



Activity Name	Level 3 Options workshops
Run by	Next Steps South West
Date	24 Level 3 Options workshops delivered throughout Tranche 4 (Sep 2019 – Feb 2020)
Location	24 Target schools and colleges across Cornwall, Devon and Somerset
Total number of students	~2135 Target and Non-Target Students
Number of target students by postcode	~673 Target students
Schools involved in the event	Bideford College, Brixham College, Chilton Trinity School, Hayle Academy, ISCA Academy Marine Academy Plymouth, Paignton Community and Sports College, Millbay Academy, Plympton Academy, Robert Blake Science College, St Ives School, St Luke's Science and Sports College, St Peter's C of E Aided School, Teignmouth Community College, The Park Community School, Tiverton High School, UTC Plymouth, West Exe School

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Introduction

This report outlines the impact of Level 3 Options workshops organised by Next Steps South West (NSSW) staff and delivered to Year 10 and Year 11 students across the South West throughout the 2019-20 academic year, which corresponds to the Tranche 4 (T4) period for NSSW.

Level 3 Options is a workshop that covers information about post-16 options, such as Technical Qualifications, A-Levels, International Baccalaureate (IB) and Apprenticeships. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for participants to address concerns regarding possible career pathways they would like to take in the future.

Aims

These workshops aimed to increase knowledge of post-16 options and to support students in confidently assessing the pros and cons of each option. It is anticipated that increasing students' knowledge about these options is likely to have a positive impact on their confidence to make decisions about their future studies. These aims align with key barriers identified by NSSW related to lack of *Knowledge of HE* and lack of *Soft Skills* (i.e. self-confidence).

Evaluation Design and Data Collection

Evaluation of Level 3 Options workshops across the NSSW consortium in T4 consisted of post-activity evaluation surveys designed to evaluate the short-term outcomes by using the indicators illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Anticipated outcomes for Level 3 Options workshops

Barrier to HE	Short-term outcomes	Indicators
<i>Knowledge of HE</i>	Increased knowledge of HE-related Level 3 options and pathways	Students are able to identify different HE options/routes
		Students can describe the differences in Level 3, and HE routes
<i>Soft Skills</i>	Increased confidence and expertise in researching and planning future options	Participants report an increase in confidence in making Level 3 choices

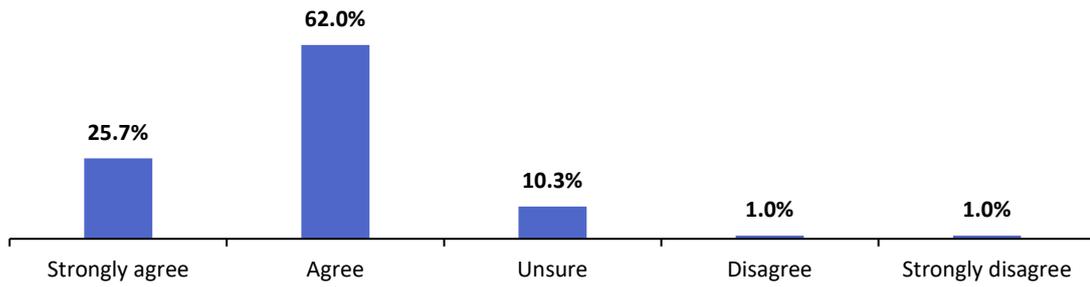
Each survey included quantitative and qualitative questions, related to the barriers mention above, to evaluate the success of these workshops in achieving the short-term outcomes. The following sections present the analysis of findings, and the impact they had on NSSW barriers to HE.

Impact Evaluation Results

The following section illustrates the findings gathered from 389 students that attended a Level 3 Options workshop and completed the post-activity survey. Figures 1a and 1b indicate that the great majority of students either strongly agreed or agreed that they understood *the different pathways available at level 3* (~88%) and *how level 3 choices shape their future career and/or study plans* (~84%). Results suggest that the information disseminated in the session is likely to have increased their knowledge of post-16 options.



