

Headline Programme Evaluation Report

SHE Can

AUGUST 2021

Background

SHE Can was a headline HeppSY project that aimed to support girls in Year 9 and 10 with lower than desired academic self-confidence to increase their confidence around their aptitude for learning, understand how to better articulate themselves and their ideas, and confidently present their work and success in the future. The programme also provided tailored HE information, advice and guidance by relatable role models.

A previous iteration of the programme ran in 2019 for 46 female students in Years 9 and 10. The second iteration of the programme ran during the academic year 2020/21, and was heavily disrupted due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools and colleges.

Programme design

Theories of change

The programme design and development was supported by a theory of change.

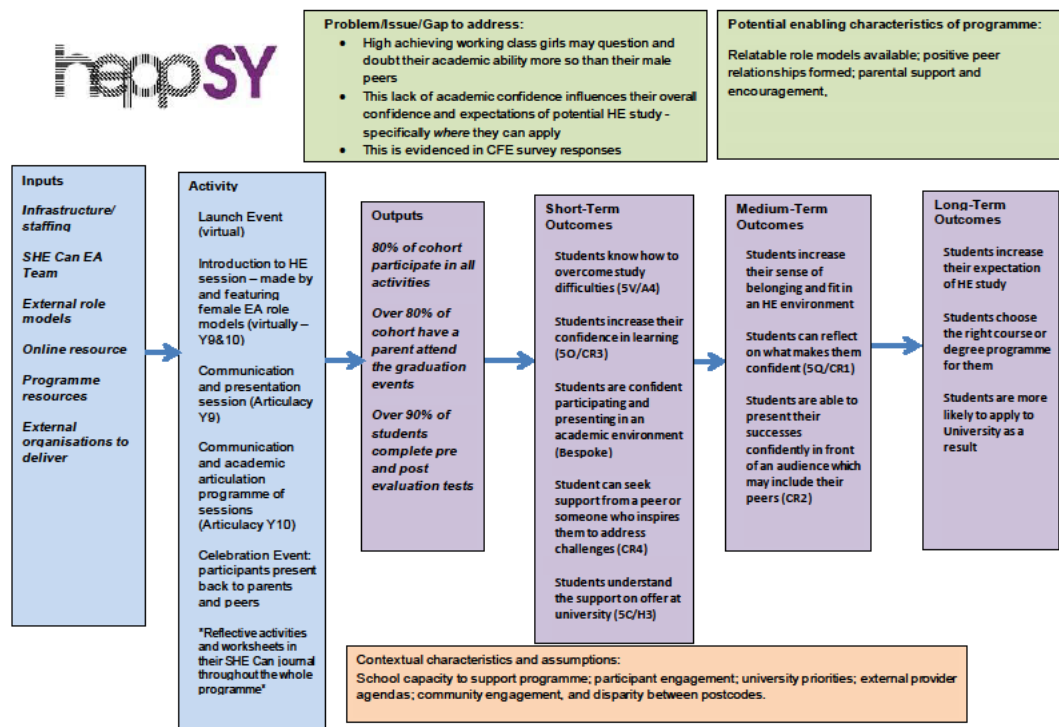
The programme design was based on three key theories of change:

1. If high achieving year 9 and 10 girls with lower than desired academic self-confidence are given tailored information advice and guidance by a relatable role model, then they **see that someone like them has successfully navigated their way to and through University**, leading to an increased understanding of the support available at University, and an improved sense of prospective belonging and fit.
2. If high achieving year 9 and 10 girls with lower than desired academic self-confidence take part in a communications and presentation workshop/programme, then they **understand how to better articulate themselves and their ideas**, leading to an increase in their confidence, specifically around their aptitude for learning, which they can successfully present to others.
3. If high achieving year 9 and 10 girls with lower than desired academic self-confidence take part in a celebration event where they present their work to parents, then they **develop confidence in their academic and presentation skills**, leading to students being able to confidently present their work and successes in the future, including in formal assessments.

Logic model

The SHE Can logic model (see Figure 1) was designed to outline the programme inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

Figure 1. SHE Can logic model



Evaluation design

Research questions:

- How successful was the implementation of the SHE Can programme?
 - Were output targets achieved?
 - What barriers and constraints inhibited successful implementation?
 - What factors supported or enabled successful implementation?
- Was SHE Can successful in achieving its stated outcomes?
 - For whom did the intervention work best and why?
 - Through what mechanisms did the intervention work?
 - Were there any unintended outcomes?

