

An independent review of evaluation evidence submitted by Uni Connect partnerships

A report for the Office for Students on the findings from the second call for local evaluation evidence

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Contents

Executive summary	1
Key findings: the impact of Uni Connect	1
Recommendations to inform planning	3
Strengthening the evidence base.....	3
01. Introduction	5
Context.....	5
The Phase 2 impact evaluation.....	6
Call for evidence	6
This report	7
02. The impact of outreach interventions	8
Introduction.....	8
Multi-intervention approach.....	9
Workshops and masterclasses.....	11
Mentoring.....	13
Summer school activities and residential activities	16
Information, advice and guidance.....	18
Campus visits.....	20
03. Developing the evidence base	23
Key learning	23
Recommendations to inform planning	24
Strengthening the evidence	24
Recommendations to strengthen the evidence base	26
Appendix 1: Methods of analysis	28
Appendix 2: Summary of results	30
Appendix 3: Strength of evidence coding framework	36
Appendix 4: Assessment types of impact evaluation	38
Appendix 5: Short-, medium-, and longer-term outcomes	39

Executive summary

Uni Connect (formerly NCOP) is a four-year programme in two phases that supports the delivery of sustained and progressive outreach to target learners in Years 9 to 13. This interim report presents the findings from the second of three calls for local evaluation evidence in the national impact evaluation of Phase 2. The findings are based on an analysis of 52 sources of evidence submitted by Uni Connect partnerships which demonstrate the impact of a range of interventions at a local level. The increase in volume and quality of the evaluation findings submitted in response to this call represents a significant step forward in the development of the evidence base.

Overall there is evidence from both the local and national evaluations to strongly indicate that a sustained, progressive, and collaborative approach to outreach has a positive impact on short- to medium-term outcomes, including knowledge and awareness of higher education (HE) and learners' confidence to make informed decisions, as well as on their intentions towards HE. Although at this stage it is not possible to measure the impact of Uni Connect on longer-term outcomes such as the actual rate of progression to HE, the signs are encouraging. Sustaining these impacts is, therefore, essential and will help to ensure that the long-term goal of equality of opportunity in HE is achieved.

Key findings: the impact of Uni Connect

Our analysis of the local evaluation evidence provides insights into the positive impacts that sustained and progressive outreach has on outcomes for learners and into the effectiveness of some individual interventions that can be used to inform planning and delivery. There is, however, an important note of caution – the evidence presented here is largely empirical and *indicative* of impact; it is not possible to claim that the outcomes achieved are *attributable* to the interventions in the majority of cases.

There is strong evidence that multi-intervention programmes have a positive, sustained impact on learner outcomes. Reflecting the findings from Phase 1 of the national impact evaluation, the local evaluation evidence strongly indicates that multi-intervention approaches delivering a coherent programme of activities to learners over time have a positive impact on learners' knowledge and awareness of HE. 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 HE.

Individual ‘light touch’ interventions are less effective when delivered as one-off or stand-alone activities, but have a positive impact when delivered as a series. Single information, advice and guidance (IAG) sessions and stand-alone workshops/masterclasses appear to have limited impact. However, when delivered as a series, workshops/masterclasses are shown to be effective for developing learners’ subject knowledge, skills, and confidence to both achieve in their current studies and progress to HE. The impact of IAG in comparison is relatively weak, but appears to be most impactful when tailored to the needs of individuals and embedded, along with careers guidance, as a thread running throughout a coherent programme of support.

High intensity activities are positively associated with increased knowledge about all aspects of HE and intentions to progress to HE. Although the volume of evidence submitted on summer schools and residential is limited, it is relatively strong and demonstrates a positive effect on knowledge and intention to progress to HE along with other short-term outcomes; there is also a positive association with academic attainment. The impact of these interventions on longer-term outcomes such as HE application and progression rates is, as yet, inconclusive.¹

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. Mode of delivery may also be a factor influencing the effectiveness of mentoring. Evaluations of face-to-face interventions demonstrate more positive impacts than those delivered online, although evidence on the latter is more limited. Increases in the self-awareness, motivation, resilience, and confidence of White males from lower socio-economic groups are positively associated with mentoring, which contribute to increased intentions to progress to HE.

Interventions can achieve different outcomes for learners at different stages in their journey. Whether the intervention is a relatively ‘light touch’ campus visit or an ‘intensive’ summer school, interventions that expose learners to university life can have a negative impact on intentions towards HE if they are not appropriately timed and tailored to take account of the stage in the learners’ journey and their wider characteristics. Evidence suggest that younger cohorts may benefit most when the focus is on awareness raising and challenging misconceptions. This contrasts with older year groups who may benefit from detailed subject/course information and insights into student life to help them make informed decisions.

¹ This is largely due to the fact that learners who have participated in Uni Connect activities in a progressive and sustained way are yet to apply/accept places at HE. The impact evaluations being undertaken by CFE and the OfS will provide further evidence in this area.

Recommendations to inform planning

Findings from this evidence review provide some useful insights for partnerships to reflect upon when planning their outreach offer and evaluations for the third (and final) year of Uni Connect. Based on the evidence, the following recommendations are made to partnerships.

- Continue to deliver multi-intervention programmes which engage learners in a coherent programme of activities linked to progression frameworks
- Integrate high quality, impartial IAG into activities and multi-intervention programmes to support the development of confident and effective decision-makers
- Deliver interventions, such as workshops and masterclasses, in a series rather than as ‘one-off’ sessions where possible to maximise impact
- Review the appropriateness of activities, such as campus visits and summer schools, for learners in different year groups and ensure interventions are tailored to take account of their characteristics and stage in the learner journey
- Consider ways to integrate student ambassadors into the delivery of activities such as mentoring and campus visits, where the evidence suggests they can add value and enhance impact

Strengthening the evidence base

This report, along with the evidence review completed by the Education Policy Institute on behalf of TASO², has highlighted that more evidence is needed to establish findings in the following areas.

- The outreach interventions that work most effectively at different stages of the learner journey
- The relative impact of individual activities that comprise multi-intervention programmes
- Whether the immediate, positive impacts achieved as a result of outreach interventions are sustained in the longer term
- The impact of outreach interventions on priority sub-groups

² Robinson, D., and Salvestrini, V. (2020). The impact of interventions for widening access to higher education. London: Education Policy Institute.

- The causal relationship between outreach interventions and outcomes for learners

Work at the national level by CFE³ and the OfS⁴ to understand the impact of Uni Connect, along with wider work to examine the impact of access and participation across the student lifecycle, will fulfil a key role in addressing these gaps.

Partnerships have an opportunity to contribute to the development of the evidence base, particularly a fuller understanding of ‘what works’, through ongoing local evaluations.

