

# **Access and Participation Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29**

## Introduction and strategic aim

Providing quality education since 1896, St Helens College is one of the largest further and higher education providers in the Northwest.

We support students of all ages, studying at all levels, and provide courses and training to around 5,000 students, including 400 HE students, across four campuses within two local authority boroughs, as a part of a merger with Knowsley Community College in 2017.

We are actively involved in our local communities, offering high-quality training and education opportunities to both residents and businesses. This collaboration not only enables us to provide excellent work experience, employment and apprenticeship opportunities for our students but also supports employers across the Liverpool City Region to build a skilled workforce for the future.

Our strong progression routes enable students to join us at the age of 16 to study T Levels, a technical, vocational qualification, or an apprenticeship, before then continuing their educational journey to degree level study and beyond at our University Centre St Helens.

University Centre St Helens offers Higher National qualifications and specialist degrees in line with our strategic goal to deliver an outstanding experience, placing students and apprentices at the heart of everything we do.

We are committed to ensuring every student reaches their full potential by providing an outstanding student experience.

Our ambition is to support and empower our students to 'dream big' by providing an outstanding experience that raises their aspirations and motivates them to achieve the very best outcomes. We have the highest expectations of our students, and in turn, they have high expectations of us. We are committed to providing them with every opportunity to reach their full potential - academically, professionally and socially.

## **Mission Statement**

St Helens College's Mission Statement is 'Transforming lives through excellence in education and training'.

## **Strategic Plan**

Developed in consultation with our staff, students, the College's Corporation Board, and external stakeholders, the Strategic Plan sets out our high-level objectives and commitments for the next three years, as we aspire to be one of the very best technical and vocational colleges in the country. Most importantly, our students and apprentices remain at the heart of everything we do.

From cultivating aspirational learning environments through outstanding curriculum and facilities to delivering high quality teaching and learning, we are committed to providing them with every opportunity to excel and achieve the very best outcomes

The College's Strategic Plan is founded on six key goals, which provide a framework for more detailed operational activities, transforming the way we work with our students, staff, employers and local communities.

## **Our Strategic Goals**

- **Outstanding Student Experience**  
Delivering an outstanding experience, placing students and apprentices at the heart of everything we do.
- **Exceptional Curriculum**  
Developing an innovative and agile curriculum that meets the needs of our students and communities.
- **Growth**  
Achieving growth through strategic partnerships and relationships with key organisations and employers.
- **Transformed Estate**  
Transforming the College's estate to inspire outstanding teaching and learning.
- **Employer of Choice**  
Attracting and retaining skilled staff through reputation, recognition, and a strong sense of community.
- **Anchor Institution**  
Building upon our role as an anchor institution in Knowsley and St Helens and contributing to the leadership of education and skills ecosystems.

We recognise the significant role we play as an anchor institution in St Helens and Knowsley and the greater economic challenges our communities face post-pandemic. Through strategic partnerships with key organisations and employers, we are focused on contributing to system leadership and addressing employment needs that will not only support economic recovery and growth but will also provide wider employment opportunities for our students.

To this end the College has forged strong partnerships with awarding bodies and validating universities. We currently offer Higher National programmes awarded by Pearson, along with Foundation and Bachelors degrees validated by The University of Chester, The University of Central Lancashire and Liverpool John Moores University. The College continually explores opportunities

to raise student participation in higher education through increasing progression to further study and developing a broader and deeper offer in all curriculum areas.

## **Our College Values**

Developed in consultation with our teams, our values define who we are, how we engage with our students, stakeholders and each other, and they guide us in the work that we do.

- **Ambition**  
We are committed to raising aspirations and expectations, motivating each other to achieve our full potential.
- **Excellence**  
We commit to being the very best in everything we do and encourage our teams, students, and stakeholders to do the same.
- **Collaboration**  
We work together as one team, valuing our different perspectives and consulting with colleagues to achieve our goals.
- **Innovation**  
We actively search for novel ideas, leading technologies, and the most effective ways of working that benefit our students, teams and employers.
- **Respect**  
We treat people the way we would expect to be treated, championing difference and diversity and embracing and valuing everyone's right to have an opinion.
- **Trust**  
We believe in each other, trusting our teams to work with autonomy and integrity.
- **Care**  
We are kind and empathetic to everyone we encounter.

## **Our Public Value Statement**

The College seeks to add value to the social, economic and physical wellbeing of the wider communities that we serve by:

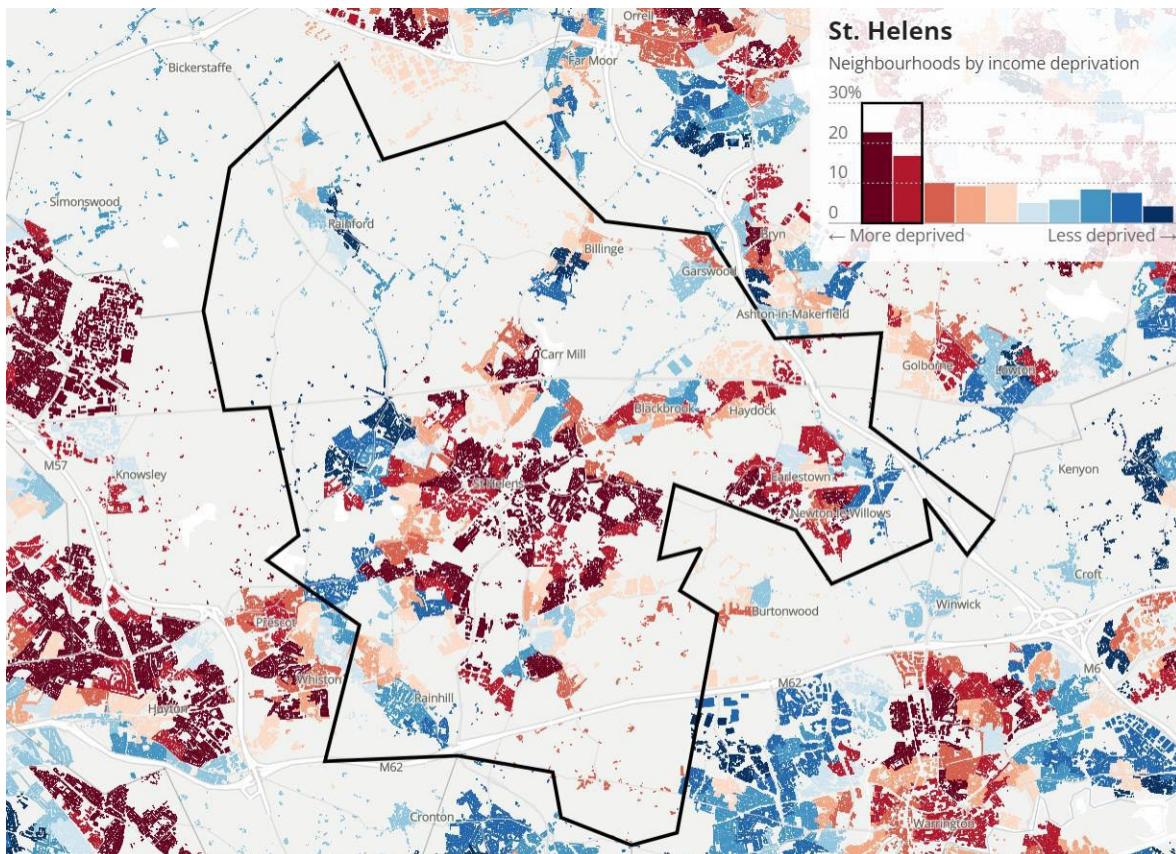
1. providing education and training in accordance with the College's mission, strategic goals and values, meeting the needs of students, apprentices, employers and the wider communities in general.
2. raising aspirations of students and the communities by promoting prospects and celebrating success.
3. ensuring a broad curriculum offer with good progression routes from entry level to higher education and training.
4. promoting healthy lifestyles and good citizenship skills to all students and colleagues.
5. being responsive to changing needs and circumstances.
6. actively listening to and engaging with College stakeholders, aiming to provide the best possible service within the College's mission.
7. being a respectful and responsible employer.
8. always acting with corporate integrity.

## Local Context – two boroughs

St Helens College and Knowsley Community College are situated in two boroughs where residents experience significant deprivation, critical skills deficits including in English and maths, low economic activity, and low levels of diversity, particularly in Knowsley.

