

North East Uni Connect Programme Impact Report

2024-25

Universities

- Durham University
- Newcastle University
- Northumbria University
- Teesside University
- University of Sunderland

Colleges

- Bishop Auckland College
- Darlington College
- Derwentside College
- East Durham College
- Education Partnership North East
- Education Training Collective
- Gateshead College
- Hartlepool College of Further Education
- Middlesbrough College
- Newcastle College
- New College Durham
- Prior Pursglove and Stockton Sixth Form College
- Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
- The Northern School of Art
- Tyne Coast College

Introduction



The 2024-25 academic year has seen the North East Uni Connect Programme build on the support it has been delivering for young people and their key influencers across the North East for the past seven years. We have supported students through our structured outreach programme delivered through the region's further education (FE) colleges and in our target schools. In addition, we have introduced new strands of activity which gave students in our target schools the opportunity to participate in campus visits, employer engagement, resilience support and careers focused activity. We were also able to support selected schools with an attainment raising programme, designed to address the link between attainment and progression which is particularly significant for certain student groups across our region.

Through our collaboration with the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP) we were able to continue to support their work with the region's five universities to deliver on a collaborative offer of support for care-experienced students via the Care Leaver Covenant, along with their delivery of the Choices Together programme which supports care-experienced young people with progression.

Our signposting offer has ensured that teachers, advisers, parents and carers continue to have access to relevant information and support, so that they in turn can provide the right information, advice and guidance to their young people around progression. This offer was again strengthened by the delivery of our Higher Education Advisers and Teachers (HEAT) conference, for the third consecutive year.

Through our FutureMe activity, we have supported 24,959 students across 84 schools and colleges with a programme that has been designed specifically to address some of the key barriers to attainment and progression that are so significant across the North East region. The most recent HE Education Track (previously HEAT-HESA Track) data demonstrates that target students who have engaged with our programme have a higher level of entry to HE than the North East average (42.7% compared to 40.8%). In addition, this rate increases as the level of intensity of engagement with our Programme increases (43.4% for intensive engagement compared to 33.2% for minimal engagement). We are excited to build on the fantastic work we have delivered alongside our region's HE & FE providers, schools and partner organisations during the 2025-26 academic year and beyond.

Louise Harrison
Head of Programme Delivery

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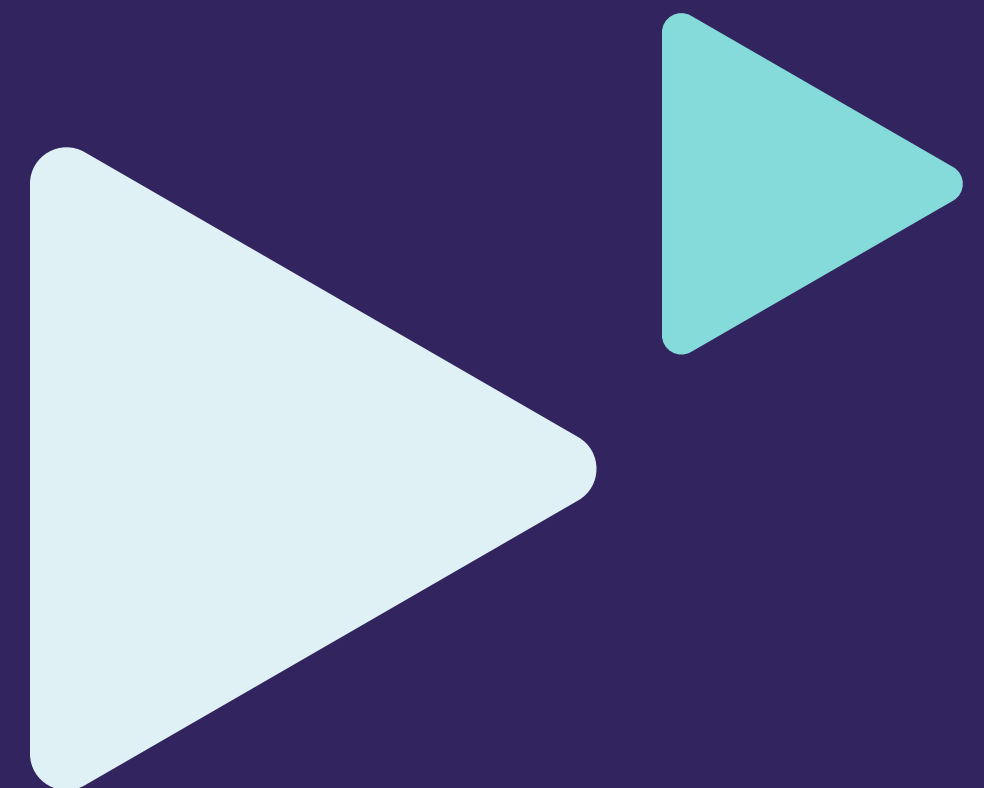
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NEUCP at a Glance

