

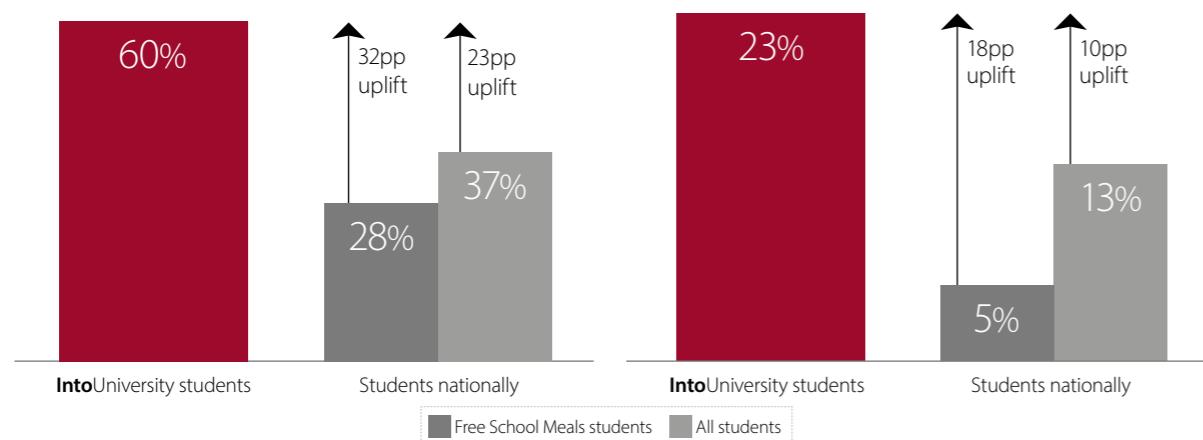
IntoUniversity Impact Summary

In 2024–25 we worked with over:



Progression to Higher Education

60% of IntoUniversity 2025 alumni progressed to Higher Education, compared to 28% of students from similar backgrounds nationally.

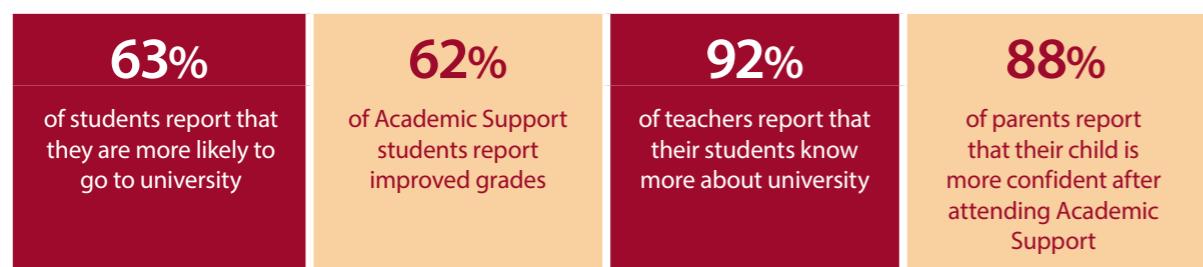


Attainment

External analysis by FFT Education Datalab found that students who regularly attend IntoUniversity's Academic Support over several years make **3 months' additional progress** in Key Stage 2 Maths.

Evaluation Questionnaires

After taking part in our programmes:



“Being part of one of IntoUniversity’s earliest cohorts and now volunteering as a mentor myself has been incredible. I’ve watched the charity grow from a single centre to reaching its 250,000th student, and I still see the same determination and spark that first inspired me.”

Lady, former IntoUniversity North Kensington student

Introduction

Late in 2025, we reached an important milestone as we welcomed the 250,000th student onto an IntoUniversity programme. Each of those students has their own individual story, from alumni who have now graduated and begun their careers, to those just setting out on their journey with IntoUniversity and beginning to explore what they are capable of. You’ll see student experiences highlighted throughout this report, offering a reminder of why our work remains so important and providing a powerful insight into the impact it has had on some of those 250,000.

Alongside these personal accounts sits rigorous quantitative evaluation that shows they are not isolated one-offs, but a reflection of the difference our centres are making at scale. IntoUniversity students achieve more highly at school, progress to university at higher rates than their peers, and are less likely to drop out once there. At a time of ongoing debate about the value of Higher Education, we also present analysis showing that the great majority of IntoUniversity graduates can expect a positive financial return from their degrees, in addition to the personal and wider societal benefits we know Higher Education brings.



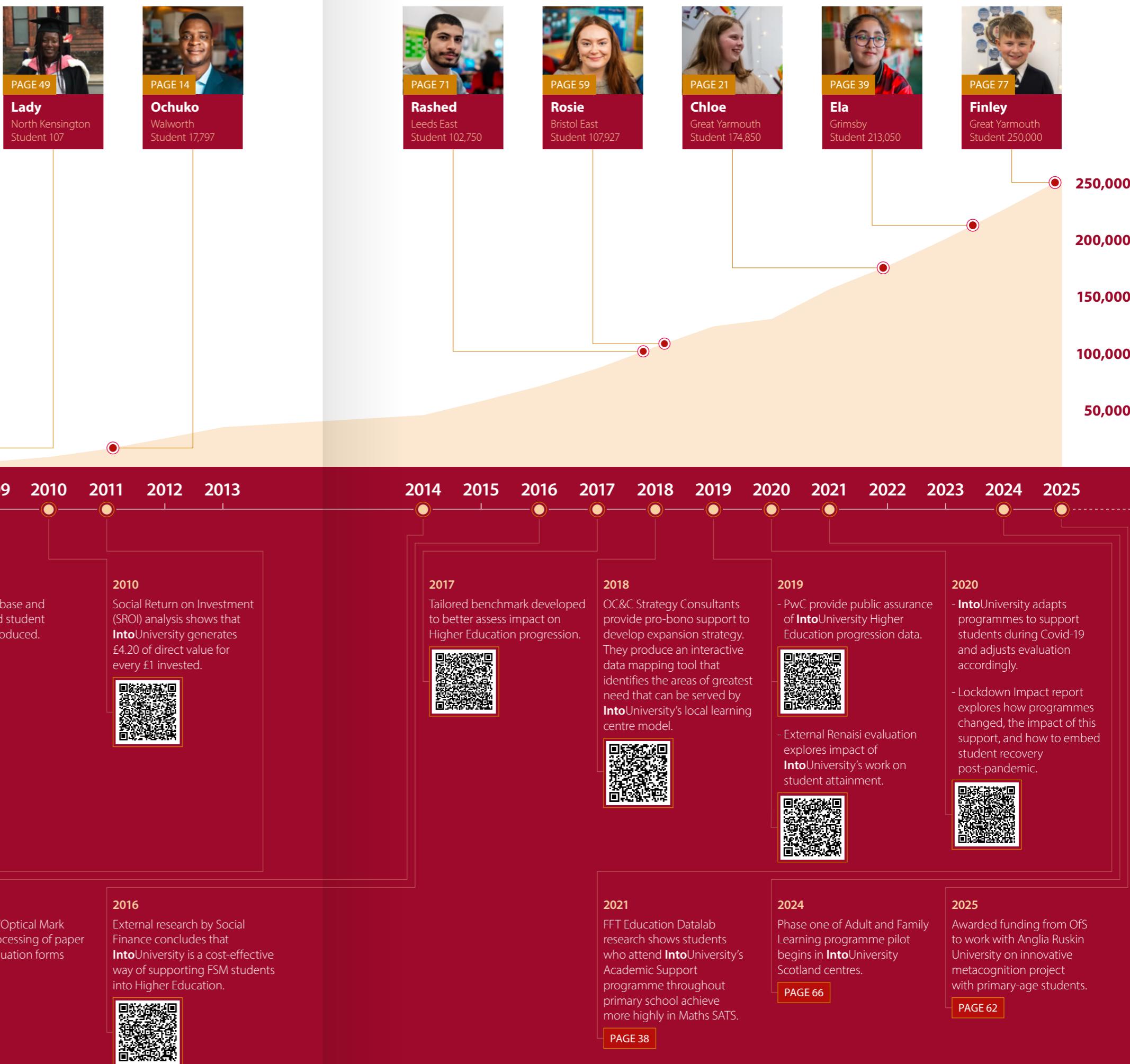
This evidence illustrates what sustained commitment can achieve, but it also underlines the responsibility that comes with reaching so many young people. As we continue to broaden our reach and expand into new areas, we remain aware of the importance of learning, adapting, and refining our approach. This report highlights some of that ongoing learning, including our research into metacognition, carried out in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University through the Office for Students' Innovation Fund, and our Adult and Family Learning pilot, developed and delivered with the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The findings from these and other projects will feed back into our wider work, helping us strengthen our practice and ensure that our support remains impactful and grounded in evidence.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on ensuring that every young person who walks through our doors – whether part of the first 250,000 or the next – has the opportunity to realise their potential.

Alex Quinn

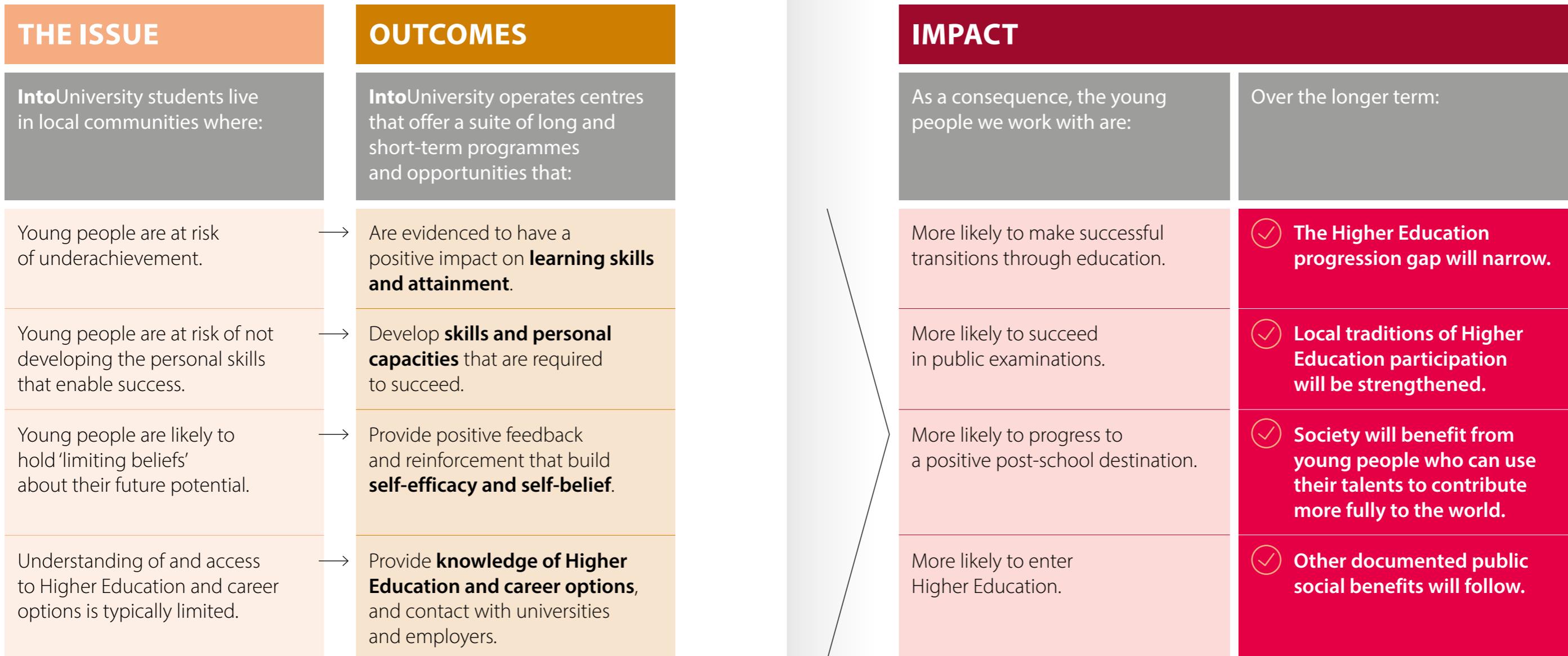
Head of Data and Impact at IntoUniversity

Journey to 250,000 students



Impact milestones

IntoUniversity's Theory of Change



OUR MODEL



OUR APPROACH



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The Issue

In the UK, young people's chances of accessing Higher Education are heavily influenced by a range of factors outside of their control, including where they live, which school they go to, their sex, ethnic group and income background. As a result, many young people do not have the opportunity to access the range of benefits that we know Higher Education can bring.

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Potential Impacts of AI in Education

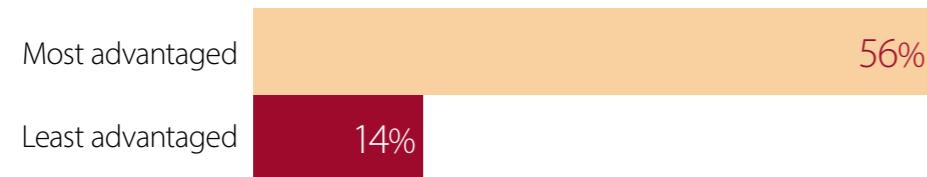


Unequal Access to Higher Education

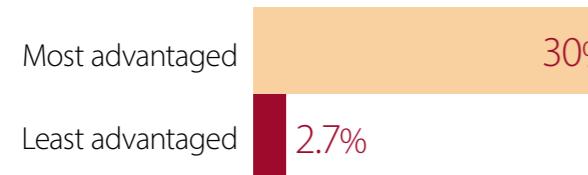
A young person's chance of entering Higher Education is heavily influenced by their background. The charts below show the scale of the gap in Higher Education access between the most and least advantaged groups. Note that the entry rates are not comparable between England and Scotland because different measures of disadvantage are available for each nation. This analysis uses UCAS' Multiple Equalities Measure (MEM) for England¹, and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) for Scotland².

England

The most advantaged young people are 4 times more likely to enter Higher Education.

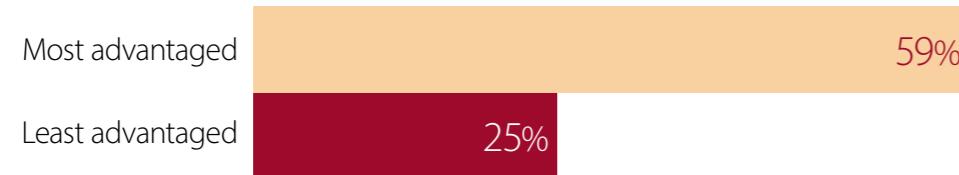


The gap is even greater for higher-tariff institutions. The most advantaged young people are 11 times more likely to enter a higher-tariff institution.

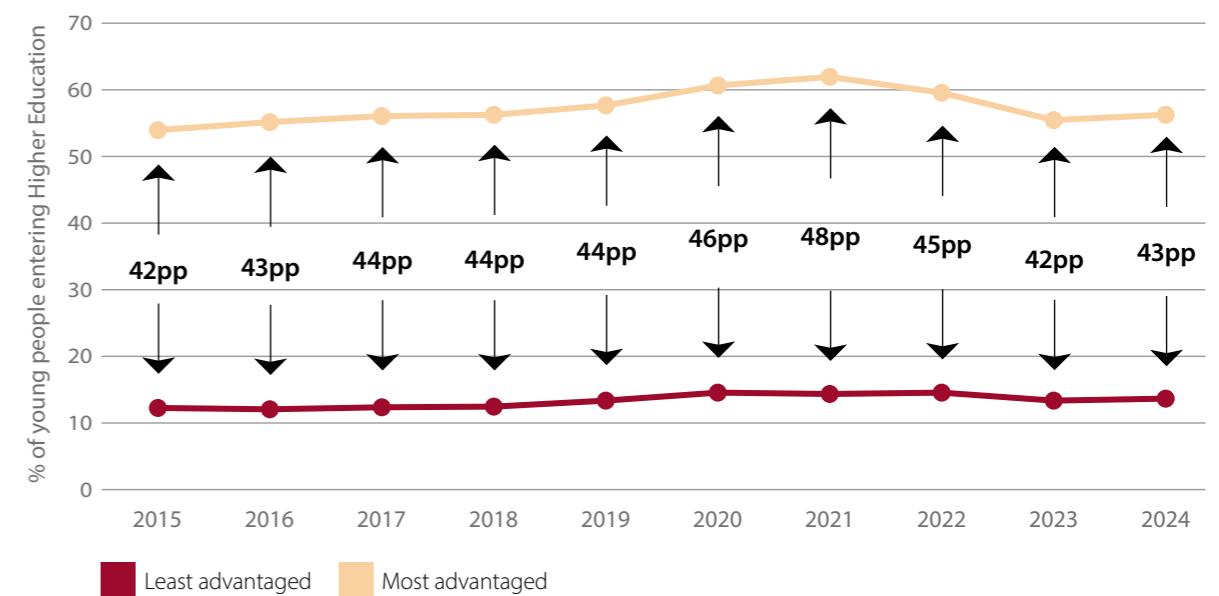


Scotland

The most advantaged young people are 2.4 times more likely to enter Higher Education.



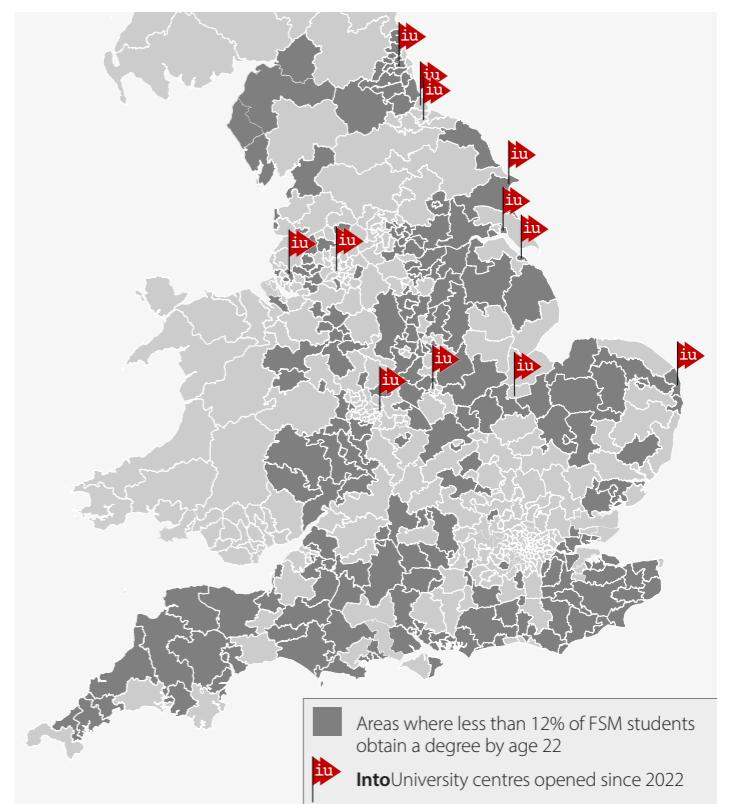
Despite work nationwide, the gap in access to Higher Education remains high



IntoUniversity's recent expansion has targeted regions where access is most unequal

The map on the right shows how our expansion has strategically targeted parts of the country where access to Higher Education is most unequal.

Recent research has reinforced the need for support in these areas, with particular attention drawn to the North East of England and coastal towns¹, which have been a major focus for our expansion.



"When my parents moved to this country and saw the quality of life that was on offer, they knew that education would be one of the routes through which we could succeed. My dad always emphasised trying to do better than he did."

I remember the first time I walked into an **IntoUniversity** centre. Some students were reading, some were doing homework, and I'd come in to meet my mentor for the first time. Having someone in a local centre in my local area telling me that the world really was my oyster made a world of difference. If I hadn't come to the **IntoUniversity** centre, or applied to their corporate insight programme, or continued paying attention in class, or spent time meeting my mentor, if I hadn't done any of those things, my trajectory would have been completely different.

