

Evaluation of the XP Trust D6 Report

Phase 1: September 2020 – July 2021

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Programme context	3
3. Underlying theory of D6.....	6
3.1 Intended effects on students and schooling.....	6
3.2 Extending the school day	6
3.3 Transactional analysis informed approach to relationships	8
3.4 Metacognition and self-regulation (MSR).....	8
3.4 Positive role models.....	9
4. Evaluation methodology	10
5. Evaluation findings.....	11
5.1 The planned design and format for D6 sessions.....	11
5.2 Preparation of Student Learning Coaches	12
5.3 Delivery of coaching.....	14
5.4 The effectiveness and impact of the D6 sessions	18
5.5 The skills and knowledge gained by the Student Learning Coaches.....	20
5.6 The effects of D6 on students' engagement with learning.....	23
5.7 Developing the D6 programme and its curriculum.....	25
6. Conclusion and recommendations	27
6.1 The vision for D6 and how is this articulated by staff leading and supporting D6	27
6.2 The delivery and format of D6	27
6.3 Students' experiences of D6 and the benefits they perceive	27
6.4 Preparation and support of the Student Learning Coaches	28
6.5 Towards best practice in D6 for all students	28
References	30
Appendices.....	32
1. Information sheet and consent form D6 Student Learning Coach (Focus Group)	32
2. Parent information sheet and opt-out form (Focus Group)	35
3. Student information sheet and consent form (Focus Group).....	38
4. Focus Group schedule for students	39
5. Focus Group schedule for Student Learning Coaches.....	40
6. School Staff Interview (indicative schedule).....	41

1. Introduction

This evaluation is funded by the Edge Foundation, as part of a successful bid by XP Trust in 2019, which looked to improve careers guidance and curriculum alignment for all Post 16 students in the Trust. This bid was substantially revised for 2020/21 due to a combination of changes to XP's Post 16 curriculum offer, and Covid restrictions. The XP D6 Saturday School Project is part of this much larger bid, and Sheffield Hallam University have been commissioned by the XP Trust to deliver this aspect. This evaluation reviews and evaluates the provision of D6 Saturday School running since November 2020 (<https://xpschool.org/d6-begins-this-saturday-for-year-11/>).

The evaluation takes place at the end of the first run of the initiative, with Y11 students, and before the beginning of its second iteration involving both Y10 and Y11 students with a view to inviting KS3 students at a future point. This report captures the current approaches to D6 in the two secondary schools and makes recommendations on its development. The aims, therefore, are to identify the efficacy of the D6 design and delivery in order to improve its outcomes, and to disseminate the benefits of the model. It examines Student Learning Coaches' (SLC's) perceptions of the preparation for the role, including those related to their future education and employment.

The effects of the D6 programme on students are also examined, in terms of the impact on learning, including the agency of SLCs in supporting students to develop their confidence, habits of work and learning, and metacognitive strategies to meet the needs of assessment at a crucial stage in their school careers. Analysis also draws on the perceptions of school staff of the effects on students' participation in the programme and engagement with learning. This research will inform the future development of this form of intervention and the programme design and its effectiveness.

The research questions guiding this evaluation are:

1. What is the vision for D6 and how is this articulated by staff leading and supporting D6?
2. How is D6 carried out in the two secondary schools in the trust?
3. What have been students' experiences of D6 and what benefits do they perceive?
4. How are Y13 student learning coaches prepared and how have they carried out their duties?
5. What is best practice in D6, and how can D6 be improved and adapted for Y10 and KS3 students?

2. Programme context

XP School, Doncaster, UK, is an 11–19 secondary school, established in 2013 as a 'free school'. The school is part of a growing academy trust, currently three secondary schools, comprising a second secondary school in Doncaster, XP East and one in the Northeast, XP Gateshead, each following an approach to curriculum and pedagogy (Pountney and Said, 2018) developed in the EL (Expeditionary Learning) Schools in the United States. EL Education is a marriage of the philosophies of Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, and the best of the Harvard Graduate School of Education's theoretical and practical approaches to teaching and learning.

The design of the XP curriculum is based on a principled, whole-school approach (Pountney and McPhail, 2019) predicated on key ideas: *a common mission; personalisation; connect with the world; teachers are learners; and language is our culture*. Referred to as an 'ethic of excellence' (Berger,

2003), running through XP’s approach is the notion of taking responsibility and leading one’s own learning (Berger et al., 2014). Central to this is the metaphor of ‘crew’ – the idea that each student is supported by and contributes to a group, whose strength can be measured by that of its weakest member (Greeley, 2001). In each year group, there are 50 students organised into four crews.

The XP D6 programme began in September 2020, following liaison with Matthew Moss School (MMS), Rochdale, where a D6 Saturday School¹ had been started in 2019 to provide resources and space, and a quiet and safe social learning environment for study. D6 (day 6) is an entirely voluntary, student-directed ‘Saturday school’ (a term the school avoids). It aims to improve outcomes for students, particularly focused on disadvantaged students, while developing their wider life skills, such as resilience and independence. The attendance at MMS ranges from around 100 students during the Autumn Term to around 200 in the examination season, which is over a quarter of the school roll, The school claims that the D6 initiative is ‘an extension of the pervasive culture of self-reliance’. A visit by the XP Trust’s Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to one of the sessions impressed, convincing them that a similar approach at XP would be beneficial. The CAO spoke of what he had seen:

‘It just really struck a chord with us because for me immediately it smacked of students leading their own learning. So providing the opportunity and the space for kids to determine what it was that they needed to do in their time outside of school hours ..., it just chimed a note with us.’ (CAO)

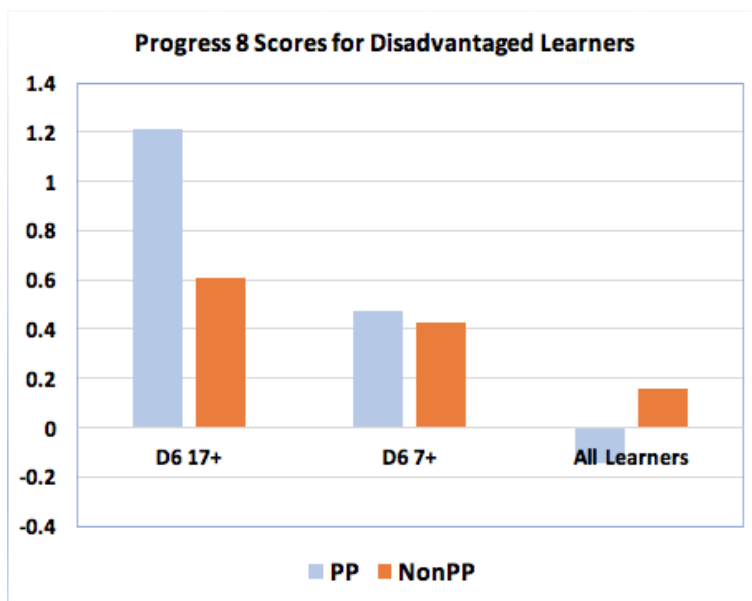


Figure 1: Progress 8 scores for disadvantaged learners attending D6 at Matthew Moss School

The case for an intervention was partly driven by the demographic and geographic factors that XP shared with Matthew Moss School, and the CAO spoke in interview of the compelling data around the impact that D6 at Matthew Moss had had on students who came from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially for those who had attended at least six sessions. MSS reports that learners

¹ <https://www.mmhs.co.uk/our-school/d6-saturday-school/>

that attend on average achieve an entire grade higher than those that don't. It has a particularly large impact on students in receipt of pupil premium (see Figure 1²)

Matthew Moss High School is a secondary school in Rochdale, Greater Manchester. It has a significantly higher number of students in receipt of pupil premium (44.6%), English as Additional Language (50.9%) and receiving SEN support (16.4%) compared to national averages. Similarly, the urban areas of South Yorkshire are in the top 10% of most deprived areas in England, according to the indices of multiple deprivation in terms of income, health, and education (McClennan et al., 2019) with multi-generational family unemployment, and below national average achievement in all levels of education.

As a precedent, MSS offered a model with elements that echoed the culture of XP. This included the use of student learning coaches (SLCs), as XP's CAO observed:

'... they were self-managing, working alongside student coaches ... they'd asked students from the college to apply to be mentors and coaches, so instead of being paid to flip burgers and doing something menial the kids were actually doing something worthy and honourable and giving something back.' (CAO)

The CAO also noted the involvement of younger students, including year 7 and 8 students, who gave a variety of reasons for attending:

'Some said it was because they liked to work collaboratively, they liked to work in groups, they found that they completed work better if they were able to share ideas and discuss problems and grapple with things together. Some students said it's just great because I can finish off coursework, art coursework that I don't have time to do during the week because I'm focussing my time on perhaps more academic subjects ... Other students were saying I just need a quiet place, ...' (CAO)

The observations made by the CAO and CEO on their visit to MSS became the vision for reproducing this at XP, with some differences in key areas:

'Whereas I think Matthew Moss looked at students who had got particularly high grades and they came from a range of schools across Rochdale ..., we obviously had our own students who'd gone on to FE and they obviously know our school, had been through our school, they understand expeditions, they understand crew and our culture so we went to them and we'd got some incredible students who had left us in 2019.' (CAO)

The school day at XP is already extended from 15.15 to 16.30 each day to allow students who wish to, to study or to socialise. The extension to this, and the accommodation of the MSS D6 model to the XP context and culture, was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with some pragmatic decisions made about the start of D6 at XP:

'So, yeah, we started ... we were all ready to go and we got hit by the pandemic which stalled things until the September so we went again to go out with D6 but then we were

² Source: <https://www.wholeeducation.org/transaction-analysis-and-an-innovative-saturday-school-stand-out-practice-at-matthew-moss-high-school/>

put into bubbles so it made it quite difficult ... so our focus actually was initially just on Year 11 students because we felt they were the most immediate priority and I think it's worked very well for them.' (CAO)

3. Underlying theory of D6

The programme's aims are social-psychological in nature and designed to improve academic success by changing how students think or feel about themselves and their schoolwork and thereby encouraging them to take advantage of learning opportunities provided by the school. The design of the programme is underpinned by research evidence that has informed its development.