Encompassing all possible activity undertaken as part of NEUCP programming, O&A Programme (Schools), FE Programme (Colleges), NERAP Choices, Outreach North East Events, Opportunity North East and early Cluster Programmes.

From 2016/17 to 2024/25*

181
Institutions Engaged

14,674
Activities Delivered

1,008,952
Total Contact Hours

137,343
Unique Students Engaged

722,589
Students Engagements



62% of students engage in >3 Activities

41% of students engage in >5 Activities

66% of students are POLAR4 Q1 and Q2

35% of students are NEUCP UC Targets**

**Uni Connect (UC) Target students are identified on Postcode by the Office for Students (OfS) as having lower than expected progression despite attainment. Each UC programme nationally has postcodes assigned to them, these students are just those linked to NEUCP. Other UC targets may still engage with the programme but are not counted here.

*correct as of 3rd December 2025, figures subject to change due to potential missing registers being provided or students being removed etc.
Data is only displayed for student activity, non-student activity is not included. Total institutions engaged including non-student activity is 211, further information on non-student engagement can be found on page 11.

Year in Focus

2024/25* Overall

84
Institutions Engaged

1,193
Activities Delivered

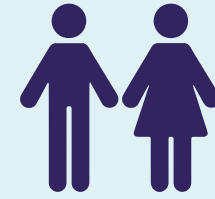
106,160
Total Contact Hours

24,959
Unique Students Engaged

71,124
Students Engagements

The most common activity types were HE Subject Insight (433, 35.9%) and General HE Information (339, 28.1%)

Student Profile



We engaged with slightly more female than male students (56% vs 44%)

64.5% of students engaged live in POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2



29.8% were NEUCP target students (based on postcode)

FE and O&A

NEUCP has two main programme strands, the Outreach & Attainment programme (O&A), aimed at Schools, and our FE College Programme.



FE

741 activities
15,808 students (4,575 target)
Most common activity type:
HE Subject Insight (409)

O&A

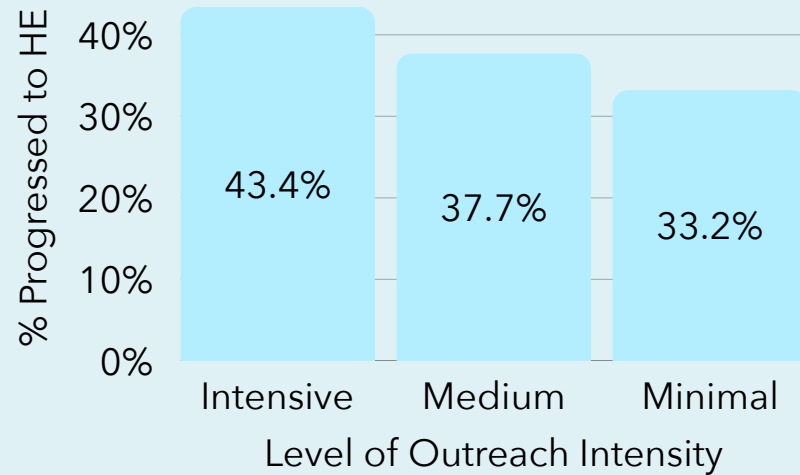
460 activities
9,108 students (2,838 target)
Most common activity type:
Skills and Attainment (213) and
General HE information (212)

*correct as of 3rd December 2025, figures subject to change due to potential missing registers being provided or students being removed etc. Data is only displayed for student activity, non-student activity is not included. Further information on non-student engagement can be found on page 11.