I now have a son, and can say to my son 'you have the opportunity to do better still than I did'."

Ochuko

IntoUniversity Centre: Walworth

Joined IntoUniversity: 2012

Student Number: 17,797

Programmes taken part in:

- Secondary FOCUS
- Student Opportunities
- Mentoring
- Student Associate Network

Now: Working as an Investment Account Executive at Addepar



[Watch Ochuko's story here](#)



The Benefits of Higher Education

At **IntoUniversity** we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to access the benefits of Higher Education, which are well-studied and numerous. Full references for all the benefits listed here can be found at the back of the report.

Individual

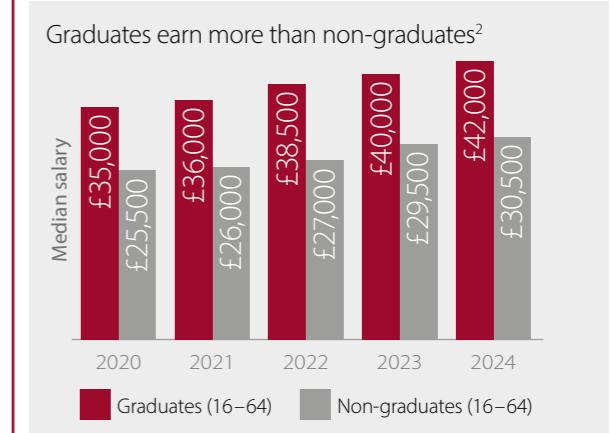
Graduates enjoy ...

-  ... **higher life satisfaction**
-  ... **an increased sense that what they do is worthwhile**
- 84%** of recent graduates report finding their work meaningful¹

Some courses have a large impact in these areas despite a relatively small boost to earnings.

Other benefits include:

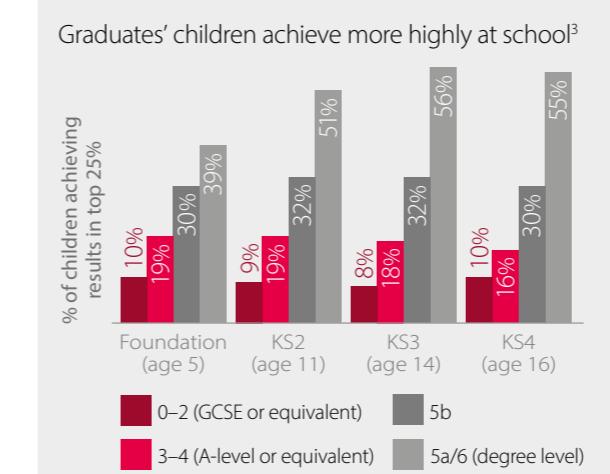
- Longer life expectancy
- Less likely to smoke
- Less likely to be obese
- Greater levels of trust and tolerance



Other benefits include:

- Increased entrepreneurial activity
- Wider choice of career options
- Lower unemployment
- Increased employability

Non-economic



Other benefits include:

- Greater social cohesion
- Lower crime rates
- More likely to vote
- Greater political stability
- Greater social mobility

Economic

Universities contribute £265bn to the UK economy each year⁴

Key components of this are:

- **Research and development**
- **Higher earnings and resulting tax revenues for graduates**
- **Money brought into the country by international students**
- **Money spent by universities in their local area and the wider economy**

It is estimated that for each £1 of public funding, universities generate £14.30 of economic value

Other benefits include:

- Faster economic growth
- Greater innovation
- Higher productivity
- Stronger local economies

Societal

1. PwC, *Does studying an undergraduate degree make you wealthier and happier?* (2023)
2. HESA, *Graduate Outcomes 2022/23*
3. Ermisch and Del Bono, *Inequality in Achievements During Adolescence* (2012)
4. London Economics, *The economic impact of higher education teaching, research, and innovation* (2024)

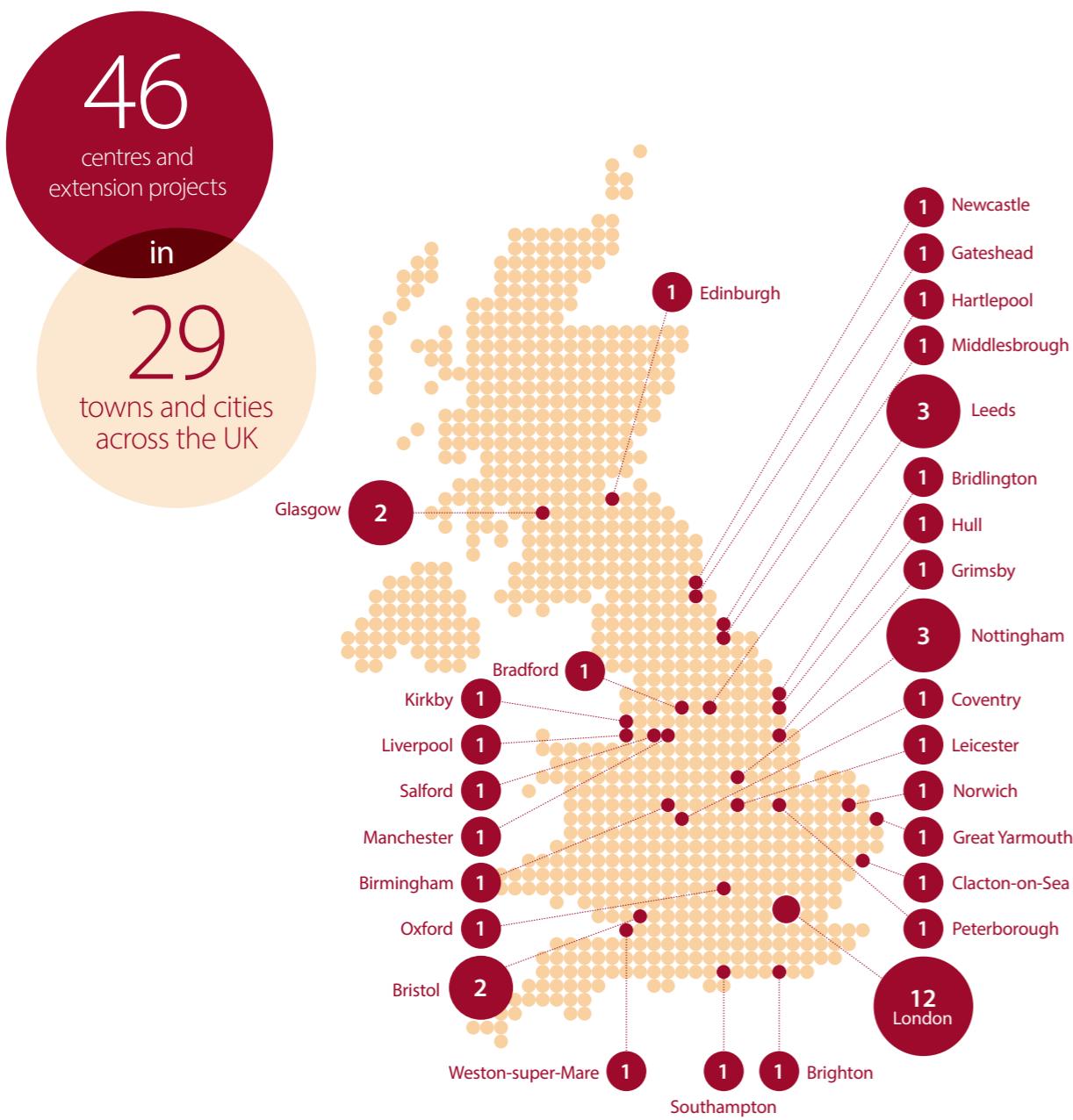
Our Scale and Reach

Opportunities to access the benefits Higher Education provides remain hugely unequal, and we continue to expand to try and meet the need for our work.

In the 2024–25 academic year we worked with over:

61,000	2,025	429
Students	Volunteers	Partner schools

As of 2026 we have:

Looking to the Future:
Potential Impacts of AI in Education

Artificial Intelligence presents huge opportunities, but also risks widening the education gap

A recent report shows that the use of AI by teachers in schools is already widespread¹. It is often used to support positive outcomes for learners, including lesson planning, resource creation, and adapting learning materials to support different students. However, effective AI use requires investment in training and software, and schools' abilities to provide this reflect existing inequalities. Teachers in private schools are twice as likely to have had formal training in the use of AI as those in state schools. Further, while they do not report the same level of training as those in private schools, state school teachers in the most affluent areas are more likely to have had formal training than those in the least affluent areas. As AI technology becomes more embedded in schools and teaching practice, students from the least advantaged areas are at risk of being left behind.

The self-directed use of AI by students also has impacts on their learning, as AI presents both opportunities and challenges. University students surveyed by HEPI in 2025 reported several positive effects of AI use on their learning, including increased productivity, support with editing, and access to university textbooks². Some experts have highlighted that AI could be particularly helpful for students from disadvantaged groups³. However, research shows that over half of low-income families struggle to access devices or reliable internet outside school for homework or learning⁴, suggesting there is work to be done if all students are to have the opportunity to realise these benefits.

A further consideration is the potential for AI to affect students' learning negatively. In a 2025 paper, Tom Richmond, former Department for Education adviser, warns that Generative AI can affect pupils' capacity to learn, weaken their critical thinking skills and promote dependency on technology, which, he claims, can lead to metacognitive 'laziness'⁵. With the gap in AI training that schools are able to provide, teachers in less advantaged areas may have less knowledge about potential risks and how to mitigate them.



Chloe Cheetham

Impact and Evaluation Manager at IntoUniversity

We work closely with many of the young people least likely to see the benefits of AI, which gives us a unique opportunity to help bridge that gap. For many of these students, our centres provide essential access to computers, reliable internet, and the guidance of expert staff and volunteers. This makes us a critical point of contact for supporting use of AI in a way that enhances learning rather than creates new barriers. Just as teachers face the challenge of integrating technology into their practice, our staff must feel confident in striking the balance between enabling students to harness AI's potential while safeguarding them from risks. We recognise how important it is to get this right. That's why, alongside developing robust internal processes and training, we are actively engaging with corporate and technical partners to explore practical solutions and best practices. Our goal is to ensure that AI becomes a tool for empowerment – not exclusion – for the young people we serve.

1. The Sutton Trust, *Artificial Advantage?* (2025)

2. HEPI, *Student Generative AI Survey 2025*

3. Pearson, *Intelligence Unleashed: An argument for AI in Education* (2016)

4. RM Technology and the Digital Poverty Alliance, *Digital Blackout* (2025)

5. Social Market Foundation, *eduAItion, eduAItion, eduAItion: Could Generative Artificial Intelligence pose a risk to educational standards?* (2025)

Our Model and Approach

Underpinning all our work is our distinctive model and the way we approach how we work with young people.

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10 Years in Southampton



Our Distinctive Model and Approach

**Local and national**

Our home-from-home local centres run at grassroots level. At the same time, via our national network, they also benefit from collaborative expertise, experience and a shared mission, culture and ethos.

**Place-based interventions reaching social mobility cold spots**

We run centres in areas facing the greatest disadvantage and where we will have the most impact. We undertake comprehensive feasibility and consultation in each new location to understand fully local context and needs.

**Long-term neighbourhood partnerships**

We work with local communities in the heart of the places where our young people live. Centres are there for the long term, allowing us to create local traditions of support and educational success.

**Evidence-based**

Our programmes are designed to use practices that are evidenced to have a positive impact on the outcomes we're aiming to achieve. Sitting behind our theory of change is a body of research justifying the design decisions made in the programme. We conduct regular reviews to ensure our teaching practices remain based on the most up-to-date and strongest evidence.

**Early and sustained multi-intervention**

Our centres run programmes for children from the age of seven, enabling them to engage positively with education from a young age and over their whole education journey, throughout primary and secondary school, into university and beyond.

**All talents, all abilities nurtured**

Our distinctive, positive ethos and values-driven culture underpin our striving towards high-quality delivery and compassionate pastoral care. We believe that every young person deserves the support they need to achieve their goals; we do not direct our services exclusively towards 'gifted' young people. Our staff teams spend time understanding students' individual talents and needs, build positive relationships and create a welcoming and purposeful environment that inspires a love of learning and lays the foundation for success.

"The belief that the staff have shown me really helped me believe in myself. It's made me think that I can do way more than I could before. They've helped me with friendships and they've helped me talk to more people. They've helped me want to push out of my comfort zone and talk in front of people."

Before I came here I didn't know what university was about and I didn't know if I wanted to go in the future. But now I've realised that there are so many opportunities with going to university and I really want to go."

Chloe

IntoUniversity Centre: Great Yarmouth

Joined IntoUniversity: 2023

Student Number: 174,850

Programmes taken part in:

- Academic Support
- Mentoring
- Primary FOCUS

Now: Studying in Year 9



[Watch Chloe's story here](#)



The IntoUniversity Student Journey

Our multi-intervention programme starts work with students in primary school and continues to offer support all the way through to university application and beyond.

Primary school	Age 11–16	Age 17–18	Post-school
			
Primary FOCUS	Secondary FOCUS		Student Associate Network
A structured programme which supports and enhances school learning and inspires students to think about their future education and the world of work.	A series of workshops and trips that support students' learning and increase their knowledge of Higher Education,	career opportunities and educational pathways.	An opportunity for former IntoUniversity students who have left school to continue their engagement and receive tailored career and academic support. This includes insight events, work experience and mentoring.
Academic Support			
IntoUniversity staff provide sessions of structured academic study after school in our local learning centres. The sessions raise attainment, encourage young people to become active, independent learners and help them to develop effective study skills. Students		have access to essential resources that they may not have at home such as books, university prospectuses and computers.	
University Student Mentoring		Corporate Mentoring	
IntoUniversity students are matched with university student volunteers, providing them with positive role models and the opportunity to develop their social skills, explore future options and improve academic attainment.		In their final year of school, students are paired with career-experienced graduate mentors who offer support with the transition from school through to university over a period of 18 months. Mentors act as positive role models, providing guidance and advice on university applications, career pathways and study skills.	
Student Opportunities			
Students enrolled on IntoUniversity programmes have access to a range of other opportunities, including:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Khadija Saye Arts Programme - Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation bursary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extending Horizons residential - Explore Oxbridge Programme - Careers Insight Days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holiday FOCUS - Work Experience - Big City Bright Future Internship

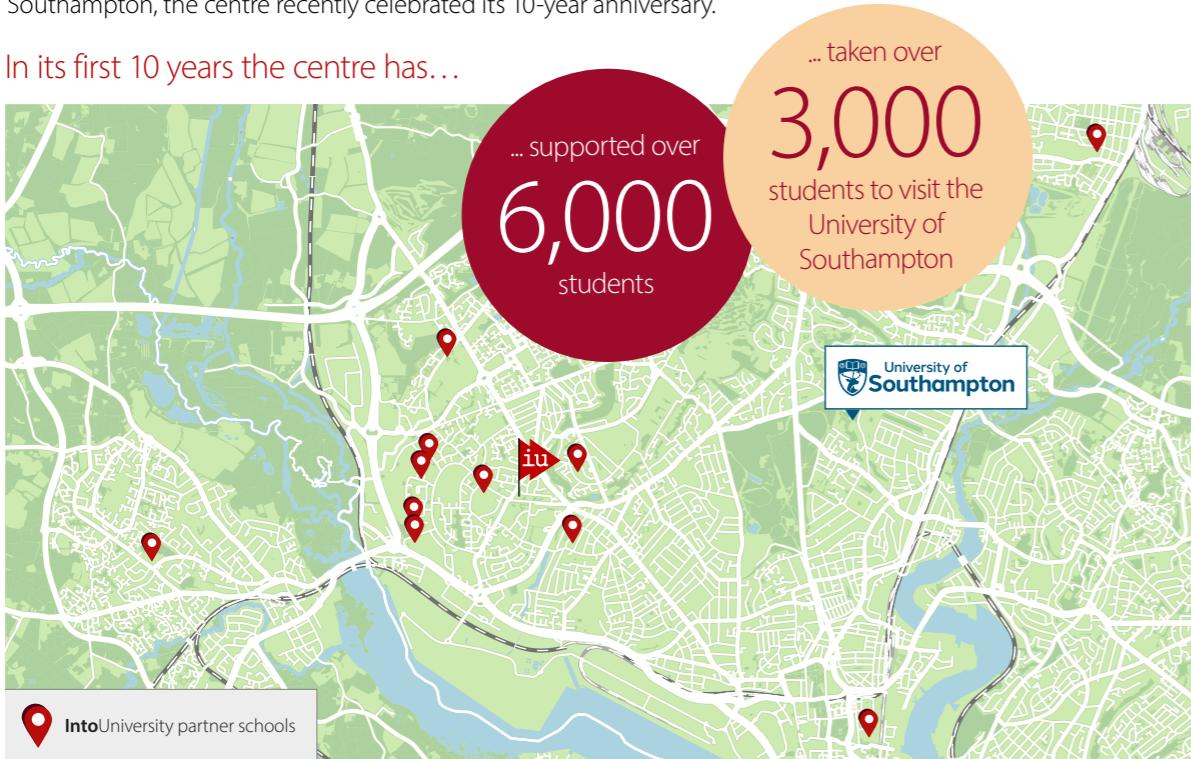
Long-term Neighbourhood Partnerships Case Study: 10 Years in Southampton



Our mission is built on long-term commitment and being deeply embedded at the heart of the communities where the young people we serve live. Our work is collaborative, focused on creating ecosystems of support around each young person, and relies on ongoing partnership with students, their families, schools, universities and other funders. It is these partnerships which enable our work year on year and allow us to remain a stable and sustained presence within communities.

Here we look at some of what it takes to make this work happen on the ground in our Southampton West centre. The centre is situated in a TUNDRA quintile 1 area, which means young people in the local area are among the least likely in the country to progress to Higher Education. Opened in 2015 in partnership with the University of Southampton, the centre recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary.

In its first 10 years the centre has...



"Newlands Primary School has worked with the IntoUniversity Southampton West centre since its launch ten years ago. It has been such a valuable partnership, offering our pupils many opportunities. Many of our pupils have no experience of university, and the 'What is a University?' workshop in Year 5 really opens their eyes to the possibilities. This is extended by the visit to the University of Southampton during the Year 6 FOCUS Week, ending in their graduation, which the children really enjoy. A fantastic example of the impact this can have is an ex-pupil who went on to study English at university and is now teaching English in Japan, which he attributes to being inspired by his IntoUniversity sessions."

We really value how the IntoUniversity Southampton West team works with us to ensure the programmes enhance our curriculum. Both the Year 5 'Natural Disasters' and the Year 6 'Evolution' sessions are great examples of this. The children report enjoying these sessions, while we know they are acquiring knowledge & skills to complement their learning. The pupils reported particularly enjoying this year's visit to the Gilbert White House to learn about adaptations. Finally, so many of our children have benefited from attending Academic Support. They appreciate having a supportive space to complete their homework, something that many of our families find challenging to manage at home."

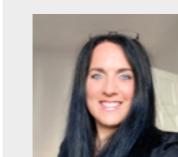
Tracy Legg – Assistant Headteacher at Newlands Primary School



"The relationship between Newlands Primary School and IntoUniversity Southampton typifies the sustained partnerships our centres build in local communities. A few minutes' walk from the centre, Newlands has been a consistent, enthused and engaged champion of the centre, supporting Primary FOCUS and extending our reach by promoting other programmes to families. The connection has been deepened by other touchpoints, such as IntoUniversity staff attending Year 6's end-of-year performance."

Students at Newlands gain a variety of experiences, from writing about future aspirations, to a city tour with the Tudor House museum and a graduation ceremony at the University of Southampton. It's wonderful to also invite their families to the graduation to share the experience and see the impact that the centre has had."