(a) I understand the different pathways available at Level 3



(b) I understand how Level 3 choices shape future career and/or study plans

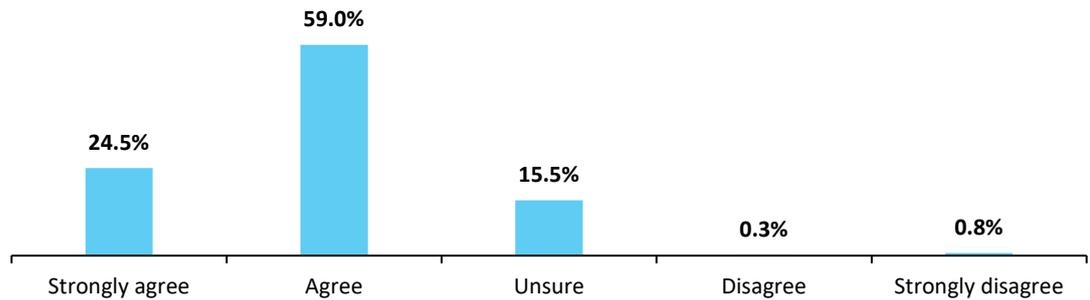


Figure 1. Increased Knowledge of Post-16 options

Furthermore, most students reported that *they were able to consider which Level 3 options would best fit with their career and/or HE plans* (70%) and more than four-fifths stated *they knew how to find out about course and study options in the future* (84%) (Figure 2).

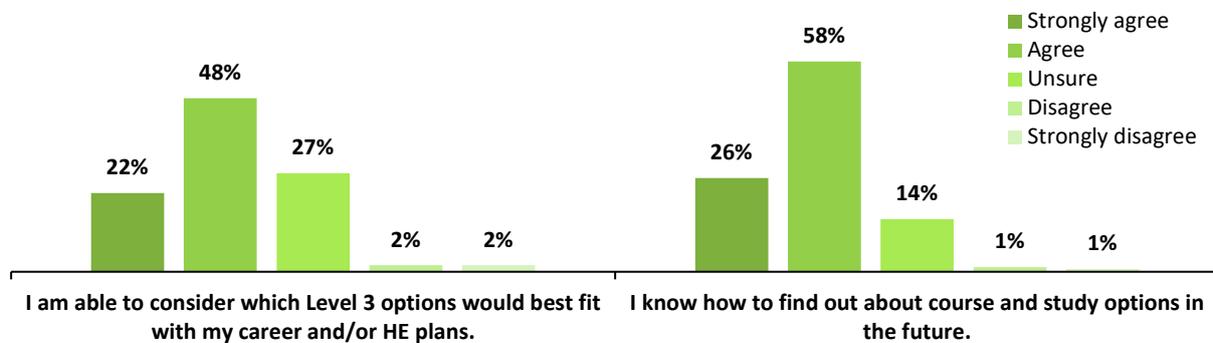


Figure 2. Increased confidence in choosing and researching Level 3 options

To corroborate the validity of these self-reported results, students were asked to assess their knowledge of Level 3 options. Figure 3 shows that 67% identified the correct option when asked to look at the option that would not lead to a specific career at Higher Education (HE) level. These findings indicate students' knowledge of post-16 options enables them to recognise the differences between routes available to them.



