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Introduction

Since its establishment in 1998, the University's Access and Participation Office has worked to develop extensive and successful outreach programmes that support the progression of young people from groups which are currently under-represented in higher education. Each year we work with young people and adults from across Wiltshire, Bath and North East Somerset.

Our Primary outreach consists mainly of working with Year 6 learners (aged 10 and 11) in specifically targeted schools. Activities in the framework are made available to young people who would benefit the most. We work with colleagues in schools to help identify those learners based on OFS under-represented group criteria.

Our aims are to support equality of opportunity for all under-represented groups in higher education.

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What we do

The Primary Progression Framework is based on the principle of a learner progression framework. Outreach sessions build upon each other over time to support learner aspiration, raise awareness of higher education (HE), contribute to academic attainment and encourage educational progression.

There are three core sessions: My Future and My Interests delivered in school, and My University, which is a visit to Bath Spa University campus at Newton Park. Each session is interactive, challenges stereotypes and supports learners in acquiring knowledge, skills and experiences surrounding HE. Learners receive handbooks, which once completed, are taken home and shared with family/guardians.

Bath Spa University Student Outreach Ambassadors act as role models for learners and provide a direct link to where they are at now to where they could be in the future.

The Themes Reading programme and the Primary Readers scheme, developed in conjunction with school teachers, and our Dance workshops, developed in conjunction with Bath Spa University students, enhance our framework.

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Evaluation approach

The Primary Progression Framework was designed collaboratively between outreach and evaluation staff, and the content of each session and its intended outcomes were mapped to Level Zero of NERUPI as follows:

	Programme	My Future	My Interests	My University
Outcomes	Pupils will be able to:	- Give examples of different career areas, the jobs within each career area and the route into each job. - Describe the education pathway from primary to higher education.	- Give examples of a range of subject areas that can be studied at university. - Identify university subject areas they may be interested in based on their current strengths and interests. - Give examples of jobs their chosen subject areas could lead into.	- Give examples of things that can be found on a university campus. - Identify some of the ways that university students learn (e.g. lectures/seminars/practical sessions, independent study time) - Give examples of reasons why somebody might choose to go to university. - Describe what it is like to be a university student and some of the things students can get involved in.
NERUPI Theme	KNOW	✓		✓
	CHOOSE	✓		
	BECOME			✓
	PRACTISE			✓
	UNDERSTAND		✓	

- To evaluate this, the following methods are used:
- Pre- and post-questionnaire measuring achievement against all NERUPI themes across the whole Progression Framework
  - Evaluation postcard at the end of Programmes 1 and 2 containing two questions about the NERUPI Aims covered in that session
  - Collection of HEAT monitoring data

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Why work with primary pupils?

Career ideas begin at an early age. Laying the foundations so children can achieve their full potential is vital. Exploring future possibilities and encouraging children to understand that opportunities are out there regardless of background, challenging stereotypes and providing inspiration opens up a world of exciting possibilities. Unless they are supported to see how these futures are possible, any ideas they do have can be curtailed by their surroundings from an early age.

Pupils' knowledge and understanding of careers is in part determined by their environment and the careers of parents/caregivers. The Progression Framework we have devised aims to support aspirations students might already have, expand their awareness to jobs outside of their sphere and begin to arm them with the knowledge and understanding they will need to confidently navigate their way forward.

Research shows that "children from as young as five have ingrained stereotypical views about the jobs people do based on their gender, ethnicity, and social background...Starting early is key to social mobility and breaking the cycle of life-limiting forces of entrenched career aspirations that don't tend to change from the age of 7 to 17 – unless we provide children with the opportunity to broaden their horizons" (Starting Early, Education and Employers, 2021).

