



# Feel Good Summer: Pathways Evaluation 2022



pedestrian1998

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“Going to the DMU campus itself was brilliant. Rather than somebody coming into your environment to talk about University, it was really good to go into their environment and explore the reality of University for myself”

Feel Good Summer Participant

# About the delivery partners

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## About Pedestrian

Pedestrian are an established arts and education organisation with a significant track record of delivery in Leicester. Since 1998, they have built a strong track record of delivering high quality creative activity that has seen them deliver over 14,000 workshops.

They provide education, training and outreach projects for young people at risk, vulnerable adults and communities in Leicester, Leicestershire and across the Midlands. Their participants are often socially excluded, not in education, employment or training (NEET) or experiencing disadvantage.

Pedestrian believe that with the right levels of support and timely intervention everyone can achieve their goals, we call this 'Pioneering Potential'.

## About Soft Touch Arts

An award-winning Leicestershire charity, established in 1986, using arts, media and music activities to make positive life changes for disadvantaged young people. The charity supports them to develop creative, social and employability skills. They work with young people who lack opportunities or have challenges in their lives.

Soft Touch's projects help young people keep on track, building confidence and resilience to change negative or risky behaviours, and progress to lead more fulfilling lives. Soft Touch believe creativity gives young people more positive choices in their lives and they have a proven track record of achieving outcomes with young people.

Pedestrian and Soft Touch Arts were funded to deliver the Pathways project in 2021 to support a cohort of young people from a particular neighbourhood in Leicester where University attendance is considerably lower than surrounding localities.

## About Dot to Dot

Dot to Dot Training and Consultancy were commissioned to complete an independent evaluation of the Feel Good Summer Project. Dot to Dot were founded in 2015 to specifically provide support to the VCSE Sector (Voluntary Community Social Enterprise). Dot to Dot support organisations to improve their effectiveness, demonstrating their social impact and evaluation services form an integral element of the organisation's services, the company is led by Simon Pickering.

Simon has an extensive track record working within the youth arts and homeless sectors. Simon worked for BBC Blast, the BBC's award-winning youth arts learning programme.





# About Feel Good Summer Project

**In 2021, Soft Touch Arts and Pedestrian delivered a pilot programme. In 2022, the organisations were jointly commissioned a second time to deliver a follow up programme aiming to engage young people who do not typically consider, explore or look into higher education (HE) but are capable and need that additional support to engage.**

The project is targeted at the Weston ward in Leicester which is one of the most deprived wards in the city. The project was delivered within the local school, New College which is familiar to young people locally and who the project is aimed at.

The project targets young people in Year 9- Year 11 who were specifically facing the following barriers to accessing higher education:

- Who have a physical or learning disability (where higher education is an option)

- Are young carers
- Are looked after young people
- Are from disadvantaged areas not being served by university outreach

The project uses creative and music based activity to raise awareness, develop new skills, whilst teaching young people about the role HE as an accelerator of cultural and creative activity.

Feel Good Summer was funded by Pathways, a widening participation initiative from local universities. In 2021's pilot programme both organisations learnt a considerable amount, gaining insight into some of the factors that contribute to the number of HE attendees from this ward being lower than neighbouring areas. This learning was fully applied to the delivery of the 2022 project.

## Feel Good Summer Intended Outcomes

Feel Good Summer had the following intended three outcomes for young people participating. These outcomes are derived from the Pathways Progression Framework seen in Annex One.

- Young people (learner) can identify what Higher Education (HE) is and the benefits of attending HE as applied to them. (Phase 1 & 2, Outcome 1)
- Young people (learner) can identify the link between their current level of study, their attainment and HE study. They can show an increased interest in continuing their studies and express motivation to do well. Skills that raise attainment are improved. (Phase 1 & 2, Outcome 3)
- Young people (learner) can identify what is required of them to make a successful transition to HE. (Phase 2, Outcome 2)

The Pathways outcomes framework has three distinct phases:

- Phase one: Introductory Phase
- Phase two: Development Phase
- Phase three: Consolidation Phase

The Feel Good Summer delivery contributes to elements of Phase one and two. The Pathways Progression Framework is designed as a tool to help support staff in the delivering on behalf of the partnership to develop a programme of activity that raises aspiration and supports young people's progression into higher education.



