

Oxford for North East

Our Impact 2022-2023

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 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 residentials 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 2022 to August 2023.



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. Previously a student at Oxford after attending a state school in Derbyshire, she arrived at St Anne's following a career in a Sixth Form of an Academy in London.

Hannah works primarily 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, and to pick up fish and chips from Seaburn.

Supporting the St Anne's team during Hannah's Maternity Leave for three months of this period under review here were Jackie and George. Jackie is a former Vice Principal and English teacher, most recently from a state secondary school in Oxford, and George, a former state school student from Hertfordshire who finished his MPhysPhil in Physics and Philosophy at Oxford in 2023.



Joel Butler, Access & Schools Liaison Officer, Christ Church

Joel has been working at Christ Church since January 2022, having defended his DPhil thesis 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 2022/23

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 2022-23.



How we work

Oxford for North East is a consortium of Oxford colleges (Christ Church, St Anne's College and Trinity College) who deliver outreach work in the North East region. 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 with students from as young an age as possible. Working in partnership with attainment-raising organisations such as the Brilliant Club. 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 disadvantage 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.¹

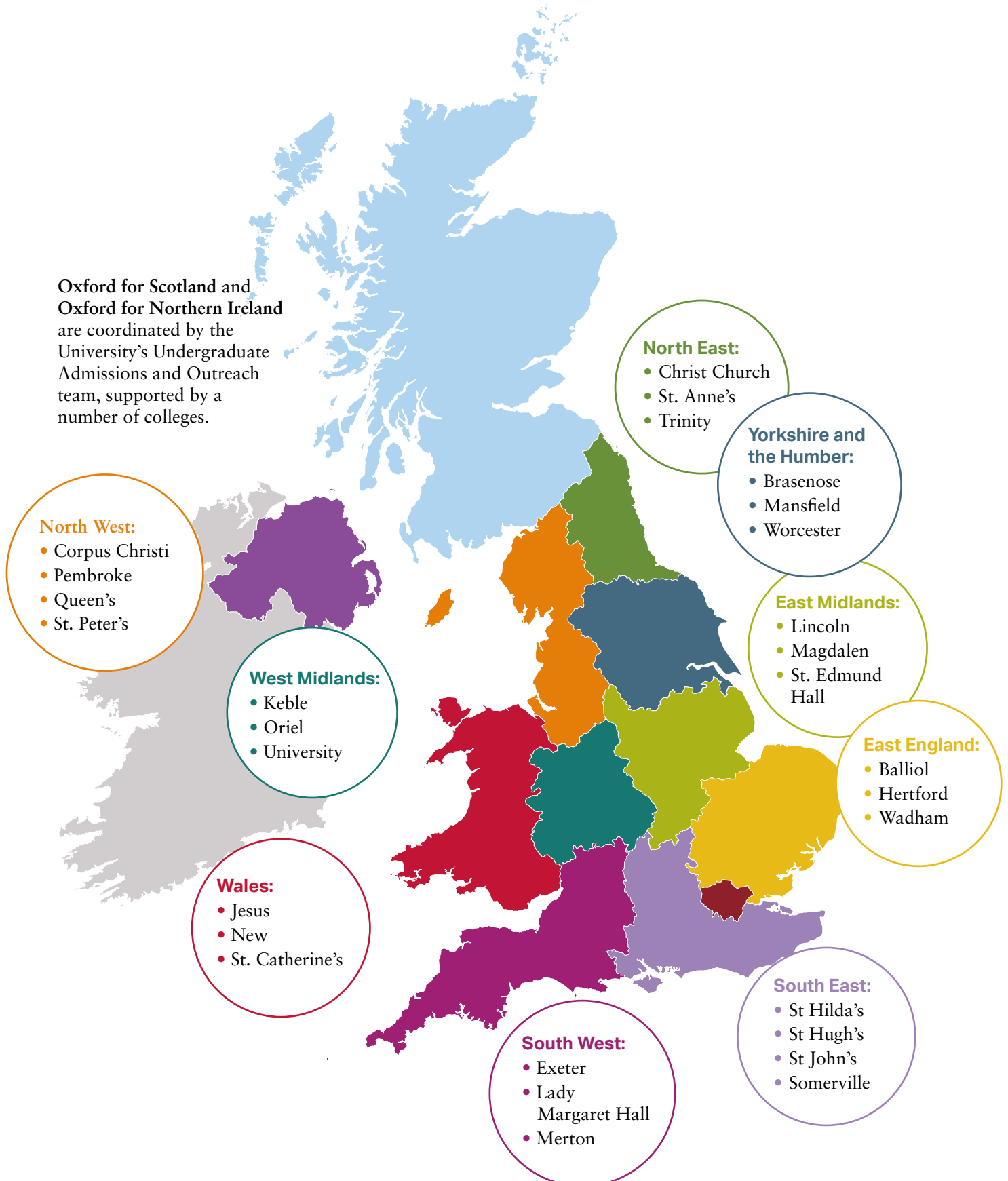
A particularly important targeting metric is Free School Meals. The North East of England has one of the UK's highest rates of children qualifying for FSM (33.3% in 2023, of students in secondary schools in the region – cf. 27.1% average for England)². FSM is one of the most significant indicators of 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.

