



Tranche 3 Impact Report Executive Summary: ‘Why Would You?’

Introduction and Aims

In Tranche 3, over 3500 students (including over 1000 NCOP target students) attended the ‘Why Would You?’ performance at 29 Next Steps South West (NSSW) schools across Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset. The play portrays three 17-year-old friends deciding what to do after their current studies, addressing common concerns that students may have when thinking about studying at higher education (HE). In addition, more than 700 students (485 NCOP target students) also attended a workshop to further explore key themes of the play. Throughout the performance and workshop, the characters discuss topics such as lack of HE role models, family/peer expectations, lack of self-confidence, and concerns around financing HE study. ‘Why Would You?’ thus addresses the barriers of Knowledge of HE, Finance, and Socio-economic factors, all the while aiming to raise students’ aspirations to HE study.

‘Why Would You?’ Performance Evaluation

Evaluation data for ‘Why Would You?’ was obtained through post-performance surveys collected from 1560 students in 16 schools during the Spring Term of Tranche 3.

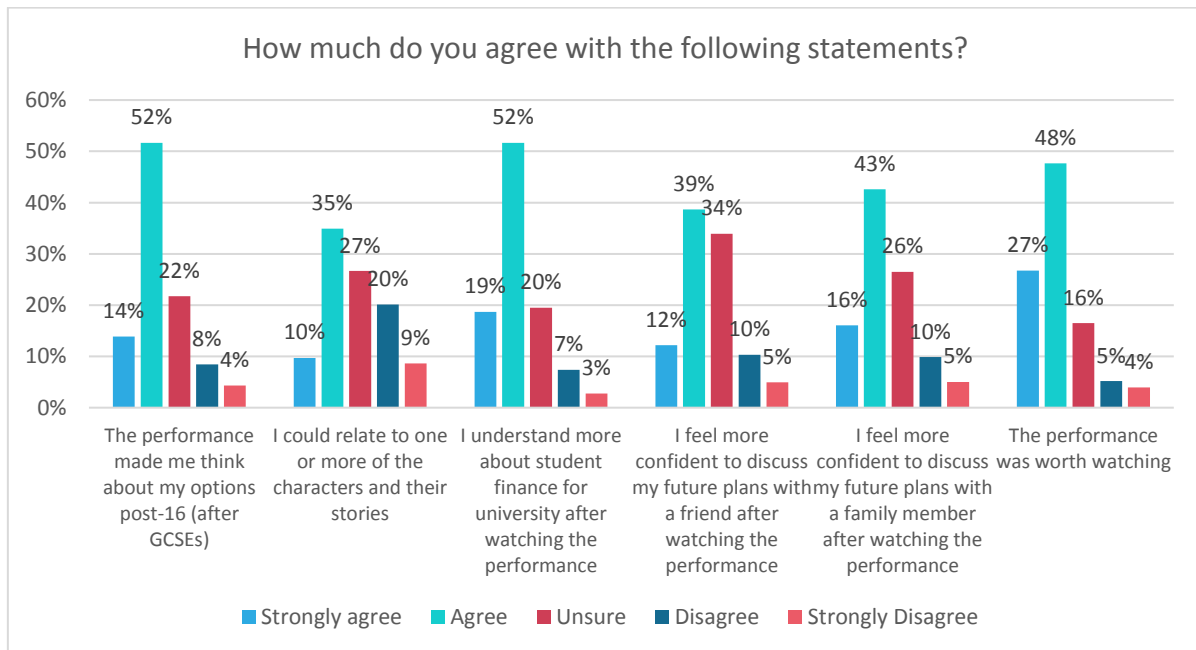


Figure 1 – Student feedback, post-performance statements

Analysis of results for six survey statements with which students were asked to show their agreement on a Likert scale (Figure 1) highlights the following key findings:

- 75% agreed that the performance was worth watching.
- There is a strong indication of impact on the barrier of Finance, as 70% agreed that they understood more about student finance after the performance.
- The data suggests impact on students’ confidence to talk about their future plans with friends and family (≥51% agreement with increase in confidence in these areas).
- 66% agreed that the performance made them think about their post-16 options.

