



An analysis of Future U Programme Outreach Activity  
supported in Academic Year 2021-22

Future U Evaluation Team

## Introduction

This report provides an overview and descriptive analysis of the outreach activity supported by the Future U programme and partners in academic year (AY) 2021-22. The activity is taken from data uploaded to the HEAT database.<sup>1</sup> The descriptive analysis should be beneficial in informing and guiding priorities for future outreach activity for AY 2022-23.

## Data Characteristics and Collection

HEAT enables the collection of an extensive data set related to outreach activity which can then be analysed and reported. The Future U Central Team record a minimum data set for each individual outreach activity that is supported through the programme. Outreach activity can be activities that are directly planned, coordinated and delivered by the Future U Outreach Team; activities enabled as part of programme workstream projects and delivered through partners or external providers commissioned by the Future U programme; or activities directly delivered by Teachers/Facilitators within schools but with resources provided by the Future U Team, such as the [Pillars of Growth](#) 'in a box' resources.

For each individual activity supported the key data items captured include the type of activity being supported; number of contact hours that the learner or target group of participants is engaged; mode of delivery such as face to face, online, individual or groups of learners; location of delivery, school year group, name of beneficiary school/college or community group. An activity will be counted where there are at least 1 or more participants.

Using a formal Information Sharing Agreement protocol, participating schools and colleges benefitting from any activities being supported by the Future U programme are requested to share key identifiable data related to participants engaged in activities. This data can then be uploaded to the HEAT database which can then be used to track the progression of participants and whether they progress to higher education and helps provide an overall analysis of the reach and impact of outreach provision being supported through the Future U programme.

The Future U programme uses a range of tools and processes to ensure the quality, accuracy and integrity of data being uploaded to the HEAT database. However, for some activities, there can be some instances where the required full school or college data is not provided (or on occasions needed or appropriate) in its entirety. In these cases, it can then be difficult to match activity to a given learner, and therefore on occasions actual or estimated volume of activity can only be captured.

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<sup>1</sup> Higher Education Access Tracker system used to collate data from a range of sources to provide a targeting, monitoring and evaluation service to help evaluate the effectiveness of outreach activity.

## Programme Targets and Activity

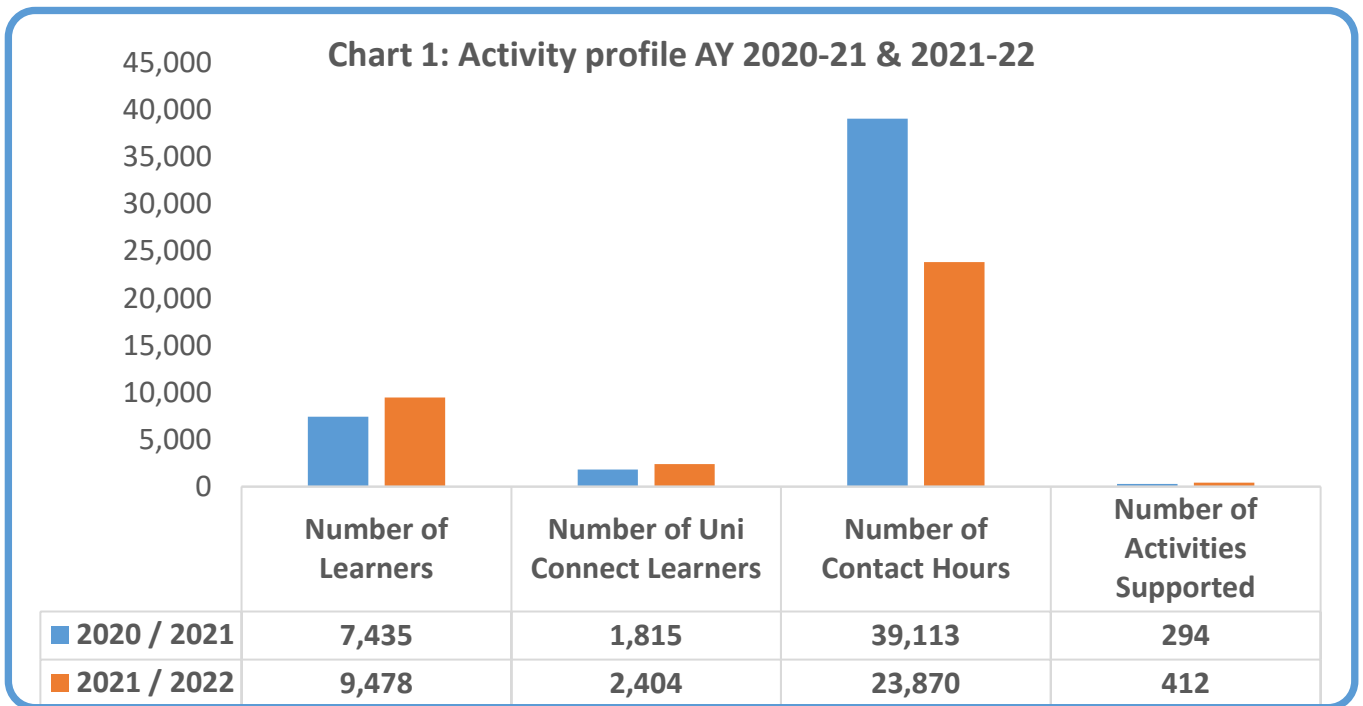
For activity delivered in AY 2021-22, the Future U programme was required, via its mandate from the Office for Students (OFS), to focus and prioritise outreach activity to achieve the following aims.