### Income deprivation in St. Helens<sup>1</sup>

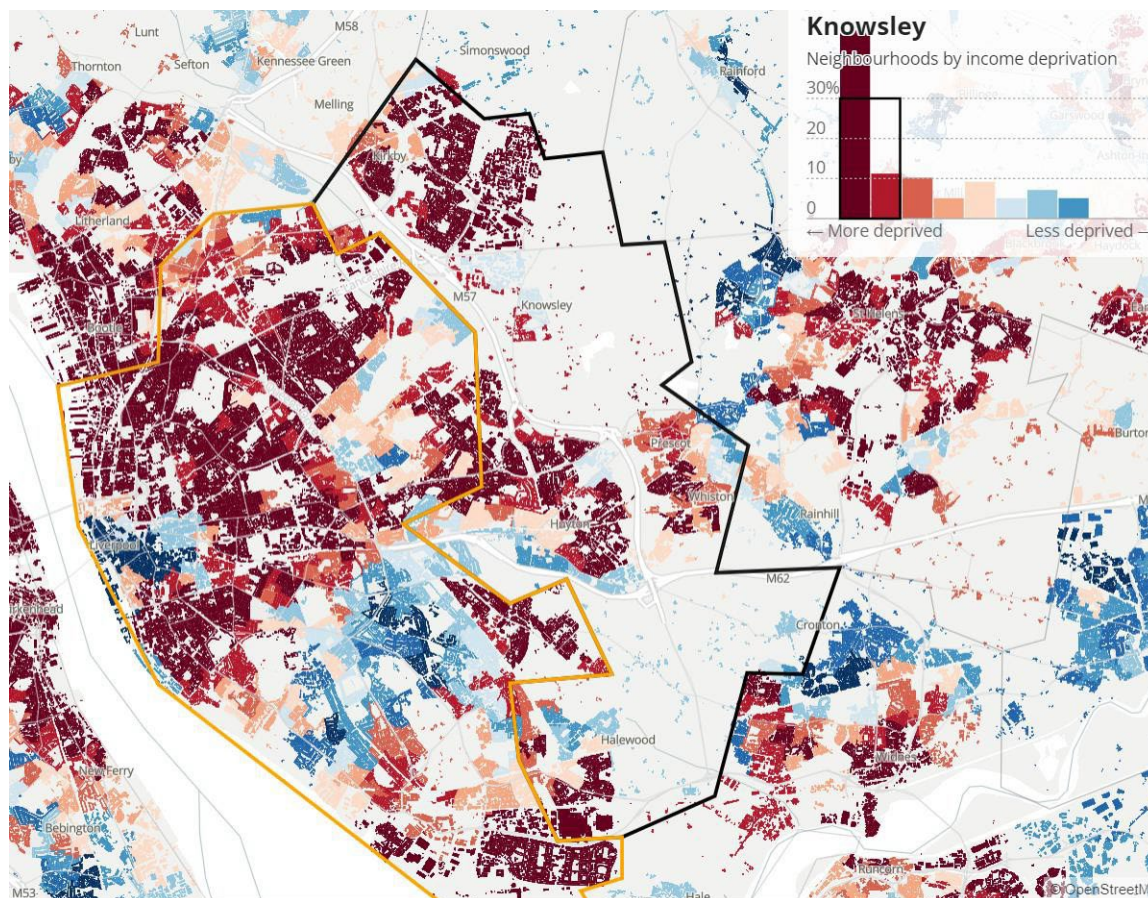
In St. Helens, 18.2% of the population was income-deprived in 2019. Of the 316 local authorities in England (excluding the Isles of Scilly), St. Helens is ranked 33rd most income deprived.



<sup>1</sup> Exploring local income deprivation (ons.gov.uk)

## Income deprivation in Knowsley<sup>2</sup>

In Knowsley, 25.1% of the population was income-deprived in 2019. Of the 316 local authorities in England (excluding the Isles of Scilly), Knowsley is ranked 2nd most income deprived.



Most notably, 16.8% of working age residents in St Helens claim Universal Credit, compared to 13.9% nationally and Knowsley has a 72% unemployment rate. Additionally, the level 3 and 4 skills gap has increased in Knowsley over the last ten years, and the number of adult residents undertaking apprenticeships, further education, and degrees is decreasing.<sup>2</sup>

From 2021 ONS Census data<sup>3</sup>, the percentage of the population in the St Helens area with highest level of qualification being at Level 4 or above was 27.2%. This is 6.7 percentage points lower than the comparative England figure. For the Knowsley area 23.8% of the population are Level 4 or above qualified, this being 10.1 percentage points lower than the England figure. This demonstrates the opportunities that the College has to support the development of higher education skills within the local population.

<sup>2</sup> St Helens Inclusive Growth Action Plan (October 2022), ONS Language Census 2021, Nomis, St Helens Borough Strategy 2021-2023, Knowsley 2030 Strategy, RCU Vector

<sup>3</sup> 2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis ([nomisweb.co.uk](https://nomisweb.co.uk))

## Risks to equality of opportunity

A thorough exploration of the Office for Students Access and Participation Data Dashboard, alongside internal data has resulted in the risks to equality of opportunity outlined below. Further detail around review of data and resulting action can be found in Annex A.

**Risk 1:** Part-time students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) are less likely to continue in their studies in higher education than those in IMD quintile 5 (least deprived). Evidence suggests this is a function of cost pressures and access to personal and academic support.

**Risk 2:** Students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) are less likely to complete their higher education studies than students from IMD quintile 5 (least deprived). Evidence suggests this is a function of cost pressures, academic and personal support, the HE environment, including feelings of belonging, and could be impacted by the course type and delivery model.

**Risk 3:** Students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) are less likely to attain a 2:1 or above than students from IMD quintile 5 (least deprived). Evidence suggests this is a function of cost pressures, personal and academic support, including mental health and soft skill support, and could be impacted by assessment diversity and the higher education environment.

**Risk 4:** Full-time students who were eligible for free school meals at KS4 are less likely to progress into graduate employment or further study than students who were not eligible for free school meals at KS4. Evidence suggests that this is a function of access to HE dedicated support for careers and post-graduate study that increases both awareness and aspiration.

### Objectives

As a result of the risks identified above St Helens College has agreed the objectives below. The objectives were set based on exploration of the data available in the OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard and with Teaching Excellence Framework benchmarks in mind. Whilst the objectives target one group (for example students from IMD Q1) to ensure these are measurable and timebound, the intervention strategies outlined also aim to increase performance for other students (for example students from IMD Q2).

**Objective 1:** St Helens College will increase the number of part-time students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) continuing in their studies to 78% by 2029 through enhanced financial, academic and personal support. (PTS\_1)

**Objective 2:** St Helens College will increase the proportion of full-time students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) completing their higher education studies to 75% by 2029 through enhanced academic and personal support, increased feelings of belonging and further improvements to the HE dedicated space and through review of the curriculum type and model of delivery. (PTS\_2)

**Objective 3:** St Helens College will increase the proportion of students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) attaining a 2:1 or above to 75% by 2029 through enhanced personal and academic support, including aspiration raising activity. (PTS\_3)

**Objective 4:** St Helens College will increase the proportion of full-time students eligible for free school meals progressing into graduate employment or further study to 57% by 2029 through enhanced HE careers and further study support. (PTP\_1)



## Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

The intervention strategies setting out the intended activities for each objective are outlined below. Whilst the objectives set out above outline targets for students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) or students eligible for free school meals, many of the activities outlined will support all students.

As outlined in Annex A, no targets are identified in relation to access overall or students with a reported disability due to positive performance, however current activity will continue to be enhanced to ensure equality of opportunity is maintained. Continuous monitoring will take place and additional activity will be developed if required.

### Intervention strategy 1: Continuation

#### Objectives and targets

Objective 1: St Helens College will increase the number of part-time students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) continuing in their studies to 78% by 2029 through enhanced financial, academic and personal support. (PTS\_1)

#### Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 1: Part-time students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) are less likely to continue in their studies in higher education than those in IMD quintile 5 (least deprived). Evidence suggests this is a function of cost pressures and access to personal and academic support.

