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Evaluation of the Sussex Coastal Highway Project, 2001/2

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September 2002

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Sussex Coastal Highway project

The Sussex Coastal Highway project is designed to widen participation in Higher Education (HE). The project is funded by HEFCE for three years and the participating institutions are the three Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Sussex (University of Brighton, University of Sussex and University College Chichester), eight schools and eight Further Education (FE) colleges in Brighton, Chichester, Hastings, Newhaven and Worthing. The project has two strands, strand b and strand d. Strand d was funded for one year and has now finished. It was concerned with mapping the needs and aspirations of 19-21 year olds who had either no level 3 qualifications or incomplete qualifications for entry into HE and exploring ways of meeting those needs. This report is concerned with the other strand of the project, strand b, which has been funded for three years and has just completed its second year.

Strand b of the project is working with successive cohorts of pupils from year 10 upwards in the participating schools. It aims to provide sustained intervention to encourage these young people to achieve at age 16 and subsequently to enter HE. The project designs and delivers a range of activities for the participating pupils. It is delivered by three Project Officers, one based in each HEI, each of whom has the responsibility for leading the project in one or two of the five towns involved. Additionally, in 2001, a Mentoring Co-ordinator was appointed to develop mentoring across the whole project. In autumn 2001 the Chichester-based Project Officer left the project, so there was no Project Officer in post in Chichester for several months during 2001/2. One of the Project Officers undertakes the role of Project Manager and the project is overseen by a steering group.

1.2 The evaluation of the Sussex Coastal Highway project

The evaluation of the Sussex Coastal Highway project is being conducted in three stages with reports submitted at the end of each year of the project (September 2001, 2002 and 2003). The present report evaluates the second year of strand b of the project and makes recommendations for the project's work in 2002/3.

Less funding was provided for the evaluation of the project's second year than for the first and third years, so the evaluation of the second year is designed simply to assess the extent to which the project is continuing to meet its aims. The purpose of the evaluation was established by the project steering group. The evaluation is designed to:

1. assess the project's outcomes and impacts on participants;
2. assess the extent to which the project is successfully targeting the specified population;
3. determine which of the project's activities are most appropriate;
4. examine the extent to which the effects of the project vary within the region and/or between participants;
5. evaluate the management of the project;
6. make recommendations about how this and future similar projects could be improved.

In addition, this second evaluation report will ascertain the extent to which the recommendations made in the first evaluation have been implemented. These recommendations were:

1. Ensure that, in all participating schools, the primary cohort targeted is year 10. Continue to ensure that the pupils selected meet the project's criteria.
2. Provide HE staff who contribute to taster sessions with written information about the project and about the year 10 cohort, together with examples of the types of activities which have been successful in previous taster sessions.
3. Identify a set of core activities that all participating pupils will be entitled to receive by the end of year 11. In particular, ensure that this entitlement is delivered in the Chichester cluster.
4. Develop those activities which were offered in 2000/1 but were not taken up by participants, e.g. study skills activities, and continue to explore and develop new activities.
5. Review the position of the school that had some difficulties in working with the project and resolve the problems experienced by this school.
6. Consider whether it is feasible for strand b Project Officers to share more information about their activities at the planning stages and whether greater uniformity of activities across the clusters, and/or greater joint working between Project Officers, would be beneficial.
7. Consider ways in which information about the project can best be disseminated within participating institutions, especially the HEIs, as well as to other SLPA institutions. Implement a dissemination strategy in 2001/2.

Chapter 2

Research methods

2.1 Introduction

A qualitative research strategy was employed, to provide detailed information about the impact and outcomes of the project and its strengths and weaknesses. The main data collection method was qualitative interviews with participants in the project and those involved in delivering it. Representatives of all stakeholder groups were interviewed and, as far as possible, similar numbers of interviews were conducted in each cluster area. In order to validate pupil and parent interview data in a wider group, short questionnaires were distributed to a larger sample of participating pupils and their parents.

The interviews had a semi-structured format. To ensure that all topics were covered, the interviewer used an interview schedule as a prompt sheet, but the interview format also allowed interviewees to raise other issues if they wished. The interview schedule was used flexibly, allowing a conversation to develop between the researcher and the interviewee. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer obtained permission from the participant to tape record the interview. Interviewees were assured that their comments would be treated in confidence and that the interviewees' identities would not be made known to anyone other than the researchers. (Two interviewees, the Project Manager and the Mentoring Co-ordinator, are identifiable in this report and their permission has been obtained for this.) Each interview was transcribed in full for analysis.

Copies of the questionnaires and those interview schedules where a standard set of questions were employed in more than one interview are provided in Appendices 1 to 10.

2.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with:

- 17 pupils
- 4 parents
- 9 teachers
- 2 FE mentors
- 4 HE mentors
- 2 FE tutors
- 5 HE staff involved in taster sessions
- 5 members of the steering group

- 4 Project Officers including the Project Manager and the Mentoring Co-ordinator

Pupils

The 17 pupil interviews included at least one pupil from each of the project's cluster areas (see Table 2.1). Seven of the eight schools were represented in the pupil interviews. All the pupils interviewed were from Year 10 because at the time of the evaluation Year 11 pupils were taking their GCSEs and they subsequently left school and were difficult to contact, although some completed questionnaires (see section 2.3). Interviewees were either selected by teachers or were chosen by the researcher from those who were present at project activities or during the researcher's visits to schools. Most of the interviews were undertaken at the pupil's school but two were conducted at one of the HEIs (after a project activity) and one was conducted at a pupil's home with a parent present. Most pupils were interviewed individually but on one occasion it was more convenient to interview three pupils as a group. Pupil interviews generally lasted between 10 and 15 minutes.

Parents

All of the parents who received a questionnaire (see section 2.3 below) were asked in a covering letter whether they would be willing to be interviewed. Twenty replied positively. These replies included parents of children from all of the project's cluster areas. However, due to time constraints, it was not possible to contact all of those who responded. Four parents were interviewed, representing two of the cluster areas. Three of the parent interviews were conducted in the interviewee's home and one was carried out at one of the schools. The parent interviews lasted approximately half an hour.

Teachers

Sixteen teachers were interviewed. This included at least one teacher from seven of the eight of the schools. One school was not represented because of difficulties in arranging a suitable interview time with the teacher involved. Teacher interviews were conducted at the schools and lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. In one case two teachers were interviewed together.

FE and HE mentors

Names and phone numbers of a sample of mentors from HEIs and FE colleges were obtained from the Mentoring Co-ordinator. All of those contacted by the researcher were willing to be interviewed. The interviews took place in the mentors' homes with the exception of two which were conducted at the University of Sussex. Interviews were between 20 and 30 minutes in length.

FE and HE staff

Two FE tutors were interviewed. One of these had considerable ongoing involvement with the project and had been involved in a number of the project's activities and the other had invited HE students to visit her college through the project. Interview questions were designed for the individual interviewees and the interviews lasted 45 and 25 minutes respectively. Both were conducted at the interviewee's college.

Four members of HE staff who had been involved in taster sessions were interviewed at their respective HEIs. Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes.

Members of the steering group

Five members of the steering group were interviewed, including a representative from each of the three HEIs involved, the Chair of the steering group and a teacher who was a steering group member. Interviews were carried out at their respective institutions and lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

Project Officers

All the Project Officers, including the Project Manager and the Mentoring Co-ordinator, were interviewed. They were interviewed in their workplaces except for one who was interviewed at home. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

2.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by 98 pupils (29 Year 9, 62 Year 10 and 7 Year 11). Pupil questionnaires were distributed in three ways. The 29 Year 9 pupil questionnaires were completed by pupils from the two schools within the Chichester cluster area during the summer school at University College Chichester. A further 143 questionnaires were given to teachers at the other six schools to distribute to the Year 10 pupils. Questionnaires were returned by five of these six schools, and a total of 63 questionnaires were received through this method.