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

In relation to contributing to reducing the gaps in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups, Future U has a target to engage 20% of potential learners within 26 (electoral) Ward areas located within Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool which have lower levels of higher education participation compared to other areas. The OFS estimates, that within the Ward areas assigned to Future U to support, there is a population of approximately 8,900 young people, known as Uni Connect Target Learners (UC), who might benefit from outreach support.

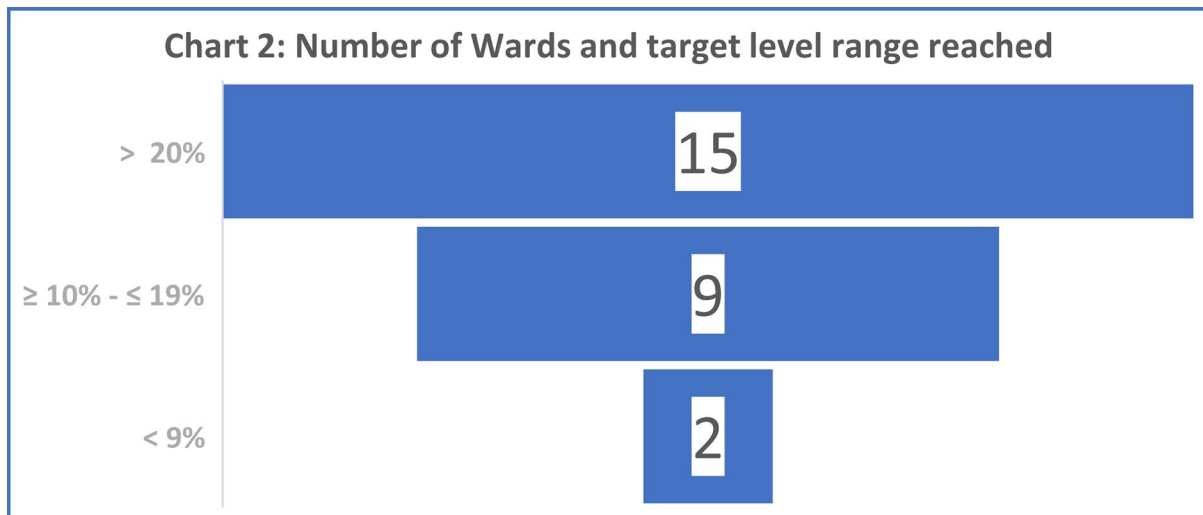
## Overall Activity Profile

The data indicates that in AY 2021 – 22, 412 individual activities were supported through the Future U programme, with delivery of activities benefitting pupils from 63 schools/colleges or community groups. These activities reached just over 9,600 learners, with 2,404 of these being UC target learners, equating to 27% of all Uni Connect target learners being engaged in the academic year. The activities delivered over 23,000 contact hours. As indicated in Chart 1, the activity data shows an increase in all areas compared to activity supported in AY 2020-21, except the number of contact hours delivered. The number of learners reached in AY 2021-22 is now at the level seen prior to the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic.



## Target Ward - Uni Connect Learners

The target to reach 20% of UC learners within each of the allocated ward areas was reached in 15 of the allocated 26 wards (58%), (range 7% - 46%). Chart 2 illustrates the number of wards and profile of target range reached. The five wards with the lowest level of target reached were Digmaor (West Lancashire), Moorside (West Lancashire), Chorley East (Chorley and South Ribble), Skelmesdale South (West Lancashire) and Trinity (Burnley). The five wards with the highest level of target reached being Mill Hill (Blackburn with Darwen), Shadsworth with Whitebirk (Blackburn with Darwen), Ewood (Blackburn with Darwen) Church (Hyndburn) and Central (Hyndburn). Appendix 1 provides a map showing the location of target wards and the level of engagement achieved against the expected target level of 20%.



### Levels of participation based upon Widening Participation measures

Using the **POLAR4**<sup>2</sup> measure which reflects the rate of participation by area, indicates that approximately 6,500 of the 9,600 learners reached in AY 2021-22 where in POLAR 4 Quintiles 1-3. 37% of these learners were Uni Connect Learners. The programme reached over 1,000 learners in POLAR4 Quintile 5.

With reference to the **IDACI**<sup>3</sup> measure, the programme reached 5,273 learners (56% of all learners) in areas within the three most deprived deciles, with 1,222 learners (13% of all learners) being reached within areas in the highest three deciles.