Students were also asked to provide an example of something they had learnt from the performance. 1341 qualitative responses were received and have been coded into thematic groups (Figure 2).

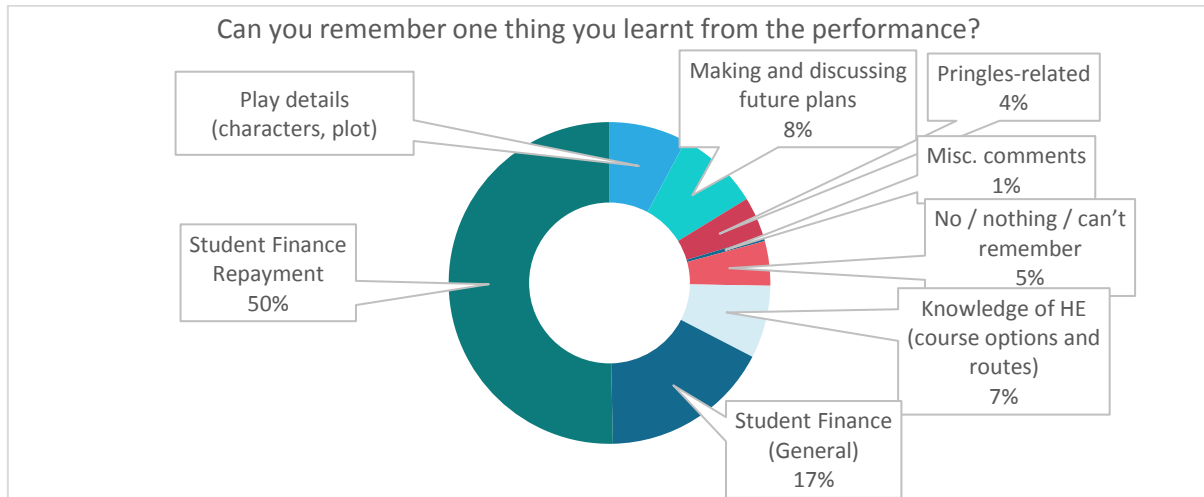


Figure 2 – One thing you have learnt from the performance

From coding and analysing individual comments, the following findings emerge:

- There is indication of impact on the barrier of Finance, with students showing increased knowledge of the loan repayment system (50% of comments), and of student finance in general (17% of comments).
- Finance comments included:
 - *'If you don't have lots of money you can still go to university'*
 - *'Student loans aren't as bad as made out to be'*
 - *'They can only take 9% after you earn £25k'*
 - *'You have 30 years to pay off your student loan, otherwise, it is eradicated'*
- 7% of comments highlighted impact on the barrier of Knowledge of HE. Students cited increased understanding of HE progression routes (including foundation degrees and Degree Apprenticeships), entry requirements, the range of courses available, and flexibility with course transfers and applying after the age of 18.
- Knowledge of HE comments included:
 - *'You don't need A levels to go to uni'*
 - *'You don't have to pick options straight away'*
 - *'That you can go to university with an apprenticeship'*
 - *'You don't have to be amazing at everything to get higher education'*
- A number of students (8%) responded with comments indicating that the performance had made them think about their future how to discuss their plans with others, indicating impact on the barrier of Socio-economic factors.
- Comments related to Socio-economic factors included:
 - *'Do what you want not what your parents want'*
 - *'Don't be afraid to discuss what to do in the future with someone'*
 - *'Don't let people hold you back from trying to go to uni'*
 - *'You need to think about what you wanna do but also you can always change it'*

In order to evaluate the impact of 'Why Would You?' on students' aspirations for HE study, the survey asked students to indicate how likely they were to apply to HE in the future, after having watched the performance (Figure 3). This data shows that the majority (59%) of students indicated that they are likely to attend Higher Education after watching the performance, suggesting that the intervention may have had a positive impact on their HE aspirations.