³ CFE Research is undertaking an impact evaluation to assess the changes that have resulted from Uni Connect interventions. This involves the use of quasi-experimental methods, a review of the evidence from partnerships' local evaluations, and reports at key points in the programme.

⁴ The OfS is undertaking quantitative analysis using national administrative data sets to assess: (i) Key Stage 4 and 5 behavioural change; (ii) numbers of entrants to HE; (iii) attainment; and (iv) progression. The OfS is also undertaking ongoing monitoring and governance of partnerships, including account management and monitoring of biannual financial returns and operating plans.

01. Introduction

This report summarises the findings from evidence submitted by partnerships in response to the first call in Phase 2 of Uni Connect.

Context

Building on the success of Phase 1⁵ of the programme, Uni Connect⁶ is continuing to support the delivery of a sustained and progressive programme of outreach to target learners in Years 9 to 13 through 29 local partnerships and newly-established Outreach Hubs. The aim of the programme in Phase 2⁷ is to support the Office for Students' (OfS) mission to eradicate gaps and realise equality of opportunity for all in higher education (HE) within 20 years. It will do this by supporting young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education and act on their intentions towards HE.

A further aim of the programme is to strengthen the evidence base about what outreach works, for whom and within what context. A capability building team led by the University of Exeter was appointed by the OfS to support partnerships to improve the volume and quality of their local evaluations during the first year of Phase 2 of Uni Connect.⁸ CFE Research is conducting a 'meta-review' of local evaluation evidence that involves collating, analysing and synthesising the evidence produced to develop a fuller understanding of the impact of Uni Connect on outcomes for learners. This report provides insights into what the local evaluation evidence submitted to date tells us about the impact of outreach activity funded by Uni Connect.

⁵ Phase 1 of Uni Connect ran from 1 January 2017 to 31 July 2019.

⁶ Uni Connect was formerly known as the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP).

⁷ Phase 2 started on 1 August 2019 and is due to finish in July 2021.

⁸ The capability building team provided support from July 2019 to July 2020.

The Phase 2 impact evaluation⁹

The overarching aim of the national impact evaluation being undertaken by CFE in Phase 2 is to measure the extent of the changes in learners' knowledge, attitudes and intentions towards HE that can be attributed to their engagement with Uni Connect, and to establish the impact of the programme on rates of progression to HE. To achieve this aim, in addition to the meta-review of local evaluation evidence, the impact evaluation involves the following activity:

- A longitudinal survey of learners in schools and colleges where partnerships are delivering Uni Connect-funded activities
- A comparative analysis of the outcomes of Uni Connect target learners who engage in the programme and those who do not

Call for evidence

Since Phase 1, partnerships have been encouraged to share evidence detailing the findings from their local evaluations on the impact¹⁰ of Uni Connect-funded activities with the national impact evaluation team via email¹¹. In Phase 2, three formal calls for local evaluation evidence are planned. The first took place in March 2020.¹² The evidence submitted in response to this first call provides the basis for this report.

Partnerships submitted a total of 52 studies, providing evidence of the impact of multi-interventions, summer schools and residentials, mentoring, workshops and masterclasses, and information, advice and guidance (IAG). Each study was assessed against the OfS's Standard of Evidence.¹³ The majority of evidence submitted was 'Type 2 – empirical' (n=46). For the first time, two reports based on 'Type 3 – causal' were submitted, along with four 'Type 1 – narrative' studies. The increase in the volume and quality of the evidence submitted represents a significant step forward in

⁹ Further details of the national evaluation being undertaken by CFE (external evaluation) and the OfS can be found at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/uni-connect/evaluating-uni-connects-impact/>.

¹⁰ Partnerships are also conducting process evaluations to understand the effectiveness of programme delivery at the local level. This evidence is out of the scope of the review. Partnerships have been encouraged to focus their *impact* evaluation on a sub-set of activities, such as new and innovative activities, well-established activities that are being delivered to new groups or in new contexts, strategically important interventions, and/or interventions requiring a substantial financial investment.

¹¹ The first call for evidence during Phase 1 was in May 2019. Findings are reported in the [National Collaborative Outreach Programme end of Phase 1 report](#).

¹² Two further calls for evidence will be issued in January and July 2021.

¹³ Access and participation standards of evidence are published online at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluating-impact-of-outreach/>

the development of the evidence base. It provides insights into the positive impacts that sustained and progressive outreach has on outcomes for learners and the effectiveness of some individual interventions. There is, however, an important note of caution – the evidence presented here is largely empirical and *indicative* of impact; it is not possible to claim that the outcomes achieved are *attributable* to the interventions in the majority of cases.

Further details of the characteristics of evidence submitted by partnerships are provided in Appendix 2, including the average quality score. An account of the methods used to code and assess the strength of evidence is contained in Appendices 1, 3, and 4.

This report

This report explores the impact of Uni Connect interventions on a range of outcomes for learners, taking account of the volume, strength, and quality of current local evaluation evidence. The findings and associated recommendations are intended to support partnerships to plan their delivery and further strengthen their local evaluation in the final year of Uni Connect.

The analysis of the longitudinal survey of learners will be published separately. This report will demonstrate the emerging net impact of Uni Connect at the programme level and progress towards the achievement of the programme's overarching objectives.

02. The impact of outreach interventions

This chapter explores what the evidence generated by Uni Connect partnerships tells us about the impact of different interventions on a range of outcomes for learners.

Introduction

Uni Connect is designed to support learners in a sustained and progressive way. As such, the success of the programme is being measured against outcomes over the **short** term (e.g. awareness and knowledge of HE), **medium** term (e.g. intentions to progress to HE) and **long** term (e.g. application to and acceptance of a place in HE)¹⁴, as specified in the national evaluation framework. This chapter identifies the outcomes that are associated with different types of outreach activity and whether the activities have a positive or negative impact on learners overall and sub-groups (where possible). It also identifies where an activity is shown to have an **immediate** impact and where there is evidence that the effect is **sustained** over the medium- to longer-term.

The interventions are ordered according to the average quality score of the evaluation evidence submitted, from strongest to weakest. Where appropriate, reference is made to the findings from wider literature, including a review of the impact of interventions for widening access to HE¹⁵ which was commissioned by TASO.¹⁶

¹⁴ See Appendix 5 for further details of the outcomes specified by partnerships in their local evaluations.

¹⁵ Robinson, D., and Salvestrini, V. (2020). The impact of interventions for widening access to higher education. London: Education Policy Institute

¹⁶ Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in higher education, or TASO as it is known, is a new affiliate What Works Centre. Funded initially for three years by the Office for Students, TASO shares the OfS's vision for eliminating equality gaps in HE within 20 years. Its mission is to improve lives through evidence-based practice in HE. It will achieve this by providing access to research, toolkits, and evaluation guidance to HE professionals.

