

A rapid evaluation of Hampshire and Isle of Wight 350+ NHS Careers Programme

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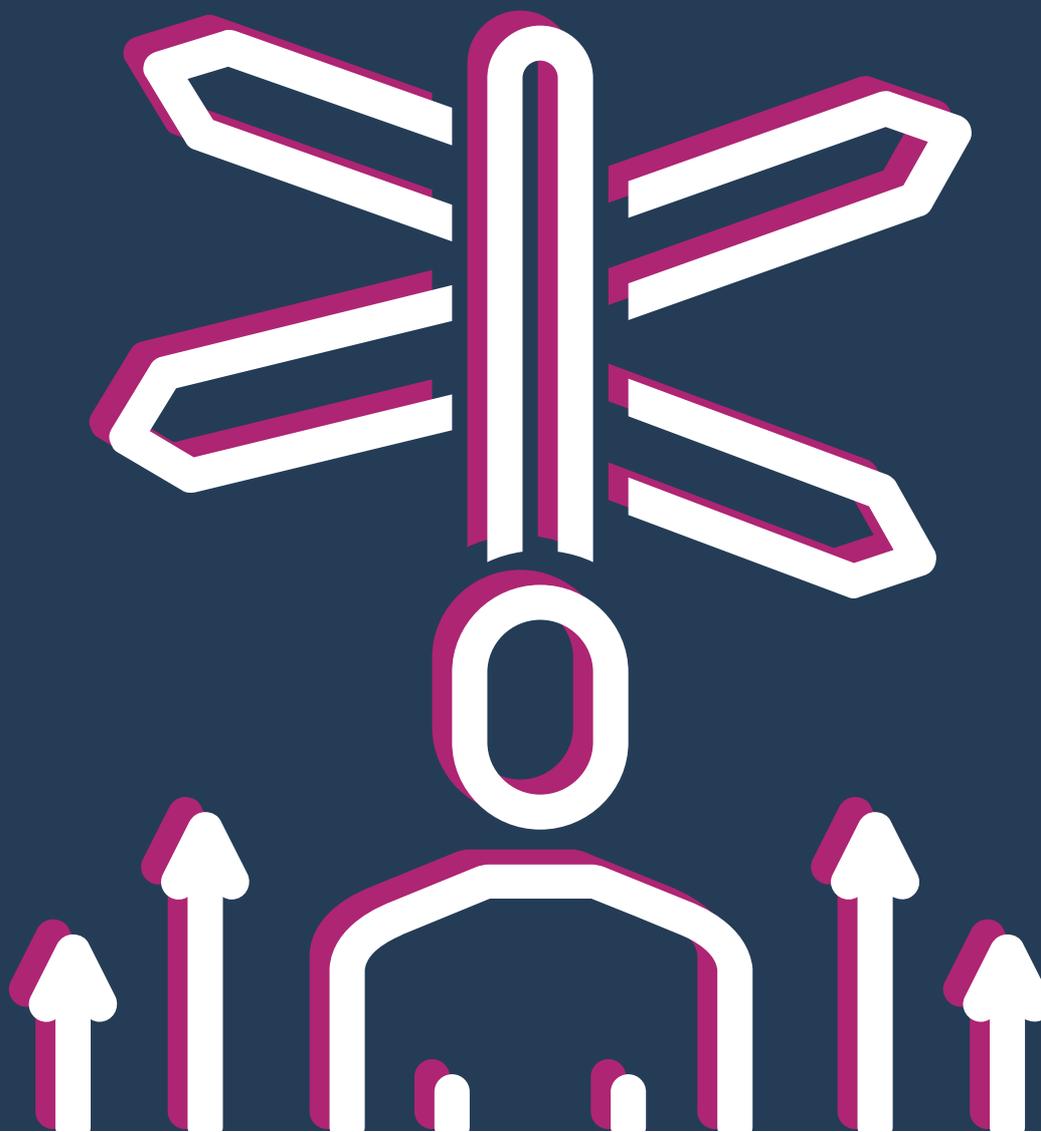
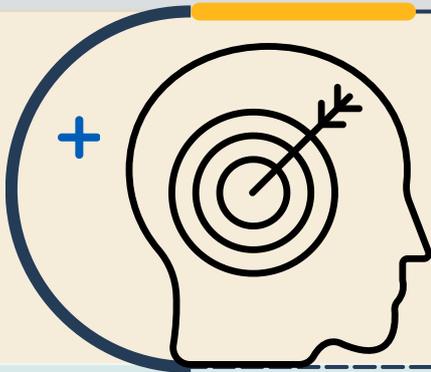