3.1 Intended effects on students and schooling

XP's D6 programme can be characterised as a *positive education programme* in that it maps to many of the principles of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective, including the fostering of self-determination, self-efficacy, and belief in the future (Lerner et al., 2005). Given the aims of D6 to build academic engagement and positive attitudes and strategies for learning, an evaluation might examine the ability of individuals to overcome setbacks that have the potential to limit motivation and performance. Relevant measures, that broadly guided the development of the curriculum at the outset, include academic buoyancy (AB) and academic resilience (AR) (Martin & Marsh, 2009). AB applies to the majority of individuals in an academic setting, whereas AR applies to individuals who may experience acute adversity. Poor AB is related to low level negative outcomes such as achievement anxiety, isolated poor grades, temporary lapses in engagement and motivation, and minor negative interactions with teachers; poor AR is predictive of high-level negative outcomes such as disengagement from school, chronic underachievement, sustained disaffection and truancy, and opposition to teachers (Martin, 2013). While avoiding the pitfalls of cause and effect, a measure of resilience / buoyancy and of engagement / disaffection can provide a broad measure of impact.

3.2 Extending the school day

The issues surrounding calls to extend the school day have been exacerbated by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. A government review (DfE, 2021), based on a snapshot survey in March 2021, found that pre-pandemic the average school days was 6.5 hours. The review concluded that extending the school day, or extended school time (EST), would involve "significant delivery considerations" including teaching capacity, new legislation, and accountability measures to ensure quality.

A review of the research in 2010 on EST (Patall, Cooper and Allen, 2010), considers the arguments made for extending time spent in school and the potential positive and negative effects. Potential positive effects for students included increased learning and better academic achievement and more time for learning / time on task. More repetition of material is seen to lead to deeper coverage of the curriculum and greater opportunities for experiential learning. The potential negative effects for students include wasted time, in that unless used appropriately, allocated time does not necessarily translate to increased instruction, and an increase in fatigue and boredom leading to decreased effort. The potential positive effects for society include how increased learning opportunities level the playing field for disadvantaged children and low-income children.

Based on a study of charter schools in New York City, Fryer (2014) found that adding at least 300 more hours of instruction to the school year was one of the best ways to improve student achievement. To achieve this schools would need to add 7 hours of instruction approximately per week. Typically this is done by adding hours to the school weekdays or adding an extra day, as well as extending the school term (and reducing holidays). While the claims for the MSS model show positive impact on attainment, a three-year evaluation of a Saturday school programme for primary school students who are falling behind, *Shine on Manchester*, found little evidence of impact on attainment (Menzies et al., 2016). However, there were effects on attitudes and relationships, similar to those identified as a result of the culture of crew at XP (Loe et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, the evidence for the actual effects of EST is variable and contradictory, and studies, to date, have been unconvincing as to the benefits, partly owing to the difficulty in isolating the multiple contributory factors. Some international comparisons of the effects of EST are positive about the effects (Rivkin and Schiman, 2015), whilst others downplay the effects of extra instructional time (Murray, 2020). Overall, there is little evidence for the effects of EST on non-achievement measures, such as motivation, attitudes to school, or other student-related outcomes. Furthermore, it is unclear as to whether EST may affect student outcomes in the long term.

One factor that is seen to influence how EST is perceived by students and parents is how it is presented. The terms used to refer to EST, labels such as '*Saturday school*', '*Study Club*', or in the case of XP, '*D6*', may influence how students respond to the offer of EST. Also messages as to whether EST has an academic, or other social, benefit are moderated by how the time is used. Linking EST to tutoring, Nickow et al. (2020) found that effects are largest when led by teachers. Allowing for the expense of using fully qualified teachers, the cheaper option of well-trained teaching assistants can still have very large effects. Programmes offered during the school day have the largest effects, while they are still sizeable for after school programmes, and those that are provided for longer and more frequently.

To be effective, therefore, tutoring and EST needs to be delivered by staff with high levels of training and linked strongly to existing classes and teaching. In June 2021 the department for education in England announced it was setting aside £1 billion for national tutoring aiming to provide 100 million tutoring hours for children and young people across England. Prior to this XP/E had been involved in GROW, a graduate mentoring scheme organised by Sheffield Hallam University (Pountney et al. 2021), providing 12 hours of mentoring for Y10 and 11 students.

A further factor in the success or failure of EST is the content and instructional strategies used in school, and studies suggest that if additional time is not used properly and school is experienced as boring or as punishment rather than as an enriching learning environment, it could lead to undesirable student outcomes, such as student fatigue or low motivation. These variations in pedagogic strategy can mediate the effects of EST on students. Where teachers have more time to spend with students individually, the effects are seen to be higher

Taken together, the research evidence would suggest that EST can be an effective means to support student learning, where conditions are suitable, particularly for students who are most at risk of school failure, and when careful consideration is made for how that time is used.

3.3 Transactional analysis informed approach to relationships

The success of MSS, the model for XP, is partly based on their approach to building relationships, informed by Transactional Analysis (TA) theory (Sameroff, 2009). In order to foster healthy, respectful dialogue and relationships, MSS bases its approach around supporting adult-to-adult interactions at all times, as a form of social competence, manifested as emotional self-regulation, social cognition, positive communication, and prosocial relationships with family members, peers, and teachers. Staff at MSS are trained in the theory of TA, and then explicitly use this language in their own practice. It is also integrated into policies, displays and posters across the school. XP has developed its own version of this in its common mission and its key principle of “*language is our culture*” and connection with the local community and the world. The strength of relationships at XP is verified by research (Loe et al., 2017) that shows higher than the norm levels of student–student (8% higher), student–teacher (5% higher) and teacher–student (20% higher) relationships. The report concludes that ‘this is the direct result of the school’s culture and its curricular practice’ (p. 14).

3.4 Metacognition and self-regulation (MSR)

Key ideas informing the design of an intervention such as D6 include offering students metacognitive strategies, including how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, and setting an appropriate level of challenge to develop students’ self-regulation and metacognition (MSR) (Quigley, Muijs, and Stringer, 2018). MSR, defined, simply, as developing students’ ability to monitor, direct, and review their learning by teaching them to set goals, and to evaluate their own learning, is rated by the EEF Teaching Toolkit as “high impact”, with students making on average seven months of additional progress on attainment, for very low cost (Quigley, Muijs, and Stringer, 2018). Promoting and developing metacognitive talk in the learning activity is seen as significant in the design of the D6 programme because it helps students to organise and effectively manage their learning independently, and to model thinking by focusing on the thought processes behind decisions they make, as well as teaching the strategy itself (Sperling, Howard, Staley, and Dubois, 2004). This approach can be synthesised as the *Activate; Practice; Reflect; and Review* cycle. Table 1 shows how it might be effective in an XP D6 context, drawing on the GROW Programme where graduate mentors worked with XP Y10 students on a one-to-one basis (Pountney, 2021). Here D6 might take account of the interrelationship between metacognition and motivation as cyclical (Karaali, 2015). Therefore, the key practices and activities of the programme can be aligned with success in attaining goals in which motivation is addressed across all activities.

While the D6 programme is not explicitly subject-focussed it does address what might be broadly termed “curriculum learning”, and the programme acknowledges the important link between MSR and specialist subject knowledge. The premise is that metacognitive development can assist with the consolidation of learning through being able to justify and explain learning choices and decisions (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). MSR alone cannot bring about deep learning, but it can develop the potential for it, especially in the context of disruption to schooling.

Here, the student is able to raise specific subject problems with the student learning coach (such as difficulty with mathematics for example) and the SLC works through activities with the student designed to unpack and develop new strategies for tackling difficulties.

Table 1: Principles of metacognition and their potential realisation in D6

Principle	Description	Example realisation in D6
Activate	What we learn depends on what we know already, and it's important to get students thinking about prior knowledge that will help them with their next steps.	Foundations , activities covering induction to the programme taking stock of where students are now. Encouraging students to look back on their HOWLs and to take responsibility for their learning. This might also involve identifying important skills and strategies.
Practice	To be able to work independently, students need sufficient scaffolding and guidance. Planning a learning sequence requires keeping in mind how young people will progress from being fully supported to being fully independent.	Curriculum Learning , activities covering planning and setting milestones and prioritising action, identifying gaps and becoming "unstuck".
Reflect	An important aspect of self-regulation is reflecting on what you have done and using this to inform what you'll do in future. Targeted questions and prompts can encourage students to do this.	Curriculum Learning (continued) , activities covering strategies for learning and deepening subject knowledge and Skills), and getting ready for tests and examinations and setting goals (WB8: Preparing for Assessment)
Review	Reviewing previous work, and retrieving key ideas from memory, aids long-term retention, particularly if this happens once students have started to forget what they have learned. The important thing here is that this is done from memory in the first instance, with resources used afterwards, as it's the retrieval process itself that strengthens long-term memory.	Planning the Future , activities covering the skill of staying positive, and choosing paths, identifying resources needed, and preparing to make a good impression, and celebrating success in the programme and in the future.
Motivate	[applying to all above and running through the programme]	Award of Certification of Completion Further celebration of learning events, involving in-school recognition of success, involving peers and parents/carers.

