



Uni Connect annual report

Phase two, August 2019 to July 2020

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Summary

The Office for Students (OfS) Uni Connect programme brings together 29 partnerships of universities, colleges and other local partners to offer activities, information, advice and guidance on the benefits and realities of going to university or college. The partnerships focus their work on local areas where higher education participation is lower than might be expected given the GCSE results of the young people who live there.

There have been two phases of the Uni Connect programme since it began in 2017. Phase two of the programme began in August 2019 and is due to end in July 2021. This report showcases programme achievements from August 2019 to July 2020. During this period:

- 185,919 Uni Connect target learners took part in at least one programme funded outreach activity between 1 August 2019 and 31 July 2020
- 2,480 schools and colleges engaged in Uni Connect activity between August 2019 and July 2020.
- 522 partner members were involved in the 29 partnerships across England from a range of organisations including colleges, universities, local organising bodies, charities, and employers.

Strong local collaboration has continued to be at the heart of the Uni Connect programme in phase two. Partnerships have engaged with a wide variety of strategic partners including local authorities, the Careers and Enterprise Company and local enterprise partnerships (LEPs). Most partnerships are also working with employers, the National Citizen Service, Student Loans Company and NHS Trusts. Beyond that, partnerships cite a broad range of partners, including opportunity areas, housing associations and community and third sector organisations. In phase two of the programme there has been a notable shift in the nature of this engagement. The introduction of outreach hubs has been a catalyst for deepening and broadening relationships with existing partners such as the Careers Enterprise Company and LEPs.

Outreach hubs have also enabled partnerships to deliver a new signposting facility. Partnerships are also providing additional strategic engagement to support schools and colleges access outreach opportunities where a need has been identified. Therefore, more learners from underrepresented groups can benefit from higher education outreach.

Uni Connect partnerships have also had to adapt quickly to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent national and regional lockdowns since March 2020. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the learners that the Uni Connect programme aims to support. Partnerships moved swiftly to move their events and resources online and, in some cases, deliver printed resources to learners without access to the internet. This move to online provision has delivered the benefit of enabling Uni Connect to reach a much wider audience and continue to support schools and colleges in providing information, advice and guidance for their students.

One of Uni Connect's aims is contributing to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthening evaluation practice in the sector. The latest review of partnerships' evaluation evidence incorporated 165 partnership submissions and the contribution adds substantially to the volume and quality of evidence on the impact of outreach.

Although it is still too early to fully assess the longer-term impact of Uni Connect in terms of learner progression to higher education, evaluation of the programme has generated evidence of its effectiveness in terms of the sustained and progressive approach to outreach having a positive impact on the most disadvantaged pupils, including on their confidence in making decisions about their course of study. In the summer 2020 monitoring returns, partnerships reported that 293,399 unique Uni Connect learners had engaged in sustained and progressive outreach activity since the launch of the programme in January 2017.

Increasingly, the evidence from the Uni Connect evaluation indicates that multi-intervention approaches have a positive impact on short, medium and long-term outcomes for learners. Emerging evidence suggests more positive outcomes for those who participated in 3-6 hours (per academic year) or 7-8 engagements (over Years 12-13). They are also found to improve learners' knowledge of higher education and contribute to learners having higher levels of confidence in their decision-making abilities. Sustained engagement in multi-intervention programmes is found to have a positive impact on long-term outcomes, including the likelihood that a learner will successfully progress to higher education.

Background

The Uni Connect programme (formerly the National Collaborative Outreach Programme or NCOP) was established in January 2017 as an initial four-year programme, with funding of £60 million per year. This led to the creation of 29 partnerships of universities, colleges, local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, employers and other local partners. The partnerships deliver impartial information, advice, and guidance (IAG) and support for progression into university or college. The focus of the programme is to deliver sustained and progressive programmes of targeted outreach with young people in Years 9 to 13 who live in areas where higher education participation is both low and lower than might be expected given the GCSE results of the young people who live there.

The Uni Connect programme aims to:

- reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups
- support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education
- support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners
- contribute to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.

Launch of phase two of Uni Connect

The launch of phase two of Uni Connect was marked at an OfS parliamentary event held on 29 January 2020. Guests at the event had the opportunity to hear from Uni Connect learners about their experience of the programme and how it had helped them in the decisions they were or would be making about their next steps. They also heard from the Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP, then Minister for Universities, Science, Research, and Innovation; Michael Barber, then Chair of the OfS; Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive of the OfS; and Chris Millward, Director of Fair Access and Participation at the OfS.

As well as providing a valuable opportunity to hear from learners, and to showcase the work done across the programme, it enabled Members of Parliament to hear first hand how the programme was working with young people in their constituencies. The event allowed the partnerships to engage and connect with their own MPs and with each other.

Launch of Uni Connect branding at OfS Parliamentary event

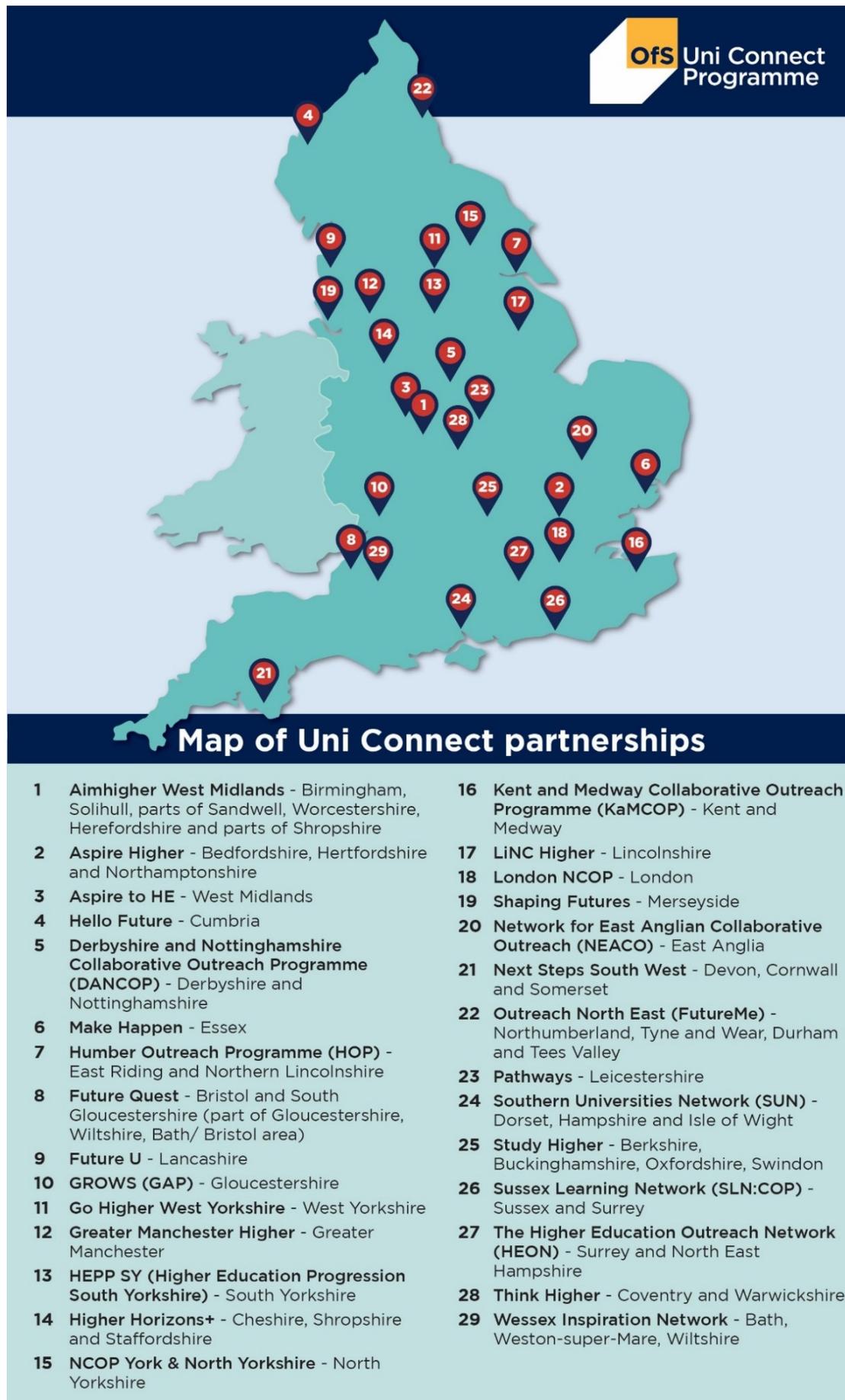


Centre Nicola Dandridge, to the right Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP, together flanked by Uni Connect learners

A national Uni Connect website¹ provides information about the programme to different audiences (teachers, parents and learners), and highlights the diversity of routes available to those participating in the programme. The website also helps visitors to find out about their local partnership, providing information on the areas that each of the 29 partnerships cover (see Figure 1) and their contact details.

¹ See the Uni Connect programme website at <https://www.ofsuniconnect.org>.

Figure 1: Map of Uni Connect partnerships in phase two



Phase two overview

Phase two of the Uni Connect programme started on 1 August 2019 and is due to finish in July 2021. Building on phase one, it supports two strands of activity (see Figure 2):

- Delivering targeted higher education outreach within the local areas where it can have the most impact (these are the same areas targeted under phase one)
- Establishing outreach hubs within the 29 local partnerships with cross-England coverage to help schools and colleges access the higher education outreach they need and provide a platform for wider collaboration.

