



Youth Engagement project at Drop the Mask Productions CIC

February to May 2023

A partnership project lead by Drop the Mask Productions CIC, with input from Compassionate Cuppa CIC and Owl XL CIC.

Funding was granted to support young people to improve life skills through gaining confidence in planning, producing and delivering projects in Media and IT, enabling them to have more choice for employment within Southampton.

One week work experience placements were offered at Drop the Mask Productions CIC. There was project work for the students to work on, but they also had the freedom to explore their own areas of interest. Compassionate Cuppa CIC provided wellbeing support for Drop The Mask Productions CIC staff, as well as the students where needed. Owl XL CIC created the social outcome monitoring system and carried out the social impact analysis.

Students taking part in the work experience opportunities offered were in their final year at Eastleigh College. Those offered work experience were keen to experience the supportive working environment offered at Drop the Mask Productions CIC, as most are either disadvantaged or vulnerable.

15 students completed their work experience placement, 2 attending each week over 8 weeks (1 student did not complete the week due to circumstances outside of Drop the Mask Productions CIC control). At the start of their week they were asked to score their confidence in their core personal abilities on a range of 1-10 within 6 holistic areas of personal development:-

Social	Working relationships
	Engaging with others
	Respecting without judgement
Communication	Writing
	Careful listening
	Explaining ideas
Intellect	Tackle challenges
	Evaluating
	Improving
Emotion	Patient
	Persistent
	Emotional wellbeing
Wellbeing	Self-confidence
	Physical wellbeing
	Social wellbeing
Aspiration	Motivation
	Commitment
	Realising full potential

At the end of the week they re-scored their abilities and gained a record of personal progression within the week. They were also asked for free text feedback to give them the opportunity to express their experience in their own words.

SOCIAL OUTCOMES

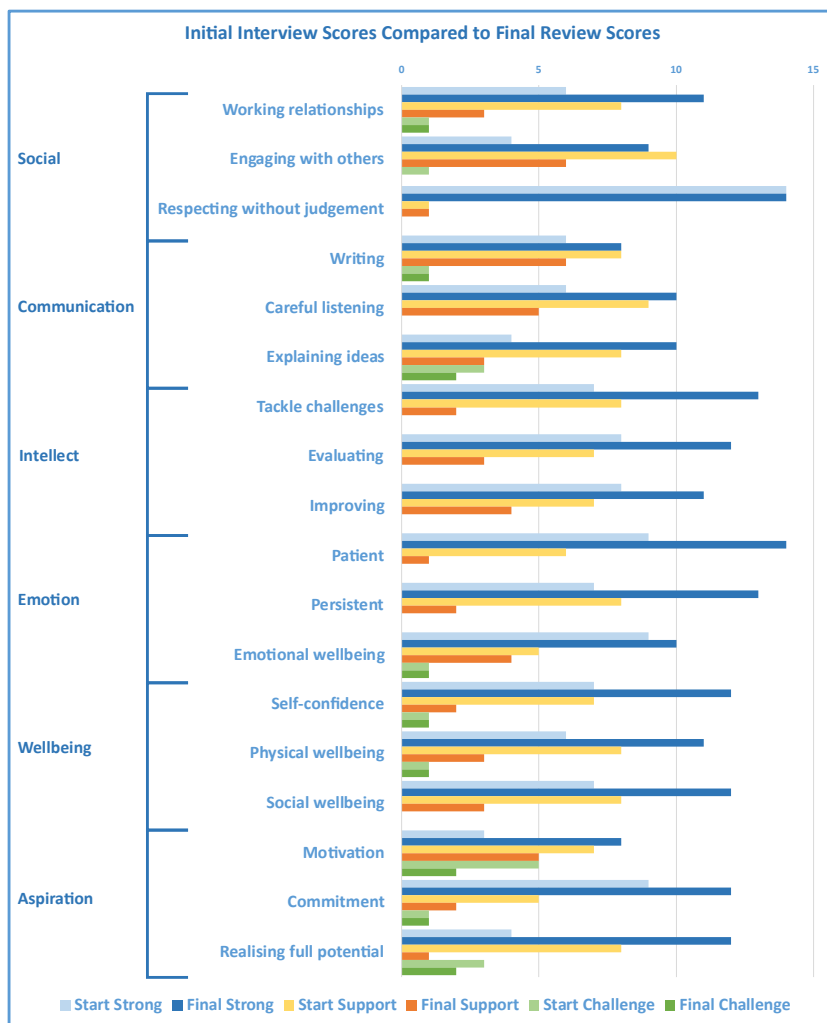
The score range was from 1-10, which for analysis were grouped into:-