“It’s been great fun, getting to visit an actual University has been a real experience for me. Hearing from students about their experiences has really helped me to understand the role of University”

Feel Good Summer Participant





# Feel Good Summer project delivery elements

The Feel Good Summer Project consisted of multiple core activities:

- Creative activity - music technology including beat making, lyrical development and recording led by Pedestrian
- Creative activity - visual arts including craft, graphic design, fine art and media production led by Soft Touch Arts
- University ambassadors – Young people who are/ have attended University or HE who provide talks, support and insight on their experiences
- Master classes from guest speakers and artists about their alternative higher education journey

## Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was completed in July 2022, with final write up in September and October 2022. The evaluation methodology has been light touch compared to other projects we evaluate. This evaluation has taken a snap shot approach and not a longitudinal approach. The snap shot approach was undertaken due to the Feel Good Summer project being a short-term project working with a target group of young people. The evaluation methodology undertaken to produce the evaluation consisted of:

- Evaluation survey completed by all young people who participated in the programme
- Facilitated evaluation group session with young people as part of the deliver timetable
- One to one evaluator led conversations in person and telephone conversations with young people
- Delivery team observations and feedback collated during project's delivery





# Summary & Findings

The Feel Good Summer project worked with 14 young people. The original target number was 25 young people. The lower numbers were partly due to a low number of referrals to the project by the partner school and other factors such as chosen week of summer and families away on holiday. However, given the target group of young people the numbers of young people worked with is a positive achievement.

## University Ambassadors

In this year's project delivery, the University Ambassadors were less integrated in the overall project delivery, they attended only on the University visit day. This has led to participants feeding back that they had less connection with the University Ambassadors and their role as advocates for attending University. A number of participants reported that they

didn't see a natural connection between themselves and the Ambassadors.

However, there was positive feedback from another participant of really insightful and engaging conversation which helped participants to progress in terms of thinking about their path to University.

Participants stated that Ambassadors shared their experiences and answered lots of questions for participants. This engagement helped to inspire participants to think about their own University and post-18 opportunities.

Overall, the Feel Good Summer project participants stated that being around and listening to the University Ambassadors increased their overall confidence to progress into Post-18 education, with 49% of participants stating the University Ambassadors had contributed to an increase in their confidence levels in relation to attending University.



## Participant comments on University Ambassadors

"I feel I have come from a different place to them, so I didn't feel they understood my situation. I didn't feel that inspired by them as our situations are so different"

"Having the University Ambassadors on the project this week has influenced me, in a good way, I want to get to where they are. I know what I need to do, they helped me with quite a few questions I have about going to University and they were really helpful with their responses"

"They have all come from different backgrounds and the only reason they managed to get to their dreams is by studying hard at school"

"The University Ambassadors did very different courses at University to what I want to do, this meant I found it difficult to relate to them"

"The University Ambassadors didn't convince me that I would fit in, I am dyslexic and have a difficult home life, so I didn't think they related to me"

"They had no reason to give me confidence that I could do it because I'm not them so I couldn't relate to them very well"

"I feel like I'm easily influenced and it was helpful them being there because then they could influence me in good way and encourage me to explore University attendance"

"The University Ambassadors being part of the project helped to give me an idea that I wanted to go to University"

"They were helpful in introducing me to other possible courses I could study after I finish school"

"I saw what can be achieved and what opportunities university can offer, through the support and conversation I had with the University Ambassadors"

# Facilitated evaluation findings

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Participants took part in a facilitated evaluation session with responses were captured on flip chart paper. The session aim was to gain feedback directly from participants, however the session was delivered at a mid-way point. At the end of delivery might have provided greater opportunities for further insight and feedback.

Participants freely shared how much they had enjoyed the week, especially the creative and cultural activities. It was clear in the evaluation session that the participants were thinking through the realities of attending University.

Participants shared that the trip to De Montfort University (DMU) and getting a real-life tour of the University was an amazing experience, with a number asking if the whole project could have been run at the University instead of at their school.

In addition, participants mentioned how much they had learnt in terms of creative skills with a number of participants commenting how they hadn't

realised how many creatively based subjects you can do at University.