#### Related objectives and targets

- Objectives 2 and 3

#### Related risks to equality of opportunity

- Risks 2 and 3

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
<b>Financial support</b>	<p>A review of financial support will be undertaken in 2025 with particular focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of support available</li> <li>• Accessibility of support</li> <li>• Removal of barriers and any perceived stigma</li> <li>• APP target groups</li> </ul> <p>This will result in a revised financial support offer.</p> <p>Intended to address EORR Risk 10 and will build on existing activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working group</li> <li>• Financial support</li> <li>• New resource development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced financial support</li> <li>• Increased uptake of financial support</li> <li>• Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> </ul>	2, 3
<b>Personal support</b>	<p>Enhanced personal support will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalising tutorial hours for HE students. This will extend beyond part-time students as it is intended to also support continuation and attainment. The tutorials are intended to provide increased opportunity to identify 'at risk' students and signpost to relevant support.</li> <li>• Enhanced HE specific induction to increase awareness and accessibility of College support services and provide increased resources.</li> </ul> <p>Intended to address EORR Risks 7 &amp; 8 and will build on existing activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutorial hours</li> <li>• Staff time - induction</li> <li>• New resource development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early identification of 'at risk' students</li> <li>• Increased numbers of HE students accessing financial and pastoral support within the College</li> <li>• Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> </ul>	2, 3

<p><b>Academic support</b></p>	<p>Increased early academic support to support bridging the gap between Level 3 and/or students who have had a break in their educational journey. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-entry academic support through ‘HE Rehearsal’</li> <li>• Tailored resource production</li> <li>• Development of asynchronous activity</li> <li>• Academic Skills Programme – to include a package of sessions delivered by the HE &amp; Adult Academic Mentor to all first-year programmes. Will include Academic Integrity training.</li> <li>• Academic support drop-in sessions</li> </ul> <p>Resources and sessions will be developed with age differences in mind.</p> <p>Intended to address EORR Risks 6 and will build on existing activity undertaken by the HE &amp; Adult Academic Mentor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HE &amp; Adult Academic Mentor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased confidence in their academic ability and feelings of belonging for new starters</li> <li>• Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> </ul>	<p>2, 3</p>
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**Total estimated cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £173,120 over 4 years of plan**

**Summary of evidence base and rationale**

The activities outlined in the intervention strategy are pre-dominantly a result of staff and student consultation. Discussions around enhancing current practice and suggestions for new activity identified a number of key areas, which were supported by additional research, alongside consideration of the TASO Evidence Toolkit. For more detailed information, please see Annex B.

## Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Financial support	<p>Enhanced financial support</p> <p>Increased uptake of financial support</p> <p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p>	<p>Type 1 – monitoring spend on financial support</p> <p>Type 2 – monitoring continuation, completion and attainment rates for students accessing financial support, split by mode of study and IMD quintile</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>
Personal Support	<p>Early identification of ‘at risk’ students</p> <p>Increased numbers of HE students accessing financial and pastoral support within the College</p> <p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p>	<p>Type 2 – monitoring continuation, completion and attainment for student who have attended tutorial sessions, split by mode of study and IMD quintile</p> <p>Type 1 – reporting HE student access to central student support services</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>
Academic Support	<p>Increased confidence in their academic ability and feelings of belonging for new starters</p> <p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p>	<p>Type 2 – student self-report survey before and after ‘HE Rehearsal’ and Level 4 Academic Skills Programme split by mode of study and IMD quintile</p> <p>Type 2 – monitoring continuation, completion and attainment for student who have attended ‘HE Rehearsal’, and Level 4 Academic Skills Programme, split by mode of study and IMD quintile</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p> <p>Seek external publication of ‘HE Rehearsal’ evaluation.</p>

## **Intervention strategy 2: Completion**

### **Objectives and targets**

Objective 2: St Helens College will increase the proportion of full-time students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) completing their higher education studies to 75% by 2029 through enhanced academic and personal support, increased feelings of belonging and further improvements to the HE dedicated space and through review of the curriculum type and model of delivery. (PTS\_2)

### **Risks to equality of opportunity**

Risk 2: Students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) are less likely to complete their higher education studies than students from IMD quintile 5 (least deprived). Evidence suggests this is a function of cost pressures, academic and personal support, the HE environment, including feelings of belonging, and could be impacted by the course type and delivery model.

### **Related objectives and targets**

- Objectives 1, 3 and 4

### **Related risks to equality of opportunity**

- Risks 1, 3 and 4

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Enhancing the HE student experience	<p>We plan to review the current HE dedicated study space to identify areas for improvement. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of current space and utilisation, including student consultation, with particular attention paid to ensuring all ages of students are engaged</li> <li>• Piloting of HE space</li> <li>• Further capital expenditure based on review outcomes</li> </ul> <p>Increased support for student-led extra-curricular and social activity. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with students</li> <li>• Support for student-led clubs and activities</li> <li>• HE social fund</li> </ul> <p>This is new activity intended to address student feedback during consultation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working group</li> <li>• Capital expenditure</li> <li>• Resource development and marketing of activities</li> <li>• Student Liaison Officer role</li> <li>• HE social fund</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased feelings of belonging as a HE student</li> <li>• Increased student satisfaction</li> <li>• Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> </ul>	1, 3
Curriculum review	<p>We plan to undertake a review of the current curriculum that includes a review of course type and delivery mode. Any agreed changes would then need to be approved through validation partners and addressed in future planning.</p> <p>This is new activity intended to address EORR Risk 5.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum review hours</li> <li>• New programme development and validation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased student choice</li> <li>• Increased performance in continuation and completion</li> </ul>	1

<p>Academic Support</p>	<p>Building on the activity introduced in Intervention Strategy 1 through the Academic Skills Programme. To include a tailored package of sessions and resources delivered to progressing students, alongside drop-in sessions.</p> <p>Resources and sessions will be developed with age differences in mind.</p> <p>Intended to address EORR Risk 6 and will build on existing activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HE &amp; Adult Academic Mentor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased confidence in their academic ability and feelings of belonging for progressing students</li> <li>• Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> </ul>	<p>1, 3, 4, 5</p>
<p>Personal support</p>	<p>Building on the activity in Intervention Strategy 1, progressing students will be supported through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased HE specific well-being resources and events</li> <li>• Introduction of level 5 &amp; 6 HE induction</li> <li>• A programme of aspiration and soft skill sessions</li> </ul> <p>Intended to address EORR Risks 7 &amp; 8 and will build on existing activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff time</li> <li>• HE &amp; Adult Academic Mentor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased numbers of HE students accessing support within the College</li> <li>• Increased confidence and feelings of belonging for progressing students</li> <li>• Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> </ul>	<p>1, 3, 4, 5</p>

**Total estimated cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £238,730 over 4 years of plan**

### **Summary of evidence base and rationale**

The activities outlined in the intervention strategy are pre-dominantly a result of staff and student consultation. Discussions around enhancing current practice and suggestions for new activity identified a number of key areas, which were supported by additional research, alongside consideration of the TASO Evidence Toolkit. For more detailed information, please see Annex B.



## Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Enhancing the HE student experience	<p>Increased feelings of belonging as a HE student</p> <p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p>	<p>Type 1 – plan for HE space and monitoring utilisation</p> <p>Type 2 - monitoring continuation, completion and attainment overall and by IMD quintile</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>
Academic support	<p>Increased confidence in their academic ability and feelings of belonging for progressing students</p> <p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p>	<p>Type 2 – student self-report survey before and after the Academic Skills Programme split by IMD quintile</p> <p>Type 2 – monitoring continuation, completion and attainment for student who have attended Academic Skills Programme, split by IMD quintile</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>
Personal support	<p>Increased numbers of HE students accessing support within the College</p> <p>Increased confidence and feelings of belonging for progressing students</p> <p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p>	<p>Type 1 – monitoring HE access to support services</p> <p>Type 2 – monitoring continuation, completion and attainment split by IMD quintile</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>

## **Intervention strategy 3: Attainment**

### **Objectives and targets**

Objective 3: St Helens College will increase the proportion of students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) attaining a 2:1 or above to 75% by 2029 through enhanced personal and academic support, including aspiration raising activity. (PTS\_3)

### **Risks to equality of opportunity**

Risk 3: Students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) are less likely to attain a 2:1 or above than students from IMD quintile 5 (least deprived). Evidence suggests this is a function of cost pressures, personal and academic support, including mental health and soft skill support, and could be impacted by assessment diversity and the higher education environment.

### **Related objectives and targets**

- Objectives 1, 2 and 4.