Figure 2: Elements of the phase two programme



Targeted outreach

Uni Connect uses analysis of areas, with both low overall levels of participation and an unexplained gap in higher education participation, to determine where investment can be targeted to boost the numbers of young people from underrepresented groups going into higher education.² The programme focuses on the 997 target areas across England the analysis had identified; the 29 partnerships deliver sustained and progressive programmes of outreach activity to support learners in these local target areas.

As part of a new approach in phase two, the upper age limit for engagement with the programme was removed. Uni Connect partnerships were able to engage with learners over the age of 19 from target areas who were studying on a Level 2 or 3 further education course.

Outreach hubs

Phase two also introduced a new outreach hub element – to deliver outreach activity and offer a range of support to schools, colleges and other organisations. The hubs are expected to:

- help teachers and advisers find out about the outreach activity available in an area

² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/.

- support schools and colleges in areas of low participation to access higher education outreach
- provide a platform for other local collaborative activity.

The 29 local partnerships have established outreach hubs that cover every local authority in England. Through the hubs, partnerships are involved in:

- a. Signposting teachers and advisers to wider outreach activities in their local areas (this is available to all publicly funded schools and colleges) and supporting schools and colleges to access these opportunities.
- b. Providing a platform for local collaboration to support progression for people of all ages, through tertiary education involving universities, colleges, employers, third sector organisations and local agencies.
- c. Supporting effective and impactful collaboration between higher education providers and their local partners.

The programme is intended to complement and add value to the work that higher education providers undertake through their access and participation plans, in particular work that is best delivered in collaboration.

What has the programme achieved in phase two, year one?

Monitoring reports submitted by partnerships in October 2020 provide detailed information on the delivery of outreach activity and learner engagement in phase two of the programme between August 2019 and July 2020. The data suggests that despite the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Uni Connect partnerships have continued to deliver a range of activities to a high number of learners to meet the aims of the programme. The reports also outline how partnerships have engaged in wider collaborative activity to support learners from underrepresented groups through the outreach hubs.

Engaging learners

During the first year of phase two (August 2019 to July 2020), partnerships have continued to engage with high numbers of learners, building on the success of phase one of the programme (see Figure 3). During this year, partnerships engaged 185,919 Uni Connect learners in at least one activity (compared to 180,922 learners engaged during the previous year).³ Since the launch of the programme in January 2017, partnerships have engaged with a total of 765,389 learners in at least one activity, of which 348,290 are Uni Connect target learners.⁴

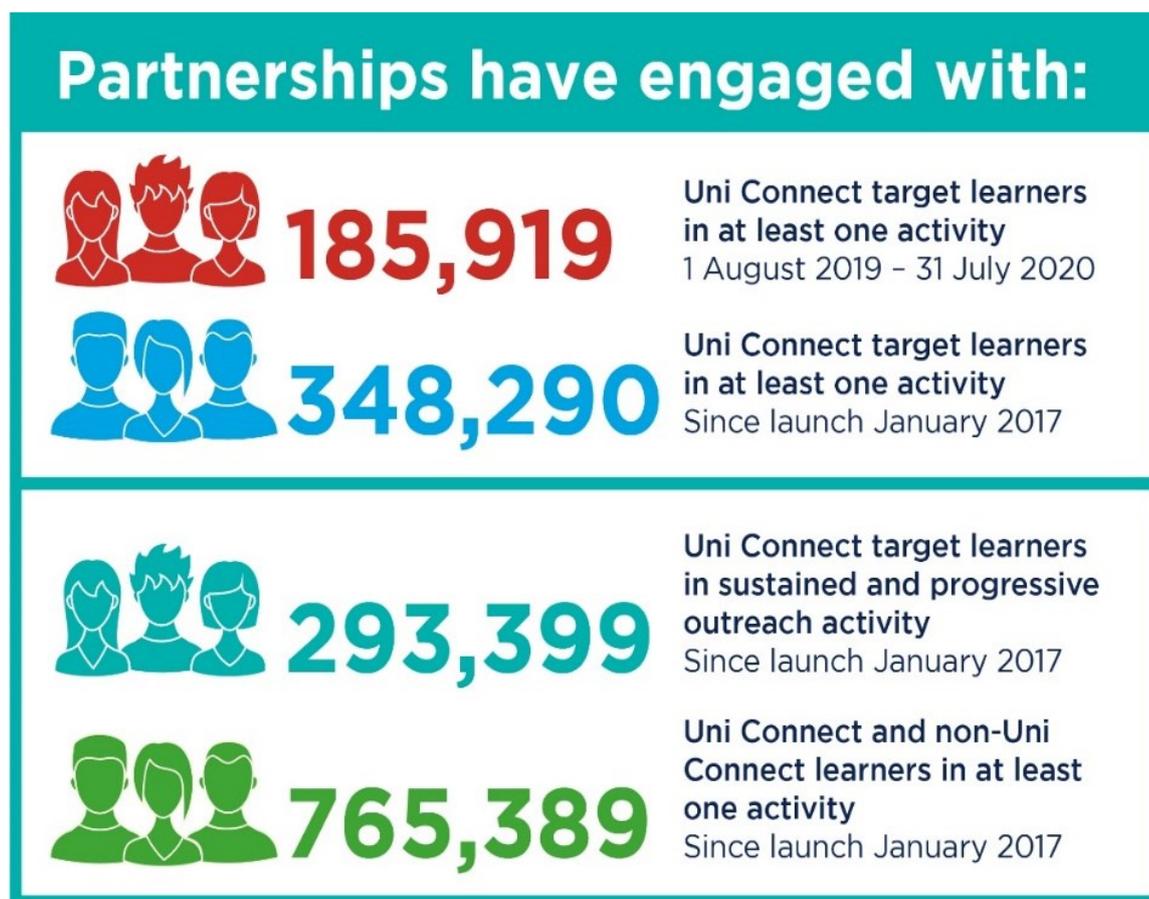
Although even a single interaction with the programme can be helpful, evidence from the externally commissioned evaluation of the programme, conducted by CFE Research,⁵ demonstrates that multiple engagement with learners – which is achieved through the programme’s targeted and sustained approach – has a positive impact on the most disadvantaged pupils, including on their confidence in making decisions about their course of study. In the summer 2020 monitoring returns, partnerships reported that 293,399 unique Uni Connect learners had engaged in sustained and progressive outreach since the launch of the programme in January 2017.

³ See National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP): Two years on, available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/ncop-two-years-on/.

⁴ These figures are taken from the summer 2020 tracking reports.

⁵ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/third-independent-review-of-evaluation-evidence-submitted-by-uni-connect-partnerships/.

Figure 3: Uni Connect learner engagement as reported in Uni Connect summer 2020 monitoring returns and tracking reports

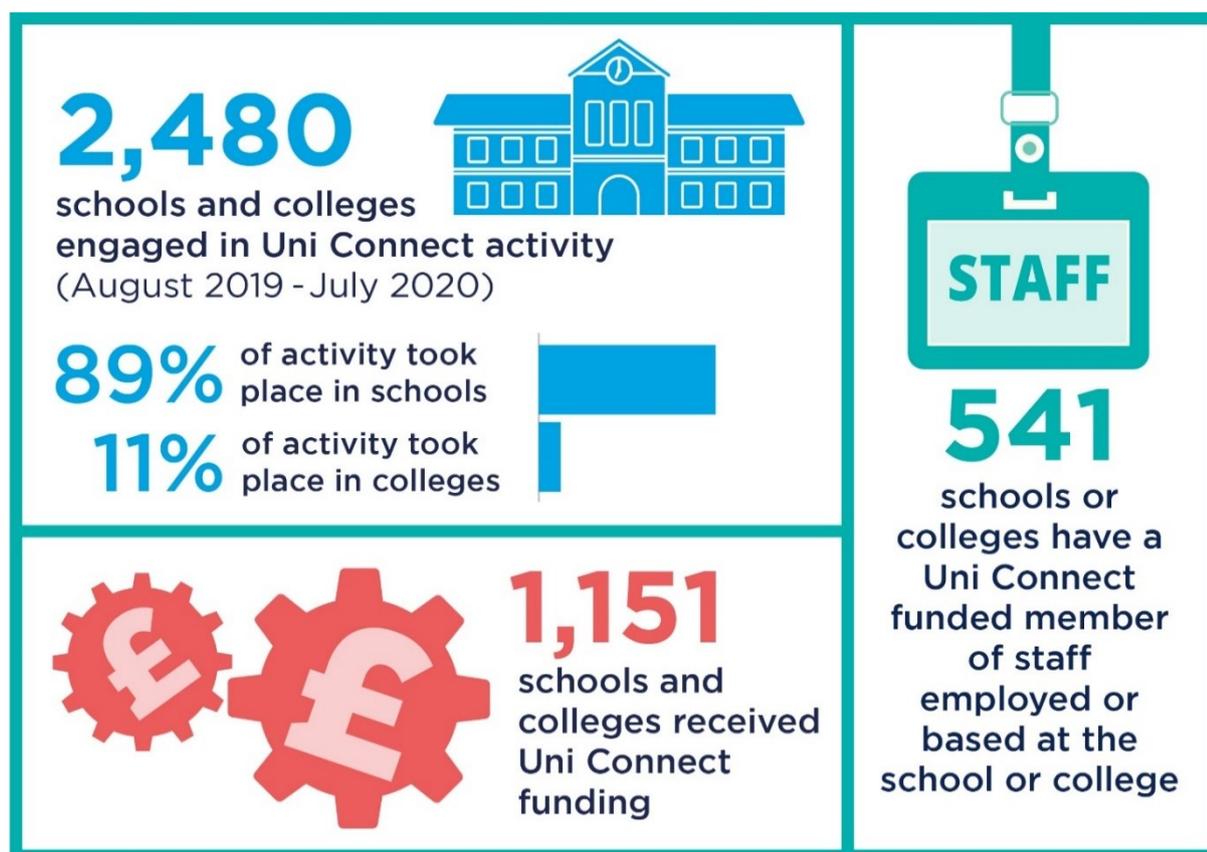


Engaging schools and colleges

Partnerships work with schools and colleges in different ways, and engagement with schools and colleges has increased since phase one of the programme. Figure 4 shows how schools and colleges have engaged with Uni Connect in the first year of phase two:

- 2,480 schools and colleges engaged in Uni Connect activity (August 2019-July 2020; source: summer 2020 tracking reports)
- 89 per cent of activity took place in schools (source: summer 2020 tracking reports)
- 11 per cent of activity took place in colleges (source: summer 2020 tracking reports)
- 1,151 schools and colleges received Uni Connect funding (source: summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns)
- 541 schools or colleges have a Uni Connect funded member of staff employed or based at the school or college (source: summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns).