Multi-intervention approach

Multi-intervention outreach

A multi-intervention approach to outreach delivers a range of activities to the same cohort of learners over a sustained period of time. Activities could include a combination of information, advice and guidance, mentoring, campus visits, workshops, masterclasses, and summer school/residential activities. The impact of multi-intervention outreach on the following outcomes has been evaluated by partnerships:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of HE
- Increased confidence in ability to make informed decisions
- Increased likelihood of progression to HE

The majority of the evidence suggests that this type of intervention has a positive effect which is sustained.

A high volume of evidence on the impact of multi-intervention approaches to outreach was submitted and reviewed – a total of 21 reports, including two ‘Type 3 – causal’ studies.¹⁷ As such, the evidence on the impact of this type of intervention is amongst the strongest and most robust collected during this call and in some cases we can say with a high degree of confidence that the outcomes achieved are *attributable* to the intervention.

Impact on short- to medium-term outcomes

The evidence overall suggests that multi-intervention outreach has a positive impact on learners’ knowledge and awareness of HE. The integration of IAG into multi-intervention programmes, delivered as one-off a impact of interventions impact of interventions activities during campus visits and/or as a standalone activity, appears to be key to achieving these outcomes by increasing learners’ understanding of different aspects of HE, such as courses, course requirements, finance, and aspects of university life.

The evidence suggests that when outreach is delivered in this way, the effects are sustained into the medium term. For example, one study highlights that Year 9 learners who engage in multi-intervention outreach benefit from substantial increases in their knowledge and awareness of HE over time. By Year 11,

¹⁷ See Appendix 2 for a more detailed breakdown of the quality and strength of evidence submitted for multi-intervention outreach.

those learners who engage with multi-intervention outreach generally demonstrate greater levels of knowledge and awareness of HE as well as higher levels of confidence in their decision-making abilities compared with younger learners and those of the same age who do not engage. By ensuring learners have the information they need as well as the confidence to make effective choices about their options later in their learner journey, multiple interventions can have a positive impact on long-term outcomes, as outlined below.

Impact on long-term outcomes

Frequency of engagement in the multi-intervention approach to outreach, sometimes referred to as ‘dosage’, has a positive impact on the likelihood that a learner will successfully progress to HE. For example, evidence from the ‘Type 3 – causal’ studies indicates that learners who engage 7-8 times are more likely to be accepted on to a HE programme than those who engage less frequently or not at all. While it is important to acknowledge that those who participate in a greater number of activities are likely to be the most engaged and motivated to apply and progress to HE, these findings reflect wider evidence from the Uni Connect learner survey¹⁸ and other sources¹⁹ that ‘black box’ interventions, those which combine several outreach components, are associated with improvements in HE outcomes.

A limitation of the evidence based on evaluations of multi-intervention outreach is that it is difficult to differentiate the impact of individual elements in order to understand their relative effectiveness and the contribution that each makes to the achievement of the outcome.^{20,21} Our review of the evidence on the impact of some of the activities that make up multi-intervention programmes helps to address these issues by identifying the outcomes associated with the individual components and their effectiveness.

¹⁸ See the [National Collaborative Outreach Programme end of Phase 1 report](#).

¹⁹ Robinson, D., and Salvestrini, V. (2020). The impact of interventions for widening access to higher education. London: Education Policy Institute

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Further evidence will be derived from TASO’s current feasibility study on the impact of the individual elements of multi-intervention programmes on intervention outcomes being measured.

Workshops and masterclasses

Workshops and masterclasses

Workshops/masterclasses are delivered as one-off events or as a series. The focus of these activities is primarily on skills development, confidence building, study techniques, and exam preparation.

Partnerships have evaluated the impact of workshops/masterclasses on the following outcomes for learners:

- Increased knowledge of the study skills required in HE
- The development of interpersonal skills such as confidence, resilience, and problem solving
- Increased confidence in ability to make informed decisions about further education (Key Stage 5)

The majority of the evidence suggests that workshops/masterclasses have a positive impact on these outcomes, particularly if they are delivered in a series to the same cohort of learners.

Five outputs examining the impact of workshops/masterclasses were reviewed: four ‘Type 2 – empirical’ and one ‘Type 1 – narrative’.²² Although the volume of evidence is limited, the quality of the evaluations is high and, as such, the findings provide a good *indication* of the impact of this outreach activity.

Three of the five interventions evaluated delivered a programme of workshops/masterclasses to a cohort of learners; the remaining two offered a one-off session. Reflecting the findings from the evaluations of IAG activities (see below), individual workshops and masterclasses appear to be less impactful than those delivered as a series. The type of impact, and the extent to which it contributes to the achievement of Uni Connect’s aims, also depends on the focus of a specific workshop/masterclass, which ranges from revision and exam skills, though writing skills and subject tasters, to the development of interpersonal skills and confidence.

Impact on short-term outcomes

There is evidence that workshops/masterclasses most closely aligned to Uni Connect’s objective to encourage and support progression to HE are associated with increased knowledge of HE. For example, one pre/post-intervention evaluation shows that learners’ understanding of HE increased by around 20% following the

²² See Appendix 2 for a more detailed breakdown of the quality and strength of evidence submitted for workshops and masterclasses.

workshops/masterclasses. This programme, along with another focused on enhancing learners' subject knowledge, also reports improvements in learner confidence to make informed and effective choices about Key Stage 5 study. However, the level of the increase in confidence is small.

Other workshops/masterclasses interventions do not appear to be designed to *directly* impact knowledge of and attitudes towards HE. However, they can *indirectly* contribute to the achievement of these objectives by supporting learners to develop the necessary study skills for HE (e.g. writing and problem solving) which in turn boosts their confidence in their ability to study at a higher level. These interventions also have the potential to maximise attainment, thus increasing the likelihood that learners will achieve the qualifications required to progress to HE in the future. However, no data on actual exam performance is available at present to determine whether the perceived increases in skills and confidence led to higher attainment than would have been expected otherwise and a subsequent increase in applications to HE. At the national level, the next wave of the learner survey data will be linked to the National Pupil Database (NPD) and Individual Learner Record (ILR) so that account can be taken of actual attainment at Key Stage 4 for the cohorts that have progressed beyond this stage when determining the impact of Uni Connect at the programme level.

For example, the pre-post intervention evaluation of a workshop that focussed on study skills and exam preparation demonstrates that learners had a better understanding of how to prepare for exams and felt more confident to take exams, particularly in maths and English, (the results for science are not so pronounced) following the workshops. Although all learners benefited, this type of intervention appears to be particularly impactful for Uni Connect target learners and females. Larger increases in both understanding and confidence were identified for females and target learners compared with males and non-target learners.