3.4 Positive role models

The use of recent alumni as learning coaches is seen to have reciprocal benefits in that it is an opportunity for work experience and enhanced employability. The role of mentors /tutors in addressing learners' confidence and motivation is covered in the literature, including how motivation is adaptive of past and present experiences, and that "success matters". This includes supporting students to feel successful and in control, with the result that they tend to have a more positive relationship with material they are working on (Karaali, 2015, p. 442). The use of alumni and student ambassador initiatives (Sanders et al., 2018) including higher education outreach, such

as the GROW programme, highlights how informal interactions allow students to develop shared “learner identities” with student ambassadors and in doing so, helps students understand the reality of further education and how they themselves could belong in this setting (Gartland, 2015). Of particular concern was the disproportionate impact on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Nelson, Lynch and Sharp, 2021), who may be less likely to have the support of positive role models and so lack confidence about their future (Marshall, 2019).

4. Evaluation methodology

This evaluation used a qualitative approach, involving interviews and focus groups carried out by the author as part of data collection in July 2021. Due to Covid restrictions the interviews and focus groups took place online. All interviews and focus groups, with permission, were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. Table 2 shows the methods used and number of participants (and the codes allocated to them) who took part, with their permission (see Appendices for sample information and consent forms and interview and focus group schedules), and were subject to standard ethical approval procedures. The staff and student learning coaches were asked questions around student engagement, programme completion rates and perceptions of the programme. A focus groups was held with students who had attended D6. Parents/carers were made aware of the nature and purpose of the focus group and given the opportunity to opt out their children from the focus groups. Analysis of the focus groups informed the development of the semi-structured interview schedules for both CAO and AP leading the programme (see appendices for a sample).

Table 2: Evaluation data set

Types of Data	Participants (Data source) and codes	Total
Interviews	Chief Academic Officer (CAO)	1
	Assistant Principal i/c (AP)	1
Focus groups	4 Students (F1, F2, F3, F4 and F5)	1
	4 Student Learning Coaches (SLC1, SLC2, SLC3 and SLC4)	1
	2 Staff Learning Coaches (LC1 and LC2)	1

The potential benefits of taking part in the evaluation for SLCs included the chance to share their coaching experience, and how this may have contributed to their work readiness, or further / higher education as appropriate. They were also able to reflect on their experience and those of the students they had coached, and to make suggestions as to how the training and programme could be improved moving forward. For students, the benefits included the opportunity to feedback and to contribute to the programme, as well as the possibility of becoming learning coaches in the future if they choose to. While both students and SLCs might have felt they were unable to speak openly about the programme and to voice criticism of the school and staff, it was made clear that their responses would be anonymised and that the purpose of the evaluation was to improve the programme and was not an evaluation of the school or the staff.

5. Evaluation findings

The following section describes the outcomes of the evaluation and draws together the interview and focus group data from SLCs, school staff and students.

The programme aimed to create a three-way relationship between recent XP alumni, school staff and year 11 students. The costs included two Learning Coaches (LCs) (Higher Level Teaching Assistants) and five student learning coaches (SLCs) (see Table 3). This does not show the additional costs for heating and lighting or for opening up.

Table 3: Staffing costs of providing a full programme of D6 2020-21

Staff Member	Rate Scale	Hourly Rate plus oncosts	Hours per week	Weeks	Cost
Learning Coach 1	HLTA	£12.73	4	25	£1,273.00
Learning Coach 2	HLTA	£12.73	4	25	£1,273.00
Student Learning Coach 1	Flat	£5.00	4	25	£500.00
Student Learning Coach 2	Flat	£5.00	4	25	£500.00
Student Learning Coach 3	Flat	£5.00	4	25	£500.00
Student Learning Coach 4	Flat	£5.00	4	25	£500.00
Student Learning Coach 5	Flat	£5.00	4	25	£500.00
				Total	£5,046.00

The plan for 2020-21 was to test proof of concept and to open the programme for all years in 2021-22 and aim for 20 students for each year (40% of students). Estimates of the cost³ per each D6 session was £220 approximately, based on an average attendance of 20, and this equated to £11 per student per session. In practice the average attendance was 10 making the cost per student double this estimate.

5.1 The planned design and format for D6 sessions

Guided by the principles of XP's 'common mission' the CAO was clear that D6 should enable students to take responsibility for and direct their own learning:

'We know that learning's complex, kids can learn in different environments working with different people and that can accelerate and decelerate their progress depending on a multitude of different factors. So we've got to provide I think, rather than more of the same which I don't see as being beneficial, that we provide alternative environments, alternative ways of students engaging in the learning process, and I see D6 as being a large part of that.'
(CAO)

His view on the government's approach to EST was mixed:

'I think the pitfall of just having extra time is that that will just be - for some kids it will be a waste of time. In fact it would be counterproductive I think because then they'll be even more

³ Staff costs for the Assistant Principal and the Chief Academic Officer are not included

tired and less likely to even do anything when they get home whereas if our kids want to leave at 3.15, they can. ... [its] not just their academic progress but how they are as human beings I don't think we should be forcing kids to stay after school, I think it's heinous that, and it's typical of a control driven system and a conformist system.' (CAO)

The Assistant Principal (AP) delegated to lead the D6 programme at XP was also the head of key stage 4 (years 10 and 11) at the school. He appointed the SLCs in the Summer 2020 from those alumni who had expressed an interest in the role. All five coaches were appointed, all of whom were Y13 students at local colleges studying for A levels in various subjects. Their work as coaches was paid (see Table 3). The AP was also responsible for the initial format of the D6 events, which for reasons to do with the Covid pandemic and the need for clearly defined 'bubbles' was restricted to Y11:

'We couldn't logistically have all kids from all year groups in, even though that is the original intention of D6 to have everybody in, all years' groups but also with Year 11 missing a crucial amount of stuff in their GCSE course we thought we'd just front load it with those guys and kind of prioritise them in the first instance.' (AP)

The two staff learning coaches (LCs) were both higher level teaching assistants (HLTA) with existing crew leader responsibilities in school, who were very experienced at leading classes and groups. They saw D6 as meeting the needs of students and their role as supporting and guiding the SLCs.

5.2 Preparation of Student Learning Coaches

The five SLCs were all female, aged 17 or 18, and were studying a range of A Levels at two local post-16 colleges. The subjects taken by the four SLCs who took part in the focus group are:

- SLC1: studying second year of psychology, sociology, and English at A-Level
- SLC2: studying first year of media, drama, and applied science
- SLC3: completed A-Levels in biology, chemistry, and history
- SLC4: completed English language and literature A-Level and double public services

The SLCs heard of the D6 student learning coach role at the presentation evening for XP alumni and were attracted to the opportunity to 'give something back':

'Having done GCSEs and found it quite tough I wanted to be able to help those guys through it' (SLC1)

'So, it was nice to feel like we could give some kind of support back and make them feel like it's not as scary as it would have been' (SLC2)

Informal preparation was given in the form of a meeting with the AP and the staff Learning Coaches (LCs) to explain the procedure and what was required:

'I did a couple of sessions with the student coaches before D6 started and talked about roles and responsibilities and what they might do and how they might maybe run a few crew sessions at the start of each week just to build a bit of a relationship with the students that come in and just to feel comfortable themselves.' (AP)

The AP was clear that SLCs needed to feel supported and confident in leading the D6 sessions, while being mindful that students were did not favour what one student articulated as *'another lesson by somebody who's only just done the course themselves and isn't as experienced or qualified as a normal teacher, I don't need that'*. The AP felt that the choice of XP alumni meant that they had seen the XP model and culture themselves over time, but this did not immediately unfold:

'I left it kind of open to the student coaches to run and what they did was I suppose do what they've seen model for them over their time in education which is a teacher stands at the front of the room and teaches so we kind of ran with that for a little bit and then the feedback that we started to get from some of the kids that were attending and or own observations was that that wasn't quite the right thing to do [rather than it] be really totally student led and it should be about the kids prioritising what they want and just being able to crack on with it and access support if they can' (AP)

This is echoed by the LCs

'I think they took on the role of teacher more and they automatically started teaching from the front rather than helping students with what they'd got because when it first started none of the students were bringing work in ... so they were teaching them new things but doing it a lot from the front as in a lesson.' (LC2)

'I heard them talking about, 'right, I'll teach the maths because I'm stronger at this, I'll take the science because I do A-Level science' and then they took a group of three or four each and say like [SLC] went in and she did chemistry and she did teach from the front' (LC1)

The AP became aware of the need to *'develop the coaches' autonomy'*, and in November 2020 he invited the author of this report⁴ to work with the SLCs, and to bring his expertise developed in preparing mentors for the GROW mentoring programme. He met with the SLCs online on four one-hour online sessions, covering:

- Discussion of their experiences to date and evaluating what had worked and what not so well
- Ethical issues involved in coaching and acting on behalf of the school
- Preparation for the upcoming sessions and planning activities