HE Education Track

HE Education Track (previously HEAT-HESA Track) is a cumulative measure reporting on HE progression of engaged students after they have been estimated to be ready to progress to HE (HE Ready Year). The most recent release for the 2022 cohort contains five cohorts of students who have been HE ready between 2018 and 2022. The latest a student could have engaged with the programme would have been in the 2021/22 academic year.

Total Cohort 2018 to 2022



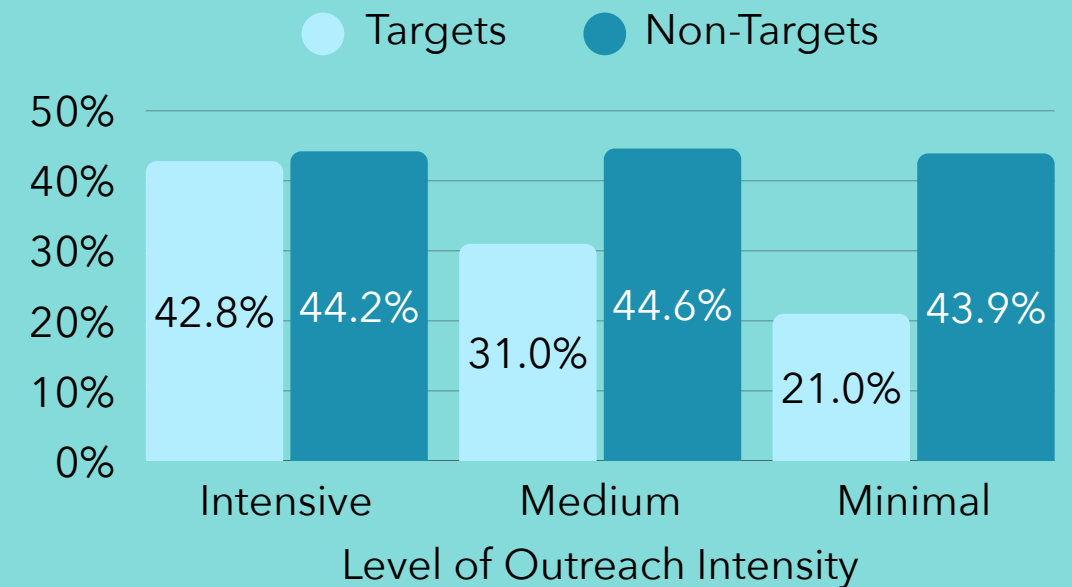
35,705
Unique Students

37.1%
Progressed to HE

Overall, more intensive engagement with the programme (higher contact hours, more activities, more intensive activity types e.g., mentoring), leads to higher likelihood of progression to HE.

Target vs Non-Target students engaged with NEUCP have different engagement to progression patterns.

Total Cohort 2018 to 2022 (50.8% Target Student)



Ready Year 2021 Young Learners Only for Comparison to WP in HE*

10,260
Unique Students

42.7%
Progressed to HE

*Young Learners (19 and under) estimated to be HE Ready in 2021 only to allow for accurate comparison as the Widening Participation in Higher Education (WP in HE) measure, produced by the Department for Education (DfE), tracks progression into HE by age 19.

The North East average progression by age 19 in 2022/23 (cohort HE Ready 2021) was 40.8%, compared to 46.9% in England (DfE, 2025). Our cohort sits 1.9 percentage points higher than the North East average although still lower than the English average by 4.2 percentage points.