Finally, 55 pupil questionnaires were sent directly by post to approximately half of the Year 11 pupils who participated in the project. A covering letter explained the purpose of the questionnaire and a stamped addressed was envelope enclosed for return. Seven questionnaires were returned by this method. The Year 11 pupils who were contacted through this method were also asked in the letter if they would be willing to undertake a short interview. There were three positive reply to this, but it subsequently proved impossible to arrange an interview time with one pupil and the other responses were received too late for an interview to be arranged.

Forty-nine parents filled-in a questionnaire. Seven were parents of Year 9 pupils, 36 of Year 10 pupils and 6 of Year 11 pupils. Parent questionnaires were distributed to the majority of parents of pupils who participated in the project from each school. At three of the schools the questionnaires were given to the teacher or Project Officer responsible to forward on to the parents. Thirty-three parent questionnaires distributed through this method were returned to the researcher. The other parent questionnaires were sent directly to the parents' home addresses with a stamped addressed envelope enclosed. Of these 16 were returned.

2.4 Summary

In total, 52 interviews were carried out and 147 questionnaires were returned. In selecting the interviewees an attempt was made to provide representation of all groups of stakeholders in the project, and, in the case of pupils, parents and teachers, geographical representation across the project. All stakeholder groups were appropriately represented (see section 2.2) and, as Table 2.1 shows, the geographical representation was good. As noted in section 2.2, at least one pupil from seven of the eight participating schools was interviewed. Similarly, at least one teacher from seven of the schools was interviewed. The school at which no pupil interview took place was different from the one where there was no teacher interview, so every school was represented by at least one pupil or teacher interview. Six of the eight schools were represented by parent interviews and/or parent questionnaires.

Table 2.1 Representation of pupils, parents and teachers

	Newhaven	Worthing	Chichester	Brighton	Hastings	Total
INTERVIEWS						
Pupils	4	5	2	6	1	17
Parents	0	0	0	3	1	4
Teachers	1	1	2	3	2	9
QUESTIONNAIRES						
Pupils	4	37	29	26	2	8
Parents	0	25	9	12	3	49

Chapter 3

Findings of the evaluation

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the extent to which the project is continuing to meet its stated aims. Data from the interviews is presented and, where appropriate, information gathered from the questionnaires is included.

3.2 Selection of pupils to participate in the project

The project bid¹ specified that selection of participants would be based on 'those from families less well represented in higher education, with potential, but needing some tailored intervention for that to be realised'.

Interviews with teachers showed that in most of the schools, appropriate selection methods were employed.

We identified the cohort who were at a certain level of academic potential using their Key Stage 2 results, Key Stage 3 test results and their CAT results and ... they completed a questionnaire and [the Project Officer] took those questionnaires away, and from the answers on the questionnaire she selected on both occasions about 25, 30 children who would fit the criteria. She then came in for two mornings and interviewed them all and reduced it down to the 14 or 15.
(Teacher)

In the first instance we selected a group of approximately 90 pupils who had test scores of above a certain level ... we then narrowed it down, by use of a questionnaire, to 47 we've got this year, who made it clear from the answers to their questionnaire that they didn't have any relations, immediate relations or friends, that had been to university. (Teacher)

I got a database set up of the students, with details of their CAT scores and Sats scores, and I sorted them in order of CAT score and issued them to the tutors or I gave them to the Year Head ... we identified them by ability and then identified them by the family background. (Teacher)

¹ Proposal for funding for widening participation 1999/2000 to 2001/02, University of Brighton, September 1999

One teacher said that his school's selection method for the second cohort was an improvement on the method used in the first year of the project:

Because we were selecting from a House system as opposed to a Year system we've actually had people who know them better, so the selection has much better fitted the criteria. As a result the boys in the Year 10 group are much more what I would call enthusiastic and amenable. (Teacher)

Teachers and Project Officers reported that in two schools there were some problems with the selection process in 2001/2. In one of these schools it proved possible to reach agreement with some of the selected pupils that they would not participate in the project:

[In one school] the cohort were quite badly selected and everyone laughed when they saw the list of names because what he'd given me was some of the worst behaved kids in the year group and not exactly what I'd asked for which was CAT scores above 100. Most of them weren't as strong academically as that. But anyway that's been an interesting cohort and what we've done is we've dropped six of them and the school managed to recruit another six pupils who are much better suited who will now continue with the project. (Project Officer)

We interviewed the students that weren't responding and weren't taking advantage of the Highway system, didn't we, and we said 'Look, you know, you haven't replied to one letter, you haven't gone on one trip, do you want to be on this?' (Teacher)

However, in the other school all of the pupils who were originally selected have continued on the project.

... the head of the sixth form felt – when she saw the list of the pupils that had been chosen from that school – that some of them were not suitable, but they were all so keen that we decided that we couldn't say to them that they couldn't be part of it, and, in fact, what she did was she called a meeting at the school for all the Coastal Highway pupils and they all turned up. She was hoping that some of the ones that were less suitable would not turn up, and would deselect themselves, but every single one of them came, and if they're that keen then you know having five or six that may not be suitable is OK, I think. (Project Manager)

Problems with the selection process were attributed by interviewees to misunderstandings on the part of the teachers who undertook the selection.

I don't think it was explained very well to the year tutor ... The year tutor had got the wrong end of the stick and I know that there are students on the programme who are not at the moment going to get to university because they just don't have the wherewithal at the moment. Later on in life they might go on to an access course and they might be able to, but at the moment they don't have the skills,

they don't have any of it. (FE tutor)

In the Chichester cluster area, as in 2000/1, Year 9 rather than Year 10 pupils were selected. These pupils participated in the summer school at the end of Year 9 will then continue with the project when they progress to Year 10.

Teacher 1: There's been a bit of a debate in the steering group about it because technically the target is Year 10 ...

Teacher 2: And we've got, I mean we've picked them from Year 9. The only activity they're doing in Year 9 is the summer school, so when all the other things, the visits to the universities and so on take place they will be in Year 10, the mentoring starts in Year 10 and 11.

Teacher 1: So really Year 9 is, politically with a small p, we said Year 9 is an introduction to the scheme. The main focus of the funding is targeted at Year 10 and 11.

Three interviewees suggested that the selection process needed to be explained to pupils more fully, because of the possibility of demotivating pupils who were not selected. Two of these interviewees cited specific instances where there had been a negative effect on pupils who were not selected for the project.

The kids that were actually chosen actually went to the class and said 'Oh, we're the ones who are going to go to university, they've chosen us', so then the others thought 'Oh well, if they're the ones that think they're going to do better then why do we bother?' So perhaps the selection process wasn't too clear, I guess, to the children. ... I think it needed to be explained more to them because of the misunderstandings, like with a girl that thought that she hadn't been chosen because she wasn't going to go to university. (FE mentor)

There was a parent contacted me of somebody that hadn't been selected and he felt his daughter was probably bright enough but she'd obviously struggled in the results that we were going by, but he felt that because she hadn't been selected she now considered herself unfit to go to university. (Teacher)

When I was told that [my son] was on the project, my initial reaction was 'Oh that's good', but then I thought about it the other way round, and I was sort of saying, 'Is so and so on it, is he on it, is he part of the project?' and I was thinking, if I was one of those parents, I'd be thinking the other way round 'Why isn't my child being given that sort of opportunity or at least some of the information?'

The pupil interviews showed that some pupils had a clear understanding of why they had been selected for the project, but others were unsure. There was some evidence that the level of understanding among pupils varied between the schools.

We went into the canteen and filled in a questionnaire and I think most people who hadn't got someone in their family who had been to university and could tell them about it, most of them got picked. (Pupil)

I was underachieving, like I was capable to do it but I wasn't sure like whether I was going to college or anything so [my teacher] said to me it would be a good idea if I went on it, so I did. (Pupil)

Interviewer: Why do you think you were selected to be on the project?

