

Oxford for North East

Our Impact 2021-2022

OXFORD
for North
East



Oxford for North East

The University of Oxford is keen to encourage and support more applications to the University from young people in the North East of England. Christ Church, St Anne's and Trinity Colleges are the University of Oxford's North East Consortium, offering outreach support to students, parents, carers, and teachers across the North East of England. With additional support from Lincoln College, Oxford for North East offers a suite of outreach opportunities to both primary and secondary school communities, including information and guidance talks in schools, student residential in Oxford, online parent and carer support sessions and teacher and HE advisor CPD. The following report summarises our programme and its impact from September 2021 to August 2022.

Meet the OXNE Team



Hannah Snell, Senior Outreach Officer, St Anne's College

Hannah has been working at St Anne's College, and OxNE, since 2019. She was previously a student at Oxford, having attended a state school in Derbyshire and had a career providing academic support as part of a Sixth Form team at an Academy in London.

She primarily works with schools in the north of the region (Gateshead, Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland) and loves visiting the region regularly to visit schools.



Joel Butler, Access & Schools Liaison Officer, Christ Church

Joel has been working at Christ Church since January 2022, having successfully defended his DPhil in History at Oxford that same month. Joel attended state schools in the West Midlands and was variously eligible for Free School Meals. He studied History at the Universities of Durham and St Andrews before progressing to Oxford via time in Istanbul and work in schools.

Joel works across the North East and can often be found riding buses across the Durham Moors or trains along the North Sea coast. He is always up for a chat with the diverse community of North-Easterners he meets in hotels and cafeterias along the way, as well as colleagues and students across the full range of state schools between the Tees and the Tweed.



Richard Petty, Senior Access Officer (North East), Trinity College

Richard has been working at Trinity College and Oxford for North East since 2019, coming from a 20-year career in schools, latterly as a Headteacher and Head of Sixth, via time off to look after twin sons born in 2017. He was born and brought up in Newcastle and studied History & Economics at the LSE and a PGCE in History at Oxford.

Richard is based in an office in Darlington and most of his time in schools is spent in County Durham, Darlington, Hartlepool, Redcar & Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees and Middlesbrough.

Thank you 2021/22

Oxford for North East would like to thank the schools, colleges and staff who have worked with us over the last year, as well as the Outreach and Engagement Officers across Oxford and, most importantly, the young people, their families and supporters for their continued support during 2021-22.



How we work

Oxford for North East works exclusively with state schools and is keen to support schools in the North East that have no prior relationship with the University of Oxford. We prioritise outreach in non-selective state schools with lower rates of student progression to higher education, high-tariff universities and to the University of Oxford. Engagement with students from under-represented and/or disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly those who are care experienced or qualifying for Free School Meals [FSM], is also very important to us.

Our work isn't limited to encouraging those who are qualified to apply to Oxford – we want to raise student expectations and realise aspirations however we can, and work in both primary and secondary schools. Working in partnership with attainment-raising organisations such as the Brilliant Club and IntoUniversity, Oxford for North East is also keen to develop relationships with schools who may have lower than expected attainment at GCSE.

Relationships with schools are shared and managed across the three 'Oxford for North East' Colleges.

St Anne's has worked primarily with the northern portion of the region and maintains strong relationships with schools there, and Trinity has always worked closely with schools in the south of the region. Christ Church rotates its geographical focus with each regular visit to the region. With their Senior Access Officer based more locally, Trinity College is available throughout the year, whilst staff from St Anne's and Christ Church stay for a week in the region around twice each per term in order to visit schools for Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and academic sessions. Visits may also span weekend activities for our joint sustained-contact programme, Aim for Oxford. Collectively, we aim to cover all requests for workshops from schools using our shared capacity across the three colleges, as well as offering more flexible online sessions throughout the year.

Oxford for North East shares communications with schools and organisations across the region, sending out a monthly newsletter and North-East-specific opportunities. Teachers are encouraged to sign up for our monthly newsletter from which they can find out