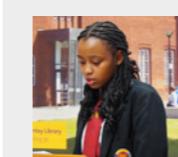
Jack Hall – Primary FOCUS co-ordinator at IntoUniversity Southampton West



"Over the past ten years the partnership between the University of Southampton and IntoUniversity has broken down barriers, normalised university pathways and helped to support access to Higher Education for the young people of Southampton."

Together, our partnership has facilitated visits from young people to our campuses, while our staff and students have visited and supported the centre-based programmes and operations. This has connected us with the local community in a way that is not always possible. We are incredibly proud to have had this impact over a sustained period and to have been able to support such a large number of young people with their educational journey. This is all down to the power of true collaboration and partnership."

Trish Nicolaides – Head of Lifecycle at the University of Southampton



"When I was at Newlands Primary, IntoUniversity staff came into our school and took us on trips. I had my Year 6 FOCUS Week graduation ceremony at the University of Southampton. This experience was great, I remember exploring the university campus and learning about the different courses you could do there and we got to ask the university students some questions. It was my first time going to a university."

I've been coming to Academic Support for four years. One thing I found challenging before attending IntoUniversity was maths. IntoUniversity pushed me by encouraging me to practise and helped me when it was very hard. My grades improved and they gave me more confidence. I would recommend IntoUniversity to anyone because it can improve your academics and is a great place to make new friends."

Joanna – Year 8 student at IntoUniversity Southampton West

Outcomes

At the end of each programme we ask students to fill out evaluation forms. This gives us information on how successfully our programmes are supporting students towards our intended outcomes. Last academic year, we processed and analysed over 45,000 forms.

Where possible, we ask parents / carers and teachers to fill out evaluation forms too. This enables us to triangulate students' feedback, showing whether any changes they report are being observed by others too.

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- 30 Skills and Capacities Required to Succeed
- 32 Self-Efficacy and Self-Belief
- 34 Knowledge of Higher Education and Career Options



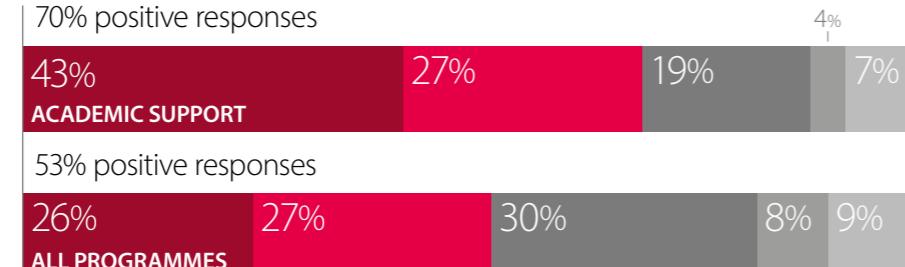
Learning Skills and Attainment

“IntoUniversity delivers a holistic and supportive programme and can be confident that there are many ways in which this supports increased attainment.”

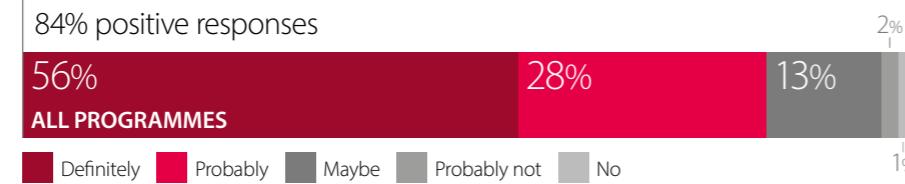
Understanding IntoUniversity’s impact on attainment: A qualitative research study. Renaisi. 2019.

Students' attitudes to learning improve

All IntoUniversity programmes include elements designed to foster an improved attitude to learning. 53% of students responded positively when asked if they were working better in school as a result of our programmes. This increased to 70% for students taking part in our Academic Support programme, which places a greater emphasis on this outcome. Teachers and parents/carers also responded positively when asked about improved attitudes to learning.

STUDENTS
Are you working better in school?

53% positive responses

TEACHERS
Have you noticed any positive changes in your class' attitude to learning?PARENTS/CARERS
Have you noticed any positive changes in your child's attitude to learning?

Definitely Probably Maybe Probably not No

Attainment at school

One aim of IntoUniversity’s Academic Support programme is to support young people’s attainment in school. Responses show that students on the programme and their parents/carers think that it is succeeding in this aim. Students on other programmes, where there is less of a direct focus on attainment, are less likely to feel this way.

STUDENTS

Have your marks or grades improved?

63% positive responses



PARENTS/CARERS

Have you noticed an improvement in your child’s marks or grades?

66% positive responses



“I really appreciate the environment at IntoUniversity. It’s a place where I feel comfortable, and it’s much easier to concentrate here because of the quiet space and accessibility. It really makes a difference not having a brother or sister around while I work! IntoUniversity has helped me keep improving – it has given me a place where I can focus on my school work and build the skills I need to stay on track.”

Zayne, Year 10, IntoUniversity East Ham

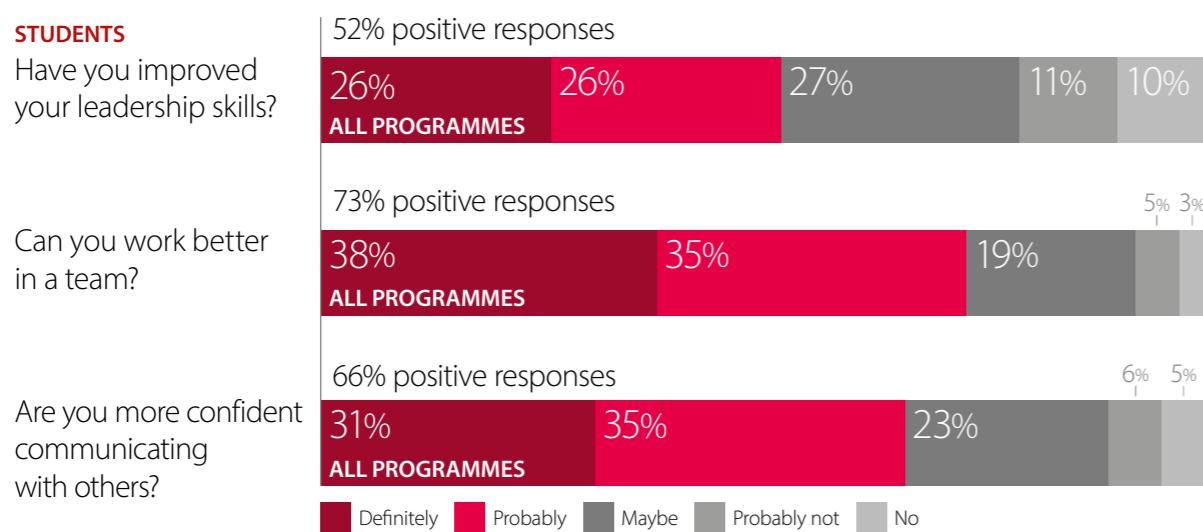
Further evidence that Academic Support raises student attainment is provided by an external evaluation by FFT Education Datalab, which found that students who regularly attended Academic Support made the equivalent of 3 months’ additional progress in Key Stage 2 maths (see page 38 for more details).

Skills and Capacities Required to Succeed

Students report improvements in a range of key skills

Research by the Skills Builder Partnership shows that those with strong 'Essential Skills' earn more, are less likely to be unemployed, and have higher job and life satisfaction, even after accounting for other factors such as level of education, numeracy and literacy skills¹. This suggests that working to build these skills can have a long-term impact on young people.

All our programmes include activities designed to support the development of key skills, although some programmes focus more on certain skills than others. For example, on our 'Leadership in FOCUS' programme, 63% of students said they had improved their leadership skills, compared to 52% for all programmes. The data below shows that the majority of students across all programmes responded positively when asked if they had improved specific key skills.



"Before I came to IntoUniversity I wasn't very good at talking to people, but since attending Academic Support I have been able to work on my communication skills. It's helped me be able to talk to new people. I'm trying to do Architecture at university and going to IntoUniversity helps me stay on the right track. It makes my dream of studying Architecture more achievable."

Tyler, Year 10, IntoUniversity Hackney Downs



"IntoUniversity inspires our students to aim higher and explore more opportunities that they wouldn't normally get in school. Our students learnt employability skills, teamwork, confidence, commitment and many more skills which will help them thrive. Students use the skills gained whilst working with IntoUniversity both in school and out of school, and particularly when making choices about their next steps in life."

Peterborough Hub Coordinator, Thomas Deacon Academy (IntoUniversity Peterborough partner school)

"I am very happy that my children have the support of IntoUniversity. Since attending, their writing, spelling and speaking skills have all gotten better. Academic Support is really helpful as the children can get easily distracted when doing their homework at home – I would recommend it to everyone!"

Parent of an Academic Support student at IntoUniversity Birmingham East

Self-Efficacy and Self-Belief

Students see university as an option

After working with us, students feel that they are more likely to go to university. Parents/carers and teachers also responded positively when asked whether their children/students were more likely to go to university.

STUDENTS
Are you more likely to go to university?



PARENTS/CARERS
Do you think your child is more likely to go to university?



TEACHERS
Do you think your class is more likely to go to university?



Definitely Probably Maybe Probably not No

"By coming to IntoUniversity, I build confidence in my own abilities. Like many others, I often find myself doubting what I can do, but being here gives me the chance to challenge those doubts and prove to myself what I'm capable of."

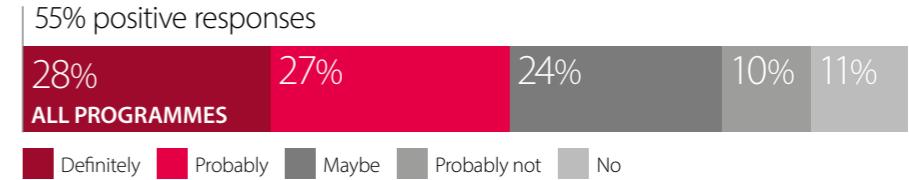
Former IntoUniversity North Kensington student, now studying at Queen Mary University



Students develop their confidence and belief in themselves

After working with IntoUniversity, 55% of students report that their confidence has improved.

STUDENTS
Has your confidence improved?



Definitely Probably Maybe Probably not No

Parents/carers and teachers also see improvements in confidence

The improvements students report in their confidence are also observed by their parents/carers and teachers.

PARENTS/CARERS
Do you think your child's confidence has improved?



Definitely Probably Maybe Probably not No

TEACHERS
Do you think your class' confidence has improved?



Definitely Probably Maybe Probably not No

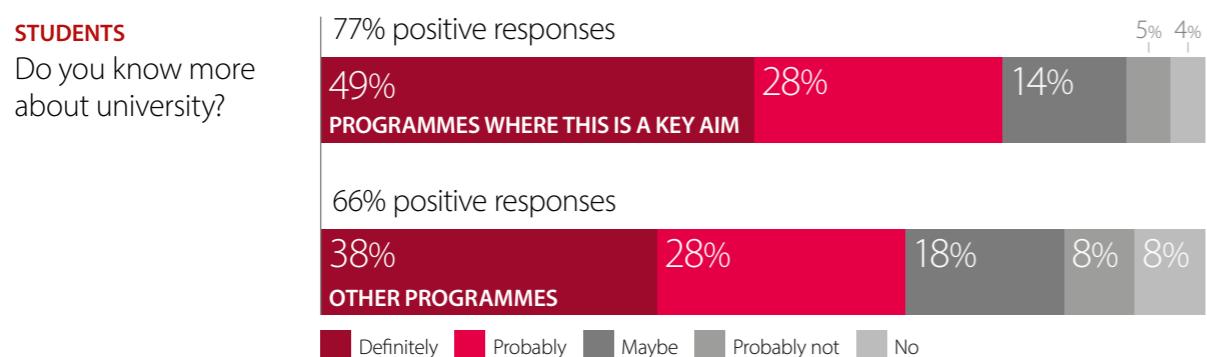
"For us, it feels as though IntoUniversity has opened doors for our children that they believed were firmly shut. IntoUniversity has literally changed the life plan of one of our children who is now keen to study graphic art at Leeds University – he discusses it with staff on a weekly basis! Lots of our children had either never considered university as an option or did not believe it could be possible for them and now many are thinking about alternative or additional options for their futures."

Assistant Headteacher at Meadow Bank Community School (IntoUniversity Bradford East partner school)

Knowledge of Higher Education and Career Options

Students increase their knowledge about university

For students to aspire to Higher Education, navigate applications and make informed choices about their future options, they need appropriate knowledge. On some of our programmes, including Primary FOCUS and workshops such as 'A Day of University Life' and 'Support with Personal Statements', this is one of the main aims. For these programmes, 77% of students gave a positive response when asked if they knew more about university. On programmes where increased university knowledge is a secondary aim, 66% of students gave a positive response to this question. This suggests that all programmes are effective at increasing students' knowledge of university, and that programmes where this is one of the main aims have a greater impact in this area.



"The workshops and one-to-one Personal Statement sessions have been incredibly helpful for figuring out what I want to do in the future. They showed me a pathway I didn't think was possible and gave me hope that I could achieve my goals of becoming a medical professional. I've recently been offered places at universities to study Biomedical Sciences! Overall, IntoUniversity has made me feel much more confident and prepared for the future."

Azra, Year 13, IntoUniversity Salford Central

Teachers say their students know more about university

When we asked teachers, 92% said their students' knowledge about university had definitely or probably improved.



"IntoUniversity provided an engaging and inspiring FOCUS Week that introduced the class to university life, the range of courses available, and what the future could look like after school. The team made learning exciting and easy to understand, especially during our visit to a real university at the end of their FOCUS Week, which made it all feel more real and achievable. This experience has made the students think more seriously about their future and has shown them that university could be a great option for reaching their goals."

Year 6 teacher at St Scholastica's Primary School (IntoUniversity Hackney Downs Primary School)

Students feel more informed about their future options

Our Student Opportunities programmes specifically aim to build students' knowledge of possible careers and pathways. 90% of students taking part in these programmes reported that they were better-informed about their future career options and pathways as a result of the programme. We ask a very similar question for our mentoring programme, where 86% of students reported that their knowledge of future options had increased.



"The support IntoUniversity gives us towards careers, especially through the workshops, has helped me decide what I want to do. When I go to college, I know about all the options such as A levels, BTECs, and T levels. Without the knowledge from IntoUniversity, I would be feeling a lot more confused about all the different options."

Fatima, Year 11, IntoUniversity Leeds South

Impact

External evaluation shows that young people who regularly attend our Academic Support programme achieve higher exam grades. By tracking our students as they leave the school system and benchmarking their destinations against similar students, we know that they are significantly more likely than their peers to progress to Higher Education and other positive destinations.

- 38 External Evaluation: Key Stage 2 Attainment
- 40 Progression to Higher Education
- 42 *Into University's Tailored Benchmark*
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External Evaluation: Key Stage 2 Attainment

We commissioned researchers from FFT Education Datalab to evaluate the impact of attendance at IntoUniversity's Academic Support programme on students' Key Stage 2 SATs results. These are the exams students in England take at the end of primary school at age 11. The full research report can be found on our website.

The Academic Support programme

Academic Support is a holistic programme that supports students to develop social, emotional and study skills. It runs after school in our local learning centres and primary school students are able to attend once a week during term time. They can get help with their homework and take part in our bespoke curriculum, which is designed to reinforce the learning they do at school.

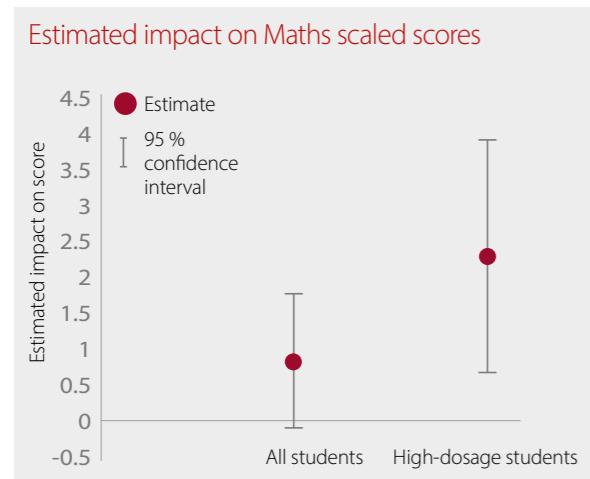
Evaluation design

The evaluation used a quasi-experimental design. Data from the National Pupil Database (NPD) was used to compare the Key Stage 2 SATs performance of students who had taken part in IntoUniversity's Academic Support programme to the performance of those in a comparison group matched with respect to prior attainment, school characteristics, demographic factors, and measures of disadvantage. The evaluation also assessed whether the impact varied with dosage. High dosage students were defined as those who had attended 80 or more sessions, equivalent to regular attendance over 10 or more terms. 392 IntoUniversity students who completed Key Stage 2 between 2016 and 2019 were included in the analysis. A third of these were high dosage students.

The results

High dosage students made 3 months' additional progress in Maths

The chart shows estimated impact on Maths scaled scores for a) all students; b) high-dosage students. There is always an element of uncertainty when using a statistical model to estimate impact. The circle shows the model's best estimate for the impact, while the bars above and below represent a range of plausible values.



There was a statistically significant positive impact on Maths results for high-dosage students. It was estimated that a high dosage IntoUniversity student would achieve a scaled score of 2.29 more than a matched comparison student. This is equivalent to 3 months' additional progress.

There was not conclusive evidence that Academic Support has a positive impact on Maths results for students with a lower dosage. Although the estimated impact for all students was positive, equivalent to around 2 months' additional progress, this was not statistically significant.

What next?

We are planning to repeat this analysis with a larger group of students in 2026 which will enable more precise estimates of the impact of Academic Support on KS2 attainment. This will also form part of our OfS-funded project looking at metacognition in Primary students (see page 62 for more information). We will compare students on our standard Academic Support programme with those who have taken part in the new metacognition project, to see if taking part results in a different impact on Key Stage 2 attainment.

"My maths is way better now. Ever since I came here I just feel a bit happier. I got way more confident in Science, Maths and English and everything. It impacted my SATs results. I thought I wasn't really going to pass them, but when I picked up my pencil I thought, 'I remember they were telling me about this'. So I wrote it down, worked it out and actually got the answers right."

Ela

IntoUniversity Centre: Grimsby

Joined IntoUniversity: 2024

Student Number: 213,050

Programmes taken part in:

- Academic Support
- Primary FOCUS

Now: Studying in Year 7



Watch Ela's story here



Progression to Higher Education

60% of IntoUniversity students who finished school in 2025 achieved a university place¹. This is higher than all of the benchmarks we use for comparison, suggesting that the IntoUniversity programme is **having a positive impact on students' chances of going to university**.

Where did IntoUniversity school leavers go in 2025?

60%	7%	9%	12%	9%	3%
progressed to Higher Education ¹	were applying to university or enrolled on an access course	were starting a Further Education course	were in work or doing an apprenticeship	were undecided about their future or looking for work	did not fall into any of these categories ²

How is the progression rate for IntoUniversity students calculated?

The majority of data (84%) was collected by contacting students by phone. We also received some data from students completing an online form, school partners, seeing students in person and social media. This year we collected progression data for 5,686 students out of a cohort of 13,958 – a sample of 41%. The outcomes for these students are shown in the table above.

What about the students we do not have data for?