¹ 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.

² DfE, *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics*, 2022-23, published June 2023: FSM6 measure (pupils eligible for FSM at any time in the previous 6 years), figures for North East region and England overall.

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 in the region 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 particularly targets secondary schools, 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

The North East's share of all UK school students attaining AAA+ is 2.5%; applications from the region make up 2.2% of all UK applicants to Oxford, and 2.5% of students admitted to the University.³ In the short term, our aim has been to see the region's admittance proportion matching its share of AAA+ attainment across the UK and, following some slight under-representation on the basis of these metrics in recent years, this was achieved for the first time in the 2021-23 three-year cycle. Longer term, we aim to see access to Oxford from the region increase further by supporting a rise in attainment where we can work with students on a sustained basis, for instance on the Aim for Oxford programme or the Brilliant Club Scholars' Programmes (see further exploration of both below).

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.⁴

We recognise that many students in the North East of England opt to study at a university within the region. Amongst all the English regions, the proportion of university students who are classed as short-distance commuters to their university, 33.2% are from the North East, the most of any region.⁵ 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.⁶

We also recognise that, quite rightly, finance, strong community and family ties can all influence this decision. 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.



³ University of Oxford, 'Annual Admissions Statistical Report' (June 2024), p.7.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Sutton Trust, *Home and Away: Social, Ethnic and Spatial Inequalities in Student Mobility*, February 2018, table 4, 'Mobility Type and Students' Home Region', 16.

⁶ *ibid.*, table 2, 'Social Class and Student Mobility 2014-15', 14.

OXNE AIMS – 2022/23

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 also 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 meet **The University of Oxford's targets and aims for 2022-23, which were as follows:**

OFS ⁷ 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.

⁷ 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 2022/23, OxNE ran **230 activities** that offered information, advice and guidance, or advised on the benefits of university and course choices, for students from Year 5 to Year 13 (2021-22: 177)

2

Awareness of Higher Education

In 2022/23, an estimated **8,505 young people** attended events and sessions offered by Oxford for North East and its colleges (2021-22: 9,436)

3

Improving skills and motivation for University, subject knowledge, attainment

During 2022/23, over **840 students** from Year 7 to Year 12 participated in academic tasters or Oxplore sessions designed to encourage critical thinking and deeper learning (2021-22: 400)

4

Increasing understanding of the admissions process

In 2023/24, **312 Year 13 students** received specific application support through in-person and online workshops (2021-22: 700)

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 2023-23 in numbers

230
events in
schools

organised
by Oxford
for North East
(2021-22: 216)

8,505

North East students
reached through Oxford
for North East activities
(2021-22: 8,662)

92 schools
engaged in Oxford
for North East
events (2021-22: 81)

44
teachers

joining in Oxford
for North East
information and
CPD workshops
(2021-22: 134)

246

parents and carers
engaged in Oxford
for North East events
(2021-22: 302)

42
Year 13 Offer Holders
& **22**
parents/carers
attended the
North East Offer
Holder event in
Newcastle



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 2022/23 Programme

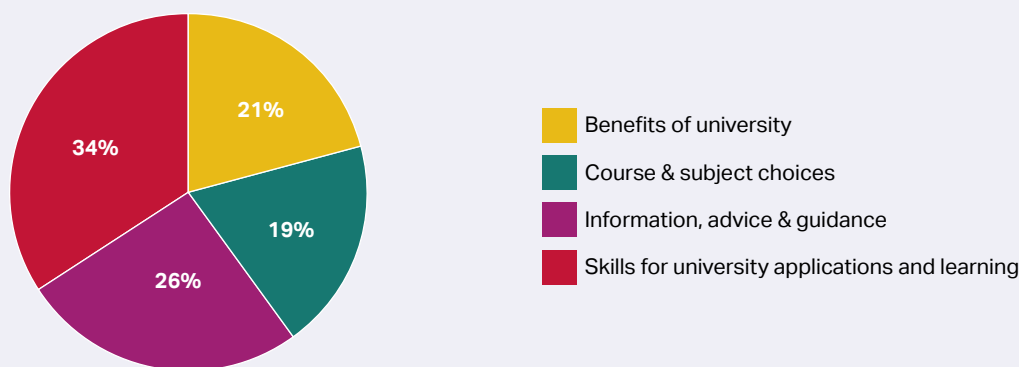
How effectively does OXNE offer up-to-date information, advice, and guidance to students, parents, and teachers about studying in higher education and the University of Oxford, and the skills required to do this?