Mentoring

Mentoring

Mentoring comprises a combination of workshops and tutorials, one-to-one careers guidance, and goal setting sessions. It is typically delivered face-to-face or online although some partnerships adopt a more blended approach. The impact of mentoring programmes on the following outcomes has been evaluated by partnerships:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of HE
- Increased confidence in ability to make informed decisions
- Increased confidence in ability to succeed in HE
- Development of skills and attributes
- Increased intentions to go to HE

The majority of the evidence suggests that mentoring has a positive effect immediately after the intervention. Evidence that the effects are sustained and impact on longer-term outcomes is more limited and draws mixed conclusions.

A high volume of evidence on the impact of mentoring was submitted and reviewed – a total of 12 studies – the majority of which is ‘Type 2 – empirical’ (n =11). Three of the 11 empirical evaluations submitted were assessed as strong.²³ As such, the evidence provides a relatively good *indication* of the impact that this intervention has on outcomes for learners.

Impact on short-term outcomes

A previous review²⁴ of the evidence on the impact of mentoring (alongside counselling and role models) found a positive association with outcomes such as increased aspirations²⁵, confidence, and awareness of HE. These findings are reflected in the results of the majority of Uni Connect partnerships’ local evaluations which also found that mentoring is positively associated with an increase in knowledge and awareness of HE immediately post-intervention, as well as an

²³ See Appendix 2 for a more detailed breakdown of the quality and strength of evidence submitted for mentoring interventions.

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ The use of the term ‘aspirations’ in the context of access and participation and the conclusion that low rates of progression among under-represented groups are a result of a lack of aspiration has been challenged recently (e.g. Harrison, N & Waller, R. (2018), Challenging discourses of aspiration: The role of expectations and attainment in access to higher education). It is argued that low learner and parental *expectations*, rather than aspirations, contribute to low progression rates.

increase in learners' confidence in their decision-making abilities. For example, one of the studies with the strongest evidence on mentoring reports a 25 per cent increase in learners' knowledge of the benefits of HE following their engagement in the mentoring programme.

Two of the 12 mentoring projects evaluated targeted White lower socio-economic working-class males. One was delivered online over 12 weeks by an external organisation, the other was delivered face to face and provided learners with nine hours of contact time through workshops and keep-in-touch sessions. The aim of these interventions was to support this specific group to recognise their strengths and help them develop their skills and attributes. The pre-post survey results for the face-to-face intervention suggest that this approach is an effective way to achieve these outcomes for this particular sub-group. It has a particularly strong effect on learners' self-awareness (e.g. areas to focus on at school), motivation (e.g. goal setting), and resilience (e.g. ability to deal with setbacks) and a moderate effect on learners' confidence (e.g. to try new things outside their comfort zone) and team working skills. Although based on a much smaller sample, the evaluation of online mentoring suggests that it has a positive impact on learners' social capital.²⁶ The proportion of mentees who reported that they '*knew people they could call on for advice about employment and education*' as a result of the intervention increased from 28 per cent (of 22 learners) to 56 percent (of 18 learners) following the intervention.

Impact on medium- to long-term outcomes

The evidence from partnerships on the impact of mentoring on learners' intentions towards HE is more mixed. While some partnerships report positive effects, others suggest there was little or no impact on learners' intentions towards HE, reflecting the findings of Robinson and Salvestrini²⁷.

The difference in the results is likely to be attributable to a range of factors. Although activities funded through Uni Connect are supposed to be targeted at learners who share similar characteristics, it is possible that some activities are delivered to whole year groups or, conversely, to very specific sub-groups. As such, it is possible that differences in learners' characteristics could be a factor. Other reasons for the variation in the results could include differences in levels of intensity (i.e. number and duration of individual sessions and duration of the programme overall), year group, and delivery mechanism; however, in the absence of a control or comparison group, it is not possible to say with any certainty.

²⁶ 'Social capital' refers to the tangible and intangible resources an individual can access via social networks, e.g. their friends, family, colleagues, and contacts.

²⁷ Robinson, D., and Salvestrini, V. (2020). The impact of interventions for widening access to higher education. London: Education Policy Institute

There is variation in all these factors among the mentoring activities evaluated by Uni Connect partnerships. Two of the programmes were targeted at Year 9, three at Year 10 and one at Year 11; four programmes were delivered to mixed year groups. Two of the programmes were delivered online, while the remainder were predominantly delivered face-to-face. As noted above, two of the programmes were targeted specifically at White working-class males. The staff responsible for delivering the activities also varied between programmes.

Delivery mechanism could help to explain the apparent differences in the effects of two mentoring programmes evaluated by Uni Connect partnerships: one that reported very little change in learners' perceptions of HE and only small increases in learners' overall desire to study at HE and the other reported a significant increase in learners' intention to progress to university. Both these mentoring programmes were targeted at learners in Year 10 and both were delivered over multiple sessions (8 to 10). However, the former was delivered by an external delivery organisation and partnership staff and the latter by student ambassadors. This suggests that delivery mechanism could, at least in part, influence outcomes and that mentoring could be more effective when it is delivered by individuals who are closer in age to learners and who learners can relate to.

At present, there is limited evidence to determine whether the impact of mentoring is sustained and affects longer-term outcomes such as progression to HE.

Encouragingly, nine out of the 12 evidence submissions reviewed indicate that partnerships are implementing longitudinal methods and that further data collection is planned to assess the impact of mentoring in the longer term. However, given the year groups of the cohorts of learners involved, it will be a number of years before it is possible to measure the impact on rates of progression to HE.

Summer school activities and residential activities

Summer school activities and residential activities

Summer school activities and residential activities include overnight stay(s) in or near a university campus and involve activities such as revision sessions, outdoor sports activities, social activities, and subject taster sessions. The impact of summer school and residential activities on the following outcomes has been evaluated by partnerships:

- Increased knowledge of HE
- Increased confidence in ability to succeed in HE
- Increased likelihood of applying to HE

The evidence suggests that summer school and residential activity can have a positive impact immediately after the intervention.

Just three ‘Type 2 – empirical’ evaluations of summer school and residential activities were submitted for review.²⁸ Although the size of this evidence base is limited, the quality is relatively strong and provides useful insights into the potential benefits for learners.

It is important to note that each of the summer school or residential activities targeted a small cohort of learners and each had different objectives. The first targeted multiple year groups and set out to increase learners’ confidence in their ability to succeed at HE by supporting them to develop subject knowledge and study skills. The second targeted learners in Year 9 and aimed to increase the likelihood of learners’ applying to HE through subject tasters, social activities, workshops, and a campus tour. The third intervention targeted Year 10 students and focused on increasing learners’ knowledge of HE through 30 hours of contact time at a summer school held at a Russell Group institution.