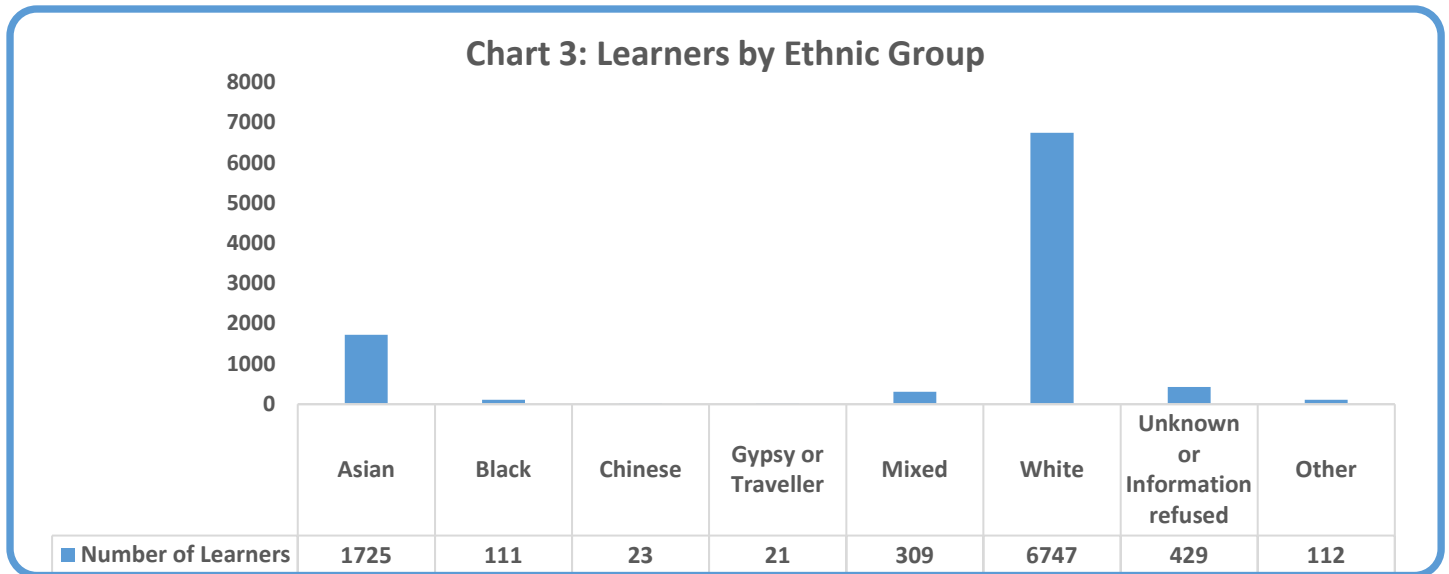
### Learner Profile

Where known and recorded, there was almost an even split in the overall number of learners engaged in activity based upon gender at 49% female and 48% male (remainder unknown). This same gender ratio was also consistent for UC learners reached.

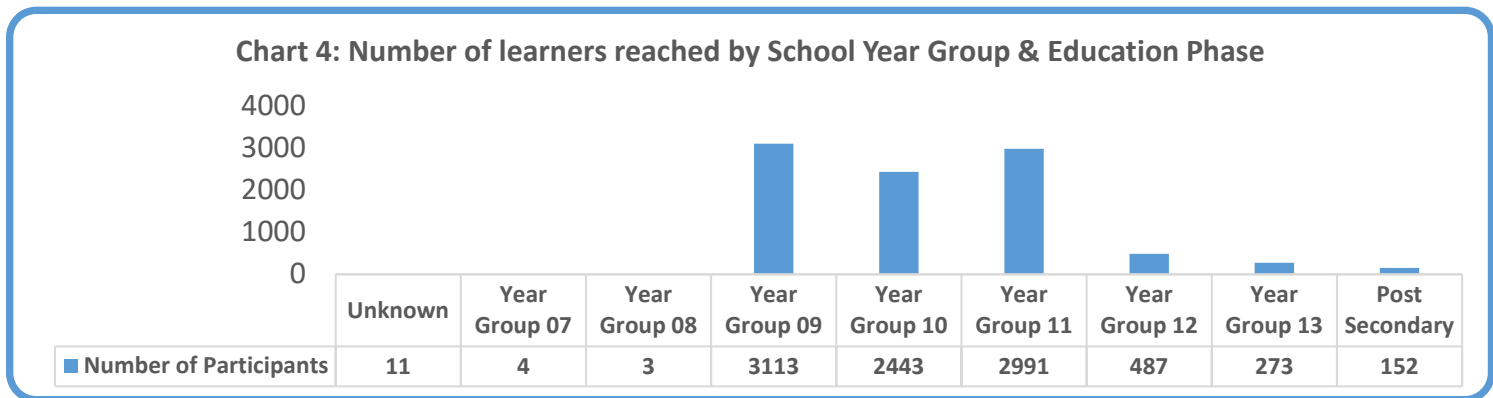
<sup>2</sup> POLAR4 classifies local areas across the UK according to the young participation rate in higher education

<sup>3</sup> Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families.

