: Free School eligible Learner progression to HE over time

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Brighton & Hove	18.5%	17.7%	19.6%	21.2%	20.9%
East Sussex	13.4%	13.6%	15.7%	16.9%	16.3%
West Sussex	15.0%	19.3%	17.3%	18.1%	16.8%
National	26.3%	26.6%	28.1%	29.2%	29.0%
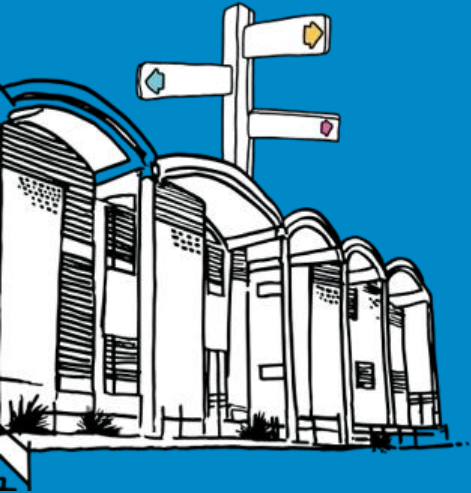
Project Outline

- Ten Year 9 boys from an East Sussex school
- Participated in four one-day workshops on creative arts including:
  - Participatory film making
  - Zine making – identity representation in the arts & media
  - Music & rhythm representing life
  - Film creation & editing

Project Outline - what we did differently

- Youth work Training for Academic colleagues designing and leading workshops

- Opportunities to create the workshop design together

- The same WP team present at all sessions and ambassador

- EMBEDDING TAKING BOYS SERIOUSLY PRINCIPLES

#1 RECOGNISE THE PRIMACY OF RELATIONSHIP

#2 DEMONSTRATE DIGNITY AND RESPECT

#3 UTILISE A 'STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH' TO LEARNING

#4 CHALLENGE AND AFFIRM MASCULINE IDENTITIES

#5 PROMOTE POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

#6 IDENTIFY BLOCKS TO BOYS LEARNING

#7 CONNECT BOYS LEARNING TO CONTEXT

#8 ENGAGE MEANINGFULLY WITH BOYS

#9 ENABLE CREATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

#10 VALUE THE VOICE OF BOYS

Evaluation Strategy

- Evaluation Design used anticipated outcomes as points of reference.

  - Feelings of **belonging,** being valued and having voice heard in relation to the project

  - Increased **confidence** in questioning and expressing own thoughts and beliefs

  - Improved **engagement** in school and in creative subjects

  - Increased **attainment** and/or **confidence** in their ability to succeed at school

  - Increased likelihood to **progress** to higher education

- Methodology qualitative and inspired by ethnographic approach of 'being there'

- Observation of workshops and celebration event, analysis of creative outputs, focus groups with the boys, group interview with teachers, individual interviews with workshop leaders and WP practitioner.

Headline Outcomes

1. All boys attended and spoke positively about the project and positive impact on attitudes to HE.

2. Successful parent/carer engagement.

3. Positive impact on boys' confidence and school engagement.

4. Teacher's feedback stated significant impact on attainment and thoughts on future progression.

5. Positive feedback from academics on their own pedagogy with Sussex students.
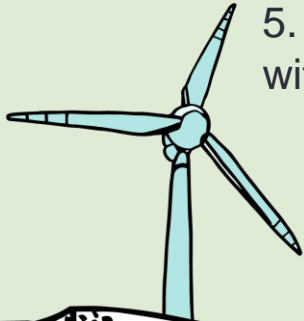
Key Evaluation Themes

Higher education was imagined as a place of **FREEDOM** and new opportunity

RELATIONSHIPS and belonging were central to the project

MASCULINITY was a subtle but important theme in the project

The focus on **CREATIVITY** allowed for self-expression and working beyond comfort zones

There were **IMMEDIATE IMPACTS** on in-school confidence and attainment

For the boys, **EXPERIENCING** the university space authentically, added value

Key Evaluation themes/findings

"They get the same messages from us all of the time. And I think it is a little bit like wallpaper. But suddenly somebody else says, oh, you could do this, or you could do that… And it changes completely."
Teacher

"Yes, it's made me try slightly harder in some subjects because obviously, I want to get into the university and stuff."
Participant

"I was expecting them to be non-compliant and rowdy. I thought there would be a lot of bravado, etc…But they just blew me away, just from all angles, obliterated every expectation that I had of them"
Practitioner

Key Evaluation themes/findings

"Felt like a very trusting environment …..They weren't like spoon fed approach that we give them at school sometimes. It was much more mature environment that they rose to the challenge of it. "
Teacher

"It was quite easy to find things in common when its other boys as well, so you make a lot of friends
Participant

"The iterative model where you immediately encourage a co-ownership and signal, demonstrate a trust in young people. And an interest in who they are and what they want to do because I think everything about the freedom and creativity, that I would really lean into that"
Practitioner

Key Evaluation themes/findings

EM   So, one thing we're looking at is, why are boys less likely to go to uni than girls?

PA7   Because it's like, in general, they're more naughty.

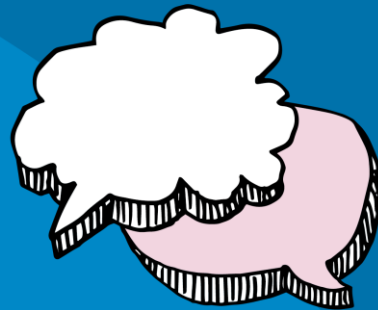EM   Do you think so?

PA7   Yes.

PA4   And they're more focussed on what they look like and don't care about their education.

Plans for 2025

- **Research question** – Why are boys less likely to go to university?

- Maintaining creativity

- Including oracy and confidence-building

- Meeting a range of academics and staff

The Boys

Boys Project Video

https://sussex.box.com/s/tanzisnutigyk9das070cjfbb4tkzqap

Thank you for listening.

Sam Dunnett – Head of Widening Participation
s.n.dunnett@sussex.ac.uk

Chris Mason – WP Partnerships Manager

chris.mason@sussex.ac.uk