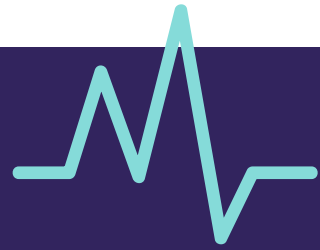
While there is no exact comparison to target vs non-target students we can assume some similarity to the split of disadvantaged (eligible for free school meals at 15 or before) and non-disadvantaged students in the North East which sit at 21.9% and 46.7% respectively,

30.1% vs 44.2%

Target vs Non-target Progression

Target status is based on Postcode, living in an area that has low progression despite attainment, thus **targets will progress at lower rates than non-targets.**

FutureMe Insights



Aims

FutureMe Insights aimed to enhance Year 9 students' understanding of career options, pathways, and the qualifications and skills needed to access them, with a focus on a key regional growth sector: Health and Life Sciences. The events included interactive, practical sessions delivered by employers.

2

Events Delivered

7

Schools Participated

2

Combined
Authorities Involved

11

Employer-led
Sessions

211

Students Attended

Evaluation

FutureMe Insights was evaluated through Pre- and Post-event surveys measuring intentions towards higher education, understanding of options after school, careers and GCSE choices, and confidence in decision making.

All scale questions showed improvement in the Post-event survey which was statistically significant at the strongest 0.1% level.



Masterclasses

Aims

Subject-specific Masterclasses aimed to enhance Year 10 students' knowledge of the links between their current studies, higher-level study, and careers, and increase their motivation for curriculum learning and aspirations towards higher education. Events showcased facilities, specialisms, and pathways across partner universities and colleges.

22

Events Delivered

13

University and
College Hosts

17

Schools Attended

649

Students
Participated

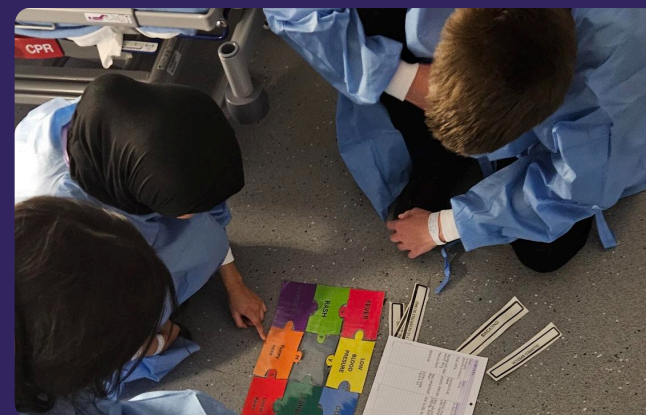


"Without a doubt, I would be considering a career in the healthcare sector; my focus being on helping patients and aiding happier lives. This experience has made me firmer in my decision."

Student, Health Care
Escape Challenge

"Fantastic event which was very interactive and informative. The students loved the day and learned so much about higher education and their next steps"

Teacher, Doctor for a Day



Evaluation

Masterclasses were evaluated through Pre- and Post-event surveys measuring academic self-efficacy, knowledge of, and intentions towards, higher education, sense of belonging in HE, and awareness of future pathways.

All scale questions showed improvement in the Post-event survey which was statistically significant at the strongest 0.1% level.

Tutoring

Aims



The Crafting Accurate Sentences Tutoring programme, developed by Lindsay Skinner in collaboration with the South West Social Mobility Commission at the University of Exeter, was delivered in 10 hour-long sessions. The programme aimed to improve Year 8 students' literacy skills, and specifically the ability to craft accurate sentences. Learners' academic self-efficacy was also expected to increase.

Participants completed Pre- and Post-programme assessments with four marking criteria, each relating to a literacy concept. Pre- and Post-programme surveys also measured academic self-efficacy and attitudes towards the programme and HE.

"I was really happy to hear ... from [Teacher] that they have actually seen progress of the students attending my sessions" - Tutor

"I thought [Tutor] was excellent last week. ... she gave a range of really effective examples in her teaching to explain noun and verb classification. She had a patient, supportive approach with the kids who ... responded really well. There was a lovely balance of enjoyment and learning!" - Teacher

"Working in small groups, having the time to learn something in an explicit way and a tutor who is not a member of staff, a new face helped" - Teacher

"Today's session was great, I can see them learning and improving already" - Tutor

60
Sessions Delivered

14
Tutors Delivered the Programme

6
Schools Involved

84
Students Participated

Evaluation

There was a significant increase in Post-programme scoring for all assessment criteria at the strongest 0.1% level.