OxNE Outputs

OxNE offers a combination of in person and online events. 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



34% of our sessions with young people focused on developing the skills for competitive university applications and learning. 26% focused on Information, Advice, and Guidance. 21% primarily provided information on the benefits of university,

while 19% looked at course & subject choice-specific material. This represents a similar proportion of work in each area as in the previous year (2021-22: 36%, 31%, 19% & 14% respectively).

Work with students and schools

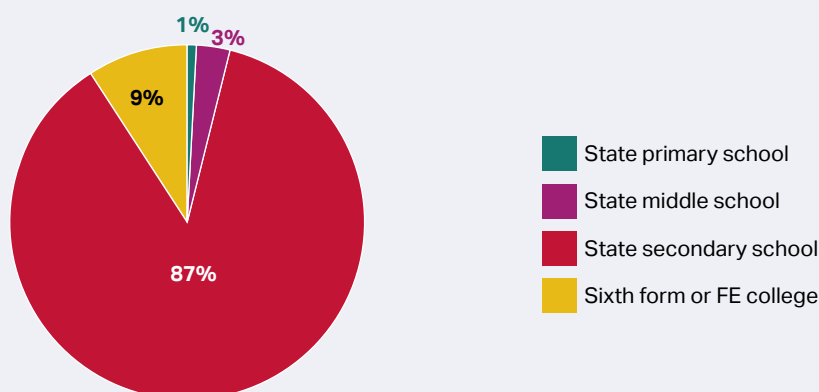
8,505 students in the region attended at least one event delivered by the Oxford for North East team in 2022-23 (2021-22: 8,662).

Which schools did we work with?

OxNE organises sessions for students in primary school years through to Year 13, as well as teachers and families. The majority of our work took place

in state secondary schools which accounted for 87% of our engagement, whilst 9% of our work took place in sixth Form or FE Colleges and 4% in middle or primary schools. These proportions very closely matched those from the previous year, with a little more work with younger pupils, in line with our desire to work with younger minds with a view to demystifying Higher Education.

Types of school/college in which sessions were delivered



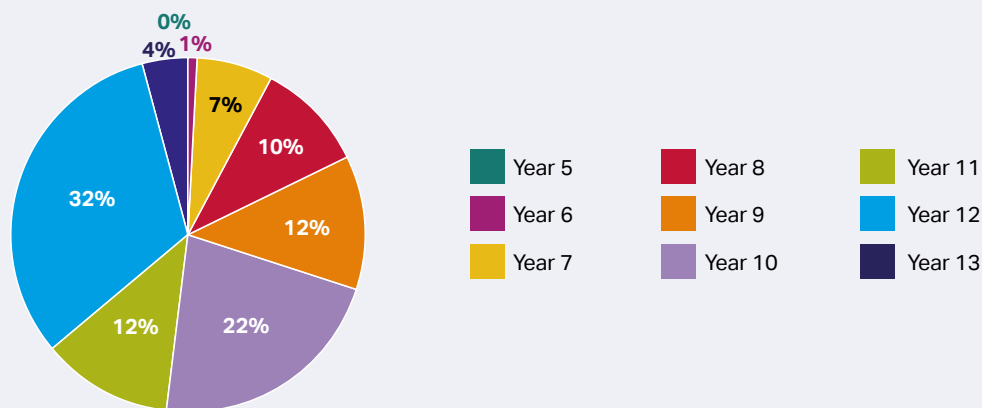
In 2022-23, OxNE worked with a total of 92 schools (2021-22: 81), with the 80 secondary schools in that total representing nearly half of the 174 state-funded mainstream secondary schools in the region.⁸

Which students did we work with?

Sixth-form students were again prominent in the age profile of students we worked with, but with the aim of having an impact on longer-term aspirations, we sought to work with a younger profile of students in 2022-23, and achieved this. It is still crucial for us to ensure that those who are looking towards university

applications are well served: 32% of students worked with were in Year 12 and 4% were in Year 13. However, it is pleasing that the proportion of students we supported in Year 9 and 10 - arguably key years for the formation of aspirations for 16, 18 and beyond - were higher in 2022-23. 12% of students to whom we delivered were Year 9 students and 22% were Year 10 students: we worked with 55% more Year 10 students in 2022-23 than in the previous year, (2022-23: 1,906; 2021-22: 1,228) and 43% more Year 9 pupils than in 2021-22 (2022-23: 1,021; 2021-22: 714).

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



Working with North East Students at the University of Oxford

We believe it is crucial to grow the network of students from the region whilst they are at Oxford, and hold an annual North East welcome event for new and experienced undergraduates in their first few weeks of their first term. Hearing about Oxford for North East's work, or having already experienced it first hand, also encourages current undergraduates to join our cohort of North East Ambassadors. There is no substitute for young people in the region meeting people of a similar age who are thriving at the University of Oxford, and ambassadors are pivotal in providing support during events in Oxford such as our Year 12 North East Residential and KS4 Brilliant Club Residential, as well as our in-region Offer Holder Event for current offer holders, with the March 2023 attended by 42 students and 22 parents/carers.