Students selected the choice that was NOT a Level 3 option for someone wanting to study Paramedic Science at Higher Education

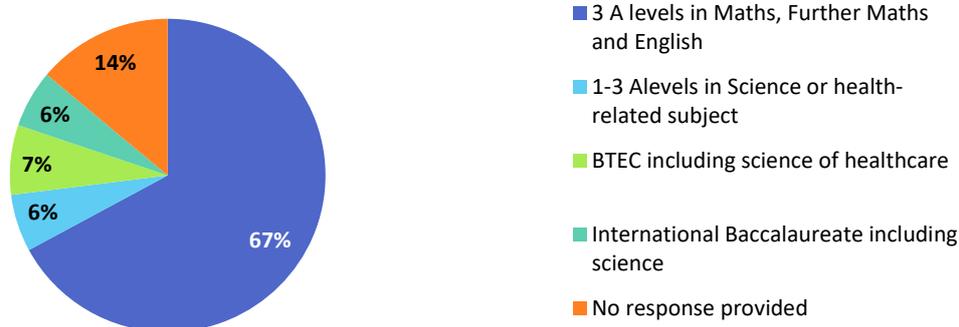


Figure 3. Choosing the correct post-16 option

In conjunction with these results, there is evidence in the qualitative responses that illustrate what attendees learnt about level 3 route/qualifications in the session (see Table 2). It should be noted, that for some of the responses, a thematic area was coded twice within an individual comment. Hence, the count of thematic responses (TR) is not always equivalent to the total number of individual responses (IR). For this question, 326 IR resulted in 467 TR.

Table 2 indicates that the most common information learnt during this session related to T Levels, Apprenticeships, Entry requirements and Different career pathways. Additionally, it is worth highlighting that some students found specific information relating to their interests, which is likely to inform their choice of post-16 options.

Table 2. Information learnt on the session

Thematic Category	TR	Quotes
Finance	2	"I have learned about bursaries"
HE Knowledge	7	"Above level 3 is considered Higher Education"
Find information	10	"How to research courses. Where to research courses"
NVQs	16	"NVQ- national vocational qualification. NVQ take 3 years"
Vocational courses	17	"How vocational courses set you up for the future"
Specific information	18	"I have learnt how I will be able to get into level 3 photography and history and the nearest place to do so."
IB	23	"I have learnt what IB means"
BTECs	25	"BTEC levels use A*-D ratings"
A Levels	49	"A-levels you have big exams at the end of your qualifications"
Different career pathways	51	"There are lots of different ways to get to the job I want. There is more than one type of apprenticeships and degrees that I can choose to do."
Entry requirements	61	"What grades we need for different courses"
Apprenticeships	65	"What apprenticeships there are. What qualifications I need if I choose the apprenticeship route"
T Levels	123	"T levels are new courses available in England. There are more hands on and include just 3 courses so far"

Attendees were asked to rate their level of confidence in planning their next steps after Year 11. Figure 3 results show that most students (63%) gained "much more" or "a bit more" confidence to plan post-16 options.



Do you feel more confident in planning your next steps after Y11?



Figure 4. Self-confidence to plan post-16 options.

Finally, students shared their next steps to pick their level 3 option (Table 3). Similar to Table 2, the number of TR (324) differs from IR (307), since some comments fall under more than one thematic category. Overall, it appears that most students will be assessing their possible options either by researching information, visiting institutions and/or comparing career pathways. There is evidence that the workshop supported students’ development of soft skills, which includes feeling confident to explore different career pathways that align with their interests.

Table 3. Next steps to choose Level 3 options

Thematic Category	TR	Quotes
Applied	3	“Already applied, but will definitely look at higher education options, and broaden my after-school options”
Talk with influencers	17	“Speak to career advisers or colleges or school”
Unsure	20	“I don’t know as I have no idea as what I want to do”
Working towards entry requirements	22	“Do more revision and work more in lessons to get the grades I need to go to college”
Decided on a career pathway	27	“I have already picked my A levels” / “Sign up for apprenticeships” / “I’m not doing L3”
Assess suitable option	46	“Research of subjects available in A levels and research universities which specialize in the courses I want to do.”
Campus visits, Taster Days, Open days/evenings	51	“Visit colleges and ask about specific courses” / “Go to taster days and open evenings”
Research for information	138	“Look online and in prospectus for different options” / “Use the NSSW website and gov.uk”

There were other thematic categories, less common, but that highlight the impact of the workshop beyond their main aims. For instance, students are thinking of engaging with parents/guardians and/or career advisors about post-16 options and work to improve their grades. However, it is also important to consider some students said that they were unsure about their future options, indicating the need for further support.



