FUTURE QUEST & UWE BRISTOL SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME IMPACT REPORT

2026

FUTURE QUEST

UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

Background

Between January and February 2026, Future Quest hosted 7 campus visits involving pupils from 9 schools, bringing over 300 pupils from Years 7–9 onto campus. These sessions were supported by student volunteers, mainly from the UWE Bristol School of Social Sciences, who played a central role in delivering engaging, supportive experiences for visiting pupils.

Volunteer Participation and Engagement

21 VOLUNTEERS

46 SESSIONS

241 HOURS VOLUNTEERED

Three volunteers returned from last year, and eight completed 3+ sessions, demonstrating strong commitment. Four volunteers had previously taken part in Future Quest while at school.

Volunteers completed a baseline survey (22 responses) and an endline survey (18 responses). Ten statements were rated on a 1–5 scale, producing average scores focused on skills, confidence, and belonging. Volunteers with prior Future Quest experience also provided written case studies.

Communication & Presentation

- “I am confident presenting to a group of strangers.”
- 3.59 → 4.00 (+0.41)
- “I can confidently explain my ideas when talking to others.”
- 4.05 → 4.39 (+0.34)
- “I feel I have good communication skills.”
- 4.09 → 4.33 (+0.24)
- “I am confident speaking one-to-one with someone new.”
- 4.05 → 4.11 (+0.07)

“I have massively improved my ability to present and talk to large groups, my confidence is much better now.” (Year 2 - Psychology Student)

“Projecting my voice wasn’t as difficult as I thought, which reduces some anxiety around that area.” (Year 2 - Philosophy Student)

“I have always lacked confidence in presenting myself to an audience… Future Quest challenged me in environments where young people can get easily distracted. I was able to lead a university tour and answer questions in a lecture hall.” (Year 3 – Sociology with Psychology Student)

Communication and presentation show the strongest overall improvements. Gains are particularly high for presentation confidence (+0.41), which aligns directly with the volunteer role in running campus tours and answering pupils’ questions. There is also strong improvement in broader communication skills, including explaining ideas clearly (+0.34). One-to-one communication shows smaller gains (+0.07) but still moves positively, indicating interpersonal confidence is developing alongside group-based communication.

Adaptability & Problem Solving

- “I am able to adapt when plans change.”
- 4.05 → 4.33 (+0.29)
- “I think of several ways to solve a problem and then choose the best way.”
- 4.00 → 4.17 (+0.17)
- “When things don’t work out, I keep trying.”
- 4.29 → 4.33 (+0.05)

Adaptability and problem-solving show clear growth. Adaptability is one of the strongest gains (+0.29), reflecting how volunteers adjust to unpredictable environments. Perseverance increases slightly (+0.05), likely because baseline scores were already high, but it still moves in a positive direction.

“It was an opportunity to help some of my skills that I think are lacking... and a choice to step into some amount of discomfort.” (Year 2 - Philosophy Student)

“I recognised it takes certain approaches and adaptability for different personalities... it helped me acknowledge how to adapt my language to young people.” (Year 3 – Sociology with Psychology Student)

Belonging & Identity

- “I see myself as part of the university community.”
- 3.82 → 3.89 (+0.07)
- “I feel I belong at university.”
- 4.09 → 4.06 (–0.04)

Changes in scores for belonging and identity aren’t significant enough to allow us to draw proper conclusions. Responses could have been influenced by external academic or social factors rather than volunteering itself, additionally it may be interpretations of the

question or scale differed on the separate days.

"Working with Future Quest helped me connect with other students, made me feel more confident about 3rd year, and made me realise I don't need to decide everything now." (Year 2 - Psychology Student)

Career Planning

- "I have a clear idea of the type of career I want to go into after I finish my degree." 3.55 → 3.67 (+0.12)

Career confidence shows a modest but positive increase. Volunteering exposes students to teamwork, public engagement, leadership, and communication roles, all of which may support deeper reflection on career direction. Though the improvement is smaller than in other areas, the upward change suggests volunteering contributes to increased clarity and self-awareness around future pathways.

"For our Social Sciences students volunteering with children in this way helps to build their confidence and enable them to see how the skills they learn on their courses can be transferred. It gives them a real opportunity to make a difference and help open doors for young people to HE. Our students have demonstrated resilience, team work and communication skills, all of which employers around the globe are crying out for." Dr Myra Evans, Director of Partnerships (SSoS)

Conclusion

The January–February 2026 volunteering programme delivered strong impact, with 21 volunteers contributing 241 hours across 46 sessions. Volunteers developed their soft skills, particularly communication, presentation confidence, adaptability, and problem-solving. Belonging and career confidence showed smaller but positive trends.

Looking ahead to future cycles of the volunteering programme, it may be valuable to build in more structured opportunities that support students' longer-term development. More explicit signposting to the career guidance and employability services offered by UWE Bristol could help strengthen the modest gains seen in career confidence. Additionally, expanding belonging-focused activities, such as volunteer networking events, could further enhance students' sense of community connection and identity.