

Background

Young people are unaware of the diverse career opportunities open to them with 57% lacking an understanding of their options post-secondary education¹

- Young people are more inclined to move into jobs they are familiar with rather than exploring alternative opportunities.
- This is even more pronounced in remote and rural areas such as NHS Highland board area.



Employers are encouraged to use innovative approaches to inform young people of the range of opportunities open to them, providing opportunities to test or confirm their interest in these and to build their confidence¹.

Issue

Applications for work experience placements at NHS Highland are low post Covid19 with requests mainly focusing upon high profile careers:

- Nursing
- Physiotherapy
- Medicine
- Generic 'healthcare'

A work experience placement often only allows shadowing in one area or pathway so providing limited exposure to the range of alternative career options that a young person may be suited to.

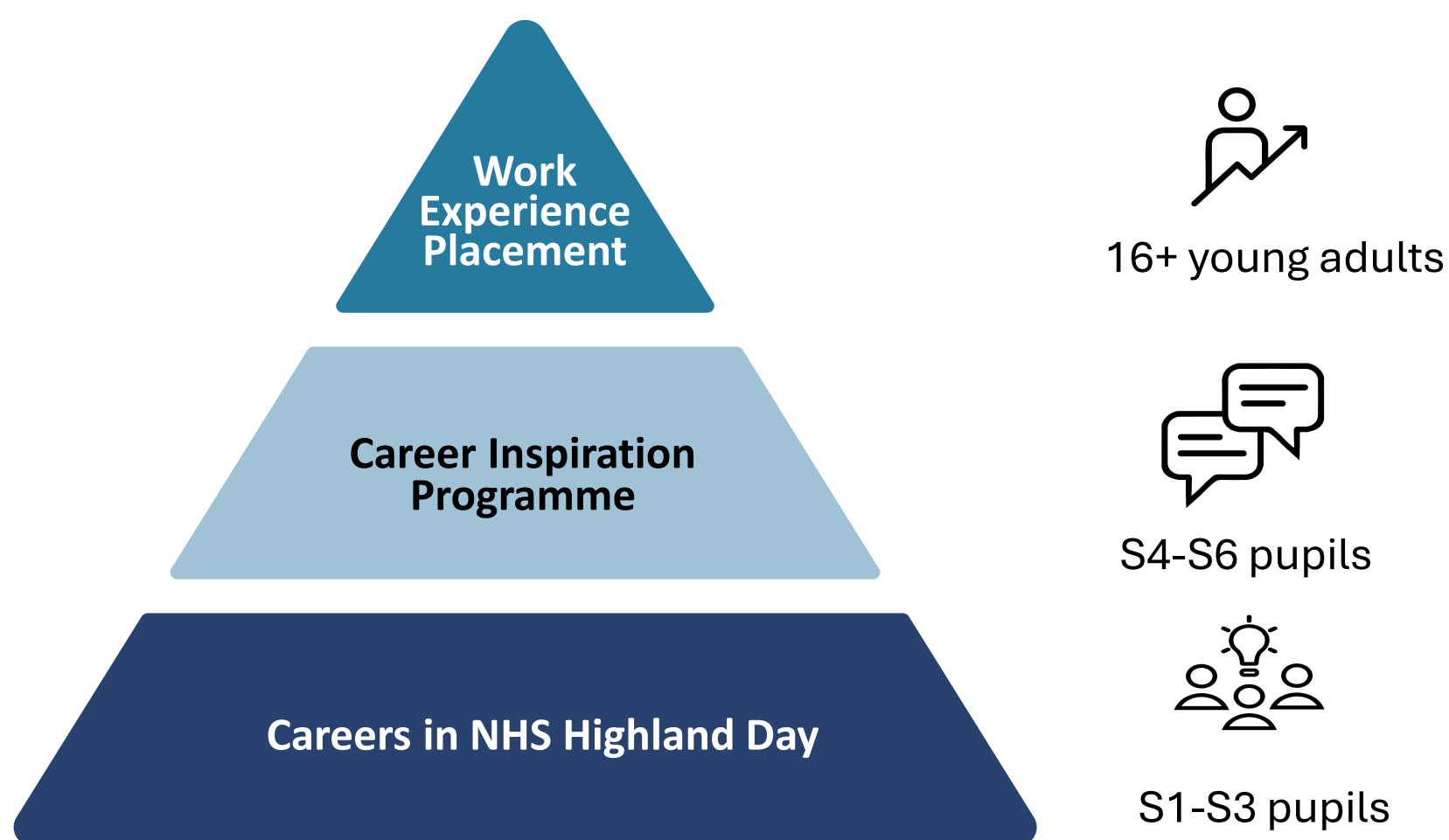
Only 3.6% of our workforce is under 25 years of age highlighting the need to inform and attract these young people within our board area.