Proposed models of data collection:

Evaluation of the programme was intended to be carried out as below:

- Bespoke pre/post survey – drawing on both the CFE questions but also our own Likert scale questions linked to the learner logic model and progression framework.
- Register analysis to evaluate whether output targets are met (participation)
- Interviews with programme participants (girls and potentially their parents)
- Interviews with role models
- Structured observations at activity days
- Analysis of reflective scrapbooks
- HEPA interviews and feedback

Limitations and challenges

Programme implementation

- Programme timeline? Dates of activities?
- Schools involved?
- Students/year groups involved?

Findings and discussion

Below we outline findings in relation to the research questions and logic model outputs and outcomes discussed above. Split into two sections, one discusses the analysis of the participant data we were able to gather, and the student reflections, with the other outlining themes arising from the practitioner reflective focus group.

Participant post-survey analysis

Three students completed the post-survey (Table 1), and an additional student completed one half of the post-survey. The students generally responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to the Likert statements surrounding higher education knowledge and academic confidence, with only a few neutral responses. The statements surrounding confidence presenting and communicating with others received more mixed responses, with a combination of “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree” and “disagree” responses. Responses to the qualitative questions were very positive (Table 2), with students reporting that they were able to engage with the sessions, and that the sessions were relevant and helpful.

Table 1. Post-survey Likert statements.

Higher education knowledge	Academic confidence	Confidence presenting and communicating
I am confident I know what higher education is	I can solve most problems if I use the necessary effort	I feel confident presenting my work in front of others
I understand that there are different types of higher education institution open to me	I think my school related successes are well deserved	I can communicate my strengths and achievements to others
I can describe the differences between different higher education institutions	I am confident in my ability to overcome challenges I face with my school work	
I can describe the differences between different higher education institutions	I can get the grades I need for further study	
I feel able to make an informed decision about where to study and why	I understand the types of study support available to me	
	I can seek study support or extra help by myself	

Table 2. Qualitative post-survey responses.

Question	Responses
How easy was it for you to engage with the sessions fully?	"It was very easy to engage and to complete all of the tasks that where set"
	"It was challenging but I overcome it"
	"very easy"
How relevant did you find the SHE Can sessions?	"I found it very relevant as it as helped me with my confidence to express myself"
	"I found them useful"
	"very relevent helped me a lot"
Do you have any suggestions for improvement?	"Maybe set more tasks which allow people to talk more such as play a game - two lies one truth"
	"No"
	"wish the sessions were more than a couple that we had and,shame covid spoilt the face to face meetings"

Practitioner/implementation evaluation

To support implementation and outcomes evaluation a reflective focus group was held with practitioners. Five themes were identified around implementation and one around programme outcomes.

Implementation

Planning

Practitioners gave several examples of where they felt that considering the aims of the programme as a whole and making links between sessions enhanced the experience of pupils on the programme. Practitioners had made use of the logic model during planning sessions to ensure that they were lining up content with their theory of change.

...every time we had an element of the program for She Can we made sure that it matched up to the logic model and that the aims of the logic model were the aims that that the girls were gonna achieve by doing that workshop or session. I think it was really useful because then we could easily see - do we need that part? Do we really need them to do that element? Well, no, probably not, they've got enough and they're going to reach those aims.

The logic model was seen as a useful reference for informing programme content, particularly in the context of having more limited time than initially planned and changes to the mode of delivery due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In addition, advanced planning with an external provider was indicated as a positive step that helped with coherence and student engagement throughout the programme. This was facilitated by meetings with the external provider before prior sessions were fully designed and delivered. These ensured that staff delivering other sessions were fully informed and could link to this session content and enabled HeppSY staff to be meaningfully involved in supporting delivery.

Programme design

Practitioners spoke about the importance of self-reflection for pupils as a core part of session delivery, building in opportunities for programme participants to apply the concepts and ideas discussed in the sessions to their own interests and priorities. It was felt that these opportunities for self-reflection helped with session engagement, particularly given the restrictions of delivery online, and that both presenters and pupils reflecting on their experiences built up positive relationships that enabled presenters to be effective role models. This idea of 'self-reflection' as a core element of the programme was also seen as part of a building block model, which allowed pupils to explore a concept or skill, reflect on it and then add to it, developing their confidence.

