Case Study

University of York

On Track Programme

The programme provides **one-to-one coaching** for students from widening participation backgrounds, supporting them to explore **employability, career goals, professional identity and future aspirations.**



Overview of On Track Programme

Students from low-income and independent backgrounds often face barriers that extend beyond academic achievement. They may have less access to professional networks, role models and informal sources of career guidance, making it harder to imagine and pursue future opportunities.

The University of York's On Track Programme exists to help address these challenges by providing **targeted support** to students from **widening participation backgrounds.**

The programme recognises that successful progression is not simply about skills and knowledge. It is also about helping students believe in their potential and understand the pathways available to them.

Following three years of pilot delivery, Inclusive Futures was appointed as the University's contracted coaching partner for 2025-26.

Students work with a coach over a series of structured conversations designed to **increase confidence, build self-awareness, navigate barriers and translate aspirations into meaningful action.**

Through individual coaching, the programme creates space for students to reflect on who they are, what matters to them and what kind of future they want to create, helping them develop **greater confidence** and **agency in shaping their next steps.**

Evaluation

Key Statistics:

71% of students reported a **better understanding of themselves** by the end of the programme

145 students accessed **coaching support**

296 coaching sessions were delivered.

67% of students reported a **stronger vision for the future**



Key Findings:

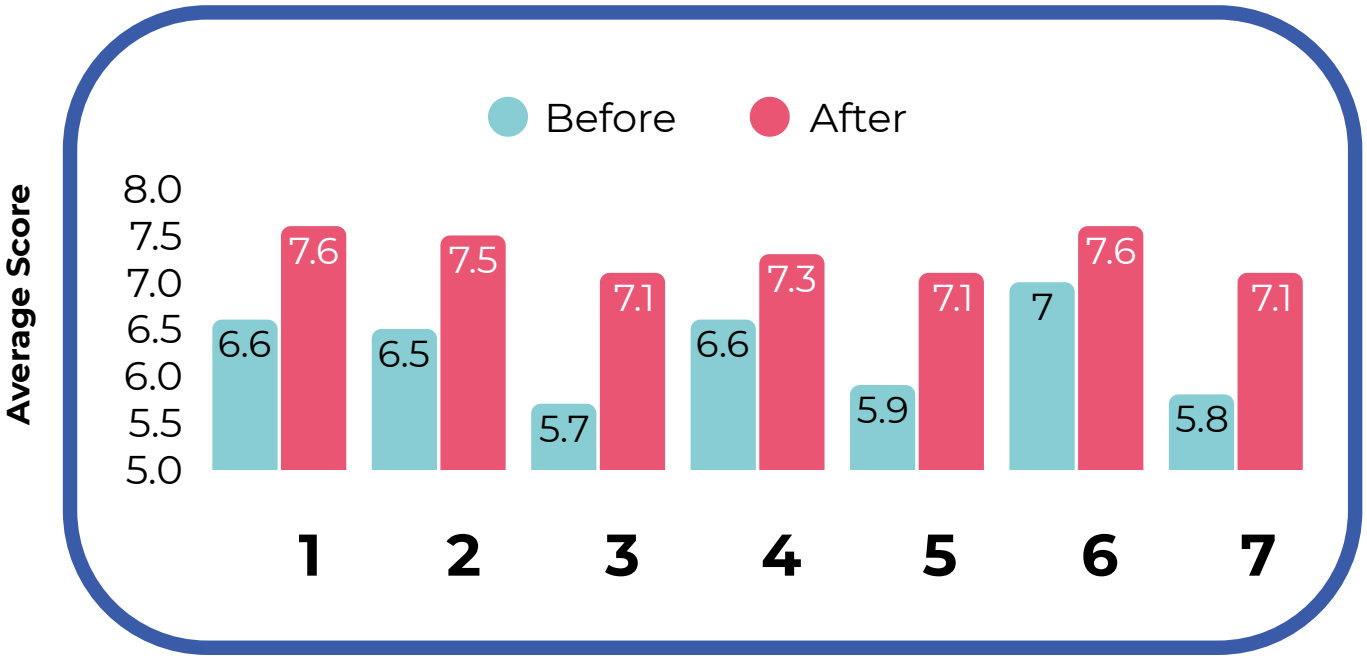
- **Self-awareness** emerged as one of the most important outcomes of the coaching programme.
- **Confidence** was one of the most common themes discussed during coaching, featuring in approximately **half of all coaching sessions**
- **Career direction and future planning** were among the most **common goals** identified at the start of coaching, highlighting the importance of creating space for students to explore what is possible for them.
- Many students **translated increased confidence** and clarity into **tangible outcomes**, including securing internships, progressing through competitive recruitment processes and building professional networks.