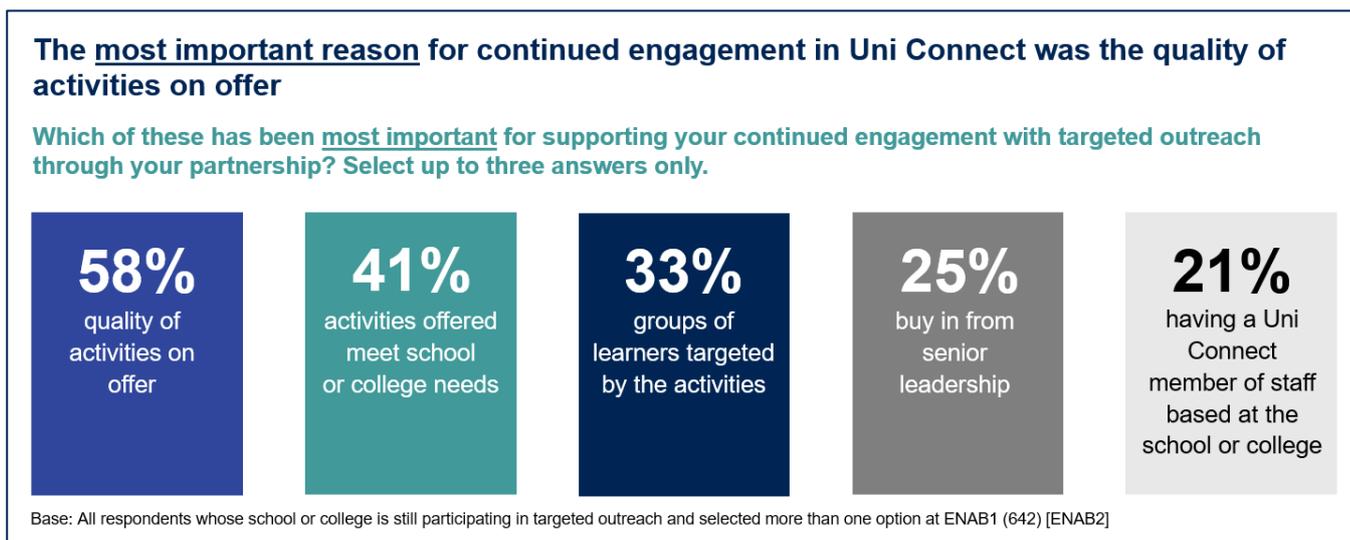
Figure 4: Uni Connect engagement with schools and colleges as reported in Uni Connect summer 2020 monitoring returns and tracking reports



Ipsos MORI, which was commissioned to formally evaluate the Uni Connect programme in phase two, conducted an online survey with schools and colleges eligible for Uni Connect targeted outreach between November and December 2020.⁶ The evaluation highlighted that the Uni Connect offer is widely regarded by schools and colleges as offering something different to the other outreach provision available, particularly in terms of the level of support provided and the range and quality of activities on offer (see Figure 5).

⁶ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/formative-evaluation-of-uni-connect-phase-two-survey-of-school-and-college-staff/.

Figure 5: Ipsos Mori evaluation findings on the most important reasons for continued school and college engagement with Uni Connect

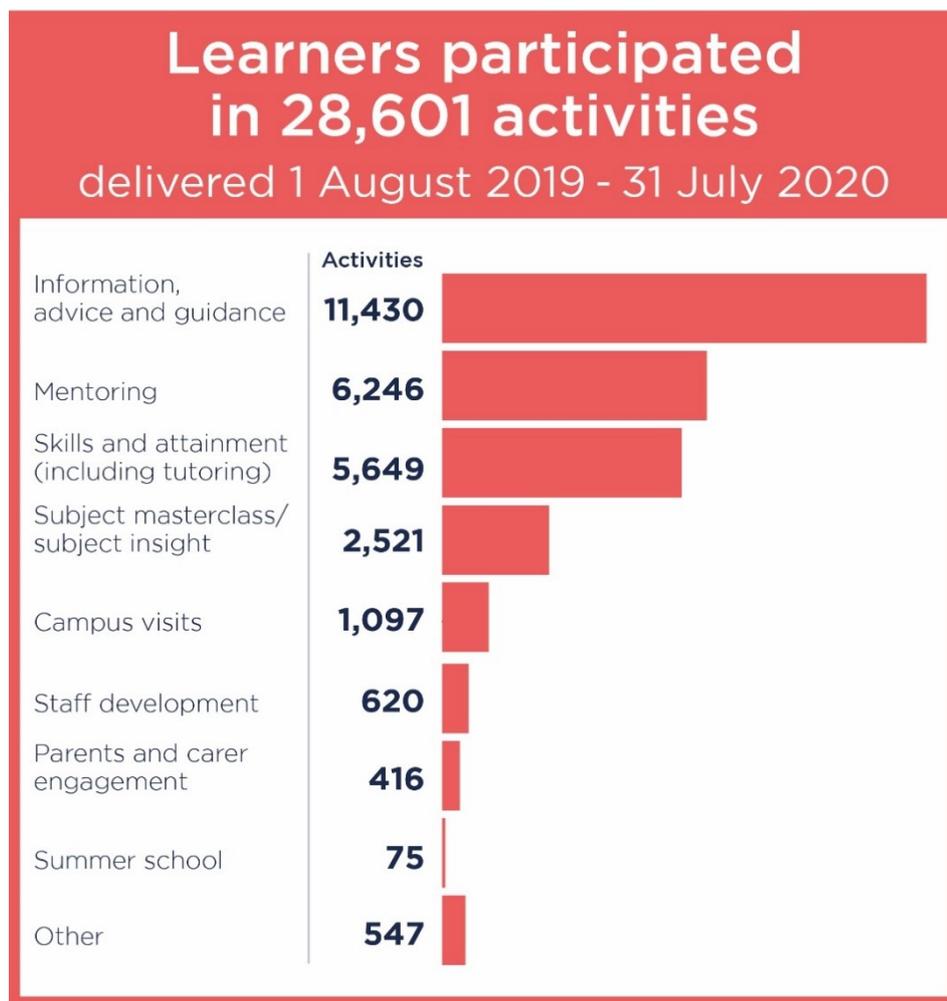


Source: Ipsos Mori, Formative evaluation of Uni Connect phase 2.

Activities and working with young people

During the first year of phase two, partnerships reported a total of 28,601 activities taking place between August 2019 and July 2020. Partnerships offered a range of activity types, for example information, advice, and guidance (IAG), mentoring and subject masterclasses. Figure 6 shows the number of activities, with one or more participants, delivered by type, during the first year of phase two. Almost half of the activities delivered were IAG and general higher education information activity types; the next most common activity types were skills and attainment raising (including tutoring), and mentoring. See Table 1 of Annex A for the number of activities of each type that took place in 2019-20.

Figure 6: Activity types delivered August 2019-July 2020 as reported in the summer 2020 tracking reports⁷