The opportunity to discuss their work and reflect on how things were going was appreciated by the SLCs, although this aspect was specifically evaluated in this review, but does inform the recommendations. The AP attended the SLC workshops and was aware of the SLCs' needs:

'Obviously then the student coaches are very young themselves and we were putting them in quite a position of responsibility ... we wanted to make sure they transition from students to members of staff so they understand the responsibility of I'm now a member of staff working

⁴ The author of this report was commissioned by XP. He is also a director and trustee. This potential conflict of interest was flagged to the funder, Edge Foundation and was made clear in the application for ethical approval by SHU.

at XP as opposed to I'm just another student, I'm just like you, you know, to make sure we get the relationships right and that kind of social dynamic I suppose.' (AP)

The LCs also saw their role as facilitating the work of SLCs

'For me I'd like to stay in the background as it is and just have check-ins and make sure everything's running smoothly and I think they'd gain more strength, confidence, independence in their learning, revision skills, they've got to get independent with that.' (LC1)

'I think it were really nice for the students, for it to be student coach based. I think us just supervising helped them really feel comfortable going through that and I think if we took on a more prominent role, I think the dynamics of that would change.' (LC2)

5.3 Delivery of coaching

The SLCs delivered 11 sessions of D6. Each session was three hours long, from 9.30 to 12.30. The activities for sessions were unstructured and not prescribed by the school. The intention was to build on XP principles of students leading themselves. Notice of the D6 sessions was given to Y11 students in crew meetings, along with the potential benefits and the fact that it was completely optional.

Table 4: Attendance at D6 sessions

D6 Attendance at 11 sessions 2020-21*	07-11-20	14-11-20	21-11-20	28-11-20	05-12-20	10-04-21	17-04-21	24-04-21	01-05-21	08-05-21	15-05-21
Students	14	11	7	9	10	5	11	11	11	8	13
SLCs	5	5	3	5	5	4	3	3	3	4	3
SCs	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2

* SLC=Student Learning Coach (student); SC= Learning Coach (staff)

Table 1 shows the number of D6 sessions, and student attendance. The AP and the CAO were present at parts of most sessions. In the period covered in this evaluation there were 11 sessions. 27 students attended at least one session and the average number of sessions attended was 4. The average attendance for all sessions was 10. This average (20% of Y11) is broadly similar to attendance at MMS (25% of year groups) although MMS has opened D6 up to all year groups. 7 students attended at least 8 sessions, and 9 students attended only once.

Notable in the record of attendance is the disruption in the timetable owing to Covid. Originally planned as 25 sessions, only 11 were held, and both the later start to the programme (7th November) and the interruption (between 5th December and 10th April) were due to the lockdowns imposed and the problems of accommodating student bubbles. In May 2021, the school was doing teacher GCSE assessments with students, and this also contributed to some falloff in attendance, explained by the AP as students thinking the pressure was off because they didn't need to do exams. It also affected the SLCs who had their own A Level assessments and course work, with one SLC withdrawing.

The SLCs led and organised the D6 sessions, with some supervision by school staff, mainly the SCs with the AP attending initial sessions.

'[SLCs] were just brilliant at setting everything up ... I mean they'd start each D6 session with a crew, split up into crews and do a debrief and do a check-in. They were phenomenal.' (CAO)

The AP responsible for leading the SLCs was also their crew leader in 2019 when they left XP and therefore knew them well. However, he had not been involved in the initial visit to MMS and therefore was less familiar with the philosophy. After, initial sessions, observed by the CAO, there were some adjustments to the role of the SLCs:

'I think it was in the second week or the third week that we'd been running it I was in school and I just had a bit of a walk through just to see what was happening and what I gleaned from that walkthrough was that the coaches were instructing the kids so they'd got groups of kids and they were saying, well, we'll instruct you in an area of history, so you're doing the Vikings, we did the Vikings so we'll teach you about the Vikings and that was absolutely not what we wanted the learning coaches to do. It was to facilitate learning, not to instruct.' (CAO)

This was also partly in response from the students:

'It needed to feel different from school and we got a bit of push back from the kids as well actually who said ... 'I thought this was going to be different from school and I thought I could determine my own timetable' ... so I think we'd kind of over structured ...' (CAO)

The fact that this was 'out of sync' with the original vision of how D6 was meant to run was a worry if students were to lead their own learning:

'We didn't want our [SLCs], even though they were brilliant actually, standing up in the front of a class and didactically instructing kids, I was like, you know, we could get teachers who are trained to do that on a Saturday morning, that isn't the concept.' (CAO)

The LCs noted this also:

'I think they took on the role of teacher more and they automatically started teaching from the front rather than helping students with what they'd got because when it first started none of the students were bringing work in to work with, so they were teaching them new things but doing it a lot from the front as in a lesson' (LC2)

The conversation about this took place at the first support session for SLCs where the CAO and the AP talked over with the SLCs how things were going.

'We shared with the coaches this is what we'd seen, and this wasn't quite right. [AP] absolutely accepted that as well and we just kind of redefined what we wanted to get out of D6. That really, I think was a really important intervention because it then did have a real impact on how the coaches then worked with the kids. They stopped doing the instruction' (CAO)

The AP was aware of this and how D6 was evolving organically, albeit affected by Covid:

'The numbers started to creep up actually each week [until] we were in the second lockdown where schools were still open ... when the next lockdown hit, we obviously had to shut and so when we came back in March time, ... that was when the announcement had been made that GCSEs are cancelled and that there would be no exams and that's where we started to see a tail off in attendance.' (AP)

Allowing for the fact that the AP had not attended the original presentation and visit to MMS to see D6, he felt that D6 had evolved as a kind of *'expectation versus reality'*. His response to experiencing D6 was that in 2021-22 six SLCs were needed and that at least two of these should be ones that were involved in the first run. He was also more aware of which students might benefit the most:

'The reality of it is we know that there's some kids who you go, 'you'd really benefit from coming to D6, why don't you come along?' I suppose that needs to be the message rather than you need to come to D6 - we don't want to see it as another intervention, and we don't want to be on to the parents saying your child needs to come on a Saturday because they're not doing very well, or they need extra help.' (AP)

Much clearer for the AP was the philosophy behind D6 in the context of XP and how to realise it.

'It's about that student-led learning and students - we don't want it to become a stick. It needs to be of their own volition I think - it felt like we were building a bit of momentum with it and then word spread You know, on the same note we don't want it just to become like a youth club on a Saturday where people come and socialise.' (AP)

This tension between the student-led ideal and the reality was perhaps illustrated in how some students were directed to D6:

'[Name] was a good example in Year 11 who [Crew Leader] kind of sat with him and then phoned mum and said it would be really good if he could come to D6 because I think he'd get a lot out of it, and he did actually.' (AP)

This pragmatism of the ethic of D6 was also a response to the problems of Covid, and the AP spoke of this and its effects on students as being *'uneven'* and often where the students who most needed the help were most affected:

'I think [it was] less about the learning loss per se because it wasn't necessarily about catching up or anything like ... some kids coped really well because they were from a particular background ... and the other end of spectrum was where kids were in such a poor routine they went to bed at three, four in the morning, waking up at midday, not doing the activities, not engaging with crew leaders very much It was more like here's a place I can come and figure things out that I lost because of COVID.' (AP)

The AP spoke of tweaking of the model, to find its *'sweet spot'*:

'You get a feel for when it's working right. When it looks busy and students look busy and look like they're working hard but they're not sitting in a classroom with people talking to

them, it's that kind of feeling but I would say, yeah, the first piece of that puzzle really is going to be really clearly defining the purpose of D6, the rationale for it and I suppose the vision for it and then working towards that but making sure that's communicated with everybody ...' (AP)

The AP's vision for implementing D6, beyond the logistical and organisational aspects involved students helping each other:

'[next year] if you've got some Year 10s coming in they might want to sit and just help somebody in Year 7 a little bit. I think that's the first step, is just widening the net and then seeing what it looks and feels like with more kids in there. I think it's the kind of thing that's difficult to predict. When there's only a few kids in it's quiet, it's busy, it's purposeful'. (AP)

But he was realistic about scaling this up to larger numbers:

'Extend that to 100, you know, that environment doesn't necessarily scale with it, it might become a bit noisier, little kids into the mix might become a bit sillier at times, there might be behaviour management things to look after so therefore student coaches might need a few tweaks on here's what to do if students are not getting it right.' (AP)

The need to develop clear 'protocols' for student expectations and behaviour was seen by the AP as the next challenge, perhaps with a phased introduction.

'The cynical side of me says I wonder if parents would send their kids on a Saturday morning because it gets them out of the house for a morning, you can get some stuff done and so we might find there's kids who necessarily wouldn't normally come but are coming which might present even more challenges.' (AP)

This proviso was also about being clear of the benefits of EST:

'I think there's a reason that school days are the length that they are. There's a reason that we have a lot of holidays and a lot of breaks ... by summertime kids are absolutely shattered and sometimes when kids are tired and they're doing too much it becomes more trouble than it's worth. ... kids get really tired and when they get tired, they get daft, and I think we'd see an increase in that. So I don't think more equals better. I don't think more equals quality.' (AP)

The AP articulated the issue of EST as being 'more' school for its own sake as the distinction between equality and equity:

'I suppose it's that kind of conversation around equality versus equity. Equality is you're all going to have a longer day. There might be some kids who don't need it but there might be some that do need it, but equity is putting resource where kids need it rather than putting it towards everybody. It's about levelling the playing field isn't it whereas I think just extending holidays, extending school day, having more I don't think does that.' (AP)

5.4 The effectiveness and impact of the D6 sessions

While the D6 programme was initially aimed at both Y10 and Y11 students it transpired that students attending were mostly Y11. The CAO commented:

'We got Year 10 students attending but their attendance wasn't great, partly I think because of the pandemic and partly because we'd not been able to really launch it properly,'

It was possible to correlate the attendance at D6 with academic performance, allowing for students having the choice of whether to attend or not.

