

HE Academic Support Tutor –

additional support to address barriers to student success



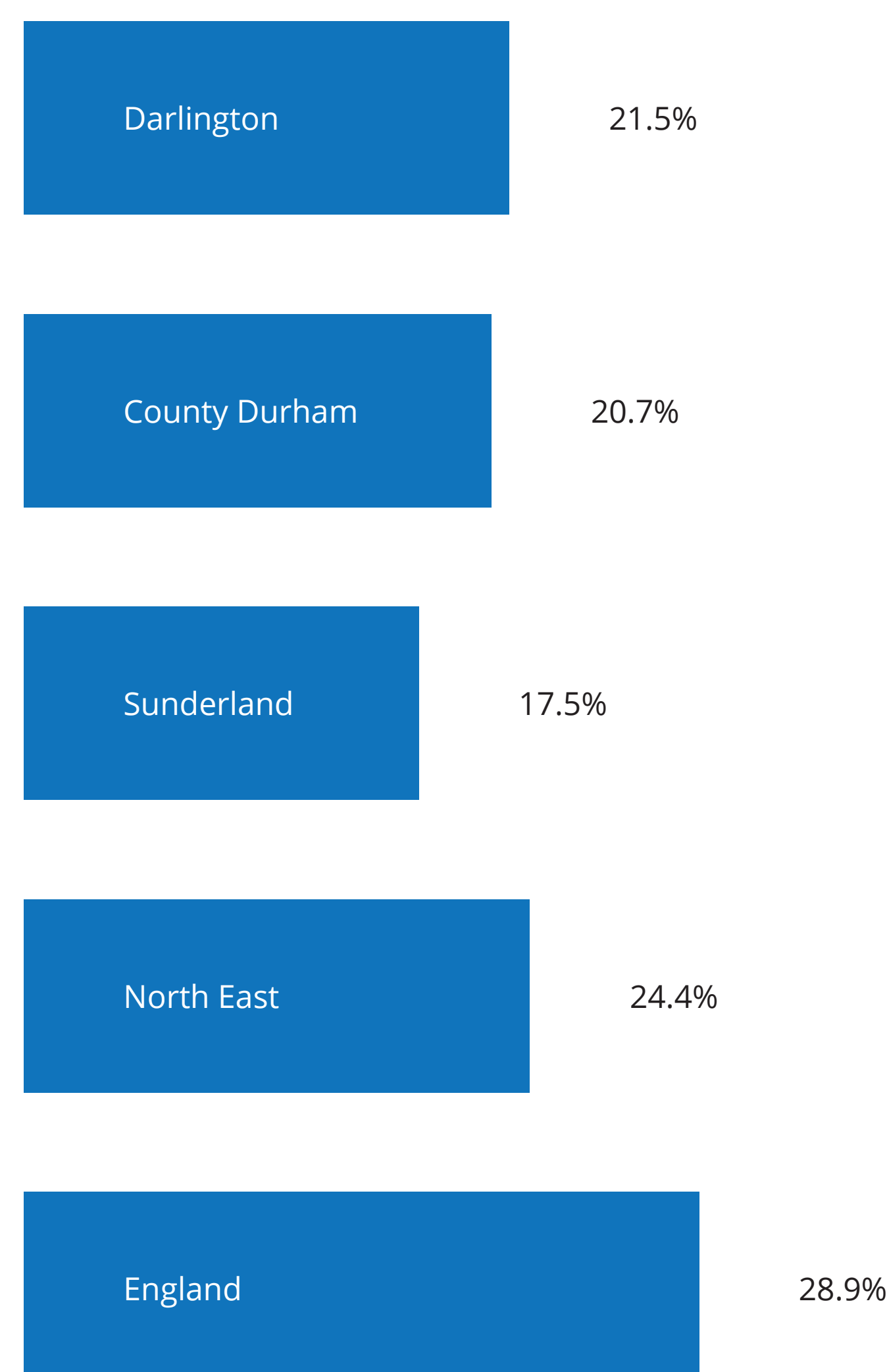
This project provides an excellent opportunity to develop academic support in the college-based higher education (HE) sector, led by a group of local colleges with shared aspirations (New College Durham, Darlington, and Sunderland). The development, enhancement and evaluation of this unique model will produce an evidence-based rationale for the adoption of similar principles and practices that can be shared and implemented widely across HE provision in the further education (FE) sector. The aim is to improve outcomes for HE learners within FE colleges by making improvements to their learning, boosting engagement with course content, enhancing the learning experience, and raising confidence and resilience. Specifically focusing on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and those with learning difficulties or mental health issues, the project will provide specific academic support to learners via a dedicated HE Academic Support Tutor. This support will include one-to-one support sessions, group tutorials and access to a wide range of IT based learning resources.