- 8-10 Strong abilities
- 5-7 Some Support needed
- 1-4 Abilities in which they were more Challenged

A baseline gained from the initial interview scores showed:

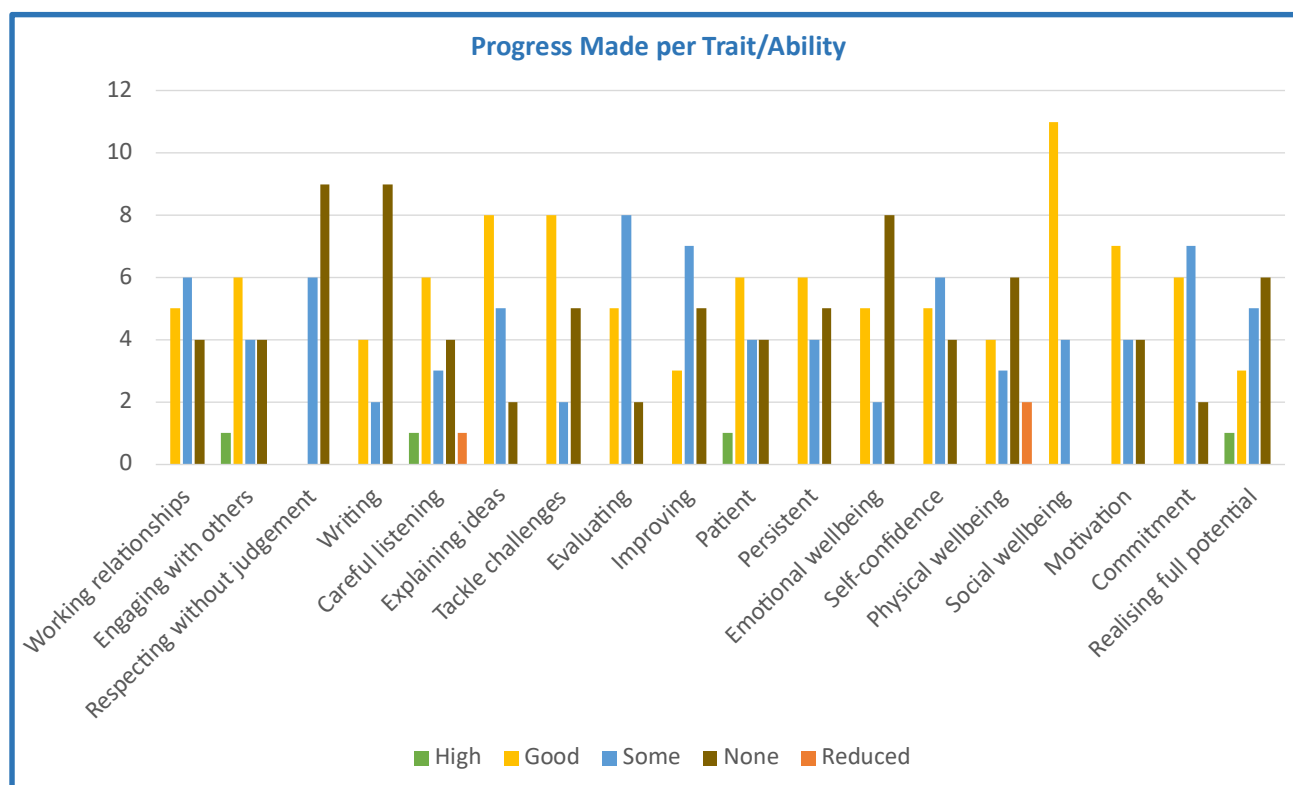
- The Intellect area was generally seen as where their strengths lay.
- Social and Emotion areas had more of a mix of strengths and support needs.
- Communication and Wellbeing majorities were in the support needed range, but still with a good percent in the strengths range.
- The Aspiration area, although it had the majority of scores as a mix of strengths and support needs, it also had more than the other areas in the challenge range.