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A RAPID EVALUATION OF THE 350+ NHS CAREERS PROGRAMME



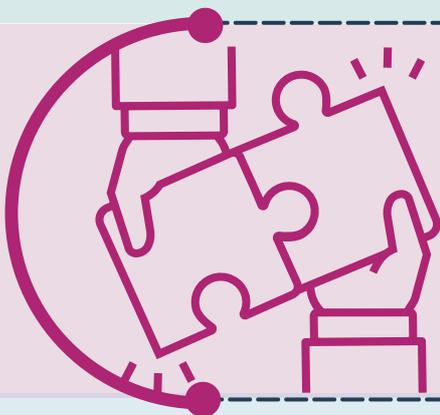
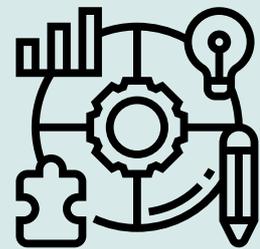
AIMS

To evaluate the integration/collaboration between organisations to form a workforce attraction and development programme for NHS careers.

To understand and learn from areas of excellence within the programme that can translate to other ICS/ICB areas.

METHODS

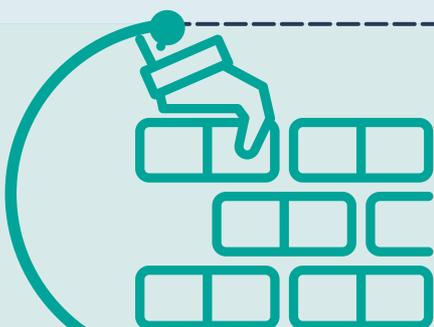
We completed a rapid qualitative appraisal, a form of rapid evaluation that provides a snapshot of a particular context. We undertook 2 observation/ethnography sessions and completed 17 interviews. We talked to people across school, college, NHS, and local enterprise organisations.



MAIN FINDINGS

Collaborative synergy: uniting for progress and expanding opportunities. The programme established a cohesive network for career development and outreach while pioneering innovative initiatives and fostering a comprehensive understanding of diverse NHS roles.

Empowering young people: challenging perceptions and shaping new professional and personal narratives. The programme consistently nurtures inclusivity, offering enriching experiences and there is an increased awareness that the NHS must take steps to better understand the needs of the future workforce.



Building a foundation: strengthening collaboration and cultivating lasting impact. A call for ongoing support and expansion, emphasising the need for continued professional development, early engagement initiatives, and innovative virtual work experience programmes to shape an inclusive and informed healthcare workforce of the future.

About 350+

350+ NHS Careers is an education outreach programme inspiring the workforce of the future across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The outreach team visits education settings to deliver sessions encouraging young people to recognise a career for themselves in the NHS, regardless of their background or whether they will go to university. In these sessions the team bust myths about what an NHS career looks like. They bring NHS colleagues into the classroom to talk to students about their careers. Outreach sessions link areas of curriculum to NHS best practice.



The outreach team of qualified teachers provides advice on qualification choices and the many routes in to the NHS. The team interacted with over 40,000 students in the 2022/2023 academic year.



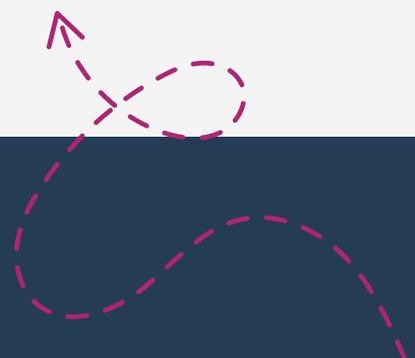
Background

The NHS faces an ever-increasing demand for healthcare services, driven by an ageing population, workforce supply challenges, and the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (NHS England, 2022). To meet this demand the NHS requires a sustainable and skilled workforce. The NHS People Plan (NHS England, 2020) outlines strategies and initiatives to attract, train and retain a diverse and capable workforce. It emphasises the importance of engaging with young people and school leavers, harnessing enthusiasm, and providing them with opportunities to shape the future of healthcare. In response to the growing needs within the NHS workforce, Hampshire and Isle of Wight (HIOW) Integrated Care Service (ICS) were awarded funding to develop an NHS Careers Programme to highlight the wider range of career pathways available within the NHS, and to raise awareness among young people that there are more than 350 different clinical and non-clinical job roles.