Pupil: I don't know actually, I was really surprised. I don't know. No, they didn't really say why it was, I don't know. They didn't say and I didn't really ask. (Pupil)

Interviewer: Why do you think you were selected to be on the project?

Pupil: Because I'm clever! I don't know, I don't know really. They got us all together and then they said 'Right, we've only got to choose a few' and I was put on the reserve list and someone dropped out so that I could go instead, so it was good. (Pupil)

3.3 Appropriateness of the project activities

A wide range of activities designed to increase pupils' understanding of higher education has continued to be delivered during the second year of the project. Activities provided during the first year of the project, such as campus visits, taster sessions and parents' evenings were delivered again. Additionally, new activities such as study skills seminars were delivered and, following the appointment of a Mentoring Co-ordinator, mentoring was offered in most of the schools for the first time.

3.3.1 Campus visits, taster sessions and summer school

As in 2000/1, campus visits, including the Chichester summer school, and taster sessions were very successful and were enjoyed by the pupils.

We had a go on a graphic calculator. That was cool. ... We had an IT session and we did this questionnaire on the internet and you had to do all these questions on that and in the end it would tell you what kind of stuff you were into. I got music as my highest one. (Pupil)

They've been to the universities, which they've really enjoyed. Because they've had the summer school at Chichester they saw a fairly small institution in action which was an eye-opener, and then to go to a great big university like Sussex and see everything there, that really captured their imaginations. (Teacher)

They enjoyed the one to the University College Chichester best and that was the Year 11 group simply because of the content of the day. It was very hands-on, very active. They weren't listening, they were actually participating in some group type activities. ... They did a write-up for me, the older ones, the Year 11's did a write-up for me after they'd done I think two or three visits. They'd done Brighton, they'd done Sussex and they'd done University College Chichester, that's how I know that they preferred the Chichester visit. (Teacher)

When she'd come back she'd say what she'd done and that she'd had a fun time and enjoyed it. It wasn't all heavy and academic and all that sort of thing, because with [my daughter], she finds spelling and things like that really hard, but because it was all sort of practical things and making things and all things like that she did enjoy it, I think, very much. (Parent)

They did computing with one of the staff in the Computing and Maths school and that was very hands-on. They built a web-site, Durrington High School website, and they did separate pages on what my school is like, what I enjoy doing, my year group, etc. So that was good, that worked out really well. (Project Manager)

As in 2000/1, a few of the taster sessions were less successful:

I found it very difficult to get the girls involved. They were very silent on me. ... I didn't know how well the girls knew each other to start with and I just found it incredibly difficult to get them going and that was hard ... I couldn't get the girls to interact. I couldn't get them to talk to me very comfortably. It just didn't work. (HE Tutor)

We went to some various sample lectures, but lecturers from the university talking to a group of lads from Year 10 in Hastings, some of it was pitched a bit high. ... The kind of activities that worked the best were the ones which allowed them to be hands-on, in other words for the students to be doing things, they're active. So, for example the one to Brighton worked very well when we went to Chelsea School at Eastbourne, because that's your Sports College and that allowed the lads to actually do things, run around and, that's what works best, the active ones. (Teacher)

3.3.2 Mentoring

Some mentoring took place in the first year of the project in the Chichester cluster area, but, following the appointment of a Mentoring Co-ordinator in 2001, mentoring was delivered in most of the schools in 2001/2. Mentors undertook a training programme during the autumn term:

I trained them over a 10 week period. We started off with a whole day Saturday

school and then we met on a Wednesday evening over eight consecutive weeks until Christmas and I devised and ran a training programme with them based loosely on the Derby Accredited Training program for mentors. ... It starts just unpacking the word mentoring and the mentoring relationship and the role of the mentor generally, and then it looks at the kind of needs and situation of young people in Year 10 to 11 at school. So, it looks at the needs and wants of young people, it looks at learning styles, it looks at study skills - the way people learn, what GCSEs entail in terms of the content of learning but also the skills and processes of learning which often aren't included in GCSEs. We look at planning and action planning, at motivational interviewing ... We look at child protection issues, we look at sources of support like careers, like drugs agencies, like other sources of support in the town so that if mentors are finding their mentees are in trouble they know where to refer them on to. And we look at practical exercises that can be done in the different sessions. (Mentoring co-ordinator)

Mentors also received on-going support:

Every couple of weeks or so, there was a chance to feed back. I always felt that if something had come up I could contact [the Mentoring Co-ordinator]. And we had top-up sessions. (HE mentor)

We were able to get feedback and we did have resource evenings as well. Like I've done a lot of sheets and stuff that I've used with information that they can have, and other people have done like revision sessions for different subjects. We all brought in our material and then swapped it round and photocopied each others' so we're trying to build up a resource library so then we've got it and it doesn't take us as long to find out. (HE Mentor)

... the support network has been fantastic, like with [the Mentoring Co-ordinator and the Project Officer], you can contact them whenever, and we were given an awful lot of material, a lot of work went into it. (HE Mentor)

Both mentors and mentees said that mentoring had been valuable for pupils.

It was one to one, I got to know her really well and she could tell you all about what it was like at uni and about other things. (Pupil)

She told us about stuff we'd not heard of, like gap years and things like that you could do, certain places you could go or things you could do. (Pupil)

When it got to the end of their school term for Year 11, I said to them 'Well, if you want any other revision sessions, you know, throughout study leave or whenever, just tell me and I'll sort you out, but if you don't then that's fine, whichever you want', and all of them said 'Yes, yes please that'd be really good' which was really nice because they obviously wanted to extend it. They were

always coming in extra time and they always came, so it was like 100% attendance most of the time, and so I'm still doing revision sessions a lot with them now, and one of the girls is like 'Yes, come round to my house, I want to do History, can you help me?', which is really nice, and I've only finished with one of my groups and when I finished they gave me this massive card and loads of presents and things which was totally unexpected but they were like 'Oh, thank you so much, it's been really, really helpful and you've been really great'. (HE mentor)

We spoke about the mock exams which they had coming up soon for their GCSEs, and they were saying they were nervous, and I was just talking about how I revised for my exams, you know I wasn't telling them how they should do it, I just told them how I did it. (FE mentor)

They said they'd be given these booklets, you know, the prospectus and they were really quite scared about it and I was saying how I was scared about university and that was really close for me. (FE mentor)

It was clear that the mentors had worked hard at their role, in some cases with considerable success:

I've got one mentor who says that she can hardly ever get her mentee to talk in a meeting on a one to one basis, but she's devised amazing activities that they can do together which entails talking as little as possible but finding out as much as she can about the girl she's working with, doing collage work and cutting out bits of paper and pictures and words that say something about you as a person, having little pots where you put feedback in to your mentor and your mentee at the end so you can slip in a little note about how you think the session went, bringing along stuff with questions already typed on it so she hasn't actually got to talk through it. And she's trying to gradually draw her out through some work like that, and she's doing quite amazing work. (Mentoring co-ordinator)

Some mentors worked with groups of pupils and found that this was an effective way of mentoring:

With three of them they could share each others' ideas, and I could say things like, let's have five minutes to just write down everything you think about this, and then talk to each other about it. (HE mentor)

With just three mentees it worked really well, because then we could find common ground, sessions that were relevant for everyone and it was really good because they all know each other that are in the group, and all of them are really good friends as well, and so instantly they were relaxed in the group. (HE mentor)

Some of the mentors explained how they had benefited from the experience personally, either from the training they had received or from the experience of mentoring.

The training I thought was really interesting, especially on the child protection and things like that which will come later on when I'm doing my studies in childcare. I'm not a very confident person anyway, I don't like sitting or standing in front of people and talking but I felt I could, so I guess I gained confidence from it, working with them. (FE mentor)

Although some of the mentors were FE students, most of the mentoring was done by HE students.