At the final review the majority of scores had moved into the strengths range for all areas, where scores had moved up from the support needed or challenged range. This graph shows the changes in scores between the initial interview and final review for each ability area.



Considering that the placements were only for one week, the amount of change in ability demonstrates the importance of such opportunities, but it is important to keep in perspective how much change is possible within the time limit. As one of the students said, “a lot of the topics in the STEP are asking about core skills which are quite difficult to improve in a week’s time.” In the graph below you can see that all but one area had some students indicating no change in the ability, the exception being Social Wellbeing, which shows an exceptional high proportion of students indicating good levels of increase.

- High Progress = score increases of 4 or more
- Good Progress = score increases between 2-3
- Some Progress = score increase of 1
- None = no score increases
- Reduced Progress = score reductions of -1



The only ability not to have any good progress shown is Respecting without Judgement, which was given high scores at the initial interview by all but 1 student.

There are 4 instances of High progress being made. Three of these increased their scores by 4, showing how much the experience had enabled them to Engage with Others, improve Careful Listening and increase their Patience. Exceptional progress was given for Realising Full Potential, where the initial score was 1 and the final review was 10, an increased score of 9, which really does indicate the difference the work experience placement made for this particular student.

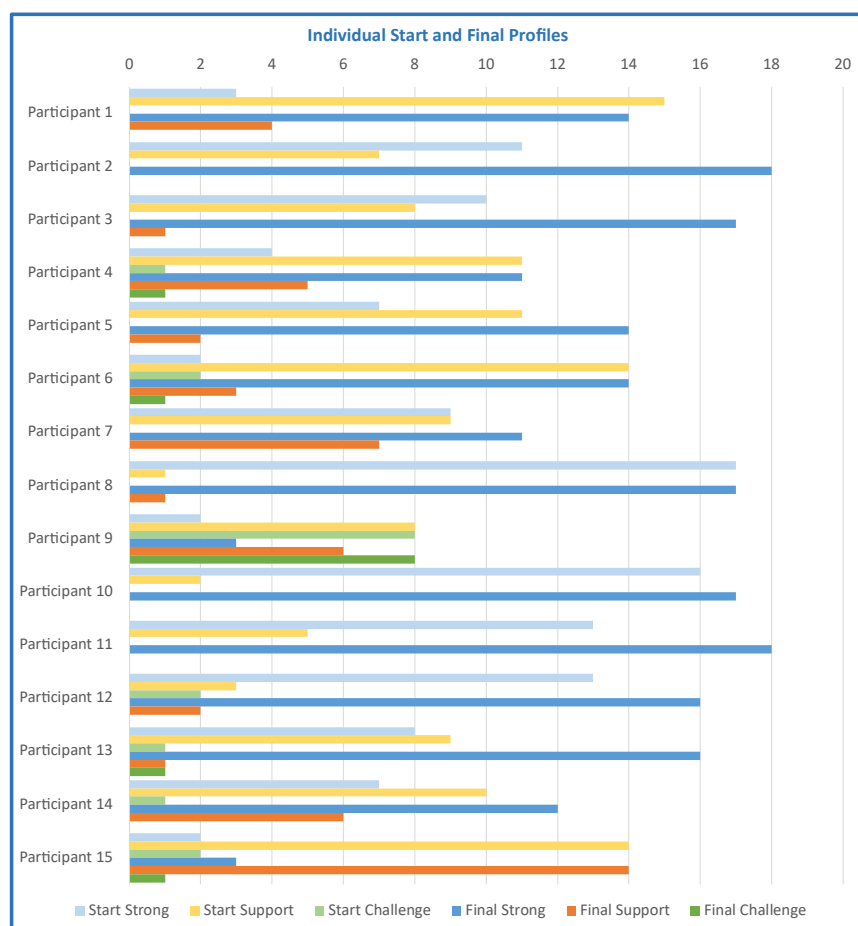
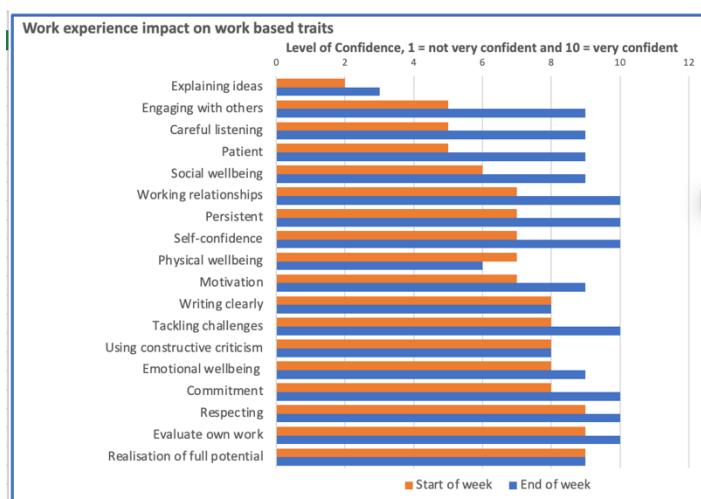
There were three reduced scores. Two were for one student in Careful Listening and Physical Wellbeing, the other for another student was also for Physical Wellbeing. They gave no reason for these reductions, but had scored the two abilities quite high initially, so the assumption is that the placement helped them evaluate these abilities in a different situation to their normal routine.