The 350+ NHS Careers Programme

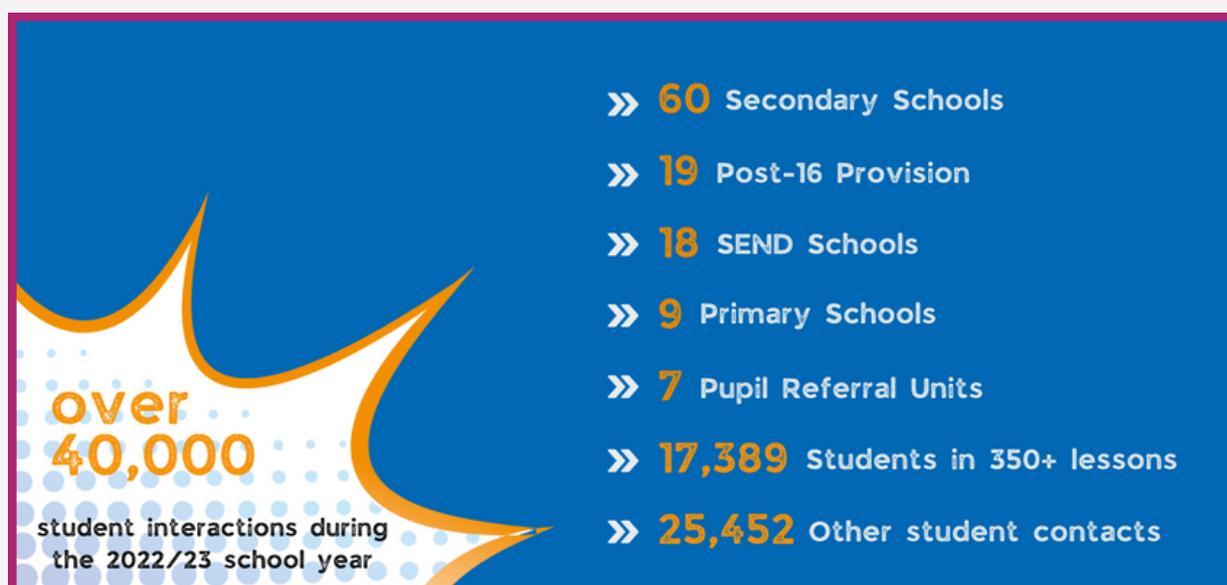
Launched in September 2021 and led by the HIOW ICS Education Outreach Team hosted by Solent NHS Trust, the HIOW 350+ NHS Careers Programme works in partnership with local councils, local Enterprise Partnerships, mainstream schools, SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) schools, Pupil Referral Units, colleges, universities, and NHS Trusts across HIOW to promote and raise the profile of the NHS as a future employer. In addition to this, the 350+ Programme model provides educational sessions through which schools and colleges can secure evidence of progression against the Gatsby Benchmarks; contributing to comprehensive and effective careers guidance which promotes the development of well-informed young people who are prepared for the world of work (Department for Education, 2023). The HIOW 350+ NHS Careers Programme sessions include:

- Myth Buster and Myth Buster (SEND suitable) session: Discussing the wide variety of clinical roles and non-clinical roles within the NHS, highlighting NHS core values.
- NHS Apprenticeships session: Exploring and linking together the wide range of Apprenticeships available across both clinical and non-clinical roles within the HIOW NHS ICS.
- GCSE subject session: Linking curriculum skills and knowledge directly to a role within the NHS. Curriculum related task.



- GCSE subject practical session: Linking curriculum skills and knowledge directly to a role within the NHS using on-site facilities. Practical curriculum related task.
- First Aid: In partnership with University and NHS Trust paramedics and paramedicine students: Offering First Aid training that meets the statutory guidance within the Relationships and Sex Education curriculum.
- NHS Day: Delivering a bespoke day for schools and facilitating NHS career-specific sessions for students to carousel across the school day. Using school timings and facilities and upscale the number of 350+ and NHS colleagues participating in the day.

The programme is reaching a considerable number of students in HIOW education settings, with more than 40,000 interactions during the 2022/23 school year. Most students (87%) who have interacted with the programme would now consider a role in the NHS, while more than 87% of the students have reported that they have gained new knowledge as a result of engaging with sessions, and that they would recommend 350+ sessions to their peers.



Gaining a reputation as a trailblazer in the field of careers development, the 350+ Programme was awarded 'Best Careers Programme – Pre-16 Education' and 'Innovative Employer Engagement Activity' at the Career Development Institute's 2023 Annual Showcase event. Additionally, the 350+ Programme Outreach Lead received recognition at the Enterprise M3 Careers Hub 2023 Awards, winning 'Excellent Careers Speaker'.