'[the information] we got from Year 11 is really significant stuff. It worked really, really well for the students who attended regularly, and it had a significant impact I think, not just on their academic attainment but also how they grew as characters and how they saw themselves as learners and I'm absolutely sure that it has given them even more confidence to carry forward into their next steps.'

In terms of the process, each D6 started with a check-in, where students were asked to use a post-it to say what they wanted to achieve in the session. SLCs responded by working flexibly with the students, with some group work and some students working individually.

'We had some kids who came in who just worked on their own and revised and they didn't need to engage with any of the coaches and that was absolutely fine. Some of the coaches said [in] the check-ins were saying what are people worried about? Saying, ah, I'm struggling with this essay on McBeth and so it was like, oh, well let's have a little study group then, does anybody else want to join that?'

The two staff LCs, who were also crew leaders, were key in being the intermediaries between the SLCs and the staff in school. A D6 Google Classroom was set up so that teachers could drop work in, as requested by the students. The SLCs had access to this and used it in their preparation. This was a shift from the original conception as it was assumed that students would just bring their own work in, but it became useful for teachers to suggest topics if they knew students were attending D6.

'So the kids were coming in saying I know what I'm doing today, Miss [Name]'s left me some more resources on the history essay I'm writing about Hitler and his rise to power, and so then the learning coach could say oh great, well let me support you on that or do you want to show me your draft or can I critique it?' (CAO)

Taking the eight students who attended at least 8 of the 11 sessions (73%), an examination of the impact on attainment and progress per student is shown in Table 5. *Attainment 8* (A8) is the average measure of an individual student's progress across their 8 best performing subjects at GCSE. For each subject, students are given a mark from 1 to 9 (for English and maths) or from 1 to 8.5 (for other subjects). A score of 1 is roughly equivalent to a GCSE '1' grade, and a 9 is roughly equivalent to a GCSE '9' grade. The total score for each student is added up, and then divided by 10 to get an average attainment score. (It's divided by 10 rather than by eight because of the double weighting for English and Maths.)

The *Progress 8* (P8) score shows how these students have improved during secondary school, compared to other students who were at the same level when they finished primary school. This is the difference between the average Attainment 8 score for students who started secondary at a similar level (based on results at KS2 tests taken at the end of primary school) and the student's actual Attainment 8 score.

The sample is a range of predicted attainment scores (from 30 to 68) and predicted progress scores (from -1.65 to 1.53). The improvements between the predictions and the actual scores are shown for each student. The average improvement for the group who attended more than 70% of D6 in the year 2020-21 is 5.5 for A8, and 0.55 for P8 – equivalent to an average improvement of half a grade at GCSE. While this sample is small, and the contributing factors are difficult to isolate, when taken together with the positive accounts of students (see below) there is a strong indication of positive impact on learning.

Table 5: Attainment and Progress scores for students attending more than 70% of D6

Student	Gender	Attainment 8			Progress 8		
		Predicted	Actual	Improvement	Predicted	Actual	Improvement
Student 1	Female	53	58	5	1.53	2.03	0.5
Student 2	Female	59	60	1	0.09	0.19	0.1
Student 3	Female	46	58	12	0.83	2.03	1.2
Student 4	Male	68	72	4	-0.17	0.23	0.4
Student 5	Male	41	42	1	0.97	1.07	0.1
Student 6	Male	30	37	7	-1.65	-0.95	0.7
Student 7	Male	51	57	6	0.45	1.05	0.6
Student 8	Male	39	47	8	0.13	0.93	0.8
Average improvement				5.5			0.55

A second measure of students' achievement is HOWLs – Habits of Work and Learning – where teachers and crew leaders grade students for their habits of work and learning per term for each curriculum expedition. The HOWLs are specified as *Work Hard*; *Get Smart*; and *Be Kind* using the same 4-point system as for academic grades, set out in XP's Assessment Handbook:

- 4 - Excellence: the student always demonstrates this HOWL
- 3 - Secure: the student almost always demonstrates this HOWL
- 2 - Developing: The student sometimes does not demonstrate this HOWL
- 1 - Beginning: The student regularly does not demonstrate this HOWL

The trust takes the view that habits of work and learning are a set of skills and attitudes which support a safe learning environment, develop self-discipline, and provide the foundation for a culture of achievement. They are considered as important as the academic content or skills students will master during their school career. The premise, therefore, is that there is a direct correlation between HOWLs and academic achievement, and crew leaders place great emphasis on developing HOWLs and assessing students with regard to their achievement and progress in this area. The HOWLs are made explicit to students and parents:

Work hard

- I arrive for each class on time and prepared.
- I participate fully and mindfully in class.
- I complete all work in a timely manner to the best of my ability.

Get smart

- I take responsibility for my learning by asking questions and seeking help when needed.
- I assess my work, based on established criteria and rubrics.
- I welcome feedback and revise my work.

Be kind

- I communicate politely and kindly.
- I work cooperatively with others.
- I take care of resources and materials and act as a steward of our community.

Table 6: HOWLs final grades for students attending more than 70% of D6

Student	Average HOWLS		
	Work Hard	Get Smart	Be Kind
Student 1	4	4.5	4
Student 2	3.5	4	3.5
Student 3	4	4	4
Student 4	4	4	4
Student 5	3.5	4	3
Student 6	3	4	3
Student 7	4	4	4
Student 8	3.5	4	3.5
Average	3.7	4.1	3.6

Students are expected to maintain a 3.0 or better in all of their HOWLs if they are to develop as successful learners and are expected to take remedial action if they are not demonstrating our HOWLs to an acceptable standard. Table 6 shows the average HOWLs for the eight students who attended over 70% of the D6 sessions. Direct correlation between the HOWLs and the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 improvements for each student is difficult to establish and it is impossible to claim causation related to D6. However, these data provide a fuller picture of the cases that each student represents. Abi (Student 3), an average student, maintained a 4 (excellent) in her HOWLs, and made a 12-point improvement in her A8 score and 2.03 improvement in P8. Ethan (Student 6), predicted 30 points in A8, improved his strategies for learning (Get Smart) to excellent (4) and made a 7-point improvement, almost 1 grade per subject. While, again, the case for a causal link between D6 and academic attainment and HOWLs is difficult to make, this partly substantiates the underlying principles that D6 is founded on, and that there is an interdependent relationship between them.

5.5 The skills and knowledge gained by the Student Learning Coaches

All of the SLCs spoke of enjoying the experience of D6 and finding it 'rewarding'. They viewed the opportunity as positive for their own development:

'[it was] a good opportunity to develop skills that employers and universities will look for as well. So, it was just a great opportunity and a great fit for what I was looking for at the time' (SLC1)

'it's a skill set for going to university and having those extra skills added to your CV, but also added to you as a person' (SLC2)

'... it goes on your CV, but it's something so similar to [university]. So, it gives us that leverage, but also for me personally, I'd have never thought I'd be working with young people. That would never have crossed my mind, but I feel like it opens up a new way of thinking.' (SLC4)

The relationships developed between SLCs and students often went beyond the sessions:

'Some would email me afterwards about stuff like medicine that I could help with or asking for resources. So, they really took on board what we were saying and really engaged with what we were doing.' (SLC3)

The closeness in age to the students, and having experienced the same school and culture was seen as helpful by the SLCs:

'Being that close in age makes it more comfortable. They're not just thinking we're here to, not shout at them, ... but we're also here to comfort them and say, 'This is what we went through. This is how we can help'. (SLC4)

'Whereas with us, with it just being a couple of years, we could all say, 'We did this just last year or just the year before. We know how you feel.' We could talk about our own experience, and it was still an experience that was very fresh and recent to us. So, I feel like we were someone they could trust our advice.' (SLC1)

The SLCs felt that the students trusted them and would ask questions they wouldn't put to teachers. Being adaptive and being sensitive to the needs of students was important:

'The first few weeks we kind of did formal lessons and I sometimes found that a bit difficult because I'd never taught anything before, I'd never stood in front of a class and tried to give them help as a group, but then as it went on and it became a little bit less formal, we started doing more one on ones' (SLC1)

This developed over time:

'As we got to know what they struggled in, so for example when I was teaching English or history, there would be a few students who can't just learn by writing questions down and answering them, they could learn visually. So, we'd put videos on, annotate the videos, go back through, whatever worked.' (SLC4)

They saw their (relative) expertise in school subjects, studying for A Level, valuable and the process reciprocal in helping them deepen their own understanding of the subjects.