Providing an opportunity for the three partners to work collaboratively, the project intends to improve retention, achievement, attainment and progression rates for HE students. This will be achieved by sharing resources, knowledge and learning to develop a proactive, holistic, responsive and sensitive service to meet the needs of HE students. All project partners provide HE for students living in North East England, and students on foundation degrees and higher national programmes are predominantly young white males and in POLAR quintiles 1 and 2. The additional resources created by this project will enable the three partners to support a combined total of 3000 students across the lifetime of the project, with the aim of achieving a 10% improvement in retention, achievement and attainment rates, and a 15% increase in the proportion of students progressing into L6 and 7 qualifications.

The focus of the project is on HE students enrolled on foundation degrees and higher national programmes. While recruitment and retention rates on these programmes across all three partners are good, attainment and progression to L6 and postgraduate study is low. Furthermore, data indicates that attainment, achievement and progression are particularly low amongst students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, in particular young, white males, as well as for students with learning difficulties or mental health issues.

In England, a slightly lower proportion of working age males have degree level qualifications than females. These proportions are similar in Durham and Darlington, but in Sunderland only 14.8% of working age males have degree level qualifications, compared with 20.1% for females. DLHE (2016) data identifies high numbers progressing into employment or further study but the majority earn less than the average graduate salary. This project aims to address this inequality by helping students to access higher quality, better paid employment opportunities by improving levels of attainment, achievement and confidence.