About this rapid evaluation

This rapid evaluation comprised a central evaluation that aimed to explore the unified approach of a workforce development and attraction programme.

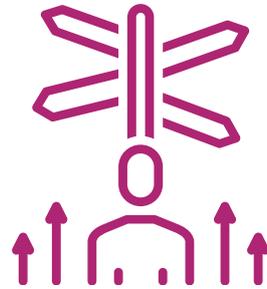
The rapid evaluation took place between March and July 2023. A core evaluation project team of eight people were involved in both data collection and data analysis. We used training and buddy support systems to maximise the potential of building capacity and capability in research and evaluation methods. The team undertook two observation sessions at a secondary school (Myth Buster and First Aid) and conducted a total of 17 interviews engaging with staff and professionals from school, college, NHS, and local enterprise organisations to gather insights on the 350+ NHS Careers Programme. Interviews lasted between 15 and 55 minutes and were recorded and transcribed, or selectively transcribed, based on the rapid evaluation aims. Interviews were based on quality improvement (continuous and methodical improvement) and appreciative inquiry (looking at what works well and why, learning from excellence).

Rapid evaluation methods provide a basis for identifying operational challenges and generating a platform for action (Vindrola-Padros 2021). Based on intensive and team-based data collection, rapid evaluation methods gain in-depth data from multiple sources over a short and intense data collection period. Data is analysed iteratively, informing subsequent cycles of data collection and emerging findings. The timeliness of rapid methods lend themselves to the fast-paced context of the NHS, enabling evidence for both policy and applied intervention. There is also the wider value of the team-based and participant focus of the methods by increasing capacity and capability and centring value on the participant voice. Since 2020, Solent NHS Trust's Academy of Research and Improvement, under the mentorship and guidance of University College London (UCL) Rapid Research, Evaluation and Appraisal Lab, has established an Evaluation Hub providing both internal and external expertise, training, and delivery of rapid evaluation methods in health and community settings.

A series of three case studies are planned and will showcase areas of excellence within the 350+ NHS Careers Programme to create regional and national shared learning. The case studies will be co-produced with students as peer researchers and evaluators and will focus on the following areas. These will be published in a 2024 report:

1

AHP (Allied Health Professionals)
Interactive Careers Day



2

Operation Department Practitioner
(OPD) Hybrid Work Experience Day



3

The student experience

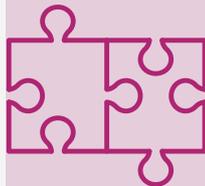


Key themes

The central evaluation explored two areas of the 350+ Careers Programme: partnership and collaboration, and workforce development and attraction. Our findings in these areas were underpinned by three key themes:

Collaborative synergy

uniting for progress and expanding opportunities



Empowering futures

growth through challenging perceptions and shaping new personal and professional narratives



Building a foundation

strengthening collaboration and cultivating lasting impact



Collaborative synergy: uniting for progress and expanding opportunities

Many of the participants reported constructive collaboration through their involvement in the 350+ NHS Careers Programme. Initially, NHS Trusts had concerns about potential confusion and duplication in the provision of career development and outreach activities to schools and colleges. However, these concerns were soon dismissed as participants found that engagement with the 350+ Programme not only established a wider careers support and outreach network, but also facilitated the formation of strong partnerships, overcoming previous challenges faced by individual Trusts and organisations. Collaboration generated space for sharing expertise and best practice as well as a more co-ordinated approach to careers and education outreach activities amongst NHS Trusts, education providers and the 350+ Programme team.

“I had tried to reach out to other organisations to find who was their work experience lead and it's like a needle in a haystack ... and [350+] had managed to break all that down and pull us all together.”

“It's been nice to have someone that's got that advanced specialism and knowledge to answer questions specifically important for this demographic [young people] ... It was great to see how the schools responded, and it built another level to our relationship.”

“There's more involvement where we can share best practice and just support each other. We are quite good in the sense that if I'm not able to attend an event, I'll ask the 350+ team if they can attend and vice versa.”