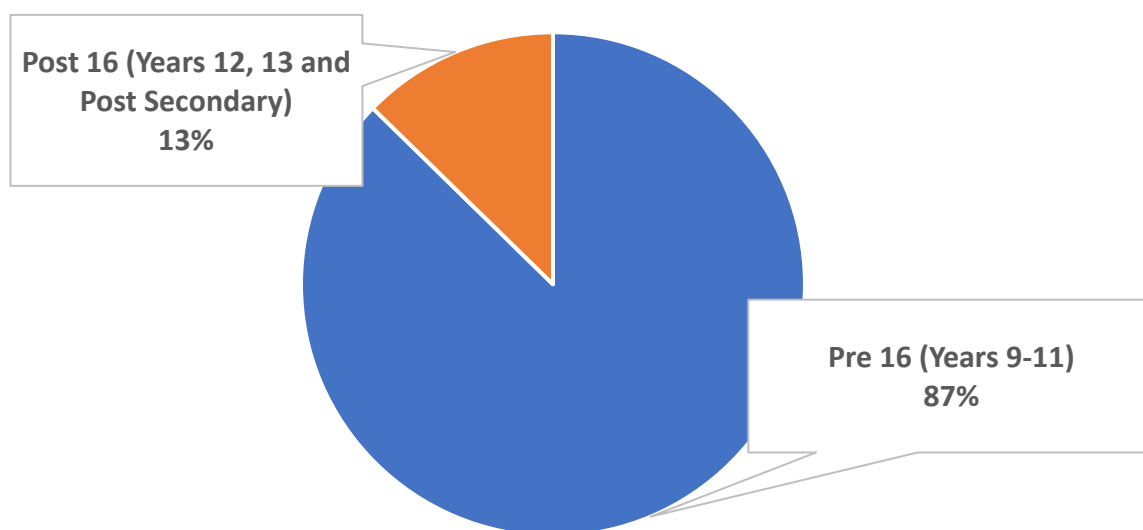
Chart 3 identifies the number of learners by ethnic group, with learners from White ethnic groupings representing 71% of learners reached. Learners from Asian ethnicities were the next largest group of learners reached at 18%, indicating that 89% of learners reached were from White or Asian ethnic groups.



Overall, most of the learners reached were in School Year groups 9 & 11 (Chart 4). Just under 10% of learners engaged were from School Year groups 12-13 and post-secondary education. For the proportion of learners reached who were UC learners, the number of learners engaged from School Year groups 12-13 and the post-secondary education phase was slightly increased at 13% compared to non-UC learners (Chart 5).



**Chart 5: Proportion of UC Pre 16 and Post 16 Learners engaged AY 21-22**



### Under-represented Groups

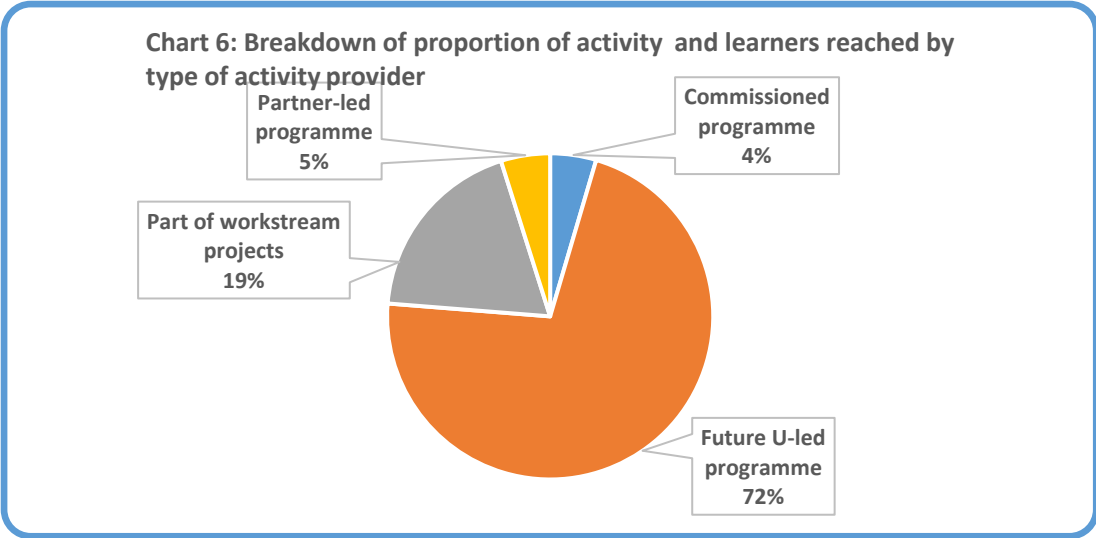
As part of strategic workstream activities Future U had a priority to reach learners from a range of under-represented groups of learners accessing HE. These groups included care experienced/care leavers, young carers, learners with special education needs and learners from some of the BAME<sup>4</sup> population groups. Accordingly, funding was provided to target and support a range of activities that might either help gain an understanding and / or meet the needs of these learner groups. The available data, as gained through the activities directly designed for these specific groups, indicates that seven young carers, seventeen care experienced/young care leavers and sixty-nine young people with recorded special education needs were engaged. In relation to the BAME population eighty-three learners were engaged. It needs to be noted that more learners from the learner population groups identified were probably engaged in the range activities supported through the programme at school level, but data specifically related to some of the identifiable personal characteristics such as care leaver status is not currently captured and recorded as part of the programme's core data set.