Although the secondary aim of increased self-efficacy was not met, there was evidence of increased confidence and responses indicate that the programme was a positive experience for tutors and tutees

Developing FutureMe



Aims

Developing FutureMe was designed as a supplementary intervention for Year 8 students participating in the Tutoring programme. Additional places were offered to non-tutored Year 8 and Year 9 students. The events aimed to improve cognitive study strategies and speaking skills within the context of progression to higher education.

2

Events Delivered

5

Schools Participated

2

Third-Party Delivery Providers

100

Students Participated



Evaluation

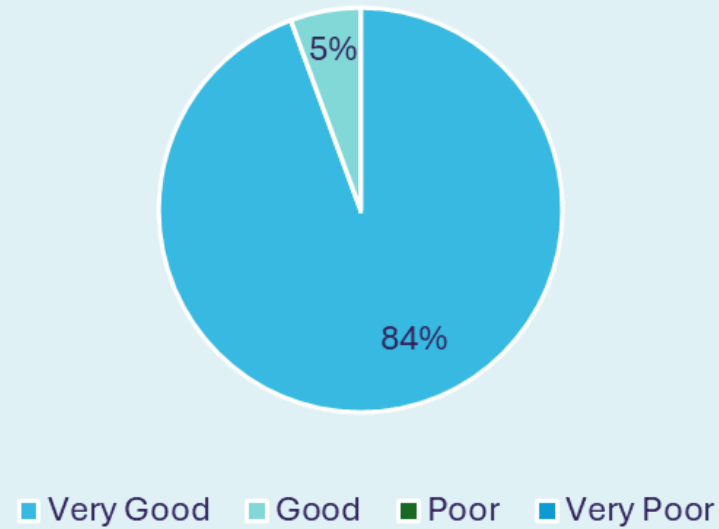
Developing FutureMe was evaluated through Pre- and Post-event surveys measuring confidence in ability to do well at school, development of academic skills, and attitudes towards higher education.

There was a statistically significant increase in average overall scoring in the Post-event survey. The biggest positive change was seen for the statement: "I can clearly explain my ideas, even when writing about complicated things".