Impact on short- to medium-term outcomes

All three evaluations indicate that the majority of participants enjoyed the experience and benefitted in some way from their involvement. There is evidence from the residential delivered to multiple year groups that the experience had a positive impact on learner confidence and attainment which was recognised by teaching staff and reflected in learners’ GCSE grades for English and Maths.

²⁸ See Appendix 2 for a more detailed breakdown of the quality and strength of evidence submitted for summer school/residential activity.

The pre/post survey of participants in the Year 9 residential revealed that it had a positive impact on learners' intentions towards HE. There was an increase in the proportion of learners overall who expressed a desire to study at HE and an increase in the number who perceived they would fit in at university following the intervention. Learners also reported that they were more confident about where to find information about education and career options and were more informed about university-level study and student life. Following the summer school for Year 10s at the Russell Group institution, all learners were able to articulate the benefits of HE. These findings mirror those of Robinson and Salvestrini²⁹ who conclude that summer schools and residential are positively correlated with an increase in confidence and aspirations towards HE.

Impact on long-term outcomes

Little can be said about the sustainability of the impact of summer school or residential activities because the current evidence only captures impact immediately after the intervention. Encouragingly, one partnership is planning a further follow-up to explore the extent to which the impacts are sustained into the medium term and influence longer-term outcomes including applications and acceptances to HE. This will help to plug a gap identified in the review by Robinson and Salvestrini³⁰ on the effect of summer schools and residential on applications and acceptance rates.³¹

²⁹ Robinson, D., and Salvestrini, V. (2020). The impact of interventions for widening access to higher education. London: Education Policy Institute

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ TASO will be adding to the evidence base here and are planning to conduct Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) of summer schools in the near future.

Information, advice and guidance³²

Information, advice and guidance (IAG)

IAG provides learners with the knowledge, understanding, confidence and skills they need to make informed choices about their future learning and career.

Schools and colleges have a statutory duty to provide impartial IAG to learners in Years 8 to 13 about the full range of options available. Uni Connect partnerships are supporting schools and colleges to fulfil this duty by delivering activities that develop learners' understanding of the opportunities in HE and the benefits of this route. IAG is delivered in a variety of ways to individuals and groups, including one-to-one sessions and workshops. It is also delivered as part of wider activities such as campus visits. The impact of IAG on the following outcomes has been evaluated by partnerships:

- Increased knowledge of HE and other post-18 options
- Increased confidence in ability to make informed decisions about further education (Key Stage 5), to facilitate access to HE

The evidence suggests that IAG can have a positive impact that is sustained into the medium term.

Five submissions examining the impact of IAG on outcomes for learners have been reviewed, all of which are 'Type 2 – empirical'.³³ Evaluating the impact of IAG is particularly challenging because it is often embedded in wider activities and the lack of evidence on the impact of IAG was identified as a gap in Phase 1. Although the evidence is relatively weak compared with other interventions, it is an important step towards a fuller understanding of the contribution that IAG makes to the achievement of Uni Connect's objectives.

Impact on short-term outcomes

The evidence suggests that IAG, coupled with tailored and targeted careers guidance³⁴, has a positive impact on learners' knowledge of HE which is sustained

³² Further details on the statutory duty on schools are available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools>. Guidance for colleges is available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-for-colleges--2>

³³ See Appendix 2 for a more detailed breakdown of the quality and strength of evidence submitted for IAG activity.

³⁴ Careers guidance has a specific focus on future career options, including graduate employment opportunities.

into the medium term. According to Robinson and Salvestrini³⁵, IAG is most impactful when it is tailored to the needs of individual learners and integrated with other associated activities.

The local evaluation evidence suggests that IAG delivered as part of tailored, paired, and one-to-one career guidance sessions with Year 10 and 11 learners can be particularly effective in terms of:

- Increasing learners' understanding of the importance of exploring ideas and forward planning
- Broadening awareness of educational pathways and knowledge of HE
- Increasing learners' understanding of future career options, including graduate employment

There is further evidence from partnerships' evaluations to suggest that learners who participate in IAG activities that are coupled with tailored career guidance are more confident in their ability to make informed choices about their future education. The evidence indicates that IAG builds learners' confidence in their ability to make decisions by supporting them to narrow down future study and career options and develop their understanding of the pathways to achieving their learning and career goals. Effective IAG also ensures learners know where to find relevant information about courses and HE providers on which to base their decisions.

One-off information sessions, such as one-hour subject tasters, are not as strongly associated with positive outcomes. Evaluation of this type of intervention reveals only small differences in learners' knowledge and awareness when pre/post intervention levels are compared. Light touch interventions such as these are not typically tailored to the needs of individual learners. This may help to explain why they are less impactful for learners in general and are likely to predominantly effect the outcomes of those who have a particular interest in the subject at the outset.

No evidence was submitted on the impact of IAG, as a stand-alone activity, on longer-term outcomes, including progression to HE, during this call.

³⁵ Robinson, D., and Salvestrini, V. (2020). The impact of interventions for widening access to higher education. London: Education Policy Institute

Campus visits

Campus visits

Campus visits are one-off activities which typically involve a tour of a university campus, IAG, subject taster sessions, and an introduction to campus life. The impact of campus visits on the following outcomes has been evaluated by partnerships:

- Increased knowledge of HE
- Increased understanding of the benefits of HE relative to other progression routes
- Increased confidence in ability to make informed decisions
- Increased aspirations towards HE

The evidence suggests that campus visits have an immediate impact after the intervention, but the effect on learners is mixed.

Six submissions examining the impact of campus visits on outcomes for learners were reviewed: five ‘Type 2 – empirical’ and one ‘Type 1 – narrative’.³⁶ While the evidence offers some insights into the potential benefits of campus visits for learners, with the exception of one study the strength of the evidence is weak and draws mixed conclusions.

The majority of studies indicate that campus visits have an immediate, positive impact on short-term outcomes such as learners’ knowledge of HE. In particular, it increases their awareness of:

- The range of options available and where to find out more information
- What student life is like
- The academic and pastoral support available
- The benefits of HE
- The financial implications of HE and the financial support available

In contrast, campus visits appear to have a more limited impact on learners’ subject knowledge.

It is interesting to note that there is evidence that some learners are *less confident* about their knowledge of HE following a campus visit, suggesting this activity can

³⁶ See Appendix 2 for a more detailed breakdown of the quality and strength of evidence submitted for campus visit activity.

have a negative impact. However, this is not necessarily the case. It may be that some learners over estimate their knowledge prior to a campus visit and report lower levels of understanding after the event as a consequence.