Oxford Offer Holders at our in-region Offer Holder event, March 2023, Discovery Museum, Newcastle

⁸ DfE, *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics*, June 2023.

Work with parents and 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. The online sessions support parents of young people in Years 10 to Year 12 and pre-suppose no prior knowledge of Higher Education, and are an important part of our work to de-mystify both Higher Education and the University of Oxford.

'The representation from northern students'

'Really enjoyed hearing about the ambassadors' experiences'

'Hearing directly from the students'

SLIDO POLL FEEDBACK TO THE QUESTION
'WHAT WAS THE MOST USEFUL PART
OF TODAY'S SESSION?', OCTOBER 2022
PARENT/CARER ONLINE EVENT.

In 2022-23 we worked with a total of 246 parents/carers from the region, with very positive feedback:

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



Pilot alumni event: Trinity College President Hilary Boulding discussing our work, Mining Institute Newcastle, September 2022

97% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that *'I have a better understanding of the University of Oxford and the application process'*

And **97%** of parents strongly agreed or agreed that *'I feel more confident about supporting my child if they apply to Oxford'*

25% of parents/carers who registered for our parent/carer sessions said they had no first-hand experience of Higher Education. We hope to expand our support for parents/carers of first-generation prospective students in future years. Just 7% of parents/carers registering for our sessions said that their family was entitled to Free School Meals – a proportion well below the national and particularly the regional average. As young people qualifying for free school meals remain greatly under-represented at university, we aim to engage more parents from the widest backgrounds in future years.

Work with teachers

Working with teachers is central to our delivery of Access and Outreach programmes. By developing core relationships with teachers in our access and outreach work, we believe OxNE can offer more effective support to all students thinking about higher education, and potential Oxford applicants.

In 2022-23 we worked with a total of 44 teachers in online sessions, with 5 sessions also delivered on bespoke topics to teachers in schools. These were particularly well received, on teacher references (addressing the new format of teacher references to be used in UCAS applications in Autumn 2022) and on admissions tests (supporting departmental colleagues with their helping students in specific subject areas). As a consortium we worked with fewer teachers online this year (cf. 134 in 2021-22) and we have opted to move our online support for teachers in the region into the well-established Trinity College Teacher CPD programme.

Work with alumni

In September 2022 the University Development Office chose the North East for its first in-region alumni event, with 90 university alumni who are now based in the region, with matriculation dates ranging from the 1950s to the 2020s. 21 current Oxford students from the North East also joined the event.

We felt that this was a really useful networking two-way opportunity, both in being able to explain our work in the region, and meeting alumni based in the region who would be keen to support our work. A number of attendees on this evening have since offered their help with in-region sessions and their enthusiasm and insight is appreciated.

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 2021 and 2023, 43,381 UK students applied to Oxford for undergraduate study, of which 975 were from the North East. Of these North East applicants, 210 received offers – a success rate of 21.5% - higher than the overall UK success rate of 19.5%. North East students have historically been slightly under-represented at the University of Oxford, although the latest figures (for entry years 2021-23) suggest that there is now no regional representation gap (see p.6 above), 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.

RESULTS

86% of students who participated in the 2022/23 summer residential agreed or strongly agreed that they now knew what Oxford tutors would be looking for in an applicant, a huge increase from 26% before the programme started. Before the start of the programme, 62% of participants who completed the evaluation said they were very likely or definitely going to apply to Oxford. Of those who were less likely to apply to Oxford, at least one applicant expressed doubts about fitting in at Oxford or wanting to move away from home to go to university. The figure for those who were more likely to apply increased to 66% after completion of the programme, with those less likely to apply citing informed reasons such as course availability and suitability, grade and subject requirements, or intentions to apply to Cambridge instead.

Students have consistently given positive feedback about the academic project element of the Aim for Oxford Residential. In 2021/22, 91% said they enjoyed working on their academic project, and 94% agreed that this project would be useful for a university application.

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 57% (24 of 42) students completing the 2022/23 Aim to Oxford programme chose to make an application in the 2023 UCAS round for 2024 entry. This is down from 70% in 2021/22, but is reflective of more students attending the Aim for Oxford Residential (42 v. 37).



Aim for Oxford students presenting an independent research project on cancer, August 2023

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. Success rates for 2022/23 also reached 23% when controlled to exclude applicants whose predicted grades were not sufficient for the courses to which they applied, or 21% when including all applicants.

WHAT NEXT?

We have seen huge demand for this programme, with over 200 applicants for 60 places in 2022/23, 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 wanted 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, and achieved this with an additional Spring Residential for some students unsuccessful in applying for Aim for Oxford.