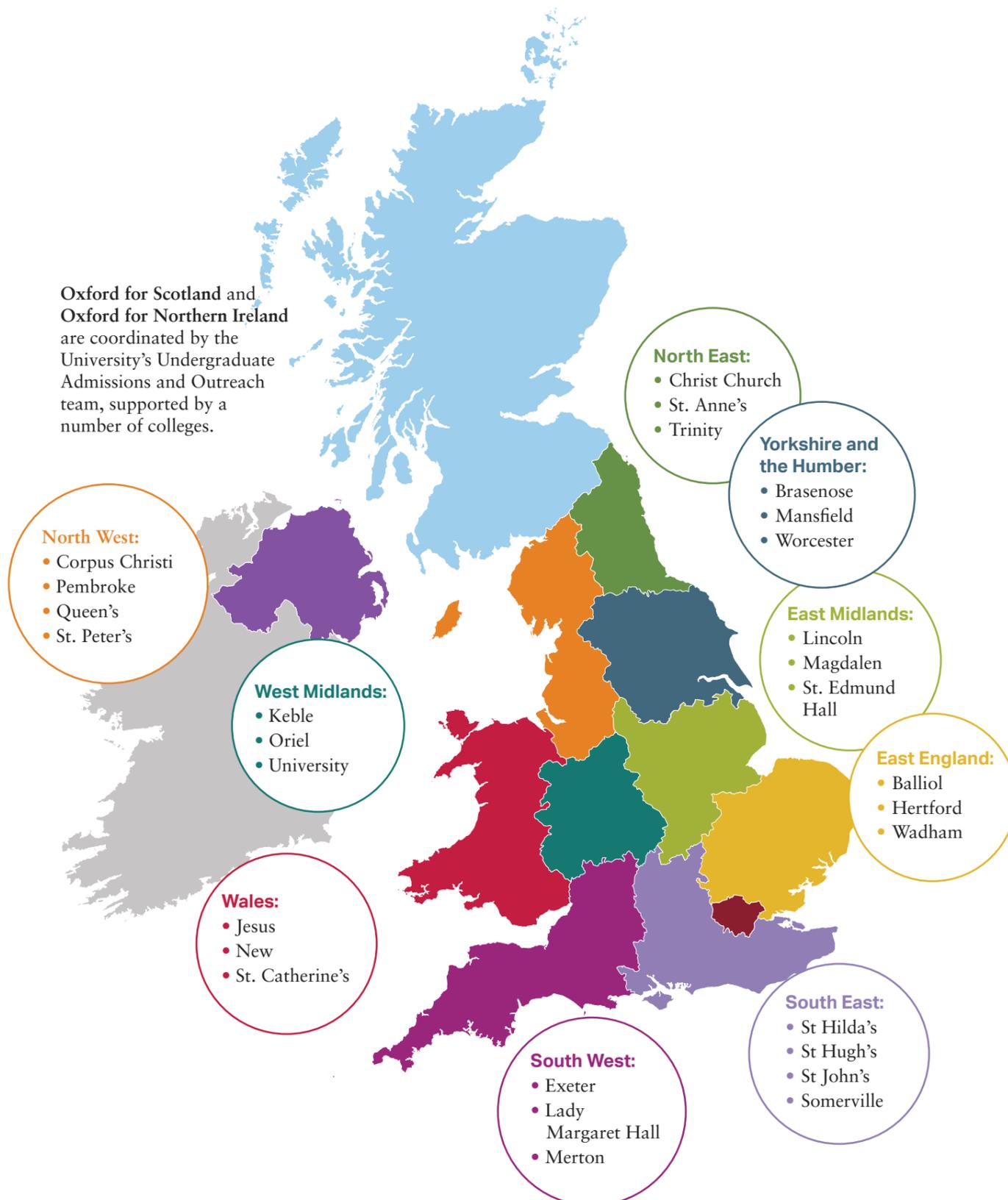
more about wider opportunities for their students, families, and colleagues. We maintain our regular contacts, and are particularly keen to reach schools with little to no prior engagement with Oxford for North East, including those with high contextual indicators of deprivation amongst their student body.

Contextual indicators may include various proxy metrics: POLAR, ACORN, FSM, first-generation students, underrepresented ethnic backgrounds, care experience, or young carer status. POLAR and ACORN are measures by which postcode areas are sorted into categories based on levels of progression to Higher Education and consumer wealth profiles respectively. First-generation students are those with no immediate family history of participation in Higher Education. Some students may be from ethnic or cultural backgrounds that are underrepresented at the University of Oxford, while others may have experienced the care system or be young carers for other family members.

A particularly important targeting metric is Free School Meals. The North East of England has one of the UK's highest rates of children qualifying for FSM (30.4% in 2022). FSM is one of the most significant indicators of lower educational attainment and progression to higher education, with children entitled to FSM on average falling up to two years behind their peers. We therefore also look to prioritise working with schools with a high proportion of students qualifying for FSM. It is often the case that many of these categories overlap, and in directing and targeting our work we keep an overview of these various factors relating to students and schools.

The University of Oxford's rationale for reorganising college Outreach activities into regional consortia from 2019 onwards is that it allows colleges to pool together resources and expertise in order to provide a more effective, efficient, and consistent programme of access work with our target schools.

These consortia are shown on the following map.



Regional Context and Aims

The Schools Context

Secondary school provision is a mix of Sixth Form Colleges, schools serving pupils aged 11-18, and schools for pupils aged 11-16. In Northumberland, there is also a mix of 9-13 Middle Schools and 13-18 High Schools. Our work targets secondary schools

in particular, of which there are 156 in the region; working more with primary-aged pupils in the region is a longer-term aspiration. Our work with 11-to-18-year-olds is broadly proportionate to the number of institutions in each of these three categories.

Applications to Oxford

North East's share of all UK school students attaining AAA+ is 2.8%; applications from the region make up 2.2% of all UK applicants to Oxford, and 2.4% of students admitted to the University.¹ With many more qualified applicants than are currently applying to Oxford from the North East, there is clearly huge academic potential across the region; it is Oxford for North East's aim to encourage and support students from the region, who may not have yet considered it, to make an application to the University of Oxford.²

distance commuters to their university, 33.2% are from the North East, the most of any region. this proportion rises nationally up to an average of 44.9% in the decile of students with the lowest incomes, and there is a clear inverse relationship between the perceived need to live at home and income.⁴

In the short term, we would like to see the admittance proportion matching this share of AAA+ attainment. Longer term, we aim to see access to Oxford from the region increase further by supporting a rise in attainment.

We also recognise that finance, strong community and family ties influence this decision. Quite rightly, these are important considerations for any young person considering the move away to university. Our work aims to highlight the multiple sources of financial support that the university offers, for example, the Crankstart Scholarship and Oxford Bursary, the widespread provision of subsidised accommodation among the colleges in Oxford, and the provision of travel assistance for those on bursaries.

We recognise that many students in the North East of England opt to study at a university within the region.³ Among all the English regions, the proportion of university students who are classed as short-



¹ University of Oxford, 'Annual Admissions Statistical Report' (May 2023), 7.