### **Related risks to equality of opportunity**

- Risks 1, 2 and 4.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Academic Support	<p>Building on the activity outlined in Intervention Strategy 1 and 2, the Academic Skills Programme will include attainment raising sessions for final year students. This will include a tailored package of session and resources developing academic skills and soft skills, alongside drop-in sessions.</p> <p>Intended to address EORR Risk 6 and will build on existing activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE &amp; Adult Academic Mentor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased confidence in their academic ability for final year students</li> <li>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> </ul>	1, 2, 4, 5
Aspiration raising activity	<p>Aspiration is a key element to attainment. Students will be supported through aspiration raising sessions at each level, including the internal level 3 cohort. This will be done through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level 3 progression sessions</li> <li>HE aspiration sessions, resources and materials</li> </ul> <p>This is new activity based on staff and student consultation, linking to EORR Risk 7.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE &amp; Adult Academic Mentor</li> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased aspiration for HE study (level 3)</li> <li>Increased aspiration for graduate employment and/or further study</li> <li>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> </ul>	1, 2, 4, 5

<p>Assessment diversity review</p>	<p>The HE portfolio includes a variety of programmes validated by 4 awarding partners and organisations. Periodic review is part of the validation processes for each, which includes an overview of assessment. In addition, we intend to review assessment across all programmes holistically with a focus on assessment diversity and good practice. This may result in minor or major modifications to assessments.</p> <p>This is new activity based on staff and student consultation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff time - review</li> <li>• Re-validation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased assessment diversity</li> <li>• Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> </ul>	<p>1, 2</p>
<p>Staff and student research</p>	<p>We will introduce a staff/student research project fund to support research projects conducted in partnership. This will be developed in 2025/26 for implementation in 2026/27.</p> <p>This is new activity based on staff and student consultation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff time for development and to undertake projects</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</li> <li>• Outcomes from research projects</li> </ul>	

**Total estimated cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £160,800 over 4 years of plan**

### **Summary of evidence base and rationale**

The activities outlined in the intervention strategy are pre-dominantly a result of staff and student consultation. Discussions around enhancing current practice and suggestions for new activity identified a number of key areas, which were supported by additional research, alongside consideration of the TASO Evidence Toolkit. For more detailed information, please see Annex B.

## Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Academic support	<p>Increased confidence in their academic ability for final year students</p> <p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p>	<p>Type 2 – student self-report survey before and after the Academic Skills Programme split by IMD quintile</p> <p>Type 2 – monitoring continuation, completion and attainment for student who have attended Academic Skills Programme, split by IMD quintile</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>
Aspiration raising activity	<p>Increased aspiration for HE study (level 3)</p> <p>Increased aspiration for graduate employment and/or further study</p> <p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p>	<p>Type 2 – student self-report survey before and after aspiration raising activity</p> <p>Type 2 - monitoring continuation, completion and attainment for student who have attended aspiration raising activity, split by IMD quintile</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>
Assessment diversity review	<p>Increased assessment diversity</p> <p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p>	<p>Type 1 – overview of assessment</p> <p>Type 2 – comparison of continuation, completion and attainment pre and post changes</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>
Staff and student research	<p>Increased performance in continuation, completion and attainment</p> <p>Outcomes from research projects</p>	<p>Type 2 – reporting of activity, including continuation, completion and attainment data consideration for student who have participated in research projects</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>

## **Intervention strategy 4: Progression**

### **Objective and target**

Objective 4: St Helens College will increase the proportion of full-time students eligible for free school meals progressing into graduate employment or further study to 57% by 2029 through enhanced HE careers and further study support. (PTP\_1)

### **Risks to equality of opportunity**

Risk 4: Full-time students who were eligible for free school meals at KS4 are less likely to progress into graduate employment or further study than students who were not eligible for free school meals at KS4. Evidence suggests that this is a function of access to HE dedicated support for careers and post-graduate study that increases both awareness and aspiration.

### **Related objectives and targets**

- Objectives 1, 2 and 3.

### **Related risks to equality of opportunity**

- Risks 1, 2 and 3.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
HE careers support	<p>The College has a dedicated Careers service and employability is embedded in all programmes, however there is a commitment to strengthen the core HE careers offer. Enhanced HE specific careers support will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A HE Careers Event – to include post-graduate study</li> <li>• Careers team engagement in HE induction</li> <li>• Delivery of HE employability sessions on skills such as CV writing and graduate interview practice</li> <li>• Development of HE careers resources</li> <li>• Formalised guest speaker calendar providing talks from industry, employers and alumni</li> </ul> <p>This links to EORR Risk 12 and builds on existing activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff time</li> <li>• HE &amp; Adult Academic Mentor</li> <li>• Events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased aspiration for graduate employment</li> <li>• Increased progression performance and Graduate Outcomes data</li> </ul>	1, 2, 3
Post-graduate study support	<p>As noted above the intended HE Careers event would include information related to post-graduate study and the guest speaker calendar would include discussion of the value of post-graduate study. In addition, support will be enhanced through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General post-graduate study session for progressing students</li> <li>• Additional resources and materials related to post-graduate study</li> <li>• HE progression event with validating partners</li> </ul> <p>This links to EORR Risk 12 and builds on existing activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HE &amp; Adult Academic Mentor</li> <li>• Staff time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness and aspiration related to further study</li> <li>• Increased progression performance and Graduate Outcomes data</li> </ul>	1, 2, 3

Research related to age	As noted in Annex A performance of students by age provided some interesting data for both completion and progression that warrants further exploration. To explore this further a research project will be undertaken, with recommendations for further action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased knowledge and understanding in relation to the impact of age on FT and PT completion and progression</li> <li>• Recommendations for action</li> </ul>	2
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**Total estimated cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £75,440 over 4 years of plan**

### **Summary of evidence base and rationale**

The activities outlined in the intervention strategy are pre-dominantly a result of staff and student consultation. Discussions around enhancing current practice and suggestions for new activity identified a number of key areas, which were supported by additional research, alongside consideration of the TASO Evidence Toolkit. For more detailed information, please see Annex B.



## Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
HE Careers support	<p>Increased aspiration for graduate employment</p> <p>Increased progression performance and Graduate Outcomes data</p>	<p>Type 1 – reporting activity</p> <p>Type 1 – monitoring and reporting Graduate Outcomes data</p> <p>Type 2 – student self-report survey before and after relevant activity</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>
Post-graduate study support	<p>Increased awareness and aspiration related to further study</p> <p>Increased progression performance and Graduate Outcomes data</p>	<p>Type 1 – reporting activity</p> <p>Type 1 – monitoring and reporting Graduate Outcomes data</p> <p>Type 2 – student self-report survey before and after relevant activity</p>	<p>Annual reporting through governance structure.</p> <p>Published on Access and Participation webpage.</p>

# Whole provider approach

## Strategies, policies and services

All of the strategies, policies and services below, contribute to our strategic objectives for access and participation. By creating a whole college approach in which inclusivity and accessibility are embedded within our practice at every stage of the student journey, we aim to create a learning environment within which all students, including those within our target groups, have equity in opportunity and realise their full potential.

### Equality and Diversity Policy

Being cognisant of the diverse backgrounds of the communities that we serve, the College is committed to providing a high-quality educational experience and promoting, maintaining, and supporting equality and diversity in all aspects of its work<sup>4</sup>. As part of its overarching aim to create an environment where individuals feel confident and respected and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, the College has a clear Equality & Diversity Policy.

St Helens College strives to build a culture that values equality, diversity, openness, fairness and transparency for its staff and students. The College believes that by embracing equality and diversity we are providing a sound foundation on which to build a successful and vibrant environment whose cultures and values are respected by both our students and the community as a whole. To this end the College Group is committed to produce, implement, review and monitor policies which promote equality and diversity for all those who study and work within the institution.

The College's commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in our core values<sup>5</sup>. We make sure that everything we do helps:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance the equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

As part of this commitment we aim to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take measures to fulfil the needs of individuals from protected groups where they are different from the needs of other persons.
- Support and encourage individuals with protected characteristics to participate in the public life of the college especially where participation is disproportionately lower.

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<sup>4</sup> St Helens College Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

<sup>5</sup> [Equality and Diversity \(sthelens.ac.uk\)](http://sthelens.ac.uk)

## Support Services

The College offers a comprehensive range of support services to all students on Higher Education courses in order to help them to overcome any obstacles they may experience, that could adversely impact on their personal welfare or academic success. These include:

- The Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team;
- Learner Support Service;
- HE Student Liaison Officer.

There is a dedicated Student Finance, Welfare and Guidance Manager to support HE students with:

- Information regarding fees and funding;
- Understanding entitlement and assisting with loan applications.