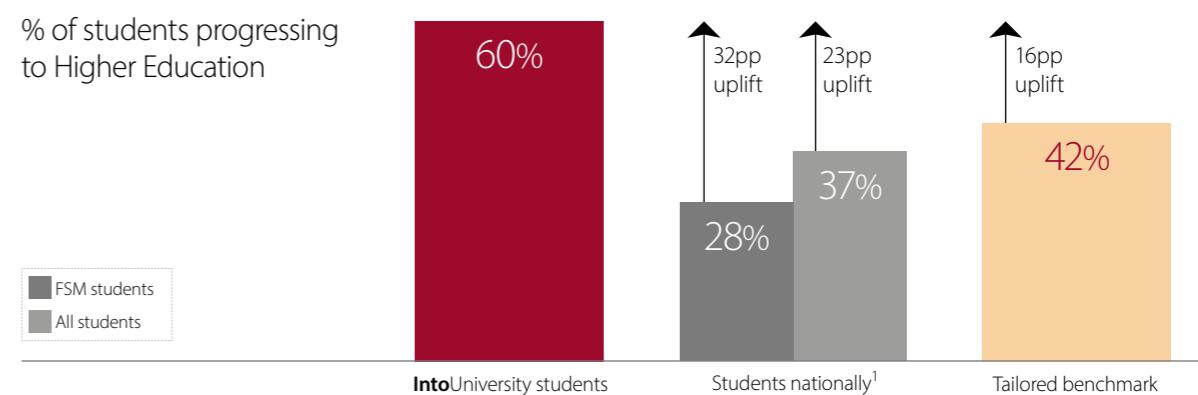
It is reasonable to suggest that the university progression rate for the students we do not have data for might be lower. If we conservatively assume that we had no impact on these students, then our overall progression rate would be 49%³. This is still above the national average and comparable benchmarks.



How do IntoUniversity students compare with other students?

To understand the effectiveness of our programmes, we can compare the university progression rate of IntoUniversity students with the rate for similar groups of students who have not received IntoUniversity's support.

Data published by the Department for Education (DfE) gives university participation rates for all students nationally and specifically for students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). These provide a general point of comparison. However, we know that the students we work with are not reflective of the UK as a whole. For instance, many of our centres are in London, which has a much higher participation rate than the rest of the country. To account for this, we have used the Office for Students' ABCS dataset data and the DfE school performance tables to calculate a tailored benchmark, designed to estimate students' likelihood of going to university based on where they are living, which school they attend and the age at which they joined the IntoUniversity programme. A detailed explanation of how this was calculated can be found on page 42. IntoUniversity's rate is considerably higher than these benchmarks, as shown in the graph below.



Why are we showing the uplift?

Some of the students we work with would have gone to university without any support from us. We use a range of benchmarks that estimate how many students this applies to. By comparing our students to these benchmarks, we're able to better understand the impact of our programmes.



Ollie Sewell, Data and Impact Officer

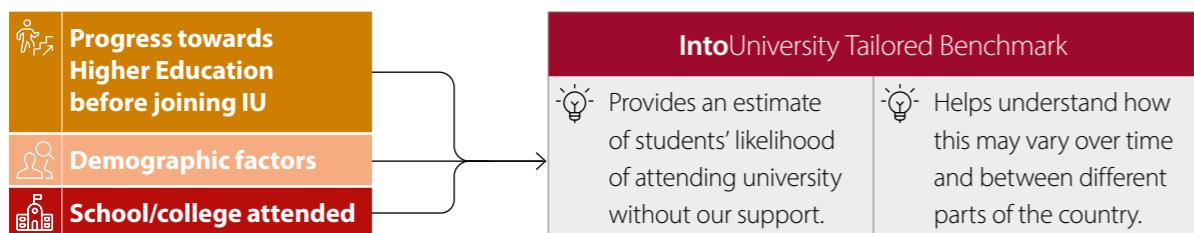
1. This comprises 56% with a confirmed place to start university in 2025, 2% with a confirmed deferred entry place to start university in 2026, 1% with a confirmed place to study an HND/HNC (Scotland only), and 1% with a confirmed place on a university foundation course.

2. This includes applying for other types of education, volunteering, moving abroad, medical issues and caring responsibilities.

3. This is based on using 60% as the progression rate for the students we have data for, and the tailored benchmark for the 8,272 students we were not able to collect outcomes data for. Taking the tailored benchmark as the progression rate for these students assumes that we have had no uplift on the background rate for these students, which we think is unlikely given the uplift seen for students we do have data for.

1. DfE, 16-18 Destination Measures Academic year 2023/24: % of students in state-funded mainstream schools and colleges progressing to Higher Education

IntoUniversity's Tailored Benchmark



What is the benchmark for?

A number of factors unrelated to our programme influence how likely our students are to go to university. The tailored benchmark uses data relating to some of these factors to estimate how likely our students would be to go to university without our support. We can calculate the benchmark for different groups of students, allowing us to look at how our students' background chances of going to university vary over time and between different areas.

What factors does the benchmark take into account?

Progress towards Higher Education before joining IntoUniversity

We do not apply selection criteria to students who join our programme pre-16, other than requiring them to meet our criteria for need. It seems reasonable to assume that they have a similar chance of progressing to university as any other student in their demographic group, and so we use demographic factors for this group to estimate their background chance of going to university.

For students who join post-16, we think this approach underestimates their chances of university progression. Most students in this group are already studying the necessary qualifications for university before they start working with us. Nationally, 28% of FSM students progress to university, but this rises to 46% for those studying the necessary qualifications¹. We therefore use a different dataset that only includes students studying these qualifications, to give a fairer estimate of the background chance of university progression for this group.

Students who joined pre-16

Students who joined post-16

Demographic factors

The 'Associations Between Characteristics of Students' (ABCS) dataset², brings together a range of data to show how different combinations of demographic factors influence progression to Higher Education. We can combine this with our own data on our students' demographics to estimate each student's background chance of progressing to Higher Education, based on these factors:

- Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)
- Gender
- Measures of deprivation within their local area (IMD and IDACI quintiles)
- A measure of how many young people in their local area progress to Higher Education (TUNDRA quintile)

School/college attended

Students at some schools or colleges are significantly more likely to go to university than students at others.

The DfE publishes university progression rates for all students, and for disadvantaged students specifically, at any school or college that offers post-16 education³. For each student, we used their school or college progression rate, taking the disadvantaged rate for students we knew were eligible for FSM, and the overall rate for all other students.

Assembling the benchmark

For each year from 2015 to 2025, we calculated a benchmark by taking the average background chance for all the students in that year's sample, using ABCS data for students first engaged pre-16 and DfE school data for those first engaged post-16. As DfE data for 2024 and 2025 is not yet available, we used 2023 data for these years.

Improvements we've made to the benchmark this year

We've previously used TUNDRA on its own to estimate Higher Education progression for pre-16 students. ABCS still uses TUNDRA, but also accounts for other factors affecting progression, so this year we've switched to ABCS.

Limitations of the benchmark

May overestimate students' background chance of progression

Area-based measures and FSM cannot fully capture variation in need

- Area-based measures such as TUNDRA, IMD, and IDACI, which are used in ABCS, assess disadvantage based on where students live and are relatively poor predictors of individual disadvantage¹.
- FSM is an individual-level indicator, but the non-FSM group ranges from those with incomes just above the FSM threshold, all the way up to the most affluent families.
- We target students using individual-level measures of need such as income, housing and care status, so our students are likely to be among the most disadvantaged in their local area.
- ABCS combines multiple indicators to better capture variation, but necessarily still generalises into groups. Within these groups, it is likely our students are among the least likely to enter Higher Education.

Unknown FSM status for some students

- In some cases, our partner schools confirm that students meet our criteria for need but don't specify which criteria apply. This means we can't be certain whether those students are eligible for FSM.
- It is likely that many of the remaining students are also eligible for FSM, but to be conservative we have only used the lower FSM progression rate for students confirmed as FSM.

School progression rates are not independent of our own progression rate

- If students are more likely to go to university after taking part in IntoUniversity programmes, this will increase the overall school progression rate (and therefore the benchmark rate) as well as our own rate.

Cannot effectively capture recent changes in university progression

Use of historical data

- ABCS covers cohorts from 2015–2019, while the latest school data available is for 2023 leavers.
- Both datasets therefore reflect historical progression rather than current student outcomes.

Strengths of the benchmark

Best available estimate of what would happen to our students without our support

Controls for many of the factors that affect progression to Higher Education

- Uses the age students joined the programme to account for progress made prior to working with IntoUniversity, which is otherwise hard to control for.
- Accounts for geographical variation better than using data at the national or local authority level.
- The use of ABCS improves on our previous benchmark by accounting for additional demographic factors.

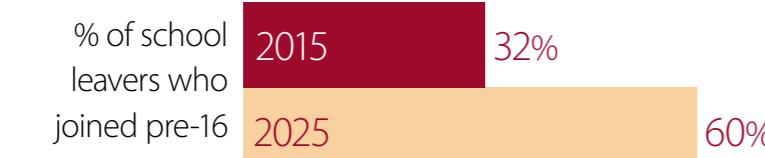
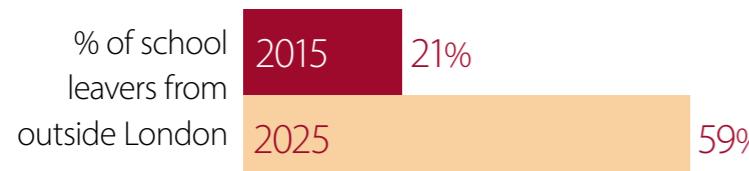
We think the benchmark provides a conservative estimate, which may underestimate our impact, as the limitations probably tend to **overestimate our students' background chances of going to university**.

Variation in Uplift Over Time

IntoUniversity works with tens of thousands of students across the UK each year and has progression data going back to 2015. This gives us a large dataset to examine how our students' chances of progressing to university have changed over time.

The demographics of IntoUniversity students have changed significantly as the charity has matured and expanded.

Demographic change



Effect on progression

Students from outside London are much less likely to go to University than those living in London (23% vs 44%)¹.

Students who join us post-16 have already chosen options that may lead to university. Nationally, the university progression rate for such students is much higher than for the broader group of students we work with pre-16 (46% vs 28%)².

Largely as a result of these changes, more recent school leavers have a lower background chance of going to university.



As we've expanded, our uplift on the background rate has remained consistent, though with a notable drop in the last three years.



1. DfE, 16-18 Destination Measures Academic year 2023/24: Disadvantaged university progression rate for all regions outside of London compared to disadvantaged rate for London.
2. DfE, 16-18 Destination Measures Academic year 2023/24: FSM university progression rate for students studying level 3 qualifications compared to rate for all FSM students.

Understanding the recent drop in uplift

National Higher Education progression rates for disadvantaged students have fallen since 2020.

National rates fell between 2020 and 2023 (the most recent year with data available)³, suggesting the decline in uplift for our students may be part of a wider trend.

The schools component of our benchmark accounts for this decline, with students who joined us post-16 compared to similar students from the same year. However, the majority of leavers joined pre-16 and are benchmarked against ABCS data. This is based on students who left school between 2015 and 2019, so does not capture the more recent decline seen in the national data.

Potential drivers of this decline include:

Lost learning

Disadvantaged students lost nearly twice as much learning in lockdown as other students⁴. At all ages, the attainment gap is wider than before the pandemic⁵.

Reduced school attendance post-pandemic

Absence rates are a third higher than before the pandemic, and over 1 in 3 disadvantaged students are now persistently absent⁶.

Our recent expansion has targeted areas of highest need

Recent expansion has focused on coastal areas and other Higher Education cold spots, where students may be up to five times less likely to progress to Higher Education than those in other parts of the country⁶.

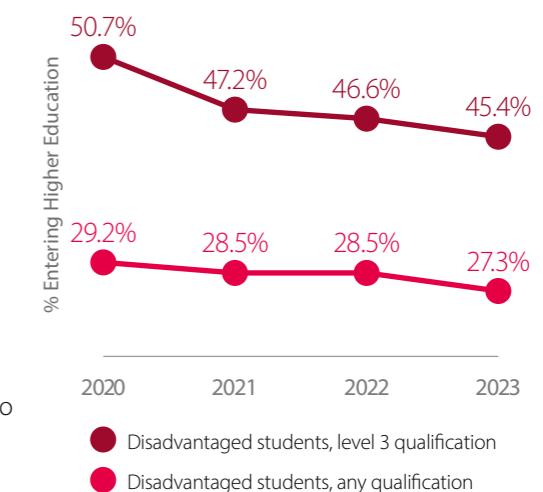
Given this context, we understood from the start that working in these areas would be challenging and the barriers to Higher Education greater. We knew that in the short term we may not see same impact as in other locations, and indeed our data shows that, so far, uplift on the background rate is typically lower in our coastal centres. The challenges in these locations will not be solved overnight, which is why we are committed for the long term, working with young people from the age of seven and providing sustained support through our centres.

Looking to the future

Encouragingly, early data from UCAS suggests an increase in national progression rates for disadvantaged groups in 2025⁷, aligning with the upturn seen in our own data. We will continue to monitor, particularly in relation to:

- Government reforms outlined in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper (October 2025), which aim to expand higher-level learning and reintroduce maintenance grants for disadvantaged students.
- The gaps in learning, attainment and attendance that have opened since the pandemic.
- The ongoing cost of living crisis, which we know remains a significant barrier for many students.

Internally, our review cycle this year is focused on our Secondary FOCUS programme, and one part of that is looking at how the programme can most effectively support Secondary students in coastal and cold spot areas. We are also bringing together wider reflections from our work in these areas, looking at what we have learnt so far and how this can inform what we do going forwards.



Cost-of-living pressures

Rising inflation has hit students hard. 76% worry about making ends meet and 31% are considering dropping out for financial reasons⁵.

Negative rhetoric around Higher Education

Students' decisions may have been influenced by public discourse questioning the value of university.

1. DfE, 16-18 Destination Measures Academic year 2023/24: Disadvantaged university progression rate for all regions outside of London compared to disadvantaged rate for London.

2. Centre for Economic Performance, Learning loss since lockdown variation across the home nations (2021)

3. Education Policy Institute, Annual report (2025)

4. Impetus and Public First, Listening to, and learning from, young people in the attendance crisis (2025)

5. National Student Money Survey 2025 – <https://www.savethesstudent.org/money/surveys/student-money-survey-2025-results.html#financialstruggle>

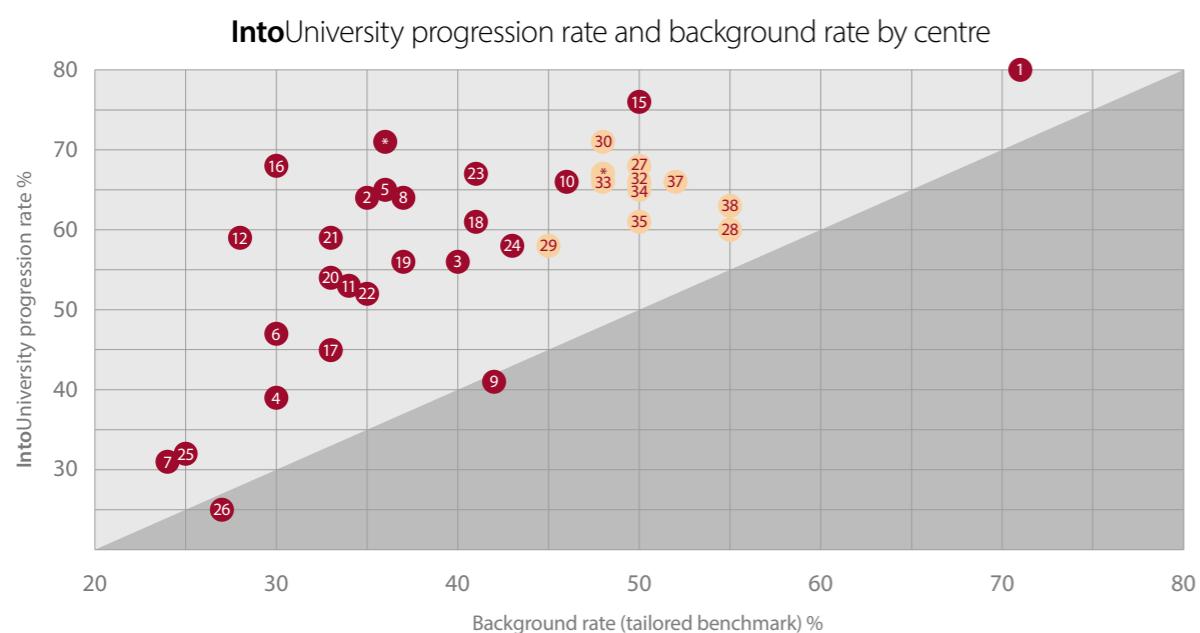
6. Ruskin Institute for Social Equity, Coast and Country: Access to higher education cold spots in England (2025)

7. UCAS daily clearing release, 11th September 2025: Percentage of TUNRA Q1 students accepted <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/statistical-releases-daily-clearing-analysis-2025>

Variation in Uplift Across the Country

Rates of participation in Higher Education vary across the country and likewise across our centres. The figure below shows the university progression rate for each IntoUniversity centre plotted against its tailored benchmark rate (the benchmark calculation is explained on page 42). This graph gives helpful geographical context to our centre progression rates and helps us understand some of the variation between them. For example, students in London have historically higher rates of Higher Education progression than those outside the capital, and you can see that our London centres generally have higher progression rates than our regional centres.

When looking at the progression rates for individual centres, it is important to consider the full context in which each centre is working. The tailored benchmark is an approximation based on nationally available datasets and so does not fully capture this context. Nonetheless, we think it is a good starting point for understanding how we might expect university progression rates to vary across our network.



Regional centres

- 1 Birmingham East
- 2 Birmingham North
- 3 Bradford East
- 4 Brighton
- 5 Bristol East
- 6 Bristol South
- 7 Clacton
- 8 Coventry
- 9 Great Yarmouth
- 10 Kirkby
- 11 Leeds East
- 12 Leeds Extension
- * Leeds South | 25 | 30 |

London centres

- * Leicester North | 35 | 55 |
- 13 Manchester North 50 | 65 |
- 14 Manchester North 50 | 75 |
- 16 Newcastle East 40 | 65 |
- 17 North Liverpool 35 | 50 |
- 18 Norwich 40 | 55 |
- 19 Nottingham Central 40 | 55 |
- 20 Nottingham East 40 | 40 |
- 21 Nottingham West 40 | 40 |
- 22 Oxford South East 40 | 40 |
- 23 Peterborough 40 | 40 |
- 24 Salford Central 40 | 40 |
- 25 Southampton 40 | 40 |
- 26 Weston-super-Mare 25 | 25 |
- 27 Bow 50 | 60 |
- 28 Brent 50 | 60 |
- 29 Brixton 50 | 55 |
- 30 East Ham 50 | 60 |
- * Hackney Downs | 50 | 60 |
- 32 Hackney South 50 | 55 |
- 33 Hammersmith 50 | 65 |
- 34 Haringey North 50 | 65 |
- 35 Kennington 50 | 65 |
- * North Islington | 50 | 65 |
- 37 North Kensington 50 | 65 |
- 38 Walworth 50 | 65 |

*Hackney Downs and North Islington are represented by the same point as their rates are almost identical.

*Leeds South and Leicester North are represented by the same point as their rates are almost identical.

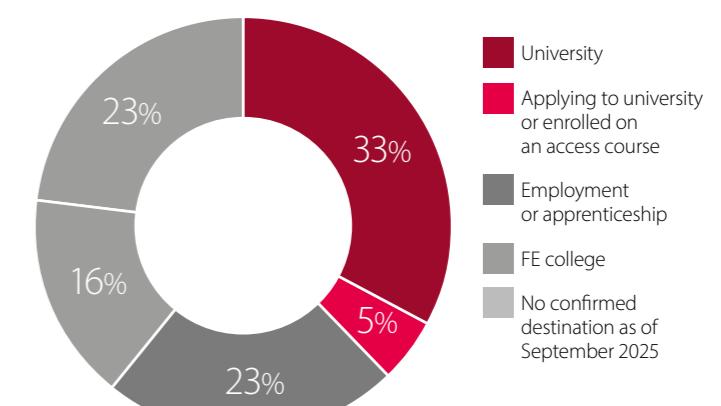
Note: Scottish centres are not included as the datasets used to create the tailored benchmark are not available for Scotland. Our Bridlington, Grimsby and Hull East centres have fewer than 25 school leavers and so are not shown on the chart above.