HEAT Conference

Overall Satisfaction with the Conference



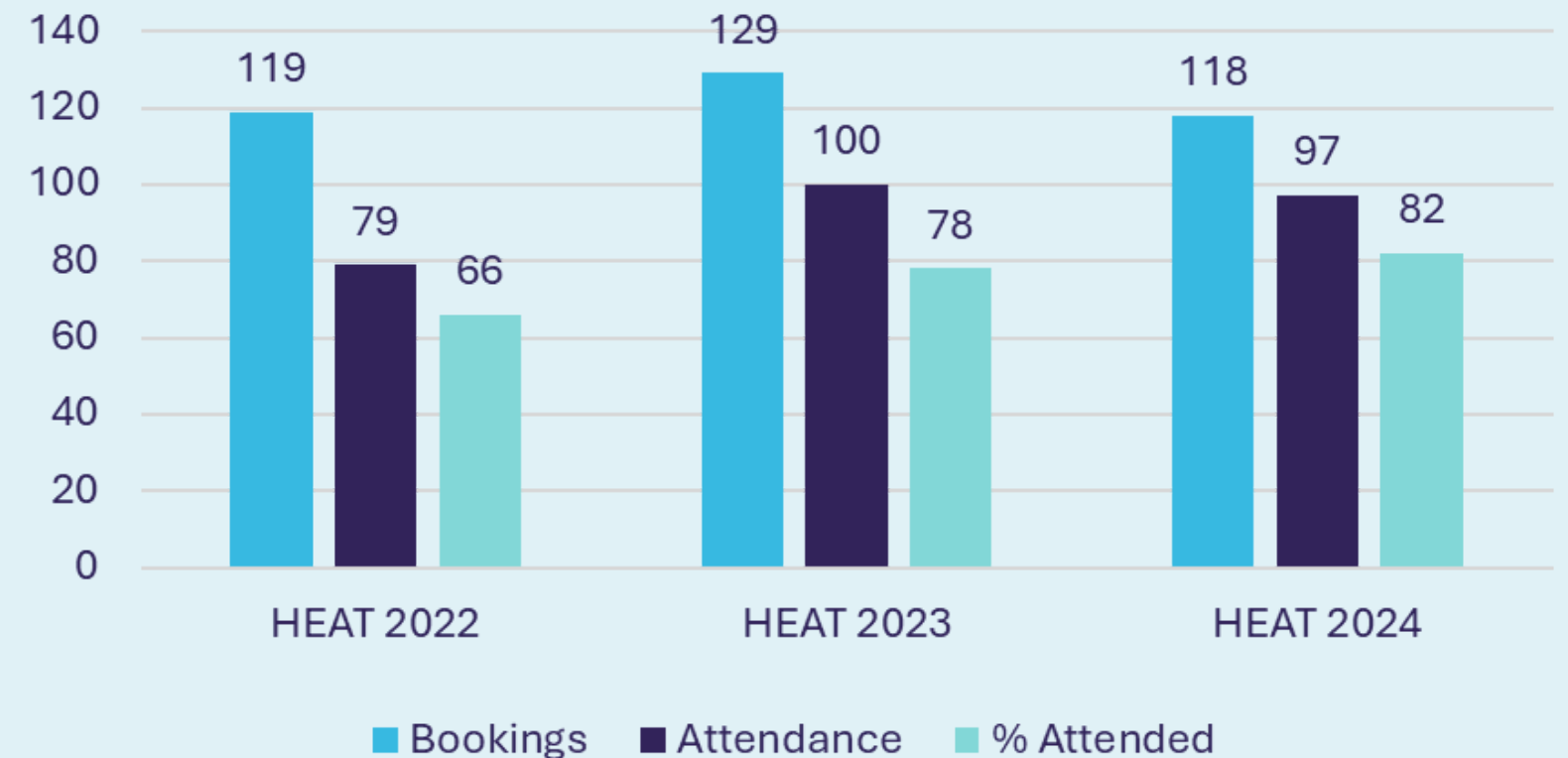
Since launch NEUCP has delivered 332 non-student activities across 154 institutions. In 2024/25 there were 12 total non-student activities delivered, one of which was the Higher Education Teachers and Advisers (HEAT) conference.

Now in it's third year, the HEAT Conference reached almost 100 teachers, advisers and widening participation practitioners.

Across the day attendees had the opportunity to participate in a number of sessions delivered by sector specialists and practitioners, aimed at increasing their knowledge and giving them practical solutions that they can implement within their institutions.

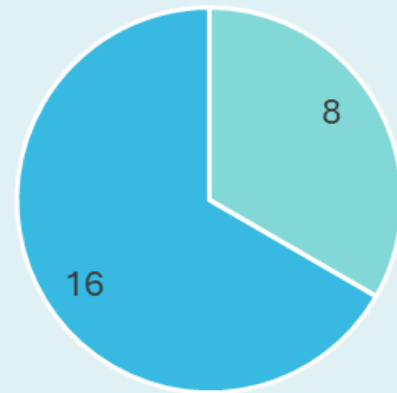


HEAT Conference Bookings vs. Attendance



Choices Together

Student Engagement



■ General HE Information ■ HE Campus Visit



For the past six years we have provided funding to the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP) to help them strengthen and develop their Choices Together programme. Choices Together is a progressive programme which supports care experienced students and young carers with progression.

Engagement by Year Group



■ Year Group 7 ■ Year Group 8 ■ Year Group 9
■ Year Group 10 ■ Year Group 11 ■ Year Group 12



NORTH EAST
RAISING ASPIRATION
PARTNERSHIP



Contact Us

If you have any questions about the contents of this report, or would like to stay informed about our activity please contact us using the details below.

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