University of Sheffield

Access to Sheffield Summer School - A Creative Approach to our Theory of Change

Introduction:

- National targeted pre-entry intervention for Y12 students.
- Practitioners as researchers - problem statements, horizon scanning and partner engagement.

- Four day residential - range of academic and social activities.
- Combining delivery expertise and in-depth understanding of what works.

- Creative, whole team approach - Theory of Change and evaluation plan design.

Barriers for students:
1. Academic confidence.
2. Sense of belonging.
3. IAG and immediate network.

Partnerships:

- Delivered a Sutton Trust Summer School in 2022/2023.
- Inspired the design of ATS Summer School in 2023/2024.
- Sutton Trust best practice and evaluation feedback showed positive impact.

8.1%
average increase in reported confidence and capability across all skills.

An additional summer school = valuable for students and complimentary to Sutton Trust:
- Follow up vs Baseline = Increased awareness on available courses and Improved confidence on subject choices.
- Continued partnership with Skills Builder - incorporating a sequential and skills based curriculum.
- Our Skills Builder aim - overcome barriers highlighted in research and problem statements.

- Skills set development and personal development reflection = improvements in self efficacy and confidence in academic ability.
- Evaluation findings supported continuation of this partnership. Post-Sutton Trust summer school - Skills Builder Benchmark data reported:
  - An increase in confidence and capability in demonstrating the Skills Builder 8 essential skills

"I can speak with confidence about different courses at the University of Sheffield which are open to me" - 23.9% increase.

"I have knowledge of the different types of degree programmes offered at university" - 20.6% increase.

"I have confidence in making decisions about which courses are right for me" - 11.1% increase.

Theory of Change and ChangeBusters:

Aims:
- ToC at the centre of programme and evaluation design
- Change existing perceptions around ToC and evaluation
- ToC are accessible for the whole team
- Co-create ToC with practitioners
- Incorporate student voice
- Increase engagement with evaluation overall
- Training session

ChangeBusters game (Sheffield Hallam University and Advance HE)
- Provides an interactive way of supporting teams to "understand the stages of a Theory of Change, build confidence, explore evaluative questions, and extend learning through application through their own context. The goal is better intervention design and evaluation which in turn should lead to better student outcomes."
(Aims of the game - facilitator pack)

- A ToC template was developed to support us in playing the game (based on best practice in the APP team at UoS, TASO, other HEIs, NERUPI).
- Attended ChangeBusters Facilitators training session

Co-creation:

- Chose the players - key stakeholders - practitioners, students, evaluators
- Pre-session communication with all game players - to give context
- Tailored game pieces - ATS National Summer School ChangeBusters

- Played the game - two hour in-person ChangeBusters workshop
- Documented the game - photos and notes - ensured we had a completed ToC and evaluation plan output

- Student voice - a key element - supported open and honest discussions. Previous ChangeBusters sessions evidenced it as a valuable addition to the ToC design process.

"My involvement ensured a wider range of perspectives and inputs were considered and supported the co-creation of the evaluation framework."

Senior Student Ambassador feedback on a ChangeBusters workshop

Outcomes and learning:

Theory of Change:
- Linked to an evaluation plan
- Live documents

Informed our Whole Provider Approach:
- Ensuring ToC is embedded across all programmes in the Access Service and our APP
- Created a blueprint for other programmes

Engaged and enthused practitioners:
- Evaluation considered from the start
- Inclusion in the process, not created for them

Revisiting of the ToC post-activity:
- The team wanted to reflect and make changes
- Effective tool that engages both evaluators and practitioners

Student voice:
- Facilitated deep discussions, particularly around ensuring student ambassadors voices are heard when they are supporting the summer school

Students more informed:
- Enthused to want to work on future Access programmes
- Sharing their participation on Linked In

Progression to HE:
- Eligible for a contextual offer of up to 3 a level grades
- Programme participants are applying to UoS

Reflection on process & documentation:
- Recognising when using ChangeBusters is appropriate
- The process is time and resource intensive but outputs are valuable
- Changes made to evaluation plan template - reducing time it takes to complete