It was an idea that came from FE colleges that we should use FE mentors and where we have used them it's been a brilliant success, but they were hoping, I think, to go into schools on a weekly basis and schools felt not only that they couldn't accommodate them but they didn't have enough mentees to see them. One idea was that they would be linked up with a HE mentor and go in to work with the mentees, on a one FE mentor to one small group basis, and when the HE mentors were starting it seemed to them like just another person to look after so they didn't want to have someone in with them every week. (Mentoring co-ordinator)

All the FE mentors who were interviewed, and some of the HE mentors, argued that it would have been useful for the pupils to have received more mentoring from FE students.

More college mentors in the schools would have given them a better idea of the subjects because the guy [HE mentor] I was doing it with, no offence to him but he didn't know about any courses at the colleges nearby because he lived far away and he moved to university here, so he didn't have any idea of that, and there's also other things I knew about my college apart from subjects, how to get there, whereabouts it is, what activities they do outside and things like that. (FE mentor)

It would be really good to have [a FE mentor] who could actually come in and talk about it from their perspective rather than just the perspective you get through a prospectus that's trying to sell the place, so a realistic impression. But unfortunately all the FE mentors have their own study blocks and their own commitments and so unfortunately I'm only at [the school] in the morning and none of the FE mentors could come in at that time, so unfortunately they weren't able to come. (HE mentor)

A lot of the university students forgot about what they did at GCSE because it was quite a long time ago so, but I think we've got that closer, and we can remember what we were doing. (FE mentor)

I know [FE mentors] who haven't done anything at all and are quite disappointed really. ... I just think there was not enough communication between the FE mentors and the higher education management. (FE mentor)

The mentoring programme required detailed organisation:

Because of the university year and the school year being different we couldn't recruit mentors until October time which means that we couldn't get them into schools until November. Then it was Christmas, mentors go off early on Christmas holiday from university, and then in January the schools have mocks. So, I think you have to be very tight and very clear about the two different timetables in order to get the programme up and running as quickly as possible. (Mentoring co-ordinator)

Organising mentoring is very, very time intensive, you need a lot of attention to detail ... [the Mentoring Co-ordinator] was able to do a lot of the detailed work. ... Also in terms of the training course, I think the training that the mentors had, and I've had this feedback from the school, was excellent and [the Mentoring Co-ordinator] designed that and delivered most of it as well. (Project Manager)

Despite this good central management of the mentoring programme, in some schools there were organisational difficulties because of circumstances within the schools. Consequently, in these schools, mentoring was less successful. One school in particular had difficulties implementing mentoring:

It was badly managed from the school end; the mentors would turn up, they didn't have a room to meet the mentees in, the mentees had been told only just before the meeting they had to come up, they didn't know what they were coming for, they were just kind of being the troops rounded up to go into a room to wait and see what happened. Different mentees were produced each week, rather than the same set, so there was no possibility of building up a consistent relationship. There were many weeks when the mentors turned up and nobody was there ... So the relationship began to break down and the mentoring finished there completely this year about February, March time. (Mentoring Co-ordinator)

The Brighton University students were excellent, so the training they had had and their commitment was faultless, it was the logistics of trying to fit it into the school timetable. You've either got to make it a commitment, say over a lunch time where you do something like a working lunch, or you've got to say to them it's got to be an after school commitment, but that's quite difficult to do with the type of lads you're talking about, you know, at lunch times they want to play football, right, after school they want to go home and some of them have got part-time jobs. (Teacher)

At another school more mentoring took place, but some organisational problems were reported:

It was a voluntary thing and more than half of them opted not to have any sort of mentoring and then there were all sorts of problems because it's impossible to get to without a car, and a couple of mentors actually dropped out, they say for all sorts of reasons but I think not having a car was one of the key issues. (Project Officer)

The only one slight problem there was, it was difficult fitting them in during the school day because obviously they were supposed to be in lessons at that time of their educational career. It was quite important for them to be in lessons so it was changed and a lot of them saw them after school or whatever and I think the students found that very useful. (Teacher)

In other schools, however, mentors reported excellent organisation on the part of teachers and administrative staff.

The secretarial staff [in the school] have always been happy and friendly and willing to help with anything. The classrooms have always been booked, that's because of the school in itself, you know it's a very new school and each classroom's got computers in, TVs and everything which makes it easier because then I was able to like put gap year videos on and revision videos on. (HE Mentor)

In Chichester, where some mentoring took place during the first year of the project, mentoring was initially offered to the schools in 2001/2 but it was not delivered.

We did let the schools down with the mentoring and I think actually the schools were disappointed, the parents were disappointed. ... I think the minute that [the Mentoring Co-ordinator] was appointed for the whole of the project, for all three, not just two HEIs, we should have really called in [the Mentoring Co-ordinator] at that point and because we've run it before, we pioneered it, because we've run it before perhaps we thought we'll continue to do it and I thought that was a mistake. We should have exploited to the full all the resources of the project. (Steering Group Member)

... we had great expectations and we told the parents and the kids about it and then it didn't happen, which was disappointing, but it is going to happen next year, it's been delayed, but that's just because I don't think the university got themselves together, you know they were learning, they hadn't got together enough students who wanted to be mentors. (Teacher)

Plans are in hand for mentoring in the Chichester cluster area in 2002/3:

We're geared for and planning mentoring to begin in November in schools. ... From September we will be recruiting, training and implementing mentoring in both schools. (Project Officer)

We've agreed to work quite closely on the mentoring, that I will take the same responsibility for the mentoring in Chichester and that I will train people and [the Project Officer] will do the schools liaison there. (Mentoring co-ordinator)

3.3.3 Activities for parents

Parents were invited to meetings including introductory meetings held at schools or FE colleges and a parents' evening at the University of Sussex. Parents said they found these meetings useful:

At Hastings college we had that open evening for parents and the pupils and there was like a girl there who had not got on very well at school and gone off and had a baby and you know, done the normal things that happen and felt that she was going to end up in a sort of dead end sort of life and then she'd, something had happened and she got into university and lots of things were happening to her and she was very positive and I think when she talked, then the younger ones then took more notice because there were older sort of tutors and things there that probably the younger ones wouldn't have taken so much notice of. (Parent)

There was a girl who did a section on university life, she'd sort of left school at a very early age and had a child, then decided to go back to university, that was quite interesting ... I was sitting there thinking, well this person's sort of saying 'If I can do it, anyone can do it'. (Parent)

I did find that very useful and I think it was made very clear about all aspects of it and the financing of it, of further education and all the rest of it. (Parent)

... it gave you a good idea and it was opening up the fact that it's not just about doing the lessons but there's this whole sort of university life itself there and it wouldn't matter what degree you got necessarily, although you can specialise ... it opened up some of the sort of things that we'd see as parents, some of the issues around funding, and the loans side and all that type of thing. (Parent)

It was a little bit daunting, it made you realise that it's not going to be that cheap and, not that that would put me off because I'd rather him go to university ... but I was sitting there thinking yes, I need to plan this really carefully, so I think there's a lot of planning that needs to go into the fact that if you are going to go into uni, you've got to sort of work out your finances pretty clearly up front. (Parent)

Only one parent expressed a negative view of the parents' evening:

It was an open evening where lecturers gave their input, but to be quite honest some parts of it made me quite angry and I actually did give feedback to [the Project Officer]. I found it patronising to be quite honest. The lecturers were coming in, 'I'm from a council house background' and, you know, 'I've managed to make it to university' and 'above all the strains and the tribulations I've managed to make it to university, you poor children from deprived backgrounds can come to university and you can make it too'. (Parent)

3.3.4 Study skills activities

One of the Project Officers ran a number of study skills activities including maths master classes and learning performance seminars. These received excellent evaluations from the pupils:

When we did that day thing last Tuesday, it really helped me, like revision and memory, like doing things in a simpler form and it really helped me, it really taught me instead of just rushing into an exam and then, yes, he explained it really well, so I learnt quite a few things from it. (Pupil)

When I walked in there I thought it would be quite boring because I saw the booklet and it was really thick, but they actually made it quite fun and gave us little prizes if we answered questions correctly and made some sort of games out of it. It was mainly on revision I think, on helping us with revision and he gave us little poems to sort out to try, so it would make it easier for us to remember ... we got to keep the booklets at the end so we've got something to refer back to. (Pupil)

I thought the learning activities, the learning skills day was probably the best one because that was really useful. I'm not very good at revising sometimes so I thought it was quite interesting to find out ways of doing that. (Pupil)

There was a lot of helpful stuff about revision, I really liked it. (Pupil)

Pupil 1: We need some more seminars like we had. They're well good. There was a lot of helpful stuff about revision, I really liked it.