There is also evidence to suggest that a proportion of learners change their intentions towards HE following a campus visit. While some make a positive shift, others, including a proportion of those who previously aspired to HE (9% of learners in one study), appear to be deterred by the experience. Ensuring young people receive high quality information on which to base their decisions is a key objective of Uni Connect. As such, the decision not to progress to HE still represents a positive outcome for learners, if it is well-informed.

The campus visits that have been evaluated by partnerships were delivered to learners across the range of Uni Connect target year groups: two interventions were targeted at learners in Years 9 and 10; the others were delivered to learners in mixed year groups, including learners in Year 8³⁷ in one instance. Insights from previous research suggests that the age and stage of the learners who took part in the campus visits may explain the mixed results. For example, an earlier study³⁸ examining the influences on learners' attitudes and intentions towards HE demonstrated that the closer a learner gets to the transition at age 18, the greater the influence of HE providers and the information they offer through prospectuses, websites, and campus tours. Rather than helping to encourage learners to aspire to HE, this earlier research suggests that campus visits help learners who intend to apply to HE to decide what and where to study, with many subsequently selecting an institution they had visited and where they felt they 'fit in'.

This is not to suggest that younger learners do not benefit from campus visits; indeed there is qualitative evidence from the local evaluations to indicate that learners find the visits informative, particularly when student ambassadors share their experiences of university life on and off campus. However, it is likely that the outcomes that can be expected for younger cohorts will be different to those for older year groups. It is important to take this into account when interpreting the evaluation evidence and when selecting measures to assess the impact of this type of intervention for different year groups in the future.

³⁷ Year 8 learners are not eligible for Uni Connect-funded activities

³⁸ See, for example, CFE Research (2017) *User insight research into post-16 choices*. London: DfE published online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664227/User_insight_research_into_post-16_choices.pdf and CFE Research (2015) *Understanding progression into higher education for disadvantaged and under-represented groups*. BIS Research Paper No. 229. Sheffield: BIS published online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474269/BIS-15-462-understanding-progression-into-higher-education-final.pdf

Although further evaluation activity is required to explore this fully, it may be that interventions such as campus visits, and other more intensive activities that expose learners to university life, such as summer schools and residential, are most effective for younger learners when the focus is on awareness raising and the objective is to open learners' minds to the possibility of HE and challenge misconceptions about the types of people who go to university. As learners progress into and through post-secondary/further education, it may be helpful for the focus to shift to supporting learners to develop the skills they need to study at a higher level, develop detailed knowledge of the types of provider, courses, subjects, and support (e.g. financial) on offer, and potential graduate careers. The objective for older learners is to develop their confidence in their ability to achieve in and progress to HE (so they are enabled to act on their intentions towards higher level study) and provide the information and insights they need to make appropriate decisions (including about what and where to study).

03. Developing the evidence base

Here we identify learning that could inform planning for Year Four of Uni Connect and prevailing gaps in understanding. Recommendations to address gaps and further strengthen the evidence base are provided

Key learning

Uni Connect is a collaborative programme designed to deliver a targeted, sustained, and progressive programme of support to learners with the potential to progress to HE but who are under-represented in HE. The evidence from both the local and national evaluations strongly indicates that this approach has a positive impact on key outcomes for learners, including knowledge and awareness of HE and confidence to make informed decisions about HE. It also suggests that it has a positive influence on learners' intentions towards HE. Although it is not possible to measure the impact of Uni Connect on longer-term outcomes such as the rate of progression to HE at this stage, the signs are encouraging. Sustaining these impacts is, therefore, essential and will help to ensure that the long-term goal of equality of opportunity in HE is achieved.

Partnerships are currently planning their outreach offer and associated evaluations to ensure maximum impact is achieved and captured during the final year of Uni Connect. We know from the evidence to date that multi-intervention programmes combining a range of activities have a positive impact on learners. A key challenge for Uni Connect partnerships, in addition to mitigating the ongoing impact of COVID-19, is determining which combination of activities works best in their local context and with target groups at different stages in the learner journey. Although evidence on the effectiveness of individual interventions is, in some cases, still limited, the emerging findings from this review provide some useful insights to inform planning and delivery.

The impact of less intensive interventions is more limited when they are delivered as stand-alone or 'one-off' activities. The evidence points to a 'dosage effect' which is achieved when cohorts of learners are exposed to information over a series of sessions delivered through activities such as workshops, masterclasses, and IAG activities.

High quality, impartial IAG helps to facilitate confident and effective decision-making. IAG has been successfully integrated across multi-intervention programmes to enable learners to develop the knowledge, understanding, and skills they need to make informed choices about their future learning and careers. Local evaluations and wider evidence suggest that IAG is most impactful when sessions are tailored to

the needs of individuals and embedded, along with career guidance, in more generic activities such as campus visits, workshops, and masterclasses.

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

Interventions can achieve different outcomes for learners at different stages in their journey. Whether the intervention is a relatively ‘light touch’ campus visit or an ‘intensive’ summer school, all learners, irrespective of age, can potentially benefit. However, interventions that expose learners to university life can have a negative impact on intentions towards HE if their objectives fail to take account of learners’ characteristics and year group in particular. It is possible to infer from some of the local evaluation evidence and the summer school RCT conducted in Phase 1 that younger learners can be overwhelmed rather than inspired by an experience on campus. This can deter some learners from considering HE, including those who previously aspired to this route.

Recommendations to inform planning

Based on the evidence it is recommended that partnerships take the following steps:

- Continue to deliver multi-intervention approaches which engage learners in coherent programmes of activities linked to progression frameworks
- Integrate high quality, impartial IAG into activities and multi-intervention programmes
- Deliver interventions such as workshops and masterclasses in a series rather than as ‘one-off’ sessions where possible to maximise impact
- Review the appropriateness of activities, such as campus visits and summer schools, for learners in different year groups and ensure interventions are tailored to take account of student characteristics and stage in the learner journey
- Consider ways to integrate student ambassadors into the delivery of activities such as mentoring and campus visits, where the evidence suggests they can add value and enhance impact

Strengthening the evidence

The volume, quality, and strength of the local evaluation evidence submitted to the national evaluation has increased substantially since Phase 1 of Uni Connect. The strongest evidence submitted in Phase 1 is characterised by:

- Clear and concise research objectives

- The identification of the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes being evaluated, linked to local and national evaluation frameworks
- An appropriate research methodology that achieved a high level of engagement from respondents and low attrition rates
- Individualised data collection at a minimum of two time points
- Quasi-experimental methods used to compare outcomes to a control or comparison group
- Analysis at the level of the sub-group where possible

As a result, partnerships now have access to a stronger evidence base to inform their planning and the OfS, as the funding body, can report on the impact of Uni Connect and the progress that is being made towards the achievement of the programme's objectives with more confidence. However, this report, along with the evidence review completed by the Education Policy Institute on behalf of TASO³⁹, has highlighted that more evidence is needed to establish answers to certain questions as outlined below.