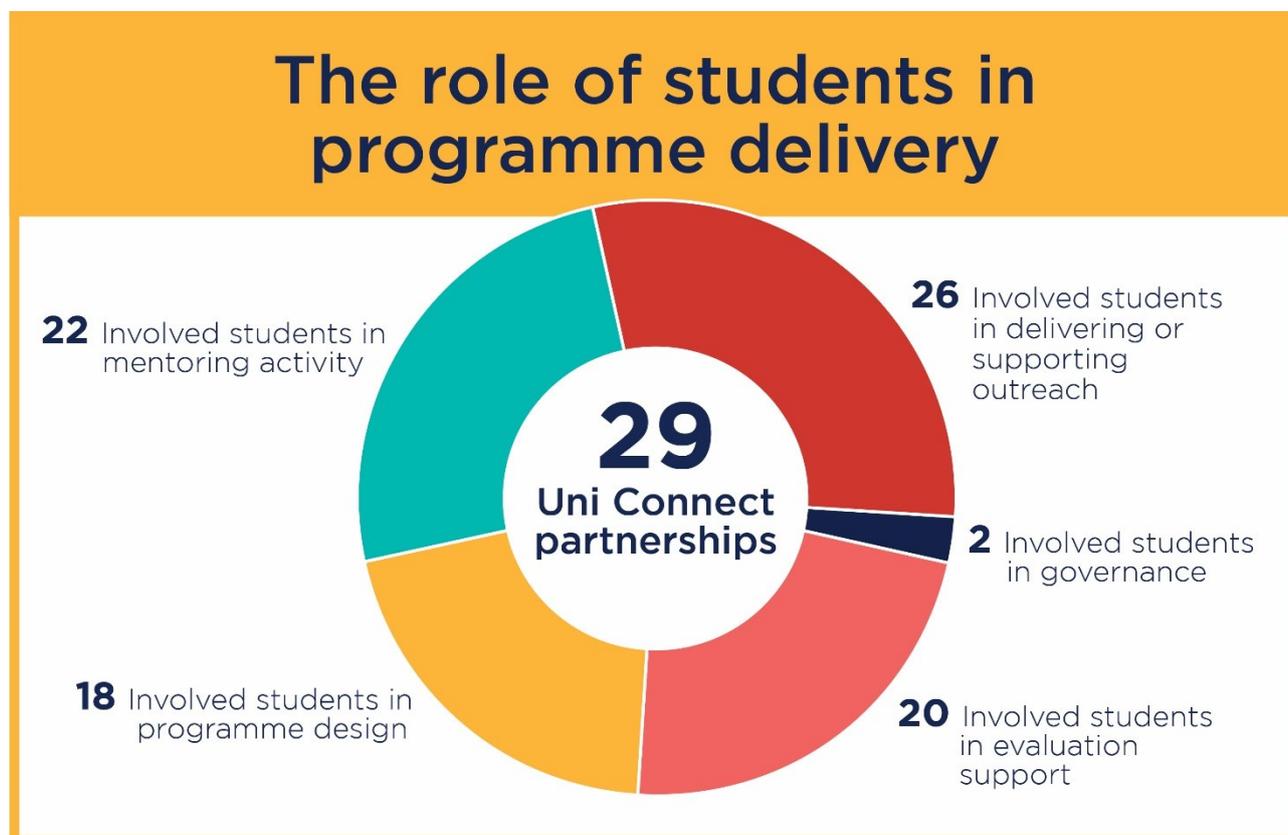
The CFE review of local evaluation evidence published in December 2020⁸ found that learners relate to and are influenced by people ‘like them’. Activities ranging from campus visits to mentoring appear to be most impactful when student ambassadors contribute to their delivery and draw on their own experience to support and inspire learners. In the summer 2020 monitoring return, 26 out of the 29 partnerships reported that they had included students in delivering and supporting outreach and 22 out of 29 partnerships engaged students to deliver mentoring activities (see

Table 2 of Annex A for more information). Figure 7 shows the role of students in programme delivery.

⁷ Figure 6 reports on the number of activities by type where >0 participants engaged and activity types were recorded in the tracking report.

⁸ For more details, see the CFE report ‘An independent review of evaluation evidence submitted by Uni Connect partnerships’, available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/independent-review-of-evaluation-evidence-submitted-by-uni-connect-partnerships/.

Figure 7: The role of students involved in programme delivery as reported in the summer 2020 monitoring returns



Next Steps South West (NSSW)⁹, led by the University of Plymouth

‘Student Ambassadors support internal progression of target students from Level 3 FE [further education] courses to HE [higher education]. They are present during NSSW workshops, open events, and campus tours. Developing a student ambassador programme provided numerous benefits, like building trust, fostering relationships, and increased enrolment. Their honesty and unscripted viewpoints helped prospective students and their parents feel more connected to higher education institutions.’

Next Steps South West Institutional Outreach Officer

‘Student Ambassadors are also a way to highlight what opportunities are available locally and in less well-known areas of education. There are many stereotypes about degrees needing to be done in more traditional subjects and routes – but with our outreach work we can challenge these views and explore other options with the students, including apprenticeships. This was highlighted at an event run in Cornwall called ‘Not going to Uni?’ This event broke down the barriers for students and introduced them to local businesses and apprenticeship opportunities. NSSW works across the counties and collaborates with other organisations, including the Careers and Enterprise Company, to create links with local

⁹ See nextstepssw.ac.uk/

employers in order to be able to run these types of events.’
Next Steps South West Institutional Outreach Officer

Uni Connect activity is delivered by a wide range of organisations, which is a benefit of the collaborative nature of the programme. The majority of activities in August 2019 to July 2020 were delivered by the Uni Connect partnerships’ outreach teams and staff members. Higher education providers and further education colleges also delivered high numbers of activities (source: summer 2020 tracking reports).

Activity was also delivered by schools and third-party providers such as local authorities. Other third-party outreach providers, such as the Brilliant Club, Articulacy and Unifrog, were also commissioned by the partnerships to deliver activity (see

Table 3 of Annex A for more details).

FutureHY York and North Yorkshire¹⁰, led by York St John University

‘The Uni Connect staff who support us are very professional, knowledgeable and so supportive of our students. They often go the extra mile and listen to issues facing individual students so that they can come up with flexible solutions. The team also brokers further support for our students, with examples being the Brilliant Club, The Excellence Hub and York St John University residential programmes for Year 10 and Year 12 students.’

Careers and Employability Lead & Assistant Headteacher, Richmond School & Northallerton School

Outreach hubs

Between August 2019 and July 2020, partnerships sought to develop their approaches and implement the outreach hub element of the phase two programme; by the end of July 2020 most partnerships’ outreach hubs were fully established.

Signposting

Partnerships have been acting as a point of contact and information for all secondary schools and colleges in their local area and have reported receiving 26,715 queries from schools, colleges and other stakeholders in the winter 2019 and summer 2020 monitoring returns. The source of queries received by partnerships is predominantly from schools (58 per cent), followed by colleges (11 per cent) (see Note: Some activities were delivered by more than one provider, so the total number of activities in Table 3 cannot be summed due to double counting).

Table 4 of Annex A). The most common types of queries during 2019-20 were queries about outreach provision (40 per cent) and requests for funding (32 per cent) (see

¹⁰ See www.futurehy.co.uk/

Table 5 of Annex A).

All partnerships host a website with details of the local outreach offer and to signpost other information to support schools and colleges. Partnerships reported that the impact of coronavirus, and consequent cancellation of activities, offered a unique opportunity to develop and improve aspects of the signposting element of outreach hubs. This was particularly the case for the outreach hub websites which, for many partnerships, became a key vehicle for the delivery of online outreach activity and signposting resources. The number of visits to partnerships' outreach hub websites increased from 77,992 in the first six months of phase two (August 2019-January 2020) to 165,982 in the second half of the year (February-July 2020) (source: winter 2019 and summer 2020 monitoring returns).

The Higher Education Outreach Network (HEON)

To enable the HEON partnership, led by the University of Surrey, to signpost to local outreach activity they have successfully been able to design, develop and populate their outreach hub website. To help teachers and advisers find out about outreach activity, they have included a bespoke outreach search for the 116 schools and colleges which HEON engages with.

Each of the schools and colleges can go onto the site, search for their name and they are provided with a list of HEON partners who are able to engage with them. Practitioners also have the option to contact the HEON team directly from the website as well as via email and phone.

The website provides further information on careers advice, resources and training opportunities offered by the partners within the partnership. During the coronavirus pandemic, the partnership built a new virtual learning area on its outreach hub website to deliver online outreach activity. This included establishing a virtual book club, the Book Quest¹¹, which won the HELOA Best Practice Collaboration Award 2021.

Partnerships have also supported schools and colleges in areas of low participation to access higher education outreach, via the outreach hubs, by:

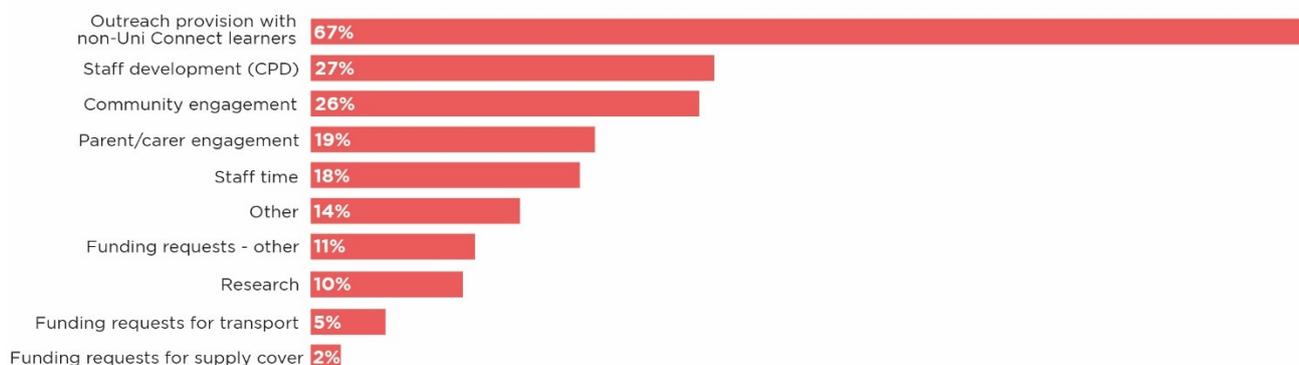
- a. Engaging with those schools and colleges to understand their outreach needs
- b. Facilitating access to existing outreach provision, either locally or nationally
- c. Working collaboratively to help develop new or expanded outreach provision to meet identified needs, using the combined resources of the providers in the area and drawing on the investment set out in their access and participation plans where appropriate.