How can we address this and raise young peoples' awareness of the range of different roles and professions within NHS Highland and encourage them to consider these as future career pathways?

Proposal

Introducing a tiered approach to engaging with secondary school pupils our aims are to ensure:

- We maximise the number of young people we can connect with across our board area, especially in the more remote and rural areas.
- Interactions are appropriate for the age and stage of the young peoples' learning.
- We enable young people to explore a wide range of careers.
- We provide pupils with engaging exposure to how their skills, knowledge and interests translate into working in different professions or roles.



Careers in NHS Highland Days: Delivered at different locations across the board area (80-100 pupils per day):

- Raise awareness of opportunities and provide future career inspiration.
- Hands-on interactions/workshops delivered by practitioners so pupils can investigate different roles and try their hand at different aspects of practice.
- Opportunities to ask questions of those doing the job.
- Find out about pathways into careers with workshops covering all job families.

Career Inspiration Programme: Groups of 10-16 pupils to investigate careers further

- Multi-modal deliver to enable 'a job taster' (e.g. typical tasks, working environments and application of skills).
- Delivered at different facilities across our vast board area enabling engagement by pupils in more remote schools.
- Activities aligned to SQA 'Work Placements' unit.

Work Experience Placement: Traditional work experience placement.

- Pupils from across-the-board area request a placement in a career of interest.
- The aim is that through the tiered approach, pupils will have developed a greater awareness of roles and can make a more informed decision about a placement.

This poster reports on our evaluation of Tier 2: Pilot Career Inspiration Week

Pilot Study – Method

10 pupils from two different schools attended an Inspiration week based at their Community Hospital

A multi-modal approach delivered by representatives from a range of job families to increase learner engagement and support the needs of different learners. Pupils undertook an initial skills audit and produced personal action plans for the week aligned to the SQA Work Placement unit

Reflective sessions each day afforded pupils the chance to talk about their experiences, share their learning and nurture a greater appreciation of 'collaborative working across NHS Highland.

Evaluation via a questionnaire (qualitative and quantitative) completed by pupils and facilitators. Pupils presented their main learning points and reflected upon their career aspirations at the end of the week. A follow-up focus group was conducted four months after the week.

Findings

Analysis of end of week questionnaires indicates that pupil feedback was positive with sessions mainly perceived as excellent or good (fig.1):