Aim for Oxford students with Oxford staff and ambassadors, Roof Garden at St Anne's College, August 2023

CASE STUDY 2

BRILLIANT CLUB NORTH EAST SCHOLARS PROGRAMME

Following a successful pilot year in 2021-22, the Brilliant Club Oxford for North East Scholars' Programme again tailored this national programme, which enables young learners to experience university-style learning over the course of a taught programme working with early-career PhD researchers, to the North East setting. The programme contains challenging topics which are deliberately cross-curricular, and in some cases ethically challenging too.⁹ Targeted at schools with relatively high eligibility for Free School Meals, in areas of relatively low progression to Higher Education, this programme

was again launched with a residential visit to Christ Church, St Anne's College or Trinity College in March 2023 for 112 Year 9 students from eight schools in the region.

50% of students on this year's cohort were eligible for Free School Meals, which is relatively very high, compared with the North East secondary school average, itself the highest of any region in England.¹⁰ 57% of the students' parents had no history of Higher Education, higher than any sample of parents/carers we had registered in our parent/carer sessions.



Scholars' Programme placements in Summer 2022-23

The Brilliant Club Scholars' Programme has a geographical reach predominantly in the south of England and the Midlands, so it is pleasing to be able to bring students in the North East into the programme.



Brilliant Club North East Year 9 scholars with teachers and North East ambassadors Lauren (from Blyth) and Marcus (from Hexham), Trinity College, March 2023

⁹ The 8 programme topics and taught courses: *Will Artificial Intelligence Be Good For Us?*, *The Evolution of Veiling*, *Are Animals Genuinely Represented through Literature?*, *Through the Bookwormhole: Exploring L-Space with Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman*, *Lights to Reach New Heights!*, *Climate Change: Political Action within the UK*, *Working Through Loss: the Power of Poetry to Express Complex Emotions*, and *Writing Lives and Life Writing: Telling Your Life Story*.

¹⁰ 33.3% for North East secondary schools, and 27.1% for all secondary schools in England; DfE, *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics*, 2022-23, published June 2023: FSM6 measure (pupils eligible for FSM at any time in the previous 6 years), North East regional and national figures.

Alongside Information Advice & Guidance sessions relating to Higher Education, the residential programme included visits to museums in Oxford, fun activities such as scavenger hunts around the city, and sessions led by student ambassadors, all of whom are current students from the North East at the University of Oxford. Some feedback on the residential:

Evaluation statement at the conclusion of the residential	% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with statement
I am now much more likely to consider university as a possible future option	87%
I know more about what it would be like to be a student at the University of Oxford	93%
I know more about the cost of university and the financial support that is available	100%

'I've loved this; it's been fab!'

'Oxford is a really beautiful place with Rich History and I have really enjoyed my time here. I may be considering Oxford as a possible choice but we will have to see what's in store for my future! – all my friends agree too.'

'I touched a cockroach'

[reflecting on an Insects session at the Museum of Natural History]

Students went on to attend a series of online tutorials over the following Summer term, with 84% average attendance at these modules. They were then charged with completing a written assignment on their research project, with 71% submitting a final assignment. Students then evaluated their skills in three areas, with their sentiments before and after the programme compared:

	% agreeing before the programme	% agreeing after the programme
Academic skill: I can assess how reliable information is when reading a text	45%	73%
Academic skill: I can clearly explain my ideas, even when writing about complicated things	55%	73%
University knowledge: I know a lot about what it is like to be a student at university	36%	73%
Sense of belonging: I would fit in well with others at university	64%	73%

The Scholars Programme has a wide national reach. 5,868 students in 366 schools completed a Scholars' Programme in 2022-23, including the eight Oxford for North East programme schools. All outcomes (such as progress between baseline and final assignment) for the North East students were in line with those for students on other Scholars' Programmes. There was also no statistically significant difference in the attainment of those North East students in receipt of Free School Meals, from those of students not in receipt of them.¹¹

¹¹The Brilliant Club, *Programme and Impact Report: Oxford for North East 2022-23*, September 2023.

CASE STUDY 3

NORTH EAST YEAR 12 RESIDENTIALS

What was the most useful part of the North East Residential?

'I realised exactly what I wanted to apply for at Oxford and viewed some colleges that I really liked.

The student helpers were great. Answered everything effectively so I fully understand what Oxford is truly like.'

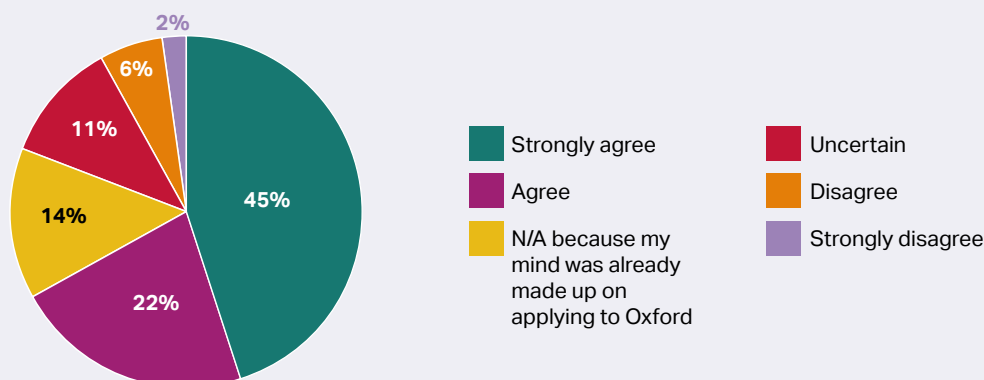
'I definitively know what I'm going to study at university. Also I wasn't really thinking about Oxford before this trip. But now I'm more likely to apply due to the beautiful surroundings and friendly atmosphere.'