² By comparison, the West Midlands is proportionally represented in Oxford admissions despite its similar attainment challenges to the North East, and Greater London is over-represented by approximately 29.3%. London and the South East made up 47.2% of UK applications to the University of Oxford between 2020 and 2022, and 47.6% of students admitted; the rest of the UK made up 52.8% of applications and 52.4% of students admitted.

³ Sutton Trust, Home and Away: Social, Ethnic and Spatial Inequalities in Student Mobility, February 2018, table 4, 'Mobility Type and Students' Home Region', 16.

⁴ ibid., table 2, 'Social Class and Student Mobility 2014-15', 14.

OXNE Aims – 2021/22

On average across the three-year period between 2019-2021, 2.6% of qualified students from the North East were offered and accepted places at Oxford. We recognise that many students hope to study at one of the many excellent local universities in the region. However, as they have so much to offer our academic community, we hope to persuade more talented students from the North East to consider Oxford as one of their future potential choices.

To help us encourage more applications from students from under-represented backgrounds, our programme activities are designed to achieve the following:

OFS ⁵ agreed access targets 2020/21 to 2024/25 (currently under review)	Access and outreach programme aims
TARGET 1 To reduce the gap in participation rates for disadvantaged students (ACORN) to 3:1 by 2024-25	AIM 1 Increase knowledge of the benefits of higher education.
TARGET 2 To reduce the gap in participation rates for under-represented students (POLAR4) to 8:1 by 2024-25.	AIM 2 Development of realistic attitudes about Oxford ("Demystifying Oxford").
TARGET 3 To eliminate the gap in offer rates for Asian applicants by 2021-22	AIM 3 Increase awareness of the breadth of university courses and where they lead post-university
TARGET 6 To help raise attainment in schools through a programme of student and teacher focused activities.	AIM 4 Increase awareness of the Distinctive features of studying at Oxford.
	AIM 5 Application process: A Increase understanding about the application process; its stages, deadlines etc. B. Develop practical skills to improve performance in the various admissions stages.
	AIM 6 Increase motivation to learn and study.
	AIM 7 Improve skills necessary for university study.
	AIM 8 Broadening subject knowledge.
	AIM 9 Raising attainment

Although not every aim will be suitable for every activity that we offer, or for every age group, these nine aims are at the core of our outreach work across the region

⁵ The University of Oxford have an Access and Participation Plan agreed with the Office for Students. The targets outlined here relate directly to those associated with increasing access to students from underrepresented and/or disadvantaged backgrounds. Details of the agreement can be found here <https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/app>. These targets are currently under review for 2023 onwards.

Some of our Achievements

- 1

Increasing knowledge of the benefits of HE, realistic attitudes about Oxford and its distinctive features

In 2021/22, OxNE ran 177 activities that offered information, advice, and guidance to students from Year 7 to Year 13.
- 2

Awareness of Higher Education

In 2021/22, an estimated 9,436 young people attended events and sessions offered by Oxford for North East and its colleges
- 3

Improving skills and motivation for University, subject knowledge, attainment

During 2021/22, over 400 students from year 7 to Year 12 participated in academic tasters or Oxplore sessions designed to encourage critical thinking and deeper learning
- 4

Increasing understanding of the admissions process

In 2021/22, over 700 Year 13s received specific application support through online and in-person workshops
- 5

Making Oxford a realistic goal

 - Collaborating with The Brilliant Club to offer the Scholars' Programme, including a residential launch in Oxford
 - Year 12 residential opportunities
 - The Aim for Oxford programme

Oxford for North East 2021-22 in numbers

251
events in schools organised by Oxford for North East (2020-21: 119)

8,662
North East students reached through Oxford for North East activities (2020-21: 3,060)

81 schools engaged in Oxford for North East events (2020-21: 39)

48 Year 13 Offer Holders attending the Oxford for North East Offer Holder event in Newcastle

172
teachers joining in Oxford for North East information and CPD workshops

313
parents and carers engaged in Oxford for North East events

700
Year 13 students receiving support with UCAS application sessions (2020-21: 448)



Oxford Offer Holders and some of their parents/carers meet with existing students from the region at the conclusion of the Offer Holder event, March 2022, Mining Institute, Newcastle

Evaluating OXNE's 2021/22 Programme

The evaluation of OXNE's 2021/22 programme focuses particularly on this main evaluation question:

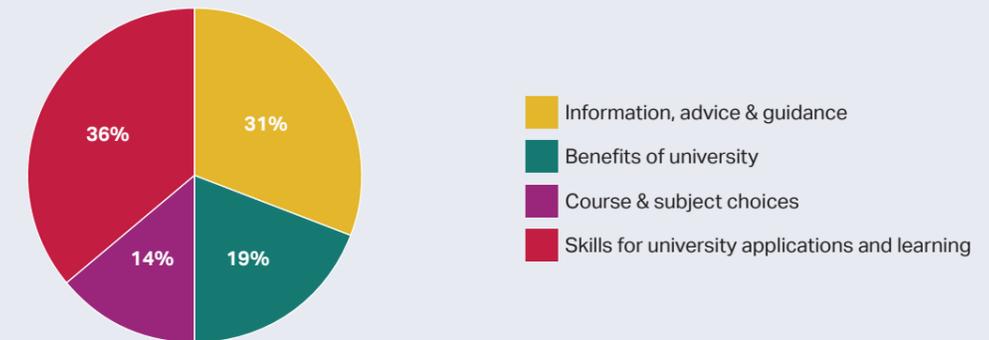
How effectively does OXNE offer up-to-date information, advice, and guidance to students, parents, and teachers about studying in higher education and the University of Oxford, and the skills required to do this?

OxNE Outputs

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have greatly increased our digital outreach provision and now offer a combination of online and in-person events which has taken our activity in the region back to pre-pandemic levels.