There is one other exception worthy of note. One student scored 10 in the initial interview for Working Relationships, considering it to be one of their two strongest abilities and all other abilities were also scored at the high end of the scale. They really valued the placement, saying “A very positive environment and a friendly team” and at the final review they had scored all the abilities as 10, except Working Relationships which they had increased to 11. A good example that shows that there is room for improvement however strong you feel you are at something.

INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL OUTCOMES

The scoring table that the students completed created their own individual graph for them to keep. This was also evidence they took back to the college of what value the placement provided, which in turn provides outcome evidence to the college scheme.

The aim behind the monitoring system is to enable students to focus on their strengths as a way of facing their challenges. With the initial interview scores the scoring table sorts the abilities into a graphic with their strongest abilities at the bottom, that provides the visual foundation for them to build on for the abilities above that need more support or are seen as challenges, shown as the orange bars on the image. When the final review scores are entered the graphic updates itself to show how far they have progressed, shown by the blue bars on the graphic.



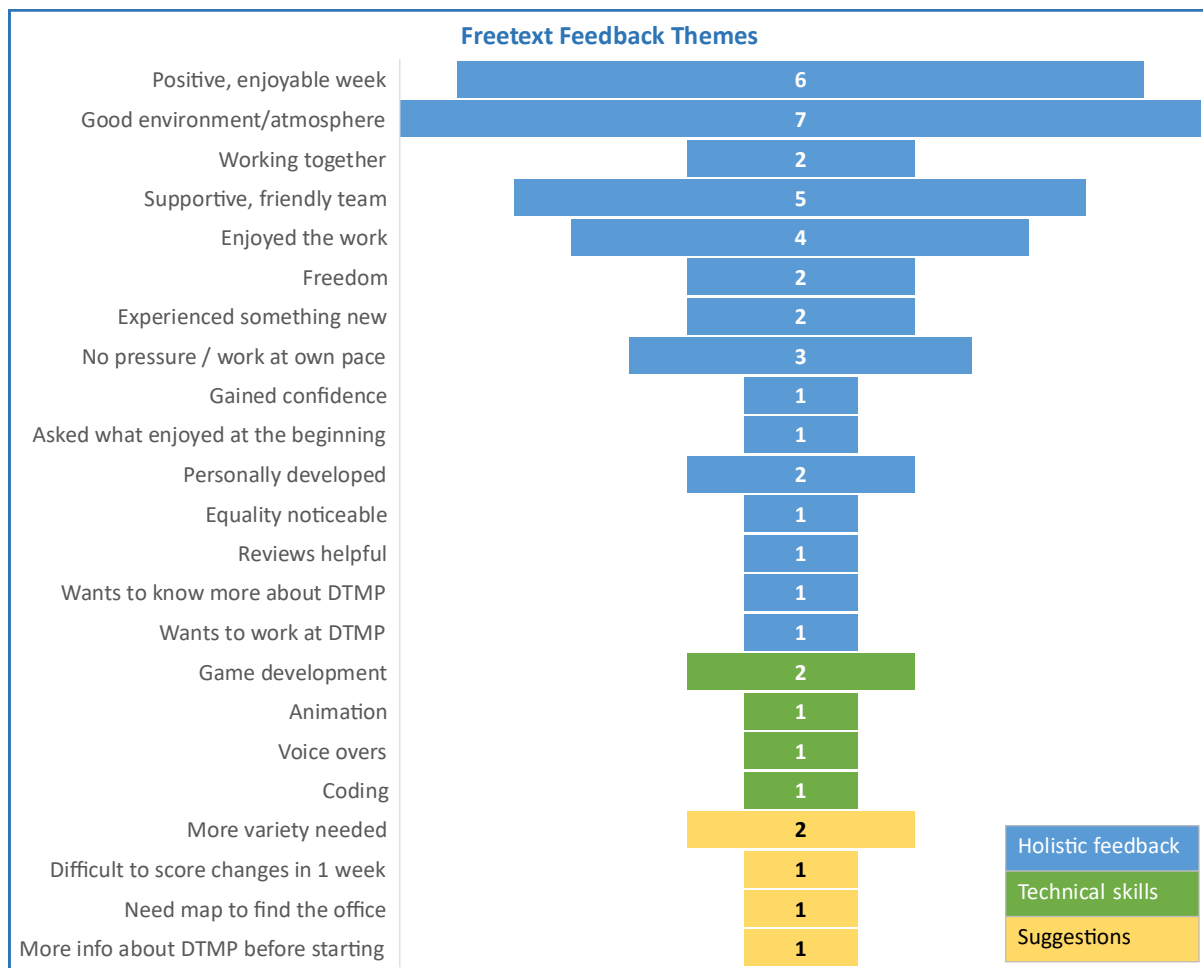
As you would expect, the different students view their starting points in very different ways. For example, Participant 1 did not perceive themselves as having any real challenges, but also only a few strengths, most of their abilities were seen as needing some support. By the final review the placement experience had enabled them to realise they had more strengths than they realised, leaving a few abilities needing support that they could now plan to develop in other ways. The only student whose starting profile is the same as their final one is Participant 8, due to the scores being in the high range, if looked at in detail we can confirm that the scores did increase within this range.

The scores given are the students' own perceptions, not measured against any metric. It was deemed very important that the placement experience was about enabling the students to develop the confidence to work in an IT media environment whatever their initial perceptions or anxieties were. The profiles demonstrate that every student benefitted from their experience.

THE STUDENTS' FINAL SAY

It is important for the placement team to also use all the abilities in their everyday working practice, making the work place a welcoming space for those who are neuro diverse or have mental health conditions. Careful listening was one of the abilities listed for the students to consider and it

was important for their feedback to be listened to in the way they wanted to say it. There was no prompting or guidance, so what they fed back was just what they wanted to tell Drop the Mask CIC. 49 information bits were given, falling into the themes listed below.



I really enjoyed the working atmosphere and the task I was given as it was something that I enjoyed and I was asked about what I enjoyed doing at the beginning. Gave me the freedom to do what I wanted to do.

I enjoyed being able to work on a project that I wanted to work on, using technologies that I like. Moreover, I found the reviews of what we were working on very useful.

Good environment to work in, amazing people. Equality seems like a big thing, no neglect. No pressure which was good, allowed to work at our own pace. Everyone is very supportive.

I just want to say thank you for letting us stay here and work for a week. Just by being here has taught me a lot and boosted my confidence to a whole new level.