A number of participants mentions that as a result of this week they feel their dream of attending University is within reach as a direct result of the Feel Good Summer project, this is a stand out achievement for the overall project.

The evaluation session was focussed on a few key questions which were:

## **What would help you think about if University is for you?**

Participants fed back that having tours and visits to see what the university life is really like would be really useful. Some participants stated that wish the project had been delivered in an alternative venue so they got to experience new places.

Participant fed back that would like to know more about the practicalities around University

attendance such as the application process and what funding or support would be available.

## **What are your concerns about going to University?**

Participant responses to this question were very useful and highlighted elements of University and HE engagement that could be address in pre and post-16 education, for example some participants stated they were worries they would become isolated and lonely whilst studying especially if living away from home. Other participants stated that personal anxiety and had worries about fitting in were raised.

A number of participants stated that University and HE were "a different world to ours" demonstrating the distance that young people from the project target community perceive they need to travel to feasibly consider attending University.



# Facilitated evaluation findings

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## What are the barriers for you for accessing University?

- Lack of money
- Paying back the money once I complete studying
- Being able to afford it
- The effort academically required to make it to University
- I am not sure I would be able to sit through the very lengthy lectures
- No experience of others that have attended university
- Meeting new people and having to make new friends
- Not sure my grades will be good enough. Having to attend for the full year and leave home
- Unsupportive parents with no money
- Not knowing about how universities work.

## What are you thinking of doing post-18?

41%

of the participants are considering College and university at post-18.

42%

of the participants are considering College at post-16 and then employment.

17%

of the participants are considering an Apprenticeship at post-16.

# Facilitated evaluation findings

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## What would help you to consider if University is for you?

- More information on the practicalities
- Talking to lecturers more about the reality of studying at University
- Hearing more experiences from people more like me in terms of attending University
- Further information on how to apply
- More days like yesterday (visiting DMU)
- More details on what support I can get with funding
- Knowing that I wouldn't get bored in lengthy lectures
- Further information for my mum so that she can help me decide if I can go

## What's been your biggest take away from this week?

- I have learnt loads from the talks
- Learning how to do animation
- Going the University
- Visiting DMU was a massive deal for me
- Knowing that University is bigger and cheaper than I previously thought
- Learning new skills and about University
- Making my own music and learning through the team that I could do this at University
- Learning new creative skills has been brilliant
- Making beats and how to structure tracks

- Experiencing University for the first time
- I have learnt and had new experiences which has changed my thinking about going to University
- Trying new forms of art and music
- The support from the staff on the project
- Going to University is possible for me
- Hearing the University Ambassadors talks helped me
- Talking to the staff team about other options to apprenticeships

# Facilitated evaluation findings

## What could have improved this week?

- More creative time for making music
- More days and more trips to University
- Having more options other than music or art for the creative side of the week
- I would have liked to spend more time at the DMU Campus and get more of a University student experience
- I would have liked more time to get to know the University campus more
- Nothing I have a brilliant time – thanks to the staff working on the project
- If the sessions had been at Pedestrian or Soft Touch Arts, this would have made it feel less like school for me
- I would have liked to know more about creative subjects you can study at University





# Participant Survey Findings

71%

stated that they knew very little about going to University prior to the project

100%

reported that they felt better informed about University and how to access it

57%

rated the delivery team running the project as very good, 42% rated them as excellent.

100%

reported a shift in their knowledge levels of what's required to attend University in the future.

57%

stated that the project had impacted on the future career and educational plans.

72%

told us that the week had contributed to changing their perceptions on University

# Survey Findings

50%

told us that the week had enabled them to gain better knowledge of the options for attending University.

50%

told us that the week had contributed to them deciding to go to University in the future.

85%

stated that they are now considering attending University as a result of the project

71%

of participants stated that as a result of the project they now feel more confident to attend University

64%

of participants stated that as a result of the project they now feel more prepared to think about attending university.

49%

of participants stated that the University Ambassadors had contributed to an increase their confidence about attending University

The survey completed by all the participants provided a snap shot of young people's views and their progress during the Feel Good Summer project delivery week. The survey was combination of free text responses and 1-5 based scale responses that asked participants to provide pre and post scores based upon their experience.

The responses from participants were very impactful for the evaluation but more useful for shaping the future shape and delivery model of the Feel Good Summer project.