'We are taking at A-Level, so that's our speciality, we know the core elements of what we're trying to teach them, and I think that gave us the advantage in helping them' (SLC4)

'I also spent quite a lot of time with students going through past paper questions. I'd take a group of maybe two or three of them into a room, we'd look at a question, we'd annotate the question and answer it' (SLC1)

Division of labour in the SLC group was managed around their expertise, whether humanities or Maths or Science:

'I usually focus on science because that's what I was doing at A-Level ... I'd gather some exam questions and put them on a presentation. We'd go through those together and then check what we'd got and then sometimes I'd do things like, 'Draw this type of cell,' or, 'Explain to me how this process works,' as a collaborative thing and then I'd do a few more fun things like the mini experiments you get, like the ruler drop experiment in biology' (SLC3)

Often the interaction between students and SLCs was metacognitive, providing strategies for learning:

'A lot of the kids who came had the knowledge but didn't have the skill set to revise. So, they had the capacity to revise, but they just didn't know how to or how to effectively use what little time they might have. So, I think one of the big impacts was in giving them that skill set and imparting our own knowledge to them.' (SLC2)

Some of this was about confidence:

'I realised that for quite a few of them it wasn't that they were coming to D6 to get extra knowledge or extra teaching, it was that they were struggling doing their own study at home. They felt that they needed support in maybe how to study and also just motivating themselves to do it.' (SLC1)

'I feel like as the weeks have gone on, they've gained more confidence in themselves to think,' That is actually the right answer. I know how to work. I know how to learn and to put my knowledge down.' (SLC4)

This involved talking about the future, and college and university, offering a perspective from someone who had recently gone through it.

'We also did a lot of personal development stuff. So, I would chat with the kids if we had a spare minute on what were they planning on doing at college just to try and find ways that I could target it to them, to the kids who were struggling because I think from experience' (SLC2)

The careers aspect was supported by one of the staff LCs:

'I had a little bit of a careers drop-in centre as well, so they dropped in for some careers advice some of them while they were there. Some of them just bobbed in to do that which were really nice that you could spend a bit of time doing CVs and stuff with them.' (LC2)

Having covered the importance of safeguarding in the preparation sessions, and of keeping themselves and the students safe, there were instances where students confided in SLCs:

'She was very anxious, got very worked up and in her mocks had had to come out of a couple of exams because she'd broken down or had a panic attack and so I spoke with her. ... I spoke with her and talked through it ... I was able to help her on that personal level and give her some advice that helped me when I was going through the exams, and I know she emailed me afterwards to thank me.' (SLC2)

SLCs were given XP email addresses and access to a D6 Google Classroom, so that they could see what students were doing in class. After several weeks of D6 the SLCs asked for resources to support their growing understanding of the role, such as access to an online resource, *Exam Pro*, so they could access past papers.

In terms of how they would like to improve their preparation they explained how future SLCs might be given an experienced SLC to work alongside⁵, and for more time to be given to preparing them, with examples of strategies and activities. More notice of the topics being covered in class and guidance from teachers on current topics would also help.

SLCs spoke of the reciprocal benefits of being a student learning coach and what they had gained:

'I think it's really forced me to scrutinise my own revision plan and what I'm doing now and look at how that's transferable and take some advice off the kids really as well. I think a lot of the kids are very laid back, whereas I perhaps was a little bit more stressed and anxious when I was in their position.' (SLC2)

In response to the question 'what would you say to a Y11 thinking of becoming a D6 coach' they all felt they would recommend the benefits and the experience:

'You get to see these students you're helping flourish and develop and achieve and it feels really good to watch this happen and also it gives you a new experience to have such a sense of responsibility that maybe people haven't had before.' (SLC3)

'[I would say] it's incredibly rewarding because you get to be the person who I think all of us wish we had when we were their age to talk to you not only about the academics and be that shoulder to lean on in terms of that, but also to give you advice about the wider world and steps after GCSEs.' (SLC2)

5.6 The effects of D6 on students' engagement with learning

Although the numbers attending were relatively small, LCs were able to point to the effects on students, including those who were initially resistant:

⁵ SLC3 has been appointed as a staff Learning Coach for her gap year, 2021-22

'I see this glum face ... and I said, ah, did your mum force you in? He went, yeah, I had to get out of bed for this. Anyway, he came on his own, he went upstairs and after two hours he was really happy because he'd completed his history assignment, he'd got feedback from the mentor for it and he says I'm coming back for three hours next miss, I'm going to be here nine till 12. He wasn't a high achieving student at all, but he got a lot from it.' (LC1)

Others developed confidence over time:

'The difference in her from the several months that she came to D6 and she came regularly every week, just her confidence levels in her own ability, you know, she were working with students that were already doing the courses that she wants to do at college, she were engaging with them and just to see the difference ... she's wanting to apply to D6 to do the mentoring now.' (LC2)

The four students in the focus group also mentioned this. One of the group (P3) had attended 10 of the 11 sessions, and for her it was a chance to improve her grades over time and to improve her confidence:

'So, I thought it was good to have a lesson and then go to D6 to solidify that information and it was a great place to go with people who also had the same passions and wanted to learn the same as you and it just helped in assessments' (P3)

The others (P1, P2 and P4) had only attended 8 sessions between them, but talked of the effects on them:

'For me personally it was the fact that I could go to some experienced college students who have previously studied the courses and have a lot of experience and they could help me better my methods and how to learn properly in science and maths because I was really struggling, and I've realised that by going to even a few sessions it's really impacted me and my grades' (P2)

There was some adjustment to be made to the format by students attending, who found the SLCs to be nervous at teaching for the first time:

'The D6 coaches on the first one were really trying to figure out what they were doing, scouting around seeing what people wanted to do and the likes. The first couple of D6 days, sessions were really structured. The D6 coaches were acting more like teachers, putting people in classrooms, and asked them what they subject they wanted to do, put them in classrooms then tried to teach them' (P4)

Others were surprised at the unstructured nature of the D6 sessions:

'When I first went in there was a lot more freedom than I expected. I expected it to be more of a controlled, put in a classroom kind of thing, but it wasn't. It was your decision to be there, so it was you who would lead your learning. It was just that the support was there when you needed it' (P3)

The shift to individually focused and tailored sessions was welcomed by the students, giving them the opportunity to choose exam papers and call upon SLCs for help. P4 wanted the environment, somewhere quiet to study without distractions:

'So, the best thing that I got from the D6 coaches was being given the environment where everyone's learning and them being on hand to help me if I needed them.' (P4)

There were things the SLC couldn't help with:

'I remember going up to a D6 coach and it was with some maths work, and they didn't specialise in maths. They were, not just as confused as I was, but they didn't really understand it. So, what happened then was we worked together to research and further understand it as a pair.' (P3)

'There were I think one or two questions none of us could work out at all because we didn't understand the paper enough, ... I think it might have been a part of science that the D6 coach wasn't 100% keen on, so we did struggle a little bit trying to sort out that paper.' (P1)

5.7 Developing the D6 programme and its curriculum

There was a consensus by staff, the SLCs and students, that the D6 programme had value and could be run again.

'I think with Year 9s getting involved would be amazing because they can obviously then see by the Year 10s and 11s how they work and the way to work, how they question mentors, what their thinking is, how they write so they will pick things up and be mentored and help that way.' (LC1)

Students liked the format and the mixture of formal and informal:

'With me I feel sometimes actually do better if I'm talking to someone. Sometimes when I'm at home, for example if I'm going through a piece of work or homework or something along those lines sometimes, I'll be on a call with one of my friends and I feel like just talking to them about whatever ... for me it does help me concentrate a little.' (P1)

For others a quiet space was important:

'When I was there, I just had a table in the library to myself with my headphones on. So, I feel like working independently with no-one around you without distractions is easily accommodated.' (P4)

Students in the focus group agreed that it was worth scaling up:

'I would have liked it to have been open since Year 7 to be honest.' (P4)

'If I was in any year group, I'd want that help from the older year groups, just because they've got more experience. Like we benefited from the Year 12s and 13s, I think it was, the younger years could benefit. Maybe Year 7s benefiting from Year 11s.' (P2)

In terms of scaling this up the LCs had some reservations about numbers, suggesting that an optimum number was one coach to eight students:

'It's going to be more of a challenge the more students we get in there. The younger we go down the years the more there might be issues with behaviour and maybe bits of silliness. I think we could counteract that by putting on some physical activities as well.' (LC2)

'We can handle the lower numbers, it's not a problem but I think that would benefit from somebody senior in there so that students realise that - and there'd have to be consequences if there was any behaviour, any issues with things.' (LC1)

When asked whether they would consider becoming a SLC the students all thought this was worth considering for the benefits to themselves and for the remuneration:

'I think I would want to because for me it really benefited me and I'd really love to pass that onto someone else and the knowledge I have, I would love for anyone to benefit from that, any year group.' (P2)

'I'd very likely become a D6 coach because I think not only would it help students who would struggle in certain areas, especially maths because that's one of my strong points I think, and I know that's something a lot of kids struggle with.' (P1)

Students had advice for other students who were considering attending D6:

'I'd say definitely go and as soon as possible because, like we said, we wish we'd had it earlier and I don't think you realise how much you benefit from it until it does come to tests in school and stuff where you realise that you've absorbed all this knowledge that you didn't even realise you'd absorbed from going on a Saturday.' (P3)

'I have a brother in Year 10 and he's currently doing his mocks and practice and he's asking me, 'What do you recommend? Do you recommend anything?' I told him, 'Go to D6. It really helps you. There are going to be people there who specifically specialise in that subject you need help for.' (P2)

One difficulty raised by the student focus group was the problem for those living some distance away getting to school on a Saturday (given that XP students come from across Doncaster). Typical was:

'I know with some people as well it can take them quite a bit of time to get to school because they live further away or it is just they don't have a car or something like that, it's just awkward to get there in general.' (P1)

Finally, unprompted, the students were keen to express their praise for the work of the SLCs and the efforts of the LCs, AP, and CAO on making D6 possible.