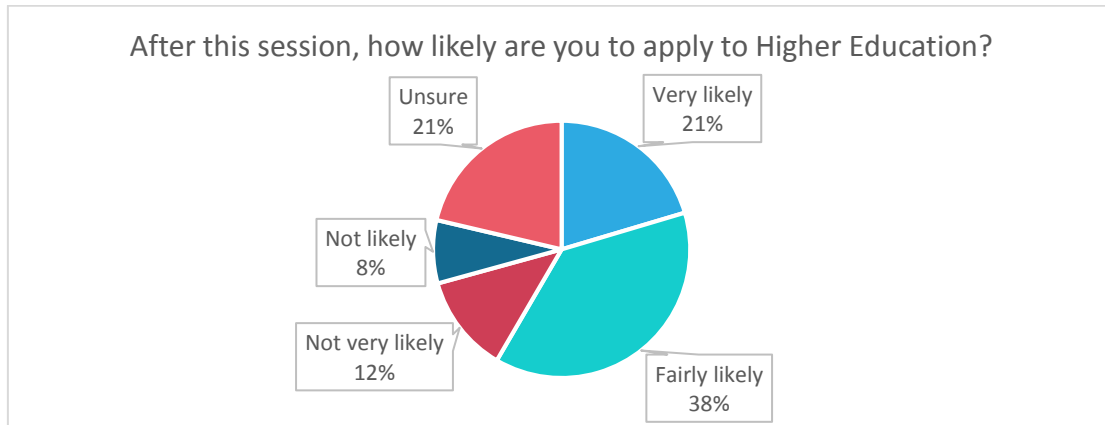


Figure 3 – Likelihood of future application to Higher Education

Respondents were also asked to justify their answer to this question, in order to understand the reasons behind students' HE intentions. Combined analysis of this qualitative data with the quantitative data in Figure 3 indicates the following:

- The majority ($\approx 55\%$) of students who stated that they were 'Fairly likely' or 'Very likely' to apply to HE justified their response by citing a specific career or subject that they had already decided on pursuing.
- Although $\approx 20\%$ of those who answered that they were 'Not very likely' or 'Not likely' to apply stated that HE was not needed for their chosen career path, a larger proportion ($\approx 25\%$) were unable to give a justified response, instead stating 'I don't want to go'. Additionally, 56% of those who indicated that they were unsure whether or not they would apply for HE stated that they did not yet know what they wanted to do in the future, and another 21% were unable to provide a reason for their answer. This data indicates the importance of continuing conversations with these young people about their career plans.
- $\approx 6\%$ of those who were unsure whether to or who were unlikely to apply to HE cited a lack of confidence in their academic ability, indicating the existence of a barrier relating to Soft Skills (including confidence and resilience) that NSSW addresses in other interventions.
- 2% of those who selected 'Very likely' and 5% of 'Fairly likely' cited increased knowledge from the 'Why Would You?' performance as having affected their response:
 - *'because It made me feel inspired to go onto further education' (Very Likely)*
 - *'I wasn't going to go but now I have learnt more I want to' (Very Likely)*
 - *'because I understand about the cost as I thought it was expensive' (Fairly Likely)*
 - *'because it gave me an open mind to higher education' (Fairly Likely)*
 - *'I want to go further with my future after the performance' (Fairly Likely)*
 - *'Now 50,000 debt seems less scary to pay' (Fairly Likely)*

Teacher Feedback (ISC Survey data)

In order to counteract self-report bias in the student surveys, we also collected data from NSSW In School Coordinators (ISCs) relating to the 'Why Would You?' intervention. In two ISC surveys conducted in Tranche 3, 8 ISCs provided feedback relating to their perception of the 'Why Would You' activity and its impact on their students (Figure 4). This triangulated data supports the findings from the student surveys in the following ways:

- 87% of respondents agreed that the majority of students had learned something about HE or career planning, indicating impact on the barrier of Knowledge of HE.
- 100% of ISCs agreed that students talked positively about their experience and that it had raised their aspirations, suggesting impact on the barrier of Socio-economic factors.