The College also has a qualified and experienced Careers Officer who is available to provide information, advice and guidance to HE students in relation to;

- Receiving support in choosing or applying for the right undergraduate or postgraduate degree;
- Discussing progression routes and career options;
- Discovering more about study options at the University Centre St Helens;
- Obtaining help with CV writing, searching for jobs and preparing for interviews.

All HE students have access to specialist staff within the Learner Support Service who act as a contact for current and prospective students with additional needs. The role of these specialist staff is to provide information, advice and support to students about the reasonable adjustments that are available to them on their higher education programme of study. Learner Support staff have links with academic colleagues and other central services such as libraries, to raise awareness of disability issues and to ensure that appropriate adjustments are made. The staff are also available to support students with applications for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

Our HE students also have access to a range of free workshops to further support them with the development of higher-level academic writing skills needed for success at degree level. These sessions are delivered by the HE & Adult Academic Mentor and the Library & Learning Resources Manager, with the aim of them being to provide students with additional support opportunities for the development of their analytical and evaluative writing, revision skills, critical thinking, editing and proofreading skills.

## Financial Support

Students have access to financial support, via the following routes:

### HE Study Enhancement Gift<sup>6</sup>

The Study Enhancement Gift is available to all Full Time students who are enrolled on University Centre St Helens qualifying higher education courses as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> [Study Enhancement Gift \(sthelens.ac.uk\)](http://sthelens.ac.uk)

- Year 1 Level 4 Full-time Foundation Degree and Bachelor's Degree - new students for the first year of study only.
- Year 1 Level 4 Full-time Higher National Diploma - new students for the first year of study only.

Students transferring to a qualifying University Centre St Helens higher education course from another higher education provider beyond Year 1 Level 4 will be deemed eligible for the Study Enhancement Gift.

Students on qualifying courses receive a non-repayable Study Enhancement Gift, up to the value of £400. For the majority of courses, this is a laptop or subject specific equipment. In some of the Creative Arts courses, where access to higher specification technology is essential, students pay a higher tuition fee and receive the required higher cost equipment at the start of the course, up to the value of £1500. This ensures that all students have equal access to relevant technology, from as early as possible on the course, and aligns with our objectives, to ensure that students aren't disadvantaged based on financial background.

Where the laptop is less relevant, or where the majority of the cohort already own the required equipment, alternatives such as extra qualifications or educational trips have been funded through the SEG. Individuals from IMD quintile 1 who are studying on these courses, would still be eligible to apply for funding a laptop through the Student Opportunity Fund.

The success of these gifts is measured through the Staff, Student Liaison meetings, and the choice of gift can be changed each year in response to the changing needs of the course, or the group of students.

### **Student Opportunity Fund**

The Student Opportunity Fund (SOF) provides discretionary financial assistance to higher education students in order to help them access and remain in education. All full time and part time higher education students are eligible to apply for support through the Fund. The following types of assistance are available:

- Standard Awards (SA) which are provided to students in order to help meet general living costs associated with being a full-time student e.g. rent, mortgage payments, food, utility bills etc. They can be allocated where there is a shortfall between a student's income and expenditure. This amount may be capped to enable efficient use of hardship funds.
- Non-Standard Awards (NSA) which are discretionary awards which may be provided to students in cases where there is no shortfall between income and expenditure.

Applications to the Fund can be made at any point throughout the academic year. However, all full time HE students must first have applied for a full student loan entitlement, or statutory support package, and have received the 1st payment before applying to the Student Opportunity Fund.

Applications are particularly welcome from (but not restricted to): -

- Those living in areas of low higher education participation or from lower household income or socioeconomic status backgrounds;
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic students;
- Mature students – aged 21 or over;
- Disabled students (those in receipt of DSA and those who have declared a disability but are not in receipt of DSA);
- Care leavers.

## Student consultation

Student consultation took place at two stages before submission. Firstly, a student consultation workshop which included discussion and activity related to:

- OfS expectations for the New Access and Participation Plans
- Data exploration and resulting suggested targets
- Equality of Opportunity Risk Register
- Potential intervention strategy activity.

Students discussed the risks to equality of opportunity, outlining various reasons for each target area, which were then mapped to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR). In addition to the risks within the EORR, students noted the importance of feelings of belonging as a higher education student studying in a college-based higher education environment and therefore interventions were developed with the intention of targeting these potential risk areas.

Student discussed current practice and suggested areas for further development, which fed into the suggested, and later agreed, intervention strategies. Interventions suggested by students included changes to the financial support provided and HE dedicated well-being and careers support. Student also supported suggestions such as the academic support programme and the potential for student and staff research projects.

Once the intervention strategies had been drafted, these were shared with the same group of students for comment. Student were asked to provide suggestions for changes or additions and to comment on the activities, including whether they thought they were credible ways to address the risks identified. They were also asked to note any potential concerns about negative outcomes. Student feedback was incredibly positive about intervention activity, noting that it was clear the students 'points and suggestions were carefully considered and effectively integrated'. In addition, the draft plan was shared with students before final edits and submission.

Students will continue to be engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of the Access and Participation Plan through membership in the governance structure. The student members will contribute to monitoring and reporting in relation to the individual intervention strategies, alongside the monitoring and reporting in relation to the overall plan. In addition, students will be engaged in some of the activity outlined, for example the review of HE space and facilities, and will feed into the research projects outlined in the evaluation plan.

## Evaluation of the plan

The College is committed to evaluating the activity set out in the Access and Participation Plan overall, as well as evaluating the individual intervention strategies. The intervention strategies cover a range of activities across the College, and accordingly the responsibility for achieving the outcomes is spread over multiple senior managers, supported by the whole college approach.

The evaluation section in each of the intervention strategies sets out the intended evaluation activity and publication plans. The College has strengthened evaluation activity with the intention of increasingly undertaking Type 2 activity where possible. This is intended to support future access and participation planning and enable more robust strategies going forward. For example, various student surveys measuring self-reported changes in aspiration and confidence will be developed and implemented, as well as enhancing the monitoring and reporting of data for students accessing the various activities introduced. Some Type 1 activity is included, such as reporting access to services and uptake of financial support.

The overall plan and impact on performance data will continue to be evaluated annually, this will be further enhanced to include reporting against the planned intervention activity, alongside reporting against the stated targets. This will feed into the annual reporting to the Curriculum and Quality Committee. Reports will be made available on the College Access and Participation webpage, which will be ready by spring 2025, to enable wider sharing of good practice.

We are committed to effective monitoring, not just against the targets set out in this plan, but also continued monitoring of all student groups. Exploration of data identified additional student groups for monitoring (please see Annex A), this monitoring will take place annually and additional intervention strategies will be developed if required. To achieve this, we are continuously improving our data access and use, and supporting staff knowledge and understanding in relation to access and participation.

## Provision of information to students

Clear information about the tuition fees that apply to St Helens College's higher education provision and the financial support available to students is published on the College website at [www.sthelens.ac.uk](http://www.sthelens.ac.uk).

This Access and Participation Plan (and other documents) is published on the College website in an accessible format, with other formats such as Braille produced on request and sent to current or prospective students by our Student Services Team. The Student Services Team can be contacted by telephone and/or in writing for additional guidance, and to respond to questions or requests for supplementary information. Individual advice is always provided at course interviews prior to any offers of a place.

We provide information to UCAS and to the Student Loans Company in a timely fashion for incorporation in their databases for each academic year and ensure compliance to the mandatory information required in relation to Key Information Sets and Wider Information Sets as required for OfS, Unistats, and other bodies to whom we report as part of our normal college operating procedures.

The College is committed to providing full financial information, including information on fees and financial support to current and prospective students using the following means and methods:

- UCAS – all full-time provision is listed and advertised on UCAS, this includes all information regarding tuition fees, loans and grants. Timely and accurate information is provided to UCAS and the Student Loan Company (SLC) in good time and to deadline to ensure these platforms are populated so as to inform prospective students early on in their decision-making process.
- Websites – the College website has separate areas and individual programme information that clearly indicates fees per year and course duration. The website also provides information on any additional programme costs that may be incurred. This is also provided via the programme specific student handbooks.
- The website provides information on all student support services and signposting that is available, including who to contact for financial IAG and support with the SLC and loan applications, study support, access arrangements and additional learning support etc.
- The website clearly signposts and easily navigates browsers to the financial support section and promotes these services and the accessibility to independent financial information, advice and guidance. This service is available from our specialist Finance Advice and Guidance Manager, and is available via email, telephone or face to face.
- All course literature and the prospectus include information on fees, support and information, advice and guidance available and signposting to the SLC portal.
- All applicants are provided with the tuition fee policy along with all other relevant terms and conditions and College policies as part of their "offer" communications, in a durable format, this includes all other alternative payment methods available other than SLC loans and grants.
- Face to face information, advice and guidance is provided at school assemblies, careers events, UCAS exhibitions, College open events, interviews and careers events etc. whereby school liaison staff and programme tutors provide face-to-face and 1:1 information, advice and guidance.
- In-College information, advice and guidance activity for current level 3 students and Access to HE students takes place in individual classes, as requested by tutors, and includes careers and finance information, advice and guidance.