Outcomes Achieved (T4)

To monitor the success of Level 3 Options Workshops, results were measured and evaluated against targets for the short-term outcomes concerning NSSW barriers to HE that were established in the Phase Two Evaluation Framework (see Table 4).

Table 4. Level 3 Options Workshops – Outcomes

Activity Title and HE Barriers (<i>italics</i>)	Short-term Outcomes and Outcome Targets (bold)	Indicators Students report/are able to	Evidence	Target Outcome Achievement
Y10 / Y11 Level 3 Options Workshops <i>Knowledge of HE Soft Skills</i>	Increased knowledge of HE-related Level 3 options and pathways for ≥ 80% students	Identify different HE options / routes	88% reported they understand the different pathways available at level 3 84% stated they understand how Level 3 choices shape future and/or study plans Target 80%: T4 achievement over 80%	Achieved
		Describe the differences in Level 3 and HE routes	67% correctly identified the Level 3 options needed to study a specific subject at HE level Target 80%: T4 achievement over 65%	Not Achieved
	Increased confidence and expertise in researching and planning future options for ≥ 50% students	Increase in confidence in making Level 3 choices	69% said they are able to consider which Level 3 options would best fit with their career and/or HE plans 84% stated they know how to find out about course and study options in the future 60% said they are much more confident or a bit more confident to plan their next steps after Y11 Target 50%: T4 achievement 60% and over	Achieved

The table above illustrates that two out of the three targets were met or exceeded. Furthermore, although the target established for the second outcome was not achieved, results were still positive, since over 50% of students correctly identified the Level 3 options needed to study a specific subject at HE Level.

Conclusion and recommendations

In general, the evaluation gathered at these sessions highlights evidence of a positive impact of the Level 3 Options workshop on the students who attended. The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data from workshops delivered throughout T4 indicates the workshop succeeded in increasing students’ knowledge of post-16 options and supported the development of the confidence needed to research and contrast their options. Furthermore, some comments suggest attendees are likely to request support from key influencers to decide their next steps, and others are aiming to achieve the requirements needed to pursue the career their interested in. These findings indicate that the workshop helped students to start overcoming key barriers to progression to HE identified by NSSW, namely: lack of *Knowledge of HE*, lack of *Soft Skills*, negative opinions of *Influencers* and *Socioeconomic factors*.



There are still some aspects of the workshop that could be improved to increase students' knowledge and confidence in choosing Level 3 options. For example, including more examples to illustrate the links between Level 3 options and HE degrees. This could be achieved through sustained engagement in the NSSW progressive framework of activities that reiterate the information disseminated in this workshop.

Overall, and when comparing results gathered in T4 and T3 for this workshop, it can be said that the Level 3 Options workshop continued to achieve positive outcomes for the clear majority of its participants.



Y10-Y11 Level 3 Options workshops 2019-2020

Level 3 Options is a workshop that covers information about **post-16 options, such as Technical Qualifications, A Levels, International Baccalaureate (IB) and Apprenticeships**, it provides an opportunity for participants to address concerns regarding possible career pathways they would like to take in the future and motivation to work towards career goals.

Engagement

No. of students	2135
No. of schools	24
No. of survey responses	389



88% reported they understand the different pathways available at level 3

'I have learnt how I will be able to get into **Level 3 Photography and History** and the **nearest place** to do so!'

My next steps are...
'Do more revision and work more in lessons to get the grades I need to go to college'



60% said they are much more confident or a bit more confident to plan their next steps after Y11

For these students, motivation levels, gaps in HE knowledge and lack of soft skills have been addressed and are now less likely to be barriers to HE progression.