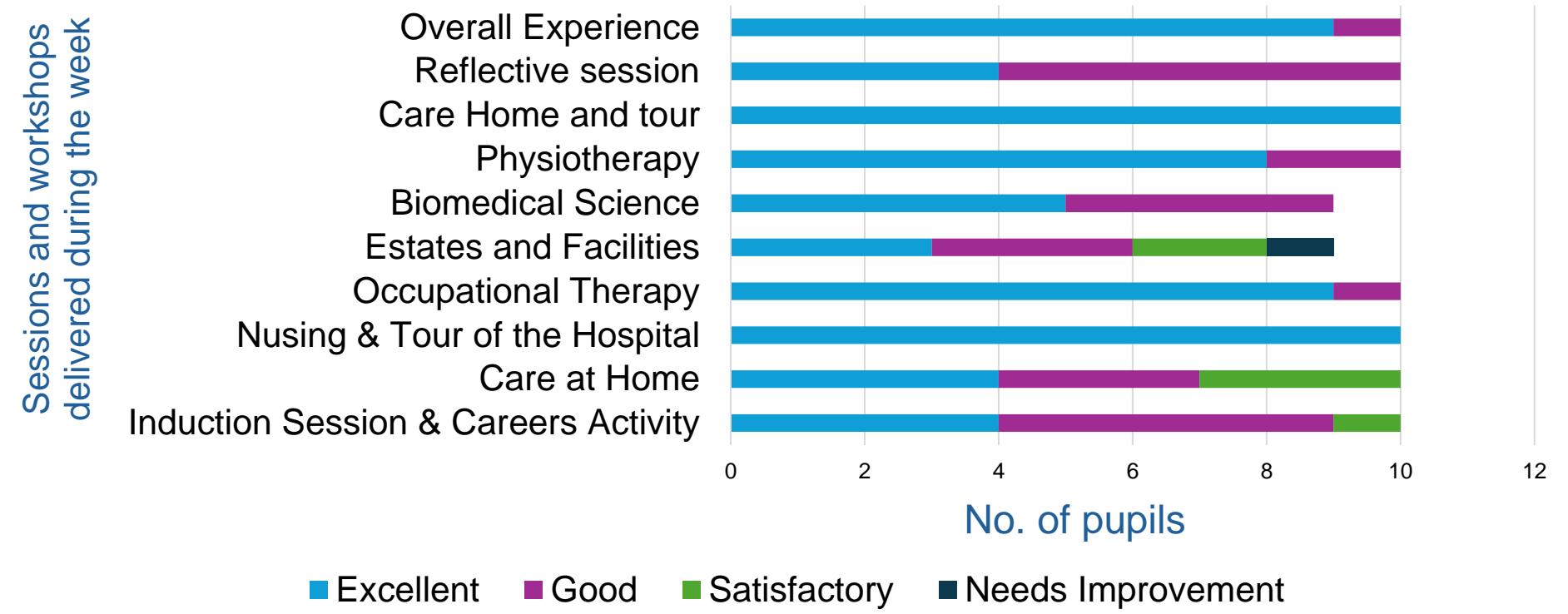


Figure 1: Summary analysis of end of week Pupil Evaluation Questionnaire

Qualitative responses provided a more nuanced insight into the pupils' experiences. Simple coding of responses identified that the week had:

- broadened their awareness of roles
- helped them to see how different teams work together.
- Provided an understanding of different roles, which in turn inspired them to find out more about certain roles and career pathways (fig.2).



Figure 2. Selection of pupil qualitative feedback

Facilitator feedback highlighted that they:

- Found delivery of the workshops enjoyable and manageable within their workload.
- Appreciated the interactive and generative format with the groups of young people.

Pupils reflected upon the week at the follow-up focus group. They stated that they (fig 3):

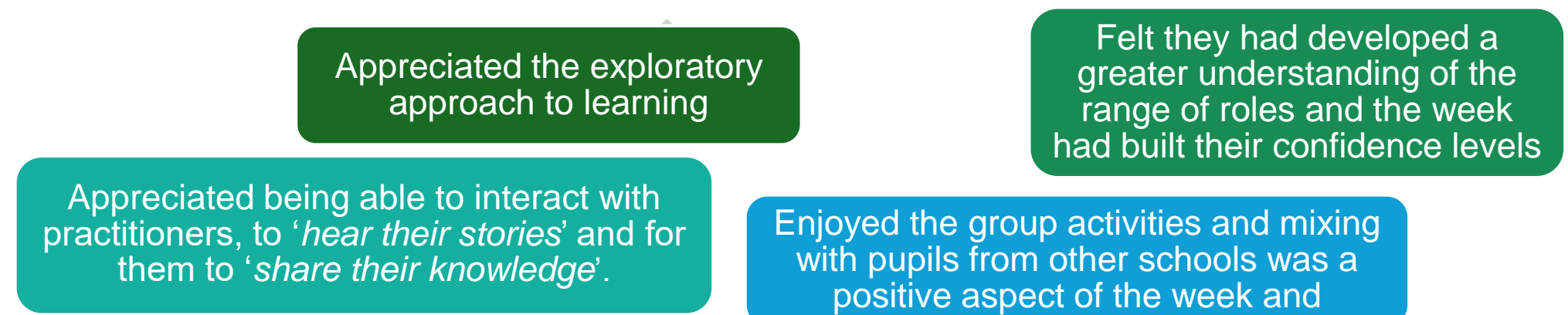


Figure 3. Selection of young people comments from focus group session

Pupils felt that groups sizes of 10 to 16 would be ideal; enabling small group working, positive interactions and collaboration.

Discussion

We designed a pilot Inspiration week by drawing upon research that emphasises how learning is situated in social contexts and involves participation in communities, rather than individual acquisition of abstract concepts separate from interaction and experience². Acknowledging that learning arises from action and problem solving within an environment where there are shared experiences³ we developed a range of interactive workshops and tours. In adopting this format, we addressed our aim to allow young people to put their knowledge, competency and skills into practice, inspiring them to consider a range of career options.



Importantly, not only has the week impacted upon pupils' awareness of careers in the NHS and delivered an intervention that can accommodate more pupils than shadowing in the workplace alone, but is also has already achieved positive outcomes with:

- 3 of the 10 pupils actively pursuing careers they had previously not been aware of.
- 1 pupil joining Staff Bank to gain work experience in the local care home to support their nursing application.

Next steps

Working in collaboration with a range of internal and external stakeholders a project team has been established to roll-out the delivery of:

- Careers In NHS Highland Days at different locations across the board area to enable us to engage with a maximum number of S1-S3 pupils.
- Career Inspiration Programme across the board area and assess the feasibility of Virtual Reality to bring the work environment to pupils in our more remote areas.
- Develop our Work Experience offering.
- Evaluate, review, report upon and share findings of next stages to develop a robust programme of outreach addressing our stated aims for NHS Highland.

References

1. UCAS (2023) Project Next Generation: Six Themes That Influence Student Choice. Available at <https://www.ucas.com/file/813551/download?token=Ad530RSp> (Accessed: 21st February, 2025)
2. Lave and Wenger (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
3. Raelin, J.A., 2007. 'Toward an epistemology of practice'. *Academy of management learning & education*, 6(4), pp.495-519.