'Just to praise the coaches. They've done such a good job and I know that I'd be so nervous going up and teaching people who are only a couple of years below you and not knowing

what you're walking into. So, I really think they did an amazing job and they've really helped us with our grades, and it doesn't go unnoticed.' (P3)

'I'd like to build onto [P3] and appreciate the school and everyone who's set it up because even though we experienced it for a little while, I think it will really benefit anyone and everyone who attends, and I just want to thank you for that extra support that we had.' (P2)

6. Conclusion and recommendations

Taking the research questions in turn, the findings are summarised, and key recommendations are made.

6.1 The vision for D6 and how is this articulated by staff leading and supporting D6

There is strong indication that the vision for D6 and its implementation in the XP context has been led effectively by the CAO, and supported by the AP. The cascade of this vision down to the LCs and the SLCs has been reasonably well managed, with strong fidelity to the original principles. The adoption of the vision by the SLCs is effective, albeit developing. It is clear that the anticipated benefits, including the strengthening of relationships and reinforcing HOWLS, are materialising, and it is expected that dissemination of the headlines of this evaluation will assist in disseminating the value of the programme.

Recommendation 1: Develop a strategy for disseminating the benefits of D6 to students and parents, and to other staff.

6.2 The delivery and format of D6

The report examines the process and resources for running D6 in 2020-21. The accounts of students, SLCs and staff indicate that the duration and timing of sessions are about right. It is clear that D6 is evolving and there are lessons learned for how the delivery and the format of the programme can be improved. Key to this is the staff that oversee the D6 sessions and provide the link with crew leaders. The current emphasis on student-led learning complements the pedagogy and curriculum of the two secondary schools. While there are strong links between the work that students choose to do at D6, and what they might be advised to focus on by teachers this is not systematic, even allowing for cases where students do not wish to engage with academic work in D6.

Recommendation 2: Review the links between the focus of students' work in D6 and that of current expeditions and facilitate how this can be maximised, including the involvement of crew leaders.

6.3 Students' experiences of D6 and the benefits they perceive

Students valued the contribution of coaches who had recently been through the same experience. The impact of D6 sessions on students' attainment, progress and habits of work and learning is indicated by the data for the eight students who attended regularly. LCs and SLCs also spoke of

effects on students who attended infrequently, and this should not be overlooked. There was concern for those who lived further away.

Recommendation 3: Develop a clear statement of the possible ways that students can engage with D6, shared with students, parents, and crew leaders.

6.4 Preparation and support of the Student Learning Coaches

The selection of alumni for the role of SLC has been a success and has been beneficial to the students and the SLCs themselves. It is clear that students' perception is that SLCs are very helpful for learning and building confidence and that SLCs bring a dimension that complements what the school and teachers have to offer. However, while the SLC's own subject knowledge is important, the school needs to monitor the coverage of subjects and to fill gaps where necessary. SLC's understanding of their role is key and this might have been clearer at the outset. The provision of 'support sessions' prior to the D6 events each week was beneficial and an important opportunity for the coaches to discuss their work and the strategies they would employ. The focus of sessions on safeguarding, metacognition and self-regulation, and transaction, were all seen as helpful. Techniques such as keeping a coaching diary might also be helpful, along with access to Google Classroom and resources to help with coaching. The involvement of experienced SLCs in future cohorts is beneficial.

Recommendation 4: Provide (paid) preparation sessions at the outset and regular support sessions for SLCs on their role and key ideas and techniques for coaching and provide monitoring of practice to aid learning.

6.5 Towards best practice in D6 for all students

The degree of formality, and of free choice to attend or being directed by school staff to participate, is an important balance that needs to be made. The flexibility of the approach, and the important principle of meeting individual needs is key but requires a level of adaptability and awareness that SLCs need help with. Further modification of the programme to include other year groups will affect this balance, and the logistics need careful planning. This should include strategies for making the benefits of D6 clear to disengaged students

The intention is to run further D6 cohorts in 2021-22 that take forward these recommendations and build on the success of the programme. A further evaluation of the D6 programme and its impacts will build on this report and examine further its impact. The value of this review will be increased with a larger sample size and attention to pre/post attainment measures such as Attainment 8 and Progress 8, as well as measures of engagement and attitudinal scores such as HOWLs.

Recommendation 5: Clarify leadership and responsibilities for taking D6 forward

While the vision and direction of D6 was ably led by the CAO and the CEO, delegation of leadership of D6 in order that this is managed and guided effectively, is required. This includes oversight of the implementation and impact to ensure that the benefits are sustainable and transferable.

Recommendation 6: Identify the basis of further monitoring and evaluation of D6 as it is scaled up, including staff responsibility for this.

The disruption of Covid, including the lockdowns and student bubbles, has had some effect, with less than half (11) of the envisaged 25 sessions taking place. This has disrupted continuity and the students' familiarity with the programme, which in turn has affected attendance and has made it more difficult to identify the impact of the programme and to limit the confidence in the effects observed. However, there are strong indications of positive perceptions of the value of the programme held by those who have been involved. Key here is the validity of the proposition that D6 is consonant with, and mutually reinforcing of, the Trust's principles and common mission. This, by itself, is a good reason for continuing the D6 project, and along with the potential benefits explored in this report a strong case can be made for developing D6 further.

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Appendices

1. Information sheet and consent form D6 Student Learning Coach (Focus Group)

Information about the XP D6 Programme Evaluation

You are taking part in the XP School D6 Programme as a **Student Learning Coach**.

As part of the programme, we are carrying out an evaluation. The aim is to help us to understand how and why elements of the programme have worked well, or not so well, and to help us improve the programme going forward. Therefore, we want to gather information about your experience of being a learning coach, including the preparation and support for the role, your D6 sessions with the XP students, where you think you have been able to support them and any challenges you have faced.

What will the evaluation involve?

For the evaluation, we may ask you to do one or more of the following:

- participate in a focus group with a researcher, these will last around 45 minutes, and will take place at a time convenient to you. With your permission, interviews and focus groups will be recorded using an audio recorder and may be transcribed;

The focus group will be carried out by an experienced researcher from Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University. With your permission, the focus groups will be recorded using an audio recorder and may be transcribed. The interview or its transcription will be shared with the researchers involved in the evaluation. All data will be stored in secure password-protected computers in Sheffield Hallam University.

If you decide not to participate in the research it will not affect your place on the programme.

The information gathered for the evaluation will be shared with project stakeholders and used for the purposes of understanding the impact of the D6 programme. If you wish to withdraw any data you have already provided you can contact the evaluation lead within two weeks of taking part in the focus group. After this time, your data will have been anonymised and collated with data from other participants for analysis.

Will I be identifiable?

All reports, and academic research publications, will anonymise individuals in order that no individual participant or school will be identified or identifiable.

For the purposes of research and knowledge exchange including presentations at professional or academic conferences, or publications in professional or academic journals, the retention period for the anonymised data will be 10 years after the last publication arising from the research. The anonymised data may be used for other research purposes, for example for reanalysis of data to further illuminate the mentor/mentee relationship.

How will my information be used?

The University undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data protection allows us to use personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of **public tasks that are in the public interest**. A full statement of your rights can be found at <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research>. All University research is reviewed to ensure that participants are treated appropriately, and their rights respected. This study was approved by the University. Further information can be found here <https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice>.

Interviews will be recorded so that the researcher can listen back and ensure they haven't missed anything you have said. Anything you say to the interviewer or on the questionnaires will be treated in confidence and all data will be anonymised: neither you nor your organisation will be named in any publicly available reports, except with your and your school's permission.

This will comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and in accordance with the university Data Protection Policy Statement: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research>

<p>You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• you have a query about how your data is used by the University• you would like to report a data security breach (e.g., if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately)• you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data DPO@shu.ac.uk	<p>You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Professor Ann Macaskill - a.macaskill@shu.ac.uk) if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated
<p>Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT Telephone: 0114 225 5555</p>	

Our evaluation of the programme will be completed by the end of October 2021.

If you have any further questions about the evaluation, please ask:

Dr Richard Pountney - evaluation lead – r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk

Participant consent form

If you are happy to take part in the various activities involved in the evaluation of the GROW programme, please complete the following consent form and return it to your facilitator.

If you prefer: you may complete the form online using this link:

https://shusls.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9HrYH3KjLXFHlhw

Please answer the following questions by circling, or highlighting, your responses:

I have read and understood the information sheet about this evaluation	YES	NO
I have received enough information about the evaluation to allow me to decide whether or not to take part	YES	NO
I understand that I am able to ask for further clarification from the interviewer before the start of any data collection and can decide not to continue at that point	YES	NO
I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study within two weeks of taking part in an interview, focus group or survey and that this does not affect my participation in the programme	YES	NO
I understand that project staff may access session materials, mentoring logs and critical reflections on sessions and that I may withdraw this consent at any time.	YES	NO
I understand that, in the write-up of the evaluation or other research that draws the data collected for this evaluation, my contributions will be anonymised	YES	NO
I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.	YES	NO
I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study to be used for any other research purposes.	YES	NO
I consent to the audio recording of interview/s and/or focus groups	YES	NO
I understand that choosing 'yes' to the above questions and signing this consent form will be taken as my written consent to taking part in interviews/focus groups once anonymised.	YES	NO

By signing below, you indicate that you have voluntarily decided to take part in this study having read and understood the information in the sheet for participants. It will also indicate that you have had adequate opportunity to discuss the study and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

Thank you for agreeing to take part!