### Type of Activity Profile

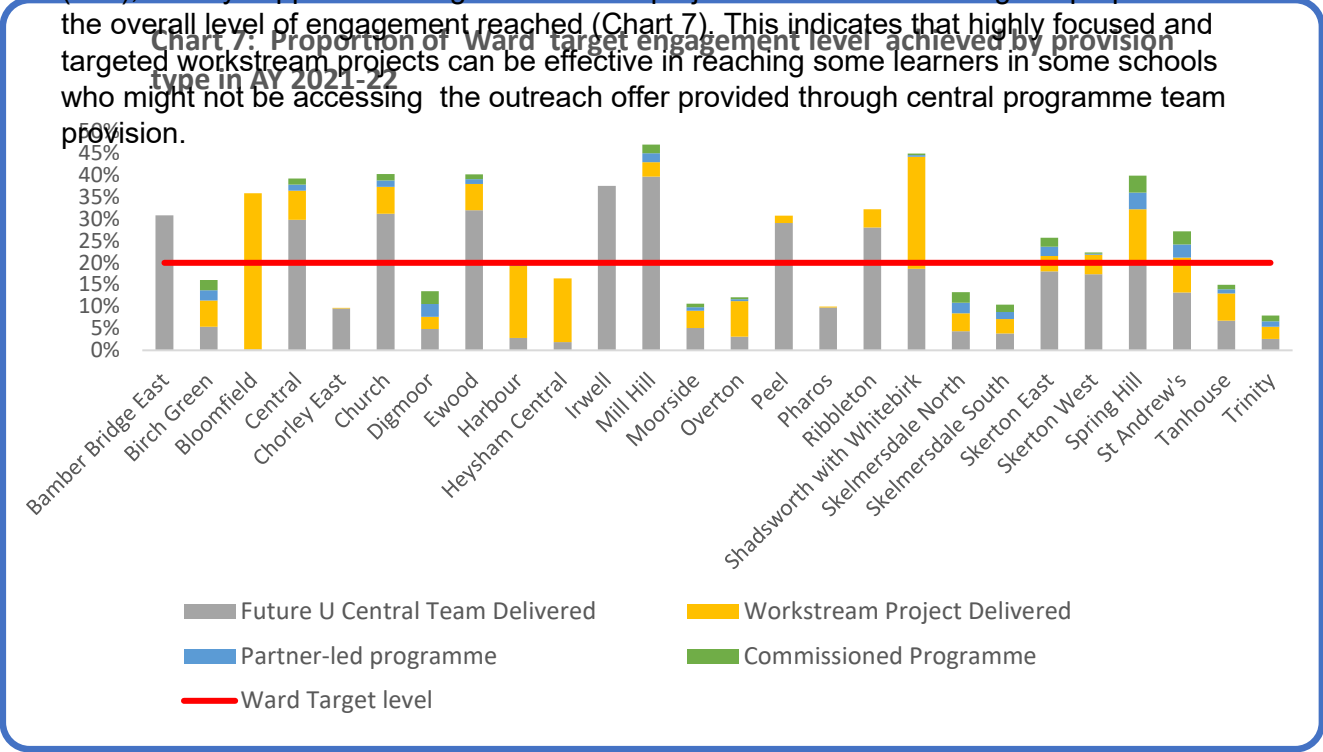
The delivery of outreach activities in 2021-22 were provided or supported either by the Future U Outreach Team, a collaboration of Future U partners through a range of funded workstream projects or programmes commissioned through third party activity<sup>5</sup>. Chart 6 identifies the proportion of activity delivered via the different types of delivery provision. As illustrated, the majority of activity was either directly supported through the Future U Central Programme Team or Future U Partnership.

<sup>4</sup> BAME defined as Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups

<sup>5</sup> Commissioned programme activity could have been fully supported by Future U or part funded with other local strategic stakeholders, for example Lancashire Skills Partnership.



Direct central programme and workstream outreach activity contributed the most in relation to the level of Ward target engagement seen in AY 2021-2022. However, for some Wards (n=5), activity supported through workstream projects accounted for a higher proportion of the overall level of engagement reached (Chart 7). This indicates that highly focused and targeted workstream projects can be effective in reaching some learners in some schools who might not be accessing the outreach offer provided through central programme team provision.



### Type of Activities

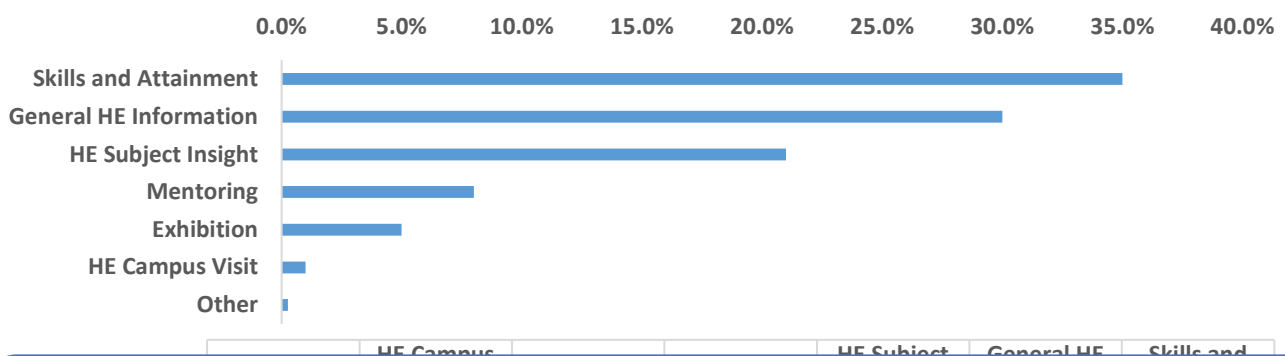
With the support of partner's, the Future U programme provides an extensive outreach offer, with the delivery of a range of activities which seek to provide impartial information and guidance, enhanced subject & career insights, personal and soft skill development, support the acquisition of new skills and opportunities to visit college and higher education settings to



