

## **University of Sussex**

### **Virtual School Revision Days**

#### **Category: Raising School Attainment; LAC**

The Virtual School GCSE Revision Days have been operating for the last 4 years and came about as a result of a desire on the part of the Head of East Sussex Virtual School and the University of Sussex Care Leaver Coordinator to improve the life chances of young people in the care system. The Head of the East Sussex Virtual School invites Looked After Children to attend the GCSE revision day which takes place at the University of Sussex. Typically, between 10 and 12 young people take up the offer. Often, the young people have never stepped foot on a university campus or even considered university as an option.

The University of Sussex Care Leaver Coordinator recruits approximately four University of Sussex students to help out on the day (all students have been DBS/CRB checked and are studying either maths/physics or English). The morning consists of an introduction to the University of Sussex student helpers, a campus tour, information on student finance and support for care leavers at university, plus a study skills and future thinking workshop. University students and Looked After Children get the opportunity to talk about university life during the lunch break. After lunch, the Looked After Children work with the university students to improve their maths and English skills in preparation for their GCSE exams. (Because the students who help out are also part of the University of Sussex Tutoring Scheme, they are familiar with the GCSE curriculum as they tutor students in local secondary schools on a weekly basis.)

The revision days are greatly enjoyed by the young people who attend and have been shown to have a tangible impact on learners' aspirations, with the vast majority saying that university seems like a more achievable goal for them. Participants also consistently state that they have a greater understanding of what university is like after attending the revision day and speaking with students. They also say that they feel they will get a better grade as a result of the help they receive from students and the study skills workshop, demonstrating a potential impact on their attainment.

The University of Sussex students who help out consistently say that it is the most rewarding activity they ever engage in whilst at university and it has encouraged a number of student helpers to get more involved with Looked After Children either as part of their tutoring role or as a profession after they graduate.

**To learn more about this project or if you would like to get in touch with the University of Sussex, please contact Michael Naughton on [Michael.naughton@londonhigher.ac.uk](mailto:Michael.naughton@londonhigher.ac.uk)**