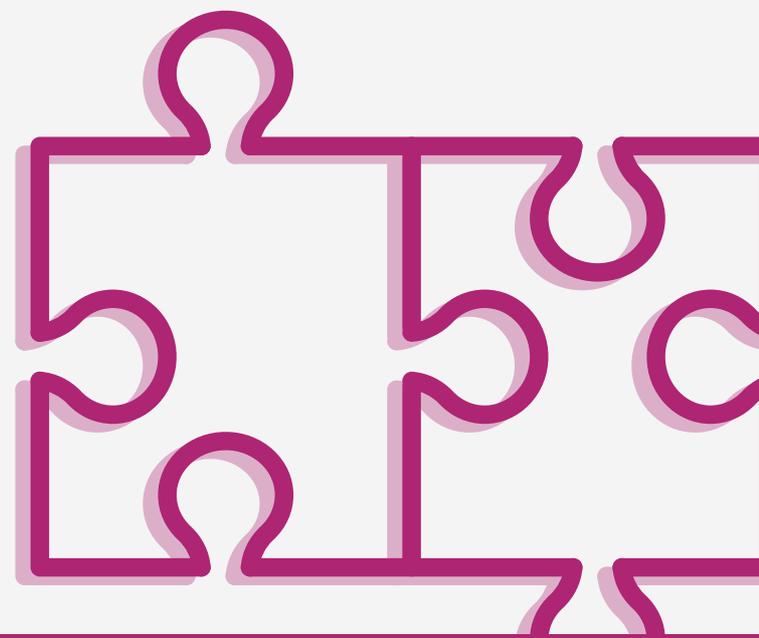
“We have genuinely managed to work alongside the other careers leads or outreach teams creating a better offer for the students ... We're not having three of us turn up at one event ... which frees the others up to go to something else, and we've co-ordinated much better use of NHS staff time.”

One of the primary achievements of the collaborative effort is the ability to make progress on multiple fronts in a cohesive manner by advancing complementary agendas that align seamlessly with the 350+ NHS Careers Programme. For example, university staff promoting post-secondary education, NHS career development staff engaging with a broader demographic and the effective sharing of key Public Health messages during programme activities.

“[350+ offers] a gateway, to allow me to provide to youngsters what I didn't have the opportunity to experience while at school. Someone from the University, coming in to talk to me about what it's like to study at university and what opportunities are available.”

“Anyone could have access to our staff to have a conversation about a career that they're interested in regardless of what your background is. So from our perspective, we wouldn't have even explored that without 350+ being there to facilitate those conversations.”

“We found that there was this really good opportunity for us to have our main focus as careers, but at the same time, increase the uptake of immunisations. So, we developed a programme that we call 'horrid hands,' that is based around germ spreading.”



An alliance to advance work experience opportunities

People employed in school and college settings reported that the Covid-19 pandemic led to a significant decrease in external organisations contributing to and facilitating careers support, work experience and placement opportunities for young people. It was highlighted that the 350+ NHS Careers Programme has taken steps to fill the void in new and innovative ways, tailoring sessions and activities to meet curricular needs as well as those of the student body. Collaborating with NHS providers, colleges, and universities, the 350+ Programme has developed unique and inclusive work experience opportunities using a hybrid of virtual and face-to-face approaches.

A significant accomplishment of the 350+ NHS Careers Programme has been the creation of a mock surgical theatre, known as 'The Learning Hub' at HSDC Alton College Campus. Led by the 350+ Programme team, the college and NHS colleagues sourced the space and equipment required to set up a mock operating theatre. The purpose of the hub is to convey a complete patient journey, spanning from the pre-operative phase to post-operative recovery. It serves as a central platform, effectively encompassing and highlighting the diverse range of NHS clinical roles involved in the provision of surgical care to the post-surgery care of the patient. It also serves as a conduit from which students can begin to consider the participation of non-clinical NHS roles which may not be directly involved in the clinical aspects of care, yet still play an integral role in contributing to the overall patient experience.

“Work experience has a lot of challenges ... There is limited access to areas, for example, pathology ... We restrict it to three days to give as many people the opportunity that we can ... That's why the virtual sessions are really beneficial because while they might take a lot of time to set up, big groups of people access the experience. It also gives individuals the opportunity to hear other opinions, ask questions they might not have thought about.”

“I had this idea that I'd love to create an operating theatre because of all of the NHS spaces, you're not even awake when you're in there ... It embodied so many of the jobs, you know, without a cleaner, no one's going in here, without the architects, it's the wrong size. The plumbers have come in, the electricians have been, the radiographers are in there ... it just encapsulates all of these amazing roles, and we could talk about patient journey.”