Our delivery seeks to strike a balance between supporting those students in the region who are considering making an application to Oxford in the near future, and demystifying and promoting Higher Education more generally with younger students, their parents/carers and teachers:

Types of session delivered in schools and colleges

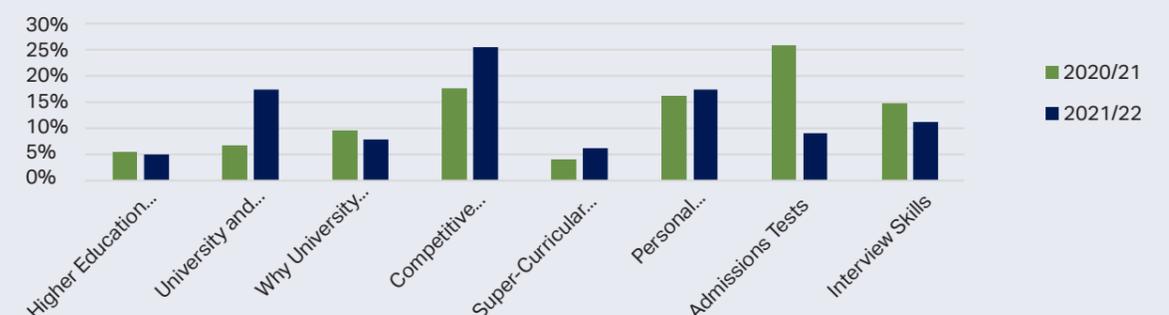


36% of our sessions with young people focused on developing the skills for competitive university applications and learning. 31% focused on Information, Advice, and Guidance. 19% primarily provided information on the benefits of university,

while 14% looked at course & subject choice-specific material.

Our core information, advice and guidance sessions, and their demand, are noted below:

Oxford for North East Core IAG Sessions



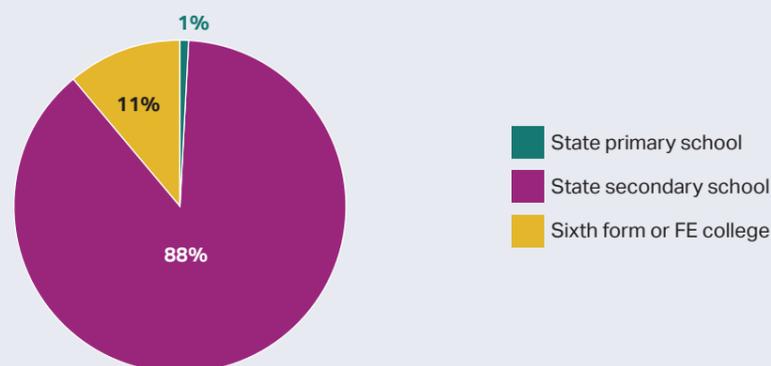
Work with students and schools

As a result of our increased delivery in the North East, 9,436 students in the region attended at least one event delivered by the Oxford for North East team in 2021/22

OxNE organises sessions for students in Year 7-13, as well as teachers and families. The majority of our

work took place in state secondary schools which accounts for 88% of our engagement, whilst 11% of our work took place in sixth Form or FE Colleges and 1% in primary schools. As far as resources would allow, we would also like to work with primary-age pupils, to demystify Higher Education as a choice for the future.

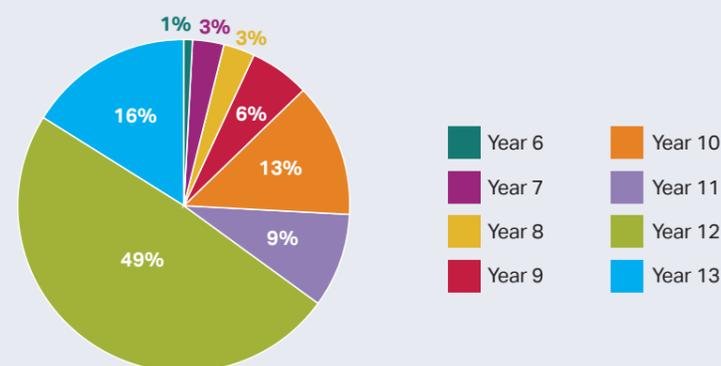
Types of school/college in which sessions were delivered



Year 12 students were prominent in the age profile of pupils in sessions, accounting for 49% of our engagement with students. Year 6 made up 1%, Year 7 and Year 8 accounted for 3% each, Year 9 made up 6%, Year 10 accounted for 13%, Year 11 made up 9%, and Year 13 made up 16%. The reduction

from Year 10 to Year 11 reflects the focus that is placed on preparation for GCSEs in that year. Year 13 engagement generally comes in the first term of the academic year, in line with the admissions cycle and before their sprint towards A-Level final exams.

Year group of pupils in our sessions delivered to a single year group



Whilst – as shown by the chart above – 65% of our sessions are delivered to Years 12 and 13, we actually work with greater numbers of individual students in Years 6 to 11. This is because sessions for younger pupils tend to be delivered to larger and less selective groups than when we engage young people at Key Stage 5.

In 2021-2022, OxNE worked with a total of 77 schools, which represented 48% of secondary schools across the North East. While 42 of these were schools that had no recent prior engagement with Oxford, further work remains to be done in engaging more schools in the region.

With the particular aim of making Oxford a realistic goal for young people from the North East, OxNE have also trained Student Ambassadors from colleges across the University of Oxford so that they can share their experiences of being a student from the region with prospective applicants. North East Ambassadors have played a key role in the following three case studies: the Aim for Oxford programme; the Brilliant Club North East Scholars Programme; and the North East Open Day Residential. They have also been essential participants in online Admissions Test and Interview Skills workshops, and in our in-person North East Offer Holder Event.