On the University outcomes side, the survey does show that participants made significant progress during the week, with 85% now stating they are considering University as a direct result of the project.

In addition, the participants scored the project highly in terms of the delivery team that working upon the project. The survey result are clearly demonstrating that the project has huge impact potential for participants.

72% reported that that project had changed their overall perception of University and how to access it. Furthermore, 71% told us they feel increased confidence in respects of attending University in the future.

These are impressive results and demonstrates a high level of successful delivery against the intended project outcomes, some further work or consideration should be given to how to increase participants confidence levels in respects of attending University not only their levels of awareness.

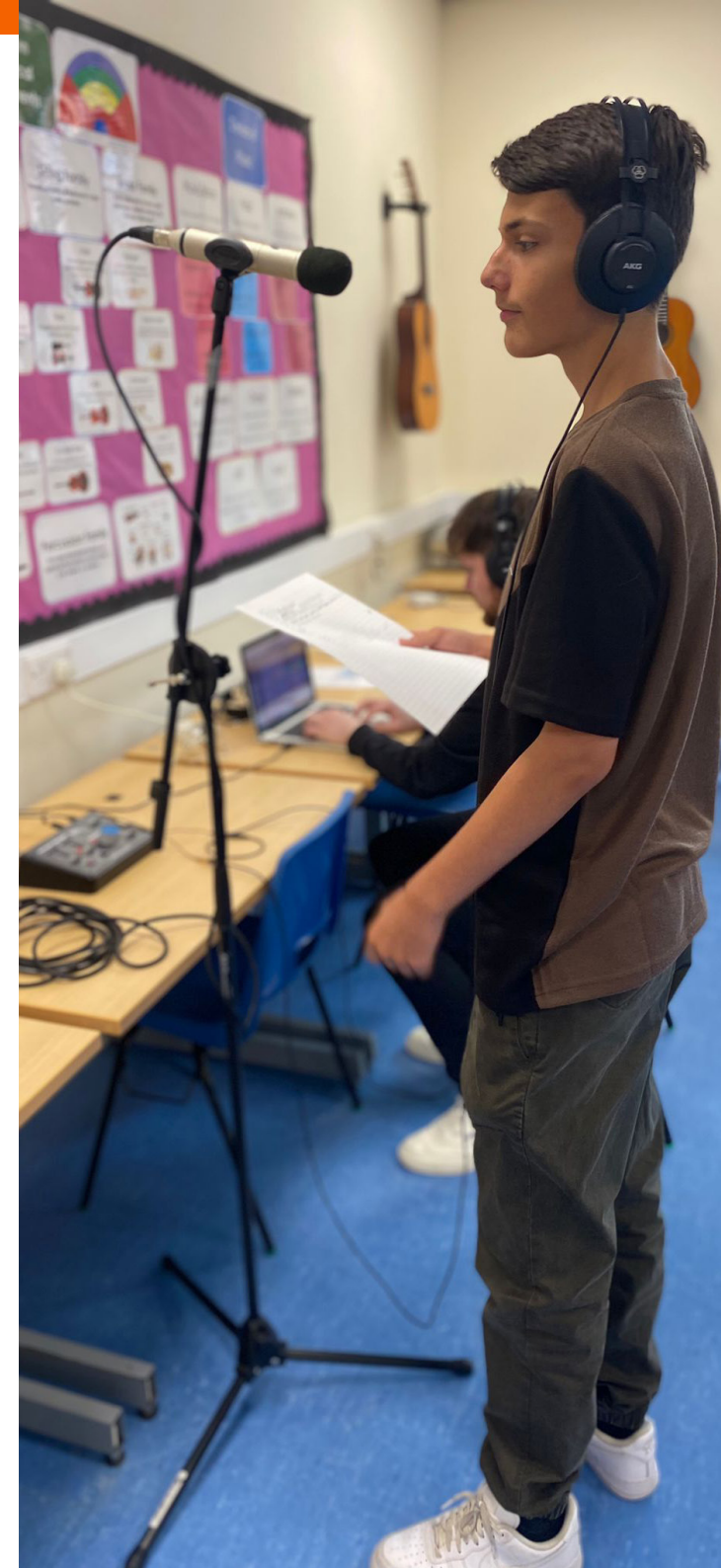
## One to ones and phone interviews

As part of the evaluative process we conducted six one to one interviews, which is a sample of 40% of participants in the project.

