



BOBS Skills pilot activity at Hailsham Community College summary report

November - December 2024

About Culture Shift

Culture Shift was established in 2011 as a legacy of Creative Partnerships Sussex and Surrey and became a charity in 2020.

We have a dual focus on health and arts, working with those people who experience barriers to participation for a variety of reasons and are most likely to be socially isolated and living with physical and/or mental health inequalities. This includes adult and young carers, older people, disabled people, children and young people.

Through Culture Shift opportunities to connect with others through purposeful creative activity, people and communities develop a stronger sense of identity, pride, confidence and resilience.

We have a strong track record of working with learning disabled adults in Sussex, established through our Arts Connect and Being Our Best Selves (BOBS) programmes and the band Delta 7 which we have managed for over 10 years and has been the subject of BAFTA shortlisted documentary, *Delta 7: Disabled Not Defeated*.

Another key strand of work which demonstrates our experience in this area is Disability Awareness Training - a bespoke professional development offer for the cultural sector.

Culture Shift projects

The Culture Shift portfolio of work also includes Carers O'Clock, focused on adult and young carers, Our Songs Our Stories, focused on older people with Dementia and Voices From The Edges, focused on children and young people.

The diversity of these programmes is the foundation of the Culture Shift approach which encompasses a wide spectrum of artforms, participants and places.



Background and context

The Being Our Best Selves (BOBS) programme was first piloted in 2019, with a focus on improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of learning disabled adults.

Culture Shift has since extended the BOBS model into Further Education, resulting in the BOBS Skills programme, which has been successfully facilitated across FE colleges in East and West Sussex since 2022, and first piloted in secondary education settings in 2023.

In November 2024, Culture Shift was commissioned to deliver a 6 week course of BOBS Skills sessions at Hailsham Community College with Year 11 Students.

Students were selected to participate on the basis of limited self belief and aspirations, poor attendance and motivation in lessons, aiming to test the value of the programme to students in a secondary school environment.



“ Many of our students at Hailsham Community College grapple with feelings of limited potential and self-doubt every day. They feel restricted by their local environment, believing they lack the ability to achieve their personal goals or achieve geographical and social mobility. Sadly, as a school community, our students have learnt to accept disappointment and often lack the motivation or drive to make significant changes. A project like this offers a unique chance to challenge these perceptions. By providing practical experiences and fostering creativity, it can help our students cultivate the confidence and aspiration they need to succeed. ”

Josh Jesson, Assistant Head Teacher

Format and content

A total of 53 Year 11 students were selected to take part in this project. Students were carefully selected by the senior learning team.

Students were divided into 2 groups with each group participating in weekly sessions over a 6 week period during term 2, with a break of one week for students to take their mock exams.

Sessions were planned for alternating days of the week to ensure that student participation in the programme did not significantly disrupt attendance of specific lessons.

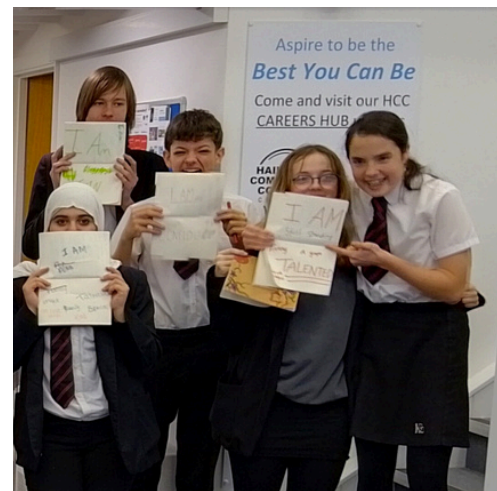
Each session lasted approximately 2 hours and was led by 3 experienced BOBS coaches, managed by Culture Shift, supporting delivery and gathering evaluation data.

Themes and Activities

A flexible and adaptive approach was key to ensuring session content was relevant and engaging for the students. Following each session, themes and activities were carefully planned based on observations of the students, their feedback and the reflections of teaching staff.

The session content included interactive group discussions, team challenges and individual reflection with a focus on:

- Raising aspirations
- Building resilience
- Setting goals and ambitions
- Recognising and responding to opportunities
- Developing self-belief and confidence



Impact

Evaluation data

Data showing the impact of the pilot was gathered through embedded evaluation methods within the sessions and student voice feedback and attendance data gathered by the school.