Practitioners also pointed to the value of consistency in staff throughout the programme as an important factor in why participants engaged throughout.

[the HeppSY EAs] had been with the girls from the launch all the way through it, so I think having that consistent face... it actually worked and it was really good.

This was expressed as both consistency in having the same staff but also consistency of approach in all sessions being structured to allow opportunities for those staff to share their own experiences of HE and of presenting.

Mode of delivery

Practitioners had some reservations about the online delivery model but were impressed with the level of engagement they had achieved with pupils throughout the programme, contrasting this with less rewarding experiences of online delivery with other content. Although there was still a preference for face-to-face delivery, particularly to identify and support where individual students may be struggling with the content, they felt that they had managed the restrictions of the format well and had engaged pupils successfully.

Enabling factors that supported the online delivery model were small pupil groups, regular and positive encouragement for students to appear on-screen and to use their microphone with clear explanations of why this will be beneficial, multiple sessions to enable pupils to develop their confidence and trust in presenters and pupils having their own devices, which meant that they were able to respond quickly in chat or on camera.

Overall, practitioners felt that face-to-face delivery would still be preferable for maximum impact, particularly given the reluctance of some of the cohort to appear on camera. One participant chose not to present at the end of the workshop and practitioners felt that, with in-person delivery, this could have been managed and the pupil better supported to participate. Practitioners also pointed to technological difficulties causing additional stress, especially where schools may not have capacity to encourage students to log-in to events or to manage on-site technical problems.

School engagement

As with other projects, school engagement was heavily influenced by the capacity of the key point of contact. It was felt to be particularly helpful that one point of contact was able to cover two schools for this project. Capacity within the school and COVID-19 restrictions also affected engagement, with schools unable to chase consent forms as effectively. Part of the issue around this for Sheffield schools was felt to be the short timescales between the project being advertised to schools and the launch date.

Adaptation

COVID-19 restrictions required practitioners to adapt the programme content in a number of ways:

- Reducing content covered in the EA delivered session
- Using pre-recorded rather than live examples of pupils presenting for the celebration event
- Condensing the timeline for the programme from the previous year
- Hosting sessions out of school hours
- All delivery hosted online

Practitioners indicated that hosting the launch online might be possible for future delivery but the remaining content would be preferably delivered in-person. They also felt that there were benefits to a condensed delivery schedule but that they would look to add in some of the reduced content by having more EA-led sessions in schools.

I think I like how condensed it was because before it seemed to go on forever and it was like this prolonged project that went on for months. Whereas I like it that it was short, sharp and snappy. I think being realistic if we were to intersperse it with more EA sessions it would naturally have to be over two months.

There was agreement that, although the reduction in content for the EA session had been for positive reasons, with pupils engaging in more depth than expected, at least one further session would have been preferable to ensure pupils received valuable information about HE.

Outcomes

Oracy

Practitioners spoke enthusiastically about the development of pupil skills in oracy throughout the programme, with students moving from not being willing to verbalise or appear on camera, to presenting an extended speech.

...seeing how these girls went from being so quiet to just saying so much. And it wasn't just the fact that they were introducing themselves, some of the content that they had in their speech, like touching on things personal to them - the amount of confidence you would need as a person to share that with complete strangers. I was just blown away by it. Everything that they came out with, the way that they articulated themselves, their aspirations - these girls really were dreaming big.

Feedback from school contacts also indicated that they had seen positive outcomes, with some schools wanting to replicate elements of the programme for other pupils and pursue further accreditation for participating pupils.

Programme outcomes

Conclusions

Recommendations for practice and future research

Using the logic models for planning sessions appeared to be a useful resource for this project, particularly where mid-programme adaptations were necessary. This practice could be shared with other project teams.

Meeting with outside providers, particularly those delivering on sequential programmes, appeared to help in making the programme more coherent and supported pupil engagement. Where possible, this type of planning should be built into relationships with external providers.

A 'building blocks' approach to this programme, with opportunities for pupil self-reflection throughout, was an important part of programme design and appears to have supported success in online engagement of pupils. It may be possible for similarly designed EA sessions to enhance other programmes where online delivery is expected.

Further exploration of the most effective timescales in delivering a project of this sort may be helpful. Practitioners were positive about the shorter timescales, provided schools received enough notice to prepare. It would be helpful to explore whether a shorter timescale assists with pupil and school engagement.