Empowering young people: challenging perceptions and shaping new professional and personal narratives

The 350+ Programme team have exhibited a strong commitment to inclusivity by ensuring that programme sessions and activities are accessible to all interested students. This determination is fuelled by a programme objective to raise awareness of the breadth of roles and opportunities within the NHS. Students are introduced to a diverse array of clinical roles that have the potential to align with their existing interests or future goals. Alongside this, there is a concentrated effort to dispel the misconception that the NHS is solely a workplace for those wanting to provide direct health care to patients, for example doctors and nurses. Supported by a range of clinical and non-clinical professionals the 350+ NHS Careers Programme is presenting younger people with inspiring glimpses into potential future job roles and career paths.



"I think what really works well is the general reach that we're getting across Hampshire ... we work really closely together. We're able to put on these bespoke programmes for particular schools and colleges and I think that works really well. I think that's great just being able to call upon the support of all the different professions we've got and it doesn't seem like you're doing it on your own."



"Some schools will say, we'll pick some students to come to hear your session. And it's like no, bring everyone, bring them all. This is for everyone. It's not just for those that have maybe expressed an interest in health careers. Get them all in. This is for everyone to hear this message."



"They had 30 different professionals from different roles in the NHS, with about 250 school kids on site, all of our T level students. We did a Round Robin activity almost like speed dating with the different professionals to find out about their different careers and how you could get into those roles."



"I told them all about being an art therapist and they said they didn't know that. But they just assumed that the NHS is not for me because I like art. It's such a good example because not many people have heard of it and it's moments like that where you're just changing people's perception."

Fostering a positive professional identity

It was highlighted that NHS leaders sometimes misunderstand what is important to younger people who are considering their career options, which can present as a barrier to recruitment into the NHS workforce. One aspect that NHS leaders may be overlooking is the changing priorities and values of younger generations who want to prioritise work-life balance, flexibility, workplace culture and opportunities for innovation. By understanding and addressing what is important to younger people, the 350+ Programme is enhancing the appeal of the NHS as a career option in order to effectively recruit the next generation of clinical and non-clinical professionals. Through the 350+ NHS Careers Programme, young people have had the opportunity to interact with role models who advocate for the NHS. Participants felt that it was crucial to create opportunities where students from all backgrounds could identify with the NHS advocates and the job roles being showcased.

“I just hear how people talk and it's like we still insist on putting pension in any job advert and while we all know it's a great pension, it doesn't have the same meaning to a 16 year old, it's not a carrot ... And actually where the NHS agenda is talking about things like flexible working and stuff, that's absolutely what they're going to be looking for, a balance of work and life.”

“The 350+ Programme allowed us to try to start building those bridges, bringing people into school who looked and sounded like the people we were talking to, and people could then build that understanding of what that career was actually like because they're talking to people who were more like them, who understood what they were after.”

“To ensure that we had a good mixed set bringing [university and apprenticeship] students in was really helpful ... Because they're younger, they interacted much better. The 11-year-olds responded much better to the 18-year-olds than they did to the 'mother figures' that were in the room.”



Reframing the narrative surrounding employment within the NHS has been an ongoing focus of the 350+ Programme. Extensive efforts have been made to foster the inclusion of young individuals from SEND schools and to challenge the notion among many young people that a university degree is a prerequisite for working in the NHS. The 350+ Programme sought to highlight to young people, and school and college staff, that individuals can embark on a fulfilling career within the NHS without the need for a traditional university education. Young people have been supported in group sessions and on an individual basis to help them understand and maximise the range of NHS job roles and entry routes that are available to them.



"I ask [SEND schools] can I talk to students ... There's a real untapped workforce there because these students have got so many skills. You know, for example, a student with autism who likes predictability and routine, you put them in a lab where they're testing, you know, it's very structured, a routine ... They will be the best worker in that lab. So that's really exciting that there's this whole workforce out there that stats show don't often end up in employment."



"We have a whole session on who's most important. We've got from the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) down to the cleaner. The kids start with them in a pyramid of CEO as most important and a cleaner and the other nine NHS roles in between, and then by the end of the session, they realised actually they [NHS job roles] need to sit in a line because they're all important and actually they've rated them in terms of wage instead of their importance to the NHS."



"I think one of the key things for students, especially in the deprived areas, is widening participation. They feel they cannot go to university; they cannot run up that debt. They need to be earning, contributing to the household. And a degree apprenticeship, that's their way to do what they want and be able to be at home and support the family ... They are [thinking] 'Oh my God, this is the way, the route, the yellow brick road into the job I've always wanted'."