Support for students on alternative pathways

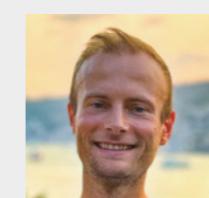
As discussed on page 13, our recent expansion strategy has been to target areas with the highest levels of need. Our centres work closely in partnership with local schools and colleges, including supporting students in post-16 education. We have expertise supporting this age group with skill development, choosing options and writing strong applications, areas which are relevant to students thinking about the full range of post-school pathways. In these high need areas there may be few organisations offering additional educational support, and some school and college partners have told us that the most valuable contribution we can make to their provision for particular cohorts is to deliver targeted support for students pursuing non-university routes.

This year, both our Weston-super-Mare and Great Yarmouth centres had significant cohorts of post-16 students who were already following these alternative pathways when they joined the programme. For context, only 13% and 17% of FSM students respectively progress to Higher Education in these areas¹, much lower than the national average. While the majority of leavers from these centres did not progress to university, they did achieve other positive destinations, with 23% entering employment or starting an apprenticeship, 16% enrolling in further education, and 5% working towards applying for university entry next year.

Destinations for Weston-super-Mare and Great Yarmouth school leavers



- University
- Applying to university or enrolled on an access course
- Employment or apprenticeship
- FE college
- No confirmed destination as of September 2025



A strategic question: should we continue to broaden our support to include students already set on pursuing non-university pathways?

Our work supporting students on non-university pathways provides important context both for specific centre uplifts and the changes in network-wide uplift shown on page 44. The extent to which this work fits with our mission, in particular where students' first interactions with us come in post-16 education, is an important strategic question

which we continue to examine. We aim to support educational success in the communities where we work. In some, there are few students of school-leaver age who want to, or are currently in a position to, apply to university. In some cases, our school and college partners tell us that it's those on non-university pathways who stand to benefit most from our support and expertise. The majority of students we support on these alternative pathways go on to positive post-school destinations. Not only does this work support their more immediate educational success, it is an opportunity to discuss lifelong learning and raise awareness of Higher Education and the benefits it offers, perhaps opening up university as a viable option later in life. It also highlights our commitment to being present in these communities for the long term, building trust and helping to establish local traditions of support and success in education.

We believe it's important to be open and transparent about our data, so we haven't excluded these students from our analysis. We are looking at how we may reasonably be able to adapt our tailored benchmark to account for our work with these students while ensuring that we remain conservative and avoid overstating our impact.

Alex Quinn, Head of Data and Impact at IntoUniversity

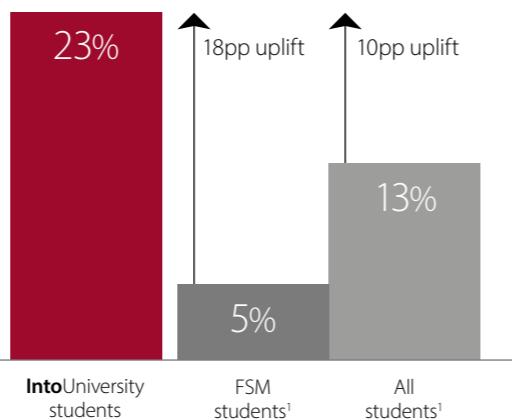
¹ DfE, 16–18 Destination Measures Academic year 2023/24: 24% of disadvantaged students in state-funded mainstream schools and colleges progressing to Higher Education in North Somerset and Norfolk Local Authorities.

Progression to Selective Universities

How many IntoUniversity students obtain places at selective universities?

The young people IntoUniversity works with have a higher rate of progression to selective universities than those nationally:

IntoUniversity students are more likely to progress to top-third Higher Education Institutions than students nationally.



20% of IntoUniversity students progressed to Russell Group universities, with 0.9% going to Oxbridge.



"IntoUniversity has been a constant source of support and inspiration in my life. From the moment my parents discovered the North Kensington centre I was welcomed into a space filled with resources, encouragement, and people who truly believed in me. Meeting my Year 9 mentor – a young Black woman at university – was transformative; seeing someone from a background like mine thriving in Higher Education made me certain I could too. Even now, as a young woman in my professional career, the IntoUniversity team continues to cheer me on and advise me, opening doors I might never have found alone."

Being part of one of IntoUniversity's earliest cohorts and now volunteering as a mentor myself has been incredible. I've watched the charity grow from a single centre to reaching its 250,000th student, and I still see the same determination and spark that first inspired me."

Lady

IntoUniversity Centre: North Kensington

Joined IntoUniversity: 2003

Student Number: 107

Programmes taken part in:

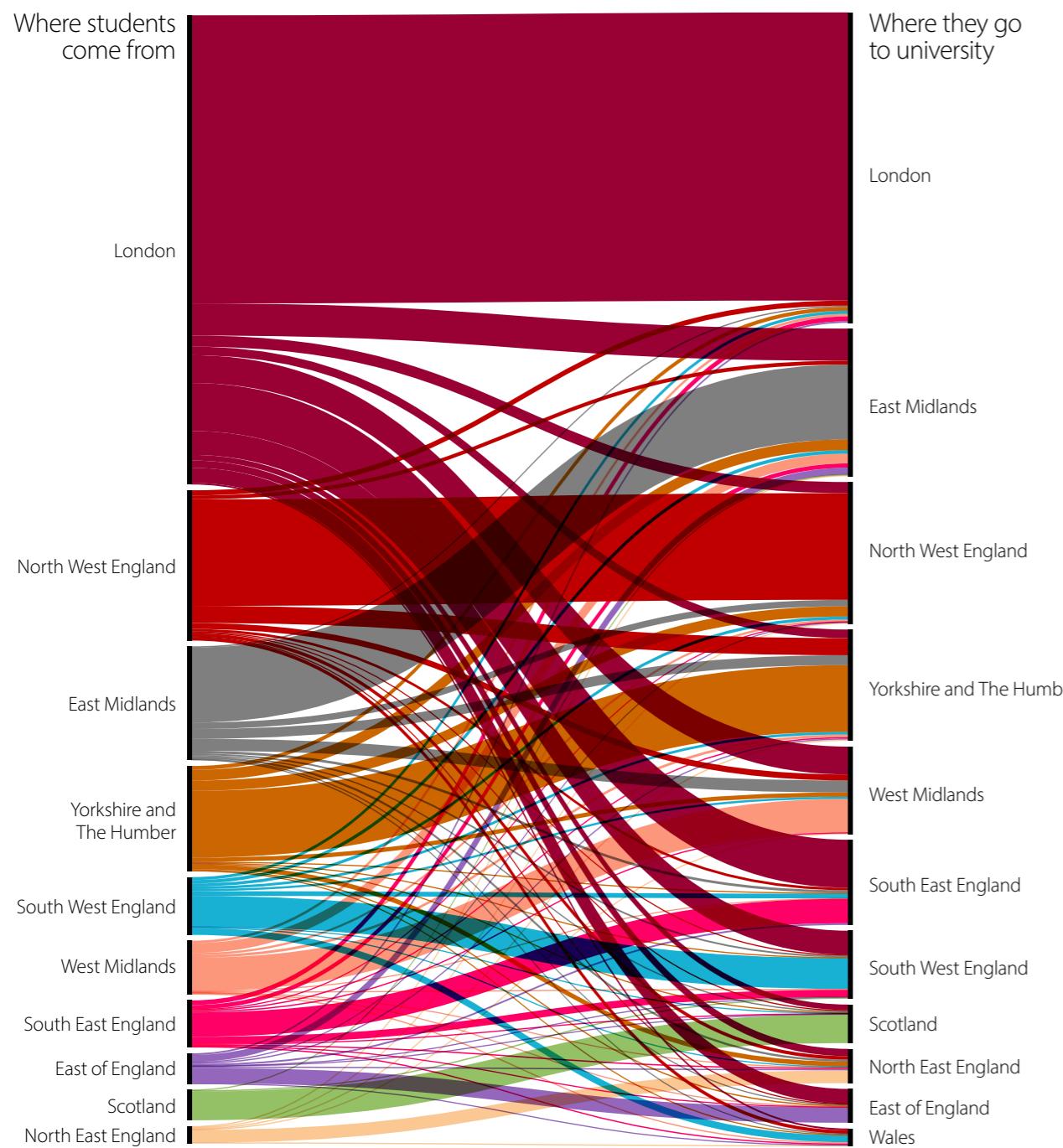
- Primary FOCUS
- Academic Support
- Mentoring
- Student Associate Network

Now: Working as a Marketing and Content Manager



Student Migration

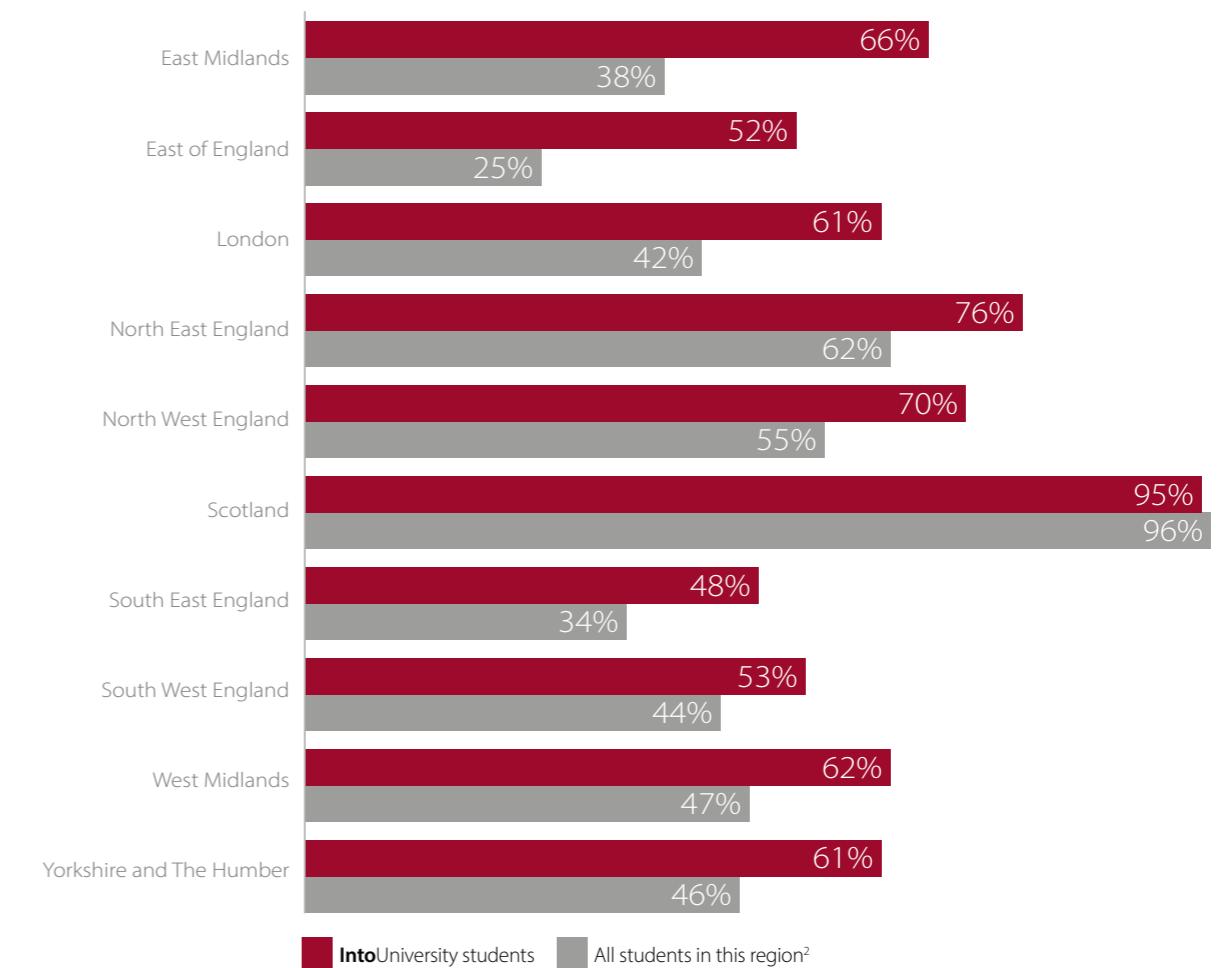
Research shows that there is a relationship between social mobility and geographical mobility, and this can be reflected in students' university choices relative to their home region.¹ We are interested to understand how our students move across the country for university. The graph below shows the home regions of IntoUniversity's 2025 university entrants on the left and their university destination regions on the right. The flows between the regions show the movement of students.²



How does this compare to students nationally?

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to be less geographically mobile than their more advantaged peers, with proximity to home one of their biggest considerations when choosing a university.¹ It's therefore no surprise that IntoUniversity students are more likely than average to stay in their home regions for university, as shown in the graph below.

% of university entrants studying in their home region

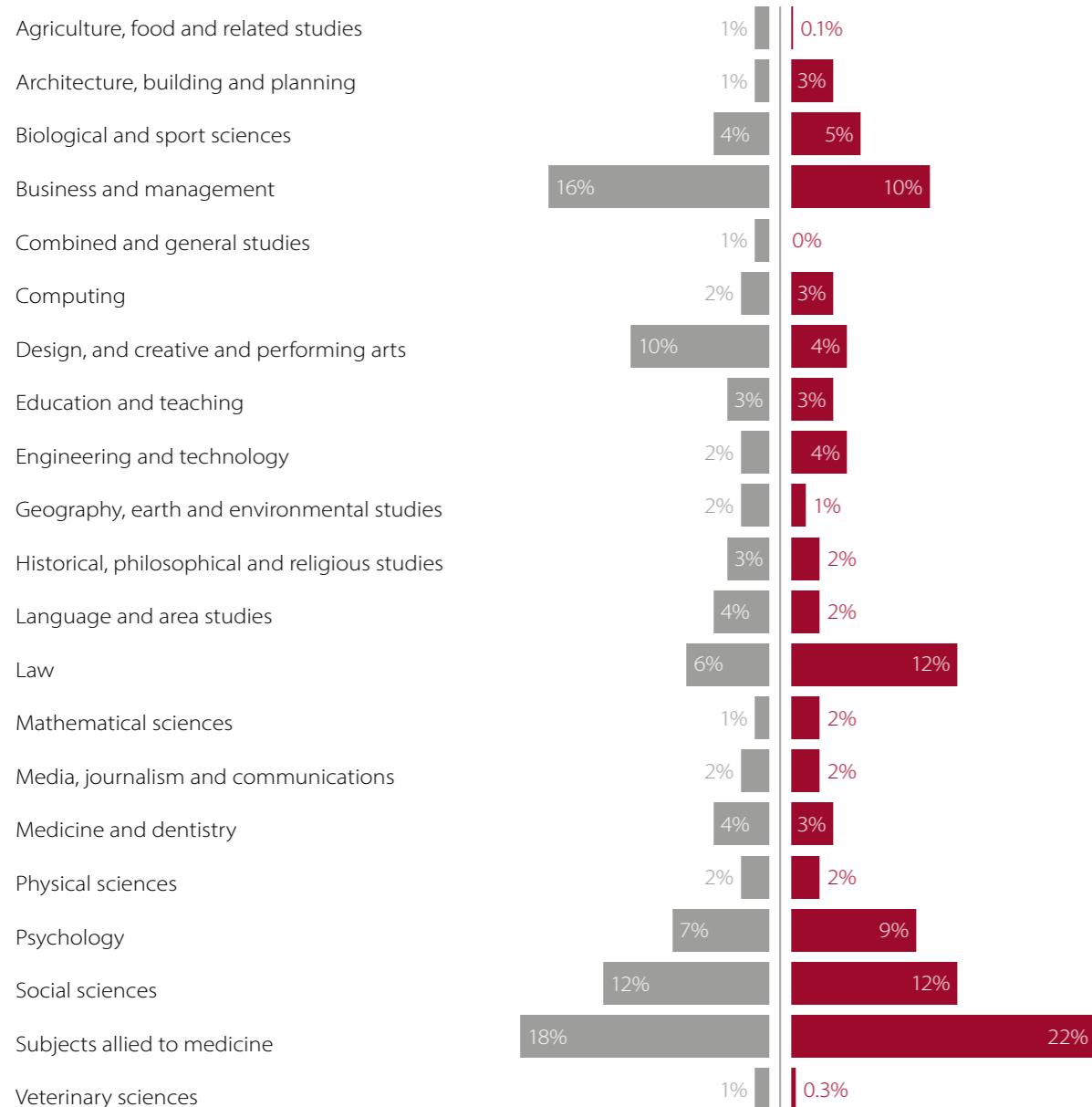


Subjects Studied at University

IntoUniversity students who progress to university go on to study a diverse range of courses, as shown in the charts below. Data on the subjects studied has been grouped under the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) level 1. The percentage of IntoUniversity students in each subject group is compared to the national average for 2023–24¹.

Female IntoUniversity students were more likely than average to study law, psychology, or subjects allied to medicine. They were less likely to study business and management or design, creative and performing arts.

Female students: subjects studied

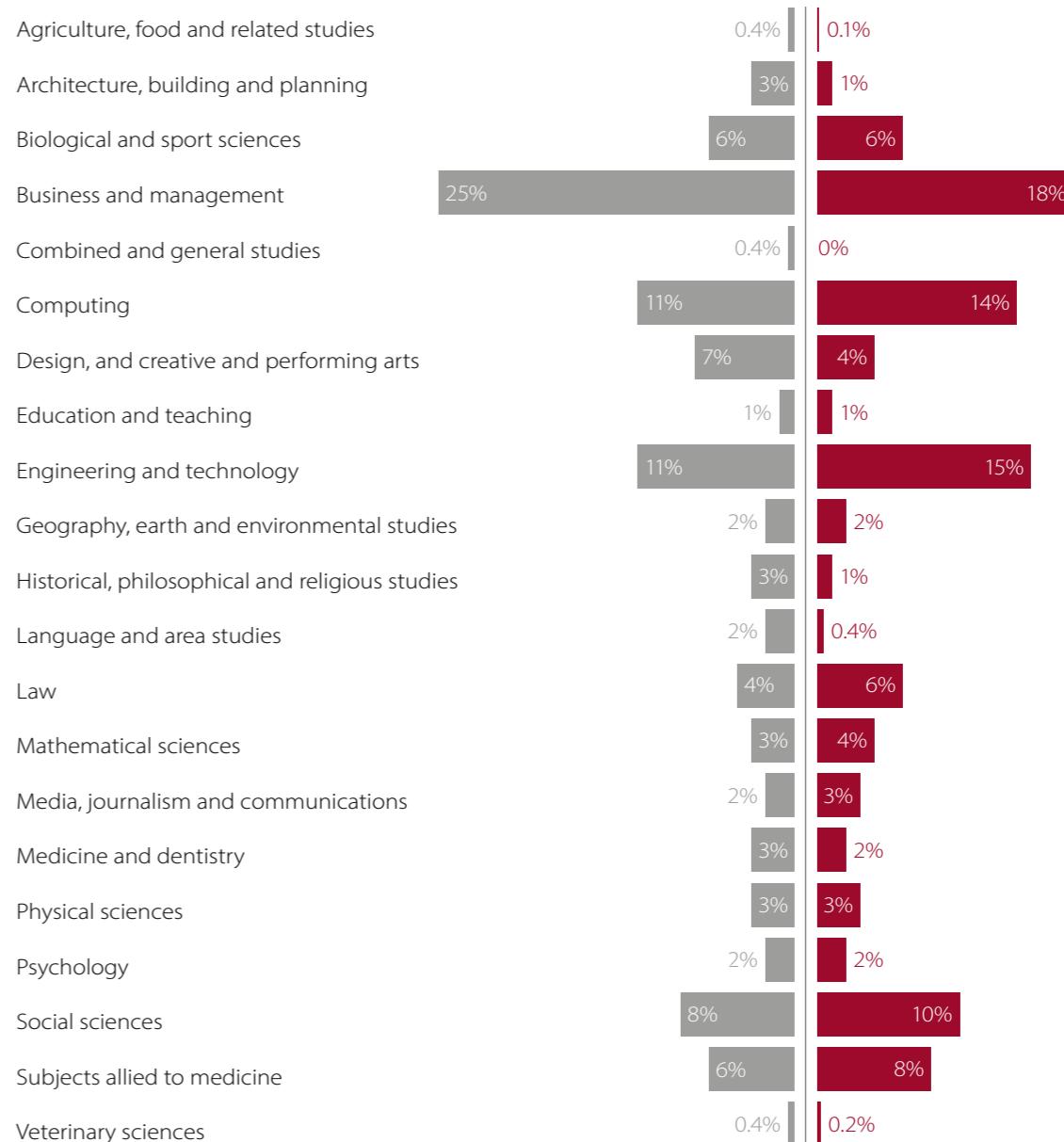


National Average IntoUniversity students

1. HESA, HE student enrolments by subject of study and permanent address 2023–24: Full time students studying a first degree.