Which outreach interventions work most effectively at different stages of the learner journey and the relative impact of individual activities that comprise multi-intervention programmes. The effect of individual interventions and the contribution each makes to the overall impact of multi-intervention programmes is yet to be established. For example, IAG and campus visits are key components of many multi-intervention approaches but evidence of their impact on learner outcomes is limited and relatively weak.

Whether the immediate, positive impacts achieved as a result of outreach interventions are sustained in the longer term. It is currently unclear if the immediate impacts achieved as a result of outreach interventions are sustained. Longitudinal research designs are required to track learners and monitor outcomes in the longer term, including applications and acceptances to HE. This is particularly important for high-intensity activities such as mentoring and summer school/residential programmes, which are expected to have a significant effect on long-term outcomes, given the level of investment required to deliver them.

The impact of outreach interventions on sub-groups. The impact of outreach interventions on sub-groups is not fully understood. Evidence of the impact on certain sub-groups, such as White males from lower socio-economic groups and female learners, is starting to emerge. However, there remains a gap in understanding about the ways in which Uni Connect is impacting other sub-groups,

³⁹ Robinson, D., and Salvestrini, V. (2020). The impact of interventions for widening access to higher education. London: Education Policy Institute

including disabled learners and learners from ethnic minority backgrounds. These groups were amongst those identified as the least knowledgeable about HE and the least confident about their ability to progress in Phase 1.

The causal relationship between outreach interventions and outcomes for learners. It is not possible to attribute impact to Uni Connect interventions in many cases. While qualitative methods can provide a deep understanding of the impacts achieved and the ways in which interventions benefit learners, it is not possible to establish *causal* relationships through this method alone. Robust quantitative methods including quasi-experimental and experimental methods are needed to establish causality, but limited use is being made of these approaches at present.

Work at the national level by CFE⁴⁰ and the OfS⁴¹ to understand the impact of Uni Connect, along with wider work to examine the impact of access and participation across the student lifecycle, will fulfil a key role in addressing these gaps.

Partnerships have an opportunity to contribute to the development of the evidence base, particularly a fuller understanding of ‘what works’, through ongoing local evaluations.

Recommendations to strengthen the evidence base

In order for Uni Connect to contribute to the development of the wider evidence base on the impact of access and participation, it is recommended that the OfS:

- Continues to monitor partnerships’ evaluation spend, evaluation plans, and research outputs in order to ensure the evidence generated contributes to a fuller understanding of the *impact* of Uni Connect activities at the *local* level
- Encourages partnerships to continue to engage with the national evaluation, including the final wave of the learner survey, so the impact of Uni Connect on outcomes for learners can be established at the *programme* level
- Ensures the national impact evaluation team and Uni Connect partnerships are kept informed about the activities of TASO, including commissioned evaluation of the impact of specific outreach interventions and studies into the feasibility of randomised controlled trials, and identifies potential synergies to strengthen evaluation practice and the evidence produced

⁴⁰ CFE Research is undertaking an impact evaluation to assess the changes that have resulted from Uni Connect interventions. This involves the use of quasi-experimental methods, a review of the evidence from partnerships’ local evaluations, and reports at key points in the programme.

⁴¹ The OfS is undertaking quantitative analysis using national administrative data sets to assess: (i) Key Stage 4 and 5 behavioural change; (ii) numbers of entrants to HE; (iii) attainment; and (iv) progression. The OfS is also undertaking ongoing monitoring and governance of partnerships, including account management and monitoring of biannual financial returns and operating plans.

- Ensures local evaluations are focused on addressing gaps where appropriate and enhancing the strength and robustness of the evidence produced so that impact can be *attributed* to Uni Connect-funded activities

It is recommended that the partnerships:

- Review local evaluation frameworks and identify opportunities to address gaps in understanding through future evaluation activities, particularly in relation to the impact of interventions where the evidence is weakest (e.g. IAG and campus visits) and the impact of Uni Connect on sub-groups such as disabled and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic learners
- Draw on the feedback provided by the national impact evaluation team to explore how local evaluation evidence could be enhanced through: (i) longitudinal research designs to establish whether immediate impacts are sustained in the longer term; and (ii) quasi-experimental or experimental methods to establish causal relationships
- Review resources for evaluation to ensure the budget and expertise (internal or external) is available to explore the feasibility of developing more robust quasi-experimental research designs and to implement these methods as appropriate
- Explore opportunities to work with other partnerships to scale up evaluations of interventions which engage relatively small numbers of learners in order to generate more robust samples
- Explore opportunities for collaboration with other partnerships to explore the optimum combination of activities in multi-intervention programmes by, for example, comparing programmes that are comprised of different interventions or that utilise different delivery mechanisms.

Appendix 1: Methods of analysis

The evidence submitted for each intervention was initially assessed against key criteria to assess its robustness and whether impact had been achieved as detailed in the table below.

✓ Included in the evidence review	✗ Out of scope for the evidence review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submissions with a focus on the impact of individual outreach interventions or programmes of activity on outcomes for Uni Connect learners. • Quantitative or qualitative evidence of impact. • Evidence that an outreach intervention or programme has a positive impact, negative impact, or no effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submissions with a focus on the effectiveness of systems and processes associated with the delivery of Uni Connect, such as student or teacher feedback on what they liked or disliked about an activity, what worked well, and what could be improved • Submissions with a focus on operational issues, e.g. the effectiveness of governance arrangements or partnership membership and collaborative working practices.

This initial screening process identified 52 studies for inclusion in this evidence review. The evidence selected was coded using a detailed framework, aligned to the criteria developed by TASO as part of their recent evidence review (see Appendix 3). The strength of evidence was determined using the Standards of Evaluation Evidence⁴² developed by the University of Exeter on behalf of the OfS (see Appendix 4). The evidence was classified as either ‘Type 1 – narrative’, ‘Type 2 – empirical or ‘Type 3 – causal’. The overall quality of the evidence of impact was then assessed taking account of the type as well as the appropriateness and application of the method. ‘Strong causal’ evidence is classified as the highest quality and ‘weak narrative’ as the lowest quality in this context (Figure 1).