"Schools are so focused on university and things like that, and this is so good at giving those individuals, that either don't want to go to university or can't go to university for whatever reason, the insight into the other opportunities that are out there for them, and I think that's what the NHS needs to do, we need to focus more on that."

Building social skills

The 350+ NHS Careers Programme not only helps young people explore their career interests but also offers valuable opportunities for social skills development as they learn how to initiate conversations, build relationships, and develop their communication skills. Interacting with 350+ NHS Careers Programme staff and engaging with NHS professionals during programme sessions and activities, helps young people to connect with adults who are not a part of their existing home or school network.



"Students are not used to talking to adults other than members of their family. And actually, they haven't had many visitors going to them because of COVID. So, these students, they are not used to talking to adults who they don't know, and so they're very wary, very unsure about approaching you."



"That's massive for a kid to not just head straight out to break and they've taken some time, they see you at another event and they go 'Hi guys do you remember you came to our school?' and we're like, yeah, how are you? It does make a difference."

Building a foundation: strengthening collaboration and cultivating lasting impact

There is a strong consensus for the 350+ NHS Careers Programme to continue in the current highly effective format. It has gained widespread support and endorsement from collaborating schools, colleges, universities and NHS Trusts. It is clear that the enthusiasm and commitment of the 350+ Education Outreach Team is a driver of its success. The professional teaching background of key team members not only embodies the 350+ Programme principle that anyone can make a difference in the NHS and that it's not all about the well-known clinical roles, but it also provides the outreach team with insight into the challenges faced by those working to deliver a school and college education. This insight enables the 350+ Programme team to thoughtfully plan and consider sessions and activities that educational settings can more effectively engage with.

“I think that the staff that I've engaged with [during] the project have been amazing. They've been really open to ideas, creative. I've really enjoyed working with the project.”

“So these guys really love talking about jobs at the NHS, they're so enthusiastic. You see young kids get on board with that, you see them going away and talking to their friends about it. And I'm like, it's mad how they can generate those conversations. I think it's inspirational.”

“I understood education, I understood career pathways and what children experience in secondary school, then across college ... Now I'm able to get what we need as the NHS into schools, be it through curriculum or through PSHE [Personal, Social, Health and Economic] lessons, or linking it up to IT GCSE or catering GCSE or Biology GCSE and actually making it relevant so that teachers are on board with supporting students into thinking about their careers and aspirations for the future.”

The 350+ NHS Careers Programme is viewed as a foundation upon which further developments can be built. There is a collective belief that there is untapped potential for collaboration in terms of work experience opportunities, specifically through the implementation of innovative hybrid and virtual approaches.

This includes the establishment of additional hubs across colleges in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Each hub will focus on a different aspect of NHS care to meet the growing appetite to expand the reach and breadth of bespoke sessions and activities.



"We're going to put together a virtual work experience programme. So, for instance, during the summer holidays, children that are interested in working for the NHS have got a series of work experience areas that they can do in their own time, but we can monitor who's logging on who's doing what, what school they're from, that kind of thing."



"There's a sixth form college who are going to give us a hub space that's really different. It's got four kind of sections to it. So we're going to create space for each of the four nursing types ... So one for learning disability, one adult nursing, one for paediatrics, and one for mental health. Each highlighting the different areas."

A focus on CPD and early outreach

With a view to creating a lasting and positive impact there is enthusiasm for the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) for school and college staff, particularly careers leads and those with responsibility for careers guidance, to enhance their understanding of NHS careers and pathways to employment. While recognising that promoting clinical NHS roles and careers is important to attract a patient-facing workforce, there was also emphasis that school and college careers staff should consider the wider career opportunities. By broadening their perspective, educators can better support and guide students towards diverse career paths within the NHS. In addition, there is an eagerness to further engage with primary school settings initiating contact with students at a younger age to expand their horizons and encourage them to explore the concept of working in the NHS. Engaging younger people in 350+ sessions and activities can create a mutually beneficial outcome. By considering their potential career interests and goals, young students can make well-informed decisions when selecting GCSE subjects. Additionally, through this engagement students may realise the potential for career opportunities within the NHS that align with their personal learning interests.



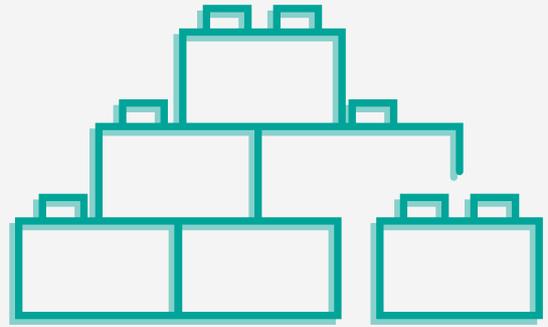
"Going forward it would be good to see the 350+ Programme including some more material for the teachers at the colleges, sort of like an 'educate the educator', as they sometimes also have the idea that the NHS is just doctors and nurses and therefore may not encourage their students to come along to events."