We believe it is crucial that prospective students have the opportunity to meet with current undergraduates from the region who have opted for the University of Oxford. Our in-person Offer-Holder event is one of the fora in which we make this happen; at the March 2022 event, held during the university vacation to enable ten current students to attend from the University, 48 Offer Holders joined us, together with 36 of their parents/carers. These opportunities also arise during our residential programmes and online workshops.

Work with parents & carers

We understand and aim to address parent and carer concerns relating to the costs and benefits of higher education and we believe working directly with this important group is crucial. Our work with parents/carers takes place in person and online. For example, at our annual Offer Holder event, we meet parents/carers of students who have already successfully applied to Oxford. In addition, we also work with parents/carers of younger students, and those without their own direct experience of Higher Education.

Work with teachers

Working with teachers is central to our delivery of Access & Outreach programmes, given the importance of colleagues to the formation of young people's aspirations. In 2021-22 we worked with a total of 134 teachers in online sessions, 5 whilst they were staying with us in colleges, and 8 in sessions delivered in schools. Following the success of these engagements, a more formal programme of online sessions will be delivered specifically for colleagues in the region in 2022-23.

In 2021-22 we worked with a total of 281 parents/carers from the region. We delivered six online sessions, with their flexibility of timing and location proving an attractive way to engage a range of participants. A further six sessions were delivered in person at partner schools and colleges.

Feedback was very positive. For instance, in a session in July 2022 focused particularly on parents of Year 12 students who may be actively considering an application to Oxford, three statements on the impact of the sessions elicited the following responses:

100% of parents agreed or strongly agreed
'I feel more informed about the benefits of going to the University of Oxford'

100% of parents agreed or strongly agreed
'I have a better understanding of the University of Oxford and the application process'

And **90%** of parents agreed or strongly agreed
'I feel more confident about supporting my child if they apply to Oxford'

28% of parents/carers who registered for the North East 2021-22 sessions said they had no direct experience of Higher Education.

In 2022-23, we hope to expand our support for parents, particularly those with no first-hand experience of going to university.

'Special thanks to Caitlyn [student ambassador from Sunderland], canny to see fellow North-Easterner smashing it at Oxford! Well done lass! The representation does help an over-anxious parent.'

A PARENT IN OUR REGIONAL PARENT/CARER ONLINE EVENT, JULY 2022, IN A SLIDO POLL RESPONSE EVALUATING 'WHAT WAS THE MOST USEFUL PART OF TODAY'S SESSION?'

'Welcome and facilities ... wealth of knowledge about admissions/ applications, appropriate to school context ... knowing our school context before the residential was ideal. Open day opportunities Very well looked after ... nothing was too much trouble.'

A TEACHER FROM STOCKTON JOINING US ON THE NE TEACHER RESIDENTIAL, 27-30 JUNE 2022, IN RESPONSE TO 'PLEASE COULD YOU ADD ANY COMMENTS ON ASPECTS OF THE RESIDENTIAL THAT YOU THINK WENT WELL'

CASE STUDY 1

AIM FOR OXFORD – OUR YEAR 12 SUSTAINED CONTACT AND RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMME

WHAT? Aim for Oxford is Oxford for North East's sustained-contact access scheme for young people in Year 12 from the North East of England. It is a two-year-long programme, which supports sixty high-achieving state school students from January in Year 12, through to making strong applications for, and then arriving at, Oxford.

WHY? Between 2015 and 2017, 36,504 candidates applied to Oxford for undergraduate study, of which 733 were from the North East. Of these North East applicants, 204 received offers – a success rate of 27.8% - higher than the overall UK success rate of 24%. As noted in the introduction, North East students are under-represented at the University of Oxford – the latest figures suggest by around 23%⁶ – and Aim for Oxford was conceived as a programme to capture more North East state-school students with the potential to apply for Top Tier universities.

HOW?

- In-person academic sessions delivered in the North East, and a four-night summer residential in Oxford;
- Academic enrichment and IAG sessions, opportunities to engage with University researchers and alumni, and support in completing an independent research task during the summer residential;
- Support with interview skills and continued support for Year 13 applicants, including opportunities to meet other Offer Holders from the North East of England.



Aim for Oxford students touring Christ Church library, a key resource for their independent research projects, August 2022

RESULTS

93% of students who participated in the 2021/22 summer residential agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed working on their academic project, and 94% agreed that this project would be useful for a university application. We saw a significant knowledge change in the cohort when it came to knowing what the tutors at Oxford would be looking for in an applicant – from 42% agreement before the start of the programme to 91% agreement.

The majority of the students who participate in Aim for Oxford continue on to Higher Education, or take time out before pursuing it. The students also engage with other outreach opportunities in the North East but all students agreed or strongly agreed that Aim for Oxford had increased their knowledge of Oxford and wider higher education.

Not every student on the programme will choose to apply to Oxford, but it is positive that 70% (26 of the 37) students completing the 2021-22 Aim to Oxford programme chose to make an application in the 2022 UCAS round for 2023 entry.

We see knowing more about Oxford's courses and the university as a sign of success, as well as how many go on to make a successful application. In 2019/20, Oxford offers were made to 28% of Aim for Oxford students who applied to the university. Whilst for both academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22 this figure fell to 23%, this remains higher than the overall offer rates nationally or regionally. This suggests that Aim for Oxford, combined with other engagement opportunities, contributes to engaging with and supporting potential Oxford students within the North East.

WHAT NEXT?