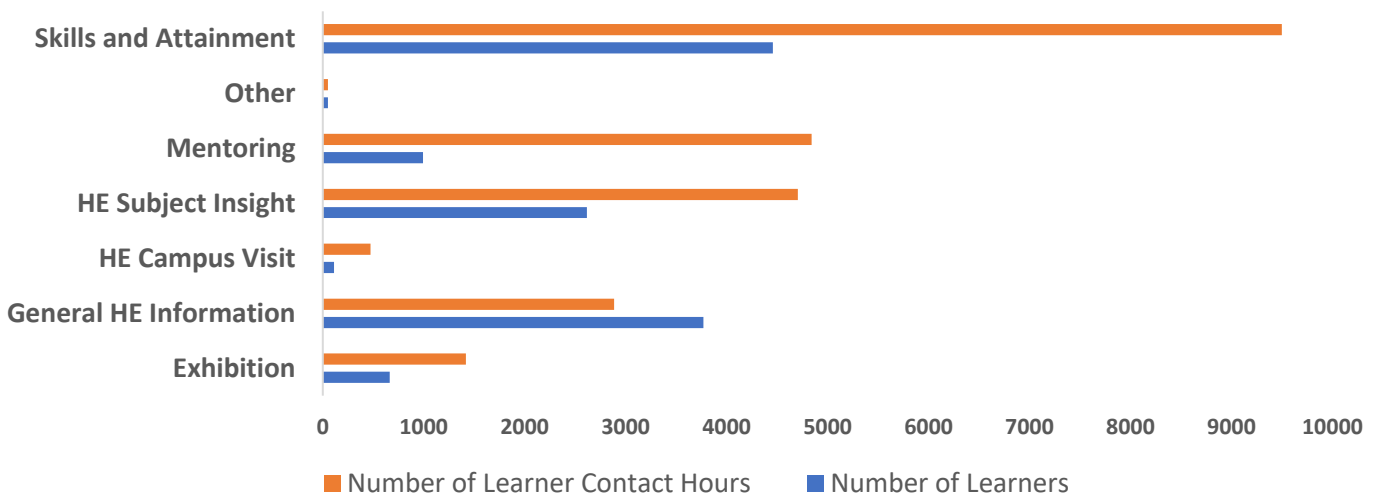
help inspire and inform their future education and career options ([www.lancashirefutureu.org.uk](http://www.lancashirefutureu.org.uk)).

Chart 8 illustrates the number of learners who have participated in the indicated activity. Activities related to promoting skills and attainment, which also includes tutoring, was the largest type of outreach provision supported and accounted for just under 9,500 learner contact hours. While mentorship (which includes coaching related activities) accounts for 8% of the learners participating in an activity, this activity, which typically involves learners participating in 3 - 8 individual sessions, accounted for 4,800 contact hours.