Pupil 2 [*showing a spider diagram*]: This was mine, planning a party.

I contacted the Maths department and got students to do it instead [of teachers] which was a lot better for the kids. ... The kids actually sat for two and a half, three hours with one break in the middle and just worked absolutely solidly and at the end of the day they had lunch with us, and said that they'd actually loved it, which when you think about it is a little bit unusual, and came back for the second

time as well at Easter, but that's something I would definitely repeat with the students. (Project Officer)

3.3.5 Cultural visits

Since the last evaluation report, a number of cultural visits have taken place including a two-day trip to first world war sites in Belgium, a visit to the Catholic University of Lille, a theatre trip, and a visit to the Houses of Parliament and other London locations such as the London Eye and Madame Tussaud's.

We took them to the University of Lille, because the school asked that they should go somewhere like a university abroad because one of the pupils had asked to see a university abroad the year before. So I made contact with the University of Lille through the internet and they sort of hosted us for the day. It was surprisingly easy to get over there and spend a few hours for a day and then get back. They showed us round the Students' Union, the faculties, the libraries, gave us different talks about different facilities that they have there and were basically really hospitable and I thought it was good. (Project Manager)

Interviewees thought that cultural visits were a valuable component of the project:

All those sorts of things are good really because some children only just sort of stay in Hastings don't they, and don't go places. (Parent)

A lot of the kids, because of the background they were brought up in, very few of them have actually travelled very far before, so the opportunity of visiting the first world war battlefields, the opportunity of going up to London and seeing Parliament, these are activities that they never normally would be able to do, so as an enrichment activity, to give them a much wider breadth of what's out there, is very important. (Teacher)

I think the visits which are most successful are the ones which go to high profile places like the Houses of Parliament, because they're taking youngsters from places like Hastings out of their immediate horizons and that is something many of them have never done before. (Teacher)

I hear they were talking about it for weeks afterwards, you know the fact that they were running around the trenches and so on, chasing each other and so on, nevertheless I think it did impact on them and the broadening of the horizons by taking them there and also by taking them to the Parliament visit and so on. (FE tutor)

One interviewee was of the view that cultural visits were not appropriate to the project:

I know that from Hastings a group went to the first world war battlefields. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not questioning its legitimacy but I think we might ask questions about the relevance of that for the widening participation agenda. ... I'm not so sure we can be in the business of supplementing their poor social and cultural horizons all the time. (Steering Group Member)

3.4 Impact of the project

3.4.1 Impact on pupils

Pupils, parents and teachers said that participation in the project had raised pupils' awareness of HE and had encouraged some pupils to consider HE as an option when previously they had not done so. Other benefits that some pupils had gained from involvement in the project were improved attendance at school, greater commitment to academic work, better study skills and increased confidence.

Just within the last year and a half I have seen pupils participating in this project that I have absolutely no doubt would not have gone into further education, but because of the project they will either aim to go to in to further education or they will go in to further education. (Teacher)

With their form tutor when they review their year, a lot of them mentioned it there, and I can't tell you exact numbers, but certainly several of them mentioned that they were now thinking of university where previously they hadn't. (Teacher)

Initially he didn't want to become involved, but, as he did, as he was invited on the visits, he became more and more involved and because of his involvement his attendance actually improved substantially within school, so obviously it had quite the desired effect. (Teacher)

It's helped me, like that seminar thing has helped me sort a lot of my stuff out like my coursework and things and [the project's] helped me in the way that I know where I want to go, what college I want to go to and what I want to do. (Pupil)

I always wanted to go to college, but university I didn't really want to go before, but I would like to go now. (Pupil)

It's helped me socially because I've made new friends and I'm more confident in myself, it's like, OK, people won't suddenly run a mile if I talk to them. (Pupil)

We've had students who went to [visit a FE college] and came back quite excited by it all and that was good for their motivation in school. They've drawn from that situation and brought that into school in terms of motivation. (Teacher)

In the selection itself, because it takes a lot of them by surprise because they're often the kind of kids that have been left, they're not absolutely the top high-flyers, so they often, I think, feel forgotten. That initial picking them up as a candidate for the project, I think that in itself is such a boost before you've even taken them anywhere, and then you start taking them places and they think 'Oh, this is special, there must be something special about me', and then I just think it's the ongoing contact. (Project Officer)

It [the project] gives me lots of help, confidence of what it will be like for the future and it helps with exams, so you're not all stressed out and you can actually memorise more than usual. (Pupil)

We went into one of the actual rooms and sat in there to see what it was like and we had a look round the whole place. ... I'm not sure what I want to do yet but I probably will go to university because looking round it, it's made me think that I really want to do something. (Pupil)

I'm actually trying to get into, I think it's Lewes college, and hopefully get in. I think afterwards I'll probably go to university to get some better qualifications. (Pupil)

It has made my son realise what a great thing it would be to go to university. However much we might try to encourage him, seeing university life at first hand is a bigger incentive. (Parent questionnaire)

I feel it gave my son an insight into university life and made him think about future possibilities. (Parent questionnaire)

It has made him feel more grown up. College and uni certainly seem less daunting for him now. (Parent questionnaire)

Data from the parent questionnaire confirmed that parents believed the project had a range of beneficial effects:

Of the 49 parents who returned a questionnaire:

- 49% said the project had helped with their child's decision to go to university;
- 47% said it had helped with their child's motivation to study;
- 41% said it had helped with their child's decision to continue in education at 16;
- 41% said it had helped with their child's self-confidence;
- 33% said it had helped with their child's school grades.

The pupil questionnaire showed the extent to which participation in the project had influenced pupils' views about HE (Table 3.1). Fifty-two pupils said that they had already wanted to go to university before taking part in the project and most of these (92%), still wanted to go, the rest now being unsure. Nine pupils said they had definitely not wanted to go to university before participating in the project. Two of these now wanted to go, five were unsure and two still did not want to go. Of the 37 who had been unsure about university before joining the project, 23 (62%) were now certain that they wanted to go to university, two said they had decided they did not want to go and 12 (33%) were still unsure.

Table 3.1 Changes in pupils' views about HE

		Would you like to go to university?			TOTAL
		Yes	No	Don't know	
Before you were involved in the project, what were your views about going to university?	I wanted to go (n=52)	92%	0	8%	100%
	I did not want to go (n=9)	22%	22%	66%	100%
	I was not sure (n=37)	62%	5%	33%	100%

The interviews with pupils included some of those who did not want to go on to HE or were still unsure:

I just don't fancy it. It's just more years of school. ... It sort of swayed me a bit, I've sort of kept my options open but after considering everything I've decided I don't really want to do it. (Pupil)

University doesn't really appeal to me that much ... I just think going to college and then going to university, I just think to be truthful it's a waste, but I could be completely wrong. I mean I haven't, I don't know that much about it. I mean, I've been to this taster day and I thought that was pretty good but, I don't know, I haven't really thought that far ahead, I should be I know, but I haven't really thought that far ahead. (Pupil)

I was planning on at least going to college. I would like to go to university, yes, but I'm not that sure about it. ... I'm interested in Art quite a bit, so studying Art would be good. (Pupil)

However, among those who were still unsure about whether they wanted to go to university, several of these pupils' and their parents' comments in response to open-ended questions in the questionnaire showed that the project had helped them to develop their ideas about higher education:

Being on this project has made me think about whether I want to go to university and I have been looking at it, unlike before. (Pupil questionnaire)

It makes us think more about furthering our education. (Pupil questionnaire)

It has been interesting and helped open my eyes to the student world. (Pupil questionnaire)

It did encourage him to look towards a university education. (Parent questionnaire)

Some teachers, mentors and the Mentoring Co-ordinator commented on specific impacts on pupils of the mentoring they received:

[Mentoring] has had quite a big impact on students ... youngsters have actually been looking forward to being in school with the mentors. (Teacher)

Before he didn't have a clue what he wanted to do, well he wanted to do really strange things like become a professional skateboarder and things like that - and now he's actually going on to college. (HE Mentor)

... when I've asked the kids what they've done differently as a result there's a number of things the kids have said that they've now decided to do about their own futures which they would not have decided to do if they hadn't have met their mentor, like go on to university. Some of them have actively said 'Since I've met my mentor and worked on this stuff I've decided to go on to university' or 'I've really organised my revision' or 'I've knuckled down and decided to work harder' or 'I've found out that it's not cool always to be late and never to do your homework and in fact it's more cool to do your homework'. And some of them have talked about wanting to do gap years and just broaden their horizon generally, travel a bit, found out about volunteering and other kinds of opportunities that they could do. (Mentoring Co-ordinator)

3.4.2 Impact on parents

Interviews with parents, teachers and Project Officers showed that nearly all parents were very pleased that their child was participating in the project.

[The Project Officer] has received a number of communications from parents, especially through email, thanking her for some of the events and activities that have taken place. (Teacher)

Parents are really chuffed that their son or daughter have been picked out and given the privilege ... The feedback, just chatting to them after the meeting had finished, was extremely positive. They were really, really pleased that their son or daughter had been chosen and was being considered as worthy for university. (Teacher)

There was evidence that some parents' views about the possibility of their child entering HE had changed:

Initially most of the parents we invited, possibly with the exception of one or two, didn't really consider that their child could go to university or further education.

So, in effect, the project was also educating them as to what could happen, and their perception of further education changed. (Teacher)

The general, overall thing is just feeling that anybody could go, you know, it wouldn't matter if you weren't too clever, there was something possibly there for you for the future you know. I felt at the end of that meeting that you've got a chance just as much as anybody else really, if you're prepared to put yourself out a bit. (Parent)

Some parents suggested additional information that the project might provide for them:

One of the things I'd be interested in is if he selected a university that wasn't local. ... what are the pitfalls around accommodation and that type of thing, what are the best things to do, you know, how to set yourself up so that your finances aren't stretched, and also how you can settle in, that sort of thing. Now, I remember him saying, is it Year 1 people actually can use the university lodgings, but then once you get into Year 2 you can't, or something? (Parent)

Although parents receive the project newsletter, a number of parents suggested that some direct feedback to them about the impact that the project has had on pupils would be useful:

I think what would be nice is also getting some of the pupils and hearing them saying what they got out of it and that sort of thing, because they don't, they're at an age when they don't necessarily come home and rush in and tell you all about it. ... they want to be separate and sort of independent of you so they're not necessarily going to share it with you. (Parent)

It would have been useful for me as a parent to sit there and maybe listen to some of the feedback that the kids had given directly, so that you open up a dialogue, because I'm not saying for one minute that [my son] as a child doesn't pass any information on or anything like that, but, like I said, most kids of their age wouldn't sit down and give you a full synopsis. (Parent)

3.4.3 Impact of the project on schools

As in the 2000/1 evaluation of the project, teachers identified a range of benefits for schools as resulting from their involvement in the project. These included the impact of the project on some pupils' academic work, provision of activities which would otherwise not have taken place and strengthening of relationships with local FE colleges.

The benefits for the school have been improved behaviour, improved attendance, better concentration and focus in lessons and improved grades in a number of lessons for those particular pupils. (Teacher)

There's been money and time and activities available for them, for a fairly large number of our able pupils, and they wouldn't have gone on if the school had been expected to pay for them. ... the project pays for all the supply cover which is great because it means that every time we run a trip my classes are going to be covered by paid supply teachers. (Teacher)

Very good link with working with the local colleagues at the local college who've been involved with it. The guy who's been the link person for the college has been excellent. (Teacher)

... schools who are not involved in the project who want to be, and maybe that's just because they think it's glamorous, but I think it's because they think they can see something good happening, so people who are not in the club want to be in the club and that's usually a sign that something's going well, I guess. (Steering Group Member)

3.5 Organisation and management of the project

3.5.1 General organisation of the project

Parents and teachers said that they found that the project was well organised.

I thought it was very pro-active the way there were letters coming through and it was saying 'Right, on such and such a day [my son] will be visiting the University' and 'On this day he will be doing X'. (Parent)

We get copies of everything, we get copies of everything that's sent to parents, we get copies here, we get all the newsletters that go to the students. (Teacher)

It seems to work well and [the Project Officer] just puts in so much effort. (Teacher)

If I ask [the Project Manager] something she always says 'Well, I'll find out' if she doesn't know, so I'm perfectly happy. (Teacher)

I have to say [the Project Officer] has been outstanding in her skills at not only communicating and getting on well with the children, but I hardly have to do anything. ... She's got a fantastic relationship with the children, she's fantastic with the staff when she comes in here, she's brilliant with the parents, and that's partly why the project's been such a success because often projects like this sound good and a huge amount is put upon the school and you haven't got the manpower or the time to administer that, and that's not the way this project's worked. Having an external project worker who's also got a background in working with young people has been fantastic. (Teacher)

As described in section 3.3.2, interviewees also said that the mentoring was organised very efficiently.

3.5.2 Tracking of pupils

An important organisational issue for the project, now that many Year 11 pupils have left school, is tracking participants through FE in order to provide continuing support to them and to collect information about their FE and HE destinations.

A lot of [pupils] are leaving, a lot of them might go on to sixth form college, they might go on to FE college or they might stay on in the same school in the sixth form, so we have to know where they are, so that's why we've got a database of their names and addresses and so on. ... but obviously it depends on their GCSE results and whether they get their grades and what we're doing is, when we come back in September, I'll be phoning up all my pupils that I haven't got a destination for and I'll be writing to them and saying 'Where are you?' and we've asked the FE colleges if someone has applied and got a place and doesn't turn up, can you chase them as well because obviously we don't want to lose them. And even if they haven't got their grades, you know, we want to offer them support and look at what alternative routes might be. (Project Manager)

The big question now is what happens to the kids when they leave school? And some of them are leaving this summer and the other ones will be leaving next summer and we must be absolutely sure we know where they've gone and what kind of support they're going to get in FE ... I think there's a slight danger that the kids will kind of drift off and the good work we've done will be dissipated and that's an issue we need to get our heads round. (Steering Group Member)

3.5.3 Organisational problems within one of the schools

As noted in section 3.3.2, one school has experienced a number of internal pressures during the year and consequently found it difficult to find sufficient time for the project.

[The school] is a challenging environment and as such a lot of time is spent on dealing with behavioural difficulties and things like that. Also at the moment they're having major building works. ... it's just too much pressure on, [the project's] fallen to the bottom of their heap of things to do. ... The school failed its last Ofsted and was going to be put onto special measures this year, three weeks ago they had a second Ofsted inspection on top of everything else, and this was so they were not to go onto special measures and they've got through that. (FE Tutor)

My workload throughout the year, through circumstances, has gone through the roof. The major colleague I work with went off long-term ill, so for most of the

year I've done one and a half people's jobs, so Coastal Highway could never be fairly high up on my list, right? Because I had 45 other jobs that had to be done that day or that week and that's a problem. ... This additional project, probably for this school, didn't arrive at the right time. ... we totally support it, the Head totally supports it, we have had difficulty with logistics of organisation and I think, to be honest, finding the right amount of time to commit people to it wholeheartedly. (Teacher)

3.5.4 Project Accommodation at the University of Brighton

The Project Manager raised an issue about the quality of the accommodation provided for the project at the University of Brighton and the number of times the project staff at the University of Brighton had to move offices.