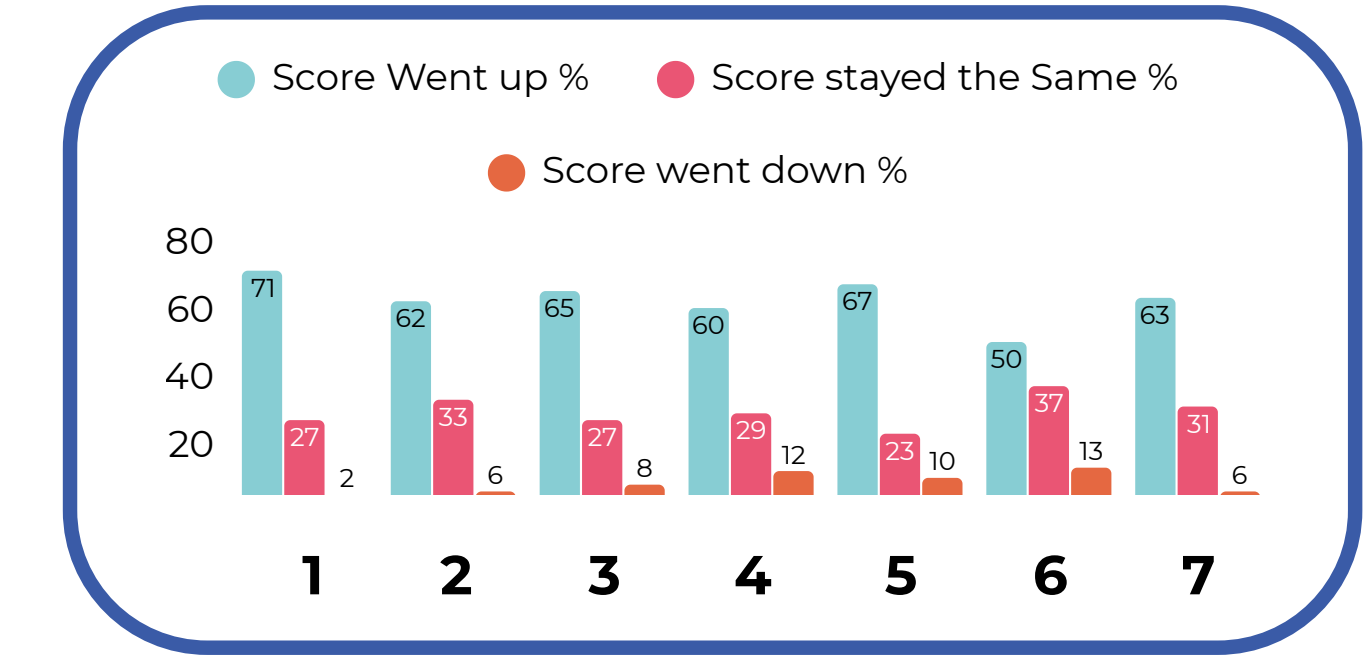
The Data

Students completed a **Discovery Wheel** at the beginning and end of the four-session coaching programme, rating themselves across seven areas: **Understanding Myself (1), In Control of My Life (2), Self-Confidence (3), Motivation (4), Vision for the Future (5), Resilience (6), and Taking Action (7).**

This coaching tool supports students to reflect on their development and recognise areas of growth over time.

Alongside this, coaches tracked themes discussed within coaching sessions and recorded students' employability goals, providing insight into the topics, challenges and ambitions most important to participants.





What does York say?

"**Students end the programme knowing what's possible, being clearer of their future and having thought about what is important to them.**

Coaching has provided a safe space and support to unpick and discuss this. The students Inclusive Futures have been supporting don't always know what is possible or what they want, so they need this before they work on the 'how'. Inclusive Futures' coaching has provided all of this."

“The team at Inclusive Futures are clearly passionate about working with students from a range of backgrounds and have the expertise to support students with the challenges they face.

Since working with Inclusive Futures, we have been able to be more reactive in a positive way to speak to what students need.”

Hannah Fraser and Nicola Clemmit
job roles?

Future Implications

The success of the On Track Programme demonstrates the value of combining employability support with coaching. While practical career guidance remains important, the evidence suggests that confidence, self-awareness and future vision are foundational to **helping students progress.**

The partnership with the University of York also highlights the importance of **targeted support** that **recognises the lived experiences of widening participation students**. By helping students understand what is possible for them, develop confidence in their own abilities and take meaningful action towards their goals, coaching has become a powerful tool for **supporting student success and social mobility.**