"There was a year 8 myth busting assembly which was really good, that was with one of my new schools with only year 7 and year 8 so it was an ideal opportunity to start getting employers in and highlight careers at a young age."



“By year 10, those decisions have been made and we've kind of missed the boat, not completely, but there's an element they've already quite decided. So, I think we need to go younger. Let's give them options.”



The 350+ NHS Careers Programme has the potential to create a lasting impact that stretches beyond the existing NHS workforce development and attraction priorities. Young people are attending and engaging with education outreach sessions that teach important skills such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of an automated external defibrillator, which can contribute to the development of their understanding of civic and social responsibilities.

Additionally, students are attending 350+ Programme sessions and activities which promote social inclusion and widening participation by actively seeking to attract a diverse workforce. This may help young people not only to recognise value within themselves, but also to contribute to the development of inclusive and culturally competent young adults. In an increasingly interconnected world, being able to understand, respect and appreciate different beliefs, values and capabilities is essential for effective healthcare services.

350+ Key Learning

Sharing expertise

Sharing expertise, best practices, and resources within a collaborative framework not only enhances the quality of support provided to children and young people but also benefits the organisations participating in the 350+ NHS Careers programme

Innovative initiatives

Innovative initiatives, like the mock surgical theatre, helps students explore diverse roles within the NHS, fostering a deeper understanding of potential career paths

Targeted outreach

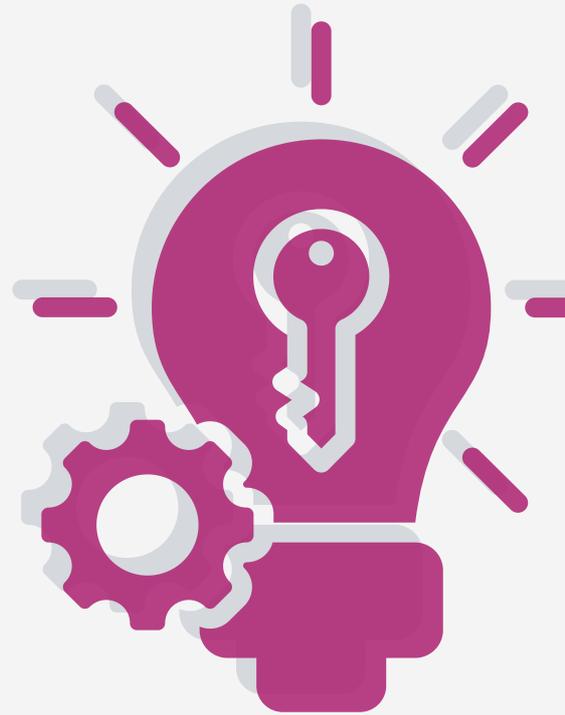
Targeted outreach efforts and engaging with diverse professionals can dispel misconceptions about career options within the NHS and broaden students' horizons showcasing pathways that do not necessarily require traditional university education

Taking steps

Taking steps to understand and address the changing priorities of younger generations, such as work-life balance and flexibility, can enhance the appeal of the NHS as a career option

Continuing professional development (CPD)

Providing continuing professional development (CPD) for educators and career advisors to keep them updated about pathways into diverse NHS career roles, and initiating outreach efforts at an early age, preferably before students make critical educational choices, will ensure that they are aware of diverse career options and can make informed decisions about their academic paths





Future Directions

The ongoing success of the 350+ NHS Careers Programme demonstrates the importance of actively engaging with schools, colleges, universities, NHS Trusts, and local partners to attract younger and diverse individuals into NHS job roles. Sustainable long-term funding would ensure longevity of the current effective programme and its continuous improvement through the development of novel and innovative initiatives which include methods to measure long-term impact on NHS workforce recruitment.

References and acknowledgements

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Thank you to the rapid evaluation project team; Katie Cook, Rebecca Cowan, Lizzie Fofana, Becky Hocknell, Natalie Parker, Anna Peachey, Georgina Trimlett-Glover, Ann Williams.

When reporting our findings, we have removed filler words and repeated words to enhance the clarity of the quotes.