

Session Title:	Running an Effective Summer School
Speaker(s):	Liz Hutton-Brownhall – University of Derby
Chair:	Amy Slater-McGill
Reporter:	Joe Cunningham

Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:	<p>University of Derby Liz has worked on three distinct summer school models, each of which appears later in the case studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medic Mentor (2020/21/22): 5-night programmes; six summer schools delivered across six weeks. • Bridge to a Career in Construction (2023): Apprenticeship-linked programme designed to push participants outside their comfort zone (including outdoor pursuits such as mountain climbing). • University of Derby (2024/25): A university immersion experience for widening participation (WP) students, including a stay in Halls of Residence.
Overview/Aim of session:	<p>The session aimed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the speaker's background and experience across different summer school models. • Support participants to build a summer school plan. • Compare three contrasting models of summer schools. • Share best practice across institutions. • Discuss the prompt: "If you could fix one summer school problem..."
Workshop Content	<p>Three Summer School Personalities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Adventurer (outdoor/offsite focus) • The Academic (subject taster / curriculum focus) • The Professional Prepper (UCAS preparation, progression guidance) • <p>Additional components of the workshop included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A design Challenge (roundtable activity to build a summer school concept) • Case study exploration • Sharing of best practice

<p>Case Studies/Examples:</p>	<p>1. The Power of Getting Them Out of Their Comfort Zone (Bridge to a Career in Construction)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group of Year 12 students from inner-city London. • Aim: Develop employability skills, resilience, and confidence; many participants lacked tools such as the STAR reflection model. • Programme co-designed with MACE. • Included outdoor pursuits, raft building, and student leaders assigned to each activity. • Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 100% of students secured interviews. ○ 75% received offers. ○ Successful progression into degree-level apprenticeships. <p>2. The Belonging Shift Happens Early (University of Derby)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 10 local students with at least two WP markers. • Aim: Provide a realistic lived experience of university life. • Students stayed in Halls of Residence. • Programme balanced academic insight with fun and social activity. • Outcome: Significant increase in sense of “fitting in” — from 34% to 91%. • Demonstrated early intervention value in aspiration-raising and belonging. <p>3. Operational Chess Game (Medic Mentor)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 12 high-attaining students; nationwide recruitment. • Six-week rotation model with multiple cohorts. • Aim: Build confidence and readiness for clinical UCAS applications. • Delivered across six national venues, supporting 1000+ students in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary pathways. • Included pre-programme and post-programme engagement • Outcome: Strong progression into related university courses across the UK.
<p>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</p>	<p>Build a Summer School Challenge (20 minutes) Participants designed summer school concepts considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing fun vs. knowledge • Safeguarding and risk • A suggested timetable • One unique idea <p>Group A – Outdoor Pursuits The group proposed an outdoor-focused residential for care-experienced Year 12 students built around</p>

	<p>confidence-building activities such as Olympic-style sports, supported by strong safeguarding measures. The emphasis was on fun, social connection, and providing a positive break from home life.</p> <p>Group B – University Experience This group designed a 3-day, 2-night architecture-themed university experience that combined academic insight, hands-on project work, and a construction site visit. It concluded with students giving a tour to their parents, highlighting the value of authentic university exposure.</p> <p>Group C – Large-Scale Multi-week Application The group outlined a multi-week subject-specific programme taking students through tasters, careers insight, and application preparation, alongside independent living activities like shopping and cooking. The structure mixed fun with academic progression within a safeguarded residential environment to build skills and knowledge for the next stage.</p> <p>Sharing Best Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in more breaks and downtime. • Residential accommodation is valuable for social bonding; one provider noted that non-residential students missed out on social time by not staying in halls. • Offering students the choice to stay or not can still result in most opting for residential participation. • Careers connections, especially alumni involvement, can be particularly impactful. -
Questions and Answers:	
Summary/Key takeaways:	<p>Response to “If you could fix one thing...” (Only one contribution was shared due to limited time.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desire for greater academic buy in for Year 10 summer school engagement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Potential solutions:</i> use data to demonstrate pipeline importance; involve student ambassadors as advocates.