## Annex A: Further information and analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity

A thorough exploration and evaluation of the data in the OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard was undertaken and supported with a review of internal data. This data exploration resulted in the identification of a number of potential risks to equality of opportunity. The initial risks identified are outlined below, with a rationale for final target choice and an indication of action intended where potential risks have not been targeted.

Students with a reported disability have also been considered, however full-time access numbers are above the sector average and full-time students with a reported disability outperform those without for continuation, completion and attainment, with only a 2.9ppt gap shown in the 4-year aggregate for progression. Part-time student numbers are slightly below the sector average, however this has seen an increase from 3% to 15.8% over the last 5 years and aggregate gaps for continuation (2ppt – 2 year) and completion (2.4ppt – 4 year) are low. As a result, no potential risks to equality of opportunity were identified, although monitoring will continue.

### Access

Identified Area	Explanation	Rationale for target choice
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<p>The BAME student population was 5.9% for 21/22 with a 4-year aggregate of 4.1% and a 2-year aggregate of 4.7% for full-time students.</p> <p>Numbers are similar for part-time students with 3.9% for 21/22, a 4-year aggregate of 3% and a 2-year aggregate of 4.1%.</p>	<p>Whilst this is significantly below the sector, where in 21/22 BAME students made up 34.8% of the full-time and 14.7% of the part-time student population, the St Helens 2021 census data suggests only 3.5% of the local population identify as BAME, meaning we have met our previous target to reduce the access gap in line with the local population. Access activity will continue, and this will be <b>monitored</b>.</p>
Eligible for free school meals	<p>A reduction in 21/22 to 30.6% for full-time students.</p> <p>An increase is indicated from 11.9% to 17.3% for part-time students, however this is below the sector figures for part-time students.</p>	<p>Even though a decrease is indicated for 21/22, the 21/22 figures, as well as the aggregates of 37.1% and 36.6% remain significantly above the sector 21/22 average of 18.9%.</p> <p>The increase in population numbers for part-time students is positive and will be <b>monitored</b> for further assurance.</p>



Targets – no access targets identified however access will be monitored in relation to ethnicity and eligibility for free school meals.

### Continuation

Identified Area	Explanation	Rationale for target choice
Age	19/20 full-time figures suggest a 10ppt gap however this has reduced to 1ppt for 21/22.	The FT gap has reduced to 1ppt in 20/21. No target required but will be <b>monitored</b> .
Ethnicity	Limited data due to small student numbers.	Will be <b>monitored</b> internally at a student level. Any targets and interventions implemented will be open to BAME students.
Eligible for free school meals	Limited data is available for both FT and PT students.	Other areas likely to include similar students provide a more measurable comparison as outlined below.
<b>Deprivation (IMD 2019)</b>	<p>The 4-year aggregate for full-time IMD 2019 does not indicate concern with similar performance for all Qs, although the 2-year aggregate does note a peak in performance for Q3.</p> <p>Part-time continuation is lower for Q1 with aggregate gaps of 17.6ppt (4 year) and 17.4ppt (2 year). <b>Q1 students are less likely to continue in their studies.</b></p> <p>Exploration of intersection data suggests sex may play a role in this as Q3-5 males outperform Q1-2 males.</p>	<b>Target identified for PT students.</b>
POLAR 4	<p>Full-time POLAR 4 continuation is varied, with Q1 outperforming Q5, but with Q4 outperforming all others.</p> <p>Part-time aggregate continuation is for Q1 is low</p>	Part-time continuation is acknowledged as a potential risk however consultation with staff and students suggest the reasons for this relate to personal circumstances and are therefore less suited to an area-based measure. A

	<p>at 55.6% (4 year), with a 34.2ppt gap.</p> <p>Exploration of intersection data suggests sex may play a role in this as Q3-5 males outperform Q1-2 males.</p>	<p>target has been included in relation to deprivation that is expected to impact positively on this data and POLAR4 and TUNDRA will be <b>monitored</b>.</p>
TUNDRA	<p>The 4-year aggregate for full-time students does not suggest concern with similar performance noted across the Qs and only a 1ppt gap between Q1 and Q5.</p> <p>Part-time student performance for Q1 (least participation) is however low at 48%, with a gap of 42.9ppt between Q1 and Q5</p>	

Target: **St Helens College will increase the number of students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) continuing in their studies to 78% by 2029.** This will bring continuation for part-time students in line with TEF benchmark.

### Completion

Identified Area	Explanation	Rationale for target choice
Age	<p>Earlier data suggests small ppt gap however the 17/18 data indicates full-time mature students outperformed young students by 12ppt.</p> <p>Part-time young students outperform mature students, however this gap is reducing as shown by the 4-year aggregate (6.4ppt) and the 2-year aggregate (3.6ppt).</p>	<p>Whilst there is a gap noted for full-time students for 17/18 with mature students outperforming young students, this is an anomaly when looking at the previous years. This will be <b>monitored</b> and when designing intervention activity age will be taken into consideration. For example, post-entry academic support will include materials developed with the different age groups in mind. The part-time gap noted is closing and will again be <b>monitored</b>.</p>
Deprivation (IMD 2019)	<p>Aggregate data suggests full-time students in Q1-Q4 have similar performance,</p>	<p><b>Target identified for full time students.</b> The target will relate to Q1, however</p>

	<p>however Q5 (least deprived) do outperform significantly as shown in the 4-year (10.2ppt) and 2-year (15.4ppt) aggregates. <b>Q1 students less likely to complete their studies.</b></p> <p>For part-time students Q2-Q4 have similar performance, however Q1 is lower as shown in the 4 year (4.4ppt) and 2 year (9.1ppt).</p> <p>Intersection exploration suggests sex may play a part in this as Q3-Q5 females outperform Q1-Q2 females by for full-time data however for part-time students there is less impact noted.</p>	<p>the intervention activity will be open to all students, aiming to increase Q2-4 alongside.</p> <p>Whilst there is a gap acknowledged for part-time completion, this is a smaller gap between Q1 and Q5 than for FT students and, with the exception of the 14/15 data, part-time students from all quintiles are more likely to complete than full time students from Q1-Q4. The target is therefore related to FT students, however activity will be open to part-time students also and part-time students' performance will be <b>monitored</b>.</p>
FSM	<p>A widening gap is indicated from 10.7ppt for the 4-year aggregate to 16.6ppt for the 2-year aggregate. This is however heavily impacted by the 17/18 data which indicates a 25.6ppt gap.</p> <p>Limited data is available for part-time student performance other than the 4-year aggregate showing a 5ppt gap.</p>	<p>Completion for students eligible for FSMs is acknowledged as a potential risk however it is felt that targeting deprivation will also address the concern identified. This will be <b>monitored</b> to track whether an additional targeted response is required.</p>
POLAR 4	<p>Limited data is available for Q4 and Q5 students however the 4-year aggregate suggests that Q5 students outperform Q1 students by 16.9ppt.</p> <p>Limited data is available for part-time students however the 4-year aggregate does</p>	<p>Completion is acknowledged as a potential risk however consultation with staff and students suggest the reasons for this relate to personal circumstances and are therefore less suited to an area-based measure. A target has been included in relation to deprivation that is</p>

	<p>suggest that Q1 students outperform Q5 by 9.4ppt.</p> <p>Intersection exploration suggest sex may play a role in this for both full and part-time students as Q3-Q5 males outperform Q1-2 males.</p>	<p>expected to impact positively on this data and POLAR4 and TUNDRA will be <b>monitored</b>.</p>
TUNDRA	<p>Limited data for Q4 and Q5 full-time students however the 4-year aggregate suggests that Q5 students outperform Q1 students by 7ppt.</p> <p>Limited data is available for part-time students however the 4-year aggregate suggests that Q5 students outperform Q1 students by 14.7ppt.</p>	
Sex	<p>Full-time figures show some variation in performance by sex, however the aggregates suggest females slightly outperform males by 3.6ppt (4 year) and 2.3ppt (2 year).</p> <p>Interestingly this is reversed for part-time students where the aggregates suggest males outperform females by 8.2ppt (4 year) and 10ppt (2 year).</p>	<p>A potential equality of opportunity is noted, particularly for part-time students, this is reversed depending on mode of study. Interestingly when looking at progression there was again a reverse for full and part-time, but also a reverse in the sex that outperformed (PT males outperform in completion, females in progression). Discussion took place in relation to the potential to introduce a target for both, however it was felt that more research was needed to explore the nuances between these. As a result research related to both completion and progression by sex has been added within the intervention strategies. This will continue to be <b>monitored</b> and action</p>

		taken based on the research outcomes.
Ethnicity	Limited data due to small student numbers.	Will be <b>monitored</b> internally at a student level. Any targets and interventions implemented will be open to BAME students.