We have seen huge demand for this programme, with over 200 applicants for 60 places in 2021/22, so we are working to ensure that our selection process is rigorous, and that we can expand the programme to meet this demand without compromising the quality of what is delivered. We also want to ensure that we are offering some level of support to students who are unsuccessful in their applications, including the potential for an alternative residential experience at the Oxford.



Aim for Oxford students, Roof Garden at St Anne's College, August 2022

⁶ University of Oxford Annual Admissions Statistical Report 2023, 7: this figure is based on North East students forming a 2.8% share of UK students attaining AAA+ at A-Level, cf. a 2.4% proportion of UK students admitted to the University of Oxford, three-year total, 2020-22.

CASE STUDY 2

BRILLIANT CLUB NORTH EAST SCHOLARS PROGRAMME

Following the successes of the Aim for Oxford programme, Oxford for North East has looked to expand its sustained-contact provision to younger age groups. Piloted in 2021/22, Christ Church, St Anne's, and Trinity Colleges collaborated with The Brilliant Club to support a version of their Scholars Programme in the North East for Year 9 pupils. The Brilliant Club Scholars Programme 'gives pupils from non-selective state schools the opportunity to work with a PhD researcher to experience university style learning. It helps pupils develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to secure a place at a highly selective university'.⁷ The programme was tailored to deliver academic content on a topic that could lead to an Oxford undergraduate degree, and targeted at schools showing high rates of Free School Meals in areas of low reported progression to higher education. This collaborative Scholars Programme was launched with a free residential visit to Oxford, and a 50% subsidy for the programme was provided by the OxNE colleges.

Working with The Brilliant Club to target schools for

the programme allowed OxNE to establish contact with schools that had been quiet or entirely cold in terms of previous engagement with the consortium. Nine schools from County Durham, Darlington, Redcar and Cleveland, Sunderland, and Teesside took part, with the schools split geographically across the three colleges. 48% of our Year 9 participants were Pupil Premium, 30% had no parental history of HE, 76% were from the 40% most deprived areas in the country, and 93% met at least one of these criteria. The residential was planned and timetabled collaboratively but delivered as three separate trips across the three colleges, with schools arriving on shared coaches directly to their college host.

The residential programme included activities and workshops designed to enhance pupils' knowledge of university and student life, including in key areas such as finance and workload. This was supported by a carousel of academic taster sessions and visits to museums and libraries. Pupils also remotely received their first Scholars Programme tutorials while on the Oxford residential.



Students asking ambassadors Marcus (from Hexham) and Olviya (from Teesside) about university life, Brilliant Club Residential, Trinity College, April 2022

Feedback on the launch residential was highly positive. 94% of pupils on the Christ Church residential agreed that they had learned a lot about university, that they felt more confident about going to university in future, and that they were now aware of the benefits of higher education. The same proportion of respondents also agreed that the trip had been helpful and fun!

Progress on the programme was considerable, with 87.4% total tutorial attendance, and OxNE participants outperforming their peers nationally in terms of final outcomes despite their mean baseline scores (an assessed piece of homework after their first tutorial) at the start of the programme being below average, only further highlighting their progress. Pupil Premium students made a staggering 40% progress between their baseline scores and their final assessments, compared to 23% nationally. 82.6% of our Pupil Premium Cohort scored either a first or upper second class on their final assignments. We also saw excellent results in terms of change in attitudes towards Higher Education: our cohort strongly outperformed the national averages in self-reported change in confidence that they can succeed at university, are knowledgeable about university, and feel a sense of belonging at university.

WHAT NEXT?

Following this successful pilot scheme, the Scholars Programme with OxNE is set to run again for 2022/23 for a new set of schools across the region, with targeting focused on schools that best match the criteria for The Scholars Programme, especially those with no prior contact with Oxford for North East.

'It is a nice, welcoming place for everyone to learn.'

'There is lots of financial support available to students and the welfare of students is looked after.'

'The food is affordable and still delicious, and the people are friendly rather than snobby.'

IN BRIEF:

- 50%** Programme subsidy from Oxford for North East
- 9** School placements
- 12** Pupils per placement
- 48%** Pupil Premium
- 30%** No parental history of Higher Education (first generation students)
- 76%** From the 40% most deprived areas in the country
- 93%** Meeting at least one of the target criteria
- 87.4%** Tutorial attendance rate
- 40%** Average progress from baseline assessments
- 17%** Overperformance compared to national average
- 82.6%** Of Pupil Premium participants achieving a first or 2:1 in their assignment
- 17%** Increase in belief that pupils can get into university and succeed there
- 29%** Increase in confidence in knowledge about university

	% agreement
I learned a lot about university	94
I feel more confident about going to university in future	94
I am aware of the benefits of higher education	94
The trip has been helpful and fun	94

⁷ The Brilliant Club, 'The Scholars Programme' at <https://thebrilliantclub.org/the-scholars-programme/> (10 October 2023).

CASE STUDY 3

NORTH EAST OPEN DAY RESIDENTIAL

'The first-hand experience of seeing the University and being part of it for a few days. That is entirely different from reading and watching about it and instead gives a really clear indication of what being an Oxford student would entail and how to achieve and earn a place.'

'I have learnt that Oxford is not as intimidating as I thought, I feel the stigmas have been debunked which has helped me feel confident about applying.'

Following a return to in-person Open Days at the University of Oxford, Oxford for North East was able to welcome students from across the region for a free residential visit to Oxford to tie-in with the University's Open Days. This was organised for 27-30th June 2022. A virtual 'North East Alternative Residential' had complemented the virtual Open Days during the pandemic. The aim was to offer 120 North-East students from state schools and colleges the opportunity to sample Open Day in a

supported way, provide them with free travel and accommodation, with plenty of opportunity to interact with current North East undergraduates.