'Getting to experience what living in a college was like and being able to explore Oxford in the evening when there were not swarms or prospective students everywhere.'

Our North East Open Day Residential took place again in June 2023. This event aims to offer state-school students an opportunity to sample Open Day in a supported way, provide them with free travel and accommodation in one of the three Oxford for North

East colleges – with Lincoln College also joining us in offering rooms - with plenty of opportunity to interact with current undergraduates and prospective applicants from North-East England.

Following the NE Residential, I am more likely to apply to Oxford



120 students were offered a place on the programme; 109 attended the residential, from a total of 28 schools and colleges in the region of whom 89 provided feedback:

Following my visit to Oxford...	% agreement
I understand what competitive universities are looking for in an applicant	99.0
I understand the Oxford application and admissions process	100
I understand what life at an Oxford college would be like	93.3
I have a clear idea of what subject I would like to study at university	86.5
I know how Oxford is different to other universities	92.1
I know what it would be like to be a student at Oxford	92.1
I know about the cost of university and the financial support available	67.4
I know where to go to find out more information about the University of Oxford	86.5
I feel motivated to work hard in school to give me more options in my future	97.8

Of the 109 students attending the 2023 North East Residential, 50 (46%) went on to apply for the University of Oxford for 2024 entry, with 58% of these applicants being shortlisted for interviews. The University of Oxford made offers to 11 of these 50 applicants.

This 46% application rate of those attending the residential was an increase on the proportion of 2022 Residential attendees applying (43%), and the offer rate of 22% for those who applied was higher than the 3-year average for all UK applicants.¹²

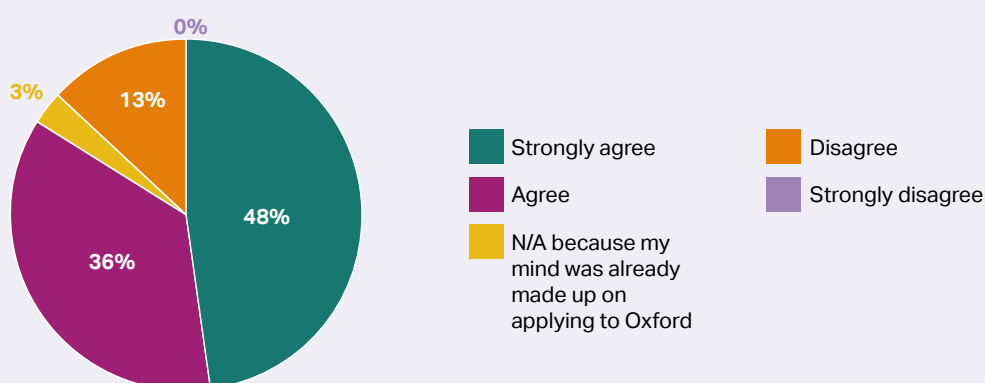


North East Residential students and ambassadors, the Lawns, Trinity College, June 2023

The 2023 North East Residential application success rate was lower than that of the 2022 Residential, however (31.9%) This may have been due to the one-off provision in 2023 of a Spring Residential, attended by 64 students who had applied, but not been selected for, the Aim for Oxford programme. As applicants for the Aim for Oxford programme (see case study 1, above), their applications had been subject to even more eligibility and selection criteria than the North East Residential.

The Spring Residential saw 64 students from North-East state schools staying at Christ Church for three days and two nights in April 2023, during schools' Easter holidays, for an immersive experience to find out more about the University and colleges, take part in workshops on super-curricular enrichment, personal statements, Admissions Tests and Interviews. As with the North East Residential, feedback from attendees was very positive, particularly on the likelihood of applying to Oxford (see following pie chart).

Following the Spring Residential, I am more likely to apply to Oxford



Of the 64 students attending the Spring 2023 Residential, 22 subsequently applied to the University of Oxford for 2024 entry. 13 of those students were shortlisted for interview, and the University made offers to 6 students, an offer rate of 27%.