Through ongoing monitoring, partnerships have provided information about proactive support initiatives delivered via outreach hubs. Figure 8 outlines the different types of initiatives delivered

¹¹ See www.heon.org.uk/case-studies/the-book-quest/.

by partnerships and reported in the summer 2020 monitoring return during the period February-July 2020. Outreach provision with non-Uni Connect learners has been the main type of proactive support provided by the outreach hubs which supports the aim to provide an infrastructure to support wider activity with schools, colleges, and partners across the outreach hub geography (see Table 6 of Annex A). It also supports the updated expectations of partnerships to support wider learners in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

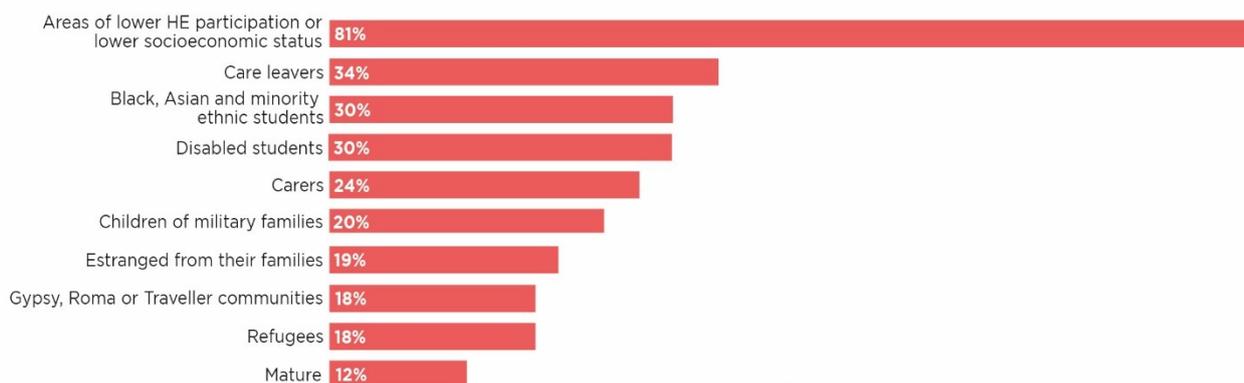
Figure 8: Types of support provided as reported in the summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns



When considering where to focus outreach activities, partnerships are encouraged to prioritise student groups where data shows gaps in equality of opportunity in relation to access to higher education.¹² Figure 9 shows the proportion of outreach hub initiatives that have been reported as targeting specific underrepresented groups. The data is also given in

Table 7 of Annex A.

Figure 9: Proportion of outreach hub activities targeting underrepresented groups as reported in the summer 2020 OfS monitoring return



Strategic engagement and collaborative partnerships

Within the 29 Uni Connect partnerships, a wide range of organisations are involved as core members, as outlined in Figure 10, and in Table 8 of Annex A. This demonstrates the diversity of

¹² See OfS Regulatory notice 1: Access and participation plan guidance for 2019-20 (OfS 2019.05), at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-notice-1-access-and-participation-plan-guidance/.

organisations involved, highlighting the breadth and strength of collaboration across providers of further and higher education and key local organisations.

Figure 10: Core members of the 29 Uni Connect partnerships, as reported in the summer 2020 OfS monitoring return



Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY)¹³, led by the University of Leeds

Go Higher West Yorkshire's strong engagement with partnership members has enabled them to make use of member resources and expertise to respond to the changing delivery environment. In particular, the engagement of their higher education in further education members who have led on a number of key initiatives. For example, Wakefield College, as the only local higher education provider in Wakefield, spearheaded the virtual higher education roadshow, utilising the expertise of their marketing team and building the relationship with local radio. GHWY's higher education week featured a range of higher education routes and options, while their Policing Taster Day has a strong focus on apprenticeship routes.

The strong relationships between members is helping to support further education learners. For example, level 3 Art and Design Students at Calderdale College completed a personal statement exercise and competition with students from Leeds Arts University, building upon the understanding they are gaining via GHWY's Progression Module Light programme. The Module supports students entering higher education and employment and was adapted in

¹³ See www.gohigherwestyorks.ac.uk/

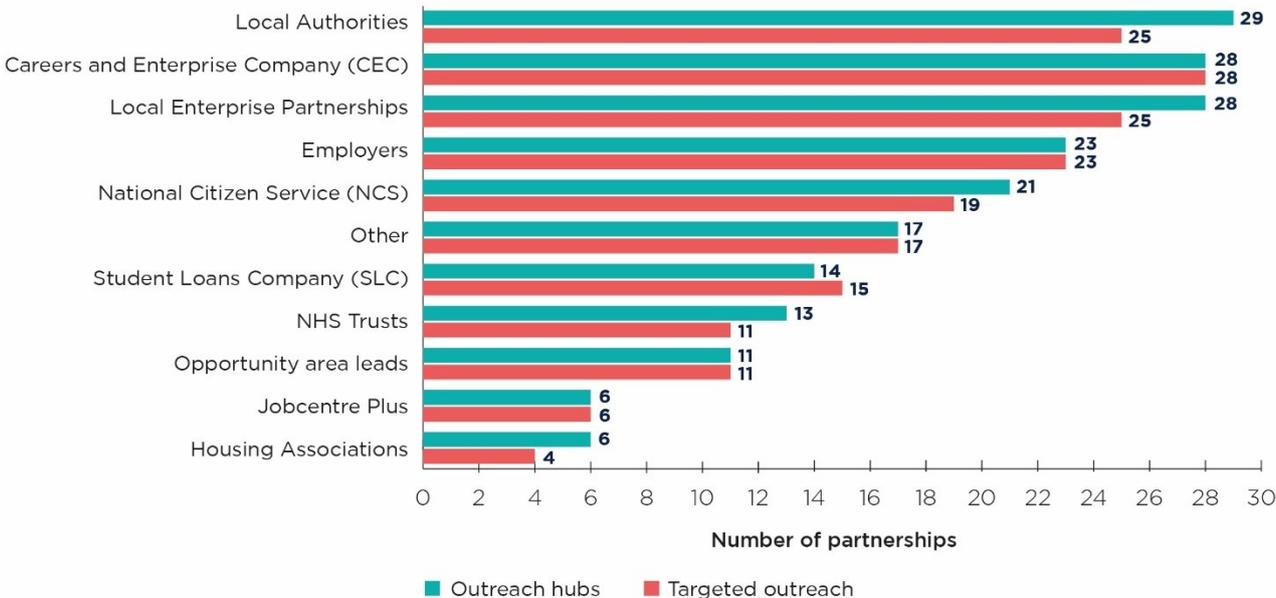
response to the pandemic from the partnership’s collaborative ‘Progression Module Plus’ for Y12 students.

Uni Connect provides a platform for other local collaborative activity by:

- a. Engaging strategically with local authorities, LEPs, employers and others to understand the landscape of educational disadvantage, high level skills needs and joined-up careers advice in the area
- b. As far as possible developing innovative and locally tailored approaches to address the challenges identified through the above engagement, drawing in additional funding and support from available sources to support this.

Strong local collaboration has continued to be at the heart of the Uni Connect programme in phase two. Partnerships have engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders as part of both targeted outreach and outreach hub activity, as shown in Figure 11. The key strategic partners for Uni Connect are local authorities, the Careers and Enterprise Company and LEPs. These have been prioritised by partnerships in terms of their strategic engagement, with almost all reporting that they are working with them on outreach hub activities. Most partnerships are also working with employers and the National Citizen Service and around half are working with the Student Loans Company and NHS Trusts. Beyond that, partnerships cite a broad range of partners, including opportunity areas, housing associations and community and third sector organisations (see Table 9 of Annex A).

Figure 11: Number of partnerships working with stakeholders via outreach hubs and targeted outreach as reported in the summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns



The Ipsos Mori formative evaluation of phase two¹⁴ of the programme has highlighted that, whilst the profile of partners engaged through outreach hubs is broadly similar to that for targeted outreach, there has been a notable shift in the nature of this engagement. Outreach hubs have been a catalyst for deepening and broadening relationships with existing partners such as the Careers Enterprise Company and LEPs. Partnerships are now able to work with local partners in a more holistic way rather than being restricted to only working with those schools and colleges eligible for targeted outreach. Partnerships are also engaging with partnerships more strategically, not only focusing on activity delivery but identifying strategic priorities, sharing intelligence and co-ordinating provision.

Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach Programme (neaco)

Neaco¹⁵, led by Cambridge University, has collaborated with Suffolk County Council, the Careers and Enterprise Company and New Anglia local enterprise partnership to deliver a conference for teachers and IAG leads on how and where to access Local Market Information (LMI), and how to utilise it with students. Neaco joint-funded the event and delivered a workshop providing a regional view of graduate-relevant LMI to support higher education decision making, signposting to useful LMI resources to use with young people (particularly from Uni Connect target wards) and a series of progressive activities across year groups that attendees could deliver themselves.

Think Higher

Think Higher¹⁶, led by the University of Warwick, has co-funded an Enterprise Co-ordinator with the Coventry and Warwickshire Careers Hubs. This ensures that the partnership and its constituent partners are fully engaged in efforts to improve the provision of guidance through the Gatsby Benchmarks for all schools in the region.

As well as developing relationships with existing partners, some partnerships have also broadened their strategic engagement to incorporate wider organisations such as community groups and employers. Working with employers is perceived as important to developing an understanding of local skills needs and gaps as well as identifying alternative progression pathways for learners, such as higher level apprenticeships. Further work with employers is also something that schools and colleges suggested they would like to see more of as part of the programme in the schools and colleges survey¹⁷ conducted by Ipsos Mori as part of the formative evaluation.

One example of successful collaborative activity in phase two is the collaborative working between Uni Connect and the National Citizen Service (NCS). The NCS is a government-backed initiative that brings together young people aged 15 to 17 from different backgrounds, giving them the

¹⁴ See Formative evaluation of Uni Connect phase two: Findings, at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/uni-connect-phase-two-formative-evaluation/.

¹⁵ See www.neaco.ac.uk/

¹⁶ See www.thinkhigher.ac.uk/

¹⁷ See [Formative evaluation of Uni Connect phase two: survey of school and college staff - Office for Students](#)

chance to undertake a programme of personal and social development and community action. There are many ways in which the aims, objectives and work of NCS and Uni Connect programmes align, therefore collaboration is encouraged to ensure Uni Connect partnerships are taking a joined-up approach to outreach delivery to avoid duplication and minimise burden on schools.