Of the 120 students given a place on the programme, 115 students attended from a total of 23 schools and colleges in the region. 109 students fed back their evaluation of the residential, including responses to the following statements:

	% agreement
I understand better what top universities are looking for in their students	97.2
I understand the Oxford application processes more clearly	95.4
I know more about what it would be like to be a student at the University of Oxford	95.4
I know more about the course(s) that interest me	90.8

Of the 109 students feeding back information on the North East Residential, 47 went on to apply for Oxford University in the 2022 UCAS round for 2023 entry. Of these 47 students applying, 28 were shortlisted for interviews, and the university made offers to 15 students. Whilst naturally the cohort

seeking out the NE Residential opportunity may differ from the general application cohort in terms of their commitment to making the application, this relatively high offer rate of 31.9% for NE Residential students applying is significantly higher than the medium-term average of 20.0% for UK applicants.⁸



North East Residential students, staff and ambassadors, Garden Quad Trinity College, June 2022

IN TERMS OF THEIR QUALITATIVE RESPONSES, STUDENTS FED BACK:

Potentially transformative experiences...

'I can be independent, which was useful to try before I go to University.'

'I have the confidence to move away from home for university'

'How cool Oxford is as a city and that I definitely want to go to university'

'I enjoyed the independence the most, we were treated like real students and were trusted to make use of our time'

Changing perceptions...

'The university is not as scary as I thought it would be'

'The community at Oxford is a lot more open and friendly than I thought it would be, and the ambassadors were really amazing to talk to from that point of view.'

'The idea that Oxford University is an elite, unreachable place is a misconception.'

'The student ambassadors have been amazing and so so helpful, they clearly cared a lot and it definitely seems like the university cares a lot about its students too'

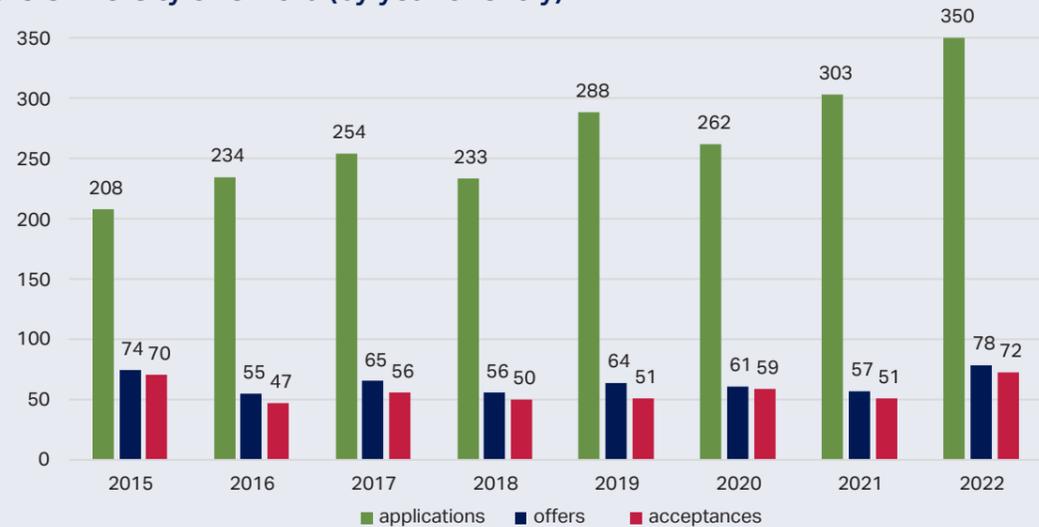
WHAT NEXT?

The success of the 2021-22 programme has led us to consider expanding this residential in 2022-23, or offering another one during the Easter break. By focusing on a two- rather than three-night North East Residential, for a broadly similar cost we could offer the experience to more students in addition to the residential offered to Aim for Oxford students.

Access to Oxford

This year has seen a significant rise in the volume of outreach activity from OxNE, which would be expected in the recovery from a pandemic.

Applications, offers and acceptances of students from North-East England to the University of Oxford (by year of entry)

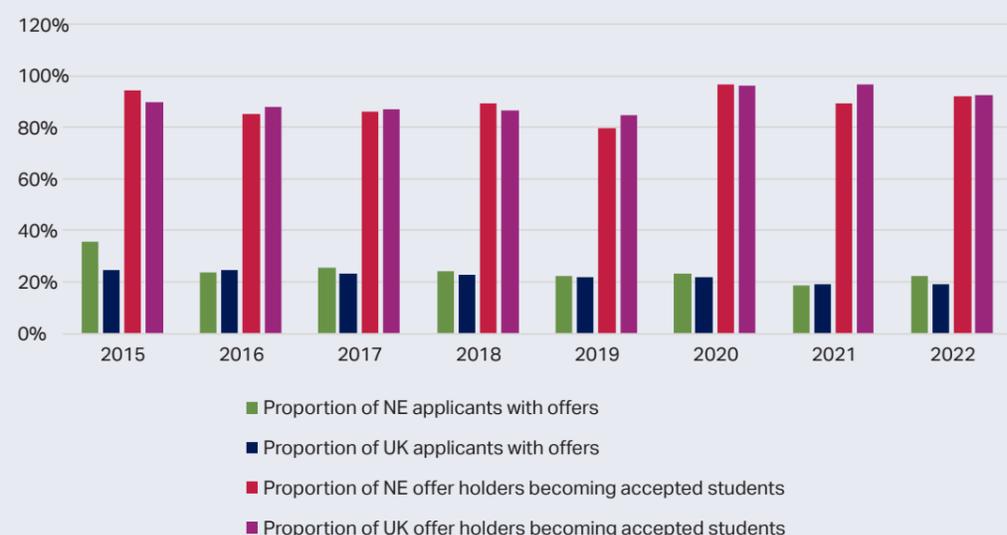


There has been a positive upward trend since 2015 in the number of applications from students in North-East England, with a general trend also of a rise in the number of offers and acceptances⁹, with some swings from year to year.