Male IntoUniversity students were more likely than average to study computing or engineering and technology. They were less likely to study business and management or design, creative and performing arts.

Male students: subjects studied



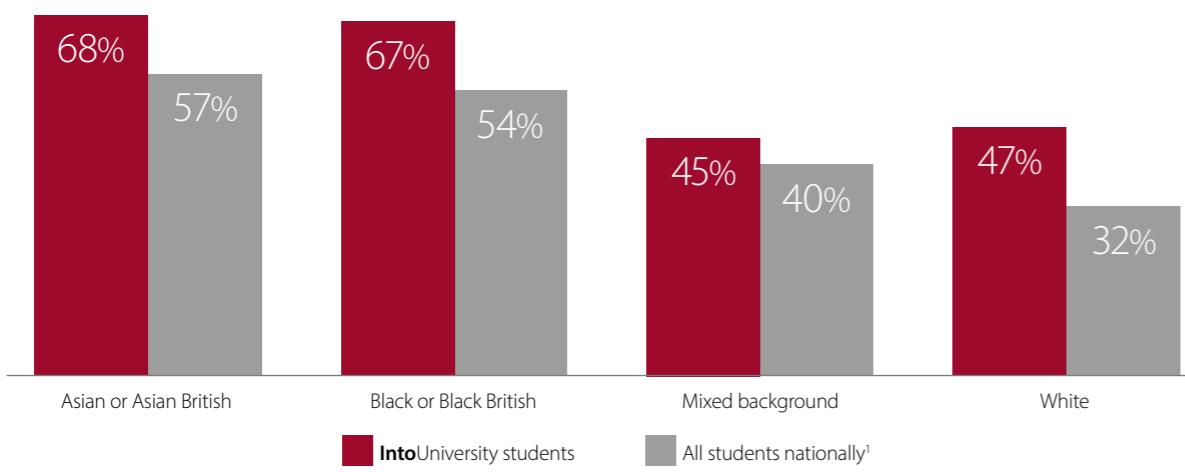
National Average IntoUniversity students

Progression by Ethnicity and Gender

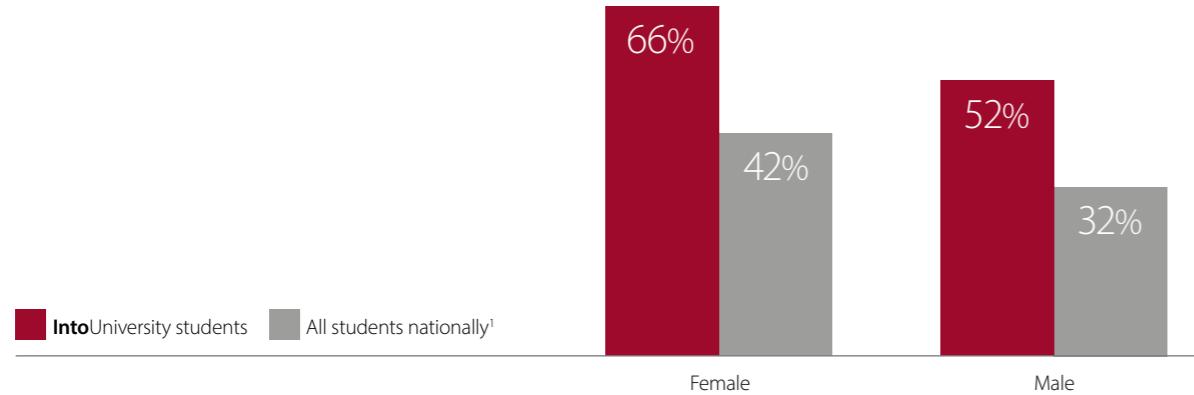
IntoUniversity holds data on the ethnicity and gender of most of the students that we work with. The graphs below show university progression rates for our sample group of students, broken down by ethnicity and gender, versus national benchmarks.

IntoUniversity students broadly fit national patterns of progression for gender and ethnicity, but with higher rates overall in each case.

Ethnicity



Gender



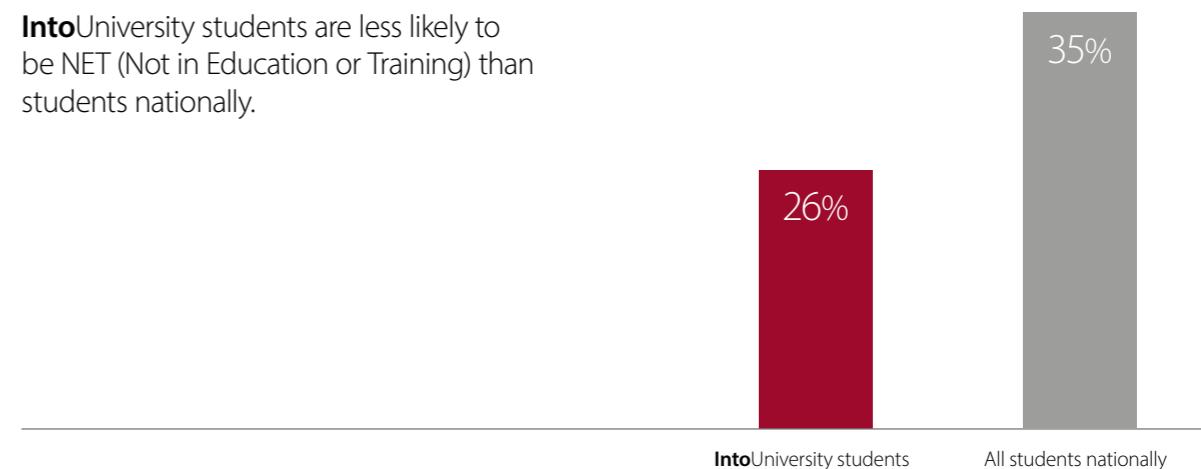
Other Post-18 Destinations

5,686 students in our school leaver cohort had outcomes recorded. The large majority of them progressed to positive outcomes such as university, access courses, further education colleges, employment or apprenticeships.

Knowing what proportion of IntoUniversity students are Not in Education or Training (NET) is helpful when assessing the wider impact of our programmes beyond entry to Higher Education. Of the school leavers with outcomes recorded, 26% were NET, compared to 35% of students nationally¹. Students who told us they had secured a deferred university place were not counted as NET since they had secured a long-term place in Higher Education. If we did count those students as NET, the rate for IntoUniversity students would be 29%, still below the national average.

The majority of IntoUniversity school leavers recorded as NET were in work or on gap years with the intent to apply for university to start in 2026. We would consider these to be positive outcomes even though they are classified as NET in the short term. The remainder were looking for work or further training, or undecided. We look to signpost these students to further opportunities and other organisations specialised in supporting over 18-year-olds via our Student Associate Network. In many cases IntoUniversity centres will also continue to support students who are undecided or still searching for further education or training.

IntoUniversity students are less likely to be NET (Not in Education or Training) than students nationally.



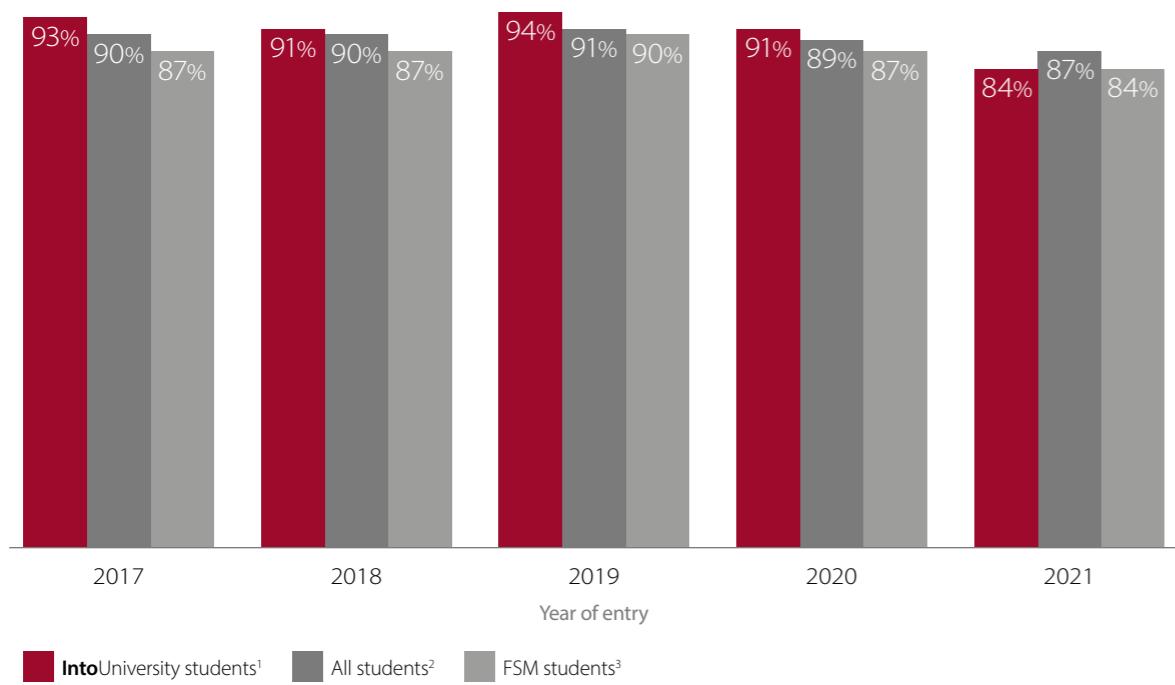
University Continuation

Our programmes are designed to tackle the barriers that prevent young people from applying for and entering Higher Education. We know from the evidence presented earlier in the report that students who take part in the IntoUniversity programme are more likely to enter Higher Education as a result.

We also track how many IntoUniversity students who enter Higher Education continue beyond their first year. The chart below compares their continuation rate with national rates for all students and for students receiving Free School Meals (FSM).

IntoUniversity students are less likely to drop out of university than similar students

% of students continuing at university beyond their first year



In four of the five years for which we have data, IntoUniversity students were more likely to continue their studies than the two comparison groups, while in 2021 the IntoUniversity continuation rate was very similar to that for FSM students nationally. This suggests that the increased progression rate for IntoUniversity students is not offset by students dropping out later on. In fact, IntoUniversity students generally seem to be less likely to drop out than other students.

In 2021, the continuation rates dropped for IntoUniversity students and both comparison groups. Potential contributing factors include the ongoing impact of the pandemic, in particular on mental health and disrupted learning⁴, and the sharp rise in inflation and living costs that took off during this time⁵. The decline for IntoUniversity students was greater than for the comparison groups, suggesting they may have been more affected by these challenges. We will continue to monitor how this may have affected our students as more recent data becomes available.

Future Earnings

Does attending university provide a financial benefit for our students?

The IFS has published analysis which calculates the likely gain or loss in earnings at age 29 as a result of attending university¹. This is broken down by subject and university attended, and controls for differences in prior attainment, subject choices at school and family background.

We have combined the findings with our own data on which subjects our students study and which universities they attend². The results show that 92% of IntoUniversity students are studying courses that can be expected to increase their earnings at age 29 compared to if they had not attended university. The average increase in earnings for IntoUniversity students is estimated at 38%. While these findings are not based on analysis of our students' actual earnings, which we don't have access to, they nevertheless provide an indication that our students are making subject choices and attending universities that are likely to provide them with a positive financial return.

Higher Education provides a wide range of personal and social benefits, many of which are not financial in nature, and we encourage students to consider all of these when making decisions about their futures.



1. Obtained from the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT). IntoUniversity students recorded on HEAT are matched to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) database.

For those students who are successfully matched, we are able to track whether they continued beyond their first year of study.

2. Office for Students, *Access and participation data dashboard – full-time Higher Education entrants*

3. Office for Students, *Access and participation data dashboard – full-time Higher Education entrants eligible for FSM in Key Stage 4*

4. Allen, Kannangara and Carson, *Long-term Mental Health Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on University Students in the UK: A Longitudinal Analysis Over 12 Months* (2023)

5. Office for National Statistics, *Consumer price inflation time series* (MM23)

1. IFS, *The impact of undergraduate degrees on early-career earnings* (2018)

2. Students can only be matched to the IFS data where we hold data on both their degree subject and gender. We were able to match 80% of our 2025 university entrants to the IFS data. Of these, 73% were matched to a specific subject-university combination. The remaining 27% could only be matched to the subject average across all universities. This is because either the subject-university combination they were studying did not exist during the time frame of the IFS analysis, or the IFS did not publish data for that combination due to small numbers.

Volunteers

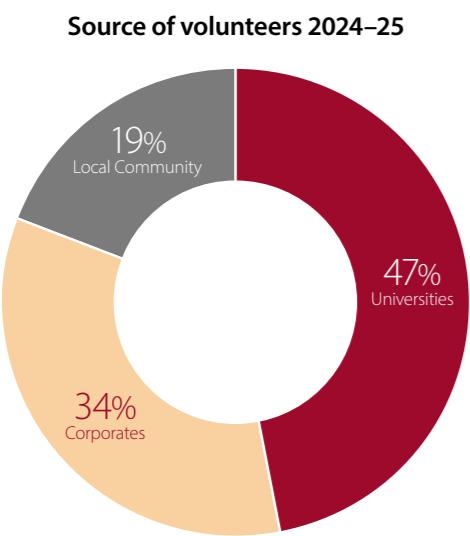
Volunteers are essential to the work of the charity. Last academic year more than 2,025 volunteers supported IntoUniversity, contributing over 17,000 hours of volunteering to the charity. Assuming it costs £25/hour to employ an academic tutor, the value of volunteers to our organisation is in excess of £425,000 annually.

We collect and monitor feedback from our volunteers. Last year's results showed the following:

2024–25 volunteers		
98%	98%	96%
would recommend volunteering with IntoUniversity to others	felt their time was valued by IntoUniversity	are more likely to volunteer again as a result of volunteering with IntoUniversity

How volunteers contribute to IntoUniversity

- They improve the quality of the support we offer our young people.
- They provide our young people with a range of opportunities to meet adults with direct university, college and careers experience.
- They increase awareness of our organisation's mission and the issues we address.
- They extend the internal capacity and reach of the organisation.



The best thing about volunteering is...

“...watching my mentee grow and become more confident and comfortable with themselves and their abilities both socially and academically.”

“...seeing the growth in the confidence and collaboration of the group throughout the session.”

“...Working as part of a team at the IntoUniversity centre, collaborating with members of staff to reach the shared goal of making a positive change in a young person's life.”

“...being able to talk about and share my experiences with a group of students who were incredibly receptive to what I had to say.”

“...contributing to something really worthwhile that will have a positive impact on the young people we are working with.”

“...helping to inspire and motivate our future generation.”

“I come from a single parent background in South Bristol originally. Neither of my parents had gone to university. I didn't really know a lot of people in professional industries. Things like personal statements and UCAS points were all very alien. Having a centre that was in walking distance of me and my school and was in the local community that I was a part of was so important.

A massive part of where I am today is because I said yes to as much as I possibly could, and IntoUniversity was instrumental in that process. Going into Higher Education expanded what I knew about the world.

Some of the IntoUniversity staff reached out to me in my first year at university and asked if I would like to be a volunteer mentor here at the centre. And I said yes, absolutely. The students at the centre are from the local area and I'm from around here as well. There's such value in a mentor from a similar walk of life to you.”

Rosie

IntoUniversity Centre: Bristol East

Joined IntoUniversity: 2019

Student Number: 107,927

Programmes taken part in:

- Secondary FOCUS
- Student Opportunities

Now: Trainee Solicitor at Burges Salmon and IntoUniversity volunteer



Watch Rosie's story here



Learning and Development

At the heart of our work is a commitment to continuous learning. Not only for the young people we support, but also for ourselves as we strive to ensure that every programme we deliver is high quality and achieves meaningful impact. The following pages demonstrate some of the learning we have done this year, testing fresh approaches and rigorously evaluating their effectiveness to inform future practice.

62 Metacognition Project

66 Adult and Family Learning Programme Pilot

70 Student Opportunities – Programme Review



Metacognition Project

We have been awarded funding from the Office for Students' Equality in Higher Education Innovation Fund, in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University, enabling us to design and deliver a pilot to develop and assess metacognitive skills in primary-aged students in our centres.

The project will run for two academic years (2025–2026 and 2026–2027). The first year of delivery began in September 2025, with 8 centres piloting an adapted version of our Primary Academic Support curriculum (see opposite page). Each pilot centre has been matched to a control centre that is continuing to run our standard programme. In the second year the pilot will be expanded to include more centres. Learning is built into each stage of the project and will be shared with the sector and fed back into the work of all centres at the conclusion of the research.

PHASE 1: Planning & Development	PHASE 2: Delivery of programme	PHASE 3: Year 2 Expansion	Learning & Sharing
Jan – Aug 2025	Sep 2025 – Aug 2026	Sep 2026 – Jul 2027	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review of practice, design of new programme and evaluation framework – Sites selected and matched with control centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Delivery of programmes & evaluation undertaken for year 1 intervention sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Delivery of programmes & evaluation undertaken for year 1 and new year 2 intervention centres 	<p>Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Continuous cycle of embedding project learning into practice and sharing findings with sector

What do we mean by metacognition?

Metacognition is an awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes and how they can be purposefully directed. It encompasses how learners can guide and adjust their behaviours, feelings and actions to overcome learning challenges more effectively. Key elements of this are planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning and employing different strategies to support how they learn.

Why metacognition?

Developing metacognition has been shown to be an effective way of raising attainment in schools and is recommended by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) as a high-impact, low-cost approach to improving academic outcomes. However, there is little research looking at developing metacognition in out-of-school settings or its links to widening access to Higher Education.

IntoUniversity is well-positioned to explore these areas further. Two key aims of our work are improving attainment and introducing young people to Higher Education. Developing metacognition has long been recognised in our Theory of Change as an important part of how we support students. For this project, we aim to build on this further, learning from metacognition interventions that have been successful in schools and exploring how to apply them effectively to our centre contexts.

Over the two years of the project we are examining three key questions:

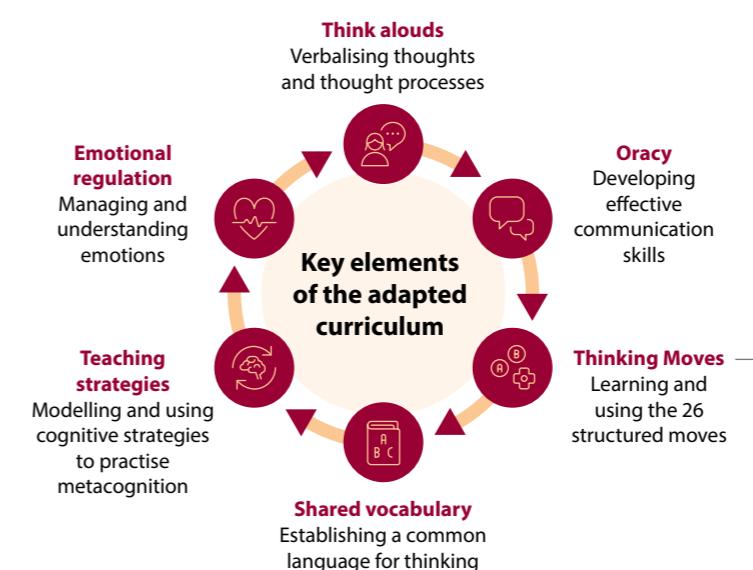
1. How can metacognition be assessed in primary school-aged children?
2. How can school-based practices be adapted for out-of-school interventions, and do they remain impactful?
3. Does teaching metacognition as part of a wider University Access programme affect other (non-attainment) outcomes of interest for Access work?