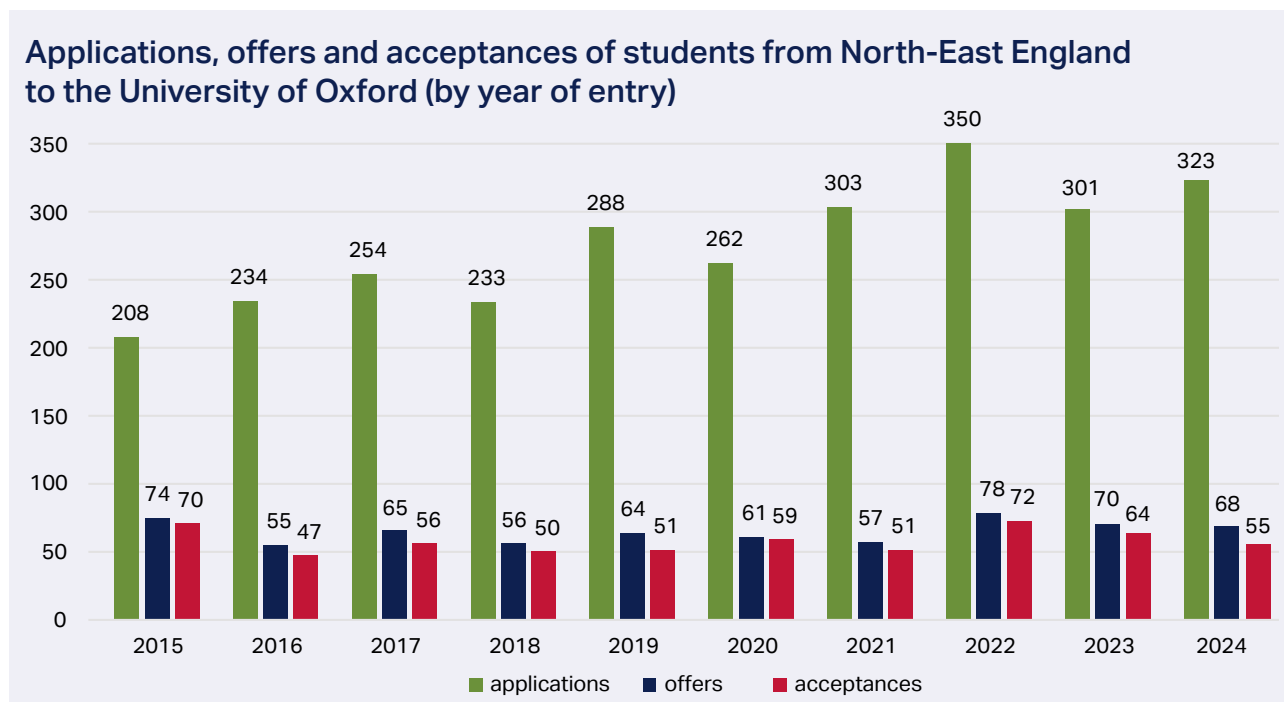
Across the three residential visits to Oxford offered by OxNE (Aim for Oxford, the Spring Residential

and the North East Open Day Residential), 22 students received offers from the University of Oxford, an average offer rate of 23%, nearly 4% higher than the national average success rate. A further positive is provided by the overall picture of Offer Holders in North-East England: Oxford for North East have worked with the vast majority of those receiving an offer in Autumn 2023.

¹² University of Oxford Annual Admissions Statistical Report 2024, 7, table 2.1: 8,446 offers were made to 43,381 UK applicants, an offer rate of 19.5%; 3-year total 2021-23.

Access to Oxford

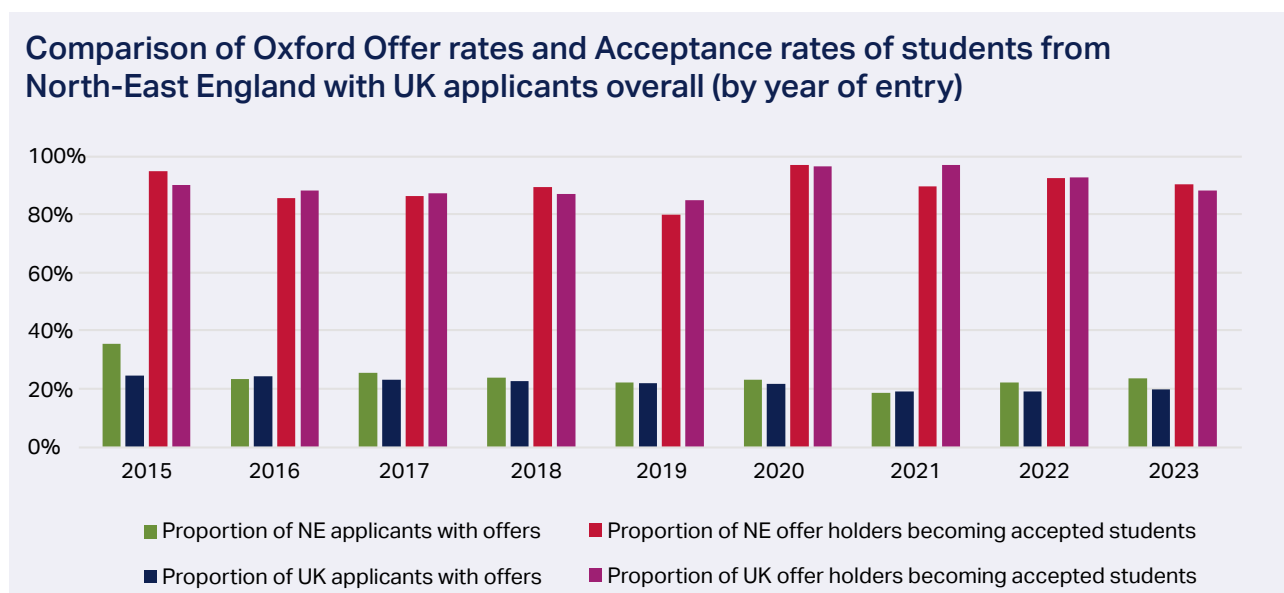
This year has seen a significant rise in the volume of outreach activity from OxNE, which would be expected in the recovery from a pandemic.