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Feedback from schools and learners

"We have a high proportion of disadvantaged learners who may not have had experience of university in their own families. This programme raises their aspirations and allows them to see the different education paths available to them. I feel strongly that it is crucial to expose our children to these experiences at primary school." *Hannah Duffy (Deputy Head and Year 6 teacher)*

"We have worked with Bath Spa University for several years now. It is such an enriching experience for the children to have current students visit us and talk about the different courses they are studying. It makes our children realise from primary age that there is a whole world of possibilities open to them." *Vicky Heslop (Year 6 teacher)*

"My best trip of the year was going to Bath Spa University. I want to study in the TV studio there when I'm older." *Year 6 child*

"I didn't know anything about university before this year. Now I know lots about it and want to go one day." *Year 6 child*

"I want to go to university and study to be a graphic designer or a vet. Meeting the students from Bath Spa University was good because I could ask them questions about it and see what courses there are." *Year 6 child*

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Evaluation results

Due to Covid, the most recent full evaluation is for 2018-19. The pre- and post-questionnaire received 218 responses. Learning gain between the start and end of the Progression Framework was visible through the percentage point change in the proportion of respondents who selected 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' to the following statements:

Statement	PRE: % Strongly Agree/ Agree	POST: % Strongly Agree/ Agree	pp change between PRE and POST
I know lots about university	17%	81%	+63%
I know what qualifications I need to get different jobs when I'm older	39%	69%	+30%
I would like to go to university one day	69%	72%	+3%
I know some ways that university is different to school	69%	93%	+24%
I know lots of subject you can study at university	46%	88%	+41%

Respondents who attended all three programmes were also more likely to correctly identify subjects that could be studied at university, and to correctly name what lessons are called at university:

Questions	PRE: % Correct Answers	POST: % Correct Answers	pp change between PRE and POST
What subjects can you study at University?	76%	84%	+8%
What are lessons called at University?	22%	75%	+53%
Whats jobs do you need to go to University for?	79%	76%	-2%

Respondents who attended all three programmes were also more likely to name things that can be found on a university campus than they were prior to participation:

Category of responses	PRE		POST	
	No. of responses	% of all responses	No. of responses	% of all responses
Teaching space	64	23%	79	26%
Social space (shops/cafes/sports grounds)	60	22%	68	22%
Services (doctor/library/IT facilities)	55	20%	41	14%
Accommodation	49	18%	54	18%
Other facilities	45	16%	61	20%
TOTAL	273	-	303	-
Participants giving incoherent/no responses	91	-	34	-

Respondents who attended all three programmes were slightly less likely to name reasons why somebody might choose to go to university than they were prior to participation, but there were considerable increases in the number of responses relating to some categories - in particular, the proportion of respondents providing answers relating to 'achieving their dream' increased by 15pp, from 2% to 17% of all responses given:

Category of responses	PRE		POST	
	No. of responses	% of all responses	No. of responses	% of all responses
To get a better job	73	26%	53	20%
To get higher level of education/experience	56	20%	41	15%
To learn more	51	18%	39	15%
To get a specific job	39	14%	21	8%
To increase general job opportunities	36	13%	23	9%
To earn more money	9	3%	26	10%
To increase teir confidence/soft skills	6	2%	7	3%
To achieve their dream	5	2%	46	17%
To have fun	4	1%	11	4%
TOTAL	279	-	267	-
Participants giving incoherent/no responses	22	-	27	-

The Progression Framework is designed through a reflective process enabling updates to activities and evaluations in response to findings. For example, the evaluation questions for Programme 2 were recently updated as a result of previous evaluation responses suggesting a disparity between what was covered in the session and the original outcomes.

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Moving forwards and future projects

The aim of the university's outreach strategy is to reduce gaps in equality of opportunity for groups which are underrepresented in higher education across the sector and in our own institution. When working at an individual school level the percentage of students from areas with low participation in higher education remains one of our main priorities. In support of this aim, we will continue to develop our highly-targeted outreach programme. These developments will be based on evaluation and feedback from schools, and will likely include new handbook activities and curriculum workshops.