Over the last 22 months since I started I have moved desk and office seven times! There are another two moves in the pipeline before November and the first of these moves is to extremely cramped, sub-standard accommodation. At one point we were being asked to move to a portakabin in the car park! This is all very disruptive to our work, especially the mentoring side of the project, as students often get confused and don't know where to find us. (Project Manager)

Chapter 4

Evaluation of the implementation of the 2001 recommendations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter uses data from the interviews to assess the extent to which the project has implemented the recommendations made in the 2001 evaluation of the project.

4.2 Selection of pupils

The 2001 evaluation recommended that the project should ensure that, in all participating schools, the primary cohort targeted is year 10, and that it should continue to ensure that the pupils selected meet the project's criteria. Information about the selection of pupils is provided in section 3.2. It shows that most schools continued to select an appropriate cohort. One school that had experienced problems with selection in 2000/1 had an effective selection procedure in place in the second year of the project. However two schools where pupils had been selected appropriately in the first year of the project had experienced some selection problems in 2001/2. Interviewees said this was because of misunderstandings on the part of the individual teachers who selected pupils. In one of these schools it had been possible to make changes to the cohort originally selected.

In the Chichester cluster area, pupils continue to be selected during Year 9 and the project steering group has taken a decision that it is appropriate for the Chichester summer school, which is for Year 9 pupils, to be included in the project.

4.3 Information for HE staff involved in taster sessions

In the 2001 evaluation it was recommended that HE staff who contribute to taster sessions should be provided with written information about the project and about the year 10 cohort, as well as examples of the types of activities which have been successful in previous taster sessions. Some HE tutors and Project Officers said that more information had been provided this year.

I was given details about who would be there, what schools they were from, what sort of information we needed, very basic information really, but plenty for me, and obviously because I was communicating with [the Project Manager] if there was anything I needed to know, and I did ask her a couple of questions ... we did

talk about the interactive session and whether or not that would be appropriate and we came to the conclusion that we thought that would be fine. (HE tutor)

I did send them all a letter suggesting what they should be doing and I said I was there as an ex-teacher and could be used if they weren't sure about how to pitch it ... I suggested, I strongly suggested they had students to talk to my students, because it's been shown that's what really what captures their interest is to actually talk to someone who's doing the course and maybe is only 19 or 20 years old, and most of them did that. (Project Officer)

What I did this time was, I explained via e-mail what exactly, who they were, what their background was and said you know, they're bright 14 and 15 year olds. Last year I said things like they're year 10, a lot of HE staff don't know what year 10 is and in fact one group thought they were 10 years old, so I think I've explained more about what the project is and talked them through it and I've also asked them more about content, what they're going to do ... this year I've been a lot more careful about asking them for the programme of what they're going to do so that I can see if it's appropriate or not. ... there were people I went back to and said it needs to be hands-on and interactive so is there anything they can have a look at or anything they can actually do, any worksheets and that sort of thing. (Project Manager)

Only two tutors (who had provided a taster session together) felt that they had needed more information:

Tutor 1: We were a little unsure as to our remit, what it was we were meant to be doing with them.

Tutor 2: We didn't even know what Year they were, did we?
(HE Tutors)

4.4 Identification of a set of core activities

It was recommended in 2001 that the project should identify a set of core activities that all participating pupils will be entitled to receive by the end of year 11, and that, in particular, the project should ensure that this entitlement is delivered in Chichester.

In Chichester the project's progress was hampered in 2001/2 because there was no Project Officer in post for several months. However, during the course of the year, the schools were provided with a list of activities that could be delivered, and, despite the absence of a Project Officer, a campus visit took place.

I had a whole list of the range of things that we could do, here it is, careers talks, university visits, they did talk about perhaps taking the kids across to see the war graves those kinds of visits and things. (Teacher)

The Year 10's went over to Sussex in January. We had a great day ... we visited science labs, we visited halls of residence, we visited the Students' Union, we had a talk on English, we had a nice range of activities offered to us. We also did sport activities. ... there was very positive feedback informally on the bus back. (Steering Group Member)

With the appointment of a new Project Officer, plans are now in hand for a range of activities to be delivered in Chichester in 2002/3.

We should definitely hopefully at the end of December have a visit to either Sussex or Brighton University or both for a taster day, that's on the cards. In the Spring term, I've spoken with our representative from West Sussex Careers, and we're organising some fun event to do with careers and future planning for students to have a careers day and we're going to hopefully implement that and have that in the Spring term here at UCC. So we want those three events to take place fairly quickly in the next two terms. We do have to put some more ideas, I mean they do have a menu of activities, the schools do have a menu of activities but clearly we need to define those activities more, so we really need to talk with them in terms of timetabling etc. (Project Officer)

Additionally, as noted in section 3.3.2, mentoring in Chichester will be organised by the project's Mentoring Co-ordinator.

One interviewee was of the view that the Chichester summer school provided a means of delivering a large part of the set of core activities:

We've given the schools pretty recently a range of things that we can offer to them. When we talk about the summer school singular like that it makes it sound like one activity, but I prefer to think of the summer school as a series of diverse activities taking place over three days. At the moment we haven't undertaken all

the activities we would have liked simply because we were without a Project Officer, but equally in the next six or seven weeks we will be undertaking a diversity, a range of activities, which I think perhaps isn't quite conveyed by the term summer school. (Steering Group Member)

4.5 Development of activities not taken up in 2000/1

The 2001 evaluation recommended that the project should develop those activities which were offered in 2000/1 but were not taken up by participants. It was also recommended that the project should continue to explore and develop new activities. The main activity offered but not delivered in the first year of the project was study skills. One of the Project Officers ran some highly successful study skills activities in 2001/2 (see section 3.3.4). However another Project Officer reported that, as in the previous year, she had suggested some study skills activities but the schools had not responded positively.

One of the things we were going to do were some study skills activities and I got all the materials and stuff to set it up and we had a meeting, one of our normal planning meetings, and basically the way we left it was that they were going to come back to me with dates and they never came back to me with the dates and I can't organise things without knowing when. (Project Manager)

As discussed in section 3.3.5, a strong programme of cultural visits has been developed during the second year of the project and mentoring has been a major development (section 3.3.2). Additionally, a range of new activities has been incorporated into campus visits and taster sessions:

There were a couple of talks [during a campus visit] which were new as well ... one was on student finance and that was quite a fun session - it was the first time we'd done it, it was interactive, they had to work out what their budget might be if they were a student and then sort of have a bit of a reality check when they came in, but it was also very positive. (Project Manager)

A lot of the tasters were new because I managed to get more academics to do things for me, so I think last year I only had what was it, five or six different subjects and this year I had 10. (Project Officer)

4.6 Resolving the problems experienced by one school

It was recommended that the project should review the position of the school that had some difficulties in working with the project and resolve the problems experienced by the school. This school has participated fully in the project in 2001/2.

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Generally things have gone a lot better. The cohort was selected very well initially and then the questionnaire process, so that's been very successful. (Project Officer)

They've recruited the right cohort, they've made sure they turn up to things, they've generally been really enthusiastic and pupils have taken part in a lot more of the activities. (Project Manager)

There's been a parents' evening which was open to both years and was quite well attended. I was quite pleased that quite a few [parents from the school] turned up this year because they didn't last year. (Project Officer)

4.7 Joint working between Project Officers

The 2001 evaluation recommended that Project Officers should consider whether it is feasible to share more information about their activities at the planning stages and whether greater uniformity of activities across the clusters, and/or greater joint working between Project Officers, would be beneficial. There is little evidence that there has been any change in this respect other than some joint working on mentoring organised by the Mentoring Co-ordinator. However the Project Officers are not in agreement about the likely benefits of more collaborative working.