Signature of participant:

Date:

Name (block letters):

Contact email address:

Contact telephone number:

2. Parent information sheet and opt-out form (Focus Group)

XP D6 Saturday School Programme Evaluation

XP and XP East Schools in 2020-21 have provided an optional D6 programme on Saturday mornings to support students preparing for GCSE assessments. Your child has taken part in one or more of these sessions working with a Y13 **Student Learning Coach** prepared and supported by the school. Now that your child has completed the programme, we are carrying out an evaluation. The aim is to help us to understand how well the elements of the programme have worked, so that we can improve the programme. Therefore, we want to gather information about children's experience of the programme and being coached. The evaluation aims to identify what effect the coaching has had on children's confidence and habits of work and learning. The evaluation is not about testing individual students, or staff, or schools, but is about understanding how effective the programme is overall.

See <https://xpschool.org/d6-begins-this-saturday-for-year-11/> for more information about the programme.

What will the evaluation involve?

The school has requested this evaluation and has agreed to pass this information sheet to you. We are therefore contacting you as a parent / carer of a student who took part in the D6 Programme, to ask permission for your child to take part, in school, in an online [Zoom or similar] **focus group** (with a small number of other students, lasting between 30-45 minutes to share their thoughts on the experience. We would like to ask you what your child thought of the coaching, and if they think it's helped them at all.

This evaluation has been checked and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). In summary:

- Despite you agreeing to allow your child to take part at the beginning of the programme - the decision for them to take part in a focus group is still their choice. Participation is voluntary and they can decide to not be involved and/or withdraw from the focus group/interview without giving a reason. There will be no consequences as a result of this.
- We will provide an age-appropriate information sheet explaining what the research is about and what the process for data collection is. Before we audio-record the focus group/interview we will ask your child for verbal consent.
- Their name will not be used in any reports or in any related academic publications.
- If they decide that, following the interview/focus group they wish to withdraw their data, they can contact the named researcher detailed at the bottom of this information sheet within 14 days of the interview/focus group).

What happens next?

We will arrange with the school to agree a time, during the school day, when we can hold the focus group or interview. This will take place in a quiet room, in school, possibly with a teacher present. The meeting will be recorded, and the session will be transcribed and collated with those of other students, into a summary, that we will use to write an evaluation report. It is important that you know that we are evaluating the programme, not your child or their teachers or the school. The findings from the report may be disseminated at educational research conferences and in academic or professional journals. No individual students, staff or schools will be named in these reports.

How will the data be protected and what is your right to withdraw?

Personal data will be kept securely on a password protected University folder accessible only to members of the evaluation team. The SHU evaluation team will comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and in accordance with the university Data Protection Policy Statement. Please refer to the link for more information:

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notice/privacy-notice-for-research>

You should contact the Data Protection Officer DPO@shu.ac.uk if:

- you have a query about how your child's data is used by the University
- you would like to report a data security breach (e.g., if you think your child's personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately)
- you would like to complain about how the University has used your child's personal data

You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Professor Ann Macaskill a.macaskill@shu.ac.uk) if you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how your child was treated

Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT / 0114 225 5555

If you require further information about this evaluation, please contact:

Dr. Richard Pountney (r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6288)

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM (OPT OUT)
XP D6 PROGRAMME EVALUATION

To be completed by a parent or guardian who **DOES NOT AGREE** to their child taking part in the GROW Programme research as outlined in the attached information sheet.

I confirm that I have read and understand the attached information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I **DO NOT** wish my child to take part in the above study

Please use BLOCK CAPITALS

Your Name

Child's full name

Child's school

.....
Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date of signature

3. Student information sheet and consent form (Focus Group)

XP D6 Saturday School Programme Evaluation

You have taken part in D6 Saturday School sessions working with a **Student Learning Coach** provided by XP/XPE School. Now that the programme has finished for this school year, we are carrying out an evaluation. The aim is to help us to understand how well the elements of the programme have worked, so that we can improve the programme. Therefore, we want to gather information about your experience of the programme and being mentored.

What will the evaluation involve?

Your school has invited Sheffield Hallam University to carry out the evaluation, and to pass this information sheet to you. We are therefore contacting you as a student who took part in the XP D6 Programme, to ask you to take part, in school, in an online [Zoom or similar] **focus group** (with a small number of other students), lasting between 30-45 minutes to share your thoughts on the experience. We would like to ask you what you thought of the mentoring, and if you think it's helped you at all.

See <https://xpschool.org/d6-begins-this-saturday-for-year-11/> for more information about the programme.

This evaluation has been checked and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). In summary:

- Despite you and your parent/guardian agreeing to take part in D6 at the beginning of the programme - the decision to take part in a focus group is still your choice. You can decide to not be involved and/or withdraw from the focus group/interview without giving a reason.
- Before we audio-record the focus group/interview we will ask for your verbal consent as well.
- Your name will not be used in any reports or in any related academic publications.
- If you decide that, following your interview/focus group you wish to withdraw your data, you will need to contact the named researcher detailed at the bottom of this information sheet within 14 days of the data collection (i.e., up to 14 days after the interview/focus group).

What happens next?

We will arrange with your teacher to agree a time, during the school day, when we can hold the focus group. This will take place in a quiet room, in school, possibly with a teacher present. The meeting will be recorded, and your answers and comments will be transcribed and collated with those of other students, into a summary, that we will use to write an evaluation report. It is important that you know that we are evaluating the programme, not you or your teacher or the school. The findings from the report may be disseminated at educational research conferences and in academic or professional journals. No individual students, staff or schools will be named in these reports.

If you require further information about this evaluation, please contact: Richard Pountney (r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6288)

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THIS INFORMATION SHEET

4. Focus Group schedule for students

XP D6 Programme – Student Focus Group (indicative schedule)

Semi-structured Questions (starters, allowing for follow-up where appropriate)

- [interviewer introduces themselves explains briefly what is going to happen and why and checks verbal consent for participation]
- Can we go round and briefly introduce ourselves?
- Can you each say a little about how many D6 sessions you attended and why you decided to go along?
- What do you remember about the early sessions?
- Did you know what to expect?
- Did you know that Student Learning Coaches were going to be involved? How did you feel about that?
- How did you get on with the Learning Coaches?
- Did you speak with the school staff at all – what about?
- Say a little about an activity that a Student Learning Coach helped you with. Anything stick out in your memory about that?
- What about doing this in school on a Saturday? What was that like [follow up where appropriate on location, travel, friends ...]?
- What were the best things about the programme for you?
- What were the worst things?
- Do you feel the programme helped you in any way [follow up where appropriate on effects on how they felt about the disruption to learning, effects on getting back into school, getting ready for exams ...]?
- How do you feel about the future now?
- Would you recommend the programme to your friends? Why / why not?
- Is there anything you want to say about the programme that we haven't discussed?

5. Focus Group schedule for Student Learning Coaches

XP D6 Programme Evaluation – Student Learning Coaches (indicative schedule)

Semi-structured Questions (starters, allowing for follow-up where appropriate)

- Can we go round and briefly introduce ourselves?
- Say a little bit about your involvement in D6 and why you got involved
- How have you found it?
- How would you describe your D6 role? How did the students respond to you?
- Did it help that you were an alumnus of the school? Why?
- Can you give some examples of your various activities on D6 days?
- Can you give some examples of how your work on D6 had an impact on students?
- How well prepared did you feel on day 1? How could this have been improved?
- How did your D6 work develop over time? Were there any developments you made – how did these come about?
- What do you think the effects of CV19 were on yourself and your study at college last year? How is that now? How did it affect your D6 work?
- How could your role be developed?
- What would you say to a Y11 who was thinking of becoming a D6 Student Learning Coach next year?
- How much were you paid for the work? How does this compare to similar Saturday work? How do you feel about that?
- In what way do you think your D6 work might help you in the future?
- How do people feel about the future?
- Is there anything anyone wants to raise with the group?

6. School Staff Interview (indicative schedule)

XP D6 Programme – School Staff Interview (indicative schedule)

Semi-structured Questions (starters, allowing for follow-up where appropriate)

- Introduction and invite to ask any questions about the research
- Can you briefly introduce yourself?
- What is your involvement in D6? How did you get involved?
- What did you know about D6 before you started?
- What do you understand as the purpose of D6?
- What are the general feelings about the programme? Which type of student was it best suited for do you feel?
- Do you think there were effects of CV19 on D6 - students / the school / yourself? How is that now?
- Do you feel there was a learning loss? In what way?
- How can schools get back to normal do you feel?
- How can D6 be developed further? In what ways? What do others feel about that?
- Is D6 appropriate for younger students – what would need to change?
- How do you colleagues feel about D6 do you feel?
- How do people feel about the future? Is there anything that will change about supporting students in future that has arisen from what we learned about lockdown?
- The government is talking about extending the school day – how do you feel about that. Is D6 different from that – in what ways?
- Is there anything else you want to raise with me?

Sheffield Hallam University

Evaluation of the XP Trust D6

POUNTNEY, Richard

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