- 100% of respondents stated that they wanted to arrange the intervention in their school again.

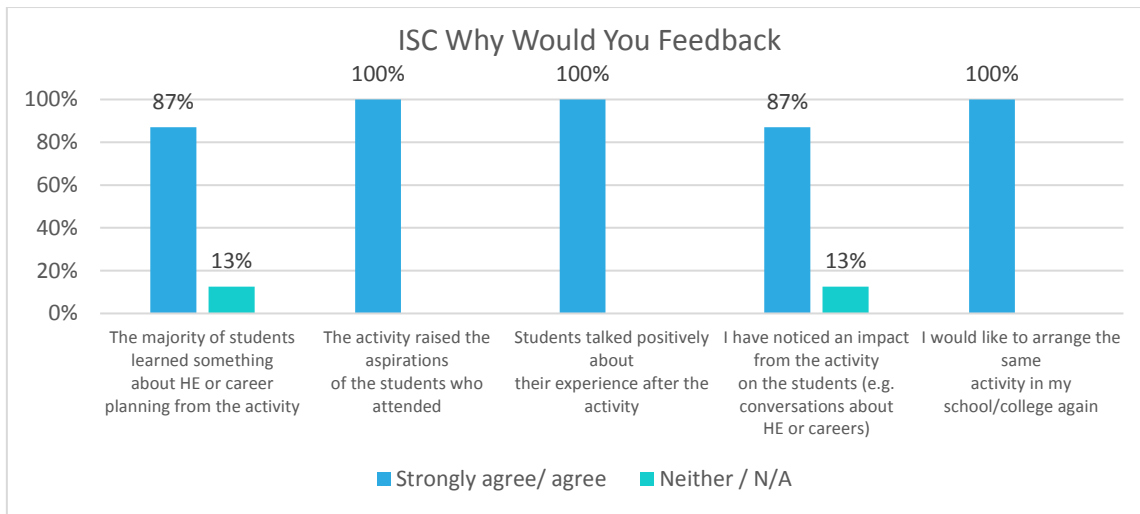


Figure 4 – ISC Survey ‘Why Would You’ feedback

Qualitative comments left by ISCs also highlighted the positive reception of the intervention:

- *‘A very good play which covered a number of scenarios that some [...] students may be encountering at home. A very good workshop that engaged all the students’*
- *‘The performance was fantastic and really hit students. They were really engaged and really enjoyed from feedback. The only improvement I would suggest would be to be given a more detailed plot. This would have allowed me to pre warn any students it may affect. But really fantastic’*
- *‘All students were engaged in the activity and we talking about University after the event’*

Conclusion and recommendations

The evaluation data relating to students’ perceptions of the impact of the ‘Why Would You?’ performance indicates that this intervention was successful in meeting its key aims and addressing three barriers to HE progression, and this is supported by the data collected in the two Tranche 3 ISC surveys analysed above. This data suggests that students increased their understanding of HE pathways (Knowledge of HE) and Finance, and showed increased confidence in making and discussing future plans with friends and family members, thus addressing the barrier of Socio-economic factors.

Overall, the data suggests very few recommendations for changes to the intervention, and those that can be made are summarised below:

- Only 45% of students felt that they could relate to one or more of the characters, and it could therefore be beneficial to review any elements of the performance which could be altered to ensure that the audience will relate to the characters and dialogue.
- One ISC requested a more detailed plot summary in advance of the performance to help prepare for any student reactions that may be triggered by some parts of the performance.
- As no formal evaluation was gathered after the workshops, it is recommended that a method for data collection is explored in order to investigate the additional impact of this element of the intervention on the attendees.
- Finally, it is recommended that all post-performance surveys include a way in which data regarding HE progression intentions pre- and post-intervention can be better disaggregated, so that it is possible to more confidently attribute any change in intentions to the ‘Why Would You?’ performance and/or workshop.