I felt that it was supposed to be a project where we were offering something similar and were working more in conjunction with each other ... I don't know what [the other Project Officers are] doing at all often till after the event and that's only if things filter through, so it's not been a two way process in terms of activity and what activities can we both do, so we have been working pretty much independently. (Project Officer)

We communicate a lot by email but we've had quite a few face to face meetings. Because we've had the Mentor Co-ordinator, there's been a lot of working together on the mentoring and they all went on the same training course together and so on. But in terms of activities, covering the same activities, that has not, I don't think we've done that much working together, but I think that's, I personally find that too difficult to organise. (Project Manager)

The project manager said that the geographical location of the schools she worked with meant that joint activities were often not feasible:

We did try to organise a Christmas party jointly, to be held at the University of Sussex. Initially I agreed to this, but when it came to planning the logistics I soon realised that it would not be possible. The problem is that the three schools I work with are in Hastings and West Worthing. The Hastings schools are 37 miles away, and Durrington is 15 miles in the other direction. The schools are 52 miles apart. In order to get the pupils to the party I would have to get coaches. I would

need to accompany the pupils on the coaches to the event - an evening event - and go back with them and stay to make sure they were picked up by their parents and carers safely. In the first place I would not be able to invite pupils from both Hastings and Worthing, since I could not be in two places at once. These logistics are different from those which other project officers have to deal with. (Project Manager)

4.8 Dissemination of the project

It was recommended that the project should consider ways in which information about the project can best be disseminated within participating institutions, especially the HEIs, but also to other SLPA institutions, and that a dissemination strategy should be implemented. A dissemination strategy has been produced and the Project Manager has been proactive in disseminating information about the project in a range of ways both within her own HEI and to other audiences. Other Project Officers and Steering Group members have undertaken dissemination activities within their own institutions. Additionally the dissemination strategy includes informing parents and SLPA schools and colleges of the projects activities via, for example, the project's newsletter.

I gave a talk at South Bank on setting up a partnership between different education sectors and out of that they actually have set one up now at South Bank University. Also, some people at London University asked me to write a chapter for a book which is being published next month, so that's on Sussex Coastal Highway and how it's worked. Also, things like, we've done press releases and things have appeared in the local press. Also the university's internal magazine 'Channel', we've had a couple of articles in there. What else? Oh yes, national conferences, I've presented workshops at national conferences, one in Manchester, another one in Leeds as well. (Project Manager)

[The Project Manager's] done a number of presentations to different Schools within the university. She's going to be doing a presentation at the Learning and Teaching Conference next Friday which about 250 people are going to. There's going to be a presentation about it at a widening participation conference which is going to take place in October and she's also written pieces for the newsletter, Channel, so I think she's tried very hard to make people know about it, so I think we have spent more effort on that this year than we did last year. ... [The Project Manager] and I have done some of these presentations to Schools together and I've talked about more general widening participation and [the Project Manager] talked about the project and I think people have been very enthusiastic. I think she's got some very tangible offers of involvement out of that, which is good, and I think also we've just managed to raise awareness about what's going on and that this is a very exciting and useful project, you know. (Steering Group Member)

I did a thing at the university called the research forum where people who are interested in widening participation can do presentations and I did a presentation

about the project a few months ago, and that was to about 20 people within the university. And obviously there's also the Widening Participation group at the university, so occasionally I'll give them an update about what's going on.
(Project Officer)

We had a half-day staff development group for widening participation ... there were about 40 people in all. We're just about to publish a newsletter, I report regularly to the recruitment and admissions committee and bring them up to date on the project and activities. (Steering Group Member)

Some of the teachers thought that there was potential for more dissemination of the project within the participating schools.

I think it might have been interesting at some point to do some kind of presentation, maybe in assembly to the Year 10 students just in general, just to really broaden their awareness across the school of exactly what the project is and what it hopes to achieve, and I think maybe something possibly with teaching staff as well, you know, I know we've tried put a bit of information through school to make teachers aware of what the project's all about but I think maybe something from the project team could be directed to specifically to teachers within the institutions just to raise their awareness of what the project's about.
(Teacher)

It's my job in a way to make people in school aware because I'm sort of co-ordinating it, but there is a possibility perhaps that, I hadn't thought this through, I'm just thinking about the whole thing of gaining a higher profile because people know that I organise a group of pupils and they call, they tend to call them the university pupils, the university group, some of them know the correct term, the Sussex Coastal Highway project, but they tend to feel it's you know, probably somehow my little thing that I get going. (Teacher)

Chapter 5

Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Summary of key findings

The project has run successfully in its second year. In most of the schools, appropriate methods were used to select pupils for the project. A small number of interviewees suggested that, in some schools, pupils were not fully informed about the purpose of the project and the selection process, and two of these interviewees provided examples of negative effects on pupils who had not been selected.

Project activities such as campus visits and taster sessions have continued and a number of activities such as mentoring, study skills and cultural visits have been developed. Implementation of some activities has been uneven across the project, for example only one Project Officer developed study skills activities. The new mentoring programme was organised efficiently, mentors received thorough training, and mentors and mentees provided evidence that mentoring was a valuable experience for pupils. Some FE mentors were trained but had little opportunity to undertake mentoring, and most mentors believed that pupils would have benefited from more involvement of FE mentors. No mentoring was delivered in the Chichester cluster area and in one school mentoring finished mid-way through the year.

The project has a positive impact on pupils in a number of ways. As well as increasing the proportion of participants who want to progress to FE and HE, pupils, parents and teachers said that some pupils' academic work and/or attitudes to study had improved, and some pupils had gained more self-confidence. There was also evidence that parents had learnt more about HE through participating in parents' evenings and that some parents had, for the first time, considered HE as a possibility for their child.

The project appears to be well-managed and organisational problems were primarily due to circumstances in particular schools. However, one school that experienced problems in participating in the project in 2000/1 had become fully involved in 2001/2, indicating that, in some cases, such difficulties can be quickly rectified.

Most of the recommendations of the 2000/1 evaluation have been implemented. There are two exceptions. First, because of the absence of a Chichester-based Project Officer for several months, it was not possible to deliver the full set of core activities in the Chichester cluster area. However, the new Project Officer has already planned a number of activities for 2002/3. Secondly, there is little evidence of greater collaboration between Project Officers in terms of sharing ideas and planning activities. However not all Project Officers were in agreement that greater joint working would be beneficial.

5.2 Recommendations for the third year of the project

We make the following recommendations for the third year of the project.

1. Continue to provide support and information to the teachers who select the pupils for the project to ensure that appropriate cohorts are selected.
2. In order to avoid any possible demotivating effect on pupils who are not selected for the project, consider whether more information about the project and the selection procedure should be provided to the whole Year 10 group of pupils in the participating schools.
3. Ensure that mentoring is delivered in all schools and explore ways of assisting those schools that experienced difficulties in implementing mentoring in 2001/2.
4. Consider whether mentoring by FE students should be further developed.
5. Consider whether the successful study skills activities delivered by one of the Project Officers can be used as a model for provision of study skills activities to pupils from other schools.
6. Continue to develop those features of the project that are widely viewed as beneficial to pupils, such as campus visits, mentoring and cultural visits, and develop new activities as appropriate.
7. Monitor the systems that have been put in place to track pupils as they progress to FE, to ensure that they are effective in following-up the current Year 11 cohort. Develop and modify these systems if necessary. Ensure that tracking takes place for pupils from all schools.
8. Consider the appropriateness of the project's current accommodation at the University of Brighton and the future plans for the accommodation of University of Brighton based staff.
9. Ensure that the additional activities, including mentoring, which have been planned following the appointment of a new Project Officer in Chichester, are delivered during 2002/3.
10. Continue to disseminate the project. Explore the possibility of additional dissemination methods to provide more detailed information for parents and participating schools about the project and its impact.