As well as looking at the trends in acceptances, offers and applications, we examine two ratios derived from these figures. Firstly, it is important to analyse the proportion of offers to applications in the region. In the eight years covered by the graph above, this has varied from 35.6% in 2015 to a low of 18.8%

in 2021, and for six of the eight years has remained steadily in the 22.2%-25.6% range. Crucially, to address whether applicants from the region seem to have a better or worse chance of being offered a place at the university, we compare these proportions with the national figures for UK applicants each year. With the exception of 2015, the proportion of North East students being made offers has been within 3% of the proportion of UK students made offers nationally; sometimes a little higher, in some years a little lower, suggesting no significant difference.

Comparison of Oxford offer rates and acceptance rates of students from North-East England with UK applicants overall



By looking also at the proportion of offers leading to acceptances, we examine whether there is a difference between the conversion of offers into acceptances. Offers are of course not accepted by some applicants; some accept an offer and then do not attain the required A-Level/equivalent grades, with the college making the offer being unable to accept them. In the eight years depicted above, for North East students the proportion of offers leading to acceptances has varied from a low of 79.7% (2019 entry) to a high of 94.6% in 2015 (2022 entry: 92.3%). Comparing these figures with the equivalent national figures for UK applicants from all regions, we find that the proportion for North East students has consistently been within 5% of the national figure – sometimes a little higher, in some years a little lower. There was one exception in 2021, when an 89.5% rate of acceptances from North East offers was more than 7% lower than the 96.8% for UK applicants nationally.

The conclusion from both series of proportions is that over time, the rate at which applicants from North-East England are awarded offers, and the propensity of those offers to be converted into acceptances, does not differ significantly from those for applicants across the UK.

In Summary

We have been delighted to see continued engagement from across the region at all age ranges, not just in the year groups set to apply in the next admissions cycle.

In terms of aims 1 and 2, ‘increasing knowledge of the benefits of higher education’ and ‘demystifying Oxford’, programmes such as our collaboration with The Brilliant Club have been a resounding success, with the outcomes and evaluation showing progress in changing attitudes positively. Comments from students such as, ‘it isn’t as scary as people make it out to be’, ‘money isn’t as tight as commonly believed’, and ‘once you are here everything isn’t as bad as people said’, demonstrate the importance of continuing to work on challenging stereotypes and providing accurate information about the costs and benefits of university across the range of age groups we work with. Increased engagement with Key Stage 3 will allow us to continue communicating the benefits of higher education and the realities of

studying at universities like Oxford before learners embark on the important pathway through GCSEs and A-Levels.

Our regular engagement with the range of year groups in the North East, though particularly Key Stage 5, has also allowed us to ‘increase awareness of the breadth of university courses’ and their career destinations, and educate and inform on the distinctive features of an Oxford education – as well as more generally what to expect in the differences between school and university learning. That c.9,400 young people engaged with these sessions in 2021/22 suggests that we are making inroads into spreading a realistic and accurate awareness of university education, the options it provides, and how it differs from school (including the distinctive features of the University of Oxford) to young people across the North East of England.

Our range of programmes and sessions also focus heavily on supporting prospective applicants through the admissions process. While offers and acceptances from the region rose in 2022, the rise in students taking up a place at Oxford has not yet matched the pace of the rise in applications, which suggests there is more work to be done in preparing applicants for success – though of course this is a complex challenge influenced by multitudes of factors. However, with over 700 Year 13s being offered specialised application support, the foundations for us to be able to support this process as a consortium are firmly in place.

No single activity will ever cover all nine goals at once, and nor should they if we want our work to be focused, targeted, and effective. However, in sustained-contact programmes such as Aim for Oxford, we can provide activities and sessions that, over the course of the year, engage with each of those goals in a meaningful way, equipping young people with greater awareness, skills, motivation, and confidence when thinking about progression onto higher education and Oxford more specifically. With a combination of these sorts of carefully structured sustained-contact programmes and our targeted ad hoc work, we are pleased to see progress in our coverage of both our goals and the number of students across the full geography of the region that we work with.

⁹ acceptances: students admitted to the university in October of the entry year, usually following A-Level/equivalent results

What Next?

We have noted some further developments that we wish to take for our three case studies:

- Provision for students not accepted onto the Aim for Oxford programme
 - Continued collaboration with the Brilliant Club to run the Scholars Programme with a new set of schools in the North East
 - Expanded capacity for the North East Open Day Residential, whether within that programme or in opening up another residential opportunity.
- for the 2022/23 academic year:
- Increase our provision for teachers across the region
 - Increased opportunities for parents and supporters to engage with our programmes
 - Expand our provision for Key Stage 4 (Years 10/11)

From our own experience of working in the region, as well as consideration of the types of activities that we have organised in 2021/22, we also intend to have the following ambitions at the forefront of our activities

It has been a pleasure to return to in-person activities with schools across the region in 2021/22 and we look forward to continuing to raise the ambitions and aspirations of so many young people, their teachers and families across the region in 2022/23.



Joel (Christ Church) engages a group of Year 7s and Year 8s in Northumbria



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