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 acceptances,¹³ 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 nine years fully covered by the graph above, this has varied from 35.6% in 2015 to a low of 18.8% in 2021, and for seven of the nine 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, with the North East's figures for the most recent two entry years comparing favourably with the national rate:



¹³ acceptances: students admitted to the university in October of the entry year, usually following A-Level/equivalent results

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 nine 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 (2023 entry: 90.1%). 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. In the most recent year of entry, 2023, the proportion of North East students converting offers into acceptances, 90.1%, was higher than the rate for students across the UK as a whole, of 88.1%.

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.

On pp.13-14 above, we analysed the partner schools and students we are working with. Whilst it is a long-run desire to work with a greater number of schools, and more relatively disadvantaged schools, of the thirty state schools in the region with applicants who were accepted in the 2023 entry year, we worked with 27 of those schools in 2022-23. As far as resources allow, we will continue to widen the search, but this coverage would suggest that we are serving a great proportion of our current potential applicants.

In Summary

It has been a pleasure to work with young people, teachers and families from across the North East in 2022-23. Against the previous year, we have increased the number of schools we have worked with across the region by 14%, and the number of information and advice and guidance sessions that we have delivered by 30%. We have worked with a greater share of Key Stage 4 students than in previous years, contributing, we hope to the long term impact of our outreach activity.

It is not enough to provide an increased quantity of sessions and interactions with schools and families across the region, however, and feedback from the activities and case studies in this report shows positive trends in the knowledge and understanding of Higher Education and the University of Oxford, as well as attitudes towards the University.

In 2021-22, our next ambitions were to provide support for students who were not shortlisted for the Aim for Oxford programme (achieved through the North East Spring Residential and North East Open Day Residential), to continue our collaboration with the Brilliant Club and to increase the capacity of the North East Open Day Residential – all of which we have achieved.

From our own experiences, we also aimed to increase provision for teachers, opportunities for parents and carers to engage with our programmes and to expand our provision for Key Stage 4. We have now formalised a teacher CPD programme, as well as online parent and carer talks in 2022-23, and increased the share of activities offered to students in Years 9 and 10.

With the consolidation of a range of activities that are delivered at regular points throughout the year, we have continued to align these with the University of Oxford's nine Access and Outreach aims, as well as reflecting on areas where we can continue to develop and improve our provision.



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

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 – a potential further residential opportunity or programme offering sustained contact. The eligibility criteria in place for this programme suggest that many applicants for it, beyond the number we can accept with the current capacity of the programme – are very well placed to make a successful application to the University of Oxford (see discussion above, pp.23-24).
- 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. On the North East Residential, ensure that financial costs and bursaries information are disseminated better (see table above, p.23)

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 and 2022/23, we also intend to continue with the following ambitions at the forefront of our ongoing activities:

- Increase our provision for teachers across the region
- Increased opportunities for parents and supporters to engage with our programmes, including the opportunity for more parents and carers without their own experience of Higher Education, and more parents/carers whose children qualify for Free School Meals, than previously.
- Expand our provision for Key Stage 4 (Years 10/11)

Following the data gathered in 2022/23, we have highlighted the following areas for continued improvement:

- Increase the number of schools with whom we are working, in particular those with high proportions of pupils eligible for Free School Meals and/or no prior experience of working with the University of Oxford
- Engage with parents and carers who have no personal experience of Higher Education and/or have young people in receipt of Free School Meals
- Begin the cycle of engagement with the University of Oxford earlier with more activities for Key Stage 3 and 4 (Year 7-11), and where engagement is sustained such as on the Scholars' Programme run in conjunction with the Brilliant Club, have a positive impact on the attainment of students we work with
- Explore opportunities to work with primary schools in the region

We are excited to continue our work in the region in the coming year, and look forward to continuing to raise the ambitions and aspirations of so many young people, their teachers and families across the region in 2023/4.



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