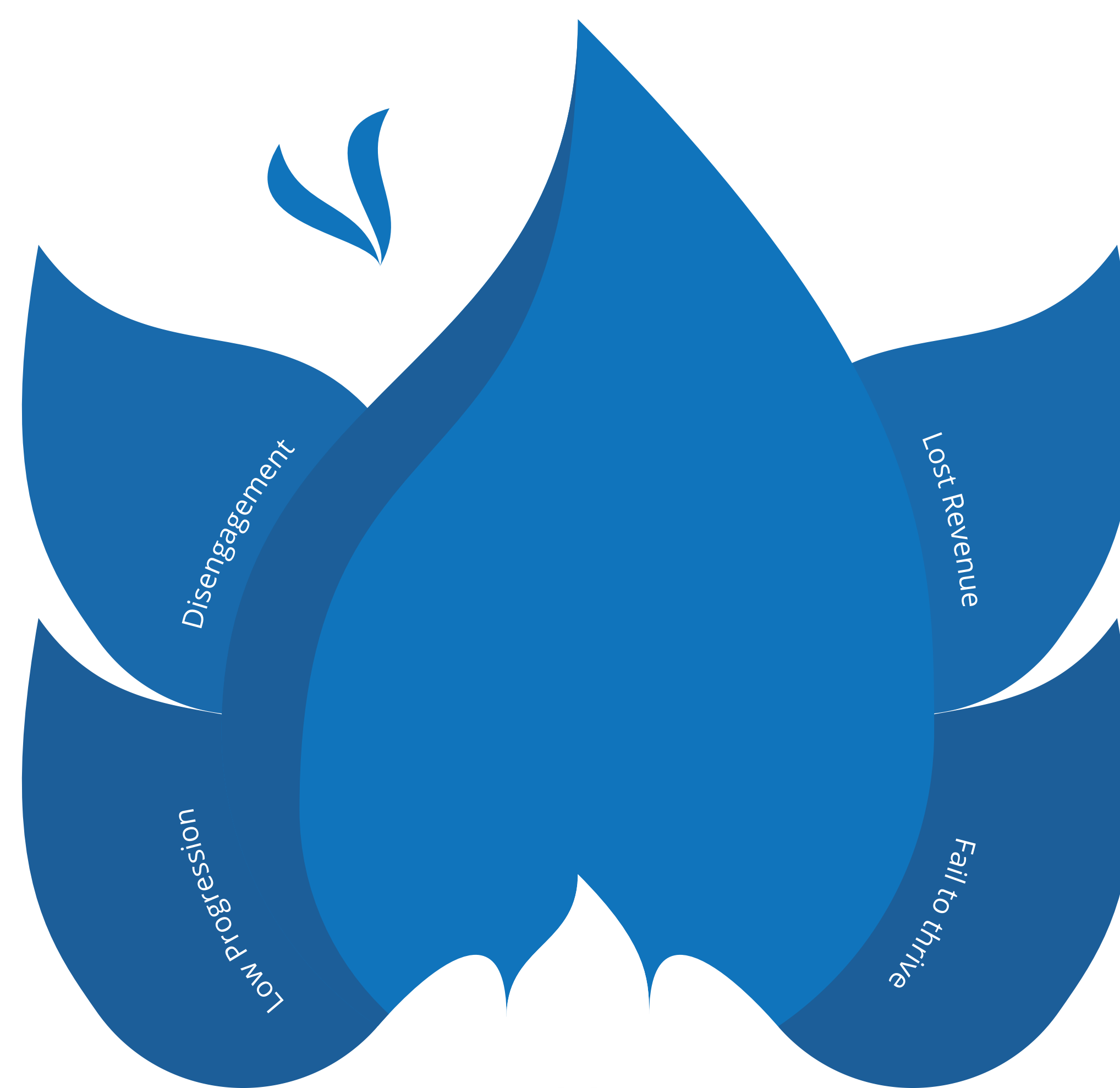
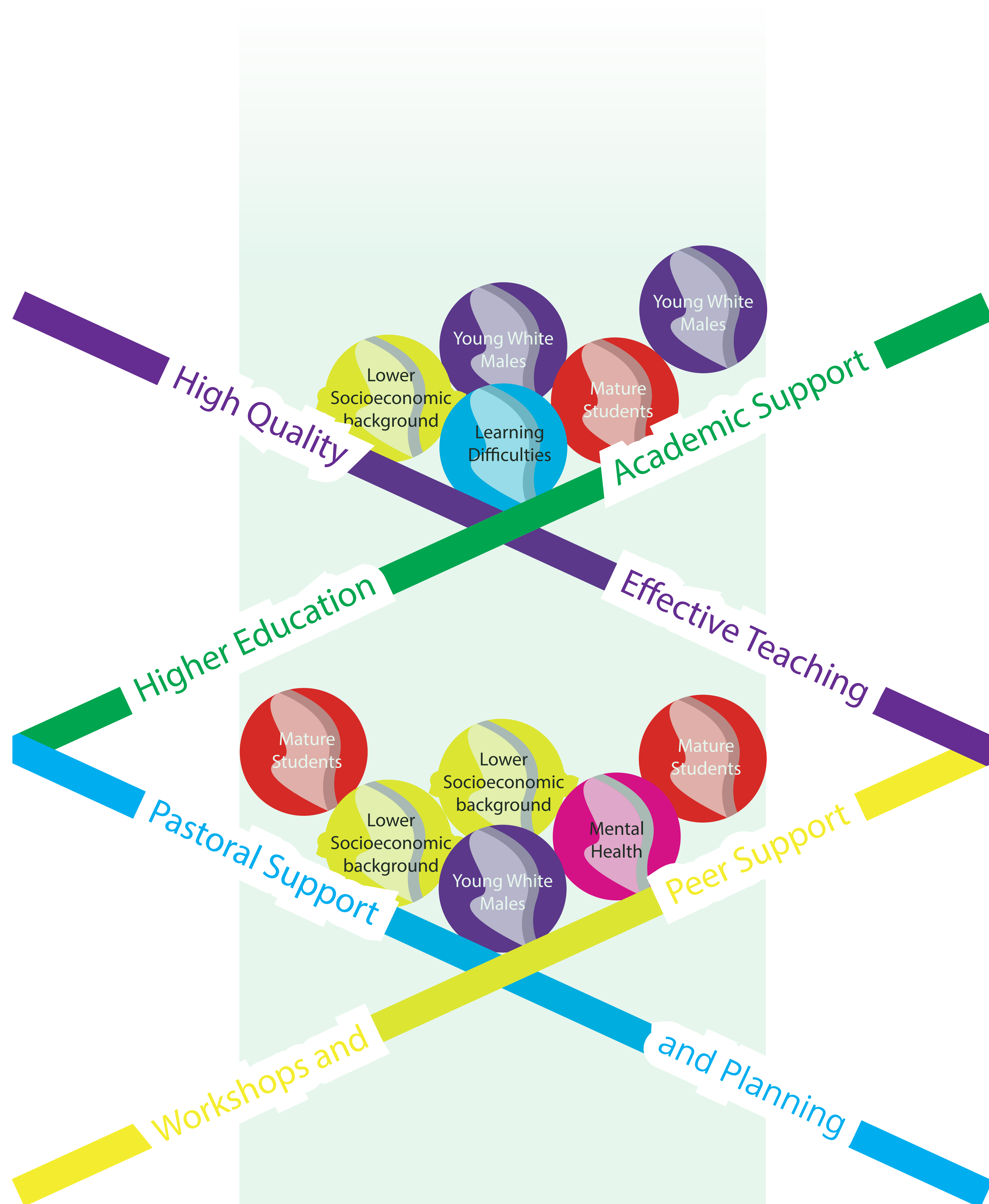
Working age population with degree level (or equivalent) qualifications.



A range of key performance indicators (KPIs) have been established against which performance can be monitored and measured plus a project delivery plan to enable the monitoring of progress against expected monthly and annual targets for student engagement and participation in the project.

- KPIs include:
- Number of learners participating in the project
 - Number of learners accessing 1:1 support
 - Number of students attending group tutorials
 - Number of students accessing online academic support resources
 - Increase in retention, achievement and attainment rates
 - Increase in proportion of students progressing to L6 and 7 qualifications

Formative evaluation data will contribute towards the project's comprehensive final evaluation, to provide an assessment of quality, effectiveness and impact, as well as identifying lessons learned that can be used to inform future interventions. The report will include an analysis of performance against targets, a comparison of final data against baseline data; and an assessment of distance travelled by participating students via a post-support Grit questionnaire and analysis of average grades. We will also gather qualitative feedback on the project via interviews and focus groups with participating students and staff.



DLHE, 2016, Higher Education Statistics for the UK 2015/16. [online] Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/higher-education-2015-16> [Accessed 31 March 2017].

ONS Population Survey, 2015, Annual Population Survey. [online] Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/articles/873.aspx> [Accessed 31 March 2017].