**Chart 8: % Number of learners attending activities by type**



**Chart 9: Number of learners and contact hours by activity type**



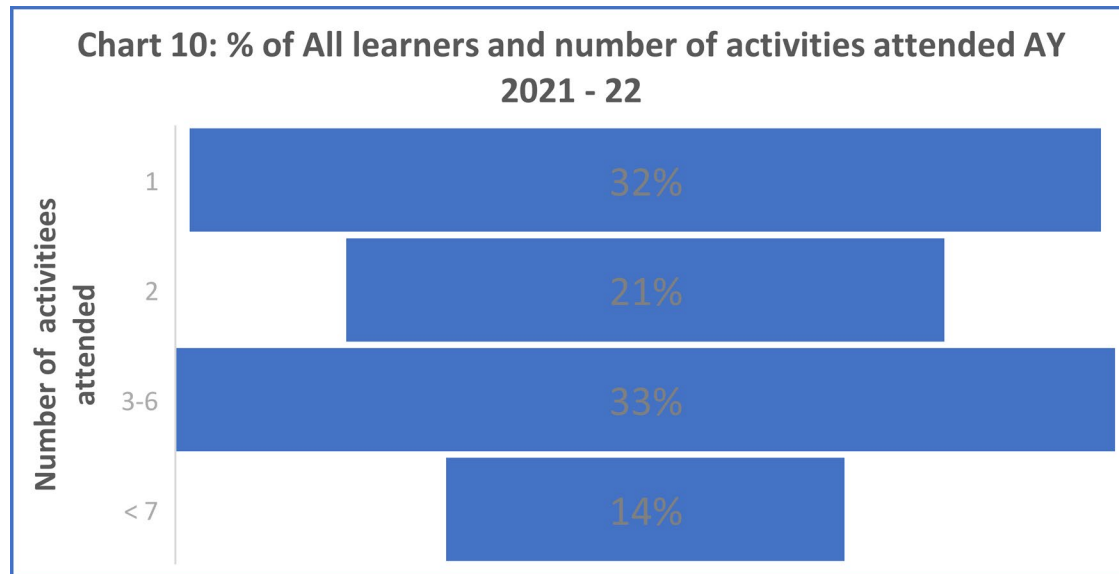
### Location of Activity

Most of the activity supported in AY 2021-22 took place with learners located within their school setting (86%). A small group of learners were accessed via a public/community setting (n = 415). Of further note is that in AY 2021-22, just over 3,500 learners were engaged in activities that were supported or delivered through digital/online methods, a reduction of 46% compared to this mode for delivery in 2020-21 (n = 6516).

## Sustained and Progressive Activity

There is a key aim to engage learners in multiple and, where possible, activities defined as sustained and progressive learning activities, with evidence indicating that where learners are engaged in three or more activities that they are more likely to progress to higher education (CFE 2019)<sup>6</sup>. In AY 2021, as illustrated in chart 10, most of all learners participated in 3 or more activities (68%). In relation to the proportion of UC learners, 29% of these learners engaged with 3 or more activities.

While it is positive that the majority of learners are engaged with three or more activities, these activities may not be sequenced and directly linked and reflect separate interactions. Consequently, the potential intended benefit may be lessened.



Where activities are defined as sustained and progressive then 2,388 learners have participated in at least one activity of this defined type of activities, with 702 of the proportion of all UC learners engaged in AY 2021-22 being involved in such activities. Approximately, 29% of all learners engaged in 3 or more sustained and progressive activities, whereas for the proportion of UC learners this was lower at 21%.

## Level of Impact Score and activities delivered

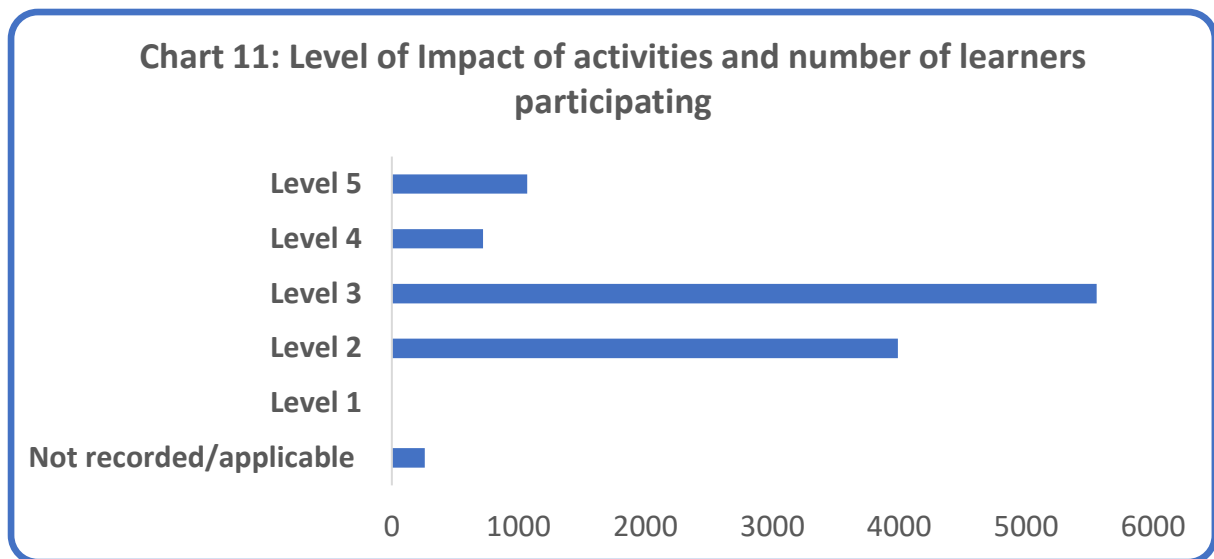
In this academic year, the Future U programme team has attempted to define and assess activities in terms of their level of impact. A level of impact score of between Level 1-5 was devised and allocated to each activity. An activity ascribed a Level 1 activity would indicate an activity of assumed lower impact (such as a short duration assembly based delivered activity) and a Level 5 score would denote a higher impact type with a longer contact duration activity such as involvement in a mentorship session.

While more work is needed to evaluate whether the application of the impact score noted above can be taken as a reliable measure of impact, based upon activity delivered and

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<sup>6</sup> Report to OFS The National Collaborative Outreach Programme End of Phase 1 report for the national formative and impact evaluations (2019). CFE Research

supported in the AY 2021-22, many learners were involved in activities with a score of Level three or higher as indicated in chart 11.



## Implications

It is pleasing to see those levels of outreach provision have increased and are now at or above the level of activity supported prior to the onset of the pandemic. The number of UC learners being engaged is increasing, with 87% of all UC target learners within the allocated Future U wards having received some outreach engagement since the commencement of the programme in 2017.