Target: **St Helens College will increase the proportion of full-time students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) completing their higher education studies to 75% by 2029.** Whilst the target is measured against Q1, the interventions are also intended to increase Q1-Q4 and will bring this above TEF benchmark.

### Attainment

This measure currently only relates to full-time students due to course delivery models. Part-time student data will be monitored if this increases with changes to the delivery model. Low numbers impact on available data and statistical uncertainty, however the data does suggest that measures related to socio-economic status are potential areas of inequality of opportunity.

Identified Area	Explanation	Rationale for target choice
Age	Young students had previously outperformed mature students by 3.5ppt, however 21/22 data saw a sharp decrease for young students.	Attainment by age is acknowledged as a potential risk to equality of opportunity. The data is variable, with some years showing young students outperforming mature students (20/21), and others showing mature students outperforming young students (21/22) and relates to small numbers and therefore this will be <b>monitored</b> whilst other areas are targeted.
<b>Deprivation (IMD 2019)</b>	Limited data available for Q2-Q5 however the aggregates do show a gap between Q1 and Q2 of 5.8ppt (4 year) and 13.4ppt (2 year). <b>Students from Q1 are less likely to attain a 2:1 or above.</b>	<b>Target included for FT students.</b> Whilst the data is limited, the measures do suggest that students from Q1 are less likely to achieve a 2:1 or above. It is however important to note that attainment data is positive and therefore a small increase is targeted. This is replicated in other measures (FSM, POLAR4 and TUNDRA) and therefore a target has been introduced.
FSM	Limited data available beyond the 4-year aggregate which suggest a gap of 12.5ppt.	
POLAR 4	Limited data available other than Q1 and Q2 4-year	

	aggregate which suggests a gap of 23.5ppt. Q1 statistical uncertainty is low.	The decision was taken to target deprivation rather than POLAR4 and TUNDRA as consultation with staff and students suggests the reason for this are related to personal circumstance and are therefore less suited to an area-based measure.
TUNDRA	No data – numbers too low.	
Ethnicity	Limited data due to small student numbers.	Will be <b>monitored</b> internally at a student level. Any targets and interventions implemented will be open to BAME students.

Target: **St Helens College will increase the proportion of students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) attaining a 2:1 or above to 75% by 2030.** This would compare positively to the sector overall.

### Progression

Identified Area	Explanation	Rationale for target choice
<b>Deprivation (IMD 2019)</b>	<p>Full-time data is limited for Q3-5, the 4-year aggregate does show a gap of 6.1ppt between Q1 and Q2, however this has decreased in the 2-year aggregate to 1.5ppt.</p> <p>Whilst there is limited data, part-time data indicates the 4-year aggregate for Q1 students is 65%, and 71.9% for the 2-year aggregate suggesting a positive move and no concerns when considered against the TEF benchmark.</p>	<p>Whilst data is limited, progression is acknowledged as a potential risk for equality of opportunity for full-time students, however part-time student progression does not suggest an area for concern.</p> <p>It is difficult to identify an appropriate, measurable target from the data available due to small numbers in most data splits. To enable this to be measurable the decision was taken to <b>target</b> eligibility for FSM for full-time students utilising the 4-year aggregate of 2018/19-2021/22.</p>
<b>FSM</b>	<p>There is limited full-time data however the 4-year aggregate suggests a gap of 21.4ppt. <b>Students eligible for FSM are less likely to progress.</b></p> <p>No data available for comparison for PT students.</p>	<p>Consultation with staff and students suggest any concerns around progression are more likely</p>

POLAR 4	<p>There is limited full-time data for Q3-Q5 but the 4-year aggregate indicates a gap of 10.6ppt between Q1 and Q2.</p> <p>No data available for comparison for PT students.</p>	<p>to be a result of personal circumstances and are therefore less suited to an area-based measure. POLAR4 will be <b>monitored</b>.</p>
Sex	<p>Full-time males outperform females as shown in the aggregates with gaps of 9.3ppt (4 year) and 6.2ppt (2year).</p> <p>Interestingly part-time females outperform males with an increasing gap from 9.3ppt (4 year) to 18.3ppt (2 year).</p>	<p>A potential equality of opportunity is noted, particularly for part-time students, which is reversed depending on mode of study. Interestingly when looking at progression there was again a reverse for full and part-time, but also a reverse in the sex that outperformed (PT males outperform in completion, females in progression). Discussion took place in relation to the potential to introduce a target for both, however it was felt that more research was needed to explore the nuances between these. As a result, research related to both completion and progression by sex has been added within the intervention strategies. This will continue to be <b>monitored</b> and action taken based on the research outcomes.</p>
Ethnicity	<p>Limited data due to small student numbers.</p>	<p>Any targets and interventions implemented will be open to BAME students.</p>

Target: **St Helens College will increase the proportion of full-time students eligible for free school meals progressing into graduate employment or further study to 57% by 2029.** This will bring performance in line with TEF benchmarks for full-time students' progression.

## **Annex B: Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy that is included in the access and participation plan.**

### **Intervention Strategy 1**

Includes:

- Review of financial support
- Formal tutorial time
- Enhanced HE Induction
- Pre-entry 'HE Rehearsals'
- Level 4 Academic Skills Programme and drop-in sessions

Students and staff both note that financial support is a key element of ensuring students are able to remain on programme, especially those students from the most deprived IMD quintiles. This is supported by the TASO Toolkit (2024) which notes emerging evidence that post-entry financial support has a positive impact on both retention and completion in higher education, although it is noted that most of the existing research comes from the USA. There are various opportunities available for students who are struggling financially, however during consultation both staff and students mentioned the potential for the current practice around financial support to create barriers for students due to perceptions of 'hardship' and the stigma attached to requesting this type of support. As a result, a review of current practice will take place, exploring options to increase accessibility and reduce stigma. This review will include consultation with both staff and students.

The importance of identifying 'at risk' students early enough to make a difference is well documented. Students currently have access to tutorial sessions, however these are not formalised on the timetable and can result in students considering this to be optional. The tutorial time is intended to provide the opportunity to discuss progress and identify any 'at risk' students early, ensuring they are provided with the support required to remain on programme.

HE Induction includes a variety of activities and speakers with the intention of introducing students to both the wider College and HE services. Consultation with staff and students identified that some students remain unaware of some of the central services available to them or feel that some information would be more accessible if tailored to HE students. Anecdotally we are aware that higher education students value a separation from further education students. The enhanced HE Induction intends to bring the services to increase knowledge and awareness of the services available and ensure HE students feel more comfortable accessing these.

The College attracts a variety of students who are either progressing directly from Level 3 and may need some support in understanding the 'step up', or mature students who are returning after a break in education. A small research project (Brennan, 2024 - unpublished) was undertaken by our HE & Adult Academic Mentor around practicing academic skills, which resulted in the suggestion for 'HE Rehearsals'. The HE Rehearsals are intended to both bridge the gap for progressing students and reintroduce mature students back into the educational experience. The TASO Toolkit (2024) notes emerging evidence of a small positive impact in relation to pre-entry study and soft-skill support and a large positive impact for pre-entry tutoring, the HE Rehearsals will be a mixture of these. The potential for HE Rehearsals was discussed with both staff and students during consultation. Both



groups felt it had the potential to provide students with an opportunity to develop skills, increase confidence levels and reduce anxiety, and that it may also help with early community building.