In November 2019, staff from both Uni Connect and NCS attended two collaborative events, hosted by the OfS and NCS, to share knowledge and information and discuss ways the two programmes could work more collaboratively. As a result of these events collaborative relationships between local partnerships and NCS were developed in some areas.

Aspire to HE and NCS

Aspire to HE¹⁸, led by the University of Wolverhampton, has collaborated with their local NCS provider and Dudley College to support the delivery of a specific NCS programme for target Uni Connect learners which was tailored to meet the needs of those who would benefit most from the experience. A programme was developed between the college and the local NCS provider that supported the involvement of learners identified through Aspire to HE. For many learners, the financial aspect of taking part in college activities can be a huge barrier to their participation and therefore their success. Due to the college's links with the local Uni Connect partnership, target learners were financially supported to take part in the programme which had a number of positive impacts and outcomes, supporting their progression and personal development.

¹⁸ See aspiretohe.co.uk/

Supporting outreach during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

School closures resulting from the pandemic are expected to exacerbate inequalities and widen the existing attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers.¹⁹ Closures of schools also had a significant impact on Uni Connect partnerships' plans for delivery of outreach activity. Partnerships worked hard to continue to support schools during the pandemic by exploring and delivering alternative models of engagement. The OfS undertook a review of the equality impact assessment of the programme and issued further guidance²⁰ to the partnerships, asking them to explore alternative modes of engagement and delivery in response to the changed environment. We asked them to identify:

- a. how their approach could support broader groups of underrepresented students, not just those in their target schools and wards
- b. the information, advice and guidance needs of students applying to higher education in the upcoming admissions cycle.

As part of the evaluation of the Uni Connect programme, CFE Research published a short briefing,²¹ which provided emerging insights from 11 Uni Connect partnerships into how the coronavirus pandemic has affected Uni Connect outreach delivery, outreach effectiveness, disadvantaged learners, and their engagement with the programme.

Changes to activities

The coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on activity that was planned for the latter part of the 2019-20 academic year. Partnerships traditionally delivered outreach activity face to face; therefore initial school closures and subsequent ongoing disruption posed particular challenges for outreach delivery: 7,278 activities were cancelled and 973 postponed (source: summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns). Partnerships were asked to explore alternative modes of delivery and they responded quickly and flexibly, developing online delivery models to support schools and colleges during the lockdown period. A key finding from CFE's research on responses to coronavirus and data collected through monitoring shows that existing activities and materials were adapted for online delivery, in some cases supporting learners with more flexibility and choice. A total of 4,201 activities were reported to have taken place as planned or moved online (source: summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns) and it was reported that some activities, such as provision of IAG and mentoring, were easier to adapt than others (like campus visits and summer schools).

¹⁹ See epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/disadvantage-gap-covid-19/.

²⁰ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/uni-connect-programme-an-update-from-the-office-for-students/.

²¹ See Emerging insight report: COVID-19 and Uni Connect, at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/emerging-insight-report-covid-19-and-uni-connect/.

Humber Outreach Programme (HOP)

The Humber Outreach Programme (HOP)²², led by the University of Hull, offers work experience as part of the curriculum to vulnerable learners who are either looked after, a child in need or have an education, health and care plan. However, this year, due to lockdown this was unable to take place in its original form. With the help of the COVID-19 rapid response community grant, an alternative solution was developed.

The local market offered learners the opportunity to engage, sell and set up as a small business. The aim of the project was to develop the learners' enterprise skills as well as helping them overcome their barriers to learning, reigniting their potential and enthusiasm for learning, and providing them with contact while they were isolated.

Pathways

Pathways²³, led by the University of Leicester, worked with colleagues at partner universities and local NHS Trusts to bring their Junior Emergency Medicine project online. Using real to life emergency simulations, filmed by medical professionals and discussion groups, the event sought to provide insights into the skills and qualities that students applying for medicine and allied health courses would need to demonstrate in their applications, recognising that many students had missed out on opportunities to undertake work experience.



²² See hop-humber.co.uk/

²³ See www.pathwaystohe.ac.uk/

heppSY

heppSY, led by Sheffield Hallam University, in partnership with the University of Sheffield, delivered a free higher education digital festival (heppFEST) for school pupils, college students, parent and carers, and teachers and careers advisers across South Yorkshire.

With around 100 online live sessions, the festival²⁴ provided information and guidance for those wanting to find out more about higher education opportunities including degree level courses and apprenticeships.

Guest speakers from both Sheffield universities, as well as sessions including the universities of Cambridge and Oxford, formed part of the festival. A series of online sessions, including careers clinics, were delivered for teachers who wanted to enhance their professional development skills.

Analysis of the monitoring data collected in summer 2020 suggests that, during the lockdown period (26 March-31 July 2020), 85 per cent of activity was delivered online compared to only 4 per cent pre-lockdown (1 August 2019-25 March 2020) (source: summer 2020 tracking reports).

Very limited evidence suggests that some online mentoring and multi-activity engagement has been as effective as face-to-face delivery, but that less immersive, online approaches to activities such as summer schools may be less effective in helping learners understand what student life is like.

Further evaluation is needed to understand the impact of mode of delivery, on both levels of engagement and learner outcomes, to ensure new blended approaches capitalise on the strengths of online delivery and are at least as effective as the predominantly face-to-face offer.

Aimhigher West Midlands

The Aimhigher West Midlands partnership²⁵, led by the University of Birmingham, continued its online tutoring throughout the pandemic and was able to continue with online mentoring through an online chat function. The partnership quickly developed a page for its website and it received over 200 visits to its chat function and over 100 visits to its home learning. The partnership also planned a student voice project with 30 Uni Connect learners, tasking them to become community reporters. This involved the learners creating vlogs and blogs around their experiences of lockdown.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) for prospective students

As part of the revised expectations in response to COVID-19, partnerships were asked to consider the information, advice and guidance needs of students applying to higher education in the upcoming admissions cycle. A slightly higher proportion of IAG and general higher education

²⁴ See www.hepp.ac.uk/festival

²⁵ See aimhigherwm.ac.uk/

information activities (42 per cent), as well as skills and attainment activities (21 per cent), were reported as being delivered in the post-lockdown period (26 March to 31 July 2020) (see Table 10 of Annex A). This also supports the CFE research finding that partnerships were more easily able to adapt IAG and general higher education information sessions to online formats during the pandemic than other activity types such as summer schools.

Examples of how some partnerships sought to address the IAG needs for prospective students were included in the OfS Briefing note published in June 2020.²⁶

FutureMe

The North East Uni Connect Partnership²⁷, led by Newcastle University, has reviewed, and repurposed its student facing FutureMe activity in schools and colleges. The restrictions placed on schools and colleges during the pandemic created opportunities to pivot to alternative delivery methods and to upskill the team in virtual delivery options, including media and editing training.

This new way of working has brought benefits in creating a flexible programme that can be offered to a wide range of students who need support. Within the schools programme, a comprehensive virtual offering is now available and will form a key part of the FutureMe school provision to complement in-person delivery going forward. The partnership's 15 colleges in the region have adopted a blended approach to delivery, focusing on both in-person (when permitted) and online provision.

Individual one-to-one support during the pandemic was critical in providing additional student interventions and replaced activity such as campus visits and third party provision. These activities provided support for students transitioning to an online learning environment and needing to make progression decisions, particularly for those who were hoping to enter higher education in 2020. A variety of interventions, such as virtual careers appointments, online study skills and platforms to enable students to create professional profiles that highlighted their key and transferable skills, took place. The partnership also developed a study buddy app to support students' academic learning and help foster strategies to build resilience and ease transition to higher education.

Working digitally has provided opportunities to develop a programme that is sustainable and robust enough to accommodate future challenges, whilst providing flex at a school and college level to accommodate a range of individual requirements and timetabling challenges.

²⁶ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/coronavirus-briefing-note-information-advice-and-guidance-for-prospective-students/.

²⁷ See futureme.ac.uk/

Supporting disadvantaged students through higher education outreach

Partnerships were also asked to consider how their approach to delivering outreach during the pandemic could support broader groups of underrepresented students, not just those in their target schools and wards.

The CFE emerging insight report outlines how the shift to online delivery helped to support more non-target learners to engage in the programme, by increasing the accessibility, flexibility and volume and choice of activity available to learners. However, there were also a number of barriers to engagement, particularly for disadvantaged students. According to eight partnerships that gathered interview data from teachers and Uni Connect co-ordinators, disadvantaged learners were less likely to have access to technology (such as laptop, tablet and/or a stable internet connection) to enable them to engage in learning and outreach while home schooling, and this acted as a barrier to access.

There is limited data available to fully understand the wider reach of outreach delivered by partnerships during the pandemic and the true impact of the work undertaken by partnerships will not be known for some time. Partnerships reported that they had engaged with 13,425 additional learners during the pandemic (source: summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns). This figure represents the number of learners engaged during the lockdown period who had not previously engaged with Uni Connect as part of a sustained and progressive programme of activity. This also only represents learners where partnerships were assured that they had meaningfully engaged with an activity and basic data had been collected – therefore, it is likely that a greater number of learners engaged in the programme as a result of changes made to delivery.

Examples of how some partnerships adapted their outreach delivery to support disadvantaged and vulnerable groups during the pandemic were included in the OfS Briefing note published in July 2020.²⁸

GROWS

GROWS²⁹, led by the University of Gloucestershire, designed an interactive blended learning booklet, adapted from sessions run in schools, for Year 9 and 10 learners researching potential future pathways and careers. Through quizzes and other interactive activities, they can explore post-16 pathways and qualifications, develop their interest in particular careers and courses, identify their own skills gaps, and set goals and actions to work towards their dream career.