⁴² <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluation-self-assessment-tool/>

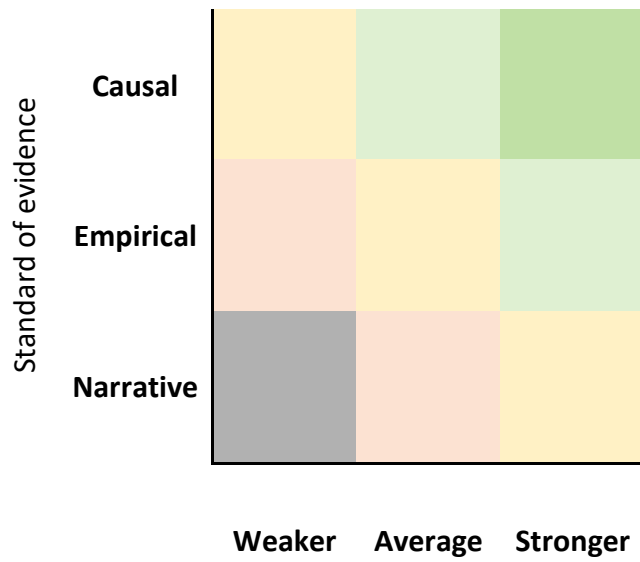


Figure 1: Assessing the strength of evidence and evaluation

Appendix 2: Summary of results

Activity type	Standard of evidence	Target group	Evaluation approach	Impact achieved
Multi-intervention approach				
Multi-intervention approach	Causal	Multi-year group	Quasi-experimental	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Causal	Multi-year group	Quasi-experimental	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Quasi-experimental	Too early to say
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	White males from lower socio-economic groups	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Narrative	Year 9	Mixed-methods	Positive impact

Activity type	Standard of evidence	Target group	Evaluation approach	Impact achieved
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Year 10	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Year 12	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Primary quantitative	Positive
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Primary qualitative	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Year 12	Mixed-methods	Unclear
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Primary quantitative	Positive impact

Activity type	Standard of evidence	Target group	Evaluation approach	Impact achieved
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Females	Primary quantitative	Too early to say
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Year 9	Mixed-methods	Unclear
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	Year 9	Qualitative	Positive impact
Multi-intervention approach	Empirical	White males from lower socio-economic groups	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Workshop/masterclass				
Workshop/masterclass	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Workshop/masterclass	Empirical	Multi-year group	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Workshop/masterclass	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Workshop/masterclass	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Mixed positive and negative
Workshop/masterclass	Narrative	Year 10	Secondary research	Positive impact

Activity type	Standard of evidence	Target group	Evaluation approach	Impact achieved
Mentoring				
Mentoring	Empirical	White males from lower socio-economic groups	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Mentoring	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Mentoring	Empirical	Year 10	Mixed-methods	Too early to say
Mentoring	Empirical	Year 9	Primary quantitative	Mixed
Mentoring	Empirical	Year 10	Mixed-methods	Mixed positive and negative
Online Mentoring	Empirical	Multi-year group	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Online Mentoring	Empirical	White males from lower socio-economic groups	Mixed-methods	Mixed positive and negative
Mentoring	Empirical	Multi-year group	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Mentoring	Empirical	Year 10	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Mentoring	Empirical	Year 11	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Mentoring	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed methods	Too early to say
Mentoring	Narrative	Year 9		Positive impact

Activity type	Standard of evidence	Target group	Evaluation approach	Impact achieved
Residential/summer school				
Residential	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
Residential	Empirical	Year 9	Primary quantitative	Positive impact
Residential	Empirical	Year 10	Primary quantitative	Mixed positive and negative
Information, advice and guidance				
IAG	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
IAG	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
IAG	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Positive impact
IAG	Empirical	Year 9	Mixed-methods	Mixed positive and negative
IAG	Empirical	Multi-year group	Primary quantitative	Mixed positive and negative
Campus visits				
Campus visits	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Too early to say
Campus visits	Empirical	Multi-year group	Mixed-methods	Mixed positive and negative
Campus visits	Empirical	Not specified	Mixed-methods	Positive impact

Activity type	Standard of evidence	Target group	Evaluation approach	Impact achieved
Campus visits	Empirical	Year 9	Primary quantitative	Too early to say
Campus visits	Empirical	Year 9	Primary quantitative	Mixed positive and negative
Campus visits	Narrative	Service children		Unclear

Appendix 3: Strength of evidence coding framework

Partnership

Date Evaluation carried out

Format of material

Standard of Evidence

Activity type

Activity type notes

Length & intensity of activity

Mode of activity delivery

Brief Description of activity

Target Group

Brief description of target group

Outcomes evaluated (NCOP learners/ parents/ teachers/school staff)

Key outcomes evaluated

Type of approach

Rationale for approach

Data collection methods

Total No. participants in intervention

Total No. in evaluation sample

Total No. respondents and response rate

Attrition rate (pre-post studies)

Time frame for evaluation

Data analysis

Results

Impact achieved

Notes on demonstrable impact

Challenges/limitations of evaluation

Standard of Evidence

Strength of design, implementation and execution

Overall quality rating

Strength of evidence – what has been done well?

Strength of Evidence – what could be improved?

Researcher reflections

Appendix 4: Assessment types of impact evaluation⁴³

Type 1: Narrative		Type 2: Empirical Enquiry (encompasses Type 1 and the following)		Type 3: Causal claims (encompasses Type 2 and the following)	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Coherent strategy	Disjointed activities	Clear aim of what activities seek to achieve	Aims developed after activity	Have a target as well as a control or comparison group	Using groups that are not comparable
Approach and activities underpinned by evidence from literature or other evaluations	No rationale for developing approach and activities	Select indicators of your impact	No concept of measuring success	Could use an experimental or quasi-experimental design	Selection bias in comparator groups
Shared understanding of processes involved	The model of change is not shared	Quantitative or qualitative data – or both, ‘triangulation’ is good!	Information not systematically collected	Think about selection bias and try to avoid it	
Reason for activity	Ad hoc activities	Pre/post data (minimum two points in time)	Only collect information once		
Clear conception of why the changes you seek to make are important	No understanding of needs of target groups	Analysis competently undertaken	Data not related to the intervention		
Programme reviews	No review or evaluation	Sharing of results and review of activity	Results not used to inform decisions		

⁴³ <https://www.officeforlearners.org.uk/publications/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluating-impact-of-outreach/>

Appendix 5: Short-, medium-, and longer-term outcomes

Summary of short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes		
Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Increased knowledge of HE and other post-18 options	Ability to make more informed and effective choices about Key Stage 5 study to facilitate access to HE	Increase in number and percentage of Uni Connect learners that apply to HE
Better understanding the benefits of HE relative to other progression routes	Aspiration to progress to HE	Increase in number and percentage of Uni Connect learners who are offered a place at HE
Greater confidence in the ability to make informed choices about future education	Intention to progress to HE	Increase in number and percentage of Uni Connect learners who accept a place at HE
Changing attitudes to HE		Increase in number and percentage of Uni Connect learners who enrol on a HE programme
Development of interpersonal skills and/or study skills development		