What are we doing?

Primary Academic Support students study a degree-themed curriculum each term, created by us and aligned with the national curriculum. For pilot centres, we have adapted this using insights from the 'Learning Skills' programme, which successfully developed metacognition and raised attainment in a school context¹.

The Thinking Moves framework and the use of think alouds are new elements that sit at the core of the revised curriculum. Other components such as oracy, student emotional regulation and learning reflections were already part of the existing programme, but have been further developed and given greater prominence.

Known to our students as The Big Thinking Project, the adapted programme combines explicit sessions on metacognitive skills with opportunities to apply them in curriculum topics, helping students develop strategies to manage their own learning. Some examples of the resources used as part of the programme can be seen over the page.



Interested to find out more?
See our detailed project Theory of Change here:

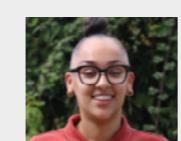


***Thinking Moves**, developed by Dialogue Works, is a framework for understanding the different types of thinking that we do. It breaks thinking down into 26 moves, each corresponding to a letter of the alphabet and with its own hand signal. Early feedback from the first term of delivery has shown this to be an engaging and accessible way for Primary students to learn about how they think.*



"Being part of the metacognition design team has given us an exciting framework and methodology to use in our own practice as facilitators. It has enabled us to equip young people with tools to become more confident, independent learners with greater agency in the teaching and learning process."

Ellery Child – IntoUniversity Great Yarmouth – Curriculum Design Team



"One thing which has stood out to me is how quickly our students have picked up the Thinking Moves. It feels really impactful to see students doing the corresponding move after reading a task in their workbooks."

Teyah Michalis – IntoUniversity Bristol East (Year 1 Intervention Centre) – Centre Leader



"My favourite thing about the Big Thinking Project is the Thinking Moves because they are fun. Practising the moves and remembering to use them in school has helped me with my learning. I like the 'Picture' Move because it is very creative and gives me a mystical kind of vibe."

Marta – IntoUniversity Peterborough (Year 1 Intervention Centre) – Primary AS Student

Some examples of resources developed for the project

Big Thinking Project
Explicit Learning Content Year 1

 Primary Academic Support Curriculum The Big Thinking Project

Welcome to...



This project is a really exciting opportunity to do some big thinking and turn in to a brain builder - like me!

Brain builders are excellent learners, and just like normal builders are experts at choosing the right tool for the job.

Thinking out loud

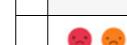
One way we can think about our learning is by **speaking our thinking moves out loud**.

We can do this by speaking our ideas and questions **before, during and after** completing a task.



Learning Journals (Trackers)

Think Back

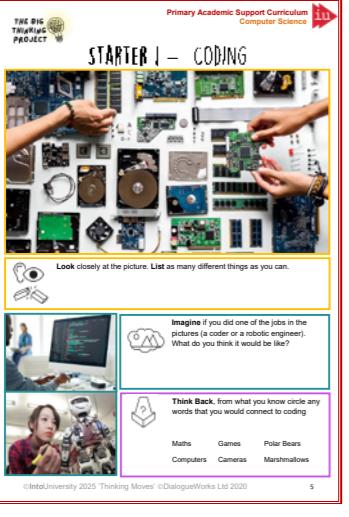
Date	How well did you understand what you were trying to learn today?	Name of one Thinking Move tool you used today	How did you use it?
	 ★★★★★		
IU Adult Comment:		Be focused	
		Be respectful	
		Aim high	
	 ★★★★★		
IU Adult Comment:		Be focused	
		Be respectful	
		Aim high	
	 ★★★★★		
IU Adult Comment:		Be focused	
		Be respectful	
		Aim high	

Thinking Back over the last three weeks, what has gone well with your learning? Why?

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Thinking Moves DialogueWorks Ltd © 2020

Curriculum Resources Examples from Computer Science and Chemistry
(Autumn 2025 & Spring 2026)

Starter 1: Coding



Primary Academic Support Curriculum Computer Science

STARTER 1 – CODING

Look closely at the picture. List as many different things as you can.

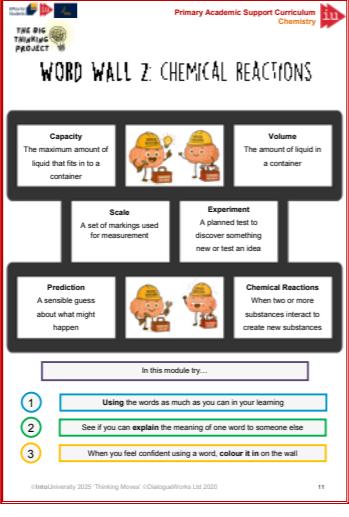
Imagine if you did one of the jobs in the pictures (a coder or a robotic engineer). What do you think it would be like?

Think Back: from what you know circle any words that you would connect to coding

Maths Games Polar Bears
Computers Cameras Marshmallows

© IntoUniversity 2025 'Thinking Moves' © DialogueWorks Ltd 2020

Word Wall 2: Chemical Reactions



Primary Academic Support Curriculum Chemistry

WORD WALL 2: CHEMICAL REACTIONS

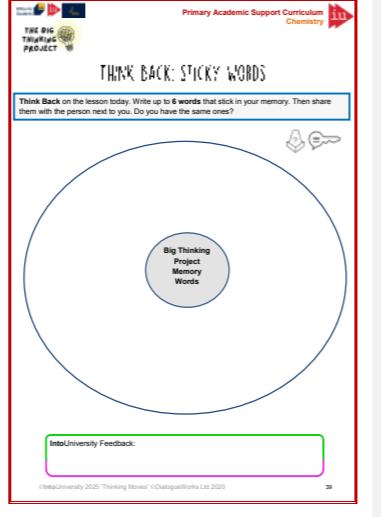
Capacity: The maximum amount of liquid that fits in to a container
Scale: A set of markings used for measurement
Prediction: A sensible guess about what might happen
Experiment: A planned test to discover something new or test an idea
Chemical Reactions: When two or more substances interact to create new substances

In this module try...

1. Using the words as much as you can in your learning
2. See if you can explain the meaning of one word to someone else
3. When you feel confident using a word, colour it in on the wall

© IntoUniversity 2025 'Thinking Moves' © DialogueWorks Ltd 2020

Think Back: Sticky Words



Primary Academic Support Curriculum Chemistry

THINK BACK: STICKY WORDS

Think Back on the lesson today. Write up to 6 words that stick in your memory. Then share them with the person next to you. Do you have the same ones?

Big Thinking Project Metacognition Words

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Evaluation approach

The project has a quasi-experimental design with mixed evaluation methods. Our partnership with Anglia Ruskin University has been key to developing the **Theory of Change** and evaluation approach, utilising Anglia Ruskin University's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework. Like the curriculum design, the evaluation design was also influenced by the Learning Skills programme¹.

Some data will be collected in both intervention and control centres, allowing comparison between the two:

- Student questionnaires (pre and post) in year 1 and 2
- Evaluation tasks to assess metacognitive thinking in primary school students
- Observation of these tasks to identify evidence of metacognitive processes
- Key Stage 2 SATs results
- Student interviews and focus groups

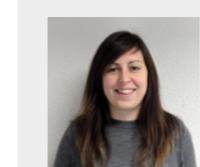
Other data will be collected from intervention centres only:

- Learning Journals
- Staff interviews
- Ongoing collated staff feedback on the programme and training
- Observations of programme delivery



"Our strategic partnership with IntoUniversity demonstrates the power of bringing together academic research, evaluation expertise, and third-sector practice. By bridging theory and real-world delivery, we've been able to co-design an evidence-based intervention that aims to support young learners, strengthen the sector's understanding of metacognition, and advance widening participation."

Bilal Hazzouri – Anglia Ruskin University, Impact and Evaluation Manager



"The funding from the OfS and our partnership with Anglia Ruskin University are allowing us to develop further and test what works to support students from a young age to succeed in their education. It has been key to being able to scale a more deliberate, consistent and explicit teaching programme on metacognition targeted at primary school students. Our knowledge and understanding around both pedagogy and evaluation have already been enhanced by this partnership, and we look forward to sharing our collective learning as the project continues."

Emily Magrath – IntoUniversity, Director of Programme Development & Impact

1. Mannion and McAllister, *Fear Is The Mind Killer* (2020)

Adult and Family Learning Programme Pilot

In partnership with the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh we have developed an Adult and Family Learning pilot, delivered at our centres in Scotland. The pilot has been designed to bring together the partners' combined expertise in adult learning and attainment-raising programmes with understanding of the specific needs of local communities.

A Theory of Change was developed through a series of workshops run with **IntoUniversity** and the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh by service design consultants Out of the Woods. As part of this, four specific outcome areas were identified for the project to focus on:

 **Improve understanding of educational pathways in the local area**

 **Improve confidence to support children's learning and development**

 **Improve positive attitudes to learning**

 **Improve opportunities for adults to learn and reflect on education opportunities for themselves and their children**

The programme was designed to build on the work of existing centres by engaging adults, parents and carers of young people involved in **IntoUniversity** programmes. Its development was informed by research showing the crucial role families play in supporting young people's learning, and by specific evidence showing the added value of providing Higher Education information to parents and carers to help guide their children towards successful Higher Education pathways, particularly where parents have not studied at this level themselves.

The first phase of the pilot ran from September 2024 to August 2025 at **IntoUniversity** Craigmillar, Govan and Maryhill, with programme delivery beginning in January 2025. The second phase is currently underway.



"The activities gave me encouragement to improve on myself, and learning about how children learn encouraged me to help them with their learning."

*Kolade – **IntoUniversity** Adult and Family Learning Participant*

What are we doing?

In phase one of the pilot, we worked with parents, carers and other adult family members of **IntoUniversity** students to enable them to better support their young people's learning. Activities were designed to support the four outcome areas identified in the Theory of Change and took place in the **IntoUniversity** centres, in the local area, online, and at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Themes included the transition from primary to secondary school, storytelling, learning about Additional Support Needs such as dyslexia, and navigating the education system, including applying to university.

Equipping families to learn together

Young people on our Primary FOCUS programme take part in degree-themed FOCUS Weeks, culminating in a graduation ceremony at the University of Edinburgh or Glasgow. Family members are invited to attend a workshop at the university on the day of their child's graduation event.

One of the workshop formats is to provide an immersive walk through of activities that adults could deliver subsequently at home. For example, during weeks where children had been learning about Chemistry, adults participated in an interactive demonstration of a Chemistry experiment and were then given a Chemistry resource pack to take home. Adults who attended reported improved confidence in supporting their young people with a learning activity.

Chemistry FOCUS Acid and Alkaline 
Make a magic potion!

You will need:

- A clear glass
- A heatproof cup or jug
- Butterly tea flowers
- Hot water
- Lemon juice
- Soda or lemonade

Instructions

Step 1
Make your butterfly tea - Add 1 tablespoon of butterfly tea flowers to a heatproof cup or jug and cover with hot water. Leave the mixture to cool for around 20 minutes.

After 20 minutes
Remove the flowers from your butterfly tea, using a spoon or a strainer. You should be left with a bright blue liquid.

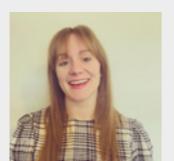
Step 3
Add your cooled tea to a clear glass, filling it to about 1 third.

Step 4
Now for the colour changing magic! Add lemon juice to your tea and watch it change from blue to pink.

Step 5
Top up your magic potion with soda or lemonade. Now it's ready to drink!

"The first year of the Adult and Family Learning pilot has been filled with moments of connection and growth: adults who, after long days at work, still come to workshops determined to better support their children's learning and development, and children who beam with pride when the adult beside them answers a question in a family reading session. I've seen how the programme has facilitated the strengthening of these bonds. Watching families grow in confidence after each activity, and hearing about their successes, fills me with excitement as we look ahead to delivering phase two."

*Veronica Cueva-Peralta – **IntoUniversity** Adult and Family Learning Manager*



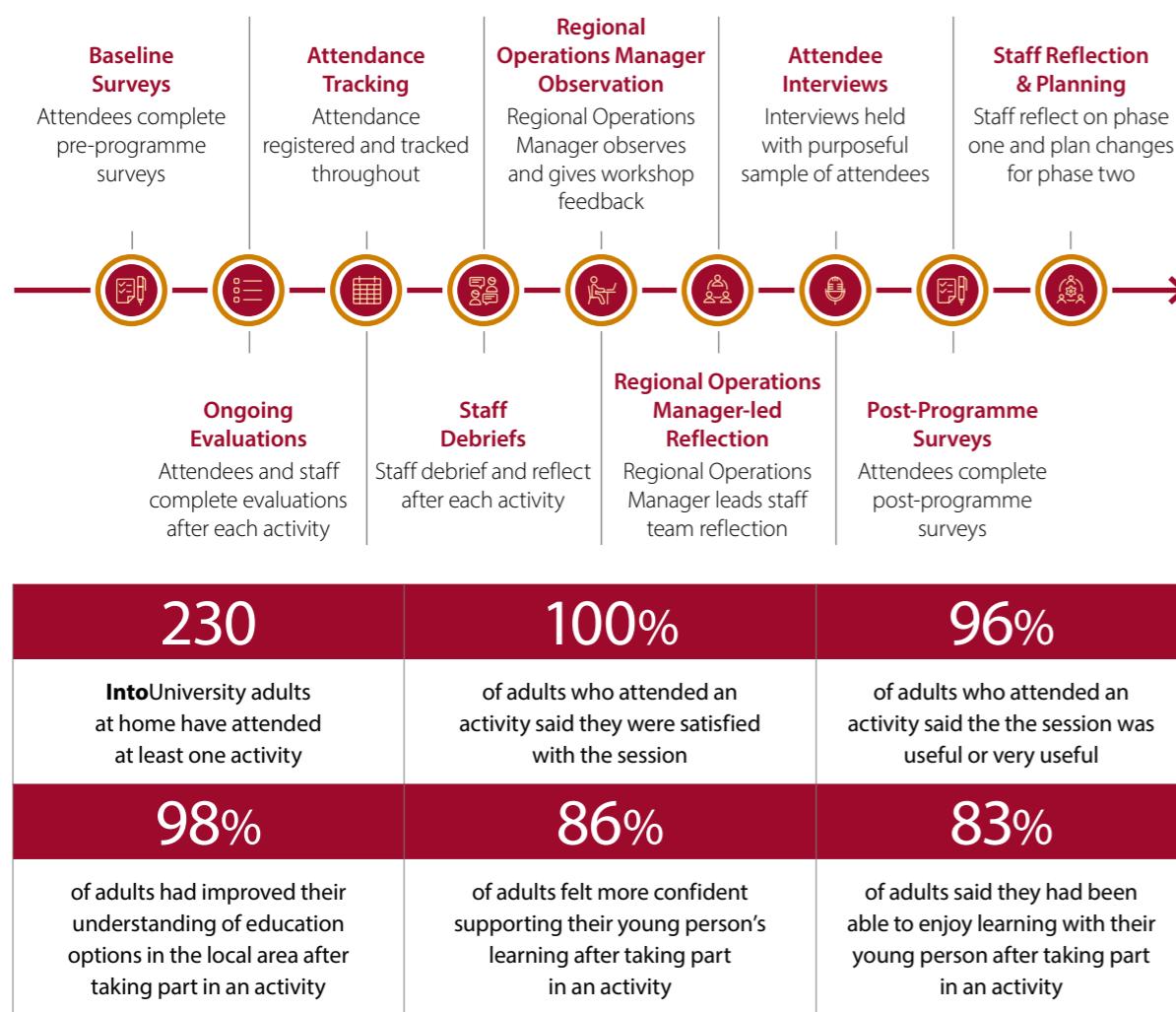
"From creating a Theory of Change framework in collaboration with the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow to the Adult and Family Learning staff team bringing the newly designed sessions to life, it has been a joy to see the development of the programme this year. The cross-centre collaboration and pilot programme have deepened our understanding of the communities and families we work with across our Scotland centres, enabling us to provide more targeted support that benefits the whole family."

*Kim Rowson – **IntoUniversity** Regional Operations Manager for Scotland*

Evaluation

The evaluation of the project was designed in collaboration with the Widening Participation teams at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh and consultants from Out of the Woods.

AFL Evaluation Plan: Phase One (January–July 2025)



"The University of Glasgow champions education as a driver of inclusivity and social progress. The Adult and Family Learning pilot embodies these values by extending support not only to the students involved in our collaborative initiatives but also to their families, truly putting people at the heart of everything we do. We worked closely in partnership with IntoUniversity on the Adult and Family Learning pilot, helping parents and carers gain confidence, navigate and understand educational pathways, and discover further learning opportunities. The pilot programme supports the University of Glasgow's civic mission to serve the city and its communities, and demonstrates the importance of collaboration in promoting lifelong learning."

Neil Croll – Head of Widening Participation
University of Glasgow

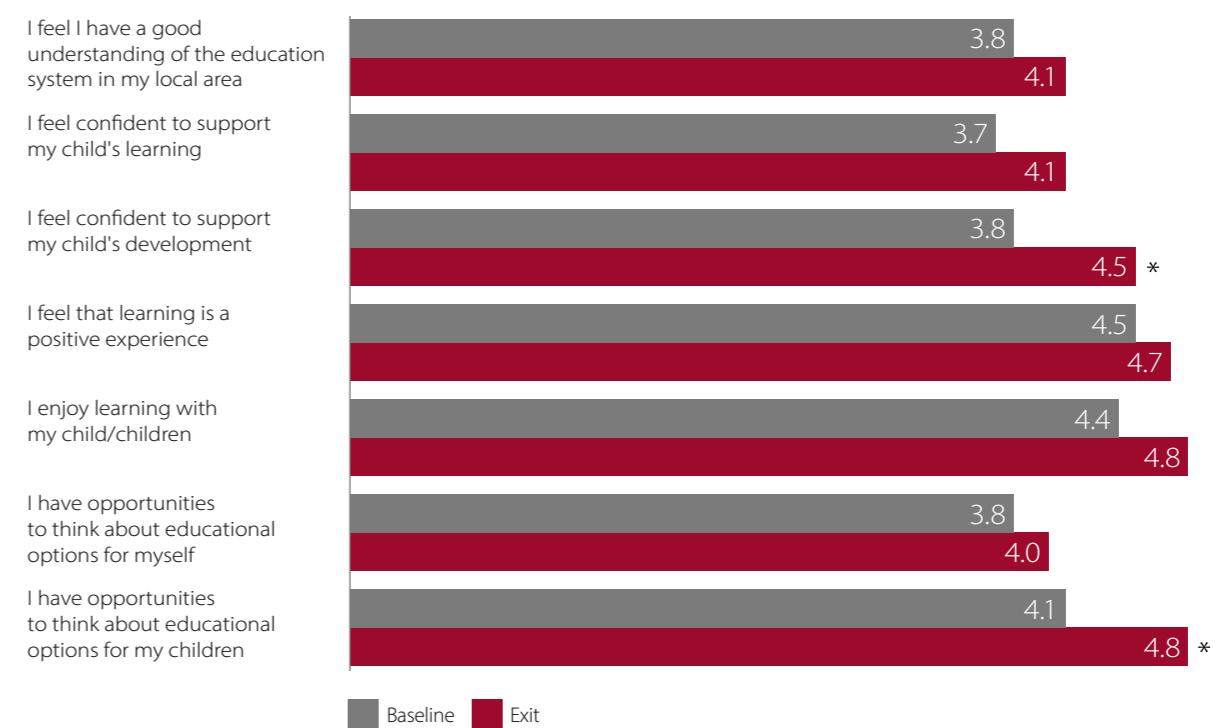
"Our collaboration with IntoUniversity on the Adult and Family Learning pilot has brought together our expertise in adult learning and IntoUniversity's strong community connections to engage whole families. The partnership has helped to foster a sense of belonging among families who may not have previously considered university as a possibility. It reflects our belief that meaningful, sustained partnerships are essential for breaking down barriers and creating intergenerational impact."