Impact

- **71.7% of students attended at least 4 out of 6 sessions**
- **97.3% of students rated their experience of BOBS sessions 5 out of 5**
- **73% of students who gave feedback said the programme had given them a better understanding of what they would like to do in future**
- **67% reported that they felt that their self-confidence had improved as result of the programme.**

Student and staff feedback

- **Students described sessions as ‘helpful’, ‘explorative’ and ‘constructive’ time away from lessons ‘without any stress’.**
- **Students reported they had ‘learnt to open up more’ and that the sessions were ‘a really positive space’ where they could speak about things they ‘had never spoken about before’ and did ‘not feel judged’**
- **Students said BOBS gave them a ‘positive perspective on (their) mental health’ and helped them ‘in many ways in everyday life’**
- **Other self-reported student benefits included improved communication and teamwork skills, reduced levels of stress, increased motivation and happiness.**

“BOBS is the single-most impactful intervention I have seen in the college in the 15+ years that I have worked here”
Safeguarding Lead, Hailsham Community College

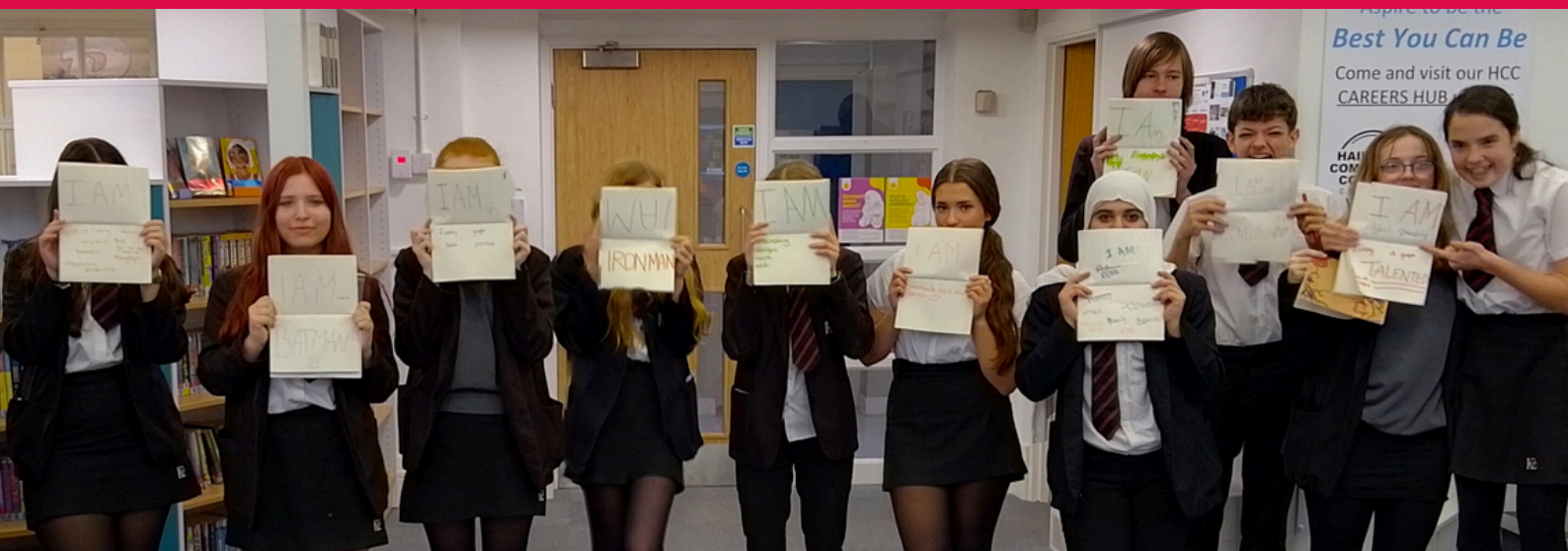


“ It’s honestly exactly the kind of experience I wish I’d had at their age. These sessions gives me hope for the future

Woodzy, BOBS SKILLS Coach

It’s great to see young people at the early stages of their development and gratifying to see the small wins, working towards bigger changes ”

Suzi, BOBS SKILLS Coach



Observations and recommendations

Overall this project had a positive impact on the student participants and there is enthusiasm to further develop and duplicate this model, based on the following learning;

Student selection was crucial to the success of this project. BOBS SKILLS is not a behavioural intervention and therefore students were not targeted on the basis of poor behaviour. Rather, staff at Hailsham Community College selected students who were understood to have often received less attention and focus in lessons due to disruptive behaviour of other students.

This approach to student selection had the additional consequence of bringing students together in different groups to usual classes. Students reported 'talking to different people' and 'interacting with new people' as key benefits of the programme .

Year group selection is flexible. Year 11 students reported that they felt participating in BOBS sessions throughout their time at Hailsham Community College would have significantly improved their experience of secondary education and many felt that the programme could be improved by more sessions/being longer.

Whilst the BOBS sessions were well-received by Year 11 students, senior teaching staff reflected that sessions may be more beneficial to Year 10 students to help build resilience, motivation and aspirations prior to their GCSE exams, whilst causing less disruption to coursework and exam preparation.

Aims and objectives for this project were discussed and agreed in advance of the project delivery and this was crucial to success, in order that the content and activity was planned accordingly, including the selection of the coaching team.

“ It's been a rough couple of months. (BOBS) was incredibly helpful. I felt welcomed.

Thank you for making me feel like I could fit in and make friends. Its been the highlight of my week! ”

Year 11 Student