The interviews were light touch given the length of the project. The consensus from participants was that the project had been very fun and that they had learnt a huge amount from the creative and cultural activities.

Participants clear stated that the University awareness and the Ambassador talks had been hugely beneficial in helping them to explore University. Participants stated that they had more questions about courses and finances to enable them to fully consider if it was a feasible.

A number stated that it had inspired them to work harder at school as they now saw the potential opportunities that would be opened up to them through University.





# Recommendations

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The format and approach taken the Feel Good Summer project is exceptionally valid. With this validation there are a number of recommendations for consideration and further exploration with the partners involved in the project.

- Careful consideration needs to be given to the venue used for the project delivery, with a number of participants stating this acted a barrier initially for them.
- Recommend that the use of a University Campus for the week is explored to give participants a great sense of University life.
- Further exploration is required to increase the overall number of participants for the project and exploring the relationships with schools to increase the overall engagement in an excellent project.
- The feedback on the role of University Ambassadors has not been as positive as the previous year, we recommend that this is reviewed and there is additional more purposeful space in the project created to enable greater, more in-depth dialogue between participants and the University Ambassadors.
- The role of external evaluators needs to be reconsidered as this may well be better delivered by the delivery staff throughout the week as participants build up trust and have deeper conversations with them.
- Explore ways to extend the length of time that young people are involved in the project, recognising that the journey to University is different for all young people.

- Consider ways to build a greater synergy between the creative activities delivered as part of the project and the opportunities for participants to take these further through via appropriate University courses.
- The value of the UK's Creative Industries is currently one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy. With this in mind the guest speakers and University Ambassadors should be from the creative industries better aligning with both Pedestrian and Soft Touch Arts.
- The partnership and stakeholders involved in the project should collectively explore how the Feel Good Summer project could become a longer-term programme. Ideally, working across multiple years so that young people could receive long-term support to achieve the overall ambition of attending University.
- The approach toward Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) needs to be considered and focussed around some of the barriers that participant told us about as evaluators. Explore if this could be delivered in partnership with the relevant school IAG teams to ensure continuity and follow ups can be provided with a more joined up approach, as it seems that a number of participants are left with more questions about funding than they had prior to engaging in the project.
- Explore and consider the role of peer mentoring and opportunities for extended peer work to support young people, possible matching University Ambassadors with young people as mentors. This would need training, support and resources allocating to make successful and would require longer term project support.

# Conclusion

Based upon the evidence and feedback collated it's clear that the Feel Good Summer project has delivered on all of the three key outcomes it was funded to achieve.

The evolution of the project was very clear in the second year of delivery, if a third year of delivery is offered the sense is that this would provide an excellent opportunity to put the learning from two years of highly successful delivery into practice and achieve excellent outcomes for the participants.

Whilst the overall number of beneficiaries is slightly less than hoped it's very clear that the project has been delivered to a very high standard. There are some exciting and important approaches being developed as part of the project that requires further exploration and continuation funding.

In addition, its' importance to reference the project performed so well because of the trusted partnership working between Pedestrian and Soft Touch Arts, coupled with both organisation's youth led approach which provides choice and maximises creativity for young people participating in the project.

The use of creative activities led by Pedestrian and Soft Touch Arts acted as a clear and powerful engagement tool to work with the project participants, which was reflected within all the evaluation evidence and insight collected.

The project has achieved impressive results and demonstrates a high level of successful delivery against the intended project outcomes, some further work or consideration should be given to how to increase participant's confidence levels in respects of attending University not only their levels of overall awareness.



## Participant's comments, July 2022

"I already knew I wanted to attend University to study sport, but this week has made me consider other subjects"

"This week has encouraged me to experience new things and it's certainly made me think about possibly going to University"

"I used to really want to go but then I lost confidence about going to University, after yesterday's visit to DMU I feel like it could be an option for me"

"Before this project, I didn't know if I wanted to go to University, but now I know that if I do choose to go I will get support"

"I feel better prepared for University and I know more about what's expected from me"

"This project has given me more of an insight and taught me more"