Laura Cattell – Head of Widening Participation
University of Edinburgh

Impact of Phase One

All adults who participated in the programme completed a baseline survey to help us gauge their prior knowledge. At the end of each individual activity, adults were asked a series of short questions to assess the immediate impact and collect feedback. This helped us build a picture of the short-term impact of individual workshops within the programme and to understand adults' views about the provision offered during the first phase of the pilot.

A smaller group of adults, who had attended multiple activities in the programme, also completed an exit survey which asked the same questions as the baseline. This was compared with their baseline to assess the impact of phase one of the pilot as a whole. For all seven of the questions asked, the average score after taking part in the programme was higher than before taking part. For two of the questions (starred), this increase was statistically significant¹.



Some adults also participated in qualitative interviews, giving more detailed information about if and how the pilot had helped them. Key themes from the interviews built and expanded on the insights from the survey analysis. Some adults reported feeling more confident supporting their children in subjects they, themselves, had previously found challenging. A few had gone on to make serious enquiries about education courses for themselves, and one had secured a bursary, which they had found out about through the pilot programme, to support their studies. Others highlighted positive impacts such as forming stronger connections with their local community and other families as a result of their participation. Together, the different parts of the evaluation have helped us understand more about who attended and how the pilot supported participants with their goals. These findings are helping to shape the second phase of the pilot, currently running in our Scotland centres, to support more adults in both their own and their young people's educational pathways.

¹The statistical tests used were matched pairs two-tailed t-tests, testing for a significant difference between the baseline and exit survey score in each area. The starred areas were significantly different at the 0.05 level.

Student Opportunities – Programme Review

Background

Careers education and employability are themes which have always run throughout our programmes, starting with careers workshops in primary school and featuring interactions with volunteers from the world of work at Secondary. We've long recognised the importance of this for our young people and research shows careers education can change attitudes to education, influence future plans, motivate students to study harder, and boost attainment¹.

Our Student Opportunities programme has grown up organically over a number of years, building on our existing work, a desire from our valued corporate partners to tackle employment access gaps, and a recognition that we could collectively do more to support our students. Through these partnerships, we have been able to create additional, exceptional opportunities that help students gain valuable experience and insights into careers.

What does the programme aim to achieve?

Confidence and Self-belief	Careers Awareness
– Building confidence and a sense of belonging in professional and career-focused environments.	– Increasing understanding of possible careers – Finding roles that align with interests and aspirations
Skills Development	Experience and Professional Networks
– Practical skills tailored to particular sectors – Transferable skills such as communication, teamwork and time management – CV writing and interview skills	– Opportunities to develop a strong work history – Exposure to professional environments and expectations – Meeting professionals and establishing connections

How does it do this?

Insight Days	Skills Workshops	Work Experience
One-day events where students explore a profession or industry through workshops, presentations, and interaction with professionals.	Supported by our corporate partners, students take part in activities, centred on building skills relevant or applicable to a particular workplace or industry.	Exclusive placements for IntoUniversity students in a range of sectors including finance, entertainment, and the arts, with leading globally recognised firms such as BlackRock, United Agents and House of Hackney.
Example: IntoHealthcare – Students learn from healthcare professionals about career pathways in fields such as medicine, physiotherapy and occupational therapy.	Example: Mazars Hackathon – With industry expert support, students work in teams to tackle real-world challenges that require problem-solving, critical thinking and effective communication.	Examples: Big City Bright Future (see opposite) and Khadija Saye Arts Internships – Three-week-long paid internships, generously provided by our partners across a range of industries. Students gain sector insights, skills, invaluable work experience and a standout item to add to their CV.



"Our Student Opportunities programme works to break down barriers and give young people the confidence, skills, and networks they need to thrive in their chosen careers. By connecting students with hands-on experiences and professionals across diverse industries, we help them to see what's possible and to feel that they truly belong in these spaces."

Sevgi Firat – IntoUniversity Student Opportunities Manager

"The first time I found out about IntoUniversity was in Year 12. I remember receiving an email into my inbox about their Big City Bright Future programme. They had Investment Banking, Management, Law, all the careers that I was curious about. The IntoUniversity staff were super helpful, I was overwhelmed by the 1:1 support that they provided, and I got onto the programme."

I spent two weeks on the rates training desk at the Royal Bank of Canada. It was my first time being on a trading floor, seeing what all these investment professionals are doing on a day-to-day basis. I remember my mentor at the time telling me that I needed to speak to every single trader and to learn what their job was. This was scary at first, because I was nervous, but it kicked off a chain reaction where I went from doing the BCBF scheme onto my first year at university. I now work as a portfolio manager in the multi-asset division at BlackRock. I don't think I'd be working here if I hadn't had that experience with IntoUniversity."

Rashed

IntoUniversity Centre: Leeds East

Joined IntoUniversity: 2018

Student Number: 102,750

Programmes taken part in:

- Secondary FOCUS
- Student Opportunities
- Student Associate Network

Now: Working as a Portfolio Manager at BlackRock



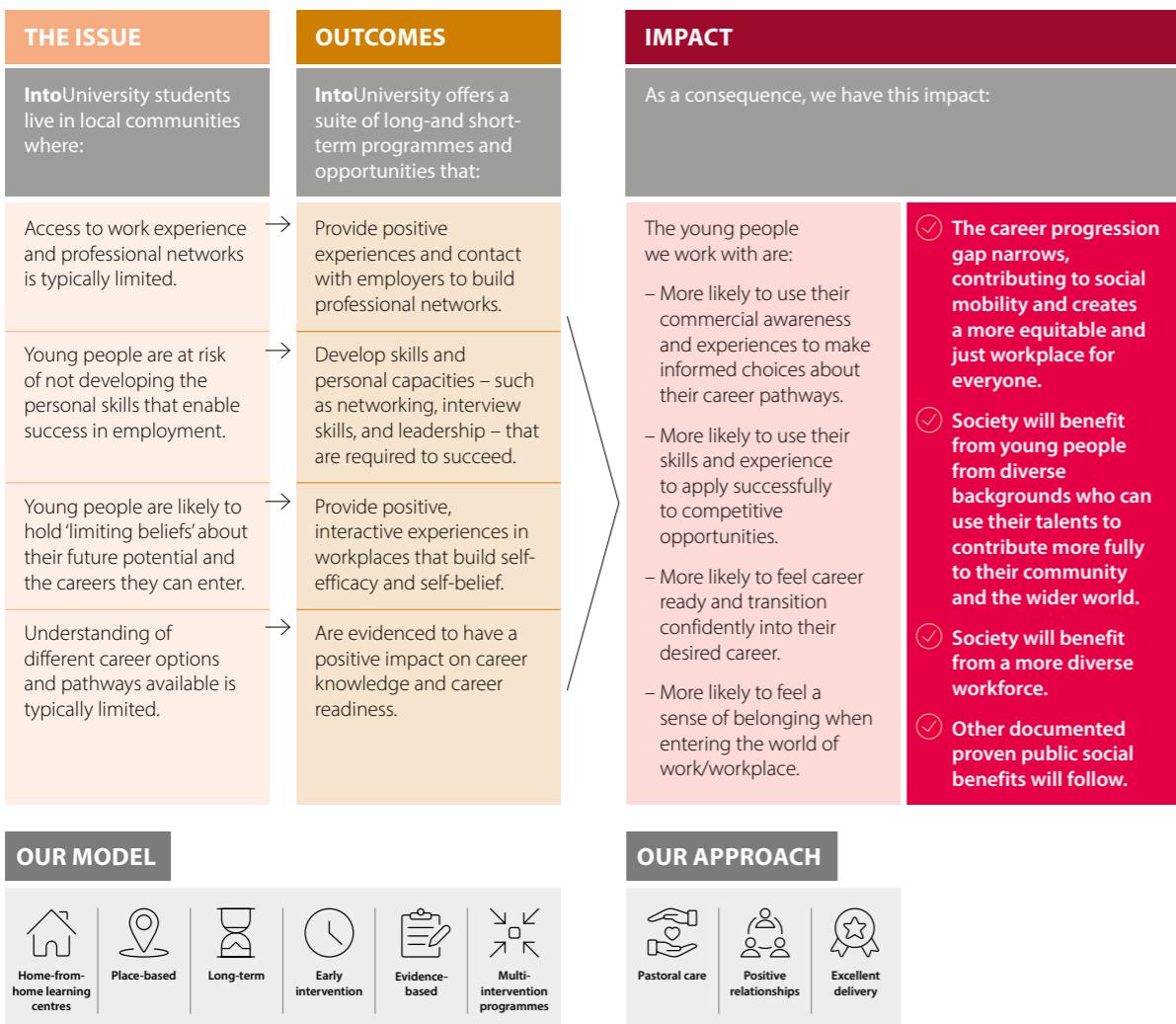
Watch Rashed's story here



What are we doing?

This year we have taken a step back and are launching a distinct Theory of Change and evaluation plan specifically for our employability work. Building on the aims and activities outlined on the previous page, the Theory of Change below summarises the issues the programme seeks to address, the solutions it offers, and the short-term outcomes and long-term impacts it aims to achieve.

The Theory of Change provides a framework for how we will maintain, develop, and assess the Student Opportunities programme going forwards, and how we will continue working with partners to offer students meaningful opportunities to help them prepare for their future careers. It also underpins our refreshed evaluation approach for this programme (see opposite page).

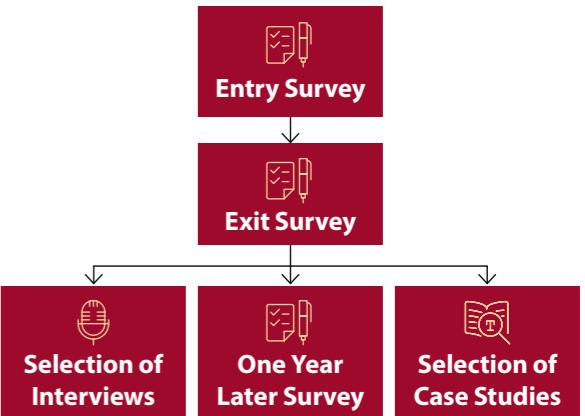
The IntoUniversity Employability Theory of Change

"We have created a theory of change for employability to capture the outcomes that many of our student opportunities programmes achieve through a variety of different activities and experiences for young people. The student opportunities programme is an evolving area of work at IntoUniversity, so the theory of change will help us develop and define our strategy and improve our evaluation process for these programmes."

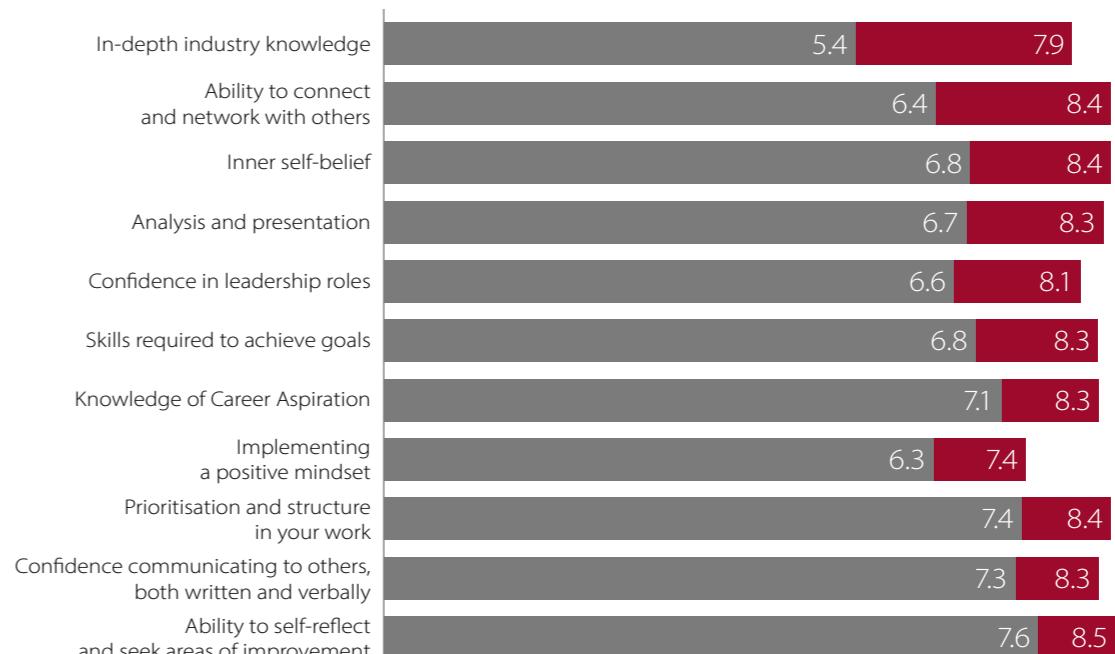
Ellen Daunt – IntoUniversity Head of Student Opportunities

Evaluation approach

This year, we have strengthened our evaluation approach to better measure progress toward the outcomes and impact identified in our employability Theory of Change. Students now complete entry and exit surveys for each programme, allowing us to assess changes resulting from their participation. In addition, we plan to interview students from a variety of employability programmes to gain deeper insight into their experiences, and complete case studies exploring how selected providers support our students. Finally, we plan to follow up with a sample of students one year after they take part, to understand whether the programme has influenced their career paths or informed their career decisions in the longer term.



This approach builds on and expands some of the existing evaluation we have done, including the use of entry and exit surveys to evaluate our Big City Bright Future internship. Since 2021, students participating in the internship have completed a baseline survey before taking part and a follow-up afterwards, asking them to assess their own skill level in the key areas the internship aims to develop. In each of the four years we have been collecting this data, the results have shown statistically significant improvements in all of the skill areas assessed¹. The area seeing the largest increase was in-depth industry knowledge. The chart below shows the results for all four years of the survey combined².



1. The statistical tests used were matched pairs t-tests, testing for a significant difference between the baseline and post-internship survey score in each area. The p value for each area was <0.02 in all of the 4 years assessed. Of the 649 students who took part in the internship between 2021 and 2024, 219 completed a baseline and follow-up survey.

2. The 2021, 2022 and 2023 data was collected using a 10-point scale. For 2024, this was changed to a 5-point scale. For this chart, the 2024 data has been converted to a 10-point scale.

Thank You

Our work is only possible due to the generous support of our funding partners. We are extremely grateful for your continued support, and to all of you who wish to remain anonymous. Our sincere thanks extend to all of our donors, volunteers, trustees, advisory panel and staff. There are far too many of you to list here but we are incredibly grateful for your inspiring dedication to helping our young people achieve their full potential.

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University of Nottingham
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University of Oxford
Pembroke College, University of Cambridge
The Peter Cundill Foundation
Purposeful Ventures
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The Worshipful Company of Tallow Chandlers
Teleflex UK
The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
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Unite Students
University College Birmingham
Venner Shipley LLP
University of Warwick
Charles Wilson and Rowena Olegario
Steve and Tracy Windsor
William and Alex de Winton
University of York

Through the Royal National Children's Springboard Foundation we also support young people to take up boarding school bursaries.

The Benefits of Higher Education: References

Non-economic individual benefits

Greater life satisfaction

- ONS (2011) Measuring National Well-being, Education and Skills.
- PwC (2023) Does studying an undergraduate degree make you wealthier and happier?

More likely to volunteer

- Borgonovi and Miyamoto (2010) Education and civic and social engagement.

Less likely to smoke

- Bynner et al. (2003) Revisiting the benefits of Higher Education.
- de Walque (2004) Education, Information, and Smoking Decisions Evidence from Smoking Histories 1940-2000.

Less likely to be obese

- Devaux et al. (2011) Exploring the Relationship Between Education and Obesity.
- Cutler and Lleras-Muney (2010) Understanding Differences in Health Behaviours by Education.

Less likely to drink excessively

- Kuntsche, Rehm and Gmel (2004) Characteristics of binge drinkers in Europe.

Longer life expectancy

- Miyamoto and Chevalier (2010) Education and health.
- Balaj et al. (2024) Effects of education on adult mortality: a global systematic review and meta-analysis

Greater trust and tolerance

- Borgonovi (2012) The relationship between education and levels of trust and tolerance in Europe.

Economic individual benefits

Higher earnings

- IFS (2016) The UK wage premium puzzle: how did a large increase in university graduates leave the education premium unchanged?
- IFS (2020) The impact of undergraduate degrees on lifetime earnings.

Lower unemployment

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011) The returns to Higher Education qualifications.
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2016) Graduate labour market statistics: 2015.

Increased entrepreneurial activity

- Bloom, Hartley and Rosovsky (2006) Beyond private gain: the public benefits of Higher Education.

Non-economic societal benefits

Greater social cohesion

- Green, Preston and Sabates (2003) Education, Equity and Social Cohesion: A Distributional Model.

Higher achieving children

- Ermisch & Del Bono (2012) Inequality in Achievements During Adolescence.
- Dickson et al. (2016) Early, late or never? When does parental education impact child outcomes?

Lower crime rates

- Feinstein et al. (2008) The social and personal benefits of learning: A summary of key research findings.
- Sabates (2007) Educational Attainment and Juvenile Crime: Area-Level Evidence Using Three Cohorts of Young People.

Greater political stability

- Bynner et al. (2003) Revisiting the benefits of Higher Education.
- Kelly (2006) Investment in Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education and the Effects on Economic Growth

Greater social mobility

- Blanden, Gregg and MacMillan (2010) Intergenerational persistence in income and social class: the impact of within-group inequality.

Economic societal benefits

Economic growth

- Hermansson et al. (2010) Graduates significantly enhance productivity and economic activity in Scotland.
- Holland et al. (2013) The relationship between graduates and growth across countries.
- London Economics (2024) The economic impact of higher education teaching, research, and innovation

Greater innovation

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011) Supporting analysis for the HE White Paper.

Increased tax revenue

- Walker & Zhu (2013) The impact of university degrees on the lifecycle of earnings: some further analyses.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers and Universities UK (2007) The economic benefits of a degree.

Higher productivity

- Moretti (2004) Estimating the social return to Higher Education: evidence from longitudinal and repeated cross sectional data.
- Conlon et al. (2023) Skills and UK productivity: Estimating the contribution of educational attainment to productivity growth

"Finley's brother Riley, now studying at college, was actually the first ever student to sign up when the Great Yarmouth centre opened. We've always said that our work is about long-term relationships and seeing families grow with us, so to now welcome Finley as the 250,000th **Into**University student really feels like a full-circle moment."

Amy Rust – IntoUniversity Great Yarmouth centre leader

"It's such a good opportunity for the kids around here. There isn't much like this in the town. Riley came to the centre twice a week, did Academic Support, mentoring, trips – all sorts. It helped his confidence massively. He learned social skills, he tried new things, and it gave him something to look forward to."

Finley and Riley's mum

Finley

IntoUniversity Centre: Great Yarmouth

Joined IntoUniversity: 2025

Student Number: 250,000

Programmes taken part in:

Primary FOCUS

Now: In Year 3



Read more about Finley's story here



For further information on
our impact work please contact:

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