The booklet includes activities that do not require internet access. Those that do are designed to be undertaken in short chunks, and can be accessed on smartphones, tablets, and other devices. Printed copies have been posted to the homes of students in those schools with the highest populations of widening participation learners.

²⁸ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/coronavirus-briefing-note-higher-education-outreach/.

²⁹ See www.grows.ac.uk/

LiNCHigher

LiNCHigher, led by Bishop Grosseteste University, adapted its in-school activity to an online platform, called LiNCHigher Learning³⁰, which hosts pre-recorded training modules, materials and worksheets, using individual learner and teacher information accounts. Pupils can be allocated work modules based on their individual learning needs and year group, as well as more targeted activities for underrepresented groups, and their progress can be tracked.

The platform currently supports over 34,000 learners and contains 20 courses and over 100 videos on a wide range of topics on higher and further education, student finance, motivation and self-belief, careers and subject knowledge masterclasses. These are designed to engage learners – particularly those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

³⁰ See www.linchigherlearning.co.uk/.

Understanding our impact

Programme evaluation approach

Uni Connect is being evaluated at a national level to understand how successfully the programme meets its aims, in addition to programme output monitoring and local partnership evaluation activity. The OfS uses evidence from the evaluation to support our funding decisions and refine guidance for partnerships at a local level. Partnerships draw on and generate evaluation evidence to improve their delivery.

The core elements of the national evaluation are described briefly in the table below.

<p>OfS national dataset analysis impact evaluation</p>	<p>OfS national dataset analysis uses UCAS applications and National Pupil Database (NPD) school data to measure differences in higher education participation in Uni Connect target areas compared with other areas. Future analyses will incorporate HESA data.</p>
<p>Independent impact evaluation (CFE Research)</p>	<p>Longitudinal learner survey run by CFE Research to measure changes in Uni Connect learners' knowledge, attitudes and intentions towards higher education (intermediate outcomes) between Years 9 and 13. Data collection has been disrupted in 2020-21 due to COVID-19.</p> <p>Meta evidence review of partnerships' local evaluation outputs by CFE Research.</p>
<p>Independent formative evaluation (Ipsos Mori)</p>	<p>Formative evaluation research aims to support programme learning and increase the impact during the programme. Understanding 'how' and why' Uni Connect is working informs policy decisions, strengthens programme governance, and supports establishing a causal link between programme activity and impact.</p>
<p>Partnership local evaluation</p>	<p>Partnership local evaluations focus on generating evidence of how their activity impacts learners, to improve their outreach delivery. Each partnership has a local evaluation plan aligned with their progression frameworks. Many incorporate the learner survey and all use longitudinal tracking, in addition to other approaches.</p>
<p>Partnership longitudinal tracking</p>	<p>Longitudinal learner tracking through to higher education entry. Partnerships collect learner and activity data using longitudinal tracking services. The tracking services use NPD and HESA data with counterfactual groups to understand whether Uni Connect learners are more likely to progress to higher education. Some partnerships are also working with UCAS using Strobe, a service that can track individuals into the UCAS applications system, and report anonymously on their outcomes or characteristics at aggregate levels.</p>

We do not expect to be able to fully evidence the programme's impact yet, as much of Uni Connect's targeted outreach activity is designed to have impact over five years – engaging the same learners from Years 9 to 13. Additionally, the higher education national datasets that are needed to assess higher education participation are only available between 6 to 18 months after actual higher education entry. However, some positive evidence on the short to medium term impact of the Uni Connect programme has emerged from the evaluation to date.

This section summarises the latest available findings from all elements of the evaluation in phase two. All the evaluation reports are available on the OfS website.³¹

OfS national dataset analysis impact evaluation

The OfS national dataset analysis has established a baseline for quantitative analysis into the ongoing impact of the programme.³² This analysis explores changes in UCAS applications data as a measure of higher education progression, to understand whether Uni Connect is closing the gaps between young people from areas with the highest and lowest participation. Linked National Pupil Database (NPD) and UCAS (2012-2019) data were used to look at the proportion of young people (at age 18) applying to and being accepted into higher education.

The analysis found no evidence that the gap in participation has reduced yet for the cohort of learners who experienced at most two years post-GCSE Uni Connect targeted outreach. We anticipate that programme impact is most likely to be seen from 2022 onwards (UCAS data will be available in early 2023), when learners who have engaged with partnerships from Year 9 may enter higher education. This finding covers two years' programme delivery to Year 12 and 13 learners, whereas much of Uni Connect's outreach activity is designed to have impact over five years – with partnerships engaging learners from Year 9. The OfS will continue to assess data as it becomes available to evaluate the programme's longer-term impact.

Additionally, the analysis found that the gaps in **entry** to higher education are highly associated with the gaps in **application** to higher education. This suggests that any differences Uni Connect might make to learners' decisions after their application are unlikely to affect whether learners choose to enter higher education or not, but may affect their choice of course and institution.

Independent impact evaluation (CFE Research) – Longitudinal learner survey

Evidence from the longitudinal learner survey analyses indicates that the sustained and progressive nature of the programme does benefit learners, with improvements in their self-reported knowledge, attitudes and intentions towards higher education.

The survey analyses found that greater engagement in Uni Connect activities was associated with learners being better informed about higher education – with improved knowledge of the subjects offered, course types, entry qualifications, student life, and potential careers supported. Learners who took part in activities were associated with improved understanding of the financial and non-

³¹ Evaluation reports are available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/uni-connect/evaluating-uni-connects-impact/.

³² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/uni-connect-national-evaluation/.

financial benefits of higher education. Mentoring was associated with learners' improved knowledge of higher education and student life. Subject masterclasses were associated with improved likelihood to apply to higher education.

Findings demonstrated Uni Connect was responsible for learners' improved knowledge of the costs of higher education and the available financial support.

The findings highlighted that there is positive change for learners with disabilities and those who have fewer family members or contacts with higher education experience; however in some areas less change was evidenced than for other learners.

Independent impact evaluation (CFE Research): Meta evidence review of local partnership evaluation

The latest evidence review incorporated 165 partnership submissions over phases one and two. This evidence adds substantially to the volume, as well as the quality, of evidence on the impact of outreach. As a result, a significant step towards the achievement of the OfS's objective to enhance the evidence base and strengthen evaluation practice has been made through Uni Connect, as per our programme aim: *"contribute to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector."*

There is a high volume of strong evidence that multi-intervention approaches have a positive impact on short, medium and long-term outcomes for learners, particularly when they engage in seven to eight sessions for a minimum of three hours in total over the course of an academic year. They are also found to contribute to learners having higher levels of confidence in their decision-making abilities. Sustained engagement in multi-intervention programmes is found to have a positive impact on long-term outcomes, including the likelihood that a learner will successfully progress to higher education. Individual 'light touch' interventions are less effective when delivered as one-off or standalone activities, but have a positive impact when delivered as a series.

All interventions are shown to have a positive effect on learners' knowledge of higher education and their confidence to make informed decisions – a key aim of Uni Connect. In addition, particular interventions appear to support the achievement of specific outcomes: workshops and masterclasses are effective for developing study skills and confidence; mentoring and summer schools support the development of self-efficacy and interpersonal skills; and campus visits are an effective way to convey the benefits of higher education and what student life is like.

Evidence on the impact of individual activities on learners' intentions towards higher education is more equivocal, but the stronger evidence suggests activities have a positive effect. Limited evidence that some interventions have a negative effect commonly focuses on learners who change their mind about higher education. We cannot see how these self-reported intentions translate into behaviour until the national higher education participation data is available for these learners.

Learners relate to and are influenced by people 'like them'. Activities ranging from campus visits to mentoring appear to be most impactful when student ambassadors contribute to their delivery and draw on their own experience to support and inspire learners.

Recommendations for delivery that emerge as a result of the additional evidence are informing the programme.

Independent formative evaluation (Ipsos Mori) – schools’ and colleges’ views of Uni Connect

Ipsos Mori completed a survey of staff at schools and colleges as part of the formative programme evaluation. Overall, school and college staff were outstandingly positive about their experience of Uni Connect delivery. Key findings from the survey included:

- Uni Connect outreach activities are perceived to be high quality and to offer something different to other outreach provision in the impartiality, level of support provided, range and quality of activities.
- Schools and colleges cite a broad range of benefits to learners who engage with Uni Connect, including increased confidence to make informed choices and increased understanding of the benefit of higher education.
- The survey highlighted a range of benefits to schools and colleges from Uni Connect, including contribution to Gatsby benchmarks, the Baker Clause, financial support, access to expert knowledge and an enriched curriculum.
- Activities taking place with learners (rather than with staff or parents and carers) were the highest rated amongst schools and colleges, particularly general information, advice and guidance and campus visits (although all activities were rated highly).
- The top reasons for continued engagement were the quality of activities on offer, alignment to the needs of the school or college and the groups of learners targeted.
- Challenges to engagement are primarily time and flexibility within the timetable and staff resource. These challenges were less prevalent in schools and colleges who have a paid member of Uni Connect staff.
- Schools and colleges would welcome more involvement of employers in targeted outreach activities.

Independent formative evaluation (Ipsos Mori) – outreach hubs in phase two

Further evaluation by Ipsos MORI has also been published which focuses on the programme’s outreach hubs, which were newly established in phase two. According to the independent evaluation findings:

- Partnerships’ approaches to hub implementation have varied widely, both in the focus for delivery and the pace of delivery progress.
- Hub operating models are fit for purpose and have shaped governance structures to become more unified, outward looking and with increased college involvement.

