Bridging Differences: co-creation of successful transition stories
Dr Lesley Black & Susan Henderson, University of Winchester

This presentation will look at how the University of Winchester has worked to co-create smoother transitions from school to university. In particular, we will consider the development of pathways for students with disabilities and/or concerns around wellbeing. The transition from school/college to university can be a challenging one for many students and for those who may have additional requirements the reality of University life may not meet expectations.

Working in partnership with staff in the Communications and External Relations team, applicants and current students, Student Services staff have developed processes and events that have created opportunities for positive transitions. Small procedural changes have opened up opportunities for conversations that have led to wide-ranging change; cross-team working has facilitated a deeper understanding of the need to ensure that difference is accounted for when planning major student events such as arrivals and welcome week. At the heart of the process is the applicant and student voice – through listening to the stories our applicants and students tell us we have been able to develop and grow our relationships with schools and colleges, build more robust pre-entry processes to minimise challenges on arrival and develop opportunities and events that enhance the student experience, create a sense of belonging and community and enhance student wellbeing.

Learning outcomes
- By the end of the sessions attendees will have learned how to capture and use information from applicants to aid in service development and to ensure reality meets expectation;
- They will have learned how to maximise partnerships with schools and colleges and how to use these partnerships to create smoother transitions for students.
- Attendees will also have learned how solutions that have been put in place for a specific cohort can easily be replicated for a broader audience and will be able to identify areas in their own services that could have broader reach.

Presenters
Dr Lesley Black, University of Winchester

Dr Lesley Black is Acting Director of Student Services at the University of Winchester. Lesley studied English and German at the University of Aberdeen and holds a Ph.D. in German Sociolinguistics from same institution. Whilst writing her Ph.D. Lesley held a variety of teaching, support and administrative roles in both Faculty and Professional Services. She joined the University of Winchester as Disability Co-ordinator in 2005, became Head of Wellbeing in 2010 and Head of Operations in 2018. Lesley is passionate about positive transitions whether it be to University, during University or post University. She has led on developing a pre-arrival event for students with autism at the University of Winchester and has championed dedicated space and resources for students with poor mental health and students with autism during arrivals and welcome week. Lesley is a Fellow of the Leadership Foundation in Higher Education (now Advance HE).

Susan Henderson, University of Winchester

Susan Henderson (BEM) is Head of Future Students at the University of Winchester. For much of her career Susan worked with the Ministry of Defence in the fields of HR, Training and Change Management. 12 years ago, she was offered the exciting opportunity to move into the world of HE and to study to become a relationship counsellor and clinical supervisor. Susan has drawn on all the skills and knowledge she has gained over the years to develop a dynamic student focused Arrivals and Welcome Week event for our new students. Understanding what helps students transition from schools and colleges to HE is now at the forefront of her work and she is passionate about identifying and working on how we at Winchester University can improve what is both an exciting but challenging and at times scary time in the lives of our young people.