The TASO Toolkit (2024) notes some evidence for the positive impact of sustained programmes of student support. The introduction of an Academic Skills programme, with additional drop-in sessions was discussed with staff and students during consultation. Both staff and students felt this would be a positive addition, that would support building academic skills whilst improving student confidence and that this would have a positive impact on students remaining on programme, as well as ultimately supporting attainment.

## **Intervention Strategy 2**

Includes:

- Enhancement of HE space – reviewed in consultation with students
- Support for student-led social and extra-curricular activity – with HE Social Fund
- Curriculum review
- HE specific well-being support
- Level 5&6 HE Induction
- Aspiration raising activity

The current facilities include a dedicated HE floor within the College campus. Students are positive about the facilities available to them, however consultation did suggest that further enhancement of higher education space would be beneficial for creating a sense of belonging and community for higher education students. In addition, it was noted that dedicated higher education library and study space would be beneficial, especially for students who may struggle to find space and time in their home environment. Both staff and students felt further consultation with students would ensure any planned enhancements met student needs effectively, and therefore a review of the current facilities and future plans will be conducted in consultation with students.

Student consultation and previous student feedback has also noted that support for social and extra-curricular activity would be valued by students and would again enhance the sense of belonging and community, which would ultimately positively impact on students remaining on programme. Students will be supported to introduce student-led activity, and a HE social fund will be created to enable this to remove barriers.

Risk 5 in the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register notes that students may not have equal opportunity to access a sufficiently wide variety of higher education course types. The College has a varied portfolio, tailored to the local community, however this currently consists of predominantly Foundation or Bachelors programmes and therefore a curriculum review will take place to explore further options including HTQs and degree apprenticeship options to ensure that students have access to the option that best suits them and their future employment opportunities, whilst continuing to service local employer needs.

The proportion of students who disclose a mental health condition, or who may require additional support for mental health has increased rapidly over the last decade. We have outstanding central services that support student well-being, however our higher education students noted a lack of awareness and even perceived barriers to accessing these services. As a result, there will be increased higher education specific well-being support to address this and ensure students are aware of the services available, and that they feel comfortable accessing this.

As noted above, we will be strengthening the Level 4 HE Induction to ensure students are prepared for their higher education student experience and are aware of the services available to them however both staff and students agree that supporting progression between levels of study, particularly after the long break over the summer period, would also be beneficial and therefore a short Level 5 and 6 HE Induction will be introduced to provide information about the 'step up' in expectations and to serve as a reminder of the services available to support them, academically, personally and professionally.

There is a plethora of research related to pre-entry aspiration raising, however students from deprived backgrounds are less likely to aspire to the higher graduate level opportunities and earning potential. It is acknowledged that aspiration and motivation are not the only drivers of success, and that structural issues and barriers still remain, however for many students the goal is a degree, not necessarily a 2:1 and above. The aspiration raising sessions aim to increase the motivation to attain a 2:1 above, supported by the academic skills programme which will support the ability, and the financial support available, which should aid a reduction in structural barriers.

### **Intervention Strategy 3**

Includes:

- Attainment raising sessions – academic and soft skills
- Aspiration raising sessions (Level 3 and HE)
- Assessment diversity review
- Staff and student research projects

The attainment raising sessions will build on the Academic Skills Programme outlined above, supporting academic ability, alongside soft skill development. Sessions and resources will be developed and delivered that ensure students are aware of how to increase their grade to a 2:1 or above. This was discussed with staff and students who felt it would be a beneficial addition to the support already provided within the programmes of study.

As noted above, aspiration raising activity is aimed at increasing attainment through enhanced motivation. There are clear critiques of reducing attainment to motivation and ignoring the structural issues (Bowers-Brown et al., 2019), however the additional supporting activity within the intervention strategies intends of providing a more holistic approach.

When discussing attainment with staff and students the assessment practice itself was noted. Many programmes include a diverse set of assessment opportunities that not only prepare students for employment, but offer variety to suit different student preferences, however it was noted that this could be enhanced for some programmes. Our programmes undergo regular revalidation, however this has resulted in the commitment to undertaking an assessment diversity review to ensure that outstanding practice and pedagogy that supports student attainment is apparent throughout the full portfolio.

The benefits of staff-student research partnerships or collaborations at the individual and institution level are widely reported (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Little, 2012) and the previously Higher Education Academy report "Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education" (HEA, 2014), focuses particularly on the benefits of staff-student partnerships in the UK for student learning and teaching enhancement. Many institutions support staff/student research projects, both as a way to support scholarly activity for staff and students, and

to support research into internal practice and interventions. Researchers at Kingston University (Huet et al., 2017) found that students developed competencies such as information handling, presenting information in different formats appropriate to the audience; and cognitive abilities such as evaluation and analysis. They also noted it was often the students first exposure to an important aspect of academic practice, sparking further interest in research, strengthening confidence to succeed with their current studies, and stimulating their ambitions to continue with further studies in higher education. The potential for staff and student research in partnership was discussed during consultation and both staff and students felt this would be beneficial for attainment and encouraging students to remain in their programme of study, whilst also supporting students financially, especially if undertaken during the summer period.

#### **Intervention Strategy 4**

Includes:

- HE careers event
- Employability skill sessions
- Guest speaker calendar
- Post-graduate study support

Employability is embedded into our programmes, and many include modules specific to professional practice and employability skills. The TASO Toolkit (2024) suggests there is a mixed impact for information, advice and guidance for employment and employability, with more evidence required, however students were keen to increase the general support currently offered in relation to preparation for employment. Again, we have excellent central careers services, offering support, activities and events that will be further tailored to higher education student needs. The information and events will include advice and guidance in relation to post-graduate study generally, supported by the programme specific support already provided. In addition to support from central services, a programme of general graduate employability sessions will be introduced to ensure students are prepared for a graduate recruitment process.

Students were positive about the guest speakers invited into their sessions and the impact this has on aspiration. The TASO Toolkit (2024) further supports the notion that role models can have positive impacts on attainment. As a result, a more formalised guest speaker calendar will be developed and shared with all HE students.

# Fees, investments and targets

## 2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: St Helens College

Provider UKPRN: 10006174

### Summary of 2025-26 entrant course fees

\*course type not listed

**Inflation statement:**

We will not raise fees annually for new entrants

**Table 3b - Full-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	8250
First degree	BA(Hons) Game Art / BA (Hons) Graphic Design	N/A	8750
Foundation degree		N/A	8250
Foundation degree	FdA Early Years Practice	N/A	5995
Foundation degree	FdSc Media	N/A	8750
Foundation year/Year 0		N/A	*
HNC/HND	HND 'Top Ups' are 1 year full time	N/A	5450
CertHE/DipHE		N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT		N/A	*
Accelerated degree		N/A	*
Sandwich year		N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years		N/A	*
Other		N/A	*

**Table 3b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2025-26**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

**Table 4b - Part-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	*
Foundation degree	Microbiology 3 year PT route	N/A	5450
Foundation year/Year 0		N/A	*
HNC/HND	HNC courses are all 2 year part-time	N/A	4125
CertHE/DipHE		N/A	4125
Postgraduate ITT		N/A	4125
Accelerated degree		N/A	*
Sandwich year		N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years		N/A	*
Other		N/A	*

**Table 4b - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2025-26**

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

# Fees, investments and targets

## 2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: St Helens College

Provider UKPRN: 10006174

### Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 6b provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 6d gives a more detailed breakdown.

#### Notes about the data:

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Yellow shading indicates data that was calculated rather than input directly by the provider.

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

"Total access investment funded from HFI" refers to income from charging fees above the basic fee limit.

"Total access investment from other funding (as specified)" refers to other funding, including OFS funding (but excluding Uni Connect), other public funding and funding from other sources such as philanthropic giving and private sector sources and/or partners.

**Table 6b - Investment summary**

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£65,000	£65,000	£65,000	£65,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000

**Table 6d - Investment estimates**

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
Access activity investment	<b>Total access investment (£)</b>	<b>£30,000</b>	<b>£30,000</b>	<b>£30,000</b>	<b>£30,000</b>
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment (as % of HFI)</i>	5.2%	5.2%	5.2%	5.2%
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment funded from HFI (£)</i>	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)</i>	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£59,000	£59,000	£59,000	£59,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£6,000	£6,000	£6,000	£6,000
Financial support investment	<b>Total financial support investment (£)</b>	<b>£65,000</b>	<b>£65,000</b>	<b>£65,000</b>	<b>£65,000</b>
Financial support investment	<i>Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)</i>	11.2%	11.2%	11.2%	11.2%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
Research and evaluation investment	<i>Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)</i>	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%