- Developing outreach hubs has driven stronger and more strategic relationships with stakeholder partners, which are likely to be sustained.
- Most of the hubs' new outreach activity (proactive support) has extended partnerships' existing outreach offering to new learners and/or schools, with a few examples of innovative new activity development.
- All partnerships have a communication strategy and website to deliver signposting to their regions, though this area was most varied in its interpretation and delivery.
- The perceived impartiality of outreach hubs has been a key enabler of strategic engagement with schools, colleges and stakeholders.
- Uni Connect staff located in schools and colleges, and their relationships, were instrumental in continued delivery during COVID-19.

The report includes further programme recommendations for the OfS and partnerships to drive impact.

A new approach to Uni Connect

Phase three of the Uni Connect programme will start in August 2021 and will, in principle, run through to the end of July 2025. Funding for the programme is subject to confirmation and consultation on an annual basis.

The OfS recently consulted on a proposed new approach to the Uni Connect programme³³ for phase three. The consultation response has now been published³⁴ and sets out the decisions made after taking full consideration of responses received. The aims and priorities for phase three of the programme are to:

- Contribute to reducing the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups.
- Equip young and adult learners from underrepresented groups to make an informed choice about their options in relation to the full range of routes into and through higher education, and to minimise the barriers they may face when choosing the option that will unlock their potential.
- Support a strategic local infrastructure of universities, colleges and other partners that can cut through competitive barriers, offer an efficient and low-burden route for schools and colleges to engage with, and address outreach 'cold spots' for underrepresented groups.
- Contribute to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice across the sector.

The 2021-22 academic year will be a transition year during which partnerships will develop the different elements of their approach and review any existing activity against the phase three programme aims and ambitions. Partnerships will continue to deliver targeted outreach to learners who live in the phase two Uni Connect target areas.

³³ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/consultation-on-new-approach-to-uni-connect/.

³⁴ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/a-new-approach-to-the-uni-connect-programme-from-2021-22-to-2024-25/.

Conclusion

During the first year of phase two, Uni Connect partnerships have continued to build on the success of the programme and engaged with high numbers of learners, schools and colleges in outreach activity, despite the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Partnerships have adapted successfully to new ways of working through the introduction of outreach hubs and in response to the pandemic. As a result, wider groups of underrepresented students have been engaged and supported by the programme.

The programme evaluation is contributing to building a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthening evaluation practice across the sector. Strong evidence is emerging from the programme which shows sustained engagement with students is needed to support them to make informed decisions about higher education. Evidence suggests that multi-intervention approaches have a positive impact on short, medium and long-term outcomes for learners. Emerging evidence suggests more positive outcomes for those who participated in 3-6 hours (per academic year) or 7-8 engagements (over Years 12-13). They are also found to improve learners' knowledge of higher education and contribute to learners having higher levels of confidence in their decision-making abilities. Sustained engagement in multi-intervention programmes is found to have a positive impact on long-term outcomes, including the likelihood that a learner will successfully progress to higher education.

The Uni Connect partnerships have now established a strong infrastructure for the delivery of collaborative outreach. Partnerships have consolidated relationships with local and national organisations such as the Careers Enterprise Company and LEPs to understand the outreach and skills needs of their areas. This ensures the programme is in a strong position, as it moves into phase three, to help both young and adult disadvantaged learners find out about their options – including the full range of routes into and through higher education.

Annex A: Monitoring data 2019-20

Uni Connect partnerships submit monitoring reports to the OfS every six months. These allow us to gain a clear picture of how the partnerships are delivering targeted outreach activity and establishing outreach hubs to:

- meet the programme aims
- inform evaluation of the programme
- inform future policy and funding development.

Partnerships submit an activity and learner engagement tracking report, produced by their chosen tracking system, which provides aggregated data on activities delivered and learners engaged. This is alongside a monitoring return which collects information on finances, governance and operations.

The data in this annex is taken from the summer 2020 tracking reports and OfS monitoring returns and the winter 2019 OfS monitoring returns, covering the academic year August 2019 to July 2020.

Table 1: Activity types delivered between August 2019 and July 2020, as reported in the summer 2020 tracking reports

Activity type	Number of activities
Campus visit	1,097
Information, advice and guidance	11,430
Mentoring	6,246
Parent and carer engagement	416
Skills and attainment (including tutoring)	5,649
Staff development	620
Subject masterclass/subject insight	2,521
Summer school	75
Other	547
Total	28,601

Table 2: The number of partnerships involving students in elements of operational delivery, as reported in the summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns

Area of operational delivery	Number of partnerships
Delivering or supporting outreach	26
Evaluation support	20
Governance	2
Mentoring	22

Area of operational delivery	Number of partnerships
Programme design	18

Table 3: Activities delivered between August 2019 and July 2020 by activity provider type, as reported in the summer 2020 tracking reports

Activity provider	Number of activities
Further education college	6,052
Higher education provider	12,011
Other higher education partnership	1,298
School	1,786
Third party provider	4,030
Uni Connect partnership	12,733

Note: Some activities were delivered by more than one provider, so the total number of activities in Table 3 cannot be summed due to double counting.

Table 4: Number of queries to outreach hubs during 2019-20, categorised by source of query, as reported in the winter 2019 and summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns

Source of query	Number of queries reported by source: August 2019 to January 2020	Number of queries reported by source: February 2020 to July 2020	Total number of queries reported by source: August 2019 to July 2020	Total number of queries reported by source: August 2019 to July 2020 (%)
Colleges	99	1,321	1,420	11%
Higher education providers	75	114	189	1%
Learners	552	833	1,385	10%
Parents and carers	469	162	631	5%
Public sector organisations	245	503	748	6%
Schools	1,345	6,351	7,696	58%
Social workers	0	1	1	0%
Third sector organisations	73	486	559	4%
Others	223	345	568	4%
Total	3,081	10,116	13,197	100%

Table 5: Number of queries to outreach hubs during 2019-20, categorised by type of query, as reported in the winter 2019 and summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns

Type of query	Number of queries reported by type: August 2019 to January 2020	Number of queries reported by type: February 2020 to July 2020	Total number of queries reported by type: August 2019 to July 2020	Total number of queries reported by type: August 2019 to July 2020 (%)
Outreach provision	2,642	3,226	5,868	40%
Staff development (CPD)	131	467	598	4%
Parent and carer engagement	493	700	1,193	8%
Community engagement	14	95	109	1%
Funding requests for transport	138	44	182	1%
Funding requests for supply teachers	8	70	78	1%
Funding requests – other	24	4,421	4,445	30%
Others	520	1,708	2,228	15%
Total	3,970	10,731	14,701	100%

Note: The total row in Table 5 differs to that in Table 4 due to the way the data was reported in the monitoring returns.

Table 6: Number of Uni Connect initiatives during February to July 2020, as reported in the summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns, by type of support

Type of support	Number of initiatives	Percentage of total initiatives
Community engagement	42	26%
Funding requests for transport	8	5%
Funding requests for supply cover	4	2%
Funding requests – other	17	11%
Outreach provision with non-Uni Connect learners	108	67%
Parent and carer engagement	31	19%
Research	16	10%
Staff development (CPD)	43	27%
Staff time	29	18%
Other	23	14%

Note: Initiatives could be recorded as providing more than one type of support, so percentages do not sum to 100%. 161 initiatives were reported in total.

Table 7: Number of Uni Connect initiatives during February to July 2020, as reported in the summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns, by underrepresented group supported

Underrepresented group supported	Number of initiatives	Percentage of total initiatives
Areas of lower higher education participation or lower socioeconomic status	131	81%
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	49	30%
Mature	19	12%
Disabled	49	30%
Care leavers	54	34%
Children of military families	33	20%
Carers	38	24%
Estranged from their families	31	19%
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities	29	18%
Refugees	29	18%

Note: Initiatives could be recorded as supporting more than one group, so percentages do not sum to 100%. 161 initiatives were reported in total.

Table 8: Core members of the 29 Uni Connect partnerships, by type, as reported in the summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns

Type of organisation	Number of partners
Charities	37
Employers	4
Further education colleges	170
Higher education providers (e.g. universities)	138
Local organising bodies	115
Others	58
Total	522

Table 9: The number of Uni Connect partnerships engaging with external stakeholders, as reported in the summer 2020 OfS monitoring returns

Type of stakeholder	Partnerships engaged in outreach hubs	Partnerships engaged in targeted outreach
Careers and Enterprise Company	28	28
Employers	23	23
Housing associations	6	4
Jobcentre Plus	6	6

Type of stakeholder	Partnerships engaged in outreach hubs	Partnerships engaged in targeted outreach
Local authorities	29	25
Local enterprise partnerships (LEPs)	28	25
National Citizen Service (NCS)	21	19
NHS Trusts	13	11
Opportunity area leads	11	11
Student Loans Company (SLC)	14	15
Other	17	17

Table 10: Number of activities, by type, that took place pre- and post-lockdown during 2019-20, as reported in the summer 2020 tracking reports

Activity type	Number and proportion of activities 1 August 2019 to 25 March 2020	Number and proportion of activities 26 March to 31 July 2020
Campus visit	1,080 (4%)	17 (0%)
Information, advice and guidance	9,778 (40%)	1,652 (42%)
Mentoring	5,435 (22%)	811 (20%)
Other	483 (2%)	64 (2%)
Parents and carers	300 (1%)	116 (3%)
Skills and attainment (including tutoring)	4,810 (20%)	839 (21%)
Staff development	361 (1%)	259 (7%)
Subject masterclass	2,335 (9%)	186 (5%)
Summer school	52 (0%)	23 (1%)
Total	24,634 (100%)	3,967 (100%)

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



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