While the expected target engagement level at Ward area was reached in the majority of Ward areas, the lower level of engagement in a related cluster of wards (most notably West Lancashire), particularly where there are known higher levels of deprivation, is disappointing. Although the OFS are not applying a set target level for engagement at individual Ward level in the forthcoming academic year, the lower level of activity in some Wards suggests the ongoing need for collaborative outreach provision to ensure best reach.

The efforts to consider further, scrutinise and report on activities which might have a higher level of impact and/ or are also linked to a sustained and progressive has been a positive development this academic year. The activity reported here at least provides a baseline, to help guide, focus and evaluate further how best to ensure all learners, and particularly UC learners, are benefitting from more activities defined and linked as sustained and progressive.

The high levels of engagement seen with learners in year 9 and above means that the programme can continue to seek to engage with these learners and their schools in the next academic year. Given the OFS has requested that Uni Connect partnerships prioritise their outreach provision with those schools where they have already established engagement to maximise impact. This has been factored into planning and identifying target schools for AY 2022-23.

### Appendix 1: Future U Programme

### Ward Engagement Target Achieved Academic Year 2021-22

Key: Expected Ward Target Level 20% or higher	
Wards were 20% engagement target or higher achieved	
Wards were 10 -19% engagement target achieved	
Wards were less than 10% engagement target achieved	

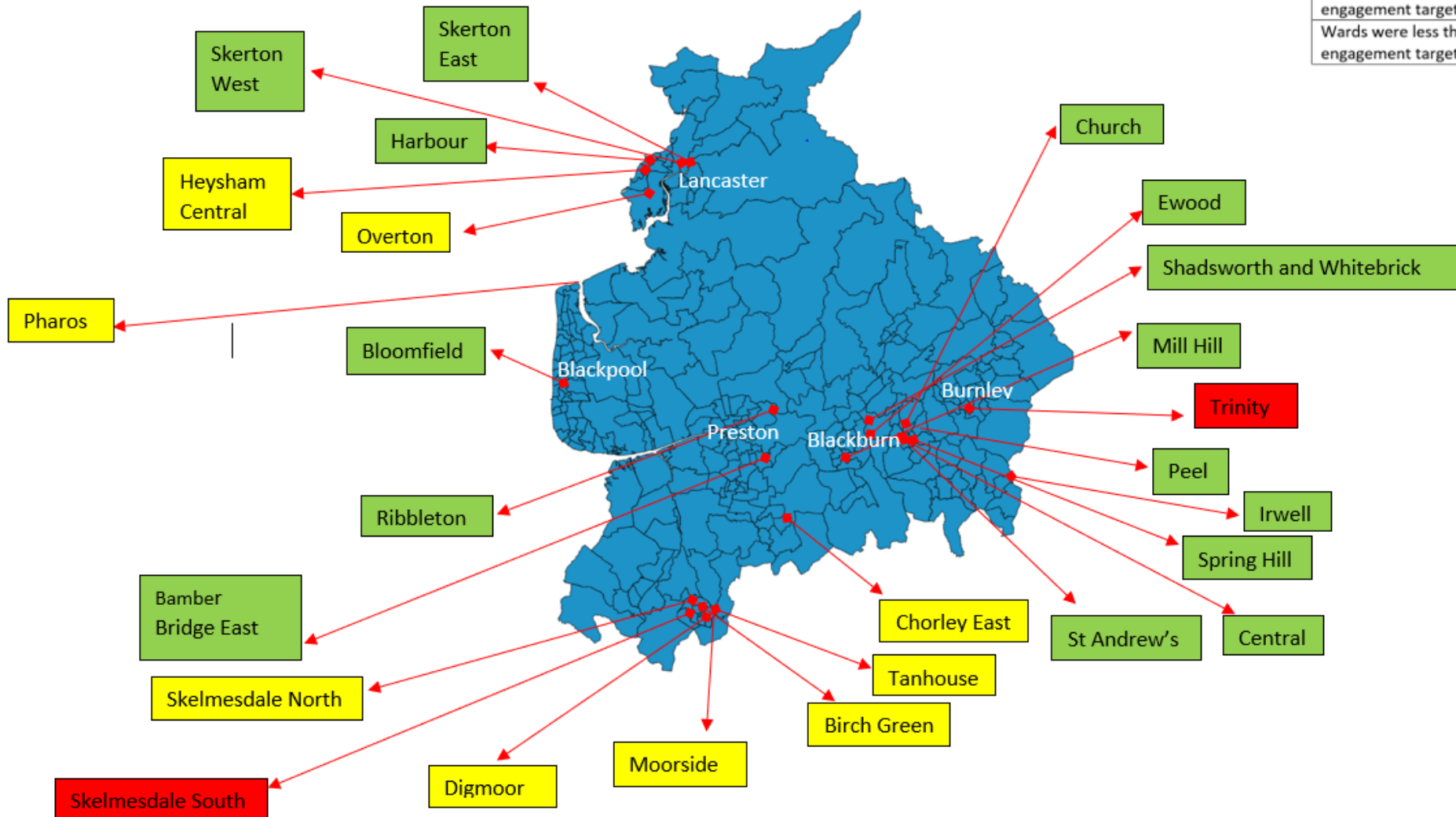


Image Source: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/neighbourhood-geographies-dashboard/>